

JOANNA PAGE. *Science Fiction in Argentina: Technologies of the Text in a Material Multiverse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. 235 pp.

Over the past decade, we have seen a growing critical interest in Latin American science fiction, with monographs, edited collections and special journal issues dedicated to a subject that has, at times, eluded academic attention. Joanna Page's new book, *Science Fiction in Argentina*, makes an important contribution to this developing focus and is essential reading both as a consideration of this area of literary production and as an excellent model for an approach to the study of a national science fiction tradition. In addition, Page makes one of the best forays into understanding the ways science, fiction and science fiction all work together in the production and consumption of culture and society.

Page's approach to the topic proposes innovative combinations in her consideration, moving deftly between novels and short stories, comic strips, graphic novels and films. The book begins by navigating the ambivalent relationship that Argentine letters have maintained with science fiction over the history of the country. As Page points out, critics seem to bend over backwards to deny the presence of a science fiction tradition in what is, ironically, the Latin American country that has most contributed to the genre both in the region and internationally. Indeed, in my own experience, the only Latin American to appear in many general histories of science fiction is Jorge Luis Borges. Nevertheless, there is a rich tradition in science and speculative fiction in the country from nineteenth century writers like Eduardo Holmberg and reaching through many of Argentina's most canonical writers. Page combines considerations of a canon of Argentine science fiction with lesser known works over the course of the book and helps extend and innovate the criticism of both the individual works and the larger tradition.

The first chapter, "Fantasy and Science between Intellectuals and the Masses," places Eduardo Holmberg's pioneering 19<sup>th</sup> century efforts in science fiction in dialogue with Héctor Germán Oesterheld's *El Eternauta*. Page makes a persuasive case for understanding these two canonical figures within the context of science, mass culture and intellectualism. The first chapter also acts as an important methodological introduction as Page moves deftly between traditional literary production (Holmberg) to Oesterheld's comic strip. By choosing something as fundamentally important to the history of Latin American science fiction as *El Eternauta*, she also makes the case for taking the genre seriously. The book continues with an examination of science fiction production from novel to graphic novel to theater to film. Chapter Two, "Mediation and Materiality in Graphic Fiction," engages Ricardo Barreiro's 1970s and 1980s work in

comics, thinking the work from the perspectives of archive and materiality in an important contribution to our thinking about Barreiro and of comic production generally in Argentina. Chapter Three, “Time, Technics, and the Transmission of Culture,” works through dystopian fiction to examine Argentina’s economic crises and to articulate critiques of neoliberal capitalism. In this chapter, Page includes considerations of Eduardo Blaustein’s *Cruz diablo*, Rafael Pinedo’s *Plop* and Pedro Mairal’s *El año del desierto*. This focus on novels published in the first decade of the 2000s helps Page make a convincing argument about science fiction and economic realities as well as allowing her to explore the ways in which these novels exhibit a kind of “post Darwinist” theory that links them with Holmberg’s Darwinist work while simultaneously showing how these texts extend and innovate theories of science. Chapter Four works on the ideas of visuality and prosthesis as Page returns to texts that have received much more critical attention. In “Projection, Prosthesis, Plasticity: Literature in the Age of Image,” she discusses Horacio Quiroga, Adolfo Bioy Casares and César Aira and the ways in which their texts helps us consider the prosthetic nature of literature in the light of Katherine Hayles’s work on the subject. While Page’s expertise as a critic of science and fiction as well as science fiction is on display throughout the book, we can best appreciate the ways she combines the two oft-confused fields in “Beyond the Linguistic Turn: Mathematics and New Materialism in Contemporary Literature and Theater.” Here she examines the science fiction theater of Rafael Spregelburd, examining them both as parts of Argentina’s science fiction production as well as understanding how Spregelburd and Javier Daulte’s work both engage Einsteinian relativity, fractal geometry and chaos theory in their articulation of a “postanthropocentric vision.” The final chapter, “Modernity and Cinematic Time in Science Fiction Film,” takes the reader through several recent science fiction films in Argentina, including *Estrellas*, *Cóndor Crux*, *La antena* and *La sonámbula*. Page links her study of science fiction film with considerations of temporality and critiques of modernity, bringing to bear both Marxist considerations of science fiction and productive engagements with Benjamin.

There are several important threads that run through Page’s impressive consideration of the many and varied science fiction engagements that she has found in Argentina cultural expression. Page also provides a well-grounded theoretical consideration of the genre in a critical field that has needed that kind of approach. While Page certainly makes the argument for a robust science fiction tradition in Argentina, she leaves the archaeological tendency in science fiction criticism that focuses on discovery and classification to others, and builds an important theoretical framework for understanding Argentine science fiction as she

also shows how it offers significant insights and critiques of those theories. Her work on materialism is especially noteworthy and the book is an essential addition to literary and cultural theory generally even as it serves as one of the most substantial inputs into science fiction criticism in Latin America.

Page has made several valuable contributions to Argentine cultural criticism over the years, and with *Science Fiction in Argentina* she continues in an ongoing project of showing the ways in which that Argentine film and literature serve as essential reading in ongoing theoretical debates and developments. The book is indispensable for scholars in a variety of fields and remarkable proof of the importance of including science fiction in theoretical and critical considerations.

J. ANDREW BROWN

*Washington University, St. Louis*

JAIME RODRÍGUEZ MATOS. *Writing of the Formless: José Lezama Lima and the End of Time*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. 232 pp.

Jaime Rodríguez Matos's fascinating book is the most accomplished example of a line of inquiry into the work of José Lezama Lima that has been informed by deconstruction. However, the ambition and scope of this study is far broader than that of his predecessors. To start, it is not a monograph on Lezama. Rather, it is an anti-foundationalist reflection on politics and its possibility, and Lezama's text serves as the site to pursue this reflection.

From the moment politics posits itself as "the highest value" (99), it demands the assumption of some type of foundation that grounds and legitimates political power. Rodríguez Matos advances a thorough critique of this necessity, and makes a case for thinking the "non-necessary status of the political" (99). This entails confronting the "formless" (*informe*) void that always already exceeds and undoes any attempt at establishing a necessary ground for politics, even when such foundation is understood as contingent and provisional. The political act covers, represses and forgets this void. Hence the need, as Rodríguez Matos argues, to think and engage with the "politicity" (15) of the abyssal, formless void that in-forms politics. This undertaking is not political – it is an "infrapolitical" (38) act, and to think about it is the task of "infrapolitical deconstruction" (111). This constitutes the guiding thread of the whole book.

The introduction and Part I present a theoretical exposition of the genealogy of the metaphysics of political theology, and a formulation of the problem of its deconstruction. This analysis has two conceptual axes: the