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## **REVIEW OF RUDYARD ALCOCKER'S *DEATHLESS AVENGERS***

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### **RECOMMENDATION ON WHETHER IT DESERVES TO BE PUBLISHED**

Yes, *Deathless Avengers* is definitely publishable after the suggested minor revisions are considered.

### **BROAD OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT**

*Deathless Avengers* is a very original and insightful study written in a jargon-free and accessible English. This interdisciplinary study belongs within the fields of cultural studies and comparative literature, and deals with the topic of time travel in cultural production (regular literature, children's literature, film, television shows, etc.) of the Americas. The exploration of this topic is connected to a veiled reaction to serious sociopolitical issues in today's world: "fictional time travel within Latin America and the Caribbean contexts is motivated largely because of a lack of a perceived lack of practical, political agency in the present day. Fictional time is, in many instances, the final resource of those seeking radical change." A pessimistic view of the present, therefore, triggers these returns to the historical past. Time travelers in these revisionist narratives are trying to rewind the clock of history and undo the Conquest and its effects. In some cases there is redemption and revenge, while in others, a deterministic status quo remains unchanged.

The book also explores the texts from a historiographic perspective, presenting them as alternative re-writings of history or escapist alternatives to a painful memory of the historical past. In particular, several texts imagine alternative outcomes or scenarios of the

Conquest. The first chapter outlines a history of science fiction in Latin America and, within the overarching topic of the book (time travel), the “discovery” of the Americas by Christopher Columbus takes center stage. Rather than concentrating on a literary subgenre, the second chapter looks at a region, the Caribbean, and its peculiar relationship with temporality. Chapter 3 deals with texts about La Malinche from a feminist perspective, and Chapter 4 with time travel in popular culture, particularly in children’s literature, television shows, and pedagogical texts. An afterword that explores links between fictional time travel and the contemporary social movement of Taíno revival in Puerto Rico closes the book.

The study has a solid theoretical base, drawing from concepts from the field of psychoanalysis (Freud, Jung, Lacan), Stuart Hall studies on postcoloniality and race, Derrida’s deconstruction, and perhaps more importantly, Latin American and Caribbean thinkers, such as Octavio Paz, Alejo Carpentier, Leopoldo Zea, Roberto González Echevarría, etc.

**ANALYSIS OF ITS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISION, AND PROBLEMS WITH CITATIONS, TERMINOLOGY, ACCURACY**

The following are some suggestions that I would like Alcocer to consider, although, of course, he should not feel obligated to follow my advice (I am not a native speaker of English). These are discretionary issues that should not affect a publication decision:

1. First, I was surprised to see that Alcocer never saw echoes of the continuation of the Black Legend about the Spanish conquest of the Americas in these North American

authors' fictional critiques of the Spanish Conquest in the Americas, such as Orson Scott Card's *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* and S. M. Stirling's *Conquistador: A Novel of Alternative History*. In my view (and I admit that perhaps the fact that I am from Spain may have something to do with this stance), it is quite obvious, for example, that instead of dealing with Columbus and the genocide of Indians in the Caribbean basin, these North American writers could have very well found a similar source of inspiration in the arrival of the pilgrims at Plymouth rock, in their own country. Why didn't they? A perhaps easy, but nonetheless plausible answer is the continuation of the Black Legend about the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Rather than looking at the English conquest of North America (with the well-known result of the almost complete annihilation of the North American native populations; indeed much more so that in Latin America where the indigenous populations especially in Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries are alive and well, and several presidents have been of indigenous origin), they choose to highlight the massacres and genocides beyond what are today's US borders, as it is typically done in American textbooks, Hollywood films, and popular culture. Needless to say, I find these authors' choice suspicious to say the least, and I believe that *Deathless Avengers* would benefit from some sort of commentary along these lines, even if it is only in an endnote. After all, as Alcocer himself states in pages 69-70, this fixation with the figure of Columbus seems to be "a simplification of history."

2. I also felt that some paragraphs begged further explanation and insight. This is the case, for example, of the first paragraph in page 187 or the following paragraph in page 203: “in an otherwise fine novel, it is unfortunate that the figure who seems to embody or account for the ways in which Cuban has compromised itself and lost its direction be none than Onolorio: an Asian-African mulatto [...] who stands in contrast with el Indio and Muba, characters who are presumably racially “pure,” less culturally turmoiled, and more benevolent.” Perhaps Alcocer could elaborate a bit more specifically about what these sentences say about Chaviano’s notion of racial mixing, or any other potential implications.
  
3. Page 346. Perhaps Alcocer could elaborate on the use of the term “neo-indigenism” in the last line of this page. This is, in fact, a very important and accurate point that merits more attention; so much that I would actually add the term to the title of the book!
  
4. Alcocer explains that he will cite in the original Spanish first whenever the citation is outside the body of the text, and in English first when the citation is within the body of his text. However, he does not follow his own rule throughout the manuscript (see p. 326, for example). In several cases, within the same page, the quotations are first in English or in Spanish, regardless of whether they are inserted in the body of his writing or not.
  - In other cases, the original version in Spanish does not appear (see p. 193).
  - Or the translation and the original do not coincide (see note 18 in pg. 213; or lines

6-7 in p. 247; or lines 16-19 in p.270).

- In p. 232, and 292 (second paragraph, titles of short stories are not translated) the

English translations are not offered in the text.

- In. p. 246, and last lines of p. 319, beginning of p. 320, the English translation is placed before the original Spanish (within the body of the text)

5. In the sixth unnumbered page, Alcocer states that Cortés and La Malinche “had a child, Martín, who is widely (**albeit erroneously**) considered by Mexicans to be the first Mexican mestizo). He could explain, either in the text or in an endnote, why this belief is erroneous since it will not be obvious to most readers.
  
6. In pg. 8, Alcocer states: “Unless otherwise specified, ‘The Americas’ is shorthand in this study for Latin America and the Caribbean.” I believe this choice could create confusion, as term “the Americas” is universally understood as including North America as well. If he is not dealing with North American texts, why not just say “Latin American and Caribbean texts”?
  
7. Pg 26. “the latter phenomena” should be ► “the latter **phenomenon**”
  
8. Pg. 95. “yellow indian” should be ► “yellow **Indian**”
  
9. 8. Pg. 122. In second endnote, ► eliminate underlining in 1994\_(10)

10. Pg. 122. In third endnote, “From Mestizo,” ▶ “from” should not be capitalized
11. Pg. 123. Endnote 7, “A Publisher’s Weekly Review” should be ▶ “A **Publisher’s**  
**Weekly** review”
12. Pg. 127. Endnote 18. “are convinced Quetzalcoatl’s” should be ▶ “are convinced  
**that** Quetzalcoatl’s”
13. Pg. 135. Underlining in next to last page is too long
14. 13. Pg. 139 1950’s Cuba should be ▶ 1950s Cuba
15. 14. Pg. 142. 90’s should be ▶ 90s (I would delete that apostrophe with years  
throughout the manuscript; see page 192, for example)
16. Pg. 149. (200-201) should be ▶ (200-01)
17. Pg. 158. ““Door of No Return.”” (109). ▶ eliminate period after “Return”
18. Pg. 163 and throughout the text: Shouldn’t the word “Taíno” be written with an  
accent? In English, it is normally written without an accent.
19. 18. Pg. 175. “(mid twentieth century)” should be ▶ “(mid-twentieth century)”

20. Pg. 182. When quotations are taken from the internet and they have no pagination, he should write **(n.p.)**

21. 20. Pg. 187. “Sanfoka **are** striking” should be ► “Sanfoka **is** striking”

22. 21. Pg. 194. “In **any either** case” should be ► “In **either** case”

23. P. 202. “Y Muba le enseño” should be ► “Y Muba le enseñó”

24. P. 205. “A lo **major**” should be ► “A lo **mejor**”

25. p. 213 60% (Miami) ► parenthesis should not be in bold

26. P 217 “tlacaltecas” ► “tlaxcaltecas”

27. p. 218. “tlaxcaltecas2,” ► “tlaxcaltecas,”<sup>2</sup>

28. p. 219. “in terms of how (Hispanic, at least) men” ► “in terms of how **some** (Hispanic, at least) men” [to avoid unnecessary generalizations]

29. p. 221. (129-130) ► (129-30)



30. p. 221. “map painter” ► “cartographer?” [otherwise, specify what you mean by “map painter”]
31. p. 223. “La Malinche Lives On” ► “La Malinche Lives **on**”
32. p. 223. “conquistador-turned-chronicler ► “conquistador turned chronicler” [why the hyphens?]
33. p. 224 “Orozco y Berra’s” ► “Orozco’s **and** Berra’s”?
34. p. 224. “(ibid.) begins her 1978” ► “(ibid.), begins her 1978” [Incidentally, I don’t think either MLA style or Chicago style uses (**ibid.**) any more.
35. p. 228. Did Octavio Paz say that La Malinche was treasonous? ► or did he mean that his fellow Mexicans saw her as “treasonous”? The latter seems to me what Paz meant to say, as one can see in his sentence “el pueblo mexicano no perdona su traición a la Malinche” or in the quotation Alcocer provides in note 33 of page 285.
36. p. 229. “to feel patriotic feelings” ► “to **have** patriotic feelings”
37. p. 230. “Historia verdadera de la Conquista” ► “Historia verdadera de la conquista”

38. p. 232. “Since then it has been” ▶ “Since then, it has been”
39. 38. 233. “La mujer habitada’s” ▶ “La mujer habitada’s” [Throughout the entire manuscript. See p. 282, line 6, for example. This may be a matter of writing style, but I tend not to italicize the ‘s]
40. 39. 233. “Afterward she” ▶ “Afterward, she”
41. 233. “the Sandinista revolution” ▶ “the Sandinista **Revolution**”
42. 234. “Eventually the” ▶ “Eventually, the”
43. 239. “tendrá corazon” ▶ “tendrá coraz**ón**”
44. 242. “¿Qué me llevo? ▶ “¿Qué me llev**ó**?”
45. 243. “No sé de donde me salió” ▶ “No sé de **dó**nde me salió”
46. 244 “For the purpose of this essay” ▶ “For the purpose of this **study**”
47. 249. “and identified” ▶ “and **was** identified”
48. 262. “quedaron silencio” ▶ “quedaron **en** silencio”

49. 263. “El emana vibraciones” ▶ “Él emana vibraciones”
50. 272. “The True Story of a Princess” 1997 ▶ “The True Story of a Princess,” 1997
51. 273. “being sold **into** by her” ▶ “being sold by her”
52. 277. “in Chapingo, Mexico” ▶ “in Chapingo, Mexico,”
53. 282. “Belli’s and Kirstina Cordero’s” ▶ “Belli and Kristine Cordero’s” [Only one apostrophe if both people co-authored the work; 2 apostrophe’s if you’re talking about a different work by each person]
54. 282. The Country Under My Skin ▶ The Country **u**nder My Skin
55. 289. “Young English Readers” ▶ “Young English-**Speaking** Reading” [or “Young **Anglophone** Readers”]
56. 300. “Mcdonald’s” ▶ “Mcdonald” [or McDonald?]
57. 309. “Between **the** Europe” ▶ “Between Europe”
58. 310. “one **could that the** subtle” ▶ line 5, some words are missing here

59. 311. “Me oh Maya!” ► underlining is too long

60. 315. “in Natuatl; 36).” ► No parenthesis had been open

61. 317. “Popo and Itza” ► “Popo and Izta”

62. 322. “is this world!” ► Underlining is two long

63. 329. Members of the **Mormon Church** may find this paragraph offensive: “Cieza de León’s **falsification** would not be the only revision of the Christian story that imagines the Judeo-Christian God’s activities in the Americas prior to the fifteen century: the Book of Mormon describes such activities as well” ► Perhaps the problem could be fixed by using the word “**version**” or “**interpretation**,” instead of “falsification.” Also, in the case of the Mormons, it’s not the Judeo-Christian God but just the Christian God, since Jesus Christ is not considered a god by Jews.

64. 338. “Who will remember us/?” ► no need for the slash, and it does not appear in the Spanish original you provide

65. 339. “society) his love interest” ► “society), his love interest”

66. 341. **she** all she can do now is ► eliminate the first “she”

67. 342. “white and asian” ▶ “white and Asian”

68. 342. 1950’s ▶ 1950s

69. 342. “Rafael Leonidas Trujillo” ▶ “Leónidas” [I would either write “Rafael Trujillo” or “Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina”]

70. 348. “Ramón del Valle Inclán” ▶ Either just “Valle-Inclán” or “Ramón **María** del Valle-Inclán”

71. 351. “may to a certain extent lack” ▶ “may, to a certain extent, lack”

72. 353. “sometimes when Yuis drew” ▶ “sometimes, when Yuis drew”

73. 354 “it bears mentioning that “Boricua” refers to the Taíno name for indigenous Puerto Ricans” ▶ “it bears mentioning that “Boricua” refers to the Taíno name for indigenous Puerto Ricans (**from the indigenous term Borikén, Boriquén, or Borinquén**)”

74. 364. “to “go back in time” by visiting Rome,\_\_\_“to walk” ▶ Delete one of these two quotation marks

**75.** The bibliography has several errors. He should follow the MLA style more closely.

The citation of some articles, for example, does not include page numbers.

369. Aínsa, Fernando. Mérida, Ven. ▶ What is “Ven.” Venezuela?”

**76.** 371. Asturias, Miguel Angel ▶ Asturias, Miguel Ángel [they “rule” about not writing accent marks in capital letters is only a myth. You couldn’t do it with type writers, and that’s why people didn’t use to write them. The RAE recommends writing them always].

**77.** 371 “Is Religion any Good” ▶ “Is Religion Any Good”

**78.** 375. You don’t need to write the word Editorial in the bibliography. Ex. Barcelona: ~~Editorial~~ Seix Barral, 1999.

**79.** 375 Campana, Patrizia. El anacronópete by Enrique ▶ You don’t need that “by” in MLA bibliography

**80.** 375 Campos, Victoria Ed: ▶ Eds.

**81.** 377. Conrad, Geoffrey W and ▶ You need a period after the W

**82.** 377. Cosmos Latinos Ed ▶ Eds & ▶ and

83. 378. Croato, Tony and Corssley, Robert. ▶ These two entries are incomplete.
84. 379. Dauster, Frank [and throughout the bibliography, you need to use MLA style or Chicago Style]: 19, no 3 (1972) ▶ **19.3 (1972): page numbers**
85. 380. Duncan, Cynthia ▶ 7.2 (1985): 105-20
86. Fenwick, M.J. Portalatín's ▶ no 's necessary in MLA style
87. You forget to write the period after you include the original date of publication in many entries
88. García Márquez Harper and Row, Publishers ▶ no comma
89. Havana in My Heart ▶ no comma after "Photography"
90. Herniques, Fernando. ▶ no comma after "Society." 2.2 (June 1951): 115-21.
91. Hoover Gieses ▶ 15.1 (...)
92. Kanev, Venko ▶ 833-45.
93. León-Portilla ▶ no comma after "conquista"

94. Los cinco soles ▶ period after 2002. 19-21 (no pp. necessary)
95. Morrison, Toni. ▶ No comma after “1980)”
96. Plotnik ▶ No comma after “and Film”
97. Schaffler ▶ date when it was published and date when you quoted it need to be added
98. Shea ▶ 4 (Fall 1988): 53-59
99. Williams ▶ Page numbers need to be added
100. Zea ▶ México ▶ Mexico City

## QUALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

Although, of course, many other texts could have been selected or included, I found Alcocer’s selection of texts (literary and visual) quite appropriate. While reading this book manuscript, several novels that have either taught or analyzed in my research came to mind, such as Graciela Limón’s *Erased Faces* (where there are also time travelling Indians coming to the present); Sesshu Foster’s *Atomik Aztek* (which offers an alternate history in which the Aztecs won the war against the Spanish invaders and, in the 1940s, the “Aztek



Socialist Imperium” became a world power after beating the Nazis in Stalingrad and then colonizing the rest of Europe); Mario Acevedo’s *X-rated blood suckers* (where we have Coyote, a vampire with a thick Chicano accent who is actually the son of a Jewish Spanish soldier and La Malinche); García Márquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (where the Patriarch sees Christopher Columbus’s three ships from his window and then the author deconstructs the way in which history is written: when Columbus expresses his surprise about the paint on the faces of the indigenous Caribbean people, the latter explain that it is used as protection against the inclement sun; likewise, despite the fact that the indigenous people are aware of the economic worthlessness of the trinkets offered by the Conquistadors, they accept them only for hospitality’s sake). Alcocer’s study would be an outstanding tool to analyze any of these novels. In fact, I plan to use this book for my courses. Reading the manuscript has inspired me to teach some of this material differently.

Although *Deathless Avengers* does not exclusively deal with science fiction literature, I believe that it will become a widely read, frequently cited, and well respected book in this subfield and others, as its methods of cultural critique are unquestionably unique.

## **ORIGINALITY AND RELATION TO EXISTING WORKS IN THE FIELD**

Although I have read two books dealing with Hispanic science fiction, Cristina Sánchez-Conejero’s *Novela y cine de ciencia ficción española contemporánea. Una reflexión sobre la humanidad* (New York: Mellen Press, 2009; for which I wrote the foreword) and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán’s *Ciencia ficción en español: una mitología moderna ante el cambio* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), Alcocer’s

interdisciplinary study is far superior in its scope, originality, theoretical contribution, and overall academic quality. Among other things, Alcocer does not limit himself to analyzing the selected works but he also discusses the subgenres themselves from a theoretical perspective. In fact, I believe that *Deathless Avengers* will unquestionably constitute a landmark in this subfield.

### **STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION, AND PRESENTATION OF THE MATERIAL**

The book is perfectly organized, structured, and I find the presentation flawless

### **TIMELINESS AND SHELF-LIFE**

I foresee a long shelf-life for this study, since it is not bound to a period, genre, or country.

### **LIKELY READERSHIP, FIELDS, LEVEL**

Undergraduate and graduate students of English and Spanish-language literature, Latin American Studies, Cultural Studies, scholars interested in Latin American and American literature, or science fiction and film.

### **POTENTIAL USE IN COURSES, LEVEL**

Probably as secondary reading