

THE 2010 JAMIE BISHOP MEMORIAL AWARD for an essay on the fantastic written in a language other than English

Winner

Pablo Brescia

“La era de los tecnobebés: Juan José Arreola y el modelo crítico de la ciencia ficción”.
[“The Era of the Techno-Babies: Juan José Arreola and Critical Science Fiction”]¹

Mexican writer Juan José Arreola (1918-2001) published “Baby H.P.” (Horse Power) in 1952. The piece is about a mechanical device which, when appended to a child’s body, works as an energy collection and storage unit. This energy can later be used to power household appliances. Fast-forward to the 21st century. Since 2001, *The New York Times Magazine* has published a special issue entitled “The Year in Ideas” on the latest trends in human thought. On December 14th, 2003, and under the subtitle “Kid power,” the magazine described an invention by Raj Pandian, a professor of engineering and computer science, that stores children’s energy in small tanks, later converting it to electricity stored in batteries. My paper tries to answer this question: What happens when literature interrogates technology? I argue that “Baby H.P” could serve as a case study to explore the fictional representation of the dehumanizing effect brought about by scientific advancement.

¹ This essay appeared in Spanish in: *Revista Iberoamericana*, 78.238-239 (2012): 91-107. Special issue on Latin American science fiction.