



Se alquila un planeta

Yoss

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YOSS (José Miguel Sánchez Gómez) es sin duda el autor más renombrado y controversial de la ciencia ficción cubana. En su best-seller *Se alquila un planeta*, nos ofrece la visión desgarradora de un porvenir en la Tierra que le sirve de espejo para reflexionar sobre la Cuba de los años noventa bajo el régimen de Fidel Castro. En este futuro mordaz, nuestro planeta es rescatado de sus problemas económicos y ambientales por la invasión de extraterrestres que lo transforman en un resort turístico interestelar. Consignados a una burocracia interestelar brutal, los desposeídos de la Tierra se empeñan en mejorar sus vidas a través de las pocas vías disponibles que tienen a su alcance, como son el trabajar para la policía colonial, ganarse la vida en el mercado negro, invertir en el narcotráfico, gozar del mundo galáctico del arte y la prostitución, y extraviarse en vacío en naves espaciales de fabricación casera en busca de una vida mejor. Yoss es conocido tanto por su estética de rockero impenitente como por sus retratos mordaces de la actualidad cubana. Este libro ingenioso y fascinante marca el debut en inglés de una de las voces literarias latinoamericana más intrépidas e imaginativas.

Nacido en La Habana en 1988, el escritor **José Miguel Sánchez Gómez** adopta el nombre de pluma YOSS luego de ganar el prestigioso Premio David de Ciencia Ficción por su libro de cuentos *Timshel*. Se graduó con un título en Biología en 1991 y formó parte del curso inaugural sobre técnicas narrativas en el Centro de Jorge Cardoso Onelio de Formación Literaria en 1999. Yoss, que se destaca tanto por su estética de rockero como por su pasión por la ciencia y la mitología, es autor de obras de ficción realista así como de CF. Escribe novela, ensayo y crítica y es promotor de talleres literarios.

Además de su labor como traductor, **David Frye** imparte cursos sobre cultura y sociedad latinoamericana en la Universidad de Michigan. Ha sido traductor de la obra del andino Guamán Poma de Ayala (*Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, 1615), del mexicano José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (*El Periquillo Sarniento*, 1816) para la cual fue premiado por el NEA en 2001, del uruguayo Ángel Rama (*Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, 1982), y de numerosas novelas y poemas cubanos y españoles.

Se alquila un planeta Details

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Author : Yoss

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From Reader Review Se alquila un planeta for online ebook

Nadine says

My first Cuban sci fi, and definitely not my last with this author. I saw the Cuban element in the depiction of Earth as a third world planet whose economy is based on tourism from other worlds and galaxies, and all the social, political and economic corruptions and distortions it brings. We learn all about these worlds through a series of loosely interlinked stories of characters from all ends of this huge spectrum, including a 'social worker' (the official term for prostitutes), a human artist working off-world, an athlete in an intergalactic competition, and a slum child, among others. Although the stories are separate, this book felt very much like novel to me, not a book of short stories. The author has a kind of satiric, breezy voice that keeps the novel from feeling heavy, even when it is serious. Since I read it in English, my admiration goes out to the translator. I hope he translates all Yoss' books into English.

Al says

I didn't like how much jargon the author made up to describe the new technology in this post-alien invaded world, and some of it even sounded silly. It may be just because I normally don't read sci-fi. However, I also didn't like how quickly each character's complete backstories were divulged. This is all according to my own personal taste, though.

Rhoddi says

Surprisingly inventive and readable, the real big problem with this book is that the stories can drag on to the point of boredom. I still found it quite entertaining especially for the different point of view and honesty.

Katie says

I just don't know how to feel about this because some aspects were really screwed up and I can't get past that even if it was a metaphor for Cuba after the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Jeimy says

Gratuitous graphic gore, homophobic, and misogynistic treatment of female characters. Struggled through this one and hated it.

Tonya says

I was quite skeptical at first. I don't read sci-fi very often, if ever. The author, a Cuban man with the unlikely name of Yoss who is in a heavy metal band and who LOOKS like he's in a heavy metal band circa 1988 (think bandanna head band, leather, studded wristbands and big hair), is not really someone I'd normally seek out to read.

However, I heard about the book, thought it was in intriguing premise, and bought it.

I'm not sorry I did. It's wonderfully done. It's masterful. The plot-- that Earth was taken over by xenoids (all the other creatures of the galaxy) because humans did a poor job taking care of their planet doesn't sound so original, I suppose, but where Yoss really excels is in the construction of the book. I don't want to say too much, I honestly think this is ebook that should be read and experienced without the reader getting a lot of front loaded ideas about the book.

Just read it. I don't think you'll be sorry.

The worst part of it is that I'm finished and there's only one more book of his translated into English! (He's written over twenty in Spanish!)

Erin says

4.5 stars. This book works so well on multiple levels - as a story in its own right, as a cultural commentary, as an inventive thought experiment about the future, as a metaphor for Cuba's place within the wider world. Can be a disturbing read, but highly recommended.

Michael Yankovich says

A series of vignettes tied together by similar themes and characters, Yoss' "A Planet for Rent" is one of the most intriguing science fiction books I've read recently.

Earth, in the near future, has been contacted by alien species, collectively known to humans as "xenoids", who were compelled to make themselves known as the world was on the brink of self-destruction. The world is now clandestinely ruled by the xenoid species, preventing humanity from taking a role in the greater galactic community.

Being a Cuban writer, Yoss' use of recent Cuban history as an influence on the conditions of the world in "A Planet for Rent" is hardly passive, showing the oppression of the Cuban people and the corruption of the ruling class through thinly veiled allegories that fit very well in the vision of the future he's skillfully crafted. This book continues a trend I've noticed in my science fiction reading as of late of authors deeply engraining sex into numerous aspects of their works, a trend that has greatly confused me: is it that sex is such a deeply animalistic thing that's programmed into every being, it has to be touched on? Is it that science fiction authors tend to be giant nerds that simply don't get any? A minor part of the work as a greater whole, the inclusion of sexual situations stood out to me.

Minor nitpicking aside, this book make me think, and that's all I really ask for when reading novels. I eagerly await Restless Books's next translation of a Yoss novel, coming summer 2016.

Lucie says

Written in Spanish by Yoss, a Cuban author, but very readably translated by David Frye, this is still a fairly difficult book to read, not for language but for concepts. This is not the optimistic future view of so much of science fiction, but an almost depressing look at earth after alien contact. This is not a book to zip through in 2 days, but one to be slowly read and digested, but well worth the reading. The structure of the book is a series of stories with overlapping characters such that they form a unified whole. I heartily recommend this book to any hard core science fiction buff. Take a look from a different point of view!

K says

Wow

I love science fiction that is also a statement on society. Normally we like to imagine being the top of the social and intelligence chain and here we are not. The premise is interesting, a new perspective of a future after contact and I assume a statement on colonization. The story itself is beautifully written, the characters relating to each other in unexpected ways. I enjoyed it immensely and can't wait to read something else by Yoss.

Bbrown says

From the back cover blurb you might think that *A Planet for Rent* is just a depiction of Cuba with a coat of science fiction paint, and if so you'd be half-right. It certainly is a depiction of Cuba with a coat of science fiction paint, with social workers catering to aliens clearly representing Cuban sex workers catering to foreign tourists, with corrupt Planetary Security officers clearly representing corrupt National Revolutionary Police officers, with humans attempting to escape Earth in homemade, cobbled-together spaceships clearly representing Cubans attempting to reach the United States in makeshift rafts. But it isn't just that. The science fiction elements in *A Planet for Rent* aren't mere window-dressing; Yoss has included them for a purpose. Add to that the strength of the stories contained here, which are varied in terms of both content and structure, as well as strong overall world building, and *A Planet for Rent* is the best work of science fiction I've read in some time.

First off, this is not a novel, but a collection of short stories and vignette interludes that share the same setting and that feature an interconnected cast of characters. It's the setting that is the key to this work, as Yoss gives us an Earth that has been taken over by aliens (Xenoids), that supposedly intervened to prevent humanity from wiping itself out through war, but that appear to have really taken control of our world to exploit it and profit from it. Earth is now a tourist trap for the more advanced alien species, and humans are less than dogs to our new overlords, second-class citizens on our own planet and prohibited from traveling off Earth to anywhere else. An alien gets murdered while on vacation? The city where that happened is burned to ashes, with however many million humans were unlucky enough to live there. An alien kills a human? Who cares, it happens every day. There are a lot of science fiction novels out there with humanity coming into contact with aliens, but few where we are in as inferior a position as we occupy in *A Planet for Rent*. In this universe we aren't the richest, the strongest, the smartest, the most beautiful, or even the most

populous. Earth's advantage as an alien tourist destination is that it's cheap, with our alien visitors able to rent human bodies and work them to death for the fun of it, have sex with a human escort (who may or may not survive the process) for the equivalent of spare change, and generally do whatever they wish without the authorities doing anything to stop them, since the aliens have the cash. Needless to say, being a human in this world is terrible.

And this is where Yoss accomplishes something with this book's science fiction elements. The story of aliens recruiting human sports stars, who will accept any amount of money so that they can leave, could I have read it the same way if it was about some greedy scout from the United States snatching up a Cuban baseball player? Maybe, though, being from the United States myself, probably not, since it would inevitably have made me think about capitalism versus communism, and various other historical issues that would distract from the story more than add to it. But through the science fiction elements, it's a non-issue, as Yoss uses those elements to expand the feeling of disenfranchisement to the whole human race. Whoever reads this book, regardless of nationality or wealth, will be reading of a future where they're under someone else's boot, and considered garbage. I'm not saying that Yoss is the first to use science fiction to accomplish this feat, but he does so here effectively.

Beyond this, the stories themselves are strong. While reading *A Planet for Rent* I kept contrasting it with *The Carpet Makers* by Andreas Eschbach, which is also essentially a series of interconnected short stories, but the ones in *The Carpet Makers* were 10 to 20 pages, more about setting a scene and describing some new element of the universe than delving too deeply. In contrast, the stories in *A Planet for Rent* are all about 30 to 40 pages, so they are substantive, and depict characters with some degree of depth. *The Carpet Makers* depicts people on a space station playing a game and the game itself is never really explained, since it's the depiction of the space station and the scene of one character winning the tournament that's important. In contrast, *A Planet for Rent* explains the rules, since you're going to be experiencing that game with the players, and you're going to care about the outcome of that game, and care about what it represents to the cheering fans watching it, and care about the players as well. In short, the stories of *A Planet for Rent* are stronger than those in *The Carpet Makers*. Additionally, Yoss shows that he has range when it comes to story structure, with a variety of styles on display in this relatively short work (though some structures are more successful than others).

Some may find the lack of an overarching plot to be a flaw of *A Planet for Rent*, and, while it's certainly true that there isn't some central plot that is unraveled over the course of this work (as occurs in *The Carpet Makers*), there's a through-line here based on the mood of the book. This is a world where humans largely have to sell their bodies to survive (in more ways than one), where survival is a struggle. So no, you don't learn the secrets of the mysterious Auyars, or get to read a story of the rebels throwing the Xenoid yoke off of Earth, because that's not humanity's place in this universe, we're backwater garbage barely getting by, aren't you paying attention? As stated in one of the vignettes, "[w]hat fate awaits a race that has lost faith in the future, idolizes the past, and puts up with the present?" This question is in the background of all of these stories, and it's the tone this question sets that makes this work a cohesive whole. And of course the interconnected cast of characters helps too. The ending story is unfortunately one of the weakest, but ties some of the loose threads together, so that by the end you know the fates of most of the major characters in this book, meaning it doesn't end feeling incomplete.

I'm not claiming that Yoss is the first to use science fiction in this way, nor am I claiming he's a great prose writer, but *A Planet for Rent* has a strong setting, strong stories, a variety of storytelling styles, and best of all it makes you empathize with the plight of the Cuban poor without even making it explicit (though it isn't trying to hide it from you either). It's the best piece of science fiction I've read in a while, and I recommend it. 4.5 out of 5, and I'm rounding up.

Melissa says

This book is incredibly captivating. I loved seeing the different perspectives from all of the characters and that they were interconnected. It made me desperately want to travel to all the different worlds, got my heart racing, and one gore filled scene nearly made me pass out.

John says

For rent, one planet that's lost its way in the race for development, that showed up at the stadium after all the medals had been handed out, when all that was left was the consolation prize of survival.

For rent, one planet that learned to play the economics game according to one set of rules but discovered once it started playing that the rules had been changed.

The opening pages of *A Planet for Rent* read like a carnival barker beckoning curious thrill-seekers into a tent to gawk at the freakish survivors of a disfiguring accident. And in a way it is exactly that, only the freaks are humanity, the tent is the Earth, and the spectators are among a pantheon of alien species touring the wreckage and exploiting the survivors.

This is a post-invasion Earth, but with a twist that resonates with classic first contact stories: a confederation of highly advanced alien societies, which the novel collectively refers to as Xenoids, had been watching Earth closely. When humanity reached the right level of maturity, they would have welcomed Earth into the great galactic family. Humanity's self-destructive instincts won out, however, and the Xenoids intervened before it was too late:

But when the total destruction of the Earth seemed inevitable, they broke their own rules and jumped in to stop it. Their huge ships landed in Paris, in Rome, in Tokyo, in New York. Their desire to help and their resources seemed endless...

Humanity, specifically the leaders of terrestrial nations, were uninterested in Xenoid assistance and instead became "jealously protective of their power in the presence of vastly superior minds." After a failed attempt to expel the Xenoids with nuclear weapons, the Xenoids deemed humanity incapable of self-government, imposing an economically ruinous and exploitative police state on the human population, and turning the bulk of Earth's land mass into a nature preserve for Xenoid tourists.

The historical context behind *A Planet for Rent* is worth noting. Yoss is the pen name for José Miguel Sánchez, a Havana-based writer and front-man for the Cuban heavy metal group, Tenaz. At the beginning of Yoss's writing career Cuba was entering an especially traumatizing period of its history, one that has more

than passing resemblance to Earth's predicament in *A Planet for Rent*.

The collapse of the Soviet Union that began in the late 1980's had devastating effects for Cuba. Soviet shipments of fuel, food, and pharmaceuticals suddenly ceased, commencing a particularly desperate period of famine and thrift that has come to be called the "Special Period", which lasted through the turn of the century. During that decade, Cuba was forced to endure and even court various exploitative economic activities from wealthier nations for the sake of survival.

On one level, *A Planet for Rent* is a science-fictional allegorization of this prolonged period of national destitution. On another level, however, it is just straight-up good science fiction that stands on its own without reference to the historical allegory.

Yoss published the stories that form the backbone of *A Planet for Rent* throughout the 1990's. They were collected and released in novel form in 2001 by Madrid-based publisher Equipo Sirius, and quickly established Yoss's reputation in the world of Spanish letters as the pre-eminent Cuban writer of science fiction. A French edition followed in 2010, and finally, in 2014, Brooklyn-based indy publisher Restless Books released an English language version in ebook, in a clear and elegant translation by David Frye. (Restless released a hard copy version in June, 2015.)

A Planet for Rent follows the interconnected stories of six humans, each told in stand-alone vignettes, and each, in their way, about escape. The first person we meet is Buca, a "social worker" (ie. prostitute) serving the Xenoid tourists of Earth. The entirety of Buca's chapter takes place at the astroport, where her Xenoid client is ushering her, luggage-like, through security checks and customs inspections, to a ship that will bring her back to his home planet for good. Buca's client is a "Grodo", a species of Xenoid with an insectoid carapace, and his desire for Buca is distinctly non-sexual.

The bulk of the story consists of flashbacks sketching the arc of the desperate events that brought Buca to this moment in the astroport with her Grodo client, where she will finally escape Earth. We soon learn, however, that Buca's fate on the Grodo's home planet is a horrifying one. But the tragedy lies in Buca's continued happiness at leaving Earth, and the fact that even the fate she will suffer with the Grodo on an alien world is a marked improvement to her life on Earth.

Buca's story dramatizes an actual phenomenon. Among other measures the Cuban government took during the Special Period, was courting tourists from Europe and the Americas. One of the explicit selling points for these tourists was the purported availability of Afro-Cuban women. As scholar Elisa Facio has described it, the influx of these tourists gave rise to the phenomenon of *jineterismo*, a type of government-sanctioned sex tourism where predominantly white tourists came to Cuba seeking sexual encounters specifically with a "sexy mulatta."

There are other distinctly allegorical elements in *A Planet For Rent*, such as the crew of outlaws in *Escape Tunnel*, who escape from Earth on in a rickety pirated spacecraft with very little hope and very low chance of successfully reaching a safe destination in a friendly Xenoid enclave. The circumstances of these interplanetary boat people would be familiar to the tens of thousands of Caribbean, Central American, and African migrants who cross treacherous bodies of water in dodgy boats to flee terrible conditions at home.

In *The Champions*, we see yet another kind of escape, the kind available only to talented sports stars. The sport, in this case, is *Voxl*, wildly popular throughout the galaxy. A super team made up of the best human *Voxl* players on Earth will go head-to-head with a team from the League, which has the best players in the galaxy. It is as if a Major League Baseball team faced off against an all-star team from a poor backwater,

country. For the non-league team, it is both a competition and an audition: if they win, or at least stand out, there's a chance they, too, will get to join the League, with all the fame and wealth that accompanies a League contract.

This is a suitably ambivalent portrayal of the economic power that professional sports has exercised in poor nations in recent history. The abuses of Major League Baseball and the perverse incentives offered by its Caribbean recruitment networks throughout the 1990's, as chronicled by Rob Ruck, among others, are reflected in small details in Yoss's writing: the manic training each human Voxl player has received, the fanatic obsession with the sport in even the youngest players. About two young players, the narrator writes

Sometimes I feel sorry for them. They never talk about women or holofilms or even drugs. Maybe it was their father's fault: he's nearly turned them into robots, superspecialized Voxl playing machines.

Reading *A Planet For Rent* purely as straight up allegory, however, would be to massively shortchange it. In dressing the sociocultural epiphenomena of national collapse and economic colonization in science fiction threads, Yoss employs a rich and wide-ranging palette of science fictional invention that would not be out of place among the classics of the golden age.

The sport of Voxl, for instance, does not use a ball but, instead, "a spherical concentration of force fields" that have barely any mass. This spherical concentration ricochets off the walls of the court and

...gains speed instead of losing momentum every time it bounces. As if the walls had an elasticity coefficient greater than one. It takes just five or six rebounds for the voxl to move at such high velocity that not even our hypertrained reflexes can really follow it.

In *Performing Death*, a human performance artist on a Xenoid planet makes his living by slowly and gruesomely killing himself in front of a paying audience, relying on analgesic implants and nanotechnology to forestall pain and to piece him back together afterwards. The combination of technological info dump and pathos at the moment of his death is characteristic of Yoss's ability to compress head and heart into the space of a brief paragraph:

The nanos that had penetrated his brain suddenly cut the supply of blood and glucose to its neurons, while hitting his major synapses with well-calculated electrical shocks. Moy sweetly lost consciousness.

For all the technological invention, the science fictional props that fill *A Planet For Rent* have a distinct vintage feeling, much like the iconic automobiles that prowl the Havana streets. Between the holofilms and telecrack, the galactic union and the insectoid alien creatures, it is hard to shake the feeling that Yoss's work is informed more by Lem and his contemporaries than anything more recent. The vision that *A Planet For Rent* puts forward, however, is one that is immediately and terrifyingly recognizable on our present day

planet.

Charles Dee Mitchell says

Earth is a third-rate planet, and we humans just have to get over it. Civilizations from across the universe have contacted us, taken a look around, and failed to be impressed. The reaction is common to the beautiful, evolved felines of Tau Ceti; the twelve-foot tall, red-scaled, reptilian Collosaurs; the aquatic polyps of Alderbaran; and, the other members of the Intergalactic League. Earth has not been invited to join. Our planet is good for nothing more than raw materials and tourism – especially sex tourism. One of the principal duties of the Planetary Tourism Agency is the licensing of Social Workers – an easily decoded euphemism. The PTA deals in Social Workers and Body Spares, those convicted criminals whose bodies are made available to aliens who find functioning in earth's environment difficult. Body Spares are often returned worse for wear if not dead, and there is naturally no recourse. The Xenoids are in charge. Early on they had to sink Africa to make a point, but after a generation or more on the planet things run for the most part smoothly, with the oversight of the PTA and PSF, the latter the Planetary Security Force. Humans are even allowed their peculiar proclivity of democratic government.

Yoss, the pen name of José Sánchez Gómez, is both a lead singer in a heavy metal band and an iconic Cuban literary figure who has written over 20 science fiction novels. *Planet for Rent* (2001) is a series of loosely linked short stories interspersed with brief sections addressing aspects of interplanetary colonialism. One story involves a group who attempts to leave the planet in their own, makeshift space vehicle. This intergalactic version of the rafts refugees launched from Cuba for decades is the most direct reference to the Castro era. Most of what Yoss describes applies to the West's treatment of the Third World from a time before the term existed to today. Along with our intriguing genitals, our galactic betters enjoy our music, art, and sports. But there are limits to their tolerance, whether they are dealing with a kid throwing a rock at a Collosuar, a sports figure who seriously challenges a visiting team, or a Security Force member who thinks he has anything resembling real authority.

Yoss's novel is funny and disturbing, with every episode tweaking a nerve. Both his aliens and his humans emerge as fully imagined characters, and the novel ends with a story of how the system ensconced in this future world poisons everything and everyone it touches.

Yoss's novel is the first of two books that kicks off a series of Cuban science fiction from Restless Books. Two more titles are due in 2016.

Sara says

Brilliantly acerbic gonzo science fiction that manages in the end to be surprisingly moving. Wiping a tear at the gym this morning.
