

Daína Chaviano: Fantasy Woman

By Carolina Cardona

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It turns out fantastical characters are everywhere in Miami. South Beach. Wynwood. The Grove. But author Daína Chaviano will tell you that real fairies, however, frequent both Matheson Hammock and the gardens of Vizcaya. Ghosts, she says, prefer to roam freely around Cauley Square, especially during cafecito time. Chaviano would know. Everything about her ethereal demeanor reveals a constant contact with the beyond belief. Just a blink of her eye can teleport you into the sensual, wondrous realms of science fiction, fantasy and the paranormal; the eccentric neighborhoods she routinely visits in order to write her magnificent style of voluptuous, award-winning and widely translated prose. Her rich, layered stories are riddled with mythological creatures, curious phantoms and even alien grandmothers; all while still firmly anchored in historical and political hyper-realism.

JUST DON'T EVER, EVER, CALL HER WRITING MAGICAL REALISM

“In the U.S. it is believed that every Latin American writer who works with fantasy writes ‘magical realism’... it’s not a genre I even like,” she remarks over coffee as bookshelves and sunlight delicately frame her silhouette at Books & Books in the Gables. “I’m more in debt to W. B. Yeats than García Márquez.”

Currently hailed as the most prominent contemporary Cuban author of science fiction and fantasy, Daína Chaviano crafts sweeping tales that feel viscerally current and culturally relevant, especially to anyone born or raised in the tropics. From her *Fábulas de una abuela extraterrestre* (Fables from an Extraterrestrial Grandmother) to *Historias de hadas para adultos* (Fairy Tales for Grownups) and *La isla de los amores infinitos* (The Island of Eternal Love) to her latest novel, *Los hijos de la Diosa Huracán* (Children of the Hurricane Goddess), Chaviano’s work encompasses decades of masterfully wielding realistic, romantic and historical elements with the narrative and profoundly philosophical aspects of sci-fi, fantasy, and Gothic literatures, all crafted with her own Caribbean twist.



A MIAMI MOMENT

Los hijos de la Diosa Huracán will be presented at this month's Miami Book Fair, where Chaviano herself is expected to make an appearance. The author is pleased to consider the Miami Book Fair another auspicious sign of Miami's position as a true global literary city and a unique fiction publishing hub. "Miami is home to many Hispanic writers who have arrived in waves...many of us have continued our careers here, which has enriched the city's literary scene. There are reading clubs and literary collectives that meet regularly in cafés, book shops and private homes. And in recent years I've seen the work of the Fundación Cuatrogatos promoting author encounters and Spanish-language reading to young people."

These are all promising efforts that will reap the next generation of truly fantastic beasts: the newest wave of great Miami authors.

