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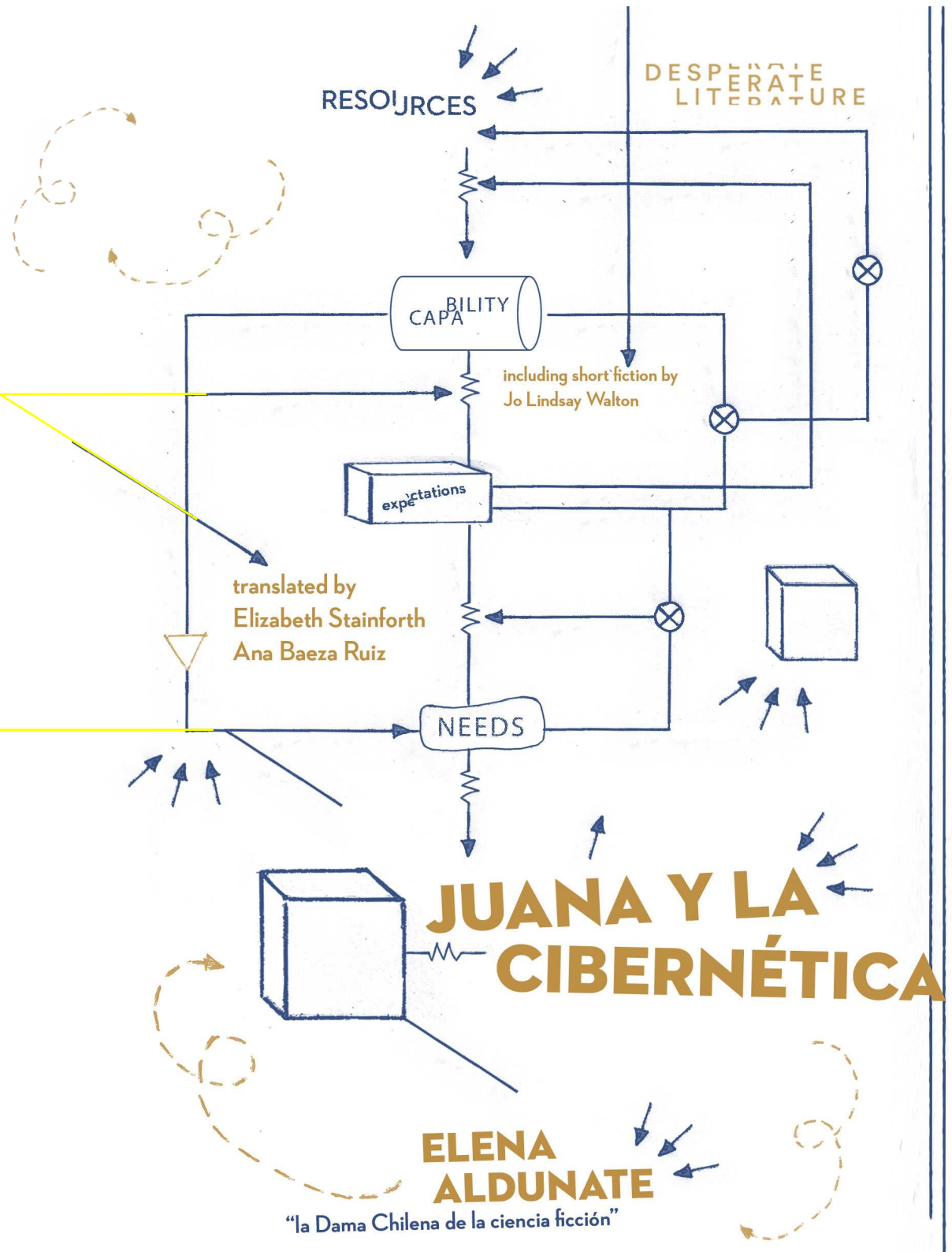
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JUANA ... Y LA CIBERNÉTICA

## Introduction

Elizabeth Stainforth

'La Dama de la Ciencia Ficción'. This is the title bestowed upon the Chilean author Elena Aldunate (1925-2005) in a collected edition of her stories, published by Cuarto Propio in 2011. An early pioneer of science fiction writing in Chile, Aldunate was one of the first women authors to become associated with the genre through her story anthologies, including *El señor de las mariposas* and *Angélica y el delfín*, published during the 1960s and 1970s.

Aldunate was born María Elena Aldunate Bezanilla in Santiago, the daughter of the mathematician and engineer Arturo Aldunate Phillips, who was also a published author. She worked as a writer of stories, articles and radio scripts, from the 1950s onwards. With Ilda Cádiz, Hugo Correa, Antonio Montero, Roberto Pliscoff and Andrés Rojas, Aldunate was also involved in the founding of the Club Chileno de Ciencia Ficción, which began in the 1970s.

As critics have noted, Aldunate's stories consistently explore psychological themes, such as loneliness, repressed desire and existential crisis, from the perspective of women protagonists. In a biographical essay on Aldunate by Barbara Loach, she quotes the author as saying that 'one is constantly being filled with experiences and one has to know how to take advantage of what one sees, hears, lives [...] Only with this foundation can the imagination be given wings: that is, make fantasy with a foot in reality, and with elements that will be difficult to refute'. Aldunate's literary influences include Jules Verne, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and the Chilean authors Hugo Correa, María Luisa Bombal, Marta Brunet and María Elena Gertner.

Reflecting on the emerging legacy of Aldunate, Andrea Bell observes that, although she was 'occasionally profiled and her books reviewed in the Chilean press, her work has only recently come to the attention of literary historians'. During the last decade, the re-publication of Aldunate's stories in collections such as *Cuentos de Elena Aldunate: La dama de la ciencia ficción* has helped to remedy this situation, and introduced the author to a



