

Editor's Note: "The SF in Translation Universe" is a regular column appearing in the Features section of SFRA Review (beginning with issue #325).



The SF in Translation Universe #9

Rachel Cordasco

Welcome back to the SF in Translation Universe! It's certainly been a hell of a year, but if you're reading this, that means that you've made it through and you can start dreaming about how much better 2021 will be.

Of course, 2020 wasn't bad at all if you think about it in terms of books and stories, since I'm going to tell you about some fantastic SF in translation that came out between September and the end of the year. It's certainly been a good fall/winter for collections, including Clelia Farris's *Creative Surgery* (tr from the Italian by Rachel Cordasco and Jennifer Delare), Christiane Vadnais's *Fauna* (tr from the French by Pablo Straus), *The Beast and Other Tales* by József d'Arbaud (tr from the Provençal by Joyce Zonana), Cixin Liu's *To Hold Up the Sky* (various translators), Aleksandar Žiljak's *As the Distant Bells Toll* (tr from the Croatian by the author), *Okamoto Kidō: Master of the Uncanny* (tr from the Japanese by Nancy H. Ross), and Jean Ray's *Circles of Dread* (tr from the French by Scott Nicolay). That's right—seven collections, translated from six different source languages, from seven distinct publishers. Ranging from the fantastic and surreal (*Fauna*, *The Beast*, and *As the Distant Bells Toll*), to horror and the uncanny (*Okamoto Kidō* and *Circles of Dread*), and finally to intriguing blends of science fiction and surrealism (*Creative Surgery*, *Fauna*, and *To Hold Up the Sky*), these collections will whet any reader's appetite for more stories by these authors who should be much better known.

The one anthology that came out this season was *The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories*, which includes tales from Spain, Norway, Hungary, Italy, Quebec, Mexico, and everywhere in between. Many of these authors have never appeared in English before, and will greatly enrich our understanding of the modern horror genre, which has been and always will be an international one.

We got two Japanese novels and one Polish novel in October, along with a standalone novella by the great Polish surreal fantasist Bruno Schulz. His story, *Undula* (originally published in Polish in 1922, tr in 2020 by Frank Garrett) is one of dreams

and nostalgia, cockroaches and masochism. Similarly, Hiroko Oyamada's *The Hole* (tr David Boyd) takes us into a region between reality and dream, where a woman who has recently moved to the countryside falls into a hole that seems to have been made for her (makes me think of Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*). What follows is a series of strange characters and creatures that destabilize her understanding of her world. Sayaka Murata's *Earthlings* (tr Ginny Tapley Takemori) also begins with a character's shift from the city to the country and her growing belief that she is an alien (with all that that word might mean). Finally, Andrzej Sapkowski's *The Tower of Fools* (tr David French) introduces us to a new fantasy world (not connected to the *Witcher*), in which a magician and healer is caught up in a war and thrown into an asylum filled with people who are either insane or iconoclastic.

Rounding out the year is a short novel that seems to capture the dislocation from reality that many of us have felt in 2020. Guido Morselli's *Dissipatio H. G.* (tr from the Italian by Frederika Randall) takes as its starting point one man's realization (after abandoning a suicide attempt) that every single person, except for him, has vanished off the face of the Earth. What follows is a series of philosophical speculations about the place humans had held in the world, what their absence means for animals and the natural landscape, if time and history have any meaning when almost everyone is gone, and what a lone man should do when he has only his memories and human detritus for company. This is a strange, melancholic, yet strikingly touching story, and one I highly recommend.

In terms of short fiction, September and October have brought us a richly diverse group of stories from Bulgaria, Germany, Russia, Korea, Mexico, China, El Salvador, and elsewhere. We have magazines like *Clarkesworld*, *World Literature Today*, *Samovar*, *Future Science Fiction Digest*, *Asimov's* and others to thank for this treasure trove (most of which is freely available online- check the "SFT on the Web" tab on sfintranslation.com).

Thanks for reading, and I'd love to hear what you're reading now and/or looking forward to: rachel@sfintranslation.com.

Until next time in the SFT Universe!