

The SF in Translation Universe #12



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Welcome back to the SF in Translation Universe! It's been quite a summer (here in America), with people slowly emerging from their homes, blinking in the sunlight, visiting friends, going out to dinner, and sending their kids to camp. Contrast this with publishing during these warmer months, when books seem to slow to a trickle. And yet, and yet, we still have some fantastic new SFT to discuss! Because SFT never quits.

Of the five works of SFT that I'll discuss in this issue's column, four are out in English in July, with the fifth coming out in September (I'm looking askance at you, August!). Three are collections, translated from the Korean, Spanish, and Polish. July 15 brings us Korean author Bora Chung's *Cursed Bunny* (tr. Anton Hur), which includes quite the mix of genres—magical realism, horror, and science fiction. Chung's stories here defy genres and also readers' assumptions about patriarchy and capitalism. The first story in this collection, "The Head," first appeared in *Samovar Magazine* in 2019. It's one of those deliciously-disturbing stories that sticks in your brain.

Of Claudio Ulloa Donoso's *Little Bird*, translator Lily Meyer says "there may be no way to tell which stories in *Pajarito* are fiction, but there's also no need. Each one has the immediacy of a diary entry and the floating nausea of a sleepless night." This quote and an accompanying excerpt from the collection are available on Electric Lit (<https://electricliterature.com/the-successful-candidate-will-not-have-a-dead-bird-in-her-pocket-claudia-ulloa-donoso/>). Like *Cursed Bunny*, *Little Bird* refuses to fit neatly into generic constraints, though the latter focuses more on pushing the boundary between reality and fantasy. One character turns fireflies into men, another vacations in her cat's stomach. Sounds like my kind of book!

And then there's Stanislaw Lem's *The Truth and Other Stories* (tr. Antonia Lloyd-Jones), which represents the most recent Lem published by MIT Press (from which an essay collection is due out later this year). Only three of the stories in this volume have been translated into English before, offering readers a banquet of new science fiction from one of the genre's masters. Darkly funny, as many Lem stories are, these portraits of mad scientists, artificial life forms, and more will surely enthrall both new readers and Lem-loyalists.

The two novels out this summer/early fall include a Chinese story about strange creatures who live alongside humans but remain almost invisible and a work of Swedish horror about an epidemic of suicide. Yan Ge's *Strange Beasts of China* (tr. Jeremy Tiang), set in a fictional Chinese city, tells the story of an amateur cryptozoologist's attempt to learn more about the city's fabled beasts. Their greenish skin, birthmarks, and other characteristics make them stand out from

the human residents, but they've figured out how to blend in...until this cryptozoologists starts looking a little deeper.

Finally, it should come as no surprise that the work of Swedish horror I mentioned is the brainchild of John Ajvide Lindqvist—he of the popular *Let the Right One In* and *Little Star*. Known as Sweden's Stephen King, Lindqvist has a gift for turning a simple horror story into a larger meditation on human psychology. In *I Am the Tiger* (tr. Marlaine Delargy), a journalist tries to understand the rash of suicides plaguing Sweden's underworld and what connection the drug-dealer named "X" has to do with it. When the journalist's young nephew gets pulled into the maelstrom, this search for truth becomes more immediate.

And what of short fiction? The July issue of *Clarkesworld* brings us St. Petersburg-native Leonid Kaganov's "I'm Feeling Lucky" (tr. Alex Shvartsman), an engaging time-travel story about hope and resignation.

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

Until next time in the SFT Universe!