

FEATURES

The SF in Translation Universe #16



Rachel Cordasco

It's definitely been a year, and there's a lot to catch up on here in the SFT Universe. Let's hope that 2023 brings us all peace, joy, and a lot more SFT! For this column, I'd like to do something different—instead of highlighting current and upcoming SFT in roughly chronological order, I intend to tell you about *everything* SFT (that I know of, of course!) that's come out between June and December of 2022. Furthermore, I will present the texts according to their format (anthologies, novels, etc.), since that order helps us see some interesting patterns in SFT from this past year. Let's do this thing!

Anthologies consistently make up the smallest percentage of SFT each year, but during the last half of 2022, we had five (!) anthologies. Perhaps this means that readers are demanding more varied stories from a diverse array of authors, and from many different places. Thanks to the untiring editor and author Francesco Verso, Anglophone readers can get their hands on two very different and important anthologies: *Kalicalypse: Subcontinental Science Fiction* (co-edited with Tarun K. Saint and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Future Fiction) and *Freetaly: Italian Science Fiction* (Future Fiction). I include *Kalicalypse* here, despite the fact that most of the stories were originally written in English, because the anthology is a dual-language edition (English and Italian) and two of the stories were translated from the Bengali. These excellent texts come from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. *Freetaly* is a landmark book in the SFT world because it is the first collection of Italian science fiction published in English. Among the many talented authors included are Linda De Santi, Alessandro Vietti, Verso himself, Clelia Farris, and Nicoletta Vallorani (whose story "The Catalog of Virgins" was translated by yours truly and originally published in *Clarkesworld Magazine*).

Anthologies of Chinese and Kurdish speculative fiction are also out now from Clarkesworld Books and Comma Press, respectively. *New Voices in Chinese Science Fiction* continues Neil Clarke's efforts to make Chinese SFT mainstream in the Anglosphere. The stories included have never before been published in English. Comma Press's *Kurdistan +100: Stories from a Future State* is the publisher's latest collection of stories from countries where authors have been asked to imagine their collective future. Here, Kurdish writers are asked to create worlds located in 2046—a century after the short-lived independent Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. This anthology won the PEN Translates Award for 2021.

Last, but certainly not least, is the massive and fascinating Best of World SF 2 (Head of Zeus), edited by powerhouse author, editor, and translator Lavie Tidhar. This anthology follows his five-volume Apex Book of World SF series and the Best of World SF volume, and includes stories from Bolivia, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Italy, and everywhere in between. Readers will recognize

names like Clelia Farris, Julie Novakova, Bo-Young Kim, K. A. Teryna, and many more. And did I mention that this book is really big? The more wonderful things to read, my dear!

If you're more of a novel kind of reader, you're in luck. 2022 brought us not only the latest Fresán book but new texts by Fresán's fellow Argentine author César Aira, Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski, and (squeals excitedly) a trilogy by Israeli writer Shimon Adaf. Fresán's *The Remembered Part* (tr. Will Vanderhyden, Open Letter) brings to a close a monumental trilogy about literary creation, narration, metatextuality, and memory. If you haven't read Fresán, that's something you need to rectify right now. And speaking of metatextuality... Aira's *The Famous Magician* (tr. Chris Andrews, New Directions) also concerns itself with the writer's craft, though here it is mixed up with a (potential) magician and the protagonist-writer's uncertainty about whether or not his publisher and even his wife are also magicians.

Those looking for epic fantasy should look no further than Book 3 of Andrzej Sapkowski's Hussite Trilogy, *Light Perpetual* (tr. David French, Orbit). Here the protagonist Reynevan must continue to run from his enemies (both human and mystical) and exchange his tools of healing and peace for those of a dangerous spy. Shimon Adaf's sprawling and multilayered *Lost Detective Trilogy* (tr. Yardenne Greenspan, Picador) similarly employs magic, but also other subgenres: detective, murder mystery, and science fiction to tell a complicated yet electric story. While it begins with the mysterious murder of troubled rock singer Dalia Shushan, it very quickly dives into Israeli society and politics, the perpetual ghost of the Holocaust, and a horrifying experiment that opened doors to another world. If you've never read Adaf, you should—you'll thank me (my email address is below).

The collections from the second half of 2022 are as diverse as they are alluring. From the Japanese we get *3 Streets* by Yoko Tawada (tr. Margaret Mitsutani, New Directions), where ghosts freely mingle with humans in health food stores and on the street; from Uruguay, we have Horacio Quiroga's *Beyond* (tr. Elisa Taber, Sublunary Editions), with stories that hover between two worlds: the living and dead, the sane and insane, and civilization and nature. Swedish author Anders Fager brings us *Swedish Cults* (tr. Henning Koch and Ian Lemke, Valancourt Books), where the dark and monstrous emerge (bloody sacrifices in the woods, mysterious illnesses, and more). The disturbing and mysterious likewise make Samanta Schweblin's *Seven Empty Houses* a collection you won't be able to put down (tr. Megan McDowell, Riverhead). Here characters are filled with dread because of houses, relationships, and their own histories. Schweblin's gift for writing stories that settle deep in your mind and refuse to leave is on full display in *Seven Empty Houses*.

So while we may have been busy and stressed in 2022, at least we could put our hands on great SFT! 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!