

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 #7

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WELCOME back to the SF in Translation Universe! The first third of 2020 is shaping up very nicely, with some sequels, new translations, and exciting collections.

You've probably heard by now about the ongoing translation of Jin Yong's incredibly popular *Legends of the Condor Heroes* series, which is bringing wuxia (Chinese martial arts fantasy) to a broader audience. A ton of translated wuxia is available on the internet already, and hopefully Anna Holmwood and Gigi Chang's translations will encourage readers to seek out more wuxia online. January brings us Anglophone readers the third book in Jin Yong's series—*A Snake Lies Waiting*—in which the brave and noble Guo Jing has walked into a trap (blinded by his love for Lotus Huang) and must fight for his own survival and his people's freedom.

If you're looking for German dystopian satire, look no further than Marc-Uwe Kling's *QualityLand* (tr Jamie Searle Romanelli). Here Kling sends up 21st-century consumer-driven technology-obsessed capitalism by taking such innovations as driverless cars, wireless-adapted glasses, and a gargantuan online store (TheShop) to their extremes. As this novel argues, the seemingly simple task of returning, for example, a pink, dolphin-shaped vibrator delivered to you in error is far more complicated than you might think.

Interested in a wartime love story set in 1990s Turkey and told from the perspective of a dog? Then Kemal Varol's *Wûf* (tr Dayla Rogers) is for you. Here a street dog named Mikasa, who is forced to work as a minesweeper for the Turkish army, tells his tale to other dogs at a kennel, where he finds companionship and even cigarettes. Inviting readers to look at war and brutality from a new perspective, *Wûf* is a unique book from an underrepresented source language.

But perhaps you're looking for a novel that plays with your mind even as it plays with language and your sense of reality. No, I'm not talking about a Zivkovic story, but Peter Stamm's *The Sweet Indifference of the World* (tr Michael Hofmann). When Lena and Christoph, two complete strangers, meet up in a Stockholm cemetery, they realize that, twenty years before, they each fell in love with the other's double. Is Christoph's novel (which grew out of his breakup with Magdalena) somehow influencing his new relationship with Lena? Or has he begun to confuse reality and fantasy?

If you think *January* sounds intriguing, just wait until February. We're getting Russian,

Spanish German, and Indonesian SFT then, including a new translation of an older title by the Strugatskys. Originally brought into English as *Prisoners of Power* in 1977 (based on a heavily censored version thanks to the Soviet authorities), *The Inhabited Island* (as it's now called) is the story of Maxim Kammerer, an explorer from the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, who crashes on a war-torn world and is drawn into its inhabitants' terrifying reality. The first of the Kammerer subsection of Noon universe books, this book portrays a civilization that is technologically advanced (they have atomic bombs) but socially oppressive.

Also translated from the Russian is a new psychological fantasy thriller from Marina and Sergei Dyachenko called *Daughter From the Dark* (tr Julia Meitov Hersey). You've probably been hearing about their previous brain-bending, haunting book—*Vita Nostra* (also translated by Hersey)—that fully deserves all the praise it has been given. *Daughter from the Dark* (which I am just 40 pages shy of finishing) asks us to imagine the consequences of stepping out of our comfort zone and doing a single good deed (like giving a seemingly lost little girl shelter and protection). How might it completely change a person's life, and oh yeah, what if that little girl was actually a creature from another plane of existence and your life just became a billion times more complicated? And is her little teddy bear actually a blood-thirsty beast that kills whenever the girl is threatened? Mmmmmaybe.

From Ray Loriga comes a dystopian story about authoritarianism and the disappearance of privacy. *Surrender* (tr Carolina de Robertis) tells of the nightmarish reality that war can create, where children disappear and entire communities are forced to move to “transparent cities,” in which transparency is a literal mandate and all necessities are provided so long as the inhabitants “behave.”

We get even more German SFT in February, this time in the form of an epic fantasy by Bernd Perplies called *Black Leviathan* (tr Lucy Van Cleef). In this world where dragon-hunting is the norm, one man joins the crew of a ship that flies through the Cloudmere on a very specific mission—the pursuit and capture of a dragon known as the “Firstborn Gargantuan.” The captain's rage-driven quest echoes that depicted in *Moby-Dick*, only dragons are, well, more terrifying than whales...

Also out in February is a novel by Intan Paramaditha entitled *The Wandering* (tr Stephen J. Epstein). Paramaditha's previous book, the collection *Apple and Knife* (2018), was inspired by horror, myth, and fairy tales. *The Wandering*, too, brings together multiple subgenres in a story about what it means to wander the globe. When an English teacher in Jakarta seeks escape from a boring life, their wishes are granted in a pact with a devil, who gives them a pair of red shoes that will take them anywhere they'd like to go. But there's a warning attached to this gift...

So far, March is only bringing us a single work of SFT, but it sounds excellent. *That We*

## FEATURES

*May Live: Speculative Chinese Fiction* (tr Jeremy Tiang and Natascha Bruce) expands the availability of Chinese SFT by offering us fantastic and phantasmagorical tales involving people living in giant mushrooms, twisted desires, and mysterious beverages. With stories by Dorothy Tse, Enoch Tam, Zhu Hui, Chan Chi Wa, Chen Si-an, and Yan Ge, *That We May Live* promises to enthrall.

In terms of short fiction, so far we've gotten stories about a woman absorbing alternate dimension versions of herself ("The Perfect Sail" by I-Hyeong Yun, tr from the Korean by Elisa Sinn and Justin Howe, *Clarkesworld*), a father inspiring his son to bring an ancient art into the future via virtual reality ("The Ancestral Temple" by Chen Qiufan, tr from the Chinese by Emily Jin, *Clarkesworld*), and a woman seeing her reflection in a subway window...but it isn't hers ("The Other Woman" by Bibiana Camacho, tr from the Spanish by Cecilia Weddell, *World Literature Today*).

With such an excitingly diverse array of themes, source-languages, and sub-genres, 2020 is looking like another excellent year for SFT.

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

Until next time in the SFT Universe!