

Space Cowboy Books Presents: Simultaneous Times Newsletter

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Letter from the Editor

In this issue we celebrate and congratulate Rachel Cordasco, winner of the third annual Space Cowboy Award, author of *Out of This World: Speculative Fiction in Translation from the Cold War to the New Millennium*, translator, and host of the amazing website *SF in Translation*. She's doing amazing and important work, and we hope that you will be inspired to look deeper into it, and the wonderful world of international science fiction. -Jean-Paul L. Garnier



What made you decide to start the Science Fiction in Translation?

When I started reviewing sf for John DeNardo's SF Signal, John sent me a few works of sf in translation from China and Poland. As a lifelong reader of translated fiction, I started wondering how much speculative fiction was being written around the world and then translated

into English. My small list of sf in translation (SFT) soon exploded into a massive spreadsheet of thousands of titles, and thus the SF in Translation website was born.

Tell us about your new book Out of This World: Speculative Fiction in Translation from the Cold War to the New Millennium?

After building the SFT website for a few years, I thought it would be a good idea to write a longer analysis of trends and themes in SFT since the Cold War. I pitched the idea to the University of Illinois Press, which had recently published Dale Knickerbocker's *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World*, and after discussing the shape the book would take, we decided to make *Out of This World* a reference book for SFT. I hope it will serve as a handy guide for students, scholars, and lay readers interested in world speculative fiction and why certain books are translated when.

What are some of the greatest thematic differences you've found between SF abroad versus American & British SF?

This was the most fascinating part of the project for me. Each source-language chapter revealed major trends that were unique to each country/language. For instance, the Finnish sf that is translated into English tends to skew toward magical realism and surrealism, especially around the environment and fantastical creatures (Krohn, Sinisalo), while Japanese SFT has leaned heavily toward hard-sci-fi since the 1990s (Hayashi, Torishima). Since I don't read much English-language sf, I find it hard to compare it to SFT, though generally the trend in sf around the world is toward the fantastic,

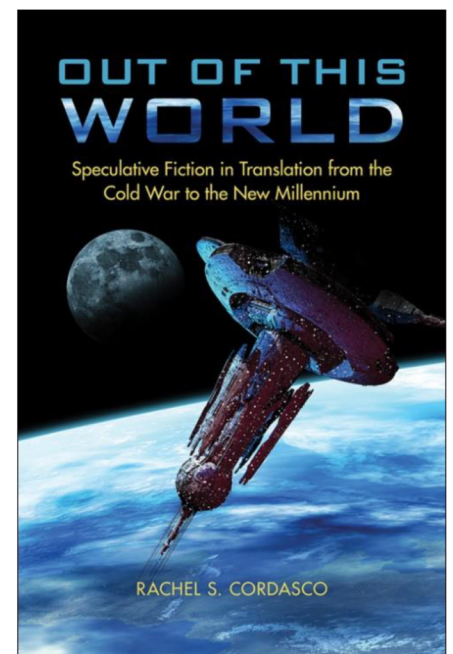
rather than the science-fictional. Of course, authors in different countries are faced with different environmental, social, and political issues, which influences what they write about. One obvious example of this is Chen Qiufan's *Waste Tide*, which focuses on hi-tech waste (junked cell phones, computers, etc.) and how its shipment back to China from the US for sifting and processing by poorly-paid migrant workers might impact the future of technological progress and AI.

You also work as a translator, what are the greatest challenges and joys that come along with the work?

I've always loved studying languages, and when I noticed that Italian speculative fiction wasn't often translated into English, I thought I'd try my hand at it (since Italian was the latest language I had learned). I truly enjoy the challenge of figuring out how to render Italian stories into English, particularly those stories by [Clelia Farris](#). Her talent for lyrical descriptions and unusual or unexpected plot developments engages my own brain in finding just the right way to present her work in English. Sometimes, Clelia uses Sardinian slang, which adds another fascinating layer to her stories. It's like a puzzle, and I'm relatively good at these kinds of puzzles, not those 5,000 piece things that my kids like to put together! I'm terrible at those.

What areas of the world are underrepresented in SF, why is this, and what would you like to see more of?

This is a great question because it goes to the heart of why certain source languages are more translated than others. One reason is that some countries (e.g. France and China) have governments that fund cross-cultural programs to get their books and films into English. Smaller or less prosperous countries, on the other hand, don't put resources toward this kind of exchange. Then there's the problem of finding translators for sf written in languages like Romanian, Bulgarian, Finnish, Hebrew, Danish, etc. Foreign language education in the US is not a priority by any means, and the focus on French, Spanish, and Chinese in secondary schools comes at the expense of other languages that students might discover and decide to pursue.



Over the last two decades, SFT has definitely shifted away from western Europe and toward the far East (China, Japan, Korea), which is good for diversifying what Anglophone sf readers have access to. What I would love to see is a more even spread of SFT from all over the world so that readers can get a better sense of what writers are focusing on in diverse countries.

What's the most important thing you've learned from covering speculative literature from around the world?

This kind of work has taught me a lot about the publishing world (especially how risk-averse it is) and also that the major sf awards that purport to be “world awards” are anything but. The Hugos and the Nebulas, for instance, don't have a separate category for translated works, so Anglophone readers just keep nominating and voting for Anglophone stories without realizing that the world of sf is much larger than that. I've made it my mission to tell as many people as possible about the excitingly diverse range of SFT from all corners of the world. Hopefully this will encourage people to read more broadly and get a better understanding of our neighbors on this small blue-green planet of ours.

What are you currently working on, and what's coming up next for you?

At the moment, I'm putting together yet another source-language spotlight month—this time, it's Hebrew SFT (previous months have focused on Nordic, Romanian, and Polish SFT). Over the next several weeks, I'll be posting pieces about the surprisingly large amount of Hebrew SFT available to Anglophone readers, including some great upcoming books this year. I'm also going to start on a new Clelia Farris translation soon and pull together notes for a potential sequel to *Out of This World*, which will focus on underrepresented source languages like Greek, Romanian, Icelandic, Norwegian, and others.



<https://www.sfintranslation.com/>

Reading Recommendations from Rachel Cordasco

- The Queue by Basma Abdel-Aziz, tr. from the Arabic by Elisabeth Jaquette
- The Three-Body Trilogy by Liu Cixin, tr. from the Chinese by Ken Liu
- Kontakt: An Anthology of Croatian SF, eds. Darko Macan and Tatjana Jambrišak, tr. Tatjana Jambrišak, Goran Konvični, and the authors
- Dreams From Beyond: An Anthology of Czech Speculative Fiction, ed. Julia Novakova (various translators)
- The Rabbit Back Literature Society by Pasi Ilmari Jääskeläinen, tr. from the Finnish by Lola Rogers
- Memoirs of a Polar Bear by Yoko Tawada, tr. from the German by Susan Bernofsky
- Dolly City by Orly Castel-Bloom, tr. from the Hebrew by Dalya Bilu
- Sunburnt Faces by Shimon Adaf, tr. from the Hebrew by Margalit Rodgers and Anthony Berris
- The Mission by Péter Zsoldos, tr. from the Hungarian by András Szabados
- Dissipatio H. G. by Guido Morselli, tr. from the Italian by Frederika Randall
- Nexhuman by Francesco Verso, tr. from the Italian by Sally McCorry
- Dendera by Yuya Sato, tr. from the Japanese by Edwin Hawkes & Nathan A. Collins
- Legend of the Galactic Heroes series by Yoshiki Tanaka, tr. from the Japanese by Daniel Huddleston, Tyran Grillo, and Matt Treyvaud
- One Hundred Shadows by Hwang Jungeun, tr. from the Korean by Jung Yewon
- The Old Axolotl: Hardware Dreams by Jacek Dukaj, tr. from the Polish by Stanley Bill
- Solaris by Stanislaw Lem, tr. from the Polish by Bill Johnston
- Solarpunk, ed. Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro, tr. from the Portuguese by various
- Vita Nostra by Marina and Sergey Dyachenko, tr. from the Russian by Julia Meitov Hersey
- Twelve: A Romanian Science-Fiction Anthology, ed. Cornel Robu, tr. from the Romanian by various
- The Inhabited Island by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, tr. from the Russian by Andrew Bromfield
- The Bottom of the Sky by Rodrigo Fresan, tr. from the Spanish by Will Vanderhyden
- Wicked Weeds by Pedro Cabiya, tr. from the Spanish by Jessica Sequeira
- The Lost Detective Trilogy by Shimon Adaf, tr. from the Hebrew by Yardenne Greenspan
- Cat's Whirl by Rodolfo Martinez, tr. from the Spanish by Steve Redwood
- The Ouroboros Wave by Jyouji Hayashi, tr. from the Japanese by Jim Hubbert
- In the Mothers' Land by Elisabeth Vonarburg, tr. from the French by Jane Brierley
- Muck by Dror Burstein, tr. from the Hebrew by Gabriel Levin
- A Planet for Rent by Yoss, tr. from the Spanish by David Frye
- Future Fiction: New Dimensions in International Science Fiction, ed. Francesco Verso and Bill Campbell, various translators
- CoDex 1962 by Sjon, tr. from the Icelandic by Victoria Cribb
- Invisible Planets, ed. Ken Liu, various translators
- Memory by Teresa P. Mira de Echeverría, tr. from the Spanish by Lawrence Schimel