



SMALL PLANET

**Issue #1
May 2026**

The SF in Translation Magazine

**Interview with Sue Burke
SFF in Wales**

Alex Shvartsman on Boskone

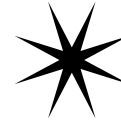
Clelia Farris on translation

**News, Reviews, Forthcoming Books...
and more!**

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Small Planet: The Speculative Fiction in Translation Magazine

Issue #1: May 2026



General Editor: Rachel Cordasco
Essays & Interviews Editor:
Roseanna Pendlebury
Design & Layout:
Jean-Paul L. Garnier
Interior Art: John Zimm

Contributors:

Joachim Boaz
Sue Burke
Rachel Cordasco
Clelia Farris
Cristina Jurado
Monica Louzon
Cheryl Morgan
Juan Manuel Pérez
Jessica Rose Sanford
Alex Shvartsman

Letters to the editor:
rachel@sfintranslation.com

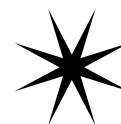
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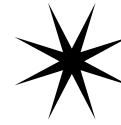
No AI/LLM was used in the creation
of this magazine

A Note on Language

In an ideal world, this magazine would feature articles in a multitude of languages. For now, though, everything will be in English in order to further the mission of the magazine to encourage English-language readers to dive into speculative fiction from around the world. And yet, English itself is written differently, depending on if you live in the US, UK, or wherever a version of English is written and spoken. To recognize this diversity, some of the articles in this magazine will be written in US English, while others will be in UK English.



Editor's Note
Issue # 1 (May 2026)



A wise starship captain once said, “make it so!” In keeping with this pronouncement, a group of us SFT enthusiasts have decided to start a magazine. *Small Planet* intends to be the place for readers to go when they want to know about the speculative fiction being written around the world and translated into English. After all, there are over 7 thousand languages on this planet today. English is just one, and though this magazine will be in English, its focus is on reaching across languages and borders.

In these pages you’ll find...interviews with translators, columns on forthcoming books, reviews of older and newer SFT, wish-lists of books we’d like translated into English, reports from countries around the world on their SF scenes, and so much more that I can’t even think of it all right now. Seriously, there is so much to write about and read about.

I’d like to declare that this magazine is going to be *huge*, *world-changing*, and *earth-shaking*, but I’ve seen too many other projects (including the World SF organization in the 1980s) do the same thing and then...end. Maybe if we start off small and casual, and just quietly do our thing, before we know it, we’ll be celebrating our 50th anniversary!

I say “we” because this magazine is community-driven. If you have something you want to contribute, an interview you want to do, knowledge of a particular country’s SF scene, etc., this is the place to send it (we currently cannot pay for content). This magazine only works with input from all of you.

Thanks for reading and...I just can’t help myself...*Engage!*

—Rachel

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SF&F in Welsh

Cheryl Morgan

When looking for science fiction and fantasy in languages other than English, the UK is probably not where you would think of starting. Nevertheless, should you find yourself in Wales, you will see bilingual road signs. You can buy books in Welsh, watch TV programs in Welsh and, if you visit the right parts of the country, hear people speaking Welsh in the street.

The Welsh language is an ancient one. It is the language that was spoken throughout most of the British Isles before the Romans came. Even the Picts are now thought to have spoken this early form of Welsh. The Irish speak a different but related language, and have bequeathed that tongue to the Scots. Linguists call the language group to which Welsh belongs Bythonic, and versions of it are used in Cornwall and Brittany as well. Welsh itself is spoken in Patagonia, a part of Argentina.

Welsh was the dominant language throughout most of what we now call Wales until the 19th century. However, Victorian-era social engineers deemed that young Welsh people were being held back by their lack of English skills, and they banned the use of Welsh in schools. By 1911, the percentage of Welsh speakers in the country had dropped to 44%, and now it is only around 18%. However, the creation of a devolved Welsh government has given the language a lifeline.

While the use of Welsh is common in day-to-day conversation, finding literature in Welsh is more difficult. While some people still learn Welsh as their first language, everyone studies English at school. The market for literature in English is vastly bigger than that for Welsh, so understandably most writers opt for English. Nevertheless, some Welsh writers are determined to keep their native

tongue alive, and write in that language. Some of those works are available in translation.

The market for SF&F in Wales is quite fragmented. Some Welsh-connected authors, such as Al Reynolds, Jo Walton, Stephanie Burgis, Jasper Fforde and Tim Lebbon, are very well known and are published in English outside of Wales. Others have opted to go with small presses based in Wales. However, these books are not widely known, even within our community, mostly because generalist publishers in Wales don't understand our market. Books published in Welsh are often not visible to SF&F readers, even within Wales, and very few have been translated.

Fortunately for the purposes of this article, two of the more famous Welsh science fiction novels have been translated, and are widely available. The best known is *Y Dydd Olaf* (*The Last Day*), whose author rejoices in the magnificently Welsh name of Owain Owain. The book is legendary in Welsh literary circles, and more recently achieved fame when it became the inspiration for a concept album by the Welsh technopop queen, Gwenn Saunders.

Owain was a physicist by trade and a language activist by inclination. He founded *Trafod y Ddraig* (*The Dragon's Tongue*), the newspaper of the Welsh Language Society, in 1963. The novel was written in 1968 and submitted for the Prose Medal at the 1970 National Eisteddfod. The judges declared themselves unable to make an award that year, because *Y Dydd Olaf* was obviously by far the best submission, but was so complex that they felt it unsuitable for the general reader.

It is a very short book. These days we would call it a novella.

The book was picked up for publication in 1976. The publisher's preface states (in translation), 'Nothing like this book has been seen before in our language, nor anything quite

like it in any language'. Sadly that's probably not true for any language, though the book was certainly a first for Welsh. Owain's science fictional influences are on display for all to see. The narrator of the book admits to having read *1984* and *Brave New World*. The tropes used recall Dick, Vonnegut, and Pohl & Kornbluth's legendary *The Space Eaters*. But the work I suspect inspired the unusual nature of *Y Dydd Olaf* is *Stand on Zanzibar* by John Brunner.

Brunner's Hugo-winning novel was first published in part in *New Worlds* in 1967, though the full book did not appear until 1968. It gained fame in part because of Brunner's use of the so-called Dos Passos Technique, which uses things such as fictionalized newspaper reports to add to the air of realism in the work. *Y Dydd Olaf* includes medical reports from the institution where the narrator is being kept. It also has a non-linear narrative, and the narrator is deeply unreliable.

A translation of the book appeared in 2024 from Parthian, a Welsh small press. My Welsh is not good enough to judge the work of Emyr W. Humphreys (the translator), but he has an excellent track record. Nevertheless, the book clearly posed challenges to the translator. It is deeply philosophical, and word choices are often laden with meaning. For example, the authoritarian dictator in the novel is called the Computer-General in translation, but the Welsh (Uchel Gyfrifydd) translates literally as the High Accountant. The book has a theme of humans becoming machines. Humphreys uses the word 'assimilated'. I'd love to know if that is in the original, or if Humphreys intended us to think of the Borg. Owain was doubtless thinking of the Cybermen, who made their first appearance in 1966. In any case, the book is a fascinating read, if somewhat dated in its social attitudes. I'm delighted that it is available in English at last.

An older and rather simpler tale can be found in *Wythnos yng Nghymru Fydd* (*A Week in Future Wales*) by Islwyn Ffowc Elis. The book was published in 1957 by Plaid Cymru. It is, as the title suggests, a time travel narrative. *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells is an obvious precursor. It presents both utopian and dystopian futures for the country, and the visit to the dystopia turns the narrator into a fervent nationalist. You can see why the Welsh nationalist party was interested in it. Elis himself apparently admitted that the book was blatant political propaganda.

The book was translated in 2019 by Stephen Morris, who published it on a website. I corresponded with him about it and hoped to produce a print version. Unfortunately the rights holders didn't understand modern small press publishing and made demands that would probably have bankrupted me. However, Stephen has been able to find a publisher, and it is now widely available.

If you would like to know more about these two books, there is a review of *Y Dydd Olaf* on *The Ancillary Review of Books*. <https://ancillaryreviewofbooks.org/2024/12/12/parts-of-the-present-review-of-owain-owains-y-dydd-olaf-the-last-day/>.

Also I have put reviews of both in the April edition of *Salon Futura* <https://www.salonfutura.net/2026/04/issue-79/>.

Miriam Elin Jones, from the University of Swansea, who is an expert in Welsh SF, has pointed me at a few other works. *Cafflogion*, by R. Gerallt Jones (1979) is the subject of a number of adaptations, including a translation. You can find more about it here: <https://www.cafflogion.com/>. The translation is particularly interesting as it presents both languages side-by-side.

Y Llyfrgell by Fflur Dafydd has recently been made into a successful movie (*The Library Suicides*). However, Miriam tells me that the

English version is more a novelisation of the film than a translation of the original story.

A book I would love to read, but which is not yet translated, is *Dim Ond Un (Only One)* by Merleri Wyn James. Miriam says, ‘it takes a look at the history of one family’s approach to feminist politics, but it is underpinned by scientific developments too like hydrogen cars and global warming’.

For young adult readers there is *Llyfr Glas Nebo (The Blue Book of Nebo)* by Manon Steffan Ros, a post-apocalyptic novel that won the Carnegie Medal in English translation in 2023.

So what about fantasy? Wales is, after all, the land of the Red Dragon. Obviously, we have *The Mabinogion*, which is available in multiple translations and interpretations. To my knowledge, there are no works of Welsh genre fantasy available in translation. However, there are some works I would love to see reach a wider audience.

Top of the list is the Manawydan Jones series by Alun Davies. Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson series has become a worldwide hit, even spawning a Disney TV adaptation. As far as I can make out, Manawydan Jones is Percy Jackson but with Welsh kids and Welsh mythology. There are two books out thus far. The first, *Y Pair Dadeni (The Cauldron of Rebirth)*, won the prestigious Tir na n-Og prize for children’s literature. And the second, being about the great boar, Twrch Trwyth, is set in the area where I live. Why these haven’t been picked up for translation is a mystery to me.

Also the Welsh seem to have a particular affection for cosmic horror. In English there are two anthologies in the Cthulhu Cymraeg series, edited by Mark Howard Jones. The first is sadly out of print, but the second, *The Night Country*, has just been published.

In Welsh we can look to the work of Peredur Glyn, the pen name of Peredur Webb-Davies, a lecturer at Bangor University who also provided welcome input to this essay. He was the first person to translate Lovecraft into Welsh. (Yn ei dŷ yn R’lyeh, mae Cthulhu marw yn aros yn breuddwydio, in case you were wondering.) In addition he has written a number of books in Welsh that mash together the Cthulhu mythos and Welsh mythology. Who knows what horrors lurk in our country’s deep past? His latest novel, *Arfanwol*, won the Daniel Owen Memorial Prize (for non-published fiction) in 2025, and is now available in print.

More obviously in the fantasy genre is *Trigo* by Aled Emyr, which is marketed as epic fantasy. There is a review in English available here <https://nation.cymru/culture/book-review-trigo-by-aled-emyr/>. Fantasy-adjacent is the X-Files-inspired *Darogan* by Siân Llywelyn. Both books use elements of Welsh mythology in their worldbuilding. *Drychwill*, also by Siân Llywelyn, is a supernatural thriller.

No discussion of Welsh fantasy would be complete without mention of Robin Llewelyn, if only because of who he is. Llewelyn is the great-grandson of Clough-Williams Ellis, the architect who built the Italiante village at Portmeirion, famously the location for Patrick McGoohan’s TV series, *The Prisoner*. Llewelyn is the current CEO of Portmeirion Ltd., the company that manages the village.

Llewelyn is also an author, though what kind of work he produces is a little hard to pin down. I have seen him described as writing ‘magic realism’ and ‘absurdist’ fiction as well as fantasy. What is clear is that he writes contemporary fiction in which very strange things happen. Two of his novels, *Seren Wen ar Gefndir Gwyn* and *O'r Harbwr Gwag i'r Cefnfor Gwyn* have been translated into English, as *White Star* and *From Empty Harbour*

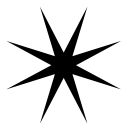
to *White Ocean*, respectively. Both books won the National Eisteddfod Prose Medal.

Finally, on the Welsh genre scene we have been blessed by the existence of *Gwyllion* magazine. This was a small press short fiction venue that ran for 10 issues. I have been assured that the inclusion in the final issue of a story by me was not the reason for its demise. The magazine published both science fiction and fantasy, in both English and Welsh. Issue #10 is notable for a fine story by Olivia Cowhig, who provided both English and Welsh versions of her work. All of the back issues are available as ebooks from the website.

<https://gwyllionmagazine.com/issues/>.

For any minority language, translation poses a risk. Welsh is particularly endangered because English is so widespread in the country, and because of pressure from England. Far-right politicians often refer to Welsh as a ‘foreign’ language that should be eradicated. Authors who write in Welsh may be reluctant to allow translation into English (though not into other languages) in order to encourage the use of Welsh amongst their compatriots. However, when I spoke to Peredur Glyn at a literary festival recently he told me that he was considering producing English-language versions of his books. I hope he does.

As always, the difficulty with getting work translated from Welsh into English is the cost. Good translators such as Humphreys are hard to find, and need to be paid a living wage. But I am convinced that there are hidden gems to be found, because publishers in London, being English, will be deeply dismissive of anything emanating from Wales, and will therefore miss some wonderful fiction.



Translating from... Spanish with Sue Burke

Cristina Jurado

Literature is a solitary business. It’s a craft built upon a series of solitary efforts. Within it, authors spend countless hours looking for the perfect word, sentence, or paragraph to bring their ideas to life. Editors manage multiple projects at once, organizing and suggesting, and navigating an endless sea of administrative deeds. Agents scout for talent and opportunities, as the hinges between the offer and the demand. Proofreaders dive into texts searching for whatever is not supposed to be there, and translators... How can one define what they do? To say that they bring a text from one language to another would be an oversimplification. They are guardians of words, protectors of the author’s style, specialists in structure and prose, catchers of nuances and keepers of meaning. Their work is often invisible and regularly overlooked.

In this series of interviews, we will get to know translators from all over the world, exploring their challenges and aspirations and, hopefully, gaining a deeper understanding of their profession.

Our first guest is Sue Burke, an accomplished science fiction author as well as a journalist and translator who has lived in Milwaukee, Austin, Madrid, and now Chicago. Her short stories, poems, and articles have appeared in a variety of magazines and anthologies. Her fiction includes the trilogy comprising *Semiosis* (Tor, 2018), *Interference* (Tor, 2019), and *Usurpation* (Tor, 2024), as well as the stand-alone novels *Immunity Index* (Macmillan, 2021) and *Dual Memory* (Tor, 2023).

Jurado: You translate from Spanish into English—what is it about Spanish that appeals to you?

Sue Burke: Spanish is enormously expressive: elegantly formal, voluptuously intimate, deliberately obtuse, beguilingly poetic, vulgar (oh the many curse words!), comic, colloquial, or straightforward. Like every language, it has unique linguistic resources in its grammar, vocabulary, and literary inheritances. Spanish can also create complex associations among the elements of a sentence. Can I make my translations equally expressive? That's the fun and the challenge.

Jurado: What made you become a translator? Do you remember when and where you were when you took that decision?

Sue Burke: It started slowly around 2005. I was a writer in Spain hanging around with a lot of Spanish writers, and they needed translations, and I had just earned a high-level certificate in Spanish from the Instituto Cervantes, so I occasionally translated. Then I decided to get serious, studied translation (there are technical and craft-related techniques to know), and obtained certification from the UK's Chartered Institute of Linguists in 2013.

Jurado: From Spanish medieval novels like *Amadis de Gaula* and science fiction to poetry—like your recent translation of *Liquid Sand (Arena Líquida)* by Jorge Valdés Díaz-Vélez—you have translated countless stories. What genre do you find more challenging?

Sue Burke: Among translators, it's a well-known secret that the most challenging (that is, frustrating) work to translate is something badly written in the first place. Bad writing crosses genres, and it poses an ethical conundrum: If a few little changes would make the original work objectively better, should you make them? No. But then will your bad-sounding translation reflect badly on you as the translator?

Whatever the genre, excellent writing in the original work will contain challenges because the author has put the language to its highest use: the yearning assonance in a love sonnet, the playfulness in the names of a child's imaginary animals, multi-level wordplay, or the confusion of a character teleported to another time and place. This is where you as the translator can do your best work. Occasionally I've spent an hour on one paragraph to try to preserve the author's brilliance. If I found a good solution, it was time well spent and a happy memory.

Jurado: How do you typically organize your translation workflow?

Sue Burke: First, I read the piece all the way through. A lot of questions will be answered about the precise meanings of terms, as well as the authorial intent and overall tone and style. I might also decide if I'm interested in translating it at all. (See previous question.)

After that, the workflow is much like the process for my own writing. First, a Zero Draft, which is too rough to count as a first draft. It may contain notes to myself. I will also be developing a glossary for specific terms that need to be constant throughout the work, and I might be compiling questions for the author. (Computer-aided translation tools like Trados excel at technical translation, but I think they are too constraining for literary translation, so I don't use one.)

Draft One compares my translation and the original document, and I look for errors including accidentally omitted lines, glossary reconsiderations, and formatting slips. Draft Two is an on-screen edit for flow and style; it can be repeated as many times as necessary, and I may need to consult the original work some more. For Draft Three, I print out the work and edit on paper, and I always discover problems that were somehow invisible on the

screen. I can repeat this step until I think all the words are perfect. Draft Four involves using a read-aloud function on my computer. It should be mere proofreading but always uncovers at least a few glaring imperfections. At that point, I can turn in the piece, knowing that the author or editor may have further refinements and might catch embarrassing errors. I aim for excellence, but I never hit a bullseye.

Jurado: Can you share with us examples of key decisions you had to make in order to translate a story?

Sue Burke: Many translating decisions are made by the use for the translation. For contemporary fiction, usually the standard is to recreate what the author would have written if the author were fluent in the target language. But questions remain. If the story clearly takes place in a Spanish-speaking location, do you use “Señor” or “Mr.”? Do you need to explain things for a foreign audience that the native audience would easily understand, such as adding to a mention of Barajas that it is the Madrid airport? How about slang? Curse words? Puns? I might consult with the author or editor and let them struggle with the decision.

Some accepted translation strategies provide approaches to these decisions. For example, in one piece, a passage contained three puns that didn’t work in the target language, so I substituted three similar puns, but I could have used a footnote. For a story that included a chart with symbols for words, I switched the meaning of two of those symbols to entirely different words in English; I could have asked for the chart to be changed, but it was a .jpg and I took pity on the graphic artist.

Other kinds of translation involve different decisions. I translated some handwritten

Renaissance documents regarding the slave trade for the Smithsonian Museum, and my translation was as literal as possible with endless footnotes about the context (the horror explained itself). I translated lyrics to a song with great freedom so they could be sung to an existing tune. I turned a Spanish sonnet into a Shakespearian sonnet, which has different rules for syllable count and meter, because English and Spanish have different natural rhythms. I’ve adapted works, fitting a sprawling play to a tiny stage, working with the director.

What will the translation be used for? That’s the key question.

Jurado: Let’s talk about the elephant in the room: AI. It’s entering the industry, raising concerns about job security and the quality of translations. What is your opinion on it?

Sue Burke: An AI is just math, and its results are by definition average, homogenized, and mediocre. For people without experience in translation (or writing, or art, or music-making), the results might look right, and for some purposes, mediocre is actually good enough.

Literary translation aims for excellence, nuance, and accuracy. It is an art, which is inefficient and sometimes expensive; certain decision-makers think cheaper is always better.

Expertise must be learned step by step, however, and entry-level jobs in all sorts of fields may disappear as the result of AI substitution. We will lose the opportunities to develop needed skills. “Fixing” AI output dulls rather than improves our skills. The corporations insisting on AI use are effectively telling us that we can send a robot to the gym and become Olympic athletes.

Deep down, I don't think the AI revolution will succeed in all fields. We need to out-compete AIs, and I believe we can. People value art. In the short term, though, people like us—translators, writers, artists, editors, and musicians—are being hurt.

Jurado: What changes would you like to see in the literary translation market to better reflect the diversity of creativity in today's world?

Sue Burke: Translation is too connected to the "literary fiction" genre. I watch what's going on in the literary community, and I still see contempt for genre fiction as something so shallow and simple that an AI could actually do it. Literary fiction's attitude toward works from other countries also leans toward accepting only a single story, usually a sad tale of the oppression of colonization, or a sad tale of the trauma of war, or a sad tale of another stereotypical suffering of that country or culture, especially if written in an idiosyncratic, experimental, anti-narrative format.

The close connection of translation with "literary" fiction hurts translation because literary fiction doesn't sell well, which makes it seem like translations can't sell well. And yet, genre literature is so compelling that it inspires fans to create unauthorized translations. The genre fiction that comes out of these "single-story" countries can be amazing and even uplifting. Brazil gave us solarpunk.

As for sales, as an author as well as a translator, I know that the task of self-promotion is hard and necessary—and kind of fun if you do it right. Translators need to do what they can to sell the works they create. They may not always see it as their job, and often they're not even called upon to do it. Publishers too often ignore translators when they could be allies.

Jurado: What advice would you give to any aspiring translator?

Sue Burke: Your skill as a literary translator depends on your skill as a writer in the target language. You may be a native speaker, but without training, you may not know how to write at the level of excellence. How can you make a beautiful sentence in one language sound beautiful in another, fully aware that the standards of beauty vary from one language to another? Your job is to preserve the beauty—or the anguish or humor or whatever, using linguistic resources. You can translate poetry most effectively if you yourself are a poet. I've been writing in English professionally for more than a half-century, and I still study how to write every day. There is always more to learn.

Another skill you can acquire (which an AI cannot) is creativity. Transcreation is the process of adapting a message or work from one language to another while maintaining its intent, style, tone, and context. Creativity must be learned, and I still study that relentlessly, too.

As an aspiring translator, you already know that creativity and excellence are where the fun is. Fun can be your career goal.

Jurado: And last but not least, which works would you like to see translated into English in the near future?

Sue Burke: I think *Mundos en la eternidad* (Worlds in Eternity) by Juan Miguel Aguilera and the late Javier Redal is one of the best space operas ever. Through space opera, we science fiction fans are used to exploring life on a distant planet. Can we explore other lives here on Earth, or are some people and some cultures just too distant? I believe that human variety will bring us a sense of wonder, and we can achieve that through wide-

ranging translation.

Jurado: Anything you would like to add? The floor is yours!

Sue Burke: For too long, translation has been viewed as a reactive, passive activity, and one depreciated by canards like “lost in translation” and “traduttore, traditore.” I hope we translators become more assertive. This is an art form in every sense of the word and, of course, in every language.



ISFDB and Translation

Monica Louzon

Rachel Cordasco’s [essay](#) on **finding** translated speculative fiction from February 2026 is a fascinating read and consistent with my own observations of (and struggles with) finding speculative fiction in translation—because this is *still* an uphill battle. I had a lot of reactions as I read her essay, but the first points that sprang to my mind as I read it were related to the [Internet Speculative Fiction Database](#), or ISFDB.

The Internet Speculative Fiction Database (ISFDB)

Wouldn’t it be nice if there were a comprehensive site that cataloged metadata from all published speculative fiction translations? A place where you could go to search not only by author, but also by translator? The ISFDB is ostensibly a place where one might logically go to find such information. After all, it

is “a community effort to catalog works of science fiction, fantasy, and horror” that links together bibliographic information, including author bibliographies and tables of contents for magazines and anthologies alike. I’ve contributed to various ISFDB records myself—and this hands-on experience has also opened my eyes to how easily ISFDB *could* dramatically help translated speculative fiction gain more visibility, and how doggedly the ISFDB admins refuse to do so.

Currently (as of March 9, 2026), ISFDB automatically creates profiles for writers, editors, poets, artists, publishers, and magazines when a user enters details of a book or magazine—but inexplicably, it does not create profiles for translators. I wish I could pull up a translator’s profile in ISFDB to see all the works they’ve translated, but the only way an SF translator gets a page in ISFDB is if they get published in some other capacity (as an author, artist, etc.—and there is no section for translations on those profile pages!). For example, several of my translations are documented in ISFDB, but none are visible [on my ISFDB profile](#). This also means that, if I discover a translator I like, I can’t go find all their other translations in ISFDB with just a couple of clicks. I have to *dig*.

How ISFDB Presents Translations

One might assume that this simply means ISFDB doesn’t collect metadata about translations, but that would be incorrect because it *does* collect translation metadata. When creating a new ISFDB entry for a story or novel, one can indicate in the “Notes” field that a work is translated (and if so, by whom). ISFDB contains information about thousands of speculative translations, who translated them, and where to find them – but none of that information is displayed in a user-friendly format.

If you'd like to see an example of how ISFDB presents translators, take a look at the ISFDB entry for [“Rat’s Tongue” by Xing Fan \(translated by Judith Huang, published in 2022 by Future Science Fiction Digest\)](#) or [my own translation of “Lamia” by Cristina Jurado \(published in 2022 by Apex Magazine\)](#). You’ll note that while these stories link back to their corresponding author pages, there are no hyperlinks to pages for the translators.

Take a look at these author pages for [Stanislaw Lem](#) and [Liu Cixin](#). You’ll notice that ISFDB clearly marks instances where these authors’ works have been translated to other languages (including each language, when, and in which publications)—and yet, the translators remain anonymous. For some stories, you can click through and find the translators’ names in that little “notes” field, but some translators remain unidentified (which could be due to contributing users not taking the steps to name the translator, or simply because the original publisher never even credited the translator).

Now, just imagine how much easier it would be to find more translations by a specific translator if they were clearly identified on those author profile pages, and how much easier still it would be browse that translator’s work if ISFDB allowed translators to have profile pages, too! And imagine how much more nuanced our discussions of translated speculative fiction could be if ISFDB allowed translations performed by authors to appear on those authors’ pages!

ISFDB’s Guidance for Submitting Translations

I’ve mentioned ISFDB not “allowing” translators to be properly indexed in the database – “allowing” is indeed the correct word choice. I’d like to call your attention to [ISFDB’s FAQ guidance users for entering translations](#) into the database—the guidance

requires you to log in, so I will excerpt some key quotes for you in the paragraphs below.

The general rules and information for entering translations are rather straightforward: all titles must have a language field, and translated titles are entered as variants of the title in its original language. Users are specifically required to identify the translation language AND use the original non-Latin characters for the author and/or translator names when those names are written using systems like Chinese characters or the Cyrillic alphabet.

ISFDB’s translation guidance also directs users, “Ideally, the Note to Moderator [field] should include the information that this is a translation and the Title of the original publication that it was originally translated from.” Specifically naming the translator for a given translation is mandatory “*if it is a translation and you know the name of the translator.*”

However, these same FAQ and guiding rules explicitly state (and have stated for many years): “There is currently no support for a ‘translated by’ field in the [ISFDB] database. Translators should be recorded in each Title’s Notes field.”

No “Translated by” Field?

Why doesn’t ISFDB support a “translated by” field?

The ISFDB site appears pretty straightforward, and it seems to me that the admins could make a few behind-the-scenes tweaks that would make these changes possible (particularly given how responsive admins of other sites, like [The Submission Grinder](#), are to user suggestions). I am not sure how complicated the back-end of ISFDB actually is, but I suspect that it can’t be *that* much more complicated than [The Submission Grinder](#)’s back-end, and [The Submission Grinder](#)

regularly adds new fields and filters based on user suggestions.

Perhaps one of the things dissuading the ISFDB administrators from adding this field is the daunting task of having to go back through and help update records to ensure translator information is properly indexed and recorded. I would argue this logic does not hold up to scrutiny, because interest specifically in translated speculative fiction has grown astronomically over the past decade, and I think ISFDB will find no shortage of users interested in tackling this challenge.

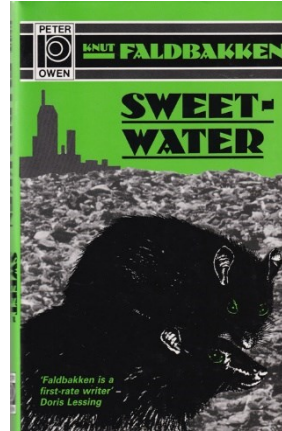
It *kills* me that ISFDB doesn't allow profiles for translators. Unfortunately, translators remain next-to-invisible in the database, and this seems very unlikely to change in the near future unless the ISFDB admins concede and add a "translated by" field.

Nevertheless, I still hold out hope that there will someday be enough of us clamoring for change that ISFDB will finally add that "translated by" field—or that we'll be able to build our own ISFDB knock-off for #SFIn-Translation.



Book Review: Knut Faldbakken's Sweetwater duology (1976, trans. Joan Tate, 1994)

Joachim Boaz



Knut Faldbakken (1941-), a prolific Norwegian novelist, wrote a science-fictional duology titled *Sweetwater* early in his career. The first volume, *Twilight Country* (1974, trans. Joan Tate, 1993), followed an odd collection of refugees from a disintegrating urban metropolis, the titular Sweetwater, as they cast off the entangling membranes of lost paths and the weight of melancholy souls and attempt to chart a new beginning in the city Dump. In volume two, *Sweetwater* (1976, trans. Joan Tate, 1994), a deathly equilibrium is reached. In an obliquely hinted at dystopia, the city slowly withers and depopulates due to the effects of global warming, industrialization, and malignant societal decay. As the city dies, less and less refuse enters the Dump. The community of outcasts, who inhabit a collection of huts around a camper and crumbling home with small garden plots surrounded by refuse, can no longer scavenge for supplies and food. They must abandon the uncertain topography of the Dump and return to the city.

Faldbakken sets up a series of conceptual clashes and processes that guide the brief fragments of narrative. As with the first volume, there's a tangible sense of organic transformation within the characters who inhabit the Dump. The narrative first settles on Jonathan Bean, a member of Sweetwater's Peacekeeping Force, who finally receives approval to search for his brother, who disappeared

into the Dump in *Twilight Country*. As Bean shifts into the background as his previous ideological sense of self fades, the narrative returns to the leader of the community, Allan, a primitivist survivalist willing to dispense justice with his fist, the focus of volume one. But as the mechanisms of survival wear down any remaining delusions, Allan must abdicate his authority to others in the final calculus.

Antiseptic Memories of Sex and Ritual

Jonathan Bean represents an earlier generation, attempting to find order in the ruins. He considers “a degree of collective cleanliness an adequate aim for society’s level of civilization” (15). The evolution of his character forms the central character arc of the novel. He “detested the thought of decay” (8). He had joined the Peacekeeping Force to “counteract the tendency to decay in society” and “restore the dignity of human beings” (8). His quest to find his brother leads him to the Dump, a “nerve-racking” topography that “seems to resist every purposeful encroachment” (6). While overwhelmed by the Dump and the monstrous rats that scurry amongst the refuse, he sees and attacks Boy, the mute son of Allan, the leader of the Dump’s community. Bean’s captured and imprisoned. His illusions about collective cleanliness and order erode.

His memories of order and ritual in Sweetwater revolve around his lover Stella. They’re memories of antiseptic sex and sterile hotel rooms. He remembers the “smell of soap from her clean body” (23), his earlier resistance to sleep with her unless she was “newly powdered, newly oiled” (33), and their jaunts to the Laguna Hotel, with its “impersonal comfort and dry hygienic smell of disinfecting detergents” (163). Life (and erotic experience) in the Dump clashes in an extreme and disquieting manner.

After Bean’s capture, Faldbakken slowly breaks down each element of his self-

conception. In one instance, his previous memories of “chemical wine” (13) stashed away for an evening of antiseptic lovemaking with Stella clash with his discovery of a “small curled foot” of a lizard in a meal provided by his captors (18). In another moment, he’s overcome by a horrifying arousal after a brief glimpse of the dirty body of Allan’s wife Lisa and her “toothless smile,” while she’s comforted by Doc, her aged surrogate father-figure met in *Twilight Country* (33). While imprisoned, he’s forced to confront the thin layer of dirt that covers but does not erase his excrement (15) —the perfect metaphor for the new world. His “intense loathing” generated from the community’s “primitive existence” and the “simplicity of their lives” slowly dissipates after he discovers his brother’s fate and participates in the crippling collective daily rituals of acquiring sustenance (47). He sees a “new ‘order’ around him,” a “strange way of harmonizing with their environment of garbage, decay and wretchedness,” one centered on community (49). He wants to build his own ramshackle hut around Allan’s camper (49). But the inevitable *shift* between city and Dump arrives. Smiley, a one-time pimp and mouthpiece of pseudo-intellectual nihilism puts it best: “Living in other people’s muck like bloody tapeworms [...]. And how long do you think that can go on?” (50).

“Paradise out here is singing its last verse” (50)

The novel’s fulcral narratological and conceptual moment revolves around the arrival of a cargo ship in Sweetwater’s port. Faldbakken indulges in a rare bit of political context. The city, starving due to “the Government’s inadequate supply program,” struggles under a dictatorship and police state (52). This totalitarian takeover transpired under the “pious exhortations” that chaos would end. As Smiley puts it, the people failed to realize that the “chaos they’re afraid of is

already here” (51). And as the cargo ship runs aground in Sweetwater’s port, all the dreams of a better future coalesce around its metal mass. Does it contain food? Much needed supplies?

Crowds gather dreaming of “a better and fairer distribution” (60). While outside their isolated apartments and participating in discussions, the cocoon of government propaganda loosens. The “State-controlled mass media” proclaims that “all efforts were being made to access” the vital goods on board (68). Soon representatives of a “population subdued for years by an authoritarian political plot” find boats and head out towards the stranded vessel (69). There are no supplies. There are guns for the Peacekeeping Force. Cathartic violence erupts. A rebellion. A brutal suppression. An epidemic exasperated by starvation. A civil war between the militarized factions tasked with keeping peace. No more refuse enters the Dump. Allan, Bean, and Mary, Allan’s second wife and surrogate mother for Lisa’s child Rain, decide to return to Sweetwater.

City as Refuse, Refuse as City

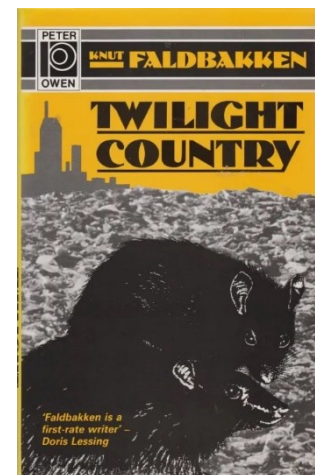
In *Twilight Country*, Allan, fleeing the city’s entropic slide, notices that “the anarchy of the Dump was creeping in, showing itself in the cracks, consuming the city, slowly dissolving it into the individual basic elements” (45). For Allan, the Dump represents a new frontier, a place to make anew. In *Sweetwater*, both become identical — the interchanges between the two cease. The empty city, depopulated after revolt, civil war, famine, and epidemic, becomes the new frontier.

Allan, Mary, Rain, and Bean create a new home in an abandoned apartment building. Time in the Dump “hardened them physically and mentally, blunting their minds and imagination, making them capable of fighting on like rats in the ruins of this vast city” (138).

They survive on abandoned pets, woodworms, and the encrusted patina of spilt pantries. They revel in the slaughter of a horse. Allan’s brutal brand of survivalism cannot last. His followers, malnourished and diseased, need something else. Like some sacrificial harvest ritual, those anchored by memories of the past will be cast off and some indefinable *growth* will propel the survivors forward.

Final Thoughts

I am fascinated by densely metaphoric SF “survival” stories within the urban expanse. The city becomes a typological landscape onto which humanity’s travails are inscribed and discerned. *Twilight Country* and *Sweetwater* rate among



the best. Both books form a cohesive thematic unit around the central metaphoric processes: the city decaying into the Dump, the Dump *shifting* back into the city, and the deathly stillness that besets equilibrium. Faldbakken’s prose and descriptions exude earthiness and violence. Unlike other Scandinavian post-apocalyptic nightmares I’ve read—for example, Sven Holm’s *Termush* (1967, trans. 1969), Anders Bodelsen’s *Freezing Down* (1969, trans. 1971), and P. C. Jersild’s *After the Flood* (1982, trans. 1986)—Faldbakken avoids the relentless logic of humanity’s death drive. He suggests, *tentatively*, a future led by Mary and Rain and informed by the profound trauma experienced: “the War’s over. People have to start again” (183).



Translation Programming at Conventions

Alex Shvartsman



A few years ago, I spoke on a fantasy panel about languages at Dragon Con. While other authors spoke about various invented languages, Tolkien, and so on, I focused on real-world languages and translation. And the audience was there for it.

A handful of people approached me after the panel and began to ask questions about translation. The conversation kept going and lasted for a good couple of hours; luckily I had a break in my programming and was able—and happy—to accommodate. This gave me a true sense of how much interest there is in translation and international works in fandom, versus how much of it is being covered at even the largest genre conventions.

An average genre convention today features somewhere between zero and two panels about translation. Those two panels are generally the same: the more common one is about fiction from outside of the

Anglosphere, and the less frequently seen one is about the actual process and challenges of translation. It is typical for both of these panels to be populated by authors and editors, with maybe one or two translators in the mix. This is not necessarily due to a failure on the part of the con runners. Rather, there are few enough qualified translators attending any given convention to build robust panels. I always felt that the interest is there and that the attendees would appreciate it if some convention would go through the effort to invite translators and put together a translation track. Earlier this year, I got my wish.

I pitched the idea of the translation track to Maria Eskinazi, who was the chair of the 2026 [Boskone](#), and she enthusiastically supported the concept. She put me in touch with the program team and I would also very much like to thank Tim Szczesuil and Laurie Mann for accepting and adapting my ideas and turning them into actual program items.

Boston is a great location for this endeavor as there are many excellent genre translators in New England or near enough to attend the convention. With my help, the program team sent out invitations and we built out a three-panel program about translation.

Here's what we ended up doing:

How Translated Works Get Published

Alex Shvartsman, James Patrick Kelly, Joshua Bilmes, Julia Meitov Hersey

On this panel we had an in-depth discussion about the economics of publishing translation, both from English in the foreign markets and of translated works in the United States. Joshua Bilmes added his unique perspective as an agent, which was especially valuable. James Patrick Kelly makes every panel better with his brilliant comments. Julia and I spoke

about our experiences as working translators and the challenges we've faced with some past and present projects.

The AI Translator: Replacement or Reinvention?

Alex Shvartsman, Blake Stone-Banks, Julia Meitov Hersey, Mark L. Olson, Neil Clarke

It seems no convention is complete without discussing the thorny problem of AI. Neil Clarke is a subject matter expert not by choice, but by being forced onto the front lines of the issue. Olson moderated and provided the only somewhat pro-AI perspective on the panel, while the rest of us explained why the technology isn't presently capable of quality literary translation, while it may be perfectly sufficient for directions or even a technical manual.

Dealing with Challenging Translation Problems

Alex Shvartsman, Blake Stone-Banks, Julia Meitov Hersey, Sarah Smith

This was my favorite panel as it was the only one that comprised solely of translators (working from Russian, Chinese, and French languages) and we got to go a lot more in-depth into the challenging translation problems and how to resolve them than your typical panel does.

In addition to discussing various topics we had two fun exercises. First, I asked each panelist to read a short excerpt from their own translation work that was especially difficult and then talk about what made that particular passage so challenging.

Second, I asked each translator to find a copy of *Neuromancer* in their source languages and translate the opening paragraphs back into English.

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.

"It's not like I'm using," Case heard someone say, as he shouldered his way through the crowd around the door of the Chat. "It's like my body's developed this massive drug deficiency." It was a sprawl voice and a Sprawl joke. The Chatsubo was a bar for professional expatriates; you could drink there for a week and never hear two words in Japanese.

The opening paragraphs of *Neuromancer* have a few advantages to be used for this exercise: they feature one of the most distinct and well-recognized opening sentences in all of science fiction, and there's all the buzz boosted by the upcoming Apple TV show. It also has slang, a made-up term (Sprawl), a bar title (Chatsubo) and it doesn't require much additional context for the readers who are not already familiar with the text. The translators' choices were fascinating and truly instructive. I highly recommend this exercise for future conventions and panels.

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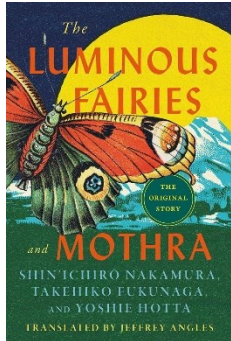
Overall, all three translation panels were very well attended. I hope to see more conventions rise to the challenge of offering translation programming.

We've already seen some excellent steps in the direction of recognizing translations recently: the Flights of Foundry online convention has featured a translator guest of honor each year; the British Science Fiction Association has introduced an award category for translated short fiction; and most recently the Locus Awards introduced the translated novel category. Convention support would be the logical next step.

If you are a con runner and are interested in adding a translation track or just a panel or two but would like some advice or need help getting in touch with your local / semi-local translators, please do not hesitate to reach out. I'd be thrilled to help point you in the right direction.

Forthcoming Books

Jessica Rose Sanford



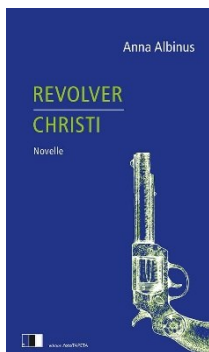
***The Luminous Fairies and Mothra* by Takehiko Fukunaga, Yoshie Hotta, and Shin'ichiro Nakamura**

Translated from the Japanese by Jeffrey Angles · University of Minnesota Press · Jan 13, 2026

A standout collection of mid-20th-century Japanese speculative fiction that blends folklore, science fiction, and environmental anxiety in ways that feel surprisingly current. The stories pull from kaiju myth, rural legend, and postwar disillusionment, but they never stay in one lane for long.

What makes this worth picking up is how fluidly it moves between the strange and the grounded. You get eerie, memorable imagery alongside sharp reflections on ecological loss and cultural change. It's a great entry point if you want to explore Japanese speculative writing beyond the usual names, especially if you like fiction that feels both mythic and politically aware without spelling everything out.

*



***Revolver Christi* by Anna Albinus**

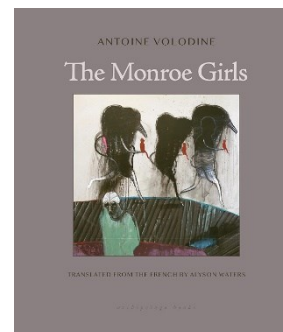
Translated from the German by Rachel Farmer · Dedalus Books · Feb 13, 2026

This is a slow-burn psychological novel built around a mysterious religious artifact and the person who becomes obsessed

with it. The setup sounds straightforward, but the book quickly turns inward, tracking the narrator's unraveling as belief, illness, and coincidence start to blur together.

It's a strong pick if you like fiction that leans into atmosphere and ambiguity rather than clean answers. The tension comes from not knowing whether anything supernatural is happening at all. Instead of jump scares or big reveals, you get a creeping sense of unease that builds page by page. It's especially rewarding for readers who enjoy unreliable narrators and stories that leave room for interpretation.

*



***The Monroe Girls* by Antoine Volodine**

Translated from the French by Alyson Waters · Archipelago Books · Mar 17, 2026

Set in a bleak, dreamlike afterworld, this novel follows a group of voices caught somewhere between life and whatever comes after. The structure is fragmented, with overlapping stories and perspectives that gradually build a picture of a ruined political landscape and the people still trying to make sense of it.

What makes it worth your time is the mood and the voice. It has that rare ability to feel both intimate and apocalyptic at once. Even when the narrative is disorienting, the emotional core holds. If you're drawn to experimental fiction or writers who push form without losing impact, this is one that sticks with you. It's a challenging read but a rewarding one.



News

- **The Premio Italia** organizers have announced their award winners, including (for a science fiction novel by an Italian author) *Katàne* by Claudio Chillemi (Delos Digital).
- **The Kurd Laßwitz Preis** (an annual literary award for German-language science fiction) has announced its winners, and the best German SF Novel goes to Nils Westerboer for *Lyneham* (Klett-Cotta), a dystopian story about family, time, and planetary colonization.
- The **Locus Recommended Reading List** has added a new category for Translated Novels this year, with input and assistance from Gautam Bhatia, Rachel Cordasco, Jukka Halme, Cristina Jurado, Roseanna Pendlebury, Carlos Arturo Serrano, Alex Schvartsman, and Jared Shurin.
- The top ten finalists for the [Locus Awards: Translated Novel](#) are:
On the Calculation of Volume III by Solvej Balle, tr. from the Danish by Sophia Hersi Smith & Jennifer Russell (New Directions; Faber & Faber)

The Unworthy by Agustina Bazterrica, tr. from the Spanish by Sarah Moses (Scribner; Pushkin UK)

The Midnight Shift by Cheon Seon-Ran, tr. from the Korean by Gene Png (Bloomsbury UK; Bloomsbury US)

Red Sword by Bora Chung, tr. from the Korean by Anton Hur (Honford Star)

The Midnight Timetable by Bora Chung, tr. from the Korean by Anton Hur (Algonquin)

Ice by Jacek Dukaj, tr. from the Polish by Ursula Phillips (Head of Zeus)

Blood for the Undying Throne by Sung-il Kim, tr. from the Korean by Anton Hur (Tor)

Vanishing World by Sayaka Murata, tr. from the Japanese by Ginny Tapley Takemori (Grove; Granta UK)

Dengue Boy by Michel Nieva, tr. from the Spanish by Rahul Bery (Astra House; Serpent's Tail)

The Wax Child by Olga Ravn, tr. from the Danish by Martin Aitken (New Directions; Viking UK)

- The **BSFA Translated Short Fiction** winner is "Liecrafft" by Anita Moskát, translated from the Hungarian by Austin Wagner (*Apex Magazine*).
- The latest issue of **Michael K. Iwoleit's InterNova** has a focus on German SFF, including two essays on German SFF and

SFT: <https://internova.worldculture-hub.net/>

- The latest issue of *Samovar Magazine* is out, with one original story translated from the Korean, one reprint from the Chinese, and poem from the Arabic: read them at <https://samovar.strangehorizons.com/issue/april-27/>
- *Contact Zone*, an Italian magazine about science fiction and fantasy, published an issue focused on translation in April. Essays include Mirko Casagrande's "Accommodation or Creativity? The Recent Debate on Translating Science Fiction," Anastasia Parise's "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: A Paratextual Analysis of Nine Italian Translations," my own "Speculative Fiction in Translation, 2015-2025," and much more.
<https://www.loffredoeditore.com/it/riviste/onlinerviste/contactzone>



To Translate or Not to Translate: Origins of a Surging Translator

Juan Manuel Pérez,
Author of

*The Enigmatical Sphere Of El Chupa-Ku/El
Esfera Enigmatica De El Chupa-Ku
...and other Speculative Poetry*

loves to write haiku/le encanta escribir haiku
about wild *chupacabras*/sobre el *chupa-*
cabras salvaje
chupacabristas/chupacabristas

The first title was the very thing I pondered when I started to put together this collection of a (now) Elgin Nominated, *chupacabras*, haiku bilingual book, *The Enigmatical Sphere Of El Chupa-Ku/El Esfera Enigmatica De El Chupa-Ku* (Space Cowboys Books, 2025), early last year. All one hundred of the "chupa-ku" within were previously published as single haiku, and later, in volumes or sets of five haiku, completely in English with limited Spanish words and slangs included. Despite all this, they were never published in a complete Spanish format. So why should I publish them in Spanish now? Why do I bother now, after publishing numerous poetry books in primarily English? Why?

imagination/imaginación
the only proof between us/la única prueba
entre nosotros
fear or not to fear/temer o no temer

Let's start with the origin. I was born in the late 60's in rural, hot Texas by the Mexican border to a pair of very English-limited speaking, migrant farm workers. My late father spoke limited, broken English. My late mother didn't speak English at all at that point. I would eventually work alongside them and other brown-skinned, non-English speakers, on those same unforgiving labor fields in the always hot Middle Rio Grand Valley. So, to no surprise, I grew up speaking

only Spanish (with some variation of Nahuatl language from my maternal grandmother until her death in my early life which also ended that language acquisition at that point; my mother refused to speak it or teach it to us as well) at least up until the 2nd grade. The school district then gave me the label, “bilingual student,” in a class of very limited English speakers. In school, the ones that spoke English pretty well were labeled “regular” and were placed in a “normal” class, labeled as such.

Although I eventually learned English by the 2nd grade, the “bilingual” label remained on my file like a scarlet letter up into high school. The stigma gave vibes of a “special ed” label. In fact, some of my non-English speaking classmates (relatives and friends) were categorized as “special ed” even though the only thing that was wrong with them was that they didn’t want to speak any English. We were considered the bottom of the filthy pond in a somewhat imagined, uppity world we were growing up in. It was a “tortilla-eats-tortilla” kind of world as a blatant metaphor. We were all so damned poor as it was. But “how poor?” was the leveling hierarchy. Crazy, I know. Most of it was just simply brown relative-on-brown relative hate. Today that label of being “bilingual” is a high skill of honor. I wield this skill now like a fresh, intellectual sword in a “we only speak English in ‘Merica” kind of world. Back in the late 70’s and into the 80’s, it was a damning sign that we would never matriculate from a life of poverty faced by many migrant farm workers. At least that was the feeling I remember from the “educated professional” adults around me who also labeled my aging parents “indigent,” not knowing that I already knew what this word meant even as a teen. It was then a mix of hate and embarrassment at the same time.

the goats are always/las cabras siempre estan fatter on the other side/mas gordas en el otro lado

of the farmer’s fence/de la cerca del granjero

The first English word I ever famously remember saying, and what others who can recall me saying, was “BATMAN!” That would be obvious since that is how I learned English. I remember my teacher showing the class a few episodes of the 1966 Batman TV series on a projector in our kindergarten class (in Levelland, Texas) after our naps. I’m sure by now that these “films” haven’t been recommended curriculum for quite some time, especially in our very ban-happy republic of Texas. In reflecting on that time, I really didn’t understand a word they were saying but I guess BATMAN is/was very easy to say in any language. Migrating back to our hometown of La Pryor in the middle of the following year, my assigned bilingual teacher would turn on a cassette player that was accompanied by a comic book of, you guessed it, BATMAN! It was the Power Record series that was, whether legally or illegally, transferred to cassette tapes for accessibility. Yeah, you know the ones! And then it was Superman and those deadly alien bullets and then Star Trek and that irritating, shrieking creature. Those are the ones I remember because I played them repeatedly to my teacher’s delight. I always enjoyed the panels in the comic book, and I could soon imitate these “pictograms and word balloons.” Obviously, the reading part eventually came easily upon repetition of the words of my new, favorite pastime: reading comic books.

when writing freely/al escribir libremente
about *el chupacabras*/sobre el chupacabras
remember to growl/recuerda gruñir

So where did all my “interpreting/translating” training start? It began with numerous, rural medical clinic visits to “El Centro De

Salud” in Crystal City, Texas and public-school paperwork and after school meetings every year at La Pryor Independent School District starting about the sixth grade. I would primarily interpret, translate, and inscribe the paperwork for my Spanish-speaking, indigenous mother whose only role after that was to sign where I told her she would need to sign. This important role, especially for a child (and the eventual driving duties once I had my hardship license because driving made her terribly nervous as she aged), would eventually be taken over by my middle sister after I left for military service upon graduating high school in 1987. As an added note, yes, I became the first of the kids to graduate high school (and eventually college, too) from my immediate family, since the two, older, half-siblings did not complete high school, and the third oldest sibling (my dad’s first child, but not my mom’s) passed away as a child, and since both of my parents dropped out of school at a way too early age; my dad in the fifth and my mother after two years in the third grade. Their dropout status was mainly due to migrant field work obligations and that both didn’t like school anyway nor the punishment they would receive for speaking Spanish in the classroom. My late father told me some horrible stories when I became an adult (and a teacher myself) of how he was treated for simply cholo-speaking (Spanish slang) to his friends during school hours. That was in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s.

ever stop to think/alguna vez te detienes a
 pensar
 if *el chupacabras* cares/si al chupacabras le
 importa
 whether it is real/si es real

Faster than any bilingual migrant farm worker! More powerful than a set of classic encyclopedias! Able to leap generational gaps of disappointment! Look up ahead! It’s

a fact! It’s the truth! It’s Super-Vato! Okay. Okay. Okay. It’s just me. Anyhow, I would wind up completing high school at the top of my class. I know, right? Like how? I always joke about being the Valedictorian by saying that I was the only one able to speak English proficiently by the end. There were less than thirty students by the time we got to this graduation ceremony at our small, rural school. Some of my classmates had already dropped out or moved on to the bigger cities like Uvalde, just twenty miles to the north or the border city of Eagle Pass to the west, or to the even bigger and promising city of San Antonio to the east. As for the joke, my classmates hate me for that. But hey, without the knowledge of the history I just gave you about me, it would just be an odd, inside joke. Still, here is the important and related part to this essay as I continue to say that I was the Top Dog (our school’s mascot was literally a Bulldog). I wrote a traditional and expected Valedictorian speech in English as prescribed by the school administration. Knowing that my parents and some non-English-speaking elders and relatives would be in the audience that day, I translated my speech all by myself into Spanish as well. That day, at the age of eighteen, I delivered the Valedictorian Address in both languages to everyone’s surprise and satisfaction. I was told then by the adults that it was the first time they could remember hearing or seeing that done at this school. I’ll take it!

why worry about/por qué te preocupas
 terrible chupacabras/con el terrible chupacabras
 worry about man/preocúpate con el hombre

Fast forward into my time in the military as a Marine Corps Regulation Navy Corpsman or Fleet Marine Force Medic (8404) freshly off from combat service with the 2nd Marines in the last allied-led war of the 20th century, the First Persian Gulf War or Operation Desert

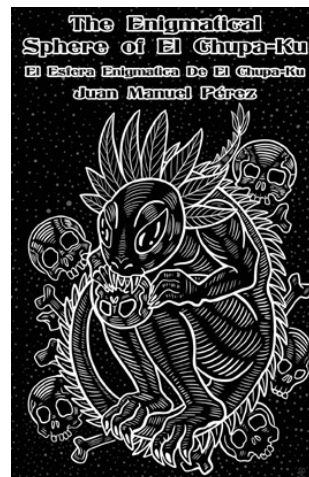
Shield/Desert Storm (1990-1991), I found myself in South Florida in the late summer and early fall of 1992. We deployed down to Homestead, Florida to help with the recovery and provide medical support after Hurricane Andrew ripped through the area that August. Part of my medical duties, besides conducting minor medical surgery procedures, was to apply my translating skills to the Spanish-speaking, Cuban patient population affected in the area. It was funny because they made fun of my hard, Tex-Mex dialect with proper Spanish and I in return was allowed to grin at their South Florida, Cuban Spanish dialect, taking soft jabs in the middle of devastation and tragedy. Yes, no matter where we are, we can almost always tell where we are from without having to see each other, simply by listening to the way we speak, especially in Spanish. This was my first official military interpreting/translating gig. The other pluses of being attached to this Hurricane Andrew Relief Special Marine Air Group Task Force unit was meeting Gloria Estefan (September 7, 1992) and Paul Simon (ten days later; September 17, 1992) who were nearby providing aid and were then touring our field medical station set up on Homestead High School's Football Field. I even got autographs to prove it but sadly the photos from the disposable cameras didn't turn out. Plus, we were also treated to a free U2 concert at Joe Robbie Stadium (October 3, 1992). But I digress.

I don't always write/no siempre escribo
poems about *chupacabras*/poemas sobre
chupacabras
... who am I my kidding/... a quién estoy
engañando

Then after my ten years in the military and a few years into civilian life, I began to heavily publish poems here and there, but nothing translated that I can recall. I began to gather complete poetry books of previously published poems but without any Spanish

language poems or translated poems in them. By 2020, at the onset of the Covid pandemic, I had a book published by FlowerSong Press from the Rio Grande Valley. In this politically charged, anti-Trump anthem, *Screw The Wall And Other Brown People Poems*, I include a Spanish-Calo (Chicano-speak in honor of my father) poem that I refused to translate into English in protest of the removal of Chicano books in Arizona. Written in Spanish slang, "El Corrido De El Librotraficante"/"The Ballad Of The Book Trafficker" was an actual song and it remains untranslated to this day. Moving on to 2024, I published my first English to Spanish horror poem in *Star*Line: The Journal of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Association* and got paid for a translated poem for the first time. The horror quatrain, "un corrito negro/a black little chorus," was published in the *Xenopoetry Section* of the Winter 2024 Issue (47.1).

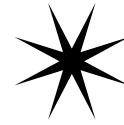
fresh, cool, morning dew/fresco, rocío de la
mañana
runs beautifully across/corre maravillosamente
a través
the goat's twisted face/la cara torcida de la
cabra



Still at that point none of my poetry books were translated from my normal English into Spanish. It was after I had published my long, experimental renga, barrio horror, *La Santa Madre Tamalera* (Gnashing Teeth Press, 2023), that I seriously started thinking about translating my work from English into Spanish to reach a wider audience if you will. At a local comic book shop where I was having a comic-book

release event for this book, a Spanish speaker came up to me and asked me why I hadn't done it to the rest of the graphic book since the title was already in Spanish. I don't know why I didn't do it either. It seems (now) that it would have been a natural thing to do. So, since that meeting I was thinking that the next book would be in both English and Spanish. I had already signed the contract for a book in 2023 that finally came out this April (*Bury My Heart Under The Martian Sky*, Interstellar Flight Press, 2026). Regrettably, I should have translated that book as well. Then in the early part of 2025, I gave my very first translated haiku book to Space Cowboy Books. By December of the same year, that little polished book that has its pieces running throughout this very essay became my first bilingual reality. As an added note for this year, I have also completed my first, official, English to Spanish translation of five political poems for someone else's work: Brian U. Garrison, current President of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association. The pocket-size Spanish version of his activist pamphlet is titled "Totalmente Antifascista" and I have already received my "contributor's copies" of said document, I'm proud to say. So, I am really beginning to like how it feels to publish in dual languages and translating my own work from English to Spanish for a much wider spread of readers. This is me encouraging you to do so as well. Thus, my journey is underway into becoming that intergalactic icon I always wanted to be. That speculative speculator I speculated about once. That somewhat infamous interpreter who finally interpreted the signs and applied the skill that thrills and kills. A TRANSLATOR BECOMING!

...I can still dream, can't I? Anyhow,
Peace and Blessings To All My Relations,
A'ho.



L'effetto che fa

Clelia Farris

In Italia abbiamo una lunga tradizione di doppiaggio dei film stranieri. I doppiatori sostituiscono la loro voce e la loro lingua alle battute degli attori. In questo modo lo spettatore può seguire la storia senza dover leggere i sottotitoli, che comunque distraggono e rendono meno fluida l'azione sullo schermo.

Ecco, la prima volta che ho letto un mio racconto tradotto in inglese ho avuto la stessa impressione di straniamento che deve provare uno spettatore anglofono nel sentir parlare Meryl Streep in italiano. Che cosa sta succedendo? diceva la mia immaginazione. Quella non è la voce del tuo protagonista!

Non so come funzioni per gli altri scrittori, ma io vedo e sento il racconto o il romanzo che sto scrivendo come se fosse un film, proiettato nella mia testa. Deve essere il famoso "teatro della mente" di cui parlava Hume, solo che, invece di mettere in scena me stessa, ogni tanto la compagnia teatrale "Clelia Farris" mette in scena quello che scrivo.

È uno dei vantaggi dell'essere una scrittrice: posso liberarmi della mia vita passata, di tutti gli accadimenti che fanno sì che io sia io, e cambiare esistenza. Diventare qualcun altro, almeno sulla carta. Tuttavia, questo "qualcun altro" parla ancora in italiano. Io e i miei personaggi abbiamo una lingua in comune. Invece nella traduzione non solo il mio mondo diventa un "world", ma loro si esprimono dicendo "I".

L'aspetto curioso di questo salto linguistico è una mancanza di aderenza totale. Il personaggio che parla italiano e quello che parla inglese non si sovrappongono, non combaciano perfettamente, sono due figure leggermente sfalsate. Credo che la spiegazione sia sempre di natura filosofica: lingua diversa, coscienze diverse.

Il pensiero umano ha bisogno di un linguaggio per esplicitarsi e linguaggi differenti generano pensieri diversi. La costruzione delle frasi, per esempio. In inglese il soggetto è sempre esplicitato, che sia he, she o it, è sempre chiaramente individuabile. In italiano può essere implicito, può essere espresso nella frase precedente, a volte bisogna risalire di molte frasi, prima di trovarlo, perciò i bambini italiani, quando iniziano ad andare a scuola, hanno difficoltà a individuarlo subito, devono capire come cercarlo a partire dal tempo del verbo.

La traduzione tira fuori dai miei personaggi una sorta di alter ego che parla un'altra lingua. Nella parola italiana "doppiaggio" c'è la parola "doppio", che presuppone sempre qualcosa di inquietante. Un "altro io" evoca lo spettro di un Mr. Hyde e ci si aspetta che questo "altro" agisca in modo perlomeno discutibile. Ma se ripenso ai motivi per cui scrivo, i timori svaniscono. Scrivo per impersonare qualcun altro, per essere un "altro io", per andare oltre la mia vita quotidiana e viverne una differente. È questo il motivo per cui apprezziamo ancora la visione di un film e la lettura di un libro.

Dunque, perché non fare un salto ulteriore e ritrovarsi nei panni di un personaggio che parla un'altra lingua?

A volte i personaggi dei romanzi ci somigliano, oppure mettono in mostra aspetti del nostro essere di cui non siamo consapevoli. A me è spesso capitato di

scoprire alcune caratteristiche dei miei personaggi in corso di scrittura. Quando inizio a scrivere il personaggio si fa avanti, si presenta, mi dice nome e cognome, mi racconta qualcosa di sé, tuttavia, come le persone reali, non spiattella i dettagli intimi della sua vita al primo incontro. Ci vuole tempo per approfondire la conoscenza. Ci vogliono le svolte di trama di un intero romanzo.

L'alter ego può essere fisicamente diverso da noi, altrimenti non sarebbe "altro". Può avere i capelli biondi anche se io ce li ho bruni, o gli occhi nerissimi anche se i miei sono castani; può essere maschio, avere tredici anni o magari novanta; può abitare in un grande condominio oppure in una grotta che è stata una tomba. Perché quindi non potrebbe parlare una lingua diversa dalla mia?

Sentirlo parlare un'altra lingua, alla fine, è solo una sfumatura in più che si aggiunge alla complessità dell'immaginazione.

The Effect It Has

Clelia Farris
translated from the Italian
by Rachel Cordasco

In Italy, we have a long tradition of dubbing foreign films. Voice actors substitute their voices and language for the actors' lines. In this way, the viewer can follow the story without having to read subtitles, which, in any case, are distracting and make the on-screen action less fluid.

Well, the first time I read one of my own short stories translated into English, I experienced the same sense of estrangement that an English-speaking viewer must feel upon hearing Meryl Streep speak Italian. "What's going on?" I asked myself. "That's not my protagonist's voice!"

I don't know how it works for other writers, but I see and hear the short story or novel that I'm writing as if it were a film projected in my head. It must be that famous "theater of the mind" Hume spoke of, except that, instead of staging myself, every now and then the "Clelia Farris Theater Company" stages what I write.

It's one of the advantages of being a writer: I can shed my past life—all of the events that make me who I am—and change my existence. I can become someone else—at least, on paper. And yet, this "someone else" still speaks Italian. My characters and I share a common language. In a translation, however, not only does my "mondo" become a "world," but my characters express themselves by saying "I".

A curious aspect of this linguistic leap is the total lack of correspondence. The character who speaks Italian and the one who speaks English don't overlap; they don't perfectly coincide. Indeed, they are two slightly misaligned figures. I believe that the explanation is ultimately philosophical in nature: different language, different consciousness.

Human thought requires a language to express itself, and different languages generate different thoughts. Sentence construction, for example. In English, the subject is always explicitly stated—whether it is "he," "she," or "it," it is always identifiable. In Italian, it can be implicit or expressed in the preceding sentence; sometimes, one must look back several sentences before finding it, which is why, when Italian children begin school, they struggle to immediately identify it. Rather, they must learn how to locate the subject by starting with the verb tense.

Translation brings out in my characters a sort of alter ego who speaks another language. Within the Italian word "doppiaggio" lies the

word "doppio"-- "double"--which always implies something unsettling. An "other self" evokes the specter of a Mr. Hyde, and one expects this "other" to act in a manner that is, at the very least, questionable. But if I think back to the reasons why I write, my fears vanish. I write to impersonate someone else, to be an "other self," to go beyond my daily life and live a different one. This is why we still appreciate watching movies and reading books.

So, why not take a further leap and find yourself in the shoes of a character who speaks another language?

Sometimes the characters in novels resemble us, or they reveal aspects of ourselves of which we are unaware. I've often found myself discovering certain traits in my characters in the course of my writing. When I begin to write, the character steps forward, introduces themselves, tells me their full name, and shares something about themselves; and yet, much like real people, they do not offer the intimate details of their life at the very first meeting. It takes time to deepen one's knowledge. It takes the plot twists of an entire novel.

The alter ego can be physically different from us; otherwise, it would not be an "other." She might have blond hair, even though mine is dark, or jet-black eyes, while mine are brown. He could be a male, thirteen years old, or perhaps ninety. He might live in a large apartment complex, or in a cave that was once a tomb. Why, then, couldn't he speak a language that isn't mine?

Hearing one of my characters speaking in another language, in the end, is just one more nuance added to the complexity of the imagination.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

From *The World SF Newsletter: World SF-Progress Report Number One* (1976)

“When the First World Science Fiction Writers Conference was held in Dublin, in September 1976, there was a great deal of international interest and attendance. When the idea of a World SF organization was suggested it was of immediate interest. All those present were professionals in some aspect of science fiction—and all cared a good deal about the international aspect of this literature. An informal meeting was held and it was decided that this idea should be changed into a reality, in such a way as to enhance the international nature of science fiction and its still-growing hold on the imagination of forward-thinking people everywhere.”

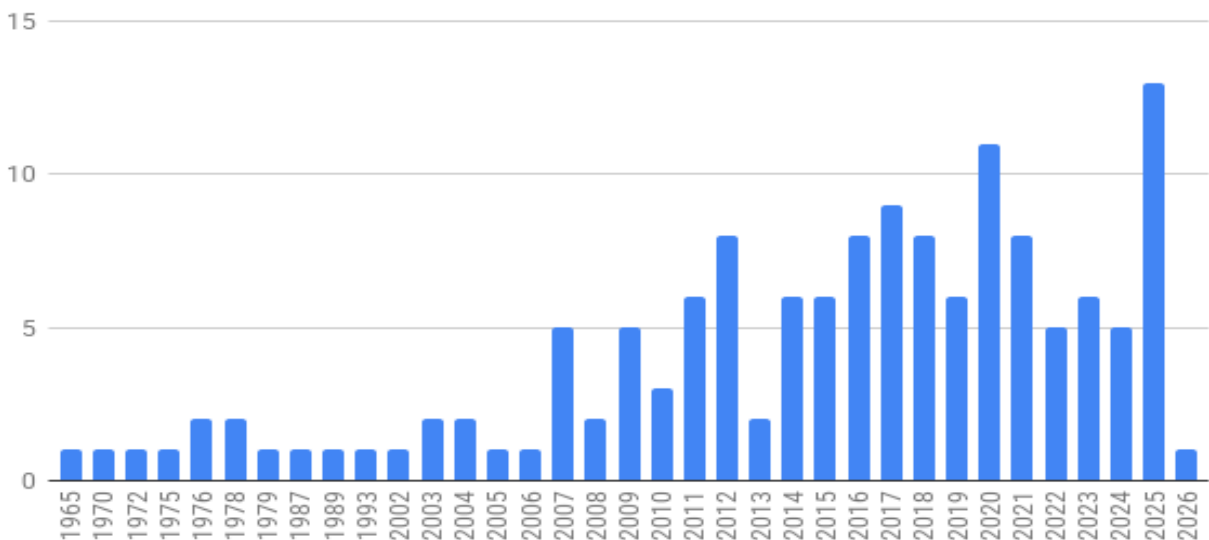
—Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Frederik Pohl (World SF Organizing Committee)

“When you read science fiction successfully, you suddenly see humanity immersed in deep time. Science fiction is therefore a kind of historical literature, creating as it does a form of historical vision: while following closely the lives of the story’s protagonist, you also glimpse the life of the species.”

—Kim Stanley Robinson, foreword to *Typescript of the Second Origin* (1974) by Manuel de Pedrolo, translated from the Catalan by Sara Martín (Wesleyan University Press, 2018)

Fun Stat

Spanish-language novels since 1960





November, 2018

John