

*Quaderni di cultura*

*12*



Aspects of science fiction  
since the 1980s:  
China, Italy, Japan, Korea

*Texts by*

Lorenzo Andolfatto, Chiaki Asai, Roberto Bertoni,  
Chen Qiufan, Giulia Iannuzzi, Ilgu Kim,  
Massimo Soumaré, Wang Yao

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## *Contents*

<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. ESSAYS ON LITERARY AND VISUAL TEXTS</b>	
<b>CHIAKI ASAI</b> , Social concerns expressed in science fiction works by Japanese writer Sayuri Ueda	11
<b>ROBERTO BERTONI</b> , Eastern and Western interactions in some Italian, Japanese and Korean science fiction works	23
<b>ILGU KIM</b> , Alternative reality in some texts by Korean writer Bok Geo-il within the context of Western and Eastern science fiction	43
<b>WANG YAO</b> , National allegory in the era of globalization: Chinese science fiction and its cultural politics since the 1990s	61

### 3. REFLECTIONS ON TRANSLATION

**GIULIA IANNUZZI**, The translation of East Asian science fiction in Italy: An essay on Chinese and Japanese science fiction, anthological practices and publishing strategies beyond the Anglo-American canon 85

An interview by G. Iannuzzi with **LORENZO ANDOLFATTO**:  
*Shi Kong* and the translation of Chinese science fiction in Italy 109

Una conversazione di G. Iannuzzi con **MASSIMO SOUMARÉ**  
sulla traduzione della fantascienza giapponese in Italia 121

### 4. STORIES

**CHEN QIUFAN**, The cat ghost  
*(translated by Ken Liu)* 137

**WANG YAO**, A hundred ghosts parade tonight  
*(translated by Ken Liu)* 155

**Giulia Iannuzzi**  
(University of Trieste)

**THE TRANSLATION OF EAST ASIAN SCIENCE FICTION IN ITALY:  
AN ESSAY ON CHINESE AND JAPANESE SCIENCE FICTION,  
ANTHOLOGICAL PRACTICES AND PUBLISHING STRATEGIES  
BEYOND THE ANGLO~AMERICAN CANON<sup>1</sup>**

Science fiction as a genre with a strong identity - with an easily recognizable and cross-mediatic repertoire of themes and tropes - is a unique vantage point from which to observe the shape and functioning of a trans-national literary production, or, in other words, of a literature which presents *global* characteristics shared by different linguistic and cultural traditions. Since science fiction was first published as a specific narrative sub-genre in the Anglo-American world (the starting point is usually seen as coinciding with the invention of the word - *scienti-fiction* and later *science-fiction*, Westfahl 1998, see Roberts 2006), its narrative inventions have often functioned through shared imaginaries and conventions

<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised and expanded version of the research which started with the paper “Introducing East Asian science fiction to Italian readers: Anthological practices”, presented at the *East/West SF International Conference*, (Hannam University, Daejeon, South Korea, 4 June 2014). I would like to thank Professor Roberto Bertoni for his much appreciated guidance and useful insights offered during the East/West science fiction research project, and Professor Ilgu Kim for accepting and encouraging my contribution at the Hannam conference. This text, originally written in English, has been most competently revised by Judith Moss, to whom I would like to address my heartfelt thanks. I would also like to thank Mtsugu Arada for the revision of transliterations of Japanese names and titles.

generally accepted by authors, not only in the case of specific trends or movements, such as cyberpunk, but more in general through a collective adoption and use of singular ideas and images.<sup>2</sup>

In the Anglo-American field of science fiction studies, there has been increasing attention in recent years to non-English traditions as well as to the idea of *global* or *world* science fiction. Of particular note are the special issues on global science fiction and the different national science fiction traditions appearing in the 2000s in *Science Fiction Studies* (without doubt one of the most important scholarly science fiction journals in the international field), the more recent launch of a collection especially devoted to world science fiction studies by the academic publisher Peter Lang, and an increased trend on the part of Clute, Langford and Nicholls' *Encyclopedia of science fiction* towards a global perspective, with the inclusion of numerous entries on non-English speaking countries and authors.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that *translations* have a critical role to play in shaping the idea we (“we” as readers, scholars, or authors) have of the trans-national science fiction production (leaving aside for the moment the thorny question of the “canon”). This

<sup>2</sup> On science fiction definition, conventions and tropes, see the seminal work by Suvin (1978), the historical and pragmatic approaches represented by Rieder (2010) and Gunn et al. (2008). For works of reference on science fiction history and sub-genres, see Bould et al. (2009), James and Mendlesohn (2003), Latham (2014), Roberts (2006) and Seed (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Later in this essay and in the bibliography, I will quote examples of *Science Fiction Studies* special issues, and various entries from the *The encyclopedia of science fiction*, on Chinese and Japanese authors. The special collection by Peter Lang was announced in May 2014, ed. Sonja Fritzsche (Illinois Wesleyan University) - see *World science fiction studies*.

is even more true when applied to the Italian science fiction reader: as a genre and as a label used by publishers, science fiction arrived in Italy during the 1950s, essentially in the form of translations of British and American publications. In fact, the Italian word for science fiction - *fantascienza* - was coined to translate the English term *science fiction*, in 1952, by Giorgio Monicelli, the editor of the first specialized Italian publication, the magazine *Urania*, which was printed by one of the biggest Italian publishing houses, Mondadori, in Milan (Iannuzzi 2014, pp. 23-43), and which is still very much alive, as we shall see in the subsequent pages. Although several pioneering works had already appeared in Italian literature between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which might be considered as the initiators of an Italian science fiction production (Lippi 2005, De Turrís 2001), during the 1950s, science fiction began to be thought of essentially as translated versions of British and American publications (Iannuzzi 2014, Saiber 2011). The reasons for this dominance of the Italian science fiction marked by translations from English can be traced back to a complex set of circumstances. In terms of industrial development, Italy was a late and slower starter compared to England and America and the Second World War took a toll on the publishing industry, causing a significant delay in the production of books and periodicals during the 1940; only during the “economic boom” of the 1950s were the majority of people first able to buy a comic book, a weekly magazine or a cinema ticket (Forgacs 1990, Forgacs and Gundle 2007).

Science fiction translations were also part of the broader cultural influence of the United States which was clearly bound with the central position of the United States in the global economy as well as the post-war political situation (in fact,

American dominance in science fiction publications was common in other European countries over the same period, James 1994). Together with the sheer size and vitality of popular culture production in the United States, American leadership in scientific research and development - from the space race to the growth of the Internet - supplied that collective, mass-produced scientific-technological imagery which gave science fiction its traditional “raw materials”. In Italy, the translation of science fiction in English brought with it, along with the translation of texts, a whole series of themes, conventions, and literary models, not to mention publishing formulas, making the science fiction case an excellent example of translation as a complex cultural phenomenon (Even-Zohar 1990).

Since then, Anglo-American leadership in the Italian science fiction market has not changed a great deal. *Urania*, the most popular Italian magazine, which features a complete novel or collection of short stories per issue,<sup>4</sup> still publishes translations from English in the vast majority of its issues. For a general idea, let us take a look at four sample-years from the last few decades. In 1980, *Urania* published fifty-two issues, all of them featuring translations from English.<sup>5</sup> In 1990, the twenty-two novels and anthologies published were all translations from

<sup>4</sup> *Urania* has changed its frequency of publication on various occasions over the years, but since issue 1486 in May 2004, it has been issued monthly; the series’ sales have declined from the 25-30,000 copies sold in the early 1950s per weekly or fortnightly issue, to the 5-7,000 copies per issue appearing today.

<sup>5</sup> Twenty-seven by American authors, seventeen by British authors, three by Irish authors, one by a Scot, two by Canadians, and two by Australians. First editions of works written by Canadian authors, such as Alfred van Vogt or Robert J. Sawyer, usually appear on the United States market, just as Scottish or Irish-born authors (e.g. Gordon Williams, Bob Shaw) usually publish with English or American houses.

English.<sup>6</sup> In 2000 out of thirty-one issues, one featured a French author and four featured Italian authors (two of which were published as special supplements), and the rest were translations from English.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, in 2010, out of twelve issues, nine were translations of English works,<sup>8</sup> two were Italian novels, and one was an anthology of Chinese science fiction (*Shi Kong*, to which I will return in the pages below).

Through the years, we can argue, the collection have always reflected the strong position of translations from English on the science fiction specialized Italian market,<sup>9</sup> with increasing space given to non-American authors, and a hard-won consolidation of the space reserved to Italian authors: since 1990, in fact, *Urania* has been choosing the recipient of a yearly Urania Award, therefore featuring national science fiction, but always in a sort of “protected area”.

When it comes to East Asian authors, there is a specific barrier which makes translating more of a challenge, which is the relative scarcity of translators able to translate directly from East Asian languages into Italian. This scarcity is confirmed by the frequent appearance of works and anthologies translated from English translations - in other words, with the mediation (linguistic and therefore cultural) of English and American publishing initiatives and editors, which also indicates - I think

<sup>6</sup> Twenty were translations from American-English, one from British-English, and one from Canadian-English.

<sup>7</sup> Twenty featured translations of American authors, four of British, and two of English-Canadian.

<sup>8</sup> Six by American authors, one from a British, one from a Canadian, and one from an Australian author.

<sup>9</sup> This dominant position of English as the first original language is not something limited to science fiction. English is by far the most common original language of Italian translations overall - see the *Unesco index translationum statistics*.

- a greater willingness on the part of the English-speaking science fiction market to risk money on new initiatives (also thanks to a wider readership, probably ready to try out increasingly varied fare).

Chinese science fiction is a case in point. In the English-speaking world, Chinese science fiction lies at the centre of some fascinating new initiatives (which often bear witness to the Chinese-language science fiction field within the entire Chinese-speaking world, both within China and outside it) such as the website of the international *World Chinese-language science fiction research workshop*, special issues and essays featured in various academic journals and magazines during the last few years.<sup>10</sup>

The first anthology of Chinese science fiction was published in *Urania* in 2006, with *L'onda misteriosa* ("The mysterious wave"). *L'onda misteriosa* is the Italian translation of *Science fiction from China*, edited by Wu Dingbo and Patrick D. Murphy, in 1989. The translator from English into Italian was

<sup>10</sup> Worthy of note are: the *Special issue on Chinese science fiction*, edited by Y. Wu and V. Hollinger in 2013 for *Science Fiction Studies* and the set of entries on Chinese science fiction mainly written by Jonathan Clements for *The encyclopedia of science fiction*, edited by J. Clute, D. Langford and P. Nicholls. Interesting essays have been featured in other journals and websites, such as Yan, Bogstad and Pengfei 2010; *Chinese science fiction*, a special issue of *Rendition* in 2010. Since the 1980s, contributions on Chinese science fiction (brief histories, review of conferences, essays on specific aspects) have featured sporadically in the principal English-language science fiction journals (*Extrapolation*, *Foundation*, *Science Fiction Studies*). In 2014 Loncon 3 (the 72<sup>nd</sup> World Science Fiction Convention) featured two panels on Chinese science fiction: *The world at Worldcon: Chinese diaspora science fiction* (With Emily Jiang, Eric Choi, John Chu, Derwin Mak) and *The world at Worldcon: Chinese SF/F* (Ji Shaoting, Tang Fei, Zhaoxin Lee, Meizi Wang).

Roberto Marini, who has been working with Mondadori publishing house since 1988.

In his afterword, Giuseppe Lippi (the editor of *Urania*), discussed the advantages and disadvantages of such a choice: the work done by Dingbo and Murphy was extensive and valuable, supplementing the translation of short stories with a substantial bibliography and an introductory essay written by Dingbo, while the Italian edition does its best to make up for the years which have passed since the original publication with the addition of an essay on contemporary Chinese science fiction (another translation from English: an essay by Lavie Tidhar featured in the journal *Foundation* in 2003). Significantly, the blurb of the book stresses the presentation written by Frederik Pohl as being a reassuring guarantee for the Italian reader of the quality and interest of this unusual appearance of Chinese science fiction in the collection.

The short stories translated on this occasion were all first published, in the original language, between 1978 and 1987; noteworthy are the presences of Tong Enzheng, rarely translated into English despite having lived and taught in the United States for many years from the early 1980s (permanently after Tiananmen, until his death in 1997, see Clements 2014 c); Ye Yonglie, whose few short stories from among a vast production have been translated into English (Clements 2014 e); Wang Xiaoda with the novelette *The mysterious wave*, which gives the title to the collection, and which is also his only work translated into English up to now; and a “founding father” of Chinese science fiction, such as Zheng Wenguang, included with his short story “The mirror image of the Earth” re-printed in various other English anthologies, in which elements of criticism towards the

Cultural Revolution are recognizable.<sup>11</sup>

For many of these authors, the short stories in this 2006 collection were the first works ever to appear in Italian, and will remain so. The exceptions are Ye Yonglie, who appeared in Italy in 1989 with the futuristic-crime short novel *L'ombra delle spie sull'isola di Giada Verde* (the translation, in one volume, of *Bidao dieying* and *Fan Chao-liu*, from the 1980s Jin Ming series) and would be included in the collection *Shi Kong* in 2010, and Zheng Wenguang, who would also be included the next 2010 collection (with the same 1980 short story, “Diqu de jingxiang”, translated in 2010 as “La Terra allo specchio”).

In 2010 came the next, very different, anthology of Chinese science fiction published in *Urania: Shi Kong: 时空 China futures*: the first anthology ever translated directly from the Chinese into Italian by Lorenzo Andolfatto (Andolfatto 2010 b).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Authors and stories included in *L'onda misteriosa* are: Tong Enzheng with “The death of the world’s first robot” (“Shijie Shang Diyi ge Jiqiren zhi Si”, 1982) and the novelette *Death ray on a Coral Island* (*Shanhu Dao Shang de Siguang*, 1978); Wei Yahua with “Conjugal happiness in the arms of Morpheus” (edited version of “Wo Jueding yu Jiqiren Qizi Lihun”, 1981 and “Wenrou zhi Xiang de Meng”, 1982, see Clements 2014 d, see also Clements 1995); Ye Yonglie with “Reap as you have sown” (“Zishi Qiguo”, 1981) and “Fushi” (1981); Wang Xiaoda with “The mysterious wave” (“Shenmi de Bo”, 1979); Zheng Wenguang with “The mirror image of the Earth” (“Diqu de Jingxiang”, 1980); Jiang Yunsheng with “Boundless love” (“Wubian de Jianlian”, 1987). For English titles, I refer to the *Internet speculative fiction database* unless otherwise indicated; for original titles and years of publication I refer to the authors’ entries in Clute, Langford and Nicholls 2014, *ad vocem*. For Chinese names, I follow here the criterion adopted, in this case, also by Mondadori: surname first, according to the Chinese convention.

<sup>12</sup> With an introduction by Lorenzo Andolfatto and an appendix including short biographies of the authors, a report by Lorenzo Codelli from the

Once again, the aim of the publication was to give the Italian reader a general idea of the most recent Chinese production, and the editor chose to translate works written between 1980 and 2006, first appearing in the popular magazine *Kehuan Shijie* (see Clements 2012, Iannuzzi 2015 a).<sup>13</sup>

For many of these authors this is the first (and, once again, the last, up to August 2014) translation in Italian, in particular for Jin Tao, Liu Wenyang, Wang Jinkang, Liu Cixin and He Xi. Some of these authors are hardly known in the English world either, while others are now being translated in English and acquiring new visibility (noteworthy is the translation of Cixin's first novel of the "Three body trilogy", that has been announced by Tor Books in 2013, to be published in 2014, see Tor 2013). Only Han Song has already appeared in Italy, in 2009, with the short story "La Grande Muraglia" ("Changcheng") featured in the magazine *Fata Morgana*.

The interesting fact is that the appearance of *Shi Kong* in 2010 coincided with a cultural event: the presentation of a series of ten Chinese science fiction films at the annual *Science plus fiction* festival held in Trieste, probably the most important science fiction film festival in Italy. In fact, the

*Science plus fiction festival* (science fiction film festival held in Trieste) on the retrospective series *China Futures*, and the article "*Shi Kong*" by Giuseppe Lippi.

<sup>13</sup> Authors and stories included in *Shi Kong* are: Zheng Wenguang with "Diqu de jingxiang" (1980); Jin Tao with "Yueguangdao" (1982); Ye Yonglie with "Fushi" (1981); Han Song with "Yuzhou mubei" (1992); Liu Wenyang with "Shanguang de shengming" (1994); Wang Jinkang with "Shengming zhi ge" (1995) and "Jue dou zai wangluo" (1996); Liu Cixin with "Liulang diqu" (2000); He Xi with "Liudao Zhongsheng" (2006). For original titles and years of publication, I refer to the credits in the Italian volume.

connection between the anthology and the festival is made clear in the book, which has an appendix with a general presentation of Chinese science fiction films and files on the ten films shown in Trieste. While the editor and translator, Lorenzo Andolfatto, wrote the general introduction to the anthology and short biographies of the authors, the appendix on Chinese science fiction cinema and on the series presented during *Science plus fiction* is by Lorenzo Codelli, one of the major experts on science fiction cinema in Italy. There is an afterword by the editor of the series *Urania*, Lippi, as a short, general overview on Chinese science fiction literature today.

Just as with the presentation by Frederick Pohl in 2006, the link with an Italian film festival works as a “credential” with which to present Italian readers with a selection clearly perceived as unusual. The publisher somehow saw a Chinese anthology as a risk and it was programmed as an “extraordinary” initiative, therefore linked to a special occasion (also prepared by the publishing of a dossier on the previous issue of the series, Andolfatto 2010 a).

Interestingly, there are parallel examples when it comes to Italian translations of Japanese science fiction. The anthology *La leggenda della nave di carta* (literally “The legend of the paper spaceship”), published in 2002 by Fanucci (one of the most well-known specialized Italian publishers), is the translation of an anthology entitled *The best Japanese science fiction stories*, edited by Martin Greenberg and John L. Apostolou, which appeared in 1989 (curiously, the same year as *Science fiction from China*).

Despite the introductions by the editor and translator Ilaria M. Orsini, and by one of Italy’s finest science fiction experts, Carlo Pagetti, the anthology is lacking in what might be

expected from the first important anthology of Japanese science fiction ever to appear in Italy. It is lacking aspects such as biographies or notes about the authors, an overview on the history of Japanese science fiction, and a more in-depth analysis of its current tendencies. The original English anthology (and therefore the Italian one) includes authors with very different fortunes in the Anglo-American world: Abe Kōbō (with “The flood”, 1951) for example, has been already widely translated in English (Clements 2014 a, Bolton 2009), while Hanmura Ryō (despite wide recognition in the Anglo-American world as one of the “founding fathers” of Japanese science fiction) has rarely appeared in translation (Clements 2014 b, Tatsumi 2000). Many of these authors (e.g. Komatsu Sakyō) had only appeared sporadically in English translation in magazines, while only a few of them - such as Hoshi Shinichi and Ishikawa Takashi - had personal collections translated into English by Japanese publishers such as Kadansha International and *The Japan Times*, especially during the late 1970s and the 1980s. These publishing initiatives were devoted to the translation of Japanese science fiction into English, initiatives of a kind which does not exist in Italy.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The Italian *La leggenda della nave di carta* includes all the authors and stories present in the English *The best Japanese science fiction stories* (some of which had appeared before also in various English language magazines): Abe Kōbō (Abe Kimifusa) with “The flood” (“Kōzui”, 1950); Hanmura Ryō (Kigono Heitarō) with “Cardboard box” (1974) and “Tansu” (1983); Hoshi Shinichi with “Bokko-chan” (1958, English translation 1963) and “He-y, come on ou-t!” (“Oi, Detekoi”, 1958); Ishikawa Takashi with “The road to the sea” (1981); Kita Morio (Saitō Sōkichi) with “The empty field” (1973); Komatsu Sakyō (Komatsu Minoru) with “The savage mouth” (“Kyōbō-na Kuchi”, 1970) and “Take your choice” (“O-erabi Kudasai”, 1967); Kōno Tensei (Kōno Norio) with “Triceratops” (1898); Mayumura Taku (Murakami Takuji) with “Fnifmum” (1989); Tsutsui Yasutaka with “Standing woman” (“Tatazumi Hito”, 1974); Yano Tetsu with “The legend

On the other hand, the selection of short stories present in the original English version, is enriched with some interesting extras: the short stories are preceded by some testimonies on Hiroshima, selected from a volume edited in 1951 by Arata Osada (Osada 1951); the Italian edition also adds the stories: “Time warp complex” by Shono Yoriko (“Taimusurippu konbinato”, winner of Akutawa Prize in 1994) and translated into English in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, in 2002 (see Pääjärvi 2011); Takekawa Sei with “On a moonless night”, from the anthology *New Japanese voices* (Mitsios 1991); Ōhara Mariko with “Girl”, included in the anthology *Monkey brain sushi* in 1991 (Birnbaum 1991) and later reprinted in English in the anthology *Speculative Japan* (van Troyer and Davis 2007).

Another example is the anthology *Onryo, avatar di morte* (Onryo, deadly avatar), published in *Urania* in 2012 and edited by Danilo Arona (a well-known Italian horror writer) and Massimo Soumaré (the latter was also the translator from Japanese). The anthology contains a rather unusual miscellany of works both by Japanese and Italian authors, with a general introduction and biographical notes on the authors written by the editors. As regards the Japanese section, we have short stories all first published during the 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

of the paper spaceship” (“Origami Uchūsen no Densetsu”, 1978). For Japanese titles and years of first edition (not indicated in the Italian volume) I refer to the authors’ entries in Clute, Langford and Nicholls 2014, *ad vocem*. For Japanese names I follow the Japanese criterion: surname first.

<sup>15</sup> Japanese authors and stories included in *Onryo* (with a significant presence of women writers) are: Bandō Masako with “Shiabane no koe” (1996), Inoue Masahiko with “Odoroyu no jiken” (1990), Kamon Nanami with “Jitsuwa” (1996), Komatsu Sakyō with “Kudan no haha” (1968), Minagawa Hiroko with “Tsuki no hikari” (1991) and Shibata Yoshiki with

Once again, in the case of *Onryō*, the selection of authors and stories from the Far East is presented as a special event, and the association of Japanese with Italian authors points to how Italians are seen as an unusual presence in the Italian science fiction market (as opposed to the *canonical* role still firmly attributed to the Anglo-Americans) and thus presented on special occasions, just as translations from other languages are.

On another level, the focus of the anthology on a horror theme exemplifies an interest in Japanese horror that tends to prevail over interest in *hard science fiction*;<sup>16</sup> and the introduction explains the thematic criterion of the anthology, the role of *onryō* and *yūrei* within contemporary Japanese horror, and the influence of this collective imaginary outside Japan, also thanks to the international success of many films during the 1990s.

Italian readers encounter many of these authors in translation, in another series - the anthological collection *Alia*, published by the small CS\_Libri in Turin, which is divided into three sections devoted to Anglo-American, Italian and Japanese science fiction (as sections of the same volume until 2006 and again from 2011; in 2007 and 2008, the Japanese collection

“Tsukiyo” (1999). The Italian stories, which alternate in the volumes with the translated ones, are: “Antracite” by Alessandro Defilippi, “Fobia” by Samuel Marolla, “Barocco kaidan” by Massimo Soumaré, “Il cacciatore di figli posseduti” by Stefano Di Marino, “Vale va bene” by Danilo Arona, “La donna dai capelli ramati” by Angelo Marenzana.

<sup>16</sup> The anthology was initially to be featured in another Mondadori collection - the fantasy collection *Epix*, which closed before the publication of the volume (Iannuzzi 2015 b), but interestingly, when it comes to Japanese science fiction, the fantastic and the uncanny seem to prevail over *hard science fiction* in other cases too, as later in the text. On the idea of *hard science fiction*, see Cramer 2003.

was published as a separated volume). The Japanese section is edited by Soumaré. Here, Soumaré translates and proposes to an Italian public Japanese authors of different generations, featuring short stories that represent a vast range of non-realistic narratives - from techno-scientific oriented science fiction to horror, surrealism, and the fantastic. Some of the authors featured in *Alia*, such as Tsutsui Yasutaka, Hoshi Shinichi and Komatsu Sakyō,<sup>17</sup> are acknowledged as important authors in contemporary Japanese literature, irrespective of the genre in which their work may or may not be classified.

In the Japanese section of *Alia*, we find authors who had never been translated into Italian or English before. In the first volume (Catani et al. 2003) for instance, the Japanese section is devoted to a sophisticated look at the roots of the contemporary fantastic, featuring authors active during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, such as Yamamura Bochō (Tsuchida Hakujū), Yumeno Kyūsaku (Sugiyama Yasumichi), Miyazawa Kenji, Unno Jūza (Sano Shōichi), Dazai Osamu, along with Hayami Yuji, who belongs to a subsequent generation. Others had appeared in Italian before, mainly with short stories published without any science fiction marker, in literary magazines such as *Il Giappone* or *A Oriente!* (this is the case of Yumeno and Miyazawa), or even with personal collections and novels, published by small and medium-sized companies such as Marsilio or *La vita felice* (e.g. Miyazawa) or even bigger ones such as Feltrinelli (Dazai) (Sumaré 2003).

A younger generation of writers - born during the 1950s and the 1960s - was presented to the Italian readers in *Alia* in 2004

<sup>17</sup> Komatsu was also featured in the above-mentioned collections - *La leggenda della nave di carta* and *Onryō*. In 2007, *Alia* features a short story with a historical setting: “Fuori della zanzariera” (Kaya no soto).

(Catani et al. 2004). Many of these writers, Asagure Mitsufumi, Hayami Yuji, Iino Fumihiko, Inoue Masahiko, Ōta Tadashi, Shinoda Mayumi, and Tsuchida Yasumi, are extremely popular in Japan, and they often work in different genres in addition to the fantastic (especially mystery stories, crime novels, and young adult fiction).

With Shinoda (an author incidentally interested in Italian history and settings in her stories),<sup>18</sup> we finally see the appearance of a female author, who will be featured again in the 2005 volume (Catani et al. 2005), this time in company of Bandō Masako, Kumi Saori (Hatano Ineko), Onda Riku (Kumagai Nanae), and Ueda Ake.

In the 2005 volume, Bandō represents that production of Japanese horror already famous abroad thanks to Suzuki Kōji's *Ring* (1991) and its adaptations for the big screen.<sup>19</sup> In Soumaré's introduction, the characteristic use of traditional Japanese folkloristic imagery quite rightly leads to a comparison with the Italian author Danilo Arona. Asamatsu Ken is also an important author of supernatural and historical fiction, well known in Japan, also as the editor of H. P. Lovecraft's complete works (the volume features the short story "Deichūren, il fiore di loto nel fango"; Asamatsu was also included in the 2007 volume).

Of course, the science fiction repertoire is not the principal one recognizable in the work of these and many other authors presented by *Alia*. In fact, it is sometimes hardly present at all,

<sup>18</sup> The protagonist of Shinoda's "Opus magnum" (in Catani et al. 2004) is Leonardo da Vinci; "Il sangue santo" ("Seinaru chi", in Catani et al. 2005) belongs to a vast cycle in which a part is played by Christian imagery connected to the Vatican and Italy.

<sup>19</sup> Especially the Japanese 1998 *Ring*, directed by Nakata Hideo, and the American remake *The ring*, directed, in 2002, by Gore Verbinski.

being replaced with fantastic, hallucinatory and dreamy stories, horror narratives, and, furthermore, urban-fantasy, traditional fairy-tales,<sup>20</sup> and so on. The authors (such as Kikuchi Hideyuki in 2005, or the above-mentioned Onda Riku) often intentionally work *across* different genres; this is a choice in line with the cultural project of the series, which is precisely that of presenting the whole “archipelago” of non-realist literature.<sup>21</sup>

Scientific elements tend to prevail in a few cases - with very different results, such as in Unno’s “Il caso dell’omicidio del robot” (“Robotto satsugaijiken”, 1931, in Catani et al., 2004) or Sena Hideaki (Suzuki Hideaki) with “La pendola del crepuscolo” (“Tasogare hashiradokei”) and “Il primo ricordo” (“Saisho no kioku”, in Catani et al. 2005).

Coming rapidly to the present day, the sixth volume in 2011 (Sumaré, Mana and Treves 2011), went back to the formula of a single volume featuring Italian authors and translations, and significantly extended the geographical area of interest to other East Asian countries, adding China (Qiufan Chen, Fei Dao, Haitian Pan) and Singapore (Dave Chua, Alvin Pang, Mei Ching Tan, Cyril Wong) to the Japanese presence. After a few years’ pause, a new version of *Alia* began in June 2014. With the new title of *Alia Evo* (where *Evo* is short for *Evolution*), the publication migrated to a digital format, trying to overcome the obstacles related to financial sustainability and especially to distribution often faced by small-scale paper publication.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Alia*’s reader is invited to reflect on the variety and contamination of genres in contemporary Japan literature and on the importance of the traditional fairytales and their repertoire of imagery is underlined also by Inoue Masahiko 2004.

<sup>21</sup> “L’arcipelago del fantastico” is the subtitle of the series.

<sup>22</sup> See Citi 2014; on the presence of small and micro publishing initiatives in Italy during the 2000s, see Ferretti 2004, pp. 331-336; and for examples

With a prevalence of Italian authors, *Alia Evo* seems willing to continue its research among East Asian authors, and the volume features the previously mentioned Chinese author Fei Dao (Jia Liyuan, an author who also wrote for *Kehuan Shijie*, but did not appear in *Shi Kong*) and the Japanese writer Kamino Okina.

In conclusion, it may be said that “generalist” science fiction collections - those collections in the science fiction domain which are aimed at reaching the largest possible readership - such as *Urania*, tend to avoid risky initiatives, and in the Italia market, this means perpetuating the idea of science fiction as a literary product translated from English, while other cultural traditions are usually ignored. Consequently, when it comes to the science fiction production of other cultural areas, such as from East Asian countries, the need is felt to present vast, representative selections of authors and tendencies, so as to provide the reader with a general idea (if not a *canon*) of science fiction from other countries. This is the approach followed by the anthologies described above, and the presentation of these anthologies as special events, linked in with other cultural initiatives (the film festival in Trieste for *Shi Kong*) is a move in the same direction. Their presentation as the results of specific studies on the other hand (accompanied by special critical apparatus, introductions and after-words) responds to a perceived need to guide Italian readers through uncharted territory and avoid alarming them, by continuing to stress the exceptional nature of the volume presented.

Stronger cultural projects involving the translation of East Asian science fiction are to be found among smaller publishing

of the growing relationship between small-scale paper-based publishing initiatives and digital media in Italy, see Iannuzzi 2009.

houses, which sometimes operate with a specific niche of readers in mind, or with the specific aim of broadening their readers' horizons of expectations.

Even though translations from other languages are very small in number compared to those from English, it would be possible to extend a mapping of translations of East Asian science fiction in Italy to other cases, looking for example at those science fiction novels and short stories published without any generic label (as noted in the cases of Miyazawa and Dazai), at their fortunes, and at the intriguing relationship between literary translations and wider cultural exchanges.<sup>23</sup> This is something that I would very much like to be the subject of subsequent studies, in order to obtain a clearer understanding of just how important a role is played by publishers, editors, and translators in shaping our literary landscape and our idea of global science fiction.

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<sup>23</sup> This in a contemporary context in which the interaction and integration between different media is increasingly important. See Bertoni 2013 on the example of the “Korean wave”.

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