ASPECTS OF SCIENCE FICTION SINCE THE 1980S:
CHINA, ITALY, JAPAN, KOREA

PRESENTATION OF A RESEARCH PROJECT, AND BOOK LAUNCH

Trinity Long Room Hub – Arts and Humanities Research Institute
Trinity College Dublin – Thursday 10 December 2015, 4 to 5.30 pm

SPEAKERS:
CHIAKI ASA (SENRI KINRAN UNIVERSITY, OSAKA); ROBERTO BERTONI (SLLCS, TCD);
LORNA CARSON (TRINITY CENTRE FOR ASIAN STUDIES);
DECLAN COOGAN (GLOBAL RELATIONS OFFICE, TCD);
ENRICA MARIA FERRARA (SLLCS, TCD);
GIULIA IANNUZZI (TRIESTE UNIVERSITY);
RENA SPERANDIO (ITALIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE, DUBLIN)

[“Mistery of Light” – Foto Rb, 2015]
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Aspects of science fiction since the 1980s: China, Italy, Japan, Korea is a research project on science fiction in East Asia and the West. It involves essays on cultural studies, literary criticism, creative writing, and translation. The project originated in Ireland in 2014, was created and co-ordinated by Roberto Bertoni, and included the participation of colleagues from China, Italy, Japan, and Korea. This led to the publication of three volumes, a conference, and two book launches (one in Ireland and one in Italy).

One volume, published in 2015 by Trauben (Turin) and the Italian Department at Trinity College Dublin, has the same title as the whole project, and includes essays, interviews, and short stories, by Lorenzo Andolfatto, Chiaki Asai, Roberto Bertoni, Chen Qiufan, Giulia Iannuzzi, Ilgu Kim, Massimo Soumaré, and Wang Yao.

A second volume, published in Italy by Trauben (Turin) in 2015, is Roberto Bertoni’s Two stories from Paralolino (translated from Italian into English by Maria Tirelli).

A one-day conference, held at Hannam University (Daejeon, South Korea), was co-ordinated by Ilgu Kim. The Proceedings were published by Hannam University (2014) under the title East/West Science Fiction.

The Western/Asian project does not intend to study the problem expressed in its title in a systematic way, yet it is hoped that it may contribute to the general picture.

Warm thanks go to all authors and to all who participated in the research, as well as to Trinity College Officers Olivia Waters (International Marketing Manager) and Jenny Lu (Country Advisor for China) for their help in contacting Chinese writers.

SUMMARY OF BOOK CHAPTERS

In addition to two short stories (by Chen Qiufan and Wang Yao) the book entitled Aspects of science fiction since the 1980s: China, Italy, Japan, Korea includes the following chapters:

1. Chiaki Asai, “Social concerns expressed in science fiction works by Japanese writer Sayuri Ueda”, discusses the author’s social concerns and the way in which they might be relevant both to Japan and Europe. One of the Ueda’s major themes is the transformation of the human body as we can see in a number of her books, for example Mars Dark Ballade and The Cage of Zeus. Discrimination due to gender and sexuality is also an important concern along with environmental preoccupations. All of these motifs, as well as relativity of human-centred presuppositions, appear clearly in The Ocean Chronicles, set in a future society in which, due to catastrophe, living creatures have been transformed to suit the new environment. Technology and time travel characterize some other works she wrote.

2. Roberto Bertoni, “Eastern and Western Interactions in Some Italian, Japanese and Korean Science Fiction Works”, examines what Coletti calls the “world novel” in relation to intercultural themes belonging in Asian and Italian literature. Some Italian mainstream authors used science fiction and were inspired positively by Asian models. This is the case with Bonaviri’s Il dormiveglia and Benni’s Terra!. But some other authors wrote in rather prejudicial anti-Asian terms, as the case is very sadly with Scurati’s La seconda mezzanotte. In turn, East-Asian authors integrated Eastern and Western elements in world-wide read texts, for instance Murakami’s 1984. Visual works inspired by science fiction also present hybridization – the two examples considered are Oshii’s animation Sky Crawlers, and Shin’s TV serial Rooftop Prince.

3. Ilgu Kim, “Alternative Reality in Some Texts by Korean Writer Bok Geo-II within the Context of Western and Eastern Science Fiction”, focuses on the theme of travel through time and construction of alternative reality by analysing first Philip K. Dick’s The Man in the High Castle in comparison and contrast with some Japanese and Korean stories based on the concepts of Eastern mutability and Western determinism. The central text examined is Bok’s In Search of an Epitaph, in which a continuation of Japan’s colonization of Korea is imagined. According to this essay, works such as these show to what extent confidence has been lost in the accessibility of history, but the true value of the Korean work is a critique of self-aggrandizing.

4. Wang Yao, “National Study in the Era of Globalization: Chinese Science Fiction and Its Cultural Politics since the 1990s”, is a study of modern Chinese science fiction as a committed literary genre which presents itself as allegory of what she terms as “China Dream” in its utopian as well as contradictory aspects. In the period since the 1990s she sees Chinese science fiction as a national allegory in the age of globalisation. She considers the writers belonging in a group called “Cenozoic Era”, sub-divided into three sub-groups – i. those who express dystopia; ii. The
triad comprised of writers He Xi, Liu Cixin and Wang Jinkang who have established literary criteria for science fiction; and iii. the political irony and dark imagery of Han Song and others.

5. 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”, takes issue with the fact that science fiction is par excellence a genre suitable to study trans-national literature, as recent anthologies of both global and national science fiction show. She reconstructs the story of the translation of Chinese and Japanese science fiction in Italy in terms of interest in non-hegemonic and non-Anglo-American varieties of writing that are, however, connected to Western stories both in terms of models and as stimulation for further western work. She also interviews Lorenzo Andolfatto and Massimo Soumaré, who are two of the main translators respectively from Chinese and Japanese into Italian.

**BIOGRAPHIES**

Chiaki Asai is an English professor at Senri Kinran University in Osaka, Japan. She has published articles extensively on English and American authors with ecocritical themes, as well as on some contemporary Japanese authors. She has contributed literary essays to several books, and is currently working on a monograph about literary aspects of Rachel Carson’s three books that revolve around the sea.

Roberto Bertoni, Associate Professor of Italian, and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, has published on Italian and intercultural East Asian/Italian topics. He edits the online journal Carte allineate (http://cartescoperterecensionietesti.blogspot.com/). His last book of short stories is Altrove (Manni, 2014). Personal site: http://postservic0.wix.com/roberto-bertoni.

Lorna Carson is Director of the Centre for Asian Studies, Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics, and Fellow of Trinity College Dublin. Her research, which resulted in numerous publications, focuses on multilingualism, population diversity and language learning, with a particular emphasis on urban multilingualism. She is the current President of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL).

Declan Coogan has a degree from Trinity College Dublin and a Masters in International Trade Management from Santiago de Compostela University. He was Director of International Marketing and head of the MSc in International Business in Portobello College. He managed European Recruitment and Admissions at Dublin Business School. He now manages TCD international recruitment strategy, and is responsible for both the Regional Officers and Country Advisors.

Enrica Maria Ferrara is Adjoint Professor of Italian Literature and Culture at Trinity College Dublin. She has published on various topics of Italian and Comparative Literature in academic books and journals. Her latest volumes include: Calvino e il teatro (Peter Lang, 2011); and Il realismo teatrale nella narrativa del Novecento: Vittorini, Pasolini, Calvino (FUP, 2014).

Giulia Iannuzzi is honorary Fellow in Literary Criticism and Comparative Literature at Trieste University. Her main research interests are science fiction; cultural relationships between the USA and Italy; history of publishing houses; new media; ecocriticism. Among her books are: Fantascienza italiana. Riviste, autori, dibattiti, dagli anni Cinquanta agli anni Settanta (2014); and Distopie, viaggi spaziali, allucinazioni. Fantascienza italiana contemporanea (2015). Web: https://units.academia.edu/GiuliaIannuzzi.

Renata Sperandio has been Director of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of Dublin since March 2015. Her previous postings include the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of New York and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura of Hamburg. She started reading science fiction when she was 13 (Ray Bradbury and Fred Hoyle) and has never really stopped.
4 pm.  Introduction, by Roberto Bertoni.

4.10 pm.  Speech, by Lorna Carson.

4.15 pm.  Book launch, by Enrica Ferrara.


5 pm.  Speech, by Renata Sperandio.

5.05 pm.  Speech, by Declan Coogan.

5.10 pm.  Questions and answers.

Institutions participating in the book launch: Global Relations Office (TCD), Italian Cultural Institute (Dublin), School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies (TCD), Trinity Centre for Asian Studies, Trinity Long Room Hub.

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