

Howell, Yvonne, ed. *Red Star Tales: A Century of Russian and Soviet Science Fiction*. Montpelier, VT: Russian Life Books, 2015. 463 pp. \$20.00. ISBN 978-1-880100-38-7.

Red Star Tales is a labor of love by some of the top scholars and translators of Russian and Soviet science fiction. This excellent anthology began as a Kickstarter project, and on its website we are told that "424 backers pledged \$21,444 to help bring this project to life" (You can see the Kickstarter video at: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/russianlife/red-star-tales/description>). The publisher, Russian Life, generously pledged that two copies of the book would be donated to more than two hundred schools and universities in the United States where Russian is taught.

The editor is Yvonne Howell, author of *Apocalyptic Realism: The Science Fiction of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky* (1994). Translators include Anindita Banerjee (*We Modern People: Science Fiction and the Making of Russian Modernity*) and Muireann Maguire and Sibelan Forrester, contributors to a special issue of *Slavic Review* (Spring 2013) on Soviet-era science fiction. Howell's introduction to *Red Star Tales* is highly accessible to the non-specialist and, at the same time, an invaluable resource for the Russian scholar who may be new to science fiction.

The stories themselves are divided into three sections by chronology. Part 1, "Red Star Rising [1892-1915]," includes texts by philosopher Nikolai Fedorov and rocket scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, both of whom had an enormous influence on Soviet-era science fiction. Valery Bryusov's tales "Rebellion of the Machines" (1908) and "Mutiny of the Machines" (1915), both translated by Banerjee, are a welcome addition to the frequently reprinted "Republic of the Southern Cross."

Part 2, "Red Star in Retrograde (1926-1946)," includes Alexander Belyaev's "Professor Dowell's Head" (translated by Maguire), a story that captures the early Soviet fascination with life after death. Maguire chose to translate the original edition, which is useful, since the 1938 expanded novel already exists in translation. Alexander Kazantsev's 1946 "Explosion: The Story of a Hypothesis" (translated by Nora Seligman Favorov) is a speculative account of the Tunguska event of 1908 and will therefore be of interest to a general audience. Likewise, Andrei Platonov's "The Lunar Bomb" should be a welcome addition to anyone who teaches Platonov's other translated work.

The stories in part 3, "Red Star Reforming [1958-1992]," take up roughly half of the book, which is a wise choice, because it makes the anthology very useful for courses dedicated to literature and culture of the Cold War. This part includes previously untranslated pieces by the Strugatsky brothers ("The Spontaneous Reflex" [1958] and *Those Burdened by Evil* [1988], both translated by Kevin Reese). These and other fascinating tales from the era of the Space Race will make a solid foundation for a comparative course on Soviet and U.S. science fiction.

Red Star Tales is reasonably priced, which makes it an excellent choice for undergraduate courses on the Soviet era or on comparative science fiction. The introduction will be invaluable to teachers and students, especially those without a background in Russian and Soviet literature. The translations are excellent, and the book as a whole is carefully edited. My only criticism is that it would have been nice to see footnotes, such as those in Howell's translations, throughout the collection. One can only hope that the appearance of *Red Star Tales* marks an upsurge in the teaching of Russian and Soviet science fiction. Equally important, this collection is a fun read and opens a portal onto a fascinating world of speculative fiction previously unavailable to Anglophone science fiction fans. This affordable collection will make an excellent gift for your next Cosmonautics Day celebration!

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