



South Korean Sci-Fi and Transnational Technocultures

Wednesday, February 20 | 5 p.m. | Joyce J. Camilleri Hall

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

- Ted Chiang is one of the most influential science-fiction writers of his generation. The Seattle-based Chinese American writer is the winner of four Nebula Awards, three Hugo Awards, the John W. Campbell Award, three Locus Awards, and the Sidewise Award. The 2016 film *Arrival* was based on one of his short stories.
- Soyeon Jeong is a science-fiction writer, translator, and human-rights lawyer. Her short story collection *Yeonghui Next Door* (*Yeopjip ui Yeonghui ssi*) was the 2015 Book of the Year for Young Adults in South Korea. She is the chairperson of the Science Fiction Writers Union of the Republic of Korea and the executive director of the Boda Initiative, a non-profit whose mission is the education of children in developing countries.
- Sang Joon Park is an editor, translator, publisher, archivist, columnist, and critic. He has been responsible for publishing more than 100 sci-fi works in Korean translation and has contributed to cultivating a new generation of Korean sci-fi writers by serving as the founding editor of *Fantastique* (2007–2010) and the organizer of a wide range of reading communities and visual-art events on speculative fiction. He teaches sci-fi-related courses at multiple Korean universities.
- Gord Sellar is a South Korea-based writer of speculative fiction, a blogger, and a chronicler of sci-fi culture in Korea. He has contributed to numerous magazines and published and presented papers on Korean sci-fi cinema and the uses of sci-fi in South Korean academic and public discourse.
- Sunyoung Park is an associate professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Gender Studies at USC, and the editor of Kaya Press's Korean Literature series.
- *Requiem for Bodhisattvas: The Kaya Anthology of South Korean Science Fiction*, edited by Sunyoung Park and Sang Joon Park, is forthcoming from Kaya Press in March 2019.

ABOUT SOUTH KOREAN SCI-FI

Excerpted and adapted from the introduction to Requiem for Bodhisattvas

Coming from a country renowned for its high-tech industry and multispeed broadband yet still mired in the unfinished Cold War, South Korean sci-fi offers fresh perspectives on global technoindustrial modernity and its human consequences.

While South Korean science fiction is influenced by both Anglophone and Japanese sci-fi traditions, it also has developed some distinctive characteristics. For instance, South Korean science fiction often has a strong sense of the apocalypse having already happened, whether through colonization, war, dictatorship, or the corporate monopolization of resources. Another distinctive characteristic of South Korean sci-fi is that it tends to feature aliens and monsters less as external threats than as reflections of the self. Main characters are often post-human, non-human, or almost-human; if they are human, they might be a human who empathizes with the aliens. Protagonists in South Korean sci-fi are less likely to have superpowers than to be vulnerable subjects marked by marginality and difference.

The modern literary genre of science fiction was introduced to Korea in the early twentieth century through translated works by authors such as Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Karel Čapek. By the 1950s and '60s Korean sci-fi started to develop its own unique traditions in the midst of the rapid modernization of the nation. The science-fiction authors of that era tended to have an optimistic, cosmopolitan (if also Cold War-inflected) view. By the 1970s, the view had turned more dystopic, now looking at the realities of life under a dictatorship in a fast-industrializing society. As in the United States and elsewhere, in this era a small but critical subgenre of science fiction developed in South Korea that might be called "the science fiction of protest."

The 1980s were a time of unrest and social activism in South Korea. Science fiction, and popular culture broadly, had a few quiet years of low creative output under the authoritarian regime of Chun Doo-hwan. But around the country's political democratization in 1987, the critical and dissident vein of science fiction resurfaced once again. And then came the 1990s, when the production and consumption of science fiction in Korea exploded. Fan clubs were active on a pre-Internet telecommunications system, and popular magazines devoted to sci-fi were launched.

Today, science fiction is a rising and ever-shifting genre in South Korea. The protest tradition of social engagement is still very much alive, and there is also an increase in feminist and queer voices in science fiction that is only expected to grow in the years to come.

READYMADE BODHISATTVA: THE KAYA ANTHOLOGY OF SOUTH KOREAN SCIENCE FICTION

Readymade Bodhisattva: The Kaya Anthology of South Korean Science Fiction is the first book-length English translation of science and speculative fiction from South Korea. It brings together both classic and contemporary stories from the 1960s through the 2010s.

KAYA PRESS

Kaya Press is the premier publisher of cutting-edge Asian and Pacific Islander diasporic writers in the United States. Kaya publishes many forms of writing, including experimental poetry, noir fiction, film memoir, avant-garde art, performance pieces, and “lost” novels. Kaya and its authors have been the recipients of numerous awards, including the Gregory Kolovakas Prize for Outstanding New Literary Press, the American Book Award, the Association for Asian American Studies Book Award, the PEN Beyond Margins Open Book Prize, the Asian American Writers’ Workshop Award, and the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Prize. Founded in 1994 in New York, Kaya Press is now housed in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at USC.

“Kaya was the name of a tribal confederation of six Korean city-states that existed from the middle of the first until the sixth century CE. It is remembered as a utopia of learning, music, and the arts due to its trade and communication with China, Japan, and India.

Much as the word ‘kaya’ can be found in many different languages, our publishing vision is to explore the multiple connections, chance or otherwise, between cultures. In Sanskrit, ‘kaya’ means ‘body’; in Japanese, ‘kaya’ often refers to a type of yew tree that withstands harsh conditions; in Tagalog, it means ‘to be able’; and in Turkish it means ‘rock.’ In Zulu, ‘kaya’ means ‘home.’” —Kaya Press

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Did any speculative or sci-fi ideas explored in the event especially grab your attention?
- In what ways is South Korean sci-fi connected to American sci-fi or other sci-fi traditions you may be familiar with? How does South Korean sci-fi differ from other sci-fi traditions?
- How does the specific context of South Korea inform sci-fi projects created there?
- What influence do you think the first book-length English translation of South Korean sci-fi might have on English-language readers?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Kaya Press
kaya.com
- Gord Sellar’s blog on South Korean Science Fiction
gordsellar.com/series/sf-in-south-korea
- South Korean SF Association
koreasf.org/wp/ksfa (in Korean)

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

REBECCA MICHELSON of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about today’s event. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. journal articles and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.



Ted Chiang



Soyeon Jeong



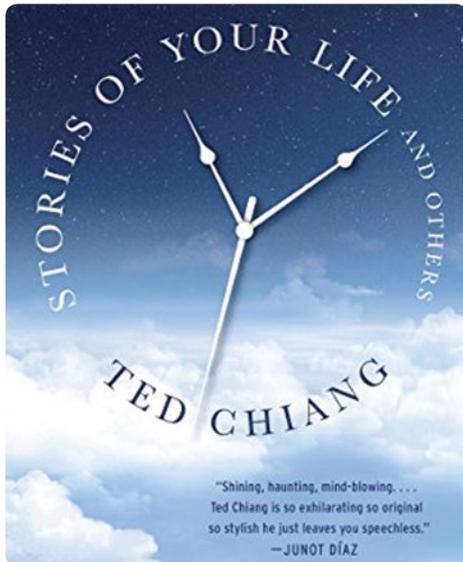
Sang Joon Park



Gord Sellar



Sunyoung Park



BOOKS

Chiang, Ted. *Stories of Your Life and Others*, 1st ed. New York: Tor, 2002.

Grand Depository: PS3603.H53 S76 2002

Wong, Kin-yuen, Gary Westfahl, and Amy Kit-sze Chan. *World Weavers Globalization, Science Fiction, and the Cybernetic Revolution*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.

Doheny Memorial Library: PN3433.5 .W67 2005

Knickerbocker, Dale. *Lingua Cosmica: Science Fiction from Around the World*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.

Doheny Memorial Library: PN3433.5 .L56 2018

DATABASES

Kanopy Streaming Service

Kanopy is a streaming video service that provides access to videos on the following topics: Film & Popular; Education (k-12); Global Studies & Languages; Health; Media & Communication; and Social Sciences.

National Library of Korea (NLK 국립중앙도서관)

Korea's largest library, NLK is especially strong in books from the colonial period.

JOURNALS

East Asian Science, Technology and Society

Fantastique: Fantasy, SF, Mystery, Horror, Culture Magazine

Journal of Korean Studies

Words Without Borders: The Online Magazine for International Literature

JOURNALS ON SOUTH KOREAN SCIENCE FICTION

Park, Sunyoung. "Between Science and Politics: Science Fiction as a Critical Discourse in South Korea, 1960s–1990s." In "Science and Literature." Special issue, *Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no. 2, ed. Christopher Hanscom and Dafna Zur (October 2018): 347–367.

Sellar, Gord. "Another Undiscovered Country: Culture, Reception and the Adoption of the Science Fiction Genre in South Korea." *Acta Koreana* 14, no. 1 (2011): 153–174.

Shin, Helen. "Beyond Representation and Simulation: Surviving the Age of Mediation and Its Failure in Kim Young-Quiz Show." *Journal of Korean Studies*, 20, no. 2 (2015): 261–289.

JOURNALS ON NORTH KOREAN SCIENCE FICTION

Berthelie, Benoit. "Encountering the Alien: Alterity and Innovation in North Korean Science Fiction since 1945." *Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no. 2 (October 2018): 369–396.

Zur, Dafna. "Let's Go to the Moon: Science Fiction in the North Korean Children's Magazine Adong munhak, 1956–1965." *Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 2 (2014): 327–51.

MORE SOUTH KOREAN SF STORIES ONLINE

Kim Bo-Young, "An Evolutionary Myth" Trans. Gord Sellar and Jihyun Park. *Clarkesworld* 104 (May 2015). clarkesworldmagazine.com/bo-young_05_15/

Jeon Sam-hye. "Genesis." Trans. Anton Hur. *Words without Borders*, June 2016. wordswithoutborders.org/article/june-2016-the-queer-issue-vii-genesis-jeon-sam-hye-anton-hur

DVDS

Villeneuve, Denis, Heisserer, Eric, Levy, Shawn, Levine, Dan, Ryder, Aaron, Linde, David, Adams, Amy, et al. *Arrival*. Hollywood, California: Paramount Pictures, 2017.

Leavey Library: CIRDSK-DVD LVYDVD 11125

