Transnational Humanities in Korean Studies

Thursday 19 May – Friday 20 May 2016

Seminar Room, Australian Centre on China in the World (Building 188)
The Australian National University

‘Cinema in Seoul, 1966’ is from the private collection of Dr Roald Maliangkay. Used with permission.
Important Information

Venue

The ‘Transnational Humanities in Korean Studies’ Conference will take place in the Australian Centre on China in the World (Building 188, Fellows Lane, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200 Australia).

The conference will take place in the Seminar Room. All meals (morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea) will be held in the Tea House and are available free of charge to all participants.

Internet

You can access wireless internet for the duration of the conference through ‘ANU-Secure’ in the CIW building.
About the Conference

The transnational movement of people, ideas and material cultures is not novel in the contemporary era. Transnational mobility has been with us throughout human history, but since the nineteenth century the pace has become unprecedentedly rapid due to the combined forces of imperial expansion, capitalist development, and industrialization. Furthermore, border-crossing mobility, whether intended or by force, was no longer limited to a few privileged elites, it fell into the purview of a much wider segment of the population.

In this conference "transnational humanities" is understood in its broadest possible sense, aiming to capture the dynamic movement and networks of people, ideas and materials across national boundaries as pivotal forces that shaped and reshaped modern and contemporary Korea. This conference will bring together scholars and students whose research sheds new light on the history of Korea from a transnational perspective. The conference is composed of three sessions. The first session, *Korea and the World in Literature*, will explore the flow of ideas between Korea and the wider world through the medium of literature. The second session, *Negotiating National Identities in Film*, will explore identity and culture as represented in film. The final session, *Space, Society, and Gender*, will address different types of social constructions: views on urban and rural spaces in visions of modernity in colonial Korea, transborder membership politics and bureaucratic procedures throughout the twentieth century, and the conceptualisation and performance of masculinity in recent times across East Asian cultures.

The Transnational Humanities in Korean Studies conference aims to investigate specific cases that demonstrate the nature, process and outcome of transnational flow, networks and actors, centering on Korea. The conference will also provide opportunities for student-led discussion and open discussion for a dynamic and constructive investigation of how scholars can engage with the questions raised by transnational mobility and the interactions of peoples, societies, and cultures.
Program: Thursday 19 May 2016

9:30-9:40  Opening  
Speaker: Professor Hyaeweol Choi

9:40-10:10  Transnational Humanities in Korean Studies Project Member Discussion  
Speakers: Professor Hyaeweol Choi, Dr Roald Maliangkay, Dr Ruth Barraclough,  
Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Dr Geng Song

10:10-10:30  Morning Tea

10:30-12:30  Session 1: Korea and the World in Literature  
Chair and Discussant: Ruth Barraclough

  Presentation 1  
Reciprocal Assets: Science Fiction and Democratization in 1980s South Korea  
Sunyoung Park  University of Southern California

  Presentation 2  
East Asian Unconsciousness of Translation and World Literature  
Jinyoung Park  Yonsei University

12:30-13:30  Lunch

13:30-15:30  Session 2: Negotiating National Identities in Film  
Chair and Discussant: Roald Maliangkay

  Presentation 1  
Modern Goods from the New World and the Affects of Border-Crossing: Re-imagining the Colonial Past  
Hyunjung Lee  Nanyang Technological University

  Presentation 2  
Powers of the False and Real Fiction: Migrant Workers in Contemporary South Korean Mockumentaries  
Hye Seung Chung  Colorado State University

15:30-16:00  Afternoon tea

16:00-17:00  Presentation 3  
The Colonial Perception of Ri Kōran's Films in Korea and Taiwan  
Naoki Watanabe  Musashi University
Program: Friday 20 May 2016

09:30-10:30  Session 3: Space, Society, and Gender
Chair and Discussant: Hyaeweol Choi

Presentation 1
Subverting the Standard: Agrarian Modernism through Spatial Reconstruction in Colonial Korea
Albert Park Claremont McKenna College

10:30-11:00  Morning Tea

11:00-12:00  Presentation 2
Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea
Jaeeun Kim University of Michigan

12:00-13:00  Special Chair and Discussant: Ariel Heryanto

Presentation 3
Transnationalism and East Asian Masculinities
Geng Song University of Hong Kong

13:00-14:00  Lunch

14:00-15:30  Graduate Student Round-table
Discussion led by AKS students

15:30-16:00  Afternoon Tea

16:00-17:00  Open Discussion
Abstracts

Session 1

Presentation 1

**Reciprocal Assets: Science Fiction and Democratization in 1980s South Korea**
Sunyoung Park (University of Southern California)

This paper examines the interrelation between futuristic cultural imaginations and the political process of democratization in South Korea during the 1980s. Analysis is focused on the ways in which works of Korean science fiction appropriated some of the genre's established tropes and conventions within the context of the decade's activist culture. Pok Kŏl's alternate history novel *In Search of an Epitaph*, for instance, made an innovative anti-imperialist and anti-militarist use of the formal strategy of reimagining the past in order to project an alternative future. Similarly, Sin Ilsuk's graphic novel *Born in 1999* engaged a postapocalyptic and posthuman imagination in the service of feminist activism, featuring as it did a psychokinetic female warrior who confronts established patriarchy while battling against alien invaders. A careful reading of these and other texts reveals a fascinating two-way exchange between social activism and science fiction in late twentieth-century Korea. On the one hand, science fiction advanced the activist cause by providing a convenient cover of fictionality and the allure of fantasy for oppositional imaginations. On the other hand, resonance with activist causes endowed science fictional works with gravity and respectability in a cultural environment that had been until then hostile to irrealist and speculative fiction. The paper closes with some reflections on the cultural historical significance of 1980s science fictional literature. The surging popularity of science fiction in South Korea beginning in the 1990s was due in no small measure to the genre's affinity to counterculture, and today still a tradition of activist fantasy is very much alive in the country.

Presentation 2

**East Asian Unconsciousness of Translation and World Literature**
Jinyoung Park (Yonsei University)

World literature is a historical concept that can only be established and carried out through translation into the native language. Translations in East Asia are accompanied with intentional misreading and unintentional misunderstanding. The world literature imagined in three countries — Korea, China and Japan — is neither singular nor politically equal. Problematizing the spirit of the age and imagination of translations in East Asia in the first half of the 20th century provides new perspectives that methodologies of comparative literature or translation studies cannot capture. The translations for "A Doll's House" by Henrik Ibsen and "The Last Lesson" by Alphonse Daudet are a great example showing how contemporary European literature is incorrectly interpreted and reproduced in the context of the age in East Asia. On the other hand, the difference of viewpoints for The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck and Moment in Peking by Yutang Lin is produced through translations by ideological transformation of the other — China — and East Asian self-representation. Translation is a cultural praxis and effect that actualize 'East Asian World Literature' and bring it to historical movements.
Session 2

Presentation 1

Modern Goods from the New World and the Affects of Border-Crossing: Re-imaging the Colonial Past
Hyunjung Lee (Nanyang Technological University)

The Japanese colonial period in Korea at the turn of the twentieth century stands as the crossroads of various contradicting desires: while it was an era of colonial violence and oppression it was also the dawn of a new world with discursive forms of fascination borne by the lure of modernity. Aside from the grand narratives of colonial history and discourses, it is equally important to consider and discuss the significance of popular, material cultures and modern commodities that directly affected people in their everyday lives. Especially, the younger generation of Kyungsung (Keijo) was suddenly exposed to the wonders of the modern urban lifestyle, let alone the repressive social reality they had to encounter as the second-class citizens of a colonial city. Modernity in forms of popular culture and commodities have also allowed Koreans to imagine cosmopolitan interconnections between different places and to re-conceptualize themselves in relation to other national subjectivities outside the national border.

By examining three post-2000s South Korean films that focus on the popular, everyday cultures of modern Seoul--YMCA Baseball Team (dir. Kim Hyun-sok, 2002), Radio Days (dir. Ha Ki-ho, 2008), Modern Boy (dir. Jung Ji-woo, 2008)--this paper discusses how modern technology and materials in people’s everyday lives (such as sports, radio, jazz music and dance) have functioned as a physical and symbolic medium that ushered people to transcend their existing national/ethnic boundary. Focusing on how the current popular films represent the significance of such modern commodities, I also explore to what extent these films endeavor to represent an alternative take on the Korean colonial past. Through cinematic styles replete with nostalgia and the aesthetics of retro-cultures, these films attempt to transcend the grand, nationalistic narratives of the history by highlighting more complex, private realms of the given times--but eventually fail to cross the rigid borderline of the national.

Presentation 2

Powers of the False and Real Fiction: Migrant Workers in Contemporary South Korean Mockumentaries
Hye Seung Chung (Colorado State University)

This paper examines the mockumentary aesthetics and representation of migrant workers and immigrants in director Moon Seung-wook’s The City of Cranes (Sit’i obû k’ûrein, 2010), a tourism promotion film partly financed by South Korea’s Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism. Despite the inclusion of picturesque landscape shots of Incheon enhancing the agenda of the film’s state sponsor, The City of Cranes has subversive potential insofar as it not only blurs the boundaries between documentary and fiction but also rejects truth claims related to the authenticity of images or the constructed notion of national identity. Drawing upon Deleuze’s theory of the “powers of the false,” the paper explores the possibilities of creating a new type of cinematic praxis and a new identity through the experimental blending of real characters (playing themselves), documentary images, and staged scenes.
Yoshiko Yamaguchi (Ri Kōran/Shirley Yamaguchi/Lee Xianglan, 1920-2014) was a transnational movie star and a famous pop singer in East Asia during and after WWII. During the time when Japan invaded China, she presented herself as ethnic Chinese, using her Chinese name Lee Xianglan. During this time, she played roles in Japanese policy films such as Shina no yoru (China Nights, 1940), Wangshiliufang (Eternity, 1943), and Watashi no uguisu (My Nightingale, 1943/4), that were produced by the Manchukuo Film Association. Her film career continued after the war, appearing in Hollywood films and Hong Kong films such as Japanese War Bride (1952) and Akatsuki no dassō (Escape at dawn, 1950) respectively. In this presentation, in order to think about marginalization of some facts in Ri Kōran’s self-narrating and her myth, I would explore about the colonial reception of her films in Korea and Taiwan. The reason why I restricted the subject and the areas to Colonial Korea and Taiwan is that we could find some incidents and materials relating to Ri Kōran because Yamaguchi could not devote more attentions to Japanese imperial colonies so intensively. These are not just simple incidents and materials to be explored. These facts could change the meanings of her self-narrating and her films and could become hints to clarify what kinds of selves Yamaguchi had in narrating Ri Kōran.
Session 3

Presentation 1

Subverting the Standard: Agrarian Modernism through Spatial Reconstruction in Colonial Korea
Albert Park (Claremont McKenna College)

Pushed by Japanese colonial authorities and prominent Korean intellectuals, popular imaginations of modernity stressed urbanization with industrialization as the means for Religious-based agrarian movements by groups such as the YMCA, Presbyterian Church, and the Ch’ŏndogyo Church vigorously contested these established visions of Korea’s future. They carried out elaborate drives to reorder the countryside for the birth of a rural modernity that would feature an agricultural-based moral economy and forms of identity and consciousness rooted in the present. These pursuits to reconstruct rural Korea into a modern agrarian paradise were fraught with immense challenges as they battled two opposing forces: modernists who desired an electric urban future and traditionalists who longed for a pristine rural past.

This paper explains the rationale behind and efforts of these agrarian movements through the theory of reclamation—a concept from landscape architecture that stresses a temporal and spatial framework of modernity that is centered on the present and sensitive to place. This paper emphasizes how these movements furnished an alternative path of modern life that sought to subvert the standard meaning of modernity that had ironically tied together the norms of Korean modernism and of Japanese colonialism. It explains how these movements were in line with and influenced by agrarian drives for modernity from other parts of the world that sought to decenter industrial and urban-based visions of modernity. In particular, the paper focuses on the influence of the Danish Cooperative System on these drives to reconstruct rural Korea.

Presentation 2

Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea
Jaeeun Kim (University of Michigan)

Over the last two decades, scholars have shown growing interest in the relationship between the state and “its” external members (e.g., emigrants, diasporas, and ethnonational “kin”). This presentation, based on my forthcoming book with the same title, examines the role of the historically evolving and mutually interlinked bureaucratic practices in shaping the contours of this transborder membership politics over time. I develop a set of theoretical arguments about how bureaucratic procedures contribute to the making, unmaking, and remaking of the “homeland” state and the “transborder nation”: by constituting the conceptual grid through which a state identifies and enumerates “its” transborder population and mobilizes them for its own agendas; by mediating the reiterative encounters between the state and “its” transborder population, and thereby shaping the vernacular idioms of self-identification of the latter; and by leaving durable documentary traces, to which a state turns to validate the belated claims to national belonging by those whose long defunct ties to their “homeland” seem ambiguous or suspicious. I flesh out these claims through the analysis of two contentious episodes of transborder membership politics: South Korea’s effort to create its own docile citizens out of ethnic Koreans in Japan in a fierce competition with North Korea; and South Korea’s effort to control its territorial and membership boundary from ethnic Korean “return” migrants from China.
This paper discusses the dynamic interactions between East Asian cultures in the construction of masculinities in recent years. It has become a global trend to study men and masculinities in a cross-cultural and transnational context. In East Asia, phenomena such as “Pan-East Asian soft masculinity” have attracted increasing scholarly attention. The sweeping “Korean Wave” and images and discourses originated from Japanese ACG culture such as Otaku and moe have great impacts on expressions of masculinity in Chinese cyberspace and popular culture. On the other hand, however, masculinity is associated with nationalist sentiments and is defined by exclusion of and even confrontation with national Others in the Self/Other dichotomy. A salient example is heroic masculinity in anti-Japanese TV drama, a government-sanctioned and market-oriented genre of TV entertainment in contemporary China. By critical readings of new images and discourses emerged from transnational imagination, the paper explores how ideal manhood is constructed and negotiated through the complex entanglement between gender and national identities.