2022
Hans Christian Andersen Award Nominee
Republic of Korea

Writer

Yi Hyeon
cover & inner image source:

Wanini the Green Lioness (Ills. by Oh Yun-hwa, Changbi Publishers, 2015)

I’m Opportunity, a Mars Exploration Rover (Ills. by Choi Kyung-sik, Manmanbooks, 2019)
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Yi Hyeon was born in Busan in 1970. As a child, she loved books and displayed skill at writing. In middle school, she devoured romance comic books; while in high school, she took to writing poetry and novels of unspecified form and genre, while dabbling in romance stories. At university, she studied Korean language and literature, after which she worked for a while at an advertising agency and as a writer for an educational TV network. Yi Hyeon took on various jobs, as a part-time lecturer at a cram school, a writing teacher, the owner of a bookstore, the owner of a private library, and an activist at a support center for migrant workers. While working at these various jobs, she threw herself into writing novels. Her short story “Trains, Forever Sounding Their Horns, Always Racing Towards the Light” (2005), which was based on her experiences as a party member of the Democratic Labor Party during the 2004 Korean general elections, earned her the 13th Chun Taeil Literary Award in the fiction category.

Emboldened by this recognition, Yi Hyeon was about to launch a career as a fiction writer when an editor of children’s books persuaded her to turn to children’s fiction. With her collection of short stories Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy! (Changbi Publishers, 2006), she received the grand prize at the 10th Changbi Good
Children’s Book awards, which marked the start of her career as a children’s book author. Since then, she has written over 50 fiction and non-fiction titles, including the young adult novel *Our Scandal (Changbi Publishers, 2007)*, the SF book *Planet of Robots (Prunsoop Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010)*, the historical novel *1945, Cheolwon (Changbi Publishers, 2012)*, and the picture book *I'm Opportunity, a Mars Exploration Rover (Manmanbooks, 2019)*. In doing so, Yi Hyeon has continuously challenged herself to cross over stories and genres to experiment with folk tales, history, sports, science, fantasy, martial arts, and mystery. She was also praised as “a breath of fresh air in Korean creative children’s books for the new millennium,” and is recognized as a superlative storyteller.

Yi Hyeon has consistently pioneered new territories and paved new roads. As a result, her oeuvre has expanded to various realms. In one interview, Yi Hyeon described herself as an author who “loves verbs.” She is drawn not to the static, but to the dynamic. This also brings to mind the soliloquy of Opportunity, a character in *I'm Opportunity, a Mars Exploration Rover*, who announces that: “Nothing happens if you stay still. You’ll be safe, but you also won’t discover anything. I’m a Mars exploration rover, and that means I will press on towards unknown roads.” Just as Opportunity marched steadily down unfamiliar paths in a silent, lonely, and unknown planet, Yi Hyeon continues to press on as well, showing her newly discovered world of stories in a dedicated, ever-changing, and interested way.

Known as a serious workaholic, Yi Hyeon loves traveling just as much as she loves her work. Cuba, Mongolia, China, Canada, the U.S., Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Serengeti National Park, and the South Pacific are just some of the places she’s visited, which, when connected by a straight line, would be enough to circle the planet three or four times. These journeys have allowed her to present works that transcend time, space, and theme. *Wanini the Green Lioness (Changbi Publishers, 2015)*, an adventure fantasy based on a strong female character inspired by Serengeti National Park, was much beloved by readers, and ultimately led to the publication of its sequel, *Wanini the Green Lioness 2 (Changbi Publishers, 2019)*.
Yi Hyeon has been hailed as a gifted storyteller who transformed Korean creative children’s tales in the 21st century. Since the year 2000, Korean creative children’s stories began demonstrating a narrative style that was different from what was considered traditional. Specifically, these stories were more descriptive in developing characters, employing various perspectives in interpreting our world along with its ironic tensions and conflicts, presenting bleak realities, and depicting open-ended or even sad endings. This new crop of writers which includes Yi Hyeon has been experimenting with these narrative styles that have been praised for being more modern and innovative. At the same time, there were concerns that these new styles might seem difficult for younger readers, and even inconsiderate of their needs. The most representative of Yi Hyeon’s works are the short stories “Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!” and “Three Days,” which were included in her first short story collection Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy! (Changbi Publishers, 2006). “Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!” involves the interesting dialogue of a man who delivers Chinese noodles, and presents a subjective and positive worldview while also satirizing the world. “Three Days” tells the story of three children from
different backgrounds and contexts who share a strong friendship that is tested when one of them runs away from home. The fact that the story employs the points of view of all three characters to present a more dimensional story, and the fact that the story ended without providing any real closure to the emotions involved, were taken up as causes for concern.

At the time, this narrative style was not often found in children’s literature. There were heated debates over which comes first—the author’s need for creative expression, or the consideration given the readership’s level of comprehension and understanding. Despite these concerns, Yi Hyeon pushed through with her work amidst these transitional debates, mindful of a need for postmodern worldviews, contemporary narrative strategies, skepticism of the traditional, realism-oriented creative writing style, and changes in worldly understanding of young readers. She was able to do so because she had faith in her young readers. As a result, she succeeded in establishing a new standard for Korean children’s stories in the 21st century and captivated readers with her spirited storytelling skills.

Since her debut in 2006, Yi Hyeon has been sensitive to the issue of violence. *Our Scandal (Changbi Publishers, 2006)* dealt with the physical and verbal violence that can take place in and outside of the classroom, along with the many forms of resistance to such violence. *Hooray for Jang-soo! (Urikyoyuk Co., 2007)* warned of the dangers of violence that may go unnoticed in the lives of young children and teenagers. This novel began with a soliloquy by the main character Hye-soo: “In a word, my family is what you might consider an average Korean family.” However, her normal routine is uprooted when Hye-soo is dragged to the underworld. Now turned into a ghost, Hye-soo is shocked when she learns that Jang-soo, her perfect older brother who used to be a top student, is contemplating suicide. Other books have explored similar themes—the stresses of achieving a certain academic level, confusion over one’s identity—but in her book, Yi Hyeon introduced the foreign elements of the netherworld, shamans, and ghosts to force the readers to look at the issue and risks of violence that are camouflaged as “normal” in our own society. This mindset is why the optimistic thinking of “longevity is best” and “nothing else
matters other than to live a long life” has prevailed.

Since 2010, Yi Hyeon’s works have featured strong, powerful female characters in forceful, consciously crafted story arcs. Criticizing the male character bias in Korean children’s books, Yi Hyeon presented her works with female characters as their main protagonists. The Seventh Arrow (Munhakdongne Publishing Group, 2017), Very Small Kid (Human Kids Publishing Company, 2018), and Fighters of Legend (Changbi Publishers, 2019) are all based on mythical contexts or motifs, but the experience of participating in a hero’s destiny or adventure, which is typically enjoyed by boys, has been given to young girls instead. In Very Small Kid, the kid’s gender is only revealed at the end of the story, almost like a twist. “You thought the kid was a boy? Why? When there was no mention that he was?” asks the author, as if challenging the reader to ask herself why she assumed this kid, whose parents begged the Mountain God for three long years to have, and who bravely restored their village by outsmarting a group of thieves, was a boy, and not a girl.

The recently published The Secret of Yeondong-dong (Changbi Publishers, 2020) is also a book presented in a feminist point of view, describing the adventures of a passionate little girl who solves mysterious attacks on animals and women.

What is truly extraordinary are Yi Hyeon’s Wanini the Green Lioness series (Changbi Publishers, book 1 2015, book 2 2019). In these books, Yi Hyeon imagined the brave lioness Wanini, based on the ecological characteristics of lions, and wrote a charming female adventure narrative without attempting to artificially reorient traditional gender roles. Wanini is a “weak, small lion, who will never amount to a true hunter, a useless little creature” who nevertheless develops into an amazing
huntress. She overcomes obstacles and creates her own pride of lions, but she lacks land, has no rights to mate, and has no children. Wanini's pride is not made of blood relations. They are all listless wanderers who unite to survive. In an unchartered, unmapped world, Wanini and her pride must find a way using their own wits, and in that regard, they truly are exemplary characters in contemporary children's fiction.

In typical anthropomorphized fiction, the same patriarchal norms and gender ideologies that rule our human world are applied in the animal world. However, Yi Hyeon does away with this ridiculous notion and instead, gives dynamic life to the world of Wanini. As such, readers can see that the world of wild animals governed by the rule of the jungle is one where "any of the songs we sing can come together as one" in a spirited chorus of life.

The Invention of New Ethics & a Wider Solidarity

At a time when science fiction wasn't typically seen as a genre for children, Yi Hyeon led the trend with the announcement of the three-part series Planet of Robots (Prunsoop Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010). Planet of Robots was praised as "Korea's first real SF children's storybook" and was embraced by critics and readers alike. In Planet of Robots, an AI robot goes on a journey in search of its rights, its freedom, and dreams, thereby raising philosophical questions such as whether we humans should see robots as humanistic entities capable of human thought and emotions, and whether humans and robots can have an equal relationship.
Critic Yoo Young-jong wrote that *Planet of Robots* deals with important post-humanist debates and forces the reader to think critically of the advancements in science and technology and their relationship with humans. Nara, the humanoid robot in the book, strongly protests the ills of a creatively barren, human-centric viewpoint.

“Here is my mind. You made us to be like humans. You made us to think, and to feel. We live with you and become more like you. We’re not puppies or cats. Although, it’s the same with puppies and cats. Why do you think you are the only ones who can feel? Why do all humans think they can do as they choose? Why do humans think they own everything? Why…” – Yi Hyeon, *Planet of Robots 1*, Prunsoop Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010, p. 64.

In the book, like-minded humans and robots engage in solidarity and participate in the protest. In the end, they end up creating new ethical guidelines for the freedom and coexistence of humans and non-human beings.

*The Secret of Yeondong-dong (Changbi Publishers, 2020)* is her latest work. Jung-hyo, a 12-year-old girl, lives in an aging multi-unit residence in the village of Yeondong-dong where she becomes involved in various incidents with her neighbors. Jung-hyo and her friends work together to get to the truth of the matter, without missing a single clue. In-chan, who uses his latest electric wheelchair to move around with ease, is excellent at finding clues and has great chemistry with Jung-hyo. However, because they are children, Jung-hyo and her friends are routinely ignored or stripped of their rights. Although they discovered the shocking truth behind an incident, they are pushed out of a site because it is “not a place for children to play,” and are later forced to only listen as adults do all the talking. Similar themes can be found in *Planet of Robots* and *Wanini the Green Lioness*. Children robots must be obedient and provide joy and comfort to their masters And Wanini, the lioness, goes ignored for being too weak and young, and then shows how unfair that treatment was.

Throughout all of her works, Yi Hyeon shows an appreciation and respect for the lives of children. She resists the violence that is displayed by anthropocentrism, androcentrism, and even adult-centrism. Instead, she marches on toward new stories of coexistence and solidarity, and an imaginative appreciation of the other.

- Cho Eun-sook(critic, professor of Korean language education, Chuncheon National University of Education)
Literature plays an important role for children in formulating perspectives on new phenomena and new problems. In fact, Children’s and YA SF are major resources for encouraging discussions on the relationship between emerging technologies and humanity. Science Fiction raises social, philosophical, and ethical questions the readers will likely meet in a near future. This paper examines posthuman imagination embodied in *Planet of Robots*. *Planet of Robots* is the first novel in Korean children’s and YA SF that embraces major discourses in post-humanism. Post-humanism is a contemporary theory that attempts to explain the meanings and implications of advanced scientific technology—such as biotechnology, computer technology, robotics, and IT technology—on us and our society. Post-humanism challenges the historical notions of “human” and “human nature,” the fundamental assumptions of traditional humanism, because humanism excludes the diverse subjects such as artificial intelligence, cyborgs, androids, and genetically altered beings that are “created” through technology in its consideration of humanity.

*Planet of Robots* uses a familiar motif of the conflict between humans and robots. However, it focuses more on the problems of human identity and robot subjectivity than the actual conflict itself. *Planet of Robots* exposes its readers to the concept of robotic beings as persons. It also calls for the collaboration among diverse beings for a better future. In so doing, *Planet of Robots* points out the importance of critical imagination in children’s education.

-Yoo Young-jong(critic)

From “Planet of Robots and Post-human Imagination”
Child and Young Adult Literature Study Abstract
Wanini the Green Lioness (Changbi Publishers book 1, 2015 book 2 2019) tells of the adventures of lions living in the vast African grasslands, quite different from the homes and schools we are used to in children’s books. With this series, Yi Hyeon has broadened the horizons of Korean children’s literature, and at the same time, received much love from her readers. We sit down with the author to discuss her art and her continued efforts to make new attempts across genres, including animal fantasy, young adult fiction, historical fiction, and SF.

Q. The Wanini the Green Lioness series is in the genre of animal fantasy. Were you always interested in animals growing up?

A. I have to say I wasn’t very interested in animals. But my daughter is, and she begged me for a pet puppy. This kindled in me an interest in puppies. I learned the joys of interacting with another life form outside of human beings. I am actually grateful to my daughter and to our puppies for this opportunity. It’s led me to have an interest in the Serengeti National Park, and in lions.
Q. Did you plan on writing a sequel to *Wanini the Green Lioness*?

A. Not in the least. But my young readers were waiting for the next story. They were very saddened by the death of the wandering male lion Asante, as found in the first book. Many of my readers wrote to ask that Asante be brought back to life in the sequel. I had no way of resurrecting a dead character, but because I was able to write a sequel, the adventures of Wanini could continue. The second *Wanini the Green Lioness* story was truly born of the efforts of my readers.

Q. Did you visit Serengeti in person while writing the sequel?

A. When I was writing my first book, I didn’t have the wherewithal to go to Tanzania for research. Instead, I turned to reading other books, watching documentaries, and researching online. I remember doing extensive research—to the extent I wore myself out. In preparing for the sequel, I had the chance to go to Serengeti. I was nervous that the real Serengeti might prove to be very different from what I wrote in the first book. Fortunately, there were no grave errors. But the Serengeti I’d only seen in pictures and online was very different from what I saw in person. Serengeti was truly a connection between the human world and the animal world. It made me see how animals are so much a part of our world. That’s why in the sequel, I started out by writing about the children in Tanzania.

Q. Was there something that inspired you to write *Wanini the Green Lioness*? Are there any characters you are particularly fond of?

A. I would have to say Wanini, the titular character. I’m also fond of Wanini’s grandmother Madiba, who is also the leader of her pride, and her group of lions. I had wanted to write about animals when by coincidence, I stumbled upon a documentary on the Serengeti. Of course, the lions attracted me the most. There was a pride of lions made of female lions, without any male to dominate them. These lionesses would roam around in search of water during the dry season. Once,
a young lioness fell to the ground. But the pride had to continue, and the camera stayed with the pride. But I wondered about that young lion. Did she survive? What happened to her? That lion was Wanini, and that’s when the story of Wanini began.


**A.** I am a female writer and yet I am often asked this question. When that happens, I wonder whether a male writer would be asked the same question if he were to have male characters as his lead protagonists. I don’t think so. It’s very natural for a female writer to write about female characters. So in a way, yes, this was intentional. There are more female writers than there are male writers, and there are more young girls who are interested in fiction as opposed to their male counterparts, and yet most children’s books center on a male protagonist. There are some that have female lead characters, but they typically play a supporting, passive role. It is because of that reality that I make a conscious effort to have strong, powerful females in leading roles.

**Q.** What is the message you want to send with the *Wanini* series?

**A.** Children’s lives are very limited in terms of their reach and scope. Korean children, I would presume, lead lives that are even more confined and restricted. There are many children who can’t even play and run around to their hearts’ content in their homes or in other ordinary places. But with stories, it’s different. There are no limitations or constraints in fiction. Children can travel back in time or go forwards in time. They can be free of all the things that are deemed proper and
true in this world. I want our children to see that world. Like Wanini, I want them to feel like they’re roaming free across the wide plains, and learn about creatures that follow a different set of rules, and imagine a world where other beings can live together in harmony. I want our children to see that there is so much more beyond their current realities, and the confines of Korea, and even this planet. Together with this small, weak lioness—and yes, a baby cub that might remind them of themselves—I want them to run wild and feel free.

Q. Your readers loved *Planet of Robots*. This book builds upon the Three Laws of Robotics as presented by Isaac Asimov as the core pillars of science fiction. Do they hold any particular meaning?

A. Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics is more than the rules that govern this novel. Those rules are the philosophical foundations for thinking about robots. Asimov’s works, and his Three Laws, were all revolutionary when they were first presented. That was back then. The Three Laws see robots as a tool and places humans at the center of all existence. This human-centrism is a very modern idea. The idea that man is the lord of all creation has long been contested, and the climate crisis, as well as all the challenges we see around us, are evidence of this fact. Through *Planet of Robots*, I wanted to question human existence. I wanted to pioneer a new path not through humans but through robots, and what’s more, through a young robot. Naro and Ara, the robots in the book, become free when they use the Three Laws program to remove a virus. But Neda thinks to herself and interprets the Three Laws correctly to become truly free. I believe children can do that. In fact, I believe children are the only beings who are capable of such free thought. They are capable of identifying the correct path to take.

Children have a high sense of self-esteem. They are proud of not only themselves but of the different elements that make them who they are. Children trust in other humans, love their country, and wish their neighbors well. They understand justice and believe in the power of love. They know how to value the things that are important to them. They hold to all those things that adults have long forgotten, in pursuit of other things.
A. I had the opportunity to visit the Cheolwon Workers' Party of Korea Headquarters building. Cheolwon was located north of the 38th parallel, the line that divided the two Koreas after liberation. At the time, it was part of what was known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The building that had been built as the Cheolwon branch for the Workers' Party was still standing in Cheolwon. It had maintained its sheer size and scale, but its exterior was heavily pockmarked from the shells and gunfire that had rained down on it during the war.

I cannot forget the feeling I had when I first stood in front of that building. How must it have felt for the Koreans to come together after independence to erect that building right next to the former Japanese police station? Even if there was pressure from the party, they must have felt an overwhelming sense emotion as they chipped in their own funds and hammered the nails into the cross beams to write a new history. And yet, those new hopes were crushed in just three years. Cheolwon was the first place to be devastated by bombings in the 1950 Korean War, and the Cheolwon Workers' Party of Korea Headquarters later became the Operational Command of the People's Army, then a field hospital, then later an abandoned building relegated to one side within the Civilian Control Zone. When I stood there, I could feel the tragic sorrows of Korea's contemporary history. Since then, for five years, I started thinking those novels and taking frequent trips to Cheolwon.

Q. What inspired you to write 1945, Cheolwon?

A. Cheolwon was located north of the 38th parallel and was completely destroyed during the war. Most of the residents of that town were killed or
fled north. It was difficult to find any relics, let alone any archives or other materials. The documents held by the U.S. Army that were slowly released after the 50th anniversary of the armistice helped somewhat. Later on, I met an elderly person who was born and raised in Cheolwon and was still living there. This individual was forced to take on a Japanese nationality while the country was still under colonial rule. When Korea was liberated he was in the eighth grade, and he suddenly found that he was living in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Soon, however, the Korean War broke out, and this man was suspected of wrongdoing by both North and South Korea. After much difficulty, he became a South Korean citizen following the armistice. His nationality changed three times before he reached his mid-twenties, and during that time, he lost almost his entire family. His stories helped me in my research. The character Hong Jeong-du that appears in 1945, Cheolwon is almost literally based on a communist partisan who was hiding as a servant in this man’s hometown. Some of the other characters are also reminiscent of the people who lived in Korea at the time. I wanted to introduce these people, who had mostly gone unnoticed in our textbooks, to our young readers. I wanted to convey a message of hope that had disappeared in our country due to the powerful people in South and North Korea. After all, we can still hope.

Q. You have written in various genres and attempted to take on new stories in history, sports, science, fantasy, and mystery. Is there anything new you’re trying out these days?

A. Quite simply, I am a feminist and a vegetarian. I love literature and children above all. And I will continue to write the stories that speak to these sides of me. Right now, I have plans to write more sequels to Wanini the Green Lioness, totaling 10 volumes. I want to write about the voices of the other animals, not just Wanini. I’m also planning to write the stories of young juvenile inmates in our court system and in detention centers, as these youth have not been discussed much in young adult fiction.
Planet of Robots 1, 2, 3
Ills. by Oh Seung-min

The series emphasizes the importance of coexisting with robots in a new machine civilization. - Jeong Jae-seung (professor of bio and brain engineering at KAIST)

This is a three-part science fiction series following the humanoid robots Naro, Ara, and Neda, manufactured by Robota Inc., in 2103, as they attempt to find freedom by participating in a revolt of the robots. Naro, Ara, and Neda practice values that make them seem more human than human beings themselves. Planet of Robots was widely acknowledged for challenging the Three Laws of Robots that have been regarded as cardinal rules in the genre of science fiction ever since Issac Asimov’s seminal work I, Robot. Planet of Robots not only led the new SF wave in Korean children’s storybooks in the 2000s but also raised fundamental questions about post-humanism where humans and robots coexist, instead of stoking irrational, vague fears and anxiety about a futuristic world.

In terms of genre, science fiction has been largely absent from Korean children and youth literature. And then, the three-part series Planet of Robots happened. The greatest charm of these books is that they are fun and fast-paced. Many familiar
elements of Korean society can be found in these tales. In a world divided into the sky city and the earth city, and further subdivided into the classes of Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta, the "torches" and the robots who seek ultimate freedom read as an allegory about the realities and dreams of our own children. -Kim Jin-gyeong [poet, children’s book author]

This series describes the lives and destinies of artificially intelligent robots; but what it really aims to tell is a story about the dreams of humanity. The themes of conspiracies, betrayal, trust, love, choices, and responsibility that are manifested as humans and robots clash, serve to reflect the world of humans. Through this futuristic world, the author is really forcing us to look back on our choices. -Won Jong-chan [critic, professor of Korean literature at Inha University]

This is an excellent imaginative piece about robots that have been made to serve humans, and attempt to transform the lives of those same humans. It’s a masterpiece that will serve as a milestone in young adult SF fiction. -From the Judges’ Statement of the 2012 Changwon Children’s Literature Award
1945, Cheolwon

I wanted to introduce people, who had mostly gone unnoticed in our textbooks, to our young readers. I wanted to convey a message of hope that had disappeared in our country due to the powerful people in South and North Korea. -Yi Hyeon

1945, Cheolwon tells the story of the people who lived in the town of Cheolwon, which became part of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea following the Korean Peninsula’s liberation from Japanese rule on August 15, 1945. The book was based on rigorous research. It is a historical novel about Korean liberation—one of the most monumental incidents in Korean modern and contemporary history—and the ensuing chaos, as seen from the perspective of the youth. Cheolwon was located along the 38th parallel, which divides the two Koreas. At the time the 38th parallel was drawn, Cheolwon happened to be located north of the line. However, as the battles progressed, the city soon edged further down south to South Korean soil. In this novel, the year 1945 and the location of Cheolwon provide important context to the conflicts and choices made by the characters. Gyeong-ae works as a servant to a family who was responsible for her parents’ death when she is told her country has become liberated. Ki-soo is the son of a pro-Japanese landlord who decides to lives as a communist. Eun-hye joins hands with a far-right terrorist group in an attempt to flee to Seoul after her family’s land is confiscated by the North Korean regime as part of its land reform policies. None of these young characters were free from
the tyrannies of history. The author restores, in painstaking detail, the townscape of Cheolwon and also vividly describes the people who experienced Korean modern and contemporary history in such turbulent times. Yi Hyeon later also published Seoul in the Summer of That Year (Changbi Publishers, 2013), a story of the Korean War as seen from the eyes of the youth, and once again solidified her position as a foremost historical writer.

Yi Hyeon managed to take a weighty subject with enormous scale and demonstrate how to write an amazing work of historical fiction. (…) While there were many literary works set in the post-liberation context, not many of them gave equal voice to all the characters, across all classes and subsets of society. Readers can have a more dimensional understanding of the dynamics that were at play in Korea after its independence. And they can also understand why their understanding had to have come from this book. Although we are many years past 1945, the town of Cheolwon itself has also been destroyed in the war. Its department stores, theaters, restaurants, and crowds of people all vanished, and the only thing left standing to bear witness to the hopes and dreams of the town’s residents is the old Cheolwon Workers’ Party of Korea Headquarters Building. (…) It’s difficult to find a book like 1945, Cheolwon where the people of a particular time and place in history are so perfectly and thoroughly developed. While based in history, this book is a true masterpiece in fiction. -Seon Anna (children’s book author, critic)
Dong-gu, the Gucheon Elementary School baseball team’s pitcher, Pureun, its catcher, and Young-min, the team’s newest player, want nothing more than to keep playing baseball as a team. However, to pursue the career professionally, they must go to a middle school with a good baseball team, which means they must do more than simply enjoy the game. They have to compete in national competitions and win. They must display their fullest potential so the scouts and coaches will take them to their middle schools. Their new coach pushes them on, to “not do your best, but be the best,” and yet no one can always win every single game. Some days, they lose, and some days, they win. With baseball though, the game ain’t over till it’s over. Which is why they must continue to shout, “Play ball!” That is the lesson they must learn if they want to keep playing the game they love.

"You have to learn how to lose well. Everyone knows how to win. But in baseball, it's all about losing. You have to know how to lose well. Life isn't a tournament. It's a league.” - From Play Ball
This is a story about baseball, but it’s so much more than that. It is the story of young boys who must confront their limitations and face the fact that they might not become the best at what they do. Play Ball tells the story of teenagers who are just old enough to understand that they are not invincible. Yi Hyeon is a writer who gives voice to teenagers. Her portrayal of the despair and the conflicts experienced by these youth, who are more men than they are boys, is convincing and realistic. She is superb at describing the game of baseball and of life in general. When Dong-gu stays on the mound although he knows he’s bound to lose the game, his coach says, “You have to learn how to lose well. Everyone knows how to win. But in baseball, it’s all about losing. You have to know how to lose well. Life isn’t a tournament. It’s a league.” The way to adulthood is paved with lessons all telling us that life isn’t about winning, but rather about knowing how to lose. However, no one knows what’s going to happen next. Just as it’s not over till it’s over with baseball, so is it true of life. -Han Mi-hwa (columnist)
Wanini, the small frail lioness is kicked out of her pride in the wild grasslands of Serengeti and meets other wandering lions to create their own pride and work to survive in the African plains. In Serengeti, all animals must do their best to survive in the wild. The youngest, most vulnerable animals are at risk every day, and this is the setting of Wanini and her friends’ adventures as they are forced to choose, decide, team up, and fight in the wild. The *Wanini the Green Lioness* series is one of the most favorite selections of elementary school children in Korea, for their “one book a semester” reading plans. It is widely beloved and appreciated by readers.

Wanini and her friends show that if each of us doesn’t give up and continues to work towards our goal, then humans and animals can one day live in mutual existence.
Children are more readily accepting of stories about creatures besides than humans. They see Wanini as themselves, not as the other. Our children, who have grown up within a safety net built with numerous safeguards and fences that their families and society have created, see Wanini and her pride survive in the wild and feel a sense of triumph. The reason the Wanini series is so well received by elementary school children, especially in their “one book a semester” reading plans, is not surprising. As the modern notion that humans are superior to other species starts to fade, there has been a demand to pursue coexistence between humans and non-humans. As there are more discussions on the rights of minorities, animals, and yes, children, I hope that we will see more of these books that challenge us to understand the other and escape the confines of a human-centric worldview. -Lee Pong (children’s book author)
This book was written by Yi Hyeon, with illustrations provided by Choi Kyung-sik. The Mars rover Opportunity, launched by NASA to conduct research on the surface of Mars in search of life, understand the climate, and study the geology, is featured as the book’s narrator. Its journey, from the beginning of its expedition to its end, is traced in full. Even as it becomes covered in sand and its wheels get stuck, Opportunity presses on to find traces of water on Mars and successfully completes its mission by taking pictures of craters and sending them back to scientists on Earth. Opportunity travels just 5 centimeters a second, and over a period of ten years, manages to cover 45.16 kilometers along the red surface of Mars. Opportunity’s solemn soliloquys as it explores the silent stretch of space go well with the black-and-white monotone illustrations, and present the book almost as a work of restrained poetry.
The Mars expedition rover Opportunity was born in 2004. Opportunity travels across the universe for six months to arrive in Mars, where it wakes up from a long sleep. On Mars, Opportunity must exist all by itself. Its twin robot Spirit has been sent to the other side of Mars. Opportunity’s mission is to slowly crawl across the surface of Mars and transmit its findings back to Earth. Its readers, who have calmly followed its story thus far, perk up only after its journey ends. Once free from its mission, Opportunity takes pictures of itself and pushes on to crawl over a hill and even to a place it hasn’t been before. “If I stay still, nothing will happen,” Opportunity tells itself, as it continues to press on. When one of its wheels gets stuck in sand, it spends over 30 days trying to pull itself out. And yet, it continues to journey on, exhibiting a beautiful, bold sense of purpose. “The stars of today will shine again,” it says, in a sentence that well demonstrates its philosophy. The restrained writing and thoughtfully illustrated images create a kind of majesty that shines through in this book.

-Kim Ji-eun [critic, professor of creative writing, Seoul Institute of the Arts]
Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!
Ills. by Yoon Jeong-joo | Changbi Publishers, 2006
ISBN 9788936442248 | 260pages | 152×225mm

Yi Hyeon’s debut children’s storybook, a five-part collection of short stories, navigates various themes including realistic issues such as part-time jobs, young love, running away from home, and poverty, as well as the future of the planet as seen from a sci-fi perspective.

Winner of the 10th Changbi Good Children’s Book
Excellent Literature Book by the Korean Culture and Arts Committee
Recommended Book by the Children’s Book Research Association
Rights sold to Japan

Our Scandal
Changbi Publishers, 2007
ISBN 9788936456016 | 216pages | 152×210mm

Set in a middle school classroom, this book vividly describes the online culture of teenagers who are used to texting, chatting, and online comments. While it also deals with issues such as school violence and single moms, the mood never gets dark.

Recommended Book of the Year by the Korean Association of Publishing and Culture
Youth Book of the Year, Gyeonggi-do School Library and Libraries Council
Children’s Book Research Association Recommended Book
2008 Children’s Peace Book Selection Committee for Young Adolescents
Rights sold to China, France

Hooray for Jang-soo!
Ills. by Byun Young-mi | Changbi Publishers, 2013, Revised Edition
ISBN 9788936442736 | 224pages | 152×225mm
*First edition Urikyoyuk Co., 2007, Ills. by Oh Seung-min

Hye-soo, an average girl, accidentally dies when the Undertaker makes a mistake. This fascinating fantasy tells us that everyone has the right to do what they want in life.

2020 Korean Language Teachers’ Meeting Recommended Book
The Seventh Arrow 1, 2
Ills. by Lee Ji-hye | Munhakdongne Publishing Group, 2017 | 153×220mm
book 1 ISBN 9788954445744, 196pages
book 2 ISBN 9788954445751, 188pages

This book tells of the adventures of Mara, the village’s most skilled archer, and her group of justice-loving friends. This fantasy was inspired from Korean traditional oral legend motifs such as ancient myths, the nine-tailed fox, the Underworld, martial arts techniques and dragon horses.

2017 Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Selected Book
2018 School Library Journal Recommendation Book

Very Small Kid
Ills. by Kwon Mun-hui | Human Kids Publishing Company, 2018
ISBN 9788965913504 | 132pages | 185×235mm

This book tells the story of a little kid who may be smaller and slower than her peers but continues to bravely face the world head on. Based on an ancient tale, Yi Hyeon has brought her own interesting perspective and personality to the story.

2018 Selected Book by Korean Culture and Arts Council
2019 Children’s Book Research Association Recommended Book
2019 Selected Book by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Better Me Children’s Book

The Secret of Yeondong-dong
Ills. by Oh Seung-min | Changbi Publishers, 2020
ISBN 9788936443108 | 240pages | 152×225mm

Twelve-year-old Jung-hyo teams up with her neighbors to solve puzzles in this neighborhood mystery. Heavy issues such as burglary, arson, bullying, and animal abuse, but the deep ties between the neighbors of Yeondong-dong provide a reassuring sense of comfort.
List of Awards and Other Distinctions

Awards and Recognition

2005 – The 13th Chun Taeil Literary Award
(for Trains, Forever Sounding Their Horns, Always Racing Towards the Light)

2006 – Winner of the 10th Changbi Good Children’s Book Contest in 2006
(for Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!)

2008 – Recipient of Daesan Creation Fund of the 16th Daesan Cultural Foundation
2012 – Changwon Children’s Literature Award
(for Planet of Robots 1, 2, 3)

Recommendations by book

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Awards and Distinctions</th>
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| **Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!** | Yi Hyeon    | • Winner of the 10th Changbi Good Children’s Book  
|                            | Yoon Jeong-joo | • Excellent Literature Book by the Korean Culture and Arts Committee  
|                            |             | • Recommended Book by the Children’s Book Research Association  
|                            |             | • Rights sold to Japan                                                                 | 2006 |
| **Our Scandal**           | Yi Hyeon    | • Recommended Book of the Year by the Korean Association of Publishing and Culture  
|                            | (n/a)       | • Youth Book of the Year, Gyeonggi-do School Library and Libraries Council  
|                            |             | • Children’s Book Research Association Recommended Book  
|                            |             | • 2008 Children’s Peace Book Selection Committee for Young Adolescents  
<p>|                            |             | • Rights sold to China, France                                                        | 2007 |
| <strong>“The Trespasser” in Rainbow</strong> | Yi Hyeon et al. | • Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book                                           | 2008 |</p>
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<td>Today Weather Is…</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
<td>• Recommended Book by the Children’s Book Research Association</td>
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<td>Kim Hong-mo</td>
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<td>• Recommended Book by Open Children</td>
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<td>Planet of Robots 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
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<td>Oh Seung-min</td>
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<td>The Encyclopedia of Korean Ghosts</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
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<td>Kim Kyung-hee</td>
<td>• Hanuri Recommended Book</td>
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<td>Children Are Children</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
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<td>Park Seo-yeong</td>
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<td>All My Man!</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
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<td>• 2019 Drama Copyright Agreement with Art Pictures (Production Company)</td>
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<td>The Encyclopedia of Korean Goblins</td>
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<td>Lee Yu-jin</td>
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<td>1945, Cheolwon</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
<td>• School Library Journal Youth Book of the Year</td>
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<td>• Recommended Book by National Library of Children and Youth</td>
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<td>• Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book</td>
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<td>• 2018 Recommended Book by Korean Language Teachers’ Meeting</td>
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<td>I’m on My Way to the Silk Road</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Baik Dae-seoung</td>
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<td>• Recommended Book by Gyeonggi Provincial Council of School Libraries and Libraries</td>
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<td>• Excellent Book Selected by Social and Cultural Foundation for Reading Books</td>
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<td>• Hanuri Recommended Books</td>
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<td>• Included in reading list for second semester of 6th grade</td>
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<td>• Recommended Book by School Library Journal</td>
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<td>Hooray for Jang-soo!</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Byeon Young-mi</td>
<td>• 2020 Korean Language Teachers’ Meeting Recommended Book</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Seoul in the Summer of That Year</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon</td>
<td>• Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Youth Recommended Book</td>
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<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>• Rights sold to Japan</td>
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| “Cat Day” in Blue Child                                             | Yi Hyeon et al.      | • 2013 Booktase Recommended Book  
• Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book  
• Indigo Seowon Recommended Book  
• 2016 Mokpo Public Library Book (Youth Section) Selection     | 2013    |
|                                                                      | (n/a)                |                                                                      |         |
| Samgungnyusa: Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms                      | Yi Hyeon  
Jung Seung-hee  | • 2015 Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book  
• 2016 Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Youth Recommended Book  
• 2014 Whale Breathing Library Recommended Book  
• 2015 Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Selected Book  
• 2015 Gyeongnam Reading Hanmadang Selection Book  
• 2015 Nam-gu Incheon Reading Relay Awards | 2014    |
| The Weight of Villain                                               | Yi Hyeon  
Oh Yun-hwa        | • 2014 Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Youth Recommended Book  
• 2014 Whale Breathing Library Recommended Book  
• 2015 Korea Publishing Culture Industry Promotion Agency Selected Book  
• 2015 Gyeongnam Reading Hanmadang Selection Book  
• 2015 Nam-gu Incheon Reading Relay Awards | 2014    |
| Wanini the Green Lioness 1, 2                                       | Yi Hyeon  
Oh Yun-hwa        | • Recommended Book by School Library Journal  
• 2017 Donghwa Dongmu Clan Selected Book  
• 2018 Children's Book Research Association Recommended Book  
• 2019 Selected Book by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Better Me Children's Book  
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| Spring of the Year of Imjin                                         | Yi Hyeon  
Jung Seung-hee  | • Whale Breathing Library Winter Vacation Recommended Books  
• Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book  
• Recommended Book by School Library Journal | 2015    |
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<td>It’s Okay, Even in the Ice Age!</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Kim Ryun-gun</td>
<td>Hanuri Recommended Book&lt;br&gt;Recommended Book by Gyeonggi-do Council of School Libraries</td>
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<td>Play Ball</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Choi Min-ho</td>
<td>Kyobo Bookstore Recommended Book&lt;br&gt;Recommended Book by the National Library of Children and Youth&lt;br&gt;Recommended Book by the Council of School Libraries and Libraries</td>
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<td>The Seventh Arrow 1, 2</td>
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<td>2017 National Library of Children and Youth Recommendation&lt;br&gt;2017 Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book</td>
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<td>I’m Opportunity, a Mars Exploration Rover</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Choi Kyung-sik</td>
<td>2018 Selected Book by Korean Culture and Arts Council&lt;br&gt;2019 Children’s Book Research Association Recommended Book&lt;br&gt;2019 Selected Book by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Better Me Children’s Book</td>
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<td>“On the Train” in Laughing Together</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon et al., Kyo Eun</td>
<td>2020 Sejong Book Culture Section Selected Book&lt;br&gt;2020 Book Recommendation for Happy Morning Book&lt;br&gt;2020 Gyeongnam Reading Hanmadang Selected Book</td>
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<td>Fighters of Legend</td>
<td>Yi Hyeon, Kim So-hee</td>
<td>School Library Journal Recommendation Book</td>
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*Note: The table includes books that have been recommended by various organizations and institutions, indicating their high quality and appeal in the field of children's literature.*
8 | Translated Editions

**Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!**
Korea | Changbi Publishers | 2006

ジャージャー麺がのびちゃうよ!
Japan | 現文メディア | 2010

**Our Scandal**
Korea | Changbi Publishers | 2007

我们的丑闻
China | 上海人民出版社 | 2011

**Café 0405**
France | Flammarion | 2011

**1945, Cheolwon**
Korea | Changbi Publishers | 2012

1945, 鉄原
Japan | Kageshobo Publishing Co. | 2018

**Seoul in the Summer of That Year**
Korea | Changbi Publishers | 2013

あの夏のソウル
Japan | Kageshobo Publishing Co. | 2019

**Wanini the Green Lioness 1, 2**

(unfinished)
China | Jieli Publishing House | Contracted for 2019
## Complete Bibliography

### Children’s Fiction

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Illustrator(s)</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<td>Your Noodles Will Get All Mushy!</td>
<td>Iills. by Yoon Jeong-jo</td>
<td>Changbi Publishers, 2006</td>
<td>9788936442248</td>
<td>260</td>
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<td>The Trespasser</td>
<td>Iills. by Kang Hee-jun et al.</td>
<td>Sakyejul Publishing Ltd., 2008</td>
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<td>Today Weather Is...</td>
<td>Iills. by Kim Hong-mo</td>
<td>Changbi Publishers, 2010</td>
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<td>Planet of Robots 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Iills. by Oh Seung-min</td>
<td>Prunsoop Publishing Co., Ltd., 2010</td>
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<td>Iills. by Oh Seung-min</td>
<td>Changbi Publishers, 2020</td>
<td>9788936443108</td>
<td>240</td>
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**Children’s Fiction**

*Wanini the Green Lioness*
Ills. by Oh Yun-hwa
Changbi Publishers, 2015
ISBN 9788936442804
216 pages, 152×225mm

*Wanini the Green Lioness 2*
Ills. by Oh Yun-hwa
Changbi Publishers, 2019
ISBN 9788936443054
224 pages, 152×225mm

*Spring of The Year of Imjin*
Ills. by Jung Seung-hee
Prunsoop Publishing Co., Ltd., 2015
ISBN 9791156750628
200 pages, 153×220mm

*It’s Okay, Even in the Ice Age!*
Ills. by Kim Ryung-un
BIRI Publishing Co., Ltd., 2016
ISBN 9788949161907
134 pages, 148×215mm

*Play Ball*
Ills. by Choi Min-ho
Hankyoreh Publishing Company, 2016
ISBN 9788984319851
188 pages, 154×223mm

*Very Small Kid*
Ills. by Kwon Mun-hui
Human Kids Publishing Company, 2018
ISBN 9788966591354
132 pages, 185×235mm

*The Seventh Arrow 1*
Ills. by Lee Ji-hye
Munhakdongne Publishing Group, 2017
ISBN 9788954645744
196 pages, 153×220mm

*The Seventh Arrow 2*
Ills. by Lee Ji-hye
Munhakdongne Publishing Group, 2017
ISBN 9788954645751
188 pages, 153×220mm

*On the Train*
Ills. by Kyo Eun
Changbi Publishers, 2019
ISBN 9788936443009
236 pages, 152×225mm

*From the anthology Laughing Together*
### Children’s Fiction

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<td>Our Changing Personalities et al.</td>
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* From the anthology Our Changing Personalities

### Picture Book

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* Picture book (hardcover)

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* From the SF anthology In Search of a Lost Concept
Young Adult Fiction

- **Our Scandal**
  - Changbi Publishers, 2007
  - ISBN 9788936456016
  - 216 pages, 152x210mm

- **Youngdu’s Accidental Reality**
  - Sakyejul Publishing Ltd., 2009
  - ISBN 9788995828353
  - 210 pages, 145x215mm

- **All My Man!**
  - Munhakdongne Publishing Group, 2011
  - ISBN 97888964614726
  - 296 pages, 140x205mm

- **1945, Cheolwon**
  - Changbi Publishers, 2012
  - ISBN 9788993645643
  - 381 pages, 152x210mm

- **Seoul in the Summer of That Year**
  - Changbi Publishers, 2013
  - ISBN 9788993645611
  - 328 pages, 152x210mm

- **Cat Day**
  - Changbi Publishers, 2013
  - ISBN 9788993645654
  - 212 pages, 152x210mm
  * From the anthology *Blue Child*

Nonfiction

- **Children Are Children**
  - Ills. by Park Seo-young
  - Sunandtree, 2010
  - ISBN 9788962680564
  - 163 pages, 185x235mm

- **The Encyclopedia of Korean Ghosts**
  - Ills. by Kim Kyung-hee
  - Prunsoop publishing Co., Ltd., 2010
  - ISBN 9788971846513
  - 140 pages, 208x250mm

- **The Encyclopedia of Korean Goblins**
  - Ills. by Lee Yu-jin
  - Prunsoop publishing Co., Ltd., 2011
  - ISBN 9788971846605
  - 140 pages, 208x250mm
**Nonfiction**

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Meeting with Readers

- Wanini the Green Lioness Book Concert Poster
- Wanini the Green Lioness Selected as 2019 Book of the Year by Bupyeong
- Book Relay Poster (2020 Jeju’s Book of the Year Wanini the Green Lioness)
- Wanini the Green Lioness Book, Selected in One Book, One City Initiative for Bupyeong
- 2020 Korea Book Fest Book Concert
- Wanini the Green Lioness Book Signing 1
- Wanini the Green Lioness Book Signing 2
Yi Hyeon’s interview featured in the Japanese outlet Weekly Friday, on its special edition on the Korean War. Together with news of the Japanese translations of her 1945, Cheolwon and Seoul in the Summer of That Year, the article also recommends the books as meaningful reading for Japanese youth.

“We must teach our young children the right way to view history, especially as they haven’t properly studied modern and contemporary history. (…) This book is a true work of historical fiction and reads well with an intriguing taste of mystery.”

- From Weekly Friday
Children’s Essays after Reading *Wanini the Green Lioness* as Part of One Book a Semester Reading Campaign

Online Zoom Talk with Readers

Special Talk with Young Readers
Park Hyo-jung, “For the Youth to Reflect on Where They Are,” Middle Urikyoyuk, 2007.7.
Yoo Young-Jong, “Planet of Robots and Post-human Imagination,” Child and Young Adult Literature Study 21, 2017.12.
Han Mi-hwa, “Know How to Lose Well,” Hankyoreh, 2017.03.23.

2022 Hans Christian Andersen Award Nominee from Korea

Writer Yi Hyeon

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Translated by Amber / Kim Hyun-jung
Edited by Park Jin-hee
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