A positivist vision of science fiction as a discourse closely bound to science and technology has been influential in South Korea ever since the first flourishing of the genre in the 1960s. Using that normative vision as a reference, the present essay investigates the ways in which select science fictional texts have actually represented the technoscientific enterprise in South Korea in the period spanning the 1960s through the 1990s. As the analysis suggests, the heyday of positivist-oriented science fiction in the country was largely limited to the 1960s, which was a time when Koreans looked keenly upon science for its utopian promise of development and modernization for the nation. As later years brought dictatorship and forced industrialization, however, a marked shift towards dystopia and social protest became evident in cultural texts that critically depicted technoscience and modernization as tools of oppression rather than progress and liberation. The historical existence of this more critical vein of science fiction, it is argued, attests to the genre’s hitherto underappreciated potential for fruitful engagement with the political and social challenges of modernization both globally and within South Korea’s technologically saturated society.

KEY WORDS: Science Fiction; Science; Technoculture; Postcolonial Literature; South Korea