

Hometown: The Topography of Initiation and Catharsis in Yun Hŭnggil's "Road to Soradan"

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This paper deals with one of Yun Hŭnggil's (b. 1942) latest short stories, "Road to Soradan" (*Soradan kanin kil*) (2002), and it has two purposes. The first is to depict the child narrator's process of initiation during the Korean War (1950–1953) in relation to his hometown topography. More specifically, I will argue that being initiated into the surrounding world and the war circumstances is reflected through the child narrator's direct interaction with Soradan, a pine tree grove in his hometown. At Soradan, the encounter between the child narrator (Yi Kigon) and Pak Chŭngsŏ has both a psychological and formative impact on the child narrator psyche. The second aim of this study is to interpret the adult narrator's homecoming journey as endowed with cathartic connotations. Together with his former schoolmates, the narrator travels back both in space and in time, attempting to stitch back together the shattered memories of his traumatic childhood. Arguing the significance of Soradan in relation to the story's narrator, I will suggest that it has multiple symbolic functions. On the one hand, how it affects the child narrator's inner world and contributes to his understanding of life, circumstances of national division, and himself as an integrated part of this particular landscape; and on the other hand, the role of Soradan as the testimony for the Korean War's legacy.

Keywords: Yun Hŭnggil, *Soradan kanin kil*, Korean War, topography, place, division literature

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