

Literature as Aesthetic-Affective Psychogeography: Women's Writing during the Korean War

"Psychogeography," as described by Guy Debord in 1955, was meant to produce mappings that focused on the emotional, somatic, or non-visual experience of individuals within their built environment. While Debord's primary goal was challenging postwar urban alienation and restoring the vitality of "the authentic journey," I rework this concept by situating it within the context of the Korean War just a few years prior to Debord's formulation. Beginning with an analysis of the US Army's aesthetic-affective propaganda techniques as deployed by the Psychological Warfare Division, I pay particular attention to the caricatured melodramatic representations of women in many of the leaflets targeting enemy soldiers. Then turning to the South Korean literary field, I show how essays, poetry, and short fiction by major women writers of the period (such as Mo Yunsuk, No Ch'ŏnmyŏng, Son Sohŭi, Im Ogin, and Han Musuk) can be productively understood as examples of literary psychogeography. While some works, like the poetry of Mo and No, worked towards explicit anti-communist ends, the fiction of Son, Im, and Han show a nuanced and conflicted exploration of the relationship between wartime mobility, emotions, and urban mapping that exceeds familiar Cold War ideological explanations.

Jae Won Edward Chung is an assistant professor of Korean literature and culture at University of Colorado Boulder. He received his BA from Swarthmore College, and his MFA, MA, and PhD from Columbia University. He worked as a teacher and a literary translator before entering academia. He is currently completing a book manuscript which looks at the discourse of "everyday life" (*saenghwal*) during the Korean War and the postwar 1950s, with particular attention paid to intermedial relations and to ontological, aesthetic, and affective negotiations underway within the cultural field. For his second book project, he will trace the evolution of the apocalyptic imagination in Korean literature from early twentieth century to the present. His broader research interests include intellectual history, media studies, ethnic studies, and theories of race and affect.