The orphaned nation: Korea imagined as an overseas adopted child in Clon's *Abandoned Child* and Park Kwang-su's *Berlin Report*

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ABSTRACT   *International adoption from Korea constitutes the background to this study. The forced migration of Korean children has by now continued for over half a century, resulting in a diaspora of more than 150,000 adopted Koreans dispersed among 15 main host countries on the continents of Europe, North America and Oceania. Both the demographic scope, the time span and the geographic spread are absolutely unique in a comparative historical child migratory perspective, and still over 2,000 children leave Korea annually. This massive intercontinental displacement and dispersal of Korean children was, for many years, silently taking place in the shadow of Korea's transformation from a war-torn and poverty-stricken country to a formidable economic success story in the postcolonial world. Even if the subject of international adoption and adopted Koreans turned up now and then in the political debate throughout the years, it was not until the end of the 1980s that a comprehensive discussion started. Ever since, the adoption issue (ibyang munjê) has been haunting Korea as a recurrent subject in Korean media and popular culture. This paper is a reading of the pop group Clon's song* Abandoned Child *from 1999 and the world-famous Korean director Park Kwang-su's film* Berlin Report *from 1991 where adopted Koreans are seen as symbols of a divided and dispersed nation. With the background of Korean nationalism with its notion of the nation as family and its strong emphasis on homogeneity and continuity, the point of departure is the very existence of the adopted Koreans as a delicate threat to nationalist ideology, causing anxieties of disrupting a supposedly fixed and unified national identity, and calling into question what it means to be Korean and who belongs to the Korean nation. The reading is grounded on the fact that the subject of separated families is considered to be one of the most important aspects of the Korean reunification discourse, and has become a powerful metaphor of the Korean nation itself.* Abandoned Child *is the most typical of Korean adoption songs in representing the fate of Korea's 150,000 lost children, and the adoptee of the song is easily transformed into a powerful symbol of one of Korea's numerous separated families. In* Berlin Report, *the divided and dispersed Korean nation is represented by two separated adopted Koreans longing and searching for each other as the adoption issue is set upon the reunification issue, and their individual traumas become the national trauma of all Koreans.*

KEYWORDS: Korea, nationalism, reunification, separated families, international adoption, adopted children

Introducing the subject

International adoption, the transferral of tens of thousands of predominantly Asian children to Western countries for adoption, which has been going on for over half a century and still continues, constitutes the background to this paper. The paper starts by putting the practice of international adoption within the context of Cold War politics, American imperialism, and the present day's globalization with its massive trafficking in Asian children, and

where these human commodities can be seen as the products of a powerful combination of Western colonial consumerism and Asian patriarchal nationalism. It then continues by chronicling the history of international adoption from Korea and the issue of the divided families. With the background of Korean nationalism with its notion of the divided nation as a separated family, the paper is a reading the pop group Clon's song *Abandoned Child* from 1999 and director Park Kwang-su's feature film *Berlin Report* from 1991.

The reading is grounded on the fact that the subject of separated families is considered to be one of the most important aspects of the Korean reunification discourse, and has become a powerful metaphor of the fractured and fragmented Korean nation itself. According to this interpretation, the adopted child in *Abandoned Child* comes to represent the fate of Korea's 150,000 lost children and is easily transformed into a powerful symbol of one of Korea's numerous separated families. Further, in *Berlin Report*, the divided and dispersed Korean nation is imagined as, and represented by, two separated adopted Koreans longing and searching for each other as the adoption issue is set upon the reunification issue, and the national trauma of all Koreans are projected onto their individual traumas. The paper concludes that the very existence of the adopted Koreans is a delicate threat to nationalist ideology, causing anxieties of disrupting a supposedly fixed and homogeneous national identity, and calling into question what it means to be Korean and who belongs to the Korean nation.

The dynamics of international adoption

International adoption, the one-way forced migration of primarily non-white children from non-Western countries to white adopters and Western countries, was initiated immediately after the end of World War II even if Western missionaries occasionally had adopted 'native children' already at the time of the classical era of European empires.[1] Between 1945–1953, around 5000 war children from Europe, China and Japan – many fathered by American soldiers – were transferred to the United States for adoption as part of America's post-war refugee programme (Quinn 1961). However, it was not until the time of the Korean War that international adoption became an established practice as part of the general anti-Communist atmosphere of the Cold War and American security politics in Asia.[2] This early interest in Asian children is interpreted by Christina Klein (2003: 143–190) as an expression of a discourse on familial love and America, as the benevolent 'white mother', to create familial ties to Asian people through the sponsoring or adopting of Asian children, while Asians simultaneously were infantilized and feminized, and portrayed as unable to take care of their own children. In this way, international adoption became an integrated part of American foreign policy to facilitate political relations and legitimate anti-Communist interventions in the region, while at the same giving ordinary Americans a sense of personal participation in the Cold War when family ties became a political obligation.

Ever since the end of the Korean War, it is estimated that close to half a million children have been adopted internationally, of whom almost a third come from Korea and two thirds have ended up in America (Hübinette 2004). Up to the mid 1990s, Korea acted as the uncontested leading supplier of children for international adoption until China took its place, and Asian countries have also altogether provided more than two thirds of all children adopted by Westerners even if several Latin American and a few African countries also have been involved in the practice. Around 25,000 Korean children, 10,000 Indian children, and 30,000 Chinese children were, for example, transferred to America and other Western countries for adoption only in the 1990s. The fact that Asia is dominating as a supplying continent further underscores the continuous orientalist imagery at work where Asian children in many Western countries are widely perceived as being docile and submissive, clever and hardworking, and kind, quiet and undemanding.

To continue, it is no coincidence that of the leading countries supplying children for international adoption to the West, almost all fall under the American sphere of influence and have been exposed to American military intervention, presence or occupation, even if civil wars, ethnic cleansing of minorities, and corrupt dictatorships must also be added to explain why these countries became involved with the practice in the first place: Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka in Asia, Colombia, Chile, Honduras, Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala in South America, and Ethiopia in Africa. In other words, the state of international adoption brutally reflects current geopolitical transformations and conditions as evidenced by the fact that Iran stopped sending children for adoption after the Islamic revolution in 1979, and China and Vietnam started sending out children and getting involved with international adoption as part of their respective reform politics and globalization policies from the beginning of the 1990s.

Today, after the end of the Cold War, international adoption is exploding and involves up to 30,000 children a year as a result of the globalization of predatory neo-liberal capitalism, recent biopolitical transformations in the international division of labour, the mass popularization of the discourse of multiculturalism and a rapidly falling middle-class birth rate in Western countries (Selman 2002). International adoption is also undoubtedly at the same time – together with international marriage – one of the most privileged ways of immigrating to and entering the West, given the sudden upsurge in anti-immigration and anti-refugee legislation in many affluent Western countries after the outbreak of the 'War on Terror'.[3] This involuntary transferral of tens of thousands of non-Western children on a worldwide scale after formal decolonization is a clear reflection of a still existing global colonial reality and racial hierarchy, and a grim reminder of the astronomical power imbalance between the West and its former colonies. This is also the approach of Anthony Shiu (2001) in his lucid and powerful critique of international adoption where he analyses the logic that is at stake with its flexible accumulation of human commodities, and ethnic chic and orientalist performances that is flourishing on the adoption market, while Janice Raymond (1993: 144–154) links international adoption directly to other global modes of sexual and reproductive exploitation, like the trafficking in women, the marketing of surrogacy and 'intrauterine adoption', and the trade in organs and foetal tissues, and where Asia again stands out as the leading supplier.[4]

The Korean adoption issue

However, international adoption cannot just be blamed on cynical Cold War security politics, American imperialism and Western racial consumerism. The history of international adoption from Korea instead shows how Western colonialism goes hand in hand with Korean patriarchy. The massive intercontinental circulation and transportation of Korean children originated as a rescue mission just after the Korean War, organized by Christian fundamentalists to 'save' the mixed children who were the products of large-scale sexual exploitation and military prostitution caused by the Western military presence (Miller 1971). In 1954, it gained an official status when the Korean government initiated an adoption programme with the purpose of cleansing the country of mixed children. Under the military regimes between 1961–1987, Korea was modernized with a terrible efficacy and horrifying speed, and children of young factory workers who were relinquished and abandoned out of urban poverty now replaced the war orphans (Tahk 1986). During the period, international adoption was used as a method of decreasing the numbers in an over-populated country, as a child welfare practice to avoid costly institutional care, and as a goodwill strategy to develop political ties to, and trade relations with, important Western allies.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the adoption issue came to play a part in the propaganda war fought between the two Koreas, as North Korea accused its southern neighbour

of selling Korean children to Westerners. In 1976, the accusation led to the entire adoption programme being classified and transformed into something close to a state secret to avoid further embarrassment, and a plan for the gradual phasing out of international adoption was announced to curb the massive outflow of children (Sarri *et al.* 1998). However, four years later, a new military government chose to discontinue the policy, and instead, through a process of deregulation, the adoption agencies were allowed to compete among each other to track down unrestricted numbers of 'adoptable' children. Consequently, a thriving and profitable adoption industry was created resulting in the largest numbers ever sent abroad in a decade, with close to 70,000 placements. In the 1980s, Korea had accomplished a reasonable economic wealth, and from now on the children dispatched overseas were more and more categorized as 'illegitimate' as increasingly they were born by young middle-class high school or college students.

In 1988, the Seoul Olympic Games showcased a newly democratized and industrialized Korea to the world. Western journalists suddenly started to write about the country's adoption programme and designated Korea as the leading global exporter of children. The unexpected attention was deeply humiliating and painful for the proud host country and, as a result of the negative foreign media coverage, the Korean society was finally forced to address the problem in public. Ever since, the adoption issue has been haunting Korea as a recurrent subject in media and popular culture that turns up over and over again in editorials and columns, novels and poems, children's books and comics, television dramas and plays, and popular songs and feature films. In 1989, the government decided to set up a new deadline of 1996. This deadline also failed, but the number of international adoptions has gradually decreased.

Over 50 years of international adoption from Korea has resulted in a population of more than 150,000 adopted Koreans divided between 15 main host countries in North America, Western Europe and Oceania.[5] Both the demographic scope, the time span and the geographic spread are absolutely unique in the history of forced child migration as Korea is by far the country having sent away the largest number of its own citizens for international adoption in modern history. However it is important to remember that every year still more than 2,000 Korean children leave the country, all born at secluded maternity homes belonging to the adoption agencies to secure a steady supply of healthy infants for an insatiable adoption market in the West. So in Korea, for more than half a century, international adoption has been a machine-like and economically rewarding business for the adoption agencies, an easy way out of avoiding social welfare expenditure for the Korean government, and a brutal method of upholding a rigid and morbid patriarchal norm system for the Korean society as a whole. International adoption is, in other words, still used today to get rid of and cleanse the country of 'impure' and 'disposable' children.[6]

The problem of the dispersed families

The fate of the adopted Koreans must also be linked to the social upheavals and ruptures caused by Japanese colonialism and even more by the Korean modernization process taking place during the authoritarian regimes. International adoption from Korea is, in other words, directly caused by the disappearance of traditional Korean society, the mass dispersal of people of Korean descent and, above all, the break-up and separation of numerous Korean families, which started with the collapse of the Chosôn dynasty in the second half of the 19th century, escalated during the colonial era, reached its peak with national division and civil war, and was finally accomplished with postcolonial migration and modernization. All these dramatic and in many respects tragic events leading up to the often cited notion of ten million divided families in Korean reunification discourse, struck with brutal and terrible force and took place within an astonishingly short period, affecting

every Korean individual struggling to stay alive and causing extreme strain on every Korean family trying to keep together in the chaos. Even if international adoption from Korea originated as a consequence of interracial relationships at the time of the Korean War, it would most probably never have taken on such huge proportions as it did without the preceding and following internal and external mass movements and displacements of people.

To being with, the exodus of Korean people began in 1860, caused by the outbreak of famine and impoverished conditions in the northern provinces (Lee 2000: 6–13).[7] The first wave of emigrants found their way to the Russian Far East territory bordering present-day's North Korea, and from 1869 Koreans started to pour into Chinese Manchuria in great numbers. From 1881, Korean students started to go over to Japan, and in 1903 emigration to the US was initiated in the form of indentured labour. These four countries, Russia (later Soviet Union and Central Asia), China, Japan and the US, still remain the most important host countries for the Korean diaspora where 90% of the 4.5 million overseas Koreans are to be located. Taken together, the various dislocated groups of Korean ethnicity may well fit into Robin Cohen's (1997: 31–56) category of a victim diaspora, defined as an involuntary dispersal caused by catastrophic and traumatic events such as mass poverty, labour mobilization, forced transportation, severe persecution and refugee movement. Cohen uses the Jewish, African, Armenian and Palestinian diasporas as case studies and typical examples of victim diasporas, and if any part of the Korean diaspora immediately qualifies itself into the category it must be the adopted Koreans.

The colonial era that followed, and whose extreme migration patterns have been dealt with in detail by Kim Dae Young and John Sloboda (1981), changed Korean society once and for all as the country and its people were ruthlessly exploited by imperial Japan. Hundreds of thousands of young Korean males were mobilied for labour service in Japan, while around 320,000 were drafted as military personnel and stationed within the extensive Japanese Empire of whom a total of 70,000 died from hardships, during war operations or as unintentional victims of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Yoneyama 1995). In addition, tens of thousands of young Korean girls had been forced to serve as 'comfort women' in the Japanese army, of whom probably a minority survived and returned to Korea after the war (Yoshiaki 1995). At the time of Japanese capitulation, altogether 4 million Koreans or an astonishing 16% of the entire population were to be found outside the peninsula, while a total of 40% of the adult population had been uprooted and dislocated during the period.

For the Koreans, the year of 1945 meant liberation from Japanese rule, occupation by American and Russian troops, partition along the 38th parallel, repatriation and resettlement of countrymen from the collapsing Japanese Empire, and the beginning of massive internal migration movements. In 1948, the division was formalized by the establishment of two contending dictatorial regimes, which both systematically and ruthlessly purged its opponents, causing further mass killings and floods of refugees.[8] The following civil war, transformed into an international conflict between the super powers, resulted in something close to genocide with 3.5–4 million soldiers and civilians being killed on both sides and representing between 10–15% of the entire ethnic Korean population in those days (Halliday and Cumings 1988: 200–201).

The various ways of calculating the magnitude of these movements of people between 1945–1953 have been examined by Shin Eui Hang (2001). Quoting Korea's leading demographer Kwon Tai Hwan as the most reliable source, Shin assumes that as many as 2.6 million people went to South Korea during those years, eventually constituting 14% of the population. Of these, 1.4 million had been repatriated from every corner of the Japanese empire, and 1.2 million were refugees coming from North Korea, while 300,000 took the other direction, northwards, either voluntarily as political activists or involuntarily as abductees. Finally, during

the post-war period and particularly at the time of the authoritarian regimes, more than a million Koreans emigrated overseas, while a new wave of massive internal migration caused by a modernization process which took barely three decades in Korea to accomplish wrecked complete havoc on what was left of pre-war Korea. Hong Sung-Won (2000) also mentions other non-quantifiable but nonetheless catastrophic effects of these events on the social structures of the Korean society, like widespread poverty and unemployment, mass criminality and prostitution, militarization and corruption of state and civil society, and cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism. Finally, they both take up the war orphans and mixed children and their ensuing adoption to Western countries, as one of the most compelling results of division and war.

The subject of the divided families is considered to be the most important human aspect of the Korean reunification issue, and is examined in detail by Kim Choong Soon (1988), James Foley (2002) and Roy Richard Grinker (1998: 99–126). In his ethnographic study of dispersed families, Kim chronicles the Korean media's tradition of assisting in the search for separated relatives. From the 1960s onwards, Korean newspapers and broadcasting channels have conducted regular campaigns and aired several radio and television programmes with the goal of helping to reunite split families. Between 1974–1976, *Hankook Ilbo* carried out a campaign containing advertisements by 3510 people searching for 8348 lost persons, of whom some turned out to have been adopted abroad, and in 1983 the national television broadcaster KBS launched a televised campaign lasting for a year where, in total, 100,952 applicants participated, resulting in as many as 10,189 reunited relatives of whom again some were international adoptees. Today, there are also several national registries and DNA databases like the one administrated by Korea Welfare Foundation, which divides between those separated because of division and war, those separated because of internal social upheavals during the modernization process, and finally those separated because of international migration and adoption.

Foley writes on the nature and scale of Korea's divided families, and points out the uniqueness of the situation as the populations of other divided countries like Germany and China did not experience the same complete severance of ties as the Koreans are still doing, and even to the extent that it is virtually impossible to get to know if one's relatives are alive at all. He scrutinizes the widely accepted number of between 7.5 to 10 million separated families in Korea and the various ways of estimating the internal movements of people before and during the Korean War, and finds that it is difficult to calculate the exact amount given the sheer chaos on the Korean peninsula between 1945–1953. Foley instead assesses the number of still surviving first-generation divided family members in Korea to 750,000. The issue of separated families was raised for the first time on an inter-Korean level during the first round of Red Cross talks in 1971–1972, but not until 1985 did the first reunion of North and South Korean relatives take place. After that, it took another 15 years until a second reunion was organized in connection with president Kim Dae Jung's sunshine policy and his meeting with Kim Jong Il at the historic inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang in June of 2000, and ever since such reunions are regularly arranged. President Kim also eased the possibility for pro-North Korea Koreans in Japan to visit relatives in the country, and he repatriated captured North Korean spies to North Korea even if the northern neighbour has not yet responded and repatriated South Korean POWs and abductees still presumed to be held in the country.

Foley criticizes the way in which the family reunions are conducted, namely as lasting only for a brief period and taking place under heavy media attention and constant scrutiny of officials, and with no respect for the integrity of the persons involved. Even more, the lucky ones in South Korea are selected by a computer lottery from the 180,000 who have applied for family reunion, and, as just a couple of hundred are involved every time and the median age of the applicants must be close to 80, the pace of the reunions is clearly inadequate.

Instead, Foley proposes the re-establishment of communication links between the two Koreas, the setting up of routines to trace and verify the status of lost family members and the construction of a more permanent reunion meeting place somewhere along the border. Lastly, Foley also mentions the 100,000 Koreans who emigrated from Japan to North Korea between 1959–1984 as yet another group of separated families of the Korean diaspora that is seldom heard of.

In his study of the South Korean reunification discourse, Grinker looks at the cultural dimension of Korea's divided families by highlighting the ambiguous attitude towards North Koreans in South Korea as the North Korean state and governance is considered as fundamentally evil, while the North Korean people are considered as natural brethren. In cultural texts, schoolbooks and everyday conversation, the division is often symbolized as a sundered body, a fractured mind or a separated couple or family, and articulated through a special version of *han*, the *han* of separation (*pyôlhan*). Reunification is represented as the reunion of families, but as the North Korean ideology is said to have substituted the state for the family , as witnessed and reported by many defectors, North Korea has become a place without families in the South Korean imagery, and as a result there is a growing fear among South Koreans that their North Korean relatives will not want to acknowledge them. For Grinker, using Freud's notion of melancholia as a grief that cannot be resolved, this central paradox results in an inability for the South Koreans to mourn their lost ones in the North. Grinker also takes up the younger generations of South Koreans who seem to have a much less strong concern for their relatives across the border than the middle-aged and elderly. The concept of all ethnic Koreans seen as one dispersed family has also become a powerful metaphor of the Korean nation itself. This view is, for example, acknowledged by the Korean Red Cross (1977) in its enquiry on the problem of separated families, which starts by counting displacements under Japanese rule, continues with population movements before, during and after the Korean War, and ends with post-war migration and international adoption. Grinker writes:

> Koreans often construe division not only as the separation of the nation but also as the separation of families, and as a result unification is construed as the reunion of separated family members. The nation is the family writ large. Thus, although Korean division is sometimes represented in terms of land, or more literally the ancestors' lands (*pundandoen choguk*), the more conventional and primary representation is the division of people. (Grinker 1998: 102–103)

With all this in mind, this reading looks at the adopted Koreans as symbols of a fractured and fragmented nation in Pak Kwang-su's *Berlin Report* (1991) and in Clon's *Abandoned Child* (1999).

Representing family separation

> Who remembers me, my unforgotten look – When I was abandoned on the street – Who remembers me, who grew up without even knowing my name – As I was adopted to a foreign country far from this land – I have always been crying alone – When thinking of being lonely, I have longed for my mother – I do not even know the face of my mother – As I long for and want to meet her, I have returned to this country – As a child I knew nothing – Why I was received by a family to be raised – By parents with different colours and features – Who took care of me, comforted and patted me – As I grew up, I gradually learnt – That I was adopted from a country named Korea – From then on I started to cry alone – I think all the miseries of the world belong to me – Why was I abandoned on the street – Why have I been crying alone – Still I do not know, exhausted by longing – I only miss my mother – There is nothing more I hope for during my life – But only for once to meet my mother – Still I am searching – I love the mother who abandoned me more than anyone else – Whatever story and circumstances – It does not matter, I just long for my mother – Compared to my pain, I know that my mother's pain – Was much more painful than mine of the past days – Now if your situation is that you

cannot stand in front of me – Please leave at least a letter to me, that is my last wish – I have lost everything – My name, my country, my language – nothing is left for me – But my inner side always asks – Who are you, are you Korean? – As I want to search for my roots again – As I want to see the mother from the land where I was born – Again I rolled back the time – To see my mother with even one strip of hope. (Clon 1999)

On 11 June 1999, Korea's then leading dance pop group Clon invited all adopted Koreans who for the moment were visiting Korea to a free concert called *Be Strong* at Seoul Educational Culture Center (*Joongang Ilbo*, 2 June 1999). At this extraordinary event the group performed songs from its third newly released album *Funky Together* including *Abandoned Child* which, according to the cover text, is explicitly dedicated to all adopted Koreans overseas (Clon 1999). Recorded together with the female singer Kim Tae Young, the album itself produced several top hits, became a bestseller with over 800,000 sold copies, and was well received by music critics for its unique Koreanized blend of punk, funk, rap and techno. The dance duo, Clon's two members Kang Won Rae and Ku Jun Yup, went to school together, started their careers as dancers in music videos for other groups and singers, and after winning a contest they received a recording contract in 1996. Regarded as the oldies of Korean pop for already being in their late 20s when Clon was founded, Kang Won Rae and Ku Jun Yup were mainly appreciated as dancers and it is no surprise that they were elected the best male dance group in 2000. However, at the end of 2000, Kang Won Rae was severely injured in a motorcycle accident in central Seoul, making him paralysed on the lower part of the body, and understandably the band had to split up after a less successful fourth and last album.

According to a review in *Taehan Maeil*, *Abandoned Child* describes 'the pain and sorrow of an adoptee' (*Taehan Maeil*, 19 May 1999). The band members explained to the media that a concern for social issues lay behind their decision to hold the concert, and the album cover tells that the inspiration to write the song came after having watched a television documentary on an adopted Korean who comes back to Korea and searches for the Korean mother: 'This earnest message of the song is conveyed deeply into the heart'. *Abandoned Child* begins with recorded sounds from an airport signifying international adoption, and the lyrics are slowly rapped to the tones of the French pianist Richard Clayderman's romantic piano theme *Ballade pour Adéline* creating an air of melancholy. The song portrays an adopted Korean who has been abandoned on the street and adopted to a Western country, and the lyrics take up typical issues associated with overseas adopteeness in Korean representations of adopted Koreans like physical alterity and lack of Whiteness, and feelings of abandonment and loneliness, rootlessness and alienation. In the course of the song, the adoptee returns to Korea with the hope of reuniting with an unknown Korean mother, prepared for the worst kind of circumstances and at least wishing to receive a letter from her saying that she is alive and well. With this simple and sincere message, the adoptee in *Abandoned Child* comes to represent Korea's 150,000 internationally adopted children. As one of the country's lost children, the adopted child in the song also comes to represent one of Korea's numerous separated families as well as the Korean nation itself, and perhaps most of all its future and destiny.

In the song, the adoptee cries alone and longs for Korea, making the lyrics fall in line with the Korean media's dominant focus on searching for roots and visiting Korea and its reluctance, or even refusal, to deal with the internal problems of Korean society that cause international adoption to continue. Even more important, in *Abandoned Child* the distinction between the biological mother and Korea becomes blurred as roots are maternalized and the nation becomes figured as a bifurcated mother who eagerly calls for and reclaims her lost and unhappy child living in exile in a far off and hostile Western country. A maternalized Korea is a powerful metaphor given the strong connotations of deep affection, over-protectiveness, limitless endurance, and self-sacrifice invested in Korean motherhood, and it is only by

reuniting with the biological mother and returning to the Motherland that an adopted Korean can be relieved from being and feeling eternally different and lonely in a Western country. At the same time, the romantic and nostalgic cult of motherhood as evidenced in the Mother Korea metaphor simply disregards the actual asymmetric power relations existing between men and women in contemporary Korea. Furthermore, the complete absence of the biological father serves to effectively deny paternal responsibility and obscures the deep patriarchal structures at work behind international adoption. In this way, Mother Korea will continue to call upon and reclaim her lost children, to return instead of meeting them halfway, acknowledging their in-between status and accomplishing an equal encounter. This reclaiming of adopted Koreans takes place in *Berlin Report* as well, and is even executed physically through the intervention of a male Korean journalist.

Just like women, children also have their special place in nationalist discourse. In accordance with the familial and reproductive associations of nationalism, in nationalist ideology children are commonly seen as the destiny of the nation. Harry Hendrick (1994) writes about Britain in the 1910s, a period when modern child welfare was established in the country, as its children were turned into a national issue, especially those coming from poor working-class families, and children started to be represented as vital investments for the future of Britannia, underpinned by eugenicist thinking. Veena Das (1995: 55–83) takes up another example of when children represent the nation, namely how children of abducted and raped women have come to symbolize national dishonour during the partition of India. With the background of the strong feelings of dishonour and shame invested in the Korean adoption issue, it is here worth remembering that international adoption from Korea was also initiated as a result of war, and the first children sent away were products of sexual exploitation, military prostitution and, most probably in many cases, rape.

Besides the aforementioned more obvious links to pronatalist social welfare issues, and to injustices during times of warfare, children also often come to represent the future of the nation in nation-building processes and in international relations. According to Caroline Levander's (2004) study of the building of the American nation, the image of a white Anglo-Saxon child was used to envision a racial and national identity without African-Americans in antebellum America, further underlining this connection between children and nationalism and how a child can be used to represent a nation. Returning to international adoption, Barbara Yngvesson (2003) writes about adoption from Chile to Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s, which made it possible for the adopted children to be entered in the Chilean civil register with their Swedish surnames. This provoked strong nationalist feelings and reactions as Chilean children were turned into Swedish children even before they left their country of birth, and finally led Chile to stop adoptions to Sweden in 1991.

So whether as child welfare subjects, as products of war and rape, or as symbols of nations, children are conceived as the future of the nation just like women are regarded as the origin of the nation. With this in mind, the lyrics of *Abandoned Child* can be seen to represent not only the fate of the adopted Koreans but also the fate of all ethnic Koreans in North and South Korea and around the world, united in bittersweet *han* as the Korean nation is imagined and envisioned as, and represented by, an exiled orphan having 'lost everything', 'name, country and language', and 'searching for roots' and asking 'are you Korean?'. Just like the adoptee in *Abandoned Child*, it is a fact that so many other ethnic Koreans also have experienced uprootedness and homelessness, and separation and loss, after a brutal century of colonialism, division and war, and just like the adoptee in the song so many other ethnic Koreans also harbour a longing for a return to some kind of a lost home, a wish to reunite with lost and many times unknown family members, and a general feeling of identity confusion and wanting to be healed. Given Korea's modern history and the Korean reunification discourse, most Koreans can recognize and mirror themselves in the existences and experiences of adopted Koreans. As will be shown, this

projection of the life of an adopted Korean on the fate of the Korean nation is even stronger in *Berlin Report*.

Park Kwang-su and *Berlin Report*

Celebrated director Park Kwang-su, born in 1955, is counted as one of the founders of the Korean independent film movement and the leading oppositional *minjung* director of the 1980s, with titles like *Chilsu and Mansu* (*Ch'ilsu wa Mansu*) (1988) and *Black Republic* (*Kûdûldo urich'ôrôm*) (1990) where he portrayed the plight of the Korean working-class, frustrated and rebellious youth, and the relentless struggle for democracy. After democratization, Park has secured his place as one of Korea's leading directors in mainstream cinema by bringing up previously sensitive historical issues, such as the unhealed wounds left by the Korean War in *To the Starry Island* (*Kû somê kago sip'da*) (1993) and social unrest at the end of the Chosôn dynasty in *Uprising* (*I chaesuûi nan*) (1999). While studying art at Seoul National University, he started to make short-films and got involved with alternative groups like the Seoul Film Collective, which organized the Korean independent film movement by secretly circulating one another's productions and arranging illegal screenings.

After a visit to Paris where he attended ESEC (École Supérieure Libre d'Études Cinématographiques), and worked as an assistant director for Yi Chang-ho, one of the few successful Korean filmmakers of the early 1980s, he came back to make *Chilsu and Mansu*, his first feature and directorial debut. *Chilsu and Mansu* is widely regarded as the opening of what was then known as the 'new Korean cinema', heavily politicized and socially conscious, fiercely anti-American and anti-Western, and affiliated to the democratic labour movement. From then on, Park was immediately hailed and acknowledged as the most representative of modern Korean filmmakers by a left-liberal-leaning Western film world. His films started to be screened in many countries, and he was invited to numerous film festivals and bestowed with prestigious prizes. This turned Park Kwang-su into one of Korea's most internationally acclaimed directors, and his works are today frequently analysed in film studies.

Kim Kyung Hyun (2002) links his most famous feature film *A Single Spark* (*Arûmdaun ch'ôngnyôn Chôn T'ae-il*) (1995), depicting and honouring the life of the hero of 1970s Korean labour movement, to Chang Son-u's *A Petal* (*Kkotnip*) (1996) which deals with the Kwangju uprising of 1980. Kim sees the two works as examples of the existence of the specific genre of post-traumatic historical remembrance in Korean film with the aim of reconciling with the past by narrating a tragic historical event through the lives of individuals, just like post-Mao Chinese and post-Franco Spanish cinemas did. It is therefore not a coincidence that Park takes up the adoption issue in his third 1991 feature film, *Berlin Report*, as yet another traumatic and tragic experience in modern Korean history that has to be staged, mourned, remembered and reconciled (1991). By the way of a psychoanalytical reading, Kim Kyung Hyun (2001) also analyses Park Kwang-su's films as a reflection of a general male crisis in Korean society caused by being dominated and feeling humiliated by foreign powers, where Korea's problematic history is told exclusively through the perspectives of male intellectual characters, and *Berlin Report* falls well in line with this way of narrating a story.

Berlin Report, screened at the international film festivals in Karlovy Vary and Hong Kong, is a film set in Paris with the adoption issue as its main theme (*Joongang Ilbo*, 29 March 1991). *Berlin Report* is a psychological thriller with strong political undertones, making use of both the division of Korea and Germany in the plot. Director Park actually pointed out in an interview that the film might be a little bit too complicated to take in for the ordinary filmgoer because it deals with many issues at the same time, including the adoption and reunification issues, the legacy of World War II, the 1991 Gulf War and leftwing radicalism among alienated youth (*Joongang Ilbo*, 20 November 1995). Besides, in the film there are

plenty of dream-like and mystical sequences and shots, different nationalities and ethnicities, Koreans and Westerners alike, come and go, the scenes change between Paris and Berlin, and the actors switch between Korean, English, French and German. According to an interview in *Seoul Shinmun*, Park drafted the synopsis of the script while studying in Paris in 1985:

> I will depict the Korean peninsula's frustration, sufferings, love and what Koreans have lost…
> The ultimate theme is love, and this love is our emotional alternative for the unification of
> Korea. For unification without love signifies mutual death. (*Seoul Shinmun*, 13 January 1991)

The cast and the crew of *Berlin Report* are some of Korean cinema's finest and most respected actors and cinematographers. The veteran actor Ahn Sung Ki who has participated in more than 60 Korean feature films plays the leading male character Sông–min. Kang Su-youn who has acted in more than 30 films and has received two best actress awards from major international film festivals performs as the adopted Korean girl Marie–Hélène, and Moon Seung-keun is her biological brother Yông-ch'ôl or Lucien. Moon Seung-keun originally comes from the theatre, and he is one of Park Kwang-su's favourite actors and the one who stars as Chon Tae-il in *A Single Spark*. In the crew, most notable are the director of photographer Jeong Kwang-seok, musical director Won Il, and assistant director Kim Sung-su who nowadays does his own directing with top box office hits like *Beat* (1997) and *Musa* (2001). Finally, a couple of more-or-less well-known French actors also participate in the film, like Jean-Marie Fonbonne (the criminal inspector), Jacques Seiler (Marie–Hélène's adoptive father) and Marianne Loyen (Sông–min's girlfriend).

The film narrative of *Berlin Report* circles around Sông–min, a Korean foreign correspondent based in Paris, who covers the mysterious homicide of a certain Monsieur Bernard, adoptive father to Yông-hûi or Marie–Hélène, a Korean girl in her early 20s. Marie–Hélène is mentally disturbed and unable to speak, but little by little the correspondent is able to roll up her background story by initiating an unusual and complicated relationship with her. Monsieur Bernard was a former Russian military intelligence officer who, during the war, had been captured and tortured by the Nazis. He had adopted Marie–Hélène as a single father, brought her up isolated in a close and reclusive way, and – damaged by his war experiences – he also abused her, thereby causing her mental state of aphasia. Marie–Hélène also has an older biological brother, Yông-ch'ôl or Lucien, a leftwing painter who grew up in another adoptive family in France and whom she longs for dearly. As an adult, he had tried to reconnect with Marie–Hélène several times but had been hindered by her adoptive father, and before the reunification of Germany he defected to East Berlin. When Sông–min understands that Marie–Hélène's greatest wish is to reunite with her lost brother, he goes to Germany to look for him. After many ups and downs, Sông–min finally manages to arrange for the two siblings to meet each other in Berlin. In the film, Korea's exiled and scattered children are depicted as living lonely and dysfunctional lives, longing for human affection, and alienated from both domestic and overseas Koreans as well as from themselves, even if they obviously are in desperate need of each other.

Korea's lost children

Berlin Report begins with authentic newsreels from the Cold War, the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, to firmly establish the political context of the film. Sông–min is introduced as a member of the Korean expatriate community of Paris, having a relation with a French woman and working from an office in his own apartment. He reads in the newspaper about the murder of Monsieur Bernard and gets an interest in the case, and after receiving permission from his boss in Korea, who well understands the spectacular and commercial potentials in the adoption issue, he starts to investigate the story.

Monsieur Bernard had lived in an old manor-like house on the countryside just outside Paris, and when Sông–min visits the house for the first time a mute and hostile Marie–Hélène reluctantly opens the door. Sông–min is, from the beginning, perplexed by her Korean appearance, tries to speak to her in Korean and reminds her that she was born in Korea. Marie–Hélène does not answer at all, and instead she resolutely chases him away by pointing a gun at him just like her asocial and unfriendly adoptive father has taught her to do. Yet, Sông–min's visit makes Marie–Hélène remember another recent and unexpected visit by an ethnic Korean man, namely that of her biological brother Yông-ch'ôl, as from now on the film is interrupted with flashbacks from Marie–Hélène's suppressed memory. It appears that Yông-ch'ôl had visited the house several times and tried to get in contact with her, and he had wanted to rescue her from the abusive situation but was chased away by the adoptive father's gunshots.

Sông–min pays a visit to the criminal inspector in charge of the homicide, who gives him Marie–Hélène's whole family story including Monsieur Bernard's strange background and the existence of her brother Yông-ch'ôl. The criminal inspector gives Sông–min access to all the information about the case, and urges him to dig deeper as he might understand what has happened better than him 'because you are both Koreans'. In reality, already at this stage the criminal inspector suspects Yông-ch'ôl of the murder, but he needs help to capture him so he uses Sông–min's ethnic concern and growing affection for Marie–Hélène to make him find the way to Yông-ch'ôl. This French policeman will turn up over and over again in the film, secretly watching over Sông–min's every action and move, almost acting as a symbol of an anti-Communist West wanting to catch and punish North Korea (Yông-ch'ôl) by the way of South Korea (Sông–min and/or Marie–Hélène). Encouraged by the support coming from the criminal inspector, Sông–min keeps on following Marie–Hélène at a distance and gets increasingly fascinated by her complete silence, her sad appearance and her fate as an adopted Korean, and in the end he is finally able to make her to respond to his contact attempts. He is invited to the house where he examines the belongings of the adoptive father, including Japanese samurai swords, photos from the war and a Nazi German Iron Cross medal, which he carries away. Sông–min also discovers a photo of a three-year-old Yông-hûi together with her elder brother Yông-ch'ôl in Korea before their adoption in France.

Marie–Hélène hangs around the leftist alternative scene of Paris and has a French boyfriend, an artist who is a former colleague and comrade of Yông-ch'ôl. The boyfriend treats Marie–Hélène like the child she mentally is, openly deplores the fact that Korea exports its children, says to Sông–min that 'you Koreans sold Marie–Hélène', and tells about his friend Yông-ch'ôl who is 'neither Korean nor French', who was never able to overcome the fact of 'having a Korean body and a French mind', and who as a result of his identity crisis finally ended up in East Germany. When he also tells Sông–min that Marie–Hélène cannot stop thinking about her brother, driven by feelings of guilt and a bad conscience for coming from a country exporting its own children, Sông–min decides to go to Germany to find Yông-ch'ôl. With the help of a German-speaking colleague, Sông–min starts to search for Yông-ch'ôl who, after the fall of Communism, lives as a leftwing political activist in the world of anti-Fascist and autonomous collectives in former East Berlin.

In one of the collectives in an occupied house, Sông–min meets Yông-ch'ôl's girlfriend Nina, who is yet another adopted Korean. Just as with Marie–Hélène, Sông–min again becomes surprised and instinctively addresses her in Korean, and once again, just as with Marie–Hélène, Nina does not seem to care at all about Sông–min's Koreanness and instead plainly tells him that yes, she is born in Korea, but she cannot speak Korean and then closes the door. This is the second time in a row that an adopted Korean refuses to answer to Sông–min's ethnic interpellations, and by the way of Marie–Hélène's and Nina's impolite refusals to identify themselves with Sông–min, adopted Koreans can well be likened to 'abjects' in

Julia Kristeva's (1982) sense. In her feminist theory of the maternal, where she responds to inherently patriarchal Lacanian psychoanalysis and tries to recover a lost pre-patriarchal stage, Kristeva locates the process of abjection when the child is on its way to becoming an independent Self but still perceives its mother as being a part of oneself. This ambiguous state results in insecurity and many times also in antipathy towards the abject, the Other who or which is a part of oneself and which one wants to separate oneself from but cannot. As subject formation takes place on an everyday level and not just in infancy, and as the boundary between sameness and difference is never fixed, abjection is for Kristeva a permanent aspect of life itself. The abject can neither be fully objectified nor be incorporated, and must be ignored, forgotten and over-looked to preserve the imagined wholeness of the Self, but even if it were to remain hidden and unknown outside the domain of meaning and signification, it still exerts its influence by continuing to disrespect boundaries and disturb systems.

Patricia Doreen Farrar (1999) uses Kristeva's notion of abjection in connection with adoption in a most productive way in her study of biological mothers to domestic adopted children in pre-1968 Australia. For Farrar, abjection is the very meaning of adoption itself, and the abject are those children who were born as a result of pre- or ex-nuptial relations and therefore had to disappear and be adopted away to preserve the society's mores:

> Kristeva describes the abject as 'the jettisoned object (which) is radically excluded…(a)nd yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master' (Kristeva 1982: 2). In response to this challenge, the mother has tried to preserve her inner sense of self as 'mother', while presenting a projected self an 'Other' or non-mother. Abjection is the way in which a woman deals with the horror of relinquishment: by preserving her private inner self as 'mother' she is able to incorporate the threat of the abject. In becoming the 'other' she attempts to resist the abject's challenge, which if she acknowledges it, may annihilate her… In this context, the adopted-away baby could be interpreted as the abject, as 'something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself' (Kristeva 1982: 4) and which is only qualified in terms of opposition to the subjective mother. (Farrar 1999: 373–374)

As soon as Korea's abject children, who have all been expelled and excluded, and rejected and repressed to preserve the nation's racial purity and patriarchal culture, enter the film and become seen by Sông–min, as he recognises himself in the adopted Koreans, they will always worry and question a hegemonic Koreanness where race, language, nation and culture are more or less indivisible. Sông–min soon gets to learn that the abject Koreans cannot simply be trusted in their disrespecting attitude towards his Koreanness, and in their state as eternal potential traitors to their nation or even murders of their own kin.[9] At the same time as abjects, they do not just pose a threat to a supposedly homogeneous Korean nation, as once they reclaim their spaces and are given meaning by being acknowledged by others also open up for new and other subjectivities and modes of being Korean. On the other hand, as soon as the abject becomes visible and intrudes upon the social and cultural order, it has to be changed and modified in some way to be endured, and Sông–min finds his solution in coping with the abject Koreans by relentlessly continuing to interpellate them as Koreans with the hope that they finally will answer to his hails and fall in line with his understanding of what it means to be Korean.

Sông–min finally finds Yông-ch'ôl at a pub, but he does not want to follow Sông–min back to France. When Sông–min returns to Paris he feels forced to tell Marie–Hélène that he did not find her brother, even if a phantasmagoric scene is staged in his mind where the two siblings and the brother's French friend meet together and Yông-ch'ôl, who apparently has learnt Korean, teaches Marie–Hélène that he is not anymore Lucien but *obba* (big brother) and that she is from now on Yông-hûi, thereby Koreanizing them both and making them legible and recognizable to Sông–min's nationalistic satisfaction and pleasure. Sông–min continues to meet the disappointed Marie–Hélène, and they soon initiate a relationship. He

also tries to comfort her when it becomes clear that she has been severely abused by her adoptive father.

Healing a fractured nation

Marie–Hélène's flashbacks do not stop torturing her, and when she sees the Iron Cross which Sông–min took with him from the house in his apartment, the memories of her being abused surface again. Monsieur Bernard had forced Marie–Hélène to perform a play over-loaded with political symbols, as she had to act as a Japanese girl dressed in a kimono, wearing the Iron Cross around her neck, while he himself was dressed in a Russian officer's uniform. After having raped her, he usually regretted what he had done by disavowing his own act and the fact that his terrible behaviour had turned her mute and made her mentally sick. As a director, Park is a filmmaker from the democratic movement, and the notion of the divided nation as a couple who have been separated was particularly strong in the reunification discourse developed by the dissident and populist *minjung* movement – the abused Marie–Hélène can be read as representing the female half of the Korean nation.

Sheila Miyoshi Jager (2003: 57–73) examines the romantic rhetoric of Korean reunifica-tion, and finds that the narrative of 'the anguished, lonely female, unduly separated from family and friends' has been a common theme in Korean literature ever since the Mongol and Japanese invasions of the Koryô and Chosôn dynasties, again highlighting the intimate rela-tionship between nationalism and sexuality, as violence against the nation often is depicted as a violation of the female body. In the 1980s' counter-discourse of *minjung*, the classical Korean tale of Ch'unhyang who is abused by a cruel and corrupt official but remains virtuous and loyal to her loved one, came especially to allegorize the female Korean devotion to family and nation, thereby linking romance to nationalism and adding a strong gender aspect to the reunification issue:

> The patriotic struggle for the lost (unified) nation becomes a *variation* of the same romantic story of faith and loyalty in the recovery of loss. The link between conjugal romance and patriotism is thus more than a suggestive coincidence; each had a direct investment in the other. Together they mapped out the context for what constituted proper feminine behavior. The attainment of conjugal reunion, achieved by women's 'virtuous' resistance to evil gover-nors (and foreign imperialists), thus underscores the patriotic goal, which in turn also becomes the microcosmic expression of nationhood. Thus, embedded within the narrative strategy of *chuch'eron*, and of dissident reunification discourse more generally, are related themes about feminine resistance and proper womanly conduct with regard to men. Conju-gal reunion and, by extension, national consolidation, could be achieved only if women adhered to principles of Confucian virtue, that is, by faithfully awaiting the arrival of their (absent) husbands and resisting other (Western) men's sexual advances … resistance to the division, and the virtuous struggle for reconciliation that it implied, took the allegorical form of resistance to the foreign male. (Jager 2003: 67–68)

In *Berlin Report*, it is the adopted Korean Marie–Hélène who represents one half of the Korean nation as a violated and exiled woman who never gives up her dream of reuniting with her loved one and thereby restoring national unity, even though she of course is not going to marry her brother. If the separation of the two adopted siblings is a metonymy for the divided nation, then Marie–Hélène's stoic longing for her brother Yông–ch'ôl can be interpreted as a promising possibility of and fervent wish for the reunification of the two Koreas. At the end of the film, Marie–Hélène is also rewarded for her faithfulness in believing that she will meet her brother once again.

One day, when Sông–min wakes up, Marie–Hélène has disappeared without a trace. Sông–min is absolutely devastated, and starts to drink heavily, deeply regretting that he did not drag Yông–ch'ôl with him from Germany. He brusquely ends his relationship with

his French girlfriend, and ignores the calls from his boss in Korea. Sông–min tries to track down Marie–Hélène at the clubs of the red light district in Paris. Disgusted by what he perceives as Western decadence around him, with plenty of prostitutes, drug dealers and criminal thugs, he wants to save her from this occidentalized milieu and make her give up her self-destructive lifestyle. After having thrown the Iron Cross into the Seine and almost given up all hope, Sông–min receives a phone call from a mental hospital. He visits the hospital and finds a tired and confused Marie–Hélène locked in a cell with *'obba'* ('big brother') mysteriously scribbled on the walls in *han'gûl*. However, one gets the suspicion that these scribbles exist only in Sông–min's head, as Marie–Hélène certainly neither can speak nor write Korean, and thus rather they reflect his own desire to Koreanize her.

Obsessed as he is with reuniting the two siblings at whatever cost, Sông–min immediately drives her to Berlin, and it is by now clear from Marie–Hélène's flashbacks that it was Yông-ch'ôl who killed her adoptive father after having discovered that he abused her. Marie–Hélène even witnessed the murder, and before Yông-ch'ôl left the house he promised her that he would come back again as soon as possible. Together, Sông–min and Marie–Hélène visit Nina in an apartment filled with Yông-ch'ôl's paintings of Marie–Hélène. Yông-ch'ôl has gone into hiding, and Nina scolds Sông–min and wants to know why the French police came to visit her last time after he had been there. She asks Sông–min aggressively in English if 'people from his country' always behave like this, and then switches to mutterings in her first language, German, linguistically marking her un-Koreanness. However, when Sông–min begs her to help them locate her boyfriend Yông-ch'ôl, not because she is a South Korean but because she is an adopted Korean just like Marie–Hélène, Nina agrees. In this way, Nina shows that even if she does not want to subject and subordinate herself to Sông–min's version of Koreanness, she is at least prepared to answer to his interpellation to identify with a somehow dormant but nevertheless incipient adopted Korean community transgressing national borders, as she herself has been adopted by Germany while Marie–Hélène is an adoptee from France.[10]

Sông–min takes Marie–Hélène to a bar, and meets up with Yông-ch'ôl alone at an appointed place. Yông-ch'ôl turns up and jumps into Sông–min's car, and they slowly drive back towards the bar talking to each other and unaware that they are being tailed by the French police. Sông–min tells Yông-ch'ôl that he has brought Marie–Hélène to Berlin, as Yông-ch'ôl is her only known relative. He also asks him why he moved to East Germany and why he killed her adoptive father. Yông-ch'ôl responds that he went to East Germany as a socialist, but he soon became disillusioned. Yông-ch'ôl also admits that he killed Yông-hûi's adoptive father, and he legitimizes his deed by declaring that Marie–Hélène is a victim of Western imperialism. Yông-ch'ôl spits out that Sông–min will never understand neither why he went to East Germany nor why he killed her adoptive father, adding that Marie–Hélène will get along well alone just like he himself always has been doing. He also says that he will come back to Marie–Hélène one time, but not now as he has other things to do, and that Sông–min must return to Paris with her but without him, demanding he stop and turn around the car. However Sông–min ignores Yông-ch'ôl's protests and drives him to the bar, screaming that he cannot abandon her twice just like their parents and Korea abandoned them both.

Finally, at the moment when the two siblings are about to meet each other, the French criminal inspector suddenly turns up from nowhere to arrest Yông-ch'ôl. The policeman aims his gun at Yông-ch'ôl, but both Marie–Hélène and Sông–min stand in his way, and Yông-ch'ôl is able to run away. However when Marie–Hélène cries *'obba'*, her only real phrase in the film, Yông-ch'ôl chooses to return, and the two siblings are at last able to embrace each other in the presence of Sông–min and the Frenchman. The film ends with Sông–min leaving Yông-hûi in the house where she sits watching Yông-ch'ôl's paintings with a calm expression in her face. He has left a final letter to her saying that he is leaving now, but that he will return

to Paris to be present at Yông-ch'ôl's trial and meet the two siblings once again who both have been abandoned by Korea but who now at last have found peace together.

So from the beginning to the end of the film, Song-min's unsuccessful and unpleasant encounters with the three adopted Koreans desperately yearning for a recognition of his Korean Self but never fully receiving it, is a reminder of the horrifying presence of 150,000 abject Korean bodies who question the dominant image of what it means to be Korean, and who for a long time were forgotten and foreclosed, and marginalized and invisible, but who nowadays increasingly make their existence heard. In *Berlin Report*, the fractured and fragmented Korean nation is projected on and represented by two separated adopted Koreans longing and searching for each other as the adoption issue is set upon the reunification issue, and their individual traumas allegorizes the national trauma of all Koreans of having been divided and dispersed. This projection is executed by the South Korean male intellectual Sông–min and often experienced in his own dreams and visions, completely disavowing the un-Koreanness of the adopted Koreans. Marie–Hélène's and Yông-ch'ôl's fates as abandoned children, orphans and biological siblings split apart by international adoption is transformed into a romantic, melodramatic and powerful symbol of the divided Korean nation and, in the end, with some modifications, it appears that it is possible to heal the nation, even if the cautious message of Park Kwang-su's film *Berlin Report* obviously is that reunification is not an easy affair.

Notes

1. The 50,000 'lost birds' of Native American children in Canada and the United States who were placed for adoption in white families from the 1950s and even as late as the mid-1990s, and the 'stolen generations' of 50,000 Aboriginal children in Australia who between 1886–1970 were forcibly separated from their parents and transferred to the custody of Anglo-Celtic families as a civilizing project, could be mentioned in this context. Similar to the captivity narratives of whites being taken in and adopted by native nations which were both feared and condemned in the European settler communities of the 19th century, one can only imagine the reactions if Asian middle-class couples, whether in Korea or living overseas, suddenly started to adopt white children, or if Asian children were to be sent to Latin American or African countries for international adoption. Except from a number of modern anthropologists who willingly and voluntarily go native and let themselves be adopted by their informants and thereby challenge this one-way traffic, at least on a symbolic level, two famous but nonetheless extremely rare examples of such reversed, switched and almost counterfactual adoption cases are the white orphans in Rudyard Kipling's famous novel *Kim*, from 1901, and in Rabindranath Tagore's equally well-known novel *Gora*, from 1924, both adopted by Indians and raised as a natives in British India. However, it must have been a deliberate choice by the two legendary authors to make use of Irish boys given the ambivalent position the Irish inhabited in those days as being both white and non-white at the same time.
2. Pearl S. Buck, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature and an adoptive mother of seven mixed children from China, was for example one of the earliest to use themes of child rescuing, anti-Communism, and American paternalist responsibility to encourage Americans to adopt Asian children.
3. In spite of the fact that non-Western immigration in general is perceived to be a security threat in the US after the 9/11 events, recently the newly established Department of Homeland Security changed the country's immigration law after intense lobbying from the American adoption industry, led by high-profile politicians and celebrities, to be able to automatically grant US citizenship to children adopted overseas by Americans. The same kind of legislation has been passed in European countries as well, including Sweden where exemptions from otherwise harsh visa regulations to be able to enter a EU country have been made to satisfy the demands from powerful adoption agencies and influential adoptive parents. Moreover, many banks are providing generous adoption loans, several airlines are offering fare discounts, and some governments are reimbursing parts of the adoption fees, again reflecting the exclusiveness and elitism surrounding the world of international adoption.
4. It is well-known that not only children are leaving Asia in great numbers to be adopted by Western families, but also women to be married to Western men.
5. The leading countries with the highest numbers of adopted Koreans are as follows: United States (102,606), France (11,042), Sweden (8830), Denmark (8518), Norway (5993), Netherlands (4099), Belgium (3697),

Australia (3039), Germany (2352), Canada (1739), Switzerland (1111), Luxembourg (468), New Zealand (559), Italy (382), and England (72)

6. It is a fact that Korea cannot anymore blame the consequences of war and the prioritization of economic growth, nor hide behind self-orientalizing images of Confucian thinking and bloodline clannishness, excuses which are still sometimes heard. This culturalist explanation is of course as shallow and false to legitimize the adoption imperative for pre- or extramarital children as it once was in Western countries before the sexual revolution at the end of the 1960s. Ironically, birth mothers in many Western countries, like in Australia, the United States and the Netherlands, whose children were adopted before the revolution of 1968 are nowadays coming out and raising their voices, speaking out about how they all too often were pressured and coerced to give up their children by patriarchal parents and families, and social workers, adoption agencies and religious groups, just like all too many Korean women are forced to do today.

7. However, Koreans had left their country in great numbers before 1860; as during the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, the Japanese invasions in the 1590s, and the Manchu invasions of the first half of the 17th century, tens of thousands were dragged away as captives or slaves. 200,000 has been estimated for the first invasion and as many as 300,000 for the Japanese intrusion.

8. For example, the slaughtering of 'communists' on Cheju Island in 1948–1949 resulting in 80,000 people, one third of the population, being killed or fleeing to Japan.

9. Rumours among Korean intelligence circles of adopted Koreans having become pro-North Korean Communists are probably expressions of this fear.

10. An organized adopted Korean movement transgressing borders and cultures has actually been in the making ever since the end of the 1980s.

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