



The Nation is a Woman: The Korean Nation Embodied as an Overseas Adopted Korean Woman in Chang Kil-su's *Susanne Brink's Arirang*

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1. Feminist scholars argue that modern nation states are profoundly gendered in the sense that the nation is embodied as a woman. [1] Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias examine how nationalism, gender and sexuality intersect, and identify five ways in which women are implicated in nationalist narratives: as biological reproducers of the nation, as boundaries of national groups, as transmitters and producers of national culture, as symbols of national difference, and as participants in nationalist struggle. [2] The nation imagined as a female body gives rise to strong familial connotations, and it is the task of patriarchal nationalism and male power, often represented by the government and military, to rescue and defend, sacrifice and in the end die for her. In their resistance to a patronising colonial power, anti-colonialist forces in general and postcolonial nation-builders in particular seem to be especially susceptible to invoking this gendered manner of nationalism and the image of the nation as woman. [3]
1. In her study of anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalism in South Africa, Anne McClintock reminds us that nationalism is from the very beginning constituted as a gendered discourse, and cannot be grasped without an understanding of gender difference. [4] Sexuality is intimately intertwined with nationalist ideology when female bodies are fetishised as boundary markers of the nation, and male power is set to protect and recover their purity and sanctity. Because womanhood is associated with reproduction and domesticity, the nation also becomes conceptualised as a family, time is spatialised as static, and history becomes a question of genealogy. Women are signifiers and bearers of the nation, but at the same time the Afrikaner *volksmoeder* is denied any agency as women's autonomy is contained within a cult of passive victimology. When a foreign power dominates the nation, it is the role of men to take back control of 'their' women to be able to regain male agency and restore the honour of the nation. Even if women now and then are given a place in anti-colonial struggle such as in the case of ANC's Women's League, practices strengthening patriarchal structures are usually invigorated and reified in times of imperialist domination, as colonised men feel emasculated and have to compensate for their eroded power.
2. According to Nira Yuval-Davis, modern nation-states have taken on three main gendered forms known as *Volknation*, *Kulturnation* and *Staatnation*. [5] In the *Volknation*, women are the biological reproducers of the nation, and the control and regulation of sexuality become crucial not only to preserve 'pure' roots to a perceived common mythical origin but also to envision and sustain a collective future. In the *Kulturnation*, women are the cultural bearers

of the nation, the symbolic border guards and the embodiments of the collective. Finally the *Staatnation*, the third major dimension of nation-building projects, relates to political rights and who are to gain citizenship in the era of global migration and multiculturalism. It is women as reproducers and bearers of the nation which most concerns colonised countries like Korea. As Yuval-Davis puts it,

Hegemonic cultures present a specific view about the meaning of the world and the nature of social order. The relationships between women and men are crucial for such a perspective, and therefore in most societies also the control of women by men. Women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity's 'honour' and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture. Specific codes and regulations are usually developed, defining who/what is a 'proper man' and a 'proper woman', which are central to the identities of collectivity members. Feelings of disempowerment which result from processes of colonization and subjugation have often been interpreted by the colonized men as processes of emasculation and/or feminization. The (re)construction of men's—and often even more importantly women's—roles in the processes of resistance and liberation has been central in most such struggles.^[6]

3. Korean nationalism is undoubtedly heavily gendered as well.^[7] In Korea, just like in so many other nation states, people are born in and return to the Motherland [*moguk*], while they defend and fight for the Fatherland [*choguk*]. Furthermore it was a bear-woman [*ungnyô*] who mothered the nation in the form of Tan'gun, the mythical progenitor of all Koreans, and it is no coincidence that shamanism, predominantly practised by women, is considered to be the most atavistic and timeless of all religions in Korea. Laurel Kendall writes that historically shamans have been doubly marginalised by being female and by practising an outcast profession.^[8] Recently, however, patriarchal nationalism has started to 'speak for' the shamans, inscribing them with nationalist meanings, and thereby transforming them into mute artefacts of nationalist struggle and ideology.
1. Sheila Miyoshi Jager finds that in the first half of the last century, male impotence, failed manhood, impaired bodies and loss of control over women's sexuality were frequent subjects in Korean literature reflecting Korean men's traumatic experience of having been colonised by Japan.^[9] Regarding the postcolonial period, Jongwoo Han and L.H.M. Ling categorise the Republic of Korea as a mixture of Confucian parental governance and a projection of Western liberal capitalism resulting in a self-orientalised hypermasculinisation.^[10] The Korean developmental state was heavily hypermasculinised on the international scene, while at the same time the domestic society was hyperfeminised to be able to uphold gender division. Confucian virtues of sexual chastity, obedience to the family and modest appearance were reinvented, and the couple cites the famous *minjung* poet Kim Chi Ha who analogised Korea's transition into modernity as a woman about to enter prostitution.
2. The gendered aspect of Korean nationalism is especially evident in the public debate surrounding the comfort women. Hyunah Yang shows that the discourse on the comfort women has resulted in the reinforcement of patriarchal nationalism, as the women are perceived as having soiled the dignity of the nation instead of addressing the elusive guilt and complicity coming from native Korean men who acted as intermediaries to force, coerce and trick the women to 'enlist'.^[11] Similarly, Bruce Fulton looks at literary representations of military prostitutes in the genre of *kijich'on* [camp town] fiction and find that the women are used as an allegory for a subordinated Korean nation provoking uneasy feelings of masculine humiliation.^[12] As Chunghee Sarah Soh rightly points out when commenting the comfort women issue, Korean women have indeed repeatedly paid the price to 'save the nation' and act as 'patriots' with their bodies as they have been sent away as tributes or gifts to please dominant powers.^[13] Soh sees this as a result of a binary classification between what she calls those women who, to marry, were socialised to be selfless wives and devoted mothers, and those women who, to date, were recruited and trained to entertain and offer their bodies. With a long history of being a vassal under Chinese, Japanese and American imperialism and governed by the Confucian concept of serving the great

[*sadaejuû*], this concerns court ladies to the Mongols, tributary women [*kongnyô*] to the Ming emperor, captives [*hwanhyangnyô*] to the Manchu dynasty, comfort women [*chôngsindae* or *wianbu*] to the Japanese, war brides and military prostitutes [*yang'gongju*] to the Americans, and *kisaeng* girls to foreign businessmen and tourists.

The Korean adoption issue and *Susanne Brink's Arirang*

3. In this paper then, I examine how the gendered version of Korean nationalism is articulated in the Korean filmmaker Chang Kil-su's feature film *Susanne Brink's Arirang* (1991), where an overseas adopted Korean woman comes to embody the Korean nation. I take nationalism as a gendered discourse and woman as a privileged sign of the nation as the theoretical point of departure, and read the film primarily as a cultural text instead of a purely cinematic production. This means that I focus on the narrative of the film and not the filmic features or the technical aspects of direction and production. The reading of *Susanne Brink's Arirang* takes place with the background of the history of international adoption from Korea and the development of the Korean adoption issue.
4. Ever since the end of the Korean War in 1953, around 155,000 Korean children have been adopted to fifteen different Western countries, and still over two thousand children leave Korea annually to service the western world's adoption market. [14] In the modern history of the world, this makes Korea the country that has sent the largest number of its citizens away for international adoption. International adoption from Korea can be contextualised as both a concrete effect of the hypermasculinisation of the Korean developmental state, and a continuation of the long Korean tradition of trafficking in human beings as tributary gifts. [15] Further, international adoption can also be seen an example of a practice that upholds and strengthens patriarchal structures within Korea itself. Nira Yuval-Davis proposes that the trafficking in children in the form of international adoption illustrates how more powerful national collectivities dominate less powerful ones on a global level. [16] International adoption has, in other words, been used by Korea for well over half a century to sustain a rigid patriarchal system within Korean society, and at the same time to please its Western allies and superiors.
5. The massive intercontinental circulation of Korean children has taken 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. At the beginning of the 1970s, overseas adopted Koreans were for the first time included within the discourse of Korean nationalism when North Korean media accused its southern neighbour of selling Korean children to Westerners. Just like the history of the comfort women and the military prostitutes, the existence of tens of thousands of Korean adopted children in Western countries suddenly created strong feelings of shame and humiliation. The negative attention led to the entire international adoption program being classified as something close to a state secret, and the overseas adoption statistics were separated from emigration statistics to hide the high number of Korean children who poured out of the country every year. However, at the time of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, Western media started to write about Korea as the leading global provider of children for international adoption, and within Korea the adoption issue was here to stay. The social drama of *Susanne Brink's Arirang*, released in September 1991 and directed by respected Chang Kil-su, played a pivotal role in this development by making the existence of the adopted Koreans widely known in Korea. Indeed, *Susanne Brink's Arirang* is arguably the most famous Korean feature film representing an adopted Korean in a Western host country. As one of the earliest popular cultural works to take up the adoption issue and definitely the most complete and classical representation of an adopted Korean that has ever been made, the influence of *Susanne Brink's Arirang* in bringing up the negative aspects of international adoption in Korea has in all respects truly been enormous.

6. *Susanne Brink's Arirang* depicts the life of Susanne Brink, an adopted Korean woman who was brought up in Sweden, and is based on a true story. The narrative trajectory of the film starts with her departure from Korea as Yu-suk at the age of three, continues through her hardships as an adoptee in Sweden with an abusive adoptive family, two suicide attempts and endless misery, and ends with the reunion with her Korean family some twenty years later. *Susanne Brink's Arirang* takes place in a wholly Swedish setting except for the first and last scenes when Susanne's Korean family appears, and almost solely with Swedish actors and in Swedish using Korean subtitles. In the film, even the title character played by the Korean actress Choi Jin-sil has learnt her lines in Swedish. The real Susanne Brink had appeared in 1989 in a television documentary on adopted Koreans in Europe, through which she actually found her Korean mother. Her life was subsequently turned into a novel that became the basis of the film script.^[17] Through the film, Susanne Brink was turned into one of Korea's most well-known adopted Koreans, and several follow-up documentaries have been made about her, while repeat transmissions of the film are still regular on Korean television channels.
7. The year of 1991 is considered to have been a particularly gloomy year for Korean national cinema, and *Susanne Brink's Arirang* was among only a few domestic titles to reach any commercial success or critical attention at all throughout the year. One important factor that contributed to the success of the film was the fact that Susanne was played by the celebrated Choi Jin-sil who received a domestic prize for her performance, and who began her rise to stardom from the beginning of the 1990s. The director Chang Kil-su managed to release another well-received film the same year, *Silver Stallion* [*ŪnmanŪn oji ahnŪnda*], based on a novel of Ahn Junghyo, which won awards at the Montreal film festival. Just like *Susanne Brink's Arirang*, *Silver Stallion* is also centred on the gendering of the nation in the form of a Korean woman who is raped by American soldiers and ostracised by her community at the time of the Korean War.^[18] Chang has continued to work with Choi Jin-sil in other film projects as well as producing other feature films depicting ethnic Koreans overseas like *America, America* (1988), *That Which Falls Has Wings* [*Ch'urakhanŪn kŌsŪn nalgaega itta*] (1990) and *Western Avenue* (1993). *Western Avenue* takes up the Los Angeles riots of 1992, known as *sa-i-gu* by the Korean community of the city, and the film was criticised for its stereotypical portrayals of non-Koreans, whites and blacks alike—something which is apparent in *Susanne Brink's Arirang* as well.

The rite de passage of adopted Koreans

8. *Susanne Brink's Arirang* abruptly starts as a documentary with two authentic Swedish female adopted Koreans in their teens aggressively spitting out bitter phrases of having been adopted from Korea. The first girl tells that her adoptive parents wanted a Korean daughter as if they had chosen among pets, and that she knew that she was sold cheaply as Korean children were not worth much in those days. The second girl, with a pierced nose and a particularly provocative style, states that she despises her Korean mother for having abandoned her, and that she wants to spit in her face and take out revenge on her in the future by coming back and destroying her new family. The two adopted Koreans are in other words seeing themselves as products of both Western racialised consumerism and Korean subservient trafficking. It is easy to imagine how shocking this opening of the film must have been to a Korean audience of the early 1990s, as the two adopted Koreans both visually and verbally by any means transgress the rigid boundaries of idealised Korean femininity, as well as violating the almost holy sacredness surrounding the Korean mother. The spectacular opening sequence which from the very beginning sets the stage for and framing of the theme of the film itself—namely how overseas adopted Korean women are used as representatives of the Korean nation—is followed by one of the key scenes in the film when Susanne and her daughter Eleonora sit in front of a Korean television team. With tears in

her eyes and while smoking, Susanne tells that she wants to ask her Korean mother why she sent her so far away. Here again, the director has consciously chosen to present yet another severe violation of Korean womanhood for the already shocked spectators as 'proper Korean women' are not allowed to smoke in public, and Susanne, at least theoretically, smokes in front of the whole Korean people. [19]

9. The story itself unfolds in 1966 where, in a working-class neighbourhood in Seoul, a widow, played by Kim Yun-kyeong, lives a difficult life as a single mother of three children after the premature decease of her husband. The mother decides to relinquish Yu-suk, the youngest daughter, for international adoption. After a final farewell to siblings and neighbours, the mother takes Yu-suk on her back for one last time just like Korean women traditionally carry their infants, and walks to Kimpo Airport. At the airport, a female adoption agency worker and an escort woman wait impatiently. The agency worker shouts at Yu-suk's mother to hurry up. The rude and cold-blooded middle-class woman dealing in child trade here becomes the antithesis to the decent, simple and traditional working-class woman forced to give up her daughter for adoption. The poor mother signs the necessary documents and buys Yu-suk a girl doll dressed up in *hanbok* as a last memory of Korea. Suddenly the mother regrets her decision, but forces herself to physically part from Yu-suk as the plane is about to leave. This heartbreaking scene filled with tears and cries is prolonged in slow-motion to make the most of the voyeuristic pleasure in watching and hopefully empathising with another person's despair, and the viewer gets a final glimpse of the devastated mother looking up against an airplane in the sky with tears rolling from her eyes.
10. At Arlanda Airport in Stockholm, the Swedish couple, Rune and Inger Brink, played by the Swedish actors Lars and Pia Green, eagerly awaits their new child. Skilfully, the director contrasts the complete agony of Yu-suk's Korean mother at Kimpo Airport with the naïve happiness of the waiting adoptive Swedish parents at Arlanda Airport. Above all the director explores how an international adoption may well be experienced from the angle of a child. Unsteadily waving a Swedish flag in her hand and with a bewildered look, Yu-suk is welcomed in a language she does not understand, and by people whose strange appearance frightens her to death. With a mixture of unrestrained desire for the racialised Other and a taken-for-granted possessiveness, her new mother openly claims Yu-suk as her own by lifting her up, and exclaiming 'from now on you are Susanne Brink' and 'you belong to us now'. In response, Yu-suk clings desperately to the Korean escort woman crying that she wants to go back to her mother. The escort woman who will be her last contact with another ethnic Korean for many years instead gently pushes her away and tells her that these people are henceforth her new mother and father. A Swedish adoption agency worker turns up dressed as a professional businesswoman, and gets the necessary signatures from the couple, thereby finalising their adoption of Yu-suk.
11. Following Marc Augé's notion of non-places as transitional, liminal and deterritorialised public locales of transportation as well as of commerce in his theorisation of an anthropology of supermodernity, it is possible to interpret the airport as the (non-)place where adopted Koreans are going through their ethnic *rite de passage*. [20] At the airport, Yu-suk loses her Korean identity and leaves behind her Koreanness to be reborn and rebaptised as Swedish Susanne. Consequently, it is no coincidence that airport references and airplanes in the sky so often are used intertextually as the dominant metaphor of international adoption in other popular cultural representations of adopted Koreans. [21] This *rite de passage* of adopted Koreans can be likened to the one Africans went through as they too were emptied and stripped of their original identity, Christianised and given new names and identities as slaves. The main difference is, of course, that airports have replaced harbours, and planes have replaced ships. However according to Korean nationalism, as will be evident at the end of *Susanne Brink's Arirang*, the airport can also be the (non-)place where a reversed *rite de passage* takes place by which the adoptees are able to regain their Koreanness.

12. After a car trip to Norrköping, a city south of Stockholm, Susanne enters her new home, a typical suburban middle-class villa, and meets her Swedish relatives who have arranged a welcoming dinner. Susanne is very frightened when encountering her strange-looking aunts and grandmas who disregard any respect for physical integrity and resolutely hug and kiss her. Moreover, her new mother forces her to undress, take a bath and change clothes unaware of the vital significance Susanne invests in the dress that was given to her by her Korean mother on the day of her departure. The Swedish mother's forceful act of washing and redressing her signifies the final transformation of Korean Yu-suk into Swedish Susanne. Susanne's first day in her new country ends by her sitting at the dinner table and listening to the mumbling of an incomprehensible language until she finally falls asleep in the company of an adoptive family filled with its own happiness and showing no interest in or understanding of the hardships she recently has gone through. In a last scene, again underlining the naïve mentality of the adoptive parents, Rune and Inger gently put a sleeping Susanne into bed and smile at the Korean doll she brought with her which symbolises her last pathetic connection to Korea, and which suddenly looks as astray and displaced as Susanne herself.

The suffering and shaming of Korea

13. The film now takes a jump ahead in time and resumes at the end of the 1970s when Susanne attends the senior level of the Swedish school system at the age of fifteen. More than ten years have now passed since the transformation of Korean Yu-suk into Swedish Susanne. Susanne's adoptive father Rune is a busy self-employed man, the adoptive mother Inger has turned into a bitter and bored housewife who drinks too much, the adoptive brother Håkan is a hot-tempered motorbike rider popular among girls, while Susanne herself is a shy and sensitive person with few friends in school. In other words, with a hardworking and absent father, a mother who epitomises the almost universal trope of the wicked and evil stepmother and a self-assured brother who could not care less, the stage is perfectly set for an abusive adoptive family. It soon appears that Susanne is constantly subjected to psychic terror and physical mistreatment in her adoptive family. Her Swedish brother pesters her with egoistic demands and shouts: 'I do not want to live with a damn Chinese!' while her Swedish mother openly tells her that her 'mean slanted looks' frighten the neighbours—nothing less than an implicit reference to the epicanthic folds of her eyes. In a terrible kitchen scene, Susanne is forced to listen to her Swedish parents openly arguing, as if she is not present over who wanted to adopt her in the first place, and if it is possible to send her back to Korea.
1. At Midsummer Eve, the most Swedish of annual festivals, Susanne meets one of her rare friends from school. With flowers in her hair and standing out against a crowd of Swedes dressed up in traditional costume and dancing around the maypole, this Midsummer Eve sequence is consciously inserted between the family scenes to further reinforce the message that Susanne is forever a stranger in her adoptive country with a Korean appearance turned into a striking bodily lack of Whiteness. Even if she has a Swedish name and a Swedish family, even if she speaks Swedish and behaves like a Swede, and in spite of wearing a wreath of flowers in her hair like so many other Swedish girls do at Midsummer Eve, the obvious message of the film is that Susanne will never ever become a Swede. Susanne's shortcomings of not being an ethnic Swede is from the beginning decided by her having an anatomical and biological body which associates her metonymically with East Asia, fetishises her as a stranger and marks her with the sense of out-of-place-ness Sara Ahmed discusses and elaborates on in her treatise on the embodiment of Others in postcoloniality.^[22] Sara Ahmed writes that otherisation is produced at the level of the body in the dialogical encounter between stranger and community through a process of incorporation and expulsion creating assimilable and unassimilable bodies, and by placing Susanne in relation to a Swedish crowd, director Chang clearly places Susanne within the

last category—Susanne is born a Korean and will forever be a Korean. As Ahmed says,

An analysis of strange encounters as bodily encounters suggests that the marking out of boundary lines between bodies, through the assumption of a bodily image, involves practices and techniques of differentiation. That is, bodies become differentiated not only *from each other* or *the other*, but also through differentiating *between others*, who have a different function in establishing the permeability of bodily space. Here, there is no generalisable other that serves to establish the illusion of bodily integrity; rather the body becomes imagined through being related to, and separated from, particular bodily others. Difference is not simply found in the body, but is established as a relation between bodies.^[23]

2. At home Susanne is forced to do housework and other chores. A particularly studied scene when Susanne, in a subservient posture and with tears in her eyes is doing pedicure on her arrogant and mean Swedish mother, is an explicit reference to slavery and colonialism. Through this sequence, international adoption becomes a way of selling Korean children to abusive and racist Westerners to furnish them with servants. Even more important, at this critical juncture is that Susanne as an adopted Korean girl takes on the role of the enslaved and colonised subject and embodies the gendered version of the Korean nation at times of foreign yoke, subjugation and oppression. In her embodiment of the nation, Korea becomes inscribed on her body as she assumes the burden of representing the Korean nation, and every time Susanne is victimised it is, as Yuval-Davis theorises, the Korean *Kulturation* that is suffering.
1. One day, when waiting at a commuter station dressed in a mini-skirt that is normal for teenage girls in Sweden, a male drunkard approaches Susanne and harasses her. He starts by asking her if she is from China or Japan, compliments her for her cute appearance, and when the train arrives he physically forces her to accept a sum of money in front of the curious passengers looking out of the window. This time, the orientalist sexualisation of East Asian women in Western culture and the image of them as always willing partners for Western men or even born prostitutes is used by the director to get to the point that female adopted Koreans are never safe in a Western country and must be protected, whether in their adoptive family or in the public space.^[24] The orientalist sexualisation taking place in the film, underpinned by nostalgic memories of glorious mass raping in the colonies, American military prostitution, and contemporary sex tourism and trafficking, is a well documented phenomenon and has been thoroughly dealt with in Asian American feminist studies.^[25] Accordingly Susanne must be saved from the disgrace of being raped, but also policed from the risk of prostituting herself thereby introducing Yuval-Davis's *Volknation* concept where women are the biological reproducers of the nation and therefore have to be protected and looked after so that the 'nation's blood' is not polluted. Through this split ambiguity—on the one hand Susanne embodies the suffering of the Korean *Kulturation* and on the other hand she is the focus of the shaming of the Korean *Volknation*—she is worth both pity and contempt. However, Susanne/Korea has to wait for many years and go through even more ordeals, hardships and miseries before the intervention of Korean nationalism intervenes to change her life.
2. When Susanne comes home after the terrible incident, her Swedish mother has already been informed of what has happened by witnesses from the train. She demands to see the money and accuses Susanne, violently slapping the bills in her face and beating her: 'I knew you would end up like a prostitute!' Trapped between the inescapable roles of the obedient and grateful adopted child, the kind and cute Asian girl, the submissive and docile housemaid, and the always available and willing East Asian woman, Susanne now seeks solace in her diary where she writes sentences like 'I hate my adoptive mother!' One day when Susanne comes back from school, she finds her adoptive mother standing in her room reading her diary. The adoptive mother starts to beat Susanne severely, even ripping her clothes apart as a final act of humiliation. Susanne locks herself up in the bathroom and tries to commit suicide, but she survives and wakes up at the hospital with her adoptive mother standing above her and scolding her for what she has done.

3. Some years later when entering high school at the age of sixteen, Susanne leaves her adoptive family and moves to a boarding house to start an independent life. At the boarding house Susanne becomes close friend with Ulrika, a Swedish girl with a similar family background to that of Susanne. Ulrika has been abused by her foster mother. With a defiant dress style being the norm among Swedish high school girls, but close to unthinkable for prudish and well-mannered same-aged Koreans at the beginning of the 1990s, together the two damaged and self-destructive girls start to visit Stockholm for partying. Susanne meets Christer, a young and irresponsible playboy, and initiates a relationship with him. [26] By portraying Susanne as an easy-going, 'vulgar' and emancipated young Swedish woman, drinking alcohol, dating boys and openly talking about contraceptives, the director again simultaneously makes her both a victim of decadent Western culture and a perpetrator who defiles the Korean nation in her blatant and shocking violation of proper Korean womanliness.
4. After graduating, Susanne moves to Stockholm and starts to work in a grocery store. To her surprise she soon discovers that she is pregnant. However, Christer tells her that he is too young to become a father and besides does not want to have a mixed child, and seemingly without regret he promptly deserts her. Susanne is now left alone, and in scene after scene spectators of the film are painfully reminded of her exposed and vulnerable existence in a foreign and hostile country, waiting at a bus station, working in the shop or sitting alone in her apartment staring into space. Susanne continues to work until the very day of delivery, and she is driven to the hospital by a male taxi driver who finds her lying helpless on the street after the amniotic fluid has been released—an event that further underscores her unprotected and victimised state. At eighteen years old, Susanne ends up as a single mother with a biracial daughter named Eleonora. As the social condemnation of interracial relationships, biracial children and single motherhood are the main causes behind international adoption itself, again Susanne is by all means violently shaming the Korean nation.
5. Three years later in her early twenties, Susanne resumes her acquaintance with Ulrika. Together they get to know a charming student named Willy who takes a liking to Susanne. Susanne is invited to meet Willy's mother, but feels ashamed of her state as a single mother. However, Willy's mother also happens to be a single mother, and she is depicted as a typical product of Swedish feminism and the sexual liberation of 1968. Her life as a completely occidentalised and liberated Swedish woman in her forties enjoying life with plenty of men around her is juxtaposed with Susanne's lonely and isolated existence. In this way, it can be said, that Sweden is equally gendered as Korea in the film, as the Swedish nation becomes embodied as a liberated woman according to the widespread international image of the country as the paradise of free love and sexual liberation. However, when Willy and Susanne are about to become a couple, Ulrika, supposedly her girlfriend, manages to steal him away from her. In the next scene, a completely devastated Susanne runs through crowds of Swedes on the streets of Stockholm, again underlining her different appearance and her desolate situation. Now abandoned by everyone, her Korean family, her Swedish family, her daughter's father, her boyfriend and her closest girlfriend, Susanne writes a final letter to Eleonora. Again she tries to commit suicide, but survives for a second time. She ends up at a mental hospital where she receives a vision from God and finds salvation. When discharged she moves to Uppsala, a town north of Stockholm where she starts to study theology at the university and continues to live alone together with her daughter. After having gone through this purgatory-like adoption odyssey, Korean male power now enters the scene and takes back 'its' woman to save the honour of the nation.

Korean male power intervenes

6. In the year of 1989, the film returns to Susanne. Living as a student and a single mother in Uppsala, Susanne is now twenty-five and her daughter, Eleonora, is five years old. One day, a Korean television team led by a male journalist who is making a documentary on adopted Koreans in Europe comes to Uppsala. Susanne is at first reluctant to participate but finally she accepts as she is told that the purpose of the program is to increase the awareness of adopted Koreans in Korea. It is precisely at this very moment when the journalist enters Susanne's home in Uppsala that Korean nationalism in the form of Korean male power at last intervenes as the nation's saviour and liberator. Sitting in Susanne's small apartment, the journalist starts to ask questions about her life as an adopted Korean in Sweden. When her single parenthood is brought up, Susanne nervously begins to smoke in front of the camera. As mentioned before, to smoke in public is an absolutely unthinkable behaviour of a proper Korean woman, at least at the beginning of the 1990s, even if what is considered appropriate for a Korean woman is changing drastically in a time when appearances, features and bodies are becoming increasingly Westernised as Taeyon Kim has shown in her study of the subjectlessness of Korean womanhood.^[27] It is evident that the journalist and the television team are absolutely stunned by Susanne's unlucky fate as a single and unmarried mother in such a distant and strange country like Sweden.
7. Thereafter Susanne plays and sings the ubiquitous Korean folksong *Arirang* on the piano. *Arirang*, which at times is the unofficial national anthem of Korea and which is considered to be the most representative of Korean folk songs, is commonly seen as expressing the spirit of the Korean nation in times of hardships and oppression.^[28] Thus, the symbolism of an adopted Korean singing a song overloaded with nationalist ideology and which is conceived to express the unique Korean national feeling of *han*, cannot be overestimated. The emotion of *han* is perceived as a universal Korean trait of having experienced separation and loss after a century of foreign invasions and social upheavals, and is defined as a long accumulated, suppressed and pent-up mixture of sorrow and anger caused by the injustices and hardships of modern Korean history.^[29] So with tears in her eyes and while singing *Arirang*, at this particular moment for a Korean audience, Susanne fully embodies the Korean nation and the song's connotation with parting and longing in an almost overly explicit way. If someone has too much *han* accumulated, this nexus of feelings including resignation, loneliness, longing, sorrow and emptiness, of course it must be an adopted Korean, and if this *han* is going to be released of course it has to take place in the secure and protecting presence of Korean male power.
8. The film now turns to Susanne's aged Korean mother sitting alone in her simple home in Seoul, watching the television documentary on adopted Koreans and overwhelmed with feelings of regret and sorrow. In an epilogue of the documentary, Susanne suddenly appears together with Eleonora walking around on the streets of Uppsala or sitting in her apartment studying, and her adoption story is accounted for. When Susanne's child footage is displayed, a shocked mother immediately recognizes her daughter, and collapses into a loud fit of crying. Back in Sweden, early in the morning Susanne is woken by a phone call from the Korean journalist who happily tells her that her Korean mother has been found through the documentary and invites her to come to Korea. Once again the film moves back to Korea where Susanne's Korean mother dressed up in *hanbok*, and her brother and niece eagerly wait outside the arrival exit at Kimpo Airport together with the television team. At last Susanne and Eleonora arrive, and the reunion scene is like a reprisal of the parting scene, once again prolonged in slow-motion and by the use of black-and-white flashbacks. In front of the journalist and with melodramatic film music in the background, mother and daughter embrace each other and cry together. Susanne hesitantly whispers '*ômônim*' [mother] in broken Korean, while her mother repeatedly asks for forgiveness.
9. Susanne's time spent with her Korean family in Korea is depicted as an unproblematic process of re-Koreanisation and as a dreamlike experience wrapped in an ecstasy of joy. At the time of her departure for Sweden, it is obvious that she has been de-Westernised and

re-Koreanised, as she is not anymore the Swedish Susanne but once again Korean Yu-suk. At the airport when being decontaminated and going through this reversed *rite de passage*, she gives a speech directed to the Korean journalist, the spectators and in the end the Korean people demanding that Korea must stop international adoption. This is followed by a sequence of yet another airplane lifting from Kimpo Airport towards the sky, and as the credits roll the film ends with anonymous child pictures of adoptees to illustrate the mass migration of Korean children that has been going on for such a long time and still continues. In this way there is no real end to the film, as even if Korean nationalism has managed to rescue and liberate Susanne, at the same time numerous more suffering adoptees oppressed by Western colonialism and risking to shame the nation wait to be reclaimed and saved. Lastly, the airport as a transitional non-place for both de- and re-Koreanisation and an airplane in the sky as the metaphor for international adoption are used to reach a narrative equilibrium in the film, as the reunion scene is set in juxtaposition to the parting scene.

10. To conclude, in *Susanne Brink's Arirang* the Korean nation is heavily gendered but also infantilised as it performs as a passive and victimised female adopted child who is denied any agency, thereby paralleling Anne McClintock's understanding of how South African Boer nationalism works. It is important to remember that Susanne is not just a woman, she is also a child, and she is not just any kind of overseas Korean child; she is parentless and an exiled orphan who has to be parented and taken care of. The message conveyed in this issue-oriented film overloaded with a sentimental but nonetheless powerful blend of endless misery, inescapable tragedy and victimhood is that adopted Koreans are leading miserable existences and need to be protected and rescued. In the film, Susanne is trapped between Western colonial racism and Korean patriarchal nationalism, as she is simultaneously portrayed as the Korean *Kulturnation* suffering from oppression and as the woman who is putting the Korean *Volknation* to shame. This is illustrated by her disgraceful transgressions of Korean womanhood, her constant violation of prescribed modest appearance and sexual chastity, her 'free' relationships with several Swedish men, and her shameless state as an unmarried and single mother to a biracial child. Furthermore, in the film Swedes and particularly women are repeatedly occidentalised and depicted as evil, all treating Susanne disparagingly, torturing and harassing her, and in the end nearly killing her, and in this way both patriarchal and Korean complicity is completely disavowed and denied in line with how the comfort women issue has been dealt with. Instead it is only through the recovering of Susanne, accomplished by the resolute intervention of Korean male power, that the nation can be saved. At the moment when Susanne is being rescued and recovered, and de-Westernised and re-Koreanised, Korean nationalism has been remasculinised, Korean male agency has been regained, and the honour of the Korean nation has been restored.

Endnotes

[1] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990; Tamar Mayer, 'Gender ironies of nationalism: setting the stage,' in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 1-24; Chizuko Ueno, *Nationalism and Gender*, Melbourne: Transpacific Press, 2003.

[2] Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, 'Introduction,' in *Women-Nation-State*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, Basingtone: Macmillan, 1989, pp. 1-15.

[3] See for example Sandhya Shetty, '(Dis)figuring the nation: Mother, metaphor, metonymy,' in *Differences*, 7 (1995): 50-79, and Mrinalini Sinha, 'Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and nationalism in late-colonial India,' in *Feminist Studies*, 26 (2000): 623-44.

[4] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 352-89.

[5] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, London: Sage, 1997.

[6] Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p. 67.

[7] For studies of Korean nationalism from a feminist perspective, see Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, (eds), *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, London: Routledge, 1998, and Laurel Kendall (ed.), *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.

[8] Laurel Kendall, 'Who speaks for Korean shamans when shamans speak of the nation?,' in *Making majorities. Constituting the nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey and the United States*, ed. Dru C. Gladney, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 55-72.

[9] Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2003, pp. 43-56.

[10] Jongwoo Han and L.H.M. Ling, 'Authoritarianism in the hypermasculinized state: hybridity, patriarchy, and capitalism in Korea,' in *International Studies Quarterly*, 42 (1998): 53-78.

[11] Hyunah Yang, 'Re-membering the Korean military comfort women: Nation-alism, sexuality and silencing,' in *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 123-39.

[12] Bruce Fulton, 'Kijich'on fiction,' in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, ed. Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini, University of California: Center for Korean Studies, 1998, pp. 13-32.

[13] Chunghee Sarah Soh, 'Women's sexual labor and state in Korean history,' in *Journal of Women's History*, 15 (2004): 170-77.

[14] The history and demographics of international adoption from Korea and the development of the Korean adoption issue is chronicled in Rosemary C. Sarri, Yeonoak Baik and Marti Bombyk, 'Goal displacement and dependency in South Korean-United States intercountry adoption,' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20 (1998): 87-114.

[15] Anecdotal evidence that North Korean children have been donated as gifts to Western sympathisers overseas, and the fact that the South Korean Unification Church is circulating gift children among its members are perhaps also expressions of this tradition.

[16] Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, pp. 28-29.

[17] The book was authored and edited by Yu U-jê and came out in 1990. Parts of the novel also appeared in an anthology containing the life-stories of several adopted Koreans which appeared a year later.

[18] Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 81-87.

[19] Interestingly enough, adopted Koreans participating in visiting programs are by routine actually made to promise that they will not wear 'inappropriate attire' and refrain from smoking in public in front of old people to 'ensure safety'.

[20] Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London: Verso, 1995.

[21] See for example Kwangsoo Park's comic strips in *kwangsoo's thoughts* from 1998, Clon's song *Abandoned Child* from 1999 and Sol Flower's music video *Kiss the Kids* from 2004

[22] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* London: Routledge, 2000.

[23] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 44.

24 Here, it must be said that the real Susanne Brink actually has been one of the first to raise the issue of orientalist sexualisation of female adopted Koreans in Sweden as she has written articles on the subject and simultaneously demanding a stop to international adoption from Korea.

25 See for example Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*, London: Sage, 1997; L. Hyun-Yi Kang, 'The desiring of Asian female bodies: interracial romance and cinematic subjection,' in *Visual Anthropology Review*, 9 (1993): 5-21; Aki Uchida, 'The orientalization of Asian women in America,' in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21 (1998): 161-74.

[26] According to *Expressen*, July 5, 1991, a conflict erupted between director Chang and Susanne on some of the intimate scenes in the film.

[27] Taeyon Kim, 'Neo-Confucian body techniques: women's bodies in Korea's consumer society,' in *Body & Society*, 9 (2003): 97-113.

[28] Shi-ôp Kim, 'Arirang, modern Korean folk song,' in *Korea Journal*, 28 (1988): 4-19.

[29] For a study on the concept of *han*, see Jae Hoon Lee, *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds - Han*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.

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