In-between (Un)familiar Homes: Korean Adoptees' Transnational Return Experiences and Emotions in Memoirs

by

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Abstract

With the emergence in the 2000s of discussions of diaspora, researchers took up the question of the Korean diaspora and its dispersion. However, Koreans adopted outside of the Korean Peninsula were erased in history to hide the nation's neglect of war orphans, mixed or "interracial" children, and the lack of a social welfare system for domestic adoption. Yet this marginalized history survived in the form of memoirs as a rich repository of affects and emotions reflecting the author's engagement with the self. This thesis presents three memoirs by two authors who are international adoptees in North America: *The Language of Blood* (2003) and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009) written by a Korean-American writer Jane Jeong Trenka, and *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.* (2019) by a Korean-Canadian writer Jenny Heijun Wills. With affect theory, this research discloses the sense of distance the authors feel towards their ethnic home country in common, Korea.

Keywords: Korean diaspora; adoptees; international adoption; memoir; emotion; affect

For all the wandering souls living with multiple names in different languages

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가장 존경하는 박사님 고모께. 제 여정은 항상 고모와 함께합니다.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

On May 16, 2023, the Seoul Central District Court ordered Holt Children's Services (the Korean branch of Holt International Children's Services today) to pay Adam Crapser (born Shin Song-Hyuk, currently Adam Shin) 100 million won (75,000 USD) in damages for mishandling his adoption from South Korea to the United States[1]. Although the court refused to hold the South Korean government itself accountable for the mismanagement in Crapser's adoption, the ruling has been recognized as a landmark in the history of international Korean adoptees' activism, establishing adoptees' rights by issuing the very first judicial reprimand of the adoption agencies handling international adoption in South Korea. With the half-won result to the Korean branch of Holt International Children's Services, one of the most influential international adoption agencies in South Korea, the publicity surrounding Crapser's case called people's attention to the hidden and marginalized history of international adoption of South Korean children.

Crapser was not the only one living with multiple names in different languages. As his court case shows, the hardships engraved in the international Korean adoptees' history finally started to gather the public's attention towards the exiled adoptees from the Korean peninsula in today's South Korean society. Despite the renewed attention to their plight, however, the life stories of these adoptees were still fragmented, visible only

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[1] Adam Crapser's tragic life story, including child abuse by his adoptive parents and deportation from the United States because of the mishandling of his adoption by Holt Children's Service (홀트아동복지회), was made into an episode of a TV documentary series on MBC titled *My Name is Shin Song-Hyuk* [나의 이름은 신성혁, *Naŭi Irŭmŭn Shinsŏnghyŏk*] (2017), which made him one of the most well-known international adoptees in South Korea. Featuring the moment of reunion with his birth mother and his struggle to settle down in South Korea as Shin Song-Hyuk, the episode evoked the public's sympathy, leading the episode broadcast once again, and the online fund-raising to help his independence in South Korea exceeded 300% (Yang 2017). The four-year-case against the Korean branch of Holt International Children's Services and the South Korean government was concluded as Crapser's win, however, as of August 2024, the lawsuit is still ongoing; the Holt has filed an appeal against the ruling on May 25, 2023, and Crapser also appealed the ruling on June 1, 2023, to make the government take legal responsibility in his adoption (The Korea Times 2023). In an email interview with a Korean press *OhmyNews* on May 18, 2023, Crapser revealed that he lives in Mexico and is preparing to apply for asylum in Canada (Lee 2023).

through the documentaries and interviews produced by others. The Korean media portraits highlighted the adoptees' heartbreaking tragedy through tropes like finding their birth families tied with "real blood," rediscovering ethnic roots, and the attachment to the motherland (Y. Lee 2009, 159). In the process, the adoptees were described as "poor victims" who were systemically "deceived" by the nation (So 2023, 197).

Among the cacophony of others' representation, some adoptees became researchers, activists, and authors to document their lives in their own words. With the increasing awareness regarding international Korean adoptees in the 1990s, autobiographical works including memoirs that contained adoptees' voices started thriving in the context of Korean diaspora literature. The adoptees could have made a statement towards the world through memoirs, which became an effective way of conveying the voices of marginalized minorities, as Jane Jeong Trenka, a Korean American adoptee who published her own adoption experience, mentioned in an interview: "Once when it's in a book people think it's real" (LTI Korea 2019, 2:26). In this respect, memoirs have been embraced as "ethnographic texts" (So 2023, 185) in the world to look up what was not visible by others. Subsequently, since the late 1990s, several autobiographical publications by international Korean adoptees were introduced to South Korea under the category of Korean adoptee literature or as part of Korean diaspora literature[2].

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[2] The following autobiographical works, initially published in Europe and the United States by international Korean adoptees were translated into Korean for publication in South Korea: *Blod är Tjockare än Vatten* [Blood is Thicker than Water] (1996, South Korea 2001) by a Swedish writer Astrid Trotzig; *The Unforgotten War: Dust of the Streets* (1998, South Korea 1999) by an American entrepreneur Thomas Park Clement; *Ten Thousand Sorrows: The Extraordinary Journey of a Korean War Orphan* (2000, South Korea 2001) by an American journalist Elizabeth Kim; *A Single Square Picture: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots* (2002, South Korea 2002) by an American writer Katy Robinson; *Trail of Crumbs: Hunger, Love, and the Search for Home* (2008, South Korea 2008) by an American memoirist and food writer Kim Sunée; *The language of Blood: A Memoir* (2003, South Korea 2012) and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009, South Korea 2013) by an American writer Jane Jeong Trenka; *Gul Utanpa* [Yellow Outside] (2013, South Korea 2014) by a Swedish journalist Patrik Lundberg; *Hun er Vred: Et Vidnesbyrd om Transnational Adoption* [She is Angry: A Testimony of Transnational Adoption] (2014, South Korea 2022) by a Danish poet, writer, and translator Maja Lee Langvad; *Palimpsest* (2016, South Korea 2018) by a Swedish cartoonist Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom. In 2019, Sjöblom's graphic novel was also published in English with the extended title *Palimpsest: Documents from a Korean Adoption*, and in Spanish titled *Palimpsesto*. As of August 2024, memoirs by Trotzig, Lundberg, and Langvad have not been published in English. However, part of Langvad's work was translated into English under the title "She Is Angry" and introduced in a literary journal Tupelo Quarterly (see Pathak 2023).

Autobiography has a complicated place half between literature and sociological accounts of life. When exploring memoirs in the Western context, Yagoda (2009) finds the roots of autobiography in a religious rationale, pointing out Confessions by Saint Augustine as one of the very first autobiographies in the fifth century. On the other hand, he argues that certain novels, such as *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* by Daniel Defoe, were influential in autobiographical writing; those complete fictions were presented in an autobiographical form, thus people believed the stories were real. Today, the term autobiography is obscured by memoir, yet the two terms are often interchangeably used and categorized together in contemporary literature. Introducing memoir as a subgenre of literature, Couser (2012) describes memoir as "the literary face" of a common and fundamental human activity, that is, the narration of our lives in our own words, which is deeply in our human desires and inhabitable practices (9). He also states that memoir has not only overshadowed autobiography as the term of choice for life narratives but also challenges fiction in popularity and critical acclaim. Partly rooting its origin in fiction and rivalling fiction, memoir has become one of the most popular genres in contemporary literature, easily found in bookstores.

Memoir stretches out from our everyday life as the origin of the term shows; the term derives from the French word mémoire for memory. Thus, the narrative is based primarily on the author's memories, which could often be selective and subjective. Indeed, the essence of memoir can be summarized as "how one remembers one's own life" as Yagoda (2009, 3) modifies the definition in a memoir *Palimpsest* (1996) by Gore Vidal, who was one of the influential essayists and novelists in the 20th century's American popular culture. Memoir also reveals the way that an author engages with society. According to Smith and Watson's (2001) definition, memoir is a mode of life narrative that situates one's life and the subject in a historical and social environment. Although it is not always a fully factual nor objective truth, as Penn (2018) shows when analyzing memoir as a method, memoir itself can be a method to trace one's affects and emotions since it relies on an "emotional truth" or "integrity." As such, memoirs are a rich and thick repository of affects and emotions, replete with a "realness" that often explicitly presents the writer's interior life.

Foregrounding the integrity of memoir as a form of sociological evidence, this research presents three memoirs by two authors who are international Korean adoptees in North America: a Korean-American writer Jane Jeong Trenka's two books, *The Language of Blood: A Memoir* (2003) and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009), and a Korean-Canadian writer Jenny Heijun Wills's book *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.: A Memoir* (2019)[3]. In the history of the international adoption of Korean children (details are covered in Chapter 2), the United States has been the overwhelmingly largest host country adopting more than 100,000 children from 1956 to 2008 (E. Kim 2010, 21), occupying two-thirds of the entire number of adoptees during the period. Considering the number of adopted Koreans in America, memoirs confessing American experiences were dominant in the field of English-written adoptees' autobiographical works published outside Korea in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. In that sense, Trenka's first book, *The Language of Blood: A Memoir* (2003), was one of the pioneering adoptee memoirs in the early 2000s by resonating greatly with readers in the United States and South Korea, exposing the raw experiences of living as an international adoptee, giving Trenka a fame so later her second book, *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea*, could be published in 2009. In comparison, Canadian voices were relatively difficult to be heard due to its relatively small number of international Korean adoptees, although about 3,000 Korean adoptees are estimated to exist in Canada (Hwang and Leung 2024). Hence, Wills's 2019 book, *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.: A Memoir*, is notable in that it is considered the first Canadian memoir which reveals a

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[3] Jane Jeong Trenka, raised in Minnesota in the United States, is one of the most renowned authors writing about international adoption. After her return to South Korea, she was an influential figure involved with activism with several international adoptees' organizations by leading TRACK (Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea; see Appendix C), an adoptee-led organization in South Korea. She also contributed to the movement to change the Korean Adoption Law with her scholarly works (see Trenka 2011). Both of her memoirs were introduced to South Korea in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Jenny Heijun Wills, raised in Southern Ontario in Canada, also engages in raising awareness of the issues of international adoption as a Korean-Canadian writer and scholar. Her memoir is considered the first publication about international Korean adoptees' experiences in Canada. Her next book, *Asian Adopted Queer Hungry*, a collection of personal essays, will be published in 2024. She is a professor at the University of Winnipeg in the English Department, focusing her research on Asian American and African American literature. She writes about liberalism, anti-essentialism, and race. Some of Wills's scholarly works feature Trenka's memoirs (see Wills 2015; 2016).

Korean-Canadian adoptee experience in the American-dominant genre, sharing similar but different stories in the North American context.

I chose the three groundbreaking memoirs to compare Korean adoptees' life history that stage North America and South Korea. I draw connections between Trenka's and Wills's transnational return experiences, especially among women—daughters and sisters, as the three memoirs contain affects and emotions that are unveiled through birth family reunion, especially with their birth mother and sisters in South Korea. Every adoptee has a very different story, yet it is undeniable that the international adoption of South Korean children was a massive project led by the Korean government with other states (see Chapter 2.2.). Accordingly, the individual experiences of those international adoptees became *similar* to some extent to the macro-perspective historical background. In the movement for pursuing the truth beyond their adoption document that has been hidden so far, individual adoptees could share their collective memories and thus form an adopted generation as a community. Both Trenka and Wills deal with individual stories; at the same time, their memoirs show how the authors contributed as part of the adoptees' communities. I was able to organically connect these three memoirs with similar themes that they share—for instance, their first homecoming via an adoption agency—and those significant moments led the authors to document their feelings in words. By exploring their memoirs, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of international Korean adoptees' affects and emotions, leaning on the collective dimension of their life history. I focus on bodies and languages described in Trenka's and Wills's memoirs to uncover affects of their transnational lives. In doing so, ultimately, I aim to trace the adoptees' life trajectories that were once easily ignored and obscured by the cold facts and numbers in the statistics.

I also address my positionality as a researcher of the Korean diaspora, who is not an international adoptee but a Korean individual with a transnational migration experience; I present my findings from my standpoint as an overseas Korean (for the definition of overseas Koreans, see Chapter 2.1.2). I am neither an international Korean adoptee nor an active organizer in the international adoptee communities, but I believe that, as a member of the Korean diaspora, I have a responsibility to recognize the history of the international adoption of South Korean children embedded in individual adoptees'

life stories. Acknowledging my positionality as a researcher of the Korean diaspora with close ties to my ethnic and cultural background, I take “speaking nearby” by Cathy Park Hong (see Chapter 3.1.) as a method not to read about the international Korean adoptees' lives that are out of my experience, but to read *nearby* their adopted life histories—which are private but, at the same time, became public by being published—in a proper distance with ethical respect.

In what follows, I explore the sense of distance towards home that these two authors express through their experiences about international adoption, families, and generations. In Chapter 2, I focus on the historical context of the making of international Korean adoptees. I first showcase the definition and meanings of diaspora in academia to link international Korean adoptees and the Korean diaspora. I also touch on the making of the Korean diaspora and their immigration from the late 19th century onward by following the transnational movements of people in between the Korean Peninsula and abroad. Then I move on to the details of the history of these adoptees from the 1950s to the present, with the premise that the international Korean adoptees' communities are part of the Korean diaspora. In Chapter 3, grounding my close textual analysis in affect theory especially from contemporary feminist scholars, I focus on the three memoirs by two such former children, Jane Jeong Trenka and Jenny Heijun Wills, to see the affective ties that they were able to build in adulthood with members of their original or adoptive families. With thematic analyses, I also compare these two authors' generational experiences in the memoirs by drawing on how the relationship with their birth and adoptive parents, siblings, and the future generation are (dis)connected. I then conclude the third chapter by finding a beacon of hope in the adoptees' intragenerational and intergenerational love, which ties their floating existence to the ground. Finally, in Chapter 4, I complete my thesis by summarizing the key findings and outlining the need for future research in international Korean adoptees' memoirs.

Chapter 2.

History of International Korean Adoptees

This chapter presents the history of international Korean adoptees in the context of the Korean diaspora. In the first half of this part, Chapter 2.1., I examine the definition of the term diaspora, which is the foundational concept in the understanding of the Korean diaspora. I also explore the terms *Korea* and *Korean* in discussing the Korean diaspora, analyzing the complex background of the Korean peninsula, which is now divided into North and South Korea. Then I finalize the first half of this chapter with the history of the dispersion of the Korean diaspora in the modern context by dividing it into five periods, from the mid-19th to the present, referring to Yoon's (2021) research. In the second half of this part, Chapter 2.2., I delve into the details of the history of international Korean adoptees. Starting from the structure of adoption, I reveal that international adoption has developed on a greater scale than domestic adoption in the post-war era. I also find the roots of the adoption system in the history of adoption in pre-modern Korea. I then finalize this chapter with the categorization of the international adoption of South Korean children into three periods: the formation (the 1950s-60s) and acceleration (the 1970s-80s) of the system, and the adoptees' movement towards reconciliation with the nation from the 1990s onwards.

2.1. The Making of the Korean Diaspora

2.1.1. The Concept of Diaspora and its Definition

The concept of diaspora is a fundamental background to decoding affects and emotions in the Korean adoptees' diasporic memoirs. Diaspora originated from the ancient Greek word diaspeirein meaning disperse, and has been traditionally used to describe a forced dispersion of people who were exiled from their homeland. Although the term is widely used today, researchers have searched for the origin of diaspora and

the usage of it. In the mid-1980s, Connor (1986) defined diaspora in a general sense as a "segment of a people living outside the homeland" (16). Since the 1990s, the term has been brought up in academia to explain the increasing phenomena of transnational movements by individuals. As a result, the concept of diaspora by Connor accelerated the expansion of the definition and meaning of the term. On the other hand, other researchers such as Safran (1991) limited diaspora in contrast to Connor's relatively broad definition. Safran (1991, 83-84) defines the term diaspora as the concept that satisfies the following six conditions:

1. their dispersion from a specific original center to peripheral, foreign regions;
2. their collective memory, vision, or myth toward their homeland;
3. their belief of alienation that they cannot be fully accepted by their host society;
4. the ancestral homeland as their ideal home to which they eventually return;
5. their commitment towards their original homeland for its safety and prosperity;
6. their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity in their ethnic relationship.

The Greek, Chinese, and Lebanese are mentioned as specific examples of transnational communities that satisfy the aforementioned conditions. Although these groups do not perfectly match with the conventional diaspora, such as the Jews, Safran insists that they fulfill the conditions so they are the example of the diaspora he defines. Indeed, to distinguish the mixed meanings of diaspora, Vertovec (1997) traces back the history when the capitalized term Diaspora was a social form that was once used almost exclusively for the experiences of Jews, referring to their exile from their homeland and dispersed to many other lands. Those traumatic experiences became a reference to give connotations of a diasporic situation in a lowercased "diaspora," which includes negative feelings such as displacement, victimization, alienation, and loss, therefore, the term has been applied to other ethnic groups (142).

Hence, the term "diaspora" is no longer limited to the traditional immigrant groups like the Jews; rather, it now embraces nearly all forms of immigrant communities worldwide as well as diverse immigrant groups living within a nation-state (Sahoo 2021, 2). Here I bring Vertovec's study again to set the range of the contemporary meaning of diaspora, that is

> to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialized' or 'transnational'—that is, whose cultural origins are said to have arisen in a land other than that in which they currently reside, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe. (Vertovec 1997, 141)

Among the expansive concepts of diaspora, Choi (2003, 10-11) identifies five key criteria for the existence of a diaspora:

1. a large-scale dispersal of people from their original homeland to two or more foreign regions;
2. a compelling reason for people to leave their home country such as severe political, economic, or other constraints;
3. a group's conscious efforts to maintain its collective identity;
4. people's sense of empathy and solidarity with people of a similar ethnicity that motivates transnational networks;
5. people's collective commitment to preserving ties with their original home country.

The scattered definitions of diaspora have been widely used inside and outside of academia with synonyms such as "overseas," "exile," "ethnic," "minority," "refugee," and so forth. With the expanded meaning of the term, diaspora today is a concept to refer to a broad range of historical experiences of an ethnic group's migration and their settlement.

2.1.2. "Korea" and "Korean"

Given the expanding traits of the term diaspora presented above, I apply the concept of the Korean diaspora in this research by bringing Yoon's (2021) definition here: "the dispersion of Korean people or people of the same roots or ancestry living

around the world after leaving their motherland" (65). Although there are two nations in the Korean Peninsula, North Korea (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and South Korea (The Republic of Korea), the making of the Korean diaspora started before the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, when the nation was not divided into two. Therefore, Koreans in the diasporic sense refer to ethnic Koreans with several possibilities of their motherland—either North or South Korea, or Korea before its division, or the other host country outside the Korean peninsula[4].

Laws and policies are influential to define or limit the meaning and the statistical number of the Korean diaspora. The legal name of the Korean diaspora is *jaeoe dongpo* (재외동포), which literally means overseas (jaeoe) compatriot (dongpo). In legal documents, jaeoe dongpo is officially translated as "overseas Korean(s)." In 1997, the very first legal background on the Korean diaspora, the Foundation Act on Overseas Koreans was enacted. Subsequently, relevant laws have been enacted and revised. However, due to overlapping and conflicting administrative affairs between several agencies in the South Korean government, the necessity of enacting a comprehensive and foundational act was raised (Lee 2022, 3). Over the decades of discussion, the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans was finally enacted on November 10, 2023, following the establishment of the Overseas Koreans Agency (OKA) on June 5, 2023. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea proposes two acts, the Basic Act on Overseas

[4] The term *Koreans* today, in common, refers to people having roots in South Korea. However, this is closely related to the diplomatic status of North and South Korea in the aftermath of the Cold War: North Korea was diplomatically isolated by following the Soviet Union after the Korean War, whereas South Korea could achieve its political status internationally with the support of the United States. When discussing the making of the Korean diaspora, especially the early generations in Japan, China, Russia and the Commonwealth of the Independent States, it is almost impossible (and also insignificant) to distinguish their origin from either North or South Korea since the dispersion started before the division. For instance, some Zainichi—ethnic Koreans in Japan—have Chōsen-seki (朝鮮籍, 조선적), a legal status by the Japanese government, which is assigned to ethnic Koreans who do not either have Japanese or South Korean nationality. As the term Chōsen (朝鮮) is the Japanese name of the Joseon Dynasty (조선) and refers to the Korean Peninsula, Chōsen-seki is not the nationality of North Korea but a "regional symbol" originating from the Korean Peninsula. Thus, some Zainichi keep Chōsen-seki because they have roots in *Korea*, neither North nor South, even though they are almost stateless as the symbol does not function as a citizenship (Jeong 2021, 178). Thus, *Korean* in the Korean diaspora studies refers to ethnic Koreans with their ancestral roots in the Korean Peninsula. Research on the Korean diaspora after the Korean War is more focused on Koreans from South Korea, yet the study partly includes Koreans from North Korea. About 10 per cent of North Korean defectors to South Korea decided to immigrate to other countries as refugees, which is also considered part of the Korean diaspora (Yoon 2021, 65).

Koreans (2023) and the Establishment of the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans (2020), as the legal foundation of the definition of overseas Koreans (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, n.d.). In Article 2 of the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans (2023) in Article 2, overseas Koreans are defined as follows:

> The term "overseas Korean" in this Act means a person who falls under any of the following subparagraphs:
>
> 1. A national of the Republic of Korea who obtains the right of permanent residence in a foreign country or is a long-term residence in a foreign country; and
>
> 2. A person who has held the nationality of the Republic of Korea (including Koreans who had emigrated to a foreign country before the Government of the Republic of Korea was established) or of their lineal descendants who do not obtain the nationality of the Republic of Korea.

The definition above from the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans takes a highly similar form from Article 2 of the Establishment of the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans below (enacted on February 2, 2020):

> The term "overseas Korean" in this Act means a person who falls under any of the following subparagraphs: <Amended by Act No. 7173, Mar. 5, 2004>
>
> 1. A national of the Republic of Korea who obtains the right of permanent residence in a foreign country or is residing in a foreign country with a view to living permanently there (hereinafter referred to as a "Korean national residing abroad"); and
>
> 2. A person prescribed by the Presidential Decree of those who have held the nationality of the Republic of Korea (including Koreans who had emigrated to a foreign country before the Government of the Republic of Korea was established) or of their lineal descendants, who obtains the nationality of a foreign country (hereinafter referred to as a "Korean with a foreign nationality").
>
> <Subparagraph 2 above is amended by Act No. 7173, on March 5, 2004, pursuant to the decision of its inconformity with the Constitution which is made by the Constitutional Court on November 29, 2001.>

The major revision from 2020 to 2023 in the definition of overseas Korean was made around an individual's status. In the first subparagraph of the Establishment of the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans, one of the conditions of being an

overseas Korean is to reside in a country outside South Korea with the aim of permanent residence in the host country. However, in the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans, it is revised as a "long-term residence," regardless of the will of residing permanently. Also, the second subparagraph of the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans premises that a Korean should obtain either the nationality of the Republic of Korea or another country. Yet the second subparagraph of the Establishment of the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans defines a Korean as a person who "does not obtain the nationality of the Republic of Korea," which includes stateless ethnic Koreans in the legal range of overseas Koreans. The latest enactment of the new act gives more room in the study of the Korean diaspora by widening the limitation of who Koreans are, including Koreans living outside Korea.

On the other hand, the Korean diaspora has ignited the question of what *Korean* is when it has emerged as one of the transnational ethnic groups in the progression of diaspora studies. Due to the Korean Peninsula's geographical feature—located in Northeast Asia with the northeast part of China, Mongolia, and the Japanese Archipelago, the Korean monarchial states in history could have promoted cultural exchanges with Chinese dynasties and Japan. Hence, Koreans as an ethnic group are not strictly homogeneous in terms of its genetic formation in history. Additionally, there was no remarkable immigration activity until the mid-nineteenth century; transnational movements of commoners were restricted until the middle of the nineteenth century (Brubaker and Kim 2010, 27). Therefore, the study of the Korean diaspora focuses more on immigrants or refugees involving transnational movements from the modern era, which does not necessarily include Koreans before the modern era.

2.1.3. History of the Korean Diaspora

The mid-nineteenth century is when many Koreans started to be transnationally dispersed outside the Korean Peninsula in the modern sense (Rha 2014, 60-62; Yoon 2012, 39-44; National Archives of Korea n.d.). As the Korean diaspora has more than 150 years of history, scholars divide the period into three: the old immigration from the mid-19th century to the early 1960s, the new immigration from the early 1960s to the

early 1990s, and the transnational migration including return migration from the early 1990s to the present (Yoon 2021, 67). More specifically, five periods stretch out: the first period from the 1860s to 1910s, the second period from the 1910s to 1945, the third period from 1945 to 1962, the fourth period from 1962 to the 1990s, and the fifth period from the 1990s to the present.

Figure 2.1. The Dispersion of the Korean Diaspora
Source: Rha (2014, 59). The thickness of the arrows reflects the population of the Korean diaspora.

The Old Immigration: from the mid-19th century to the early 1960s

In the first period, from the 1860s to 1910, which was the end of the Joseon Dynasty, Koreans—not in the context of nationality and citizenship but ethnicity—emigrated to China, Russia, Hawaii, Mexico, and Cuba due to famine, poverty, and oppression from the ruling class. Throughout the late 19th century, several Western powers competed for influence in Joseon and people experienced social disorders. Additionally, when Japan pillaged rice and other grains from Joseon, the food shortage was rapidly getting worse. Koreans migrated to Manchuria in China and the Maritime Province in Russia became economically nomadic with unstable living conditions (Choi 2003, 15; Yoon 2021, 67). In 1903, 102 Koreans paved their way to Hawaii for a sugar

plantation, which is considered the first immigration with a government-issued passport by the Empire of Korea (Rha 2014, 62). Although the number of Koreans was not many, the immigration to Hawaii continued until Japan forbade Korean immigrants from moving there to safeguard its Japanese labourers in 1905. 7,291 Korean immigrants, primarily bachelors in their twenties, landed in Hawaii between January 1903 and August 1905. In 1924, almost a thousand Korean women immigrated to Hawaii to create families through photographic marriages (Yoon 2003, 126-27). Subsequently, about 300 Koreans arrived in Central and South America as indentured labourers at a henequen farm in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico in 1905. Later when the Korean Peninsula was colonized under Japanese rule in 1910, independent activists immigrated outside Joseon to carry out independence movements centred in Manchuria (Yoon 2021, 67-8).

Korea faced colonial exploitation under Japanese colonial rule during the second period, from 1910 to 1945. Different social categories moved to different places: farmers and workers moved to Manchuria and the Japanese archipelago, while political activists moved to China, Russia, and America to launch the independence movement (Yoon 2021, 68). Meanwhile, Koreans in the northern part of Sakhalin in Russia were forcibly migrated to central Asia by the Soviet government in 1937 (Yi 2011, 102). With the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the construction of Manchukuo in 1932, Japan attempted to relocate numerous Japanese and Koreans to Manchuria. The Japanese Government-General of Korea promoted the immigration of Koreans to alleviate social issues, such as independent movements, the overpopulation of rural areas, and the occurrence of unemployment due to the ongoing economic recession in Korea. As a result, the number of Koreans increased by about 500,000 in the late 1930s, of which about half of the number is known to have been forcibly emigrated (Ye n.d., Yoon 2003, 127). Dispersed across multiple geopolitical spaces, Koreans were forced to work in mines and battlefields in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the Pacific War in 1941.

The third period, from 1945 to 1962, is the most complicated period involving liberation from Japanese occupation, civil war, and modern immigration policies. In 1945, overseas Koreans made their way back home as the country was liberated from Japanese rule, showing a temporally reduced number of the diaspora. Roughly 700,000

people came back to somewhere in the peninsula right after independence. 1.04 million Koreans are assumed to have returned to Korea between August 1945 and 1950, but the number is estimated to be more as the statistic does not include Koreans who returned at their own expense (Yoon 2003, 127; 2021, 68-9).

Then the number of people residing outside Korea started to increase again after the peninsula itself became a battlefield of the Cold War: from 1950 to 1953, Korea faced the Korean War, which eventually divided the peninsula into North and South. In South Korea, war orphans, waifs, and interracial children were adopted by the American family, which is the starting point of the history of the international Korean adoptees in the next chapter. Also, about 6,000 Korean students who sought higher education and Korean women who married the U.S. military landed on American soil (Yoon 2012, 40). They laid the foundation for subsequent immigration to invite their families when the door to America was wide open in 1965 by the Immigration and Nationality Act in the United States, also known as the Hart-Celler Act (National Archives of Korea n.d.). Whereas in East Asia, more Koreans who escaped the Korean War and several internal oppressions, such as the Jeju uprising, landed in Japan. After the Korean War, Korean society in Japan was also divided into two groups under the ideology differences: the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon, with North Korea) and the Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan, with South Korea)[5].

The New Immigration: from the 1960s to the early 1990s

At the beginning of the fourth period, from 1962 to 1990, migration became more and more voluntary yet under the lead of the South Korean government. Choi (2003, 15) states that since the 1960s, the character of Korean migration has changed with the development of the South Korean economy and the government's adoption of an emigration policy as part of domestic population control. Under the influence of the Emigration Act enacted in 1962, Koreans were encouraged to emigrate to other countries

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[5] Chongryon (재일본조선인총련합회, 在日本朝鮮人総聯合会; http://www.chongryon.com/index-kk.htm) is the abbreviation of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan and has close ties to North Korea by functioning as an actual embassy as North Korea and Japan has no diplomatic relation.

Mindan (재일본대한민국민단, 在日本大韓民国民団; https://www.mindan.org) is the abbreviation of the Korean Residents Union in Japan, which is a non-governmental organization with ties to South Korea.

where they had not settled in the previous periods. From 1963 to the 1980s, Koreans immigrated to Latin America as agricultural labourers. However, they failed to adapt to the local agricultural environment; hence, most Koreans in Latin America ended up moving to the cities nearby and running their own family business (Kim and Lee 2016, 79). On the other hand, another collective immigration was made to Germany from 1963 to 1977. During the period, 7,936 miners and 1,227 nurses were dispatched, creating small Korean communities in Germany (Kim 2017, 136-37). Moreover, the Korean government prioritized international adoption over domestic adoption until the National Assembly in South Korea replaced the Act on Special Cases for the Adoption of Orphans with the Act on Special Cases Concerning Adoption in 1976 (Seol 2018, 80), which accelerated the dispersion of overseas Koreans.

At the same time, voluntary migration has also been increasing, focusing on immigration to Western countries. The United States became one of the immigration options through the Hart-Celler Act in 1965. Subsequently, in 1967, the removal of ethnic quotas from Canadian immigration laws sparked the start of regular immigration from South Korea to Canada (Baker 2008, 161). Then the oil crisis in 1973 drove Korean immigration to the Middle East construction market. Yet in 1985, when the demand for construction labour decreased, Koreans started to immigrate to Australia. In 1986, when an investment immigration campaign was launched and invited Korean immigrants as newcomers, it became the apple of discord between two old and new Korean societies in Australia (Yoon 2021, 70). With the wave of investment immigration, the white-collar middle class who received higher education in South Korea participated most actively in emigrating to North America. However, with the heightened international status of the nation when the 1988 Seoul Olympics was held, the number of people returning to South Korea increased (National Archives of Korea n.d.).

The Transnational Immigration: from the 1990s to the present

It is notable that the fifth period, from 1990 to the present, started with the reintegration of the Korean diaspora in the former Soviet Union and China—who are called Koryoin and Chosŏnjok respectively—through the diplomatic relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union in 1990, and South Korea and China in 1992,

respectively. This contributed to numbers as well; according to the 2023 statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, 2,512,315 Koreans were added to the statistics of the total number of overseas Koreans in 1991, showing a 108.3 per cent increase compared to the 1990 statistics (42). After the launch of the official diplomatic relations between South Korea and China, Korean diasporas in China could make their way back to South Korea, creating their own returnee's communities and increasing their influence in South Korean society. Whereas in 1997, overseas migration increased again due to the Asian financial crisis, involving not only conventional family-range migration but also migration in the level of individual businesses and employment. Canada, with its immigration policy favouring highly educated professionals, has become a new destination for Korean migrants, attracting many students with its visa exemption agreement with South Korea in 1994. Subsequently, in 2008, the United States also launched a visa exemption program for South Korean students. Although international students tend to be considered temporary residents in the host countries with its limited duration of stay, they are part of the Korean society in the host countries being main customers of Korean-run businesses. Also, they often completely integrate into the Korean diaspora society by settling down in the host country and achieving permanent residence status via marriage and employment (Yoon 2021, 70-71).

In the table below (Table 2.1.), I summarize the history of the Korean diaspora I have presented in this chapter: from the 1860s immigration to the 21st century's contemporary transnational immigration with three axes—historical backgrounds, the reasons for immigration, and the major host countries in each period.

Table 2.1. **The History of the Korean Diaspora by Five Periods**

Period	1st Period (1860s-1910s)	2nd Period (1910s-1945)	3rd Period (1945-1962)	4th Period (1962-1990s)	5th Period (1990s- the present)
Historical Background	The end of the Joseon Dynasty	Korea under Japanese colonial rule	The Korean War and the Cold War	Emigration Act, Economic Growth	Return migration, Investigation to overseas Koreans
Reasons for Immigration	famine, poverty, oppression from the ruling class	exploited as labourers and soldiers, forced migration, Independence movement	to solve the postwar "disorder" by mixed-blood war orphans, war refugees, study abroad	agricultural labours, voluntary & investigative immigration, study abroad	1997 Asian financial crisis, voluntary immigration, study abroad
Major Host Countries	China (Manchuria) Russia (Maritime), Hawaii, Japan	Russia (Sakhalin), China (Manchuria), Japan	The United States, Japan	Latin America, Australia, The United States	The United States, Canada

2.2. International Adoption and South Korea

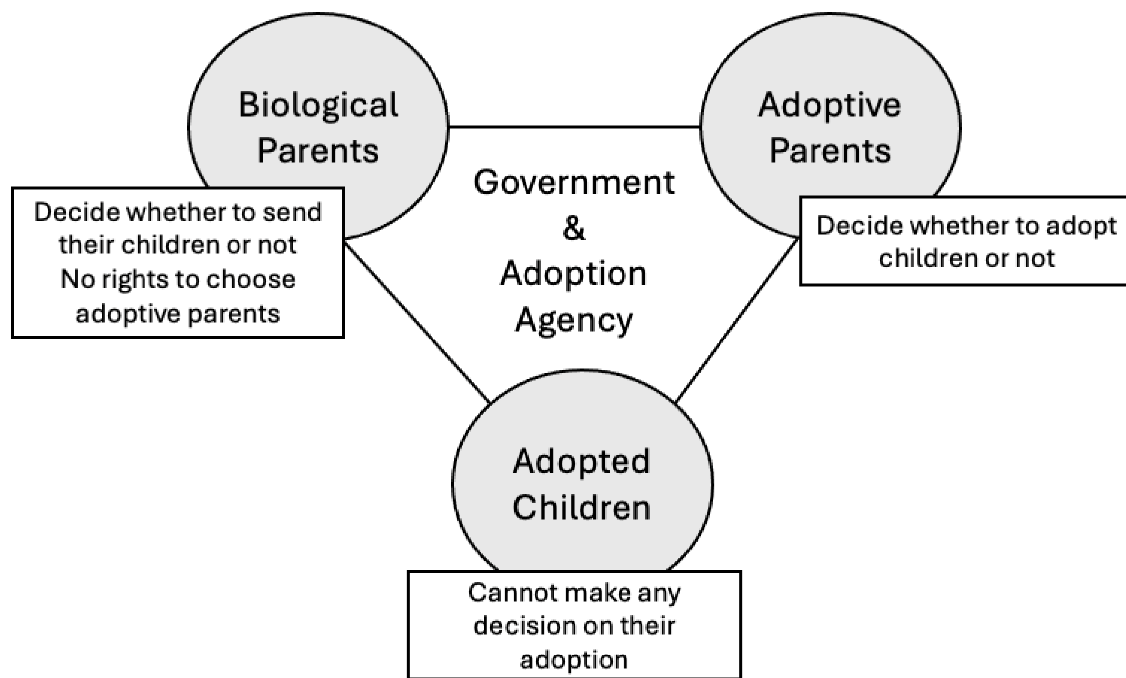
2.2.1. The Emergence of International Adoption

As international adoption became one of the visible ways to make a family in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in Western countries, researchers took up the issue of the social, cultural, and historical implications of international adoption, following the discussions of international adoption that emerged in the mid-2000s. Accordingly, the discourse on international adoption in academia, especially in Western countries, has been formed with diverse themes, such as race and ethnicity, class, gender, kinship, legal and cultural strategies, nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism (Leinaweaver 2012, 206-7; Choy 2018, 147; So 2023, 195-96). By reviewing the history of international adoption of South Korean children in this chapter, I argue that international Korean adoptees are part of the Korean diaspora with their own historical background and diasporic culture, which emerged amid the international and domestic relations involving South Korea and other countries, especially the United States.

Adoption is a form of business involving biological parents, adoptive parents, children, and adoption agencies supported by the government. In theory, adoption

agencies entrusted by the government bridge the trade; an approval from the state to the agencies serves as a safeguard to prevent human traffic from being illegally traded. In many cases, adoptive parents have the right to decide on adoption and choose a child, whereas biological parents cannot check on the adoptive family that their children may live with for the rest of their life. Moreover, children, the most important agents in the system, do not have the right or agency to agree or disagree with their adoption as well as choose their future adoptive family. In his dissertation, C. Kim (2015, 52-53) visualizes the structure of adoption as follows:

Table 2.2. The Structure of Adoption



Source: The structure of adoption from C. Kim (2015, 52-53). Graphic design by the author.

The triangle of the adoption structure can be applied to international adoption but on a greater scale, involving at least two countries and one adoption agency. When two countries—one that is willing to send children outside the border and the other that is ready to take foreign children—are prepared for international adoption by setting the legal or political foundation, international adoption agencies broker the adoption cases. Still, the opinions of children are not reflected in this process.

The emergence of international adoption of South Korean children cannot be explained without the very first cases of international adoption in global history. In the 1940s and 1950s, when the globe was under the tension of the Second World War, the European system of international adoption began when children were sent to neutral or nonbattle countries including the United States to alleviate childhood suffering from the war. Some of those adoptions were temporary, conducted with the condition of resending the children to the country of their origin (Y. Lee 2009, 159-60). Subsequently, the first interracial adoption was made in postwar Japan under the occupying forces of the United States. From 1952 to 1975, over 2,000 mixed, or interracial, children were adopted by the U.S. Army or other Western people residing outside Japan (Goodman 2000, 148). Nevertheless, the media did not actively cover these initial interracial adoptions because of Japan's hard feelings towards America, that was, "sleeping with the enemy" (E. Kim 2010, 46). Although the international adoption of Japanese children to the U.S. was not highly addressed, it set the first precedent for *visible* interracial adoption, leaving an image of an Asian adoptee in a white family. It was significant enough to influence the neighbouring country, South Korea, to launch a similar system.

2.2.2. Adoption in the Pre-Modern Korean Context

Modelling the previous cases of international adoption, the system of international adoption has also emerged in the aftermath of the Korean War. However, the concept of adoption did not come from nowhere; rather, it was a long-time cultural practice in Korean history. Several cases of adoption can be found in the Korean royal house during the Joseon dynasty from 1392 to 1910, entwined with Confucianism, patriarchy, and heirship. In the early Joseon period, from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, elite families absorbed the system by adopting daughters, couples, and the husbands of daughters as heirs. However, by the seventeenth century, adoption was resorted to only when there was an absence of biological male heirs, therefore, adoptees were chosen from close male kin (Yonemoto 2019, 47-49).

Given the demographic situations of the pre-modern period in Korea, the adoption system to obtain an heir was a tactic to maximize family prosperity to strengthen the

inheritance of the family, as well as it was a political, economic, and spiritual need to perpetuate the patriarchal family system. In other words, it was a process of replenishing an heir to sustain the branch of the family. By the early twentieth century, adopting close male kin was a cultural practice, as the first president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee's adoption case shows: Rhee had a biological son, Lee Bong-Soo, who died at six from measles in 1904. Then he adopted a child as his heir, but this first adopted son died too in 1960. Rhee adopted another heir once again; however, this second adopted son was removed from the family registration after Rhee remarried Francesca Donner-Rhee. Rhee In-Soo, who is the son of Syngman Rhee's close kin, was adopted as the third in 1961 when he was in his thirties. As the only remaining son of Syngman Rhee, he dedicated his life to protecting Syngman Rhee's reputation as the first president of South Korea (Chung 2023). As Rhee's adoption cases prove, it is evident that the concept of adoption existed and practiced in pre-modern Korean society. Nevertheless, adoption was conducted in a limited form among elite families, such as President Rhee, to keep the lineage of a family through male heirs, exclusively within relatives that share the same bloodline.

On the legal aspect, formal domestic adoption law concerning child welfare did not exist until the 1970s; in 1958, the Korean Family Law was following "the best interests of the family" principle by limiting the primary purpose of adoption as keeping the means to maintain family lines and estates, following the cultural custom from the pre-modern era (Lee 2007, 77). Also, South Korea lacked a modernized social welfare system until the Korean government developed the system from Western humanitarian organizations after wartime (E. Kim 2010, 56).

2.2.3. The History of International Adoption of South Korean Children

International adoption emerged in 1954 by filling the blank of the adoption and child welfare system right after the Korean War. However, it started to function in a completely different way from what the adoption system did in pre-modern Korean history, that is, not to find an heir but to clean up the *problems* of the postwar waifs and orphans in South Korea. Inspired by Chae-Min Kim's PhD dissertation in 2015 about the

formation of international adoption policy in South Korea, I classify the history of international adoption in South Korea into three periods, focusing on the governmental policies: the first period—the formation of international adoption in the 1950s and the 1960s, the second period—the acceleration of international adoption in the 1970s and the 1980s, and the third period—reconciliation with the nation from the 1990s and the present[6].

The Formation of International Adoption: from the 1950s to the 1960s

Two lenses are required to understand the formation of international adoption of South Korean children in the 1950s and the 1960s: the state-society relations in modern Korean history and local aspirations with humanitarianism in Western countries. As examined above, adoption in the Korean context only existed as a cultural practice in pre-modern era to maintain a family lineage, whereas domestic adoption in the perspective of child welfare did not exist in the postwar chaos. Although in October 1952, the South Korean government developed the Guidelines for Management of Welfare Facilities to efficiently instruct orphanages and organizations that accepted waifs and orphans, yet it was just a guideline for organizations, not an act that legally regulated any kind of adoption. Therefore, the process of international adoption relied mainly on the private sector, but the state's ethnonationalism supported the adoption system possible beneath the private surface.

Most of the war waifs and orphans in orphanages or hospitals were full-Korean, yet it was estimated that more than one thousand mixed-blood children existed right after the Korean War. Those children were especially concentrated around the 38th parallel (now the border between North and South Korea), which was close to the American military units. Under President Rhee's ideology of Ilminism (일민주의 *Ilminjuui*), or One-People Principle with the catchphrase of "one nation, one race" in a form of postcolonial Korean ethnonationalism (단일 민족 정신 *tanil minjok chongsin*), the mixed-

[6] In his dissertation, C. Kim (2015) named the third period as the transition period to domestic adoption. However, I titled this period differently to focus more on the process of reconciliation between the international Korean adoptee's communities and South Korea, rather than the making of the domestic adoption system in South Korea.

blood children were “contaminated” Koreans who sabotaged the nation’s “pure” ethnicity as Korean. Thus, the system of international adoption in South Korea was established prior to the establishment of domestic adoption, to get rid of these interracial—usually Amerasian—children who were the results of sexual exploitation by the foreign military presence (Hübinette 2005, 229; Y. Lee 2009, 160; E. Kim 2010, 62; Yim and Lim 2012, 80).

During the 1950s, the process of adopting a Korean War orphan by American individuals or couples played a significant role in spreading American goodwill and anti-communism in South Korea. From the viewpoint of Western media, those mixed-blood war waifs and orphans were portrayed as a humanitarian crisis which required a desperate need of Western aid. An evangelical couple in Oregon, Harry and Bertha Holt, was one of the pioneers of igniting the wave of adopting Korean children and showed how Western ideologies played in the promotion of international adoption. With religious inspiration, the Holt couple adopted eight Korean-Amerasian children. See the figure below (Figure 2.2.), the 1955 New York Times article about the Holt family and their adoption story:

8 KOREAN ORPHANS IN OREGON FAMILY

Children of U. S. Soldiers Are Adopted by Couple Who Now Have Six

Special to The New York Times.

CRISWELL, Ore., Dec. 3—The rambling old farmhouse of the Harry Holt family is full of happy people.

First, there are Mr. and Mrs. Holt, *who have six children.* Then there are the eight Korean-American orphans they adopted two months ago.

All live in the thirteen-room home on the 350-acre farm in the upper end of the Willamette Valley. The orphans, who arrived in the United States Oct. 13 to end many months of red-tape snipping by Mr. Holt and two Oregon Senators, have grown most healthy and active on their new diet.

It was on Oct. 14 that Mr. Holt arrived at Portland international airport with twelve Korean waifs, *four of them for other* adoptive parents. *The arrival* realized a dream Mr. and Mrs. Holt have had since January, when they attended a semi-religious movie that showed scenes from Korean orphanages.

Law Put Limit at Two

They decided to try to bring some of the children of United States soldiers and Korean women to the United States here to rear them on the farm where *they had reared their own six* children.

But it was not that easy. Law prevented adoption of more than two. They wanted eight. Senators Richard L. Neuberger and Wayne Morse, Oregon Democrats, introduced bills to permit the Holts to bring in the number of orphans they desired.

Then came the problem of selecting the eight to be saved from life in a Korean orphanage. Eventually it was all accomplished, however, and the trip across the North Pacific was behind the group.

"Oh, but I'm tired," Mr. Holt said, with an orphan in each arm on his landing at Portland. "But I'm awfully happy."

His wife and six children were waiting. Together they came with their much expanded family to the farm here and the new life was organized.

By Thanksgiving, it was well organized. Seven of the eight children were able to feed themselves, with only tiny Betty, at ten months of age the baby, requiring hand feeding from Mr. Holt.

Children Asked for Prayer

As they sat down, they called "kito-kito-kito," which Mr. Holt explains means prayer in Korean. And pray they proceeded to do. Mr. Holt's prayer included a special mention of the "boys and girls in Korea who do not even have a bowl of rice."

Those he saw and had to leave have lingered in his mind. In addition to the *eight the Holts have adopted they send $200 a* month to support twenty more at orphanages in Korea. Their children send $130 among them to support thirteen more.

The Holts' children are Stewart, 22 years old; Wanda, 21; Molly, 20; Barbara, 18; Suzanne, 12, and Linda, 9. The children they adopted in Korea are Joe, 3½; Mary and Bobby, 3; Christine, 2½; Paul, 1; Nathaniel, 18 months; Helen, 15 *months, and Betty, 10* months.

Love they Crave and Get

All the Korean babies walk now, except Betty, and all have gained weight since their arrival in the United States. They had anemia then, but now it is gone. They have been in good health, except for a bit of whooping *cough and some impetigo that* bothers Paul.

Of course, their English is almost non-existent, but universal things like love they understand most well. They beg to be picked up. They hunger for affection and the Holts supply it magnificently. They sleep in individual cribs in a large nursery.

Each has his own rack for his coat, rubbers and hat. Each carries his empty plate to the kitchen after meals. Vitamin concentrate is administred on an assembly-line plan. Each has his highchair and is treated by the Holts as an individual.

The area in which these children will grow up is about 140 miles South of Portland, at the extreme head of the Willamette Valley. It is made up of farms the size of the Holts, or smaller, and has logging and lumbering as its major industrial enterprises.

Except for residents who may have attended the University of Oregon at Eugene, some 15 miles North, it is doubtful if anyone here ever saw a Korean or ever thought of Korea prior to June, 1950.

But for the eight young Koreans, who are the helpless by-product of war the Holt farm will be home.

Figure 2.2. The Holt Family's Adoption Story on New York Times, 1955

Source: "8 Korean Orphans in Oregon Family: Children of U.S. Soldiers Are Adopted by Couple Who Now Have Six." Special to The New York Times. *New York Times (1923-)*, Dec 4, 1955, pg. 36. Paragraphs realigned by the author.

The Holt couple contributed to making legal grounds for international adoption outside South Korea and later founded Holt Children's Services, one of the influential agencies in igniting the wave of international adoptions in South Korea. The success of their mission is what the historian Arissa Oh (2015) calls "Christian Americanism," that is, "a fusion of vaguely Christian principles with values identified as exceptionally 'American,' an expansive sense of responsibility and a strong belief in the importance of family" (79). Although it was never an explicitly promoted doctrine, American churches, media, and the government led the message that "a good Christian with being a good American," which eventually influenced many Americans to embrace adopting Korean waifs and orphans as new missionary work (Oh 2015, 80). The spread of Western soft-power propaganda in the name of Christianism left the international adoption policy to thrive in history for more than six decades.

In 1961, the Special Act on the Adoption of Orphans was enacted to prepare a legal ground for international adoption. In the same year, the government officially authorized four private adoption agencies in South Korea, including Holt Children's Services[7]. In the 1960s, under the immigration policy, international adoption also functioned as a means of acquiring foreign currency for economic development while solving overpopulation. A report by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 1965, titled Immigration Projects and Immediate Problems, included international adoption as a kind of immigration, which proves that international adoption was a nationwide emigration project led by the government. From 1962 to 1964, 1,049 South Korean children were internationally adopted and categorized as "special immigration" (C. Kim 2015, 114). The report supports international Korean adoptees had already been included in the category of overseas Koreans; hence, they should also be considered in the context of the Korean diaspora who emigrated overseas by the South Korean governmental power[8].

With the Korean policies that boosted the international adoption of South Korean children, private organizations overseas also started their program to secure enough number of children to send overseas, engaging with agencies in South Korea. These organizations often involved Korean students in America who were studying social welfare studies. Kun Chil Park, for instance, was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota and interned at Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. Later, he founded Korean Social Services in 1964, which was one of the four agencies that officially conducted international adoption (Park Nelson 2017).

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[7] The rest of the three private agencies are Korean Social Services (한국사회봉사회), Eastern Social Welfare Society (동방사회복지회), and Korea Welfare Services (대한사회복지회). As of August 2024, except for Korean Social Services, the three agencies are continuing international adoption (Kang et al. 2024).

[8] Given that the meaning of the term migration comes from the Latin migrātus, which means the movement of a place or the departure from one country to another, Han (2014, 75) argues that it is not enough to refer to the international adoptees' situation as the word does not include the connotation of the socioeconomic status surrounding the subject, focusing on the transnational movement itself. Therefore, Han argues the term "displacement" is proper to describe the adoptees' situation as the term implies the meaning of forced deportation or involuntary relocation from where the subject was supposed to be to another place. Following her suggestion, I use "forced (im)migration" to imply the connotation of displacement in the context of immigration.

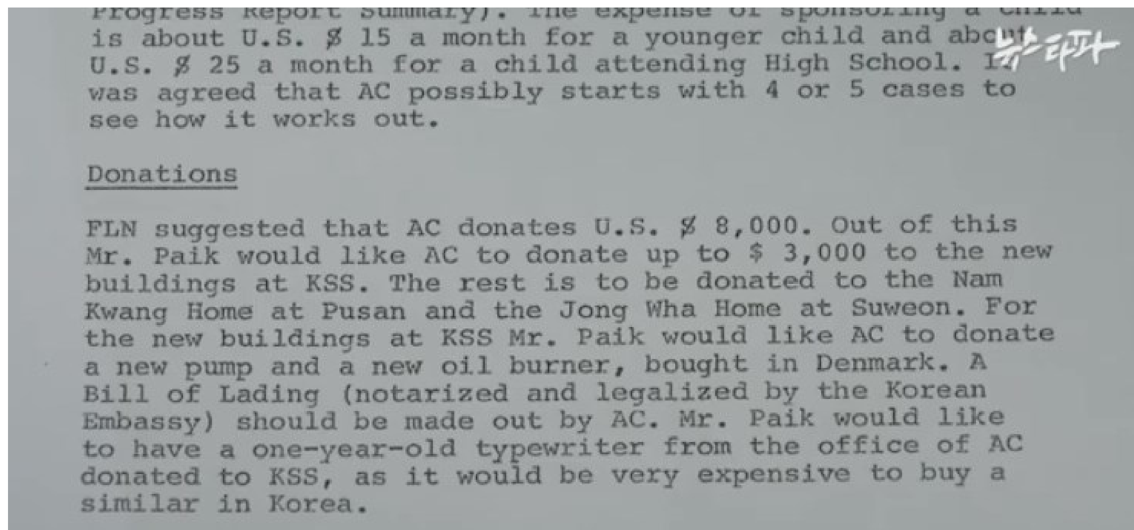
The Acceleration of International Adoption: from the 1970s to the 1980s

International adoption, initially part of the solution to the postwar disorder in the nation, continued in the 1970s and the 1980s with more complications resulting from the fast-changing nation. In the 1970s, the national goal under President Park Chung-Hee's military dictatorship was to prioritize economic growth based on anti-communism, with competition against North Korea. As the number of internationally adopted children increased, North Korea criticized South Korea's international adoption system as little different from human trafficking; the issue of international adoption of South Korean children in the 1970s was used as propaganda in North Korea (Y. Lee 2009, 163; C. Kim 2015, 134). Responding to the criticism, President Park established a five-year plan for adoption and foster care for children in need. He also launched the Quota System, which aimed to reduce about 1,000 children adopted abroad per year by increasing 500 domestic adoptions and 500 family foster care cases to make the statistic number zero; in 1975, the number of adopted children was around 5,000. (Jeon-Hong, 2017). Also, the Special Adoption Act was newly enacted in 1976, yet resulting in not only orphans but also underprivileged children with parents being manpower to be sent overseas. Eventually, those policies during the period ended up perpetuating the international adoption of South Korean children. Nevertheless, because of the number-oriented, inhumane policies, adoption seemed to decrease in the late 1970s.

Still, the 1980s saw a historical peak in the international adoption of Korean children (see Figure A.4. in Appendix A), rising in number to 66,511 children between 1980 and 1989 (E. Kim 2010, 20). International adoption in this period was employed as both a tactic to reduce the number of overpopulation and a child welfare measure to avoid costly institutional care (Hübinette 2005, 229). During this period, the government led by the military dictator Chun Doo-Hwan promoted the rhetoric of international adoption as "the extension of immigration and citizen diplomacy" (Y. Lee 2009, 164). Indeed, the military government found a profitable adoption industry with around 70,000 international placements, and the adoption agencies in South Korea were able to compete for a large number of adoptions (Hübinette 2007, 117). Such reckless export of Korean children has created a certain country or area with a relatively big number of Korean adoptees. Minnesota, one of the states with the largest number of Korean adoptees, is an

example of this phenomenon; by the 1970s, Minnesotans adopted Asians, especially Korean children via Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota or Children's Home Society of Minnesota. Korean adoptees in Minnesota now make up almost half of Minnesota's Korean American population (Park Nelson, 2017).

Moreover, many adoption cases of those children in the 1970s and 1980s were found inappropriate—according to Philsik Shin, a researcher assisting the Danish Korean Rights Group (DKRG) with investigating Danish Korean adoptees' adoption cases, most of the cases he has been dealing with had lack of informed consent between biological parents and adoption agencies (Cho and Kongsted 2023). Moreover, these biological parents were erased from the adoption process due to the falsified information in children's documents, such as misspelled names, wrong birthdates, and different orphanages from the actual facilities. Forgery of documents was made in connection with adoption agencies in South Korea and abroad. In December 2023, a collaborative news article project by a South Korean independent investigative journal Newstapa and a Danish independent investigative media outlet Frihedsbrevet revealed the 3,000 pages of internal documents between Korean Social Services (KSS) and Danish International Adoption (DIA), which is considered to be the first solid proof of the inappropriate international adoption of South Korean children. KSS required "donations" per child to DIA on top of the legal processing fees of adoption. For their profit, KSS created paper orphans with local orphanages in South Korea and sent those children to Europe, such as Denmark and Netherlands, lying to biological parents that the child died, or the child would come back when they were grown up.



Progress Report Summary). The expense of sponsoring a child
is about U.S. $ 15 a month for a younger child and about
U.S. $ 25 a month for a child attending High School. It
was agreed that AC possibly starts with 4 or 5 cases to
see how it works out.

Donations

FLN suggested that AC donates U.S. $ 8,000. Out of this
Mr. Paik would like AC to donate up to $ 3,000 to the new
buildings at KSS. The rest is to be donated to the Nam
Kwang Home at Pusan and the Jong Wha Home at Suweon. For
the new buildings at KSS Mr. Paik would like AC to donate
a new pump and a new oil burner, bought in Denmark. A
Bill of Lading (notarized and legalized by the Korean
Embassy) should be made out by AC. Mr. Paik would like
to have a one-year-old typewriter from the office of AC
donated to KSS, as it would be very expensive to buy a
similar in Korea.

뉴스타파

Figure 2.3. KSS/AC Meeting Record in 1973
AC is the acronym of Adoption Center, which is the former name of DIA. Nam Kwang Home at Pusan is an orphanage that is involved in paper orphans with falsified adoption documents. Source: "International Adoption and Money 5: Revealing the 3,000 pages of Internal Documents." *Newstapa*, December 18, 2023 (8:37-9:14). https://youtu.be/98iyqfMIUEA?si=yis_ATsH3GgFsczt

The DIA case proves that the international adoption of South Korean children during this period was no different from profit-seeking human trafficking, so the system was not built upon child welfare. With the money earned by selling children overseas, not only KSS but also other Korean private adoption agencies could have expanded their power and business in South Korea (Kang et al. 2024).

When showcasing South Korea to the world in the lead-up to the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the nation faced criticism as the "No. 1 children-exporting country," mostly sending those children to white parents in the United States and Europe. Statistics show that the 1970s dip was only that—overall, approximately 150,000 children were placed overseas via formal adoption between the Korean War and the end of the century, a figure closest to 200,000 if undocumented and uninvestigated adoptees are included (Y. Lee 2009, 164-65). Through rapid development, "war orphans" were replaced by "abandoned children," or "industrial orphans" in the wave of speedy industrialization and modernization, the increase of single mothers, and the nation's preference for sons to daughters (Yoo and Lim 2016, 152). Those orphans included "paper orphans" to be adopted overseas as a means of earning profit for private agencies and the nation through adoption fees. In short, international adoption was far more beneficial in many ways than

developing the child welfare system to establish domestic adoption. Consequently, international adoption was highly promoted by the nation during this period, and the adopted children were dispersed around the globe, obscured behind the history of the nation's miraculous development.

Reconciliation with the Nation: from the 1990s to the present

In 1989, the government established a deadline of 1996 to stop international adoption, yet it failed to be abolished (Hübinette 2005, 230). In the 1990s, South Korea finally started to show the transition to domestic adoption, following criticism inside and outside the country. Grown-up adoptees made their voices be heard to the world, which took a step forward to the reconciliation between the adoptees who were once exiled by their motherland and the nation that once abandoned the children. At the same time, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, international Korean adoptees started returning to South Korea and launched several organizations to raise awareness of the issues of international adoption inside and outside Korea (see Appendix C). The rapid development of the Internet helped them connect each other. In this period, South Korea started to welcome those adoptees coming to the country. According to Lankov (2008), the nation's attitude has changed due to the adoptees' potential; by the 1980s, the adoptees were regarded as a national disgrace as living evidence of the country's shameful history. However, in the 1990s, South Korean authorities and corporations found political and economic benefits following the wave of globalization by discovering the potential of these adoptees bridging two countries, the adoptive country and the motherland Korea.

The seeds of reconciliation were planted by Kim Dae-Jung, who served as the 15th South Korean President from 1998 to 2003. In 1989, when Kim Dae-Jung visited Stockholm as the leader of the opposition party at the time, he received a question about the issue of international adoption by Lena Kim, who is an international Korean adoptee in Sweden. Her presence was influential enough for Kim Dae-Jung to be the first president to invite international Korean adoptees to South Korea and make the first step of reconciliation. On October 23, 1998, President Kim invited a group of twenty-nine adoptees born in South Korea and raised in Western European homes; Lena Kim was one of those adoptees. In particular, President Kim directed media attention to Lena Kim by

introducing her to the crowd. Indeed, Lena Kim made her mark as an individual who contributed to raising the nation's interest in the issue of international adoption of South Korean children.

Figure 2.4. President Kim Dae-Jung and Lena Kim at the Blue House in 1998
Source: Cho, Sun-Yong. "President Kim Dae-Jung Invited International Korean Adoptees." *KBS News*, October 23, 1998 (00:25-00:28). https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=3793030.

The tour's highlight was an apology from President Kim for the adoptees' exile during a ceremony held in the Blue House (*Cheong Wa Dae*), a public park for the presidential residence and the diplomatic reception halls of South Korea. President Kim opened the reception with an official apology to the international adoptees, saying: "It's been eight months since I started to reside in the Blue House, but today's meeting with all of you is personally the most meaningful and moving encounter for me. There must have been several reasons [to conduct international adoption], however, I apologize as President of South Korea that the nation had to give you away for overseas adoption" (Sung 1998). He officially recognized and apologized for what the nation had done to the adoptees. President Kim also added, "Too many children were adopted overseas due to the nation's economic difficulties and the unfortunate practice that has been reluctant to adopt non-relative children.… I hope you all live a happy life in your host countries by

being melded with the host countries' traditions and knowing your birth roots" (Kim 1998) [9].

The history of international Korean adoptees was once hidden and neglected, however, the 1990s was the period to move forward to heal the collective wounds engraved in the adoptees' lives. By officially making an apology to the 200,000 international adoptees, the statement from the representative of the nation opened up a new era of reconciliation and investigation towards the truth of the international Korean adoptee's history and facilitated the transition to domestic adoption. During President Kim's term, the invitation from the Blue House to international adoptees was held annually and those gatherings were led by First Lady Lee Hee-Ho.

Figure 2.5. First Lady Lee Hee-Ho at the Blue House in 1999 and 2001
Left: First Lady Lee greets adoptive families at the Blue House. July 19, 1999.
Right: First Lady Lee greets an adoptee at the Blue House. August 17, 2001.
© National Archives of Korea.

However, the annual invitation of adoptees to the Blue House ended up highlighting the case of "socially successful" adoptees, going contrary to its original

[9] The entire speech is not archived in the National Archives of Korea, yet his apology has been partly recorded and covered by several journals and media, such as KBS news, MBC news, and Hankyoreh newspaper. I brought the news on October 23 and 24, 1998, that contain (or summarize) the apology from President Kim. Yngvesson (2010, 164) cites the English version of the speech from the 1999 archive of Kim Dae-Jung, however, it was unable to trace back its original source. The following quote is President Kim's speech that Yngvesson cites:

"It's been eight months since I became President. During this period, I've met countless people. But today's meeting with all of you is personally the most meaningful and moving encounter for me. Looking at you, I am proud of such accomplished adults, but I am also overwhelmed with an enormous sense of regret at all the pain that you must have been subjected to. Some 200,000 Korean children have been adopted to the United States, Canada, and many European countries over the years. I am pained to think that we could not raise you ourselves, and had to give you away for foreign adoption."

intention to raise awareness of those forgotten international Korean adoptees in history (Jeon-Hong 2017). "Not successful" cases, such as stateless, being abused or neglected adoptees, could not shed light, remaining in the shadow of the admired adoptees at the Blue House. Moreover, despite efforts to decrease international adoption, the number of international adoptions of South Korean children increased in the late 1990s and the early 2000s due to the 1997 IMF economic crisis.

Changes were made afterwards with the atmosphere of self-reflection in the 1990s-2000s' Korean society. The President Kim government launched several policies for the international Korean adoptees' rights in South Korea. In 1999, the government granted the legal status of the adoptees as overseas Koreans. Subsequently, the Overseas Koreans Visa (F-4) came into effect, which enables international Korean adoptees to live and work in South Korea for an extended permit of time (Trenka et al. 2006, 244-45). Nevertheless, the issue of international adoption was not fully addressed enough in the period. In 2005, the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Korea (TRCK) as a temporary independent organization was launched to reveal hidden truths of the past and establish a newly founded history through reconciliation. Part of the project by the organization was to reveal the government's responsibility for forced migration by the state in postcolonial Korea. However, the issues regarding international adoptees were not included in the category of forced migration, therefore they were not discussed within the first commission until the second TRCK, launched in 2020, officially decided to probe the issues of international adoption in December 2022.

The number of international adoption cases repeatedly increased and decreased along with several adoption policies. In the 21st century, South Korea became the only country that sends children overseas among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries when fighting for the national issue of low birth rate. Policies are made to promote domestic adoption and ultimately stop international adoption. In 2007, a domestic adoption priority system was launched which prohibits a child from being adopted overseas for the first five months after the child is eligible for adoption. The system seemed successful; from 2007 to 2009, the number of international Korean adoptees decreased to 47.6 per cent. Subsequently, in 2011, the amendment of the Special Adoption Act was made to promote domestic adoption and give a chance for

birth parents to raise their children. However, it ended up with a backlash—the number of domestic adoptions decreased, and the number of abandoned babies increased (S. Kim 2015, 713-14).

In the most recent decade, especially after 2011, about 40 per cent of adopted children are still sent overseas since it was unable to find a place within the nation (see Figure B.2. on Appendix B). However, the Korean government is more active than ever in making children grow up in domestic homes so that the international adoption of South Korean children can be fundamentally eradicated. Changes are made around two policy pillars: overseas Koreans and domestic adoption. With the launch of the Overseas Korean Agency (OKA) on June 5, 2023, all overseas Korean-related affairs were unified under the agency. In May 2024, OKA hosted the 2024 Overseas Korean Adoptees Gathering, inviting around a hundred adoptees and their families (H. Lee 2024). Regarding domestic adoption policy, the Korean government is expected to be the main agent in managing adoption. From July 2025, applications for prospective adoptive parents and the management of adoption records will be unified under the National Center for the Rights of the Child in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, instead of private adoption agencies that have been leading the international adoption system in South Korea. International adoption will be limited to cases following the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. South Korea signed on May 24, 2013, but has not yet ratified the convention, so it is expected to be ratified in 2025 to reduce the number of international adoption cases (J. Lee 2024).

In the table below (Table 2.3.), I summarize the history of the international adoption system of South Korean children from the 1950s when the international adoption system was formed, to the present when the international Korean adoptees and the nation move towards reconciliation.

Table 2.3. The History of International Adoption of South Korean Children by Three Periods

Period	1st Period (1950s-1960s) The Formation of International Adoption	2nd Period (1970s-1980s) The Acceleration of International Adoption	3rd Period (1990s-the Present) Reconciliation with the Nation
Regime	postcolonial Korean ethnonationalism (단일민족정신 *tanil minjok chongsin*), anti-communism	ideological conflict with North Korea by competing economic growth, anti-communism	integration of International adoptees to overseas Koreans, the political / economic potentials of the adoptees
Historical Background	Korean War, US-South Korea relations, war waifs and orphans	fast industrialization, modernization, military dictatorship, industrial orphans	criticism inside and outside Korea, adoptees' return and activism
Main Policy	Special Act on the Adoption of Orphans (1961)	Special Adoption Act (1976)	Overseas Koreans Visa (F-4, 1999)
Outcomes	4 private adoption agencies were authorized and started international adoption	many adoption cases were found improper with fabricated documents	investigations on the falsified adoption cases, unification of the overseas-Korean related work under the Overseas Korean Agency

Chapter 3.

Torn Apart, Still Connected: Affects and Emotions in the Memoirs

In this chapter, I present three memoirs written by two authors: Jane Jeong Trenka's *The Language of Blood* (2003) and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009), and Jenny Heijun Wills's *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.: A Memoir* (2019). These memoirs are especially important to an understanding of the aftermath of the international adoption of South Korean children because during the 1970s and 80s, the vast majority landed in North America, and especially the United States (where Trenka went—Wills was raised in Canada). This was the peak period for the international adoption of South Korean children through a system that we now know entailed fabricating identity documents that altered key details about the children's families and birthdates, and whether they had actually been orphaned. In order to understand how adoptees relate to their past, present, and future, I want to use notions drawn from affect theory. Before presenting my analysis of the three memoirs, I first explore affect theory in the next chapter (Chapter 3.1.) to apply it as both theoretical background and methodology for my analysis. In doing so, I refer to specific works by feminist scholars and artists, such as works by Sara Ahmed, Kathleen Stewart, Sianne Ngai, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cathy Park Hong.

3.1. On Affect: Theory and Methodology

International Korean adoptees' memoirs provide distinctive voices, personal reflections, and the authors' engagement with their contested identities and senses of self in life narrative. To touch on the adoptees' experiences in the memoirs, I take affect as a theoretical background and at the same time as a method, following the methodology of Lee, Falter, and Schoonover (2021) that affect is both theory and method as they are intricately intertwined. As affect senses the link between body and mind, it can function

as both the theory and the methodology of looking back on human beings who are emotional and therefore uncertain presences.

One of the major challenges in the theories related to emotion and affect is the lack of standard terminology—it is difficult to clarify a sole definition of what affect is. When examining happiness in her essay "Happy Objects," Ahmed (2010) even argues that she does not assume affect can be independent as a shared object of study. Yet in this research, I differentiate the term affect from a comparison to the term emotion by tracing back their origins. Often interchangeably used, the two terms are both related to one's feelings. On one hand, emotion has its Latin roots from *emovere*: a combination of *e-* as a variant of *ex-*, meaning "out," and *movere* meaning "move." Thus, emotion goes outside as an outcome that results from a movement of one's mind. On the other hand, affect was coined in German from Latin *affectus*, meaning "disposition," from *afficere*, which means "to influence." Although affect has its roots in the meaning of influence, it is unclear whether the influence has reached the result of one's state of mind. Based on the two terms' etymological differences, in his review of *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), Lee (2016, 297) explains affect as "a movement of one's mind" itself, regardless of the actual changes in one's feelings. Borrowing Lee's example, when a state of mind moves from A1 to A2, emotion focuses on A2 (A1→"A2"), an outcome of the feelings, whereas affect focuses on in-between the two states of mind (A1"→"A2). In the process, the mind might not move to A2. Nevertheless, there was a certain moment of hesitation. That matters in affect, even though the moments do not, or cannot, actually happen[10].

The modern concept of affect theory derives in part from the seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, and its genealogy was developed further by numerous scholars such as Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michael Hardt, Antonio

[10] In her essay "Happy Objects" from *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), Ahmed provides an example of the hesitation of mind with Ama Ata Aidoo's poem, *Our Sister Killjoy*. On a plane, Sissie, a black woman-narrator of the poem, is asked by a white flight attendant to move her seat back where "her friends" are sitting. However, Sissie does not know the black people there. At that moment, she hesitates; her body refuses to move the seat, but eventually, she accepts the flight attendant's unreasonable request to avoid any conflicts that might happen. Ahmed (2010, 39) discovers a political struggle in Sissie's mind, even though it has not been realized. Nothing seemed to have happened because Sissie eventually followed what the flight attendant asked her, but hesitation clearly existed in her mind then. As Aidoo's example, affect senses the movement of the mind that occurs in the moment of hesitation.

Negri, and Brian Massumi. However, my research is not a work that clarifies the lineage of affect theory. Rather than covering the details of the philosophical discourses developed after Spinoza, as Kwon (2020) showed in exploring affect with gender studies, my research approaches affect that surges everyday practices in the memoirs to see the encounters, inter-actions, and intra-actions that (dis)connect, strengthen, and weaken relationships among bodies. I work with the encounters and the "in-between-ness" of affect, that are, "in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1). In particular, by tracing how the bodily experiences shape affects and emotions, I explore how the subtle moments of affects and emotions are unveiled in Trenka's and Wills's writings. In doing so, lastly, I explore the possibilities of affect in the study of Korean diaspora and international Korean adoptees by using memoirs.

Based on the differentiation between affect and emotion, my research takes the concept of affect that mainly explores the subtle moment involving hesitation and other minor feelings in everyday life, particularly inspired by contemporary feminist scholars. In the second edition of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), Sara Ahmed categorizes several emotions such as pain, fear, and love, and explores affects both on macro- and micro-scale, from individual-state to individual-to-individual relationships. In this book, rather than asking or defining what emotions are, Ahmed asks what emotions *do*, how they work, and how emotions circulate between bodies and how they stick and move (4). Following the genealogy of feminism and critical race theory, Ahmed focuses on the process by which emotions bring out actions and practices and affect the individuals' living in structures and norms. With the concept of affective economy, Ahmed analyzes how the expression of negative emotions such as hate, disgust, and shame in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States works to reconstruct the mainstream and reproduce social norms by regulating minorities. In the process, Ahmed unravels emotions with three cases: the issue of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, the response to the September 11 attacks, and the images of refugees, migrants, and strangers. When discussing how the power relation of home and the host countries has affected the adoptees, I bring Ahmed's concept of affect as a psychosocial contagion that creates "the very surface sand boundaries that allow all kinds of objects to be delineated" (10). That is, how emotions

work to shape the individual and one's body and tie people to the broader social process. Following Ahmed's methodology, I reveal how historical violence, such as colonialism, racism, and imperialism, has been engraved in the adoptees' individual lives and how they were executed as languages in their memoirs. I trace emotions emerge among the adoptees' memoirs that circulate between people and objects, and eventually make the accumulation of affective value.

Ahmed is even more precise on the question of affects and "good" feelings in her 2010 essay "Happy Objects" from *The Affect Theory Reader*, where she suggests affect that sticks, sustains, or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects (29). Happiness here functions as a promise that directs bodies toward certain objects and moves to social goods. By analyzing several films and books covering family narratives with "affect aliens" such as melancholic migrants and unhappy queers, Ahmed shows how a family sustains its place by affecting and being affected by each other between different generations. I draw on Ahmed's concept of home and migrancy as I examine the (dis)connected feelings and emotional experience of the international Korean adoptees as they search from their birth family and home.

While Ahmed's works give a focus on migrant feelings, Kathleen Stewart's work is clearer about everyday affects that can be minor, but affective. Stewart's 2007 book *Ordinary Affects* encourages us to explore the everyday lives that are also documented in the memoir. Stewart describes the focus of ordinary affects as the question of the intimate impacts of forces in circulation, which is not exactly "personal" but can head toward they did not "intend" to go (40). They leave a collection of trajectories and circuits and in the process of affecting and being affected, making the flow of "rogue intensities," which are all the left, but unassimilated impacts of things that are fragmented in a body. Affect is experienced via rogue intensities when communicating and engaging with the world. Rouge intensities disclose the ordeal of international Korean adoptees as the adoptees are the dynamic beings at the centre of diasporic history. Tracing rouge intensities in the memoirs enables how international adoptees have constructed their own affective world through emotions. I also seek affective connectedness through bodies and generations in the adoptees' everyday lives by understanding the emergence of ordinary affects with rouge intensities.

Considering how to read the three memoirs, I turn to three other feminist scholars, an American cultural theorist and literary critic Sianne Ngai, a Vietnamese filmmaker and literary theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha, and a Korean American poet Cathy Park Hong, who all work through questions of the feelings that minorities feel. Sianne Ngai's 2007 book, *Ugly Feelings*, provides a theoretical framework for analyzing minor negative affects by presenting a range of cultural artifacts such as films and novels. The "ugly feelings" without catharses, such as envy, irritation, and anxiety, emerge when actions are blocked or hindered; Ngai unveils those ambiguous feelings in the artifacts by reading out the affective moments. Often intersecting with issues of race, ethnicity, and gender, those minor, ugly and subtle feelings are finally located at the centre of the study, skimming off the era of emotions that were easily obscured by "strong" negative emotions such as anger and fear. Following Ngai's methodology, I uncover those feelings that would be often considered less important or petty submerged in the three memoirs.

In line with the questions of those problematic feelings, Hong develops the term "minor feeling" explicitly from Ngai which is provided in the book under the same title, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* (2020). In her essay compilation which takes a mixed form of memoir and social criticism, Hong brings "minor" feelings to explore Asian Americans' dysphoric feelings. She argues minor feelings arise when one in a minority group—Asian American as the example from the book—faces American optimism with one's own racialized reality and therefore creates dissonance. When talking about those feelings, Hong brings up the suggestion of "speaking nearby" rather than "speaking about" a culture outside one's experience, which is suggested by Minh-ha[11]. In an interview, Minh-ha explains "speaking nearby":

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[11] Hong cited it from an interview for *Artforum*, however, the archive was not available. Hong cited Minh-ha's "speaking nearby" concept as follows:

"When you decide to speak nearby, rather than speak about, the first thing you need to do is to acknowledge the possible gap between you and those who populate your film: in other words, to leave the space of representation open so that, you're also committed to not speaking on their behalf, in their place or on top of them. You can only speak nearby, in proximity (whether the other is physically present or absent), which requires that you deliberately suspend meaning, preventing it from merely closing and hence leaving a gap in the formation process. This allows the other person to come in and fill that space as they wish. Such an approach gives freedom to both sides and this may account for it being taken up by filmmakers who recognize in it a strong ethical stance. By not trying to assume a position of authority in relation to the other, you are actually freeing yourself from the endless criteria generated with such an all-knowing claim and its hierarchies in knowledge." (cited in Hong 2020, 103)

> [Speaking nearby is] a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it. A speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition—these are forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language. Every element constructed in a film refers to the world around it, while having at the same time a life of its own. And this life is precisely what is lacking when one uses word, image, or sound just as an instrument of thought. To say therefore that one prefers not to speak about but rather to speak nearby, is a great challenge. Because actually, this is not just a technique or a statement to be made verbally. It is an attitude in life, a way of positioning oneself in relation to the world. Thus, the challenge is to materialize it in all aspects of the film—verbally, musically, visually. That challenge is renewed with every work I realize, whether filmic or written. (Minh-ha, interview by Chen 1992, 87)

According to Minh-ha, to speak nearby is to make an intentional distance between the subject and the filmmaker so others can fill out the meanings. There is no representation, authority, or hierarchy in the blank space; only the materialized details can exist nearby. Following the concept of "speaking nearby," Hong reveals her positionality when writing *Minor Feelings* by bringing up the concept of "speaking nearby" Asian Americans:

> I turned to the modular essay because I am only capable of "speaking nearby" the Asian American condition, which is so involuted that I can't stretch myself across it. The more I try to pin it, the more it escapes my grasp. … If I'm going to write nearby my Asian American condition, however, I feel compelled to write nearby other racial experiences. Students have asked me, "How do I write about racial identity without always reacting to whiteness?" The automatic answer is "Tell your story." (103-4)

Although Hong herself is Asian American, she could not cover all the pieces of Asian American stories. This is why she chose to publish *Minor Feelings* as a compilation of her essays because, in order to speak about and then speak nearby, she eventually came back to her own place to tell her story, which is an ultimate narrative that she can draw from every single aspect. Hong's confession shows that it is almost impossible to understand the whole—in Hong's case, Asian American society—and our perception has no choice but to be always fragmented.

In line with Ngai's and Hong's thoughts on emotions, I apply minor feelings in my analysis to understand the international Korean adoptees' specific cases, that are,

minorities in minorities: Koreans in North America, who became immigrants by being adopted. Despite the collective nature of the international Korean adoptees' historical background, every adoptee's experience is different and often fragmented. In my analysis, I connect the pieces by speaking *nearby* their memoirs with the flexibility of the term generation in practice. The story of a heartbreaking loss that occurred at such a young age in the adoptees' lives was difficult to put into words; nonetheless, despite the linguistic and cultural losses in the process of adoption, the ability to reconnect with one's biological family persisted in subsequent years for both sides. Thus, family could be formed not only across distance but also across time and loss. Power differentials happen in the adoption process between parents and children, institutions and individuals, white people and people of colour, and rich and poor nations (Park Nelson 2006, 90), and generation is an interdisciplinary term that can explain this phenomenon by being situated in the intersection of all the embodied affects.

I now want to move into my thematic analysis of the memoirs, analyzing these two authors' journey as they engage with their biological and adoptive parents, siblings, and the communities they formed with other adoptees of their generation en route to finding their identities as international Korean adoptees. I use the descriptive method of close textual analysis, highlighting similarities and differences in specific passages from the texts, that embody the authors' emotions, often quite raw. I discuss affects that adhere to the specific word choice and choice of language (Korean *versus* English, Korean *and* English) that each author used as they piece together fragments of memory after they discovered their adoptee status. I divided Chapter 3.2. into three different themes: generations and heritages, siblings with memories, and languages. In Chapter 3.3., I focus on affects that were exposed through bodies. In the process, the concept of generation ties the two authors' different but echoing feelings and emotions, finding the collective dimension of their experiences. Lastly, in Chapter 3.4., I conclude the adoptees' journey by finding their love and affection toward their motherland, Korea.

3.2. Fragmented Life, Beaded Words

3.2.1. (Dis)connected Generations and Heritages

Although a memoir is an individual's story, it has a collective dimension, involving self-representation by the author who speaks up on behalf of their self (Couser 2012, 177-78). Presenting first-person narrators, memoirs not only appeal to people from similar backgrounds, but often reach a broader audience outside of the community. Author's word choices disclose their visceral feelings and emotions as their memoirs form an affective bridge between the author's life narrative and readers. Languages and words shape memoirs, crossing the intersection of various materials throughout the text.

The Language of Blood (2003) details Trenka's encounter with her past, present, and future: fabricated adoption document, racism, neglect from the adoptive parents, birth mother, sisters, and South Korea. As the title implies, the book depicts her journey to understand her identity and roots as Korean, feeling affective ties in what she calls the unspoken language of *blood*. Ever since she was adopted, she had been feeling complex feelings, such as curiosity, resentment, and affection towards her Korean mother, sisters, and her motherland Korea. The memoir opens with a letter written in 1992 from Trenka's Umma, mom, confessing the true story behind her adoption. Trenka, born Jeong Kyong-Ah, was cut off from the branch of her birth family because she was an unwanted daughter, who could not be an heir to keep the Jeong family's lineage:

> Too many daughters! No sons for Father! What to do? Father says give the youngest two away. (Trenka 2003, 48)[12]

Right after Trenka was born, her four-year-older sister Carol and Trenka were adopted from South Korea to the United States. In the 1970s, boys were wanted as the leaders of the future generation in a family, whereas girls were not. Baby girls and children with disabilities were exported overseas due to the "blood ties-oriented culture" and "the preference for male offspring" in the Korean tradition (Yim and Lim 2012, 88). Meanwhile in Harlow, Minnesota, where women must be "wives and mothers" and men

[12] All page numbers of the quotations in this thesis are based on the three books' paperback versions.

must be “husbands and fathers” (Trenka 2003, 19), a white couple decided to adopt children via Lutheran Adoption Service by giving the children the opportunity to grow in Christian faith. When Kyong-Ah came to America and started to be called Jane, the normal white family’s only flaw—lack of their own child—was covered by Asian children adopted from South Korea. Between the two different family dynamics, Kyong-Ah’s place in the genealogy of Jeong’s family was transplanted to Jane’s place in the Brauer family[13].

Growing up in Harlow, Minnesota, the Korean adoptee girl was taught American history and her adoptive parents’ family history—her white father’s ancestors had been in Harlow for six generations, and were proud to include Minnesota’s first woman pharmacist. Her adoptive mother’s ancestors came from Prussia six generations ago, and they had a long-documented history of intestinal disease, which is undoubtedly not related to Trenka’s body. Trenka was raised and educated as if she was the Brauer family’s biological family member, but at the same time, she was often expected to retain her Korean-ness, even though she had been erased from the Jeong family in South Korea. Moments of being expected to be Korean occurred in every corner of her life, even in the earliest years. These moments bring her back to the kindergarten days when Trenka brought a picture of herself with her Korean family, presenting it in front of the teacher and classmates:

> “I would like to show the boys and girls real Korean clothes,” I announced, reaching into my paper grocery bag.
>
> “Can you tell us more about your clothes?” Mrs. Hoffman’s whipped-up brown hair was like cotton candy. She smelled like Cashmere Bouquet. I was in love with her.
>
> “Um,” I stalled, not knowing anything about Korean clothing or traditions. Then I remembered my one fact, my single piece of Korean history. “My mother sent them to me when I was a baby, after I came to America. It’s a Christmas present.” (Trenka 2003, 22)

[13] Brauer is her adoptive family’s surname, however, she uses Trenka as her surname after her marriage. In fact, her pen name is built upon her choices—see the following quote: “My marriage certificate let me choose who I wanted to be. Just write it down. / Jeong, Kyong-Ah. Or Kyong-Ah Jeong? Jane Marie Brauer. Jane Marie Trenka. Kane Brauer Trenka. Jane Kyong-Ah Jeong Brauer-Trenka. I finally choose Jane Jeong Trenka: one name from each family.” (Trenka 2003, 238)

Although “not knowing anything about” her Korean roots, as an adopted Asian child in a white family, she was expected to say something about her visible features by others. However, Trenka’s adoptive parents were not the type of open-minded parents who are positive of adoption. They neglected the fact that Trenka was ethnically Korean by not mentioning what she calls the “a-word”—adoption—and the “K-word”—Korea (Trenka 2003, 38). There should have been a few opportunities to celebrate or acknowledge adoption in Minnesota, such as culture camps or adoption day, yet Trenka was never allowed to attend those events. In this nurturing environment, Trenka grew up as if she was the parent’s own biological kid, but a step outside the Brauer house, she was anticipated to behave like a proper Korean-American with backgrounds of both sides. Surrounded by an environment that lacked Korean culture, she was grown up lacking half of her roots.

This void of Korean-ness continued. Sometimes, her inexperience with Korea appeared in an unexpected situation, such as on the day of her wedding ceremony. Since there were no Korean people around her to teach her the proper way to wear a Korean wedding hat, she wore it in the wrong way, which made her shameful and later hid her wedding pictures from her Korean family. Witnessed by others that she did not know enough Korean culture despite her Korean blood, borrowing Ahmed’s (2014) words, she was ashamed of herself and her body “turned away” from the witnesses (103). The emotion shaped her body into a certain action, that is, not showing the wedding picture to her Korean family who may notice the wrong way to wear the wedding hat. This process of shame involves painful yet minor bad feelings. Indeed, this is subtle that others might not have noticed, but she was ashamed of her ignorance of the Korean identity inside her. Shame also served as a defence mechanism for her, as Trenka’s affective reaction also prevented her from further negative feelings by not revealing her ignorance of Korean-ness to others. Nevertheless, by feeling shame, the body still remembers how she was unfamiliar with the culture that she was supposed to know; hence, the memories linger in her mind, constantly provoking her to face minor bad feelings. The disconnected Korean-related knowledge and experiences led the void inside of her to be filled with sticky affects, such as embarrassment, humiliation, and a nameless longing for Korea to find her other self.

Longing for what was missing in her life, the wish for reunion emerged from her young age—when Trenka found an airmail envelope from mom's desk, which was a clue that later led her to the truth beyond her adoption document. The flashback of her younger days was full of the memories that she tried to send a letter to South Korea to find her Umma, with a belief that her Korean mother would still love and miss her. The words in the letters were left unsent, but eventually, she could finally make her way back home after she had graduated from college. She signed up for a birth country travel from the Children's Home Society Motherland Tour and seized the opportunity to meet her biological family in South Korea. Trenka described the very first moment that she and her Korean family could hardly speak to each other, but they had certainly bonded together:

> There must have been other people on the bus, but I don't remember them. In my memory, we are suspended together in the blackness, all by ourselves, with nothing to say, no words to say it. (Trenka 2003, 112)

Even though Trenka could only speak English, common languages were not necessary for a family to embrace each other. The bus was filled with indescribable feelings of affection, but at the same time, overwhelmed by remorse in bursting tears that Umma had to send Trenka to America. Movements of minds existed, moving towards the family they could not have met for more than two decades. While hugging each other without words, affect incorporated into their body and their every breath. They were definitely feeling orientation toward each other without words, which was enough for them to feel love and be loved.

However, the reality is more complex than a fictional world where the angels descend or the theme from Romeo and Juliet plays. The backlash of disconnection from the Korean-ness in her life expanded after Trenka reunited with her birth family for the first time. During her first return, most of the time the family needed an interpreter from a church, and Trenka had a limited conversation with her half-sister Eun-Mi in simple and sometimes broken English and Korean. Cultural differences kept her remaining as a foreigner but with a Korean-like face. With her biological family in South Korea, Trenka found herself floating up there, facing the limit that she could never be a fully Korean like others no matter how she struggles to be. Visiting South Korea back and forth, those

inexpressible feelings accumulated as rogue intensities in her body, and they came out into the words with weight in Figure 3.1., "Exile's Crossword":

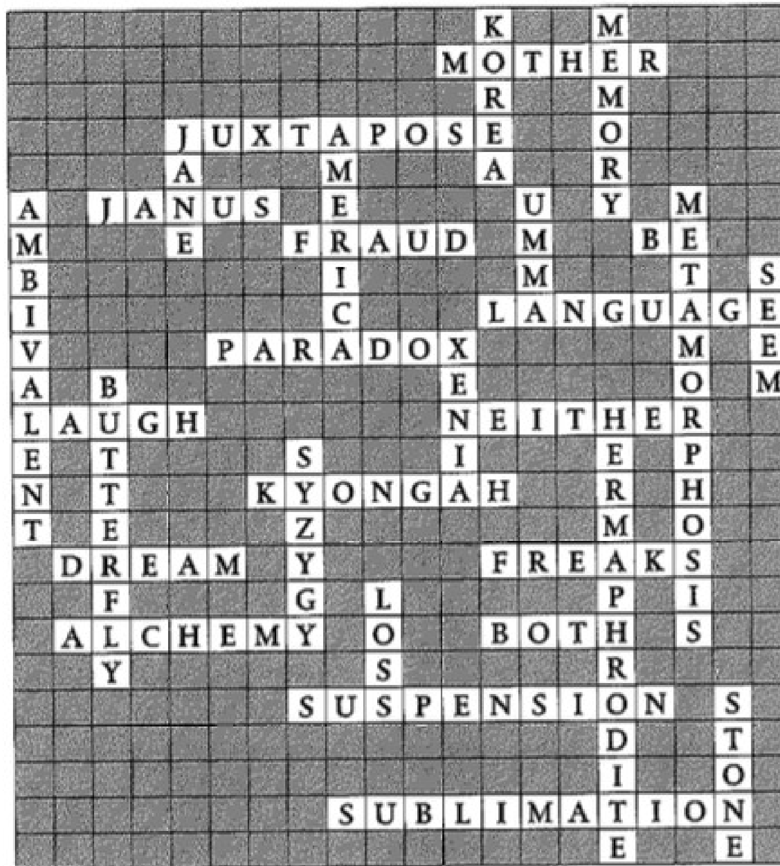

Figure 3.1. Exile's Crossword by Jane Jeong Trenka
Source: *The Language of Blood* by Jane Jeong Trenka (2003, 225).

Trenka did not add any explanation about this crossword in her book. Wills (2015, 49) analyzes that the crossword means her puzzled identity with different pieces that fit together in unexpected ways. As Wills' description, centring around Trenka's Korean name "Kyongah," which is no longer legally effective, the words branch out and draw the image of herself as an international Korean adoptee. The placement of "Kyongah" shows that her Korean-ness is important in composing her identity. However, "loss" is placed right under her Korean name, which implies that her Korean name "Kyongah" is now lost, showing the connotation of the relationship between herself and her Korean identity. Her unfamiliar motherland "Korea" is fetishized by being connected with nostalgic

words, such as “Mother,” or Umma, and “memories” that are lost. Whereas “America” is the juxtaposition of Korea to her, where she finds her existence “paradoxical” and “fraudulent” in her American experiences that started with a falsified adoption document. She is a “hermaphrodite” with “both” and “neither,” being a partly or fully Korean or American, Korean-American, or an international Korean adoptee. “Jane,” her American and legal name, is like “Janus” for her as it only represents her American side. As such, the words are selected to represent her life, and here, sticky affects pierce through her life as an adoptee crossing borders, resonating with other adoptees’ life narratives. As each independent words on the crossword are gathered and eventually composed a whole piece, the affective puzzle portrays her broken self in pieces and her journey to find them in between two countries.

Nevertheless, the reunion bridged the relationship between Trenka and Korea again by sewing the fragmented patches of history on her body. Umma tried to reinvent her daughter as Korean again by placing Trenka back in the genealogy of her Korean family. Umma told her family history to Trenka, such as how the grandparents in father’s side were in a Korean nobleman caste (*yangban*) in the late Joseon Dynasty with many cows—the symbol of the wealth in Korean history, and later how Trenka’s grandparents in mother’s side raised Umma’s family during the Japanese colonial period. This resonated with the story Trenka made up when she was young as a self-explanation of her adoption. She imagined her mother as a beautiful princess, but something terrible had happened to her, and thus she had no choice but to send her children to somewhere safe, still with a little bit of love: “Of course she missed me and thought about me constantly” (Trenka 2003, 99). Later she discovered the truth was so close. Although Umma was not a princess, she was born into a kind of aristocracy having a nobleman father. Her grandparents would have been the last generation to enjoy the higher class right before colonial rule. Understanding her Korean ancestors via stories by Umma, she was able to be connected to the parent generation again as their descendant and place herself amid modern Korean history, just like she learned the adoptive parents’ family history in Harlow.

As Trenka found herself again through her return to South Korea, the homecoming narrative also occupies a significant part in Jenny Heijun Wills’s first

memoir, *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.* (2019). She shows her reconciliation with her Korean family following three chapters: in Chapter 1, "가지. Gah-jee. Branch.," Wills starts her story by tracing back to her family branch and her very first return to South Korea. In Chapter 2, "가지다. Gah-jee-dah. To have. To Take.," she shows the way connections with her Korean family were rebuilt while coming back and forth to Canada and South Korea. Finally, in Chapter 3, "같이. GahtChi. Together.," her narrative finally leads the readers to the last page, presenting herself as connected with her parents and families in future generations in South Korea. Across the three chapters, pieces of letters are located among paragraphs, written from Wills to her older sister, younger sister, mother, and niece.

As the three chapters are titled in Korean, her unfamiliar mother language Korean is keenly used as a connection between herself and Korea. Wills places a great amount of weight on the affective ties of the mother language by calling Korean mother *Ummah*[14] 엄마, older sister *Unnie* 언니, and younger sister *Dongsaeng* 동생. In particular, those Romanised terms are not names but words involving relationships—Wills's Ummah, Wills's Unnie, and Wills's Dongsaeng. Moreover, she concludes her memoir with a Korean proverb: "딸은 엄마 팔자를 따라간다. The daughter follows the path of her mother" (Wills 2019, 244), implying she will also follow Ummah's path to express her love to the future generation. In the memoir written in English, which is Wills's first language but not mother language, those Korean words stood out by serving as a robust connection that strengthens the connotation of Korean-ness.

In an interview with CBC Books (2019), Wills mentioned that she decided to emphasize her reunion and sustained relationship with her Korean family despite cultural and linguistic differences, instead of focusing more on the pain she suffered as an international adoptee in Canada. Softly touching upon her reunion experiences, however, the body was honest enough to expose the history of international adoption that she went

[14] Both Umma and Ummah are the romanization of 엄마, Mom in Korean. Since Trenka used Umma and Wills wrote the word Ummah, I kept the two different romanizations in this research to respect the two authors' choices.

through. The bodily memory of adoption starts from when she was abandoned by her grandfather, with her Korean name Heijun given by him. When briefly giving the context of her adopted life to the readers, negative experiences surge even though she tries to not highlight them:

> For thirty years (and still to this day in the mouths of most), my name was replaced by one so expected it might have been Jessica or Meghan or Kimberly. Names of varying degrees of impossibility to Korean speakers. Mine is a name that I answer to, but that I wear only because I'm accustomed to it. Because others are accustomed to it. Not because it suits me. Early on, I was scrubbed until my skin turned pink. I was programmed to speak English, then French, and to place my fork and knife side by side on my plate when I had finished eating. I disappeared into a life of cream-of-mushroom casseroles, Irish settlers, and patent leather Sunday school shoes. I was buried under Bach concertos, feathered bangs, and maple sugar candy until my own mother wouldn't have recognized me (Wills 2019, 3).

As Trenka shows how she had been detached from her ancestors, parents, and families for decades, Wills also opens her memoir by explaining how she was put into the Western culture with an Asian body. While Trenka felt a sense of disconnection and shame when being asked about Korean features she did not have a chance to know, Wills questioned all the Western features surrounding her, such as pink or white skin colour, Canadian names that could be hers, Western table manners, and languages influenced by German and Latin. The sense of not fitting into the environment made her realize that she was transplanted to Canada because of being rooted out of South Korea. Every single part of her life, which was completely common and normal to a random Canadian, was not ordinary for her. Those small pieces accumulated, scratching her heart and lingering on her wounds. On a personal level, the gap between herself and the Western world surrounding her made Wills hide her Korean-ness, yet these gathered rogue intensities later provoked her to take a plane to South Korea.

After two decades in Canada, she decided to visit South Korea to face her disconnected history and find her biological family. Waiting for nine months after applying for a birth country travel from an adoption agency, she could find her birth mother and plan to travel to South Korea. When Wills landed on Korean soil for the very first time, anticipation and anxiety were together with her. The first encounter with her

mother at the airport was full of rogue intensities, yet those feelings were executed in such a very suppressed and reserved way. She recalls the moment:

> Ummah rushed at me, her lost-then-found daughter. She threw her arms around me and held on. The situation was uncomfortable. I stopped myself from blinking, from moving my eyes at all, because I was embarrassed and afraid I might start crying. And everyone was watching. Ummah clung to me, but I didn't soften. Someone took my wrists in their hands and positioned my arms robotically around my mother so that, to an onlooker, we appeared to be embracing. I heard the artificial snap of a digital camera capturing the staged tableau. My jaw started to hurt because I was clenching it so tight. I was holding everything inside because I was ashamed by how much I was feeling. Over the years I'd learned how to harden my body around my emotions. To wait until it was safe to unfold. / The situation was devastating. It's mortifying to know someone so deeply but be meeting them for the first time. Ummah's hands were strocking my hair with the presumptuous intimacy a mother expects with her daughter. She moaned, over and over again, *I'm sorry*, in the language that had been ripped from my mouth before it had a chance to settle in. (Wills 2019, 25-26)

Wills's moment presents a lot of paradoxical feelings. On one hand, the moment was poignant; Ummah was bursting into tears and kept apologizing to Wills in Korean though Ummah knew Wills may not recognize the language. On the other hand, lights and cameras—probably from media, adoption organizations, or agencies—were surrounding Ummah and Wills; Wills could notice that the moment was manipulated, and her feelings were hindered by those who intentionally tried to produce a typical homecoming moment with hugs and tears. Of course, Wills was also in the moment she had been waiting for. Her younger self just did not allow her to express her feelings and emotions in a place that was not considered safe and private enough. Above all things, she was fully aware of what was happening surrounding her; she finally met Ummah.

The way Wills described the moment was restrained, however, when taking out the silent layer from the surface, Wills's emotions were full of rouge intensities—affects had been built up in the process of signing up for the travel to South Korea, emailing with the agency for nine months, and finally getting a translated letter from Ummah starting with her rediscovered Korean name with an exclamation mark, *Heijun!* The feelings felt through the body were more visceral than ever. The Korean language that she heard from Ummah was more disparate than ever. Despite all those fears, unfamiliarity, and

distances, Wills was eventually connected with Ummah. By describing the awkward moment rather than exaggerating only positive feelings of the moment, Wills presents all the affects she went through during the first moment of her homecoming.

Both Trenka and Wills were once detached from their Korean home. Even when they were assimilated into their home in North America, they could eventually connect their broken pieces and place themselves back in the lost heritage in South Korea.

3.2.2. Adoptees and Siblings: (Not) Sharing the Memories

The mother-daughter reunion moment was made by overcoming the gap between two different generations and languages, providing a spice of catharsis to the readers. However, reunion or reconnection with siblings seems to be softer and relatively less cathartic compared to the moment with the authors' birth mothers. Nevertheless, sisters could also build up strong solidarity in the same generation, overcoming differences that existed between each other.

The aftermath of adoption has appeared differently within the same generation, even among siblings. At the time when Trenka was adopted, she was sent to the adoptive family with her four-year-old older sister, Carol. Since Carol was raised as Korean for four years, their adoptive parents faced challenges in nurturing her as an American. The parent's preference towards Trenka—a daughter almost like a blank canvas who did not remember anything about Korea—let Carol shut the doors of her heart against her sister and Korea. They stopped talking about Korea at all, as if they "wove a gag" over their mouths (Trenka 2003, 30). The stitched-up mouths were opened at different times. Trenka spent almost her late twenties trying to define her Korean-ness by visiting South Korea. Whereas Carol was perfectly assimilated into American culture; she did not even remember her own Korean name that was called for the first four years of her life. Many years later, however, Carol's son gave her a reason to visit South Korea, which bridged the sisters again: "After many years of hardly speaking, we were ready to begin the unraveling—of who we were in our American family, who we were in our Korean family, and who that made us together" (Trenka 2003, 141). The sisters had grown up

while time flew, and Carol had Trenka who had experienced Korea beforehand, therefore Carol's homecoming was easier than Trenka's case.

As Trenka did, Carol also visited South Korea to meet Umma, but it was not as ideal as Trenka's experience. Umma was mad at her American daughter who had almost forgotten everything about Korea, including the kimchi that, as Umma said, she used to beg Umma to make. Umma had only known Carol until she became a four-year-old Korean girl, and Carol did not even remember anything about her birth mother. Carol visited South Korea for her son to show their ethnic roots, however, the return did not become regular. In fact, she did not require knowing her Korean self as much as Trenka wanted; her own beloved family was in America, and she defined herself as Carol, not with the Korean name she did not even remember. Moreover, Umma gave her an unhappy experience—between Carol and Umma, there was a "social struggle" involving "contrary attributions" of what makes them unhappy (Ahmed 2010, 43). Umma was not satisfied with her daughter being bleached by Western culture, who did not even try to re-embody herself as a Korean. Carol was also disappointed by her Umma who did not affirm herself regardless of her American behaviour. Umma assumed that Carol must have been unhappy because she did not know anything about Korean culture. But did she? The two different expectations and disappointments made them say goodbye with subtle scars, failing to make Carol's return regular.

Carol's chaotic return shows that even though the two siblings were adopted by the same family, their affection toward their home country was completely different—Carol was not as desperate as Trenka to understand her past even though Carol should have experienced Korea more than Trenka in her younger days. Nevertheless, the disconnection in the same generation was vivid enough to split the sisters for a long time to take a completely different attitude toward Korea. After each one's homecoming, the feelings that Trenka and Carol had toward Korea were still different. But ironically, Korea let Carol and Trenka be the siblings again after over the two decades, residing part of their identity.

Carol was not the only sister that Trenka mentioned. In her first memoir, *The Language of Blood* (2003), Trenka wrote about three older sisters aside from Carol, who

were Sun-Yung, Sun-Mi, and Eun-Mi in South Korea. Later, the youngest sister Myoung-Hee was born. Myoung-Hee's birth is evidence of Father's undying hope for a son; she was born Duk-Chon—a boy's name given by Father—but later changed her name when she was twenty years old. Before meeting Trenka, Myoung-Hee remembered her sisters in America as "a story that our mother told, again and again" (Trenka 2009, 48). When Trenka made her way back to South Korea again, Myoung-Hee and Trenka cared for their ill Umma together. While accumulating mutual support, Trenka promised Myoung-hee to make her return to South Korea a routine. Throughout their dedication to the reconciliation of the relationship, the impalpable American sister became a real, existing sister in the family, despite the younger days they had to grow up in separate homes. When saying goodbye to Myoung-Hee at the airport, Trenka felt that she would always come back to South Korea where her sisters reside as a member of the family, even though Umma passed away:

> When Myoung-Hee dropped me off at the airport's curbside check in rather unceremoniously, I thought how good it was to be dumped off just like part of the family instead of being a foreign, honored guest needing me one of the long, histrionic group good-byes that we used to have, when no one was sure if I would ever return. (Trenka 2003, 182)

No tears were needed as the feelings of reunion that were once exceptional became ordinary. The goodbyes became casual since Trenka was no longer a distant American sister, at least for Eun-Mi and Myoung-Hee who cared for ill Umma together. Myoung-Hee updated the information about Trenka from a baby older sister who only existed in Umma's memory to the real older sister who now she can meet in person, stay with, and communicate with. They did have different experiences and memories of their youth, nevertheless, the sisters could fill up new moments being together in South Korea. The scars from their younger days still exist, yet it does not mean they cannot recover from the past. Trenka found her home by embracing her Korean sisters as her new family. Trenka is rooted down in her motherland Korea, where Umma no longer exists but where Eun-Mi and Myoung-Hee live and welcome her.

Unlike Carol and Trenka, Wills was adopted alone in Canada, but she also has sisters in South Korea: Bora, her younger sister, and an older sister, just called Unni in

the memoir, which literally means an older sister in Korean. Wills is at the centre of the three sisters, connecting them into one bloodline; Unni is an older sister born of a different mother, and Bora is a younger sister born of a different father. As the title of the book implies, Wills's memoir presents both her memories and letters to Unni, her "older sister" but "not necessarily related" to her, due to the complicated history of her Korean family. Although Wills does not reveal the older sister's name, her affection towards her distant older sister is expressed throughout numerous letters to her. Wills could feel the tightness between Unni and her, and the ties became affective every time she started the letter by calling her Unni, telling her story to Unni, and being curious about Unni's life. Wills does not explicitly reveal the emotional relationship with Unni; however, part of her letter gives us a connotation of the love between siblings:

> *Unni, we have the same hands. Everyone back home noticed when I showed them photographs of us together. That day at the park, you bought me cookies and ice cream and cake and spaghetti. You gave me trinkets I still keep safe. I guess you were trying to make up for decades of missed birthdays and New Years, not that anyone blames you. … Later, when it was time for me to go back to Canada, you took advantage of your job at Incheon International and waited with me at the gate after buying me Chanel makeup at duty-free. You stuffed a loaf of bread into my carry-on luggage for no reason other than to feed me on that long journey. When it arrived with me in Montreal, we were both flattened. I ate it anyway.* (Wills 2019, 75)

As Ahmed (2010, 32) states, things can convey a certain emotion to us; we are moved by things. An object becomes affective due to its location, or the timing of its appearance, or both. The letter above proves Ahmed's argument on affect and things; there is no description of emotions, yet the quote is full of affects. Unni's emotions on certain stuff and things—cookies, ice cream, cake, and spaghetti at the park are proof of Unni's orientation towards Wills. The trinkets from Unni are kept as if they are treasures. When the time to return to Canada came, Unni tried her best to take care of Wills until the last moment—Chanel product was significant because not just it was a luxurious brand, but it was a moment that Unni's affection turned into a gift. Wills took a flight with Unni's one last warm heart, a loaf of flattened bread. As Unni tried her best to fill in the lost time without her young sister, Wills also found diverse pieces of love by connecting her with Unni: they have similar hands, resemble each other, and dedicate their time to each other.

Unni's effort was not a one-way emotion; they accumulated affective values together. Despite the time and distance that they were separated, their honest heart allowed them to remain as sisters and family.

Wills could also build a strong tie with Bora, who used to be jealous of other friends with their older sisters. The reunion between Bora and Wills was made following both their own will and Ummah's wish. When meeting up, they could barely talk, but Bora always showed her love by insisting on paying and the money came from Ummah so that her two daughters could be together and build a connection as sisters. The reunion between siblings was partly required by their Ummah, still, the affection was real; their relationship even got stronger so later when Wills came back to Canada, Bora stayed in Wills's apartment in Montreal to study English and help with Wills's wedding. After Bora left Canada, their ties continued as siblings, but distinctive emotions remained inside Wills. For her, Bora was never a little girl:

> *I can't imagine you as a little girl, my little girl, because you never were. To me, you were born a twenty-something woman. But you are my woman and I am yours.* (Wills 2019, 159)

Wills could not see and therefore imagine Bora's younger days. So was Wills, that she could never be Unni to Bora until she grew up and showed up in front of Wills at the airport. This shows the complex family dynamic of an adoptee, that they may find a family member but without any shared background until they find and recognize each other. Nevertheless, just as Trenka and Myoung-Hee got connected again during the homecoming, Wills could also redefine her relationship with Bora as a family by layering up new reminiscences with Bora on their unknown past. They taught each other again, and the rebuilt-up love between sisters would last for a long time. Transcending the blank between them and filling in new memories inside it, the daughter generation could eventually be "siblings" again.

3.2.3. "Our" Languages

In line with the first book, Trenka boldly expands her world in her second memoir, *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009), by bringing not only her

experiences after publishing the first memoir but also other adoptees' life narratives. Involving the return stories of other adoptees living in South Korea, she portrays herself as well as others' stories and places the community in the context of the history of the Korean diaspora. Many parts of *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* were inspired by *Visions Fugitives, Op. 22*, a set of twenty piano miniatures by the Russian pianist Sergei Prokofiev. The chapters, for instance, are organized in the order of the movements, from the first movement "Lentamente" to the last movement "Lento Irrealmente." As Prokofiev composed the cycle with twenty distinctive miniatures, Trenka's second memoir is also a collection of different foci with "fugitive visions": her life in Seoul as a foreigner but with a Korean face, her divorce and ex-husband, adoptees' communities and other foreigner communities, and the history of the United States and South Korea which contributed to the establishment of the international adoption system. But as the piano mediates twenty different movements, Trenka weaves her—and "our"—scattered self in one memoir, following the rhythm of *Visions Fugitives*.

Trenka uses an experimental way to compose her second memoir by bringing different methods of writing. As an amateur pianist who has been playing the piano for a long time, Trenka opens some chapters with a story related to the field of music. She starts Chapter 4, Allegretto Tranquillo, with Robert Schumann's hand injury to "see how the unfortunate wounded compensate for their handicap in a two-handed world" (Trenka 2009, 80). Then she presents some "scenarios" of the handicaps and compensations that happened in her or another random adoptee's life as an "ensurance exercise":

1. If your value in society depended on having children, but you were unable to produce them yourself, would you adopt children? YES/NO

2. If you wanted a healthy white infant but there were none available, would you adopt a nonwhite infant? YES/NO

   How dark can you go? _______________

3. If you wanted a healthy white infant but there were none available, would you adopt a white child over the age of 5? YES/NO

4. If you knew that your adopted daughter would eventually leave you and go back to where she came from, would you adopt her anyway? YES/NO

5. If several of your extended family members were opposed to the adoption of a nonwhite child, would you go through with the adoption? YES/NO (Trenka 2009, 80)

These possible, factful, but imaginary scenarios that some adoptees might have (not) experienced make the readers find what was beyond her international adoption, pointing out the racial hierarchy in the system. A white family's handicap—unable to have a child—was compensated for international adoption in a very affordable way, to adopt a non-white Asian child through Lutheran Adoption Services with a scoop of religious humanitarianism in Harlow, Minnesota, where women must be mothers, not just wives. Yet the sloppy compensation will be broken soon like the fourth scenario, as the adopted daughter went back to where she came from, to pick up her shattered pieces. By listing the process of international adoption that she might have experienced, those dry and cold situations convey affect, giving readers room to draw power dynamics related to international adoption. Moreover, by not defining Trenka's case but listing them up like a survey, Trenka expands the range of her memoir to other adoptees' experiences. Scenarios from six to eight also deal with the cases that could possibly arise if a racially othered Asian girl is adopted in a small, closed community, such as abusive situations:

6. Is it worth it for social workers who are doing home studies to investigate people living in the community (e.g., teachers, neighbors, etc.)? YES/NO

   How about extended family members? YES/NO

7. If, in every family, the chances of molestation rise when there is a male nonrelative living with the family, should you consider a legal adoptive father a relative or nonrelative?

   RELATIVE/NONRELATIVE

   After how long? ________________

8. If an adopted daughter is being molested, should you preserve the daughter or her adoptive family? DAUGHTER/FAMILY (Trenka 2009, 81)

Although Trenka did not explicitly write about any abusive experiences in her two memoirs, those scenarios reveal an international adoptee's vulnerability inside the adoptive family, which is hard to investigate. International adoptees are often considered as saved children from whatever hardships happened in their origin country, such as orphanages, war, or poverty. However, as a visible non-biologically related family member, adoptees can be easily exposed to several kinds of violence under the name of family. Nevertheless, not all the adoptees experience this kind of violence; by providing them as "scenarios," Trenka threw a possibility that a number of adoptees might experience these situations.

Based on her own experience, Trenka described all the scenarios that would have happened to not only her but also other adoptees, forming a collective dimension of the community. In the second memoir, Trenka broke down the individuality and caught the collectiveness in an individual's life. She spoke about her own life, but at the same time, she spoke "nearby" everyone else's adoption history. Part of her sentences were highly straightforward in juxtaposing international adoption as human trafficking in the ordeal of history, uncovering the possible hardships of the adoptees such as neglect and violence. However, as So (2023, 197) pointed out, in writing personal narratives, those cold, critical, but strong words towards the adoption system could keep the adoptees' dignity by themselves, avoiding the victimized image portrayed by the third party.

Trenka listed up the scenarios to reveal the collective dimension of the international adoptees' experiences, whereas Wills used the subject "we" to imply the connotation of the exiled adoptees' generation from South Korea. Although Wills's memoir focused more on the recovery of family relationships, she left evidence throughout the entire book that the story was not just her own; rather, part of her sentences could be the representation of all the adoptees' languages. Her grief as an adoptee inevitably touched down the history of the international adoption of Korean children and the confusion it implies:

> This story, these stories are not all mine. Some of them, in fact, belong to no one at all, but are the fantasies that seem to flower so naturally from the mouths of those of us who've grown lives out of half faces, wishful thinking, and outright lies. Who piece themselves together from the residue of lost

> records. From withheld or secreted records. Whose orphanages and agencies have been evasively destroyed by fire and flood. Or by shame. We are told there's nothing left of the people or places or lives we might have had. We're told they—and our knowledge of them—do not belong to us. They never did. And so, these stories are nothing special—only echoes of memories and alibis. But they are all I have. (Wills 2019, Preface)

Wills opens her memoir by saying that it is not just her own story, but at the same time, it might not be anyone's story. Paradoxically, this story would be representative of the international adoptees' lives who were adopted overseas and made their way back home. Wills deliberately brings up the subject "we" in the preface, describing that her memoir is not just her individual story but "our" ongoing memories that started from the displacement by "them," the governments and agencies that made deals on "our" lives. Unveiling the history that has been hidden, "our" narratives are finally uttered in the form of a memoir. Therefore, Wills's memoir is not just a memory of her own but is evidence of collective memories of the bodies adopted and scattered across the world. They had existed as numbers on the statistics and documents, yet some of them were left undocumented; in Wills's memoir, they show up as voices of testimony. Implying the 200,000 wandering souls crossing borders, the subject "we" surges with the echoes of the community.

As presented in Chapter 3, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, the international adoption system in South Korea functioned as a method to control overpopulation and a child welfare measure instead of the domestic welfare system. Despite all the critiques and voices from adoptees themselves, Wills points out that the system is still ongoing to send unwanted children outside the nation. In the dynamic, the children who were sold outside South Korea just remained as one of the numerous numbers in the statistics, but they keep questioning the reason as Wills did under the subject "we":

> *Unni… It resonates a lot these days, that we who were scraped up from the floor of orphanages and churches and hospitals and sent alone to new families and cultures and lands are members of a lost generation. We're a blip on the history of your country, a nation that seems millennia older than the countries to which we were sent. … And we'll continue to vanish, to die one by one, many of us with the words* why me? *on our lips. I've heard official apologies again and again, statements of remorse or shame that it*

> *is still ongoing. But there is no true accountability if they keep adding to our numbers. While they keep sending us so far away. They're embarrassed this no-longer-necessary relief program still exists. But, unni, it's just too good to give up. Do you know how much people are still willing to pay?* (Wills 2019, 23)

The individuals' lives were torn apart into several lands, so their families lived with regrets, grief, guilt, and neglect. From the 1990s, the adoptees started to return with a complicated sense of distance, that South Korea is close but at the same time, it is far away, in what Wills described, "that Korea is imagined as so close when we're being taken away, infants alone on airplanes, a so far when we want to return" (Wills 2019, 48). The decision to displace one's life was made easily. However, the return could be never easy as a twofold burden sticks on the adoptee's shoulder—that they want to find their roots but with the fear that their birth family might not want to face them. Homecoming cannot always be cheerful, and adoptees resent Korea, or the Korean government, which sent them to a completely different country. Nevertheless, it is not allowed for them to express those feelings to their Korean family. As Trenka confessed in the Korean-translated version of *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption* (2006, South Korea 2012), she could not say anything about what really happened in her life as an adoptee—sexual violence, racism, attempts to suicide, depression and mental breakdown—in front of her Umma who filled up the hotel room with her tears from the guilty feelings. Likewise, Wills could only write about the system in the unsent letter to her Unni and publish it in the memoir, rather than directly talking about how it affected her life with her Korean family. Those unspoken words that could not be conveyed into Korean shape the collective words, "our" languages of the adoptees, which often linger inside their mouths. But they would remain unspoken, hardly uttered.

Through homecoming, reunion with their Korean family, and investigating the truth of international adoption including their cases, both Trenka and Wills could weave their scattered life into a complete picture. In the process, not only the authors themselves but also the readers were caught up in between several binaries: Western saviourhood that international adoption might have saved some orphans versus violence that might have happened in a random adoptive home, the conflicts between ideal or "failed" family reunion cases, and adopted children's love, longing, or resentment. Nevertheless, as

entirely different pictures can turn into beautiful collage art, diverse parts of the adoptees' lives were eventually knotted into a complete scenery of life, as a form of memoir.

3.3. Bodies: Displaced, Evident, therefore Connected to the World

3.3.1. Evident Bodies

Bodies are one of the significant places that affect appears. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) see body as a field that affect resonates with; bodies have a capacity to affect and to be affected, involving visceral forces beyond emotion. Bodies here can be physical but also, they are beyond physical. Examining international Korean adoptees' return narratives, So (2023) argues that the adoptees' return is the process of discovering themselves as "internal outsiders" placed in "non-places," as their bodies cross the intersection of structural racism and complex power relations (203). Likewise, adoptees' bodies are evident as they pierce through the life histories they have been through. Both Trenka's and Wills's bodies are torn up in two places, South Korea and North America, becoming a field that intersects history and an individual's experience.

Wills often directly mentions her body in her memoir, recognizing feelings, emotions, power dynamics, and rogue intensities flowing through the body. Adoptees' bodies are the field that several categories intersect: nations, race and ethnicity, history, and social structure:

> My question is, *why*? But I know there is no answer. At least not to me. Colonialism. White saviourhood. Orientalism. Impatience. Far-away birth mothers. No take-backs. *Which is it*? (Wills 2019, 164)

Yet the travel to South Korea did not solve any of those questions, she could feel the history that happened to her through the body. When she decided to sign up for a birth country travel to South Korea, the moment was full of unutterable feelings, which was not always enjoyable. In the letter to her Unni, older sister, Wills confessed her fear crossing through her body before submitting the reunion form to meet her biological mother:

> *Before that time, I never dared dream that I would meet her. I'd been conditioned to accept its impossibility. Cautioned by well-intentioned non-adoptees and non-Koreans that the cultural gap was too broad to overcome. Warned about how our mothers move on with their lives. How they didn't want us back then and that time only hardens them. Even chided that it is selfish to interrupt our mothers when we have perfectly fine lives in our adopted families and lands. That we are best kept as secrets, forever illegitimate and hidden. ... It was fear. / Fear that I'd die, or that she would, before we could confess ourselves to one another. What did we have to confess? Well, in the first place, unni, she had to tell me why she did the things she did. But I also needed to explain myself and the anger and the sadness that I couldn't release. That her loss, our loss, hadn't necessarily been in my best interests after all.* (Wills 2019, 12-13)

Fear has an object; Ahmed (2014, 65) defines fear as a visceral response to the unpleasantness that the future brings. Wills's fear headed to Korea, which came from not knowing anything about her birth mother and South Korea. Her fear stretched to the past and the future, that she might encounter the loss of the past and the anger she might express in the future. But fear also brought her a chance to reflect on herself; she realized that the loss in the past was not one of the priorities of her life in Canada. The feelings of fear urged Wills to execute an intense bodily experience in the present, that was, to sign up for the journey to South Korea and find her biological family. On the other hand, fear gave her the courage to face up to her Ummah and what happened in the past. She put one step forward by embracing her Korean name, Heijun, which she was hesitant to claim as her own with the fear of mispronunciation. Fear stuck on her ankles, making her hesitant. But at the same time, fear served as the driving force for her to feel orientations of her mind and take a step forward. This emotion, which was trivial but stubbornly sticky, brought her constant self-reflection and anxiety, but eventually allowed her to face her body coming back to Korea.

Wills's body surged in relation to the sense of belonging. When her Canadian mother asked her where she wanted to be buried; her mother might have expected the answer of either country, but at that moment, Wills realized that her body did not belong *in* any place. Between two homes, Canada and South Korea, she found that her body did not and could not settle down, no matter how long she spent in two countries. The lack of a sense of belonging in-between the two homes aroused an eating disorder in her body:

> She'd asked me if I'd eaten, and each time I'd say, *I don't want to eat. I want to stay thin.* I said it to tease her because I knew she was worried, but actually it was more than all that. For years I'd struggled with food disorders, loving the way I could interlace my fingers between my ribs when I wrapped my arms around myself. Loving the feeling of control that came with it. Sometimes I slept with my forearms hooked neatly in the arches of hip bones that stuck out just a little bit too much. Ummah begged me to eat something and I always promised I would, but I didn't. Hunger made me feel connected to my body and in control of what was happening around me. Back in Canada, I was floating up again, bit by bit. I noticed that no matter where I was in the world, I was always missing somewhere else. I felt unsettled. Hunger held me together. (Wills 2019, 78)

Wills's Ummah asked her if she had eaten. "Have you eaten" is a common greeting in Korean like "how are you," so Ummah would have just thrown this question to Wills to start a call, checking if her daughter was staying healthy in Canada. However, for Wills, this reminded her of a way to connect to her body in the country where she could not put down her roots. Coming back to Canada after four months in South Korea, she found in-between-ness inside her again, floating between two homes. The fragments of experience were left hanging to her body in the form of an eating disorder. Affect rose on hunger. She felt herself through her body in hunger. In the unsettled feelings of scattered bodies, hunger was what tied her to the ground, and ironically, that was the proof of her existence in the world. When going through an identity crisis, the body was the very certain object that Wills could take control of. She might have never felt to be embraced in either society, Canada or South Korea, yet the body has been and will be there with her, no matter what the environment surrounding her will change. For Wills, her body was an expression of herself, and thus, by controlling her appetite, she could confirm her existence and autonomy on herself. Her empty stomach and hunger were evidence of rough intensities and self-control. Indeed, Wills's eating disorder was self-destructive. However, the more subversive it was, the more she could feel her existence. As such, her body worked affectively in that it allowed her to feel herself, no matter what the society around her did not allow her to let in. Moreover, her body further expands beyond an individual; her eating disorder was not just an illness but indicated the bodily expression of social issues, disclosing the hardship stuck on minorities in society through her body.

As Wills tried to bead her fragmented disquiets into a beautiful piece, Trenka approached the displaced bodies with several scenarios. As the number of the "ensurance exercises" got bigger, the scenarios scaled up from the story inside a family dynamic to the history of the Korean War and foreign militaries in South Korea, the starting point of the Korean international adoption system:

> 9. If you were a country that calls itself a shrimp between whales, should you allow foreign soldiers on your soil? YES/NO
>
> 10. If you were poor, would you allow your daughter to marry a foreign soldier if it helped you economically? YES/NO
>
> 11. Should you appease foreign powers by giving humans as gifts? Would you offer prostitutes for their military?
>
> HUMAN GIFT: YES/NO
>
> MILITARIZED PROSTITUTION: YES/NO
>
> 12. If foreign allies helped save you from communism, should you send your children to those same allies later? YES/NO
>
> For how long? <50 YEARS / >50 YEARS
>
> Under what kind of trade agreement? (Trenka 2009, 81)

In the ninth scenario, the metaphor for South Korea, "a shrimp between whales," came from an old Korean proverb: "In a fight between whales, the shrimp's back gets broken." The proverb figuratively refers to a situation when the weak get caught in the middle and suffer damage while the strong are fighting. The Korean Peninsula has been the shrimp in modern history, resulting in the Korean diaspora—after independence from Japanese rule, foreign powers were involved in the peninsula during the Cold War era. As a result, the Korean War broke out, bringing the subsequent scenarios—Amerasian kids were born by an American soldier and a Korean mother, as the 11th scenario indicates. Human trafficking had started under the name of international adoption. The system continued after the nation recovered from the aftermath of the war, and Trenka was one of those children sent to the "allies." As Ahmed (2014, 16) examined migrant bodies, the bodies sent as human gifts could not "inhabit the nation" and caused "disturbance" to the host country. Many adoptees suffered as outsiders in a stranger's country. Now the grown-up

human gifts with the modern Korean history engraved in their bodies speak up about their real-life scenarios, making their *fugitive visions* visible.

Trenka even presents more explicit bodies that are involved in the tragedy of international adoption. She sets an imaginary standup comedy sequence and offers one script titled "Don't Worry I Will Make You Feel Comfortable: A Monologue for Imagining" (Trenka 2003, 96). In the scenario, Jane, who is "generically" Asian, leads the show onstage. Jane talks in a heavy Korean accent and her broken English stands out when she breaks down those stereotypes attached to Asians, especially Koreans, with a sense of dark humour. Her topics range from Asians with good GRE and TOEFL grades to submissive Asian women loved by yellow-fever white men. Part of her monologue mentions Asian adoptees in Minnesota, where Trenka grew up:

> My roommate say Asian women tasting like peaches and smelling like jasmine. Lucky for you, there are ten thousand adopted Koreans in Minnesota—one for every lake. [*APPLAUSE*] We extra good because we come without lice or tapeworm. Almost pass for white daughter! I am honorary white person! [*APPLAUSE*] (Trenka 2003, 97)

Considering Jane is Trenka's given name in America, it seems clear that this setting is Trenka's self-mocking play. In this half-factful, but in an imaginary setting of monologue, Trenka deliberately exaggerates Jane's tone by using broken English that sounds typical Asian, although she can perfectly speak English as a native. She, Trenka as Jane, reveals the moment of racism and sexism just because she was an Asian woman. Trenka implies her own life as a Korean adoptee in Minnesota, and by setting the moment as an imaginary standup comedy show, she gives the reader a sense of shareable moments of discrimination, especially for adopted Asian women. Their Asian bodies were always potentially exposed to the gale of menace from white men as Trenka had suffered from a stalker for a long time, whereas those women are now grown up "honorary white" after not inheriting Korean legacies and adapting Western cultures. Those Asian bodies of adoptees, who are Asian but not recognized as perfect Asian, are evident that they have survived the turmoil of history and are also a sign that guides the adoptees to find who they are among the multiple identities given by their two mothers.

3.3.2. “Korean” Bodies

While Trenka and Wills felt disconnected bodies in North America, bodies became completely normal among their Korean families. As both Wills’s and Trenka’s Korean mothers brought out Korean-ness inside their daughters, the two authors could write the process of how they recognize themselves as Koreans again. Korean bodies surge amid reconnecting their relationship with Korea via their Korean mother and other international Korean adoptees, or even random Koreans. During her stay in South Korea, Wills could find herself fit in a country where she had many similar bodies to her. However, the feeling that she could find similar Korean bodies gave a sense of fear to her Canadian parents; they were worried about losing their adoptive daughter if Wills decided to stay in South Korea. During a video call, Wills’s Canadian mother left the room upset when she told her adoptive parents how good it felt to be in a land of people who looked like her, and how her heart was beating differently with a sense of belonging. But Wills also confessed that she was convinced by those similar bodies: “I understood that she was afraid I’d want to stay. In truth, part of me wanted to” (Wills 2019, 48). Yet she made her way back to Canada after four months, and the Korean culture that she newly learned during her stay in South Korea helped her remain Korean even in Canada.

After being reunited with her birth family, she engaged with Korean family traditions such as Chuseok, a mid-autumn holiday celebrating harvest. She learned how to celebrate annual events with not just her Korean family but also extended Korean families such as relatives. The tradition continued when Wills’s Ummah visited Canada. Ummah taught kimchi, a traditional Korean side dish, to her daughter at Wills’s apartment in Montreal; going over Ummah’s kimchi recipe made Wills feel more Korean. By learning the tradition through all senses and bodies, Wills internalized the Korean legacy that was supposed to be attached to her in her younger days. Now Wills knows that this recipe will be inherited in her mind for the rest of her life: “I will make this recipe hundreds of times over the course of my life. And I’ll remember always that first time in our Montreal apartment. My mother had promised she would teach me kimchi, and then she did. I remember I carried the cabbage home from the store like a

baby in my arms" (Wills 2021, 88). Her body is reinvented as Korean by practicing cultures that reside in the centre of Ummah's soul.

Yet Wills could not overcome the physical distance between bodies; she was still afraid to experience her birth mother's body, that she needed to share her body with Ummah at a public bathhouse:

> My mother asked me often if I'd like to go to the public baths with her. I'd read about Korean spas in a tour book. I knew that I was expected to be naked because the saunas she proposed were not coed. That I should wash my mother, scrub her skin, her hair. That I should let her do the same to me. I hope someone told her that Westerners can be more private about their bodies. I hope she didn't think it was because of her that I felt distant. But maybe it was. I'm still afraid to see her unclothed body. The soft skin of her midsection. Gentle rolls of fat. The breasts of a woman who nursed two of her three children. That body has become foreign to me and I'm scared to see it. If she hadn't noticed the vast cultural space between us up to that point, my refusal to ever accept her invitation to the baths must have confirmed it. She eventually registered that I could never be the kind of Korean daughter she'd fully be able to recognize. (Wills 2019, 46)

Wills could imagine how Ummah's unclothed body looked like—the midsection that Wills stayed for ten months, the breast that fed her, soft skin and fat that implied Ummah's life history—however, she was neither courageous enough to look at those narratives, nor wanted to share hers. Cultural differences widened the distance more. The bodily distance made her realize that Wills could not be that "Korean" daughter to Ummah; she could not satisfy her mother's anticipation by throwing away her Westernized body and following Korean culture. She refused to know Ummah's body and Korean bodies, which made her feel that she does not perfectly belong to Korea, even though she had attachments to the motherland.

Those bodily encounters similarly happened to Trenka. For Trenka, bodies are the field of complexity that contains (non)belonging to the world. On her first return to South Korea, she could read out her mother's life and her love by touching her body:

> She showed me her breasts to tell me that she loved me and had nursed me. I touched her old woman's depleted breasts, as she asked. *Touch me here, where I gave myself to you. I made you with my own body*, she seemed to say. (Trenka 2003, 116)

The affective ties between Umma and Trenka get stronger, as Maclaren (2014) examined interpersonal touching as a fundamental form of affective intimacy. Umma bathes her daughter to see that her body is well, that she has eaten good food, and that she has grown healthy and strong. Emotions flood through the bodies as if bathing can fill the lost years between them. Reliving her babyhood together, Trenka's "American shame of the body" (Trenka 2003, 122) is reinvented into an ordinary Korean body; there is no shame or hiding between Umma's and Trenka's body. Bodies are the field that strengthens the ties between mother and daughter, generating affects under the skin.

Her bodily experience then goes further in her second memoir when she visits a public bathhouse in South Korea:

> I loved it because I had never really seen Korean bodies before. Women and children walked around shamelessly naked and soaked their skin into softness in the same hot, bubbling bathtubs spiked with mineral salts or green tea. … I saw Korean children who were lucky enough to keep their own Korean mothers, both adolescent girls who closely remembered their mothers and young children still carrying the bruiselike spots on their lower backs that most East Asian children have when they are born, and that fade with age. Their mothers still bore the brown stretch marks of childbearing and the scars of cesarean sections. How I envied those mothers, those children. (Trenka 2009, 72-73)

Bodies surge as Trenka gazes at them. She encounters the Korean bodies that she has been living with, that were never affirmed and could not be embraced in America. In the bathhouse she finds ordinary parts of her body, that she is just another Korean woman in this place, in this country. She looks at what is beyond the bodies: mothers who gave birth with cesarian sections, daughters who were not abandoned but beloved, the same bodies that pass down through generations such as the same Mongolian blue spots that East Asians share. Those bodies come to a self-recognition to Trenka that helps her embrace Korean body. For Trenka, being in a public bathhouse is not just a bathing place, but a place with a socially affective glue that she can share and feel diverse senses beyond just being together. But at the same time, Trenka's envy for those mothers and daughters also reveals that she is not free from the societal norm as Ngai (2007) points out that an object of envy is an ideal by a particular society. As an international adoptee

who has lived a different life trajectory from normal daughters, envy lingers on whenever she finds normal but ideal objects of envy.

3.3.3. Bodies in Generations

In the three memoirs, the subject "we" often appears to show the collective dimension of the authors' experiences as international Korean adoptees in North America. Both authors, Trenka and Wills, went through the birth country travel and in their sojourn, they not only found their Korean family but also international Korean adoptees' communities in Seoul. Bodily experiences flow within the same adoptee generation who share similar wounds and torn-up lives in history. As many adoptees tried to find their identities as Koreans in the history of the Korean adoptee diaspora, Wills also tried to figure out her roots with the lingering question, "why me," by expanding her world by communicating with other adoptees. In the adoptee guesthouse where she stayed during her sojourn in Seoul, Wills witnessed the collective feelings that filled the atmosphere at the house of "indulgence and discovery" (Wills 2019, 19):

> That Seoul guesthouse was a place where adoptees came to find kinship and support, where we tried to assemble the shards of lives and a culture that were tossed our way when we became too inconvenient to unsee. But whatever it was that we made of those pieces was indecipherable, so while the guesthouse was a place where we forged the kinds of connections unavailable in our regular lives, it was also a place of palpable confusion and rage and grief. Someone once described it to me as a space where Korean adoptee loss was concentrated. Where one could witness how a decades-long program of international adoption that began in 1953, one that offered some benefits, could also spread devastation across generations of people as it scattered hundreds of thousands of us around the world. Where collateral damages collided and drank themselves sick while comparing notes on eerily similar childhoods of food anxiety and abandonment issues that developed into adult eating disorders and abusive intimate partner relationships. Where we competitively offered to reveal our own scars if others showed us theirs first. (Wills 2019, 21-22)

When she met other Korean adoptees from all around the world, she could see that they fit together as "misfits" (Wills 2021, 161). The guesthouse they stayed in is where individuals stayed as a fragment of history. Bodies in the guesthouse affect and have been affected by each other. Emotions float in the atmosphere: anger of being abandoned, joy

of finding the birth mother, the sadness of not finding the birth mother yet, and confusion caused by facing the distance that cannot be overcome between Korean families and themselves. The abandoned and adopted generation came to Seoul to reclaim the truth of their lives violated by history. However, according to Ahmed's (1999) description of the narrative of home, adoptees left home and therefore have no home anymore. Adoptees constantly head home, but it could never be where they are. That sense of imperfection gives adoptees a feeling of misfit, floating in between multiple homes broken into pieces, yet sharing their emotions together and getting comforted in the Seoul guesthouse.

Trenka was more active than Wills in terms of finding other adopted generations. She organized Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea (TRACK) in 2007 and led adoptee activism in South Korea. Although the activism was not written in details in her second memoir, she mentions findings via the TRACK activities. Trenka met other adoptees studying the Korean language at local universities; they were from several Western countries such as France, Denmark, and Norway in Seoul, the homecoming city for the adoptees. Adoptees quickly bond together, as some of them are from the same agencies or orphanages. Although they all now have different citizenship and speak different languages, the adoptees gathered in Seoul formed a generation, sharing the motherland's history that crosses imperialism, industrialism, capitalism, racism, and sexism. When she started communicating with other Korean adoptees and sharing the scars engraved in their lives, her experience became the community's collective memories. Trenka felt a sense of belonging under the umbrella of "strangers—," that adoptees shared the property of "what you can become obsessed by when you see an "available child" in a catalogue—," that which "makes this one your adoptive mother" (Trenka 2009, 130). In the community of artificially constructed generations, she finds her identity as an international Korean adoptee:

> What is new about being homeless, almost without nationality and with only thin traces of family remaining? What is new about our artificial histories, is how as we near the middle of our lives, we have seven names, six birthdays, five mothers, and five fathers between the two of us. Nearly unrecognizable, we pull the batteries out of the clock, tear down the calendar, disregard measurements of time, and decide, for once, upon a time that is purely our own (Trenka 2009, 131).

The way she describes herself (and other adoptees) is in line with what Ahmed (1999) describes as the narrative of home: “leaving home produces too many homes and hence no home” (339). Through the feasibility of some memories and the impossibility of others, moving between homes enables the home to become a fetish, detached from the specific location of living. In moving and returning, the image of home is idealized—for Trenka, South Korea as home sometimes comes with positive affects such as comfort, attractive, and vibrant but often negatively breaks down as aggressive, threatening, and cold. In the circulation of the positive and negative affects, the home has shaped the concept of impossibility and necessity of the future, as Trenka “never gets there, but is always getting there” (Ahmed 1999, 339).

Bodies without homes are shared beyond individuals. Trenka deliberately uses the subject “we” to unveil the homeless state of the adoptees’ community. The community shares generationality, the conscious identification of a group of people as a generation (Erll 2014, 387), when Trenka talks about “our” experiences of homelessness and often represents the collective memories of the community by looking at the history of the international adoption system in South Korea. The adoptees, those who once lacked a sense of belonging between the two countries, made room for themselves in South Korea by gathering “our” narratives, giving a constant signal that they exist in the world.

3.4. Love on (Un)familiar Korea

Although the three memoirs propose different ways to describe the authors’ own life stories, the last chapter of the books shows their deep affection for (un)familiar homeland, Korea. Trenka straightforwardly gives readers the reason why she loves Korea:

> I love Korea even though I have been stripped of the qualities Koreans think make a Korean. I love Korea because here I feel less hungry. I love Korea because here I feel less unsafe. I love Korea because here is my uncomfortable home. I love Korea despite my abiding grief. I love Korea because Korea is the place where I was born, and where all my ancestors

> were born, and where they died, and where I hope to die. I love Korea because I am Korean (Trenka 2009, 190).

In its ideal form, the emotion of love is reciprocal, but as Ahmed (2014, 130-31) argues, it can also survive the absence of reciprocity especially in the relation between the subject—the person who loves the object—and the object—the nation that the subject lives in. When the nation fails to deliver the good life to the subject, the subject's love works to increase the "investment" in the nation by "staying with" the nation, rather than recognizing that nothing has been given back from the nation. Love in this case is crucially intensified in its affect; despite the absence of return, the subject stays with the nation as leaving would indicate that the investment towards national love ended up bringing no value at all.

After experiencing the first homecoming and family reunion, Trenka settles down in South Korea. She decides to stay in the nation that once abandoned her, which is not a completely comfortable home and still reminds her of the grief in the past. The emotions in Trenka's mind now go beyond the binary—either positive or negative affect towards Korea. Rather, emotions circulate while Trenka roots down on Korean soil. Many different emotions are tangled in a multidimensional affective attachment to Korea, in the name of love but it is not just about love. She decides to stay with the nation as a "Korean," even if she lacks some features of a Korean in a normal sense, and even if has not given back enough from the nation in response to her love.

Despite the shameful history that the nation sold children overseas, despite the depression that the returned adoptees have, and despite the scattered bodies by the nation, Trenka is still in love with her home, knowing Korea has been and is her home. Although Trenka adds that "the only neat endings" are fake and the real stories are "a never-ending balance sheet of cause and effect, sowing and reaping," she now knows that "we" will arrive "alone and together" (Trenka 2009, 190; 194). In the name of love but also with other circulating multiple emotions, Trenka's affection for her motherland Korea expands further as a form of solidarity with others, including other international adoptees, and those who were marginalized in Korean society, such as migrant workers. Living in a land that still does not recognize the subject's love, Trenka faces the uncomfortable truth behind the adopted generation and steps forward by recognizing the emotions that she

feels toward Korea. Love unfolds when she embraces the ugly, the beauty, and the other aspects outside the binary of her motherland, with "our" collective memories.

Wills's affection for South Korea is unveiled in a roundabout way through an intimate relationship with her birth family. Once she thought Korea was meaningless if the land lacks her mother, but as the memoir reaches the end, Korea stretches out in part of her mind throughout an extended family relationship with her niece:

> *You are my unni's child. Her daughter. We haven't met face to face because I live far from you and I do not even speak Korean! ... When I was a baby, I looked a lot like you. We have the same pouting mouth. ... Your imo loves you. Not because I know you, but I am certain that if I did, it would only make it more true. I love you because you are my unni's daughter. You are my blood. You are my chance to witness how children can be raised in Korea. No more stories about sorrow and poverty. Stories always show Korea as an unsuitable place to raise children. I'm watching you because you help me unknow that story.* (Wills 2019, 217)

In the letter to a member of her extended family, Wills shows her love and affection towards her very first niece, even though she has not met her and does not know her very much. As an *Imo*, or aunt, Wills could find she is always heading to home, Korea. Wills reflects on herself via the existence of her niece; that they look alike, that they share some genetic features, and that they are Korean. Wills's descending love to her niece eventually opens an opportunity for her to love Korea more; Wills expects a new story can bloom in her mind in terms of growing up in South Korea with a happy face, which she could not achieve and did not even get a chance to. Through the future generation, Wills expects that she can witness the changes that may happen in her motherland. The ties between them get stronger once Wills is expected to have a daughter, wondering how her Unni would do and what she did to the niece, and questioning Unni, "Am I doing right?" (Wills 2019, 241)

Emotions stick between two homes. Trenka and Wills weave their affective journey to ultimately redefine Korea as their home. Now Korea occupies a certain space in their minds—it is Trenka's and Wills's home where their ancestors lived and died, now their siblings live, and they often visit. Home sometimes drifts apart; as Ahmed's (1999) narrative of migrancy home, they left home and now they have too many homes

across the Pacific Ocean, hence sometimes they feel homelessness. Moving between homes enables the home to become a fetish, detached from the specific location of living. In moving and returning back and forth, home easily becomes imaginary. Still, circulating emotions towards Korea beyond the binaries of positive and negative affects, adoptees feel love for Korea as a motherland, expecting a better future that will be made by "our" love and solidarity.

Trenka and Wills were exiled from South Korea, their origin country, when they were children, without any consent. About twenty years later, they made their way back home and found their birth families in South Korea, inventing themselves as "Korean." By confronting their past and the nation's history that made them abandoned, they felt the wounds engraved in their life and sublimated their pains into a piece of love. Their memoirs are the records of their survival, proof of the painful history carved in their bodies, the collage of their voices, and the collective memories and emotions of the adoptee communities towards their (un)familiar motherland, Korea.

Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have examined the two international Korean adoptees' affects and emotions via the three pioneering memoirs: Jane Jeong Trenka's *The Language of Blood: A Memoir* (2003) and *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009), and Jenny Heijun Wills's *Older Sister. Not Necessarily Related.: A Memoir* (2021). Throughout my thesis, I have shown that each author, Trenka and Wills, wrote their own memoirs to reveal their visceral feelings that were stimulated in the middle of their diasporic life, as an international adoptee floating in between South Korea and North America. In this final chapter, I first summarize the key findings of each chapter. Then I complete my thesis with some final remarks, such as the further need for future research about international Korean adoptees' emotions in their life experiences and their memoirs.

In the first chapter, I established the importance of memoir as a genre by tracing back the brief history of the genre. Although memoir is not always factual, it is a means of expressing one's voice to the world. Therefore, memoir has been an effective way for minorities to speak up about their emotions in their own lived history. In particular, memoir plays an important part in the history of international Korean adoptees in terms of speaking adoptees' life narratives by themselves, as many adoptees were othered by being portrayed from the third party's eyes. Also, memoir helps us read between the lines so that adoptees only documented as cold facts and numbers in statistics could be seen as individual human beings with complicated emotions, as well as memoir taking the form of sociological evidence.

The second chapter opened with the concept of diaspora and the emergence of the Korean diaspora in the modern context to consider international Korean adoptees as part of its diasporic history. Taking several scholars' analyses in the field of the Korean diaspora, such as Yoon's (2003; 2012; 2021) and Rha's (2014) method, I divided the history of the Korean diaspora into five periods and found the starting point of international adoption in the third period, as an aftermath of the Korean War. Also,

referring to C. Kim's 2015 dissertation, I covered how the international adoption of South Korean children started and continues from the 1950s and the present, dividing them into three periods: the formation of international adoption, the acceleration of international adoption, and reconciliation with the nation. I focused on how policy changes were established regarding international adoption and how regimes worked. The three periods proved that the international adoption of South Korean children was systematically led by the Korean government, with the cooperation of various private agencies inside and outside South Korea in the process. I highlighted the movement towards reconciliation from the late 1980s and the 1990s between grown-up returning adoptees and the nation by quoting the 15th South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung's official apology to international adoptees. I also noted some expected changes in the international adoption policies of South Korea in the near future.

In chapter 3.1., before presenting my analysis of the three memoirs, I briefly touched upon the concept of emotion and affect. I first explored the subtle difference between emotion and affect, grounding that affect can indicate a hesitation, or a movement of one's mind, even if one's mind does not settle down a certain emotion. Then I moved on to affect theory as I applied affect as both a methodology and a theoretical framework for the research. In this process, not only scholarly works from Sara Ahmed, Kathleen Stewart, and Sianne Ngai but also cultural artifacts from filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha and poet Cathy Park Hong were included. Concepts such as "rogue intensities" by Stewart and "speaking nearby" by Minh-ha were explained, and later they served an important role in analyzing affects and emotions in the chosen memoirs.

From Chapter 3.2. to Chapter 3.4., the third chapter contained my close textual analysis of the three memoirs within affect theory. In exploring the three memoirs, affects flowed through the two authors' bodily experiences, emotions, and feelings in their life histories. I categorized their affective engagement with Korea into languages and bodies, but also with the connotation of generation, and examined the intimacy they built in adulthood with members of their Korean families. With thematic analyses, I presented Trenka's and Wills's emotions and affects in similar situations, for instance, birth country travel—their first homecoming to South Korea, the encounter with Korean siblings, and

their bodily reactions emerged in these experiences. The memoirs contained not only their reunion with Korean families but also communication with other adoptees they had met on their way back home. Wandering in between two homes, the affective ties to their motherland, Korea, were (dis)connected on the way of heading home. I analyzed that both Trenka's and Wills's stories echoed not only with the individuals themselves but also with other international adoptees who were crossing the two nations' boundaries back and forth, sharing "the lack of a home" (Ahmed 1999, 337). Nevertheless, both Trenka and Wills showed their intra- and inter-generational love to their motherland Korea, which tied their floating existence to the ground and made them feel alive, even if their love towards the nation has not been given back enough.

Focusing on emotions in the three memoirs, I analyzed the adoptees' affects that emerged from their life narratives. In the analysis part, on the fact that individuals are part of history, I left the possibility open that what both Trenka and Wills felt in the ordeal of their life histories could also emerge, or already emerged, in other adoptees' lives, considering that one's experience can also have a collective dimension. However, I limited the three memoirs written and published in North America, depicting American or Canadian experiences; hence, adoption stories drawn from other regions, such as Europe, can be different from what I analyzed here. Also, both Trenka and Wills were born and adopted during the 1970s and 1980s, when South Korea was going through industrialization and modernization under military dictatorship thus the international adoption of South Korean children peaked in its history with many falsified adoption cases. Other adoptee writers in a different generation, especially those born after the 1990s, may have various stories to tell. Additionally, although this thesis features the international Korean adoptees' experiences who are able-bodied female authors adopted in North America, disability can be another significant dimension to research international Korean adoptees as Adam King's case shows[15]. Last but not least, I limited

[15] Adam King (Korean name Oh In-ho) was born in 1991 without tibia in both legs and with syndactyly of both hands. A religious American couple, Charles and Donna King, adopted him in 1995. Adam had both legs amputated above the knee and got titanium prostheses. The story of King's family brought the media's attention and made Adam come back to Korea; on April 5, 2001, he visited South Korea to throw the opening pitch of the KBO League (the highest-level league of baseball in South Korea) (Miller 2001). In 2009, a book that covered his story was published in South Korea, titled *An Angel of Titanium Legs, Adam King* [*T'it'anyum Tariŭi Ch'ŏnsa Aedŏm K'ing* 티타늄 다리의 천사 애덤 킹].

the two authors' affects and emotions to the linkage of a feminist perspective to explore the relation of mothers and daughters, and sisterhood. Research involving different genders would also be important in searching for various gendered experiences in international adoption.

In the study of Korean diaspora literature, memoir has its potential in research with the genre's own feature positing in-between half facts and memories. Although it is not an objectively evident historical resource, self-narratives in memoirs have emerged as part of identity politics for minorities to not lose themselves by staging their lives. For stories that have not been untold enough, memoirs can bridge the gap between the authors—who share one's life history—and the readers—who listen to the unknown, or forgotten, history. Therefore, further research is desired to unravel the history of the Korean diaspora beyond international Korean adoptees and listen to their surviving stories. Their voices matter to prevent further tragedies that might happen in the process of international adoption in future generations.

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Appendix A.

Korean Children Adopted Overseas in the 20th Century

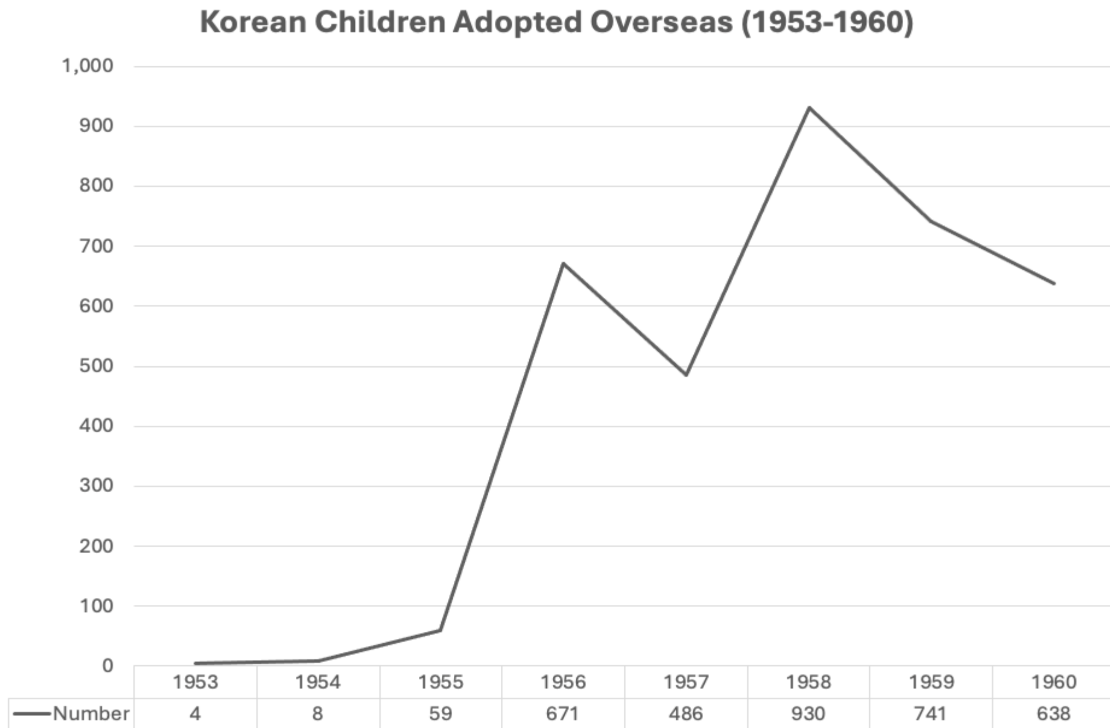


Figure A.1. Korean Children Adopted Overseas from 1953 to 1960
Source: Based on E. Kim (2010, 20), Condit-Shrestha (2018, 386-90).

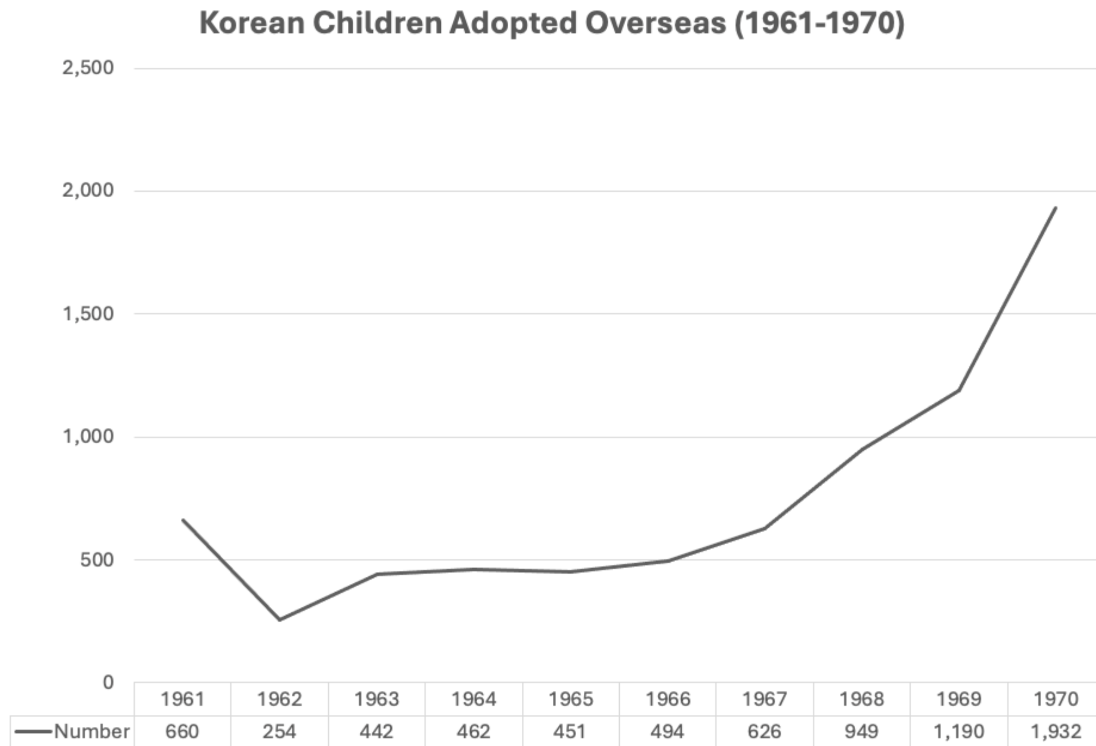


Figure A.2. Korean Children Adopted Overseas from 1961 to 1970
Source: Based on E. Kim (2010, 20), Condit-Shrestha (2018, 386-90).

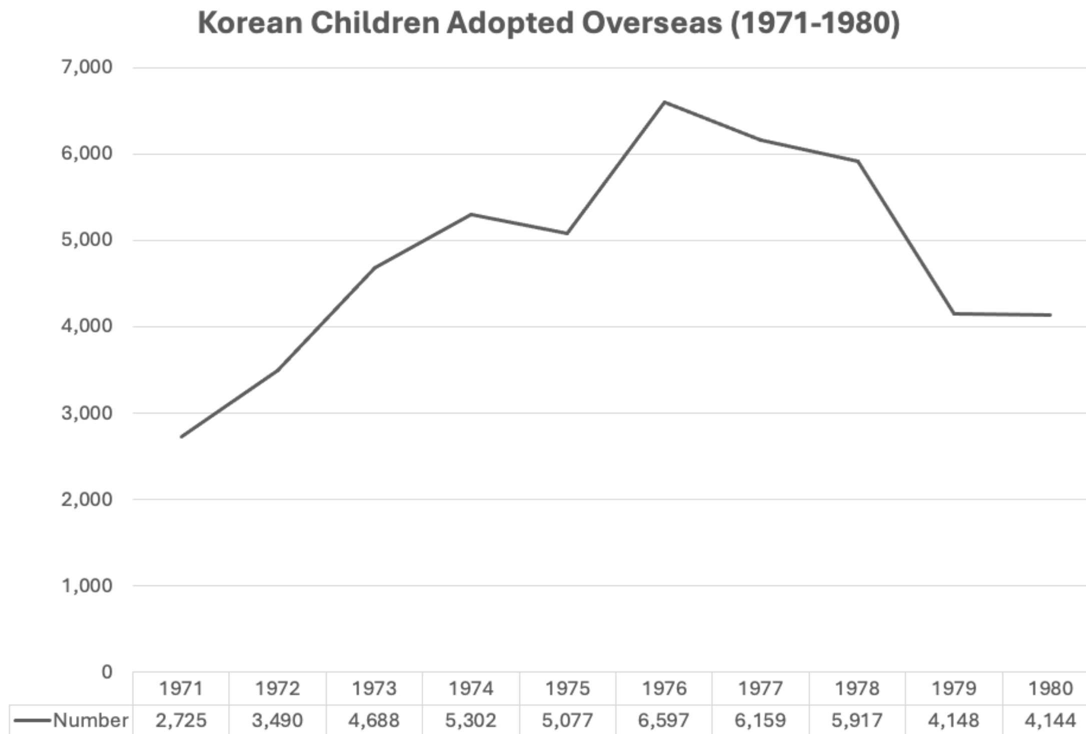


Figure A.3. Korean Children Adopted Overseas from 1971 to 1980
Source: Based on E. Kim (2010, 20), Condit-Shrestha (2018, 386-90).

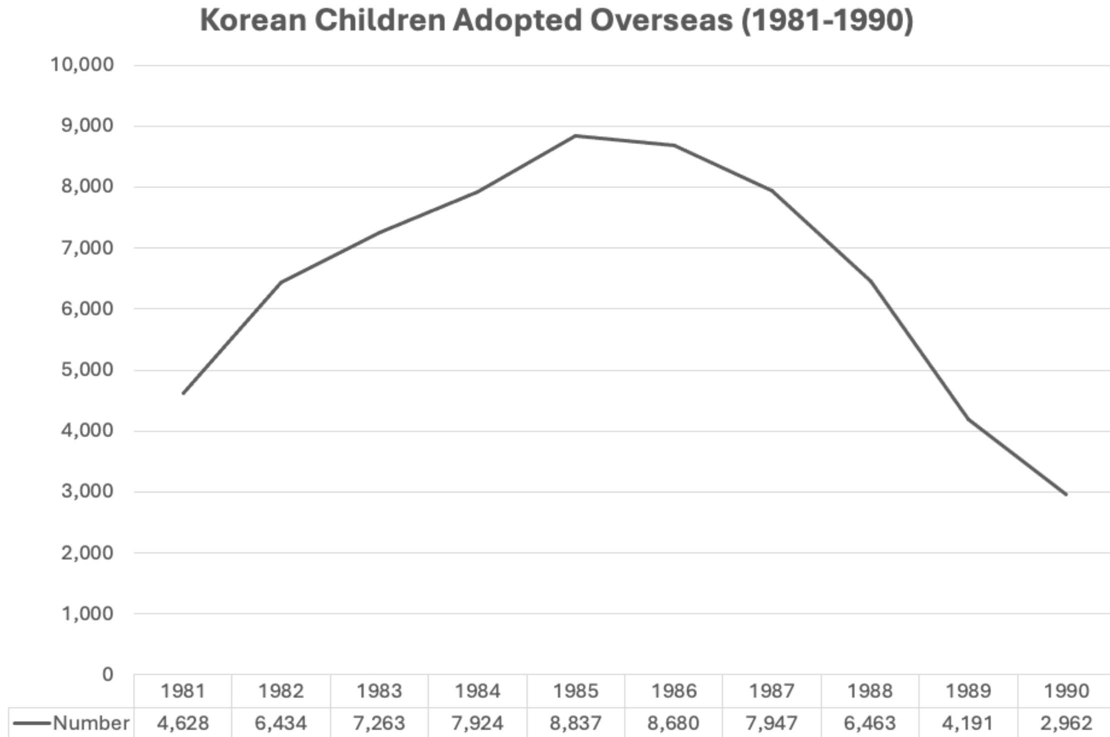


Figure A.4. Korean Children Adopted Overseas from 1981 to 1990
Source: Based on E. Kim (2010, 20), Condit-Shrestha (2018, 386-90).

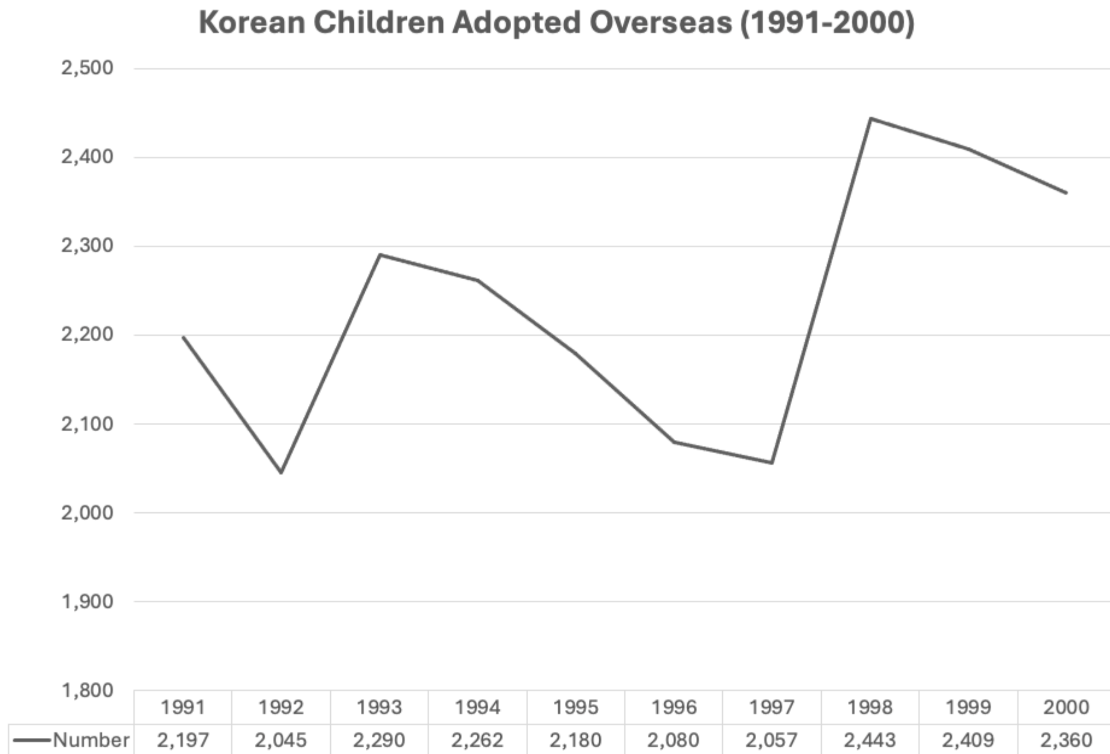
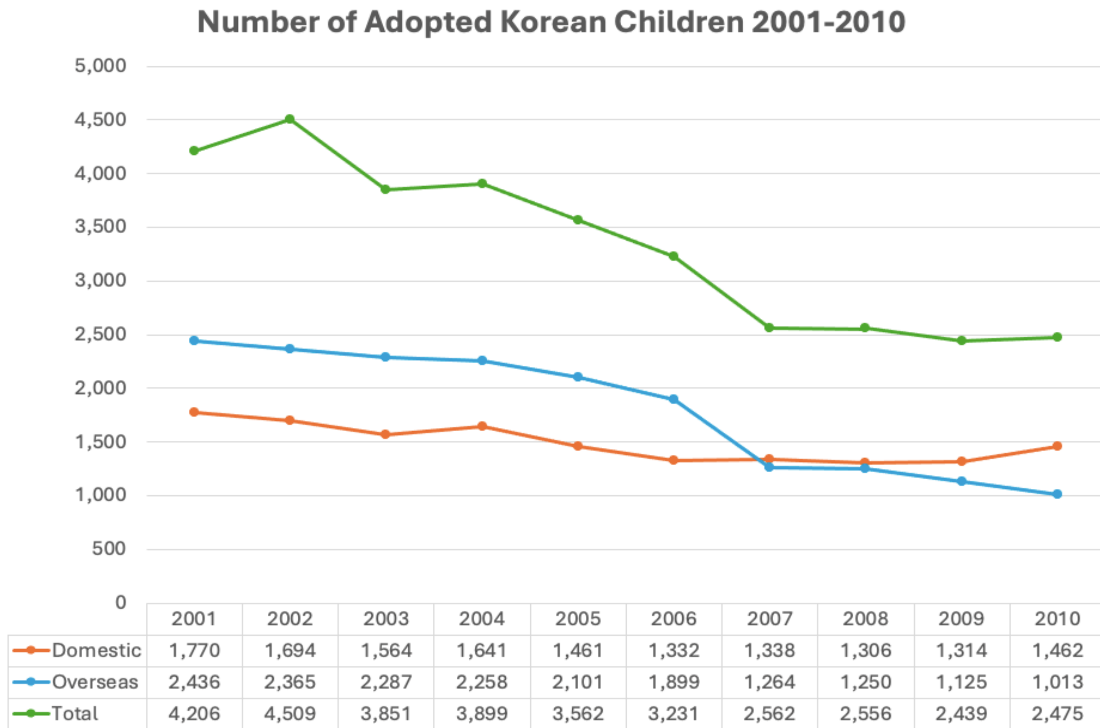


Figure A.5. Korean Children Adopted Overseas from 1991 to 2000
Source: Based on E. Kim (2010, 20), Condit-Shrestha (2018, 386-90).

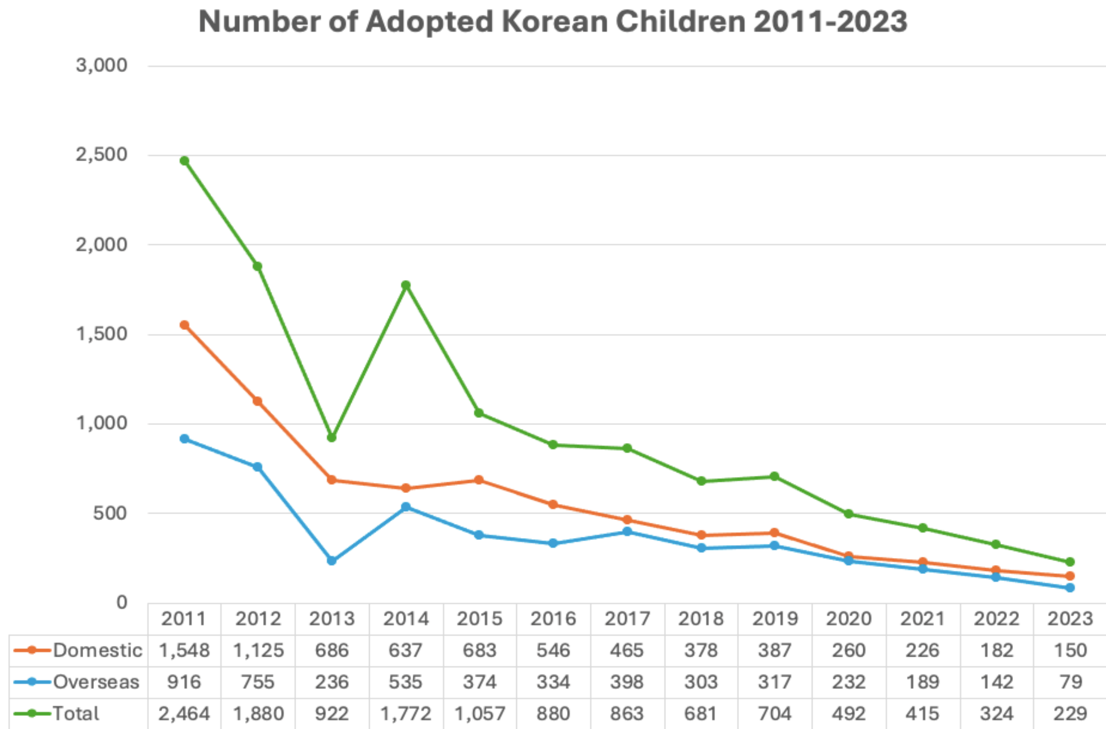
Appendix B.

Number of Adopted Korean Children in the 21st Century



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Domestic	1,770	1,694	1,564	1,641	1,461	1,332	1,338	1,306	1,314	1,462
Overseas	2,436	2,365	2,287	2,258	2,101	1,899	1,264	1,250	1,125	1,013
Total	4,206	4,509	3,851	3,899	3,562	3,231	2,562	2,556	2,439	2,475

Figure B.1. Number of Adopted Korean Children from 2001 to 2010
Source: Based on the Ministry of Health and Welfare of South Korea (2024).



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Domestic	1,548	1,125	686	637	683	546	465	378	387	260	226	182	150
Overseas	916	755	236	535	374	334	398	303	317	232	189	142	79
Total	2,464	1,880	922	1,772	1,057	880	863	681	704	492	415	324	229

Figure B.2. Number of Adopted Korean Children from 2011 to 2023
Source: Based on the Ministry of Health and Welfare of South Korea (2024).

Appendix C.

Korean Adoptee Organizations

Several transnational adoptees' networks, events, and research projects have developed, involving international Korean adoptees. In particular, these communities allow the adoptees to meet similarly situated others; as Ponting (2203) argues, members of diasporas often search for "who I am" not only in "where I am" but also "who I am with" (3). Several organizations have also launched sponsored visits to South Korea as a birth country travel, for cultural exploration or birth-family search. In addition, some communities especially international Korean adoptees' organizations in Scandinavia fight for adoptees' right and actively engage with the press to create public awareness about the history and effects of adoption. For instance, the Danish Korean Rights Group (DKRG, https://danishkorean.dk) became the first organization that submitted their application to the second TRCK to discover the facts related to their adoption (Kim 2022).

The wave of organizing the adoptees' own communities has started outside South Korea, mostly in Europe and North America. Subsequently, the returned adoptees in the late 1980s and 1990s organized adoptee communities in South Korea. However, with the transnational movements of the adoptees, the boundaries between inside and outside South Korea are being blurred today. Among several organizations, particularly the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) shows its broad network by holding its annual convention which is considered the world's largest international Korean adoptee conference. IKAA reaches out to more than 15,000 members of the international adoptee communities by having nine members and two partner associations (IKAA, n.d.). The two tables below are the lists of Korean adoptee organizations inside and outside South Korea, giving the adoptees room to communicate with each other and bond together. Table C-1 features relatively large organizations in North America and Europe, and Table C-2 features the three representative organizations in South Korea. Aside from the listed organizations here, many other large and small organizations exist, involving not only Korean but also pan-Asian networks.

Table C.1. List of International Adoptee Organizations Outside South Korea

International Korean Adoptee Organizations Outside South Korea		
Year Founded	**Organization**	**Description**
1986	Adopterade Koreaners Forening (Adopted Koreans' Association, AKF) in Stockholm, Sweden	The first association of international Korean adoptees in the world, founded by Mattias Tjeder, an eighteen-year-old adoptee at that time Organizes about 300 Korean adoptees throughout Sweden and has a strong relationship with Korean culture through the Korean Embassy in Sweden http://www.akf.nu
1990	Korea Klubben in Holstebro, Denmark	Publishes a yearly member magazine *Ch'ingu* (Friend), which covers articles about adoption, Korea and Korean adoptees, film, book and food reviews, member interviews, etc. https://www.koreaklubben.dk
1991	Arierang (Dutch Association for Korean Adoptees) in The Netherlands	Founded by Dutch Korean adoptee Myong Sook Flikweert and became a registered association on May 28, 1993 A founding member and part of the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) https://arierang.nl
	Korean Canadian Adoptee's Association (KCAA) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada	Founded by John Lim after attending a summer camp named Canadopt in London, Ontario Formerly known as Korean Canadian Children's Association (KCCA) https://www.kcaa.me

	Minnesota Adopted Koreans (MAK) in Minnesota, Minneapolis, US	The first international Korean adoptee organization in the United States No longer exists; estimated to have been disbanded before 2000
1994	Dongari in Switzerland	Aims to promote and support the discussion of all aspects of adoption as well as access to Korean culture Helps members find their Korean parents and relatives and visit South Korea http://www.dongari.ch
1995	Racines Coréennes in France	Aims to promote the meeting of adopted Koreans in France and promotes socio-cultural exchanges between French and Koreans Publishes a yearly journal *Hamkae* (Together) https://racinescoreennes.org
1996	Also-Known-As in New York, New York State	Aims to build a community that empowers the voices of adult international adoptees Provides resources and space to acknowledge the loss of birth country, culture, language, and biological family https://www.alsoknownas.org
1997	Association of Korean Adoptees—San Francisco (AKASF) in San Francisco, California, US	Aims to support, educate, and foster community, inspiring adoptees on their life journeys Hosted its 20th Anniversary at the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) Annual Convention in the fall of 2017, bringing together over 230 participants http://www.aka-sf.org

1998	Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network (KAAN) in the United States	Founded based on the leadership summit co-sponsored by the Korean Consulate in San Francisco and Sacramento-based Friends of Korea on April 18, 1998 The first KAAN Conference was held in Los Angeles in July 1999 https://www.wearekaan.org
2000	AK Connection in Minnesota, Minneapolis, US	Aims to support adult Korean adoptees as "whole people" and to celebrate the trans-racial/transnational adoption experience as a unique cultural community All programming is planned by Korean adoptees with the board of directors who are adoptees themselves http://www.akconnection.com
2001	Korean Adoptee Ministries (KAM) in Minnesota, Minneapolis, US	Religious organization with Christian leaderships formed a few years after MAK disbanded Aims to help Korean Adoptees to meet the social and cultural identity needs by promoting spiritual growth https://www.kamcenter.org
2004	International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) in Europe	Formally established in 2004 based on the two gatherings (the 1st Gathering of Adult Korean Adoptees in Washington D.C. in 1999 & the 2nd International Gathering of Adult Korean Adoptees in Oslo, Norway, in 2001) Holds gatherings in Seoul, South Korea, every three years (the latest IKAA Korea Gathering: July 10 to 16 in 2023) https://www.ikaa.org

2006	Korean Adoptees of Hawai‘i (KAHI) in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, US	A nonprofit member organization that serves as a resource and network for adult Korean adoptees living in Hawai‘i https://www.kahawaii.org

Table C.2. List of International Adoptee Organizations in South Korea

International Korean Adoptee Organizations in South Korea		
Year Founded	Organization	Description
1998	Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (G. O. A. L.) (사) 해외입양인연대	Aims the independence and self-help of international Korean adoptees Remains the only adoptee-led non-profit organization in South Korea as the other two organizations are no longer active (as of June 2024) https://goal.or.kr https://www.facebook.com/goal.kr
2004	Adoptee Solidarity Korea (ASK) 국외입양인연대	Aims to raise awareness about adoptees and change international adoption policy, as well as to abolish the international adoption system itself (Last update: November 13, 2017) https://adopteesolidarity.wordpress.com https://www.facebook.com/AdopteeSolidarityKorea/ https://twitter.com/ask_korea?lang=en
2007	Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea (TRACK)	Founded with the critique of the first national committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Korea (TRCK) in 2005 which did not work on the issues of the international adoption of Korean children

진실과 화해를 위한 해외입양인 모임	Aims to find out the truth about the frauds of international adoption in the past and ultimately move towards reconciliation (Last update: May 13, 2016) Involves Jane Jeong Trenka as a co-founder https://justicespeaking.wordpress.com