MDPI

Article

Brothers Home and the Production of Vanished Lives

Eli Park Sorensen

Department of English, Fung King Hey, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong;
eliparks@cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract: This article delves into the history of one of the most infamous internment facilities in Korea's recent past—Hyungje Bokjiwon (형제복지원) , or Brothers Home. The article outlines the history of Brothers Home, its biopolitical production of 'vanished lives', and what enabled it to come into existence—arguing that this is an essential context for understanding the history of international adoption from Korea. Located in Busan, South Korea, Brothers Home began as an orphanage in the early 1960s but developed into a 'social welfare institution' in the early 1970s. The events that transpired from the early 1970s until the facility shut down in the late 1980s—a period which aligns with the height of international adoption from Korea—have led to some referring to this place as Korea's 'concentration camp'. Inmates died in the hundreds, predominantly due to malnutrition and illness, while many suffered brutal deaths through physical abuse and torture. Some of the children from Brothers Home were relocated to Western nations for adoption. The history of Brothers Home embodies the biopolitical process of bodies and lives simultaneously enveloped in and, at the same time, kept outside socio-legal frameworks to invalidate those lives or render them insignificant or invisible; to erase them from any meaningful, socio-legal context and thereby reducing those lives to bare life. The article will focus on three main areas: the history of Brothers Home, the biopolitical production of vanished lives, and how the latter resonates with specific instances depicted in testimonies written by people returning to Korea to uncover details about their adoption circumstances, that is, moments encapsulating this 'production of vanished lives'. The central concern here is less to draw a direct line between international adoption and the events at Brothers Home, but rather to outline a crucial biopolitical context—epitomized in the history of Brothers Home—that precedes the adoption process and thus constitutes its condition of possibility. By juxtaposing this biopolitical context with autobiographical testimonies of people searching for information about the circumstances of their adoption, the article seeks to understand what it means to bear witness to the existence of a life whose desubjectivization—or disappearance—at the same time constitutes the witnessing subject's condition of possibility.

Keywords: Brothers Home; Korean international adoption; autobiographies; Korean post-war social history; Busan; biopolitics; bare life

1. Compressed Modernity and Undesirable Subjects

Korean international adoption is closely linked to the country's post-war history of modernization. There is a straight line from the many orphanages established during and after the Korean War (1950–1953) to international adoption (See Hübinette 2006, pp. 38–49; E. J. Kim 2010, pp. 43–81; Pate 2014, pp. 1–19; Oh 2015, pp. 14–28; McKee 2019, pp. 19–37). Volunteer organizations were desperately needed to care for the thousands of children left homeless and orphaned (See Hübinette 2006, pp. 38–49; Woo 2019, pp. 35–47). Some scholars have referred to the country's post-war development as 'compressed modernity' (See Chang 2010, pp. 446–48; Hwang and Lim 2015, pp. 73–88), referring to the extraordinarily rapid and condensed modernization process the country underwent in the years after the war.[1] With the support of economic, technological, and military aid from the United States, the South Korean peninsula underwent a rapid transformation from severe poverty to a

globally competitive economy within a remarkably short period (J. Kim 2011, pp. 266–75). See also (Rasmussen 2021, p. 242). It is against the background of this 'compressed modernity' that one must understand why, as some researchers have pointed out, international adoption seemed to grow larger and larger decades after the war—especially in the 1970s and 1980s when the phenomenon seemed to peak (See Hübinette 2006, pp. 54–59).

An important example that connects Korea's rapid modernization in the post-war decades and international adoption is the development of one of the most notorious internment camps in modern Korean history, 'Hyungje Bokjiwon' (형제복지원), or Brothers Home. Brothers Home began as a small foundation housing around 60 orphaned children in the early 1960s, relying heavily on foreign donations (See I.-h. Kim 2021, pp. 134–43). As these foreign donations gradually dwindled towards the end of the 60s, Brothers Home developed into a somewhat different institution, a 'welfare institution' or 'correctional facility', but in reality perhaps closer to an indefinable labor camp that incarcerated all kinds of 'socially undesirable individuals', that is, people of all ages and different backgrounds (See So 2021, pp. 172–77. See also I.-h. Kim 2021, pp. 139–52).

This development did not emerge out of nowhere. It was a phenomenon both enabled and promoted by successive post-war Korean governments that pursued and intensified social practices that had already been initiated during the colonial era.[2] These governmental initiatives profoundly impacted the historical development of Brothers Home. While the traditional orphanage at a basic level aimed to care for orphans and homeless children, the Brothers Home eventually developed from an orphanage into a prison, adoption institution, factory, retirement home, workhouse, and concentration camp. It is estimated that between 1975 and 1987—the epoch that the 2022 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report primarily scrutinizes with respect to Brothers Home—around 40,000 individuals ended up in Brothers Home, which thus made it the largest in the country.[3] Some 3000 individuals were allegedly kidnapped off the streets of Busan and the vicinity for no apparent reason—other than being in the wrong place at the wrong time (See Hankyoreh 2014b; Associated Press 2019). The history of Brothers Home forms an important, if underexposed, part of the history of Korean compressed modernity. The horrors within its fences—and the context that made this phenomenon possible, to begin with—constitute an essential truth about the violent 'birth' of modern Korea. It is a history that opens up a unique and revealing space within the political discourse of modernity emerging in the aftermath of the Korean War—an exceptional space that excluded individuals by way of inclusion and confinement.[4]

In the subsequent sections, I will provide an overview of the history of Brothers Home, its biopolitical production of 'vanished lives', and the factors that facilitated its inception. I argue that this background is crucial to comprehending the history of international adoption from Korea. The context of the vastly increased numbers of internationally adopted Korean children from the 1970s and 1980s may be found in the changing political and social dynamics involving the disciplinization and tightening control and regulation of a population and a heightened intolerance of 'social undesirables'.[5] Never before or since were so many children from Korea sent abroad for adoption than during the years between 1975 and 1987 (See Oh 2015, p. 15). A number of children from Brothers Home were transferred to Western countries for adoption. The history of Brothers Home exemplifies a biopolitical process where bodies and lives are encompassed by and concurrently excluded from socio-legal structures. It was a process that aimed to render these lives insignificant or invisible and effectively erase them from any meaningful socio-legal context—to reduce those lives to bare life. The article will center around three key topics: the history of Brothers Home, the biopolitical production of vanished lives, and how the latter resonates with specific instances conveyed in testimonies written by people returning to Korea to uncover information about their adoption circumstances, that is, moments encapsulating this 'production of vanished lives'. The primary focus here is less to establish a *direct* connection between international adoption and the incidents at Brothers Home, but instead to delineate a vital biopolitical context—exemplified in the history of Brothers Home—that precedes

the existence of an adopted body and, therefore, constitutes its condition of possibility. By juxtaposing this biopolitical context with the autobiographical accounts of people seeking details about their adoption circumstances, the article aims to grasp the significance of witnessing a life whose de-subjectivization—or disappearance—simultaneously constitutes the witnessing subject's condition of possibility.

2. Brothers Home: From Orphanage to Social Welfare Institution

During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the South Korean government launched multiple 'self-sustenance' campaigns with affiliated institutions, regulations, and apparatuses to promote a disciplined workforce while 'cleansing' society of undesirable elements (See Park 2021, pp. 63–66. See also Choo 2021, pp. 85–88). In the decades after the Korean War, the demographic of Busan City expanded tremendously. People from the countryside came to the city to look for jobs in the emerging industrial sectors. Some of these newly arrived individuals—primarily those unable to find jobs and residence—were rounded up by the local police and sent to institutions like Brothers Home (See Kim et al. 2023, p. 2). After the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs introduced the 'Social Welfare Work Act' (사회복지사업법) in 1970, Brothers Home changed its legal status to a 'social welfare corporation', receiving large subsidies from the government (See So 2021, p. 176. See also I.-h. Kim 2021, p. 135). The substantive implications of Brothers Home's transformation towards a 'social welfare' entity became directly evident in 1975 when the Vagrancy Directive (내무부 훈령 제 410 호) was introduced under the government of Park Chung-hee.[6] Park's regime lasted from 1963 until his assassination in 1979 and was characterized by a strong military rule, fierce anti-communism, and an intense focus on economic development.[7] The Vagrancy Directive targeted people considered 'vagrants' or 'socially undesirable' and aimed to regulate their movements and activities. It allowed authorities to detain and interrogate people suspected of being vagrants, and the punishment ranged from fines to forced labor. It was widely used to suppress dissent and maintain political control (See 「내무부 훈령 제 410 호」의 배경과 내용 ['Background and content of The Ministry of Home Affairs Directive 410']. Ibid., pp. 117–24). The Vagrancy Directive was thus part of a broader context of increased state control and social policies aimed at regulating the movements and activities of specific individuals deemed to be 'superfluous' (See Park 2021, pp. 63–66).

After Brothers Home changed its legal status to a 'social welfare corporation', the institution received state funding per capita, which meant there was a clear economic incentive to accommodate as many individuals as possible (See Kim et al. 2023, p. 3. See also Associated Press 2016). These individuals encompassed both the old and the young and, in some instances, newborns.[8] There are countless accounts of how the institution's personnel and local law enforcement arrested and, in some cases, abducted individuals who appeared 'socially suspect' for one reason or another (See Hankyoreh 2014a). This categorization included criminals, vagrants, homeless individuals, orphans, prostitutes, alcoholics, violent individuals, senile people, undisciplined subjects, impoverished individuals incapable of self-sustenance, the disabled, and even random passersby (ibid.).

In the early 1980s, Park In-geun, the proprietor and owner of Brothers Home, received commendation from the Chun Doo-hwan government for what was perceived as a remarkable initiative to alleviate homelessness and vagrancy in Busan.[9] It was reported that Park had cleared the city's streets of homeless individuals and endowed those unfortunate individuals with valuable skills. This was predominantly manifested in the utilization of the inmates for the construction of numerous industrial structures and edifices within the complex. Subsequently, these individuals were given work within the facilities (See So 2021, pp. 177–82). Working with wood, metal, textiles, and other materials, the inmates produced shoes, pens, clothing, fishing tackle, and other products shipped abroad for profit (See Kim et al. 2023, p. 7). At its peak, Brothers Home had more than twenty factories (See Associated Press 2016). The government praised the initiative for purportedly equipping these marginalized individuals with diverse skills that would enable them to

make a living after their release—a narrative propagated in a 1981 promotional video produced by Brothers Home.[10]

The reality, however, was very different. The institution epitomized a stark juxtaposition of public perception against the actual, concealed operations—the egregious human rights violations and corruption—within its confines. The camp, where the factories and residential buildings were located, was surrounded by walls and barbed wire and patrolled by guards armed with baseball bats and dogs. The institution's walls and propagandistic narratives concealed the realities within while outwardly fulfilling a state-endorsed and financially supported objective of social sanitation (See Kim et al. 2023, pp. 5–6. See also Kwak 2021, pp. 204–11). As witnesses later recounted, hardly any of these inmates were paid for their work; it was primarily forced labor (See Kim et al. 2023, pp. 6–7. See also Associated Press 2016). Brothers Home had very little success as a 'correctional facility' aimed at helping inmates develop the skills necessary to support themselves upon release (See Kwak 2021, p. 196; So 2021, pp. 170–72; Park 2021, pp. 61–62). Contrary to the proclaimed 'correctional' or 'educational' goals, the institution's primary objective seems to have been profit-oriented. Some observers have likened the facility to Park In-geun's 'personal kingdom', a stark contrast to the public image of a socially benevolent institution (See Associated Press 2016). The facility was a highly lucrative venture for Park and his family, generating millions of US dollars in revenue.[11] This wealth was derived from embezzled governmental subsidies and the sale of products manufactured by the coerced labor of the inmates (See Associated Press 2016). Brothers Home served as a nexus where various interests converged and found expression. From the state's perspective, the institution was pivotal in addressing society's 'undesirable' elements, while for Park In-geun and his family, it provided a means to personal enrichment.

The closure of the Brothers Home facility in 1987 was precipitated by an investigation initiated by Ulsan District Prosecutor Kim Yong-won at the beginning of that year. Upon discovering the appalling conditions within the institution, his office embarked on an inquiry that revealed rampant corruption and human rights violations. However, the investigation coincided with the intensification of the pro-democracy struggle.[12] Fearing public outrage during an already tense political climate, the Chun Doo-hwan government exerted influence on the judicial and prosecutorial bodies to bury the case. Consequently, the case never underwent a comprehensive examination, and despite the prosecution advocating for a 15-year incarceration for Park In-geun, he was ultimately penalized with a considerably reduced sentence of two and a half years for embezzlement (See Kim et al. 2023, pp. 8–9). Notably, this conviction did not account for the human rights infringements perpetrated within the confines of Brothers Home.[13] After operations at Brothers Home were closed, some inmates were released, while approximately 700 were relocated to other facilities (See Kim et al. 2023, pp. 8–9).

While survivors of the facility had been striving to bring their experiences to light in the years following its closure, it was not until 2012 that the Brothers Home case was reintroduced into public discourse. This resurgence was instigated by survivor Hahn Jong-seon, who staged a one-person protest before the National Assembly (See Choi 2021, pp. 294–96. See also Kim et al. 2023, pp. 9–10). Subsequently, the case began to attract serious attention from human rights activists, academics, legal professionals, researchers, politicians, and journalists (See Choi 2021, pp. 299–310). While the harrowing activities of Brothers Home have been exposed to the most public scrutiny in recent times, it is critical to underscore that the existence of this institution was not an isolated phenomenon. Indeed, several similar institutions emerged and functioned under comparable circumstances during the same period, indicative of a broader systemic issue (See J.-h. Kim 2021, pp. 152–54).

One institution that deserves mention here was Seongam Academy (선감학원), an orphanage/internment camp founded during the Japanese colonial era in 1942 on an island near Ansan (Gyeonggi Province, Korea), which continued operating until 1982. It is estimated that around 4691 individuals were placed here during this period (although the number is likely much higher). These inmates did similar work to those in Brothers

Home, that is, forced labor in a prison-like institution. Witnesses report countless instances of abuse, torture, violence, malnutrition, rape, and drowning (See Naeilsinmun 2019. See also MoneyToday 2020). In 2017, an exhumation revealed some 160 bodies buried in the area. The history of Seongam Academy was included in the 2022 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work to uncover the many human rights violations that reportedly occurred there. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the government was ultimately responsible for the Academy's existence and that its 'welfare' operation was unconstitutional and illegal (See Truth and Reconciliation Commision 2022a). An interesting detail is that Paik Geun-chil—a bureaucrat during the Japanese occupation—served as the director of Seongam Academy during the 1940s. Subsequently, Paik established the international adoption organization known as Korea Social Service (KSS) in 1964.[14] Although most of the crimes at Seongam Academy documented in the 2022 Truth and Reconciliation Commission report happened in the 1960s and 1970s, decades after Paik Geun-chil was in charge, it highlights a relatively close relationship between a prominent international adoption organization like KSS and an institution like Seongam Academy (See Pressian 2017a). It is possible that these internment camps—of which Seongam and Brothers Home may be extreme versions—were part of a more comprehensive network of child trafficking that in the most profitable cases led to international adoption and, in other cases, to children being detained in squalid and violent conditions, often indeterminately.[15]

3. The Production of Vanished Lives

During the governmental 'self-sustenance' campaigns of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, two distinct groups were specifically subjected to increased disciplinary attention, namely vagrants and orphans. However, a genealogical examination would illustrate the inherent complexity in defining categories for those individuals ultimately becoming subjects of institutionalization—including the categories of 'vagrants' and 'orphans'. For instance, the criteria constituting a homeless vagrant were not static, often undergoing modifications across different periods (See Park 2021, pp. 66–67, 75–78). The same could be said about the definition of an 'orphan'. Ultimately, the population of Brothers Home collectively constituted a fluid social class of 'undesirable individuals'. Brothers Home emerged as the location where these individuals could be placed and, in a sense, 'vanish'—a kind of 'non-location' within a larger space of normality defined precisely by its inability to accommodate this social class.

Brothers Home encapsulated a multitude of functionalities: the institution simultaneously operated as an internment camp, nursing home, orphanage, maternity ward, child care center, correctional facility, vocational training center, forced labor factory, unemployment institution, general hospital, psychiatric hospital, church, and prison. Its multifaceted nature suggests that its core function was to address the societal challenge posed by the fluid and mutable definition of the 'undesirable individual'. While publicly professing to rehabilitate and educate these individuals, an equally significant aspect of Brothers Home's operation entailed isolating certain individuals from neighborhoods, thereby mitigating any perceived nuisance or threat to local populations. This approach essentially quarantined these 'undesirable individuals', that is, positioned them within a figurative parenthesis, thus relieving the broader society of their presence and associated burden.

While the identity and purpose of Brothers Home were inherently fluid, this was a characteristic that mirrored the similarly fluid identities of its inmates. This mutual indefinability between the institution and its residents underscores an important aspect: the facility and its subjects lacked a fixed definition, identity, or purpose, at least in a positive sense. Instead, within the confines of the institution's walls, these subjects emerged as negative projections of a model of normality aggressively propagated by post-war governmental administrations. This conception of normality was in many ways as insubstantial and constructed as its opposite but could nevertheless assume a certain kind of definitional clarity and solidity *because* institutions like Brothers Home existed; everyone within its confines,

whoever they might be, was deemed 'abnormal' relative to the established concept of the 'normal' (See Moon 2005, pp. 21–23).

From a biopolitical perspective, Brothers Home's 'activities'—care, welfare, housing, education, medical treatment, discipline, correction, punishment, forced labor, adoption, or otherwise—were secondary or epiphenomenal in relation to the institution's primary objective. The latter explains, to some extent, this institution's emergence, possibility, and even necessity from a biopolitical perspective, whereas the former relates primarily to individual concerns.[16] It is also in this context we should understand the well-documented violence, death, and randomness that seemed integral to the institution's inner life; whatever happened to these confined subjects was of secondary, incidental, or individual importance—far more critical was the mere fact that these individuals *were confined there, at that time*, and thus were not located elsewhere, that is, within the boundaries of the normal space.

As a form of quarantine or a 'non-location', Brothers Home constituted a space in which inmates were simultaneously excluded and included—that is, included by way of exclusion. What we find here is a specific framework encapsulating a form of life that, for various reasons, has been deemed undesirable, disposable, replaceable—life reduced to virtually nothing, that is, apart from pure life itself. In his critique of Carl Schmitt's notion of the sovereign, Giorgio Agamben argues that "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power" (p. 6). Political power, Agamben observes, "constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life" (p. 7).[17] To Agamben, in virtually every conceivable scenario, individuals are born into a specific, meaningful context involving identity, family, community, language, culture, support, meaning, and possibilities. A bare life—one stripped down to nothing but its mere existence, the fact that it is nothing except still alive—is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but, on the contrary, something that requires a willful, biopolitical effort. In this biopolitical framework, identity, family, community, language, culture, support, meaning, and possibilities are 'gifts' that may be passed onto an individual life, not something inherently or naturally possessed as a birthright. It is within the state's prerogative—what constitutes biopolitical sovereignty—to 'generously' bestow these 'gifts' upon individuals or, conversely, to revoke these 'gifts' should these lives no longer align with its desired social parameters: the state functions as both the benefactor and the ultimate penal institution.

It is against the backdrop of an increasingly biopolitical modern South Korean state that one may perceive Brothers Home—beyond and above all its other activities and endeavors spanning social and commercial enterprises—as, perhaps primarily, an exceptional space designed to facilitate the production of this 'bare life', a life stripped down to its rudimentary existence, the simple and sole fact that it still 'lives' (See Agamben 1998, pp. 8–11). The function of this space was primarily negative: it removed lives, rendered them invisible, and made them disappear within a space of exception. The biopolitical purpose and *raison d'être* of Brothers Home revolves around an exclusionary mechanism that renders its history pivotal to comprehending the emergence of Korean compressed modernity. It elucidates—in a negative form—the transformation of a society from abject poverty to economic affluence driven by one of the most disciplined, controlled, and regulated workforces worldwide. As such, the history of Brothers Home provides a critical lens to examine the dark side of what has sometimes been called 'the miracle on the Han River'.

4. A Space Producing the Adoptable Body

An Associated Press (AP) investigation from 2019 found evidence of 19 direct and at least 51 indirect international adoptions from Brothers Home between 1979 and 1986. The number is likely considerably higher, but most documents have been destroyed (See Pressian 2017b). The AP investigative team interviewed a person adopted to North America; she had no knowledge of being at Brothers Home in her early years, perhaps because Brothers Home had sent her to another institution that eventually facilitated the adoption abroad (See Associated Press 2019). This seems to have been a familiar pattern at Broth-

ers Home: sending 'adoptable' (typically very young) children directly to—or via other institutions working with—one of Korea's four international adoption organizations.

Even though Brothers Home from the early 1970s was no longer primarily an orphanage—despite a significant portion of the institution's population being relatively young, of which a modest number were sent abroad for adoption—the institution nonetheless constitutes a crucial piece in understanding Korean international adoption. The international adoptions initiated by the Brothers Home institution involved lives that had initially been 'nullified' within—and thus excluded from—the normal space. By being nullified and excluded, those lives were already 'dead', at least in a symbolic or social sense. Whatever their fate—forced labor, death, release, escape, adoption, or otherwise—these individuals underwent a radical transformation the moment they were herded through the gates of Brothers Home; a transformation that, in a certain sense, reduced them to bare life—alive, yet stripped of any form of rights, like beasts without identity, rights, community, belonging to no one except the owners of Brothers Home.

In many ways, Brothers Home can be understood according to the theoretical framework outlined by Agamben; but perhaps the central issue here is not so much this production of bare life in itself but rather the possibilities that this process opens up. Although the vast majority of the hundreds of thousands of internationally adopted individuals from Korea did not come from Brothers Home, the latter is an important historical event that testifies to a process that is necessary for understanding a particular production of life, one that also includes (but is by no means limited to) those lives that were later sent abroad for adoption. The issue here is less to establish a *direct* trace between international adoption and what happened at Brothers Home but rather to understand how the latter epitomizes, perhaps in its most extreme form, a process, a zone of annulment or indistinction, that *precedes* the adoption process and thus constitutes its *condition of possibility*, one that involves an 'unnatural' production—that is, through specific mechanisms, regulations, and apparatuses—of a life reduced to a subject that holds no value except being alive. What does it mean that an existence is reduced to such a bare life? It is not simply that life becomes identical to pure, biological existence (*zoe*), but rather that it constitutes a destroyed or *de-subjectivized* form of life (*bios*)—a life from which anything meaningful (or human) has been subtracted (See Agamben 1998, p. 1). Bare life refers to an indistinct form of existence, one that inherently lacks distinguishing features to the extent that it cannot be clearly differentiated from others unless there is an external identifier, such as a number. It is this type of identifier that Miriam Stein, in her adoption autobiography Stein (2008), encounters when she is shown her file at the adoption agency in Korea; "Details about the dietary patterns and digestion habits of K77-2178, Park, Yung-Min, were meticulously documented with the precision of an accountant in the records" (p. 82). In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben observes that it was through the creation of bare life that "biopower sought to produce its final secret: a survival separated from every possibility of testimony, a kind of absolute biopolitical substance that, in its isolation, allows for the attribution of demographic, ethnic, national, and political identity" (p. 156). In a disparate context, yet one that similarly engages with the production of bare life, we witness the biopolitical ambition to sever life from any meaningful form in order to produce the isolated figure of an adoptable body whose potential to become anyone—of any demographic-, ethnic-, national-, or political identity—is near boundless, yet whose desubjectivization would always be separated from every possibility of testimony.[18]

5. Twice Born

For centuries, adoption existed along the margins of the repressed: children taken in by distant family members, the neighbor, the landlord, or people in the nearby town. It was a precarious life that somewhat resembled what Orlando Patterson, in another context, has called 'social death', that is, a marginalized, excluded, and devalued life that no longer 'naturally' possessed a particular social identity and connection.[19] The history of what happened to the 'orphanized' children decades after the Korean War belongs

to this long history of social death. Here, I use the word 'orphanized' (as opposed to 'orphaned') to emphasize the socio-legal *production* of an 'orphan'.[20] A significant portion of the children adopted from Korea in the 1970s and 1980s were not 'real' orphans, even if this category is often used in the accompanying adoption documents.[21] Within the context of post-war/post-colonial Korea, however, it is necessary to look more closely at the specific history of those subjects whose 'orphanization' perhaps was the result of an exceptional situation—e.g., extreme poverty, a tragic accident, a series of misfortunes, or exceptional systemic failures—but at the same time an integral part of a biopolitical machinery aimed at producing a radically new kind of life—an adoptable body produced within the space between the biological parents' custody and the adoptive family.[22]

A recurring image in Korean adoption autobiographies is the idea of being 'reborn' at the airport, that is, the day of arrival in the country of adoption and the encounter with a new family. In her book *A Single Square Picture*, Katy Robinson (2002) describes it thus: "with time, I became convinced my life simply began the moment I stepped off the airplane on the other side of the world. One day I was Kim Ji-yun growing up in Seoul; the next day I was Catherine Jeanne Robinson living in Salt Lake City, Utah" (p. 1). In some families, the day of arrival is called 'adoption day' or 'arrival day', often celebrated as a 'second' birthday; the beginning of the new life in the adoptive family.[23] In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt notes that "the miracle that saves the world [...] from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men [sic] and the new beginning, the action they are capable of at virtue of being born" (p. 247). Here, 'natality' should be understood as a hiatus between the physical event of birth, as a biological process, and what it potentially signifies in terms of freedom, action, and change in a world molded by past events; it marks the separation between human beings *per se* and their essential or biologically determined nature (See Arendt 1998, p. 191). Arendt's notion of natality underscores the potential of new beginnings, trajectories, and possibilities for action; the fact that individuals, each distinctive and each capable of novel initiatives, are perpetually being born into an already-existing world, and, through this simple act of being born, possess the potential to influence, disrupt or redirect this world's causal structures. Natality marks the birth of life as political existence, a unique life born into already existing structures of meaning and possibilities. Building on but also critically moving beyond Arendt, Agamben views the event of birth as a mechanism that enables the inscription of life into the biopolitical order of the nation-state. As he writes in *Homo Sacer*, "The principle of nativity and the principle of sovereignty [...] are now irrevocably united in the body of the 'sovereign subject' so that the foundation of the new nation-state may be constituted" (p. 76). The nation-state, Agamben argues in *Means Without End*, involves "a state that makes nativity or birth [*nascita*] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty" (p. 20, original parentheses). Life, thus, becomes fractured into two existences—bare life and political existence. It is a double structure that constitutes what Agamben calls the "pure source of identity" (*Means* Agamben 2000, p. 32); 'pure' in the sense that the biopolitical aim is to produce a seamless political body, one that exists only insofar as this body is continuously assessed according to the mechanism of exclusion/inclusion at the heart of biopolitical sovereignty. As we have seen above, biopolitical sovereignty embodies a vision of a political entity initially founded on a right to exclude all undesirable elements that could threaten the body politic. Such a community is based on a conception of a particular form of this political body—a fiction that, according to Agamben, includes birth. A life is born into this political community as *nothing but life*, after which the state *gives* this life political meaning: citizenship, rights, language, culture, identity, family, community, and values. This construction puts the state in a relationship of omnipotence to the individual; the state is the *provider* of everything meaningful, including the possibility of natality, but also possesses the right to *deprive* the individual of everything, that is, the reduction of life to bare life, which here constitutes the antithesis of Arendt's concept of natality. Considering the topos of the two births within the context of Korean international adoption, I suggest that 'adoption' here involves a

'deconstruction' of the miraculous link between the event of birth and political existence, a gesture of 'undoing'—not birth as such—but rather the *potential* that Arendt attributes to birth as the beginning of political existence, i.e., natality; and thereby, through this gesture of 'undoing', placing this subject, now freed from any referential frameworks, in a position open to a new political community, like a blank slate whose fate can be rewritten endlessly. As a form of biopolitical deconstruction, the adoption process reasserts and restores Arendtian natality in the form of the flight journey from Korea to the West, culminating with the 'rebirth' in the airport. It is a precarious passage during which the adoptable body exists in a zone of indistinction, stateless and only identifiable through an external marker.[24]

Unlike the 'second' birthday, the concrete circumstances of the 'first' or the biological birth and the immediate time after are typically unknown—events without witnesses.[25] While the event of the arrival at the airport may be a 'constructed' beginning, it is typically framed and documented by witness accounts and tangible photographic evidence—a certainty that normally stands in stark contrast to the uncertain circumstances of the biological birth. Most Korean children sent to Western countries in the 1970s and 1980s were adopted as infants or very young, meaning that few possess memories of the time before. Often, the only tangible and concrete ties to this 'pre-adoption' period are documents issued by the adoption organizations or governments, perhaps a few objects like clothes or shoes. The documents, accumulated during the usually long and cumbersome adoption process leading up to the legal approval of the adoption, provide a trace—in some cases, the *only* trace—that at least partially (but rarely sufficiently) points back to the time before adoption, that is, tangible objects that prevent this pre-adoption period from slipping into a void of oblivion or pure fiction. There is a referential *insistence* surrounding these traces leading back to the pre-adoption period, the circumstances of the 'first' birth—even if the 'second' birth to some extent is conditioned by the ignorance or amnesia about the concrete circumstances of the 'first' birth.

What does it mean to be—as Betty Jean Lifton puts it—'twice born' (See Lifton 1975)? In a significant portion of the autobiographical texts written by individuals adopted from Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, we find a recurring feature: texts constructed around the *search*—that is, attempts to find one's biological family, to answer questions about what happened, e.g., in the form of a journey back to Korea, to the adoption home, the agency, the study of files. Or to map out the typically missing link between the time before adoption and the time after. In many cases, it is precisely the lack of knowledge about this period—and all that it implies, such as knowledge about the circumstances of one's adoption, one's biological family, and the causes leading to the adoption—that prompted the writing of these texts. Some Korean adoption autobiographies describe scenes where the writer reflects on being 'twice born' and, more specifically, the notion of going from one existence to another. It is a reflection that often involves a recurrent sense of unreality or lack; the lack of information about one's 'origins', and perhaps, therefore, lack of one's 'true' self. And, conversely, the sense of living an 'untruthful' or 'incomplete' life, one that may or may not be based on fabrications, lies, or deliberately withheld information. Jo Soojung writes in her book, *Ghost of Sangju*: "Things that make me unreal: Real people are born, but I came off an airplane. My mirror face is opposite from my family faces" (Jo 2015, p. 13). It is against this background of the 'two births'—or what could be viewed as a form of 'deconstructed' natality—that one of the central motifs in Korean adoption autobiographies becomes the search for truth: why was I adopted, how, under what circumstances, who are my biological relatives and are they still alive?

In her book *From Morning Calm to Midnight Sun*, Sunny Jo (2005) describes how she always felt an indefinable loss while growing up—one that balances on the edge of the unreal and abstract because of its intangibility (See Jo 2005, pp. 20–24). For many years, she tried to find information about her birth parents. Holt, the adoption organization that facilitated her adoption, claimed that the file had been burned in a fire. Eventually, Jo manages to connect with her biological family in Korea and discovers the backstory of

her adoption, one that brings about its challenges but also leads to the sense that she has arrived at a 'truth' about herself that gradually replaces the sense of an abstract, unreal loss haunting her all those years—with something tangible. Likewise driven by a sense of lack of facts and information, Astrid Trotzig (1996) writes in *Blood is Thicker than Water* about an almost manic desire to access this knowledge: "I want to see more photographs. So I can imagine the foster family, their home, the city, the country, as it was in 1970. I want to know. I want more documents, more facts [...] I want to know who I am" (p. 27). In other cases, the authors/protagonists discover that the sparse knowledge they (and their adoptive parents) possessed, and with which they grew up in good faith, turned out to be incorrect, misleading, and sometimes even deliberately falsified. Uncovering the truth about one's origin story is thus often one of the authors' primary objectives; in a way, one could say that these autobiographies strive to 'de-fictionalize' an 'already fictionalized self'.

What is evident in connection with these above-cited texts and many other Korean adoption autobiographies is that the lack of information is closely connected to a sense of loss, albeit one that—because of the lack of concrete information—takes on an unreal, abstract dimension that cannot be adequately mourned. Concretely, the lack—which thus, at the same time, contains, at least potentially, the sense of loss—relates to the lack of information about the biological parents and, in a broader sense, encompasses a more abstract dimension, namely the absence of the life connected to the 'first' birth. The autobiographical writing thus becomes a process of witnessing or documenting this lack, but also a way of inserting something, a kind of 'place-holder'—words containing as well as pointing towards the void, perhaps even offering a form of closure.

The autobiographical search for truth contains an element of the imaginary, especially since the framework surrounding this truth is often porous, fragmented, and sometimes virtually non-existent (see Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, p. 82). One of the most significant aspects of this search perhaps involves a desire for something ultimately impossible, a void that relates to the (non-)existence of the life of the 'first' birth, the life that would have been part of a different family, speaking a different language, possessed a different identity, and perhaps identified with different values. It is a search that often involves the idea that one may find a 'truer' self that existed before the adoption, one that embodies the fantasy of peeling away or 'undoing' the experiences of adoption and thus arriving at the essence of one's (pre-adopted) self—a self that had nothing to do with the process in between the two births.

It would be misleading to dismiss this imaginary element in the search for truth as a Freudian family romance or a form of pathological delusion that may be 'treated' (See Homans 2006, p. 5). The search for truth is central here because there *is* an insistent core of referentiality—something happened—even if the lack of access to this core, the fragile and, in some cases, non-existent connection back to the 'first' birth, intensifies the role of the imaginary. What is central here is perhaps not so much the concrete object of the search itself—e.g., biological parents, the circumstances of one's adoption—but rather the conditions of the 'second' or figurative birth; the creation of the 'I' that initiates the search for truth. It is a 'birth' that deconstructs the link between political existence and biological birth, that is, what Arendt calls the potential of natality; a transformation that involves a more or less complete form of erasure, which in turn creates the possibility to begin anew, in a new context. Derrida's notion of 'sous rature' here articulates a central aspect of the adoption process: the idea that, on the one hand, something is erased, but precisely in this gesture of erasure, whatever was intended to be erased is at the same time preserved and pronounced (See Derrida 1997, pp. 60–61). In the adoption process, the circumstances that made the adoption possible—that is, the space between the biological parents' custody and the adoptive family—are typically obscured, absent, withheld, naturalized, falsified, forgotten, or erased. However, this process itself calls attention to the constructedness of the 'second' birth and, thereby, to the insistent core of referentiality, the fragile and, in some cases, non-existent connection back to the 'first' birth. Often, the Korean adoption texts are centered around a search through this sous rature; what happened, the specific

circumstances of one's adoption, behind or beneath the layer of *sous rature*—in other words, a search that seeks to 'erase' the 'erasure' so to speak, and thus, through this double negation, to discover the truth.

6. The Impossibility of Bearing Witness

The crucial point here is not that there is necessarily a more profound truth underlying the 'already fictionalized self' or a 'pre-adopted' self that can be unearthed in the course of writing; what the writing reveals, instead, is a moment in which the self opens itself to this space preceding adoption. Thus, central to the understanding of the relationship between the 'first' and the 'second' birth is this 'in-between space', the time between the two births—the former being the latter's condition of possibility, in the form of, quite literally, erasure, annulment, invalidation. A space of invalidation, a non-space; it is within this 'in-between space', which is both a 'time before' and a 'time after', that life becomes exempt from any meaningful context—a blank, naked life that does not seem to exist anywhere, in any actual location (with a specific political meaning), or exists precisely within an *exempt* space, and, for this reason, can be rewritten endlessly.

Here, we return to the space epitomized—*in extremis*—by Brothers Home, that is, a zone of indistinction where a subject's 'original' identity is stripped away, thus creating the possibility for the imposition of a new identity; the production of new, blank, pure subjects, freed from any specific frame of reference, open to a radically new natality. Here, we also return to one of the dominant themes in Korean adoption literature, namely the void that exists at the origin of this writing—the concrete lack of knowledge surrounding the circumstances of the adoption (where was I? how did it happen? who were my biological parents? do I have siblings? who took care of me? why did it happen at all?), and the possibility that everything could be fictional, imaginary. Ultimately, it is a void that points to the impossibility of bearing witness; that is to say, to paradoxically bear witness to the existence of a life whose desubjectivization—or disappearance—was the condition of possibility underlying the writing self, the subject bearing witness. For the latter to emerge, the political significance of the former had to be annulled through the cancellation of citizenship, nationality, custody, guardianship, and sometimes names, memories, emotional attachments, language, community, possibilities, and futures (or, more specifically, the potential futures of all these aspects). In this sense, *sous rature* refers to a subject formation based on an erasure, an annulment, which at the same time—because this formation is based on it—points back to the original annulment of the 'first' birth. The critical point here is that this annulment, upon which the 'second' birth is dependent, constitutes a specific form of production with a specific history; it is not something created by itself, naturally, under natural conditions, and thereby with no history. There is a history, albeit in the form of *sous rature*. In this context, the concrete lack of knowledge about the circumstances of adoption is not merely an unfortunate or incidental aspect of Korean international adoption; it is its condition of possibility. Without this veil over the circumstances of international adoption from Korea, this phenomenon, at least in the way it typically occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, would have been unthinkable. The history of Brothers Home and similar 'welfare' institutions points towards this 'unthinkable'; a space of erasure, where all 'original' coordinates are transformed or subtracted, which thus precedes and enables the possibility of the adoption process, the adoptable body—the subject capable of engaging in new political contexts, locations, lives, families, and futures.

If the topos of the *search* structure many autobiographies written by individuals adopted from Korea, it is perhaps because the very gesture of writing about this search—regardless of how it ends—testifies to an attempt to reach beyond the void and hence the impossibility of bearing witness. It is a writing that seeks to overcome the experience of contingency at the heart of the adoption experience, i.e., a body reduced to a number, in itself infinitely interchangeable and indistinguishable, by transforming this contingency—through the autobiographical form—into a necessity, determination, and something resembling a 'fate'. At the same time, the writing 'denaturalizes' this experience,

bringing out its radical contingency, as if simultaneously asserting and disavowing the idea that anyone could have been chosen instead of me and taken my place, that I could have ended up in any other family, somewhere else, or maybe with no family at all, and that I could have become someone else entirely. The autobiographical 'I' claims an impossible subject position, makes it *visible* or *audible,* so to speak, one that originates neither from the 'first' nor the 'second' birth but somewhere in between, a liminal space—like the impossible moment articulated by Kate Anne Kang (2016) towards the end of her autobiographical text *Given Away*:

> I take a last photograph of Omma [mother] and Appa [father] before my return to Minnesota [. . .] Long in the future, I will delight in sharing with my husband, my two children, all the photographs and stories of my time with my long-separated family [. . .] Oppa smiles, and says kimchi. Amidst the trees that shade them, Omma's smile illuminates the shadows. She has her son by her side. Her daughter is in front of her taking a picture for posterity. Her children. Her family. For this moment, this last moment, I convince myself it was always this way" (p. 209).

Notes

1   Equally relevant here to mention in connection with the biopolitical development of postcolonial South Korea is what Seungsook Moon has described as South Korea's 'militarized modernity', i.e., the ways in which militarization shaped the socio-cultural fabric of South Korea, influencing the construction of national identity, gender roles, and more generally docile, disciplined subjects.

2   For a discussion of the Japanese colonial origins of social cleansing, see (J. -h. Kim 2021, pp. 28–29). For an extended discussion of the Japanese colonial influence and ideas of social Darwinism, see (Schmid 2002, pp. 23–54).

3   The 2022 TRC report confirms 657 deaths (although the number is likely far higher). It concludes that "Serious human rights violations" were committed "by wrongful governmental power" and that "forced confinement/labor" took place within its walls. It recommends that the government "issue [a] formal apology and assist in healing victims." See (Truth and Reconciliation Commision 2022b).

4   Here (and later in the article), I refer to Agamben's notion of bare life as included in the form of the exception. See (Agamben 1998, p. 11).

5   See (Kim et al. 2023, p. 4). The process of social cleansing reached its peak in the years leading up to the Olympics in 1988. See (Associated Press 2016).

6   "The Ministry of Home Affairs Directive No. 410" was not a statute but a set of guidelines for government officials. See (Kim et al. 2023, p. 4).

7   See (Choo 2021, pp. 85–86). For a more extended discussion of the role of militarization and discipline during this period, see (Moon 2005, pp. 17–43).

8   According to some witnesses, Brothers Home had infant wards next to the director's residence. The infants would regularly disappear, which suggests they may have been sent for overseas adoption. See (Pressian 2017a).

9   Park In-geun received two state medals for social welfare achievements and was appointed a government advisory panel member. See (Associated Press 2016).

10   The 1981 promotional video can be found on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9v59BptIwc (accessed on 1 October 2023). See (Brothers Home 1981).

11   Allegedly, some of the profits from Brothers Home were transferred to Sydney, Australia, where Park In-geun's family today own and run the Milperra Golf Driving Range and Sports Complex. Regarding recent attempts to seize the property as compensation for the Brothers Home victims, see (Kim and Jolley 2021).

12   The democratic uprising in June 1987 culminated in the termination of the Chun Doo-hwan military dictatorship, thereby establishing the present Sixth Republic. In October 1987, the new democratic constitution was approved by a national referendum, and in December, direct elections were held for the first time in South Korea.

13   Park died in 2016—in Australia—without ever being charged for the human rights violations at Brothers Home.

14   Korea Social Service (KSS) was one of the four major Korean adoption agencies facilitating adoptions abroad. The others include Holt International, Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS), and Korea Welfare Services (KWS, formerly known as Social Welfare Society or SWS).

15   In 2022, the Danish Korean Rights Group (DKRG) petitioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Korea to probe into allegations of fraudulent practices related to overseas adoption cases that transpired between the 1960s and 1990s. The TRC is currently investigating 271 cases suspected of involving fraudulent practices to facilitate overseas adoption. See (Associated Press 2023).

16   From a biopolitical perspective, the exceptional space of Brothers Home epitomizes the production of vanished, invisible lives in post-war Korea. In contrast, the institution's 'activities' were primarily significant in relation to an individual perspective (i.e., the individual perpetrators and victims). Thus, to Park In-geun the wealth generated by the forced labour of the inmates was anything but invisible—even if the means to achieve this wealth had to be hidden from public view.

17   Here, Agamben follows Foucault's analysis of the biopolitical positioning of life "outside history, in its biological environment, and inside human historicity, penetrated by the latter's techniques of knowledge and power" (Foucault 1978, p. 143).

18   For a discussion of the biopolitical production of identity and adoption, see (Rasmussen 2021, p. 246).

19   See (Patterson 1982, pp. 38–45). For a discussion of Korean adoption, birthmothers, and 'social death' (i.e., the 'social' orphan whose biological/familial connections to Korea are severed and the erasure of the figure of the birth mother in the adoption process), see (J. Kim 2010, pp. 169–71; H. Kim 2016, p. 9; McKee 2019, pp. 27–28).

20   For a further discussion of this issue, see (Briggs and Marre 2009, p. 12; McKee 2019, pp. 2–3).

21   Hübinette writes: "The abandoned children who had constituted 55–65 percent of the total in the 1960s as well as those coming from broken families, had by the end of the decade increasingly been replaced by children of unmarried and single mothers from middle-class backgrounds, even if about half of the birth mothers still were young factory workers up until the mid-1980s" (Hübinette 2006, p. 58).

22   See Han (2013), "International adoption som norm og undtagelse" ['Comment: International Adoption as Norm and Exception'], https://www.information.dk/debat/2013/01/international-adoption-norm-undtagelse?lst_cntrb (accessed on 1 October 2023).

23   For a discussion of rebirth and adoption, see also (McKee 2019, pp. 84–86).

24   To Fern and Fern (2012), author of the autobiography *Songs of My Families*, the flight journey literally brings out the potential precarity of this passage between bare life and political existence. In 1971, a five-year-old Fern was sent from Korea to America for adoption. During the flight trip, her sweater—with her nametag attached—gets mixed up with someone else's. When the plane arrives in Minneapolis, she is mistakenly given to a different family. See (Fern and Fern 2012, p. 21).

25   For a discussion of an 'event without witnesses', see (Felman and Dori 1992, p. 232), and (Agamben 1999, p. 35).

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Redwood: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, Giorgio. 1999. *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2000. *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Associated Press. 2016. South Korea Covered Up Mass Murder of Vagrants before 1988 Olympics. April 20. Available online: https://apnews.com/c22de3a565fe4e85a0508bbbd72c3c1b/ap-s-korea-covered-mass-abuse-killings-vagrants (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Associated Press. 2019. Abusive S. Korean Facility Exported Children. November 10. Available online: https://apnews.com/article/adoption-asia-pacific-south-korea-international-news-busan-736590a2b96340c4aac66616d94eea33 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Associated Press. 2023. South Korean Inquiry to Look into 237 more Foreign Adoptions Suspected to Have Laundrered Origins. June 8. Available online: https://apnews.com/article/south-korea-foreign-adoptions-investigation-e7b826ee4a54d3680fec8b64f07da951 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Briggs, Laura, and Diana Marre, eds. 2009. *International Adoption: Global Inequalities and the Circulation of Children*. New York: New York University Press.

Brothers Home, dir. 1981. Promotional Video Brothers Home 1981. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9v59BptIwc (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Choi, Jong-sook. 2021. 삶과 시간을 새롭게 쓰기: 진상규명운동, 그 후 [Rewriting life and time: The fact-finding movement, and afterward]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 279–314.

Choo, Ji-hyun. 2021. 사회적 배제의 기술들: 부랑인 단속과 노동력의 쓸모 [The Art of Social Exclusion: Crackdown on Vagrancy and the Use of Labor]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 83–116.

Chang, Kyung-Sup. 2010. The Second Modern Condition? Compressed Modernity as Internalized Reflexive Cosmopolitization. *The British Journal of Sociology* 61: 444–64.

Derrida, Jacques. 1997. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Felman, Shoshana, and Laub Dori. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. London: Routledge.

Fern, Kelly, and Brad Fern. 2012. *Songs of My Families: A Thirty-Seven Year Odyssey from Korea to America and Back*. Woodstock: Lantern Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books, vol. 1.

Han, Boonyoung. 2013. International adoption som norm og undtagelse [Comment: International Adoption as Norm and Exception]. *Information*. January 17. Available online: https://www.information.dk/debat/2013/01/international-adoption-norm-undtagelse?lst_cntrb (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Hankyoreh. 2014a. 형제복지원 대하 3 부작 제 2 회 ① 검사와 원장. [Part 2 of a Trilogy on Brothers Home Part 1: The Prosecutor and the Director]. August 29. Available online: https://m.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/654991.html?_fr=nv#ace04ou (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Hankyoreh. 2014b. '한국판 아우슈비츠' 형제복지원 특별법 곧 재발의 [Special Law for Brothers Home, 'Korea's Version of Auschwitz', to Be Re-enacted Soon]. July 9. Available online: https://m.hani.co.kr/arti/society/rights/646133.html#cb (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Homans, Margaret. 2006. Adoption Narratives, Trauma, and Origins. *Narrative* 14: 4–26. [CrossRef]

Hübinette, Tobias. 2006. *Comforting an Orphaned Nation. Representations of International Adoption and Adopted Koreans in Korean Popular Culture*. Jimoondang.

Hwang, Suk-Man, and Jinho Lim. 2015. Unfinished Modernity or Another Modernity? The South Korean Case. *Korean Social Science Journal* 42: 73–88. [CrossRef]

Jo, Soojung. 2015. *Ghost of Sangju: A Memoir of Reconciliation*. Minneapolis: CQT Media and Publishing, and Gazillion Strong.

Jo, Sunny. 2005. *From Morning Calm to Midnight Sun*. Bloomfield: Korean@doptees Worldwide and Truepenny Publishing.

Kang, Kate Anne. 2016. *Given Away*. Scotts Valley: Kate A. Gjerde, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Kim, Eleana J. 2010. *Adopted Territory. Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging*. Duke: Duke University Press.

Kim, Hosu. 2016. *Birth Mothers and Transnational Adoption Practice in South Korea: Virtual Mothering*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kim, Il-hwan. 2021. '돈벌이' 가 된 복지: 형제복지원 재단의 역사 [Welfare became a "Money Maker": A History of the Brothers Home Foundation]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*'Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home'*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 127–61.

Kim, Jae-hyung. 2021. 사회적 배제의 형성: 식민지기 '부랑나환자' [The Formation of Social Exclusion: The Colonial period 'Vagrancy Lepers']. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*'Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home'*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 27–57.

Kim, Jae-hyung, Kwi-byung Kwak, Il-hwan Kim, Hae-nam Park, Jun-chol So, Sang-jic Lee, Jong-sook Choi, and Ji-hyun Choo. 2023. 'Big Brother' at Brothers Home: Exclusion and Exploitation of Social Outcasts in South Korea. *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 21: 5775.

Kim, Jiyoung. 2011. Foreign Aid and Economic Development: The Success Story of South Korea: Foreign Aid and Economic Development. *Pacific Focus* 26: 260–86. [CrossRef]

Kim, Jodi. 2010. *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kim, Susan, and Mary Ann Jolley. 2021. South Korea's House of Horrors [Documentary]. Available online: https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/12/10/secrets-of-south-koreas-house-of-horrors-hidden-in-australia (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Kwak, Kwi-byung. 2021. 규율의 환상과 폭력의 경제 [The illusion of discipline and the economy of violence]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 195–223.

Lifton, Betty Jean. 1975. *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McKee, Kimberley D. 2019. *Disrupting Kinship: Transnational Politics of Korean Adoption in the United States*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

MoneyToday. 2020. '그것이 알고 싶다' 선감학원의 비극 . . . 선감도에서는 무슨 일이? ["The Unanswered Questions": Tragedy at Seongam Academy . . . What Happened at Seongam Island?]. August 16. Available online: https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2020081607412426465 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Moon, Seungsook. 2005. *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Naeilsinmun. 2019. '지옥의 섬' 선감학원 진상 밝혀지나 [Will the Truth about Seongam Academy, "Island of Hell," Be Revealed]. September 20. Available online: http://m.naeil.com/m_news_view.php?id_art=326161 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Oh, Arissa H. 2015. *To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption*. Redwood: Stanford University Press.

Park, Hae-nam. 2021. 사회적 배제의 지속과 변형: 발전국가 시기의 사회정치 [Persistence and Transformation of Social Exclusion: Sociopolitics in the Developmental State Period]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 59–82.

Pate, Soojin. 2014. *From Orphan to Adoptee: US Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pressian. 2017a. 형제복지원도 입양기관과 공생관계였다 [Brothers Home also Had a Symbiotic Relationship with Adoption Agency]. October 19. Available online: https://m.pressian.com/m/pages/articles/172596#0DKW (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Pressian. 2017b. 형제복지원 거쳐 해외입양된 아동 실제 있었다 [There Were Actually Children Who Were Adopted Overseas after Going through Brothers Home]. October 24. Available online: https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/173243 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Rasmussen, Kim Su. 2021. Contested modernity and its discontents: On Maja Lee Langvad's Hun er Vred. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 22: 235–48. [CrossRef]

Robinson, Katy. 2002. *A Single Square Picture. A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots*. New York: Berkley Books.

Schmid, Andre. 2002. *Korea Between Empires, 1895–1919*. New York: Columbia University Press.

So, Jun-chol. 2021. '자활'이라는 가면: 시설-국가-지역사회의 공모 [The mask of "self-sufficiency": Collusion between facility-state-community]. In 절멸과 갱생 사이: 형제복지원의 사회학 [*Between Extermination and Rehabilitation: A Sociology of Brothers Home*]. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, pp. 163–94.

Stein, Miriam Yung Min. 2008. *Berlin Seoul Berlin: Die Reise Zu Mir Selbst*. Berlin: Krüger Verlag.

Trotzig, Astrid. 1996. *Blod Är Tjockare Än Vatten*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag.

Truth and Reconciliation Commision, Republic of Korea. 2022a. Human Rights Violations at Seongam Academy Confirmed by Government. Available online: https://www.jinsil.go.kr/en/nac/selectNoticeList.do?bbsId=BBSMSTR_000000000970 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Truth and Reconciliation Commision, Republic of Korea. 2022b. Truth Established by the Government on Brothers Home Case for the 1st Time in 35 Years. Available online: https://www.jinsil.go.kr/en/nac/selectNoticeList.do?bbsId=BBSMSTR_000000000970 (accessed on 1 October 2023).

Woo, Susie. 2019. *Framed by War: Korean Children and Women at the Crossroads of US Empire*. New York: New York University Press.

Yngvesson, Barbara, and Maureen A. Mahoney. 2000. 'As One Should, Ought and Wants to Be': Belonging and Authenticity in Identity Narratives. *Theory, Culture & Society* 17: 77–110.