

Even the modest success of the Korean labor movement in the 1970s led to brutal repression by the Park regime, resulting in violence, riots, and in Park's eventual assassination in 1979. Though it would be some years before trade unions would flourish and a democratic government would be elected, the success of the women workers in the Chonggye Union sparked a broader movement for social change. The repression and resistance of women are at the center of this account of Korea's rapid industrialization and democratization and will appeal to scholars and activists alike. The women and girls in the textile and garment industry turn out to be the real miracle workers.

Mary Margaret Fonow
Arizona State University

Comforting an Orphaned Nation: Representations of International Adoption and Adopted Koreans in Korean Popular Culture, by Tobias Hübinette. Stockholm: Department of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University, 2005. 269pp.

I am flattered and pleased to have been asked to review this fascinating and important book but find myself intimidated by the venue. I know something of the adoption literature, and the literature specifically about trans-racial and trans-national adoption, but have the kind of ignorance of Korea—its history, culture, and politics—that only an American, even an educated one, can have. My review will have to be limited to placing this book in the context of adoption studies.

And this book makes a very significant contribution to our understanding of adoption. In the adoption literature, there is much talk of the “triad” made up of the birth mother or family; the adoptive family; and the adoptee. It is well known in the world of adoption that the voice of birth mothers is the most silenced of these. Adoptive parents, usually of higher socioeconomic status than birth mothers, have had their say. Adoptees, once grown, have come to have theirs. But birth mothers, silenced by the fact of their “inappropriate” motherhood in the first place, become silenced further by the stigma of having given a child for adoption. Only a comparatively few are able to break that silence and make their voices heard.

Tobias Hübinette's methodology, drawing upon a “postcolonial perspective and a cultural studies reading with the purpose of identifying how Korean nationalism is articulated . . . in light of the country's ethnonationalist identity and self-understanding, and colonial experiences and postcolonial developments” (p. 217) involves a thoughtful analysis of artifacts of Korean popular

culture. He offers wonderfully succinct and well-written summaries of these theoretical and methodological positions in the first chapter and then goes on to analyze “the cinematic and lyrical representations of adopted Koreans in feature films and popular songs.” The representations could be thought of as scarce—only four of each—or surprisingly plentiful—four such films! Four such songs! That number itself seems to be indicative of a cultural concern with the issue. On the other hand, those who “read adoption” (see Maryanne Novy’s book, *Reading Adoption*), who do cultural and literary studies, point out that in Western cultures too adoption figures surprisingly often in plot. While Hübinette convincingly argues for the place of adoption in the unique Korean context as a “supplying nation,” and a nation experiencing diaspora, with its history of division, reunification, and family separation, others have argued that adoption often serves as a metaphor for the (post)modern condition of rootlessness and individuation. While no one book can do everything, perhaps more awareness of other cultural studies approaches to adoption would have provided some balance.

To return to the wonderful contributions this particular book does make: if a nation thinks of itself as a kind of family, a “motherland,” then this book provides perhaps the first articulation of the voice of the nation-as-birthmother, the nation as shamed by its infertility, and shamed further by the adoption “solution” urged upon it. The nation, Hübinette convincingly argues, is a woman—the title of chapter 4. In this chapter, the rock song “Motherland,” released in 1997 by Sinawe, identified as Korea’s most famous rock band of their time (p. 124) provides the data. The song offers a “blurred merging of the birth mother with Korea as roots are maternalized and the nation becomes depicted as a mother. . . . a bifurcated mother (who) eagerly calls for and reclaims her lost and unhappy child living in exile in a far off and hostile Western country” (p. 125). A similar theme emerges in Chang Kil-su’s 1991 feature film *Susanne Brink’s Arirang*, “arguably the most famous Korean feature film that depicts an adopted Korean in a Western host country.” Suffering and shaming—of the child, the birthmother, and the nation—are repeated themes.

What Hübinette offers is more than just a depiction of a suffering nation: he also stands in for the missing voice of the birth mother, offering a feminist analysis, a critique of the conditions which—even as such popular culture images were being produced—continued to “produce” the adoptees. He came to the topic when he visited Korea “for the first time as an adult adoptee” in 1996 and saw the presentation of international adoption as something “negative and bad, even if it paradoxically still continued” (p. 14). There is nothing like a paradox to grab the attention of the scholar.

And there is nothing like adoption, and even more so international/inter-racial adoption, to clarify paradoxes and contradictions. I have come to think of adoption as perhaps quintessentially, paradigmatically, appropriate for soci-

ological analysis. It exists on widely different levels and functions in vastly different ways on those levels. There is no question—and I speak as a loving White American mother of an almost-grown African American daughter—that at an individual, psychological level, adoption can and often does work magnificently. Loving families are formed. And there is also no question that the things that make adoption possible—economic disparities, patriarchal hypocrisies, racism, and more—are evils. Good does sometimes come out of evil. That does not justify the evil nor even mitigate it. The ability to hold that paradox in one's head requires, I think, a sociological imagination.

Hübinette places his own relation to the paradoxes of adoption right at the start:

I am here making no secret of the fact that I am totally against any kind of continuation of international adoption from Korea . . . I am also deeply skeptical towards Korea's essentialist and nationalist attempts at making claims at, and wanting to recover and re-Koreanize adoptees like myself, while I am at the same time strongly critical towards European assimilationalism, which strips the adoptees of everything Korean, as well as American multiculturalism with its ethnic chic and orientalist fetishism. (p. 16)

In a book that offers a history of Korea as a nation, a history of Korean adoption in particular, the meaning of whiteness, of globalization, of family and maternity, gender and nation, Hübinette succeeds remarkably well in his hope that his ability to practice critical self-reflectivity (p. 17) makes use of all of the ambivalences, tensions, inconsistencies that run through the book—and through adoption itself.

Barbara Katz Rothman
City University of New York

Hidden Treasures: Lives of First-Generation Korean Women in Japan, by Jackie J. Kim. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. 197 pp. Bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Koseang koseang koseang (suffering, suffering, suffering; Korean)
Gaman, gaman (endure, endure; Japanese)

In the interviews of ten women presented in *Hidden Treasures*, all the women use the Korean word *kosaeng* (suffering) to talk about the trials and difficulties they met, but the Japanese word *gaman* (endurance) to refer to their ability to survive them. The purpose of the book, according to Jackie J. Kim in her preface, is to provide an opportunity to hear about the lives of these women