

Resisting The Genre of Adoption

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The material of narrative incarnation and resurrection is language. I believe words for that language are mined from ranges of adoptee-led revelation and responsibility. The work of interrogating narratives about adoption is to enter a toxic Petri dish and address the bacteria that curses its resident organisms. There are many barriers to that process because, in our culture, harmful practices are not always recognized. And if they are, they are not considered unlawful. What's legal isn't always beneficial. What's beneficial isn't always legal. Motivations for empire clash with (or exploit) what it means to deliver children who can breathe and become more. Born through that tension, our counter-narratives become a fragrant antithesis to the genre of saviorism. [Dr. Kimberly McKee](#) states it clearly in *Disrupting Kinship*:

Unlike adoptions of children following military conflicts, such as World War II and the Vietnam War, Korean adoption never ceased, even as the nation rose to become one of the top fifteen world economies by the end of the twentieth century. This monograph exposes the growth of the transnational adoption industrial complex (TAIC) – a neocolonial, multi-million-dollar global industry that commodifies children's bodies... The fact that Korea did not cease to participate in adoption while other countries ended their international adoption programs immediately after the initial need was met (e.g., the adoption of mixed race children in the immediate post-World War II period) indicates the embedded nature of adoption in everyday society even as Korea became a global economic power. This large-scale adoption project is rivaled by no other international adoption scheme. As a result, Korean adoptees' self-expression and activism cannot be overlooked, as their voices are leading conversations in flipping the script of mainstream understandings of adoption that render adoptees as perpetual children.

The TAIC imposes conventional values, settings, events, and roles when it assumes its global operations. Society knows those conventions and expects to see them fulfilled.

A benevolent white savior adopts a needy orphan.

This is what many advocates have in mind when we ask producers of media to refrain from using adoptees as plot devices.

Adoption is a genre of law (power and control) in that individuals and institutions sharply determine and limit what's possible within our stories and lived experiences, as if our journeys were created to picture and fulfill society's "knowledge" and anticipation. There's an appetite that the genre intends for adoptees to satisfy. The good news is that we, as Christians, serve a King whose pleasure it was to abolish the law and set captives free. Adoptees aren't here to fulfill someone else's genre convention. Through narrative incarnation and resurrection, something more truthful can be fulfilled. There's hope especially for the adoptee reaching out from under the violence of fiction to feel the warmth of light on her face again.

Your life, instead of existing to prove the benevolence of bureaucracy and multiculturalism, can now be a site for corrective narration, and, if you're open to asking Christ for help, one for incarnating both the abolishment of law and the realities of the Love that fulfill it.

Reflection

In your relationship with a person or group of people, where do you tend to experience a conflict of understandings, beliefs, values, motivations, or goals?

How about alignment with any of those points? Think setting, time, duration, intensity, etc.

Through those times, what truth about yourself seems to become more evident? What is discovered or confirmed about others?

What do you hope could change? Is there a small, incremental step you could keep in mind and even practice throughout your plans and interactions these next few weeks? Where might Word become flesh; flesh herald the Word? How will you discern whether or not the change process served you (or others)?

Source: McKee, K. D. (2019). *Disrupting Kinship: Transnational Politics of Korean Adoption in the United States*. University of Illinois Press.