

**In-between (Un)familiar Homes:
A Korean Canadian's Affective Return to South Korea**

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Return migration is a rising keyword that has recently gathered attention in studying the Korean diaspora. However, in conventional migrant studies, scholars focused economic outcomes of migration, and thus, returning was often interpreted as a “failure” that betrayed the anticipation of settling down in the host country. In this sense, the stories of the returnees have been relatively little known, and the returnees’ experiences and emotions were undervalued. Moreover, compared to other Korean diaspora groups, the relatively short history of Koreans in Canada has slowed down the discussion of the return migration of Korean Canadians. This paper examines a return migrant’s life experiences and emotions with affect theory, by analyzing an essay book titled *My Own Private Countries: Korea and Canada* by Hannah Kim, a 1.5-generation Korean Canadian return migrant. In doing so, this paper focuses on how affect arises in her transnational movements between Canada and South Korea and how she draws her sense of distance between her (un)familiar two home countries.

Keywords

return migration, Korean Canadian, home, distance, affect, emotion

Introduction

In November 2021, a YouTube video which covers a Korean family's return migration story from Canada to South Korea heated online. The channel owner shared some thoughts about his immigrant life, including his recent decision to return to South Korea after three years of settling down in Canada. "In fact, I knew reverse immigration is such a sensitive topic, so I was contemplating whether to upload it or not," (CanadaHyun 2021, 0:11-15) as he worried, the video sparked an online debate in Korean communities over the next six months, especially among Korean migrants with similar experiences. While many users indicated their sympathy and agreement by sharing their own return migration stories, others disagreed with the video content and worried about dishonouring Korean immigrants in Canada. In reflecting on these varied and unique experiences of migration and return, I realized that the feelings and emotions of returnees' life stories have not been discussed enough in Korean society, which led me to question things such as: Who makes a return and what affects migrants' return? How do returns differ in the past compared to today? How do returnees balance their multiple homes, in this case, Canada and South Korea? How does a return situate in migrants' minds as an affect?

In this paper, I examine Korean return migrants' experiences and emotions as they navigate transnational lives. Starting from conceptualizing what return migration is, I trace the conventional theories of return migration and the recent research on return migrants in Korean academia, interpreting them with the concept of negative affects. Then I look up how researchers have worked on migration studies with affect theory. Lastly, I analyze a Korean return migrant's experiences and emotions that show up in the essay, *My Own Private Countries: Korea and Canada* (2022), based on the concept of affect that Katherine Stewart (2007) and Sara Ahmed (2004) suggested. Within this process, I propose to look at how the author, Hannah Kim, as a returnee herself set a sense of distance from both two (un)familiar home countries, South Korea and Canada. The book provides the author's eight years of living experiences in South Korea, from a 1.5-generation Korean Canadian returnee's perspective.

Return migration is today's rising keyword when considering Korean Canadian's life and thus, their transnational migration stories are worthy to be examined. As returning is a subsequent migration from the initial immigration, the movements of human migration in this era are transnational by involving both micro and macro factors not only migrants themselves but also different cultural backgrounds, policies, and historical contexts. Focusing on Korean migrants' returning stories, I hope my research can offer an understanding of how they make their transnational trajectory within affects and emotions. Ultimately, by tracing the sense of distance with their homes scattered both inside and outside of the Korean Peninsula, I aim to reveal how migrants conceptualize their homes in different countries that they both belong to, but at the same time, do not belong to.

On Affect and Emotion

To touch on the author Kim's experiences and emotions, I propose to apply affect theory not only as a theoretical background but also as a method as Lee, Falter, and Schoonover (2021:277) examined, that is, affect is both theory and method as they are intricately intertwined. This paper does not propose to define, trace, or re-interpret the concept of affect that is followed by the huge discourses in the history of philosophy or anthropology; rather, this paper aims to focus on the potential of the application and expansion of affect on return migration theory in Korean diaspora. For these reasons, affect here is more likely to be the practical concept in line

with one's bodily experiences, rather than the relatively rational in the philosophical discussions from Spinoza and recent discourses by Brian Massumi (1995) that placed some distance between affect and emotion. I propose to read out Kim's affective practices that interact with other agents and bodies around her two homelands, South Korea and Canada, as well as the intra-action inside of her that continuously shapes the image and distance of her home countries.

Here I bring the concept of affect and emotion that feminist scholarship offers, mostly with Katherine Stewart and Sarah Ahmed. Affect here is not stagnant, rather it has mobility by circulating between objects and signs, which is the accumulation of affective value (Ahmed 2004:45). Based on this circulation, I refer to the concept of ordinary affects as Stewart (2007:2) defines in her book *Ordinary Affects*, "public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation" and "the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of." I engage with Sara Ahmed's (2004) approach in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* when discussing emotion, as a psychosocial contagion that creates "the very surface and boundaries that allow all kinds of objects to be delineated (10)" that ties people to the broader social process; how emotions work to shape the individual and one's body. Additionally, to draw on the relationship between migration and home, I take Ahmed's (1999) concept of migrancy and home, both for the narratives of "being at home" and "leaving home."

Studies of Return Migration and Korean Diaspora

a. Studies of Return Migration in North America

In the study of human migration, migration tended to be considered a one-time, bipolar phenomenon between home countries and host countries. However, many migrants make subsequent movements in their transnational networks, and thus, migrants' movements are neither one-time nor bipolar today, rather they are continuous and transnational in multiple places (Conway and Potter 2009:1), leading to subsequent migration such as return. Return migration emerged as one of the research topics since the 1960s in international academia, reflecting the era when migrants moved across the border to return to their homes in the wake of World War (Jung 2020:108). Gmelch (1980) defines return migration as "the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle" (136). In other words, migrants who return for a short term without the intention of remaining in their country of origin are not considered return migrants.

While Gmelch's definition in the conventional context indicates the permanent trail—to return to resettle, in recent studies, returning can be defined as a broader concept, given that many migrants today make subsequent movements after their first immigration. According to the definition offered by the research of the United Nations Statistics Division, returning migrants are "persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short-term or long-term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year" (UNSD 1998:94). In the research with OECD, Dumont and Spielvogel (2008:164) point out the complex situations when defining return migration, loosely setting the concept of return as the situation where a migrant goes back to one's home country after living in another country for a certain duration of sojourn. In this paper, I take Dumont and Spielvogel's moderately unrestricted definition of return, highlighting that every returnee's return experience is unique, and thus, the concept of return may be different depending on their various situation.

Within the history of migration, scholars in the West have done significant research on returnees by conceptualizing theories about return migration. In the 1980s, a discussion emerged among scholars about the return phenomenon and its impact on origin countries (Cassarino 2004:254). However, the details of return migrants' stories have been relatively little known, and the returnees' experiences and emotions were undervalued in migration studies. For instance, both neoclassical migration theory and the traditional push-pull factor theory have difficulties in explaining the reason for returning. In neoclassical migration theory, migration is an immigrant's behaviour to expand their opportunity in new places where they can be more productive; in push-pull theory, the reasons for migration are explained with plus and minus factors in the involved countries. Within the anticipation of migrants who expect to integrate into the host country successfully, migrants are divided into two: "winners" settle whereas "losers" return (de Haas, Fokkema, and Fihri 2014:416).

Cerase's (1974) case study of returnees from the United States to Southern Italy is notable in traditional return migration studies that frame returnees as "losers" for economic reasons. Based on the interviews with 243 Italians who once emigrated to the United States and later returned to Italy, he divided the types of return migration into four, which contain each of its negative affects that are with feelings such as distress, depression, and disappointment, and so forth (Richaud 2021:906-7). Cerase named the four types of return migration: the return of failure, the return of conservatism, the return of innovation, and the return of retirement. These returns contain negative affects that come with "failures," for example, those who emigrated to America for a better financial state failed to settle because of a lack of understanding of the American system, ended up working in underpaid jobs and losing the possible benefits that migration might have brought.

Whereas Cerase's analysis of return migration focuses on the economic outcomes indicating negative affects that made migrant workers return, Reyes' (1997) research considers diverse affects and the countries' power dynamics involving social networks beyond the economic processes. Reyes theorizes the types of returning by researching migrants in Western Mexico who returned from the United States. In the socioeconomic context of migration, the study indicates that the duration of stay in America and the characteristics of residents should be considered. According to this study, early return migration emerged at a higher rate among low-wage, undocumented labourers, low-educated, male, and single people. He classified the theories of return migration into four as follows: First, disappoint theory which explains migrants' misconceptions about the host country's benefits and thus they fail to settle; Second, circular migration theory categorizes migrants who regularly migrate and return in short-term, repetitive, and cyclical forms without planning to settle permanently or for a long time; Third, target income theory illustrates returnees who achieved a certain set of economic goals by investing in better technologies or savings; Lastly, social network theory explains that the network affects the duration of their sojourn, where new migrants can expand their social networks and reduce the risk of other potential migrants, increasing the opportunities that future migrants can rely on the existing immigrants' communities for information, such as transportation, housing, and employment.

b. Studies of Return Migration in the Korean Context

The studies on Korean returnees emerged in the wave of the Korean diaspora. Tracing back to the mid-nineteenth century, many ethnic Koreans left the soil of the Korean Peninsula by making "transnational" movements in the modern sense (Rha 2014, 60-62; Yoon 2012, 39-44;

National Archives of Korea n.d.). From the 1860s to 1910, people at the end of the Joseon Dynasty emigrated to China, Russia, Hawaii, Mexico, and Cuba due to famine and poverty. From 1910 to 1945 when the Korean peninsula was under Japanese colonial rule, farmers and workers moved to Manchuria and the Japanese archipelago due to the colonial government's exploitation; political activists moved to China, Russia, and the US to launch the independence movement; Koreans in the northern part of Sakhalin in Russia were forcibly migrated to central Asia by the Soviet government in 1937 (Yi 2011:102); Koreans were taken to mines and battlefields in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the Pacific War in 1941. Then the peninsula itself became a battlefield of the Cold War: from 1945 to 1962, Korea faced the Korean War (1950-1953) after the independence of the colonial period, and it eventually divided the peninsula into North and South. From 1962 to the present, migration has become more and more voluntary yet under the lead of the government.

Studies on Korean returnees have flourished with the Korean diaspora who are descendants in the post-Soviet region emigrated between 1860s to 1910. Scholars explored their return in various layers, such as the returnees' identity crisis and cultural adjustment in South Korea through the Korean language and food (Nam and Lee 2016; Sun and Parpiyev 2018), research on the returnees' migrant life stories and find the link based on their ethnic community village in Gwangju, South Korea (Kim 2014; Han 2020), the social status of the youth generation and the affect of Korean education (Sun 2017; Kim and Sun 2018), and so forth. Research on Korean Chinese, the Korean descendants mainly in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, has also been broadly examined in studying the Korean return migration. With the surge of returnees with the start of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China in 1992, scholars have focused on their ethnic return from various perspectives: identity crisis as marginal people between China and the Korean peninsula (Piao and Piao 2015), migrant strategies and experiences of Korean-Chinese factory workers focusing on self-identification (Lee 2014), returning Korean-Chinese and the strategies of their housing plans in South Korea (Lee and Choi 2007; Paek 2018).

Within the diasporic context of returnees from the post-Soviet region and China, many studies about Korean return migration focus on the returnees' identity crisis, discrimination, and the conflicts in social integration they experience in their partly ethnic home country, South Korea. In the Korean Chinese research, particularly, affects tend to be sticky with sticky words that "create impressions of others as those who have invaded the space of the nation, threatening its existence" (Ahmed 2004:46). Although the Korean Chinese were once accepted as overseas Koreans by the Korean public with the same ethnic roots under the nation's nationalism in the 1990s, the stigma as criminals follow them in today's South Korean society (Eum, Kim, and Noh 2021:225). Thus, their ethnic name, Joseonjok, became sticky with the image of criminals around the 2010s. Moreover, the fourth generation of overseas Koreans—mainly the youth generation of Korean-Chinese and Korean descendants from the post-Soviet regions returning these days—are not legally recognized as Korean diaspora since the Article 2-2 and 3-2 of the Law on Entry to and Exit of Korea and Legal Statuses of Overseas Koreans (the Overseas Koreans Law) only recognize overseas Koreans as Koreans up to the third generation (Choi 2018:32). In this historical background, the existing discourse on return migration in the Korean context has been distinctive from what the Western academia has discussed.

In contrast, returnees from North America are less likely to face sticky affects in South Korea; instead, the nation welcomed the returnees with their linguistic capital, English, which has become a well-known middle-class obsession among Koreans (Shin 2014:100). Moreover,

compared to Korean diaspora in the post-Soviet region who were exiled outside the nation because of famine and poverty, immigration to North America has been considered voluntary, with the development of the Korean economy and the government's adoption of an emigration policy as part of domestic population control (Choi 2003:15). In 1962, the Emigration Act was enacted in South Korea, encouraging Koreans to go overseas. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act in the United States, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, opened the gate for Korean migrants to immigrate to North America (National Archives of Korea n.d.). Subsequently, in 1967, Canada's removal of ethnic quotas from immigration laws sparked the start of regular immigration from South Korea to Canada (Baker 2008:161). The white-collar middle class who received higher education in South Korea participated most actively in the migration to North America, however, at the peak of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the number of people who returned to South Korea increased (National Archives of Korea n.d.). Yet through the 1997 Asian financial crisis, overseas migration increased again, involving not only conventional family-range migration but also migration in the field of business and employment.

Within this background, the affects and emotions of returnees from North America would be undoubtedly different from the other diasporic returnees, however, there is little research on return migrants from North America to South Korea. In this sense, Sheen's (2021) Ph.D. dissertation on the social adjustments of Korean returnees is notable in researching returnees from North America. Research on 1.5-generation Korean return migrants from New Zealand to South Korea (Lee, Friesen, and Kearns 2015) and the returning intention of Korean Australians (Jung 2020) can be references to review the traits of returnees to South Korea because all returnees mentioned above share the same capital, English, even though the returnees' experiences would not be the same. As for the study of Korean Americans that includes returning as part of the research, there were studies on Korean American literature based on Ahn Junghyo's novels (Yoon 1996) and the multiple citizenship system (Oh 2019), yet neither of them covered return migration as the central theme of the research. The returnees from Canada have been less examined in particular because of the short immigration history from South Korea to Canada, that is, Canada and Korea did not have formal diplomatic relations until January 1963, and regular immigration from South Korea to Canada could not start until after that (Baker 2008:159).

As mentioned above, Sheen's (2021) Ph.D. dissertation is considered the only empirical study of return migrants from North America to South Korea as of June 2023. The research explores the life experiences of returnees from the United States and Canada, interviewing eleven returnees (three Korean Canadians and eight Korean Americans) with the narrative inquiry method. By analyzing their reasons for return, the difficulties of re-settlement and acculturation were unveiled, as well as their identity crisis involving their legal citizenship status between South Korea and the United States or Canada. Sheen found that their self-identity became flexible depending on their emotions and thoughts which were constantly affected by the time they spent in a specific region and the place they settled. However, Sheen's research involves only three Korean returnees from Canada out of eleven participants, which frames the overall research to have more focus on the analysis of Korean Americans.

A Returnee's Affects and Emotions in South Korea

In this section, I explore a Korean Canadian returnee's emotions and experiences in Korea through the book *My Own Private Countries: Korea and Canada* (2022) by Hannah Kim.

This book is a compilation of short essays that were first published in the JoongAng Korea Daily newspaper, a Korean news website in North America branch. The book is a record of her ordinary affects and emotions that she embraced with her body every day in South Korea, that is, “a pleasure, a shock, flows and circuits in one’s life, embracing all the positive or negative emotions” (Stewart 2007:2). At the same time, I look at how affects and emotions circulate within her everyday practices, as Ahmed (2004:45) argued, affect is a form of capital that “does not reside positively in the sign or commodity but is produced as an effect of its circulation.”

Here I categorized the ordinary affects that appeared in the essay into three: memories, distance, and home. She published the book in Korean to clarify her feelings in South Korea; I translated her words into English for analysis and tried to convey the closest meaning that the words contained.

a. Memories: Circulating, Accumulating, and Overlapping

Kim’s migrant memory traces back to the 1980 and the 1990s, the era that she lived in South Korea. At the end of the book, she confesses that she decided to live as a Canadian, not Korean because she likes the infrastructure of Canada such as an eco-friendly environment, education that does not promote competition, and the sociocultural atmosphere that respects others. On the other hand, South Korea was her former home country that was filled with breathtaking negative affects in her memory; an individual’s freedom was being oppressed by society’s pressure, people were conscious of others’ eyes, and fierce competition was everywhere (Kim 2022:217). She acquired her Canadian nationality as the first in her family, and never intended to return to South Korea.

However, as her time in Canada accumulates, her negative memories of South Korea are diluted and she decides to return to South Korea, where most people “look similar” to her. She flashes back to her days in Canada were special, living with people who had different faces, different accents, and different hometowns. Learning how to respect diversity, at the same time, she was always lonely because she was “different” (Kim 2022:27-28). Her living as a minority gave her a sort of homesickness, which led her to return to South Korea, where the “similar faces” are the majority of the society. Finally, when she arrives in South Korea and encounters an overlapping scenery that she remembers from her past, she naturally embraces her Korean-ness:

“When the Korean landscape in the 1980-90s that I have forgotten for a while unfolds in front of me, certain emotions that were once erased in my mind come again as if the magic of memory loss has been disenchanting. The dim sentiments of the scenery of my motherland have been embedded in me so far let me shorten the gap of the 20-year memory in a foreign land” (11).

Although she identifies herself as “Canadian” with legitimate Canadian citizenship, when she comes to her other home, South Korea, she instantly takes a distance from Canada by describing it as a “foreign land” that she has been part of a minority in twenty years. This moment of affect sways when she leans her mind to South Korea, placing it her first home. Her feelings lean more toward the Korean side when she finds the shadows of the past in South Korea. Affects still come ordinary but they are ephemeral at once, being washed away as time goes by. For instance, she remembers that she often visited the backstreet of Ewha Womans’ University with her mother when she was young, before emigrating. With sparkling memories, now she visits there by herself frequently and finds that everything is short-term (Kim

2022:26)—for her, South Korea, especially her neighbourhood in Seoul, is such a vigorous city but at the same time, it is a city with a shame that the places of memories are disappearing too fast, so the experience and memory are losing room to be re-practiced.

Instead of letting her memories of her younger days sink down into the past, she tries to find others that can fill her. Being a citizen but also travelling there like a tourist, she volunteers to become a guide of Hanyangdoseong, the Fortress Wall of Seoul; she wanted to be a citizen in Seoul with pride because she regretted living like a “passive foreigner” (Kim 2022:34) in Vancouver, as a reflection of herself in the past reluctant to engaging with local communities. She learns how to embrace South Korea as part of her during the training session by learning the history of modern Korea. She recalls her training days to be a tour guide as below:

“How much more should I love Korean to speak it as my language? What I learned was remaining lumpy in my head, but they didn’t come out of my mouth well. I stammered a lot as if I were speaking a foreign language for the first time. (...) It was a great challenge for me to explain the Hanyang Fortress Wall to the citizens of Seoul who would know more about Hanyang [the former name of Seoul]. (...) One day when I guided the citizens, I couldn’t forget their impressive faces who listened to me carefully when I introduced myself as a Canadian *gyopo* [overseas Korean] while explaining the history of the Joseon dynasty, the pain of the Korean modern history including the Japanese colonial period” (Kim 2022:34-36).

Now the fortress, where she often walks around and visits like a tourist, has become the place where she learns Korean modern history, as well as the place that she has to know well and spread that knowledge to others. She engages with the place, the very central and traditional part of Korean culture, and people, the visitors who are so “Korean” that they were surprised by a *gyopo* tour guide, and herself, struggling with Korean which was supposed to be her first language. Her body explores the place when giving a tour and her energy impresses people. In this everyday bodily interaction, things become familiar that were not familiar to her once. That (un)familiarity melts into her Korean identity, finding her roots and therefore she can balance herself as both Korean and Canadian.

b. Distance between South Korea and Canada

Stewart (2007) takes the third-person viewpoint in her book *Ordinary Affects*, seeing her book as an experiment in cultural theory. To emphasize the provisional status narrative and identity, Stewart isolates the authorial voice when writing in the third person. In her own words: “She is not so much a subject position or an agent in hot pursuit of something definitive as a point of contact; instead she gazes, imagines, senses, takes on, performs, and asserts not a flat and finished truth but some possibilities (and threats) that have come into view in the effort to become attuned to what a particular scene might offer” (5). Likewise, the view of the third person is a popular way to take an objective position. But for Kim, that sense of distance is what makes her uncomfortable and isolated. This is because, while embracing her life as a return migrant, she takes the distance from both home countries as proof of becoming away:

“A few days ago, I was talking to an acquaintance in Vancouver and I paused a while when the counterpart said, “Korea is like...” Immigrants who live outside of Korea always take a third-person perspective when speaking of South Korea and Koreans as if they were not Korean. So did I. But at that moment, when my acquaintance said,

‘Koreans are...,’ I was uncomfortable with the way of speaking as if that ‘Koreans’ referred to me. It was my first time feeling uncomfortable with the third-person viewpoint” (Kim 2022:58).

Before her return, “Korean” with the third person viewpoint was not an affective word for her. However, when she returned and lived in South Korea for a while, she suddenly felt that the distance that her acquaintance took bothered her. “Korea” is no longer a distant home for her; it affectively exists in her mind deeply involved with her everyday life. The third-person viewpoint was convincing for her when taking a neutral position between two countries, South Korea and Canada, however, now she faces an affect in the name of uncomfortableness. During her journey to find her home outside Canada, South Korea finally takes a place in her boundary, making her take the Korean side.

However, when staying in South Korea, physical distance between the countries also makes her feel isolated. Her old parents, the first generations of immigrants in Canada, always make her face negative affects; the fact that they are not with her continuously provokes her to feel anxious. She faces the irony that her parents immigrated to Canada for the family’s better life, and now their two daughters, including the author Hannah Kim, have returned to South Korea for a “better” life again. Within this circulating migration across the generations, the gap of the distance—both metaphoric and physical—cannot be easily narrowed down. Yet ultimately it is the moment when she feels is a genuine home for her whenever she meets her family, knowing how to love each other within the distance even though that is sometimes needed to overcome (Kim 2022:76).

c. Home: Never but Always There

Home, undoubtedly, is the most impactful topic that goes through the middle of the whole book. In the essay, Kim redefines her sense of distance towards two home countries: South Korea as her “home country” and Canada as her “likely home country (Kim 2022:69)”. That is because she is a 1.5-generation Korean Canadian who has reminiscences in her younger days before she emigrated at seventeen. When she first settled down in Canada, she recalls that her life was not easy—although Canada’s education and sociocultural atmosphere respect diverse cultures, she was alone because she could not mingle in the Canadian mosaic, always being aware of her “different” sides with a different face as a minority (Kim 2022:28). Those emotions in Canada helped her reaffirm her ethnic identity as Korean when she encounters ordinary, everyday affects in a folksy restaurant:

“... That was the feeling of Korea, the motherland that my body remembers. ... No matter how long I lived in Canada, no matter what my current citizenship I have, and no matter where most of my memories were built up, the heaviness and nostalgia from my motherland confirm that I am Korean. Yes, I still live in Korea, in the scenery of my roots and the humane people. I live here, also becoming another landscape” (Kim 2022:11).

Like this, she reinvents herself as Korean, feeling South Korea as home, finding nostalgia in everyday affects. However, she also reveals her homesickness towards Canada because it is the other homeland that cannot be separated from her, as she was continuously aware of her Korean identity in her early days in Canada. In Kim’s (2022:69) words, Vancouver has become a precious place in her life and now it has become a homelike place that sometimes she misses more than South Korea. Whenever she encounters hardships or unfamiliar-ness in South Korea,

the longing builds up more; in the nostalgia that floats between her two home countries, she embraces her multiple homes and homesick as follows:

“However, even if I live in Seoul or Vancouver, there is something I have to give up. Isn’t it the logic of life that you can’t have both at once? In Vancouver, Seoul was my home to return. Now I live in Seoul, and I feel Vancouver is my home that I will return to someday. It is not easy in real life to change the place you live. But for me, I have a place to feel nostalgic and a place to return, so I live a life that is lonely in every place but at the same time, not lonely at all in everywhere” (Kim 2022:59).

Her emotion and how she feels home is in line with what Ahmed (1999:339) describes as the narrative of home; “leaving home produces too many homes and hence no home.” 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—to Hannah Kim, South Korea as home sometimes comes with positive affects 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 her future, as she “never gets there, but is always getting there” (Ahmed 1999:339).

Yet in her eight years of journey in South Korea, she seems to find her own balance in chasing home:

“What I realized in South Korea when I came back is that I don’t have to choose either Korean or Canadian identity. I realized there are South Korea and Canada inside of me, and thanks to the people I met in Korea, I want to bring out that the Korean identity takes more part in me. ... With a layer of jewel-like memories, I can now live in Canada as a Korean, with the pride of my Korean-ness” (Kim 2022:218-19).

Affects come to her from in-between two home countries and she is ready to embrace them. She hugs affects that once were floating somewhere at the edge of her feelings, inclining when she tried to take one side as her sole, genuine home country. They have accumulated inside of her with a spot that helps her balance herself in her transnational life, affecting her to continuously follow her guts towards the feelings of home.

Conclusion

From tracing the discourses of return migrants to the return migrants in the Korean context, and Hannah Kim’s essay, I examined a returnee’s return experiences and emotions by applying affect theory from Stewart (2007) and Ahmed (1999;2004). In tracing the conventional return migration theories, I focused more on each returnee’s emotions which are often disregarded in the shadow of economic outcomes that migrants brought. By giving specific situations of the Korean diaspora, I highlighted the importance of further studies about the Korean returnees from North America, particularly, returnees from Canada. In exploring Hannah Kim’s essay on returning. Affects arouse in her bodily experiences, emotions, and feelings in her every day in South Korea. I categorized her affective return into three—memories, distance, and home—and examined how her ordinary affects come into her daily life and let her set a balance between her transnational movements and homes. The story of Hannah Kim, leaving home but at the same time being at home, echoes not only with herself but also with other migrants who are

wandering among the boundaries, sharing “the lack of a home” (Ahmed 1999:337). For those who are in-between around (un)familiar homes, ordinary affects give a piece of the puzzle about home, touching on emotions that we were not used to being aware of.

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