No Home but the World: Forced Migration and Transnational Identity

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by

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ABSTRACT
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In my dissertation, I investigate how 20th and 21st century literature depicts new transnational identities that challenge the conventional understanding that belonging and identity are routed primarily through the nation-state. Specifically, I focus on those narratives within immigrant literature that address the lived experiences and consequent identity formations of forced migrants: individuals, families, and communities displaced from their country or region of origin and forced to inhabit spaces with which they often have no prior familiarity. This literature challenges the idea that a spectrum of lived experiences can be restricted to a codified US nationalism and contained within an identity or set of identities that are uniquely "American." Literary studies can advance this important topic alongside the interdisciplinary fields of migration studies, international law, and sociology, and a study of forced migration narratives can help to broaden the definition of cosmopolitanism to one that includes an individual, family, or community living inside the nation-state, but whose cultural ties transcend any notion of defined borders or a single national belonging.

The assumption of place and cultural (or political) allegiance cannot withstand the observable expressions of transnational identities in forced migrant narratives, and the interdisciplinary fields of both literary studies and American studies have much to contribute to this issue. Assimilating these stories into the collective "immigrant literature" genre not only dismisses the importance of the violence of forced migration from the realm of cosmopolitan experiences, but it also denies that trauma a voice of its own. Global citizenship does not just come from an abundance of resources and the desire to use those resources internationally for personal gain, or even for geopolitical social progress; it also comes from being ripped away from your home and thrust into new environments and circumstances over which you possess no agency, from not having access to governmental support because of your gender, or no access to education because of your religion, and having to create a new life in a new land just to access the most basic of human rights.

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I dedicate this work to Golbon, who makes everything possible, and to Aram, who gives everything meaning.

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Introduction

Immigrants to the United States no longer live in a place of security, if we ever did. With the calamitous changes that transpired between 2017 and 2019, the place that has become our home has threatened us all, and our citizenship—for those of us who have obtained this legal status—no longer guarantees our protection. Though the deportation of naturalized citizens wasn't an impossibility before, it was far from a common occurrence. In her article in *The New Yorker* "In America, Naturalized Citizens No Longer Have an Assumption of Permanence," Masha Gessen writes,

> "The conceit of naturalization is that it makes an immigrant not only equal to natural-born citizens but indistinguishable from them. So denaturalization, much like the process of stripping a natural-born American of citizenship, has been an extraordinary procedure reserved for very serious cases, mostly those of war criminals."

The "denaturalization push" (*Vox News*) that occurred during 2017 and 2018 and the fear that it is eliciting among the naturalized citizenry of the United States is only a part of the nativist and nationalist policies operating in the country. In October and November of 2018, American troops were ordered to the US-Mexican border, in an unprecedented move to prevent the border-crossing of a group of migrants from Honduras. This group, made up entirely of individuals and families fleeing violence and poverty in their places of origin, has neither broken any American laws nor proclaimed any intent other than seeking humane relief and assistance. Refusing to even consider their request for assistance is a death sentence for many of them, as they do not possesses the means to return to their places of origin. For those that survive, there is simply nowhere to go, and

not even a space in which they can stand and wait. Near the end of November 2018, these restrictions reached a crisis point in which a large number of migrants rushed the Tijuana-San Diego border and were violently repelled by American and Mexican law enforcement. Among the migrants were young children seen clutching their faces at the onslaught of chemical weapons deployed against them; for them, there is no relief, and no recourse.

What does it mean to be a forced migrant? This question has no single answer, as the experiences of forced migration vary widely and include the familiar stories of refugees and exiles, as well as the less familiar accounts of statelessness and transnational adoption. While we tend to associate forced migration with violent displacement—a fair association, to which the chapters in this dissertation will attest—the events that lead to forced migration can also be a calm refusal or entirely absent from conscious memory. Sharing the same emotional pain as violent displacement, the outcome is the same; the place of origin is no longer a safe or legal space to inhabit. Where, then, are the spaces that forced migrants can inhabit? A significant portion of our contemporary political conversations concerns refugees and asylum-seekers displaced by violence—or the threat of violence—and their efforts to find a new place for their families to inhabit. Though some are admitted, many are turned away and possess no agency—be it legal or logistical—to return to their places of origin, like the Honduran migrants mentioned above. Those admitted undergo a rehoming that often does not match the cultural assumptions of the natural citizens of the state, while the space that those rejected by asylum, residence, or citizenship rights come to inhabit is a nebulous, interstitial zone of existence outside the established borders of the world's nations. My claim is that forced

migrants represent a new dimension of cosmopolitanism that challenges the unfettered mobility and the agency to exercise basic human rights traditionally associated with the term.

Cosmopolitanism has a variety of connotations in our contemporary world. While many associate it with an openness toward—or an abundance of—international experience, there is also the notion of being "at home" in the world, taking international experience to a larger, personal sense of international belonging. Though both of these definitions can begin to point in a useful direction, Paul James provides a definition of cosmopolitanism that serves quite well. He writes, "Cosmopolitanism can be defined as a global politics that, firstly, projects a sociality of common political engagement among all human beings across the globe, and, secondly, suggests that this sociality should be either ethically or organizationally privileged over other forms of sociality" (x). With these three definitions in mind, we can see the direction in which the traditional definition of cosmopolitanism points; a global community that prioritizes the shared humanity of all people over the divisions imposed by the nation-state framework of the world that we know. The utopian vision suggested by this definition is an exciting one, and scholars across various fields, including Paul James, have written at length about ethical cosmopolitanism and organizational cosmopolitanism and their logistics and methodologies of implementation. Most of these definitions, however, including those of Richard Falk's categories of world citizens, which I discuss below, limit the scope of cosmopolitanism to individuals who possess the financial agency and mobility to pursue and craft the ideal political model for the planet.

In his response to Kwame Appiah's new cosmopolitanism, Bruce Robbins writes

in *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence* about "dirty cosmopolitanism," as one "straining toward global justice that knows from the outset it is partial at best, limited and distorted by national self-interest" (45). Here the first notions of a more comprehensive cosmopolitanism come into view for this project, a notion which addresses grave injustice and seeks to find solutions to that injustice. From here, we begin to understand that cosmopolitanism can encompass more concerns than international experiences and utopian visions. Still, however, this definition operates within legal frameworks of identification and access, qualities held only by a minority of forced migrants.

My dissertation began as a search for a unifying genre of literature that addressed these alternative routes to world citizenship and cosmopolitanism. I identified what I have termed "forced migrant literature" as a subgenre of immigrant literature, including the stories of refugees, exiles, international adoptees, and the stateless that helps to expand the definition of cosmopolitanism. Though the way their narratives of displacement and rehoming situate them in a global space that preserves their transnationalism and resists homogenization remains a central part of my work, my research has also branched into the role that these narratives play in subverting the rhetoric of both the nation-state and international legislative bodies such as the United Nations and in representing the unvarnished accounts of forced migration. Currently, international legislative bodies represent a stopping point on the route toward cosmopolitanism, as they ossify us in a system that restricts thinking outside of the nation-state framework.

The international legislative bodies exist, and their mission statements are clear, so even with the nation-state basis of the coalition, why are there individuals and families that fall under their purview who cannot receive help? In "Migrant Cosmopolitanism," Thomas Nail writes,

> "More often than not, cosmopolitan institutions composed of nation-states exist to protect the interests of citizens and states above and at the expense of migrants and the stateless. For example, the United Nations, an institution similar to what Kant had in mind, defines the right to leave a territory as a human right, but not the right to enter a territory. In short, powerful nation-states want to protect their wealth from the global poor. Another example: the United Nations Migrant Workers Convention, signed by many states, provides basic rights and protection for migrants with status, but deliberately excludes rights for nonstatus migrants for the same reasons as above. Thus the cosmopolitanism of nation-states is not enough to protect or include all global migrants" (192).

Founded after WWII, in part to specifically combat statelessness and displacement, the United Nations only enshrines the rights that can lead to statelessness, such as the right to exit state territory, but not the right to enter a place and end statelessness. Combined with his analysis that points to the priority of nation-states to protect their own wealth, Thomas Nail's conclusion that the cosmopolitanism of nation-states is not enough is only part of the truth. In fact, as no framework exists within the nation-state system that provides the foundation for international legislative bodies that can lead to an end of statelessness for the displaced, can it even be called cosmopolitanism?

Throughout my dissertation I use the terms cosmopolitanism and global (or world) citizenship. The primary distinction between the two is that cosmopolitanism is an ideology rather than a legislated, controlled, and legally-binding status, whereas the use of the term "citizenship" in global or world citizenship carries with it the implication of that formal status. That implication carries enough weight that scholars such as Bhikhu Parekh have argued, "The cosmos is not yet a *polis,* and we should not even try to make it one by creating a world state, which is bound to be remote, bureaucratic, oppressive, and culturally bland. If global citizenship means being a citizen of the world, it is neither practical nor desirable" (12). While I am not yet convinced that such institutions are necessarily oppressive, they have already proven themselves to be remote and bureaucratic, as seen in the international legislative realities of the United Nations. Like Falk, Parekh then goes on to talk about what global citizenship could or should mean in the absence of such international legislative bodies:

> there is another sense, however, in which it is meaningful and historically relevant. Since the conditions of life of our fellow human beings in distant parts of the world should be a matter of deep moral and political concern to us, our citizenship has an inescapable global dimension, and we should aim to become what I might call a globally oriented citizen (12).

Through the use of the term "oriented," Parekh has removed the legal status implications of global citizenship, but instead of moving toward a more inclusive space that crosses into the discourse of forced migration, the reader is then pushed in the direction of the arena of the mobile and financially elite; of exclusive rather than inclusive cosmopolitanism. Being a globally oriented citizen carries with it the same volunteerism

and activism as Falk's global citizen categories, roles in which the displaced typically have little time to involve themselves. In this way, Parekh distinguishes between the "other" and the moral and political concern that "we" should possess as citizens already guaranteed our protection. In the chapters that follow, I at times move the rhetoric of my arguments in the direction of cosmopolitanism and away from global or world citizenship. Though this is not done out of shared critical trajectory with Falk or Parekh, I do recognize the difficulty of grappling with the notion of an unrecognized, status-less citizenship.

Narratives as Truth Commissions

Much of the discourse of migration exists within fields other than literary studies, such as international law and sociology, as well as migrant studies itself, disciplines that often engage directly with policy-making institutions such as the United Nations. Literary studies, though it is often left out of the policy-making meetings, can intervene in this conversation in critical ways. As much as institutions such as the United Nations claim that they wish to hear the truth and testimony from migrants themselves, they often turn a blind eye to claims that do not meet the strict requirements for refugee status. Zahra Kamalfar, an individual whose forced migration story is discussed in the third chapter, and her family lived homeless and destitute in the Sheremetyevo airport and faced multiple rejections for their requests to be classified as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Her story, as well as the story of Deann Borshay Liem studied in the first chapter, have only made themselves known through documentary filmmaking and autobiographic storytelling. Their experiences, like the other migrant narratives studied in these chapters, act as a form of unofficial truth

commission that rejects the sanctioned language of the nation-state in order to relate their experiences.

Official truth commissions are formed by state and international legislative entities, such as the United Nations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides the following explanation of a truth commission's role:

> The right for individuals to know the truth about the fate of disappeared persons or information about other past abuses has been affirmed by treaty bodies, regional courts, and international and domestic tribunals. A truth commission reaches out to thousands of victims in an attempt to understand the extent and the patterns of past violations, as well as their causes and consequences. The questions of *why* certain events were allowed to happen can be as important as explaining precisely *what* happened. Ultimately, it is hoped that the work of the commission can help a society understand and acknowledge a contested or denied history, and it doing so bring the voices and stories of victims, often hidden from public view, to the public at large. A truth commission also hopes to prevent further abuses through specific recommendations for institutional and policy reforms
>
> (Rule of Law Tools for Post-Conflict States, Truth Commissions, 1-2).

This professed function of truth commissions is vitally important in a world where many nation-states wield unregulated powers. The problem, however, is that while this professed function can produce positive outcomes, it relies upon the sanctioned rhetoric of the state and international entities to articulate the "truths" that it discovers. The result

of this restriction is often the glossing-over of facts or testimonies that are particularly harmful to the integrity of that state or institution. While novels such as *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* for example, might not often result in legislative action or foreign aid, narratives such as the Kamalfar family story have. After the viral video of Zahra Kamalfar was released, the Canadian government granted her government-sponsored immigration (CBC). The United Nations had rejected their refugee applications numerous times, claiming that they did not meet the requirements for refugee status. The narrative truth commission efforts of *CNN*, *Pajamas Media*, and *Russia Today* merely showed the same truth that the Kamalfar family had reported to the United Nations, and they found the help they needed.

What these narrative truth commissions show are individuals and families existing in a space between the national and the global, a status that Saskia Sassen attributes to "powerless immigrant workers" as much as to transnational corporate professionals and government officials. Sassen calls for, among other things, a recognition of the economic contributions of the global classes, and Nira Yuval-Davis' *The Politics of Belonging*, while it does intersect with much of my dissertation's work on international adoptees and refugees who have rehomed in a new space, only briefly touches on the most extreme form of cosmopolitanism; the stateless, involuntary outlaw. Though important steps on the path to understanding the relationship between forced migration and cosmopolitanism, they do not dwell on the idea of trauma as a route to involuntarily transcending the defined borders of the world. Asking the question of how can literary studies find a place in the discourse of forced migration and belonging pales in

comparison to asking how can the only field of study that deals directly with narratives of displacement not be central to the conversation?

A fair question to ask in the face of this argument is, if we are so confident that the testimony of official truth commissions are only half-truths, or reports edited so completely that they barely resemble the original accounts, how can we trust that the authors of forced migrant narratives are providing readers with the truth? A summary of issues with accurate history comes from the final paragraph of Salman Rushdie's "'Errata': Or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*" which reads, "History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge" (*Imaginary Homelands* 25). Though Rushdie does admit that memories can, and often do, conflict with other accounts of the same events, they come from a place grounded in the history of the event and are molded from historical shapes. Certainly Junot Diaz's *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and the Star Trek franchise do not purport to be historically accurate accounts, but Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Deann Borshay Liem's *First Person Plural*, are firmly grounded in the history of events. For the narrators in those texts, they are, to quote Rushdie, "memory's truth… and only a madman would prefer someone else's version to his own" (25). At the very least, the narratives studied in these chapters are as faithful to the specific events of history as are the official truth commissions, and far more credible coming from individuals who faced the trials of displacement themselves; their stories serve no institutional body but memory itself.

We live in a world—or at the very least, a country—that looks at the stories of

international adoptees, refugees, and exiles who have immigrated to the United States as "lucky to be an American." Statelessness does not even enter into the minds of the majority of society, as it "challenges the fundamental logic of a twentieth-century politics of belonging, which were based on state citizenship" (Yuval-Davis 80). The classes taught in primary and secondary schools read immigrant literature as a collection of narratives of dreams coming true or of multicultural perspectives being added to the American tapestry, if they read them at all. Even at the university level, my dissertation plays a primary role in defining the subgenre of forced migrant literature, suggesting that many departments of the humanities have been content to group the story of the exile and the story of the expatriate millionaire together. At best, the severely restricted limits of our society's contemporary comprehension of forced migration leaves questions about displacement and rehoming unanswered, and at worst, it allows narrow definitions to restrict access to security and legal recourse.

Audiences for the film *The Terminal*, which will be among the primary subjects of analysis in chapter three, saw the stateless Viktor Navorsky as a humorous subject in part because of his singularity. Here was the story of a man out of place in the world; how unbelievable! Viktor Navorsky's tale, however, does not exist in a vacuum; while it is only partially based on the life of Mehran Karimi Nasseri, there are many stories of the stateless similar to it. In addition, the numerous stories of international adoptees, exiles, and refugees represent only the smallest fraction of the tens of millions of displaced persons around the world. As a society, we can barely discern the realities of forced migration, and the legislation that we have implemented to curtail the loss of human rights reflects that ignorance. In order to address these injustices, there has to be a

productive space to begin the conversation, and through analyzing narratives as an unofficial truth commission testimony, literary studies can provide a trajectory of access unencumbered by state rhetoric.

This all speaks to the question of why this intervention is important; our understanding is not only incomplete, it leads us in the wrong direction. We have drawn lines between groups of dislocated persons and separated them into classifications that speak to our comfort rather than the reality of forced migration. Challenging Richard Falk's identification of five specific forms of global citizens (global reformers, elite global business people, global environmental managers, politically-conscious regionalists, and transnational activists), I claim that the exclusivity of global identity within these categories of the elite in contemporary social and academic discourse ignores the reality of the lived experiences of forced migrants in American culture. In describing the constituent qualities of the global citizen, Falk writes, "The global citizen, then, adheres to a normative perspective – what needs to happen to create a better world" (*The Making of Global Citizenship*). Though Falk does go on to talk about the deterritorialization of global identity and helping those in need, his definition of global citizenship remains squarely within the arena of power and choice, as the purview of the financial titan and the political activist, who are concerned primarily—if not exclusively—with geopolitics. Literary studies has much to add to this conversation, as the forced migrant identities that emerge in American literature can help to articulate post-national identities that resist the homogenization of established American discourse on assimilation and belonging.

Like Richard Falk and Saskia Sassen, I am concerned with the current status of the nation-state and how it affects mobility in the world. However, the methodology that I employ does not rely solely upon working within a system—or critiquing a system—that is limited to official reports, but one that also relies on literary narratives. For Falk, the notion of the global citizen, or the citizen-pilgrim[1], is one that, while possessing a world-embracing vision of unity, still represents a population of transnationally-mobile persons of great financial agency. Sassen pushes past this exclusivity and identifies a migrant labor population as existing between the national and global levels of consideration (MPI). My work, through reading literature in order to read the experience of forced migration, reveals the path of trauma and displacement as an access point to cosmopolitanism.

Because this dissertation focuses on narratives both in literature and in film, it participates in the ongoing discourse of literary criticism, especially at its intersection with migrant and immigrant studies. Lisa Lowe, in *Immigrant Acts*, speaks to the notion that the immigrant—specifically the Asian immigrant, a population heavily represented in the narratives studied in this work—is "forever foreign" and therefore subject to both legal and social scrutiny as the other. Focusing on two groups of migrants, Edward Said describes the unhealable rift between the exile and their homeland, and refugees as a concern new to the 20th century.[2] Agamben, in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, writes about the idea of an individual declared to be outside of legal protection and therefore deprived of basic human rights. These three scholars and theorists, along with the many others referenced throughout the chapters of my work, all touch on the realities

[1] *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*, 120
[2] Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile, 173, 181.*

of forced migration, and my dissertation is an effort to weave together the various strands of their studies into a more complete picture of the forced migrant experience in literature.

The first chapter focuses on transnational adoptees, primarily within the United States, as a community of forced migrants. In this chapter, I examine how the common assumptions of assimilation and American identity that are often attached to adoptees do not match their lived experiences as forced migrants. The texts in this chapter are all documentary films; *First Person Plural*, *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, and *Somewhere Between*. The first two films, both directed by Deann Borshay Liem, chronicle her life as a transnational adoptee searching for the missing pieces of her identity both in the United States and South Korea. *Somewhere Between*, directed by Linda Goldstein-Knowlton, contains four stories of young women adopted from China also on a quest for identity. Much of this chapter is devoted to investigating the various state and private apparatus that provided for the forced migration of these individuals, as well as the human rights violations that were committed in order to complete their adoption, to argue that the narratives of adoptees I examine constitute narratives of forced migration. In the chapter, I engage with Saskia Sassen's scholarship on the spaces between the national and the global to establish connections between transnational adoption and cosmopolitanism.

In the second chapter, I address communities of exiles and refugees, long the pitied outcasts of the global community. I argue that the refugee and exilic narratives in the novels *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, and *Vietnamerica* by G. B. Tran act as an unofficial form of truth commission for the experiences of exiles and refugees rehoming in the spaces that they are forced to

inhabit, subverting the state-sanctioned language to which official truth commissions are typically tied. The identities formed in their places of origin are not severed by their forced migration, and their resultant identity formations disrupt the notions of home and belonging central to nationalist beliefs. It must be noted that one of these texts, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, stands apart from the others in that it is a purely fictional narrative. Though it is informed by Diaz's wealth of knowledge regarding the Dominican Republic's history, it does not follow the autobiographical focus of Tran or Satrapi's texts. Whereas that autobiographical nature allows their texts to be read as more explicit forms of literary truth commissions, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* allows us to see a collection of cultural and historical ideas and events express themselves in fiction as an emergent form of truth commission.

Chapter three centers on the narratives of the stateless. Unlike refugees and exiles, stateless persons inhabit a nebulous zone that defies contemporary definitions of place, without any established legal protections existing until the last few years. Reading *The Terminal Man* by Mehran Nasseri alongside the film *The Terminal* by Steven Spielberg that was based on Nasseri's life, and thematically related journalism, I examine how the airport becomes an interstitial zone of habitation for the homo sacer of these texts. The journalism that I include in this chapter comes from three diverse sources: CNN, Pajamas Media, and Russia Today. Each of these media content providers have faced significant criticism, with Pajamas Media facing scrutiny as a conservative outlet hosting many controversial contributors, and Russian Today often seen as a propaganda arm of the Russian government. Even CNN, though it is often viewed as a respectable, fact-oriented outlet, has come under fire from many sides following the 2016 presidential election in

the United States. Though these three media organizations have their own distinct priorities in their dissemination of information, their shared focus on the displacement of the Kamalfar family reveals something of the awe that statelessness can inspire in a society that never encounters it. Cosmopolitanism for these individuals and families finds its roots in their status as involuntary outlaws, deprived of any legal recourse to address their statelessness.

In the fourth and final chapter, my dissertation turns to the genre of science fiction, specifically to *Star Trek*, a franchise which possesses a wealth of content intersecting with each of the figures central to the first three chapters; adoptees, refugees and exiles, and the stateless. Turing to science fiction is a scholarly shift particularly appropriate to migrant studies as it shows readers a spectrum of possibilities for the future. In the first half of the chapter, I argue that the Federation, the central protagonists of the series, operates as a neoliberal regime, subverting the various aspirations of adoptees, refugees, and exiles while maintaining the illusion of cultural liberation for each group. My argument in the second half of the chapter is that statelessness, something rarely seen in science fiction, is reproduced across the franchise through individuals and organizations that resist the homogenization of the Federation.

It is not my contention that these four chapters encompass all of the dimensions of forced migration, or even the principle communities of forced migrants in the world. In the future, I could easily see adding an additional chapter for trafficked persons, and another for climate refugees, among others. These chapters are a starting point in a much larger project of migration studies in literature, and the research archive for this work expands daily in the dire political realities of our time.

The choice of texts in my dissertation reflects the Americanist approach in my work. Ultimately, however, the identities expressed within forced migrant literature subvert the effort to group forced migrants within something that might be defined as an "American" society, as we see that place does not denote political or cultural identity in these narratives. It is necessary, however, to push through this paradox to help demonstrate that the themes of identity and belonging in forced migrant literature help to include displaced persons within the ranks of global citizens, as part of the effort to resist the notion of cosmopolitanism as a place reserved for the mobile elite. The assumption of place and cultural—or political—allegiance cannot withstand the observable expressions of transnational identities in forced migrant narratives, and the interdisciplinary fields of both literary studies and American studies have much to contribute to this issue.

The introduction to my dissertation would be incomplete without a brief explanation for my personal stake in this project. I am a transnational adoptee, a member of the forced migrant community. Though my ability to pass within the United States as a white American male has provided me with a life that does not reflect the hardship typically associated with the displacement of forced migration, much of my identity has been built upon being the naturalized American member of my otherwise natural American family. My spouse and her family came to the United States as refugees and have faced a host of difficulties that have shaped their sense of identities as Americans. Not a single element of my life remains untouched by either displacement or permanent transnational existence, and while I was raised to believe that my place in the United States was guaranteed, the political realities in this country that has become my home challenge that belief daily. Even the 2018 elections in the United States, in which a "blue

wave" demonstrated a pervasive discontent within the American electorate regarding the conservative administration, cannot assuage the fear that we feel in the immigrant community. After all, having faith in the general goodwill of the American people is quite different from having faith that the federal government will reflect that compassion in the application of their power.

My dissertation is primarily a project that demonstrates the agency possessed by literary studies to intervene in the interdisciplinary discourse of forced migration. Identifying a subfield of immigrant literature as forced migrant literature not only highlights specific narrative elements unique to displacement, but also illustrates how trajectories of trauma can lead to cosmopolitanism. In doing so, an implicit call to action can also be read in this work, one that would usually be reserved for the fields of sociology and international law that are so connected to this study; narratives of forced migration are not only manifestations of the creative visions of their authors, they are also works that interrogate a system of abandonment. This abandonment is not the result of an insidious international plot to rid spaces of undesirables; it comes from the fact that every system, even the international legislative bodies tasked with protecting human rights, is restricted to the premise that every individual has a protected status in some place. Our bureaucracy simply is not built for transnational adoptees, exiles, refugees, or the stateless, and the experiences of these populations reveals a host of compromising holes through which they can slip and never be heard from again.

Chapter 1

Home, Misconceived: Transnational Adoptees as Forced Migrants

Introduction

There has typically been a feeling of security in the transnational adoptee community regarding our status in the United States, something to which I can attest as a member of this community. Part of that security is rooted in our awareness of the expectations of others; many think that our parents' American culture has imprinted itself onto us seamlessly. However, the few transnational adoptee stories that exist in popular culture and academic study—as well as the deportation of adoptees like Adam Crapser—have revealed cultural challenges to us within our adopted space. Even though we are not living in tents and pushing against the armed guards of the European Union, the American border patrol, or the barred gates of wealthy nations, we no longer possess our former sense of security and belonging. Our inclusion as immigrants has been called into question.

The central focus of this chapter is the effort to distinguish the narratives of transnational adoptees as forced migrant literature. As was mentioned above and will be discussed at length throughout this chapter, many within society have a difficult time conceiving of transnational adoptees as an immigrant population. Though there might be an acknowledgement of our foreign birth, it is assumed that our assimilation is complete to such a degree that our naturalization as American citizens was merely a formality. The analysis that follows not only presents considerable challenges to that assumption, but illustrates the interpersonal and cultural experiences that can displace the transnational

adoptee through a resigned cosmopolitanism from a national to a global space. This global space is not uninhabited; it is the interstitial zone of refugees, exiles, and the stateless. With them, transnational adoptees are a part of the forced migrant population, and contribute a new experience and perspective to the discourse of displacement.

In this chapter, three documentary films that represent some of the most groundbreaking adoption stories in popular culture in the past twenty years will be analyzed. Deann Borshay Liem's *First Person Plural* (2000) and *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* (2010) and Linda Goldstein-Knowlton's *Somewhere Between* (2011) document the lives of transnational adoptees from South Korea and China. As two of the countries from which a majority of adoptees come, that these films focus on these specific transnational adoptee populations reflects another observable practice; fairly or unfairly, Asian-American adoptees are often called upon to speak for the transnational adoptee community, a reality that is reflected in several of the scenes in *Somewhere Between*. Further, in all three of the films studied in this chapter, in addition to being Asian-American, the adoptees are also women, and their forced migrations were enabled through the political policies and wars in their countries of origin. As a white, male, transnational adoptee able to pass as a white, male, natural American citizen, my subject position within the larger discursive formation of transnational adoption is markedly different from theirs. Our experiences place us within the same community of forced migrants, but it must be recognized that in this chapter I am reading across embodied knowledges that are different from my own.

Early in *Immigrant Acts,* Lisa Lowe addresses one of the core realities of the Asian-American experience that circles back again and again in narratives of immigrant

inclusion. She writes that "these same narratives are driven by the repetition and return of episodes in which the Asian American, even as a citizen, continues to be located outside the cultural and racial boundaries of the nation" (6). In this chapter, I will show how many of the interactions that take place between the adoptees in the films studied in this chapter and the members of their families and communities fit squarely within this experience; being part of a community, being a *citizen* of a community, yet outside of the close-knit, familial sense of belonging that otherwise pervades that community. The persistence of this experience within the Chinese-American and Korean-American adoptee communities in the films results in, among other things, a new perspective of the self for many members of the adoptee community. Several of the Asian-American adoptees in the community come to view their inner and outer beings as distinct from one another; that they are "yellow on the outside and white on the inside" (*Somewhere Between*). How this new perspective guides their decisions and communication with their families and communities requires close study.

Throughout the sections of this chapter, there is a focus on scenes in which several of the central figures undergo a transformative moment of awakening. Throughout their lives, up to that moment, their conception of home and belonging remained a stabilizing force in their lives; they knew that despite the racial and country of origin differences between themselves and their community, they were Americans and this was their home. This transformative moment for them is a realization that this belief was a misconception; despite their family's love for them and the acceptance of at least a part of their community, a part of them had always existed that was outside of this home.

In the films, we can see the way that such a loss of social and familial security realigns their sense of belonging and identity.

While having the opportunity to include the transnational adoptee community within the discourse of forced migration in literature and film studies is an important move for the field, I must admit that my own history does drive me onwards in this chapter, and in the all the chapters of this work. As an transnational adoptee myself, a profound sense of solidarity motivates the inclusion of these films and stories alongside the works of exiles and refugees, not to compare such "categories" of forced migrants, but to demonstrate the ways in which narratives of questioning belonging and identity reflect the experiences of even those who have known no other place, and no other home. Made to inhabit a (loving) home of Americans who took the time to cement my legal rights in my adoptive country, my personal story diverges from the stories studied in this chapter in more ways than one, but is still rooted in an identity assumed, rather than one innately granted.

Don't Tell Your New Family Your Real Name

Adopted as a toddler from an orphanage in South Korea, Adam Crapser's life in the United States did not fit into the idealized mold of the 1950's transnational adoptee that was established as the cultural expectation before his birth. He did not spend evenings in the backyard eating barbeque and watching fireworks as a child with his white American parents. Abused by the first family that adopted him, they then put him up for adoption again, separating him from his sister. When this new family kicked him out of the house at age sixteen, he went back to retrieve his personal belongings and served over two years in prison for burglary. Because neither of these families properly

competed his naturalization documents, holding a job was extremely difficult for him, as he was never able to prove his legal status. A court ruling on October 24th, 2016 called for his deportation back to South Korea within 30 days. Regarding his imminent forced migration – the second in his life – Adam says, "I guess in a sense the good thing is that I am a citizen of Korea so when I go back I will already be the citizen of some country. I guess that's where I belong" (Stack, Liam. *New York Times*).

Nowhere in this story does there reside a thread of justice. Adam Crapser was adopted from South Korea at the age of three, an age that many individuals have a difficult time remembering, and an age at which a strong sense of national and cultural belonging is nonexistent. Taken into a new home and told that he was now an American, Adam's entire identity has been shaped by a society that has repeatedly rejected him, and has now relocated him to a place that he was originally forced to leave. Technical legalities aside, no person and no court possesses the authority to dictate one's identity, and so the second forced migration of Adam's life will do nothing to erase his American history and upbringing.

According to the Adoptee Rights Campaign, there are roughly 35,000 transnational adoptees in the United States that do not currently possess citizenship (Choe, Sang-Hun. *New York Times*). To be clear, that means that tens of thousands of children displaced from their countries of origin and told that this is their new home do not yet possess the "right" to call themselves Americans. These children are entirely at the mercy of their parents' responsibility. While the same could be said of any child in the US, if the parents do not fill out the proper immigration and citizenship documents, then these children, as well as forty-one year old parents of five like Crapser, are subject

to exile from the only home that they have ever known. At what point will this conflict be resolved? Will it be when they are still too young to remember, or will they miss the cutoff point, like Adam, and be relocated again?

Fortunately, international adoption has reached a point in its proliferation and development that it has become the subject of legislative discourse. Both the Hague and the United Nations have drafted conventions that include international adoption; the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption. Among the greatest achievements of these conventions have been the opportunities to articulate certain agreed-upon claims regarding what priorities should be in international adoption. Article 3 of the UN convention states that "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration," (OHCHR.org). Article 21 further describes the circumstances under which adoption should proceed, requiring institutions to "ensure that the child concerned by inter-country adoption enjoys safeguards and standards equivalent to those existing in the case of national adoption" (OHCHR.org).

That legislative provisions did not exist for the safety of transnational adoptees until the 1950's remains among the most significant discoveries of my initial forays into the field of adoption studies. Equally shocking, but not surprising in the same sense, is that the United States is the only country in the world to have not yet ratified the UN convention on the rights of the child. Among the chief reasons that the US has not ratified the convention is that a significant portion of the conservative legislative body of the US

incorrectly sees the provisions of the convention as infringing upon their sovereign authority, stoking fears that international law would supersede, and in many cases replace, American law (Mehta, ACLU). Along with the Hague convention, these two works of international legislation represent the global discourse finally evolving to a state advanced enough to consider the ramifications of displacing infants across national borders and what might await them in the new place that they are then forced to inhabit.

Unfortunately, as unenforceable as the provisions of these conventions currently are, they also leave room for a significant amount of deception and confusion, which leads to the circumstances of forced migration. Deann Borshay Liem's films *First Person Plural* (2000) and *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* (2010) showcase much of the intentional deception of the international adoption system in South Korea, a dysfunction not isolated to that country but particularly relevant in a world in which many South Korean adoptees are seeking out their origins with a sense of destined belonging. One of the most startling revelations for the transnational adoptee community in these films concerns the direct rhetoric of deception engendered in the adoptees by the institution. These children were coached by their orphanages, instructed "don't tell your new family your real name." Though most of the administrators who ran those orphanages at the time of the adoptions depicted in the films have long since retired or died, their successors carry on this legacy of deception; not in the same direct terms of the further coaching of adoptees, but in suggesting that those displaced persons of the war and the intervening decades forget about the past and the mistakes or errors that were made. After all, so they claim, the only motivation of these institutions and individuals was the wellbeing of the adoptees.

While such an excuse might work for some, it is difficult to fathom the ethics behind robbing an individual or family of its right to a future unfettered by the private interests of governments or institutions. And, though it did not impact the perspectives of Deann Borshay Liem's family, it is also worth noting that deception happened at both ends of the adoption process in this case: her family spent months sending money to South Korea to sponsor her before deciding to adopt her, but the picture that they were shown of the young child that they were supporting did not match the appearance of the girl that they ultimately adopted. Again, this fact did not cause any alarm for Deann's parents, as they claim that she is their daughter regardless of the past—a line reminiscent of the administrator's excuses to her inquiry—but the truth is that they were intentionally deceived by an institution who took their money for one child and sent them another.

Narratives of international adoption published in the past twenty years depict individuals struggling with questions of identity and belonging, and their conclusions are an ever-evolving set of perspectives that displace them from traditionally recognized borders and nations. Perhaps as new considerations connected the idea of "impossible subjects" written about by Mae Ngai, transnational adoptees—though we do technically, for now, possess the protections of the state—still cannot breach the social fortifications built around the insular notion of what many consider constitutes a genuine citizen. Many of us feel as though we cannot exist where we are; a displacement that reminds us of the stories of refugees and exiles. Among the many questions asked in this chapter, two that strike directly at the core consideration of citizenship and belonging are: what does it mean for the individuals in these films not to be permitted what those around them might refer to as a "real" or "authentic" life in the United States because they were adopted

from another nation? And from this, if they cannot "authentically" inhabit the country in which they have been raised, then what is the space that they are forced to inhabit?

Including transnational adoptees within a larger study that also focuses upon the narratives of refugees and exiles presents rich opportunities to contrast the circumstances of displacement among different groups of forced migrants, especially because, as Catherine Choy notes in *Global Families,* so few studies have even gone to the effort to include transnational adoptees as a part of the immigrant community (78). As a transnational adoptee, and having faced a rhetoric of rejection in this country in which I was raised, I am compelled to mention again that there is both a personal and scholarly interest at the root of my inclusion of transnational adoptees within this project. I cannot count the number of times during my youth that I was referred to by the name of my country of origin rather than by my name by those around me. This was certainly not done out of any malicious intent, but it did serve as a constant reminder of a quality of foreignness that would forever be a part of me. The numerous times throughout my life that my status as an immigrant has caused me to remember that my presence here was not always so—and may not always be—is one of my primary motivations for this portion of my dissertation. Having been forced to leave one country at birth and inhabit another for the vast majority of my life removes me from a national level of identity to a global level of consideration. I use the word consideration intentionally, as those who live between places involuntarily are as often shaped by outside consideration and international discourse as they are by their own perception of themselves as transnational individuals.

When we think of forced migrants, among the ideas and images that come to mind are scenes of pain, of violation, of children and parents forced apart. There are

narrative examples of these scenes in every genre of literature and film, illustrating the ways that those experiences of displacement can be the foundation of many kinds of stories. But what about the stories of those who do not necessarily possess the memory of those lived experiences, whose consciousness sparked in a place far from the one in which they were born? Transnational adoptees might grow up without ever knowing that they migrated from another place, or they might spend every waking moment perceiving a difference within themselves, or aware of the differences seen in them by others. Or perhaps they might inhabit the "ideal" identity of the transnational adoptee—a family aware of and celebrating its multiculturalism. Regardless of which of these futures ultimately unfold for each adoptee, one of the truths that unites them with other forced migrants is that pain will be a part of their lives; not the same kind of pain—and perhaps not even traumatic—but pain that will cause them to reflect upon their origins and the circumstances of their displacement. That word, displacement, represents a hard reality to accept for many in American society; that children adopted by loving parents into a home of plenty are forced migrants.

So we must then ask the question, why is it difficult to accept the reality of displacement if there is pain? Watching the coverage of the Syrian exodus, American audiences certainly do not struggle to come to terms with the idea that fleeing a war-ravaged city and country constitutes painful displacement. The location of the pain of the adoptee community tasks our attention far greater, as the contented faces of young children in four-bedroom homes in rural Indiana and Wisconsin have not yet had to come to terms with their displacement as directly as have the exiles and refugees from the Middle East in recent years. Further, if we view those idealized examples of international

adoption in the United States as coming from an unfortunate but still civilized set of circumstances, then we neglect the history of conflicts—such as the Korean War—in which the U.S. military was responsible for enabling the adoption of foreign children though war and occupation. “Beginning the story of Korean adoption with the act of rescue,” writes Soojin Pate in *From Orphan to Adoptee*, “elides everything that came before that rescue” (2).

Though it might not require more than a cursory inspection of American military history to see the ways in which the occupation of a place leads to the displacement and relocation of its population, studies such as the one done by Pate go further to demonstrate the ways that American society rehabilitates itself in the eyes of the world by helping to address and heal those wounds that it helped to create. “What greater way,” writes Pate, “to show the benevolent nature of the U.S. military’s intention than to focus on the welfare of South Korea’s most vulnerable and innocent population: its displaced children” (35).

Among the most startling revelations in adoption studies is how recently the adoption process has existed within a formal, legal framework. Why this hesitation? Why the delay in advocacy for transnational adoptees? Among the reasons is that many stories of international adoption do mirror the idealistic vision mentioned before, and the larger population does not hear many stories of adopted children whose needs are not met. From this, the argument could be posed, why put into place legal frameworks of protection for those who need no defense? Certainly, the same source could argue, forced migrants displaced by violent revolution or religious intolerance deserve a larger share of our legislative attention. The involuntary nature of the transnational adoptee’s migration

might be acknowledged, but the present scenes of battlefield carnage and masses of refugees are not typically associated with adoptees and that can call into question the severity of our displacement, as well as the need for intervention for those individuals not aware of the ways that war and occupation create the circumstances for the exportation of children.

Several biographical documentaries are central to the analysis of this part of the project. Though it might be unconventional for an entire chapter of a literary studies project to focus upon films—and biographical documentaries at that—the rich first-person detail of these works and the narrative skill evinced through each of the stories that they contain distinguish them within a field of adoption literature heavy on theoretical approaches to imagined circumstances. This is not to say that an author who has not personally been affected by international adoption lacks the qualifications to craft a successful adoptee narrative, or that there is a lack of rich, diverse narratives about international adoption to the United States; rather, that alongside the legislative documents and historical framework of this chapter, stories that lend voice and image to a generation of transnational adoptees in the United States are especially helpful.

As mentioned earlier, a quality shared by each of these documentaries is the general geographic origin of the adoptees: East Asia, specifically South Korea and China. While children adopted to the United States and Canada come from all over the world, these countries are significant sources of transnational adoptees, and these stories therefore represent a potential source of shared experiences throughout a large portion of the transnational adoptee community. We can look to both domestic policy as well as wartime invasion to understand why these two countries are the sources of so many

transnational adoptees. Upon the ending of the one child policy in China, one of the adoptees featured in *Somewhere Between*, Fang Lee, wrote a reflective piece featured on Huffington Post, in which she celebrated the ending of the policy but lamented that it came far too late for many Chinese adoptees, including her. Deann Borshay Liem, in her introduction to *First Person Plural*, and Soojin Pate in *From Orphan to Adoptee*, discuss at length the primary cause of the spike and persistent growth in South Korean international adoption; the Korean War. The stories from these regions of the world provide a voice of active resistance against the uninformed policies dictated by the UN and Hague conventions—policies that ignore the needs of a community whose individual and collective senses of identity transcend national borders.

Pushing this line of thought into the larger questions being asked by the project as a whole, the notion of a global citizen now arises; an identity, so I will argue in the analyses that follow, forced upon transnational adoptees. Richard Falk, the international law scholar, goes into some detail about his claim that global citizens have an awareness of—and an active interest in—international affairs. While my argument in favor of forced migrants being included in the community of global citizens relies partially upon the notion that such an active interest is not necessary for inclusion, there are groups of transnational adoptees who are actively involved with international legislative efforts and who volunteer their time to act as intermediaries for international adoption. This combination of qualities—existing beyond national borders through transnational identity, but also choosing to participate in geopolitical movements—makes some transnational adoptees distinctive in forced migration studies in literature. For example, one of the adoptees from the film *Somewhere Between* might be considered a global

citizen by the definitions established by Falk, while another individual with an almost identical life story of international adoption, but no desire to engage actively within that discourse community, would not.

In each of the works discussed in this project, there is not a single parent-child pairing in which race does not play a role in the dynamics of the relationship both within the family of the adoptee and in the larger community that surrounds them. As this difference plays a significant role in the perceptions of the adoptees within these stories, so it will be a part of the analysis. With the exception of Fang, whose father is of Asian descent, none of the other individuals at the center of this work have been adopted into a family in which they share a common ancestry; every Chinese or Korean adoptee has white adoptive parents. Though race will be studied alongside the many other social, linguistic, and societal factors encountered in these narratives, briefly mentioning it here is an acknowledgement of one of the significant differences that audiences will immediately see in the families in these films.

Among the central concerns of this chapter is the question: what does it mean to include transnational adoptees within the larger context of forced migration? As Laura Briggs writes in *Somebody's Children*, "We have begun to develop a more critical account of adoption, one that asks about it not as a celebrity event or a private, family decision but as one deeply embedded in the politics of race and poverty, gender and sexuality, and international relations and economies" (5). My contention in this work is that those geopolitical realities faced by transnational adoptees place them—unexpectedly, for those unaware of those realities—among the forced migrant populations of refugees, political and religious exiles, and stateless persons. Looking at

the narrative works of transnational adoption allows that critical accounting of adoption to take place within a wider academic discourse that includes literary studies. The material outcome of this analysis, then, is the understanding that a number of works thought to once occupy only the broad genre of American literature in fact also fall under the category of immigrant literature and further distinguish themselves as narratives of forced migration.

In The Matter of Cha Jung Hee and *First Person Plural*

> "I wish I had a picture for all the lost moments of the past, so that I could string them together into one unbroken history. Instead I invent stories of what might have been, inserting myself into spaces I never occupied." Introduction to *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*

Among the principal reasons that *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* plays such a vital role in this chapter is that its narrative focuses not just upon the reflections of an transnational adoptee and her life growing up in the United States, but also upon her confrontation with the institutions that contributed to her forced migration. This dimension of the story is of particular importance because of the way that it intersects with the legislative language of the UN and Hague Conventions. It must be noted that Deann Borshay's adoption happened decades before the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and as such was not beholden to the specific laws articulated in that document. Even so, the institutionalization, negotiation, and exportation of Deann would have been permissible under the UN and Hague laws. As such, this section of the chapter will attend to both an analysis of Deann's perspectives on her own displacement as well as an investigation of the ways in which the state agencies

in her country of origin circumvented what would have been seen even then as unethical practices but are even not now technically against the law.

Unlike many of the other individuals studies in the narratives of this chapter, Deann was not only adopted after the time that she had begun to form strong memories, but was told by the South Korean institution where she lived several years of her life that she was to conceal those memories from the American family that was to adopt her. The Borshay family had spent years corresponding with a girl named Cha Jung Hee, and made known to the South Korean authorities their intention to adopt her. In a move that surprised even the veteran social workers at the orphanage, Cha Jung Hee's father returned to collect her without even a word to the administrators. Faced with the potential loss of a source of charitable income from the Borshays, the social workers and administrators decided to replace Cha Jung Hee with another girl named Ok Jin. Continuing the correspondence with the Borshays under the name of Cha Jung Hee, they arranged for the replacement girl to be sent in her place. Even though Ok Jin—now Deann Borshay—still possessed the memories of her life in Korea, she was confined within this new persona assigned to her by the social workers. Resisting this fate was impossible for young Deann, she says, as "there was no proof that I had ever been anyone else" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). This practice of South Korean orphanages was common. According to Soojin Pate, "The primary goal of the orphanage was to transform the unadoptable orphans into adoptable children" (115). Deann Borshay herself acknowledges the manifestation of this practice within her own history: "Cha Jung Hee became the template for the perfect orphan. Once the template existed, any girl could step into it" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). Literally placed into the shoes originally sent by

the Borshay's to Cha Jung Hee, Deann, a girl unknown to them until she stepped off the plane in the US, became their daughter. The beginning of Deann's life with the Borshays matched that idealized picture created by Harry Holt and Holt International Children's Services.[3] Deann says that, "Over time, I became one of them. I learned to change the way I smiled, and carried my body to match theirs. Soon, I no longer saw a difference between us, and when I looked into the mirror, it was not my face I saw, but their bodies, their beauty, reflected back at me" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*).

Returning to the original correspondence between the Borshays and the social workers at the orphanage, on a document uncovered through Deann's investigation, the social worker—ostensibly writing a letter on behalf of Cha Jung Hee—expresses Cha Jung Hee's desire to live with the Borshays. When this is read in light of the shock the social workers felt at her reclamation by her father, which occurred after this letter had been written, we can see the clear interest—if not definite intent—by the state to send Cha Jung Hee overseas for adoption. Without knowing whether she had parents, without having any legal documentation from a parent or guardian releasing her for adoption, the orphanage openly implied the possibility of Cha Jung Hee's adoption to the Borshays. The prevalence of these types of practices around the world contributed to the creation of Article 21 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that when placing a child for international adoption, the administrative institution shall,

[3] It is worth noting that these international pro-adoption agencies, and their unyielding view that adoption is the correct choice for all children in circumstances similar to Ok Jin's, are in many cases as much at fault for the forced migration of adoptees as are individuals such as the social worker for Cha Jung Hee who make unilateral decisions regarding the fate of orphans under their care. (Briggs 21)

> "Ensure that the adoption of a child is authorized only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner).

The specific words spoken by the social worker assigned to Cha Jung Hee's case were, "We didn't even know that she had parents…" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). That she did not instead say that the orphanage assumed that her parents were deceased or something similar means that there was no investigation of the orphan's status prior to opening talks about adoption. Again, because this correspondence occurred before the implementation of the Convention, it cannot be argued that Korea was violating any laws. However, it is further worth noting that even had it happened after, they still would not have been violating the provision, only its spirit, through proposing the idea of Cha Jung Hee being adopted by the Borshays. Without any authority above them, the South Korean government can avoid the technicalities of the law through professed ignorance, citing a lack of information or administrative infrastructure as the cause of the mistake regarding the status of her parents or guardians. The legislation spelled out by the UN does not create an international governing body to administrate all cases of international adoption and instead leaves upholding the law up to the officials of each sovereign government, leaving abundant space for such laws to be ignored within the boundaries of the country.

During the meeting that Deann had with the social worker during her investigation into Cha Jung Hee, the social worker's inability to grasp the violation that she had wrought upon Deann stood out clearly. For the majority of their meeting, she voiced similar sentiments to what was mentioned above, citing a lack of knowledge and hope for Deann's future as the motivations for her actions. Though we do not see Deann's face during this interview, we can assume that recalling these moments of her own life, and learning of the suffering faced by Cha Jung Hee at such a young age impacted her greatly, as similar exchanges do in various other scenes in the film. The social worker sees this as well, and responds "the switch was done out of a belief that you would be happy. I'm sorry it's still haunting you" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). Whether this statement can be read as an admission by a state agent that such actions can cause trauma and grief in the adoptee is a good question, but the displacement of any blame on her part, the remorselessness that she displays in claiming that if any trauma is being experienced, it's not because of any wrongdoing on the part of the South Korean government, immediately calls into question the number of children who have been exported under similar circumstances.

After replacing Cha Jung Hee with Ok Jin and deciding unilaterally to proceed with the adoption, the administrators of the orphanage appointed a legal guardian to Ok Jin, who then filled in the blanks on an already-prepared template that released Ok Jin from his or her care—not that she had ever been in that care. Again, here the state authorities are not violating the law that will be written, as they have acquired the permission of a guardian to release her for adoption. An action taken entirely within the country of origin, by state agents answerable to only that country, have carried out an

action that is in part responsible for the drafting of legislation against such abuse that would have no effect on curtailing such actions in the future. What does this reveal about the current state of these legislative institutions' comprehension of the realities of international adoption?

One of the unfortunate, and perhaps unforeseen, consequences of these misleading and deceptive acts by state institutions is that they severely compromise what little chance there is of the child finding a link back to the heritage that has been stolen from them, something that will be discussed later in the section on *Somewhere Between*. If this is a completely unforeseen consequence as any ethical governing body would hopefully claim, then the government programs designed to present a welcoming atmosphere to Korean adoptees who return to learn about their country of origin would call that claim into question. In "Wedding Citizenship and Culture," Elaine Kim writes that these programs construct "the adoptees as tourists, with an emphasis on their lack of cultural competence, over the acknowledgement of their intimate and embodied ties to Korea and to their biological families" (54). Deann writes about her mother, "I've never felt critical of my birth mother for giving me up, but for some reason during her visit, an unexpected anger welled up in me. I realized there was a mutual betrayal; she'd given me up for adoption, and I betrayed my entire family by forgetting them" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung* Hee). She then goes on to say, "The decision to give me up fit into a lifelong struggle to survive… I also learned that she looked for me after I left." Her mother later sent a letter to the Borshays in California, asking for the return of her daughter, Ok Jin. Because they believed it was addressed to the wrong person due to the manipulation of the state agencies in Korea, Deann discarded the letter. Though we might hope for shock

and apology on the part of those state adoption agencies at this revelation, it seems as though the response would just be another attempt to pacify the grief by telling them that they were only trying to make them happy.

Partially as a result of being raised from the age of eight into adulthood in the US, Deann occupies a rather unique position among the individuals studied in the narratives of this chapter, with one or two exceptions. A forced migrant who possesses memories from her life before her displacement—a rarity for an adoptee—who was given explicit instructions by the state agencies in her country of origin to lie to her adoptive parents, then had to actively carry out that deception each day of her life. Though by her own admission she went through a process of assimilation, becoming as American in her own eyes as much as the rest of her family, the illusion of belonging breaks down for Deann. She wonders, "If I wasn't Cha Jung Hee, who was I? My world began falling apart. All of a sudden, I saw myself in a completely different light. I wondered, had I lived my entire life as an imposter? I know in reality, I am not her. But my sense of who I am has been held captive to her name and her identity" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). Here we have an example of what Soojin Pate refers to as "coming to." She writes, "…coming to is not so much about declaring or achieving some end result (like coming out implies) but about confronting one's circumstances and conditions in order to achieve a more nuanced and complex understanding of oneself" (147).

As Deann's world falls apart, she undergoes, I argue, a moment of crisis that allows her to acknowledge the way that her origin story informs her identity. Deann's unique history results in a perception of self unlike many adoptees who undergo a similar experience; a moment of enlightenment and realization that our idea of who we are

comes into a kind of conflict with the place and circumstances in which we originated. For Deann, it is intentional deception that adds a particular trauma to her awakening. She writes,

> "Because I was not the child my parents had originally fallen in love with, there was a part of me that always questioned whether I belonged… and whether I had a right to accept my family's love, and to love them. When my mother was dying, my greatest fear was that she would lose her memory and forget that I was her daughter. I asked her one day, 'Do you remember who I am?' She paused, then she said, 'you're Deann, you're my daughter.' These were the words that I most wanted to hear, and the words that I've had the hardest time accepting." (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*)

Many adoptees go through the process of questioning whether the love that their adoptive family has for them is real, or if it is different from the love they would or do have for their biological children. Few have to ask themselves whether or not they deserve love because it was originally meant for another. This manifestation of a broken system and a lack of understanding by the legislative entities tasked with creating the processes results in the ongoing trauma of forced migration. Deann's story severely compromises the professional integrity claimed by the adoption agencies that facilitated adoptions from South Korea because it demonstrates the way that infants are treated as exported goods rather than as individuals with rights. What is the point at which this distinction changes? We have only to look at Deann's experiences after arriving in the US for an answer.

When Deann's family does learn of the deception carried out against them by the state agents of the South Korean government, they don't seem to care that they had been

misled, because for them the process of adoption was about the future of the adoptee rather than her past; their daughter Deann is who mattered, not whoever she was before she became that. Her mother says, "I didn't care that they had switched a child on us. And just because suddenly you weren't Cha Jung Hee, you were Ok Jin Kang…Kong…or whatever didn't matter to me. You were Deann and you were mine." And her sister, upon hearing her real name says, "That doesn't mean nothin' to me. You're still Cha Jung Hee" (*First Person Plural*). Both statements contain their own versions of violence, but the seeming conflict between them is actually a point of commonality. Her mother, though she at least attempts to pronounce Deann's birth name, and her sister, who completely denies that reality and claims that she is still Cha Jung Hee, are saying the same thing; that the girl who was adopted did not have an authentic identity until she became a part of their family. Recalling when her family went to pick up Deann from the airport, her sister remembers confusion as to which of the arriving children was her new sibling. She says, "It didn't matter. One of them was ours" (*First Person Plural*). The sister sitting in front of her did not even exist until she was pointed out to the family. Until then, she was just "one of them," another forced migrant with no innate right to an identity.

Somewhere Between

The film *Somewhere Between* was created by its director, Linda Goldstein-Knowlton, as a gift to her daughter that she had recently adopted from China. While her original purpose may have been to document a kind of living diary of four different teenage girls' reflections on their lives as transnational adoptees, the film reveals more than just the methods employed by the girls to cope with their constant sense of "cultural

ambassadorship" as Elain Kim would identify it. With the individuals in this film having gone through a traditional international adoption process, compared to the experience of Deann Borshay, the focus of my analysis is not on reconciling a perceived deception, but on what the end results of that idealized version of international adoption can be.

One of the unique differences between the two countries of origin discussed in this chapter, South Korea and China, is that in China families placed their children up for adoption because, among other reasons, it was what the law allowed; if they already had one child, they could not keep the others. Each of the adoptees in this story are fully aware of this reality; they know, some more than others, that their lives in the United States are the result of abandonment by their biological families. Though each of them have come to terms, to one measure or another, with this reality, it is a part of their story that stands in contrast to the intimate family lives that they have in the US.

In *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*, Mimi Thi Nguyen writes in the introduction about the parade float of Madalenna Lai, which says, "Thank you America and the world" (2). This important quote resides here to illustrate an attitude encountered by Fang, Jenna, Haley, and Ann, the individuals at the center of *Somewhere Between*, and transnational adoptees like them nearly every day. On a sunny afternoon in Nashville, Tennessee, Haley, her mother, and her sister—who was also adopted from China—are at a salon. An elderly white American woman is in the chair next to Haley, speaking to their mother. Upon learning of Haley and her sisters' country of origin and their adoption story, she extends her hand to Haley's four-or-five-year-old sister and congratulates them both for coming to "The United States of America. Are you

happy? Boy, aren't you lucky!" (*Somewhere Between*). From the expression on Haley's face, this is not the first time that this has happened to her.

Fortunately, for the psychological health of this particular individual—Haley—such a sentiment is not necessarily unwelcome or disagreeable. Raised in a southern American city by a family that seemingly rolls American manifest destiny and Christianity into a neat package, Haley does see her adoption from China as a form of divine intervention, allowing her to have the Christian life that she was always destined to have. This belief has developed in her to the extent that she sees her outward appearance as an illusion; Haley sees herself as a "banana." She claims to be "yellow on the outside and white on the inside" (*Somewhere Between*). Not all of the other adoptees studied in this narrative share this perspective, however, and one must ask the question: for what do they need to be thankful? In these films, when faced with characters like the elderly woman in the salon, there is an assumption made that their presence here was a premeditated desire fulfilled. Informed only by that assumption, these characters are incapable of viewing transnational adoptees' inhabitation of the US as involuntary. Further, the notion that one can inhabit a place without choice, yet be content to remain without an abundance of gratitude, much like many in their own native-born population, seems incomprehensible to them.

Most of the adoptive parents in *Somewhere Between* are very open about the adoption of their children, actively including their culture of origin within the thoroughly American activities of their everyday lives. Fang Lee's mother displays a particularly enthusiastic dedication to Fang's cultural and linguistic heritage, learning to speak Mandarin before adopting her and her two sisters. Partially because of this dedication,

there was no moment of transformative crisis for Fang during her childhood—at least, not one observed or discussed in the film. Adopted at the age of four or five, Fang was able to retain her native language and all of the stories and nursery rhymes that went with it, for her entire life. She says, "It's a blessing to be able to know your roots, and be able to know the people you came from" (*Somewhere Between*). With memories of her life even before her abandonment in a large city, Fang possesses an unbroken memory of her life and the cultural transitions that she has made.

Jenna Cook, not nearly as fortunate as Fang, begins to articulate the forced migration of transnational adoptees, saying "Everyone else's beginnings seemed very, like, sure. You never think about why you were born to a certain family if you're just born there because physically in, like, science, it makes sense. But if you're put there, it's different" (*Somewhere Between*). Her mother is quite aware of the difference that her daughter perceives in herself, saying "If you're always being seen and you're never blending in, of course you want to appear like you've got everything under control and you're doing everything perfectly" (*Somewhere Between*). However, Jenna's awareness goes far deeper than recognizing a racial and familial contrast with others in her community. The way that she has deliberately designed her life addresses those conflicts, and she says "I think I'm always searching for a way to compensate for the fact that I'm a girl and that I was probably poor and that for some reason I wasn't good enough… I can't get rid of the thought that I was really abandoned" (*Somewhere Between*).

Ann Boccuti, another of the adoptees in the film, shares an awareness of abandonment, but takes an entirely different strategy than Jenna. Rather than trying to compensate for a perceived lack of worth in her former family, Ann seems to more fully

embrace her identity as an American than any of the other girls in the film, save perhaps for Haley. Even though she joined the Color guard at her high school because it was the sport for "people who don't necessarily always fit in," (*Somewhere Between*) the awareness of her displacement, both transnationally as well as transracially, does nothing to diminish her more casual perspective that she is an American, her adoptive parents are her true parents, and that she will succeed in her cultural endeavors. Her story is presented with a particular satisfaction, as the authorities in China had labeled her as a slow learner unlikely to succeed.

Though all of the personal stories in *Somewhere Between* are relevant to a study of transnational adoptee narratives as stories of forced migration, Haley and Fang are particularly relevant because of the familial and emotional places that they come to inhabit by the end of the film. Both of these individuals express, at the very least, an acceptance, if not total contentment, for the lives that they lead. Haley, as discussed briefly before, feels a sense of destiny with her membership in both the American citizenry as well as her church, and Fang, natively bilingual and possessing an identity that is a composite of an unbroken chain of memories from China as well as the US, sees no critically empty spaces in her life. Two important events showcased in the film, however, produce moments of crisis for both that cause either a prolonged change in family dynamics or that result in questions about environment and belonging. These experiences of "coming to" help the reader to see, in the case of Haley, what was once voiced as a casual curiosity become a globe-spanning quest, and for Fang, something that had become rather routine in her life take on a greater meaning for her own sense of belonging.

Haley, on the road to becoming the next Miss Nashville, following in the footsteps of her sister, expresses casual interest in discovering more about her origins at several points throughout the film. Her acceptance of her life as and adoptee seems rather convincing—if occasionally performed—and so it comes as a slight surprise when she decides to travel to England with a group called Global Girls, an organization designed to help young girls adopted from China to find each other and to share their experiences and their stories. Predictably, Haley shares stories with the assembled group in London, hearing stories that are much like the ones that she has experienced in her own life. However, the events of the trip take a far more decisive turn when the group has the opportunity to meet with Hilbrand Westra, a Korean-Dutch adoptee from South Korea who is known for his transnational adoptee rights activism and for his much more controversial perspective that international adoption should not be allowed to happen in the world (*Somewhere Between*).

Haley, completely unfamiliar with the state corruption of adoption agencies and how that affects the lives of adoptees not as typical and as fortunate as her, is stunned to silence hearing Hilbrand recount the injustices perpetrated against the adoptee community. What began as a causal statement about her curiosity to discover what her biological family might be like changes to grief as Hilbrand urges her to seek them out immediately if she is to have any hope of finding them, as the orphanages and government agencies that handle adoption often "lose" their records in fires. Her casual approach to seeking out her biological family, and her comments about her nature as a "banana," cannot withstand the argument of Hilbrand, that "Adoption is something that

we carry with us for our whole life. You can try to run from it, but it runs faster than you" (*Somewhere Between*).

Fang Lee, natively bilingual and still conversant in much of the culture of her early childhood, has had many opportunities in her life to serve as an intermediary between Chinese orphans and their prospective adoptive parents. More than halfway through the film, we see her participating in many of the activities that Falk would identify as those of a global citizen. Using her family's significant resources, Fang travels to China with her American passport, walks into a Chinese marketplace in her American clothes, speaks to the shopkeepers and people that she encounters in Mandarin, and goes to serve in solidarity with those members of the adoptee community far less fortunate than she. Recalling a time that she traveled with her mother to an orphanage, Fang saw a small girl dressed in pink sitting in a low seat. Told that the girl suffered from cerebral palsy, the administrators of the orphanage label her as hopeless. Seeing her as far from hopeless, Fang raises a vast sum of money with her mother and sends the girl to physical therapy. Much to her joy, a family adopts the young girl and Fang returns to China to serve as intermediary once again.

The young girl is excited to meet her new family, expresses joy when she does, and even meets her soon-to-be-siblings on a Skype call. With all of the events leading to that expected happy ending, Fang takes the young girl in her arms again to say goodbye. For the first time in all the films studies in this chapter, we witness the moment of crisis occur for a new adoptee. As Fang says goodbye, prepared to hand the adoptee over to her bright future, the young girl sighs deeply, expressionless, and beings a keening weep. The emotion behind the moment is impossible to define; it is so much more than a

combination of sadness and anxiety about the unknown, and it cuts through Fang's familiar composure quickly.

When we next see Fang, she is sitting in a van and talking about herself in a reflective way that is new for her. Her "coming to" takes her to a space that questions the ability to serve as a bridge between recognizable, comfortable borders for a transnational adoptee such as her. This is not to suggest that her experience acting as the intermediary between the young girl and her new family placed her abilities as a linguistic and cultural translator into doubt, but that she seemingly begins to question that process of transition following this interaction. Because we know that Fang participated in many such adoption processes, it is the circumstances of this adoption—its complete lack of the typical trappings of the migrations that Fang has witnessed—in which Fang's "coming to" is triggered. Reflective now about the way that her mannerisms distinguishes her in China, she writes, "Whether I'm in America or China, they know in some way I'm a foreigner. I guess I'm a child stuck between two countries, and I don't know what that makes me… I guess I'm kind of confused about my identity" (*Somewhere Between*).

Part of Fang's "coming to" at the moment of the young girl's traumatic crisis resides in an aspect of transnational life that both of them share; a line of unbroken memories. Adopted at roughly the same age, they have memories of what their life was like before their adoption. As previously mentioned, the young girl was deemed hopeless by the administrators of the orphanage where she lived, abandoned and unwanted. Similarly, Fang, through the manipulations of her birth family, was left abandoned and unwanted in a large city, a circumstance that almost any reader would see as equally hopeless to the young girl's; though Fang was not physically disabled, being alone at the

age of three or four in a large metropolitan area is its own type of disability. Seeing what might have been her own moment of crisis reflected in the eyes of the young girl, Fang confronts her own forced migrant experience and, despite her unbroken chain of memories, might no longer be able to retain the position of comfort in her own identity. Fang's profession that she loves China, and that it is her homeland, and that some of her richest memories of her life before her adoption showcase her mother's desire and love for her, and her ability to take all of those memories with her to her home and family in the United States with relative ease, collapse at the sight of a young girl going through a similar process of abandonment and relocation.

Where is the Place of Habitation?

Among the key goals of this chapter, as well as each of the other chapters in this work, is not only to demonstrate the ways in which these narratives can be read as stories of forced migration in a way that distinguish them within the larger field of immigrant literature, but to go beyond that and to conceive of the places and planes inhabited by those who are seen as "inauthentic." Saskia Sassen, exploring the emergence of new global classes, writes, "these types of disadvantaged individuals also find themselves in an ambiguous position between the national and the global" (MPI). If we broaden how we define "disadvantaged individuals" here, as has been done through the analysis in this chapter, transnational adoptees number among these emergent global classes. We still must contend, however, with the notion that there is an "ambiguous position" between the national and the global. If the "global" in this case is the established networks of solidarity that exist between groups, then many transnational adoptees do not fit that description, as they are not part of those networks. Instead, I argue that the "ambiguous

position that they inhabit between the national and the global" is still the global, if only for the reason that despite the numerous provisions that exist for individuals occupying "refugee" or "exile" status as determined by international legislative bodies such as the United Nations, the view of many societies is far more binary; you are either the citizen of a nation, or you are not. That those legislative bodies have made such determinations does not change Haley's experience in the salon, or allow Fang's last experience in the film acting as the transitional agent of international adoption to be handled with a greater sense of surety. So, global citizenship, instead of only an outcome of transnational networking, also includes those wandering between places. The only space that can be occupied by the "inauthentic" inhabitant is the general, and the general is the global because in that binary perspective within which these disadvantaged individuals must contend, there is no acknowledgement of any other space.

This occupation of a space between nations and borders is articulated within all of the narratives included in this chapter, most clearly within the reflective language of Fang and Deann, and acknowledged in a way best described as uncomfortable by those individuals that they encounter in their travels to both China and South Korea. In the interviews with orphanage administrators and other government officials, there is an awkwardness when they are faced with a person of significant means who cannot be placed squarely within a single place of belonging, reflecting the binary perspective mentioned above. By focusing on the passages from the films that describe the new sense of being for both Fang and Deann, we can see how the revelations of forced migration moved them to that global level of consideration.

Visiting South Korea to learn about the fate of the original Cha Jung Hee, Deann has many opportunities to speak with Koreans who have been adopted internationally. Of particular note are her reflections upon meeting with a group of transnational adoptees from Sweden. In this scene, the Korean-Swedish adoptees are sitting around a large table singing a drinking song in Swedish at a traditional Korean restaurant in Seoul. The length of the scene itself demonstrates Deann's fascination with them; in a film of roughly an hour, we see this scene for a considerable time. In reference to seeing them together, Deann says, "There is a randomness to our fate. Not only could I have been Cha Jung Hee, I could have been Swedish" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). In this statement we can read Deann's knowledge that the place of habitation for transnational adoptees is not a destined exercise of their own fate, but that it is rather "random" in that it results from the whims of the state agencies and whichever wealthy country's citizens are willing to pay for the at times exorbitant adoption fees. Also, her claim that she "could have been Sweedish" is more than a reference to a country into which she could have been adopted, but brings us back to Deann's claim that Cha Jung Hee was not a single person but rather a template that any girl could fit into that could then be shaped into the idealized American or Sweedish child desired by the adoptive family.

This same scene also brings to the mind of the reader another statement made by Deann as well as other scholars such as Elaine Kim, that "Wherever adoptees end up, when we come back to Korea we become tourists in our own land" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). Whether that tourist identity is one imparted upon the individual by the state, as Elaine Kim discusses, or whether the honest unfamiliarity with both the language and the culture creates a sense of otherness in the mind of the adoptee, as it did many times

during Deann's travels in Korea, we see the transnational adoptee wandering in that place between nations, searching for a new revelation of their own identity in their country of origin while simultaneously expressing the cultural identities of the country in which they were raised.

The transition that Deann had to endure as an transnational adoptee is also the subject of her first conversation with "the real" Cha Jung Hee, after Deann discovers a woman from the orphanage whose life story most closely matches the early life of Cha Jung Hee. In her, Deann sees the life of a Korean woman that she could have had—or at least, that she imagined herself as having—had she not been adopted by the Borshays. Closely connected to her community and possessing a social position of great respect, Cha Jung Hee refuses to accept the artifacts of her time at the orphanage: the shoes given to her by the Borshays, as well as the other keepsakes that Deann had kept with her after she moved to the United States. She says, "You were sent to a foreign country and had to get used to a new culture. That must have been very difficult for a young child. It hurts me to think about it." She wants Deann to keep those items, saying that she wants to forget about the past, as "I am afraid I might dream about it" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*).

After these revelations, Deann says, "I originally thought if I gave back Cha Jung Hee's shoes, I would be free of the identity they symbolized. But I realize, they don't belong to her, they belong to me. Although I arrived in America walking in Cha Jung Hee's shoes, I can see now the path I've taken has always been my own." (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). The deception perpetrated by the Korean government as well as by Deann herself, while extremely significant in the ways that it contributed to her forced

migration, does not represent to sole source of uncertainty for Deann. Though the words that she speaks here do present a form of closure for her origin story, it does not reconcile her sense of belonging fully within her family or the United States. Deann says, "I feel like I've been several different people, in one life... I've had three names, three different sets of histories. My name is Deann Borshay, I was born… the moment I stepped off the plane in San Fransisco" (*First Person Plural*). While Deann might now have found peace with the first half of that statement, her relationship with her adoptive family and the one that she has formed over the course of years with her biological family does not allow the second to be reconciled in the film alone. Being comfortable with her former identity as Ok Jin while living as Deann Borshay Liem in the United States still contains and conveys some of the anxiety that Haley feels in *Somewhere Between*, sitting on the couch with her biological father, uncertainty stamped upon her face. What is the point at which this ambiguous existence is reconciled? Or does it have to be? For Deann, comfort does not necessarily mean an end to the narrative; accepting the truth of her early life's circumstances doesn't mean that the journey of discovery must end. Perhaps Haley will also come to a point where uncertainty and anxiety are lessened, but not dispelled entirely, through reflection and discovery.

Fang Lee, sitting in the bus on the way to the airport in China, imagines a place of unquestioned belonging, in which the disparate parts of herself can live in perfect harmony. Incorporating what she sees as the most important parts of her American and Chinese cultural history, she names this utopic vision "Fangtopia" (*Somewhere Between*). What she does not say, but what is quite apparent to the reader, is that she has been living in the imagined Fangtopia all of her life until this point. Though it has not manifested

itself as an autonomous land for her to inhabit, her circumstances that have allowed her to retain her linguistic and cultural heritage from China and incorporate it relatively seamlessly into her life as an American teenager is a utopic vision many transnational adoptees are never able to realize.

Whereas Deann's status as a global citizen, as she herself might not have thought about her identity in precisely those terms before, presents itself to the viewer as the composite meaning of her reflective journey, Fang begins to transform the way that she sees herself on a global level of consideration, giving voice to the ambiguous space that she inhabits. Fang understands that there is no idealized country for her to inhabit, she knows, "there is only the world" (*Somewhere Between*). Not only is there not a physical space for her to inhabit that meets all of her cultural criteria, but the Fangtopia that she has been experiencing has come to an end, and that realization accounts for the depleted energy in her voice as she articulates these ideas in the film. She knows that there is nothing standing in the way of her continuing to serve as an intermediary between adoptees and their new parents, and there is no reason for the reader to assume that she will not choose to keep her practice of helping others close to her sense of identity. However, the fantasy that she was sending these girls off to a peaceful transition between the lives that they used to live and the lives that they are now being forced to live is gone.

The above quote, "there is only the world," (*Somewhere Between*) is an idea voiced only by Fang throughout all of the films studied in this chapter. Many of the other transnational adoptees only come as far as Fang did in the scene in which the young girl has her moment of traumatic crisis. For those other individuals, the stunned look on their faces, or the anxiety that brings tears to their eyes, is as far as we are permitted to witness

their transformation of perspective. Fang's revelation represents the end of this emotional journey, for even though we know of the many support and international solidarity groups that exist for each member of the forced migrant community, including transnational adoptees, the opportunities that each of those members have of understanding that such groups exist, of having the means to reach out to them across vast distances, and of possessing the bravery to make that contact in the first place, are rare indeed. And though Saskia Sassen's work on emergent global classes does represent a powerful and desperately needed call to action for the transnational adoptee community as well as the larger societies and nations in which we live, if Fang Lee were faced with the claim that disadvantaged individuals occupy an "ambiguous position" between the national and the global, I believe she would respond that, for us in the transnational adoptee community, "there is only the world." Our cosmopolitanism is not one of choice, but one of resignation; as our manifold anxieties encounter wall after wall on our journey for a fixed identity, where else can we exist?

Chapter 2

Location(s) of Home: Refugees and Exiles in Narratives of Forced Migration

Alan Kurdi was three when he drowned in the sea. Face down in the sand, there is a horrifying serenity to the image, horrifying because something in us expects violent noise to accompany such things, and there is none. That dead children can be found on quiet beaches amid rolling waves simply cannot be, we tell ourselves. Only in the terror and volume of war do we fearfully expect such things. But this is the world that we live in now—one in which dead children on beaches is an acceptable price for the rhetoric and designs of nationalists. This chapter is for Alan.

Introduction

When this project first started, the refugee and exile sections of my dissertation occupied separate chapters. The idea behind that decision was to give each their own exclusive place in which the experiences showcased in the texts could be analyzed equitably. However, as the purpose of the larger project is not to categorize which experiences create a refugee and which create an exile, or more broadly, what the experiences are which result in an "authentic" forced migrant, I did not to create what some scholars might view as an artificial barrier between these two populations. The other side of this, of course, is the effort to avoid claiming that refugees and exiles are the same, unfairly trivializing differences that members of these groups might highlight as their most important distinguishing qualities.

Though some might think the terms "refugee" and "exile" related if not effectively synonymous, a great deal of work has been done in the fields of sociology,

anthropology, and cultural studies to investigate the experiences of individuals assigned these titles. Liisa Malkki, in "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things," goes into great depth tracing the emergence of the term "refugee" as well as the field of refugee studies. She argues against the notion that the term refugee accurately identifies only a specific type of person, instead providing a wealth of profound reasoning to demonstrate how it "includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations" (496). In this work, she cites Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* when transitioning the focus of the article to exile. His words speak to the focus of my project as well. Said writes,

> "Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word "refugee" has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas "exile" carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality." (181)

Preceding the above paragraph, Said writes specifically regarding exile,

> "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the

> crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever." (173)

Said's words help to lay groundwork for an imaginative expedition into refugee and exile narratives in a way that few others do, especially by providing a specific, first-hand perspective. While Said can only provide one perspective, a useful definition of the experiences of the exile exists in his words. A simple search on the internet for the definition of a refugee will provide links to many sites of the United Nations and its affiliate institutions with detailed descriptions of modern refugee experiences, but a search of exile routes the query to the dictionary and those simple definitions that we expect in those places. This could be due to, among other things, the massive population shifts occurring in the world at this time, with refugees being displaced by the millions and the international solidarity efforts to engage the world in valuable discourse concerning them. It could also be due to exile representing an antique experience in the minds of many; something done in the ancient world and not related to our contemporary experiences. Having Said's definition here, singular though it may be, provides, at the very least, a place to begin the analysis of these literary works of exile.

In her article, Malkki has helped to situate the terms "refugee" and "exile" into a discourse that anthropologists find productive, and Said 's own words echo her claim in his field of literary and cultural studies that the typical view of what constitutes refugees are the large populations of people displaced from their homes and in need of international assistance. Ultimately, these two scholars have a similar approach to how they rhetorically introduce these two terms; with refugees, a population is under consideration, but when it comes to exile, a single figure's experiences are the matter at

hand. This in itself is not necessarily a criticism of their approach—in fact, placing these figures into the familiar social formations of what constitutes them can help to avoid some conceptual barriers for students and readers. Regardless, the focus in this chapter on the work of Junot Diaz, Marjane Satrapi, and GB Tran will not require that refugee experiences happen within large populations, or that the exilic experience be limited to the reflections of the individual. Instead, we will look toward Said's claim of the "unhealable rift" of exile, and the quest of refugees to seek even the most basic of human rights. We will also consider whether the occasional conflation of these two terms is in fact an unjust trivialization, or if it is possible for the experience of the refugee and the exile to occupy the same space.

Much of this chapter will be focused on the idea of home. Home is not meant in the sense of a physical dwelling in this case, but the idea of a place of unquestioned belonging and security. This is certainly not the first time that the idea of home or simply the idea of belonging has been considered in literary analysis, but little work has been done to investigate its role in the literature of forced migration.[4] The concept of home still revolves around something that can be lost or regained by forced migrants, with many narratives of repatriation across every genre ending with either a triumphant return to the place of origin, or a permanent desolation of the spirit at not being able to return. Much of the scholarship regarding home for exiles and refugees also takes this route, either exploring the question of what can be done to help displaced populations that have lost their homes,[5] or defining a specific, unchanging place as a "true home."[6] While these

[4] Helen Taylor. "Refugees, The State and the Concept of Home."
[5] David Hollerbach, *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants.*
[6] Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile.*

approaches to home and displacement produce valuable work—and in the case of Said, provide a helpful starting point in this chapter—they still rely on a place-based notion of home that ignores much of the refugee and exile experience; specifically, they do not spend enough time considering the changes that living between the nation-state and the world have on the individual. Further, regarding the distinctions between refugees and exiles, a rejection of place-based ideas of home can undo those distinctions, or at the least, enable them to be a part of the same space and same story, as mentioned above.

In an effort to help clarify what I mean by "the same space," I offer the following personal narrative. My spouse and her family immigrated to the United States in the late 90's from Iran. As members of the Baha'i Faith, a minority religion in Iran, they were not allowed to work, seek higher education, or access the social services available to other citizens of the country. Though she was only of middle-school age at the time, with an older brother and younger sister, her parents had lived in Iran until their 40's, through the revolution, and had adjusted to their new lives as members of an oppressed community. This is not to say that they were comfortable with this new life; the totalitarian restrictions of the theocratic government made providing for their family a difficult task. But they had found the means to endure, due in part to the success of their family in the generations before the revolution. Despite their endurance, when they learned that even secondary education was going to be difficult, if not impossible, to find for their children, they made the decision to move to the U.S. through a refugee resettlement program. Since that time, all of their children have found great academic and professional success, and the family is able to pursue those endeavors unavailable to them in their country of origin.

While this might seem like an idyllic story to many, the ties that the family has to Iran are diverse and sometimes painful, challenging the notion that a home—or a complete sense of home—has been forged for all involved. My spouse and her siblings possess vivid memories of their life in Tehran, as they had all spent at least the first decade of their lives there making friends and attending school. However, though they respect and identify with the culture of Iran, they possess no particular longing to return, and no pain at having left. The unhealable rift written about by Said is not a part of their experience. For my mother-and-father-in-law, the reality is quite different, and the rift clearly present. Neither of them would ever return to Iran; they know that their lives would be in danger and their commitment to family would never permit them to risk their own freedom in such a way. Despite this knowledge, both of them have experienced pain because of the rift between them and their country of origin. My father-in-law lost both of his parents after he had moved to the U.S., and he was unable to return to Iran to bury them because of the danger. My mother-in-law lives in perpetual longing to return to Tehran, where she was a part of international solidarity movements to fight for civil rights for Baha'is in Iran. Here in her new home, her ability to participate in those movements is quite limited.

Though the ways that home is described in the novels vary, the reader will see an idea of home instilled and then lost by the characters and families focused upon in this chapter. While each of them still have a legal home, the sense of surety and belonging in that space is destroyed. In *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Belicia loses her home in the world when she is forced to migrate to the US. Despite the mobility that allows her to return to the Dominican Republic at any time, the unhealable rift of her exile forces

both her and her family into a permanent state of displacement, with both Oscar and Lola traveling between both countries on a search for identity. The Tran family in *Vietnamerica* undergo a forced migration to the United States and experience a disjunction of understanding between the parents that never allows them to rehome in the new space, based partially on the assumption that they would return to Vietnam. Both GB's mother and father immerse themselves in the places and memories of home during their visit to Vietnam because home was not something that could be realized following their forced migration. The idea of temporary forced migration carries over to Marji's experience in *Persepolis*; living in Austria was always supposed to be for only a fixed time. However, because she left during her formative years, the Western European identity that she crafted for herself was one that would never be able to return to Iran, a place which, it could be argued, barely resembled the country she had left. Though she eludes personal consequences, she ultimately leaves Iran a second time after this new identity distinguishes her as a destabilizing element in the theocratic regime.

Regarding "home" as it relates to refugee studies, Helen Taylor, in her article "Refugees, the State and the Concept of Home" writes,

> "…home cannot be reduced to any one of its many component parts, rather studies of home in the context of forced migration need to suggest complexity and contradiction if they are to achieve an understanding of the lived experience of exile… a development of the concept of home that moves beyond the restrictions of methodological nationalism, while acknowledging the very real and profound connections that refugees have to lost and newly-made homes is essential. It is

> only by looking at home in the widest possible sense that we can understand the challenges faced by refugees" (152).

In this quote, Taylor does much to disrupt the notion of home as it exists in the minds of most citizens of secure status in their place of origin. Perhaps the term most closely associated with a sense of belonging, home is often used in conversation to describe a place other than the current space one inhabits. Knowing that a place exists in which one's right to occupy or exist is guaranteed instills a great degree of security and peace because, even in the most catastrophic of personal disasters, we know that "home" and the people and amenities it contains will always be accessible. For refugees and exiles, this definition of home does not exist; the very nature of forced migration represents a destruction of that security and guaranteed space.

So what does it mean to look at home in the "widest possible sense" as Taylor writes? In the narratives studied in this chapter, when a forced migrant undergoes displacement and is severed from that place of assured security that we call home, they, as Taylor writes, move "beyond the restrictions of methodological nationalism" (152). Despite their forced displacement, the ties to the lost home remain and are further complicated by the relationships and connections that they make in their new spaces. This argument strongly contradicts established notions of home and place, and forces us to look at home in the widest possible sense, as suggested by Taylor, existing in multiple places and transmuted through rejection in the place of origin, or apprehensive permission by natural-citizen neighbors in the place they are forced to occupy. As there is no space between the national and the global, the characters in these works occupy a place of global citizenship steeped in trauma and hostility.

Each of the narratives written by these authors has an important role in the chapter, but I would hesitate to categorize any of them as being exclusively exile or refugee stories. Rather, much like the family history that I have shared above, the presence of experiences that we might attribute to the refugee or to the exile can be present within the same text. Each novel could be read as belonging more to one experience of forced migration than another, and I certainly would not add or subtract content that may or may not be helpful to the analysis in the effort to strike a balance of refugee and exile experience within the sections dedicated to each. However, rather than spend time categorizing the experiences and the characters themselves as one group or the other, we might see how the definition of the refugee or exile experience that exists within contemporary social discourse might not encompass all of its realities. Especially concerning refugees, Mimi Thi Nguyen writes in *The Gift of Freedom*,

> "It is without a doubt an understatement to observe at this stage that the refugee is no simple figure. A historical event, a legal classification, an existential condition of suspension or surrender, and a focal point for rescue and rehabilitation, the refugee figure is mired in complicated and ever emerging matrices and crises of referentiality within political as well as ontological processes of signification and subjectivization" (25).

As will become clear through the analysis of the three novels addressed in this chapter, among the ever emerging matrices of refugee and exile studies is the concept of home. There can be no concluding moment of scholarly unmasking in which the veil is thrown aside and a ubiquitous classification of home is demonstrated in forced migrant literature. As will be shown in this chapter, these individuals and families are not satisfied with a

lack of defined home and belonging; they are on a quest for it. And while the journey itself yields its own moments of personal growth, they leave the reader while still occupying the only space that they can; between the borders of the world. Because of this continuing search, we will remain in a productive place of discomfort between traditional definitions of home and belonging.

Attached to this notion of discomfort, there is something critically important in talking about exile and refugee narratives within an Americanist study in our modern political environment. Muhammad Awan writes, regarding the xenophobia of the West in the 21st century,

> "9/11 attacks and the resultant global war on terror, and its politics, gave rise to new fears and conflicts among the Diasporic communities and their host countries… As the feelings of alienation is increasing, the Muslims living in the West in particular have been forced to redefine their relationship with their host cultures, especially in the United States of America" (17).

So much of the study of immigrant literatures focuses on how the subject adapts their sense of identity within the new place; how do they maintain their rich sense of cultural or religious identity in the new environment? What are the feelings of gratitude toward the new home, or feelings of resentment toward the place of origin for their exile? And while those questions are interesting and can lead to substantive conversations, there is something absent in their content. Awan's work in his article addresses some of the questions that also play a critical role in my own work. Instead of asking only how they adapt away from home, we also ask how they contend with the forces in their new home

that oppose their presence but do not force their exile. What unique outcomes in their sense of belonging do those experiences generate for the forced migrant?

Though this chapter does not advocate the notion that trauma is the exclusive domain of refugees and exiles, Said's unhealable rift and Malkki's assertion that refugees occupy a realm in which they are victims help to take this chapter in a useful direction, begging the question of how this displacement from a national to a global level of discourse and international consideration shapes their identities? If they are not permitted—either through official government sanction or because they would otherwise likely perish—to remain in their countries of origin, but are not recognized as "authentic inhabitants" in the place that they are forced to inhabit, then in what legal or social place do they dwell? If the notion of an inhabitable place between the national and the global represents merely a bit of convenient rhetoric for legislators rather than a protected and sustaining place for forced migrants, then what is their space?

Two-and-a-half thousand years ago, when asked where he came from, the philosopher Diogenes claimed to be a citizen of the world. Coining the term *cosmopolitan*, Diogenes made a profound contribution to the philosophical discourse of his time. Diogenes was also an exile, banished from the city of Sinope in modern-day Turkey. While he might not have been the first individual to speak of global citizenship, he certainly was the first recorded to have done so because of a lack of any alternative in his own life. And while Diogenes might not be the high exemplar of social manners, his banishment fits quite well with Said's description of the exile, separated from home by the unhealable rift and forced onto a global level of consideration in the ancient world (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, University of Tennessee).

Diogenes is important here because individuals like him have existed for millennia, their exile removing them from the comfortable places within defined borders. And while there is nothing dishonest or wrong with the privileged position that might have found its start—or continued within—the academic court of Socrates and made its way to the writing of Richard Falk, the notion that cosmopolitanism was an uninhabited position before the advent of the transnational businessperson or activist cannot withstand the experience of the exile and the refugee. As long as individuals or groups have been forced to migrate to a new place, whether through official exile or because they were fleeing persecution, cosmopolitanism has been a part of the human experience. From the earliest human settlements that prohibited the reentry of warriors after battle to the children sent across borders by their parents to escape theocratic persecution, a crucible of pain and solitude heralded the birth of the global citizen. This global citizenship—this new cosmopolitanism—is one manifested in the novels studied in this chapter in the psychological between-borders state that is produced politically and materially through the displacement and forced migration of refugee and exilic figures.

In the first chapter, the stories and lived experiences of international adoptees showcased many unique characteristics, not the least of which was the nature of finding a new sense of self while occupying a space in which one already has access to all of the rights of citizenship. The global citizenship experienced by those members of the forced migrant community was more the result of powerful, reflective introspection—certainly rooted in trauma, much like all forced migrants—but was different in that the initial crossing of borders was not a remembered event. Those realities had to be sought out and recalled, whereas the lived experiences of the refugee and the exile are what immediately

constitute occupying that space between places. In the case of international adoptees, who are often either adopted in infancy or at such a young age that they are not responsible for any of the bureaucratic requirements for their naturalization, we often know no other way of living that either has to be unlearned and replaced with, or at least stand alongside, another way. Refugees and exiles, who are often adults or individuals old enough to actively participate in the immigration process, or at least understand it, have a much different experience.

This chapter is divided into three sections, with an analysis of a part of each novel dedicated to a part of the forced migrant experience. The first section will focus on encountering the oppressive force; that is, recognizing the institution(s) or cultural force(s) in one's place of origin that object to one's presence, as well as the time when the oppressive force transforms the citizen into the exile or refugee. The second section will look at movement and travel, crossing borders and existing between nations. Finally, the analysis will center on the exile or refugee's forced inhabitation of the new place. While the first two sections of the chapter are focused on the loss of belonging and the trauma of displacement, the third section is where the focus will turn to the disruption of the idea of home as attached to place. The discussion of home, its transformation, and the dissolution of our contemporary definition of it as relating directly to place, cannot be fully realized without looking at those parts of each novel that articulate the critical, transformative steps of the journey of the refugee and the exile, especially the loss of home in the place of origin and the traumatic journey to the space the characters are forced to inhabit.

One of the initial questions that I encountered in drafting the initial proposal for this project was how to situate a study that would, by necessity, include international perspectives and experiences into an Americanist project. Would including only American authors, or transnational authors writing in the United States, restrict the ability of the project to properly investigate the research questions proposed? Tran and Díaz, were either born in the United States or have lived the majority of their lives here. Only Satrapi exists, for the most part, outside of the Americanist sphere. However, her medium of storytelling, the graphic novel, resides firmly—and arguably has its origin within—the American literary tradition, primarily due to the work of Will Eisner in the 1970's (Levitz, Paul. *Vulture.com*) and to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980-1991) which was the first graphic novel to win the Pulitzer Prize and around which an archive of academic study continues to be built.

Exile and refugee narratives disrupt the contemporary understanding of home by forcing the reader to consider an idea of home that no longer relies on place. The characters at the center of these narratives may have relocated to the United States, but the cultural connections that they have maintained to their places of origin—not to mention the very act of rehoming itself—prevent them from "truly" inhabiting a defined, bordered nation. Many studies and investigations of the refugee and exile experience look at the forced relocation of populations as an action that results in the deprivation of a home, and ask questions regarding how that rift between the place of origin—the "home"—and the space these individuals and groups are forced to inhabit can be addressed and soothed. Through an analysis of three critical steps of the forced migrant experience—encountering the opposition, traveling across borders, and rehoming in a

new space—as they occur in these novels, this chapter will demonstrate that a place-based notion of home does not apply to the refugee and exile experience, and that these novels imagine in its place a new form of cosmopolitanism, one born from the trauma of displacement to a space between the recognized lines drawn between nations.

The Question of Mobility

The mobility of the individual subject represents an important and heavily-discussed subject in migration studies. With the basic definition of being able to move freely, mobility in the context of migration studies has expanded its meaning greatly. No longer limited to the ability to physically relocate oneself, mobility now includes the ability to cross national borders and, in the case of privileged individuals, to move across borders at will. The UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees has published numerous papers on the subject of mobility within the forced migrant community. One of the more recent publications from the last several years, "Mobility and Durable Solutions: a case study of Afghan and Somali refugees," looks at mobility as a perpetual solution for persons of means, who "possess the right gender, possess sufficient socioeconomic capital, or the willingness and ability to participate and benefit (whether directly or indirectly) from the socioeconomic support, cultural adjustments, and business opportunities generated by migratory and transnational mobility" (Sturridge 21-22). While it might be difficult to place such individuals within the ranks of the majority of refugees in the world—something that this article acknowledges—we can see that mobility, specifically in the case of refugees, no longer only concerns the initial departure from a place of instability and danger to a permanent place of safety, but is now recognized as a permanent ability that can be continually exercised by an individual.

The relative degrees to which each of the characters in the novels are able to exercise mobility plays a large role in the circumstances that they encounter. In *Persepolis,* Marjane Satrapi's family is descended from nobility, have a nice house in the capital city, and though Marji's displacement is driven by her parents' desire for a better life for her where she will have access to basic rights that she does not possess in Iran because of her gender, she leaves the country on a plane to Vienna backed by the capital of her family. The exile of Beli in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* is powerfully traumatic, and its cause potentially fatal. Having lived a life that was an equal mix of tragedy and stability, Beli still leaves the Dominican Republic on a plane and crosses the border into the United States without any difficulty. Tran's family in *Vietnamerica,* though they also leave on a plane, experience the forced migration of refugees by a textbook definition. Separated and smuggled into the airport through deception, chance, circumstance, and falsehoods told by their American friend are all that allow their family to escape together before the war comes to its close.

None of these individuals or families reflect the majority of what we are seeing in the world today, with lines of refugees stretching across the desert for miles. In two of the novels, the exiles and refugees arguably possess the means to return to their place of origin, and in some cases they do. This raises the question of, can you be an exile or refugee if you possess the legal right and the socioeconomic means to travel back to your place of origin? Are these titles and statuses permanent ones, or do they change with one's own circumstances? Much like Marji, members of my own family can return to Iran whenever they wish, with credentials and experiences gained in the United States that would circumvent many—but certainly not all—of the prohibitions that caused them

to leave in the first place. While few of the figures in these narratives lack mobility, the reflections and experiences present in the novels still place them in the ambiguous zone between nations and demonstrate the ways in which their refugee and exile origin stories made them into global citizens, even against their own desires.

Encountering the Opposition & Becoming a Forced Migrant

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao possesses a great many fascinating qualities, not the least of which are the multiple characters that play critical roles in the story; it might be Oscar's wondrous life, but the sections of the book that focus entirely upon other members of his family are no less captivating. It's difficult to locate precisely where in the novel Oscar encounters the opposition to his presence in the space that he inhabits. The reasons for this are many, including the fact that he is not a forced migrant himself; his mother and further extended family experienced oppressive forces in the DR and she relocated to the US. Oscar, invested in comic books, fantasy, science fiction, and the pop culture of the second half of the 20th century, finds the oppressive force in his own Dominican-American neighborhood, primarily in a Dominican culture that, according to the narrator, demands a certain kind of behavior and set of priorities that Oscar cannot bring himself to adopt. Oscar's lack of belonging in his home community are quite interesting and certainly worthy of study, but the story of his mother's exile from the DR is of particular import in this chapter. As a close look into her experiences in the novel will demonstrate, her exile and the destruction of her sense of home and belonging is so complete that it cripples her ability to successfully rehome in the United States.

Hypatia Belicia Cabral's life before her exile to the United States was anything but stable; her parents were dead before she could know them, she was shipped around the country as an unwanted thing for years before being found by her aunt and raised by her, and was exiled to the US when she crossed paths with the wrong family. Her father, formerly in the good graces of Rafael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic for thirty years in the middle of the 20th century, refused to let one of his daughters be taken by Trujillo and was imprisoned and tortured until his death. Belicia's mother and sisters also died and/or disappeared barely before her eyes had opened as an infant, and no one else in her extended family wanted to take care of her for various reasons, including her dark skin. Though she might have found some brief agency later in her teenage years to exercise her own will while still living in the DR, her liaisons with a man who would turn out to be connected to the Trujillo family caused her aunt to send her to the United States. Because of the various circumstances of her life in the Caribbean, it is difficult to locate the specific moment that Belicia recognized the oppressive or hostile forces that objected to her presence in her place of origin, though I will argue later in the chapter that it most likely occurred after a beating that she received from forces related to Trujillo and the subsequent loss of the child that she was carrying at the time. While the family of Trujillo certainly represents a significant part of this force of objection, the members of her family that refused to care for her after her immediate family was no more represent a significant part of the equation as well.

In *Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi encounters the oppressive force as a young teenager in Iran. Several years after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Satrapi is of a specific age that her experiences of relative freedom in the years immediately before and

after the revolution has instilled a powerful sense of independence alongside her formidable intelligence. These qualities, combined with a life of—again, relatively—little consequence for her independence in these early stages of the revolution, make her life at school one of extreme confidence and blunt exchanges. In the oppressive environment of the new regime, her behavior at school greatly concerns her parents, and they tell her that they are sending her to Austria. In the final pages of the book, you see the frames of Marjane and her parents at the airport as they prepare for her to leave Iran. Where once there was a strong, outspoken young woman, the reader now sees a paralyzed child, speechless in her shock. Though the experience depicted on these pages is not the same shock as those of international adoptees in the films studied in the previous chapter, there is a certain similarity in the transformative moments being experienced by these young people. Though years apart in age, leaving their homes—likely forever—strikes such an unfamiliar chord in them as to render them numb to all else.

GB Tran's *Vietnamerica* presents the reader with a confrontation with the opposing force unlike any of the other stories in this chapter. Rather than a single person facing exile or assuming the status of a refugee, Tran's family is swept up by military and political forces beyond their control. It's not until closer to the end of the novel that the reader witnesses the family's awareness of not only the changes that are happening in their home country because of the Vietnam War, but also what those changes means for their safety and security. What begins as their children noticing that more and more classmates are disappearing from school as families flee the country quickly escalates to international friends of the family helping them to escape the country on one of the last planes to leave. The intention of this brief summary is not to suggest that Tran's family

was not aware of the severity of the political changes in Vietnam or that those changes could very likely result in the destruction of their family—an argument actually made in the novel by one of the family's American friends—but rather to clarify that when it is not one person socializing with the wrong family, or one person sent away to attain rights that they could never attain in their place of origin, but an entire family being swept up in the political transformation of a country, there are different circumstances to note in the story. Tran's family was not the only family fleeing the country, and the waves of refugees flooding the airports and pouring across the borders leaves little time to develop a nuanced understanding of the forces that drove you to this point. It could be argued that the recognition of the opposing force in *Vietnamerica* occupies a majority of the novel; rather than an immediate realization, the gradual collapse of the traditional lifestyles of Tran's family and the persistent internal displacement lead to the understanding that this is not the home that they knew.

In Transit

Unlike the parts of the forced migrant experience that sometimes allow the subjects time for an intellectual examination of circumstances, the time immediately before leaving their homeland, the time in transit, and their arrival in the new space that they are forced to inhabit are moments consumed by uncertainty in these novels. Though each depicts it in a different way, the exiles and refugees in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, *Persepolis,* and *Vietnamerica* all migrate in near silence. The environment that surrounds them during their immigration, the airports, the planes, the other travelers, the government officials, all of these are sources of great energy and sound. The forced migrants themselves, however, undergo the process with the utmost quiet.

Marji's journey in *Persepolis* is second only to the Tran family in *Vietnamerica* in its silence among all the travel portions of these novels. Starting on page 149, Marji begins the travel process, which lasts through the end of the first volume of the work and continues through the first few pages of the second volume, after she has arrived in Vienna. Along with packing her belongings, Marji invites her friends over to her home to say goodbye. Through the story up until this point, Marji, due in part to her upbringing but also to her own personality, has had no reason to really consider personal loss. On page 149, she is forced to confront it for the first time. As she hands some of her treasured belongings to her friends, Satrapi writes, "I never realized how much they loved me. And I understood how important they were to me" (149). As informative about the process of travel for forced migrants as these frames in the graphic novel are, this emotional realization for Satrapi is wholly eclipsed by the scene that follows.

For her last night in Iran, Marji's grandmother comes to spend the night. After telling Marji the same story that she always has, and giving her advice about life, she and Marji settle down for the night. Though Marji does cry, realizing that this is the final night that she and her grandmother will be together, the next frame and the time that elapses between them speak volumes to the experience of the young forced migrant. The reader must assume that Marji's tears and the smell of her grandmother's jasmine flowers were soon followed by sleep. The next frame shows Marji's parents hurrying into the room to wake them so that they can take Marji to the airport. In this frame, her parents have concern on their faces—for the airport schedule, the reader assumes—and her grandmother has opened one eye in question. Marji, however, is still sleeping. It is difficult to fathom that any person could not relate to this circumstance; during youth,

many of us have experienced that night before a major transition in life, the most common of which likely is starting at a new school. On the day and evening before, though we may have some anxiety about the change in our lives, there is a relative normalcy that we eagerly embrace. For Marji, her grandmother's visit the night before epitomizes that normalcy, the sense of home that she has known since birth. Marji wants to hear the old stories that her grandmother has told her all of her life, she wants to bask in the smell of the jasmine flowers with which she is so familiar, and she wants to sleep with her grandmother in her bed, as she has doubtlessly done many times. Marji's closed eyes in that frame separate her from the other characters depicted there. Her mother and father have already prepared to take her to the airport, her grandmother has just awoken and is now present in that day and time as well, but Marji is maintaining her presence in the night before, in the normalcy of her life and home as she has known it.

The frames that follow until the end of the first volume depict Marji with her eyes wide in alarm. Save for a single frame on page 151 and one on page 152, in which she is seen weeping, Marji resides in a state of shock as to where her circumstances have led her. Though she is still young in this part of the story and there is not necessarily anything that speaks of permanence regarding this move, a part of her is aware of the fundamental shift happening in her life at this point, and her shock at losing the home that she has known is clear to the reader. Gillian Whitlock, in her book *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*, focuses on expatriate writers from Iran, including Satrapi, in one of the final chapters. She writes, "These autobiographies are narratives of trauma that remain preoccupied with an experience of estrangement, a "little death" of the self and a painful loss of the known world" (165). In the first frame on page 165, Marji's own

words reflect this idea when, waving to her parents from the other side of the security pass in the airport, she writes, "Nothing's worse than saying goodbye. It's a little like dying" (153). Consumed by her loss in these final frames of the volume, Marji decides to turn to see her parents one last time. Instead of the smiling faces that she saw through the security glass just a few frames ago, she instead sees her father carrying her seemingly unconscious mother, his face emotionless and shrouded in shadow. The death imagery of this scene, with Marji's horrified face and hands pressed against the glass that prevents her from returning to her parents illustrates the death of the traditional notion of home for Marji.

The "little death" written about by Whitlock also plays a role in the displacement and transit of Belicia in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. As mentioned earlier in the introductory section of the chapter, Beli's life in the DR was tumultuous in the extreme, lacking entirely in the agency enjoyed by Marji in *Persepolis*. Her family was not without means—a circumstance that allows her to be "comfortably" exiled by that very family—but the internal displacement that she undergoes as a result of the destruction of her immediate family at the hands of Trujillo's regime robs her of the social stability that such means might have allowed had the political conditions been different.

While the frames in *Persepolis* immediately preceding Marji's departure from Iran were surreal—in that the emotions that she and her family expressed drew such a sharp contrast with the reader's perceptions of them before her exile—the scenes in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* of Beli after the beating that results in the death of her

unborn child are especially otherworldly in how they describe the death of one's former identity, and of the home. Beli's experiences reach a critical point,

> "That night Beli drifted on a vast ocean of loneliness, buffeted by squalls of despair, and during one of her intermittent sleeps she dreamt that she had truly and permanently died and she and her child shared a coffin and when she finally awoke for good, night had broken and out in the street a grade of grief unlike any she'd encountered before was being uncoiled, a cacophony of wails that seemed to have torn free from the cracked soul of humanity itself. Like a funeral song for the entire planet" (154).

Still in a trance-like state from the severity of the assault, Beli asks her aunt if she is dying. Her aunt assures her that this is not the case, and informs her that the tumult within the environment is a result of the death of Trujillo. While this might be viewed as a reprieve for Beli's terrible circumstances—with the evil source of her family's curse dead and the power of his family diminished, surely the threat would be lessened—the remaining oligarchs and their forces begin a scorched earth campaign that threatens everyone in the country. This threat manifests itself to Beli and her aunt in the form of two hitmen who come looking for her. Realizing that Beli will never be safe in the DR, her aunt tells her that she must leave the country, to which Beli laughs. The narrator scolds her for this behavior, writing, "Oh, Beli; not so rashly, not so rashly: What did you know about states or diasporas?... What did you know, madame, about immigration? Don't laugh, mi negrita, for your world is about to be changed. Utterly" (160).

The laughter of this scene, as well as the surreal nature of the scenes that follow throughout the third section of the novel, never permit Beli to return to a relatable, stable

universe. Her aunt attempts to console her, but Beli's trauma has completely displaced her from the home and self that she knew. On page 165, Beli awakens from a dream of Santo Domingo, from, as the narrator calls it, her "lost days." As she looks out of the window of the plane, she sees the lights of New York City, the iconic place representing the land that she will be forced to inhabit. In the text between the above quotes from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* the narrator mentions a place called "Nueba Yol." All of the primary results from research regarding Nueba Yol reference a movie with that title featuring Balbuena, a prominent character from 20th century Dominican popular culture. The perception of New York, or "Nueba Yol" as the promised land in the works featuring this character are, according to Dominican reviewers of the film, reflective of New York's status as the desired destination of migration for many Dominicans (IMDB). That Beli's otherworldly state originates in Santo Domingo and ends when she sees the lights of New York registers quite profoundly with this cultural perception of New York as a place many desire to be. Interestingly, however, her viewing of the lights of the city follows immediately after Santo Domingo is referred to as "her own heart," and her relocation here as an exile contrasts significantly with that communal, cultural desire; Beli knows that this place can never truly be her home.

The sections of *Vietnamerica* that depict the travel of GB Tran's family to the United States are an illustration on page 244, and the following pages through the end of the novel that show their experience at the airport. Unlike *Persepolis*, *Vietnamerica* has a significant number of pages dedicated to various works of art that capture pieces of the forced migrant experience that stand apart from the frame-to-frame narrative. The advantage of this, from an analytical perspective, is that these illustrations can contain an

entire chapter's worth of content regarding the ideas focused upon in the novel, and the illustration on page 244 is likely the most successful example of this in the entire book.

Mary Goodwin, in "Mapping Memory in Tran's *Vietnamerica,*" describes this image, writing "the image of a tiny plane flying between Vietnam and the United States, attempting to drag the two nations together, like sections of fabric" (3). For Goodwin, the primary element represented by this image is GB's evolving sense of understanding regarding their perceptions of place. While this fine interpretation spawns many avenues of analysis, the image also represents the lived experience of Tran's family. On the left side of the illustration are the experiences in Vietnam; family gatherings, professional successes, weddings, family friends. In all of these images, there is not one that represents a single negative experience. On the right side of the illustration, a pallid grey permeates each of the images; grandparents on their death beds, belongings burning in fire, and grief on the faces of the displaced. Not all of the images on the right side are of the United States, however; the scenes of protest look to be located in Vietnam. Ultimately, it is most helpful to look at this picture as it reads from left to right; a broad collection of experiences in the place of origin, confined through war and internal displacement into a smaller and smaller space before finally being extinguished. This separation in the illustration is important to note; the experiences in the place of origin, the original home, come to an end. There is not a smooth transition of family memory between Vietnam and the United States; one set of identities based on their sense of belonging in the place of origin ceases to be, and other is born, with the plane, the symbol of their travel, the only symbol occupying the space between the two collections of memory. From the front end of the plane emerges the condensed identities that then

expand to fill a space equal to the broad, colorful representations of the family's life in Vietnam. The size and symmetry of these two collections of images show the reader that, for Tran's family, home has existed in both places, but that the broken stream of memory and experience, the result of forced migration, means that the new place that the family is forced to occupy does not reflect the same identity that was once known.

Before moving to the frames that follow this illustration, there remains one detail of the images that extend from either side of the plane that deserves attention. The emotional contrast is apparent, but while each side of the illustration possesses the clear purpose of depicting the family's occupation of two separate spaces, many of the images on the right still center on cultural practices and content that began during the family's life in Vietnam. This is a valuable example of the quote mentioned earlier from Helen Taylor in "Refugees, the State and the Concept of Home." Some of the key parts of that quote are important to mention again here. She writes,

> "a development of the concept of home that moves beyond the restrictions of methodological nationalism, while acknowledging the very real and profound connections that refugees have to lost and newly-made homes is essential. It is only by looking at home in the widest possible sense that we can understand the challenges faced by refugees" (152).

That the same cultural priorities and practices can inhabit two different spaces, as they do in this illustration, require us to look at the concept of home in the widest possible sense, as encouraged by Taylor. In this illustration, Tran calls for the reader to acknowledge this connection directly, by showing the ways that his family's identity stretches between places despite the forced migration from the place of origin to the space that they are

forced to inhabit. Throughout the novel, Tran's parents are fulfilling obligations long overdue in Vietnam during their visit, and this illustration reflects that. Many of the pictures on the right side are reflective of their devotion to a homeland from which they have been removed. For the reader to understand the connection to both "lost and newly-made homes," illustrations such as this one must be as much a focus as the sections of the novel that feature displaced family members claiming that there is no reason for them to return to Vietnam.

In the frames that follow the illustration of the plane separating the two homes of Tran's family, the reader is presented with the day of the family's forced migration to the United States, April 25, 1975 (246). Because the family will not all fit in a single car, Tri, the father, rides to the airport with their American friend Leonard. As the rest of the family waits in the front of the airport, Tri and Leonard arrive later to find that the authorities have closed the airport to any further passengers. Though they are eventually reunited through the lies and manipulation of the military forces by Leonard and make it onto the plane and leave the country, the behavior of the family in the presence of the figures of authority, the Americans, contrasts in such a significant way that the reader is forced to give consideration to these pages as principle examples of the family's experience as forced migrants.

There are two specific occurrences of this behavior depicted in these frames that deserve special attention in this analysis. Both of them begin with the words of Leonard and both show a side of the Tran family that not only has not been seen by the reader before this point in the novel, but has likely not existed at all until the day of their displacement. In these scenes, the Tran family is "undergoing the anxiety, fear, and

uncertainty that 'true' exiles must always experience" (Kaplan 107). Upon arriving at the airport, Leonard and Tri are both panicked, and so Leonard pretends that Tri is an enemy prisoner that he is transporting. To Tri's protest of this plan, Leonard says, over several frames, "And whatever they do, stay in the van and don't say a word… If you ever want to see your wife and kids again, just fucking do what I say for once! (256).

On page 259, Leonard and Tri have entered the airport and see the rest of the family. As Tri was in a position of doubt in the last couple of pages about whether or not he would ever see his family again, the reader might expect that he would be the first through the airport doors, and the first to cry out the names of his wife and children. In fact, it is Leonard who is first through the doors in the first frame of page 259, and Leonard who shouts the names of Tri's family upon seeing them. Before being permitted to see the reunion of the Tran family, the reader is shown one final frame that focuses on Leonard using his status as an American to stop the military personnel from intervening and allowing the reunion to take place.

Throughout the next eight pages of the novel, pages that depict the final moments of the Tran family's life in Korea, not a single member of the family speaks a word, nor do they leave the tight huddle that they have assumed since reuniting on page 259. The necessary anxiety, fear, and uncertainty written about by Caren Kaplan floods these pages, as the Tran family is shuttled along by Leonard and various military personnel to the plane that will take them to the United States. Their silence and utter obedience to the forces around them stands in such stark contrast to the agency exhibited by each member of the family throughout the course of the novel until this point. On page 265 comes the final exchange between Leonard and a member of the military. It is difficult for the

reader to determine which country this soldier serves; an argument could be made for either Korea or the US, but the contrasting features between him and Leonard make the confrontation between the two, held above the heads of the cowering Tran family, seem larger than any one person. As if two nations are arguing over their fate, the Tran family can only gaze up in fear as the soldier finally capitulates to Leonard's argument and allows them to board the plane. In this frame, and the one that follows, we see the moment of the Tran family's forced migration, as they are ushered across the border by Leonard, struggling to maintain the huddle, and forced into the dark confines of the cargo plane. As they look back toward the door on page 268, they witness the last sliver of light snap shut, a severed leaf drifting into the hold the final remnant of a home now destroyed, just as in the illustration, the collective memory stopping at the plane's door.

A New Home?

Now that we have studied the parts of the novels that deal with encountering the opposition to presence in the place of origin and the act of travel itself, of leaving the place of origin and crossing established borders into a new place, the final section of the novels that will be analyzed for this chapter will be those parts that show the experiences of Marji, Belicia, and the Tran family as they are forced to establish a new home in the United States. Many academics, international legislative bodies, and activist groups have advocated for a reassessment of how the international community treats, addresses, and protects the forced migrant community. One especially helpful textbook on the subject, a collection of essays and articles published several years ago and edited by David Hollerbach, *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* advances the discussion greatly. Like many of the individuals and groups listed above, however, this

book continues the question, what is the best method for addressing the needs of forced migrants who have been driven from their homes? Though that question and the discussion to which it leads are of critical import to the future of the tens of millions of displaced persons around the world, it still fails to look at home in the wider sense, as something that can exist in ways and in places that run counter to established definitions of home. The sections of these novels in which the character's ties to home both in the place of origin and in the space that they have been forced to inhabit will help expand that definition of home into one not incumbent upon a single place, but a transnational one.

In *Home Bound: Filipino Lives across Cultures, Communities, and Countries,* Yen Le Espiritu provides a critical study of home and, while her focus is on Filipino immigrants, much of her work is also helpful in framing how home can be understood for forced migrants. She writes,

> "Living between the old and the new, between homes, and between languages, immigrants do not merely insert or incorporate themselves into existing spaces in the United States; they also transform these spaces and create new ones, such as the "space between." This transnational space, then, is a productive site from which to study immigration because it articulates the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions characteristic of immigrant lives" (10).

Much like the Filipino immigrants Espiritu interviewed, the characters in these novels have "created and maintained fluid and multiple identities that link them simultaneously to both countries" (10). As will be discussed in the conclusion, there is no clear definition of home reached through an analysis of forced migrant literature. The "tensions,

irresolutions, and contradictions" that are encountered in these readings serve to sever home from a place-based definition, but they do not specify a single new idea of home, as the specific circumstances of rehoming in a new place result in unique outcomes. The only constant, also mentioned by Espiritu in her book, among the forced migrant characters in these narratives, is that they all go through a process of cultural rediscovery, whether in a literal sense or a symbolic one[7].

The sections in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* that focus on Belicia's life in the United States do not occupy nearly the same portion of the novel as do the sections of *Vietnamerica* and *Persepolis* that focus on the Tran family and Marji's life in the United States. Nevertheless, her cancer and her actions on page 302 are quite revealing for the reader about her connections to the ancestral home in the DR and the home that she has been unable to make for her family in the United States.

Though the title of the novel is clearly a reference to Oscar's experiences, pages 77 through 165 detail Belicia's life in the DR. A considerable part of the text, the content of that section has mostly been explored in the two previous sections of this chapter. I mention it here to draw an important contrast with Beli's life in the US after her exile. At the end of that section of the novel, Beli's life has been utterly consumed by death; she has lost a child to the assault from Trujillo's forces, nearly died herself, and has the home that she has come to know extinguished. Nothing about the end of that section or her travel to the United States has even a shred of positivity. Outside of that section of the novel, death is no longer only an abstract notion or associated theme of Beli's experiences; it is now a constant material consideration. Having been diagnosed with

[7] Espiritu, Yen Le. *Home Bound*, 11.

cancer from almost the beginning of the novel, Beli' attitude is one of anger at the world and her circumstances. Though the testimony of her daughter Lola leads the reader to believe that her negativity did not find its beginning with her diagnosis, the cancer reads as emblematic of the inevitable fate of Belicia; that what began with the betrayal of her lover and the loss of her child would eat away at her being, regardless of the place that she inhabited, until it consumed her.

Belicia and her aunt—and surrogate mother—La Inca pray after learning of the terrible beating that Oscar has suffered in the DR. Referencing the similar beating that Belicia experienced in the DR that resulted in the loss of her unborn child, the narrator notes, "If they noted the similarities between Past and Present they did not speak of it" (301). However, In the section immediately after this, the narrator cites Beli's past experiences in the DR as the motivating force behind her calling Oscar as soon as the doctors have given the ok for him to speak with family (302). In as few words as she can manage, given her penchant for expletive-filled commands, Beli says, "You, stupid worthless no-good hijo-de-la-gran-puta are going home" (302). Is Beli referring to her home, Oscar's home, or the shared home of the family?

Keeping in mind the reality that Beli has not been able to successfully rehome in the United States because of the trauma of her displacements, the reader can understand that there really is no home to which Oscar can ever return. Despite being born and raised in the United States, Oscar has lived his own forced migrant experience. From being internally displaced by the Dominican-American culture in New Jersey to seeking out a sense of identity in the Dominican Republic, Oscar has no stable center of belonging. Even after he meets Ybon in the Dominican Republic and though her finds, as Appadurai

world say, his "home in the world" (Modernity at Large), it is only until the cultural realities of that space reject and kill him. Even his sister Lola, who arguably finds a kind of stability at the end of the novel, lives a life in the between-borders psychological state and seeks a stable space and identity as well throughout the novel. Beli's forced migration and inability to rehome in the US creates a family of forced migrants adrift in world.

In *Veitnamerica,* there is a section of the book that represents the transformation of the family in the United States after escaping on the plane. Much like their hurried evacuation at the airport, the family is ushered out of the plane without speaking. The first frame on page 228 depicts the family's state of mind at their arrival. Bordered by the words "freedom" and "liberty" on either side, the family, except for the grandmother, seems genuinely hopeful about the life that they are about to begin. On page 243, after the five year wait for the naturalization process, the family has changed their disposition completely. While the younger children—one having arrived in the US in her infancy and the other born after their arrival—have no experiences to erase the smiles from their faces, the rest of the family is mired in silence and grief.

In the pages between these two images, the major characters from the family provide profound insights on their transformation. The first two are GB's mother and grandmother. While talking to GB about the family's exile, these two characters reveal both the initial reaction to displacement for the family, and then the current state of mind about the family's new sense of belonging. While cooking in the kitchen, GB's mother Dzung says to him "I didn't think we'd be gone forever. Maybe just a few months, and when the new government was in place we'd all return home. How could we know we

were leaving for good?" (232). The importance of these quotes in an analysis of forced migrant literature cannot be overstated. That the perception possessed by the family at the beginning of their displacement was that they would be returning home in the near future certainly sheds new light for the reader on their willingness to leave the country in the first place. But more than that, it provides important insight for the illustration on page 243 that depicts the family after living in the United States for five years and realizing that their exile is not a temporary one. As we learn in this section, GB's father knew that the move would be permanent, but withheld this information from his mother, allowing her to believe that they would return to Vietnam after all of the violence had ended. This disjunction of understanding creates an unstable family dynamic that prevents them from successfully rehoming in the United States.

GB's grandmother Le Nhi's quotes on pages 236 and 237 are sentiments that speak to a dismissal or resignation of the individual in regard to the importance of place. GB asks her, "Do you want to go back to Vietnam?" to which she replies, "What for? All my friends moved to France. I have no siblings. None of my children live there. My parents are dead. There's nothing left for me there… That Vietnam is not the home I left…" (236-237). For Le Nhi, there is no place to which she can return in Vietnam that will be a home for her, as her sense of home is tied directly to the relationships that she has with her friends and family. The lack of content in her words regarding the place that she currently inhabits, the US, is especially revealing. She claims that she does not want to return to Vietnam, but says nothing about her desire to remain in the United States; her identity and sense of belonging boarded the plane with her, and so where she happens to dwell is not as important as why she inhabits a place.

A final note that I would like to make about this section of *Vietnamerica* concerns the father of the family, Tri, sitting with GB in the yard and talking about their exile and resettlement in the United States. Tri is kneeling in the yard, surrounded by tools and other building materials, literally continuing to try to build the home for his family in the United States. Speaking to GB about fleeing the country, he says, echoing the ideas of Helen Taylor, "You can't look at our family in a vacuum and apply your myopic contemporary western filter to them" (240). Many readers blame Tri for not explaining to his wife and family that the move to the United States would be a permanent one, but it's also important to view the move and Tri's urgent motivation to flee the country with his family as the material outcome the war unfolding in Vietnam. The inequitable level of awareness that Tri possessed about the permanency of their move is worth some discussion, but the political realities of wartime Vietnam are the cause of their forced migration and the source of the family's disjunction. While Dzung immerses herself in the spaces and memories of the home during their visit to Vietnam, Tri claims that it no longer holds any meaning for him. However, the reader sees that Tri's mind is also remembering those lost spaces despite his resistance to them. We see that the family's disjunction persists even here, as he and Dzung cannot fully share in their return to their place of origin.

In the second volume of *Persepolis*, Marji goes through all of the predictable changes expected during maturation, but does so in a sweeping set of ever-changing circumstances as an exile in Europe. Though she spends her years abroad in Austria, she lives in and visits many different locations throughout the country, both voluntarily and involuntarily. *Persepolis* stands apart from both *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

and *Vietnamerica* in that it is the story of one character's experiences over the course of less than a decade rather than a multi-generational epic spanning lifetimes. Because of this, the reader doesn't have the opportunity to see Marji later in life, after she leaves Iran for the last time, and therefore has no idea of what identity or sense of belonging she ultimately possessed in the place that she was forced to inhabit, which links us back to the idea of these novels coming to their close during the journey between the interstitial psychology of the characters. Further, though Marji's eyes are still wide with shock in the first few frames of the second volume, she enjoys a comparatively smooth cultural transition into her life in Vienna. A close friend of the family from Iran takes her into their home, and though she is soon forced to move into a boarding house, the familiarity that she enjoys with this family blunts a great deal of the culture shock that she might otherwise have experienced. From the boarding house, Marji lives in a variety of settings, but always in a circumstance that allows her to not worry about paying rent or providing anything other than her own food. Even during her first foray into what many would call independence—living with a person, Markus, with whom she has a romantic relationship, ostensibly as an equal—after spending several years living in Austria, she is utterly dependent on that relationship. After Markus betrays her trust and their relationship ends, Marji claims "I had counted on this relationship for everything. The world had just crumbled in front of my eyes" (79). Following this, Marji lives on the street for a time before developing bronchitis and being hospitalized. After recovering from her illness, she decides that she needs "so badly to go home" (91). Acknowledging that it would be the end of the social liberties that she had enjoyed for years, Marji returns to Iran.

The second half of *Persepolis vol. 2* focuses on Marji's readjustment to theocratic Iranian culture. Another way that this story is unique among the novels in this chapter in that the forced migration of Marji by her parents was done out of their desire to protect her from the cultural changes happening in the country and for her to enjoy the liberties that she would find abroad. Unlike *Vietnamerica* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, there was no force directly opposing Marji's presence in Iran, and so she is permitted to return without any greater fear for her own safety than any other female citizen of Iran. Her mobility, the ability to cross borders at will, provides an important opportunity for the reader to witness a character coming back to a place despite the continued presence of the motivation for their exile. To further explore the answer to the question of what Marji finds in the years that she spends in Iran after her return, the reader has the added benefit of the book's quality as a memoir. In *A Reader's Guide to Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis*, Heather Lee Schroeder includes excerpts from both the novel and an interview given by Satrapi in which she addresses this question. From the text,

> "Her return to Iran over four years later does not seem to resolve the issue of Marjane's cultural identity. In many ways, in fact, it seems to grow worse. 'I feel like I'm constantly wearing a mask,' Marjane observes at one point shortly after she is back in Iran. She goes on to say: 'My calamity could be summarized in one sentence: I was nothing. I was a Westerner in Iran, an Iranian in the West. I had no identity" (121).

This quote captures perfectly the space between nations occupied by forced migrants. Marji's transformation into something close to the traditional notion of cosmopolitan—

that is, the well-traveled sophisticate—lays the groundwork for a new exilic experience as the second novel approaches its conclusion. Living as an adult in Iran, Marji attempts to explain the new perspectives and identity that she gained in Europe in a way that is not an explicit effort to educate and transform those around her, but that still serves to set her apart. This difference marks her as a subversive forced to the regime, and though she escapes imprisonment and injury to her person, the oppression that she feels results in a new exile. Though *Persepolis* does not feature Marji's later life, Schroeder's text includes a critical except from an interview that further solidifies Marji's lack of a sense of home and belonging. Schroeder writes, "As a memoir, this is a real issue for Marjane Satrapi, not fiction—an issue she still finds herself struggling with even today. In one interview she stated: 'Nowhere is my home anymore. I will never have any home anymore'" (121). The country that she returned to as a cosmopolitan in the traditional sense was not a space that she could inhabit, and so the notion of home was destroyed for her a second time and she was forced onto the global level of existence in a now markedly different way.

Conclusion

It's important to acknowledge the role that sociology, international law, and various other interdisciplinary fields have played in this chapter. Much of the inspiration for this chapter is due to the scholarly work of Saskia Sassen, Richard Falk, Nira Yuval-Davis, and many others whose work exists largely, though certainly not wholly, outside of the English department. As many of the circumstances of forced migrants in our world today are being addressed in the work of these other fields, focusing part of this chapter on these readings is of vital importance, not only because of the information and insights

that they contain, but also to highlight the way that a literary studies contribution can play a unique role as a form of "truth commission."

In her article, "Democracy, Interrupted: Commissioning the "Truth" in Diasporic Dominican American Literature," Kelly Adams discusses the unique position of literature to provide a truth commission role outside of traditionally established parameters. She writes, "a literary approach contrasts to other scholarship on truth commissions, which often focuses on countries that have or have had formal commissions, to articulate how literature testifies to enact its own form of justice." (27-28). Referencing Dominican writers, including Diaz, she continues, arguing that these authors

> "provide critical testimony to past and present abuses while advancing storytelling as a means of preventing future atrocities. Their creative approach to commissioning the truth creates a space for literature in the process of political transition, where memory, trauma, and history cannot be fully expressed in conventional human rights reports where facts take priority" (29).

Much like Adams, in this chapter I argue that these novels represent unique testimonies on injustices that result from the displacement of exiles and refugees, testimonies that would never be permitted by the restrained language of government-sanctioned truth commissions. Further, moving beyond the initial injustices of displacement and the rejection that might be encountered in the place that they are forced to inhabit, these narrative truth commissions provide insights on the process of trying to rehome in a variety of circumstances, and disrupt the notion of home that much scholarly work, such as Hollerbach's, relies upon to prescribe better methods of acceptance.

When Saskia Sassen talks about the "ambiguous position between the national and the global" (Migration Policy Institute), it is not challenging to situate refugees and exiles into the sets of "disadvantaged individuals" to which she is referring. As I mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter, the goal here is not only to provide an analysis of the ways that works concerning exiles and works concerning refugees can be read together as forced migrant literature. Rather, the goal is for the reader to be able to distinguish the ways that the forced migration of the refugee and exile characters in the novels disrupt notions of home and belonging. Identifying the ties that these characters can have to multiple places helps to develop a new understanding that community, family, and identity can persist without having an established, ensured place of belonging that is recognized by governments and institutions, existing in a space that can be called global or cosmopolitan.

This is not to say that this status is a comfortable one; indeed, the characters that undergo forced migration in these novels are pained greatly by their trauma. Eaten alive by cancer, Belicia in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* struggles with her sense of identity and belonging until the end of her life, and the life of her son. The Tran family's disposition undergoes an observable transformation in *Vietnamerica*, after waiting for five years for the naturalization process and learning that they will not be permitted to return to the home they knew. Even Marji in *Persepolis*, blessed in the beginning of her life with financial security by her family, left Iran not of her own volition but at the command of her parents. The cultural transformations that permeated her life abroad prevented her from being able to exist in her place of origin—a place that she was legally allowed to inhabit. So no, these are not stories of successful transformations and

relocations of home based upon desire; there is a somber reality even to the most ideal outcomes of these novels.

This somber reality and lack of desire is tied to the political and material causes of displacement. Each of the families and individuals in these texts have lives directly impacted by revolution, war, and government corruption. Perhaps the most recognizable story of wartime displacement is that of the Tran family; parts of their story are shared by more than a million Vietnamese who resettled in the US during the same span of years. Marji's story, though she always possessed the legal right to return, also contains relatable elements for members of the Iranian diaspora of the 1980s, with millions fleeing after the revolution to escape persecution and seek basic human rights. Even Belicia's story is one shaped by corrupted government forces threatening her life because of her interactions with individuals connected to the family of Trujillo. Wherever we look in these novels, we can tie the events impacting the lives of these forced migrants back to politically-perpetrated injustices.

Belonging remains desirable in the circumstances of these narratives. Even in the case of Belicia, whose life was an unbroken line of unspeakable trauma and tragedy, she spent all of her energies trying to tie her family together into a foundation for herself. Any action taken by her children in the novel that moved them beyond the ideal formation that she prescribed was met with a hostile reaction from her in an effort to curtail their resistance to that ideal. At the same time, though family, especially in the cases of *Vietnamerica* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* might represent a new foundation for belonging that does not rely upon place, the transformational rehoming of exiles and refugees can have unique outcomes, such as in *Persepolis,* that defy even a

familial foundation for belonging. Marji, though she needed to return to Iran and her family after her rehoming in Austria, was too changed by her forced migration for her family's love to be a sufficient foundation for her to build a new life for herself in her place of origin. Many of the conclusions that we can draw about the changing nature of home and belonging are uncomfortable because exile and refugee narratives do not collectively point at a new idea of home when political or national territory is rejected. While that discomfort might challenge us as readers, it is also necessary for an analysis of forced migrant literature, which is in part defined by being forced out of places of comfort.

Even with the uncertain definitions and the lack of a singular notion of home to replace the one that is destroyed through forced migration, something that persists throughout all of the novels is the cultural connection to the place of origin. Despite their inability—whether temporary or permanent—to return to their places of origin, these characters return again and again through the imagination. This does not necessarily mean, however, that home is inextricably tied to a geographical place, even for exiles and refugees who return there through the imagination. As Hamid Naficy writes,

> "Home is anyplace; it is temporary and it is moveable; it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination. Exiles locate themselves vis-a-vis their houses and homes synesthetically and synecdochically. Sometimes a small gesture or body posture, a particular gleam in the eye, or a smell, a sound, or a taste suddenly and directly sutures one to a former house or home and to cherished memories of childhood (6)."

The connections to the place of origin for the characters in these novels function much as Naficy describes, and though the notion of home inspired in those instances of imagined return might no longer exist in the world for refugees and exiles, their ability to maintain cultural connections is not lost. Those connections are critical components of the attempted rehoming process that we witness in each of the novels studied in this chapter.

Going back to the questions at the beginning of the chapter furthered by David Hollerbach and various institutions branching from the United Nations and other international legislative bodies, one of the answers that can be provided by a reading of this chapter is an uncomfortable one. If they ask "what can be done to better address the needs of the forced migrant community that has been driven from their homes?" then the answer might be that understanding that our concept of home might be one that no longer applies to their circumstances or perspectives is certainly the first step.

Chapter 3

Cosmopolitan by Default: The Enigma of Statelessness

Introduction

Modern society struggle to classify the status of statelessness, and individual citizens within those societies often have a difficult time accepting that such a status even exists. For many, it is the stuff of fiction; a person without a protected status—or at the very least, a recognized status—within any nation resides outside of reality as much as the idea of magic. If we live in a world in which there are no spaces that exist outside of national borders, so the logic goes, how can someone born and raised within one of those nations not belong there, or anywhere? The possible answers to that question confound to the extent that the United Nations itself has left individuals and families within nebulous, interstitial zones because they do not meet the standard definitions of refugees. Dozens of these cases have been documented, while the rest can only be grouped into the UNHCR's estimation of 12 million globally (*UN News*). Only within the last decade have serious efforts been made by the United Nations to address the reality of statelessness. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UNHCR, defines a stateless person as "a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law." Though this definition certainly applies to many stateless persons, the question of what that citizenship entails is also relevant. A nation might acknowledge the citizenship of an individual and permit them to return, but if that individual, should they return, faces state-sanctioned persecution in that country, or any lack of protection that citizenship traditionally entails, then what does that citizenship mean?

In 2003, Steven Spielberg purchased the rights to the life story of Mehran Karimi Nasseri as the inspiration for his film, *The Terminal*. Though Spielberg did not use the specific circumstances of Nasseri's life in his film, the purchasing of the rights to do so still makes sense from the perspective of a mystified audience; Nasseri's story, utterly unbelievable as it is, must be a one-of-a-kind event that cannot be missed. In Spielberg's own words, "As I get older, I prefer to tell stories that actually already happened because they're so compelling, and you can't write that stuff that history writes for us. History is the greatest writer of drama, and of irony, and of catastrophe, and of destiny, and of victory. You can't do better than history" (Sandra Gonzalez, CNN). In the years following that film, a family from Iran, the Kamalfar family, was stranded in Russia much as Nasseri was stranded in France, in the international terminal of an airport. It comes as little surprise that, shortly after a video was leaked of Zahra Kamalfar, the mother of the family, making a heartfelt plea on behalf of her children for all the world to see, the United Nations began an awareness campaign to address statelessness around the world, renewing their legislative efforts and publishing literature on the realities of statelessness. These three narratives of statelessness, Spielberg's *The Terminal,* Nasseri's *The Terminal Man,* and Zahra Kamalfar's short video published by Pajamas Media are the three primary texts that will be analyzed in this chapter.

The early 2000s would have been a fascinating time to observe the meetings at the United Nations as it continued to formulate a response to the existence of stateless persons around the world. Though the debate on the nature of statelessness and methods to address it had begun at the UN in 1951, only a few short years after its beginning following World War II, an internal document released in 2001 revealed that the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UNHCR, had done little to find resolutions to that hardships faced by many stateless persons. For fifty years, one of the primary agencies of the United Nations had failed to address one of the major results of the world war the resolution of which initiated its creation. Ultimately, it wasn't until 2005 and 2014 that the UNHCR released detailed texts that not only articulated what statelessness was, but also how to address it. During this more than sixty year period of time, a countless number of stateless persons have died within that nebulous zone between nation-states.

Hannah Arendt's *The Origin of Totalitarianism* is an effective introduction to the idea of the "rightless." Though her work addresses more than statelessness, the way that she introduces the idea works so well alongside the approach of this chapter that it serves as a solid critical foundation by calling attention to the assumption of the inalienability of basic human rights. She writes,

> "No paradox of contemporary politics is filled with a more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as "inalienable" those human rights which are enjoyed only by the citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves. Their situation has deteriorated just as stubbornly, until the internment camp—prior to the second World War the exception rather than the rule for the stateless—has become the routine solution for the problem of domicile of the 'displaced persons'" (355).

A contemporary reflection of this very critique can be seen in the institutions, governments, and legislative bodies at the helm of solidarity movements. For example,

the UNHCR handbook on statelessness was published in 2005, before the Kamalfar family arrived at the Russian airport after fleeing Iran. Despite their plight, the UN decided that they did not meet the criteria for refugee status, and left them to languish.

It is not only the inaction of international protectorates that speak through these narratives, but also the actions of law enforcement. Arendt writes,

> "…since the man without a state was 'an anomaly for whom there was no appropriate niche in the framework of the general law'—an outlaw by definition—he was completely at the mercy of the police, which itself did not worry too much about committing a few illegal acts in order to diminish the country's burden of *indésirables*. In other words, the state, insisting on its sovereign right of expulsion, was forced by the illegal nature of statelessness into admittedly illegal acts" (360).

In each of the three narratives in this chapter, the reader encounters circumstances carried out by law enforcement without any oversight. Though many are biographical, these scenes read as wild hyperbole. How can circumstances such as these exist in the world, these Wild West scenarios of law enforcement confronting forced outlaws devoid of maliciousness and determined to survive?

But the reality is that, unlike international adoptees, refugees, and exiles, the experience of stateless persons as forced migrants is one without any recognized legal recourse. Occupying a place between borders—literally, in the case of the airport settings of the narratives studied in this chapter—the individuals at the center of these stories are so removed from a traditional status that not only do they not have the means to reach out for assistance, but the forces that might advocate on their behalf also cannot gain access.

Stateless persons are cosmopolitan, but not because they discovered an origin that they did not before know, or because their cultural ties to a place of origin maintain a transnational existence between nations; rather, their cosmopolitanism exists in a vacuum, and their world citizenship is set apart from the collection of states that distinguishes the status of other members of the forced migrant community.

Cosmopolitanism requires a distinct definition when it comes to narratives of statelessness. Though essentially meaning a "citizen of the world"[8]—a primary reason why "cosmopolitanism" and "world citizenship" have their connections explored in the introductory chapter of my dissertation—the "equal ease" with which a cosmopolitan person might "be able to read the morning paper in Rio de Janeiro, attend a lecture in Madrid, and assist at a refugee camp in Uganda"[9] is not the kind of cosmopolitanism discussed in this chapter. The title of the chapter, suggesting that cosmopolitanism might not always be a choice, is quite intentional; the airport stateless narratives in this chapter do not reflect the ease and endless mobility typically associated with cosmopolitanism. An additional definition of cosmopolitanism is sought here, one that recognizes the existence of a human that possesses rights but cannot inhabit a recognized space. In the context of this chapter, cosmopolitanism might be defined as "existing in the world outside of recognized borders." Though this definition lacks the violence of the stateless experiences in these narratives, an umbrella definition under which the majority of unjust classifications can find belonging might help call further attention to the plight of the stateless.

Not all scholars are in agreement as to the contemporary nature of statelessness in

[8] Merriam-Webster
[9] Merriam-Webster

the world. In her article "Rethinking Refugeehood: Statelessness, Repatriation, and Refugee agency," Megan Bradley reexamines Arendt's argument concerning refugees and stateless persons. While her claim that Arendt's work deserves to be revisited and perhaps even revised in light of the changes that have taken place in our contemporary world is not without merit, some of the broader, more general statements that she makes concerning the agency possessed by refugees and stateless persons to make positive contributions to the world reflect a misunderstanding, or lack of awareness, about the circumstances faced by some stateless individuals. In fairness, Bradley does not claim that all refugees everywhere have unrestrained access to legal assistance and so their plight is not as dire as Arendt claims, but her analysis of several of Arendt's specific writings is at best problematic, especially when read alongside the airport stories of this chapter.

One of the most flawed claims that Bradley makes regarding stateless individuals, for example, is found in her analysis of Arendt's views of the fundamentally rightless status of stateless persons. She writes, "Very different courses of action are required to resolve the predicament of people who are literally stateless… a stateless person must carve out a fresh space for herself as a member of a state's political community" (Bradley). In this section, Bradley is differentiating between the legal and social support needed by stateless persons and those needed by refugees. She acknowledges the lack of a place to return to for stateless persons, but maintains that they possess the agency to make a space for themselves in a new political landscape. In the following paragraph, she goes on to address Adrent's words concerning refugees and stateless persons: Arendt argues that "suddenly the rules of the world around them had ceased to apply… the

abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger" (342). Bradley writes in response to this quote that "states… are today much more insistent on the continued application of the 'rules of the world'" and that, "it is now not the 'abstract nakedness of being nothing but human' that poses the greatest danger" (Bradley), but rather the "voluntary" repatriation to an unstable government within a country that cannot—or is unwilling to—address the refugee or stateless person's claim to protection and assistance. Bradley is correct that many states do take the "rules of the world" far more seriously than they did decades ago, but the countries in the narratives addressed in this chapter are not those states. The conflict encountered by the central figures of these texts is precisely that they have become nothing but human; fear and the abstract nakedness described by Arendt are those realities with which these individuals must contend.

In the conclusion to her article, Bradley writes,

> "Cleaving so closely to an account of refugeehood and statelessness that Arendt articulated in response to particular historical and political circumstances, and that is now in some ways anachronistic, risks misinterpreting the contemporary nature of these problems, and may also undermine refugees' claims to equal standing as citizens in their countries of origin" (Bradley).

There is a lot of truth in what Bradley argues here, but that truth is mostly restricted to the contemporary cases of massive refugee populations. Arendt's writings maintain their relevance regarding the contemporary nature of statelessness in the world, reflected in the modern narratives of individuals and families studied in this chapter. That scholars currently working in refugee and exile studies are failing to grasp that the "particular

historical and political circumstances" being addressed by Arendt are in fact part of the contemporary problems faced by stateless persons today. This failure might be partially to blame for the exclusive definitions of cosmopolitanism, as well as provide support and rationale for international legislative bodies to ignore the current material outcomes of detained persons unable to access the most basic of human rights.

The first section of this chapter focuses on Nasseri's autobiography *The Terminal Man.* Following that is a section addressing Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal*, the film that was partially based on Nasseri's biography. The final section examines the short video that was covertly filmed of Zahra Kamalfar at the Sheremetveyo airport in Russia. Though each of these texts will provide important insights in the narrative analysis, the final section on Zahra Kamalfar's story will be shorter than the others, and will include analysis of the media coverage of her family's circumstances read alongside her testimony as other primary texts. These three stories are some of the most evocative stories of statelessness; Spielberg's fictional narrative *The Terminal* is especially exceptional in its account of Navorsky's experiences. While I do not wish to conflate these stories for the plight of stateless persons in general, they do serve to highlight the problems of statelessness that exist in the world.

As we move toward a brief discussion of the setting of these narratives, I think it necessary to provide some further clarifications on access to legal recourse and what the absence of such access truly means for stateless persons. The texts that are the focus in this chapter are all from the 21st century, long after the establishment of international legislative bodies the sole purposes of which are to address instances of statelessness and to stem their continued occurrence, and yet the complete lack of legislated directives for

how to resolve these injustices results in individuals and families being rendered homeless by default. This condition has little to do with socio-economic status. Mehran Karimi Nasseri became a relatively wealthy man after signing a deal with Steven Spielberg for the rights to his story for *The Terminal*, yet he still slept on a bench each night and raced to the bathroom in the morning to wash so that he could make it back to guard his belongings before large crowds stared to traverse the terminal. This is not to argue that there should be a method for the wealthy to avoid these problems, but to highlight the fact that whereas the wealthy are often able to avoid such things, there doesn't even exist the infrastructure for that privileged access. All over the world, stateless persons in far worse circumstances than the individuals in these narratives languish in a queue that never moves toward any resolution.

The Airport

Statelessness is a status of countless origins and circumstances, and stateless individuals are at the center of many narratives across both genres and eras. Slavery and human trafficking, for example, have an important role in the discourse of statelessness, and those narratives would operate quite well in a chapter such as this. Why, then, is this chapter focused exclusively on airport events and texts? What specific analytical outcomes can be gained from narratives in this setting?

Among the primary reasons that narratives within airports can be particularly fruitful is because of their status as a "non-place." In the article "Globalisations Utopia? On Airport Atmospherics" by Urry, Elliot, Radford, and Pitt, the authors write about a ubiquitous quality of airport beyond the air travel and the ways that they play a key role in globalization. They write, borrowing heavily from French Anthropologist Marc Augé,

> "This is the nature of what we call the airport atmosphere. The most common conception here is that airports are 'non-places' which involve 'entirely new experiences and ordeals of solitude.' Such non-places are to be found: 'where people coexist or cohabit without living together': they 'create solitary contractuality. Or as John Berger writes about their strange character: 'Airports are too polite: reality is always at one remove in an airport'"

In the narratives studied in this chapter, we see how the airport quickly changes for the stateless from a non-place into the only reality available to them, drawing out not only the circular bureaucracy, but also the other individuals who inhabit the space; the staff. Especially in Speilberg's *The Terminal*, the airport staff, and the realities of their lives, intersect heavily with Viktor Navorsky's experiences in the terminal. These non-entities, hidden at great lengths by the consumer culture of the airport, are suddenly alive and playing integral roles in helping Viktor to address his circumstances as a *homo sacer* individual. Removed as he is from the jurisdiction of humanity and subject only to the whim of the security chief Dixon, Viktor—though he does not actively seek out this help initially—relies on the agency of non-entities that pass unnoticed by the authorities in order to survive. Though the relationship between Dixon and Navorsky is thoroughly explored later in the chapter, it is worth noting early on that Dixon represents a unique form of sovereign. Agamben writes that "the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the judicial order" (*The Omnibus Homo Sacer*), and while Dixon fulfills that definition as a government official unrestrained by oversight that has limitless power over Viktor, he lacks the power to change the law universally. He is a sovereign whose sovereignty exists only in the case of Viktor or other detained persons within his airport.

Arriving in the international terminal of an airport, a passenger has just traversed a great distance, crossing the guarded borders of a country and now well within that nation-state's sovereign territory. Unlike other modes of travel however, with driving as perhaps the best example, no process of customs and immigration was completed at the actual border of the country. Though some countries have an agreement to undergo such processes at the point of origin and then simply walk off of the airplane and into the country on arrival, the vast majority do not. This means that the passengers have arrived in a place that some argue is not the country until they have completed the customs process (Duva, *El Pais*). The international terminal, then, exists and a nebulous space within a country that is still outside of that country's borders. On a given day, even a given year, this practice proceeds without issue. Those times when something does occur, the most common outcome is that an individual is deported back to their point of origin, with the authorities placing them on a flight. However, there have been instances when there has been a cause not to admit the individual, but no cause to deport them. Among these instances, there have even been a few times when that individual has no home to which they can return. The stories that have resulted from these circumstances have confounded our understanding of place and belonging. After all, how is it possible that someone would not have a home waiting for them somewhere?

Though every country defines international travel laws for itself, the specifics of each country's laws are not the focus of analysis in the narratives of the Kamalfar family, Mehran Karimi Nasseri, or Viktor Navorski. Those laws certainly contributed to their status as stateless persons, but it is the treatment that they received in the terminal, at the hands of the airport police, that most clearly articulate their status as stateless, and more

importantly, as default cosmopolitans. Existing between countries in the international terminal, they are denied a point of origin and the right to exist anywhere other than in the world at large.

Each of the three narratives analyzed in this chapter take place in an airport, specifically in the international terminal. Zahra Kamalfar and her two children existed as stateless persons in at the Sheremetyevo airport in Russia, Mehran Karimi Nasseri was at the Charles de Gaulle in France, and Viktor Navorsky's fictional story in *The Terminal* is set at the John F. Kennedy airport in New York. The two non-fiction texts, Kamalfar's video and Nasseri's autobiography, focus on individuals originally from Iran, and Tom Hanks' character from *The Terminal* is from the fictional country of Krakozhia. Though only one of the texts concerns individuals who began their travels as refugees, the Kamalfar family, both Nasseri and Navorsky are displaced from their countries of origin through circumstances that occur after their departure. It must be noted that Spielberg's film is as different from Nasseri's story as Nasseri's is from the Kamalfar family's. If Nasseri was in fact ever able to view *The Terminal*—and there is nothing to say that he ever had the opportunity—he would be hard pressed to identify with a single experience of Viktor Navorsky's, save perhaps for the film's general premise of living stateless in an airport terminal. In this way, this chapter does analyze three separate narratives, all with their own characters, locations, and plots.

Though focused on these three airport stories, the purpose of this chapter is not to diminish or trivialize other realities of statelessness; the multitude of circumstances that can lead to statelessness would all be appropriate, substantive additions to this chapter. Slavery, human trafficking, and the loss of citizenship because of racial, gender, or

cultural and religious discrimination are not relics of bygone ages; they affect millions in the modern world. None of the individuals in these narratives are slaves, and none of them come from impoverished backgrounds. The unique value that they bring to this chapter is the setting itself, where many travelers experience the "Airport blues – nothing else to do but flick through the pages of your own passport" (Nasseri 78). This experience is familiar with many readers; sitting at the gate looking at the pages of their passports. Not only are there the stamps from the various countries, there are also pages in which the Secretary of State, or other senior member of a government's administration, blankets the traveler in their mantle of protection, beseeching all lawful aid to be provided in their transit. We take that for granted those seemingly inalienable rights.

Katrina Powell, in her introduction to her edited collection *Identity and Power in Narratives of Displacement*, writes that "narratives of displacement speak back to discourses of power, but in ways that challenge our understandings of vulnerability, human rights, and our (material) responses to them" (20). Narratives of statelessness, which are a part of that larger category of narratives of displacement, represent some of the most effective challenges to our understanding, oftentimes confounding the very imagination of the readers, many of whom before accessing the text were unaware that such displacements could even occur. Despite this, the United Nations maintains the following text on the human rights page of their site,

> "Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of

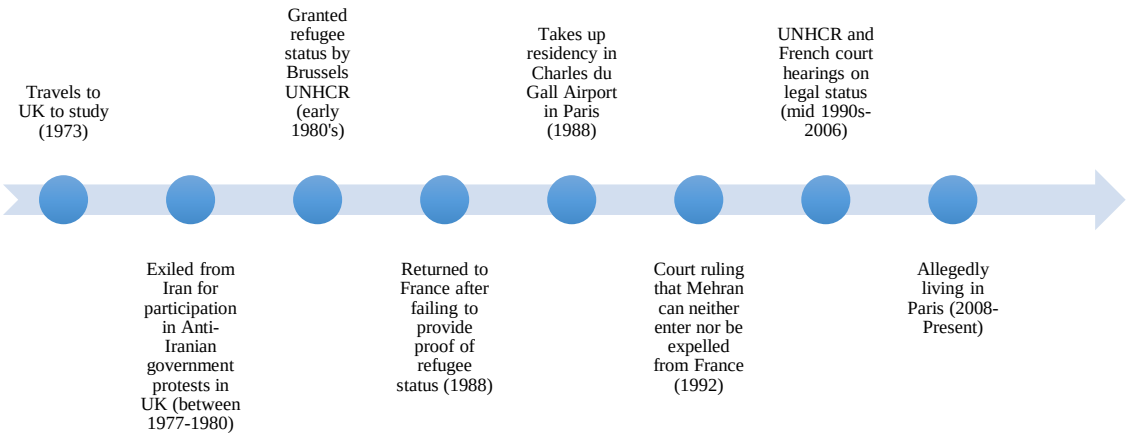
opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination" (Human Rights, UN). If even the governing body of international legislation ignores the absence of these rights for stateless persons such as Nasseri or the Kamalfar family, or is unwilling to acknowledge their abandonment by refusing to grant them a status that would provide the means to exercise these rights, then how can they be called innate or inalienable?

Another foundation of approach in this chapter is Giorgio Agamben's work on *homo sacer.* He writes, "in the case of *homo sacer* a person is simply set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into the realm of divine law… the violence done to *homo sacer* did not constitute sacrilege" (69). Agamben's work on *homo sacer* goes far beyond what any short quote could communicate, but his investigation into the notion of an individual removed from human jurisdiction but not into a jurisdiction of any higher law reflects the opportunity to study statelessness from the perspective of airport narratives. Viktor Navorsky, Mehran Karimi Nasseri, and the Kamalfar family are *homo sacer*; removed from the realm of human jurisdiction, they hold no protections from any higher authority. Further, the violence and harassment inflicted upon them by airport security is not stopped or punished, much as in the case of *homo sacer*, removed as that security is from the oversight of a state's administrative body. In airport narratives of statelessness, the reader witnesses a rebirth of ancient Roman law in the twenty-first century.

The Terminal Man

Mehran Karimi Nasseri lived in the international terminal of the Charles du Galle airport for eighteen years, making him one of the longest-dwelling inhabitants of an

airport in history. Originally from Iran, Nasseri, through a series of events in his early life in Iran as well as his time traveling around Europe seeking refugee status, lost his status as a citizen of that nation. Forced to live on a bench in the airport, he spent years merely existing, possessing no documents that provided a status for travel. Unlike the Kamalfar family, who were wanted by the Iranian authorities and who the Russian authorities tried to forcibly deport, Nasseri's exile from Iran meant that his presence there would have been as illegal as his presence in France, which landed him in prison early during his time in the terminal. He is not a refugee fleeing persecution; he simply has nowhere to go. Nasseri's life as a stateless person comprises a course of events that is difficult to grasp, even for attentive readers of his autobiography. Below is a simple timeline of both critical event and significant spans of years in his life depicted in the text.



The Terminal Man, written as journal entries, covers most of Nasseri's life. While his time living in the airport is the focus, the flashbacks to his childhood and young adulthood in Iran provide critical insight into the motivations behind his leaving Iran and why his exile might have been an almost forgone conclusion, at least from his perspective. The autobiography occupies an interesting space in this chapter, as it is not

the filmed footage of spontaneous interviews of the Kamalfar family nor the fiction of Spielberg's *The Terminal*. Much of Nasseri's account is readily verifiable through the published interviews of the many journalists and travelers within the airport who had a chance to interview him or to visit with him. Other parts of the text, however, rely only on his memory of events, as the Iranian government would never verify torture or unlawful imprisonment. This is certainly not to say that his experiences are not without precedent; countless reports of kidnapping and torture by Iranian authorities exist, many of which are from credible sources. The part of the work, however, that does not necessarily generate doubt but that raises quite a few questions, is the story of his birth and how it impacts his status in Iran.

Nasseri is from Masjed Soleiman, an oil refinery town in Iran. Built only for the purpose of refining the oil, Masjed Soleiman is a company town in the truest sense of the term; all of the homes, schools, and social services were built by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company for use by their employees. Nasseri's father was a doctor at the hospital, a respectable position both within the hierarchy of the company and in Iranian culture. After his father's death, Nasseri was told by his mother and uncle that he was the product of an affair between his father and a British nurse who worked with him at the hospital. Though his father's position and authority had commanded the silence of the family, his funeral was barely completed when they confronted Nasseri with this information, exiling him from their family to England, where they would pay for him to study for three years on the condition that he not return. The family is confident of their ability to disinherit Nasseri because of Iranian law, which Nasseri provides for the reader, writing, "Children born as the result of adultery are not stoned, because they are not responsible for their

circumstance, but such children have no rights in Iranian society at all. No rights of inheritance, no right to function in society, no right to exist. They are nothing. I am nothing" (209). Nasseri has no choice but to accept their offer, as any appeal to the government would likely result in the loss of his status within the country.

This experience creates in Nasseri a unique perspective, as he conceives of the idea that because of the circumstances of his birth, he is not from Iran. Whether he was born in Masjed Soleiman or in Sweeden out of the reach of authorities until his father could bring him safely to Iran, as his mother claims, Nasseri decides only that he is not from Iran. This is especially interesting, as Nasseri was especially close with his father, and according to Iranian law, the father determines the citizenship of the child. In fact, Iranian citizenship cannot be voluntarily relinquished, and so long as the father of an individual is confirmed as Iranian, that individual, should they ever set foot in Iran, will be subject to Iranian law as a full citizen. The law concerning adultery that Nasseri references might negate this citizenship, but for Nasseri, all of this is beside the point; he believes that because the life that he knew was a lie, his status as an Iranian must also not be true. Early in *The Terminal Man*, during an interview with a visiting journalist, she questions him about his origins,

> "I read that originally you are from Iran, is that right?
>
> I tell her no, I'm not from Iran.
>
> "Then where do you come from?"
>
> I shrug my shoulders and she looks puzzled. I tell her that my point of origin has yet to be decided. I don't have any documentation" (16).

A potential frustration for the reader exists in the story of Mehran Karimi Nasseri, born from the perspective that he has developed regarding his lack of origin. As in the stories of the Kamalfar family and Viktor Navorsky, a legal remedy for his circumstances appears in Nasseri's case, both before his arrival at the airport and after years waiting there for an option to present itself. After applying for refugee status at multiple UNHCR offices throughout Europe, Nasseri is granted refugee status by the office in Brussels. With this newly acquired status, a floodgate of options opens for him, only to be lost when his refugee status documents are no longer on his person. If this description reads as peculiar, it's only because so were Nasseri's choices; he presents two different stories to the reader, one as a means of acquiring sympathy and the other resulting only in bewilderment. The first, that he was mugged at a train station in Paris while en route to the airport and lost his refugee identity documents, captures the attention of a sympathetic reader (79-80, 112-113). Later, Nasseri admits to the reader and his lawyer in a scene in the second half of the text that he mailed the documents back to Brussels, believing entirely in the story told to him by his mother and uncle about his parentage and assuming that British citizenship would be granted to him upon his arrival in England (145-146). Throwing away his refugee status in this fashion precipitates his statelessness, as he in unable to cross the border into England and cannot retrieve the documents.

This action does not stand alone in its frustrating effect on the reader in Nasseri's autobiography. Many of the decisions that he makes raise questions for the reader, and even go so far as to make ambiguous his desire to end his statelessness. The passage above from page 16 summarizes the umbrella sentiment under which this decisions dwell. The ruling of one of the appeal courts writes "he does not allege that the Iranian

authorities have deprived him of his original nationality…" (154). This contradicts Nasseri's own telling, as he explicitly tells the reader that the Iranian authorities gave him a one year travel passport and then exiled him. Near the end of the text, Nasseri's lawyer has managed the impossible, persuading the UNHCR office in Brussels to send his refugee papers to him through law enforcement channels and what amounts to a free pass from the French government. Nasseri refuses this because the documents that he must sign say that he is originally from Iran. The new identity that he has assumed, Sir Alfred Mehran, does not permit any perspective other than the one that his family assigned to him following the death of his father. Even though their story might be purely fictitious, and even though every state agency around the world confirms his origin as Iran, Nasseri cannot accept that old identity and the freedom that would now come with it (219-224).

As frustrating as these choices are for the reader, especially in contrast to the desperation of individuals such as the Kamalfar family who are rarely given such opportunities, they do result in a genuine statelessness for Nasseri. After mailing the refugee papers back to Brussels, he is truly stranded in the airport for years, and suffers the lack of basic human rights that have been discussed at length in this chapter. Four events in the text best illustrate the absence of those rights and the lack of legal infrastructure to logically process individuals in the circumstance of true statelessness. Most of the events from these parts of the work occur after Nasseri's decision to mail the documents back to Brussels. The first, however, takes place after Nasseri has returned to Iran from England after the money from his "family" has stopped being deposited into his account.

Along with multiple other events in this book, as well as the other texts included

in this chapter, the following exchange between Nasseri and an Iranian official summarizes one of the fundamental issues in the discourse of statelessness. Having returned to discover the reason why his family has stopped providing him with money for this studies, Nasseri is detained by the Iranian authorities because he attended a demonstration against the Iranian government while studying in England.

> "You will be taken to the airport and put on an aeroplane. You will be given an immigration passport, which is valid for just one year. You are forbidden to return to Iran."
>
> "Where will the aeroplane take me?
>
> "I don't know, says the officer. That is not my problem" (52-53).

Much like the practice in the United States of a city giving a homeless individual a one-way bus ticket to another city[10], Nasseri was removed beyond the borders and concerns of Iran. Unlike the bus ticket circumstance, however, the state official in Iran did not deceive Nasseri by performing a cursory investigation of his future circumstances or feign hope of future negotiations of his returning to Iran. The last sentence, "That is not my problem" is not just a dismissal of Nasseri's case, it is a dismissal of his supposedly "inalienable" human rights.

After being stranded in the international terminal of the Charles de Gualle airport for years, Nasseri faces a similar exchange with the French courts. Having been indicted as an illegal resident, the court states, "The court… declares Mohran Karimi Nasseri guilty of illegal residence as a foreigner… Condemns him to three years' prohibition of French territory… Says that his expulsion must not be to Iran…" In response, Nasseri

[10] Outside in America Team, *The Guardian.*

writes, “so the French court has made an order that I should leave the country. Where do they expect me to go when no country will allow me to enter?” (155). Here the French court moves to expel Nasseri with nearly the same disregard as did Iran, with the only lightening of the sentence being that he not be returned to Iran. With two countries that, though they enjoyed a fast alliance prior to the Iranian revolution of 1979, occupy opposite ends of the contemporary political spectrum showing the same disregard for human rights as established by the United Nations nearly fifty years before Nasseri’s statelessness, the reader is forced to question how these circumstances are permitted to persist, and how the UNHCR cannot seem to address the very issues that it was formed to prevent.

Appropriately, the next event studied in the novel concerns the Brussels UNHCR office, the only office visited by Nasseri in Europe that grants him the refugee status that he desperately needs. Granted, the loss of that status—or at the very least, the inability of state agencies to verify that status—results directly from Nasseri’s own actions, but the Brussels office remains a part of the conversation for the majority of the years that he is stranded in the airport. One of the obvious answers to Nasseri’s dilemma, that the Brussels office simply provide him with new refugee papers, cannot come to pass. Though he contacts the office multiple times throughout the text, the final determination of the UNHCR representative is that Nasseri must arrive in person to retrieve his documents. To this, Nasseri says “the Belgian authorities will not let me cross the border to get my documents, and they will not post them to my lawyer or to me because they say I have to go and collect them in person. But I cannot cross the border” (179). Two state agencies, the French and Belgian governments, are interfering in the ability of an

established refugee to collect his identification papers from a UNHCR office. Is this not a clear compromising of the UNHCR's statute?

Michael Kagan's article "The Beleaguered Gatekeeper: Protection Challenges Posed by UNHCR Refugee Status Determination" highlights many of the UNHCR's responsibilities and authority to protect refugees. He cites an excerpt from their statute, writing

> "The agency's Statute requires that UNHCR 'shall provide for the protection of refugees', and that it should seek 'permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments… Hence, UNHCR's work somewhat ambiguously includes both providing protection and assisting governments in doing the same" (13).

The expectation that every UN and state agency should be able to resolve these kinds of circumstances instantly, or even over the course of several days or weeks, might be unreasonable. The reality, however, that Nasseri could remain stranded in the airport terminal because he did not have his papers and that the UNHCR office would be aware of that and allow the circumstance to persist for well over a decade would seem a direct violation of their mandate. Near the end of the work, Nasseri's lawyer Bourguet is able to negotiate an agreement with the UNHCR office in Brussels for them to send the papers to Nasseri at the airport through law enforcement channels. Though this is hailed in the book as a victory for Nasseri's cause, it only further implicates the UNHCR in his circumstance, as the method of providing him with his refugee papers would seem to have always been possible and legal and therefore should have been carried out immediately following his deportation to France. Further, that the UNHCR did not

intercede in Nasseri's arrest by French authorities and prevent his wrongful imprisonment crushes any remaining credibility in the office.

At the end of *The Terminal Man*, Nasseri is sitting with the airport clinic doctor, Dr. Bargain, discussing the possibility of signing the documents that say that he is originally from Iran and is now a refugee, which Nasseri cannot agree to sign because of the story told to him by his family that robbed him of his identity. Their exchange reads,

> "Dr. Bargain sits down on the black chair at the table in front of my red bench.
>
> "Alfred, you have your papers now. When you are ready, you can sign them, and then you can leave here and you can go home."
>
> "Do you understand?"
>
> "I nod, but really it is Dr. Bargain who does not understand that I am already home" (228).

Many of the characters that interact with Nasseri throughout the text have a limited understanding of his circumstance. From offering him places to stay in the city of Paris, to asking him for his address so that they can stay in touch with him regarding legal matters, even the most learned of his acquaintances seem find his predicament a charming one. Perhaps this lack of understanding comes from their privileged backgrounds—few of Nasseri's visitors are without significant financial means—or from the general lack of awareness within society that such circumstances can exist in the modern world, something which has already been discussed as length in this chapter. It also must be acknowledged that the confusion of individuals such as Bargain and Bourguet does have some limited foundation, in that Nasseri is being given a chance at a legal solution to his problem that he is unwilling to take.

Putting these notions aside for a moment, we come back to the subject of home and the individual's place in the world. A paragraph from "Stateless By Any Other Name: Refused Asylum Seekers in the United Kingdom" by Brad K. Blitz and Miguel Otero-Iglesias describes some of the primary findings from their study. It reads,

> "The denial of the right to asylum had a marked bearing on participants' sense of personal identity. They described feelings of isolation and psychological issues associated with the processes of exile and seeking asylum, and the challenges of readjusting to life after refusal. Two explicitly linked their lack of status to their personal identity. One reported, 'There is something missing from me. I have no ID card. I cannot show to anyone who I am'. Another put it simply: 'My identity is missing. Everyone has their identity'" (665).

Many of these sentiments echo Nasseri's own words in the text. Much like the respondents from the study claim that their identity is missing, Nasseri claims that his point of origin is yet to be determined, despite institutions in positions of authority on the matter allowing him a path to refugee status. Though Nasseri has since left the Charles de Gualle airport terminal, and though he is unlikely to face any legal obstacles for his presence in France because of the fame that he has garnered through his book and Speilberg's film, he still does not possess either refugee papers or citizenship in any country. As he said to Dr. Bargain, what many fail to perceive is that he is already in the only home that he knows; existing at large in the world. This is not to say that he enjoys his life in the terminal, but that his presence there would seem to be the only existence that the legal frameworks of the state and his own perceptions about his identity will allow.

The Terminal

In 2004, *The Terminal* was released to a lukewarm critical reception. Many of the reviews centered on the comedic/love story qualities of the film that were emphasized prior to its release, with comments such as "relentlessly charming"[11], "a delight in many ways"[12], and "you're guaranteed to feel great"[13]. While not all of the reviews are quite as complimentary, some of the other comments are far more telling, with a critic from *The New Yorker* writing that the film "lacks any compelling reason to exist." Though no one review speaks for an entire population, this statement, more than nearly any other excerpt from the other reviews on the site, reveals something about a general level of social unpreparedness, at least at the time of the film's release, to participate in the discourse of statelessness. The love story within the film might be flawed, and some of the most idyllic scenes—particularly the ending—might even undermine some of the core messages of struggle and injustice. There might not even have been a strong political motivation to craft the story itself, as argued in the article "Laugh, Cry, Believe: Spielberization and Its Discontents" by J. Hoberman. Hoberman writes that "*The Terminal* was designed as supremely comforting sociological propaganda. Angst is evoked to be dismissed" (129). Despite compelling arguments such as Hoberman's about the *The Terminal's* failings, there can be no doubt that the film possesses a compelling reason to exist, whatever the original intention of the director, as it provided the world at least some lens through which they could witness the compromising dismissal of human rights experienced by stateless persons.

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[11] *Dallas Observer*
[12] *Chicago Tribune*
[13] *Film Threat*

The Terminal follows the story of Viktor Navorsky as he arrives at the JFK airport in New York City to fulfill a promise to his father. That promise—to acquire the autograph of famous saxophone player Benny Colson in order to complete his father's set—plays only a small role in the film, primarily toward the end. The film's primary story begins during Viktor's flight, when a revolutionary group overthrows the government of his fictional country of origin, Krakozhia. Taken aside by customs officers, Viktor meets Frank Dixon, a supervising immigration officer, who explains his situation as follows,

> "I've a bit of bad news. It seems that your country has suspended all traveling privileges on passports that have been issued by your government, and our state department has revoked the visa that was going to allow you to enter the United States. That's it in a nutshell, basically… Anyway, it seems that while you were in the air, there was a military coup in your country. Now, most of the dead were members of the presidential guard. They were attacked in the middle of the night, it was a terrible fire fight… they got it all on GHN, anyway…Now even if we could get you new papers, we couldn't process them until the United States recognizes your country's new diplomatic reclassification... Yeah, see, you don't qualify for asylum, refugee status, temporary protective status, humanitarian parole, or non-immigration work travel, or diplomatic visas, you don't qualify for any of these things. You are at this time, simply… unacceptable." (*The Terminal*)

When the audience first meets Viktor at the customs booth, it is apparent that his understanding of English is limited to reading prepared notes from a card. Failing to provide a translator for him, Dixon resorts to sloppy analogy, using the lunch that he is

casually eating while speaking to Viktor to demonstrate, exploding his potato chips all over Viktor when he smashes the bag with an apple. "No more Krakozia! Revolution, you understand? So all the flights in and out of your country have been suspended indefinitely, and the new government has sealed all the borders, which means that your passport and visa are no longer valid. So currently, you are a citizen of nowhere" (*The Terminal*). Not seeming to care that Viktor cannot grasp what he is telling him, Dixon gives up, leading Viktor out of the door, saying,

> "Here's my dilemma, Mr. Navorsky. No have no legal right to enter the United States, and I have no legal right to detain you. It seems that you have fallen through a small crack in the system. Until we get this sorted out, I have no choice but to let you enter the international transit lounge. So I'm going to sign a release form that is going to make you a free man… free to go anywhere you like within the confines of the international transit lounge. I'm sure that Uncle Sam will have this all sorted out by tomorrow, and welcome to the United States… almost" (*The Terminal*).

The fast pace of this section reflects the way that the film packs all of the legal explanations for Viktor's circumstance into the first fifteen minutes. While this could be read as Spielberg's attempt to get to the humorous antics that immediately follow, the most remarkable element of these opening scenes is that they do articulate the crack in the system, the many flaws in the maelstrom of international legislation that allow for horrendous human rights abuses. Unlike Nasseri's *The Terminal Man*, this film does try to address the incomprehensibility of how statelessness like this can exist before abandoning it for what follows in the plot. The bureaucracy of international conventions

on the rights of stateless persons cannot seem to reach lives such as Navorsky's or Nasseri's; middle management security officers like Dixon in the film and the officers at the Charles du Gall airport in Paris simply cannot fix the problem because the international legislative efforts have yet to find a place of compromise with the sovereignty of the nation-state. How that inability to solve the problem is handled by the security officers is another matter entirely.

While the suddenness of Viktor's statelessness can be a shock to the reader, so too is there something strangely inhuman about Frank Dixon's casual approach to the circumstances. Throughout the first third or so of the film, it is established that Dixon is quite comfortable in his operating capacity, possessing a keen eye for things that seem out of place or suspicious in the customs process. Relentless in his approach to smugglers and other violators of customs law, a sudden shift in his methodology toward Viktor's case seems to run counter to the law-abiding approach that he has demonstrated until that point in the film. After releasing Viktor into the international terminal, it quickly becomes apparent that Dixon assumes that Viktor will simply leave the airport, thereby breaking the law and removing him from Dixon's jurisdiction. He is shocked when this does not happen, remarking "He's in a crack. Who the hell waits in a crack? (*The Terminal*). The shift in methodology comes almost immediately after this, as Dixon tries to persuade Viktor to leave.

> "Airports are tricky places, Mr. Navorsky. I'm about to tell you something, something that you can never repeat to anyone. Understand? It's a secret. At 12:00 today, the guards at those doors are going to leave their posts, and their

> replacements are going to be five minutes late. No one is going to be watching those doors, and no one is going to be watching you."
>
> "So, America not closed."
>
> Dixon laughs. "No. America, for five minutes, is open. Have a nice life, Mr. Navorsky." (*The Terminal*).

This scene in the film in a way reminds the reader of Nasseri's exile, of the simplest solution for states or other authorities, when it comes to stateless individuals, being to make them someone else's problem. Unlike Nasseri's exile, however, Viktor is being lied to by law enforcement. Were he to choose to leave, it could be argued that he is breaking the law on the instruction of the authorities. Fortunately for Viktor, unlike Dixon, his ethics do not allow him to violate the law, and he chooses to remain in the terminal. Looking into the security camera controlled by Dixon, Viktor declares "I wait!" This is the first step towards Viktor's successful resistance or, as Anthony Johnson writes in his chapter "No Place Like Home: Marc Augé and the Paradox of Transitivity" regarding the non-place, "Viktor triumphs over his situation: converting the non-places of waiting into the placeness of living… re-negotiating his identity by creating a history of small but remarkable (and even, sometimes, heroic) acts…" (73).

Dixon's frustration over Viktor's persistent presence in the airport never relents. Throughout the film, his is constantly baffled by Viktor's unwillingness to break the law, an action that would remove him from Dixon's jurisdiction. Shortly before an inspection is to be commenced by the federal authorities—an inspection the purpose of which is not only to check in on the security operations but also to evaluate Dixon for promotion to

replace his retiring boss—Dixon makes a phone call to a law enforcement contact of his. In the presence of his most senior customs officer, Dixon says,

> "He has no nationality, ok? No country. So, automatically, he is a national security risk, according to my interpretation of (the law). So, all I'm asking for is that you put him in a federal detention center and run a clearance on him. That's all I want… Well, what about a federal prison?... Well, what about another airport?" (*The Terminal*).

The crack through which Viktor has fallen has rendered him *homo sacer*, and as such he is removed from all human jurisdiction. Even during their first encounter, Dixon admits that he possesses no right to detain Viktor, and no legal recourse other than simply allowing him to remain. In the above quote, we see not only a callous disregard for human rights, but the inaudible responses from Dixon's contact imply that there is nothing that can be done to remedy the situation. That Dixon mentions the possibility of moving him to another airport is not only another poor attempt at humor in the film, but a real practice in cases such as these around the world. In Caitlin Dewey's *The Washington Post* article "Here's what happens to asylum-seekers who stay in airport limbo indefinitely" she writes that "parking political headaches at Sheremetyevo is old hat for the Russians… But Russia is by no means the only country to use the 'transit zone' excuse to delay action on controversial visitors." The reference to Sheremetyevo brings us back to the Kamalfar family's experiences from earlier in the chapter. Though there are many arguments both against and in favor of the international transit zone of airports as existing outside of a country's legal borders, the reality that proceeds while that conversation takes place is one in which stateless persons can be shipped to airports—and

perhaps even between airports—as a way of maintaining their *homo sacer* status, keeping them outside of the realm of larger jurisdictions.

The conversation between Dixon and his unnamed security contact is illustrative of Agamben's arguments in *State of Exception*. Navorsky easily fits all of the criteria for status as *homo sacer*, but he also exists in the international terminal of the airport within an indefinite state of exception. Dixon classifies Navorsky as a "national security risk," a status that allows for the execution of a broad array of powers to detain persons indefinitely, according to the November 13th, 2001 orders issued by President Bush. That Dixon could request Navorsky's transfer to another airport is a powerful example of how "law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension…" (Agamben 169). Navorsky and other stateless persons, as "neither prisoners nor persons accused, but simply 'detainees,'… are the object of a pure de facto rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight" (169).

In another important scene, the federal authorities touring the airport—standing in for, it could be argued, the larger legal and political entities of the nation—are forced to confront the compromising cracks in the system. Crisis strikes the airport when a man carrying medications to his father in another country is not permitted to keep the medications. The man panics and threatens to end his own life. Dixon asks Navorsky for help, as there is no other interpreter to assist. Before agreeing to help, Viktor secures a promise from Dixon that he will be allowed to enter New York. Witnessing the inhumanity of Dixon as he refuses to allow the man to keep the medicine, Viktor uses his acquired knowledge of customs law gained in his time at the airport to change the

language of the man in his translation, allowing him to keep the medicine through a loophole in the system. Enraged, Dixon physically assaults Viktor, saying

> "Do you think I need an excuse to put you back in that cell, to keep you there for another five years? You go to war with me and you go to war with the United States of America. And then you will know, when that fight is over, why the people of Krakozia wait in line for cheap toilet paper while Uncle Sam wipes his ass with Charmin 2-ply."

This tantrum is seen by the touring federal authorities, and Dixon's retiring supervisor, who he is to soon replace says, "it doesn't look good, Frank." Frank replies, "I was just following the rules" (*The Terminal*).

A clear attempt to curtail the assumption likely adopted by the audience at this point in the film that Dixon's power—or at least, the power that he will assume after his promotion—is without limit, his credibility as an officer and steward of the law shatters completely, not only in the eyes of an already hostile audience, but also before the gazes of the federal authorities, his boss, and the staff of customs officers. In the scene that follows, Dixon and his boss are walking though the terminal, and the audience is poised on the edge of their seats, awaiting the swift justice of his termination. Especially after his boss speaks the words "Sometimes, you have to ignore the rules, ignore the numbers, and concentrate on the people. Compassion, Frank, that's the foundation of this country. You could learn something from Navorsky…" there can be no doubt as to the abrupt end of Dixon's career. The glee, however, finds its death in the final sentence of his boss, as he says "Cheer up, it's not over yet" (*The Terminal*).

This quote leads to the crux of the issue that stateless individuals face in their

transit experiences, especially when their "unacceptable" status meets the blundering ineptitude of national and international legislative efforts to eliminate cracks in the system of customs and immigration. Despite the existence of some members of these agencies such as Dixon's boss, individuals who take circumstance and an absence of further legal recourse into account when determining the fate of the stateless, and are not lacking in mercy—and we must believe that there are some—even they seem unwilling, or at the very least uncompelled, to change the system. The end of the film sees Dixon promoted to the head of field operations at the airport, seemingly at the recommendation of his retiring boss, his authority over the security of the airport made complete. Ultimately, so the audience learns, Dixon's boss, though possessed of some of the productive and reasonably well-intentioned perspectives that might lead to improved mobility and legal recourse for the stateless, approached the "lesson" that he was trying to impart to Dixon with the same casual attitude as Dixon when he was informing Viktor of his new circumstances in the beginning of the film. Whether this casual approach is a result of repetitive exposure, with Dixon's boss having seen such injustice too many times to be moved further than the light reprimand, or due to the career exhaustion of a character who spends more screen time speaking about the new yacht that he bought for his retirement than the responsibilities of the job he currently holds reads as secondary to the fact that he has placed a man into a position of unquestionable authority who recently assaulted someone out of anger in public.

It is at this point near the end of the film that the narrative shifts from a focus on the realities of statelessness and injustice to the story of Viktor Navorsky fulfilling a promise to his father. With the war in Krakozhia over, Viktor's status is restored and the

love story reaches its bittersweet ending, with Amelia sacrificing some hope that her relationship with Viktor had engendered and getting a temporary visa for him as a consolation prize. Dixon tries to deport Viktor anyway by threatening to punish his circle of friends among the airport staff if he does not leave—another example of law enforcement breaking the law—and his plans are foiled as that circle of friends sacrifices themselves so that Viktor can go to New York for one day, a trip that reaffirms for the audience the splendor of America as Viktor takes a cab ride and meets Benny Colson. In many ways, this ending is reflective of the casual, naïve attitude of Dixon's boss; having witnessed inhumane treatment and the cavernous holes in the legal system that precipitated Viktor's statelessness, there is always a feel-good ending to erase critical questions about statelessness and identity. "Cheer up. It's not over yet." There is great irony in the fact that Mehran Karimi Nasseri, the man whose story inspired this film with a feel-good ending, sits stateless and forgotten somewhere in France.

The Kamalfar Family

For many readers, it might be easier to watch Spielberg's *The Terminal* or to read Nasseri's *The Terminal Man* than to bear witness to the story of the Kamalfar family. In those two texts, a lone, middle-aged adult struggles against the crushing bureaucracy of national and international laws, but the experiences of the Kamalfar family includes two children. Along with their mother, Zahra, Anna and Davood must face many of the same hardships as Nasseri and Navorsky, hardships that should at the very least have been avoided by the UN convention on the rights of the child. That Canada ultimately provided a safe place for the family to relocate is laudable, but the world watched the Kamalfar family suffer in the Sheremetyevo airport as stateless persons for nearly a year.

Unlike the sections on Nasseri and Spielberg's work, the Kamalfar family's story comprises multiple primary texts. Spielberg, as one of the most well-known names in the film industry, and Nasseri, whose fame grew over the years that he lived at the airport in Paris and through Spielberg's *The Terminal*, both produced definitive works around which an analytical investigation can revolve. Further, even though Nasseri suffered greatly during his time at the airport, he eventually established a routine that was allowed by the airport security, giving interviews publicly to many reporters and visitors who arrived at the airport for the sole purpose of meeting with him. Conversely, the Kamalfar family participated in interviews covertly, out of the sight of authorities and often in bathrooms and in the back sections of restaurants. They did not have a chance during their existence in the Sheremetyevo airport to create an organized documentation of their experiences, but had to rely upon chance encounters with journalists to get their story out into the world. The covertly filmed testimony given by Zahra to Pajamas media is the most often cited text regarding their experiences, and so it stands out as the primary text in this section. This does not mean that this video is the definitive work of the Kamalfar narrative, especially as a member of the family might choose to recount their experiences in a new form in the future, much as Nasseri has done. Two other media segments covering the Kamalfar family's experience, and that also include video interviews from the family, from CNN and Russia Today, are also closely examined in this section, read alongside the video from Pajamas Media as other primary texts. Though all from the same genre of journalism, these three sources all tell the story from a different perspective; the Pajamas Media interview as a first hand account, the CNN piece as coverage by a company and country with no connection to the events and clumsily

contextualizing it with popular culture comparisons, and the Russia Today segment as a potentially government-sponsored piece about human rights abuses in its own country.

Among the distinguishing features of the Kamalfar family's experience within their chapter is the story of their forced migration. A lawyer for the family reported that Zahra, while on a two-day furlough from imprisonment for political protest in Iran, attempted to reach Canada using false identification for her as well as her two children. They were intercepted in Frankfurt and sent back to their point of origin of the flight that had brought them there, Russia. They were eventually relocated by the Russian authorities to the international terminal of the airport and simply left there, a not-uncommon practice, as will be noted later in the chapter. At one point during their time at the airport, the Russian authorities moved to deport them back to Iran, though this ultimately did not happen because the daughter, Anna, suffered a debilitating physical episode at the prospect of returning to Iran and the family returned to the international terminal (CNN). The possibility of deportation relies on the state of origin recognizing the citizenship of the individual or family; if they did not possess Iranian citizenship, then upon their arrival they could have been sent back to Russia or displaced elsewhere. The Iranian government claimed no knowledge of Kamalfar's case in Iran, and various media organizations were unable to verify her story. Because of this, the Kamalfar family's statelessness is quite a bit different from that of Nasseri's in that there is a place to which they can legally return, but in which they might be deprived of the rights typically associated with citizenship.

As the Kamalfar family has now settled in Canada permanently, the speculation as to the veracity of Zahra's claims will not likely by pursued any further. It might be

argued that any individual or family willing to undergo such trauma must possess a powerful motivation to flee their place of origin, or even that the Russian authorities would have pursued deportation much more forcefully if Zahra's story of imprisonment and persecution in Iran was false. Ultimately, though the cause of displacement always deserves consideration, the experiences of the family within the airport powerfully articulate the reality of statelessness in a nation—and a global community—that lacks the infrastructure to address these issues.

Zahra Kamalfar's video is only a few minutes in length and, because of the covert nature of the filming by Pajamas Media, there is little in the video that is not relevant to her experience, and the experiences of her children, as stateless persons. The following is a partial transcript of the translation of Zahra's words from the video. Zahra speaks,

> "We have nowhere to sleep, nowhere to rest, and nowhere to bathe. My kids have not seen the sun for sixteen months, no sunlight. They haven't seen daylight or nighttime. Life in here is very hard. My kids have nowhere to take a shower to clean themselves. The water here is from the toilet. We drink from the toilet water. In the toilet we fill the bucket of the water in the middle of the night away from the eyes of the authorities to take a bath. I have no place to wash my clothes. All doors are closed to us. All doors are closed on us: myself, my daughter, and son. Please let my kids experience the light of day and the beauty of the night after sixteen months. Let my kids breathe freedom.
>
> In here they disrespect us. Police have attacked us. They throw our belongings in the middle of the transit hall. She pushed me, a policewoman. I hit the wall and blood dripped out of my mouth. She told me you have too much stuff, don't sit

> here sit there. Every few nights she comes back to us for questioning 'Who are you? Where are you coming from? Where are you going to?' There is no humanity in here, no human rights, nobody cares about us here. Nobody hears our screams. All doors are closed, every door is closed to us. But my kids and I are here for seventy-three days now. We sleep on the cold floor.
>
> I am not crying because I must be strong. The kids should not see my tears. I laugh to give them hope, to fight back, to endure. But now my tears are dropping because it is heartbreaking for a mother to see her kids suffer. This is the end of the world, end of the world.
>
> We have no comfort, no protection. I am afraid for my safety, for my daughter's safety, even for my son. Please end it" (Pajamas Media).

As we read through the lines of this transcript, it is helpful to immediately acknowledge two realities of Kamalfar's words: first, she was likely aware that there would only be limited time for her to speak on the video because of airport security, and second, her content was limited almost exclusively to the particulars of their everyday experiences at the airport, and the desperate needs of her children. While many texts of this kind typically include content on the motivations behind refugee or exile circumstances, Zahra does not mention anything other than their day to day realities at the international terminal of Sheremetyevo airport.

What stands out the most in this documentary text is the absence of any artistic expression, though considering the purpose and setting of the video, the audience might expect this absence. Autobiographical and documentary films such as Deann Borshay Liem's *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, which was a primary focus in the chapter on

international adoptees, contain a great deal of literary devices, but in Kamalfar's video we have the facts of her and her children's experiences and nothing else. The first paragraph centers on her children, and specifically the deprivation of dietary and environmental factors in their lives, and the second paragraph concerns the human rights abuses that she and her children suffered during their time in the international terminal. Though a powerful and evocative interview on its own, when watched or read alongside other coverage that does utilize a creative license, her honest testimony in the video draws a sharp contrast.

Six months after the Kamalfar family were forced to inhabit the airport terminal, CNN published a short piece detailing some of their experiences. The segment begins in such a way that the audience might not grasp the gravity of the story, as the narrator describes all of the amenities that the Sheremetyevo airport has to offer, including duty-free shopping and an Irish bar. "All of that gets old pretty quick," says the narrator. "Just ask the Kamalfar family" (CNN). This inappropriately lighthearted attempt to broach a dire subject does not survive past the first ten seconds of the segment, as the audience is soon shown the Kamalfar family huddled on the floor of the terminal.

Missing from the introduction to this segment is the fact that the Kamalfar family was not always inhabiting the airport since their arrival in Russia and only decided to remain there because of a lack of other options. After being deported from Germany back to Russia, they interviewed at a refugee agency and were denied refugee status before then living in a hotel in Moscow under house arrest. Their presence at the airport only came after the Russian authorities relocated them there, an established practice relocating "political headaches" (Caitlin Dewey, Washington Post). Duty-free shopping and passing

time at the Irish bar were never part of the Kamalfar family's experiences. Indeed, the narrator goes on to describe their bed within the airport as the cold floor directly above the Irish bar, the only location where they can find some brief relief from the constant harassment of the authorities. The narrator only mentions the months spent at facilities prior to their arrival at the airport when questioned by the lead CNN anchor of the segment for more information about the family's experience.

Following the narrator's introduction, there are two brief segments from both Zahra and her daughter Anna about their experiences in the airport. They speak of many of the same hardships that Zahra discussed in the Pajamas Media video, making overt pleas for help to both individuals as well as the Russian authorities. Anna discusses the family's use of the bathrooms for bathing, and the narrator, once Anna and Zahra have spoken, includes clips of Spielberg's *The Terminal*, showing the character of Viktor Navorsky bathing in the airport bathrooms in the film. These scenes are not at all the dark experiences of the Kamalfar family, and are full of Tom Hank's humorous skill as an actor. Gone is the gravity of Zahra and Anna's testimony, and the audience is again whisked back to the comfortable realm of airports as places of transit and narratives of statelessness as comedic fictions.

At several points throughout the segment, the narrator repeats two important international considerations for the Kamalfar family. The first is their status in Iran, which is heavily disputed; Zahra claims that returning to Iran would result in her imprisonment, and the Iranian government claims to have no knowledge of her case. The narrator goes to great lengths to contain all of Zahra's claims within a space of speculation, repeatedly reminding the audience that none of them have been

substantiated, at no time mentioning the established tradition of misinformation and deception practiced by the theocratic regime in power in Iran. The second international consideration for the family is the UN's handling of their case. At two points in the segment, the narrator cites UN reports of the Sheremetyevo airport's unacceptable conditions, while at the same time reminding the audience that the UN has rejected the Kamalfar family's application for refugee status. A great deal of weight is given to the UN's critiques of the airport and to the claims of the Iranian government that they have no knowledge of the Kamalfar case, while all that first hand testimony of Zahra, Anna, and Davood receive is speculation.

Another noteworthy segment on the Kamalfar family was produced by journalist Anastasia Haydulina for *Russia Today*, a television network funded by the Russian government. Knowing this affiliation, the audience might expect to see much of what was included in the segment by CNN; an acknowledgement, perhaps, that life is difficult for the Kamalfar family but speculation about their claims of displacement. Instead, the segment that was produced is quite sympathetic to the family's suffering, a suffering that the Russian government itself helped to facilitate. A simple search for information about the journalist shows that she was employed by *Russia Today* until at least 2009, two years after the publication of this video, and was thus not punished for her sympathetic coverage of the Kamalfar family. The reader can only surmise, astonishingly, that this segment, critical as it is of both the Russian government and international legislative bodies, was ultimately sanctioned by the Russian government itself.

Haydulina begins the segment by saying that the Kamalfar family "sleep in a Moscow airport's floors, bathe in its public toilets, and eat handout airline food every

day. Like the Tom Hanks character in the movie, *The Terminal*, they are 'no-people'" (*RT*). Except for an initial shot of the family huddled on the floor, these words are spoken over scenes from *The Terminal*. Though the segment then moves to brief words from the interview filmed in the bathroom with the family, the editing of the piece has already blended their story with fiction. This might have been done in an effort to provide some popular culture context for the audience, and perhaps was itself an effort to identify real stateless individuals and bring the problem out of the exclusivity of Hollywood film. Ultimately, however, the equating of the Kamalfar family with Hanks' fictional character trivializes their experiences; none of the film's traumatic scenes are shown, only the light, humorous side of Viktor Navorsky.

Insensitive introductions aside, the piece is quite sympathetic to the plight of the Kamalfar family. Much like the other segments, the family has an opportunity to speak about their circumstances in the airport and their need for help. Also included are many images of documents written on behalf of the family from Iranians living around the world. This is especially striking considering the Russian government's funding of the segment. Many of these documents could be read as quite critical of a government that has forced a family to inhabit an airport terminal and has denied them access to the most basic necessities. These images reveal the international solidarity movement that has formed around the family, coming from a population of exiles spread across the globe, many of whom have faced similar circumstances in their migration.

Instead of merely mentioning that the family had applied for refugee status and had been rejected, Haydulina includes her interview with an immigration and refugee official. In this interview, the official states that "she was denied refugee status because

she failed to apply within twenty-four hours of arriving here and at other countries on her way to Canada. She had her chance. There is nothing we can do now" (*RT*). The segment does not specify which legislative body the official works for, but there are images of UNHCR documents in the segment before he speaks and he details the refugee process in multiple countries, so it is likely that he is a UN representative, or at the very least has some professional UN affiliation. This man's words add an entirely new perspective to the Kamalfar story, as they seem to contradict the statement from the UN that was supplied by CNN. The official in this video claims that the reason for the rejection of their application was that they did not apply within the proper window of time, and that they "had their chance." In the CNN segment, the journalist claims that the UN stated that the family did not meet the requirements for refugee status, and implied that the reason for that might be that there is no confirmation from the Iranian government about Zahara's claims.

In Bulent Diken and Carsten Laustsen's *The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp,* the authors go into great detail about the circumstances of various refugee camps. To assist in the analysis of Kamalfar's text, what follows is a brief interview from Diken and Laustsen's book from refugees and the Sandholm camp in Denmark. Jamshidi, the refugee being interviewed says,

> "I feel nothing any more. No hope. No hunger. I just want some peace. Formerly I cried all the time, I missed my freedom, I missed my children, now I am just unconcerned… Eating time, shout the personnel at 12. Eating time, they shout again at 17. At 22 we go to bed. It is the same every single day. I can just as well

> go back to Lebanon and get killed. Inside I am already dead…. I am nothing" (91).

The authors go on to ask, "Is it, one wonders, so difficult for the authorities to recognize *homo sacer* here?" (91). Though the inclusion of this interview alongside Kamalfar's text is not for the purpose of comparison or to judge which displaced circumstance carries greater difficulties, I ask the same question as do Diken and Laustsen: is it so difficult for the authorities to recognize *homo sacer* here? In the airport terminal, these stateless persons have nothing to rely upon, they are not provided food by personnel, they have no beds to sleep in, and no access to medical resources or providers. Perhaps most troubling of all, they have no advocates representing their interests—or protecting their supposedly "inalienable" human right—on site. They have been removed entirely from the realm of human jurisdiction and placed into a space in which they are subjected to constant harassment and violations by autonomous authorities. The European Council Torture Commission visited the Sandholm camp in 2002, according to the authors, citing circumstances that went against the UN's principles of human rights, but the UN itself chose not to grant refugee status to the Kamalfar family despite a lack of many of the same rights, claiming that their circumstances did not meet the requirements. They abandoned them as *homo sacer* to dwell outside the space of collective protection.

Statelessness and Cosmopolitanism

As this chapter comes to a close, we can again look to the field of international law with which this literary studies work so closely intersects, a field that itself recognizes the enigma of statelessness in a global community. In William Conklin's *Statlessness: The Enigma of an International Community*, he notes that, "international

standards may only supplement a state law or acts of state officials, and then only with the consent of state parties. Treaties and international customary norms are representations of such express and implicit consent" (302). To this legal reality, Conklin poses many questions, among them "Is it enough... that a treaty or customary norm recognizes a right to nationality for everyone?" (304). We only need to look at the stories of the Kamalfar family, Mehran Karimi Nasseri, and Viktor Navorsky to begin to understand that the answer is no. Despite the existence of international accords regarding the presence of statelessness in the world, the need to address it, and methods for educating the public and providing materials and strategies to state agencies for finding solutions, statelessness continues. While sociological and international law research endeavors will hopefully lead to productive trajectories of improvement for these international legislative efforts, literary studies makes its contribution by looking at the cultural outcomes of the current state of limbo, ambiguity, and uncertain futures expressed within narrative.

Margarita Sanchez-Mazas, in her article "The Construction of "Official Outlaws: Social-psychological and educational implications of a deterrent asylum policy", specifically in reference to the Swiss asylum policy, writes that,

> "Besides the construction of an invisible population within a democratic state, the Swiss asylum policy leads to the creation of a category of people who depend on and are under the control of the very authority that tries to deport them. In this way, it turns into 'official outlaws' those who remain in the country in conditions of total deprivations of rights and under the threat of being arrested or subject to forced departure for illegal stay."

Though this invisible population is small, and the states in which they exist are not always democratic, Sanchez-Mazas is right that that perhaps the more salient part of the argument here is the complete power over the stateless exercised by an autonomous law enforcement agency. Going back to the foundational quotes from Arendt at the beginning of the chapter, these narratives assist us in understating that stateless "outlaws" are "completely at the mercy of the police, which itself did not worry too much about committing a few illegal acts in order to diminish the country's burden of *indésirables*" (360).

In this chapter, the two biographical stories are about Iranians, something that comes as little surprise considering the circumstances faced by dissidents in that country. Throughout this chapter, as well as chapter two, many references are made to the conditions of injustice that result in the exile of citizens from Iran onto the global stage. A great deal of the blame belongs with the theocratic regime in total control of the state, and many expatriate Iranians around the world do not believe that any change in that country is possible until that regime comes to an end. While these conversations are interesting and productive, focusing on Iran's status as a "rogue" nation can provide additional perspectives on the production of exiles from the country.

Indefensible as the actions of the regime are, is there something about the sanctions against Iran and its classification as a "rogue" nation that might contribute to its decisions to regularly expel its own citizens into the international legislative maelstrom? It could be argued that there is something contradictory and frustrating to being separated from many of the international agreements, negotiations, and trade deals being established among states while also being recognized as a sovereign nation and expected

to follow the international legislative accords of the global community. How can the reputation of a "rogue" state be further maligned or the consequences faced by that state made greater? Why not expel dissidents out into the world if there is no hope of recovering—or, arguably, attaining for the first time—equal standing in the international community? There would seem to be no incentive for Iran to cease the practice of violently displacing its citizens. Concurrently, the failure of international legislative bodies such as the UN to fulfill their obligation to protect the human rights of those citizens that are expelled ensures an unending trajectory toward further statelessness in the world.

Whether Iran is exploiting its geopolitical standing to eliminate political dissidents by exiling them into the world at large, or whether it is a frustrated reaction to what it views as unjust sanctions and classifications, the material outcomes are stories like Nasseri's and the Kamalfar family's. Many argue for a lifting of the sanctions against Iran, while others see a more welcoming international community as the key to relieving some of the suffering endured by refugees. The problem, however, is not one limited to Iran, but what the existence of these narratives suggests about the larger problem of the seeming fictionality of world citizenship and the ability of every human to access the most basic of human rights. Perhaps a more productive avenue of discourse to address is the relative smallness of the UN's power in a world of sovereign states and of a global community that relies on the participation of ultimately self-interested nations.

A question that we return to now is, how can cosmopolitanism exist in a vacuum? Much of the focus on cosmopolitanism in the previous two chapters centered on the ways in which the cultural ties to places of origin resist the assimilation so pervasive in the

circumstances that international adoptees, exiles, and refugees often find themselves in within their new places of habitation and result in new, transnational identities. In this chapter, though the terms exile and refugee could still be argued as applicable, some of the stateless narratives revealed that those cultural ties had been severed, while others demonstrated the fear and abuse that takes priority over those ties for the safety of the family or the self. While each of the stories possessed unique perspectives, however, something shared by each of the stateless was a complete lack of recourse. As *homo sacer*, these individuals have been removed from all legal jurisdiction, existing only as human in Agamben's "bare life." Is being human the only requisite for cosmopolitanism and world citizenship, or does the very idea of belonging and citizenship in those terms demand a recognition of the humanity within the individual, and therefore a claim to those rights that those of us in positions of comfort always cite as "inalienable?"

Chapter 4

Subjects and Malcontents: Forced Migration and Empire in the *Star Trek* Universe

Introduction

One of the first questions that I asked myself during the planning for a science fiction chapter in my dissertation was: what specifically does science fiction have to offer to a discussion of forced migration and cosmopolitanism that differs substantially from the primarily realist narratives at the center of each of the other chapters? The answer to this question, centering on the genre's ability to investigate ideas in a space not bound by the limits of realism while maintaining a consistent logic within the narrative, will be demonstrated throughout this chapter. Peter Paik, in *From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe*, does a masterful job of articulating the considerable agency of science fiction in literary and cultural studies. He writes,

> "Science fiction can accordingly serve as a vital instrument for the investigation of the contingencies governing political life, the forces that structure and dissolve collective existence, by providing the reader with visions in which familiar realities are destabilized and transformed. By compelling us to imagine a different order, science fiction cultivates in us the capacity to conceive of our contemporary situation in a dynamic manner, whether in terms of its disintegration or rejuvenation, making it the literary genre that perhaps most actively fosters a sense of historical as well as—in the Nietzschean sense—unhistorical consciousness of the present" (2).

Within the science fiction narratives studied in this chapter, frameworks of reimagined realities, imagined solutions, critiques of contemporary powers, and circumstances that do not allow for what are now considered daily injustices all find their manifestations. These philosophical and critical investigations within science fiction can be used to foster social debate, much as the imagined technologies in science fiction have driven discovery in the hard sciences.[14]

The Americanist focus of my dissertation is challenged by the fact that many of the texts in each of the chapters are from transnational writers or sources, and the entire work itself crosses into the field of transnational sociology and international law at many points. Though the science fiction narratives that I analyze in this chapter are American, their very nature challenges such rigid distinctions. In *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link write about the global interconnectedness of science fiction as being especially emblematic of the genre. They write, "No genre has offered more powerful examinations of the problems with cultural blindness and unchecked aggression toward the Other; no genre has more vividly impressed upon us the threats posed by non-global thinking, nationalism, and provincialism" (1). In preparing the rationale for including a science fiction chapter in my dissertation, I came to realize that my devotion to the genre and desire to engage critically with it was secondary to my dissertation's need for it. As a genre of literature incredibly hostile towards the form of the nation state[15], an analysis of science fiction narratives can provide profound insights for the ways in which the nation-state framework of

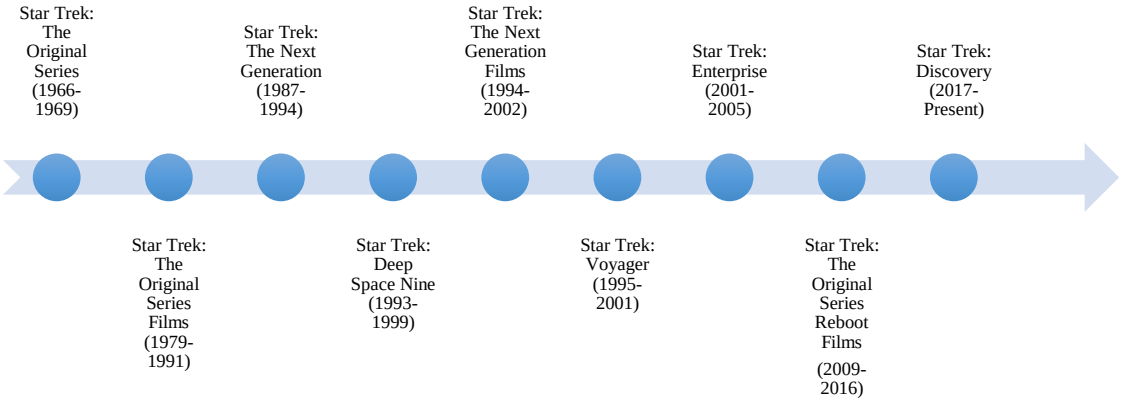
[14]Tsekleves, Emmanuel. "Science Fiction as Fact: How Desires Drive Discovery." *The Guardian.* Aug 2015.
[15] Canavan, Link. *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*.

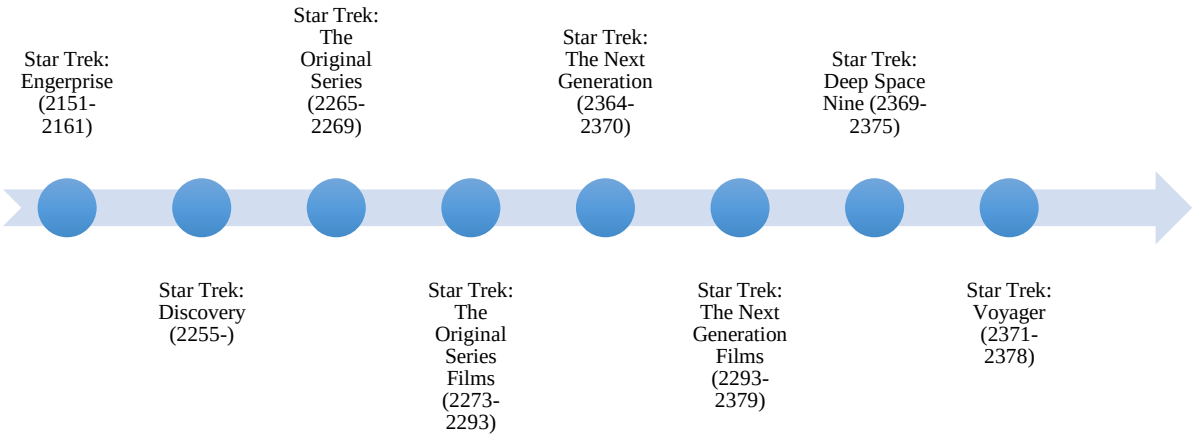
governance can threaten—and vanquish—human rights.

There are perhaps no two science fiction franchises more revered than Star Trek and Star Wars. While a surface comparison of their respective merits has rarely resulted in productive discourse, the fact that Star Trek as a franchise consists mainly of televised series and Star Wars as a franchise consists mainly of films means that the narrative structure of Star Trek—admittedly, something that has changed as the franchise has progressed from the 20th to the 21st century—has provided more opportunities to explore contained stories than any other franchise in the genre. Grappling in these episodes with a multitude of contemporary social issues, Star Trek provides a rich and varied collection of content for cultural studies in settings in which, again, "familiar realities are destabilized and transformed" (Paik 2).

From the debut of its first series in 1966, Star Trek has aired six series, including an animated series that only ran for two seasons. Other than the original series, the three "main" installments in the franchise that chronologically followed one-another; *Star Trek: The Next Generation, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, and Star Trek: Voyager* all ran for seven seasons, amassing a wealth of episodes. Including all of the series from the franchise through the first season of *Star Trek: Discovery*, there are a total of 740 episodes, with no end in sight. This more than 550 hours of content does not include the thirteen films that have also been a core part of the Star Trek cannon. Below are two simple timelines, with the first showing the broadcast and premier dates for the series and films, and the second showing the chronology of the series and films within the Star Trek

universe.





Star Trek and Star Wars are both rooted in the vision of single individuals; Gene Roddenberry and George Lucas, respectively. However, though Disney's acquisition of the franchise in 2012 did greatly diversify the number of creative minds behind the new Star Wars films, Star Trek has, from its beginning, been dependent upon the collaboration of many writers to generate content. Part of the reality of creating so many hundreds of hours of finished work is that no one person can write twenty or twenty-five scripts every

year. As a result of this shared fiction enterprise, Star Trek could be argued as being one of the largest—if not *the* largest—collection of canonical content in a science fiction franchise. This is not to say that the series does not suffer from some forms of restraint; after the end of the *Star Trek: Voyager* series in 2001 and the *Star Trek: Nemesis* film in 2002, there has been no effort to advance the franchise chronologically. Each of the television series and films made since that time have focused on events set before the original series, and have even spawned new timelines with unique histories. Whether that is because the best materials produced recently happen to be prequels, or if there is a genuine anxiety on the part of the major contributors of the franchise to examine what content might be left after the defeat of all major ideological opponents after *Star Trek: Nemesis* is a subject of some debate. This notion has received considerable attention in the prequel-centered years; Nicole Berland writes in "Star Trek and the Problem with B-4 and After 2379," that "the timeline ended because the values that underpin *Star Trek's* utopian urges bumped up against their own inherent contradictions."

It's worth taking some space here to think about the notion of the inherent contradictions that Nicole Berland mentioned in the above quote. The two main entries in the franchise that this chapters engages with are *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Roddenberry was an active part of the development of roughly the first half of *Star Trek: The Next Generation'*s series run, and was barely more than briefed on the ideas for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, due to his declining health. The only complete idea that we have of Roddenberry's original vision of the future is the original series, starring Captain James Kirk. Kirk possesses many shortcomings, including his objectification of women and his propensity towards violence, but what is perhaps the

most important feature of his character for my work is his practice of placing all of the Federation ideals for unity and cooperation within a space of human identity and culture. For Kirk, all of the most praiseworthy virtues—compassion, generosity, ambition, curiosity—are human characteristics that other species should seek to emulate. And if they already do possess some of those qualities, then they are merely a step closer to successfully adopting human culture.[16] While it's important to acknowledge that Roddenberry distanced himself greatly from Kirk's template in his final decision[17] on Captain Picard's character, he maintained the lessons in ethics between a human and the other. While Kirk was always praising Spock for his development toward a more human perspective, Picard gave lessons in many episodes to Lt. Commander Data, the sentient android who always desires to move closer to humanity.

What these two white male captains demonstrate is that, as Allen Kwan writes, "a utopian society can only be formed out of a cultural and racial normality based on Western norms and ideals" (62). Kwan goes on to further solidify the connection between Roddenberry's design of Picard and Kirk. He writes, "The cultural and racial homogenization exhibited by *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is simply a continuation of the future projected by the original *Star Trek*. Roddenberry's liberal humanistic project is very much alive, as is the project's privileging of Whiteness and Western cultural norms" (62). As Roddenberry's influence in the franchise waned with his health, the writers and producers that took over the direction of the future series made new choices, including a black commanding officer in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and a female captain in *Star*

[16] *Star Trek: The Original Series.* "Patterns of Force."
[17] Whether Roddenberry originally wanted Patrick Stewart for the role of Picard or had intended to cast someone in the mold of Kirk is a subject of debate. In the end, however, Roddenberry was convinced of Stewart's fit for the role.

Trek: Voyager. While the image of the white male as the central figure might have receded in the series, however, the Western cultural focus did not. With the defeat of the Borg in *Star Trek: Voyager*, the Federation had no real enemies left, and a leading theory about why no post-*Voyager* series has ever been written is that the Western colonizer identity would be too apparent, and that the Federation would reveal itself as a "bloated empire."[18]

At the beginning of the chapter, I included the passage from Paik's book on how science fiction can help us to reexamine our contemporary social and political realities. Among the most prevalent social and political realities that exists on the global scale is forced migration, and rather than merely illustrating the fact that science fiction authors have been aware of this reality, the purpose of this chapter is also to answer the question, how does science fiction—and Star Trek in particular—address the specific experiences of forced migration in productive ways? Moving beyond the confrontation of the facts of displacement, the episodes studied in this chapter speculate on the effects of displacement and forced migration, completing the stories in a way that shows us, as Ed Finn, the director of the Center for Science and the Imagination, says "the full spectrum of possibilities for the future and to paint it as a series of choices that we're all invested in" (Longhi). Much in the same way that science fiction has driven technological advancement, the narrative works within the genre that confront social issues imagine

[18] In the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode, "The Chase" Picard's former archaeology professor refers to Picard as a Roman centurion patrolling the borders of a "bloated empire." This is interesting for two reasons. The first is that it is the first time in the series that the Federation has been referred to as an empire in such bold terms, and the second is that the unifying message of the common ancestor for all species in the galaxy—the centerpiece of the episode—was cited as an ode to Roddenberry's memory. That the episode deemed the most "Roddenberry-esque" of the series by the production staff would be the one in which a sentiment from an individual outside of Starfleet calls into question the greater Federation society's view of the actions of Starfleet is unexpected.

solutions that engender "a more active relationship with the future" (Longhi) and create a tension between us and our own world of being, forcing us into the position of the outsider to reexamine the contemporary issues of forced migration.

In the previous chapters of this work, the argumentative trajectory has been to focus upon the forced migration experiences of the texts and then to demonstrate the ways in which they help to redefine cosmopolitanism as a larger field of belonging. At the center of this chapter is *Star Trek*'s United Federation of Planets, a tightly-woven galactic nation-state that includes many planets and species. At the core of the Federation's collective mission is exploration and unity, and any planet and species that they encounter is welcome to request membership. In order to be granted that membership, however, the civilization must have rid itself of conflict, borders, and any relics of social "infancy."[19] Once membership is attained, the effectively limitless resources of the Federation ensure permanent prosperity. While many audiences—and most certainly the creators—of *Star Trek* earnestly believe in its liberal humanism as a positive, progressive philosophy, reading it as a strictly anti-imperial, democratic text is to miss the striking imperialism within the franchise. The neoliberal humanitarianism employed by the Federation is not unlike that practiced in our contemporary world by Western nations; bringing enlightened or higher-order philosophy to "primitive" cultures, ostensibly to help them improve as a people, but ultimately to remake them into a form that can be appropriated and consumed. Occluded by the presence of alien individuals and civilizations that brazenly bear the signifiers of empire, the Federation's soft

[19] The use of the word "infancy" here is a reference to the episode "The Neutral Zone" in the first season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In the scene, Captain Picard is explaining to humans who had been cryogenically frozen in the late 20th century that their society was primitive. Money, all forms of inequality, and cultures separated by national borders are antiquated and ridiculous ideas to the Federation.

imperialism is effectively masked.

The chapter will be divided into two main sections, each of which will, in part, mirror the other chapters of the dissertation. The first section will focus on adoptees, exiles, and refugees in Star Trek as subjects appropriated by the Federation. The second section will center on representations of statelessness in the franchise, which are born from circumstances in which subjugated individuals and communities do not subscribe to the government policies enforced by Starfleet. The narrative analyses of the sections will shift their focus to the various series of the Star Trek franchise as appropriate, though *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Star Trek: Discovery* will be the series most often at the center of analysis.

Colonial Successes and Subjects of the Federation

To claim absolutely that the United Federation of Planets is not a peaceful paradise in the franchise would be folly; despite the almost constant conflict present in each of the series, the vast majority of the citizens of the Federation are not a part of that conflict, and live utopic lives in perfectly controlled environments. Hunger and disease are gone, every material need is provided for at an individual's whim, and it only rains when you want it to. Unlike stories of conflict-free lives leading to a stagnation of professional drives and ambition, the Federation characters in the franchise are always undergoing some means of self-improvement. One of the more well-known examples of this, a line spoken by two very different characters, Picard and Jake Sisko, seems almost culturally-rehearsed. When questioned about why money is not present in the Federation, they reply that, instead of pursuing wealth, "we work to better ourselves, and the rest of humanity." This philosophy, spoken in a film and episode of the franchise roughly thirty

years after Kirk's human-centric approach to enlightenment, reinforce the idea that the Federation is a primarily human endeavor. Two of the groups that are especially helpful in demonstrating this are the adoptee and refugee characters from three of the series in the franchise.

Before the premier of *Star Trek: Discovery* in 2017, the discourse on adoption within Star Trek was mostly limited to the character of Worf in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Themes of adopting new cultures and identities existed in the character arcs of Odo from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and Seven of Nine in *Star Trek: Voyager*, but those stories concerned adults adapting to new cultural circumstances rather than a child being reassigned to a new life with new parents. Worf's adoption perspective was quite novel, with the audience having a deeper understanding of the adoptee's nature than that of his human parents, with their appearances being limited to a few episodes in the series. It wasn't until *Star Trek: Discovery*'s Michael that it was a human adoptee raised in an alien culture, something that science fiction fans might have been familiar with from narratives such as Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. That the franchise decided to pursue this new trajectory with Worf rather than to approach it from a circumstance with which the audience might be acquainted was an interesting choice, and from the first episode in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s first season that explored his origin story, the audience can understand that the writers were still working it out themselves.

One of the qualities about Worf's adoption—and perhaps Michael's as well—in the series is that they *are* adopted. Perhaps the language of adoption is different in the Star Trek universe—the word "adoption" is rarely used in the franchise—or perhaps the characters were originally conceived as foster children because the writers simply chose

an easier route that required less legislative logistics. Regardless of the original rationale, and even putting aside the fact that Worf refers to Nikolai as his "foster brother" in the "Heart of Glory" episode, Worf, and even Michael on some occasions, refer to their adoptive parents with the language of "mother" and "father" instead of their names. Further, and perhaps most importantly, the duration of the parent-child relationship is a permanent one. In Jessaca Leinaweaver and Sonja van Wichelen's "The geography of transnational adoption: kin and place in globalization," they write that "Foster care is associated with temporariness while adoption is associated with permanence… in other words, adoption = 'real' member of family" (503). It is important to establish this because, if Worf and Michael's stories are to be science fiction's investigations of the topic of transnational adoption, then the parent-child relationships must be read as being permanent.

There are perhaps no more well studied groups among the forced migrant community in Star Trek than refugees and exiles. Perhaps because of a lack of distinguishing language present in the social discourse on forced migrants in the 1990's, the terms "exiles" and "refugees" were used in a nearly interchangeable fashion in the episodes that focused on themes of displacement. As these stories became increasingly prevalent in the franchise, two groups were conceived by the writers to more fully explore forced migration; the Bajorans and the Skreea. While the Bajorans play a primary role in the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* series, the Skrreea are present for only a single episode of the show.

Bajorans and their home world of Bajor are central to the series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Introduced by the character of Ensign Ro Laren in *Star Trek: The Next*

Generation, only very few landmark facts about the Bajorans were known to audiences in that series. Among these facts was that their home world of Bajor had been occupied by the Cardassians, a militant imperial power, for decades. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* begins immediately following the withdrawal of Cardassian forces from Bajor, with the Federation taking over the administrative duties of the orbital space station Deep Space Nine and helping the Bajorans to rebuild their newly-liberated society and government. Having been occupied for roughly fifty years, the generations of Bajorans who did not live under occupation are nearly gone, and the generation currently in power is forced to transform from a resistance-cell guerrilla organization into a formal government. In Star Trek, Bajorans allow an audience to witness speculative fiction's vision of how refugees might transition from the overt domination of one group to the "administrative guidance" and subtle imperial designs of another. As the story of Bajor's occupation, liberation, and cultural destiny span entire series of Star Trek, there is not a single episode that completely encapsulates their experiences as refugees. It is more helpful to instead consider brief forays in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the entire run of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* as the texts of the Bajoran narrative. In truth, the reading of the Bajoran refugee narrative in Star Trek is as much about their treatment by the Federation as it is about the events during the Cardassian occupation. The majority of Bajoran experiences are seen though the character of Kira Nerys, a resistance fighter who was appointed after the Cardassian withdrawal to be the principle Bajoran representative officer on Deep Space Nine. Ultimately, Star Trek's vision of refugee hardship offers little that is new in the daily struggles that are faced, but excels in articulating the ways that self-interest still dominates the actions of an organization, the Federation, that claims humanitarian efforts

among its central statues. After an analysis of the Bajoran episode "Ensign Ro," the section on Bajorans will shift to the character of Kira Nerys and her resistance to the Federation's administration of Deep Space Nine as another form of occupation.

Adoption in *Star Trek*

Star Trek: The Next Generation's season one episode "Heart of Glory" familiarizes the audience with Worf's past. Having rescued the Klingon survivors of a battle, Worf is assigned to host them during their stay aboard the *Enterprise*. Along with Worf's complete introduction to the audience, this episode also educates the audience about the culture of the Klingons. Shocked to find a Klingon serving on a Federation ship, a long expository scene in the middle of the episode answers almost any question that would have been asked in this point of the series about Worf's origin story. Though this scene is far too long to transcribe here in its entirety, what follows is the core of the scene's content. When the Klingon survivors ask Worf how he came to live among humans, he responds,

> Worf: "Through an act of kindness... I was buried under the rubble and left for dead. A human Starfleet officer found me. He took me to his home on Gault and told his wife to raise me as his son…When my foster brother and I were of age we entered Starfleet academy. He hated it and returned to Gault. I stayed.
> Konmel: "You have not spent much time among your own kind."
> Worf: "Hardly none."
> Korris: "So, when the night was still and quiet and the sound of the blood rushing through your veins filled your ears the only way to silence it was to slip out into the night and like the hunter that spawned you join in the struggle of life and death. You were unable."
> Konmel: "And those around you did not understand. You frightened them."
> Korris: "They shunned you, cursed you called you vile names and you knew not why. Even now do you know why you are driven? Why you cannot relent or repent or confess or abstain? How could you know? There have been no other Klingons to lead you to that knowledge."
> Worf: "Yes… yes, those feelings are still a part of me. But I control them. They do not rule me."

> Korris: "Yes, to fit in the humans demanded that you change the one thing that you cannot change. But because you cannot, you do. That too is the mark of a warrior. You said I mock you. I do not. I salute you."
> Konmel: "But against whom do you test yourself? Against what enemy do you charge into battle?"
> Worf: "I have been in battle."
> Korris: "Then you understand."
> Worf: "Yes, I do."
> Korris: "Brother, this peace, this alliance is like a living death to warriors like us."

Beginning with Worf's explanation of the circumstances of his forced migration to the human community on Gault, we see some of the replication of transnational adoption stories placed into science fiction narrative. Even considering the well-intentioned adoptive parents of Worf, the initial cause of his displacement from Klingon culture and forced migration into the Federation is war. It is worth noting that unlike the stories of Deann Liem Borshay's adoption following the Korean War from the earlier chapter on international adoption, the violent force that ended Worf's Klingon family was not the same as the one that adopted him. Despite this difference, the trauma of violence as the impetus for Worf's adoption is still relevant, as Leinaweaver and van Wichelen write, "(illegal) adoptions—or adoptions born out of state violence—must be understood in terms of 'absences,' 'traces,' and 'genocide' rather than 'migration' (502). Though for the adoptee, choice is rarely—if ever—a consideration, when violent conflict is a part of the adoption process, it carries with it a particularly sharp dismissal of the rights of the child.

When it comes to the cultural traditions of an adoptee's place of origin, science fiction can go to places that realist adoption narratives cannot. In the documentary film *Somewhere Between*, the adoptive mother of Jenni Fang learns Mandarin Chinese in order to preserve her daughter's linguistic heritage. Jenni comes to appreciate this greatly,

as it provides her with the ability to speak without a translator while traveling in China, which eventually becomes a large part of her work with adoptees. However, had her mother chosen to not learn Mandarin and speak to Jenny exclusively in English, Jenny might have found a different form of contentment in the United States, much like some of the other adoptees featured in the film. Though a racial difference between adoptive parents and their children can create gaps of cultural understanding regarding social experiences that might remain for a lifetime, humans can conceivably adapt—to varying degrees, admittedly—to any human culture. Things are not so straightforward in science fiction; Worf's conversation in the above scene is essentially about what humans and human culture *cannot* provide for him. Star Trek portrays Klingons as possessing more than just a warrior culture; they are biologically designed for combat, from their redundant organ systems to their strict psychologies. On many occasions throughout the series, there is a near-explicit suggestion that Klingons possess a biological need for combat much as a human's need for sleep, and though his time in Starfleet has provided opportunities to satisfy that need, the mostly human culture of the Federation frowns upon violence as a tactic of default. Exploring the existence of that biological need—and the cultural practices that have arisen because of it— as well as the frustration when it cannot be met is central to Worf's narrative of adoption in the Star Trek franchise.

Worf's adoptive parents are only present in a few episodes, and his father Sergey is only in one, "Family." Occurring just after the crew of the Enterprise has played a central role in averting the takeover of Earth by the chief ideological enemy of the Federation, the Borg, this episode is focused mostly upon Captain Picard's reunion with his brother in France and his healing after the traumatic events of the Borg conflict. The

secondary story in the episode concerns Worf and his parents, as they visit him after learning of his discommendation from the Klingon Empire. Though Worf was raised by human parents and serves in the primarily human Federation, his has made considerable efforts to maintain his cultural ties to the Klingons. After an insidious plot to destroy his biological father's honor forces him to sacrifice his own honor for the sake of the Empire, Worf finds himself cut off from his cultural Klingon roots. Believing Worf to be in crisis and in desperate need of emotional support, his parents arrive to comfort him, something that Worf does not want. Speaking to Commander William Riker, Worf says, "It is inappropriate for a Klingon to receive family while on duty. As humans, my parents do not understand." To this, Riker can only reply "Well, I'm not sure that I would either, Worf, since this isn't a Klingon ship." Worf further encysts himself within his Klingon identity; after mentioning that he already informed his parents of his discommendation, Worf says "I do not believe any human can truly understand my dishonor."

Though Worf receives his parents warmly when they arrive, he is quick to resume his duties whenever possible during their visit. During one of these times, his parents have a conversation with Guinan, the hostess of Ten-Forward, the cafeteria/bar where most social gatherings on the ship take place. A brief excerpt of their conversation reads,

> Helena: "We knew it wouldn't be easy for him, growing up without other Klingons to turn to for guidance."
> Sergey: "We had to let him discover and explore his heritage by himself. Let him find his own path.
> Helena: "I'm afraid that Worf feels that we do not understand him.
> Guinan: "Well, part of him may feel that way. But there's another part that I've seen. The part that comes in and drinks prune juice. The part that looks out the window towards home. But he's not looking towards the Klingon Empire. He's looking towards you."

This scene serves as a mirror to the one between Worf and Riker, establishing that Worf's parents are aware of the cultural and racial isolation that Worf has endured throughout his life and even that they are aware that he might doubt their ability to comprehend his struggle.

This story, like many in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, is fully contained within the episode. A scene that follows near the last quarter of the episode, before it transitions back to Picard's family experiences in France, resolves any notion that the audience might have that Worf and his parents' relationship might have been damaged. An excerpt from that scene reads:

> Worf: "When I heard you were on the visitor's list I was not sure I wanted you to come. I am glad you are here.
> Helena: "We had to come."
> Sergey: "Our boy was in trouble. After we read your letter about the discommendation from the Klingons…"
> Helena: "We didn't exactly understand it all."
> Sergey: "We didn't have to. We know what kind of man you are."
> Helena: "Whatever you did, we know it was for a good reason."
> Worf: "I must bear my dishonor alone."
> Sergey: "That is not true."
> Helena: "I'm sorry if this is too human of us but whatever you are suffering you must remember we are with you."
> Sergey: "And that we're proud of you. And that we love you."
> Helena: "You are our son."
> The family holds each-other.

Throughout this rather lengthy summary of episodes, we see a straining on the part of Worf, as he time and again moves toward the cultural priorities of his heritage. In only one of the conversations above, however, is there a complete focus on his needs; the conversation between Worf and the Klingons. In his scenes with Riker, the scene between Guinan and his parents, and in the final, peacemaking scene between Worf and his parents, every perspective and priority is a human one. Worf, though he clearly

expresses his disagreements early in the episode, does not push back against this human-centric approach in the end. As Lynette Russell and Nathan Wolski write in "Beyond the Final Frontier: *Star Trek*, the Borg and the Post-colonial,"

> "Within the Star Trek archive there are no examples of more comprehensive assimilation than that offered by Worf. The Native is asked not just to change but to accept the degraded view of their previous culture that is offered by the colonizer. Worf does indeed for the most part accept the culture of the Federation, however it is clear that he never fully relinquishes his own native culture. Worf's dialectical relationship within these two cultures shapes his character. He personifies resistance and assimilation, highlighting the ambiguities of both states" (9).

Though the Federation might not view Worf's internal conflict—and its occasionally problematic manifestations in his professional life—as ideal, it is a small price to pay for what he provides for them in return. Starfleet allows him to wear his metallic sash, a Klingon cultural symbol which would normally be a violation of the uniform code, places him in a highly-visible position on the flagship of the fleet, and has him present at many diplomatic functions, especially with representatives of the Klingon Empire. For the soft imperialism of the Federation, there is no more useful subject than one that shows his culture of origin that it is possible to join them while maintaining their culture. Whether that truly is the lived experience of the assimilation process of Federation membership, as Worf's conversations in this section have touched upon, is another thing entirely.

While Worf's significant marker as an adoptee is the uniform that he wears, Michael Burnham's every word and mannerism suggests a non-typical upbringing for a

human. Intellectually gifted far beyond even the high standards of humans in the Star Trek universe, a great deal of Michael's bearing and interactions are that of a Vulcan, despite being a human. This characterization is particularly stark given that the makeup of the crew around her is mostly human. The writers go to great lengths to establish her Vulcan-taught skills sets as early as the first episode, as she uses the Vulcan "neck-pinch" and performs complex calculations in her head with great speed, things that were almost entirely unique to Spock in the original series and Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Though the series reaffirms this time and again in sometimes subtle ways, one of the first spoken lines from Michael, a time estimate given with absolute precision to the second, establishes her abilities early.

Michael's status as an adoptee is based upon the relationship that she has with Sarek, and that she might have with Spock, if the next season of the show allows them screen time together. Several times throughout the first season, Michael is referred to as Sarek's "ward," a descriptor distinctly different from the manner in which he refers to Spock, as "my son." Spock and Sarek are inextricably linked throughout most of the franchise, with the writers relying on Sarek's relationship to his legendary son to establish his import within any episode—prior to *Star Trek: Discovery*—that features him.[202122] This inseparability is one of the central concerns regarding the decisions of the writers to add Michael to Sarek's family; surely the audience would have learned of her within the multiple series of the franchise that have featured Spock and Sarek if she were considered his daughter. The problem with an easy reading of Michael as the adopted

[20] *Star Trek: The Original Series*. "Journey to Babel."
[21] *Star Trek: The Next Generation.* "Unification."
[22] *Star Trek: The Next Generation.* "Sarek."

child of Sarek arises from Sarek's own words in *Star Trek: Discovery*'s episode "Lethe." Speaking to Sarek after he has been wounded, Michael says, "You know what happened. You could talk to me about it, help me understand what you did. It could make us grow closer, not further apart. That's what families do." In reply, Sarek says, "Technically, we are not related." For many ardent devotees of the Vulcan species in Star Trek—as countless forum posts on fan sites attest—this might close the door on further discussion of her adoption; Sarek said they are not related, and Vulcans are immutable in their positions.

The difficulty with this surface reading is that it does not take into account the scenes that precede it both in this episode and in the earlier episodes of the season. Before the beginning of the series, sometime after Michael has joined Sarek's family, a terrorist attack at her school gravely injures Michael. Charging into the burning structure, Sarek employs a Vulcan technique known as a mind-meld, merging his psyche with that of Michael. This stabilizes her enough for her to recover from the injuries. During the mind-meld, Sarek looks severely stressed as he shares in her pain. From that point forward, Sarek later explains to Michael during the main events of the series, a part of his "katra"—the Vulcan concept of a soul or spirit—was imprinted onto her, irrevocably linking their minds together. Sarek uses this link to telepathically communicate with her during a particularly trying scene in the second episode of the season because he sensed her despair, something that he immediately tries to walk back by claiming that he would never engage this taxing form of communication for sentimentality. He acknowledges his lack of support during Michael's formative years before telling her to gather her resolve to help in the struggle ("Battle at the Binary Stars").

Later in the season, in the episode "Lethe," Sarek suffers wounds from a terrorist attack and summons Michael's consciousness to him much as she summoned his to her. Allowed unfettered access to his mind during this time, she is faced with what can only be described as the default memory of Sarek, where his mind automatically dwells when not otherwise occupied. In this memory, it is revealed that Sarek chose Spock over Michael for a prestigious career opportunity when forced by the director of the program to choose only one of them. Sarek refers to this as an "impossible choice," implying that he holds Michael and Spock at equal levels of consideration. When Spock declines the opportunity, Sarek's guilt transforms into a trauma. Combined with the fact that only he and Michael share this extra-sensory link—Sarek and Spock never mind-melded and therefore would be unable to share the connection—Sarek and Michael's relationship is perhaps even closer than Sarek and Spock's. Following Sarek's statement of their lack of relation, Michael's face shows her disappointment and she says, "You can do better. But I won't push you. We'll have this conversation one day, father" ("Lethe"). Sarek does not respond to this title as Michael leaves, staring at the wall and sighing, seemingly in agreement with her argument.

In the case of Worf in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Family," we only have Worf's stoic acceptance at the end of a brief scene to demonstrate this for the audience, but in the case of Michael, a scene follows the conversation between her and her father that allows for her articulation of her newly-established perspective. Speaking with an officer named Ash, Michael says,

> "I always knew I could never be who he wanted me to be… but I realize today that it goes both ways; I'll never get from him what I want either… All my life,

> the conflict inside me has been between logic and emotion, but now it's my emotions that are fighting. I think about him and I want to cry. But, I have to smile, and I feel angry, but I want to love. And I'm hurt, but there's hope. What is this?"

To her question, Ash simply replies, "It's just… being human." This stuns Michael, throwing her mind back to a previous scene of her memory-journey in the episode, one of a conversation between her and Amanda, Sarek's wife and her adoptive mother. In this memory, Amanda reminds Michael of a trip they took to a book exchange and gives her another book, telling her, "This book comes with a mother's advice. You've proven that you're as accomplished as any Vulcan, which is going to serve you well, as long as you never forget that you're human too." Silence reigns following this exchange between Michael and Ash, as the audience witnesses Michael come to a personal revelation regarding her transplanetary/transspecies identity, something that she was before unable to reconcile.

Much like Worf's experiences in *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* Michael's portrayal in *Star Trek: Discovery* is one that promotes a human-centric approach to identity. However, whereas Worf's experience was one of assimilation to human culture and custom, Michael's is that of the colonizer, pulling Sarek into her human perspective. There is no political gain for the Federation here; as a human, Michael's status as an adoptee is not of any particular advantage to the Federation. Instead, in the brief conversation with Ash, and in her memory of Amanda Greyson, she is not only being reminded of her human heritage, but is learning that it is more important than her Vulcan cultural identity. In her memory of her adoptive mother, Amanda calls herself her mother,

something that Sarek does not do, and in her conversation with Ash, his response to her outpouring of conflict is that everything that she is experience is human. There is no suggestion that any of her needs can be met by Vulcan culture, and further that any supposedly Vulcan identity within her is just a part of the human experience.

The disappointment that Michael exhibits toward Sarek is genuine; though she is wounded by his words, she cites his position as a personal shortcoming of his. While he is responding in the only way that his cultural identity allows, he can, according to Michael, "do better." To "do better" means to respond as a human would, acknowledging the emotions and emotional ties that Vulcans do not. Much as Kirk, as mentioned in the introductory section, responded encouragingly whenever Spock exhibited emotions as something that was bringing him closer to "being" human, in Michael and Sarek's relationship, we have another human telling a non-human—another Vulcan, in fact—that what they are is not good enough. It is also worth noting the parent-child role reversal between Worf and Michael; when the child is human, the parents can do better, and when the parents are human, it is the non-human child that just doesn't understand. Bookended as Michael and Sarek's scene is with the Amanda and Ash lines reinforcing the human perspective, the series itself—not just the characters—takes ownership of the human-centric approach as well. Perhaps more so than any other episode of the season, we see a writing and editorial process at work similar to the one that Roddenberry used in the original series, one that depicted humans as enlightened educators and everyone else as stunted primitives.

Refugees & Exiles

Star Trek is not unfamiliar with tragedy, but for the first two series of the franchise, tragedy rarely extended past a single episode, or a two-part episode at most. Before the premier of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine,* the "utopian future-as-progress narrative depicting liberal-humanist values" (Kapell 105) was quite established for the franchise. Not only did *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*'s setting in post-occupied Bajoran territory change that, but the writers' decision to begin with a callback to one of those dark times of tragedy from a previous series doubled-down on the bleak tone. In the two-part episode "The Best of Both Worlds" in *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* Captain Picard is captured by the Borg, a cybernetic hive-mind collective that assimilates him into their own being. Forced to watch as his knowledge and experience is used to lay waste to a fleet of his fellow Starfleet personnel, Picard's innocence does little to assuage his guilt, and the trauma of the events follows him throughout the rest of the series, and presumably his life.[23] Picard's status as the philosopher-king of the franchise arguably suffers little damage in this episode considering the involuntary nature of his assimilation, and the memory—at least for the audience—fades during the following four seasons of the show. *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* brings this memory snapping back to the forefront of the story, as Commander Benjamin Sisko, the central figure of the series, lost his wife during the Borg attack led by the assimilated Picard. In the brief scene in the series premier between these two characters, the mention of this fact brings the trauma right back to the indomitable captain's face. Though the relationship between these men is healed by the end of the episode—in traditional Star Trek fashion—their confrontation

[23] With a new Star Trek series focusing on Picard set to debut in 2019, there is some speculation that part of the series will focus on his trauma from his time as part of the Borg collective.

serves to soften the assumption that this series will be what audiences have grown accustomed to in their years with the franchise, as Sisko sits in his office chair in a sabotaged space station orbiting a culturally and ecologically violated world.

Our introduction to the Bajorans actually comes in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s episode "Ensign Ro." The Bajorans are described by a Starfleet admiral as refugees, "chased off their own planet by the Cardassians, forced to wander the galaxy, settling wherever they can find room. It's tragic." The Federation's interest in the Bajorans in this episode stems from the fact that they have settlements in a Bajoran area whose safety they need to ensure after a violent attack. In order to accomplish this, a Bajoran Federation officer with an infamous past named Ro Laren is assigned to the Enterprise in the hopes that she can bridge the cultural gap between the Federation and Bajorans in order to aid in negotiations. When Ensign Ro brings Captain Picard to negotiate with a Bajoran leader in a refugee camp, this leader provides a scathing analysis of the Federation's actions during the occupation. He says, "You were innocent bystanders for decades as the Cardassians took our homes, as they violated and tortured our people in the most hideous ways imaginable. As we were forced to flee." To this, Picard responds, "We were saddened by those events, but they occurred within the designated borders of the Cardassian Empire." The Bajoran leader then exhibits knowledge of Federation regulations, saying, "And the Federation is pledged not to interfere in the internal affairs of others. How convenient that must be for you. To turn a deaf ear to those who suffer behind a line on a map… We live in different universes, you and I. Yours is about diplomacy, politics, strategy. Mine is about blankets." Though the pious nature of Picard settles all, the audience is given both the testimony of past inaction

on the part of the Federation quoted above and their present disregard for the lives of innocent refugees near the end of the episode, with the Federation admiral in the episode willing to orchestrate the slaughter of the Bajorans that he believed were responsible for the attack despite having no proof. Even though the peaceful ending of this episode and Picard's uncovering of the truth are designed to put the audience to ease with the thought of his hand at the reigns once again, its effect is actually to destabilize the reader's trust in the honor and integrity of Starfleet, the two very things Picard claims the protection of which are his priority.

This takes us to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, the entire series, as mentioned earlier, standing as a Bajoran refugee and exile text. Destabilized as audiences were with *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s "Ensign Ro" and another episode that came just before the series' conclusion, "Preemptive Strike," *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* places us within a new setting and tone of the Star Trek franchise, one that imagines "a future in which differently situated people *weren't* 'all just getting along,' in which people were embedded, emplaced, and stuck with the power relations and intimate relationships they have rather than the ones they want" (Seitz). If *Star Trek: The Next Generation* provides the benevolent thesis of Roddenberry's vision, then *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* is the antithesis, placing absolute Federation altruism within a refugee space of constant violence, mass displacement, and religious institutions. Rather than being problems "solved" by Starfleet's intervention, these were now the informative experiences of administrative existence for the Federation crew of Deep Space Nine. Among that crew is Kira Nerys, a Bajoran militia officer who grew up as a refugee and has a perspective on the Federation presence on Deep Space Nine that is a first for the series—or at least, a

first for a main character of the series.

Kira's perspective on the Federation's presence on the space station is made clear in the first episode of the series, "Emissary." In this episode, Commander Sisko meets a frustrated Kira in his new office and asks her to be candid with him about her feelings regarding the new political arrangement. She replies, "I don't believe the Federation has any business being here… I have been fighting for Bajoran independence since I was old enough to pick up a phaser. We finally drive the Cardassians out and what do our new leaders do? They call up the Federation and invite them right in!" Sisko's diplomatic reflexes immediately assert themselves to pacify her anger, and he responds, "The Federation is only here to help…" Kira is ready for this response, however, and interrupts him, "Help us. Yes, I know. The Cardassians said the same thing sixty years ago." This response is central to the narrative arcs that follow for the next seven seasons of the show, with Bajor and the Bajorans being seen as only a potential vassal for the larger powers that surround them. In this episode, when the Cardassians try to seize the wormhole—a tunnel between two points in space that allows for near-instantaneous travel—and the actions of Sisko and the Starfleet crew aboard Deep Space Nine secure its ownership for the Bajorans, Captain Picard congratulates Sisko for putting Bajor "on the map." Though he mentions the economic and scientific boom that will occur here because of the wormhole, he ends his statement by describing Deep Space Nine as one of Starfleet's "most important posts." It could be argued—especially as this is Picard speaking—that the Deep Space Nine station is one of Starfleet's most important posts because it will make them better able to help the Bajorans and improve the wellbeing of their society, but as the series progresses, the Federation's desire to incorporate Bajor into

its membership becomes increasingly apparent. In "Owning the Future: Manifest Destiny and the Vision of American Hegemony in *Star Trek,*" Fiona Davidson describes the neoliberal empire of the Federation as follows; "The Federation is the global superpower that uses economic incentives and progressive rhetoric to encourage membership and discourage dissent…" Their appetite for the Bajoran civilization and the wormhole is such that they are willing to compromise their core beliefs, allowing Sisko to actively play a messianic role in Bajoran religion as the "Emissary." This willingness to compromise, along with their zeal and haste in their efforts to incorporate Bajor are all publically justified repeatedly because of Bajor's need for their help as a population of refugees.

Much of the Federation's opinion of planets and societies such as the Bajorans as "unclaimed territory" is kept behind closed doors. Even then, Starfleet officers themselves often articulate their manifest destiny in charitable terms, honestly looking forward to welcoming new, equal partners to the whole. Outwardly, compassion and a willingness to help dominate almost all of the conversations between Starfleet personnel and non-Federation individuals. In "The Emissary" this is perhaps best exemplified by Sisko and Kira's first interaction, detailed above. However, Kira's nascent hope in the *possible* altruism of the Federation is challenged very soon after, in a conversation that she has with Julian Bashir, the Starfleet physician assigned to the station. She is surprised to hear him refer to his post on Deep Space Nine as "frontier medicine" and questions him. He is nearly euphoric in his response for why he was posted there; "I wanted this – the farthest reaches of the galaxy. One of the most remote outposts available. This is where the adventure is. This is where heroes are made. Right here, in the wilderness."

Kira is outraged, replying "This 'wilderness' is my home," a response that elicits a horrified stutter from Bashir as he tries to walk back his words. She continues, "you can make yourself useful by bringing your Federation medicine to the *natives*. Oh, you'll find them a friendly, simple folk." Bashir's wide eyes follow her from the room as he realizes what he has done. This is not the only time in the franchise that such a slip by a newly commissioned officer occurs; in the series premier of *Star Trek: Voyager*, Harry Kim mentions that Starfleet Academy warns their graduates about the manipulative greed of the Ferengi race to a Ferengi who is trying to con him. Though the Ferengi's outrage at hearing this is feigned, the horror on Kim's face is not and might reveal something about the imperial conditioning of Starfleet officers during their education.

The Bajorans might not *all* technically be considered refugees during *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. By the end of the series, though their alliance with the Federation is firmly established, they remain an independent nation the importance of which is recognized by their being one of the signatories to the Treaty of Bajor. It is also worth mentioning that there were many Bajorans during the Cardassian occupation that enjoyed a relatively comfortable life, some due to their being collaborators and some due to their economic or social circumstances. Other Bajorans were members of Starfleet during the occupation, such as Ensign Ro, and had limited or no experiences with the Cardassians. Despite this, the Bajorans were conceived of as a displaced people in their initial portrayals in the series, forced to migrate to other worlds as well as domestically displaced on Bajor during the occupation. The focus on Kira in this section as the cultural representative for Bajorans is because of her placement within the political fulcrum of the time. Not mentioned above are the last several episodes of the series, in which Kira is

given a Starfleet commission in order to train the Cardassians to overthrow their own oppressors—another hegemon from the other side of the wormhole—because they would not otherwise trust a Bajoran to help them. Though she is resistant to the idea initially, this final compromise casts Kira as Star Trek's vision of the twice-conquered refugee. Starting out as a resistant figure against Federation interference, she becomes an ally and then a member of the very kind of authoritative body that she has fought against all of her life. Through her, the franchise demonstrates the fictionality of refugees finding any lasting agency in an environment still built upon borders. As long as the major imperial powers of the Star Trek franchise exist, how can the Bajorans, or any other refugee community exercise a political or social agenda of their own? Much like the institutional frameworks of our own international legislative entities, advocating for the recognition—or even the sovereignty—of a marginalized group can be quickly followed by absorbing them into the familiar assembly of states.

The Skrreea

The tenth episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*'s second season, "Sanctuary," focuses on the Skreeaa. Though the introduction to this section contains the broad strokes of the episode summary, it needs to be emphasized that in this episode the Bajoran people are given the opportunity to help another group of refugees that have suffered in many of the same ways that they have under the Cardassians. Though there are many scenes in this episode that include the Skrreea and various crew and inhabitants of Deep Space Nine, the meetings between the Skrreean Leader Haneek and the Bajorans drive the central narrative. Though the Skreeaa refugees number in the millions, only a small fraction of their number are allowed aboard the station at a time, and in an environment

that regularly sees dozens of communities and species daily, steps were taken in the design of the Skrreea to set them apart from those with which the audience is familiar.

Many of the species encountered in the Star Trek franchise look almost human. From the Klingons in the original series to the Vulcans and Bajorans in *Star Trek: The Nest Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, pointed ears or an indented crest on the nose are all that visually identify many alien races. One of the common criticisms of the series—along with the fact that newly-encountered aliens speak perfect English, narratively remedied through the introduction of the Universal Translator technology—greater physical diversity was added to the series beginning in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* with the redesign of the Klingons and the introduction of the Ferengi. Two characteristics distinguish the Skrreea from the outset in "Sanctuary," their lumpy, shedding skin, and the fact that their language is utterly alien, even to the Universal Translator. The crew of Deep Space Nine are baffled by their inability to understand the aliens, and it takes several minutes of screen time, and multiple scenes, before the technology catches up and allows communication between them. Though the language barrier is quickly forgotten, the shedding skin of the Skrreea is not, and they face intolerant responses from several inhabitants of the station regarding it. Though Deep Space Nine is not unfamiliar with refugees and exiles—indeed, as mentioned before, the shows central themes revolve around such individuals and communities—the Skrreea are almost immediately maligned for those differences that set them apart from the other humanoid races on the station. The Bajorans, who never before shied away from the notion of numerous humans or Vulcans living on their planet, feel burdened at the prospect of accepting the Skrreea as refugees. Granted, the Skrreean population of three

million is not an insignificant number, but Bajor is not lacking in room, a fact pointed out multiple times in the episode.

Quark, the Ferengi bartender who is often the source of mischief and criminal activity on the station, shows the greatest disdain for the Skrreean refugees. Two quotes from Quark stand out, the first being "You know these Skrreeans are nothing but trouble. They're all over the station looking and touching, never buying anything. Any they flake… Come to my place. You'll see little pieces of Skrreean skin all over the bar and the floor. Its disgusting." The second quote comes from a scene in which Quark is directly addressing the Skrreea. After Quark breaks up a fight between the Skrreea and his nephew, he insults the Skrreean presence on the station. In response, a Skrreean says, "I thought we were welcome here." Quark crushes this notion by saying, "Well, make yourself welcome somewhere else." Though among the most cutting remarks made by Quark throughout the series, his attitude during these scenes is certainly not without precedent, and past examples of this behavior have paved the way for the benevolence of the Federation to shine through with its typical, cloying brightness. This trajectory is suggested in the episode at least once, during a meeting between Kira and Haneek. In response to Haneek's budding anxiety over the expectations that her people have for her to find a home for them, Kira says, "It's going to be okay. Commander Sisko is doing everything he can to find you a place to live. You're not alone." Immediately following this, however, a noted Bajoran musician visiting the station addresses Haneek, saying, "Being a Bajoran, I know what it's like to be displaced." From this, the natural conclusion to draw is that the Bajorans, as a displaced people who know the importance of a habitable space, will be the ones to pave the way for the Skrreea to find a home,

rather than the Federation.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine was prophetic in envisioning the possible circumstance of former refugees hosting refugees themselves, as examples of such initiatives in the world today challenge the contemporary "assumptions that refugees are passive victims in need of care from outsiders" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 26). With the support of Kira, the refugee kinship demonstrated by the Bajoran musician, and the generally compassionate culture of the Bajoran people, when the formal request is made by the Skrreea to immigrate to Bajor, it is not too far of a leap to expect this groundbreaking franchise to illustrate a refugee hosting situation decades ahead of its time. This expectation makes it particularly shocking when the Bajorans refuse their petition. However, the meeting between Haneek and the Bajoran officials that follows might be just as visionary as the possibility that preceded it. Because of its length, the entire scene cannot be included here. Instead, what follows is the core of the Bajoran officials' rationale for their refusal:

> Official 1: "Bajor simply cannot absorb three million refugees at this time."
> Official 2: "After what the Cardassians did to our planet we can barely take care of our own."
> Haneek: "But no one is asking you to take care of us."
> Official 1: "This decision is not based strictly on Bajoran self-interest. Such a huge increase in population would prove to be tragic to your people as well as ours.
> Haneek: "But Bajor has more than enough room for us. The plains of the Northwest Peninsula are practically uninhabited. The land's ideal for farming."
> Official 2: "It used to be before the Cardassians got their hands on it."
> Haneek: "The Skrreea are farmers. Just give us the land. I guarantee you, we can make it thrive again."
> Official 2: "Under ideal circumstances, perhaps you could. But what if the circumstances aren't ideal? What if we go through another long winter? What if your crops fail? What if the famine that has been plaguing Bajor continues to spread? What then?
> Haneek: "We are willing to take that risk."

> Official 2: "I'm afraid we aren't. We ran a series of projections to see whether a Skrreean settlement could survive on the Northwest peninsula. The results were not encouraging."
> Haneek: "Projections can be wrong."
> Official 1: "But what if they're not? What is Bajor to do if your people start dying?"
> Haneek: "I thought I made that clear. We are not expecting your help."
> Official 2: "Do you really think we could stand by and do nothing? We would feel obligated to help with food, with clothing, with whatever it would take."
> Official 1: "And where would that aid come from? Our resources are already depleted. To help you would mean depriving our own people."
> Official 2: "I'm afraid the decision of the provisional government is final. The Skrreea will have to find somewhere else to live.

Michael Piller, one of the writers of this episode, felt that they Bajorans should reject the immigration petition of the Skrreea because it would carry a greater resonance with the audience[24], and while seeing an established population reject a refugee population might unfortunately be familiar, it is also reflective of the contemporary outcomes of former refugees hosting new refugee groups as discussed in the article "Refugees Hosting Refugees" by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh. Though not always an inevitable outcome, "the encounters characterizing refugee-refugee hosting are not to be idealized, since they are often framed by power imbalances and processes of exclusion and overt hostility by the members of the original refugee community towards new arrivals" (27). The idyllic interaction between the Bajoran musician and Haneek sets the stage for a perfect union of two refugee groups, but the conversation above between Haneek and the Bajoran officials speaks to Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's research decades after *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*'s airing. None of the Bajorans in the episode show any overt hostility towards the Skrreea, but the imbalances of power and the exclusion are in ample supply. Sitting in the room during the conversation is Commander Sisko, and though he does occasionally speak

[24] "Star Trek Deep Space Nine Rewatch: 'Sanctuary'" TOR.com

during the meeting to remind the Skrreea about the possibility of Federation resettlement in the face of Bajoran rejection, the fact that he symbolizes the willingness of the Federation to help is probably the most overlooked part of the conversation between the various attendees of the meeting. The Federation, if so petitioned by the Bajorans were they to accept the Skrreea, would be capable of providing limitless resources indefinitely to offset any need the Skrreea might have. If anything, this serves to further the imbalance of power, as Haneek is literally surrounded on all sides by rationale for rejection that might make sense in our 21st century world, but is completely illogical in the 24th century science fiction setting of Star Trek.

The episode ends with one last conversation between Kira and Haneek, after the Skrreea have accepted the Federation's offer of resettlement. An excerpt of this conversation follows:

> Kira: "I still believe this is the best choice, for Bajor and for you."
> Haneek: "You still believe we would have been a burden to your people?"
> Kira: "Yes."
> Haneek: "I think you've made a terrible mistake. All of you. Maybe we could have helped you. Maybe we could have helped each other. The Skrreeans are farmers, Kira. You have a famine on your planet. Perhaps we could have made that peninsula bloom again. We'll never know, will we? Fifty years of Cardassian rule have made you all frightened and suspicious. I feel sorry for you."

One of the primary myths regarding contemporary refugee resettlement and their impact on the economy of their new home is that they are a burden rather than a stimulant[25]. While the xenophobic attitudes of some Bajorans shown in episodes before and after "Sanctuary" might demonstrate other reasons for the rejection of the Skrreea, the rationale voiced by the Bajoran officials and Kira is what such an action might cost the Bajoran people. However, in addition to what is mentioned above regarding the

[25] Swanson, Ana. "The Big Myth About Refugees." Washington Post, 2015.

Federation's resources, all technologically advanced species, including the Federation-supported Bajorans, possess the means to create infinite amounts of basic necessities. The Bajoran resource-based argument against Skrreean immigration conflicts so heavily with the Star Trek setting that a conclusion could be drawn that the Bajorans are relying upon the Skrreean's lack of technological knowledge for their argument to be accepted. Haneek's final words to Kira suggest that she sees past their rationale, and understands that it is the trauma of occupation that has led them to be closed to the pleas of their fellow refugees. In the case of the Skrreea, this has resulted in the loss of an agricultural skillset lacked by the Bajorans, something that could have helped them to recover from the Cardassian occupation.

While reading the Bajoran-Skrreea negotiation as a narrative that reflects refugee-hosting-refugee realities is important on its own, it can be tied back to the idea of Federation imperialism. As I mentioned already, the Federation possesses the means to back the resettlement of the Skrreea on Bajor indefinitely, but never make the offer. Also, as noted above, Sisko remains silent for nearly the entire conversation between the Bajorans and the Skrreea. Following Kira and Haneek's final exchange, there is no scene of the Skrreea reaching their new world or any mention of them again in the series; they are simply gone. Perhaps more so than any other episode that features resettlement, the silence behind the Federation's actions speaks volumes about how quiet and unseen their consumption of civilizations can be. We have no idea what happens to them; as a population without recourse, the Skrreea are led to the docking bay by Federation officers, ushered onto Federation shuttles, and the door is closed on their story forever.

It would be a difficult task to identify a population or community in the Star Trek

franchise that more completely showcases the Federation's agency as colonizers than the Skrreea. The intersection of lived experience for the Bajorans and the Skrreea make interference a risky gambit for a self-interested third party, and so the representatives of the Federation—namely Sisko—are wise to maintain the appearance of objective moderator while these two displaced peoples reach an understanding. Once the rejection of the Skrreea by the Bajorans has occurred, the Federation brings the Skrreea—a people with no recourse—in the fold, and uses them as its agents to colonize another world with little to no cost to their own resources. The ranks of the Federation swell by millions in a matter of hours as they add the Skrreean population to theirs, and immediately turn them to their own purpose.

Statelessness in Star Trek

Citizenship in science fiction is, for the most part, a given. This is not to say that there are not stories of exile or displacement in the genre, but that a default status of statelessness is a rarity. This is due, in part, to the difference of borders within the genre. In the speculated futures that are the settings of most science fiction, there are usually no national borders within a civilization; though different cultural practices might remain, everyone born within a given civilization are accorded rights and a guaranteed space. For example, in the United Federation of Planets in Star Trek, every individual of every world or species with a membership in the Federation is a citizen. The same can be said, to varying degrees, of the other empires, unions, and alliances within that shared universe. Borders do exist around these larger dominions, however, and the crossing of these borders is a controlled process. Some of the more militant political entities violently protect their borders, while others cautiously observe those who cross into their space,

but do not engage them unless provoked. Throughout the franchise's history, many cultural correlations have been made between various powers in the Star Trek universe and the nations of the world, effectively mapping our own notions of borders and space onto the Star Trek galaxy. Despite the gulf of difference between some of the civilizations in the franchise, a constant is the recognition of universal rights. "Sentience" is often used in the franchise in place of our use of human—though certainly not always, as has already been extensively discussed— as a way of distinguishing a being that is entitled to rights, and sentient beings in Star Trek are never made to wait for decades in a holding area because they lack the proper paperwork for Customs and Immigration. This is one of the highly-lauded qualities of the franchise and of much of science fiction as a whole; its automatic acceptance of universal rights for all and its quest for justice when those rights are threatened. This was essentially the narrative trajectory of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and the Federation's absolute authority and integrity in these matters was not questioned until late in the series and then fully explored in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

Though refugee narratives such as the Skrreea and the Bajorans can intersect in conversations about statelessness, this section of the chapter will instead focus on two examples of statelessness that are both forced and self-imposed; the character of Odo and the organization known as the Maquis. With Odo, the series investigates the statelessness of an individual that comes from a sense of otherness, a task that is not simple with such a diverse array of species. In the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Chimera," the requirements for this otherness are described by Quark, who summarizes what he argues all humanoid species need as a foundation for trust; "Our tolerance for other life forms

doesn't extend beyond the two-arm, two-leg variety." To be stateless as an individual in Star Trek in these terms, despite having the tacit acceptance of Starfleet and other humanoid institutions, is to be utterly alien, distinct—physically, culturally, and psychologically—from the majority. In many ways, Odo is one of the genre's best illustrations of the idea that difference has no final frontier, and that while series like *Star Trek: The Next Generation* almost always find agreeable endings to the inclusion of new and diverse individuals and groups among the majority powerholders, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* illustrates the injustice and intolerance they face outside of official meet and greets. Statelessness in the narratives of the Maquis is less about demonstrating pervasive forms of transnational or transspecies injustice, and is far more concerned with illustrating the hypocrisy and self-interest of established institutions. Though citizenship for Federation citizens in Star Trek is, as mentioned above, a given, many episodes of Star Trek, especially *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, show the Federation carrying out the internal forced displacement of its own citizens. Much of Federation policy is constructed around the notion that its citizens can live idyllic lives regardless of their environment, due in no small part to that environment being fully mutable. When this notion is challenged, as in the case of the Federation colonies in the Cardassian demilitarized zone, the Federation takes extreme steps to ensure that its citizens comply with the treaties it has signed, rather than going to extreme lengths—diplomatically or militarily—to protect their lives, despite the fact that rendering humanitarian aid is a core part of their statute, especially for their own citizens. That the franchise was able to envision these two examples so effectively testifies to science fiction's ability to not only explore statelessness, but to create circumstances in which conditions of statelessness are

maintained in spite of open access to citizenship, thereby exploring both the motivating forces of voluntary statelessness and the self-interest of governing institutions behind that open access. With the examples of Odo and the Maquis, we come to understand that in the Star Trek franchise, statelessness occurs when individuals or groups either find no place of cultural acceptance or when they do not accept the homogenization of the Federation. Tying this idea back into the genre's critique of real world political and social structures, the United Nations, much like Star Trek's Federation, extolls the inalienable, universal right of individuals and groups to belong, but only if there is an acceptance of the rules as outlined by the collection of nation-states.

Odo

Among the most distinguishing characteristics of Odo is that he is unique, at least for the first few seasons of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Before, the series relied on characters being out of their traditional space to explore difference, such as with Worf. Odo, however, is out of place entirely; as a non-humanoid shapeshifter, his abilities and true form as a gelatinous ooze often put him at odds with several of the other characters in the series. Kevin Jones, in "*Star Trek* and the Intimate Alien," effectively summarizes Odo's role in the franchise, placing him in a light that is particularly helpful for a forced migration reading. He writes,

> "…with Odo we find ourselves facing the daunting prospect of the formless, that which may take any form at all and which in its native state has no form of its own. Our other aliens show us the possibility of losing the original form of our life or nature as we live among people who have different forms or natures. The character of Odo causes us to confront the possibility that we may have no

> original, genuine form, that we may be as shifting and protean as polystyrene—not an insignificant concern for us as inhabitants of an increasingly rootless, shapeless, and ahistorical postmodern culture" (*The Soul of Popular Culture* 314).

Further complicating his relationship and legal status in the Alpha Quadrant—the part of the galaxy in which the Federation is located and in which most of the series in the franchise take place—is the revelation in the third season that his species, the Founders, are the primary antagonists of the series. For this reason, it is important that Jones notes that the character of Odo helps us to confront these possibilities, rather than the Founders collectively as a species; though we might view the shapeless native state of the changeling race as "formless," the series implicitly and explicitly demonstrates that they do not view themselves as lacking in this regard or any other. It is the combination of Odo's native shapelessness and a life among natively monoform beings that causes the cognitive dissonance for the reader. Where before Odo was an oddity viewed with great curiosity by the inhabitants of the station, their curiosity turns to suspicion as to where his allegiances lie. His experiences with the other Founders at the beginning of season three also complicate his stateless experience, as they welcome him home with open arms. Though their apparent malevolence stops him from accepting their invitation to join them in the Great Link—the collective, ocean-sized gelatinous mass of the Founders—he nevertheless has an established space to which he possesses the right to return.

In fact, it is important to say from the outset that Odo is welcome in two places and that the series constantly forces him to question his identity. Because of this, the use of statelessness in this section on Odo refers more to a displacement from cultural identity than one from legal status. Though he does choose to leave humanoid culture

behind at the end of the series and return to the Great Link, he does so not only to cure them of a Federation-caused plague, but to educate them towards a better way of life; that the human—or humanoid—notion of love is at least equal, but likely superior to, their emotional spectrum. Without this education, so the series finale implies, the Founders would likely go on another galaxy-conquering crusade in the future. The reason that it is important to note this is that, while Odo insists in "Chimera" that he is "not a humanoid. I am a Changeling!" it is those very qualities that he has developed while living as a humanoid that make him the "savior" of his species. Because of his unique life experiences, Odo might be permanently displaced; his humanoid psychology and changeling physiology make him incompatible with any community. In this way, the liberal humanism of the Federation empire has culturally conquered him, and through him the entire changeling species.

Throughout the various Star Trek series, there have been characters whose role in the narrative is that of the outsider studying humanity. The two most noteworthy—and arguably among the most famous icons in all of science fiction—are Spock and Data, from the original series and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, respectively. Michael Pillar, one of the co-creators of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, envisioned Odo as filling a similar role (New Frontiers: The Story of Deep Space Nine), but the combination of his biological nature and a life lived exclusively in the Alpha quadrant make him an outsider twice over. Throughout the series, there are specific events that alienate Odo from both humanoid culture and changeling culture, repeatedly pushing him into a space of statelessness between these two civilizations. These events do not occur until after the first two seasons of the series, and in these two initial seasons before the discovery of the

changelings, Odo's unknown origins and shapeshifting abilities were his distinguishing characteristics. From his involuntary transformation into a destructive monster in "The Alternate" to his forming himself into a spinning top for the amusement of a child in "Shadowplay," Odo at least matched Spock and Data's superhuman feats, constantly reminding the audience that he was something other than the rest of the crew. It wasn't until the two-part episode "The Search" at the beginning of season three when the Founders are encountered and Odo discovers his origin that the question that defines the arc of his character changes from "what is he?" to "who is he?"

Odo stands out among the other humanoid species on the station because of the unfinished clay-like appearance of his face. Later in the series, after he has encountered the other changelings, it becomes apparent that his shapeshifting skills are less refined than theirs, partially due to his isolation in the Alpha quadrant. The other changelings are able to perfectly mimic the faces of any other lifeform, including humanoids. In fact, their abilities are so refined that not even Odo is capable of telling them apart from the individuals they are mimicking.[26] Though seemingly a small detail, Odo's lack of matured shapeshifting abilities becomes a barrier between him and the rest of changeling culture, alienating him from truly being a member of their society. When only around their own kind, changelings assume their natural gelatinous state, refusing to assume solid form unless the presence of solid form beings requires it. With Odo, however, the changelings assume his shape, even down to a similar unfinished appearance for their faces. Even though Odo's return to "the link" is among the highest priorities for the changelings, there comes a time in the series when the Founders decide that he will never

[26] In "Heart of Stone" Odo is deceived into believing that Kira's life is in danger when in actuality it is the de facto leader of the changelings impersonating her.

return to them.

The episode "Broken Link" at the end of season four begins a supposedly irreversible time of exile for Odo that lasts until the middle of season five. Judged by the changelings for his role in the death of one of their own, an unprecedented event in the history of their species, Odo is "permanently" turned into a human by the Founders. The surface reading of this event is not necessarily new; a perceived traitor being forced to join the enemy is not a particularly novel occurrence, but what is of note is that they choose to leave his face as it was before, though they certainly possessed the power to make it more human in appearance. The other members of the crew are puzzled by this decision, but Odo is not. He says, "They left it this way on purpose—to make sure I'd never forget what I was… and… what I've lost." Though welcomed in two places for the whole of the series until this point, Odo loses his right to citizenship within the state of the changelings in this episode. It is not until the season five episode "The Begotten" that Odo regains his changeling nature, after an infant changeling who was also isolated in the Alpha quadrant dies and integrates itself into him. Though he regains some measure of his former identity through this event, it sets the stage for another chain of events that again alienate him from another place where he is welcome: humanoid civilization.

With the Founders having been revealed as the primary antagonists of the series at the beginning of season three, it comes a no surprise that Odo is met with some apprehension by Starfleet and other humanoid groups. Ultimately, however, trust in him is demonstrated time and again by those who have come to know him, with his counsel playing a key role in the defense of Earth against the Founders.[27] This attitude towards

[27] *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.* "Paradise Lost."

Odo does not change significantly during the time in which he loses and then regains his changeling powers, though the possibility of his official status as a Federation citizen because of his new human nature could have been broached by the writers but never was. This trust is, however, sorely tested when he comes under the influence of the changeling's de facto leader during their occupation of Deep Space Nine and nearly betrays the Bajoran and Federation to their doom, but his reversal and swift defeat of the Dominion forces helps to heal those wounds. Despite the events of the series leading to him being at least somewhat representative of what is faced by the Alpha quadrant while not being an actual enemy, his relationships aboard the station go on as before until the appearance of another isolated Alpha quadrant changeling in the episode "Chimera" in the final season of the series.

This other Alpha quadrant changeling, Laas, though he matured around humanoids as Odo did, displays far less restraint with his shapeshifting abilities than Odo. In many ways, Laas has experienced some of the same statelessness as Odo, never finding a place where he feels a true sense of belonging. With this combination of qualities—his lack of restraint and lack of belonging—it comes as no surprise that he becomes attached to Odo quickly. After Odo introduces him to the link by merging with him, Laas desires to link with Odo in public, something that Odo finds inappropriate. Later in the episode, after causing a mild panic on the station by taking the form of a mist that covers a large area, Laas kills a Klingon that confronts him. Imprisoned and likely to be turned over to the Klingons for execution, Odo intercedes on his behalf with Sisko. During this exchange, Odo asks Sisko "Is it a crime to shapeshift on the promenade?" to which Sisko responds, "it's not a crime, but it's obviously not a good idea." The

conversation does not pause here, and they continue to discuss the Klingon charges against Laas, but this question and answer have profound implications for Odo and his relationships within humanoid culture. Countless times throughout the series, Odo's shapeshifting ability has turned the tide against overwhelming odds in the Federation's and Bajoran's favor, and now when such abilities strike the first sense of discord, they are suddenly "not a good idea."

Sisko's answer finds its intolerant and deafening echo in Quark, who comes to Odo's office and scolds him for allowing this to transpire. Though ostensibly doing this as a favor to Odo, Quark's words are nearly as cutting as they were to the Skrreea. He says, "You never pulled a stunt like that. You're smart enough to know that people don't want to be reminded that you're different. Who wants to see somebody turn into goo?" He goes on for some time, citing humanoid evolution as the source of our apprehension regarding lifeforms like the changelings, not excusing the behavior of the Klingons but explaining "why it happened." This conversation adds greatly to Odo's anxiety, as there seems to be no options open to him to resolve this personal crisis. Laas eventually escapes with the help of Kira, who tells Odo that she wants him to be able to live the life he needs to as a changeling and gives him information about how to find Laas. He meets Laas to say goodbye and returns to the station out of his love for Kira, but she is the only other character with whom he speaks before the end of the episode. There is no follow-up conversation with Sisko or Quark or Worf or any of the other characters involved in the episode's conflict; there is no typical Star Trek resolution of conflict and anxiety. While Odo and Kira's love is secure, his relationship with every other humanoid on the station has been heavily strained. Even though, in typical Star Trek fashion, the events of this

episode do not affect the dialogue of the episode that follows, much of Laas' words to Odo now make sense. Throughout the episode, Laas claimed that Odo did not belong with humanoids, and that his rationale for staying was a combination of self-delusion and love for Kira—a love, according to Laas, that might be real but that is largely built on misconceptions. One of Laas' most significant claims stands out at the end of the episode when Odo returns to Kira and no other members of the crew. Laas claims, "I know the truth. You stayed here because of Kira. If it weren't for her, you would be with our people – war or no war, you would be a Founder" ("Chimera").

Throughout the series, Odo's statelessness shifts in a way unique to him, and reveals him as permanently displaced. Starting in the place between borders at the beginning of the series, his singularity prevents any true sense of belonging. After meeting the changelings and being shown another place where he is welcome but cannot ethically inhabit, that lack of belonging is only reinforced. The judgement of the changelings that makes him human pushes him out of the space of possible kinship with the Founders and into a position where true citizenship and belonging might be possible within humanoid culture, while his experiences with Laas after he has regained his powers push him away from the humanoid fold and back towards the possibility of a sense of purpose with other changelings. Even at the end of the series when he leaves the station to rejoin the Founders, it is only after he has changed their culture to suit his needs—needs that reflect his status as a colonized subject—rather than adapting to theirs.

This last point about the shifting nature of Changeling culture and Odo's last act in the series is of particular importance when discussing the imperial designs of the Federation. The Federation-caused plague mentioned earlier in this section is created and

administered to Odo by Section 31, a clandestine arm of Starfleet Intelligence that operates without any oversight. Their intention was to use Odo as a conduit to infect the entire Changeling civilization, a plan that succeeded. Though the plague is ultimately cured in Odo and passed along to the rest of the Changelings at the end of the series, an equally devastating event happens simultaneously to the Changeling's culture. Odo explains that his merging with the Great Link will stop the war, because the collective nature of the Changelings will immediately share in his psyche. This, so he claims, will show them that humanoids are not their enemy. Odo's education of the Changelings, however, is not a progressive unfolding of understanding and acceptance, but an instantaneous transformation, as the entire species forced to appreciate the love for humanoids that Odo possesses. After linking with Odo, the leader of the Changeling military surrenders, and as Odo merges with the Great Link at the series' end, the color of the mass changes as they incorporate him. Though intended to represent the cure to the virus spreading though the Great Link, this visual change also signifies the conquering of an entire species by the humanistic empire of the Federation. Whether the potentially endless war that would have been waged by the Founders justifies this attack—or the original attack using the plague—can certainly be debated, but the material outcome of Odo's actions as a colonized subject is the erasing of a whole species' identity.

The Maquis

The Cardassians' cold war with the Federation in both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* focused a great deal upon the demilitarized zone between them, established by treaty and containing many colonies of both powers. The Cardassians' unwillingness to adhere to the treaty—shipping weapons and other

illegal items to their colonists to assist them in driving Federation colonists away—resulted in the formation of the Maquis, a collection of former Federation colonists that engaged in bombing and other violent attacks against the Cardassians without the sanction of the Federation. Warned by the Federation to abandon their illegal acts of violence against the Cardassians and assimilate back into Federation society, the Maquis were displaced from their homes in the demilitarized zone and forced into the role of exiles. With the eventual elimination of the demilitarized zone through the participation of the Dominion, the Maquis, now barely surviving in exile from any larger support system or government, are utterly destroyed. The Maquis resist the idyllic vision of the Federation established in both *Star Trek: The Original Series* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* by demonstrating that there can be members of a community that are willing to at least risk statelessness because their notion of place and belonging does not subscribe to the majority viewpoint of their civilization. Though the particulars of their statelessness might be familiar, what the fact of their statelessness and their treatment reveals about the Federation has profound consequences for the common perception of the Federation as the altruistic and benevolent protectors of the Alpha quadrant.

In the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Preemptive Strike," the audience is presented with a confrontation that at once introduces the Maquis and shows the internal Federation conflict surrounding their existence. Encountering a Cardassian ship under attack by the Maquis, Picard addresses them alongside Commander Riker on the bridge of the Enterprise:

> Picard: "To all Maquis ships, call off your attack or we will be forced to engage you… You are Federation citizens. Your actions are in violation of our treaty with the Cardassians. Call off your attack… Arm phasers and photon torpedoes and stand by."

> Riker: "I never thought we'd be firing on our own people to protect a Cardassian ship."

Picard violently puts a stop to the Maquis attack, though does not destroy any of their ships, demonstrating that he is indeed willing to use military action against Federation citizens. In a meeting following this confrontation, Picard and a Starfleet admiral discuss the need to put a stop to the Maquis and plan an undercover operation using the Bajoran officer Ro Laren. Though her agreement to undertake this mission is primarily to validate Picard's faith in her and her abilities, her desire to succeed in her mission fails when she witnesses the plight of the Maquis firsthand. At the end of the episode, she joins the Maquis, much to the frustration of Picard. Commenting on the kinship that she has discovered with the Maquis, Ro says, "It's been a long time since I really felt like I belonged somewhere." This hearkens back to some of the chapter's earlier discussion of Bajoran refugeehood, further illustrating the statelessness of the Maquis; Ro, a Federation citizen herself, feels a sense of belonging among the Maquis that she does not in Starfleet.

Alex Burston-Chorowicz's chapter in *Exploring Picard's Galaxy: Essays on Star Trek: The Next Generation* explores the Maquis and their representation in the franchise. Regarding Picard and Ro Laren's interaction with the Maquis, Burston-Chorowicz writes,

> "The Maquis fall well outside Federation legality, interrupting diplomatic norms and undermining Federation interests. Picard and the Federation thus set out to destroy them. Ro's betrayal and the Maquis activities make the audience think twice about the noble liberalism Picard and the Federation espouse" (20).

Indeed, the final shot of the episode of Picard's scowling face, having just heard of Ro Laren's defection to the Maquis, is preceded again by words from Commander Riker. He

says, regarding Ro Laren's defection, "She seemed very sure that she was doing the right thing. I think her only regret was that she let you down." Though not directly confrontational themselves, the words are spoken by Riker when he is still in Bajoran Maquis makeup. He is still identifiable as Riker, but the choice of the writers to have him in the garb of the resistance cannot be coincidence; much like the opening conflict of the episode, Riker is a voice of conscious in the ear of Picard. Both times, he voices a thought—his own or Ro Laren's—that questions Picard's zealous pursuit of the Maquis, and both times he is met with silence from Picard, who might be unable to come to terms with his own actions.

"Preemptive Strike" was *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s first formal engagement with the Maquis. It was the first mention of the group's name in the franchise, the first time their covert operations were expounded upon, and the first time their operating principles were fully articulated. Like Burston-Chorowicz writes in his chapter, however, the furthest that this episode goes is to make the audience question the integrity of the Federation; violence and death both occur, but there is really not a point of no return for the group. Though the writers of the series already had big plans for the Maquis in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: Voyager*, the still shallow depth of the Maquis' narrative could have been wrapped up in another episode, with the Federation reaching a familiar compromise that brings the resistance fighters back into the warm embrace of the hegemon. The point of no return comes during *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, when they succeed in killing Cardassian officers and destroying their ships though both sabotage and open conflict.

The two-part episode "The Maquis" in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* is the next

step in breaking through the illusory shell of Federation integrity, as Benjamin Sisko has two distinct scenes, one in which he sympathizes with the Maquis and the other in which he threatens their exile. In the sympathetic scene, Sisko says to Kira,

> "On Earth, there is no poverty, no crime, no war. You look out the windows of Starfleet headquarters and you see paradise. Well, it's easy to be a saint in paradise, but the Maquis do not live in paradise. Out there, in the demilitarized zone, all the problems haven't been solved yet. Out there, there are no saints, just people—angry, scared, determined people who are going to do whatever it takes to survive, whether it meets with the Federation's approval or not" ("The Maquis" part II).

This is the final defense of the Maquis by a Federation officer that we see, at least in this part of the series. According to the *Deep Space Nine Companion*, this ripples of this speech would resound in the later episodes of the series that concerned Federation security on Earth, such as "Homefront" and "Paradise Lost." While they do, they actually strike far sooner, in the very same episode after Sisko has vented his frustration and, as Burston-Chorowicz writes about Picard, "straight-jacketed by… his petulance for Federation legality," upholds the interests of the hegemon above all. Rather than sharing these sentiments with other members of the Federation or the Cardassians, as Kira encourages him to do, Sisko turns fully on the Maquis in the second half of the episode, bursting into a Maquis meeting and declaring, "There is a treaty currently in place with Cardassia and the Federation. If you make yourself an enemy of Cardassia, you make yourself an enemy of the Federation" ("The Maquis" part II). This threat is the first time in the series that the Federation draws such an explicit line between its own citizens, and

this exile is apparently formalized, at least to some degree, by the words of Michael Eddington, another Starfleet officer who defects to the Maquis. An excerpt from his speech to Sisko in the season four episode "For the Cause" reads, "We're constantly arrested and charged with terrorism. Starships chase us through the Badlands and our supporters are harassed and ridiculed. Why? Because we've left the Federation, and that's the one thing you can't accept. Nobody leaves paradise" ("For The Cause"). Later in season five, after the Maquis have been wiped out by the Cardassian-Dominion alliance, Eddington firmly establishes their stateless existence, saying, "This wasn't supposed to happen. We were winning. The Cardassian Empire was falling into chaos. The Maquis colonies were going to declare themselves an independent nation" ("Blaze of Glory").

Writing about the Federation and Cardassian approach to the Maquis and the demilitarized zone, Burston-Chorowicz writes, "Here, two great powers colonize space and then seek to forcibly remove populations to placate each other. The self-determination of whole groups of people is ignored." It is fair to say that this was the intention of Ira Steven Behr and the other writers of the episodes concerning the Maquis, but the outcomes are far more profound than their intentions. Many of the series' episodes through seasons four and five of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* question the idyllic nature of the Federation, with various members of Starfleet demonstrating directly or indirectly the ultimate self-interest at the heart of the organization, but the Maquis represent something entirely different; how statelessness can persist even in the "flawless" Federation. The primary role of the Maquis in the franchise is that their statelessness places the Federation on the same level as the other empires and civilizations of the series; they are not the beacon on the mountaintop to which all other

realms aspire, but rather another group of colonists and conquerors trying to see how much they can encompass. The destruction of the Maquis and their total removal from future installments in the franchise was completed before the end of *Star Trek: Voyager*, and the timing could not have been better for those looking to maintain the image of the Federation as truly democratic. With the Federation devoid of any significant enemies after the end of that series, the Maquis would have become far more problematic as a representation of Federation hypocrisy.

Conclusion

One of science fiction's primary functions within popular culture is to envision the future, taking a step beyond the realists' fabrication of character and circumstance and also creating the world—or the reality itself—in which narratives take place. However, another noted ability of the genre, as this chapter has helped to illustrate, is the power to recreate the familiar within the unfamiliar; to address pressing concerns in settings so foreign that they cause us to reexamine our own histories as outsiders. The Star Trek franchise has been a noted contributor to both of these functions of the genre, and the cultural and financial investments in its series have allowed for a many social and cultural issues to be addressed over the decades.

Though approaching *Star Trek* episodically as a franchise that takes on serious subjects and brings a degree of emotional resolution to them is something that many audiences of the series have depended upon, looking at the narrative arc of the entire span of episodes reveals the larger imperial nature of the Federation. In addition to what the sections of this chapter have already addressed, I want to use the conclusion to briefly address one of the more fantastic science fiction elements of the *Star Trek* franchise, the

mirror universe. Present in most of the series of the franchise, the mirror universe is mostly what it sounds like; a near-identical dimension when it comes to individuals, species, and technology, but of an opposite alignment. In various episodes set in the mirror universe, we have encountered exaggerated versions of benevolent characters as criminals, worst case scenarios of torture by alliances of the great enemy factions, and the Federation itself as an overtly racist human empire bent on galactic domination. What possible role could these episodes play in the series? While some are so outrageous as to be comical, others are darkly sinister, and try to relay the fears of their displayed circumstances honestly.

Perhaps the one most relevant to this chapter is the *Star Trek: Enterprise* two-part episode, "In a Mirror, Darkly." This episode depicts the Terran Empire as the horrific mirror universe version of the Federation; racist, violently aggressive, and chaotic. While many of the critical reviews of this episode cited the over-the-top plot and acting—fair assessments indeed—as merely an attempt as ridiculous humor, this episode also serves another purpose. In depicting a human empire so unlike the Federation that audiences have come to know, it reinforces the notion that the *real* Federation in the *real* universe are the good guys. The Starfleet that we know and love would never conquer, and has no imperial designs on the galaxy. Slaughtering alien species and enslaving others are truly despicable acts, and so the colonizing of Odo and Worf, the subsuming of the Bajorans and the Skrreea, and stopping the Maquis seem far more considerate by comparison.

Reaching back to the introductory chapter, we can recall the quote from Bhiku Parekh that "The cosmos is not yet a *polis*, and we should not even try to make it one by creating a world state, which is bound to be remote, bureaucratic, oppressive, and

culturally bland. If global citizenship means being a citizen of the world, it is neither practical nor desirable" (12). The science fiction of *Star Trek* allows us to envision an overarching regime of world citizenship based in neoliberal humanitarianism, one that frames progress entirely by its own metric of behavior. Though nestled between layers of episodes that address injustice, *Star Trek* is ultimately about the human colonization of an otherwise nonhuman universe.

I discussed earlier in the chapter that there is still hesitation among the rights owners and writers of the various Star Trek series to explore a post-*Star Trek: Voyager* world because the timeline has begun to encounter its own contradictions. After the death of Gene Roddenberry, the series began to address some of these contradictions, and it is only because everything about the Star Trek universe was so firmly established within popular culture that these brief explorations of topics such as the Federation as a colonizing empire were so unsettling and effective. Other science fiction franchises with far less screen time or years of production have made their own forays into these critical trajectories—some to great effect—but it's difficult to imagine something more uncomfortable in the genre than Captain Picard as a colonizer. As the philosopher-king of the series, he was to be the conscience of humanity, but many of his actions cast him in the light of a Federation functionary enforcing laws that reveal the fictionality of Starfleet's altruistic vision. Though this might have been a direction for the franchise not originally envisioned by Roddenberry, dismantling the notion that "the bridge of the *Enterprise*, under the moderate and controlled command of Captain Picard, is a locus of enlightened understanding" is important in order to understand how "imperialist ideologies again reassert themselves, even beneath the deep-space multicultural façade of

the *Enterprise* bridge" (Weinstock 334). This exercise extends beyond the *Enterprise* into the entirety of the franchise's work, illustrating how one of science fiction's most successful settings engages with topics of forced migration and neoliberal empire.

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