

“There Is Only the World”: Transnational Adoptees and Forced Migration

Justice Hagan

Introduction

There has been a sense of security in the transnational adoptee¹ community regarding our legal status in the United States for a long time. 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, transnational adoptee stories that exist in popular culture and academic study—as well as the deportation of adoptees such as Adam Crapser, who was deported to South Korea despite living in the United States as an American for more than forty years—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. Our inclusion in the American community has been called into question by a nationalist apparatus hostile to immigrant populations, bringing some of our worst fears regarding our belonging to the fore: anxieties of legal status and social rejection. The analysis that follows addresses this new reality and illustrates the interpersonal and cultural experiences that can displace the transnational adoptee through a resigned cosmopolitanism from a national to a global space—resigned because that global space was not sought but is the one in which we must exist. This space is not uninhabited; it is the interstitial zone of refugees, exiles, and the stateless. With them, transnational adoptees are part of the forced migrant population and contribute new experiences and perspectives to the discourses of displacement.

2 Justice Hagan

As a white, male, transnational adoptee able to pass as a white, male, natural-born American citizen, my subject position within the larger discursive formation of transnational adoption is markedly different from that of non-white transnational adoptees, whose adoption stories are the focus of the films studied in this article. Our experiences place us within the same community of forced migrants, but it must be recognized that I am reading across embodied knowledges that are different from my own. This specific difference of subject position—and the larger slippage that exists between the transnational and transracial realities of adoption—makes it difficult for me to comfortably characterize the lived experiences of transnational adoptees as “ours.” My use of the personal pronouns throughout this article is not an effort to erase the differences between transnational and transracial adoption or to diminish the need to further explore the slippage between them. Rather, it is done both to highlight the legal frameworks that apply to all of us within the transnational adoptee population and to strengthen the solidarity of our community, a community that increasingly finds itself in spaces of precarity, indeterminacy, and threat.

Although the primary texts of this analysis are documentary films about adoptees searching for pieces of a lost past, not all the experiences of transnational adoption and a realignment of identity are tied to voluntary narratives of discovery. 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 1950s 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 completed 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 24, 2016, called for his deportation back to South Korea within thirty 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.”²

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. Though the failures of his family to follow the technical requirements of naturalization might allow the court to deport him, no institution 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.

This article addresses topics shared by American studies and critical adoption studies. As a field still in the process of defining the scope of its cultural and academic functions, the examination of the experiences and perspectives of the transnational adoptee community are key to answering some of the formative questions of critical adoption studies articulated by Margaret Homans in "Critical Adoption Studies: Conversation in Progress." She asks,

is [critical adoption studies'] purpose to use adoption (and related practices) as a critical lens through which to see, in new ways, such central features of human existence as race, identity, kinship, heritage, nationality, sexuality, and gender? Is the focus of adoption studies the rights-bearing individual whose subjugation within unequal relations of power calls out for justice; can the critical study of adoption expose the structural inequalities... that not only render contemporary adoption intrinsically unjust but that also characterize global social relations more generally?³

I argue that the answer to these questions is unmistakably yes; the lived experiences of transnational adoptees reveal new dimensions of forced migration by exposing the inaccuracy of the cultural assumptions that occupy outsiders' perceptions of the adoptee experience. Though told that we are not really immigrants by those around us, our otherness is reinforced by a barrage of transnational—and often transracial—reminders that we encounter regularly. The gain of recognizing transnational adoption as a form of forced migration is to acknowledge the interstitial anxieties of a community of people whose privileges of citizenship and cultural familiarity often mask those anxieties. Admittedly, there is a degree of specialized knowledge unique to the adoptee required to fully recognize the instability of the transnational space in which we find ourselves, but that is in part because the system that facilitated our migration also works to occlude our lack of choice behind a veil of charity.

In addition to expanding our understanding of forced migration and the communities that it affects, this work also serves to grow the range of focus for critical adoption studies. In "Critical Adoption Studies as Inclusive Knowledge Production and Corrective Action," Kim Park Nelson provides a concise overview of the discursive functions of the field. She writes,

Critical adoption studies is grounded in social justice ideologies. It acknowledges that the loss of a child, the loss of identity because of an adoptive placement or displacement, and the loss of control over reproductive processes are

4 Justice Hagan

common within adoption experience. ... It recognizes that adoption processes are about power and have often relied on social, political, and economic disenfranchisement to operate, including the oppression of women, children, people of color, and poor people.⁴

While a critical analysis of these realities of adoption are crucial to the field and the community of adoptees, much of critical adoption studies at this time looks at the cultural and legal frameworks of the adoption process, with less attention paid to the cultural and legal precarity of the adoptee community whose processes of adoption are a distant memory. As a comparatively small field of study with the opportunity to reduce future harm to oppressed persons, this attention to the adoption process is appropriate. Outside of the legal battles being waged between countries and institutions over access to adoption, however, is a community of countless adults who have spent our lives in a culturally—and now legally, for those in the United States—vulnerable space.

Three documentary films that represent some of the most groundbreaking adoption stories in popular culture in the past twenty years are at the center of this work. Deanne 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. A significant number of adoptees come from South Korea and China, and the fact that these films focus on these specific transnational adoptee populations reflects another observable practice; fairly or unfairly, transracial Asian American adoptees are often called upon to speak for the transnational adoptee community, a reality that is explicitly demonstrated in several of the scenes in *Somewhere Between*. This reality is due in part to the number of Asian American adoptees in the transnational adoptee population. In *Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America*, Choy writes,

Since the late 1990s, China has been a major sending nation of adoptive children to the United States. In 2000, it led the list of the top twenty primary sending countries, with 5,095 children from China being adopted by U.S. citizens. South Korea provided 1,794 adoptive children, making it third on the list. Vietnam, India, and Cambodia also placed in the top ten of primary sending nations.⁵

With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that these films occupy a prominent place in the discourse of adoption studies. In all three of these films, in addition to being Asian-American, the adoptees are also women, and their forced migrations are linked to the political policies and wars in their countries of origin. Though the claims that I make here are applicable to the transnational adoptee community broadly, we can understand transnational adoption as forced migration through a

more focused examination of the films of Borshay Liem and Goldstein-Knowlton as Asian-American women's texts. Each of the central figures in these works have been adopted into predominantly white American families and are forced to contend with the differences of place, belonging, and identity between themselves, their parents, and their siblings, as well as between themselves and the larger society in which they live. So, what does it mean for them to not be permitted what those around them might refer to as a "real" or "authentic" sense of belonging 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?

While *Somewhere Between* has not received much scholarly attention, Deanne Borshay Liem's films have been among those narratives closely focused on in ethnic studies and adoption studies discourse. Scholars such as Jodi Kim have made important contributions to the conversation about transnational adoption through their readings of Liem's films, and their work has helped us begin to think of the transnational adoptee as a forced migrant figure. In "'The Ending Is Not an Ending at All': On the Militarized and Gendered Diasporas of Korean Transnational Adoption and the Korean War," Kim, writing about Liem in *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, cites Eun Kyung Min in her description of the transnational adoptee figure. She writes that "she is 'an immigrant without an original home, exiled from nowhere, uprooted in the most total way imaginable, without the memory of what it is she has lost.'" She further cites other Korean adoptees whose adoptions have resulted in "the fact that the loss itself is lost...", resulting in the imaginings of "what might have been."⁶ While these accounts match those of many other transnational adoptees, there are also many more, such as Fang Lee in *Somewhere Between*, who don't have to wonder what life would have been like, at least in the early years, in their places of origin. For them, the loss is not lost, but is an observable sequence of events from a life that they remember being stolen from them. It is taking this recognition of the transnational adoptee as a forced migrant and recognizing the space into which this migration has situated them that we can understand the emergent global identity that is born from their experiences.

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, "... 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."⁷ In this article, I will show how many of the interactions that take place between the adoptees in the films and the members of their families and communities fit within this experience of resigned cosmopolitanism; 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 these communities. 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.

In my analysis of the films, I focus on scenes in which the central figures undergo a transformative moment of awakening to illustrate the new perspectives that transnational adoptee narratives bring to the field of forced migrant literature. Throughout their lives, up to that moment, their conception of home and belonging remained a stabilizing force; they knew that despite the racial and country of origin differences between themselves and their communities, 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 some within their community, a part of them had always existed 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. This realignment is one that transcends national borders, a displacement that forms connections between the place of origin and the place of habitation and situates the adoptee in what can only be defined as a global space of resigned cosmopolitanism.

Don't Tell Your New Family Your Real Name

According to the Adoptee Rights Campaign,⁸ there are roughly 35,000 transnational adoptees in the United States who do not currently possess citizenship.⁹ 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 security of citizenship.¹⁰ These children are entirely at the mercy of their parents' responsibility. While the same could be said of any child in the United States, 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.

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, “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.”¹¹ 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."¹²

That legislative provisions did not really exist for the safety of transnational adoptees until the 1950s remains among the most surprising facts at the intersection of adoption studies and international law. Perhaps equally surprising to some is that the United States is the only country in the world that has not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among the chief reasons that the United States has not ratified the convention is that a significant portion of the legislative body of the United States views 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.¹³ 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.

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. Deanne 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 rhetoric of deception engendered in the adoptees by the state orphanages. These children were coached by their orphanage administrators, instructed "don't tell your new family your real name" (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*). 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, these administrators claim, the only motivation of these institutions and individuals was the well-being of the adoptees (*In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*).

While this explanation behind their motivation might satisfy some parties, 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 Deane 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 Deane's parents, as they claim that she is their daughter regardless of the past—a line

8 Justice Hagan

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.

While the scope of harm of these institutional practices in South Korea can never be fully articulated, they are linked to a history of Western—and especially American—military conflicts. Elisabeth Wesseling writes about the surge in transnational adoption following the Korean War: “The removal of children from their birth families in Asian or African countries to rear them according to Western standards was standard practice in Europe’s settler and extraction colonies. Indigenous (especially mixed) children persistently figured as targets and tools of Western civilizing and missionizing efforts.”¹⁴ South Korea became this very kind of extraction colony for the United States following the Korean War, with more than 109,000 children adopted by American families in the years following the war.¹⁵ There is perhaps no more characteristic example of this homogenizing process than the Korean children adopted by military families following the war. As Soojin Pate writes in *From Orphan to Adoptee: US Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption*,

In the same way that [the] Korean orphan has been adopted by the American military man, South Korea—treated by the United States as if it too is an orphan—has also been adopted by the American military government. The U.S. nation becomes the adoptive father to South Korea.... Consequently, Korean adoption both preserves and maintains American neocolonialism.¹⁶

With this in mind, we can certainly still find fault with the practices of Korean adoption institutions, but the whole of the blame cannot rest on them; the West has an insatiable material interest in creating circumstances that expedite the exportation of children.

Narratives of international adoption published in the past twenty years¹⁷ 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. As new considerations intersecting with the idea of “impossible subjects” written about by Mae Ngai,¹⁸ transnational adoptees—though many of us 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: someone whose belonging within the borders of a nation-state is unquestioned. Though Ngai is referring to Asian-Americans specifically, the moves made by the administration of the U.S. government in recent years (see endnote 10) to create a process of denaturalization places all of us who have gone through the process of naturalization vulnerable. While the degree of vulnerability based on the race of the adoptee is certainly a valid distinction to be made, many of us feel as

though we cannot exist where we are—a displacement that reminds us of the stories of refugees and exiles—and because the anxiety is different for each transnational adoptee (even among those with the same national origin), our shared community falls into a space of uncertainty. Redefining the transnational adoptee experience as one of forced migration represents a major shift in the way that the adoption process is perceived, not only for individuals and organizations earnestly pursuing transnational adoption as a charitable, humanitarian act, but also for adoptees who have found a cultural equilibrium in the space that they inhabit. As we work to unpack these lived experiences and add to the field of critical adoption studies, the slippage between the transnational and transracial realities of adoptees is a significant issue. Because race is the thing that marks Asian-Americans as "impossible subjects," extending this distinction to include other transnational adoptees—especially white adoptees—is uncomfortable.

Including transnational adoptees alongside 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, so few studies have even gone to the effort to include transnational adoptees as a part of the immigrant community.¹⁹ In "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference," Jessaca Leinaweaver shares some quotes from educators and caregivers working with adopted children that demonstrate how transnational adoption is viewed as "the unknown immigration" or "the silent immigration." When faced with idea that these transnational adoptees have immigrated to their new countries, the educators and caregivers say, "we do not have immigrant children, we have children adopted internationally," and "our children are NOT immigrants. They are, once adopted, citizens of the United States."²⁰ This push even extends beyond professionals working in the areas of education or administration and extends to the parents of transnational adoptees, as will be seen later in the sections of this article that focus on Deann Borshay Leim's films; to many adoptive parents, the idea that their child is an immigrant—despite having filled out naturalization paperwork as part of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services process—is baffling and might seem to be an attempt to somehow lessen the bond that they have. Because of these conflicting statements and perspectives, it is critically important to look at transnational adoption as forced migration. As Leinaweaver writes,

Viewing international adoption as a form of migration can also offer some important insights into what happens *after* the initial migration. ... Examining international adoptees' lives through a migration lens powerfully reveals some of the persistent discomforts that preclude open conversations about racial difference and minority status in an adoptive context, that is, one where children have been caused to migrate as part of their recruitment into families.²¹

One of the central concerns of this work is this question: What does it mean to include transnational adoptees within the larger context of forced migration? As Laura Briggs notes 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."²² 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 for literary studies 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.

Transnational adoption narratives can be read as stories of forced migration in a way that distinguishes them within the larger field of immigrant literature, but they also 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."²³ If we broaden how we define "disadvantaged individuals" here, 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 international legislative bodies have made such determinations does not change the experiences that the characters encounter in the films or the experiences of transnational adoptees outside of these texts. So, global citizenship, instead of only an outcome of transnational networking, also includes those existing between places. This space occupied by the "inauthentic" inhabitant is ultimately an empty globality because in the binary perspective within which these disadvantaged individuals must contend there is no acknowledgment of any such space.

First Person Plural and In The Matter of Cha Jung Hee

First Person Plural (2000) and *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee* (2010) are two films by Deann Borshay Liem about her experiences as a transnational

adoptee from Korea who was adopted by white American parents in California. *First Person Plural* is about her search for her identity after learning that the biography and name provided by the orphanage from which she was adopted was false. In the film, she finds her biological family in South Korea and brings her adoptive parents to meet them, uniting the two halves of her life that had been separated by lies and misinformation. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, made ten years after the first film, follows Deann as she seeks out the Cha Jung Hee whose identity was used by the orphanage to facilitate the adoption of Deann to a family who had been in contact with Cha Jung Hee and had intended to adopt her. Though Deann meets an adult Cha Jung Hee who might have been the same child, there is uncertainty that the ultimate truth might ever be revealed. One of the reasons that an analysis of Deann Borshay Liem's work is so critical in showcasing the forced migrant experience is that, as Catherine Ceniza Choy writes in "No Longer Silent: The Adopted Diaspora's Return to Korea" regarding the availability of such accounts, "her films analyze the prominent role that organizational records played in her life history as a Korean adoptee in the United States. . . . Such links are difficult to find as adoption case records typically do not provide longer, continuous accounts of the adoption after placement."²⁴ Indeed, without the document archives retained by her adoptive parents and the links that they provide to state archives in South Korea, her story could not have been discovered in the way that it was.

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 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 in those early days of transnational adoption, as unethical practices.

Deann was adopted after she had begun to form strong memories and 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 Liem—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.”²⁵ 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.”²⁶ Deann Borshay Liem 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.”²⁷ Literally placed into the shoes originally sent by the Borshays to Cha Jung Hee, Deann, a girl unknown to them until she stepped off the plane in the United States, 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.²⁸ 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.”²⁹

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 specific words spoken by the social worker assigned to Cha Jung Hee’s case were, “We didn’t even know that she had parents. . . .”³⁰ 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.

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 had been wrought upon Deann stood out clearly. For the majority of their meeting, she voiced sentiments similar 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.”³¹ 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. Not all of the transnational adoptees who have lived through the process of migration have access to this information, and so there are generations of adoptees who might have been subject to unrecorded state violence.

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 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."³² 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." 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."³³ 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.

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, Deann 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."³⁴ 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."³⁵

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 gains a new perception of herself: a moment of enlightenment and realization that her idea of who she is comes into a kind of conflict with the place and circumstances in which she 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.³⁶

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, something that might not ever be able to be separated from the experience of transnational adoption. 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 United States 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."³⁷ 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: 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."³⁸ It's difficult to read this lack of concern on the part of her family as not at least in some way tied to race and culture and not just a family's excitement, with her mother's carefree stumble with her birth name and her sister's referral to the Korean adoptees as a formless group. Her family believes that the life that she might have known before coming to the United States didn't matter because a non-American cultural origin is lesser, according to the professed beliefs of her brother.³⁹ Such a sentiment can hardly be separated from the imperial nature of white American citizenship, and despite the love that her family has for her, the Korean child and sibling did not even exist until she was pointed out to the family and became Deann. 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 who she had recently adopted from China. This film is a white director's accounting, and thus the accounting of an adoptive parent, of the lives of four teenage Asian transnational adoptees. Though this differs from Deann Borshay Liem's identity as a transnational adoptee filmmaker, the perspectives and experiences articulated by the adoptees in the film are their own and are valuable contributions to the discourse of transnational adoptee narratives. While Goldstein-Knowlton's 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 Elaine 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 a more traditional transnational adoption can be.

One of the unique differences between the two countries of origin discussed here, 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 has 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 United States.

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."⁴⁰ This important quote illustrates 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!"⁴¹ From the expression on Haley's face, this is not the first time that this has happened to her. This entire encounter would not have occurred were it not for the racial difference between parent and child noted by the elderly white woman. Not only does this presumption cross the bounds of propriety, it can also create a potential emotional anxiety in the adoptee when the parent is placed into the role of savior, a parent-child circumstance unique to transnational/transracial adoption scenarios.

For Haley, such a sentiment is not necessarily unwelcome or disagreeable. Raised in a southern American city by a family that seemingly rolls American cultural identity and Christianity into a single 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."⁴² Though it would not be equitable to speculate on the political or racial perspectives of her adoptive family, as they are not presented in the film, at no point do her parents disagree with Haley's claim of an inner transformation of race. Not all 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 white woman in the salon, there is an assumption made by the white Americans they meet that their presence here was a premeditated desire fulfilled. Informed only by that assumption, these individuals seem incapable of viewing transnational adoptees' inhabitation of the United States as involuntary. Further, the notion that one can inhabit a place without choice yet be content to remain without an abundance of gratitude—a behavior exhibited by the native-born population, it should be noted—seems incomprehensible to them. The connection between the lived experiences of transnational adoptees and refugees, then, is due in part to the presumptions of the society or state of the role that they are supposed to fill.

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."⁴³ 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 articulates the forced migration identity of transnational adoptees in the film, 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."⁴⁴ Her mother is 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."⁴⁵ However, Jenna's awareness goes further 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."⁴⁶ Taking both Jenna and her mother's words into account, we can see that her efforts to compensate for the circumstances of her origin and adoption have a dual purpose. Not only does Jenna seek to prove that she is worth the effort to nurture and raise that her biological parents were apparently unwilling to give, but with so many questions about her differences in her seemingly homogenous racial community in New England, she hopes that her high achievement will be the focus rather than her race.

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 stand out because of the familial and emotional places that they come to inhabit by the end of the film. In the beginning, they express 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 United States, sees no critically empty spaces in her life, even remembering what her biological mother looked like. 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, a casual curiosity of her biological origin become a globe-spanning quest, and for Fang, the routine of her role in participating in the transnational adoption of others take on a greater meaning for her own sense of

belonging and identity. As emotional crises created through understanding—or witnessing—the inability of the adoptee to resist the displacement that adoption necessarily facilitates, these events demonstrate the proximity of transnational adoptee narratives to those of refugees, exiles, and the rest of the forced migrant community.

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 an adoptee seems rather convincing—if occasionally performed—and so it comes as somewhat of a surprise when she decides to travel to England with a group called Global Girls, an organization designed to help young girls adopted from China find each other and share their experiences and their stories. 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.⁴⁷

Haley, completely unfamiliar with the corruption of state adoption agencies and how that affects the lives of adoptees not as fortunate as her, is stunned to silence hearing Hilbrand recount the injustices perpetrated against the transnational adoptee community. What began as a casual 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 racial identity 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.”⁴⁸

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 might fit into the dictionary’s definition of a cosmopolitan individual. Using her family’s significant resources, Fang travels to China with her American passport, walks into a Chinese marketplace, speaks in Mandarin to the shopkeepers and people that she encounters, and goes to serve in solidarity with those members of the transnational 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 we have discussed here, 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 begins to keen and 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 her 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 has begun to question that process of transition following this interaction. It is the circumstances of this new experience—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 distinguish 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."⁴⁹

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 hopeless as the young girl's; though Fang was not physically disabled, being abandoned at the age of three or four in a large metropolitan area is its own type of hopeless. 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, is no longer able to retain the position of comfort in her own identity. Fang's profession that she loves China, that it is her homeland, that some of her richest memories of her life before her adoption showcase her mother's desire and love for her, and that she has the 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?

The occupation of a nationless, global space is articulated most clearly within the reflective language of Fang and Deann and acknowledged in a way best described as uncomfortable by those individuals 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 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 Korean adoptees from Sweden. In this scene, the 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."⁵⁰ 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 Swedish" is more than a reference to a country into which she could have been adopted. It 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 Swedish 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."⁵¹ 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 adoptees 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 a 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 a Korean woman's life 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 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."⁵²

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."⁵³ 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 the 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 Francisco."⁵⁴ 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 after seeking out her birth family, 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."⁵⁵ 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 (and 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."⁵⁶ Not only is there no 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," is an idea voiced only by Fang throughout each of these films. 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, it is likely that she would respond by saying 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?

Notes

1. Transnational adoptees are those individuals who have been formally adopted from their country of origin and have immigrated to the country of their adoptive family. Through their experiences as adoptees, their identities and life stories extend and operate across recognized national boundaries.

2. Liam Stack. "A South Korean Man Adopted by Americans Prepares for Deportation," *New York Times*, November 1, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/02/us/adam-crapser-deportation-south-korea.html>

3. Margaret Homans. "Critical Adoption Studies: Conversations in Progress," *Adoption & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2018): 1-4
4. Kim Park Nelson. "Critical Adoption Studies as Inclusive Knowledge Production and Corrective Action." *Adoption & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2018): 20-21
5. Catherine Ceniza Choy. *Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America*. (New York: NYU Press, 2013).
6. Jodi Kim. "The Ending Is Not an Ending At All": On the Militarized and Gendered Diasporas of Korean Transnational Adoption and the Korean War." *Positions: Asia Critique* 23, no 4 (2005): 807-835.
7. Lisa Lowe. *Immigrant Acts*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).
8. Although it lacks the term "transnational" or "international" in its name, The Adoptee Rights Campaign is an advocacy group of adoptees and allies that campaign for equal citizenship rights for foreign-born adoptees.
9. Stack. "South Korean Man Adopted."
10. The idea of secure citizenship for transnational adoptees—and all naturalized citizens—has become a tenuous one, not just because of the general anti-immigration agenda of the government administration, but also because the Justice Department has officially created a Bureau of Denaturalization to strip citizenship from certain naturalized American citizens. Stack. "South Korean Man Adopted."
11. OHCHR. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 3. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
12. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 21.
13. Sarah Mehta. "There's Only One Country That Hasn't Ratified the Convention on Children's Rights: US." November 20, 2015, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/human-rights/treaty-ratification/theres-only-one-country-hasnt-ratified-convention-childrens>.
14. Elisabeth Wesseling. "Creating Historical Genealogies for Intercountry Adoption," *Adoption & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2018): 32.
15. Eleana J. Kim. *Adopted Territory: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Politics of Belonging* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 21.
16. Soojin Pate. *From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
17. Transnational and transracial adoption stories represent a dynamic genre still in its early stages of development. As a field, the narratives are found in nearly every genre from documentary films like the ones analyzed in this article, to traditional novels, nonfiction, and children's books. Helpful sites for referencing this expanding field include Affcny.org, adoptivefamilies.com, and harlows-monkey.com. They possess vast catalogs of adoption texts across many genres as well as critical reviews for many of them.
18. Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
19. Catherine Ceniza Choy. *Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).
20. Jessaca Leinaweaver, "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference," *Human Organization* 73, no. 1 (2014): 62-71.
21. Leinaweaver, "The Quiet Migration," 63.
22. Laura Briggs. *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012): 5.
23. Saskia Sassen. "Emergent Global Classes and What They Mean for Migration Politics." *Migration Policy Institute*, 2006.
24. Catherine Ceniza Choy. "No Longer Silent: The Adopted Diaspora's Return to Korea." *Fulbright Korea Infusion*, July 14, 2016. <https://infusion.fulbright.or.kr/no-longer-silent/>
25. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, directed by Deann Borshay Liem (2010, MU Films).
26. Pate, *From Orphan to Adoptee*, 115.
27. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

24 Justice Hagan

28. 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. See Briggs. *Somebody's Children*, 21.

29. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

30. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

31. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

32. Elaine Kim. "Wedding Citizenship and Culture: Korean Adoptees and the Global Family of Korea." *Cultures of Transnational Adoption* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 54.

33. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

34. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

35. Pate, *From Orphan to Adoptee*, 147.

36. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

37. *First Person Plural*, directed by Deann Borshay Liem (2000, MU Films).

38. *First Person Plural*.

39. *First Person Plural*.

40. Mimi Thi Nguyen. *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

41. *Somewhere Between*, directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton (Long Shot Factory, 2011).

42. *Somewhere Between*.

43. *Somewhere Between*.

44. *Somewhere Between*.

45. *Somewhere Between*.

46. *Somewhere Between*.

47. *Somewhere Between*.

48. *Somewhere Between*.

49. *Somewhere Between*.

50. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

51. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

52. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

53. *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*.

54. *First Person Plural*.

55. *Somewhere Between*.

56. *Somewhere Between*.