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The Adoptee as Citizen, Denizen, Alien: Redefining Adoption as Formalized Extirpation

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إلي ما بيربى ع سفرة أبوه ما بيشبع.
"He who is not brought up at his father's
table shall not be satisfied." *—Lebanese proverb*

"I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it…
I heard 10,000 whispering and nobody listening…"
—Bob Dylan, "It's a Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall"

I. ABSTRACT

The dominant cultural mode portrays adoption as an act of charity and beneficence. This despite the growing elaboration to the contrary by adoptees come of age as well as their mothers, families, and communities from whom they go missing. This trope also runs counter to more popular cultural conceptions of adoption. In these the implied absence of filiation is still a mark and a stain on the one so branded. Nonetheless, this stigma is often alleviated via informal kinship practices. On the contrary, those who abscond with children are painted literally as bogeymen. The disparity of viewpoints makes sense when the historical roots of modern-day adoption are reviewed. These roots derive from class-based concepts of the nuclear family and the exaltation of the individual over the community. Historically, adoption evolved from indentured servitude, the emptying of poorhouses, the eradication of the Indigenous, the population of colonies, and the procurement of cheap labor from abroad. The rise of American empire post–World War II necessitated that the mythology of adoption shift to primarily evoke family creation. Its vestigial historical and socially experimental derivations nonetheless categorize adoption as a mutable manifestation of class warfare, as well as of colonial and imperial power.

Informal and/or communal kinship practices are thus inverted and formalized under the rubric "adoption". In this formalization and use against targeted populations, the origins of the institution carry forward as manifestations of current adoption industry practice. The practice is reinforced and becomes hegemonic. Receiving and source populations continue to reflect the class disparity that has always been at the core of this transfer of children and rupture of filiation. This transfer maps readily onto extirpative practices also based in economic and political class disparities. These include slavery, trafficking, gentrification, deportation, immigration, land occupation, apartheid, incarceration, enforced statelessness, etc. The origins of the practice and its global expansion/universalization reveal an international "cosmopolitan class". Expanding further, this divide denotes a difference in sheer political embodiment, between *polis* and *zoë.* Via the adoption of children across borders and class strata, dominant classes empower nation-state agency in a continuation of colonial and missionary incursions against subject populations. The perpetuation of the practice is based in shared class interests in globalization and the neo-liberal order. In this way, adoption is added to a list of deleterious practices of dispossession, displacement, and disinheritance employed against those deemed to be extraneous to the body politic.

II. A SHIFT IN CLASS FOCUS

Lebanon, like many other source countries, is seeing a rise in adopted persons who have come of age and who seek answers concerning their origins. Unfortunately, their research turns up mostly dead ends. These take the form of falsified documents, intransigent government and religious officials, unhelpful lawyers and doctors, monetary shakedowns, closed doors, unanswered phone calls, and even physical threats to their safety. This is the turning point of understanding for many, who cannot fathom this decidedly unaccommodating reaction. The adoption was a legal process, and adoptees trust that they legally belong to their adoptive family and place of acculturation. They expect that this affords them the rights and legal recourse shared by their family, co-citizens, and attained class.

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The contradictory reception upon return reveals this to be a false projection on their part. An adoptee's formal identity is, on the contrary, based wholly in terms of the needs of the adoptive family and acculturating nation-state. It fails to maintain in terms of the individual and her right to know "where she comes from" beyond a purely superficial conception. Thus, adoptees who focus their searches on their individual "selves"—as they exist within the confines of their adoptive family and country—are seen to be following a quest for "self-actualization". This search is actively condoned, since it does not upset the status quo, or the dynamics of their procurance. A much different fate awaits adoptees who seek to find the communal truth concerning their narratives as well as the stories of those they source from. Attempts to determine how these stories overlap and intersect with other societal injustices are met with solid resistance.

An examination of the history of adoption and its function in terms of economic and political policies toward the poor and marginalized helps to explain this disparity. Such an examination foregrounds the legal weight afforded to some and denied to others. It elucidates the resulting cognitive dissonance that adoptees feel concerning differences between their families, cultures, and communities. The logical conclusion of this examination places adoptees closer to those who are likewise not fully incorporated within society. To fully understand this requires a shift in focus, from the class position adoptees arrive to, to that of those they source from.

This difference in perspective defines two sides of a global divide. On the one hand exists a dominant cosmopolitan class: the *polis*. This class maintains sovereignty, as compared, on the other hand, to those without such agency: the *zoë*. These terms derive from Aristotelean conceptions of class, gender, and patrilineal demarcations of citizenship (Agamben, 1998). They serve as the inherently unequal basis for "Western" liberal democracy as understood today. They bypass the former primarily geographic conceptions of "East" and "West", "First World" and "Third World", etc., yet reveal no less divisive demarcations. They define the extirpating practices these societies evolved to deal with those deemed outside of the realm of valid existence.

These formal and informal practices sought and continue to seek the removal of the unwanted, unfit, and undesirable figuratively from the body politic, and more literally from geographic place. The notions of *polis* and *zoë* become hegemonic in terms of how the strata of society understand, ascribe, and/or deny citizenship and belonging to those within the purview of their incorporating nation-states. With time, these conceptions are mythologized, and are further inverted theoretically by post-modern and neo-liberal redefinitions of terms such as "nomad", "hybrid", "border-crosser", etc. (Lloyd & Wolfe, 2015). World events show this difference to be the current fault line resulting in activist if not revolutionary insurrections worldwide, as well as cataclysmic migratory shifts in populations.

III. BY-PRODUCTS OF COLONIZATION

Elaborating on this crucial notion, Frantz Fanon, writing in *The Wretched of the Earth*, compares the colonized native to an adopted child:

> Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own (Fanon, 1961).

This passage is intriguing on a variety of levels. It speaks of identity, of belonging, and sense of self. It implicates colonial projects in the false elaboration of such a self, contradictory to original source. It points to nation-states as conferring such a status of identity upon an individual, and the agency of accepting this or not. It elaborates a false universal which is belied by local realities. It evokes identity that is obtained via study or acculturation, as opposed

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to that of birth or assimilation. It educes the local comprador class's relationship to the adoptee. In and of itself, this elliptical reference is deserving of great expansion.

This reference will serve as the basis for a discussion of adoption that is grounded in its political and economic underpinnings. Such a discussion subjectively shifts from the personal toward the communal, from the individual to the collective, from those with the luxury and privilege of voice to those without. Posited is a focus on the migratory basis of adoption. Adoption must also be evaluated as a practice of kinship. In terms of current formalized adoption practice, its definition need expand to include additive as well as subtractive sides to said practice. The side of "loss" demands equivalence, as the adoptee walks a "razor's edge" between biological and geographic source, differing social strata, as well as acculturating family and place.

Resonating this difference, adoptive source nation-states form the economic and political antithesis to those adopting. They are former colonies/colonized spaces, or they are economically and politically targeted for similar extraction of resources (Klein, 2008). In the case of many source countries such as Lebanon, adoption is functional to and evocative of the very socio-political breakdown of societies, and this carries forward with the child. For example, many adoptees from Lebanon are more correctly defined as originating from the *balad ash-sham*, or Greater Syria. Via DNA tests, they are discovering crossed familial connections between what are now Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, as well as other countries which provided slave labor or migratory influxes historically speaking. Their current ability or capacity to interact with extended family is governed by foreign laws and false borders later imposed by various colonial entities.

Adoptees returned thus become living reminders of recent flux in the socio-economic and political order. From this vantage point, adoption was not a salvational endeavor to rescue children, but an opening salvo of forthcoming economic and/or political warfare. This war is echoed in terms of class and is waged against families and communities without the agency to counter or critique such unwilled transfer of human flesh. The majority of adopted children come from internally marginalized populations. Their separation from the greater population is likewise based on differences of race, class, ethnicity, perceived mental or physical handicap, and/or sect. That adoptees "leapfrog" into a different class stratum via such recursive oppression and forced migration in no way denies their source in this regard. In this light, adoptees necessarily find common cause with others who have also been displaced, dispossessed, or disinherited (Drennan, 2014).

IV. ADOPTIVE PARENTS AS STATE AGENTS

When adoption is examined for its political, economic, and religio-cultural roots, its social experimentation and purposefully migratory function within a given society is revealed. The contextual function of adoption, in contrast to its current mythologies of family-building and beneficent action, carry forward and taint adoption practice (Carp, 2002; Marre and Briggs, 2009). For example, the advertisements for adoptable infants, in their description of race, gender, and health, hark back to the newspaper and poster ads of the days of slavery, as well as its precursor, indentured servitude. To say "put up for adoption" elides linguistically the prepositional phrase "up on the [slave] block": to put up for sale as human chattel. For another example, Lebanese adoptees were profiled in terms of prospective adoptive country based on perceived race and/or sect, reflecting the permutations of racism affected by their destinations and internalized locally.

These derivations describe the intention of the nation-states advocating for adoption. They also show the role of adoptive parents in enacting such policies as members of the *polis.* This stands in contrast to their vaunted personal

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"wants" and "needs". Their actions maintain the preservation of their class status as economic stakeholders, and reveal family creation to be a function of this economic exigency:

> It is misleading to conceptualize the needs and concerns of prospective parents as being somehow outside of or separate from the needs and concerns of the nation. Individuals who adopt from abroad do so within a particular domestic/international/political context. Their needs and desires are socially constructed and emerge out of the same domestic/international/political and economic context as the policies that formally address national needs and concerns (Lovelock, 2000, p. 910).

This sentiment is echoed in works that focus on adoption tangentially:

> This representation of the Cold War as a sentimental project of family formation served a doubly hegemonic function. These families created an avenue through which Americans excluded from other discourses of nationhood could find ways to identify with the nation as it undertook its world-ordering projects of containing communism and expanding American influence (Klein, 2003, p. 159).

Even advocates of adoption admit to this primary truth:

> It can be viewed as the ultimate in the kind of exploitation inherent in every adoption, namely the taking by the rich and powerful of the children born to the poor and powerless. It tends to involve the adoption by the privileged classes in the industrialized nations of the children of the least privileged groups in the poorest nations, the adoption by whites of black- and brown-skinned children from various Third World nations, and the separation of children not only from their birthparents, but from their racial, cultural, and national communities as well (Bartholet, 1993, p. 90).

Repositioned thus, adoption's historical shift to a method of family creation chronologically aligns with the rise of the United States as an imperial power in the years following World War II. Adoption served as a means to accomplish a variety of sub-tasks that underpin such empire building. These include the extermination of the political left (and other enemies of the *polis*), often through the "disappearance" of their children, as in Spain, Chile, and Argentina; the creation of local comprador elites who profit from the colonization of their country; as well as the formalization of residual conversion practices of local missionaries (Baron, 2014; Joyce, 2013). A list of adoption's political and economic derivations situates the anti-family and anti-community practices embedded within it.

A. Adopting "orphans," the by-product of war

The fostering of war orphans is a recurrent trope within American history. This was seen during World Wars I and II, the mediation of the atomic aftermath in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Korean and Viet Nam Wars, the "dirty wars" of the Caribbean and Central and South America, the vestigial Cold War, and currently the direct and proxy "wars against terrorism" in South Asia. Adoption thus developed as a post-war public relations effort, and today it can be said to portend economic and political warfare.

B. Hiring "orphans": labor use and indentured servitude

The rise of a suburban middle class and its role as an engine of capital in the post-war economy of the U.S. shifted the representation of children and the notion of childhood. Previously a ready source of labor, the exploitation of

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orphans within industrial and agricultural contexts provided acquiescent slave workers. In the British Empire, foreign colonies found a ready supply of workers—voluntary and not—in the indentured poor. It was not a remedy for the disenfranchised, but actively targeted the destitute (Grubb, 1992, pp. 85_–108).

C. Removing "orphans" from their Indigenous roots

Indigenous peoples in Anglo-Saxon settler-colonies were defined as "child-like creatures in constant need of the paternal care of the government," who would "gradually abandon their…barbaric behaviour and adopt civilization" (Titley, 1992, p. 36). The goal of the Indian schools was an eradication of culture, language, history, and memory, as well as displacement from the land (Crichlow, 2002). An inversion of this practice is witnessed by organizations of converted Indigens in the U.S. fighting to end the Indian Child Welfare Act, the aim of which was to keep Native children with their original families.

D. Exporting "orphans" to populate foreign colonies

In an effort to maintain favorable population balances, the poor were used to populate British colonies and the French *metropole*. The exportation of "Home Children" was only stopped in the 1970s for the British. The French practice of populating its rural areas saw its end in the 1980s. Similar efforts directed at Arab Jewry and the population of occupied Palestine serve as another example. The U.S. internally mimicked this practice with its "Orphan Trains". These took children from eastern seaboard cities and transferred them to parts of the country undergoing homesteading and the expansionist establishment of agriculture.

E. Secreting "orphans" away from their illegitimate origins

The baby-scoop era denotes the years in which the U.S. and other Anglo-Saxon countries attempted to hide the shame of unwanted pregnancies via adoption. From 1940–1970 upwards of 1.5 million mothers were forced to relinquish children in the U.S., 400,000 in Canada (Fessler, 2007). The reference to such women by psychiatrists as "not-mothers" is a pre-cursor to the cultural indifference to original mothers within adoption mythology. Concepts of familial shame and patrilineal honor in source countries such as Lebanon readily map onto this trope.

F. Socially constructing "orphans" as perfectable citizens

The outright purchase or trafficking of children reflects adoption unfettered by ethical or moral constraints or concerns (Balcom, 2011). Historically speaking this exists within overtly nationalist and fascistic nation-states (Clay, 1995; Moll, 2012). Adoption becomes a way to increase the amount of "desirable" children in the country. Such goals are often contradictory with prevailing moral precepts or cultural beliefs. For example, the kinship practice of intra-familial adoption of out-of-wedlock children in fascist Italy placed augmentation of the population at a premium over notions of bastardy. In fascist Spain, children were adopted "into" the republic, but with a shift in class. In Lebanon, the "cleansing" of the enemy's progeny became a tactic of war, and foreign adoption became a means of annihilation via foreign assimilation.

All of these examples are instructive in terms of understanding adoption in source countries such as Lebanon. The historical tactics and functions of adoption are adapted to serve the needs of the prevailing dominant power structure in the source country. For example, in 2006, foreign media focused on a child "saved" via special visas and his adoption from the Israeli war on Lebanon, while ignoring the 500+ children killed during that attack. This child's exit from Lebanon elucidates the culmination of decades of streamlined bureaucratic processes. Whereas children formerly were given fictitious names and identities, currently pregnant women are registered in hospitals under the name of the pre-matched adoptive mother. The sheer illegality of these practices of identity erasure explains the

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amassing of bogus "proof" as to the validity of the transactions that took place. At the same time, the contradictory desire to maintain such records closed and off limits in terms of legal, media, or adoptee-driven access now makes logical sense.

V. THE CLASS-BASED MYTHOLOGIES OF ADOPTION

The institution and practice of adoption reflects a particular societal mindset concerning children, property, kinship, lineage, identity, as well as notions of individuality and self. It is incentivized by economic and political exigencies that form the basis for globalizing capitalism historically speaking. Nation-states at war—whether economic or political—impose such viewpoints on their targets, and see themselves in competition with methods of alternative care that differ from their own. These alternatives are derided because of their inclusive nature, and basis in family preservation. A growing lexicon describes this reality: humanitarian imperialism, the targeting of community-based cultures via market pressures, and the destructive nature of NGOs (Bricmont, 2006; Elyachar, 2005; INCITE!, 2007).

Adoption can be described as the distillation of a culture's view of humanity. In terms of adoptive countries, humanity might thus be defined as an infinite population of "wretched refuse". This population lives in the shadows of history, and awaits salvation from exceptional nations. To this end, the legal, governmental, social, cultural, medical, religious, and mediated realms facilitate and justify its use. In terms of adoption source countries, this view reflects local conceptions of nationality, citizenship, belonging, and identity. Those who do not fit within this definition are slated for extirpation. The adopting nation-state creates a spectacle of "saving" poor "orphans". The mediated use of the image of the "orphan"—from Save the Children advertisements in the U.S. to Ramadan *zakat* fundraising in Lebanon—evokes this notion of salvation in complex ways. Both, however, reduce the "orphan" to a "sub-citizen", a non-agentive object, wholly reliant on dominant societal actors. As opposed to its mythology as a beneficent action, the very presence of adoption instead marks the failure of a society to care for those in need, or to provide justice and equality for all.

This concept of "saved" versus "damned" is culturally manifested on a variety of levels. One notable example within American culture is *L'il Orphan Annie*. Based on the popular cartoon strip and the musical derived therefrom, the plot originates with the aptly named Daddy Warbucks seeking an heir to his capitalistic endeavors. Whereas the medium was a popular cultural one, the message in terms of class and class mobility was very different in terms of its basic tropes. These include the ethnically defined *zoë* (in the musical, these are the Irish), the supply of poor children to those of means to adopt, the one deserving child who is saved among unlucky others who are left to their fate. Such representations become de facto historical reference, and in turn they have spawned an entire sub genre of children's literature. One of the most vaunted images found here is "the red thread", itself stolen from Chinese popular culture, linking adopted Chinese children with (adoptive) parents.

The saved-versus-lost basis to the practice has obvious Biblical roots. It is no coincidence that the French NGO *Arche de Zoë* convicted for the crime of transporting children illegally out of Chad named itself in homage to Noah's Ark. All the same, more prevalent than the mediated "saviors" of children referenced within the culture are the more popular references to thievery of infants and stealers of children. Those who abscond with or remove children from their place are portrayed with an evident archetype that is always negative: The Pied Piper, the witch of *Hansel and Gretel*, the Coachmaster of *Pinocchio*, the Child Catcher of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Further afield but no less relevant are "Dzunukwa" of the Pacific Northwest's First Nation's Peoples and "Abou Kiis" (The Bag Man) in the Southwest-Asian context, pointing toward a more relevant universality of this archetypal bogeyman.

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A greater comparison of such mythologies is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the examination of adoption representation and mediation within and among different class strata is of great import. Mapping the different views above and the audiences they are directed to reveals, on the one hand, the child orphan as "waif" awaiting her rescue from her base forebears. Charles Loring Brace, founder of the Children's Aid Society, notably referred to these children as "street Arabs" from the "dangerous classes". The view from such classes, on the other hand, focuses on children as crucial to the family, with danger from outside lurking in various forms. In a recent twist, a variety of movies and performances are using the predatory adoptive parent as a plot device, thereby turning the mythology in on itself. Adoption requires this mediated inversion which mimics its class-based attack on informal kinship practices. Legal recourse, voice, and resistance can thus be qualified as equally functional to one's level of political embodiment (Williams, 1985).

VI. THE LEBANESE *ZOË* AND ADOPTION

Lebanon becomes a primary locus and departure point for expanded study of the historical underpinnings of this practice (Allouche, 2014; Stoughton, 2013). As a case study, Lebanese history provides extensive examples of the vagaries of citizenship as a function of political and economic incentives and intrigues. More importantly, it reveals adoption practice as relating to, being informed by, as well as being a by-product of such processes. This is to say that adoption is not put forth first as a charitable act, but only secondarily in light of social ills that are reneged upon by the nation-state. The failure of society to care for those within its borders results in disposable children. As such, adoption is functional to processes and practices that target marginalized populations. It relies on the historical networks of missionary-based and foreign-state supported charities and NGOs to aid and abet adoption practice. It avails itself of foreign-funded mediation to propagandize its "salvational" aspects (Harmacinski, 2006; Yunis, 1975).

Some pertinent examples of the historical derivations of adoption in Lebanon would include the presence of refugees and migratory populations; practices of political erasure, kidnapping, disappearance, and imprisonment; foreign-supported moves against activist attempts to construct a more equitable superstructure; networks of adoption coercion and trafficking targeting single mothers, the poor, and the indigent; ideologies of "pure" bloodline and ancestry; etc. Such reactionary politics have their basis in the beliefs that gave rise to adoption in Anglo-Saxon societies in the 19th and 20th centuries, namely eugenics, racial superiority, Calvinist ideas concerning the poor and needy, etc. This mirroring is not coincidental, but is instead functional of and vestigial to colonial and missionary incursions.

These beliefs find themselves manifested in a variety of scandals surrounding adoption, such as the *niños robados* of Franco's fascist regime in Spain, the disappeared children of Argentina, the stolen children of Yemeni Jews returning to Israel, the mass graves of mother and baby homes in Ireland, the kidnapping of children from Haiti and Chad, etc. These are not aberrations from the norm. These represent the norm of adoption as it should be economically, politically, and historically understood. In this light, Lebanon's "orphans" were not "saved" from the wars on Lebanese soil, but were, in many cases, actively targeted for removal. This targeting, whether decidedly individual or obliquely communal, still maintains as contrary to any notion of human rights, dignity, citizenship, identity, or belonging.

Failed attempts to address these issues in Lebanon similarly are based in economic and political necessities. These include the affording of citizenship to some groups over others to maintain power balances within the nation-state, the abdication of the government in matters of social welfare, the imposition of foreign bases of legal practice, etc. Similarities between Lebanon and other source countries include the situation of proxy-driven wars; the establishment of a comprador class beholden to neo-liberal political and economic policies; notions of ethnic

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cleansing that form the basis of dominant ideologies; emigrant and diaspora populations that act as brokers in adoptive countries; the use of adoption as a hedge against abortion; as well as local missionary, political, and economic practices that favor/disfavor particular segments of society.

VII. THE ADOPTEE AS CITIZEN, DENIZEN, ALIEN

Adoption thus needs to be removed from its mythological conception as a means of family creation and instead categorized with similar extirpating practices: slavery, gentrification, immigration, deportation, incarceration, land occupation, apartheid, enforced statelessness, etc. Such a re-definition acknowledges the analogues of adoption that trade similarly in human flesh or genetic material: gamete donation, surrogacy, organ and human trafficking, etc. Adoption is also understood to be a function of other divisive migrations. One example would be the "white flight" from American cities and ensuing suburbanization during the economic boom years after World War II. The ensuing economic incentive to fill empty homes and yards reveals the class-based contrivance that resulted in the ability of adoptees to immediately attain what often took others (such as immigrants or former slaves) generations to accomplish, if at all. The "saved" adoptee thus acts as the perfected proxy of her less fortunate and readily disposable forebears.

A redefinition of adoption might be posited thus: Adoption is, in and of itself, a violence based in inequality. It is candy-coated, marketed, and packaged to seemingly concern families and children, but it is an economically and politically incentivized crime. It stems culturally and historically from the "peculiar institution" of Anglo-Saxon indentured servitude and not family creation. It is not universal and is not considered valid by most communal cultures. It is a treating of symptoms and not of disease. It is a reductive inversion of informal kinship practices. It is a negation of families and an annihilation of communities not imbued with any notion of humanity due to the adoptive cultures' inscribed biases concerning race, class, and human relevancy.

This redefinition requires an examination of the concept of citizenship as it applies to the objects of adoption practice. This notion of degree or sheer absence of citizenship can be expressed in agentive terms: Who is the actor or agent assigning such citizenship, yet whom does such citizenship serve and/or benefit? How valid, sustainable, long-lasting, extensible, or recuperable is it? In terms of a child slated for adoption, "citizenship" in the nation-state of birth is to the benefit of the adopters, and provides for the (seen as eternal) egress of the child from the nation-state of origin. The "right to have a child" of the adoptive family negates the "right to keep a child" of the biological family. Upon return, adoptees are hard-pressed to regain nationality or to understand the taint of their source projected onto them. Ironically, their success in this regard is often based not on the adult adoptee as local citizen, but on the value ascribed to his adoptive nation-state by those locally in power.

Adoptees are marked with a conception of bastardy, whether literally in their birth country or else figuratively and subliminally otherwise. In Lebanon, similar to those locally raised in orphanages, adoptees are officially registered as "foundling", and dashes serve to mark the names of parents unknown. This despite their attainment of family via adoption. This disinheritance is compounded by disenfranchisement, when the names of absent children remain on electoral rolls, with a resulting usurpation of their voices. All of these "children of sin", with no ability to lean on patrilineal source, face various forms of discrimination and an inability to function as full citizens throughout their lives. As such, their citizenship—the merest technical existence of their belonging to a nation-state—is belied by the extirpative instinct of nation-states toward them.

Depending on the nation-state of arrival, citizenship continues to be dubious. Adoptees in the U.S., for example, are being deported to their native countries with which they have no formal connection. Similar to their domestic

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counterparts, their place and presence may be called into question by extended adoptive family in terms of legal inheritance and other familial rights. The targeted use of naturalization processes and appellations of belonging, especially in times of crisis, play out in the questioning of adoptees' affiliation with their adoptive country at airports and border crossings. The ever-shifting targets of American foreign policy and wars reflects back to the treatment of adoptees within American society based on markers of race and class. This difference creates a hierarchy concerning adoptees as members of "model minorities" (J.R. Kim, 2012). Adoptees acculturated in different societies reiterate this hierarchy in terms of their relationship to their source nation-state, the religious and non-governmental organizations that adopted them, as well as with each other, thus reinforcing the original power structures and dynamics of adoption practice.

VIII. REGAINING PLACE AND REPOSSESSING *POLIS*

This agentive conception of citizenship deserves greater expansion. For until an adoptee's citizenship fully reflects her agency, defines an immutable status, and is beneficial to her own existence, the term remains a fallacy and a sophism. The adoptee is presented as a full member of the *polis*, and yet closer examination easily reveals her roots in and from the *zoë*. Such a redefinition places adoptees in a league with others displaced, dispossessed, and disinherited: refugees, migrants, slave laborers, the marginalized poor, racial and ethnic minorities, the imprisoned, etc. Adoption has not been extensively examined for its extirpating qualities and effects, due to its crafted mythology that it is functional only to family creation, and beneficial to all concerned. This willfully ignores those most affected by it: adoptees themselves, their mothers and families, as well as communities and originating places. Its existence precludes valid attempts to right societal inequalities and holistically address issues of family structure within society.

There has been little critical response from and engagement with those whose agency is denied and voices elided by the industry and practice of adoption. Adoptees remain the objects of study in terms of how they adapt and assimilate, with little focus on those who dispossessed, displaced, or disinherited them, or regard to their desire to return or repatriate. As adoptees come back to Lebanon in greater numbers, they explore other channels outside of the secretive and obtuse power structures that deny them their right to know their origins. As these channels—such as DNA tests and discussions with affected populations—disclose the sordid truth behind local adoption practice, it can be hoped that a valid and honest discussion on the subject will be forced to the fore.

Such narratives link adoptees to each other as well as to others locally who seek to re-find place and regain political embodiment. Beyond this, they expand into the stories of those with whom they share the categories of displaced, dispossessed, and disinherited. They connect with other case-study source countries also dealing with adoptees seeking a sense of self via return. They intersect with the myriad waves of migration currently occurring worldwide which, in their unwilled nature and basis in economic and political machinations, mirror their own journeys in no small way. Walking their razor's edge between *polis* and *zoë*, adoptees have a particular role to play in this grand endeavor of undoing the extirpation and deracination waged against them and their predecessors, of equalizing the two worlds they straddle. Leveling the playing field of discussion must be the first step before venturing into such a project. 10,000+ Lebanese adoptees have stories to tell, and in the aggregate the history they reveal will not likely be a pleasant one. Nonetheless, it is time for these stories to be told. Their addition to the evidence against adoption is due, and the time for adoption to be undone is now.

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