

Michael Goodrum: War, Profit, and Migration in *Firefly*

Firefly (2002) is a show preoccupied with movement and migration. In the 'verse, Mal and his crew, like the Confederate veterans of many Westerns, are displaced by the aftermath of war and the construction of a new regime to which they are ideologically opposed; the Reavers, the product of Alliance biological experimentation, are similarly placeless, and constantly rove the outer rim as a symptom of Alliance ideology. There are also settlers, generally depicted as economic migrants who leave the civilized (and expensive) core worlds for the uncivilized (and therefore cheap) outer rim in whatever vessels they can find to carry them. Whether they are setting out for a new and better life or fleeing persecution, or some combination of both, is hard to discern; it is far easier to ascertain those who benefit from such migration. 'Jaynestown' shows the conditions under which migrants work, with costs being kept low so that the benefits can be passed on to the consumer – and indeed the producer. Settling new planets is also costly, so although some individuals may attain a degree of independence and affluence in the process, it is to be expected that the main beneficiary of the conquest of these newly terraformed planets are the Alliance and the corporations who supply them, most notably Blue Sun, who operate a monopoly over seemingly all available commodities in the 'verse. This paper will investigate the shaping of individuals and their relationship to their surroundings through war and capitalism, placing emphasis on the role of migration, both forced and unforced.