THE MELODRAMA OF CARE IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CINEMA

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This project focuses on films that reveal concerns about care and subjectivity in a world transformed by neoliberalism, flexible capital, and globalization. As these films show, care is still necessary, but under the logic of neoliberalism and globalization, it becomes a fungible commodity that can be outsourced and delegated—often according to the cost-benefit analyses necessary for life under the entrepreneurial subjectivity espoused by neoliberalism. These films utilize melodramatic modes of expression to articulate the ethical imperative for care; the necessity for this articulation suggests that something is wrong with contemporary institutions and stances toward care, that the means to care falls short of the ideal of caring for loved ones. *The Savages* focuses on middle-aged siblings forced to take care of their estranged father after he develops dementia. The film serves as a critique of the neoliberal idea that subjects are only responsible for themselves by supporting a more communal vision of subjectivity through reassembling the family. *Dirty Pretty Things* shows how immigrants face a hostile reception in the wealthy nations to which they migrate. The film illustrates how draconian immigration policies force many into the black market not only for services that are denied them but also to barter their own bodies in hope of becoming full members of the global citizenry. *Nobody Knows* extends this discussion of the abdication

of the state's role in caring for its own citizens. Through the neglect of the children first by the family and then society as a whole, the film illustrates how even the most vulnerable members of society are isolated and forced to fend for themselves. Finally, *Take Care of My Cat* explores how the care between friends becomes increasingly instrumental as part of the construction of the self. The solidarity of their days as students erodes as each enters the work force, and class differences lead to a breakdown in friendships as self-care becomes the dominant ethic. In this context, care, friendship, and family become fungible commodities that can be discarded if they no longer serve in the project of the self.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: CARE IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CINEMA AND THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION, NEOLIBERALISM

In *The Individualized Society*, Zygmunt Bauman responds to Cain's infamous question, "Of course I am my brother's keeper [. . .] I am my brother's keeper because my brother's well-being *depends* on what I do or refrain from doing. And I am a moral person because I recognize that dependence and accept the responsibility that follows" (72). This is Bauman's defense of the welfare state as the state's way of engaging in the moral act of caring. As such, if we see ourselves as a moral society, we will take a more active interest in being each other's keeper. Unfortunately, welfare programs are shrinking. On the one hand, the rich no longer see the point in investing in welfare programs, and the less rich do not see their problems reflected in the problems of welfare recipients (78). The reasons for supporting the welfare state now fall on deaf ears because they have lost validity.

Cinema explores how the welfare state has lost its legitimacy. Film is one of the primary cultural forms that articulate how larger economic and geopolitical trends affect individuals. Films that place care at the center of its narratives, themes, and character relationships attempt to represent how the dictates of globalization and neoliberalism manifest differently in individual lives. Through narratives that present a crisis brought about by the need to care in the context of globalization and neoliberalism, these films not only articulate the desires of subjects but also attempt to provide solutions for how these desires can be fulfilled. Care focuses on the conceptions of self and society by

focusing on the subject and how he or she relates to society. It questions how individuals live their lives in a neoliberal nation-state that is no longer concerned with social welfare. Contemporary film shows how these issues get represented.

This is not to argue for nostalgic vision of the nation-state before the era of neoliberalism, flexible capital, and globalization. As Wendy Brown points out, the liberal democracies in the wealthy nations "have always required other peoples to pay—politically, socially, and economically—for what these societies have enjoyed; that is, there has always been a colonially and imperially inflected gap between what has been valued in the core and what has been required from the periphery" (51-52). Rather, a textual reading of films concerned with care can reveal the radical departure of neoliberal subjectivity and governmentality from liberal democratic visions. Neoliberalism comprehensively reorganizes how individuals see the world and states interact with their citizens to bring about a world ruled by market forces. It involves a radical individualism on the part of subjects so that they may behave as rational, market actors while pushing for a state that does not impede the "freedom" to do so. Care, however, focuses on how subjects rely on others for their ability to function in the world while also showing how it has been devalued through its commodification.

This dissertation will use textual readings of films concerned with care that illustrate these trends in the transformation of care. In addition to discussing notions of caring for family members, these films also focus on the care between friends and care between immigrant communities. Discussing care in non-familial relationships allows a broader conception of care that would attempt to address wider patterns of care and neglect within a particular society and a globalized, transnational world.

These films also focus on the various methods for caring, be it through the outsourcing of care to a nursing home staffed primarily by immigrant nurses, caring for undocumented workers who are exploited for their organs in the black market, or the beeping of cell phones as text messages are sent and received. All of these films deal with the position and methods of care when local expectations of care collide with the demands of global capital. The readings will attempt to reveal the concerns about care and subjectivity in a world transformed by neoliberalism, flexible capital, and globalization.

Jean Tronto goes into more detail as to why we do not see care more integrated into public policy making. Tronto traces the role of morality in making decisions, and in particular "women's morality" that is associated with the "values of caring and nurturance, of stressing the importance of human relationships as key elements of the good life" (2). She analyzes how these values were excluded in the public sphere by identifying three moral boundaries.

The first was the notion that there was a boundary between morality and politics. Tronto states, "In modern thinking, either one or the other of these two realms of life becomes instrumental to the other, or the two should be as separated from each other as possible" (8). This idea excluded women's morality from political decision-making.

The second was that a theory of morality should be determined through reason and separated from "the concrete circumstances of any given society" (9). What was defined as "the moral point of view" came increasingly to mean from "the standpoint of disinterested and disengaged moral actors" (9). This not only meant that morality would be separated from emotion and feeling, but by defining morality as emanating from

reason, the position dictated that morality should be universal rather than bound to local customs (9).

The third boundary was between public and private life in Western thought, and since women were restricted to the private realm, their ideas of morality were kept from public discourse. Tronto sees these three boundaries as responsible for how women's morality arguments were made less effective (10). Thus, the values associated with women's morality became devalued as well.

Of these boundaries, the boundary of "the moral point of view" requires further discussion. Tronto explains the consequences of using reason as the primary defining characteristic of morality:

> In the first place, morality becomes a realm beyond the world of emotions and feelings, and thus part of reason only. In the second place, morality understood in this way should not be shaped by local customs or habits, and should appear to be as universal as the capacities of humans to reason. In the third place, insofar as there are local variations, they must be attributed to a lower order of moral thought, preserving the highest order for this depersonalized rational thought. In the fourth place, moral philosophers need to concentrate on the nature of moral thought, not on how to make certain that actors act morally (9).

This definition of morality was very much an attempt to deal with the greater distances that the modern nation state and empires governed. A universal morality based on reason meant the following:

> [I]ndividuals need not know much about the other individuals who are also following the rules [or] assume much intimacy among members of the same moral community. Such members may even be located at great distances from one another, but since they share a commitment to the same rules to govern moral conduct, they need not fear the immoral conduct of others. These conditions seem to describe the conditions of human life that prevail in the presence of a geographically large, diverse, market-oriented, world. (29)

Thus, the resultant conception of morality was intertwined with the growing dominance of a market-based economy that required people located at great distances from each other to participate in the market so that it could sustain itself and grow. As Tronto states, "By the end of the eighteenth century, moral theories that drew upon the local for its logic, its creation, and its expression, were no longer viable" (37).

Thus, Tronto's discussion of the exclusion of morality points to the following developments. First, the exclusion of "women's morality" meant that many of the values associated with it have been delegitimized. Second, by turning to reason as the favored means of articulating moral arguments, it meant morality became abstracted and universalized so as to be transferable over great distances. The impetus for this transition was the establishment of the modern nation-state organized under a burgeoning market economy that sought uniform rules to govern greater distances.

The promulgation of moral theories that no longer rely and reflect local concerns continue to this day, in particular through globalization and neoliberalism. Globalization is described by Bauman as "the emerging planetary dimensions of business, finance,

trade and information flow" (*Globalization* 2). It is the market logic on a global scale through the weakening of nation-states as the primary agents of policy and the use of technology to coordinate instantaneous movements of capital and decision-making throughout the world. Meanwhile, "neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player" (Brown 39-40). Globalization and neoliberalism attempt to spread market logic throughout the globe and into every aspect of human life at the expense of local concerns and needs and any attempts at ways of life that lie outside market logic.

In response to these developments, the goal of Tronto's ethic of care is to create a "morally admirable society" that can "adequately provide care for its members and its territory" (126). Care has two characteristics that make it important: "first, care implies a reaching out to something other than the self: it is neither self-referring nor self-absorbing. Second, care implicitly suggests that it will lead to some type of action" (102).

So care means engaging with others and acting to meet their needs. Tronto seeks to place care centrally in political discourse, pointing out that the "self-made" person could not have achieved their wealth and power "without the support and assistance of many others" (177). Care emphasizes the dependency of individuals on one another and stands in stark contrast to the subjectivity and morality promoted by neoliberalism:

> [N]eoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life. It figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their

> capacity for “self-care”—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions. In making the individual fully responsible for her- or himself, neoliberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action; it erases the discrepancy between economic and moral behavior by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences. But in so doing, it carries responsibility for the self to new heights: the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action—for example, lack of skills, education, and child care in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits. (Brown 42)

Brown shows that neoliberalism conflates morality and entrepreneurial rationality, which demands that responsibility for failures in decision-making lies solely with the individual. By emphasizing self-care, it denies the possibility that care from others contributed to the success or failure of the individual. According to market logic, then, there is no debt to be paid to society for success, but also, since society is not in any way responsible for the failure of the individual, society bears no obligation to the individual. Thus, society and individuals are alienated from one another. An ethic of care would attempt to confront this alienation and neoliberalism’s construction of the ideal subject.

However, care itself becomes a contested concept as neoliberalism attempts to transform the definition of care. Care is still necessary, but under the logic of neoliberalism and globalization, it becomes a fungible commodity that can be outsourced

and delegated. As such, the distribution of care and analysis of society's care relationships can "cast in stark relief where structures of power and privilege exist in society" (Tronto 175).

If care relationships reflect the power relationships in society, then in a globalized world these relationships are global in nature. The powerful can demand care, but at the same time care-givers are treated with disdain and dismissal so as to obscure the dependence of the powerful on those who care for them (174). Devaluing care work is a consequence of neoliberal individualism, and this means that those who perform care work are often the global have-nots, those citizens who lie at the bottom of the global hierarchy and are forced to take whatever jobs are available.

The devaluation of care has ramifications for the family. Care is still considered a primary function of the family to meet the material, emotional, and developmental needs of its members. As Eli Zaretsky states, "the family is the institution in which one's personal uniqueness is central. It is the crucible in which our emotional life first takes shape and throughout life is the major institution in our society in which we expect to be recognized and cared for, for ourselves" (17). The family nurtures and celebrates individuals—with all their idiosyncrasies—through care. However, it is also ideologically separated from the public sphere by emphasizing its difference from other human relationships, such as political and economic arrangements:

> But the overall tendency of capitalist development has been to socialize the basic processes of commodity production – to remove labour from the private efforts of individual families or villages and to centralize it in large-scale corporate units. Capitalism is the first society in history to

> socialize production on a large scale. With the rise of industry, capitalism 'split' material production between its socialized forms (the sphere of commodity production) and the private labour performed predominantly by women within the home. (29)

Zaretsky echoes Tronto's moral boundaries in noting that in the separation of the family from production, women were also kept from public social forms through their isolation within the family and the home. Despite policies that attempt to support the family and its needs, the family is always in danger of becoming isolated if such support is withdrawn and other, more informal social forms such as friends and extended communities are not present. The danger to the care of the individual is what happens when it becomes a situation of the family or nothing.

But the fact that the family is seen as a unique institution separated from the rest of society clearly does not mean that economic developments have not affected the family and care within the family. As the family was not immune to the changes brought about by industrial capitalism, it is also not immune to the effects of neoliberalism and globalization. Neoliberalism's emphasis on self-care and its insistence on extending market rationality to all aspects of life have changed the way family members relate and care for each other. Care in the family transforms so that it takes on many more cost/benefit calculations about who performs care and how much time is given to care. However, despite neoliberalism's radical individualism, more communal and utopian models of the family persist and exist in tension with the tenets of neoliberalism.

One of the most significant developments in how we view care has been how care work has become commodified. It is not the commodification of care work per se that is

new; what is unique about care work today is the extent to which all aspects of care work have been commodified and the globalization of the care workforce. Many of the care jobs are filled by overseas workers migrating from poorer nations to wealthier nations, and the jobs they perform fill every niche of a care sector that is expanding rapidly.

These workers are forced to move, traveling abroad to work as nannies, maids, and sex workers. The reason for this is what Arlie Hochschild describes as "The Taylorized Family" (*The Time Bind* 209). According to Hochschild, "capitalism and technological developments have long been gradually deskilling parents at home" (209). This process has largely been brought about by providing "commercial substitutes for jobs a mother once did at home" such as "store-bought goods [. . .] daycare for children, retirement homes for the elderly, wilderness camps for delinquent children, [and] even psychotherapy" (209). This deskilling in the home combines with companies creating "instant villages where employees can do all the things they never have time to do at home," which has the effect of establishing "a culture of outsourced care" (xxiv).

While outsourcing care work appears to liberate women to join the public sphere and work outside the home, the purpose of this outsourcing is to encourage workers to devote more time and attention to their jobs, so in that sense, the services that companies provide for their employees are not really free. Employees are expected to work longer hours and be available to work late or on weekends, which represents an encroachment by work on personal and family time. Pinched for time at home, employees look to farm out tasks and errands to immigrants from poor nations or members of the underclass who work for relatively low wages to fill the care gap that has formed because of increased demands from work.

The colonization of workers' time at home has affected women the most. Besides the increasing demands from work, Barbara Ehrenreich and Hochschild point out that the idea of women as good mothers and wives persist: "affluent careerwomen increasingly earn their status not through leisure, as they might have a century ago, but by apparently 'doing it all'—producing a fulltime career, thriving children, a contented spouse, and a well-managed home" (4). Furthermore, they point out "the marked failure of First World governments to meet the needs created by its women's entry into the workforce" (8-9). In particular, "the United States does not offer public child care for working mothers, nor does it ensure paid family and medical leave" (9). Finally, "Numerous studies, including some of our own, have shown that as American women took on paid employment, the men in their families did little to increase their contribution to the work of the home" (9). This hits children of divorce particularly hard: "With divorce, men frequently abdicate their child-care responsibilities to their ex-wives" (9).

The importance of pointing out these reasons for the care gap and the increased outsourcing of care is that too often, the focus on the evils of outsourcing care work are focused on women. This suggests care work is still mostly seen as the province of women, which deflects attention from the responsibility of men and social institutions to provide care. Thus, despite neoliberalism's focus on self-care and individual responsibility, traditional notions of the role of the family and women persist so that the burden of care falls mostly on women. But care, particularly childcare, requires much more than the mother. As Stephanie Coontz points out, "[G]ood childrearing has always required *more* than two parents. If there is any pattern to be found in the variety of families that have succeeded and failed over the course of history, it is that children do

best in societies where childrearing is considered too important to be left entirely to parents" (230). Care and the family are useful for observing the contradictions of neoliberalism and globalization. It shows how responsibilities are not the same for all subjects; when it comes to care, responsibility still means different things for men and women. Furthermore, care shows how the ability to partake in globalized culture and finance relies on the intervention of care to allow entry into the world of global elites.

Providing this care has resulted in a mass migration of women for care jobs. The social reorganization due to this "culture of outsourcing" "pulls" migrant workers from the poorer nations to fill the "care deficit" that has formed due to work's encroachment on personal and family time, while poverty in their own country "*pushes* them" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 8).

Accordingly, analyzing care relationships exposes global power relationships. Care workers usually migrate from poor regions (South Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Central America) to the wealthier nations (Western and Northern Europe, oil rich Gulf states, the United States and Canada) (Espinoza 275-280). They are forced to move, often leaving behind their own families. Furthermore, those who are illegal immigrants looking for jobs without work visas must smuggle themselves into the country and, once there, make themselves as invisible as possible to prevent deportation. The remittances they send back to their families is a more secretive, underground economy that mimics the capital flows of multinational corporations. This similarity shows that while we may think of global elites and the migrating poor occupying completely different realms, the imperative to move exists for both groups. Here, it is useful to discuss Bauman's characterization of the elites as "tourists," while the global

poor are “vagabonds” (*Globalization* 92). The difference between the two seems to boil down to the “degree of mobility” (86) where “tourists move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly *attractive*—the vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*” (93). Bauman’s use of tourists and vagabonds focuses on mobility as the primary way in which globalization affects and differentiates individuals. The image of the tourist traveling to consume experiences versus the vagabond migrating to look for work evokes many of the inequalities of globalization.

The degree of mobility is also tied to the image of the absentee landlord. Outsourcing is made possible by telecommunications, which allow overseas factories to be monitored and controlled in real time from corporate headquarters. This points to “the newly acquired independence of global elites from territorially confined units of political and cultural power, and the consequent ‘disempowerment’ of the latter” (3). That is, globalization allows elites to control localities from a distance, and this distance allows them to function outside of local laws and customs because institutions such as states and governments to not have jurisdiction beyond their own borders. In terms of mobility, this means that tourists possess both the freedom to go where they want and avoid the places they do not want to go, which allows them to avoid the constraints of local power. The power of global elites to control their concerns over great distances dovetails into Tronto’s discussion of the different phases of care. The division of labor in care means that someone can provide the resources, such as money, to care, and then the physical act of care work can be done by a care worker (Tronto 106-107). Like the absentee landlord,

the person in charge of identifying who needs to be cared for does not actually need to be present for care to be performed.

Much of care work is also geared to the needs of global elites. Tronto blames the "instrumental quality" where "much caring is only valuable insofar as it allows the pursuit of other ends by those whose needs are most thoroughly met" (116). This is one of the ways that care work is devalued, in that it becomes work tailored to the needs of the class of citizens who benefit most from globalization. The tourist travels, and the locales they travel to conform to the expectations of the traveler; linens are changed in five-star hotels in the global south just as they are in the north. ATMs that automatically calculate exchange rates and partnerships between multinational banks ensure that money travels seamlessly with the tourist. The care and service is rendered as invisible as possible as everything happens behind the scenes—whether it is the maid service or the electronic data that instantly and safely transfers money across national boundaries—so as not to disturb the tourists' focus on consumption.

If globalization splits people into tourists and vagabonds, then care exposes and collapses these differences. Care reveals that tourists are not as independent as they would believe, because their mobile existence would not be possible without the work being done behind the scenes by the caregivers. The ability of the tourist to travel freely comes only by way of outsourcing obligations and constructing the notion of the "zero drag" employee who is unencumbered and able to pick up and move at a moment's notice (Hochschild xix). Care reveals the social infrastructure and the work that must be done to allow such an unencumbered subject to exist; the work that others must do so that a privileged few can travel light.

The representation of care in popular culture says much about the values, stresses, and anxieties associated with the obligations of care. Each of the films deploys melodramatic conventions for its affect. Drawing on the extensive literature of film melodrama, I hope to illustrate how melodrama helps us understand care, such as the moral assumptions at the heart of what constitutes "proper" care, the obstacles in the way of ensuring the administration of necessary care, and how the demands of global capital and its impact on social relationships interact with melodramatic conventions to enunciate contemporary conceptions of care.

Melodrama is particularly suited for this purpose because it is associated with matters of the heart, the family, and articulating social contradictions and the moral values of a society. As Chuck Kleinhans states, "Under capitalism people's personal needs are restricted to the sphere of the family, of personal life, and yet the family cannot meet the demands of being all that the rest of society is not. This basic contradiction forms the raw material of melodrama" (200). The inadequacy of the family for meeting every need forms the basis of melodrama in its narrative conventions, its formal conventions, and the highly expressive gestures that characterize melodramatic performances. According to Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, this creates an aesthetic of excess that represents the siphoning off into the music or the *mise-en-scène* of the "undischarged emotion" that cannot be accommodated by narrative or the action (272). The inability of narrative and action to resolve fully the social contradictions presented within a movie moves toward formal excess as a way to express the ineffability of characters' suffering. The excess often takes form as an opulent *mise-en-scène*, a surging soundtrack, or bodily reactions such as the tears of characters or the spectacle of the suffering body. Each of

these formal techniques point toward what Peter Brooks describes as the "moral occult" which is "the domain of operative spiritual values" that lies beneath the surface reality of the movie (5). It is through the moral occult that melodrama articulates the moral and spiritual values at the heart of melodramatic texts. Texts that deploy melodrama point to a world that should be—a utopia where needs are met, contradictions are smoothed over, and moral virtues become clearly articulated. These films utilize melodramatic modes of expression to articulate the ethical imperative for care; the necessity for this articulation suggests that something is wrong with contemporary institutions and stances toward care, that the means to care falls short of the ideal of caring for loved ones.

Brooks discusses muteness as another technique "to render meanings which are ineffable, but nonetheless operative within the sphere of human ethical relationships" (72). Such expressions are written on the body; gesture makes the body the site of the battle between good and evil, and reveals a level of meaning that dialogue cannot express. The inability to speak becomes a metaphor for the virtue of heroes or heroines, who valiantly suffer in silence. In much the same way, disability in literary texts has often been used as a "narrative prosthesis," "a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (Mitchell and Snyder 206). The disabled body lies outside the norm of the able body, and as such, its appearance in literary and cinematic texts has a calculated intent. As spectacle, the disabled body disrupts or creates a crisis within the narrative and motivates the narrative to find solutions for this rupture.

Films deploy disabled bodies because "the disabled figure operates as the vividly embodied, stigmatized other whose social role is to symbolically free the privileged,

idealized figure of the American self from the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment" (Thomson 7). As the other, the values and prejudices ascribed to the disabled figure allow it to be in binary opposition to the idealized, able-bodied subject. In other words, the disabled body—as a symbol of non-mobility—allows the "American self" to construct itself not only as an able, mobile body, but one that is free "from the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment." If, as Bauman states, the ideal global citizen is the tourist, the disabled figure allows the tourist to construct itself in opposition to the disabled body (*Globalization* 92). The desire is to transcend embodiment—to leave the body behind.

David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder discuss the "physiognomy of disability" and how the deviation from the physical norm is often extended to the "misalignment of subjectivity itself" (57). Characters become defined by their disability; the outward appearance explains the inner workings of character. Often this character is a disruptive character defined by his or her disability. The disabled body stands in contrast to a normative body. Disability becomes something that needs to be solved, or the flaw in character brought about by the disability must be defeated, fixed, or somehow dealt with. It demands to be addressed and often provides the sole justification for propelling the narrative. The way the narrative or text solves this disruption says much about ideology and the able-bodied subjectivity that stands in contrast to the disabled subject.

In the context of contemporary ideals of the self, disability functions in two ways. First, its ability to help define the normative, able-bodied self helps articulate the ideal global subject who is mobile and moves with speed. Second, disability again brings up issues of care since disabled citizens require some degree of care. The care, however, can

take the form of not just person-to-person care but investments in infrastructure and legislation that allows disabled citizens access to society that able-bodied citizens take for granted. This could mean something as obvious as building codes that ensure disabled citizens can access these buildings, but it can also mean larger social programs such as extending health insurance so that it covers disabled citizens' needs. Like discourses of childrearing, disability cannot simply be left to families, but requires a concerted effort from society as a whole.

The primary texts for this dissertation, then, not only represent care and the assumptions that constitute proper and "good" care, but they also examine how globalization and neoliberalism affects care. These movies address questions like who deserves care, who administers care, and what are the obstacles for proper care?

But in addition to these thematic similarities, the films share a market niche in their distribution and exhibition in the way they circulate around world cinema markets. Three of the four films premiered at well-known film festivals: *The Savages* at Sundance in 2007, *Nobody Knows* at Cannes in 2004, and *Dirty Pretty Things* in Venice in 2002. While *Take Care of My Cat* premiered in South Korea, the film made the rounds at international film festivals before its limited release in world film markets. The global circulation of these films despite their modest budgets and box office grosses represents the globalization of the film industry. Their popularity and circulation relies upon an audience that sees film as an art form that transcends national boundaries, contributing to a hybrid "world film." Indeed, these films are part of the cosmopolitan global film culture that Zygmunt Bauman identifies as the dominant culture of globalization—that of the tourists (*Globalization* 101). As such, the films not only attempt to articulate the

problems of care in a globalized, neoliberal context but also represent how film is subject to the same pressures as care. On the one hand, the films tap into humanist and liberal-democratic values that strives for an ethic that transcends national boundaries, but on the other hand they also rely on marketing auteurs from different national film traditions for its legitimacy. In other words, these films are symptomatic of the same globalizing and commodifying forces that they attempt to deal with in the films.

In *The Savages* (2007), the movie explores the obligations of a brother (Jon) and sister (Wendy) whose absentee and deadbeat father (Lenny) has developed dementia. Through the act of taking care of their father, the film shows how care is outsourced to immigrant care workers. Furthermore, the siblings' reliance on expert systems reveals the mistrust in their own ability to care for their father. This, in turn, focuses attention on how Jon and Wendy are terrible at taking care of themselves; they self-medicate, are involved in unhappy romantic relationships, and are professionally frustrated. Through the need to care for their father, the characters transform into those who primarily only care themselves to characters who begin to care for each other; in this way, the film serves as a critique of the neoliberal idea that subjects are only responsible for themselves by supporting a more communal vision of subjectivity through reassembling the family. *The Savages* attempts to articulate a way for individuals to reconstitute the solidarity that is lost through the radical individualism celebrated by neoliberalism, but at the same time it relies on the intervention of care workers who have migrated to the United States. As a result, the critique cannot escape recreating some of the power relationships that are inevitable through global capital.

Dirty Pretty Things—a 2002 feature by Stephen Frears—focuses on the care-givers. The film follows Okwe and Senay, two immigrants with shaky legal status within Britain who work in the shadow economy that exploits cheap, immigrant labor. The film focuses on the mobility of these characters and represents Bauman's global vagabonds, who are compelled to move. However, due to the desperation born of poverty and their shaky legal status, their travel is filled with danger not only from those who exploit them for labor, but also from aggressive authorities enforcing draconian immigration policies. The most harrowing of these dangers is the black market organ trade, where promises of cash or a passport from a wealthy nation are exchanged for migrant workers' organs. When things go wrong during the surgery, the donors have precious few avenues for help; they fear going to hospitals because of the risk of deportation and are left to fend for themselves in finding medical care. The film illustrates how dangerous the world is for these migrant workers and focuses on the severe sacrifices these workers must make to obtain their freedom from their marginalized existence. The black market organ trade shows, through the bodies of the immigrants, how capital commodifies the bodies of immigrants as discrete organs for sale. Couched ironically as "choice," the film critiques the freedom to choose as being distributed unevenly between the citizens of wealthy nations and the migrant laborers within them. Caught between a black market that represents the most unchecked version of a market economy and a nation-state that denies even the most basic services, *Dirty Pretty Things* represents the logical end product of a neoliberal discourse that attempts to extend market logic into all phases of life while it simultaneously promotes a governmentality that is stripped of all its functions except policing.

I will then move into discussing two movies from East Asia, *Nobody Knows* (2004) and *Take Care of My Cat* (2001) which deal with anxieties about care and the status of the family in their respective countries. *Nobody Knows* is based on a true story known as the "Affair of the four abandoned children of Sugamo" which occurred in 1988. The story is about four children abandoned by their mother and who survive on their own for months. The film documents the dangers and fragility of children's well being when care is insufficient.

The film explores the reasons for the children's abandonment. Thus, it examines the social forces that devalue care of children and the family. Upon first glance, the film casts the mother as the villain in the film, and certainly, her decision to abandon the children is horrifying. However, while her characterization is certainly damning and unsympathetic, the film is also an indictment of society at-large, as the fathers are shown to be just as self-obsessed and negligent as the mother. The children are also ignored by their neighbors, who choose to be willfully ignorant when confronted with the warning signs of children in deep trouble.

Nobody Knows focuses on how the nuclear family is isolated from society. While the family has traditionally been seen as a social form isolated from the public sphere, the logic that leads to this isolation is unique from previous discourses. The needs of adults and children are not in sync in the film, demonstrating a breakdown in familial solidarity and mutual sacrifice. The causes of this dissolution appear to happen for two reasons: the desire to outsource care, and the devaluation of care in general. This manifests itself in the apartment, as it becomes a space that is not particularly welcome to children and that functions more as a prison where children are denied access to the public sphere.

This social hierarchy and the asymmetry in opportunities and outcomes is also a major theme in *Take Care of My Cat* (2001). *Take Care of My Cat* is about five young women from Incheon, South Korea. The story details the breakdown in a tightly knit network of friends as the career aspirations of one, the poverty of another, and the wanderlust of a third causes their relationship to break down. Like *Nobody Knows*, the film depicts the breakdown of the nuclear family. But it also deliberates on how friendships break down while also focusing on the reasons that friendships form. Increasingly resembling the temporary arrangements of market exchange, friends and family are no longer secure sources of care and forming identities. The ability to consume the favored commodities of globalization—fashion and images—becomes a distinguishing feature in constructing identity. The differences in the ability to consume and what is consumed create schisms between families and old friends while simultaneously allowing new connections to form. The backdrop to this drama is the contrasting space of Incheon and Seoul, where the former is depicted as a remnant of the industrialized, Fordist nation-state while the latter is portrayed as the cosmopolitan, globalized state trading in information and images. The titular cat becomes a representation of the care obligations that must be pawned off on others if one wishes to be free to travel and join global elites.

Through these films, individuals attempt to negotiate a world organized through flexible capital, neoliberalism, and globalization. The characters seek security and belonging through human relationships, but as they do so, they must confront the forces that make it increasingly difficult to find help and support when care is both lacking and devalued.

CHAPTER II

"IT'S MIDDLE-AGED AND DEPRESSING": EMOTIONAL LABOR AND CARE IN *THE SAVAGES*

In 2007's *The Savages*[1], the film opens with a slow-motion montage of senior citizens frolicking in Sun City, a retirement community in Arizona. The quality of the montage is dreamlike/hyper-real, presenting to us a peculiar if consoling image of satisfied elderly residents. As the montage unfolds, the soundtrack plays "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard" performed by Peggy Lee, a singer popular during the mid-century big band era. The song evokes the period that constituted the youth of these residents. It is, moreover, a nostalgic song in that it documents a quarrel between two children, both of whom have since grown up and become lifelong friends. They make up the day after the argument with a kiss, and the episode stands as a monument to both their friendship and their childhood. The quarrel is sung as a refrain, but this time as a "sweet dream of childhood." As this song continues, in the montage women emerge from behind a hedge dressed in identical blue, sequined dresses and dance together in a choreographed routine. The dance, like the song, contrasts youth with old age, drawing out their similarities: both are periods of play and lesser responsibility to family and community. From these dancing women, a tracking shot then moves us through a suburban street lined with cacti and palm trees and scenes of seniors playing golf, exercising to aqua aerobics, and playing bocce ball. It is a suburban desert paradise, reflecting what we hope is the ease, tranquility, and pleasure of life as it nears its end.

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[1] All references are from *The Savages*, Dir. Tamara Jenkins, Perf. Laura Linney, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Philip Bosco, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2007.

At the same time as we listen to Peggy Lee's sentimental crooning of childhood and watch the images of cheerfully active seniors who are embracing this second childhood, the montage sequence introduces us to the community of Sun City, one of the many age-restricted communities in the U.S. The community is famous / notorious for its stringent policies disallowing children as long-term residents. The age rules stipulate the following: children under nineteen may visit a total of ninety days per year per residence, but they may not live in Sun City; each dwelling unit must contain at least one person 55 or over; visiting children must not make excessive noise; there are severe restrictions on children's use of the pool, golf courses, and bowling game areas to prevent them from disturbing long-term residents ("Age Rules"). In other words, these policies imply that living the good life in Sun City means not having to care for children and other dependents. In turn, residents can count on the community to take care of them exclusively. Sun City represents a generation choosing to isolate itself from other generations by divesting itself of the need to care. In this way, the montage represents the generations' alienation from each other based not only on generational cultural differences—exemplified by the distinctive and old-fashioned Peggy Lee song and theatrical dance routine—but also through spatial segregation.

As the film progresses, we are moved to reconsider the harmony and joy presented by the montage as a veneer covering a far more unsettling reality occurring within the community. This opening montage of senior citizens at play contrasts with the following scene in which we are introduced to Sun City resident Lenny Savage. He lives with his senile girlfriend, Doris Metzger, who is cared for by Eduardo, a home health care professional. When Eduardo takes Lenny's cereal away to punish Lenny for not flushing

the toilet, Lenny retaliates by writing “PRICK” on the bathroom wall with his own feces. As we soon see, this recalcitrant action on Lenny’s part necessitates a call reporting his behavior to his children. It becomes apparent that while the care worker provided some attention to Lenny in the course of his assistance to Doris, he is ultimately responsible only for managing Doris’s quality of life, as he is paid solely for that role. Lacking a paid care professional of his own, Lenny’s care reverts back to his closest kin when he begins to exhibit signs of greater decline.

What the opening montage and its segue to Lenny’s introduction together represent are the central tensions that will be developed throughout the film as it considers what happens when estranged family members must, when one of the family members becomes disabled and dependent, reassemble the family unit and redefine essential roles and relationships of power and responsibility. We see in this film that it is an uneasy revision, and complicating the characters’ individual choices are the social and economic ideologies—expert systems—that simultaneously affirm and disrupt them. *The Savages* draws to the foreground, with painful clarity, how the institutional systems and cultural operations meant to simplify and regulate relations between generations and classes produce great personal and emotional costs, even as they seek to mute and make them invisible.

The film begins developing these complications immediately. Following the opening scenes, the movie cuts to the New York apartment of Wendy Savage, Lenny’s daughter. We watch as she receives a message from Doris Metzger’s daughter informing her that Lenny is exhibiting symptoms of dementia. In medical and psychological fields, dementia is a malady widely recognized as causing a breakdown of the self: the

memories used to construct the self deteriorate as the disease erodes the mind's ability to reflexively organize itself. Yet, the movie does not dwell on Lenny's experience of his decline. Instead, from this point forward, it follows primarily the point of view of Lenny's children, Jon and Wendy; Lenny's struggle with dementia and physical decline becomes a device for revealing the difficulties Jon and Wendy face in trying to care for their father, a narrative "crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (Mitchell and Snyder 206). In this, Lenny's dementia represents a multitude of negative social values: the loss of an individual's independence, the breakdown of personal bonds as he has trouble recognizing his children, the difficulty of discerning reality from fiction, and the disruptions his disability causes in the lives of his children. In his struggles with his progressing dementia, Lenny, for example, acts impulsively and loses his self-control over mundane disruptions by enacting petty reprisals with his excrement against professional helpers and, in a later scene, yelling at his children in public.

Indeed, the insights to be gleaned from such scenes where Lenny's disability so obviously costs him in very intimate and personal ways are instead pitched toward Wendy and Jon; that is, the "lessons" of Lenny's deterioration and eventual death are located not in what they mean to him and his identity but Wendy's and Jon's reactions—what he is costing them emotionally. Lenny's disability means that they must care for him in a material sense, but it also highlights their own various physical and emotional vulnerabilities. We discover that they are both inept at caring for themselves and managing their own lives, so while the movie ostensibly follows their attempts to provide

care for their father, it increasingly devotes more time to Jon and Wendy's strategies for self-care and care for one another.

In early scenes, Jon and Wendy have very different attitudes towards caring for Lenny. Jon approaches the problem in a very practical and deliberate manner. For Jon, caring for Lenny is calculated according to rules of investment and return. Responding to Wendy's guilt after they drop Lenny off at a nursing home, Jon attempts to console her by telling her, "We're doing the right thing, Wen. We're taking better care of the old man than he ever did of us." Jon's attitude reflects what Eva Illouz refers to as "emotional capitalism":

> Emotional capitalism is a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other, thus producing what I view as a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional life—especially that of the middle classes—follows the logic of economic relations and exchange. (5)

In other words, our attitude toward, experience of, and management of emotions look increasingly like market transactions. Meanwhile, economic relations are mediated by sentiment and emotion, lending them a sense of moral weight and personal importance. Thus, Jon's contention that they are taking *better* care of Lenny than he ever did of them implies that Lenny is receiving more than he *deserves*. The logic here is that the amount of care one is entitled to receive has a direct relationship to how much care one gave. Rather than a uniform standard for care, care fluctuates according to how much one decided to care in the past for those who are now enjoined to deliver a return on care.

Providing care in the past becomes an investment for receiving care in the future. Jon, who appears to have been the target of physical abuse from Lenny, is satisfied with sticking Lenny in a nursing home and letting Medicaid pay for it. As far as Jon is concerned, going to Arizona to pick up Lenny, admitting him into the nursing home, and occasionally visiting him is more than enough. We get the sense that caring for Lenny is somewhat of a nuisance for Jon, or at least something to be dealt with quickly and efficiently so that he can get back to writing his book on Bertolt Brecht. In this way, Jon's statement reflects how the ideology of market exchange determines the emotions and, by extension, care he and Wendy are expected to expend for and on Lenny.

Wendy, on the other hand, feels guilt and wants to find a better nursing home for Lenny, and she frames the economic transactions of care in emotional terms. Dismayed at the sterile, institutional atmosphere of The Valley View, she looks over brochures for other nursing homes in the hopes of finding a better one. She is drawn to Greenhill Manor after watching a video brochure for it that makes the following pitch:

> We know this is one of the toughest decisions of your life. What to do when the parent who took care of you can no longer take care of themselves? That's why here, at Greenhill Manor, we are committed to providing the highest quality of care for your loved ones. Our board-certified physicians are dedicated to maximizing both the physical and emotional well-being of your elder. Come celebrate 100 years of award-winning care.

The advertisement is directed at the children of the senior citizens and promises the "highest quality of care" for parents. As the voiceover plays, the video begins with the

scene an old man walking hand-in-hand with his granddaughter in a field. This scene then cuts to one of a middle-aged man pushing his mother in a wheelchair. The message of both images is simple: allow the professionals at Greenhill Manor to repay your debt to your parent(s). In doing so, you can become a closer family sans the enormous burden of end-of-life care that would otherwise deteriorate a happy family. The fact that Jon and Wendy are willing to take care of their abusive father throws an interesting wrinkle into the relationship. After all, as Jon says, they are taking care of Lenny *better* than Lenny ever did of them. It suggests a surfeit—an excess of care and perhaps more than Lenny deserves. In Jon's opinion, this excess of care should therefore be enough to pay back what little they owe to Lenny, and thereby assuage Wendy's guilt at putting him in a nursing home. Care is currency in this scenario, and the debt that guilt represents is paid for with care.

But for Wendy, it isn't simply that they are packing Lenny off to a nursing home: the difficulty seems to have more to do with which nursing home in which they are placing him. Her initial reaction to The Valley View is guilt and shame. As they walk through the halls following the nurse in charge of admitting Lenny, Wendy peeks inside the various rooms. Lenny's room is, of course, spare and empty since they haven't had a chance to decorate the place with more intimate décor. Shown in a harsh fluorescent light with the crisp, sterile white sheets of a hospital, Lenny's room looks cold and uninviting. It looks like a hospital room, which suggests the temporary and morbid nature of Lenny's residence. They leave Lenny for the night and, taking advice from the nurse, leave without any emotional goodbyes so as not to "get [Lenny] agitated before he's had time to settle in to his new home."

This scene of Lenny's admittance to The Valley View is meant to contrast to the scenes in the Greenhill Manor video brochure, and it serves to suture the audience into Wendy's point of view through shot / reverse shot. Jon and Wendy install Lenny at night in The Valley View, its cold purpose undisguised by the sterile environment. The demographics of care professionals in this scene indicate that patients will have limited or superficial access to palliative care. The assumption this scene exploits is that nurses, lower-paid because lacking the advanced intellectual education of medical doctors, lack the ability to provide care in full. In contrast, the video brochure for Greenhill Manor is shot in daylight with warm lighting and takes place outdoors on immaculately manicured lawns. The doctor who consults with the family about the elderly parent / patient provides a warm two-handed handshake, suggesting that staff will go the extra mile not only to keep the patients healthy, but they will also administer to the emotional needs of the family members who are leaving their loved one in Greenhill Manor's care. Moreover, there are no nurses in the video; when staff appear in the video, they are all represented as doctors (indicated by their white lab coats). The suggestion is, of course, that Greenhill Manor's quality of care is superior because doctors, not nurses, undertake to perform or personally supervise each patient's daily care. Moreover, the video shows family members holding hands and hugging at Greenhill Manor, whereas Wendy and Jon are instructed at The Valley View to restrain themselves from emotional displays. Certainly, to Wendy, the emotional terrain at Greenhill Manor appears much warmer and affectionate.

Of course, the point here is not whether or not Greenhill Manor is, in fact, a better nursing home than The Valley View. It is that Wendy has latched onto a representation,

which now motivates her intense desire to move Lenny from The Valley View to Greenhill Manor. We see (as Wendy cannot) in the shot / reverse shot that what is being sold in the video is not care per se but the prospect of emotional intimacy with loved ones. For Wendy, Greenhill Manor provides the opportunity to heal the trauma and dysfunction of the past, to finally fulfill the hope of familial intimacy and closeness that Wendy desires. Indeed, the tensions between Jon and Wendy regarding what constitutes appropriate care for Lenny highlight their individual acknowledgments of and responses to the dysfunction of their family. Moreover, by ascribing to this label of dysfunction, both characters can signal the family's uniqueness and engage the language of therapy to demonstrate the reflexive nature of identity that relies, in part, on a narrative of one's family history for its constitution. For Wendy, the difference in representations of care provided by The Valley View and Greenhill Manor distinguish and track the dysfunction of her family in contrast to the other more functional families represented by the smiling, hugging "family" in the Greenhill Manor video.

However, Illouz suggests that the concept of the dysfunctional family is, according to Freud, applicable to all families in some way. The source of various pathologies of the self, the family, in Freudian thought, becomes both "the origin of the self and that which the self had to be liberated from" (7). The family, thus, provides the narration for the construction of the self, but since the family is also considered the source of the subject's emotional and psychological pathologies (their emotional "baggage"), the need to cope with these pathologies and be free of the family's part in creating him/her structures the creation of a constantly evolving self. The pathologized self that emerges from the family makes "the mundane self an enticing object of

imagination." According to Illouz, Freud's theories "systematically blurred [the boundary between the normal and the pathological] and posited a new kind of normality, riddled with a new cast of pathological characters, an open-ended project for the self, an undefined and yet powerful goal for the self" (8). This tension between the family and the self—where the self attains its identity while simultaneously trying to escape its influence—comes about because "the family became the major sphere of society in which the individual could be foremost – it was the only space that proletarians 'owned'. Within it, a new sphere of social activity began to take shape: personal life" (Zaretsky 61).

The concept of personal life that constructed a self that then had to cope with the pathologies derived from the family, Anthony Giddens suggests, is a central facet of modernity. The reflexive self calls for the individual to construct itself by constant self-examination and to apply the resulting knowledge to reconstruct a new and better self. This is necessary because "modernity institutionalizes the principle of radical doubt and insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses: claims which may very well be true, but which are in principle always open to revision and may have at some point to be abandoned" (*Modernity* 3). This creates an inherently unstable knowledge environment that is reflexively organized and emphasizes the need for constant risk assessment to choose among a proliferation of choices. As Giddens states, "Reflexively organised life planning, which normally presumes consideration of risks as filtered through contact with expert knowledge, becomes a central feature of the structuring of self-identity" (5). By expert knowledge, Giddens is referring to any social activity or body of knowledge that usually requires a high degree of education to train experts in that field. These fields are

reflexively organized so that the discipline is constantly re-examined and revised according to new information. Having to make decisions in an atmosphere of doubt and risk, individuals turn to and put faith in expert systems in the hopes that it will protect them from the dangers of making a wrong choice. In this way, the family is important to this process of reflexivity as it produces identity in that it becomes a starting point to which the self continually returns as it attempts to reconstruct and reorganize itself to better tackle an uncertain future. However, the family itself is a social form that is constructed by expert systems that inform citizens on how to manage the family properly so as to navigate uncertainty safely. This includes the proper care of elderly parents suffering from dementia.

The confrontation with doubt and expert systems explains Wendy's insistence on trying to get Lenny into Greenhill Manor. Wendy wants to make sure that she is caring for her father properly, and her initial unhappiness with The Valley View motivates her to research other nursing homes that she feels would be more appropriate for her father. This points to the difficulty of caring for Lenny, because the market for nursing homes presents so many choices. Jon articulates this aspect overtly by angrily pointing out to Wendy that places like Greenhill Manor exploit her guilt in order to sell itself as a solution to the care-debt that must be repaid: "And actually," he says, "this upward mobility fixation of yours, it's counterproductive and, frankly, pretty selfish [. . .] Because it's not about Dad, it's about you—you and your guilt. That's what these places prey upon."

Jon accuses Wendy of not being able to see through the marketing, and he presents a critique of her behavior as a critique on Wendy as a consumer, "You are the

consumer they want to target. You are the guilty demographic. The landscaping, the neighborhoods of care—they're not for the residents, they're for the relatives." Wendy's difficulty, he points out, in finding what feels to her like a proper nursing home for Lenny shows how the plethora of choices imbues care with uncertainty: the stack of nursing home brochures that Wendy examines is massive, overloading her with options and playing on her fears that she will reveal the family's dysfunction through the perceived quality of care she chooses for Lenny. It is difficult for her to be satisfied with The Valley View because there are so many other homes that promise to be better. Care may be an ethic that calls upon subjects to direct their attention to the needs of others, but it also plays an important role in constituting the self. In other words, Wendy uses the exercise of picking the right nursing home as a way to assuage her guilt at putting Lenny into a nursing home—as Jon recognizes—but it is also a way for her to find comfort for herself in caring for her father moving forward. Through the reflexive examination of how they are caring for Lenny now, she hopes to reorganize the arrangement in a way that she feels is mutually beneficial: Lenny will be happier in a better nursing home, and she will feel better for having arranged it.

In the characters' differing attitudes toward care, we see the movie depict the dual personality of care: as a commodity that functions under market logic, but also as a value that attempts to transcend and provide an alternative to placing human relationships under market rules. Ultimately, for both Wendy and Jon, care is deployed to repair the past and transcend the abuse and violence of a family life that they simultaneously run from and use as the narrative to define the self. As such, their individual expressions of this valuation of care—though seemingly contradictory: economic vs. emotional—

demonstrate how care functions as a feedback mechanism: care for others provides the means for realizing an idealized self that is generous and valuable to others.

While Jon is right that Wendy's desire to move Lenny is in many ways about her own self-care as opposed to what's right for Lenny, it is also indicative of the way Wendy sees herself as a failure, as someone whose "open-ended project for the self" is not going very well, and how this is fed and complicated by the very economic values and justifications that feed Jon's perspectives on Lenny's care. Temping to make ends meet as a struggling playwright and having been turned down for the eighth time for a Guggenheim Fellowship, she moves from one personal-professional humiliating episode to another. This is emphasized in a painful scene when Jon finds out that she lied to him about winning the Guggenheim Fellowship and actually received money from the FEMA fund reserved for victims of 9/11, which she applied for when she could not find temp work in the aftermath of the attack.

The motif of 9/11 and terrorism (in the earlier scene when Wendy frantically calls Jon to tell him about Lenny's hospitalization in Arizona, they speak about the extent of the crisis using The Department of Homeland Security's color-coded advisory system) points to a persistent threat of danger that haunts the characters. The fear of such events arises from the fact that they strike everyone equally by virtue of their scope and unpredictability; it does not matter how skilled one is at risk assessment because such events lie outside our abilities to plan for the danger. Therefore, the true terror of 9/11 is that there are no knowledge systems that can help the self plan for such a catastrophe. This throws into question the efficacy of all knowledge/expert systems.

Thus, when Jon accuses Wendy of "taking money from people who really need it," Wendy actually provides a relatively valid reason for taking the money. In short, there was no work, and she needed it. Yet, he mocks her for taking money that was not earmarked for her and appropriating a victim consciousness that does not belong to her; her justification that she was affected by 9/11 does not seem legitimate. But the fact that she needed to apply for the FEMA grant also points to the lack of a safety net for part-time or temporary workers. It is precisely because they can easily be hired or fired that temp workers are utilized by companies to reduce their core workforce and maintain flexibility in the labor market. This is a significant feature of the organization of the labor market under flexible capital (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity,* 150), and it complements and even intensifies Wendy's perspective on and experience of care. Adrift in a labor market that offers no stability—which we might label as dysfunctional—Wendy lacks even recourse to the support of the family, receiving little sympathy or understanding from Jon, who seems more interested in making fun of her. Her acceptance of money to which she does not have a right despite her dire economic situation points to how neoliberalism "carries responsibility for the self to new heights: the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action—for example, lack of skills, education, and child care in a period of high unemployment and limited welfare benefits" (Brown 42).

In such ways, despite the possible inadequacy of expert systems in a post-9/11 world, the film shows Wendy and Jon turning to various systems in their attempts to cope with their unhappiness and insecurities. For example, both Wendy and Jon self-medicate:

she steals Doris's Percocet and later shares some with Jon. At one point, watching Wendy rummage through her bag, Jon observes, "It's like a pharmacy in there," as Wendy takes some gingko biloba and an antidepressant before they go in for the interview at Greenhill Manor. When Jon replies to Wendy's offer of an anti-depressant with, "I'm not depressed," Wendy scoffs, "Please." Jon's refusal is both a self-diagnosis and a diagnosis of Wendy. Wendy's rejoinder is to diagnose Jon right back.

The siblings' turn to expert systems is further highlighted as they attend a support group for relatives of dementia patients. One of the handouts is titled "Creating Special Moments"; it is a checklist for those times when visitors are "at a loss for what to do with [their] elder on visiting days." The woman leading the group claims to have compiled the list from a self-help book titled *Eldercare for Dummies*. The book trains readers on how to care for their relatives, and in the case of dementia, it recommends asking about the old days. The woman tells them that they must work extra hard at this and that simply asking questions while sitting by the bedside will not work. She recommends bringing old photos and movies to stimulate their memories.

The instructions of the support group point to a general deskilling of family members who must now seek instruction regarding how to care for loved ones. It is a large-scale phenomenon of neo-liberal culture, according to Hochschild, who discusses how many of the skills formerly practiced by family members are now outsourced. Aside from skills such as making clothes, cooking from scratch, and making household items such as soap, Hochschild lists emotional skills such as entertaining one another and "the ability to forge, deepen, and repair family relationships" as having deteriorated. She continues, "Under normal circumstances the work of tending to relationships calls for

noticing, acknowledging, and empathizing with the feelings of family members, patching up quarrels, and soothing hurt feelings" (*The Time Bind* 210).

According to Hochschild, for families that set aside a block of time every evening for family time, these times begin to take on a character like work as parents must engage a similar degree of focus and discipline in devoting that time solely to their children (212). Hochschild calls this trend in the regimentation of family time the Taylorized Family, named after Frederick W. Taylor who, through his concept of "scientific management," imposed "on the workplace and individual workers a rigorous standard of efficiency" by breaking down work into its constituent parts and calculating methods to maximize production per unit of time (48). Hochschild feels that the family and the home has become a site of Taylorized efficiency as "people carry out necessary tasks efficiently in the limited amount of time allotted" (49). While organizing the family efficiently is not in and of itself the reason for deskilling among family members, efficiency encourages outsourcing family tasks, which does result in deskilling. The Taylorized nature of Jon and Wendy's care for Lenny is reflected by their use of films to organize their care of him during visits. Split into time increments of feature film length, time spent with Lenny has a limit and is at the same time outsourced: Lenny is distracted by the movie which reduces the amount of time they must spend engaging with Lenny directly.

This deskilling manifests itself throughout the movie in Jon and Wendy's continued struggles to care for Lenny properly. An example of this is their unfortunate decision to take Lenny to a diner to ask him about his advance directive (instructions on what should be done with Lenny when he becomes unable to make his own decisions) and his funeral plans. As Wendy fumbles to introduce the uncomfortable topic, Jon

characteristically loses patience and begins bluntly explaining the information they need from Lenny. Lenny reacts with distress and then anger; when Jon asks what they should do with him after they unplug the breathing machine, Lenny yells, "Bury me! What are you, a bunch of idiots? You bury me!"

This disastrous episode further highlights the characters' inability to communicate with each other and their general incompetence as they attempt to care for their father: they need expert systems in order to connect to other humans. Following the suggestions of the support group, Jon and Wendy make the ill-fated choice of screening Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*. Lenny, at first, seems pleased as he recognizes the New York of his childhood. However, he begins confusing the fictional world of the movie with real life and mistakes the mother in the movie with his own mother. It quickly takes a turn for the worse in the emotionally charged scene where Cantor Rabinowitz manhandles his son. Lenny becomes more and more agitated and calls Cantor Rabinowitz a "bastard." As the scene continues, he stands up and yells at the screen, "Hey, you son of a bitch!" and continues, "He'd always smack me around!" When an old woman tells him, "You're in the way of the program. Sit down," he whirls around and yells at her, "Go to hell, you goddamn old vegetable."

The movie has done its job of stimulating Lenny's memories, though, of course, they weren't memories for which the support group prepared any of the attendees. Yet the fact that Lenny appears to have been himself a victim of a physically abusive father makes Lenny more sympathetic. Moreover, the primary interaction in this sequence occurs between Jon and Lenny as Jon attempts to calm Lenny down. This scene follows the model of melodramatic revelation, as the secret that finally reveals itself also

vindicates a character. While the vindication is not complete for Lenny, it is enough to provide context for why he is so abusive—for us and for Jon. It follows the logic of psychology and therapy in that memories and secrets from the past constitute subjectivity and create the "narrative of self and identity which anchors the self in childhood and in one's primary family relationships" (Illouz 24). However, the need to break free of the family to construct the self is reinforced and emphasized also by the choice of film shown to Lenny: *The Jazz Singer* is about a son who breaks with tradition to become a jazz singer. Underscoring this scene is the breakdown of the relationship between generations. Thus, it serves further as a metaphor for Jon, who was, in turn, also abused by Lenny. Jon's rather gruff way of dealing with caring for his father, his sister, and his inability to work out his romantic life with his girlfriend can be read as rooted in this cycle of abuse. In this moment it becomes clear to Jon that he must somehow extricate himself from his own history of abuse in a way that his father could not. As Jakie Rabinowitz rejects the traditions of his father, so must Jon reject those failed systems practiced by Lenny. In this, the scene reflects the alienation between generations and how the life narratives of one are viewed as obsolete and insufficient to succeeding generations.

As the scene progresses, despite the sense of progress earned by Jon's recognition of Lenny's childhood suffering, the night deteriorates when Al Jolson dons blackface. Uncomfortably, Wendy and Jon survey the reactions of the black members of the audience, which includes a large number of hospital staff. The staff are not pleased, wondering why the movie is still being shown and remarking on how the movie is not everyone's idea of the olden days. After the screening, Jon tries to justify the choice of the movie by stating that it cannot be judged "by today's standards" and that it has to be

looked at "in a historical context," but he is smart enough to give his lecture on film reception only to Wendy. This historical context, represented through blackface, reinforces the reasons for the difficulty of cultivating cross-generational understanding represented by Jon and Lenny's relationship: the representations and assumptions of previous generations appear hopelessly outdated and unacceptable to subsequent generations.

But despite what Jon and Wendy are themselves learning and achieving in such moments of care, the disaster of the film screening demonstrates also the failure of two expert systems: the support group's suggestions appear naïve in its call for comforting the elderly with nostalgia while also showing how Jon's attempt to justify the choice of the movie through academic discourse is totally inappropriate to the actual offense the movie caused. While the film presents Jon's speech as comedic, as he haplessly attempts to rationalize the screening in a way that is neither an apology that will appease the angry staff nor ease the siblings' embarassment, the scene is one of many that shows how the siblings both deal with uncomfortable situations in ineffective ways, and yet do so at the prompting of culturally authorized systems.

For instance, throughout *The Savages*, Jon habitually responds to emotional moments by either discussing the emotions using the specialized language of psychoanalysis and therapy, or he is rendered mute and cries. That is, he either completely abstracts his emotions and distances himself from them through explanation (which he deploys in instrumental ways), or he is rendered incoherent when he is overwhelmed and vulnerable. In one such example, Jon readily deploys this specialized language as a way to win arguments with Wendy and avoid the intimacy that the

awareness of emotions is meant to provide. When Wendy starts to panic at the prospect of being left alone with Lenny in Sun City for a few days while Jon flies back east to look for a nursing home in Buffalo, Jon cuts her off with, “Wendy, this is not the time to regress.” Despite Jon’s resistance to approaching Lenny’s dementia and death in a sentimentalized way and aversion to seeking trite and clichéd life lessons, his constant recourse to the language of therapy and attitudes toward love and intimacy betrays his inability to make sense of the emotional landscape in terms outside of such therapeutic discourses. Rather than using such language to comfort Wendy and understand her shame and guilt at having to place Lenny in a nursing home, he uses this language to gain the upper hand in arguments through claiming to know Wendy’s emotions better than she does. When she finds out that Jon and his Polish girlfriend of two years, Kasia, will be breaking up because her visa has expired, he replies, “Well, we’re not in therapy right now. We’re in real life.” In this, he is dismissive of Wendy’s attempts to get him to talk about what’s going on in his life.

This sort of reaction attempts to manage emotions through what Illouz describes as “emotional literacy.” In this system, she explains, emotions are transformed into something that can be wielded instrumentally: “Locked into literacy, emotions become objects to be observed and manipulated. Emotional literacy makes one extract oneself from the flow and unreflexive character of experience and transform emotional experience into emotional words and into a set of observable and manipulable entities” (33). Thus, emotions are managed by expression and speech. On the one hand, the expression of emotions pushes intimacy to the forefront of qualities important for meaningful relationships. To hear emotions and have one’s emotions heard, to share

emotions, becomes the basis for intimacy. The goal is for equality through intimacy since intimacy requires men "to pay far more careful attention to their inner self and feelings in a way that [makes] them similar to women" (Illouz 28).

For Illouz, the creation of an emotional literacy rationalizes emotion, which "is the process of expansion of formal systems of knowledge, which in turn lead to an 'intellectualization' of everyday life" (32). The codification of emotion as a "formal system of knowledge" and its intellectualization means that emotion loses "the volatile, transient, and contextual nature of emotions" (33). That is, it rationalizes and universalizes emotion, which makes emotion "susceptible to depersonalization, or likely to be emptied of their particularity and to be evaluated according to abstract criteria" (36). What Illouz is describing here, of course, is the process by which emotion becomes an expert system. Through this process, emotion is no longer felt by unique individuals in specific contexts, but rather intellectualized as a system. This alienates individuals from their own emotions when the technical language and concepts of psychoanalysis replace emotion with the instrumental need to describe what the emotion means. At the same time, this literacy allows people to speak of others' emotions since emotions are now placed in a system that makes universal claims to an emotion's meaning.

While Jon attempts to control the emotions of Wendy in an effort to distance himself from his own, in turn, Wendy gives as good as she gets. When the Guggenheim Foundation publishes an ad in *The New York Times* announcing the winners of the grant, Jon sees that Wendy's name is not on the list of recipients. He calls a friend who does consulting work for the Guggenheim Foundation and finds out that Wendy lied to him.

He chooses the drive back from Christmas shopping to confront her with his discovery. When Wendy asks why he checked, Jon claims that he did it to look out for her. However, Wendy accuses Jon of policing her and calls him "sick." Jon retorts, "No, you're sick. You're the sick one, Wendy."

After trading their accusations of emotional illness, they begin to argue about Wendy's motivation for lying and Jon's motivation for calling to check with the foundation. Wendy feels that Jon checked on her because he does not believe Wendy is talented enough to receive the Guggenheim. When she tells Jon that he's just like Lenny in that both don't believe she could succeed, Jon raises his voice and becomes angry, asking, "Why are you comparing me to dad?" When she repeats her accusation that Jon doesn't think she has any talent and can't do it, Jon bellows, "You obviously don't think you can do anything, either, because you have to fucking lie about it!" Both take each other's statements and interpret them to characterize each other in the worst possible way, ascribing psychological pathologies to one another's actions. For Jon, Wendy's lying is a symptom of her insecurity. For Wendy, turning Jon's strategy back on him, his checking up on her is a symptom of his childish sibling rivalry. She underscores this by saying, "The point is, you called them because you just couldn't believe that your little sister might just get one of them."

It would be easy not to take this scene too seriously, to dismiss it as a typical scene of bickering siblings. Indeed, Lenny, sitting in the passenger seat of the car, reacts to the commotion by calmly turning the volume down on his hearing aid so he doesn't have to listen to it, lending a somewhat deadpan and tragicomic commentary to the scene. As the sound of the argument becomes gradually muted and replaced by non-diegetic

music, the scene cuts from a close-up of Lenny's tired expression to a reverse shot of a cemetery which they drive past. It shows Lenny looking inward and isolating himself from the argument and his children. Though he has dementia, his practiced reaction to their bickering suggests that this is an argument he has heard before. This indicates that despite Jon and Wendy's education and their competence with discourses that help them dissect people's motivations, they remain trapped in the same arguments they have always had. Rather than liberating them from their pathologies through reflexive contemplation of their own reasons for how they behave, they choose to repeat the same resentments and recriminations they have always harbored toward each other.

We see this instrumental use of emotional literacy again when Wendy argues with her married boyfriend, Larry. Larry drives up from Buffalo to visit her and after a day out, they end up in a motel room to have sex. She suddenly stops to complain about how Larry has killed her ficus. When Larry apologizes, she says it's not about the plant. In fact, she explains, the plant is symbolic of the fact that she is having an affair with a married man who cannot provide the attention and care that she needs: she is like the ficus that is no longer thriving. Wendy then begins ranting about the fact that despite the fact she has an MFA, she is stuck in a cliché—sleeping with a fifty-two year old married man who is going through a mid-life crisis. Presumably, by this she means that she should be immune to clichéd relationships because of her expertise on such narratives.

Larry's response is that while he is middle-aged, Wendy is thirty-nine, which means that their relationship "is not exactly the paradigm of a prototypical winter-spring romance." He also accuses her of choosing to have an affair with a married man "instead of seeking real intimacy with someone who is available for real commitment" and

attributes it to her issues with her emotionally distant father. Wendy becomes defensive and explains that she is "just trying to have a healthy, normal sex life" and points out that she, at least, is not betraying anyone. Larry's rebuttal of "only yourself" brings a halt to the conversation as the film cuts and jumps ahead to Larry dropping Wendy off at The Valley View and trying to calm her down while she furiously gathers her things from his car and leaves.

This sequence illustrates many of Wendy's discontents: she is bothered by the fact that she does not have anyone in her life to take care of her and that she is apparently playing a minor supporting role in the narrative of a man having a mid-life crisis. Ultimately, she is troubled by what she feels is a lack of control over her own life, and the argument she instigates with Larry stems from her desire to assign blame for the unsatisfying nature of their relationship. In this, Larry acts as a mirror of Wendy. Both characters' accusations attempt to paint the other as individuals who lack the self-awareness to move beyond certain undesirable life narratives: Larry as someone who cannot transcend the urges and fears of middle age that cause him to act in a clichéd and stereotypical manner; and Wendy as someone in a state of arrested development, trapped in a traumatic relationship with Lenny which makes it difficult for her to find the intimacy and commitment she, perhaps not so unconsciously, seeks.

Again, we see that both interlocutors are well-versed in the language of therapy and use it as weapons against one another. Their use of this self-help language points to a certain active engagement with emotions and, with the recognition of these emotions, the possibility of behavioral change. Such change requires naming and mapping these emotions onto the subject's autobiography to chart their history in order to explain why

someone like Wendy might seek relationships with unavailable men. It follows that a failure to change behavior suggests a certain failure of work ethic and intellect of the self to identify the problem and act in a rational manner to correct the problem. What Larry's and Wendy's accusations have in common, then, is that they both play on the expectation that individuals should correct these deficiencies as a reflexively ordered self. But by focusing on each other's failures, the system meant to control emotions is paradoxically used as a tool to make the other lose control of theirs.

Wendy's arguments with Jon and Larry show the juxtaposition of behavior in subjects who model hyperawareness of emotions and motivations for actions, but who constantly lose control of their emotions and act impulsively. And, as she unwittingly demonstrates, this juxtaposition extends beyond personal relationships. For instance, while Jon and Wendy are taking care of paperwork to check Lenny in to The Valley View, the hospital administrator working with them briefly puts her pen in her mouth so she can rifle through the forms with both hands. Upon seeing the pen, Wendy blurts out, "Hey, I take that," with a broad smile on her face. In response to the administrator's puzzled look, Wendy explains, "On your pen—for anxiety." The pen is a marketing gift that pharmaceutical companies distribute for free to hospitals to advertise their products. This pen promotes Xanax, an anti-anxiety medication. Beyond the awkwardness of the exchange, Wendy's admission makes everyone a little uncomfortable, and Jon gives the administrator an uncomfortable grin before they continue. Though this scene focuses on how Wendy's anxiety and nervousness bubble to the surface through her expressions, it still delineates the basic outline for recognizing the emotional dysfunction of the other characters, particularly Jon. Neither character, we understand, are fully in charge of their

own emotions. However, as we will see, their emotional trajectory in the film is to resolve this lack of control through caring for themselves and one another with tenderness and compassion: this care serves as a means for overcoming isolation and loneliness.

This reading contrasts with mainstream reviews of the film that praise Tamara Jenkins (the director) for not sentimentalizing the subject matter of elder care and family drama. Roger Ebert was relieved that the movie did not "descend entirely into soap opera" (Ebert). Mick LaSalle went even further, writing that Jenkins had made a movie about a wrenching family decision "with not even a shred of sentimentality" (LaSalle). And Scott Tobias contrasted *The Savages* with other movies covering similar topics: " In other movies, when grown children take care of their estranged parents, it's usually a recipe for life lessons and sentimental reconciliations, but here, the father isn't any warmer than the man who mistreated his kids in their youth" (Tobias). The reviews appreciate the fact that the epiphanies are doled out sparingly and in small, precious amounts rather than grand gestures of healing. In other words, the film was praised for lending a certain realism to the proceedings that avoided much of the self-help pabulum of lesser films (although none of the reviews name any of the offending movies).

The idea of realism appears to be rooted in the lack of any triumphant emotional denouement that would lead to an emotional reconciliation between the family members as well as the fact that the movie is not "another one of those dreaded indie encounter sessions in which everyone cracks wise and weary on the bumpy road to self-actualization" (Dargis). *The Savages*, according to the reviews, presents the situation in a true-to-life manner and therefore eschews the easy and prepackaged lessons from the

experience that smacks of the self-help industry. The critics appear to target movies where estranged families get together to care for a dying loved one, and that in these movies, the desire for a feel-good ending and reconciliation often dictates the trajectory of the movies' narratives and character development. In other words, sentimentalism would dictate that narrative dilemmas would be solved through events and changes in characters that are motivated by the desire for emotional satisfaction rather than playing out in ways that appear more realistic. This would ostensibly involve an absence of these moments.

What the critics recognize is that *The Savages* is realistic in the way it creates a care environment very much like what many families face when an elderly loved one needs constant medical care. Families frequently must outsource care to nursing homes for various reasons, which causes many families to feel shame and guilt. As Jon observes about Greenhill Manor, nursing homes are not only selling care work but forgiveness for families feeling guilt at having placed grandma or grandpa in a nursing home. The movie reinforces this in the scene where, after Jon and Wendy drop off Lenny at the nursing home and leave, Wendy begins crying and says, "We're horrible, horrible, horrible people." Wendy expresses the guilt at leaving Lenny in the care of strangers, articulating the shame at not being able to care for a family member without help and how it becomes a mark of personal failure. Of course, Jon cannot console her. But the care that they receive from the nursing home allows both, particularly Wendy, to move beyond that guilt and find the self-actualization that Manohla Dargis praises the movie for avoiding.

The care Wendy receives at the nursing home is represented primarily through Jimmy, the friendly Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) who performs the bulk of the care

work for Lenny, such as dressing him for bed and taking care of Lenny's room. He is shown as a particular compassionate worker; when he notices that Lenny likes tater tots, he makes sure Lenny gets extra. Indeed, once Lenny gets into the nursing home, there are no conflicts between Lenny and the staff. The moments of conflict and emotional trauma center on the relationship between Lenny and his children, while the nursing home appears to take care of Lenny's needs without further drama. In light of this, the moments where Jimmy cares for Wendy become more significant in the movie. In one of the first scenes, after Larry has dropped Wendy off at The Valley View following their argument, Wendy finds Jon already there keeping Lenny company and watching a movie with him. Feeling that her role as comforter has been usurped, Wendy attempts to assert some control when she enters the room; she turns off the fluorescent light above Lenny's bed and turns on the lamp she got him because it gives off a warmer light. She asks Lenny, "See how nice this is?" Lenny, watching the movie, does not respond.

Failing to elicit the affirmation she seeks, Wendy tries to introduce Lenny to her cat Genghis, but Lenny says he can't see anything. When Wendy offers to prop his head up so that he can see, she discovers that the big red pillow she bought him from Urban Outfitters (she points that out explicitly) is missing. Not finding it in the room, she stomps off into the hall to the nurse's station to inform them that the pillow is missing. Wendy finds the pillow in the possession of an old lady in a wheelchair who is hugging the pillow and petting it. She walks up to the old woman and attempts to explain that it is her father's pillow and starts pulling it away. The old woman resists, but Wendy is determined and yanks it away from her as the old woman screams, "No!" Unfortunately, Wendy's efforts to locate and reclaim the pillow are for naught, as Lenny finally rejects

her efforts to make him more comfortable with it and yells, “I don’t want it, can’t you hear? What the hell does she think I’m paying her for? To bother me?” Jon tries to make Wendy feel better by telling her that Lenny doesn’t know what he’s talking about, but Wendy is devastated. Humiliated by the outburst, Wendy goes outside in tears with Genghis in the cat carrier. There she finds Jimmy on break and smoking a cigarette.

Jimmy shows an interest in Genghis and playfully asks if she’s planning on taking her cat out for a walk, which makes Wendy chuckle. Pointing out that the cat is probably cold, he tells Wendy to come to his van where he will turn the heater on so that they can finish their cigarette in a warmer place. Inside the van, he plays with Genghis. His attitude is in stark contrast to that of Jon, who told Wendy he didn’t think bringing Genghis to the nursing home was a good idea. Further highlighting his difference from Jon, Jimmy asks Wendy how Lenny is doing, and when she starts crying, he offers her a tissue and immediately tries to make her feel better.

When the topic switches to Wendy’s marital status, Wendy opens up to Jimmy and confesses that her boyfriend is married and her parents weren’t very good at being parents. Jimmy decides that this is “why a pretty woman doesn’t have a husband or a family of her own.” She gives him a thin smile at the compliment and, while he makes some unshared assumptions about Wendy’s romantic and familial aspirations, the reason he gives for why she does not have a husband or a family of her own shifts the blame away from her. This stands in contrast to her argument with Larry and most of her arguments with Jon where the whole purpose of those discussions is to assign blame. As Wendy has experienced, such focus on blame creates a situation where the individual is responsible for all failures and turmoil in his or her life because the individual is seen as a

"rationally calculating individual [who] bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action" and "carries responsibility for the self to new heights" (Brown 42). Through the reflexive project of the self, one is expected to navigate successfully, or at least competently, a world saturated with doubt and risk. But, as we see and Wendy realizes, in all parts of her life, she is clearly failing. Yet Jimmy's supportive words absolve her of the blame while simultaneously reinforcing the idea that the source of her problems originate from the family, which locates her failure within a discourse (the family and the need to overcome the traumas of the family through self-examination) that she is familiar with.

As the scene continues, Jimmy asks if he can read one of Wendy's plays. Flattered by his interest, she cheers up. Jimmy continues to provide her with emotional support by telling her that Lenny is fine and that he still has time left. When Wendy asks how Jimmy knows, he tells her that Lenny's toes haven't curled under yet: the toes curl under a few days before they die. Intrigued, Wendy asks, "Is that some kind of Jamaican folklore thing or something?" Jimmy answers by informing her that he learned of this phenomenon while living in the United States. Specifically, it reminds him of the witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. As the scene ends, he tells her, "I'm from Nigeria, by the way."

This scene is noteworthy for the seemingly benign minor cultural misunderstanding that occurs between Wendy and Jimmy. When Jimmy tells Wendy about toe-curling as a sign of imminent death, Wendy assumes the knowledge is a product of his culture, part of what she thinks is Jamaican folklore. Wendy's assumption of the folklore's cultural origin brings with it certain cultural stereotypes about Jamaican culture as having a more primeval, prescientific relationship to death. Much as many

nannies are hired by predominantly white upper class and urban professionals in the hopes that, along with the nanny, stereotypes of the caregiver's more loving native culture will be imported to help transcend the lack of familial relation between caregiver and child (Hochschild, "Love and Gold" 23), Wendy assumes that Jimmy brings his own native folklore about death and consolation to the process of elder care. He is not only someone who changes bedpans and sheets, but also a shaman with a wealth of cultural rituals through which to understand death. It is a knowledge that makes the clinical hospital seem more organic and less detached and sterile. Wendy likes the possibility of the toes curling under because it is simultaneously mystical and inexplicable while hinting at a knowable order that provides her with the signs that help mediate her fear of death.

In understanding the complexity of Wendy's gaffe, the layers of assumptions about and desires regarding care—both cultural and personal—that it represents, we must turn to Hochschild's work on the culture of nannies. Ultimately, this scene between Wendy and Jimmy functions as an iteration of what Hochschild describes about childcare in the U.S. As Hochschild explains, though we might assume or hope that nannies will transplant the methods of childcare predominant in their native countries, many nannies actually adopt the expectations of the country to which they migrate for work (25). In terms of the scene between Wendy and Jimmy, that the urban legend about the toes curling under comes from *The Wizard of Oz* demonstrates that the emotional labor performed by immigrant care worker Jimmy has been constructed in the country in which he is working. This seems rather obvious: following market logic, wherein care is a commodity, it makes sense that the emotions he uses to care are those that his customers

will buy. But it also suggests the role of media in transmitting cultural norms; that is, movies and television exported to foreign markets provide the first hint of the emotional terrain that any prospective care workers must navigate to be successful care workers when they migrate to the U.S. (or another Western nation) for work. This involves emotional labor that is pitched toward the host country, which also suggests that emotional norms are not created equal. If a nurse from Nigeria or a nanny from the Philippines must learn the emotional norms of the countries they are migrating to, it is because the norms of the wealthy nations that import care are more valuable than those from poorer nations. There is no commensurate learning in the other direction, despite underlying expectations that "native" systems of care will be practiced alongside normative systems, which leads to the kinds of misunderstandings we see between Jimmy and Wendy. In this, we see that globalization exerts a homogenizing force on what constitutes effective care; it is undeniably shaped by the assumptions of the wealthy countries. Paradoxically, however, wealthy nations look to the developing world as a cultural other that is thought to practice a more "authentic" version of care to be imported and to supplement and enhance current practices—though not ultimately at the cost of efficiency. Capitalizing on the poverty of the poor nations that send their workers, love and care is imported at a discount.

Thus, as a consequence of Jimmy's care, Wendy appears inspired to care as well, though it is initially ineffectual and misplaced. The night after Wendy's argument with Jon about the Guggenheim Fellowship and FEMA grant, Jon receives a late call from the hospital informing him that Genghis got into a fight with another cat at the nursing home, and they want Jon and Wendy to come and pick up Genghis. As Wendy rushes off to the

nursing home, Jon takes yet another opportunity to reproach her: “I told you that cat was a bad idea.”

At the nursing home, Wendy finds Jimmy trying to coax Genghis out from under a couch in a lounge. Wendy tells him that Genghis sometimes emerges when he is ignored, so Jimmy stops coaxing, turns on a space heater, and keeps Wendy company while they wait for Genghis. Jimmy tells Wendy that he liked her play, and she seems pleased. When Wendy reveals her misgivings that she “was scared you would think I was some . . . spoiled American who’s complaining about her difficult childhood,” she reveals her expectations that he would think her pain ought to remain private, that it does not deserve a public airing because, as an American, she lives a life of relative wealth and prosperity. That is, her material blessings are more profound and legitimate than her potentially imagined emotional complaints. But Jimmy replies that he thought the play was sad, which lends legitimacy to Wendy’s “complaints” and moves her to tear up before she suddenly kisses him. Jimmy pulls away from the kiss and says he should probably go back to work; Wendy wears a mortified expression at the rejection and starts apologizing, calling herself “gross.” However, Jimmy reassures her by telling her, “You’re great. It’s just, I’m in love with my girlfriend.” This calms Wendy as she is genuinely touched by Jimmy’s fidelity, and right at this moment, Genghis emerges from behind the couch. As Wendy leaves, Jimmy waves goodbye.

The exchanges between Wendy and Jimmy, as awkward as they are, provide a stark contrast between her interactions with her family and Larry. Jimmy is supportive, and even after he rebuffs her kiss, Jimmy cares for her through her humiliation. Jimmy, of course, must care for her, but what the scene illustrates is how the power dynamic of

care worker and consumer is made to seem so natural. There are incentives for Jimmy to make sure that he does not alienate Wendy; he works for her, and if he does not tend to her needs, he risks losing his job if she complains. However, the film removes these motivations as a possibility. First, it shows other care workers being rather gruff with Wendy without consequences. For example, when she asks a nurse about the missing pillow, the nurse rather indifferently shrugs at her. Indeed, the smaller acts of neglect by other care workers at the hospital makes Jimmy's care stand out in contrast and appear genuine by removing the possibility that care and kindness can be coerced. Jimmy's kindness seems natural and effortless, a product of a caring personality, and this appeals to Wendy. His kindness toward her defuses her critical defense mechanisms, so that when he reveals his vulnerabilities she is not tempted to become alienated from or lash out at him as she would with Jon or Larry. For instance, when Jimmy recognizes that to Wendy his admission that he is in love with his girlfriend might seem, "like corn," Wendy reassures him that it doesn't seem corny at all and is touched at how he mistakes "corn" for "corny." This contrasts with her annoyed reaction to Larry who earlier mistakes von Stroheim for von Sternberg.

Jimmy, consequently, becomes a figure associated with a more unaffected version of care and takes on an almost saintly status. Yet, the apparent naturalness of his care elides the market forces that would compel such emotional labor. His care appears more "authentic," which means that his emotions and how he relates to those who receive his care seem to emerge from his personality rather than a performance motivated by forces that would compel him to project certain emotions that may be at odds with his actual emotional state. In fact, workers in the service sector are trained to manage their emotions

and submerge their subjectivity in deference to the needs of those for whom they care (Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 7). Success in this sector depends on masking the labor involved in producing the emotion, and while this can have the consequence of alienating the worker from his or her emotions, it is important in making emotions appear authentic. Thus, Jimmy's good humor throughout his interactions with Lenny and Wendy, his belief in the urban legend from *The Wizard of Oz*, and his "corn" fidelity to his girlfriend paint Jimmy as a worker whose emotions are not staged and rather earnest. In this way, he obscures the market relationship of caregiver and client and allows Wendy to receive his kindness without doubting its motivations. It allows her a degree of trust and confidence that spills over into his assessment of her play and allows her to momentarily arrest the doubts she has about her work.

Complicating representations of Jimmy's kindness for Wendy's benefit is *The Savages*' deployment of a version of the character trope of the Magical Negro. In an article on racial stereotypes in film, Matthew W. Hughey explains:

> The [Magical Negro] has become a stock character that often appears as a lower class, uneducated black person who posseses [*sic*] supernatural or magical powers. These powers are used to save and transform disheveled, uncultured, lost, or broken whites (almost exclusively white men) into competent, successful, and content people within the context of the American myth of redemption and salvation. (544)

Movies that use this trope place the white character at the center of the narrative, and the magic and wisdom of the black character helps the white protagonist resolve his or her

conflicts. Hughey cites movies such as *Evan Almighty* (2007), *The Green Mile* (1999), and *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000) that deploy the magical Negro character to resolve white character's narrative conflicts (544). While Jimmy does not appear to possess magical powers, the subsequent curling of Lenny's toes before he dies confirms Jimmy's folkloric knowledge while his kindness seems to catalyze a change in Wendy. In this way, Jimmy conflates this trope with existing prejudices about immigrant care workers as a category of people who possess something innate in their ability to care; this ability to care is oriented for the purpose of assisting Wendy's redemption. Thus, following their final scene together, Wendy is shown writing—finally, it seems, succeeding—and, as we will see, part of her redemption lies in adopting an ethic of care.

In this relationship of Magical Negro to white protagonist, the different emotional states of Jimmy and Wendy represent different ideas of subjectivity. Whereas Wendy's self-consciousness and anxiety reflect the kind of reflexive self that constantly questions one's emotional responses and attempts to understand it so that a new self can be constructed, Jimmy seems to represent a more settled self, one who does not appear as alienated from his emotions. This naturalness points to a more established subjectivity through emotions that do not appear to be forced, but at the same time appear appropriate for the occasion as filtered through a care ethic: the care ethic means that when Wendy is vulnerable, Jimmy acts to care for her. This is in contrast to her conversations with Jon that do not employ a care ethic but the opposite, judgment and contention.

Far from the magic or mysticism invoked by the trope, however, the source of Jimmy's emotional stability seems to originate from his rather mundane belief in a stable life trajectory. Speaking to Wendy, he assumes the norm is that Wendy should have her

own family by now, and in rebuffing Wendy's kiss, he shows that he believes in commitment to his girlfriend. Rather than a life trajectory characterized by constant reassessment and reinvention, Jimmy seems committed to a more traditional, stable life narrative. However, the adoption of these narratives is not a matter of personal choice but follows the economic conditions that lie in the film's background. In contrast to Jimmy's professional stability, Wendy's job as a temp in post-9/11 New York makes her susceptible to the volatility and instability of the economy, making it difficult to settle on a course of action that encourages commitment and long-term planning. This manifests in Wendy's impulsiveness and anxiety. In this environment of economic instability and volatility, Jimmy is therefore an exceptional character who does not appear affected by the conditions that cause Wendy's insecurities. Meanwhile, his compassion and ability to care for Lenny allows Wendy the time and space to work on her play while also articulating an ethic based on care that seems immune to the world that fills Wendy with so much insecurity and doubt.

We see Wendy's ability to adopt and articulate this new ethic by the end of the movie. It closes with optimism as Wendy appears transformed through her interactions with Jimmy and Lenny's death. Following Lenny's death, Wendy returns to her apartment in New York. Larry comes by with flowers for her, and after greeting each other, Wendy asks why Marley—Larry's golden lab—isn't with him. He tells her that Marley's hips have gotten worse, and because of her advanced age and the difficult rehabilitation that would follow surgery, they will have to put her down the next day. Larry is clearly distraught, and Wendy gives him a hug to comfort him. As Larry begins to kiss her, Wendy pulls away and Larry, sensing that this is the end of their affair, tells

her he’s sorry about Lenny and leaves. Wendy stares at the door for a moment looking somewhat unsure of herself, and opens the door to catch Larry while he is still in the stairwell. She says, “Larry, can I ask you a question? Not about us.” As Larry waits for her question, the scene cuts to an intertitle that reads, “Six Months Later.”

The scene changes to Wendy exercising to a videotaped aerobics routine in her apartment, a repeat of an earlier scene from the beginning of the movie when Wendy exercised to the same tape at the hotel in Arizona. The scene then cuts to Wendy walking into a theater where a rehearsal is underway. Clearly in charge, she discusses the scene with another member of the production staff, and the scene shows a young boy being slapped by his father for not doing his chores before watching television. As the father continues slapping his son, the son is lifted above the stage on a harness, signifying the son detaching himself from the memory and thereby transcending the history of abuse. The scene cuts to a close-up of Jon watching the rehearsal. When Wendy asks if it’s too much, Jon responds through his tears, “No [. . .] the naturalism with the magic realism together . . . it’s effective.” Like expecting Lenny’s toes to curl under before he dies, the play’s disruption of realism through a gesture toward magic points to a world that articulates a moral and emotional world that transcends reality but imbues it with meaning. The scene, based on Jon’s abuse by Lenny, moves Jon to tears, providing him catharsis. It re-narrates the Savages’ family trauma as a history that can be transcended and escaped in the present so that the self can reimagine and thus reconstitute itself. We see this effect almost immediately, as Jon responds to Wendy’s insecurity about the scene with reassurance. When Wendy asks Jon, “You don’t think it’s self-important and bourgeois?” Jon again reassures her, “No, it’s good. Wendy, it’s really good.” The

exchange echoes Jimmy's reaction to Wendy's earlier misgivings about being a whining American, and what we see are siblings who respond to each other's need for support and reassurance rather than pouncing on such insecurities to win arguments. They are finally supportive of each other; Wendy has written a scene that provides Jon with emotional catharsis, and Jon provides Wendy with unqualified support for her play. Following the rehearsal, Wendy learns that Jon is flying to present a Brecht paper at a conference. When Wendy asks where the conference is, Jon tells her it's in Poland. Wendy is surprised and teases him with a knowing look, and Jon confirms that he is going to see his former girlfriend Kasia and to meet her friends and family and to "play it by ear." Previously, Jon's history of abuse as a boy makes it difficult for him to commit to a relationship with Kasia, and complicating this insecurity are the issues of a difficult academic job market for Kasia and her uncertain visa status. But now, by his interactions with Wendy, there is the suggestion that Jon will successfully rekindle and commit to a relationship with Kasia; that care will overcome the limitations of the job market and the immigration laws tied to it. Jon and Wendy hug, and he gets into a taxi by telling her through tears, "It's really good." It is an emotional moment for both of them, and their emotional warmth and tenderness with one another present a very different tone from previous scenes. Not only are they no longer alienated from their own emotions, now their emotions connect them in mutual care and affection.

After saying goodbye to Jon, the film ends with Wendy running along the waterfront. In contrast to previous scenes of Wendy exercising alone in her room following an aerobics videotape, she is outside on a beautiful day. Non-diegetic music begins, and a cut to a close-up of her striding legs and feet eventually pans to the dog

Marley running into the picture. She is fitted with a harness that supports her back legs, and she is running to keep up with Wendy. We understand that Marley is rehabbing after surgery on her degenerative hip and realize that Wendy has assumed care of Marley as the film cuts to the closing credits.

These final scenes deploy misdirection and surprise to portray the transformation of the characters: they play out through the power of revelation. Through cuts and pans, echoes of earlier scenes set up different outcomes to portray the changes in Wendy and Jon. We do not know what Wendy wanted to ask Larry until the final scene of the movie, when we learn that Wendy has intervened to get Marley hip surgery and has since assumed care for her. We learn this by increments, as Marley gradually enters the frame—her identity confirmed by the harness supporting her surgically repaired hips. Similarly, Jon's presence at the rehearsal is also shown as a surprise, as the film cuts to a reverse shot of Jon watching the rehearsal. Moreover, Wendy's exercise routine encourages us to think back on the characters, especially her, earlier in the movie. The earlier scene in a hotel in Arizona was shot for comedic effect, showing a close-up of Wendy affecting an ironic expression of being dragged along by the enthusiastic urgings of her televised instructor. In contrast, warm non-diegetic piano music plays as she practices her routine and goes to her rehearsal at the end of the movie. The difference in the tone of the two scenes hints at a change in character. No longer are the siblings creatively blocked; Wendy has finished her play and is beginning to produce it, while Jon is ready to present the ideas in his Brecht book and make a commitment to Kasia. And we find that Wendy has found meaning through caring for Marley, a triumphant moment that combines melodramatic non-diegetic music and the use of revelation to show Wendy's

emotional transformation as well. Both siblings have embraced care and actively seek commitment to others.

Ultimately, *The Savages* demonstrates the complicated status of care in that, ideally, it is perceived as something that occurs outside of market concerns even as it corroborates and deploys market systems and ideologies. By the end of the movie, Jon and Wendy are both shown as having more or less overcome their personal and professional anxieties, transformations that occurred by appearing to replace failed expert systems with a better, modified system—with the ethic of care. That is, the film shows the limits of the reflexively organized self when it is combined with the dictates of neoliberalism, even as it shows how we cannot, in the end, escape this combination. The reflexively organized self is an isolated self, responsible for navigating an apocalyptic and globalized world through individual risk/reward calculations that makes it increasingly difficult to determine the correct course of action. But like Wendy demonstrates in her care for Marley, the ethic of care can prompt moves that are not made purely from a cost-benefit perspective. Rather, like her decision to treat and rehabilitate Marley these moves involve costs and risks: as in Wendy's case, this care demands time and energy without the guarantee of returns.

In this, Wendy shows us that care requires action and that it can solve the problem of isolation through concern and interaction with others while also providing an ethic that presents a way out for a self paralyzed by doubt. Care leads to action in *The Savages* by providing the recipient the support needed to act, but is also a practice that provides care givers with meaning. It provides a respite for those trapped in the reflexive hamster wheel of constant self-analysis and doubt resulting from the instability of a flexible labor

market, a geopolitical landscape where the prospect of apocalyptic events is ever-present, and a family history that, rather than providing a basis for the self, becomes a source of pathology that must be overcome for the proper constitution of the self. On the final point, Lenny's death can also be seen as freeing the siblings from the family history that has haunted them. Their responsibilities are finished, and they go back to their lives.

At the same time, as the film shows, the outsourcing of care to migrant workers is evidence of how care work has been commodified, thus it has become subject to the forces of the market and the inequalities that develop in the market. The desirability of Greenhill Manor versus The Valley View serves as a potent reminder throughout the film of how market forces can provide different qualities of care. Even so, *The Savages* hints at the possibility of a palatable resolution amidst this conflict. The effect of these inequalities and tensions that arise when care is both a sanctuary from the market while yet subject to market forces can be resolved through the act of embracing care as an end in itself. Thus, we see that the tidiness of the film's ending relies on Wendy's epiphany after Jimmy cares for her as well as the fact that Jimmy's saintly character elides the market forces behind the care arrangement. By making Jimmy's caring appear to come from his personality and the way Wendy's adoption of such an ethic leads to her transformation, the film presents care for others as an ethic that one chooses to engage in and which will lead to meaning and provide the impetus to fulfill the other objectives in life. Indeed, this idealized version of care—represented by Jimmy—appears to show us—through our surrogate Wendy—a way out of our own isolation and insecurity.

As it is combined with the turn to magical realism, this care allows for a utopian vision that will allow one to transcend the market forces and the instability that creates

doubt and anxiety. At the same time, the film reveals the tendency of the self-help industry's focus on magic bullets that will help cure the self of doubt. In this way, Jimmy can be seen as part of the expert system that promises a lifestyle that will help the self navigate an uncertain world. In other words, care becomes another commodity that can be sold within the lifestyle market that promises to transcend that very market. Therefore, *The Savages* articulates a desire for care to free oneself from market forces and find an alternative ethic to market logic, but it can only do so by deploying magic and the melodramatic devices of sentiment, revelation, and non-diegetic music that points to an idealized future. The film solves its problems by turning to aesthetic and melodramatic solutions. In this, *The Savages* ends in a prescriptive manner. Rather than providing an alternative to sentimental family dramas as many mainstream reviews claimed, the film resolves its tensions through a climax that ties up narrative loose ends in a way that is inspirational and infuses the movie with sentiment. As such, it reveals the difficulty of finding alternatives to the instability and insecurity brought about by a world built on reflexive reconstruction of all its institutions when solutions are appropriated by the very forces the solutions are meant to escape. But by turning to care, the film attempts to articulate a way for the self to end the self-imposed exile of the subject who has been told that they are only and solely responsible for him or herself.

CHAPTER III

"YOU THINK IT DOESN'T HAPPEN BECAUSE THE QUEEN DOESN'T APPROVE?" MIGRANT WORKERS AND THE NEOLIBERAL STATE IN *DIRTY PRETTY THINGS*

If *The Savages* tells the story of how citizens of a rich nation feel and react to the imperative to care for a loved one, *Dirty Pretty Things*[2] focuses on caregivers who migrate to work in the care industry—the Jimmies of the world who leave home to work as nannies, housekeepers, nurses, and porters. Specifically, the film presents the lives of Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor) and Senay (Audrey Tatou), immigrants who work illegally in London's service industry. Okwe is a political refugee, formerly a doctor in Nigeria who fled the country when he refused to cover up a political assassination and now lives in hiding as a cab driver and the night receptionist at The Baltic Hotel. Senay, meanwhile, works as a maid in the same hotel but in violation of her visa, which prohibits her from working for sixty days since she is applying for asylum.

Narratively, the movie quickly takes a turn for the worse for the protagonists as a result of the intervention of two forces: the officers of Britain's Immigration Enforcement Directive and Señor Juan (a.k.a. Sneaky and played by Sergi Lopez). The former are in charge of ensuring that Senay and other immigrants who are in the system adhere to the conditions of their visa or finding illegal immigrants to deport them. Señor Juan is an entrepreneur. In his day job, he runs The Baltic Hotel (where Senay and Okwe work at the beginning of the movie) and employs mostly immigrants who may or may not be

[2] All references are from *Dirty Pretty Things*, Dir. Stephen Frears, Perf. Chiwetal Ejiofor, Audrey Tautou, and Sophie Okonedo, Miramax Home Entertainment, 2002.

undocumented. He is also the middle man for a human organ black market, arranging donations from immigrants and finding buyers willing to pay for an organ. The movie argues that Britain's immigration policies are partly responsible for the exploitation of immigrants by those who run the black market economy because the stringent visa requirements make unreasonable demands on some immigrants while criminalizing "illegal" immigrants. Given no legitimate and safe path to an existence that would allow them to benefit from being in a wealthy, developed nation due to state policies, these immigrants weigh their options and work in the black market. That the immigrants readily turn to the black market as a viable option—despite its dangers—is one way the movie indicts state policies as draconian. At the same time, turning to the black market parodies the dominant ideology of choice in the neoliberal paradigm.

The most valuable asset in *Dirty Pretty Things* is a passport from a wealthy nation which confers the freedom to move or stay as one wishes. Both Senay and Okwe have other destinations in mind—they do not intend on staying in London and building a life for themselves. Senay dreams of moving to New York, a symbol of greater freedom and opportunity. Seeking political asylum, she has come to London so that she does not have to live like her mother did—as a traditional housewife economically dependent on her husband and trapped in the home. Okwe wishes to return home to Nigeria with a new identity; falsely accused of murdering his wife, he is on the run from corrupt government authorities who framed him for the murder because—as a doctor—he refused to cover up a political assassination. His goals are not immediately apparent, but he comes to realize that a new passport and identity will allow him to return to Nigeria and reunite with his daughter.

This constant desire and need for movement is, according to Bauman, a characteristic of all citizens living under the influence of globalization. He divides a global populace perpetually on the move into two classes of travelers: tourists and vagabonds. To Bauman, "tourists move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly *attractive*—the vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*" (93). The primary difference, then, is choice, or at least the illusion of it. The tourist moves because they see the world as a pleasurable experience—a desirable commodity to be consumed. But they can also stay and not go anywhere if they so choose. In contrast, the vagabond *must* move because poverty at home pushes them away. But their movement is not as welcome and consequently constrained through state policy; desperation born of poverty makes these travelers undesirable since they are seen as hoping to *take* from their host nation wages and services that they have no right to.

The characters' status as vagabonds means exposure to exploitative market forces. Capital and information move across the globe at the speed of light, dictating the movement of goods, services, and labor. The goal of global citizens is not to be at the mercy of having to follow the money wherever it goes—to be free of having to chase. This freedom from chasing capital is another way of expressing the freedom from the more dehumanizing aspects of market forces. Unwanted immigrants confront a nation-state that attempts to avoid any interaction with them other than to police their presence so as to create an inhospitable environment for immigrants so that they will leave. Central to this strategy is to deny them the services that make living in the country attractive, such as worker protections and health care. *Dirty Pretty Things* takes as its subject the

consequences for immigrants in a nation-state that does not want them there. The film represents the hostile posture of the state toward immigrants through the black market in organ donations, which shows how the state—by abdicating its role in protecting its citizenry and enforcing moral norms—forces people into participation in markets. In this way, the film critiques not only the treatment of immigrants in Britain, but also shines a light on the transformation of the state from a liberal democratic vision of governmentality to a neoliberal one. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, the consequences of this transformation manifests itself through undercutting the ideology of choice. The life-or-death decisions that characters must make occurs under the backdrop of choice.

How the state views immigrants in the film reflects how neoliberalism and globalization have transformed our conceptions of the role of the state. Brown explains how neoliberal views of the state has come to replace the liberal democratic formulation:

> Even as liberal democracy converges with many capitalist values [. . .], the formal distinction it establishes between moral and political principles on the one hand and the economic order on the other has also served to insulate citizens against the ghastliness of life exhaustively ordered by the market and measured by market values. It is this gap that a neoliberal political rationality closes as it submits every aspect of political and social life to economic calculation. (46)

The state is no longer charged with the role of being a bulwark against the functioning of the market; rather, "the state itself indexes the state's success according to its ability to sustain and foster the market and ties state legitimacy to such success" (41). The state

itself becomes a market actor while its previous function of regulating the market is narrowed to ensuring the market's smooth operation.

What we see in *Dirty Pretty Things* are the consequences of this transformation on the lives of the characters. The hostility of immigration authorities towards immigrants and the latter's recourse to the black market—represented by Señor Juan—shows how the state increasingly acts solely as a police force while abdicating its other roles, forcing immigrants and citizens alike into satisfying needs solely through the market. This means the relationship between immigrants and government authorities begin to resemble the relationship between prisoners and wardens, respectively. Immigrants are increasingly viewed as a population that should be policed, and conditions are made as unwelcome as possible. The most obvious manifestation of this transformation is the access to health care. As illegal immigrants, these characters view their interactions with the health care system the same way that they would view their interactions with hostile British immigration authorities—as a hostile bureaucracy that is less interested in caring for them as it is to report them to the state as illegitimate residents. Rather than an institution that ensures adequate care for those within its borders, the health care system becomes yet another way of keeping tabs on immigrants or catching undocumented nationals. The lack of access to health care and worker protections stands in for the larger trend of the shrinking role of states in functions outside of ensuring smooth market operations.

Therefore, despite being in London—a major capital in a wealthy nation—Okwe, Senay, and their fellow migrants do not benefit from their location. One of the ways this is expressed is by showing how Senay and Okwe do not have a safe home. Hounded by

immigration authorities, they are forced to move and trade stable jobs for more dangerous ones. When officers of the Immigration Enforcement Directive come knocking at Senay's door to make sure that Senay is neither collecting rent from a border nor working (this would violate the terms of her visa), Okwe must sneak out the bathroom window so that he is not discovered. The scene is set in Senay's apartment and uses sound to create fear; as Senay and Okwe banter about what Okwe should say at work so that co-workers will not gossip and misconstrue their platonic relationship, they are suddenly interrupted by a loud pounding at her door. After a second, we hear the people at the door announcing themselves, "Immigration Enforcement Directive—open the door."

This triggers a flurry of activity, as Senay and Okwe start hiding his clothes and any other evidence that someone is living with Senay. As Senay is about to open the door, Okwe runs into the bathroom and closes the door. When Senay open the door for them, the agents enter and immediately start going through her things and searching the apartment for clues that she is violating the terms of her visa. They ask her for her Standard Acknowledgement Letter (S.A.L.), which is her ID. Senay replies, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I carry it always."

This moment shows how Senay must have her immigration documents on her at all times to verify her immigration status. As one of the officers goes through her apartment, the other talks to Senay and tells her, "Neighbors, Senay. They see things. They say in the last few days, they've seen someone come and go. A man. Sometimes, Senay, a woman in your position can be exploited. There are lots of people living in London without any kind of papers at all. They prey on people like you."

The other immigration officer finds Okwe's shoes and exclaims, "There is someone living here." Senay denies this. He finds a matchbook from The Baltic Hotel and puts it in his pocket, and then he moves to search the bathroom. He finds no one there, rummaging through Senay's things and opens a window, staring out toward the city. The shot cuts on the sound of him slamming the window shut to a reverse, low-angle shot, where we see Okwe clinging to a water drain by the side of the building. He leaps down to the street below in his bare feet.

The movie then cuts to a medium tracking shot of Okwe walking through an outdoor marketplace. The camera pans down to his feet, reinforcing the fact that he had to leave his shoes behind in the rush to get out of Senay's apartment.

Senay's home is not a sanctuary for her or Okwe; as someone in London under a provisional visa, there are conditions to her residence. She cannot collect rent or work for six months. To ensure that she adheres to the demands of her visa, immigration officials pay unannounced visits to her home and use her neighbors to keep her under surveillance. Her status as an immigrant is probable cause for search and seizures as the immigration agent takes a personal possession (the match book) to be used in their investigation without her knowledge. Okwe's immigration status is even more tenuous; he is one of those who the immigration agent refers to as people living without any papers. If his existence were known to the authorities, he would be deported immediately. So he is forced to climb out the window without his shoes to avoid detection and lives in a perpetual state of fear and uncertainty.

The Immigration Enforcement Directive's agents—who remain nameless in the movie and exist only as menacing figures who hound Senay from one job to the next in

an effort to catch her breaking the law—speak to Senay with sarcasm and irony: they speak of protecting Senay, but in fact they are there to find a reason to deport her. They interrogate her and make a mess of her apartment as they search for clues to any illicit activity.

The attitude of these officers and the emotions they convey communicate hostility toward Senay. And this belligerent attitude also affects Senay's response; she reacts with fear and nervousness. The scene is shot with close-ups, an unsteady hand-held camera, and short takes. The characters' facial expressions and emotions are clearly displayed and points to the intimacy of the setting, but this intimacy is a violation as the officers search not only her apartment but her face and speech for clues to any secrets Senay may be harboring. Shots of Senay's face are in close-up from a high angle, providing the agent's point of view as he stands in front of her asking questions while his partner ransacks the apartment. The short takes add a frenetic pace to the sequence while the dissonant non-diegetic soundtrack amplifies the fear and hostility of the scene.

The reason for this hostile posture from the immigration authorities represents the attitudes toward immigrants from poor nations by citizens of wealthy nations who view foreigners with suspicion. Laws designed to discourage immigration also create an unfriendly environment for immigrants who have already entered the country. Reflecting the aversion to being exploited, this stance assumes that the poor take advantage of services and benefits they have not paid for. As Sara Ahmed explains:

> To be a "soft touch nation" is to be taken in by the bogus: to "take in" is to be "taken in". The demand is that the nation should seal itself from others, if it is to act on behalf of its citizens, rather than react to the claims of

> immigrants and other others. The implicit demand is for a nation that is less emotional, less open, less easily moved, one that is "hard", or "tough". The use of metaphors of "softness" and "hardness" shows us how emotions become attributes of collectives, which get constructed as "being" through "feeling". Such attributes are of course gendered: the soft national body is a feminised body, which is "penetrated" or "invaded" by others. (2)

The broader context for Ahmed's statement is the rhetoric of xenophobic groups that rely on the metaphor of "soft" bodies to create a sense of a nation-state vulnerable to violation. The violators are immigrants who enter wealthy nations like England to take advantage of the country's wealth and opportunities. The fear of exploitation is itself a result of neoliberal conceptions of the state, as austerity measures designed to streamline government and subject its operations to cost-benefit analysis means cutting services that rely on tax revenue to exist. Under a neoliberal regime, such services should be provided by the private sector and placed under markets.

The response to the "invasion" by foreigners is to toughen up and become "hard." This hardness uses the metaphor of a body made impervious to penetration, but it also prescribes an emotional posture toward the "invaders" where one works to be unmoved and unaffected by appeals of poverty. This dichotomy between "soft" and "hard" bodies relies on the perception of gendered bodies that are more or less vulnerable to being "penetrated" by those seeking to take advantage.

Ahmed's description of "hard" reactions to immigrants explains the attitude of the immigration officials towards Senay: "*Hardness is not the absence of emotion, but a*

different emotional orientation towards the other. The hard white body is shaped by its reactions: the rage against others surfaces as a body that stands apart or keeps its distance from others" (4). The immigration officials represent this attitude and are tasked with patrolling the boundaries of the nation-state, and their unforgiving and sarcastic demeanor in the scene also communicates this hardness and suspicion towards Senay. She responds through fear and nervousness; she understands that these officials would like nothing better than to find a reason to send her back to Turkey. Keeping others at bay is to communicate clearly that they are not welcome.

Criminalizing immigration and cultivating an emotional hardness toward immigrants lead to the estrangement of immigrants. If vagabonds move to countries that harden themselves in anticipation of their arrival, then they live in lands where their status as non-citizens means that they are subject to the very exploitation and violation that these wealthy nations fear. The immigrants are made soft; they are vulnerable to exploitation and must also take a flexible, malleable stance toward power. The fact that this is allowed to happen relies on estrangement.

Spatial segregation is key to estrangement. Bauman notes:

> Estrangement is the core function of spatial separation. Estrangement reduces, thins down and compresses the view of the other: individual qualities and circumstances which tend to be vividly brought within sight thanks to the accumulated experience of daily intercourse, seldom come into view when the intercourse is emaciated or prohibited altogether: typification takes then the place of personal familiarity, and legal

> categories meant to reduce the variance and to allow it to be disregarded render the uniqueness of persons and cases irrelevant. (106-107)

According to Bauman, the consequence of estrangement is that we are more likely to place people who have been estranged into legal categories, which also means a greater likelihood of dealing with them through legal means. That is, we are more likely to and apply a "zero tolerance" (89) code in dealing with strangers than we are with people who we have gotten to know as individuals through the "accumulated experience of daily intercourse" (106-107). Robbed of everyday interaction by spatial segregation, a more nuanced and individual view of vagabonds becomes impossible. Therefore, criminalization and imprisonment are more likely to occur to those who have been estranged from a society and its norms, but at the same time imprisonment and spatial segregation leads to estrangement. It is no wonder that vagabonds will do anything to free themselves from this feedback loop.

This spatial segregation in *Dirty Pretty Things* is represented not only by transforming Senay's apartment into a prison cell, but also by showing very little interaction between the citizens of London with Okwe, Senay, and the other migrant workers. What little interaction occurs is largely through Okwe's perfunctory contact with pharmacists and customers of the hotel and his taxi. Guo Yi, Okwe's friend who works in the hospital morgue, is mostly shown alone in the bowels of the hospital incinerating hospital biowaste and cleaning up autopsy tables. His only social contact is with Okwe. Senay also cleans empty rooms and later works in a windowless sweatshop. Sequestered in these spaces, these workers become estranged from the larger population of London. Ehrenreich and Hochschild explain that many of the jobs described as

"women's work" are these jobs that occur behind closed doors and out of view (3-4). This does not only apply to women's work, as employers who hire illegal immigrants have an incentive to keep all of their workers out of view. This makes immigrants, and Senay in particular, vulnerable to exploitation in the movie as no one is able to witness the crimes committed against them. As Okwe says, "We are the people you do not see. We are the ones who drive your cabs. We clean your rooms. And suck your cocks."

The hardening of emotions towards immigrants explains the inability to access health care in *Dirty Pretty Things*. This hardening contrasts with the "soft" bodies of immigrants as their bodies become exploited by the forces of an unregulated black market. An example of this is the scene when Okwe discovers Somali immigrants who must get to a hospital because one of them has a staph infection. When Okwe goes to visit Señor Juan to pick up Senay's paycheck for her, he discovers two middle-aged men waiting to speak to Señor Juan. One of the men appears to be in a great deal of pain and distress, and when he starts yelling and gasping in pain, Okwe lifts up his shirt to discover a horribly infected gash along the man's side. He has a staph infection, and Okwe immediately determines that he must get to a hospital.

But Señor Juan tells Okwe, "They won't go to hospital."

In response to this exchange, both men—neither of whom speak English well but recognize the word "hospital"—panic and refuse to go to a hospital. The reason for this is that going to the hospital would in all likelihood expose them as illegal immigrants. As a result of their unwillingness to go to a hospital, Okwe takes it upon himself to find a way to steal antibiotics and other medicine so that he can treat the man. As Okwe treats him,

he learns that the wound happened during a botched operation at The Baltic Hotel as the man attempted to trade his kidney for a passport.

This scene illustrates the relationship that poor immigrants have with wealthy nations that are called to "harden" themselves against immigration. Institutionally, this "hardening" takes the form of denial of services such as health care and education. Denial of these care-giving institutions is meant to dissuade immigrants from coming, or make it so inhospitable that they may eventually want to leave. The result of this stance toward immigrants is that they are driven to the black market and informal, shadow economies to meet their needs. Immigrants' bodies are vulnerable and "soft" in the film as we see through the Somali man's wound, Okwe gingerly walking through the streets in bare feet, and the sexual exploitation of Senay's body.

The movement from state services to services provided by markets is no coincidence. Okwe's exposure to the organ black market marks his awakening to what goes on in London. His surprise that such a market exists in London connects to his rather naïve declaration that they must get the Somali man with the staph infection to a hospital. In a later scene with Guo Yi, Okwe rages against the presence of the organ black market and how it exploits immigrants. Somewhat incredulously, Guo Yi asks, "Okwe, you didn't know people sold their organs?"

Okwe responds, "Not here."

Guo Yi replies, "What do you mean 'here?' Here in London you think it doesn't happen because the queen doesn't approve? I hear in London it's ten grand for a kidney. For that, people take risks. If I had the courage, I'd sell my kidney. Just to get out of here. Just to save my brain."

Okwe’s view of London and England reflects his belief that wealthy countries contain institutions that protect people from this kind of exploitation. In other words, his vision of London is as a capital of liberal democracy. To Okwe’s horror, London does not provide the insulation and protection from exploitative market forces, at least for a certain class of people. Those who need medical attention do not necessarily receive it, and middlemen like Señor Juan exploit the vagabonds’ desperation to profit from it. *Dirty Pretty Things* depicts Okwe’s confrontation with a London transformed by neoliberalism and globalization where market forces have crept into all aspects of life and society.

Thus, tracing the network of care in *Dirty Pretty Things* reveals how wealthy nations respond to the influx of migrant workers from poor nations by hardening themselves to immigrants’ needs. Driving immigrants into the black market may appear to be an unintended consequence, but it is in fact part of the logic of neoliberalism that the state withdraw from many of its previous roles to allow the market to fill the vacuum. The film depicts this dynamic by structuring its plot so that every time the immigration officers make an appearance to look for Senay, it only makes her more vulnerable to a rapacious black market. Senay, like the other workers in the film, participates in the black market economy and works under the table to avoid hostile immigration authorities. They are drawn to jobs where employers look the other way if job seekers do not have the proper documents to work; in exchange, these immigrants work without the protection of labor laws that shield them from exploitation by their employers. Given the choice between deportation and working for substandard wages and working conditions, the characters choose the latter.

When the immigration enforcement directive forces Senay to quit her job at The Baltic Hotel, she finds a job working as a seamstress in a sweatshop. When they also come to the sweatshop and ask the manager of the sweatshop if he has seen Senay, the manager leverages this knowledge to blackmail Senay into giving him oral sex in exchange for not exposing her to the authorities. Unable to tolerate the arrangement, Senay bites him while performing oral sex and runs. She then seeks out Señor Juan to arrange for a kidney donation so that she can get a passport and leave London.

In each case, the appearance of the state officers drives Senay further into the black market and makes her more vulnerable to exploitation. Criminalizing immigrants' existence provides predatory middlemen like the sweatshop manager and Señor Juan with the means to exploit immigrants further, which only serves to strengthen the influence of the black market over immigrants' lives. These men offer solutions to Senay's problems, but they exact a heavy price. By focusing on the injustice of the costs of these decisions, *Dirty Pretty Things* confronts neoliberalism's formulation of morality. According to Brown, "neoliberalism entails the erosion of oppositional political, moral, or subjective claims located *outside* capitalist rationality yet inside liberal democratic society, that is, the erosion of institutions, venues, and values organized by nonmarket rationalities in democracies" (45). Furthermore, morality becomes conflated with one's ability to make successful decisions based on rational calculations based on market conditions: "In making the individual fully responsible for her- or himself, neoliberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action; it erases the discrepancy between economic and moral behavior by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences" (42). Because *Dirty Pretty Things* focuses on the extreme

exploitation of immigrants by the black market, it casts the choices confronting immigrants as immoral.

An exchange between Señor Juan and Okwe demonstrates how economic rationality has come to dominate all aspects of life. The constitution of this market is personified through Señor Juan. He profits from this shadow economy by acting as a kind of hedge fund manager of the black market; Señor Juan prices disparate commodities and makes money performing arbitrage. The immigrants who come to Señor Juan are simply another commodity in this cost/benefit exchange.

Initially introduced as the manager of The Baltic Hotel, we soon learn that Señor Juan not only manages the hotel but also sells truffles to upscale hotels and arranges for the donation and sale of body organs in the black market. His resourcefulness in finding out Okwe's identity demonstrates his skills at arbitrage. Suspecting that Okwe may be a doctor after seeing how Okwe handles the Somali donor's staph infection, he goes to another hotel where Okwe was previously employed. He offers truffles that just arrived from France for the hotel kitchen. He offers a discount on the truffles if the manager will tell him Okwe's background. Trading truffles for information, he then uses that information in an effort to entice Okwe to perform the organ donation surgery (his current surgeon is not as skilled and has killed a donor). Constantly calculating cost and benefit, Señor Juan embodies the entrepreneurial subjectivity that sees every aspect of human life as a commodity and uses market rationality to determine the next move.

His offer to Okwe is simple. He will pay Okwe three-thousand pounds for each surgery and eventually provide passports for Okwe and Senay. Okwe objects, not wanting to get involved in such a sordid trade. But Señor Juan tells Okwe to see it

another way, "If you were just some African, the deal would be simple. You give me your kidney, I give you a new identity. I sell the kidney for ten grand, so I'm happy. The person who needs the kidney gets cured, so he's happy. The person who sold his kidney gets to stay in this beautiful country, so he's happy. My whole business is based on happiness."

When Okwe continues to refuse, he tries another tack, "You could even go back to Africa. And no one would know who the fuck you are. Your choice. No rush."

What Señor Juan fails to mention, of course, is the danger for the kidney donor. In addition to the staph infection, Okwe unclogs a toilet in a room and discovers that the cause of the blockage was a human heart, indicating that someone has died. The horrific aftermath of these organ donations are one way the movie illustrates the danger for the migrant workers in London. It undercuts the rhetoric of happiness that Señor Juan recites to Okwe. Immigrants in London risk their lives for the ability to stay in England, selling the one commodity they own that is valuable enough to get them the proper passport.

When Okwe learns that the Somali immigrant agreed to sell his kidney for a passport, he is filled with despair at the horror of the poor subjecting themselves to such a dangerous operation for the right to stay in England. The act of desperation crosses ethical boundaries as defined through a liberal conception of the state; the idea that poverty would make one intentionally sell a part of one's body for money or a passport violates notions of the whole, normative body and the idea that the body should not be subject to the cold calculations of the market. The liberal democratic state is supposed to check this expansion of the market into all facets of life.

However, the donating characters' estrangement from their own bodies in *Dirty Pretty Things* follows the logic of how workers become alienated from their own labor. Bodies and body fragments become commodities that can be traded according to market logic. The inequality that springs from these relationships can be traced to the concept of possessive individualism and John Locke's (1632-1704) defense of property rights, which articulated and codified the idea that the ultimate possessor of the product of labor was the property-owning class. Laborers, by selling their labor for a wage forfeited any right to possession of their own labor and what the labor produced (Macpherson 215). According to Locke, the role of the state was to secure these property rights (257). The immigrants' poverty in the film means that in many cases, donors' bodies are not their own.

The selling of organs for money or a passport reflects the infiltration of market logic throughout every aspect of our lives. Brown's discussion of neoliberalism begins to explain the migrant workers' calculations:

> [N]ot only is the human being configured exhaustively as *homo œconomicus*, but all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality. While this entails submitting every action and policy to considerations of profitability, equally important is the production of all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action, conducted according to a calculus of utility, benefit, or satisfaction against a microeconomic grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality (40).

The migrant workers in *Dirty Pretty Things* are fully aware that this is the way that they must live their lives. The immigrants have decided that giving up a kidney to stay in London and to be free of their vulnerability to the exploitation of the black market is worth it. Casting this decision as a choice is portrayed ironically in this movie, as Señor Juan's speech to Okwe about how his organ business creates happiness is met with an angry glare from Okwe; clearly, the donors are driven to donate by poverty and the constant danger of deportation.

However, the moral outrage at this "choice" would be outdated and quaint according to neoliberalism. The commodification of the body is value-neutral in the eyes of the market, and indeed, proponents of market logic propose bringing the organ trade out of the shadow of the black market and creating a regulated industry of organ donation that would ensure that no one would be forced into donating an organ (Kaminer). That extreme poverty is not discussed as a coercive force in these calculations is telling; for those advocating this approach to address the scarcity of organs, the compensation for the organ ($30,000) makes this a choice by a rational subject and is cast as a way of utilizing the market to alleviate a social need: the scarcity of organs for those requiring transplants. The market is simply a tool (and very often presented as the *best* tool) meant to optimize the allocation of resources and commodities according to the laws of supply and demand. Potential donors calculate risk and benefit as they manage their bodies as an entrepreneur would a business, weighing the cost and benefit of selling an organ. Such programs are often described as utilizing the "power" of the market. And participation in this market is framed as a choice.

Attempts to regulate this market would in all likelihood be met with accusations of state paternalism in inhibiting choice. That is, government regulation or prohibition of such a market would be seen as a threat to the individual's choice to sell their organs and imposing outdated moral principles to prevent individuals from engaging in cost-benefit calculations within a market.

We see an example of this in the film when Señor Juan introduces Okwe to a woman who wants to donate an organ for a passport. Luring Okwe upstairs on a bogus room service call, Señor Juan invites Okwe into a room where an African woman sits on the bed in her underwear. She wants to donate her kidney for a passport, and Señor Juan would like Okwe to perform the operation.

Sensing Okwe's hesitation, Señor Juan tells him, "Stop acting like you've got a choice." The woman begs Okwe to help her. When Okwe responds by telling the woman to put her clothes back on, Señor Juan goes into a rage and begins manhandling Okwe. He tells him, "You came in a truck, but you're going home in chains. They'll deliver you like meat!" Okwe grabs a scalpel and holds it to Señor Juan's throat. He calls Okwe's bluff, "The whole world is wrong except you, Okwe? What? What, Okwe? You are going to cut me up and flush me away? Huh?" At this, Okwe drops the scalpel and leaves.

The mask slips; despite Señor Juan's earlier monologue on happiness, he reminds Okwe that he does not have a choice. Initially, there is ambiguity since the woman herself begs Okwe to perform the operation, as if it were her decision to donate the organ as well. However, Señor Juan himself tells Okwe what the consequences will be if he does not perform the operation. Señor Juan will expose Okwe and send him back to Nigeria as a political prisoner. For the donor, she will live with the constant threat of deportation.

For Okwe and the immigrants who come to Señor Juan for a passport, this exchange is not a choice. Who is compelled to donate organs very much depends upon the nationality and ethnicity of the donor because of their desperation. Señor Juan mocks Okwe with the question, “The whole world is wrong except you, Okwe?” This question casts Okwe’s values as outside the norm. As Señor Juan states, his “whole business is based on happiness.” The person who needs a kidney gets a kidney. Señor Juan gets his cut. And the donor gets a passport, which allows them to stay in England and no longer fear deportation. That Señor Juan’s view on the organ trade is delivered in a smug and arrogant manner casts his view as cynical and undercuts the happiness narrative that he delivers. But his view actually encapsulates the logic behind the neoliberal drive to turn all aspects of life over to the market. In this view, such calculations are actually moral calculations not only because it performs a social function (rationalizing the exchange of organs) but also because moral choice becomes absorbed into market calculations. Success or failure at making the correct decisions in the market becomes a measure of the moral success or failure of the individual, but this judgment is applied after the results of the choice. The individual alone “bears responsibility for the consequences of these choices” (Brown 43). This is the mechanism through which subjects are controlled; rather than a state that controls citizens through edict and command, “neoliberal subjects are controlled *through* their freedom [. . .] because of neoliberalism’s *moralization* of the consequences of this freedom” (44). The market is morally “value-neutral” in the sense that the market does not prejudge the morality of an act (40). Morality only enters the discussion after the decision has played out according to market forces, at which point the individual bears the full weight of the moral responsibility of the decision rather than

market forces. This is the mechanism through which subjects' "freedom" leads to their subjugation.

The technological development that accelerates and amplifies the inclusion of organ donation into this neoliberal system is the increased efficacy of immunosuppressant drugs. Catherine Waldby and Robert Mitchell describe the circulation of organs as "tissue economies." These are economies of human tissue, such as blood, stem cells, organs, and other fragments of the human body. Tracing the history of blood donation and its entanglement with notions of community, the nation, and the gift economy, Waldby and Mitchell discuss how technology and globalization have changed the way we view tissue donation and our bodies. Rather than viewing donation of tissue as a gift to a fellow citizen of the imagined community of a nation (where we place our own bodies as being a part of), the pressure now is to view our bodies and the circulation of donated tissue the way capital circulates through global markets.

Whereas tissue donation began as a state-run program that connected individual bodies with state bodies for state purposes (a way for citizens to donate blood for war efforts or following natural disasters), the black market in *Dirty Pretty Things* foreshadows the privatization of organ donation. Privatizing tissue markets shifts the role of the state from coordinators of tissue donation to a secondary role that ensures such markets function smoothly. Ostensibly, the function of the state would be to ensure the safety of donors under this system, but in *Dirty Pretty Things*, the hostility of the state towards immigrants means that the state does not even perform this function.

For something as personal as our own tissues to circulate in this manner involves a process of "disentanglement" of our body tissues (68). Organs undergo a systematic

process of disentangling so that they are able to come as close as possible to mimicking the circulation of capital. According to Waldby and Mitchell, two developments in the mid-1980s allowed the disentangling of organs and created a black market in organs:

> [T]he development of immunosuppressant drugs such as cyclosporine reduced the importance (and later FK-506) reduced the importance of histo-compatibility. Organs became more standardized and less entangled in the qualitative specificity of donors and recipients, so that surgeons could treat them as interchangeable parts rather than as recalcitrant objects with nearly unique histio-profiles. Such transformations rendered them more compatible with anonymized, market forms of circulation. As Lawrence Cohen notes, '[c]yclosporine *globalizes*, creating myriad biopolitical fields where donor populations are differentially and flexibly materialized. Difference is actively suppressed, allowing specific subpopulations to become "same enough" for their members to be surgically disaggregated and their parts reincorporated' (Cohen 2002, 12). Second, illegal markets in organs arguably developed in response to national legislation that outlawed legal organ markets in most first world countries" (171).

Immunosuppressant drugs make organs more flexible and fungible commodities, which facilitates the conversion of organs into marketable commodities. This highlights the importance of technology in these processes of disentangling and commodification. Organs and medical procedures become global commodities, and we see this not only through the exploitation of poor immigrants in *Dirty Pretty Things*, but also through the

rise of medical tourism as wealthier patients take advantage of differences in cost and medical regulations to find treatment in foreign countries.

The film shows the globalized nature of tissue economies through the diversity of the donors and the young Saudi girl who needs a kidney to live. Desperate to find a kidney, she and her family have traveled to London and enlisted the help of Señor Juan. The kidney will, presumably, be provided by the African woman that Señor Juan introduced to Okwe.

In much the same way that local communities are transformed and homogenized to become tourist friendly so that local culture is distilled to become an aesthetic and commodified experience, tissues are disentangled so that all traces of the specific body and the culture it was situated in are effaced to become an object made with the recipient—the consumer—in mind. The kidney is stripped of its specificity; the nationality of the donor or the recipient does not matter as long as they are biologically compatible, or compatible enough with the help of immunosuppressant drugs. The conspicuous absence of scenes where donors are matched with recipients through histo-compatibility reinforces the fact that one's organs are no longer markers of individual uniqueness, and that this allows the globalization of the organ market. It is a cannibalistic form of capitalism that extracts the tissues of some global citizens so that others can have life.

A legalized organ donation market would presumably protect donors from such abuses and provide safer conditions, and such protection is one of the primary arguments for forming such a market. The role of the state would be to ensure the safety of donors and recipients and ensure that donors receive a fair price for their organs. However, what

advocates of such a market fail to take into account is that for the buyer of human tissue, the desire that motivates this market is the desire for the "regenerative body, whose every loss can be repaired" (Waldby 30). This creates a conception of the body where parts can be replaced and regenerated, a way to stave off mortality and prolong life. This has led to increased demand and a sense of entitlement for these life-extending tissues and technologies in developed nations, which "has put tremendous pressure on 'real-time' therapies such as organ transplantation, which like blood donation rely on the regenerative capacities of another's body" (162).

Unfortunately, the donation system is not able to keep up with this demand. As Waldby and Mitchell note:

> The demand for organs in the United States has constantly outstripped the donated supply. Consequently, a number of commentators have seized on the language of supply and demand to argue that a 'market' in organs would coordinate information far more effectively (and morally) than a donation system. However, we note that their analyses do not take into account the inflation of expectations and demand both inherent in organ transplant medicine (the expansion and improvement of transplant techniques, for example) and resulting from regenerative biotechnology's claims. (162-163)

In other words, no matter the organization of such legalized organ markets, the increase in demand means that there will always be a shortage in supply. Furthermore, black markets would not disappear since black markets would provide organs at lower prices, making regenerative therapies accessible to buyers who cannot afford the prices of

legitimate markets. Black markets would also continue to exist for donors like the characters in *Dirty Pretty Things* who must remain anonymous to avoid detection from immigration authorities. And such an organ market would greatly expand the donating class as well to whoever needs the money.

Such a market absolves itself of the moral and human consequences of a greatly expanded tissue market through the concept of informed consent. In the scene when Señor Juan fills out the paperwork for Senay's fake passport, he makes it clear that there is one final act she must perform for him: she must have sex with him. When Senay refuses, Señor Juan makes it sound like it was her choice, a take it or leave it proposition that is a gross caricature of contract negotiations and, in the context of organ and tissue donation, informed consent:

> Under the principle of informed consent, a person has the right to be fully informed about the possible dangers and risks of participation in medical research, and the opportunity to give or refuse consent. The principle of informed consent is understood to protect the autonomy and dignity of the individual, and to prevent coercion, medical paternalism, and exploitation (Lupton 1997; Corrigan 2003). Thus when donors give tissues for research, the informed consent procedure is explicitly designed to protect them from exploitative medical pressure. (Waldby 71)

Ostensibly, then, informed consent is meant to protect the rights of the donor. However, "informed consent is the mechanism that transforms a gift into property" (71). What this means is that informed consent transfers full right of ownership of the tissue to the recipients, who can be someone who needs an organ or a biotechnology firm intent on

using the tissue donation for research and commercial opportunities. Informed consent is the legal means of disentangling tissue from donors since "the gift, once given, ceases to refer to the donor. Here the informed consent procedure acts as a kind of surrogate property contract" (72). In this instance, informed consent means both the transfer of Senay's rights to her organs as well as an agreement to provide sex. The fact that Senay "gives" her virginity to Señor Juan further underscores this exchange as the transfer of rights to her own body to her recipient. When Senay initially refuses to have sex with him, Señor Juan describes her refusal as a "deal breaker." When Senay continues to refuse, Señor Juan says, "You are this close to New York and you said no." He then turns away toward the paperwork with Senay's new identity and tears it in two.

He turns to leave, and a close-up of Senay shows how conflicted she is as the possibility of her new identity and escaping to New York appears to be walking out the door. Just as Señor Juan is about to leave the room, Senay stops him. Señor Juan continues negotiating, "I want the whole thing. That's the deal. Take it or leave it."

Senay tries to retain at least a modicum of her dignity and says, "You do not see me. You just do. Take it or leave it." Senay turns off the light, and they have sex following her "consent."

This scene demonstrates the blind spot of the concept of informed consent and the subject as envisioned by neoliberalism. What Senay has done is make her "choice" according a cost-benefit analysis, but because of her desperation, Señor Juan was able to extract far more than Senay was willing to give. That his language is couched in terms of personal choice again highlights the neoliberal subject as "entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life" (Brown 42). Informed consent is the mechanism through which

consequences of a procedure is placed solely on the donor because ostensibly, the donor assumes responsibility for anything that could go wrong by their consent. By exposing the coercion and pressure placed on Senay, this scene gives the lie to a neoliberal subject who is solely responsible for the self by casting rape as a "choice" through a mockery of negotiation. The movie constructs a situation where there is no choice for her; hounded by the Immigration Enforcement Directive and forced from two jobs due to their intervention, Senay is increasingly unable to work in London. The Italian passport that Señor Juan promises her is a way out of the exploitation that has marked her existence in London.

The flexibility of identity that the passport confers upon Senay and the other immigrants in the film shows how they can escape the exploitation through the black market, but even here, the film shows that first-world citizenship does nothing to protect individuals from exploitative market forces. The character who reflects this is Juliet, the black prostitute who Okwe defends from an abusive john. Later, she cares for Senay after Señor Juan raped her, providing her with a morning-after pill and giving her advice on how to emotionally deal with sexual assault. As they share a cigarette together, Juliet says, "What a pair: the virgin and the whore," and they share a bitter laugh at the joke. Juliet feels kinship with the immigrant workers of The Baltic Hotel through their shared experiences of exploitation.

Juliet is therefore pivotal to the film in that she shows how the state neglects its own citizens as well as immigrant others. Citizenship is no protection against the inhuman consequences of the market, and in many respects the immigrants are harbingers of a larger retreat by government and the state from its role as an intermediary between

its own citizens and market forces. Austerity measures targeting social services hit citizens and immigrants alike, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities and privatizing services that were formerly run by the government.

In organ markets, this results in a donating class and a receiving class. The donating class consists of poor illegal immigrants, and the receiving class is the wealthy, represented by the young girl and her Saudi family. All that is required, according to Señor Juan, is for Okwe to set aside his moral objections to such a market and embrace the logic that Señor Juan espouses. If Señor Juan represents the values of neoliberalism and Okwe the values of liberal democracy, neoliberalism replaces the liberal democratic stance that sees morality as separate from market values with a version that sees market rationality as the only legitimate force for decisions. Such decisions, it claims, is morally value neutral, but this can only be true by ignoring how market forces affect individuals differently and force poor individuals into choices that wealthier subjects do not have to make.

Therefore, Juliet shows how citizenship is no guarantee of protection from the market. As Guo Yi explains, the fact that they're in London does not mean that organ donation does not exist. Just because the Queen—the symbol of the British nation—does not approve does not mean that national identity or national values can prevent the encroachment of undesirable markets. *Dirty Pretty Things* depicts the underground London of illegal immigrants and black markets where global flows of capital, goods, and labor has resulted in a London where the boundaries between the developed and undeveloped world begin to blur.

How these passports are procured shows the role flexibility plays in constructing identities. Nation-states have morphed into another feature of identity that individuals reflexively choose. Embedded in this choice of nationality are the economic forces and geopolitical events that elevate or demote certain nationalities in esteem and desirability.

An example of this is the scene when Señor Juan asks Senay for the information she wants on her new passport. As Señor Juan sits down to fill out the necessary paperwork, he starts by asking, “Okay. How old are you?”

Senay responds, “Twenty-two.”

Señor Juan then asks, “How old do you want to be?”

Senay again responds, “Twenty-two.”

Señor Juan turns to look back at Senay as we cut on action to a close-up of Senay, and tells her, “Hey, come on. Relax. I can make you whatever you want. You want to be Spanish? Or Greek?”

Senay responds, “Italian.”

When he tells her she will need a new name, she has one ready, “Isabella Encarico.”

When Señor Juan asks her, “You sure that’s Italian?” Senay tells him, “She owns a café in New York.”

Later, after a cross-cut showing Okwe looking for Senay to stop her from donating her kidney, Señor Juan goes over her new identity to make sure she knows it by heart. Her new name is Isabella Fontana Encarico, she is twenty-two years old, and she was born in Arenella in Napoli. He gives her some advice, “The trick, Senay, is to believe you are the new person. If you believe it inside, then the immigration will believe it.”

This scene is notable for the role fantasy plays in the construction of Senay's new identity and how assumptions of desirable nationalities have changed quickly since this movie was produced. Senay constructs a fantasy life around her new identity; in an earlier scene as she has dinner with Okwe, she describes New York, "In the winter, they put lights in the trees. Is that true? And you can skate in the parks. And some of the policemen ride white horses. Not all of them, but some." The lifestyle that Senay imagines for herself is full of holiday decorations, white horses, and the epicurean life of a café owner. The nationality and ethnicity that best suits this fantasy is a white Italian, and so this is the identity she chooses.

However, since *Dirty Pretty Things* was produced, the nation-states and locations in this scene are no longer nationalities that are as desirable. Greek, Spanish, and Italian nationalities mean citizenship in the EU, which means a greater degree of freedom and mobility for a Turkish national like Senay. But the financial crisis in 2008 was followed by a more catastrophic sovereign debt crisis which saw Greece brought to its knees when it was revealed that the Greek government was carrying an unsustainable amount of debt. Spain and Italy have also been identified as the next nation-states that will be in danger of defaulting on its debts and thrust into crisis. As recent events have shown, the status of nationalities changes quickly if their economies slide into crisis, and markets often force nations into austerity programs designed to ensure that they can repay their debts. Cutting government jobs and services exacerbates the high unemployment in times of economic recession while at the same time removing the safety net designed to care for citizens in the event of such a crisis. The consequence of this is that almost overnight, the status of the nation's citizens can change from tourists to vagabonds as poverty forces them to

seek employment elsewhere. Another example of this is Ireland, where a faltering economy and draconian cuts to government services cause Irish citizens to leave the country to seek work, a shock to a country that had only recently been encouraging immigration due to its booming economy. The tragedy of the Irish economic downturn is expressed in terms of the forced mobility of its citizens and part of a larger national narrative of emigration brought about by disaster, but the difference this time is that the disaster was a financial collapse versus natural disasters such as the potato famine (Stringer). Prior to the global financial crisis, Ireland was a country that welcomed immigrants in large numbers as its thriving economy attracted workers and investment from around the globe (Ibid.). Ireland is a clear example of how the prestige of nation-states can change quickly so that in a relatively short time, nations that were importing labor suddenly become labor exporters.

This volatility demonstrates one of the primary forces of globalization, and it expresses itself through the fate of Señor Juan. In a position of power for most of the movie, he is drugged and replaces Senay as the kidney donor. This reversal reflects Bauman's assertion that "the vagabond [. . .] is the *alter ego* of the tourist. The line which divides them is tenuous and not always clearly drawn" (96). What Bauman means is that everyone is vulnerable to the volatility of the speed and wild swings of market forces. The exploiter becomes the victim, and the justice of this narrative development provides a degree of satisfaction through melodramatic closure as virtuous characters triumph over the villain.

The zero-sum nature of this resolution is obscured through the melodrama of its ending. The film repudiates neoliberalism by casting it as immoral and exploitative, but it

does so through nostalgia for a liberal democratic conception of morality and the market. Okwe and Senay are not leftist revolutionaries; their dreams and desires are firmly entrenched within capitalist fantasies of small business ownership (Senay's dreams of owning a café) and the restoration of a lost bourgeois family (Okwe's desire to reunite with her daughter and presumably, return to being a doctor).

The stance toward the black market in the movie is clear: it exploits poor immigrants and allows for the existence of predatory middle-men. Caught between a state that treats them as criminals and a black market that exploits this neglect by the state, the narrative resolution allows Okwe and Senay to escape both dynamics; they are no longer persecuted for being immigrant others by the British state while not paying the exorbitant price that other immigrants had to pay. By punishing the gatekeepers of the black market (the sweatshop foreman and Señor Juan), the movie presents a "bad" black market, which is simply a problem of the degree of market forces rather than kind.

As the hero of the film, Okwe is the only protection from market forces. The care that the donors receive in the film is primarily through his skill and ingenuity in treating them. Okwe mediates between the "hardness" of the Immigration Enforcement Directive and Señor Juan and the "softness" of Senay, Juliet, and the Somali donor. Okwe is a hybrid figure; he is an immigrant who is as vulnerable to exploitation as the other immigrants in the film, but he possesses skills that confer a degree of agency that the other immigrants lack. He is, as he tells Guo Yi, a "wanted man" who cannot go to the authorities after he witnesses Senay and other immigrants' exploitation by the black market. Recognizing that Okwe may be a competent and skilled doctor, Señor Juan wants Okwe to perform the operations so that he'll stop losing money on botched operations.

His ability as a surgeon confers upon him certain benefits from Señor Juan, who is willing to treat him as a partner or a valued employee versus how he views the other immigrants as merely donors for his business. He provides the care for the poor immigrants that they cannot receive from the British state, but he also faces pressure from Señor Juan to monetize these skills.

This narrative resolution and the victory over Señor Juan is a repudiation of the black market and those who run it. While the movie resolves the danger to the protagonists and ends happily for the characters, the ending does not mean the black market is eliminated. In fact, Okwe and Senay take advantage of it to escape London. Okwe's intervention is important in understanding the values that lie behind this movie. The movie itself does not propose solutions to the question of how to manage tissue economies or the exploitation of immigrants. We are placed *in medias res* into a market-based system of organ donation, and the only agency Okwe has in the face of this market is to perform the operation so that it is done safely and cleanly for the people within his limited social orbit.

This shows a subjectivity that already regards the body as an entity that can be divided and commodified. The vagabonds of *Dirty Pretty Things* view and treat their bodies as entrepreneurs relate to their assets and investments as they convert the value of their organs into the freedom to move as tourists. However, the movie also exposes this stance toward self-care as coerced; poverty forces Senay and the other vagabonds to sell their organs, putting themselves at risk of death and vulnerable to the predations of those who control access to the market that will provide the means for their freedom.

The intervention of Okwe and the care he provides for Senay and the other vagabonds expresses a subjectivity more in line with liberal democracy. Helpless to do anything about the existence of the market, Okwe's goal is to make sure that other moral principles exist outside of market rationality. Whereas Señor Juan's motivation for recruiting Okwe is because dead donors are bad for business, Okwe's attitude has more to do with his desire to provide care and to insulate the vagabonds he encounters "against the ghastliness of life exhaustively ordered by the market and measured by market values" (46). Okwe's care is an attempt to reinstate a society ordered along the principles of liberal democracy, which attempts to create moral and political worlds that lie outside of market logic, but not concerned with finding an alternative to capitalism. Values such as dignity are to be protected. The response to neoliberalism is nostalgia for liberal democracy where the state's role is to protect workers from the more dehumanizing aspects of markets to ensure a safer workplace. It is a regulated capitalism.

Furthermore, the movie resolves itself through the love relationship of Okwe and Senay. While eradicating the black market is daunting, the protection of loved ones appears all that one can do. The movie celebrates the care that vagabonds provide for each other as the state abdicates those responsibilities, but this care is designed primarily to create individuals who can travel freely like tourists and consume like tourists. On the one hand, they are free of the London underground economy, but as they depart from Heathrow, we realize that they are simply one of the lucky ones.

CHAPTER IV

NEGLECT AND CHILDREN IN *NOBODY KNOWS*

The importance of care is often articulated through stories about its failure, particularly the failure to care for children. Cinematically, movies such as Rosselini's *Ladri di bicicleta* and Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* use the suffering or neglect of children to serve as social critique by telling the story of a poor family in post-war Italy or the effect of bureaucracy on children. The emotional effect of these movies relies on sympathy for the suffering of the vulnerable, and because children's vulnerability is usually not open to debate, this means that the need for care is typically unquestioned and at the center of many of these narratives. These films trace the reasons for the children's suffering and are often indictments of the institutions, individuals, or social circumstances that result in neglect. Often deploying melodramatic conventions, the one who is blamed for the neglect says much about a society's expectations of who should be caregivers.

The context of the neglect in Kore-eda Hirokazu's *Nobody Knows* (2004)[3] is a world of global capital and the triumph of the neoliberal ethic. The film can be read as a repudiation of neoliberalism's market-based morality by showing its logic played out in the lives of children. Neo-liberalism "figures individuals as rational, calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for 'self-care'—the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions" (Brown 42). When applied to children, the ethic of self-care and responsibility for one's own actions makes such rules appear tragic, absurd, and draconian.

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[3] All references are from *Nobody Knows*, Dir. Hirokazu Koreeda, Perf. Yuya Yagira, Ayu Kitaura, and Hiei Kimura, MGM Home Entertainment, 2004.

Care presents a double-threat to the neoliberal subject. On the one hand, focusing on care and re-centering care as vital for humans to thrive undercut arguments regarding the autonomous individual, one whose success is not dependent on others and the care they have received:

> By not noticing how pervasive and central care is to human life, those who are in positions of power and privilege can continue to ignore and to degrade the activities of care and those who give care. To call attention to care is to raise questions about the adequacy of care in our society. Such an inquiry will lead to a profound rethinking of moral and political life. (Tronto 111)

This idea of individualism and autonomy is often used to legitimize "the inequitable distribution of power, resources, and privilege" for the relatively powerful and privileged (Ibid.). Focusing on the need for care would undermine this legitimacy.

Nobody Knows focuses on the breakdown of care by telling the story of four children abandoned by their mother. The movie is based on a true story referred to as "The Affair of the Four Abandoned Children of Nishi-Sugamo," an event from 1988 where a young mother abandoned her children in an apartment. There were actually five children, but the third child died shortly after birth from malnutrition. So at the time of abandonment, there were only four living children. After the abandonment, the youngest child was beaten to death by friends of the eldest child. While the mother was prosecuted and condemned, editorials also bemoaned the neglect by neighbors and workers who came by to turn off the electricity and water.

The episode became a tabloid referendum on the failure of care in Japanese society. *Nobody Knows* is based on these events. The movie depicts a largely indifferent society as Akira (the oldest child and the primary caregiver in the film) navigates through the streets of Tokyo on his many errands to take care of his siblings. A formal motif that the film uses is a high-angle shot of Akira walking through a bustling street on one of his errands. Surrounded by adults, he is nonetheless alone in taking care of his siblings. The question the movie asks is, "Who is responsible for these children? Who is to take care of them?" Even though the family fails in its duty to care for Akira and his siblings, the film also shows that the idea that the responsibility still lies with the family is a way for society to divest themselves of a broader social responsibility for all children. *Nobody Knows* articulates the forces that may cause the breakdown in care for children in an age of global capital organized around the principles of flexible accumulation and neoliberalism.

The dynamic between Akira and Keiko (the mother) mimics the relationship between elites and their domestic servants. The fact that Akira is her son and the older brother to his siblings obscures this relationship, but Keiko farms off care to her son in a relationship that resembles the relationship of capital and labor. Keiko's caring falls under Tronto's definition of "taking care of" and needs to be distinguished from care-giving (106-107). Taking care of someone "involves assuming some responsibility for the identified need and determining how to respond to it. Rather than focusing on the need of the other person, taking care of involves the recognition that one can act to address these unmet needs" (106). However, Tronto points out that this is not the same as actual care-giving, which "involves the direct meeting of needs for care. It involves physical work,

and almost always requires that care-givers come in contact with the objects of care" (107). Therefore, giving Akira money and leaving him in charge of his siblings is not care-giving, but classified as taking care of someone. Tronto's classification of the different phases of caring explains how the traditionally gendered division of labor in the family becomes commodified, and while this liberates women like Keiko to participate in public life, the underlying power dynamic between those who can delegate care-giving to care workers mimics a power relationship that was traditionally gendered. While leaving money recognizes the need for care and even moves to meet those needs, the actual physical act of care is left to Akira.

The temptation to delegate and outsource care comes from care's threat to individual autonomy. What Keiko gains by leaving her children behind is mobility and the opportunity for a fresh start. Keiko must shed herself of the necessity to care because care interferes with this desire. During their move into the new apartment at the beginning of the film, Keiko and Akira smuggle Shigeru and Yuki into the apartment in suitcases, thereby showing the children as literal baggage. Furthermore, the fact that hired movers transport her children shows how her children's care already exists within relationships of commodity exchange.

The desire to outsource her children's care and escape the responsibility to care mimics the division of labor that was at the core of the patriarchal family. This points to the masculinization of women's roles within the family so that the division of labor still exists, but the tasks do not always correspond to gender in the way it once did. The principle here is similar to Ehrenreich's discussion of the relationship between the poor countries that provide care workers and the First World that "import" the care work:

"Poor countries take on a role like that of the traditional woman within the family—patient, nurturing, and self-denying. A division of labor that feminists critiqued when it was 'local' has now, metaphorically speaking, gone global" (11-12). As a single mother, Keiko is forced to be the sole breadwinner and caregiver. Therefore, it is necessary for her to find ways to delegate the care-giving to free her to leave the home to support the family. In other words, the division of labor within the family still exists even if the care work is not always (although it usually still is) performed by the mother. Akira assumes the role of caregiver that was previously filled by the mother, and as such, Akira and the rest of the family become as vulnerable as mothers and their children have always been when faced by abandonment by the father.

The temptation is to blame Keiko for the tragic events of the film. One mainstream review describes Keiko as a "flighty young monster" (Tobias). Describing her as a monster suggests something exceptional about her neglect, and certainly, the film contributes to this characterization through Keiko's high-pitched voice and childlike demeanor, which is unsettling given how she blurs the line between how an adult and child should behave. But *Nobody Knows* goes on to focus on the systemic factors of their neglect. The neoliberal view of freedom, a radical version of what Isaiah Berlin refers to as "negative freedom," explains how the children are neglected not only by their mother, but by the state and the adults in the neighborhood. Berlin describes "negative freedom" as freedom where "a man can act unobstructed by others" (Berlin). It defines freedom as the area in which an individual can act without interference from others. Neoliberalism focuses on removing all external impediments to freedom from behaving as a market actor. In this view, care becomes must be commodified and placed into market

relationships because if it is not, it becomes an impediment to the freedom of participating in the market. It is not care itself that is the obstacle, but rather the inability to turn care into a market transaction.

The way neoliberalism seeks to deal with the obligation toward childcare is to outsource the care work. Through market transactions (which one is free to conduct because one has been able to perform as a market actor with minimal interference) subjects can purchase the care they need. This does not exclude traditional means of child care such as relatives and friends, but absent those options, a nanny or daycare allows individuals to meet their care obligations while also having the time for self-cultivation and engaging in the reflexive project of the self (Giddens 5). The problem is when the responsibility is placed solely on the primary caregivers. In other words, if one is unable to pay for these services, class determines many of the outcomes of this arrangement.

Nobody Knows shows the consequences of the commodification of care on a poor family. The children's depiction as unwanted baggage provides a visual representation of how the children are a burden, and this portrayal points to the kind of freedom that the characters in the movie desire. Akira's father—who worked at Haneda—abandoned his family and robbed Keiko and Akira of the kind of life that airports promise: to become cosmopolitan, global citizens. Depicting the children as unwanted baggage provides a visual representation of how the children are a burden. They prevent the ability to take only the essentials so that one moves with minimal inertia, allowing for flexibility and effortless course corrections. As such, for Keiko to find happiness, she must shed the weight of her children, much as her husband did.

This emphasis on travel points to the kind of consumption that becomes dominant in the age of global capital. Bauman describes this change, “Consumers are first and foremost gatherers of *sensations*; they are collectors of *things* only in a secondary and derivative sense” (83). Commodities such as pop music are disposable commodities with indefinite (and more often short) lifespans that are vulnerable to the vagaries of trends and fashions. This accelerates the cycle of production and consumption, and while this acceleration may seem exciting and novel, it haunts all commodities with obsolescence. And in an economy where service work becomes more important, the threat of becoming passé extends to workers as well. So it appears that Keiko’s window for becoming a pop singer has passed despite the fact that she is still fairly young and, one would presume, still able to sing. For Keiko, this means that her window to make money from her singing career is now largely over. The short time horizon for her to make money as a singer points to traditional gender discrimination toward women in the entertainment industry where the cult of youth has always been harsher, but combined with the family’s economic troubles, it highlights the effects of this obsolescence on the lives of the characters in the film.

The quick obsolescence of Keiko’s skills points to the changing labor market and the pressure to adapt to a volatile and ephemeral world. It requires a flexible and maneuverable identity that requires constant reskilling. The roots of these demands on individuals lie, according to David Harvey, on certain structural changes to capitalism that he traces to the transition from Fordist to flexible accumulation. This shift meant confronting the rigidities of the post-World War II economic paradigm in capitalist nations, which included a rigid currency regime (the Bretton Woods agreement) based on

the gold standard and state commitments to social programs. It also meant confronting a rigid labor market, which was characterized by union contracts and the inability of capital to make adjustments freely to the labor force depending on changes to the economic environment.

Flexible labor markets meant those buying labor—the demand side of the labor market—had greater flexibility through a larger supply of labor (the entry of women into the workforce and much greater access to labor on a global scale in Asia and the former Soviet bloc) and, through repression of labor unions, greater flexibility in hiring and firing workers. Furthermore, the mobilization of fashion and technology meant a proliferation in the kind of ephemeral commodities that globalization produces (Bauman, *Globalization,* 78). The effect of this transition on labor was profound:

> Flexible accumulation appears to imply relatively high levels of 'structural' (as opposed to 'frictional') unemployment, rapid destruction and reconstruction of skills, modest (if any) gains in the real wage, and the rollback of trade union power—one of the political pillars of the Fordist regime [. . .] But more important has been the apparent move away from regular employment towards increasing reliance upon part-time, temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements [. . .] The current trend in labour markets is to reduce the number of 'core' workers and to rely increasingly upon a work force that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad. (150)

In the age of flexible accumulation, workers have to adapt to an environment where employment becomes more volatile and higher levels of unemployment become part of

the structure of the labor market. For workers, increased volatility in the labor market meant it was more difficult to plan long-term. Mimicking the ethic of "short-term planning and getting good at taking gains when they can be had" (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 287), workers and individuals also adopted this ethic of shortening time horizons and eschewing long term investment. Inflation exacerbated this trend by devaluing savings as a sensible strategy for long-term financial stability. This encourages a more impulsive consumption and constant speculation because money no longer holds its value over the long-term.

As a result, we can view Keiko's previous life as an aspiring singer as emblematic of the volatility of a flexible labor market. Keiko represents a worker who was left behind because of her inability to reskill once she was cast aside as a singer. Furthermore, we see this shift to short-term thinking and neglecting the long-term in the consumption patterns of both Keiko and Akira. After Keiko's first long-term absence, she returns with gifts for the children. While the younger children are delighted, the older children, Akira and Kyoko, look on less enthusiasm. They understand that while the gifts are nice, they would be better off with more money. We also see Akira buying a game system and video games with the money they have left so that he can have boys his age come over to play them with him. The tendency toward short-term gratification happens at the expense of the long-term stability of the family, which requires a fixed and stable income. Flexible labor markets and uneven earning patterns in workers means volatility within families that follow the booms and busts of economic cycles. The appearance and disappearance of Keiko simulates this volatility in the lives of the children. We see how difficult it is to plan for the future when income is so unsteady; Akira attempts to budget

the money he was left with, but without a predictable income, the budget proves useless in organizing and disciplining spending.

So while these developments in the labor market discourage long-term saving and investment and makes planning difficult, care for children is a long-term project. There are no quick returns and childcare requires a sustained obligation by parents and social institutions. Like the family during the earlier phase of industrial capitalism, there is a perceived split between public life in the workplace and the private life of the home in late capital. But whereas the relationship was between a harsh public life subject to the dehumanizing drudgery of the factory and a private life that was meant as a sanctuary from the factory, the relationship is flipped today. Zaretsky explains that the bourgeois Victorian family of the nineteenth century and the proletarian family were seen as bulwarks against markets and the factory. The Victorian bourgeois family came to be seen "an enclave protected from industrial society" (49). For the proletariat, "the family became the major sphere of society in which the individual could be foremost – it was the only space that proletarians 'owned'. Within it, a new sphere of social activity began to take shape: personal life" (61). Thus, the proletarian family was seen similarly to the bourgeois family: "The proletariat itself came to share the bourgeois ideal of the family as a 'utopian retreat'" (61).

Qualities such as caring, compassion, and individuality were located in the family in opposition to the dehumanizing and homogenizing forces of the market and the factory. Labor, organized through Taylorism for greater productivity, was seen as repetitive and dehumanizing, and the family was seen as a relief from that world.

However, with the shift to flexible accumulation and globalization, we start to see this relationship between work and family invert.

This shift in conceptions of the workplace is described by Arlie Russell Hochschild in her study of Amerco, a real estate company and the corporate parent of U-Haul. Hochschild describes the work/life balance of the employees at Amerco and the inversion in the conception of work and home life from the previous iterations of capitalism. We see the effects of flexible labor markets in Hochschild's study. The ideal employee is the "zero drag" employee, a term derived from "the frictionless movement of a physical object like a skate or bicycle" (*Time Bind* xix). When applied to people, it meant an employee who was "available to take on extra assignments, respond to emergency calls, or relocate any time" (Ibid.). This is often seen as the ideal employee, and the work environment rewards employees who exhibit the qualities of zero drag:

> As I looked around the company, I began to get a glimmer of what it was about the workplace—the friendly atmosphere, the free Cokes, the many award ceremonies, the total quality circles, the mentoring program—that might make people want to be that ideal employee. (xx)

This shift is also part of the growing industry in knowledge and information work, the kind of whimsical and creative workplace characterized by jobs in Silicon Valley. In contrast, Hochschild observed a home life where tired workers had to "cope with cranky children, makeshift dinners, unfed pets, and broken appliances" (Ibid.). This leads to the following observation:

> And I began to understand "work" and "family" not as distinct sets of activities people do but as enmeshed yet competing emotional cultures. I

> began to see how the friction-laden environments people found at home could be losing out to the sense of purpose, accomplishment, and camaraderie offered by the well-oiled social machinery of the workplace. (Ibid.).

While Hochschild's study refers specifically to the US condition of work and family, it describes the general transformation of home and work under global capitalism. Although *Nobody Knows* does not show in detail Keiko's work life, it does show that she prefers her life outside the family. Her life in public appears fun: she meets her new boyfriend and she gets calls late at night for impromptu karaoke sessions. Meanwhile, home life revolves around the needs of her children and the day-to-day tasks of care and maintaining the family. So Keiko responds through outsourcing her care responsibilities to her two oldest children, but eventually, she abdicates all responsibility much as her husband did.

One of the ways *Nobody Knows* depicts this divestiture of responsibility is through the representation of space. The isolation and neglect of the children in *Nobody Knows* occurs in their cramped apartment. The apartment itself becomes a space that acts as a locus for how globalization and neoliberalism have impacted the family and its ability to care for children. How this particular family deteriorates in Kore-eda's fictionalization of a sensationalized, tabloid event reflects many of the ways that globalization has affected care. Specifically, the film depicts a care environment where care for others and care for the self has become a zero-sum game: caring for one makes caring for others difficult, while caring for others is seen as an impediment to one's own wishes and desires, which are often focused on the ability to consume.

After Keiko returns from her first prolonged absence and soon leaves again (this time for the rest of the movie), Akira confronts his mother over her neglect and calls her selfish. She responds defensively, "Selfish? You want to know who's really selfish? Your father's the one who's selfish, up and disappearing like that. What is this? I'm not allowed to be happy?"

Keiko points out that the family's circumstances are the result of the initial abandonment by the children's fathers. Furthermore, Keiko's query, "I'm not allowed to be happy?" begs the question, for the legitimacy of such a question relies on the assumption that care and happiness are mutually exclusive and therefore creates the logic that leads to the continual neglect of Akira and his siblings. Happiness in this scenario becomes the freedom to move, showing how it has increasingly acquired a "spatial dimension" (Bauman, *Globalization*, 121). It is the freedom to not have to be somewhere, to not be tied down to the home.

We see this calculation repeatedly in the film, particularly in the scene when Akira seeks out two men for help a month into Keiko's first disappearance. The first man, a taxi driver and Yuki's (the youngest child) father, sends text messages on his cellular phone the entire time and the scene cuts without any evidence that he gives Akira help.

The second man, an attendant at a pachinko parlor, is more engaging with Akira. The meeting actually begins with the man asking Akira to lend him ten yen so that they can get some drinks from a vending machine. Akira seems more comfortable talking to this man and tells him that they need money since Keiko is gone. The man responds, "For real? I don't have any money." He explains, "I'm in a hell of a jam, myself. My

girlfriend, you know she totally maxed out my credit cards. I'm in credit card hell, man. So I'm working my ass off, slowly paying it down, man."

However, he relents and gives Akira ten-thousand yen (roughly one-hundred dollars). As he goes back to work, he tells Akira, "By the way, Yuki's not my kid. Every time I did it with your mom, I used a condom. Bye, then."

Akira's visit to the two men show how absent the fathers are in the film. The taxi driver, who seems to think Yuki is his daughter, does not seem to really care as he text messages; there is no shot of him giving Akira any money or taking responsibility. Meanwhile, the second man relents by giving him some money, but the conversation is unusual for how he speaks to Akira. He tries to guilt Akira into not asking for money by telling him how much debt he has. This suggests that his debts and the children's situation are somewhat equivalent due to his reluctance to give Akira money. The equivalence of his needs and the children's is also manifested in how he denies his paternity to Yuki. He openly discusses his use of contraception when he had sex with Akira's mother; he feels no need to filter his explanation so that it is more appropriate for a child. Speaking to Akira as an adult infantilizes the man while simultaneously treating Akira as an adult, and this justifies the neglect by pointing out his own needs while simultaneously granting Akira the agency of an adult. While his protests make him a rather unlikeable character, it also points to the consequences of debt and how the threat of financial insolvency conflicts with the allocation of capital and resources for care. The obligation toward creditors becomes more important, because it affects ones future credit-worthiness. This conversation reinforces the idea that the needs of adults and children compete with each other. Rather than a hierarchy of needs where adults defer

their desire for consumption to meet the more immediate needs of children, working to service debt becomes a priority. It is a brief moment in the movie, but it shows in financial terms how setting aside resources for the care of children competes with the debt accrued through consumption. The setting of a pachinko parlor also places this scene in the context of gambling and speculation, which has become normalized as a financial strategy in global financial markets as investment has replaced saving as the means for building wealth and security. It also shows how denial of a biological connection to Akira's family justifies abandonment; despite the fact that he does give Akira some money, Akira never goes back to either of these men even when their situation becomes desperate later in the film. Despite both men in the sequence knowing that the children have been abandoned, neither of them check on the children, either. Moreover, by giving Akira money, it shows how adults choose the path of giving money to take care of the children rather than engage in any physical act of care-giving, which reflects the domination of market calculation and market values where every problem is handled as commodity exchange.

The figure at the fulcrum of this competition for happiness between adults and children is Akira; his role as caregiver frees Keiko to pursue her romance, and his siblings are able to have what little childhood they can have. Keiko is described as a "childified adult" who represents "the erosion of the traditional distinction between children and adults" (Nolletti 158-159). But it is not only Keiko who represents this childified adult, as the men also completely neglect their responsibilities. The motif of adults acting like children points to a breakdown in the traditional social arrangement

where adults take care of children. This indulgence of the childish desires of adults comes at the expense of the children, who are denied access to public life.

The children's inability to participate in society is a result of their abandonment—the starkest consequence of the lack of care. For the children, this not only means the inability to go to school but also extends to the filmic representation of their domestic space. They cannot make too much noise and they cannot go outside to play and make friends—the sort of social activities that we would associate with children.

However, when the children do make noise and are noticed, they are still neglected. The assumption that children are the responsibility of the nuclear family contextualizes this neglect. The children suffer from the idea that the nuclear family—and in particular the mother—is the primary unit of care. The film presents the care environment as one where it is the nuclear family or nothing. Spatially, the apartment represents this social logic. The nuclear family is conflated with the space of the apartment. The isolation of the children and their apartment reveals how societies organize themselves under the logic of globalization and neoliberalism. That is, while capital divests itself of responsibilities to locales, they manage to shift the responsibility for the failure of these locales onto the inhabitants themselves. This is reflected in how the children police themselves by being quiet in the apartment. The apartment is an overdetermined space where care, neglect, and desires of subjects converge and play out in how the children suffer in the apartment. Through motifs of sound and elements of mise-en-scène such as windows and bars, the film demonstrates the children's isolation and their inability to move freely into the spaces of social activity.

The film reveals a hostile environment toward children. The family's difficulty in acquiring an apartment that accepts families with young children articulates an urban environment that assumes a posture that is hostile at worst and neglectful at best toward children. The film opens with Keiko and Akira visiting the landlord and introducing themselves. After he learns that Akira is in middle school, the landlord explains, "Once you get to this age, it's fine, but other tenants tend to complain about little ones." The presence of children threatens the notion of an ideal domestic space as one that is isolated from the world outside. The apartment should be a discrete space with clear borders. What children represent with their loudness and unruliness is breaching the security of these borders with noise. This reveals hostility toward young children because they can be loud. This is why Shigeru and Yuki, the two youngest children, must be smuggled into the apartment in suitcases. Young children make it difficult to rent an apartment, so they must hide the children from their neighbors.

Alexander Jacoby discusses the attitude toward children that this implies. He suggests that while we may be tempted to view this movie as apolitical since it focuses on the drama of one family, the need for the children to be quiet and the consequences if they are not opens the door for a wider social critique (74). Setting aside Keiko's responsibility and parenting for a moment, Jacoby states:

> [T]he problems confronting Akira and his siblings cannot be ascribed simply to the specific inadequacy of their parenting; rather, they are also a consequence of inadequacies in the political provision made for single-parent families, and, crucially, of wider social attitudes towards the family as an institution. (75)

The prohibition on being noisy thus "strengthens the portrait of a society in which children are seen to be unwelcome or burdensome" (76). Their silence is meant to hide their presence, which also means easing the social responsibility to address their needs.

Therefore, quiet is one way that shows how these children behave so that they are no longer a burden. The neglect of these children is represented by their quiet, their inability to be loud. When we see all the children except Akira shut in to the apartment and living in self-imposed silence, we recognize how unnatural this seems. We associate an ideal childhood as one where children are allowed to play and be loud. These scenes depict the marginal status of the children through their inability to participate and contribute to the sounds of their community. One scene shows a medium shot of Kyoko—the oldest daughter and second-oldest child—looking out at the street through a glass sliding door. The reverse shot reveals that she is watching her neighbors greet each other. The camera then cuts to a close-up of Kyoko's feet as she stands on her toes to get a better look. The window shows that despite their inability to participate in the world outside, they are nonetheless able to see what they are missing. The frame of the window can represent the mediated relationship that the children have with the outside world; they can see, but they cannot touch; in an inversion of the trope of poor characters looking into wealthy shop windows and dreaming of the private wealth within, we now see the poor from the inside looking out at a public space they lack access to—more inmates than citizens.

Kore-eda has used the sound that travels between apartments in a previous film to explore themes of care and community. The need for the children to be quiet to hide their existence from neighbors can be contrasted with another movie by Kore-eda, *Maborosi*

no hikari (1995). The film depicts the life of a young woman, Yumiko, after her husband, Ikuo, appears to have commit suicide, leaving Yumiko behind with their infant son. This happens relatively early in the film, and the balance of *Maborosi* is concerned with Yumiko's attempts to move on with her life and make sense of Ikuo's death; she remarries and moves from Osaka to live with her new husband in a seaside town. However, she is haunted by the memory of her first husband, who died without providing any hint that he was troubled or unhappy.

Both *Maborosi* and *Nobody Knows* utilize the transmission of sound between apartments to represent attitudes toward neighbors and care. In one scene from *Maborosi*, Yumiko remarks that the old man next door has his radio on incredibly loud because he is hard of hearing. However, Ikuo doesn't mind because it lets him know that the old man is alright. The sound is evidence of the old man's presence, and rather than seeing it as a nuisance, Ikuo uses it as a way to fulfill his neighborly duty of making sure the old man is safe.

This scene reveals how both films use sound to show contrasting attitudes toward neighbors. In *Maborosi*, noise becomes a symbol of community and the acceptance of a care ethic, whereas in *Nobody Knows*, it is seen as an intrusion. This is not to say that *Maborosi* presents a utopian vision of care and community (indeed, Ikuo abandons his wife and child when he commits suicide). But it does point to how Kore-eda uses sound and its intrusion between spaces as a device to reveal how social spaces are organized and how communities and people respond when the boundaries that shape these spaces are crossed. In the case of *Nobody Knows*, the prohibition against making noise initially points to the unfriendliness toward families with younger children.

Rather than tolerating the noise of children and responding to it to care for them, prohibiting the children from making noise is a way to manage them. Muteness symbolizes a shift from caring to management, and the purpose of this shift is to minimize the children's impact on Keiko's life. Again, this reflects the zero-sum calculation between Keiko and her children; the more they are able to manage and care for themselves, the less time Keiko has to spend on their care. Meanwhile, Akira and Kyoko have dinner ready for their mother when she comes home from work and takes care of their younger siblings.

Akira himself is only twelve years old. So while he cares for his siblings, he requires care himself. Still a child, he seeks help from adults as he recognizes his own limitations. Akira also craves the friendship of peers. However, his circumstances mean he lacks both of these needs. Nevertheless, the movie depicts Akira as an effective caregiver. He behaves like an adult: he defers his own pleasure, he manages and organizes the household, and he cooks and cleans.

Martin Tsai, in a review of the film in *Cineaste*, criticizes this depiction of Akira. He feels that the subject matter provides Kore-eda with "ample opportunity for the director to revisit his favorite subjects and once more project his idyllic worldview" (64). Tsai feels that Akira is made too saintly and that the film glosses over the darker possibilities of children in charge of themselves in the service of what he identifies as Kore-eda's tendency to "speculatively [reimagine] people and occurrences through rose-colored glasses, particularly lingering on Akira's maturity, cultivated by necessity" (Ibid.).

Tsai's critique is instructive. He appears to criticize Kore-eda for not making the movie he should have, and specifically for not accurately depicting how children would behave without adult supervision. Referencing works such as *Lord of the Flies* and *Kids* where children devolve into primitive, Darwinian savagery, Tsai suggests that there is something inevitable about how children will behave when left on their own. For Tsai, how Kore-eda tells the story further betrays Kore-eda's agenda, "As the stark contrast between *Nobody Knows* and its factual basis would indicate, Kore-eda's romantic notion of Akira's sagacity and accountability defies logic" (Ibid.).

However, Linda Ehrlich examines why Kore-eda departs from the real life event of the "Four Abandoned Children" and dystopian depictions of children in literature and film. Ehrlich references a different canon of films where children demonstrate their capacity for compassion and care:

> Recall, for example, the reassuring way little Bruno slips his hand into the hand of his humiliated father (*Bicycle Thieves* [*Ladri di biciclette,* Vittorio de Sica, 1948]), or how Scout gracefully escorts a painfully withdrawn Boo Radley back to his house after he has saved the children's lives (*To Kill a Mockingbird* [Robert Mulligan, 1962]). In Kohei Oguri's *Muddy River (Doro no kawa,* 1981), the child of a noodle-shop owner reaches out his hand to the children of a prostitute who travels from town to town on a houseboat, transcending adult stigmas to become fast friends for a while. (49)

Ehrlich locates *Nobody Knows* in a tradition of movies where children also provide care. The focus of *Nobody Knows* on themes of care and the lyrical and poetic

representation of the lives of the children stems from Kore-eda's interest in an episode from the actual event:

> According to closed-door court records, the eldest boy—upon seeing his mother again in court—cried and apologized to her that he could not take care of his siblings as she had expected. Reading newspaper statements from the actual trial involving the Nishi-sugamo children, Kore-eda sensed that there was something that took place in that apartment that demonstrated the richness of a child's sense of compassion and ingenuity: "I intended to express that with words other than 'hell.'" (46)

This episode helps explain the focus of the movie. That these children suffered and that adults were largely to blame is clear, but what Kore-eda finds interesting is how the children care for themselves and how children could survive such extreme neglect for so long without drawing attention to themselves, acting with savage self-interest, or simply running away. The film suggests, through Akira's character, that care existed in these extreme conditions and that we may learn something about care and children by speculating about how they took care of themselves. The ethic that motivates Akira is the importance of the family as the principle social unit of care. In the hierarchy of the family, when the mother is absent, it falls upon him to take care of his siblings as the next oldest member of the family. Rather than speculating on how real children in the real world would actually behave that forms the basis of Tsai's criticism of *Nobody Knows*, we can redirect our attention to the fact that the children were portrayed in the manner they were and what it may say about the expectations of caregivers. Using Akira as the primary caregiver and showing how he goes about caring for his siblings demonstrates

Akira's qualities as virtues. The quiet that is demanded of the children shows them suffering in silence, and this silence points to Brooks' discussion of how muteness functions in melodrama. Muteness is often deployed in melodrama to depict the suffering hero or heroine—virtuous characters who do not speak out on their own behalf either because they cannot speak out (they are clinically mute) or because they choose to stay silent to serve a higher moral imperative as they are victimized by antagonists or unjust circumstances. This representation is used to articulate what Brooks calls the "'moral occult,' the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality" (Brooks 5).

Nobody Knows deploys this muteness and silence to help articulate this moral occult. To Akira and the children, their muteness serves to protect the family from disintegration. If the other children are discovered, the family will be evicted and possibly separated by social services. Discovery by the outside world, which does not appear to want them, is a threat to the family.

Their desire to stay together is also expressed through moments of mutual sacrifice. Kyoko assumes the care responsibilities when Akira is gone and she readily gives Akira the money she has been saving for the piano she dreams of owning. The youngest, Yuki, makes sure to save some of her treats for the rest of the family as Akira observes her selflessness. Shigeru makes sure to check pay phones and vending machines for any change that people may have left behind to supplement their meager income. On the one hand the representation casts the children in the idyllic light that Tsai critiques, but the film also provides moments of joy and play that demonstrates why the children cannot bear separation.

One particular sequence exemplifies the discipline the children practice to avoid detection while also showing the field of emotional investment that makes the family so important to them. As Yuki, Kyoko, and Shigeru are home waiting for Akira to return from errands, an employee from the utility company knocks at the door to tell Keiko that they are late on their bill. Kyoko tells the younger children to stay quiet. Akira sees the worker as he walks up the stairs and hides until the worker leaves. After coming inside, he reassures Yuki that everything is alright, and the camera cuts to a close-up of Yuki's hand clutching Akira's sweater sleeve terrified of being separated from her siblings. The image of Yuki clutching Akira's sleeve shows how fearful the children are of detection, but also the fierce attachment that they have to one another.

This prompts Akira to try to find a job at the local convenience store. The clerk—who knows about Akira and his siblings' situation and is the only adult who has shown any degree of concern for them—tells him he is too young to have a part-time job and asks if perhaps it would be better if Akira contacted the police and a social welfare worker about their abandonment. Akira refuses the suggestion, telling her, "If I do, the four of us won't be able to stay together. That happened before and it was an awful mess."

Upon returning home, Akira goes over the finances, and this is the moment when Kyoko offers her savings to him. As he soaks in the bath with Shigeru, he is deep in thought. The scene then cuts to a close-up of Akira placing everyone's shoes at the entryway of the apartment, and the shot cuts to all three of his siblings watching him with rising anticipation. A reverse shot of Akira shows him pulling the last pair out of the closet and looking up at his siblings as a slow smile spreads across his face. Showing

Akira deep in thought in the bath, we can infer that he was thinking about his siblings and trying to figure out how he can meet their needs and boost their morale, ultimately deciding that it is worth it to disobey his mother and take everyone outside.

The shot cuts to the hallway of the apartment building as the children run out of the house, and we get a rare moment where the film uses non-diegetic music that plays over a montage sequence of the children playing. The children run outside and enjoy themselves. Their first stop is the convenience store where they splurge on food and toys. They run to a playground and play together before gathering their groceries and heading home. However, before they can go back to their apartment, they hide behind cars in a parking lot to make sure they can reenter the building undetected and then sneak back in. The montage of the children at play provides evidence of what it is they are protecting; they are happy together, they care for each other, and given the right circumstances, it is idyllic.

That Akira cannot turn to child services for help suggests the inadequacy of government social services. As neglected as they are, the children still prefer to be together under their mother's unreliable care rather than separated in foster care. Whether they are better off is not the issue; what is important is the value the children place on staying together. The fact they all four would be separated suggests a solution that makes no allowances for maintaining the siblings as a coherent unit. This is a solution that Akira and the rest of his siblings reject, and it reveals the degree to which the siblings are invested in each other. The state's solution would not satisfy the emotional desires of the children to stay together while ostensibly satisfying their more immediate material needs.

The children see their family as a place of emotional fulfillment and nurturing. Zaretsky discusses how this conception of the family, and by extension childhood, came about during the early twentieth century:

> A small but growing number of Americans began to see their personal lives as wholly apart from the sphere of production. In the realm of personal relations, emotional and sexual life, and creative expression, they exercised the "freedom" denied them within the sphere of alienated labour. (107)

The family became a space separated from the public life of production. This shift began earlier in the mid-nineteenth century with the rise of industrial capitalism when "childhood, in addition to being the period in which the child was shaped to adult (i.e., social) requirements, was coming to be seen as an end in itself" (110). Production and the family became separated from each other, and children belonged in the latter. Furthermore, through public schooling, "society [lays] claim to the child and refuses to recognize the parent's property rights" (108). The care and development of children fell under the state's interest, and institutions were created to ensure that children became citizens of the state. While Zaretsky is discussing the alienation of the father from the family which led to a weakening of paternal power within the home, the resulting generation gap between father and child is no longer limited to the father and his children, but with parents and children as a whole. But the dissolution of the state under neoliberalism means this previous connection between the state and the family is broken. The state no longer "lays claim" to the child in the same way. If family became a space away from labor that the state could fill with their own institutions to create citizens

ready for the industrialized nation-state, the neoliberal state pulls back from this role. The family created in anticipation of the state's intervention is no longer relevant. In other words, the vision of family and childhood as freedom from a dehumanizing labor market becomes unsustainable for those families who have no obvious breadwinner, and the state no longer intervenes with its own support. The solution for the children is to give up on this view of family and to start over as individuals living separately.

Akira and his siblings' inability to attend school points to the inability to access the state institutions created to produce citizens. The film highlights the children's desire to attend school to join society and follow the life narrative of their peers. When Kyoko tells her mother that she would like to go to school, Keiko responds, "School? You wouldn't have any fun at school. Besides, when you don't have a daddy they bully you at school. You don't need to go to school." Akira is shown waiting outside the gates of a middle school for some boys he had befriended earlier in the film, hoping to entice them to come over with video games. Akira grabs the bars of the gates and rocks backwards and forwards, rattling the gates. He puts his face in between the gaps in the bars and stares at the school grounds, which are currently empty as the students are inside the classroom.

The gates represent both a literal and figurative barrier for Akira. Akira's apartment and the school is the global map in microcosm, where those trapped in undesirable locales are barred from the spaces of global commerce while, at the same time, elites and global finance stay away from those locales that they find inhospitable to their needs. Evoking the bars of a prison, Akira's inability to go to school means that he is falling behind his peers and is doomed to remain in the underclass. The juxtaposition of

prison imagery with school taps into the idea that prisoners are kept apart from mainstream society.

Invoking prison highlights the changing relationship between the neoliberal state and its citizens. Bauman discusses how the prison was originally constructed as a tool for rehabilitation or a "'return to competence.'" The focus on rehabilitation stemmed from the attempt "to absorb ever growing quantities of labour" (111). This was to solve a crisis in productivity brought about largely through a labor shortage.

The shift in thinking in prisons coincides with tolerating high levels of "structural" unemployment (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 150). That is, flexible labor markets benefited from higher levels of unemployment (brought about by productivity gains through technology and a sudden increase in the supply of labor through a global labor market) by exploiting the degree of workers who were willing to work for a lower wage because workers became desperate for any work at all. This increase in the structural unemployment level would explain how prisons became "*an alternative to employment*; a way to dispose of, or to neutralize a considerable chunk of the population who are not needed as producers and for whom there is no work 'to be taken back to'" (111-112). The shift away from the goal of rehabilitation reflects how states have moved away from investing in citizens under their care. Education is not immune to this trend. The importance of cram schools—private institutions that students attend after regular school hours to receive additional instruction and tutoring—imposes a financial burden on Japanese families who want their children to maintain parity with their peers in the competition for university admissions. Tuition for cram schools are

often quite expensive, exacerbating class differences and ensuring that students like Akira and his siblings fall further behind.

The cost of their exclusion is expressed not only through their hunger and increasingly ragged appearance, but also through their inability to participate in the commodity consumption of their peers. When Akira goes to a video arcade, he can only watch others play and participate vicariously. The scene shows the kind of products that Akira hopes to consume, images and simulacra that both Harvey (289) and Bauman (78) point out are the kinds of commodities that are most suited for consumption in late capital. Once the game is over, the only way to continue playing is to feed another coin into the machine, and the video game represents the accelerated cycle of consumption with images and simulacra. The video game that attracts Akira's attention is a racing car simulation, and as he walks home, he can only mimic the experience by making engine noises as he winds his way through a crowded street. Akira's aspiration is to participate in the economy of image production and consumption, one that promises a virtual mobility that would allow him to transcend his locale and connect him to the global economy of information and image exchange.

This sequence shows how the children are on their way to becoming one of Bauman's vagabonds, the global underclass that he describes as "a *flawed* consumer." That is, both tourists and vagabonds are consumers, but the vagabond is someone who cannot "afford the kind of sophisticated choices in which the consumers are expected to excel" (96). The children's inability to own toys and other commodities is used to show the degree of inequality. This includes the scene where Akira looks at his friend's new shoes as his friend complains about them, and he splurges on a video game system even

though they cannot afford it to lure his friends into coming to his apartment. Shigeru disappears one afternoon, and when Akira finally finds him, he finds Shigeru playing with another child's remote control car. Kyoko dreams of one day owning a piano, and Yuki treasures her treats. The most joyful moment in the movie is when they leave the apartment to play for the first time, and it is worth noting that the first place they go is the convenience store and engage in a euphoric spending-spree.

In the film's denouement, we see Akira finally having access to the world he craves. The scene begins with Akira watching his peers playing baseball. Again, there is the familiar image of Akira watching an activity he cannot participate in through a fence. As he watches, we hear the coach talking to his players, and the coach finds that the team is a player short because of cram school. The reverse shot shows the coach at a drinking fountain looking at Akira. The coach asks Akira what grade he is in, and the shot cuts to Akira putting on a crisp, white team uniform as the coach tells him he will be number nine in right field. This is a big moment for Akira; we know he fantasizes about playing baseball from a previous scene when he is shown playing with a ball and a branch by himself.

As Akira takes his place on the field, the scene cross-cuts to the apartment where we see Yuki standing on a chair at the sliding door by the veranda while Shigeru sits occupied with one of his toys. Kyoko is not in the room. The shot cuts to a close-up of Yuki's feet as she balances on her toes. We cut back to Akira's game as he stands in the on-deck circle practicing his swing. Observing his swing, the coach comes over and instructs Akira on how to hold the bat properly. Cutting to his at-bat, he swings and misses rather self-consciously and pirouettes after he misses, but the coach is

encouraging. He gets a base hit, and as he stands at first, we get another of the rare instances of non-diegetic music leading into a montage of his game. He runs the bases, plays the field, and smiles as he does so.

The montage cuts away to a parking lot as Akira, back in his own clothes and sandals, runs home. As he enters the apartment complex, the scene cuts to a close up of Yuki on the floor lying motionless. Shigeru sits curled up with his knees against his chest staring at Yuki, and we see Kyoko sitting over her sister silently as well. We cut to a close-up of Akira at the doorway as he realizes something is wrong with Yuki. Kyoko says, “Yuki won’t get up,” and Akira calls out to her while trying to wake her up. Shigeru says, “She fell off the chair.”

The cross-cutting juxtaposes Akira’s brief moment of happiness with Yuki’s death. The public space allows Akira to play with his peers and the coach corrects Akira not by barking instructions from a distance, but comes over to him and physically positions his hands properly on the bat and models some practice swings for Akira. As a stand-in for the father figure that Akira is missing, he invites Akira onto the baseball field, and his instruction is a form of care-giving in the way that he is there physically to help Akira. The montage presents the game as a utopian moment where the film shows how Akira could have thrived given the right circumstances. It makes the tragedy at home all the more poignant as it quickly moves from a scene that shows what might have been to how precarious the children’s lives still are. We again hear the sounds of neighbors outside who are oblivious to what has happened inside.

The shocking and tragic end to the film deploys melodrama to arouse shock and anger at the children’s fate. The film ends with Akira, his siblings, and Saki (a girl

Akira's age who befriends Akira and his siblings) placing Yuki in the suitcase that was used to smuggle her into the apartment. They pack her in with her shoes and one of her stuffed animals. Akira and Saki take Yuki on the train to Haneda airport and bury her in a field close to the runway. The moment reminds us of the promise to take Yuki to Haneda to observe the wonders of airports with their planes and promises of a life full of novelty and travel. The airport represents the world the children have been denied due to their neglect. Their deprivation is not limited to the lack of basic material needs; it includes services such as education and the ability to participate in consumer culture like their peers. For children, as it is for adults, the consumption consists of images as commodities, a way to be virtually transported to different worlds as airports promise to be literally transported to them. The lack of an education means that not only are they barred from consumption now, but that they are also doomed to it in the future.

The film begins by focusing blame for the children's neglect on Keiko and the children's fathers, as their care is seen as an impediment to the individual freedom of the adults. But the absence of Keiko for over half of the movie makes it possible to refocus attention on the neglect that surrounds the children and what this neglect means. The spatial isolation of nuclear families makes it possible for neglect to occur out of view, but this isolation extends even to the public space as Akira moves through the city on his errands, in full view but invisible even as his appearance becomes increasingly bedraggled. The indifference of the public toward the children represents the indifference that the neoliberal state has on the welfare of its citizens. The children are shown caring for one another in anticipation of being ferried into the public space by the state and adults, but in the absence of a father figure who will provide security so that they can

access the state's institutions, the family disintegrates. It is a contemporary dissolution because the film shows what, specifically, they are missing out on. The focus on shoes, the luggage in which Shigeru and Yuki are carried, the monorail to the airport, the airport itself, and the video games depict the consumption that promises full citizenship under global capital. The indifference to their plight illustrates the state under neoliberalism, which increasingly pulls back from investment in its citizens.

The film does not end with Yuki's death and burial, but rather with a coda that shows the children living as they had. Akira still goes to convenience stores hoping that they will give him the expiring food that they were going to throw out at the end of the day. However, both Kyoko and Shigeru—along with Saki—accompany Akira on their foraging trips. We know that their mother has yet to return as we see Akira and Shigeru's long and tangled hair. We sense that the children are no longer afraid of going outside since it makes little difference to their discovery; the children have discovered that as long as they don't disturb their neighbors, no one will care enough to intervene. Akira looks up at a plane flying by, reminding us of Yuki's burial and the father that abandoned him. The ending is strangely hopeful, as Shigeru appears as happy as always, Kyoko seems pleased to be outside with Saki, and Akira looks as stoic as ever. It is a facsimile of a nuclear family, with Akira and Saki at the head and the younger siblings as children. They seem to have figured out how to survive on their own as the foraging now forms part of their routine, lending some stability to their lives. As they walk away from the camera down the street, the film ends on a freeze frame as Shigeru looks back. The camera no longer follows them as traffic drives by between the camera and the children, and the freeze frame is one final look at them before they disappear back into the

apartment. The final image shows the children still together as they had wanted, and on the one hand it is a portrait of their resilience. But it is an ambivalent image, as we know that Yuki is dead and that nothing has really changed for the children. The neglect will continue, with the only difference being that now, all the children are in full view. They remain examples of a culture that is no longer interested in cultivating the mobility of its citizens.

CHAPTER V

CHOOSING WHOM TO CARE FOR: THE REORGANIZATION OF FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY IN *TAKE CARE OF MY CAT*

The opening scene in 2001's *Take Care of My Cat*[4] shows five young women in school uniforms walking together along the industrial waterfront of Incheon, South Korea's third largest metropolis. It is a playful scene as they chase each other around the wharf and take pictures of each other. They are celebrating their graduation from a trade school, and it is a brief moment of playfulness that ends with the friends posing in front of the waterfront for a group photo.

The movie cuts into the future as one of the young women, Hae-joo, leaves for work. Something is thrown out the window of her apartment complex as she makes her way down the stairwell, and she pauses before a car that has had its windshield smashed.

She arrives at the train station to commute to Seoul for her job, and the camera cuts to an extreme long shot of the train station and tilts up to a panoramic view of the port, the scenery dotted with smokestacks and large cranes for container ships. The scene cuts to a map of the massive train system that crisscrosses Seoul, and then cuts to what appears to be a close-up of the pages of an English textbook translating the phrase, "Are you sure, or are you just saying it?" The example to illustrate its use is to respond to someone saying, "I really want to continue our relationship."

The book closes, and we cut to a medium close-up of Hae-joo taking off her headphones; presumably she has been looking at the map of the Seoul subway system

[4] All references are from *Take Care of My Cat*, Dir. Jae-eun Jeong, Perf. Doona Bae, Yu-won Lee, and Ji-young Ok, Kino Video, 2001.

and studying English during her commute. To alleviate her loneliness and boredom, she pulls out her cell phone and sends a text to a friend, thereby introducing one of the recurring motifs in the movie: the appearance of the content of text messages in the frame as the characters communicate with each other. The cell phone screen appears on the upper right corner of the frame and she texts a friend, “You’re probably still sleeping. See you tomorrow at Club 369 at 7:00.”

Finally, we cut to a conference room in an office, where Hae-joo has arrived at work and opens the blinds in preparation for the start of the work day. The glass wall that separates the conference room from the rest of the office has a map of the world on it drawn in large square pixels. As the camera tracks backward to reveal more of the room, the title of the film flips into view over the map in both English and Korean.

Our initial introduction to these young women—in uniform on the Incheon waterfront—connects them to their surroundings. The drab grey uniforms of the vocational school they just graduated from blends in with the concrete and steel mise-en-scène of the port, reflecting the industrial work they were trained for and connecting the young women to Incheon. But the following scene reflects the transition that these young women must undergo, as we see Hae-joo commuting to work dressed in a fashionable, bright red coat and navigating the extensive train network of the Seoul-Incheon metropolitan area. The industrial smokestacks give way to the illustrated map of the train system in Seoul, a map that presents space as information marked by the direction of the flow of trains interrupted by the stations that serve as nodes in the rail network. These stops reflect the relative importance of these places in the metropolitan

region and demonstrate how network logic reproduces itself through the organization of places.

The cut to an English textbook introduces the primary question at the heart of personal relationships in the film. The response to the statement, "I really want to continue our relationship," is to question the veracity of the statement by asking, "Are you sure, or are you just saying it?" The question addresses the contingency of relationships and casts doubts on the promise of attachment. It foreshadows the insecurity of the relationship between Hae-joo and her friends in the movie (particularly with Ji-young, who was her closest friend in school), and every interaction between Hae-joo and her friends is in some way a reenactment of the exchange in the textbook as Hae-joo increasingly distances herself from her friends and Incheon. The cut from the opening scene at the port to Hae-joo's commute is the moment when their solidarity as schoolmates is ruptured by the demands of the construction of an adult self that makes it difficult to maintain these bonds.

The visual motif of Hae-joo's text message superimposed on the screen and scrolling across the mise-en-scène introduces us to the role of the cell phone and text messaging as ways to facilitate meetings with friends and how technology mediates personal relationships. As such, they are not simply communications devices but also devices that are infused with emotional affect and promises the initial entrée into a world mapped out digitally. This digital mapping of the world is reinforced in the final shot of the sequence when Hae-joo opens the blinds of a conference room where a map of the world composed of pixels is inscribed on a glass wall separating the conference room and the rest of the office.

Hae-joo's financial firm is a node in what Manuel Castells calls "the space of flows." The space of flows is "the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance" (xxxii). The material support typically refers to the infrastructure and spaces that allow these communications to take place, and these communications are characterized by "the production, transmission and processing of flows of information" (Ibid.). *Take Care of My Cat* shows how the desire for community built around mutual care for one another exists alongside the demands of neoliberalism, globalization, and informationalism. It shows how these young women attempt to enter the space of flows and, therefore, the world of the global elites. Care is part of the space of flows as one of its important material supports because it is necessary to facilitate access to the space of flows. The film demonstrates how the global information network bypasses those who perform care work and how care lies relatively low on the network hierarchy. This hierarchy, organized according to the logic of information capital, puts pressure on spaces, people, and values such as care to organize themselves according to the needs of capital and information flows. Care is not absent from these spaces, but care performs an auxiliary and service role that makes it ripe for outsourcing and devaluation.

Care in the film exists in two different contexts. The first is care within the sphere of ones' personal life through family and friends. It involves the characters looking after each other, staying in contact to maintain social bonds, and lending money to each other when the other needs it. Care in this environment functions to insulate individuals from the demands of careers and work that grew out of the separation of private and public life during industrial capital. But care also exists in the corporate world in the form of workers like Hae-joo who facilitate the life of those working in the space of flows. Hae-

joo's first task when entering the office is not to log onto her computer and begin a job as a knowledge worker, but to perform housekeeping chores like opening blinds and windows.

The tension between these two contexts illustrates one of the major changes that have come about due to a flexible labor market, particularly in the kind of white-collar knowledge work that Hae-joo supports. It represents the appropriation of care and the colonization of time spent with friends and family by corporate time. As Hae-joo spends more time working at her office and cultivating a persona tailored to succeed in the corporate world, she begins alienating her friends. Hae-joo reshuffles her priorities according to the relative importance of the two worlds she inhabits, placing greater value on her work life than her personal life. The film shows how this shift in focus leads to a greater importance in self-care, and this self-care corresponds to consumption of particular goods and services directed at improving ones chances of accessing the space of flows. As care becomes more of a commodity itself, it becomes replaceable if other market exchanges are more relevant in the project of constructing a self that is dedicated to increasing its attractiveness to the corporate world. *Take Care of My Cat* documents how the friendships break apart and reorganize themselves according to these pressures.

Hae-joo's recalculation of her priorities corresponds to the relative importance of work and home. Castells identifies Seoul-Incheon as one of the nodes of the global economy, a megalopolis that provides its inhabitants with access to world markets. It is a major hub of immigration, a cultural center of South Korea, and a space where manufacturing is being phased out in favor of jobs in the information economy. Residents

of these major metropolitan areas are segregated between two different spaces: the space of flows and the "space of places."

Castells describes the space of places as "a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity" (453). While the space of flows is the space created to facilitate the flow of information, communication, and capital over long distances so that inhabitants can participate in social practices regardless of how great the distance, the function of the space of places is not as focused on such a particular task. The space of places defines itself by its physical boundaries and the practices occurring within it, and while information and capital flows can be an aspect of these places, it exists as a component of the place among a diversity of social practices and meanings. However, places have a pressure to conform to the logic of flows, and the hierarchy of places has very much to do with its importance to the global network.

At first glance, *Take Care of My Cat* sets up a broad binary between Incheon and Seoul where the former represents the space of places while Seoul represents the space of flows. But particularly with Seoul, we see that it is organized according to differentiated spaces that are ranked according to their importance to the network. That is, "regions and localities do not disappear, but become integrated in international networks that link up their most dynamic sectors" (Castells 412). People move through this variegated space, and their presence in a space does not guarantee that they partake of the benefits of being in the space of flows. The space of places and the space of flows exist next to each other.

Given the decentralized nature of the space of flows, it may seem odd that nodes exist at all. After all, if the space of flows relies on information technology so that communication and social practice can take place independent of physical proximity and

locales, then it would follow that even nodes would be unimportant and there would be total decentralization. However, the necessity for these nodes is based around the importance of information: "[E]conomies of synergy still require the spatial concentration of interpersonal interaction because communication operates on a much broader bandwidth than digital communication at a distance" (Castells xxxvii). In other words, even the most high-powered telecommunications technologies cannot fully incorporate the richness and sheer volume of information in person-to-person interactions, and there remains a need for spaces where people can meet and be together in the same physical space and time.

Care is one of the social practices that cannot occur solely in the space of flows. *Take Care of My Cat* shows that care and friendship are relationships that cannot be maintained solely through interaction through telecommunications technology because this technology does not have the necessary "bandwidth" for good care-giving. This is not to say that technology is not an important component in caring. What technology seems to be able to do is allow certain phases of the care-giving process to take place and to solidify the division of labor within care. Drawing upon Tronto's four phases of caring, we can begin to see how care and caring manifests itself in the space of flows and the space of places and the role information technology plays in the recognition and delivery of care (106). Tronto's four phases of care are as follows: recognizing the need for care, taking care of who needs this care, the actual act of care-giving, and finally, receiving care. The recognition of the need for care and acting to take care of it is separated from actually providing care, and it is this division that allows care to become a commodity and how care is split between the space of flows and the space of places; recognizing the

need for care can take place through the flow of media images and information that communicates someone's need for care, and the flow of capital can provide the resources to take care of needs. But, care-giving and care-receiving (the fourth phase of caring) can only take place in the space of places, where the care-giver and care-receiver are in the same place in a space organized around the delivery of care.

Take Care of My Cat gives the lie to the idea of the self-made subject by showing that each individual needs care to protect them from a world that constantly demands reinvention to become a member of and remain a part of the networked, global elite. This exposes the myth of success being a product simply of one's own initiative and self-investment. This idea of individualism and autonomy is often used to legitimize "the inequitable distribution of power, resources, and privilege" for the powerful and privileged (Tronto 111). Therefore, care must be devalued and isolated in a way that does not threaten this legitimacy. *Take Care of My Cat* depicts the devaluation of care work even as corporate time attempts to monopolize care for its own needs.

This comes at the expense of care in the space of places. It is useful to view friendship and the family as its own space of places. These are social relationships that are set apart from the relationships of work and defined by the social practices of mutual caring and shared intimacies. Spatially, we often think of places like the home, school, or neighborhood where friends and families spend their leisure time physically together. But it is not necessarily limited to these spaces, and what seems more important is the aspect of sharing a place and engaging in the social practices of kinship. Care is one of the major elements that define these social practices.

In scene after scene, we see how the demand for care in the corporate world interferes with the ability to provide care in personal relationships. After Ji-young is taken into police custody following the death of her grandparents, Hae-joo is at work receiving an update from Tae-hee and wondering why Ji-young refuses to speak.

The phone call is interrupted by a phone call for her boss and Hae-joo speaks to the caller in English. She understands English well enough to put the call through. Her boss asks her to come to her office, and as she gets up from her desk, the shot cuts to a shot of Hae-joo's cell phone, leaving Tae-hee on the other line waiting. Her boss remarks that her friend was impressed with Hae-joo's English. She then asks if Hae-joo will help her with some work later that night. When Hae-joo agrees, her boss remarks, "All the other girls are taking night classes. What about you?"

Hae-joo responds, "I think I learn more by working. I'll learn from you. You've always made me feel like part of the team. So I'm always glad to help."

However, her boss says, "Still, you need a degree. You can't be a low-wage earner all your life."

Realizing what this means, Hae-joo's expression shows a hint of disappointment as she replies, "Who would do such a thing?"

Hae-joo forgets about her conversation with Tae-hee and readily agrees to stay late despite Tae-hee's invitation to visit Ji-young at the youth detention facility.

The scene reveals the inadequacy of Hae-joo's education at a vocational school, and that without a college degree, she will be doomed to the service professions where she would simply run errands for others. Hae-joo imagines an apprenticeship model of education and career advancement, one that relies on a mentor-mentee dyad. Hae-joo's

expectation is that work for her boss, and specifically the care work that she provides for her boss, will be reciprocated by care from her boss through education, mentoring, and favoritism. It implies a relationship based on mutual care for one another. Therefore, she remains at the office, calculating it as the means for career advancement.

However, her boss tells Hae-joo that this is not enough. There is no substitute for acquiring the skills necessary to become a knowledge worker. It can only be acquired through proper schooling and formal acquisition of skills, which has less to do with person-to-person interaction. Furthermore, this training is not carried out within the corporation, but instead farmed out to night schools where the students pay for their education. Education is an investment that Hae-joo must make for herself, and the company feels no obligation in investing in their own employees to train them to move up the corporate hierarchy.

This points to the segregation of the labor force on the basis of education, and that without the requisite education, one is forced into low-skill, low-paid activities (Castells 266). The devaluation of her kind of work is clear; as a job where she simply runs errands for others, it is a job defined by its place at the lowest rung of the office hierarchy. The accepted assumption is that one cannot be happy doing this job. Hae-joo is support staff to her boss and the other knowledge workers in her office. She produces none of the information and simply performs the menial tasks that are required for the smooth operation of the office. Her office is an example of how the space of flows relies on locales organized and streamlined toward the needs of the space of flows. It also means that even as Hae-joo is part of the office, she is not part of the space of flows and does not reap the benefits of her proximity.

As she returns to her tasks following her conversation with her boss, she faxes a document for one of the traders. As she stands looking bored and waits for the fax to go through, the camera slowly pans in on her as she is framed by the digital map of the world in the conference room. She stands between Asia and North America, existing between the two spaces of global commerce and not a part of it. She performs the menial task of sending faxes—barely more important than the fax machine and the fiber optic cables that carry the information between the nodes of global commerce.

The association of Hae-joo with the fax machine underscores the threat to her job by automation. On a night out with her fellow service workers, one recalls, “The branch manager made me get coffee eleven times today.”

In response to the complaint, another worker points out, “At least these days, the market’s good.”

The woman sitting next to her adds, “When the market’s bad, one of us is a coffee vending machine.”

The extent to which these jobs are replaceable and devalued lies in how care has become fragmented into a series of steps. Tronto’s second phase of caring, taking care of, “involves assuming some responsibility for the identified need and determining how to respond to it. Rather than simply focusing on the need of the other person, taking care of involves the recognition that one can act to address these unmet needs” (106). But acting is separate from the actual act of care-giving. “Taking care of” can involve hiring someone to perform care work, such as hiring a nanny, a maid, or office staff to bring drinks for meetings and to fax and copy documents. Information technology such as the cell phone or other instruments such as money can be used to identify and take care of a

need; flows of capital and information are not separate from care. However, what these flows cannot guarantee is the actual, direct act of care-giving which "involves physical work, and almost always requires that care-givers come in contact with the objects of care" (107).

This division can be an issue with the status of care-giving. Tronto continues:

> Yet as feminist economists have long noted, there is a great deal of work that goes into converting a pay check, or any other kind of money, into the satisfying of human needs. That we quickly equate in the United States the provision of money with the satisfaction of needs points to the undervaluing of care-giving in our society. (Ibid.)

It is this instrumental quality of care-giving, the association of ethnic minorities and women with care work, and the fact that many care-giving tasks are seen as low-skill labor and subject to automation that serve to devalue care. At the same time that corporations voraciously demand more time from its workers, it simultaneously seeks ways to make their jobs obsolete. This leads to a precarious and insecure existence for care workers.

The exchange between Hae-joo and her co-workers shows that they recognize certain aspects of the labor market under flexible accumulation: "The current trend in labour markets is to reduce the number of 'core' workers and to rely increasingly upon a work force that can quickly be taken on board and equally quickly and costlessly be laid off when times get bad" (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 152). Hae-joo and her skills are not central to the functioning of the firm and would be the first to go in the

event of a downturn. Hae-joo and her co-workers are aware of their precarious positions within the company.

To guard against this precariousness, workers must cultivate a self through various means. Aside from educating themselves to leave such entry-level jobs, the demand is for workers to become what Hochschild refers to as the "zero drag employee," which has come to mean workers who are free from obligations and attachments that would impede on the demands made by work (xix). The term "zero drag" is another manifestation of the flexibility imposed on employees by employers. This employee places a higher priority on the demands of work on his or her time than the demands of their personal lives, and the ideal employee would be one where time is completely given over to the company.

Hae-joo's decision to spend the evening at work over visiting Ji-young provides an example of how availability for work supersedes the needs of her friends, and the film has numerous scenes that illustrate the tension between work and personal time. Despite plans to meet her friends for her birthday, she cancels when a male superior invites her out for a drive only to contact her friends to let them know she can meet them after all when he postpones the drive. Later, Ji-young visits Hae-joo in Seoul to meet for lunch, but because she is busy, Hae-joo arrives an hour late and misses her. When Hae-joo calls Ji-young to see where she is, Ji-young responds that she is on her way back to Incheon, and irritatingly asks why Hae-joo didn't call her to let her know she was late.

Care in the corporate space becomes instrumental and valued only for its ability to facilitate knowledge work. Care is something to be pawned off, and care-giving and care-receiving reproduces the inequalities of globalization and flexible accumulation where

those higher up the social hierarchy receive the care they need when they need it and do not have to perform acts of care for those below. The dynamic becomes receivers of care who are able to summon help and care due to their social standing, while care workers are at the beck and call of corporate demands. As a result, Ji-young has no pull on Hae-joo's time; she is not important enough for Hae-joo to drop everything for her, whereas Hae-joo will provide this flexibility for work.

Thus, the experience of time for the characters in *Take Care of My Cat* reflects corporate demands on their time at the expense of time for their families and personal lives, but it also increasingly resembles what Castells describes as "timeless time." Timeless time is the temporal companion to the space of flows and refers to the attempt to compress the time it takes for transactions to as close to zero as possible, making it seem like time has disappeared (464). The "zero" in "zero drag" therefore acquires a dual imperative: to be as free of commitments as possible so that one can flexibly accommodate work demands, but also that this accommodation must happen quickly. The mobile phone facilitates this enforced flexibility as a device that provides the material support for the space of flows in the way it allows instant communication. The mobile phone industry itself is beholden to the logic of flexibility and speed as the constant introduction of new models means the cycle of cutting-edge technology and eventual obsolescence is constantly accelerated. Thus, it is no wonder that Ji-young fixates on Hae-joo's new cell phone at the beginning of the movie, and that when she borrows money from Ji-young, she buys a new cell phone rather than using the money to fix the sagging ceiling in the house she shares with her grandparents. Ji-young seems to confuse owning a cell phone to the ability to inhabit and benefit from the space of flows,

hoping that solving the obsolescence of her device may rescue her from her own obsolescence in the job market. Her purchase shows a shift in priorities where corporate care, or the care of the self to facilitate entry into the space of flows, clashes with familial care.

The consequence of this trend of timeless time is a reconceptualization of time as "the mixing of tenses to create a forever universe, not self-expanding but self-maintaining, not cyclical but random, not recursive but incursive: timeless time, using technology to escape the contexts of its existence, and to appropriate selectively any value each context could offer to the ever-present" (464). Examples of the mixing of tenses is postmodern collage and the commercialization of nostalgia, the reflexive nature of time, and how events appear random rather than being ordered by the repetition of social rituals that provide order and predictability to time. In the context of work, a recursive versus incursive world heralds the shift between the factory worker whose tasks were repeated in the production cycle to the office worker who must be nimble and flexible enough to quickly adapt to the changing circumstances and demands of finance capital.

Therefore, what is important to understand the relationship between Hae-joo and her friends is that she endeavors transform herself so that she partake of the benefits of timeless time. She subjects her friends to the same randomness and unpredictability that she encounters at work. Her decision to cancel her birthday gathering and then getting her friends together again when her preferred plans fall through is an extension of the "just-in-time" ethos of corporate supply chains into personal lives. Agency is not shared, and Hae-joo's plans change according to the availability of who she works for. At the same

time, Hae-joo subjects her friends to the same unpredictability. This hierarchy shows that there are beneficiaries and victims of timeless time. This hierarchical relationship organized around the experience of time foreshadows the conflicts between Hae-joo and her friends because Hae-joo's friends recognize and resent how Hae-joo does not make time for them while expecting her friends to be flexible to her needs. Those who benefit from timeless time can take advantage of the near-instantaneity of desires and get what they want quickly; however, those who are further down the social hierarchy must wait for their needs and desires to be fulfilled. In addition to the scene where Hae-joo makes Ji-young wait at the café, when the friends meet for an outing, Hae-joo makes her friends wait yet again.

Timeless time's focus on the "ever-present" through its emphasis on having things happen at the moment it is desired and reducing wait times to as close to zero as possible means the past becomes less relevant. This is particularly important for the relationship between Hae-joo and Ji-young since they were best friends in school. After an argument between the two, Tae-hee tells Ji-young, "In school, you two were the closest."

Hae-joo finds the past to be irrelevant, saying, "The present matters."

Tae-hee replies, "The present? Then what's important to you in the present?"

Hae-joo responds sarcastically, "Clothes! Why? Happy now?"

Hae-joo's response is in reaction to Tae-hee's implication that perhaps she finds more value in fashion and material wealth than her old friends, but this issue remains central to understanding the deteriorating relationship between Hae-joo and Ji-young (and to a lesser extent Hae-joo's relationship to Tae-hee, Bi-ryu, and Ohn-jo). Her focus on the

present and her willingness to view Ji-young as part of an obsolete past suggests that the time frame for evaluating the worth of the relationship is compressed so that when memories are used to validate and support a relationship, the time horizon creeps ever closer to the present and future. Moments and memories perceived as occurring in the distant past become more likely to be categorized as obsolete. On the surface, Hae-joo's answer of "clothes" is meant facetiously, but fashion's focus on the present and how quickly fashions go out of style captures the accelerated cycle of obsolescence in product cycles and, as is increasingly apparent between Hae-joo and her friends, personal relationships. For Hae-joo, what she desires from a relationship is someone who will participate in the reflexive project of the self with her or help her mold her identity according to the rules she feels will help her succeed. She has embarked on a mission of self-improvement and to rise up the ranks of the financial firm where she is employed. She invests in herself through consumption (buying clothes) and cosmetic surgery (Lasik so that she no longer needs contact lenses) in the hopes that these investments will help her standing at work. Care for Hae-joo becomes self-care, and the techniques of care she exercises is useful in determining what forces dictate the kinds of decisions she makes in constructing her own identity. Michel Foucault describes these techniques as technologies of the self "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state—of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (18).

The ethic that underpins Hae-joo's "operations" on herself is the neoliberal ethic of placing all actions under market exchange: "In so far as neoliberalism values market

exchange as 'an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs', it emphasizes the significance of contractual relations in the marketplace" (Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3). Along with focusing on the present at the expense of the past, this entails viewing social structures that are conduits of care—such as the family and friendship—as instruments. This change turns personal relationships into commodities in a market exchange with the consequence that friendship and family become equivalent to other commodities. And like commodities, it becomes disposable when it is deemed no longer useful. Hae-joo forsaking her past for her new life in Seoul means exchanging the camaraderie of the past for the commodities she finds more useful in her drive toward self-improvement.

The film shows how Hae-joo's techniques of self-care come directly from how she reads the demands from the corporate world. Her decision to undergo Lasik surgery is directly related to an episode at work. Hae-joo rips her contact lenses and is forced to wear her glasses. This occurs on the day that new employees are introduced to the rest of the office staff. The man who asked Hae-joo out on her birthday leads the new employees to the conference room for a meeting, and on the way he asks Hae-joo to bring them drinks. When he notices her glasses, he pretends he doesn't recognize her and remarks at how small the glasses make her eyes look. Hae-joo takes off her glasses and considers them.

The scene cuts to Hae-joo getting an eye exam an undergoing Lasik surgery as Tae-hee looks on. Her actions follow events at work; the ethic she follows in deciding to get Lasik surgery flows from the cues she receives from the office. Embarrassed by her

male boss (who happens to wear glasses himself), she decides to alter her physiology to avoid future embarrassment.

Following her surgery, Tae-hee accompanies Hae-joo back to her apartment to keep her company and take care of her. Hae-joo remarks that she can now grow her fingernails long because she doesn't have to worry about ripping her contact lenses. Tae-hee asks, "So you had surgery to grow your nails?"

Hae-joo continues, "Next time, I'll do my nose and widen my eyes a bit. I want to change as much as I can." It is at this moment that Tae-hee notices the large portrait mounted over Hae-joo's own bed. Upon first glance, the sequence appears to affirm Hae-joo as a self-involved character. Tae-hee's expression suggests that she views Hae-joo's embrace of cosmetic surgery as simple vanity, but what she does not understand is what happened at work to prompt Hae-joo's decision.

The portrait provides an interesting point of comparison between Hae-joo and Tae-hee. While the primary conflict appears to be the deteriorating friendship between Hae-joo and Ji-young, Hae-joo and Tae-hee's stance toward Ji-young also provides a useful point of analysis for the place of care in their respective lives. Initially, it appears that they have very different ideas about their friendships, with Tae-hee's efforts to maintain bonds contrasting with Hae-joo's increasingly instrumental stance toward her friends. While Hae-joo's portrait represents her inward turn to self-care and -cultivation, Tae-hee cuts herself out of the family photo, representing her alienation from her family. She does not identify with her mother, who is depicted as a passive, quiet woman who remains largely in the background. While she works at her family business, most of her scenes show her at odds with her father. Cutting herself out of the family photo shows her

rejecting the familial bonds to travel with Ji-young, someone who she sees as more of a kindred spirit. Family is no longer the primary means of constructing the self, and as such, Tae-hee abandons the family.

Tae-hee's cares for Ji-young, organizes events with her friends, and volunteers to help the disabled poet. She seeks an alternative social relationship to the family, which is depicted as stifling and overshadowed by her father's whims and worldview. In an opening scene as Tae-hee returns too late for dinner after helping the poet, her brother asks, "You volunteer your time, but they don't feed you?"

Her father adds, "You miss dinnertime, you don't eat. You can't even look after yourself, so how can you help other people?"

Tae-hee replies, "I'm not hungry, so don't worry."

By depicting Tae-hee standing while her family sits on the floor around the dinner table, the scene shows her literally standing apart from her family. As she is lectured by her family, the family portrait hangs in the background. As she makes her way up the stairs to her room she unlocks her bedroom door as her father says, "Always locking that room, no wonder it's all moldy!"

Tae-hee chooses to separate herself from her family spatially, keeping her bedroom door locked and not participating in communal family rituals such as meals. This spatial segregation extends to differences in how she views the world from her father, and one of the principal ways this division is depicted is through different attitudes toward consumption.

The construction of the self through consumption is an important theme in *Take Care of My Cat*. In Hae-joo's case, consumption is tied to a technology of the self that is

geared toward success at work and moving up the corporate hierarchy. Thus, shopping for clothes, cosmetic surgery, and education are all commodities she must purchase for success at work. The importance of commodities and consumption for Tae-hee is cast as different from Hae-joo but is no less important. In many ways, her model of consumption overlaps with Hae-joo in the way that consumption plays a large part in constructing the self.

One example of this is the way fashion is deployed. While Hae-joo is depicted as the most clothing obsessed of the characters, Tae-hee herself creates part of her identity through fashion. When her father brings her a traditional Korean *hanbok* to wear at work to create a more authentic experience for the customers, she refuses, saying, “No, I won’t wear it. It’s not even my style.” The scene shows her father buying something for her, but he seems oblivious to how fashion and style make a difference in the self that one projects. The inability of her father to understand what is fashionable depicts the inability of generations to understand each other. Furthermore, it marks the change between the “relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism” to “all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms” (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 156). The film creates a binary between Tae-hee and her father that represents the shift to a postmodern aesthetic from the more paternal relationship between state/corporate power with subjects and labor that characterized the aesthetics of the Fordist regime.

The commodification of cultural forms expresses itself through assuming the point of view of a tourist. Bauman describes a world split up between tourists and

vagabonds. His use of these terms is to describe the different effects of globalization on people and how the pressures, demands, and attractions of globalization increasingly put people on the move. At one end of the spectrum, you have global elites with the ability to be whisked around the world on chartered flights and manage manufacturing plants half a world away. The choice of the term "tourists" describes how these citizens view the world and the products they consume; as tourists, they consume products that veer increasingly toward "*sensations*; they are collectors of *things* only in a secondary and derivative sense" (83). The ability to access this kind of consumption depends upon mobility in both a real and virtual sense; the former referring to the money to buy a plane ticket and afford accommodations as a traveler, while the latter refers to mediated travel and the ability to experience the world through computers, telecommunications devices, and simulacra that allows for a vicarious tourism that is as ephemeral as a slideshow or going to a restaurant to sample ethnic and national cuisines.

An example of this is when Tae-hee's family goes to a Tony Roma's for some American-style ribs. Unfamiliar with the different flavors and kinds of ribs, Tae-hee asks the waitress the difference between Original, Red-hot, and Carolina Honey flavors. After listening to the explanations, she asks her mother what she wants, but her mother defers her decision. As Tae-hee is about to decide, her father grabs the menu away from her and asks the waitress, "What sells the most?"

Upon learning that it is the rib sampler, her father orders it. He goes on to justify his decision by conveying his ethic on such matters, explaining to his son, Tae-shik, "I don't trust this fancy crap. Hey, Tae-shik, when in doubt, always order the most popular dish. It's a safe bet."

For Tae-hee, the purpose of having dinner is to try something new and decide what she likes. Finding out her individual preference for the different rib styles is akin to finding one's clothing style. It allows for a customized self based largely on such consumer choices. For her father, the optimal decision is the most popular choice, thereby ensuring that their experience will mimic those of the majority. Food is a way of fitting in with the larger group, to identify the consensus and to go along.

The stakes for Tae-hee are expressed in her annoyed reaction to her father's order, "Dad, beating isn't the only form of violence. Ignoring someone's freedom counts, too."

Her father responds, "No big man would stare at a dinky menu for so long. Tae-shik, a man who graciously eats what he gets will make it big, huh?"

Tae-shik, understanding how frustrating their father's actions are to Tae-hee, milks his father's approval by responding, "Dad, don't worry. I can eat anything." He looks at Tae-hee as he says this—smug in how he is favored over Tae-hee. As his father laughs in approval, Tae-hee is shown looking at her brother in utter contempt.

This exchange further highlights the reasons why Tae-hee feels so alienated from her family. Her brother is favored in the family; when her father explains his reasons for ordering the rib sampler, he addresses his comments toward Tae-shik instead of Tae-hee. Not only does he ignore her right to choose, but he then proceeds to use Tae-hee's protests to lecture his son on what it takes to be a successful man. His behavior shows a family that does not appear to care what daughters think; Tae-hee's preferences are irrelevant, and she does not even deserve an explanation. The wisdom of previous generations are not really meant for Tae-hee; rather, they follow a patrilineal line that excludes daughters.

Tae-hee accuses her father of an act of violence at ignoring her freedom to choose. However, the freedom she is describing here is freedom of consumer choices. The conflict between Tae-hee and her father is not only a conflict about the role of women in the family and society, but also represents tensions on different patterns of consumption. The conflation of the freedom from gender inequality with the freedom to choose commodities represents how neoliberalism has co-opted the concept of freedom to legitimize itself. Neoliberalism has managed to intertwine itself and stand in for individual freedom such that "any political movement that holds individual freedoms to be sacrosanct is vulnerable to incorporation into the neoliberal fold" (Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 41). In particular, neoliberalism calls for the freedom of individuals to be market actors; this is the primary identity that neoliberalism promotes.

In other words, it is difficult for any desire for freedom to be cast in terms other than the neoliberal conception. This is largely due to neoliberalism's drive to make all of human experience subject to the functioning of markets, which also involves a concerted effort to create markets where none previously existed (2). The combination of the neoliberal view of freedom with the kind of consumption that Bauman characterizes with the tourist means that consumption assumes a value—individual freedom—that resonates powerfully with individuals. The short time horizons of "timeless time" and "zero drag" means that the time between desiring something and attaining it should be eliminated. Thus, neoliberal freedom means being free to conduct market transactions whenever the self wants to conduct it.

This polarization of the global citizenry means inequality in consuming in this manner. The type of consumption and differences between tourists and vagabonds is

illustrated in a sequence when Hae-joo convinces all of her friends to go to Seoul rather than Hae-joo going to Incheon. The drive to their destination in Seoul begins with a series of tracking shots that show the industrial section of the city. Giant construction cranes in a yard full of shipping containers dissolves to a shot of telephone and power lines, which then cuts to a shot of a giant arch with a nautical wheel suspended from the arch and a classical statue lifting its arms to the heavens. As the scene continues, we see a shot of a factory with smokestacks and wrapped in scaffolding and vents for manufacturing.

The scene cuts to a tunnel, and when the bus emerges they are in Seoul. The Seoul cityscape consists of office buildings that have flat surfaces to make room for giant billboards that advertise western fashion and use multicultural utopias to sell products. A series of extreme long shots shows a Seoul with brightly lit plazas, and the scene cuts to a shot of a group of young men break dancing on a stage as spectators cheer them on. Finally, the scene cuts to an underground shopping mall where Hae-joo takes her friends so that she can shop.

This montage contrasts the different spaces Castells describes as the space of flows versus the space of places. The scaffolding and factories of Incheon evoke its industrial nature, and the buildings' architecture expresses the industrial function of its buildings. Moreover, the arch in the port invokes the sort of monument that associates industries with national economies, a tribute not just to industry but the industry of Incheon and South Korea. Therefore, the buildings are linked to the place in which they reside as well the kind of physical, material goods that cranes and industrial factories circulate and produce.

However, when we enter Seoul, the buildings are largely flat office buildings indicating that the jobs within these buildings are largely white collar jobs. The flat, blank sides of buildings allow for them to be surfaces for advertisements and the bright lights of Seoul. These ads, depicting multicultural utopias and fashion, point to places outside of Seoul and represent a world created for the tourist, the global citizen with access to the space of flows. The smokestacks and the steel skeletons of heavy industry are replaced by buildings that look more like blank screens that are able to accommodate any image that one can imagine. This, then, is the architecture of the space of flows, the "'architecture of nudity' [. . .] whose forms are so neutral, so pure, so diaphanous, that they do not pretend to say anything" (Castells 450).

During the montage, a muted piece of atmospheric electronic music plays as the non-diegetic soundtrack that augments the journey by conferring a dreamlike, lyrical quality as the group moves into Seoul. What Seoul represents is the promise of consuming dreams and fantasy; the "architecture of nudity" allows the projection of whatever consumers desire onto its walls, whereas industrial scaffolding limits the variety of these reveries.

However, the sequence ends with Ji-young leaving early after a fight with Hae-joo. Ji-young is already upset with Hae-joo for insisting the friends come out to Seoul, and the trip to the shopping center proves humiliating for Ji-young as she is the only one of the friends who cannot afford to buy anything. The unequal ability to consume leads to a breakdown in solidarity between the two friends. Ji-young's poverty means she cannot participate in the social ritual of shopping except as a spectator for her friends' consumption. Watching others consume is a constant reminder that she cannot.

Hae-joo, meanwhile, has no need for Ji-young if she does not want to participate in the activities she wants.

This reflects the differing relationship to consumption between tourists and vagabonds:

> Both the tourist and the vagabond have been made into consumers, but the vagabond is a *flawed* consumer. The vagabonds are not really able to afford the kind of sophisticated choices in which the consumers are expected to excel [. . .] This fault makes their position in society precarious. They breach the norm and sap the order. They spoil the fun simply by being around. (Bauman, *Globalization*, 96)

The difference between tourists and vagabonds conjures images of the poor staring into a store from the outside, watching as others participate in the consumer culture that they can only dream of. Hae-joo, in turn, upbraids Ji-young for exactly what Bauman states that vagabonds do for tourists: Ji-young's moodiness spoiled the fun. As such, Hae-joo is happy to see her leave.

Of course, the distinction between tourists and vagabonds is not a clean one: "The vagabond, let us repeat, is the *alter ego* of the tourist. The line which divides them is tenuous and not always clearly drawn" (Bauman, *Globalization*, 96). The reason for this instability between categories is because between the very rich who will always be rich and those at the very bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy who have given up all hope of being a tourist, "there is a large part, arguably a substantial majority of the society of consumers/travelers, who cannot be quite sure where do they stand at the moment and even less can be sure that their present standing will see the light of the next day" (97).

The fact that both Hae-joo and Ji-young have a lot in common—growing up in the same town and close friends at the same school—makes Hae-joo's reaction all the more aggressive, which explains why she would prefer Ji-young not have come at all rather than empathizing with Ji-young's position. Hae-joo herself understands the difficulty of having a vocational school education as she admits over the phone that no one in her office is impressed that she graduated from one of Incheon's top vocational schools.

As Hae-joo's alter ego, Ji-young represents the position that Hae-joo could easily find herself, one economic downturn away from being replaced by a vending machine. So from the standpoint of her own precarious and fraught identity as a consumer, she is ready to let Ji-young leave—to banish the *alter ego* that cannot participate in the consumer economy. For Hae-joo, it means disavowing or abjecting part of the subjective self.

The manner in which Hae-joo views Ji-young is also part of the neoliberal ethic and contributes to the deterioration of their friendship. Hae-joo says that she would not live the way Ji-young would, making it appear as if Ji-young's poverty is a matter of choice. This presumes that Ji-young is not doing everything she can to pull herself out of poverty, and therefore, Ji-young only has herself to blame. This stance toward the unemployed is also part of neoliberal theory, which "holds that unemployment is always voluntary. Labour, the argument goes, has a 'reserve price' below which it prefers not to work. Unemployment arises because the reserve price of labour is too high" (Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 53). According to neoliberalism, the default worker is lazy and entitled, and social institutions meant to soften the blow of unemployment simply provide a disincentive to find work.

Of course, Ji-young realizes how Hae-joo sees her and resents her for it. Her response to how Hae-joo sees her is to demand, "What do you know?" Hae-joo does not understand that Ji-young has been looking for a job, and how difficult it has been for her. While Ji-young dreams of studying textile design abroad, she does not have the money for such an education. She also lacks the necessary computer skills to be employed in the knowledge economy. Her trade school education is presented as an anachronism, an education designed to prepare students for jobs in industries that South Korea is no longer competitive. At the beginning of the movie, we see her being laid off at a job that suggests the kind of light industry job (perhaps textiles) that allowed South Korea's rapid modernization, but has since been exported to poorer countries with cheaper labor. In a particularly cruel scene, a middle-aged man mocks her with ridiculous questions such as "How fast do you run the 100m dash?" during a job interview—a moment made all the more humiliating when they finally ask pertinent questions regarding her computer and driving skills. Ji-young can only respond that she is not very good with computers, and she does not have a driver's license. Also, because her parents passed away, she cannot attain the necessary family references for an accounting position, underscoring the marginal position of orphans in Korean society.

The attitude toward poverty as self-inflicted manifests as shame for those who are poor. It explains the inability of the friends to share their insecurities with each other; as much as Ji-young needs a better job, she cannot bring herself to accept Hae-joo's somewhat condescending offer of finding Ji-young one. This mutual misunderstanding—particularly between Hae-joo and Ji-young—also prevents the friends from understanding each other's motivations and makes it difficult to care for one another. When Tae-hee

visits Ji-young at her house to see how she is doing, Ji-young's grandmother tells Tae-hee that this is the first time one of her friends has come to their house, which suggests that Ji-young has never invited her friends to hide her poverty from her friends.

The degree to which Tae-hee seeks out Ji-young reflects how the view of the world as a tourist shapes her desire to care for Ji-young. Tae-hee has good intentions. On the one hand, her concern for Ji-young reflects Tae-hee's desire to find meaning in her life through caring for others. It motivates her to volunteer for the poet and organize outings with her friends. She seeks community where members care for one another, but she also seeks someone who is like-minded enough to travel with her. The melancholy tone of *Take Care of My Cat*—filled with silences, loneliness, and defeats for the main characters—reflects the compromises and sacrifices the characters are forced to make. For Tae-hee, her desire to care for others and find a satisfying life comes at the cost of her family; while one can read the end of the film as liberation from the sexist aspects of her family and Korean society that stifle her, it comes with rootlessness and the loss of security. Hae-joo and Ji-young point out the drawbacks to Tae-hee's desire to find a meaningful life through travel. Tae-hee dreams of traveling the world collecting sensations and experiences. She tells Hae-joo, "I just want to keep wandering around. Just the thought of living in one place suffocates me. On an endlessly sailing boat, never stopping at one place, just living like flowing water."

But Hae-joo mocks this desire, "Then I'll build a wonderful country home by the river, so come visit, okay? Start talking sense. So you run away just because of your scrooge dad?"

When Tae-hee defends herself by saying that it would be childish to run away because of her parents, and that she would leave to find a greater meaning, Hae-joo does not believe her, “Oh, so profound. Family reasons are the main reason. If they’re happy and content, why would they leave?”

Hae-joo is right in that Tae-hee wishes to leave because she is not happy at home or in Korea. Tae-hee and her friends are often not taken seriously because of their gender; when she asks about working on a ship so that she can see the world, the sailor casually dismisses the possibility by telling her, “The ship we go on is no cruise.”

Tae-hee, then, seeks the life of a tourist. She embraces the novelty and adventure of life on the move as she describes the alternative of settling down in one spot as “suffocating.” But Hae-joo identifies the power dynamic behind movement. After all, she was forced to commute from Incheon to Seoul every morning before she moved. She sees not having to move as freedom as well, such as not having to fetch coffee or run errands for superiors. It is why she insists on her friends coming to her.

Ji-young focuses on the insecurity and danger of the nomadic existence Tae-hee desires. As Tae-hee and Ji-young walk across a bridge by the port of Incheon, they are confronted by a homeless woman who rushes at them and doesn’t say a word. She stares at them with a crazed look as the two walk away while watching her warily.

This confrontation leads to different responses from the two friends. Ji-young says that she’s afraid that she’ll end up like the homeless woman. Tae-hee is curious and she confesses to wanting to follow homeless people to see how they live to see how they pass their days and wonders if it wouldn’t be nice to live freely and without restraints.

However, Ji-young refutes the sentiment, pointing out how vulnerable the homeless would be if something were to happen, such as an accident.

Tae-hee's reaction is the reaction of a tourist; she is more interested in experiencing homelessness and what it is like to be homeless. Her relationship to poverty and the life of the vagabond is an aesthetic one, and she is more interested in how it contrasts with a vision of her own life that she feels is constrained by responsibilities and obligations, such as working for her father's business and trying to keep her friends together.

But Ji-young identifies with the homeless woman and is aware of the danger of living that way. Where Tae-hee sees freedom and lack of restraint, Ji-young sees insecurity and the inability to take refuge from a dangerous world. For Tae-hee, nothing is really at stake except to be able to observe the life of a homeless person and seeing how it informs her own life, where boredom is a greater danger than any real harm. It is the difference between material homelessness versus a metaphysical homelessness. The former is fraught with danger and insecurity, whereas the latter is the kind of homelessness that allows tourists the dream of access to all places without the corresponding obligations to specific locales. What Ji-young points out is that the pleasure of metaphysical homelessness can only be sustained with the security of ending the homelessness when the situation becomes perilous. It is homelessness with a home. Ji-young desires the same things that Tae-hee desires, but she recognizes that basic economic guarantees must exist for it to resemble the idyllic travel that Tae-hee dreams of.

For this reason, Tae-hee's altruism in caring for Ji-young must be qualified by Tae-hee's relationship to consumption and the neoliberal approach to human interaction. It is a relationship that is built upon a mutual desire to travel and see the world. Tae-hee seeks a traveling companion with whom she can explore the world. The relationship between the two as fellow travelers is foreshadowed by how they spend time together during the film. They are often shown going on walks together and chatting engaged in a Socratic dialogue as they walk through the Incheon waterfront or Ji-young's neighborhood. As they walk by the harbor where women are cleaning all the seafood they have brought in, they sit to talk. Ji-young gives Tae-hee a textile design that she was working on. The design is a grid pattern that looks quite similar to the map of the subway system during Hae-joo's commute at the beginning of the film or a circuit board, where lines connect a series of uniformly laid-out nodes. A dark throughline connects some of the nodes and stands out as a path between the nodes, suggesting agency and a purposeful path that stands out amid the uniform grid.

The design serves to show movement through a network space that disturbs the pattern by tracing its path between nodes in a path that appears unpredictable, but simultaneously constrained by the lines and nodes in the pattern. The pattern is a handy metaphor for the kind of travel that occurs in a world that looks increasingly networked: movement that appears free and random, but charts a course that does not fall outside prearranged paths and locales.

Many of Ji-young's textile patterns follow this grid and digital pattern motif. She shares Tae-hee's desire to travel and study abroad. It shows that she and Tae-hee are

kindred spirits, a friendship based on similar desires to see the world. She, like Tae-hee, seeks camaraderie and community with her friends and seeks to leave home.

After exchanging the pattern, Ji-young asks Tae-hee what she plans on doing since she didn't find a job after graduation. Tae-hee explains how she dreams of going on a "working holiday" in Australia where they give you a job but also provide English lessons. When Ji-young expresses disbelief that such an arrangement would exist, Tae-hee explains that it's probably because Australia has a lot of land, but a small population, so they are using the program to attract workers.

Of course, the reality is altogether different, and while the working holiday program in Australia is a way for young people to tour Australia and learn English for those from non-Anglophone nations, there are incentives in the program so that they are steered into areas that require cheap labor. One of the ways to obtain a second 12-month working holiday visa is to work in what is described as Regional Australia—the rural and sparsely populated regions of Australia where many of the jobs involve bringing in the agricultural harvest (*Harvest Trail - Harvest jobs - Australia Job Search*). Even if she didn't work in regional Australia, Tae-hee would probably work in low-wage jobs in the service industry.

Nevertheless, because she feels stuck at home, Tae-hee feels restless and just wants to travel. She wants to learn English, the language of globalization which would make her more attractive to the global job market. Her care for the poet and Ji-young suggests a social formation where care is integrated into her wanderlust, a community of travelers who can look after each other while seeing the world.

The propensity for Tae-hee to care marks her as different from Hae-joo. Tae-hee continues to volunteer for the poet and check in on Ji-young. The scenes showing her engaged in caring and care work demonstrates how care-giving and care-receiving must occur in the same place. While the space of flows, represented by the text messages she exchanges with Ji-young and Hae-joo, is a part of her caring (she sends Ji-young a text to ask how she is doing), she differs from Hae-joo in that she actually makes the effort to go to the poet and where Ji-young lives.

This dedication to being physically present for those she cares for shows that for Tae-hee, effective caring involves being in the same place as those she's caring for. It shows her commitment to the care-giving and care-receiving phases of care. Her relationship with those she cares for is one where they share a place. The visual motif of text messages versus the typewriter she uses taking dictation for the poet visually reflects how care requires physical presence. The text from the typewriter as Tae-hee takes dictation from the poet scrolls across the desk where Tae-hee is sitting as the poet sits in bed behind her. As she finishes typing, she tells him, "Like you said, the sound of typing is nice. But refusing to write them on a computer is really stubborn of you."

The poet responds, "It's the only way we can meet."

Tae-hee asks him what he likes about her, and he says, "Your healthy legs."

In this scene, the role of those who need care and caregivers deploys the representation of disability for its narrative and emotional effects. Disability is used to create narrative questions and crises and to illuminate the anxieties and imperatives of the normative subject. Tae-hee types out the poems that the poet dictates to her, but there is tension in the scenes when they are together. What the poet wants is not just for Tae-hee

to help him type the poem, but her physical presence. But he highlights their physical differences. By pointing out her healthy legs, he emphasizes his physical disability while reminding her that he relies on her mobility.

The willful use of the typewriter is an attempt to foreground the body and the needs of the body as the tactile quality of the typewriter is contrasted with the computer. Tae-hee's presence is required as well; voice-recognition software may be a technological solution that allows the disabled to type as an able-bodied person, but it also replaces a human typist with a machine. The computer promises instant and accurate reproducibility whereas the typewriter produces what is regarded as an authentic original, which underscores the search for authenticity amidst a world flooded with simulacra (Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 300). The typewriter and typed poems also represent nostalgia for the human connection associated with a more mechanized, industrial form of production. The space of flows, organized to facilitate simultaneous interaction over places far from each other, is seen as socially isolating. The poet's reasoning for the typewriter is to emphasize place as a form of resistance to the space of flows, as a response to how those who occupy the space of flows constantly leaving the place-bound behind. This causes anxiety on the part of the place-bound and intensifies feelings of insecurity and consciousness of their dependence.

His first poem, titled "My best," says, "I want to do my best for you. So I hope you'll do the same." The poem appears to occur at the beginning of an endeavor or a relationship, where the investment of the speaker to his or her audience is being negotiated. Juxtaposed with the conversation in Hae-joo's textbook where the authenticity of one speaker's pledge to a relationship is questioned, the poem foregrounds

the uncertainty in relationships. The poem and the passage in the textbook indicate insecurity in relationships and show that what ties people together is not based on anything except for the individual's decision to invest in a relationship. The poem's speaker makes a commitment to the audience and can only hope that pledging his or her best will be enough for reciprocation. There is a desire for confidence in the relationship, and when there is a lack of confidence, the relationship deteriorates.

The forces that undermine confidence and stability in a relationship are the desire for mobility. The poet draws attention to his immobility in his poems, to speak out against being left behind:

"Everyone comes and goes, but I am always waiting. People move, and I sleep. My mood is such as if I am always asleep."

As Tae-hee puts the collection of poems together, she tells him, "I'm jealous. It's really cool to finish something."

The poet then asks her, "Now you'll leave me too, right?"

She responds, "You always group people into those who stay or leave."

"Then, do you like me?"

"Just because someone leaves you doesn't mean they don't like you."

He sighs.

Grouping people according to "those who stay or leave" again evokes tourists and vagabonds, except in this conversation, staying and leaving is presented as a choice. Bauman posits that staying is actually not the choice that it seems; for the majority of global citizens, there is a pressure to be on the move. This is due to the precariousness of everyone's existence, where someone who seems secure and whose skills are valued can

quickly become obsolete unless abilities are constantly updated through reflexive self-evaluation and constant reinvention. This is the project that Hae-joo is engaged in. The constant call for renewal and staying current exerts an overwhelming pressure even for those who consider themselves members of the tourist class.

The poet's sadness and anxiety at Tae-hee leaving signals the unstable nature of their relationship. Despite her affection for him, the relationship she has with him looks more like the relationship between a contract worker and a client. It is a temporary arrangement where the relationship's end date is determined by the completion of a project or task (the completion of the poet's project). This arrangement shows how the relationship between labor and capital under flexible accumulation reproduces itself in personal relationships. There is ambiguity to their relationship; Tae-hee appears ready to have a relationship outside of her role as a volunteer with the poet during her conversation with Hae-joo at the donut shop, but when the poet asks if she likes him, Tae-hee doesn't answer directly.

While Tae-hee seems to genuinely care for the poet, their relationship does not develop beyond the point of Tae-hee as a friendly volunteer. His disability makes it impossible for him to accompany Tae-hee on the life she desires as a tourist. It is for this reason that the titular cat, passed around to all of the friends, must be dropped off with Bi-ryu and Ohn-jo. Ultimately, the relationships that cannot be carried with Tae-hee and Ji-young on their travels must be left behind.

Tae-hee and Ji-young's friendship replaces the family and previous friendships that are no longer helpful in fostering the kind of life that Tae-hee and Ji-young seek. Friendship implies a negotiated relationship between equals and implies reciprocation.

However, the film recognizes the instability of such a relationship because it shows that the maintenance of friendship is constantly threatened by hierarchies such as class differences. The idea of investing in oneself to improve one's chances of becoming a member of the global elite with access to the benefits of living in the space of flows means friendships are evaluated based on how useful they are in achieving such a life. Hae-joo is the most obvious exponent of such logic as we see her prioritizing the relationships that will help her move up the global hierarchy at the cost of her former friends. She apportions her caring accordingly, but the cost for her is social isolation. When she stays at work late rather than visiting Ji-young at the youth detention center, the shot showing her texting Tae-hee to wish Ji-young well renders Hae-joo sympathetically. Shot at night in extreme long shot from outside the building looking into the office, her floor is the only one lit in the building. Hae-joo cuts a tiny, solitary figure standing by the window as she texts her message to Tae-hee. Hae-joo seems trapped in the giant office building unable to leave. The giant letters scroll from bottom to top along the side of the building as we see a long line of traffic moving slowly in the distance. It is a reversal from the earlier scene of the Seoul cityscape as a giant screen projected with the dreams of consumers. Instead, her office building looks more like a prison as Hae-joo stands barred from the nightlife right outside her window.

Again, we see how information technology's relationship to care is one that stops short of the full needs of care, but this time we see how lonely Hae-joo seems. The text does not fully convey the circumstances under which Hae-joo sent the text; she is genuinely unable to go see Ji-young because of work (contrasted with how she used her cell phone during the lead up to her birthday) and it does not convey Hae-joo's loneliness

and sadness that the film's mise-en-scène and non-diegetic soundtrack captures. The text message seems grossly insufficient juxtaposed to Tae-hee's willingness to actually go and see Ji-young, and this is reinforced by the statement of commitment Tae-hee makes to Ji-young, "Hurry up and come out. Isn't it stuffy in there? Ji-young, honestly, even if you hack someone up, I'll still be on your side. I think there are reasons for everything. I believe in you."

Ji-young finally says something in response to Tae-hee's statement of faith, explaining why she isn't saying anything, "I have no place to go anyway." Tae-hee's attention and concern encourages Ji-young to start speaking again, and soon she leaves the prison. Waiting for her as she comes out is Tae-hee. She has given the cat she was entrusted with to Bi-ryu and Ohn-jo, who have agreed to take in the cat. She tells Ji-young that she stole money from her father, but only what she felt she was owed in wages after working for him. She doesn't want to travel alone, and tells Ji-young she would like Ji-young to come with her.

The penultimate shot in the movie shows Tae-hee and Ji-young standing in front of a bank of screens showing arrivals and departures at the airport. After studying it for a few seconds they turn around toward the camera and walk towards it as the camera films them in slow motion and a piece of ambient electronic music starts to play. The camera cuts to a passenger plane taking off as the word "Good Bye" is superimposed on the frame.

The ending to the film presents us with an ethic that is a combination of caring and travel. Ji-young is finally able to travel abroad and escape her poverty, but only through Tae-hee's intervention. The purpose of care is to allow Ji-young to become a

tourist. Through Hae-joo, the film shows how the desire to hook into the world of the cosmopolitan, global elite relies on an entrepreneurial self that assumes self-creation through investment in the self through consumption, and how this subjectivity may discourage caring for those that do not help in this project. Therefore, Hae-joo's character divests herself from those relationships that she begins to see as obsolete. For Hae-joo, care is not a virtue in and of itself nor part of a larger ethic which she uses to structure her life; care is part of the technology of the self as an instrumental tool. Thus, she performs the care work of the office and helps her boss, but when Hae-joo discovers that her care for her boss will not be enough to help her move out of her job as support staff, she doesn't see the point of caring. Towards the end of the movie, Hae-joo is sent on a personal errand by her boss, but she blows it off by going to an arcade instead.

Therefore, the melancholy tone of the movie reflects the sadness of the characters. Hae-joo is left alone in Seoul, and while it appears she may finally come around to Chan-young's affections, she has lost two of her best friends. Tae-hee and Ji-young are free to travel the world, but only after cutting or losing their connections to their families. Tae-hee's expression of faith in Ji-young, that she would stay by Ji-young's side no matter what shows how much she craves community and close human relationships. However, the neoliberal conception of individual freedom inflected shows how fragile these relationships can be. A slight shift in how one chooses to see the world or downturn in one's personal fortunes can make the difference between two friends drifting irrevocably apart (Hae-joo and Ji-young) or deciding to travel the world together (Tae-hee and Ji-young). Therefore, the hopeful solidarity must be considered with caveats. In choosing to travel together, Tae-hee and Ji-young choose community and

repudiate the kind of radical individualism that Hae-joo seemingly embraced. Care and investing in friendship is seen as a way to counter the loneliness and isolation that Hae-joo inevitably encounters. However, this personal bond is preceded by the rejection or destruction of the traditional institutions of care, such as the family and the state. These institutions, previously conduits or care and solidarity, are shown as inadequate to the needs and desires of the characters. *Take Care of My Cat* represents care as an ad hoc enterprise where the burden is switched onto private citizens who act in charitable ways rather than an institutionalized function of the state or a norm that most individuals feel compelled to practice. Thus, the ending is open-ended and bittersweet. The world they fly toward promises the exciting experiences and sensations of the world, but it comes with the loss of a sense of belonging to a place and the security of identity that family and the nation-state once provided. While Ji-young and Tae-hee have found each other and fly into a future that may promise the life of the tourist, they also enter into a world full of uncertainty and insecurity where even their newfound solidarity is not guaranteed.

APPENDIX

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