

## **UC Santa Barbara**

### **Working at Living: The Social Relations of Precarity**

#### **Title**

Working Under Precarity: Work Affect and Emotional Labor

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0m87j6n1>

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#### **Publication Date**

2013-06-30

## **Working Under Precarity: Work Affect and Emotional Labor**

June 2013

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### **A. Introduction: Work Affect and Emotional Labor**

This module aims to provide an overview of some of the historical approaches to the relationship between affect, emotion and work, and to bring those to bear upon the contemporary politics of work under different contexts of precarity. Specifically, it examines the relation between work and affect under present conditions of post-Fordism and of the neoliberal organization of production, time, and subjectivity. Using cinematic texts as primary references, the goals of this module are to point to both capital's exploitation of affect, but also capital's production of affect, as these intersect with the concerns of gender and precarity.

The following two sections provide two approaches for thinking about how forces of capital both exploit and produce affect. Each section provides different resources for thinking about how exploitation and affects can yield new subjectivities and different forms of sociality. These subjectivities and sociality do not necessarily reproduce capital, and can in fact yield forms of resistance. After discussing some of the relevant theoretical

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issues, each section then suggests ways that these can be understood through readings of films.

## **Section One: Affect, Commodification, and the Gendered Body**

### **A) Affect and Emotion as Work or Labor**

The limits of humanistic subject categories, like “labor,” are one of the problems facing scholarship that tries to conceptualize the material impact of importance activities performed by subjects that have been dehumanized or otherwise structurally devalued. For example, critique of historical forms of accumulation and exploitation point out their reliance upon racializing strategies such as chattel slavery in the Atlantic, the capture and enslavement of native people during the conquest of the Americas and the Pacific, or indenture of Indian and Chinese workers in the British empire [see bondage module]. These forms of unfree work created and continue to create material contexts for the extraction of affective and emotional labor in historically specific forms. In contexts of work that compromise the autonomy of the worker, gender can and often does become an instrument of further dispossession of social and biological reproductivity. The main areas this has been studied is in the forms of sex, for example Kamala Kempadoo’s study of sex tourism in the Caribbean and its roots in colonialism and slavery; domestic activities (Davis, Morgan), and even the tending and reproduction of one’s own communities (Kale, Chatterjee). These processes of promoting ongoing life also become sites of value production for others. Given these issues, how do we think about the politics of distinguishing affective, emotional and other embodied work from other forms of labor, or even from the rest of life and subjectivity? How do we identify forms of life

that do not fully comply with coercive forces and the instrumentalization of bodies and affects, even when these may not register as resistance or agency?

In the context of US histories of conquest, racial slavery and immigration, the reproductive work of women has served not only to perpetuate families in the predominantly white middle class, but also to perpetuate a discourse of these families as needing more care than working class families and other families of color. Here, as in the justification for the general cheapness of all labor in the Global South, a naturalized “lifestyle difference” validates excess care within the homes of some women, whereas in others, care becomes what Rosemary Hennessey calls an “outlawed necessity.” This “affectively necessary labor” (Spivak) reproduces capital, property, and the conditions under which capital and property continue to exist, and it also contributes to the unquantifiable ability of the consuming class to thrive in a way that continues and increases their present opportunities into the projected future, giving these consumers security, and allowing them to feel “more human.”

Seemingly new forms of bodily and affective actions of interest to capitalism challenge us to keep up with understanding the choices people make in situations of material and political precarity. For example, people in both high-resource nations like the US and northern and western Europe, and in low-resource nations like India and China, are participating in clinical trials in order to access otherwise unavailable therapies. Ill and unable to access paid work for reasons of illness or lack of available work, such patient-workers are simultaneously performing unpaid experimental work for the pharmaceuticals industry (Waldby and Cooper]. The specific histories of material dispossession of citizens, such as middle class patients in the US who seek access to

unaffordable or not-yet-legal experimental therapies, or unemployed day-laborers in India who seek financial resources because there are no jobs, become part of the mechanism that encourages people to consent to subjecting their bodies to risk in a way that produces potential profit for others. As another example, scholars have examined the algorithms that convert the attention people pay to different modes of advertising while browsing on the internet as well as “liking” comments, products and websites as forms of “free labor.” These activities produce databases for marketing research even as they retooling the subjectivities of consumers to make them better and more nuanced as a type of producer (Skeggs, Beller, Terranova). In addition, growing scholarship points to the laborious efforts required to maintain valorized social identities, for example to maintain valorized social identities like white middle-class femininity (Morgan), or normative gender binaries (Butler), but also to perform publicly-demands affects like happiness (Ahmed). Most of this scholarship would agree that these social performances and valorization require work in the sense of focused intentional activity. Such emerging forms of work engage historical analysis of the role of race, class, sexuality and gender in accumulation, and bring them to bear upon still-emerging forms of neoliberal production, coloniality, and conditions of constraint and unfreedom tied to the racialization and gendering of labor in the global economy.

## **B) Affect and Emotion and Stratified Reproduction**

Feminist materialist analyses point to the unwaged, unrecognized reproductive, or even “maternal,” labors of service, care, and nurture, but they do not directly articulate with the exploitation of gendered labor as part of a system that governs through the

reduction and extension of “life,” a system that depends on these degraded feminized labors even as it uses them up. To this end, women of color feminist critiques of the racialized nature of domesticity and free labor offers additional resources for the dependence of current biological and biotech markets upon both human reproduction as well as the exhaustion of life past the possibility of its reproduction (Davis, Hong, Morgan).

Social, biological and intellectual reproduction have been figured by the global economy as less valuable than work that is deemed productive, creative and innovative. The low-valued and therefore low-compensated work of reproduction, gendered female, is therefore delegated to workers marginalized by intersectional gendered logics, and in the international division of labor, it is delegated in different ways to the Global South. As the products of affective work in the Global South are exported and consumed by citizens of wealthier nations, the resources they represent are redistributed from the individuals and communities they are produced to clients overseas. For example, scholarship in the sociology of feminized work have shown that the global division of service and care work produces new commodities and subjectivities, as well as creating affective conditions that characterize certain populations of workers and not others.

In *The Managed Heart*, Arlie Hochschild established the concept of “emotional labor” to mark the work involved in producing, or managing, affects that benefit the companies that hire people in service and entertainment industries, and more generally the work required to generate and discipline emotions as a form of paid work. She identifies the gendered nature of this type of work, and the way that the management of emotions for commercial purposes indicates an instrumental stance towards emotions,

even while this management actually alters the way that emotions are experienced. The term “affective labor” marks the intimate level at which commodities like care, concern, attention, empathy, etc. are produced and to how they are consumed. Affective labor in the form of physical and psychological care and attention performed by people such as customer service agents, maids, nannies, sex workers produces commodities of comfort, nurture and security that are not physical objects, yet are consumed in a way that causes others to feel better and more valuable. These ‘feelings’ are necessities that are essential to human life and the ability to imagine oneself or one’s community as having a viable future. The concept of affective labor comes out of the scholarship of materialist and socialist feminists beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present, including formulations of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1985), the international division of care (Parreñas, 2001) and the concept of “outlawed necessities” (Hennessy, 2000) in the lives of subordinated workers. This scholarship examines the role of domestic labor, sex work and emotional work in capitalist economies.

Given the mapping of new arenas of bodily, biological, attention and affective labor upon the global South, we can see how the transnational migration of “care” workers is connected to parallel markets in biologically and socially reproductive labor. Even the coerced or otherwise unfree aspects of new forms of accumulation and production demand attention not only to the politics of exploitation but also of affiliation and political connection. coalitional possibilities, or strange affinities.” Framed in terms of illicit and grey economies of affective exchange, the connections made and socialities

formed through communication and biological forms of labor are what Hong and Fergusson call “strange affinities,” yielding coalitional possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

The film *Dirty Pretty Things* is a story of immigrant life in London, centering on the invisibility of the lives and work of marginalized immigrants. Different forms of precarity and vulnerability intersect as characters interact in the no-place of a London hotel. Characters have to engage in different forms of commodification of their bodies and activities, and we can see in these the intersection of race, gender and national origin. In the film, you can see how the least valued forms of labor in society are delegated to immigrant, racialized and feminized workers. You can also see how this can lead to informal economies and temporary alliances that have political consequences.

One can also observe how processes of commodification of the body blend into forms of labor, particularly in how immigrant populations become the source of both organ harvesting and devalued labor, but also in how women of color including racialized citizens and also guest workers are represented as having to negotiate the refusal by others to recognize a separation of the commodification of their work and their bodies. Tadiar explains that in purchasing the commodities of care and love, buyers buy the whole person that generates these things, since they cannot be separated from a body like a factory product can. The result is the perception that the very body of the worker is a commodity owned by the buyer. At the same, it is the very conditions of being structural devaluing that also bring people together to seize the means of production. We can also see that this very mode of resistance reacts within the system of commodification, rather than against it.

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<sup>2</sup> Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick Fergusson. Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization. Durham: Duke University Press. 2011. Pp. 16.



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*Ann Anagnost has linked the market in transnational adoption to affective labor, noting that economic investments in a child participate in valorizing some bodies over others (140-142). Her focus is to discuss the production of a middle-class subjectivity, specifically through the desire for a child. She identifies this desire as part of a structure of feeling identified by a number of other scholars as being a precondition for becoming a fully realized subject of American life (142).*

Jonathan Beller. "Third Cinema in a Global Frame: *Curacha*, Yahoo!, and Manilla by Night," *positions* 9, no. 2 (2001): 338.

Piya Chatterjee. *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2001.

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Hochschild, Arlie. "Love and Gold." In *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Arlie Hochschild and Barbara Ehrenreich, eds. New York: Holt, LLD. 2002.

*Arlie Hochschild describes the high incidence of undervalued immigrant women's labor in the work of commercial child care as effectively acting in place of necessary structural and public solutions to the resources gap between Global North and Global South. She calls this the global chain of care, a privatized solution to a structural problem that occurs at "great emotional cost" to these workers. For example, Hochschild argues that the sadness experienced by mothers separated from their children is often solaced only*

*by putting all the love for those children into the charge (cite Hochschild interviewee Vicky Diaz), and occurrence Hochschild describes as "a global heart transplant."*

Arlie Hochschild. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

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Kempadoo. New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield. 1999. cited by Waldby and Cooper (2007).

Jennifer Morgan. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Parreñas, Rhacel. 2000. "Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor," *Gender & Society* 14:4(August): 560-80.

*Parreñas explains how different types of domestic labor, gendered feminine, get distributed as an international division of reproductive labor that falls along lines of race and class difference. She looks at several categories of women workers who function as a chain of support. Migrant women find work in the homes of middle-class women in other countries who hire their labor, usually to replace their own so that they can engage in employment outside the home. Another group is women who cannot migrate because they do not have the resources, but find work as caregivers to the children and families of women who can manage to migrate for work. She explains that since only 2% of families in the Philippines can afford to hire domestic help in their own homes, for the women who find employment in the homes of migrated domestic workers, they work a double day.*

Beverly Skeggs (2010). "The Value of Relationships: Affective Scenes and Emotional Performances." *Feminist Legal Studies*. 18:1, 29-51.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value." In *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Spivak*, edited by Donna Landry and Gerald M. MacLean. New York: Routledge, 1996.

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### **3. Primary Documents List/Teaching Resources**

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*Dirty, Pretty Things*. Stephen Frears. 2002

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"What is a kidney worth?" *Christian Science Monitor*. June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0609/p01s03-wogi.html>

"Uneasy Neighbors: The Plight of Illegal Indonesian Immigrants In Malaysia." *International Business Times*. May 8, 2013. <http://www.ibtimes.com/uneasy-neighbors-plight-illegal-indonesian-immigrants-malaysia-1051856>

"Southeast Asia" Migrant Maids as Modern Day Slaves." February 3, 2013. *Global Post*. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/120112/cambodia-migrant-maids-southeast-asia-malaysia>

"Malaysia Urged to Protect Migrant Workers." *The New York Times*. December 3, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/world/asia/malaysia-urged-to-protect-domestic-workers.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/04/world/asia/malaysia-urged-to-protect-domestic-workers.html?_r=0)

## **Section Two**

The focus of this section of the module is on the question of capital's need for and exploitation of affect, as well as forms of resistance organized around affect. These questions will be illustrated through the discussion of two films, Pierre and Jean-Luc Dardenne's *Rosetta* (1999), and Ken Loach's *It's a Free World*, (2007).

### **1) Capitalism and Affect.**

Since the 1970, post-Fordism has been the time of the financialization of capital and of the becoming-rent of profit (Randy Martin, Carlo Vercellone). In this context capital is described by different critics (David Harvey, Nigel Thrift) as plastic, vitalistic, Dionysian even, ludic, and above all, affective—that is, capable of exploiting not only the body of the worker, but her mind and affective capacity. In step with a capitalism that becomes “soft” and performative, work becomes “flexible”, that is, precarious and unprotected, and precarity itself becomes a form of capitalist control of labor. Capital's new forms of accumulation become biopolitical, and the body and the affective dimension of subjectivity, presented as self-regulating entities, turn becomes the chief terrain of profit making. Hence the call from different critics, (from Patricia T. Clough, to Sarha Ahmed, to Teresa Brennan, to Cristina Morini) to rethink capital through “the affective turn.”

### **2) Affective Labor as Immaterial Labor**

With immaterial labor the Fordist opposition between work and leisure, production and consumption seems to have been sutured. The hierarchy between upper management and material labor seems to collapse. The “knowledge worker” for example is asked to represent herself as self-managed, autonomous, creative, and free, almost following the

blueprint of an artistic life (Andrew Ross). However, the cognitariat's work remains exploited work, and still part of a hierarchy: the manager of a company is different from a web designer, who is, in turn, different from the call center worker. This notion of freedom needs to be carefully analyzed: the freedom of the cognitariat is the freedom that neoliberalism has hijacked away from the liberal discourse of individual rights, and bent into the freedom of the market, as Harvey affirms. Cognitive and affective work can produce a surplus of knowledge and affect, something in excess to the needs of capital, that can be used/organized autonomously: this is the thesis of the Italian autonomists—such as Antonio Negri, Franco Berardi, Paolo Virno. Yet this autonomy is always very volatile, as we will see in the films, and always in danger of being “reabsorbed” into the process of valorization.

Alongside the feeling of freedom and self-realization that immaterial labor is supposed to guarantee, a whole different range of affects emerges. These range from depression, as the consequence of failure to “be” the managerial and perfectly self-managed subject demanded by capital, as Alain Ehrenberg explains, to anger (see *Precarias a la Deriva*, Angela Mitropolous), to cynicism. The question of post-work cynicism as a key affect of neoliberalism, is studied, for example, by Lauren Berlant: as she puts it, at this historical conjuncture, optimism (as “a fantasy of sustenance”, “a social relation involving attachments that organize the present”, “a scene of negotiated sustenance that makes life bearable as it presents itself ambivalently, unevenly, incoherently” (14) At this time, at the time of the crisis of the structures that had supported this fantasy, optimism cannot be but “cruel”. This cruel optimism still interpellates masses of people, who make

attachments (to a fantasy of a steady work, solid relationships, an ideal of self-reliance) that are no longer possible, or sustainable. “Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object... [cruel optimism is] a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible and toxic.” (24).

Berlant brilliantly examines this scenario in a number of literary, cultural and cinematic texts, only to show that these attachments are inevitable. The two films proposed show instead also moments of anaffectivity and distance from the inevitability of cruel optimism. Cruel optimism is destined to a sort of structural failure that involves a non-willing subject. What if it is the subject herself who engineers her own failure?

### **3) Affect, Affects, and Resistance**

Berlant’s critique of cruel optimism is perhaps a good transition into the proposed discussion of the two films. Cynicism seems to be inevitable in both cases, for Rosetta and for Angie, the protagonist of Loach’s *It’s a Free World*. And yet, if we analyze them closely, we see that the two characters use a wider range of affects to get by their conditions of existence and work, a range of affects than cynicism in order to succeed or fail in their world. These are affects that at times function as forms of self-defense, or even resistance: anger, disidentification, an almost expressionless distance.

What both Rosetta and Angie share is their position of isolated individualism. It’s their encounter with the other and with a collectivity (or lack thereof) which is decisive in their stories. It’s this encounter that breaks the spell of neoliberal ideology, the ideology of

absolute individualism, and the conviction that “there is no alternative”, that nothing new can be imagined or put in place beyond the present conditions of work and life.

This lack of an alternative, almost a caged condition for both Angie and Rosetta, resonates with Berlant’s position, in her analysis of cruel optimism. Yet cruel optimism doesn’t leave any door open to the scenario of refusal and failure, for example, or to the possibility of connecting with others to imagine and do something different from what seems to be made available by capital.

This idea of an opening, of another, different possibility, is at the core of J.K. Gibson-Graham’s discussion in their book *A Postcapitalist Politics*, (2006), where they invoke “a politics of post-capitalist possibility”, and a more “tactile” way of approaching the problem of work and affect also via aesthetics. Like Berlant they make the analysis of cinematic texts part of their theorizing. But they turn to the plasticity of fiction as one of the spaces of the possible, the testing ground for what could happen “instead”. Against a deep-seated negativity of both neoliberal and left thinking, Gibson-Graham don’t accept that “there is no alternative”, and rather push the reader to “turn ourselves to a project of becoming”. On the one hand “you need to explore the multiple forms of power... their modes of transmission, reach and (in)effectivity.” (4) On the other you need to pay attention to something else: “a differentiated landscape of force, constraint, freedom and opportunity emerges, and we can open to the surge of positive energy that suddenly becomes available for mobilization.” (8) Volatile, we could add, but important, and definitely worth the time.

It is in this spirit that we move to the two films.

The two protagonists, Rosetta and Angie, are, in the way they are situated, at opposite ends: unemployed, marginal, excluded from work, Rosetta tries to “get in” at all costs. Angie is fired at the beginning of the film, but struggles and succeeds in becoming the figure of a successful entrepreneur. But they are similar as well: they share the view that there is no alternative to need to work and to the conditions under which people works in a neoliberal context. Work seems to guarantee survival, a life, a life-style, and, very important, an subjectivity, a sense of identity and social recognition, a place. In both cases the professional identity is more important, or is the only identity possible, at the expense of a type of affectivity that connects with others, reciprocates, comforts (the Thatcherite dictum “there is no such thing as society. There is only the individual and his family” turns into “There is no such thing as society: there’s only the individual and her work”). In this context work-as-life is understood and presented as the only source of identity/pleasure, and production comes to juxtapose with reproduction: life and work collapse into each other. This understanding is what leads both characters to their cynicism (Rosetta almost lets Riquet, the only human contact she has, drown, in the hope to get his job at the waffle stand; Angie doesn’t hesitate to report a illegal immigrants, when she needs the space and lodgings for her own “crew”). But the impulse to individualism, an almost Darwinian game of survival, where the self-managed worker imagines herself as “her own woman”, the ruthlessly successful entrepreneur, is what



puts in place the protagonists' collapse. This collapse is more prominent in *It's a Free World*, and perhaps it is presented in more complex and undecided terms in *Rosetta*.

*Rosetta* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1999, Belgium) portrays a teen-ager who lives in dire poverty. She shares a caravan in a RV park at the margins of town with her mother, who is an alcoholic and gets by prostituting herself in exchange for more drinks. The film opens with Rosetta being removed from the factory where she was doing an internship: she will not be hired and the police has to be called to make her leave. She will not accept welfare support: she wants a job, a real job, in pursuit of a normality that would give her dignity. She survives through alternative economies (for example her mother mends and transforms second hands clothes that Rosetta re-sells around, and she fishes in the river by the RV park).

An almost monomaniacal determination guides Rosetta through the many frustrations of her life: she is a furious, angry spirit, but her anger doesn't produce anything, is not able to change anything. Rosetta's most striking quality, together with her determination, is her lack of affect: her face is often expressionless, particularly at dramatic moments (see for example the moment when she witnesses Riquet's struggles not to drown).

\*How do we read this anaffective behavior? Is it self-defense? What else?

How does it connect, or does it, to the extremely affecting representation of the female body in the film? This is *de facto* a Dogma film: hand-held camera, no soundtrack at all. We are always incredibly close to the protagonist, relentlessly close, almost experiencing

what she experiences physically, including an unexplained pain in her abdomen that assaults her repeatedly.

We could say that this is a deeply affecting film for the viewer, about a young woman incapable of affect, or blocking affect in order to survive, not to feel, and be able to go on, to survive. The film seems to say that at the time of scarcity and lack, morality, feelings, pleasure are a luxury, something that must be blocked and renounced.

Rosetta's cynicism, her lack of affect can be read as a form of self-defense however, as a necessary affect in her world, while struggling to find work.

Riquet is the young man at the stand, who sells the waffles Rosetta has been finally employed to make. He also has sells at the stand the waffles he makes at home, in an illegal "side-business". The dinner at his apartment is the only moment of pleasure in the film: the two eat, drink, there's music and dance. The dance is one of the moments of non-reciprocity for Rosetta: she cannot dance, has never danced and she cannot participate in this kind of sociality. Her dialogue with herself in bed, ("You are Rosetta", "I am Rosetta", "You have found a friend" "I have found a friend", "You have not fallen in the hole" "I have not fallen in the hole") tries to revive this sense of sociality, but the fact that she is her own interlocutor is a testimonial to her solitude, alienation, and self-reliance.

Yet, once she loses her own job, she is capable of betraying Riquet by telling the boss about Riquet's illegal business. The young man is now fired and Rosetta works at the stand: this is one of the very few times we see her smile, serving her customers.

\*Is the film only an example of what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism", the impossibility not to make attachments to the wrong objects, objects that are inevitably inaccessible to somebody as Rosetta, and yet are what allows her to go on, to live?

\*And if so, how do we read her attempted suicide at the end, when she comes back home to find that her mother has escaped from the rehab center, and is drunk on the steps of the caravan? And how do we read the very ending of the film? Rosetta seals the window and door of the caravan and turns on the gas, but the tank is almost empty. She goes to buy a new tank from the supervisor, to finish her task, but Riquet is taunting her, menacingly circling around her in his moped, until Rosetta falls under the weight of the full tank. The last image is of Riquet who helps her to get up, and they finally seem to connect, looking at each other. What does this last image mean?

The attempted suicide seems to be a moment when cruel optimism fails: it's a moment of failure, when the necessary attachment to work, normality etc. reveals itself as impossible, and Rosetta acquires consciousness exactly of this impossibility. Or perhaps this point should be presented as a question: does she?

With the attempted suicide, however, she fails at being correctly interpellated by the neoliberal ideology of work under the current regime of precarity; this is a failure that can

be also read as a refusal. The ending remains open to interpretation. In a more positive, optimistic interpretation (perhaps at this time an optimism without cruelty) we could say that in her reciprocation of Riquet's gaze, her acceptance of his help, Rosetta opens to another, finds a way out of the claustrophobic space of work as capable of determining any human and social relationship. At the end, we could propose, she sees the possibility of finding another who is not herself as an interlocutor. There is not yet a community, a collectivity to which she can refer and rely upon, but it's a first step out of her isolation.

*It's a Free World*, (Ken Loach, 2007, UK) presents us with a different scenario from the Dardennes' film. Loach and Paul Laverty, respectively the director and script writer) intended the film to be an indictment of Gordon Brown's economic politics, whose injustice and greed, as Loach affirms in an interview "is breaking up families and communities." The film questions New Labour's neoliberal fantasy of entrepreneurship as career option. This is the story of Angie, who, after having been fired by her sexist boss in a foreign workers' employment agency, decides to start her own agency with her friend and housemate Rose.

It's hard not to like Angie: a peroxide blonde on her big motorcycle, wearing black leather, a single mother, she cuts a powerful figure of a working class heroine. She is a woman with power (up to a point) operating in a male dominated work world. She reclaims her marginality in order to locate herself at the center of the system, in the attempt to make it work for her. The problem is that the system is deeply unjust and exploitative: by enacting its principles (lack of any scruple, cynicism) she ends up

damaging the workers she employs and herself and her family. The way her agency functions, first with documented immigrants, later with illegal ones as well, shows us how see how immigrant workers are at the mercy of unscrupulous employers ready to take advantage of their vulnerability, a situation worsened by the shrinking of welfare and labor rights.

With Angie Loach wants “to challenge the prevailing wisdom that ruthless entrepreneurship is the way this society should develop... It seeks out exploitation. It produces monsters”.

\*Can we consider Angie one of these monsters? On the one hand she gives shelter and work to a family of Iranian refugees. On the other she has them arrested when, as I mentioned before, she needs to make space for her crew in the caravan park where they live.

At this point Angie’s methods become more and more exploitative and illegal. However, the film refuses to moralize. Rather it centers on Angie’s contradictory personality, herself drowning in a spiral of debt, and incapable of taking care of her son, left with her parents, even of protecting him, as she believes she does. In fact, not only does the boy become more and more maladjusted and violent at school, but he will also be kidnapped by the workers whom Angie was not able to pay, because of her debt

Young, ambitious, resentful, resourceful, Angie fails. But this is a different failure from Rosetta's. Angie's success is in fact her failure: at the very end we see her in Poland, hiring new immigrant workers. Her old partner Rose, horrified by Angie's methods, is no longer part of the business (and their friendship is over: an important example of sociality and affective connection goes bust). The son is still "parked" at Angie's parents, and doing badly at school. Angie is finally her own boss, and she has "what it takes" to make it in the neoliberal work world. The film invests lots of energy in showing what the costs of success are, and how they always end up multiplying profit and downsizing the social, solidarity, community.