

Migration and Affective Labour in Zadie Smith's "The Embassy of Cambodia" and Haresh Sharma's *Model Citizens*

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Abstract

This research article was a study of the interconnectedness between migration, gender and affective labour against the backdrop of neoliberal and neo-imperialist exploitation and state control in two contemporary literary texts. Originally published in *The New Yorker* in 2013, Zadie Smith's short story, "The Embassy of Cambodia", depicts the life of Fatou, a migrant domestic servant to the Derawals in their London suburban house. By taking a narrative detour through global and historical issues such as colonialism, genocide, migration, and globalization, Smith wrote about characters who practice various types of affective labour, commonly regarded as 'women's work'. The second primary text of the study was Haresh Sharma's play, *Model Citizens*, published in 2012, which touched upon the pressing issues of multiculturalism and migrants in contemporary Singapore through a portrayal of three female characters: a minister's wife, an Indonesia maid and a Paranakan or Strait-born Chinese woman whose son had committed suicide. Sharma's play is a critique of "Singaporean Dream" by posing an immanent question: Who is/are the model citizen(s) for the Singaporean state? Built upon Marxist and feminist theories of affective and immaterial labour put forth by scholars such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri and Silvia Feredici, this article was an analysis and a discussion of how affective labour and migrant domestic workers were represented in the two texts. The researcher drew a conclusion on how Smith's fiction and Sharma's play potentially suggest a path to solidarity and liberation of domestic workers in the current system of global capitalism, state control, and patriarchy.

Keywords: Affective Labour, Migrant domestic worker, Biopower, Zadie Smith, Haresh Sharma

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การอพยพย้ายถิ่นและแรงงานความรู้สึกในเรื่องสั้น “The Embassy of Cambodia” ของเซตี สมิธ และ บทละคร Model Citizens ของฮาริช ฌาร์มา

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาความสัมพันธ์เชื่อมโยงระหว่างการอพยพย้ายถิ่น, เพศสถานะ และแรงงานความรู้สึก ท่ามกลาง การเอารัดเอาเปรียบในโลกเสรีนิยมใหม่และจักรวรรดินิยมใหม่ และการควบคุมของรัฐ ในวรรณกรรมร่วมสมัยสองเรื่อง โดยเรื่องสั้น The Embassy of Cambodia (2013) ของ Zadie Smith ได้นำเสนอเรื่องราวชีวิตของ Fatou สาวรับใช้ต่างด้าวของครอบครัวเดอราวัลในย่านชานกรุงลอนดอน โดยได้สัมผัสได้เขียนถึง ตัวละครที่ทำงานบริการในลักษณะของแรงงานความรู้สึก ซึ่งมักถูกมองว่าเป็น “งานของผู้หญิง” โดยสมิธได้นำเสนอประเด็นสำคัญของโลกปัจจุบันและในประวัติศาสตร์ อาทิ ลัทธิการล่าอาณานิคม การฆ่าล้างเผ่าพันธุ์ การอพยพย้ายถิ่น และภาวะโลกาภิวัตน์ ในขณะที่บทละคร Model Citizens (2012) ของ Haresh Sharma นำเสนอประเด็นแรงงานอพยพและภาวะพหุวัฒนธรรม ภายใต้การควบคุมของรัฐสิงคโปร์ ผ่านตัวละครหญิงสามคน คือ ภริยารัฐมนตรี, หญิงเชื้อสายเปอนารากัน และสาวใช้ชาวอินโดนีเซีย โดยบทละครของฌาร์มา เป็นการวิพากษ์แนวคิด “ความฝันแบบสิงคโปร์” ด้วยการตั้งคำถามว่า ใครคือพลเมือง ตัวอย่างของรัฐสิงคโปร์กันแน่ และนำเสนอภาพแทนของแรงงานความรู้สึก ผ่านตัวละคร Melly สาวใช้ชาวอินโดนีเซีย บทความชิ้นนี้อ้างถึงแนวคิด ว่าด้วยแรงงานความรู้สึก และแรงงานอวัตถุ ของนักคิดสายมาร์กซิสต์ และเฟมินิสต์ อาทิ Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri และ Silvia Federici ในการวิเคราะห์และอภิปรายการนำเสนอภาพแทน ของแรงงานความรู้สึกและแรงงานอพยพที่ทำงาน รับใช้ในบ้าน ในงานวรรณกรรมทั้งสองชิ้น และนำไปสู่ข้อสรุปที่ว่าเรื่องสั้นของสมิธและบทละครของฌาร์มา อาจชี้ให้เห็นหนทางที่จะนำไปสู่ความเป็นน้ำหนึ่งใจเดียวกัน ความเป็นพวกพ้อง และการปลดปล่อยแรงงานรับใช้ในบ้านเหล่านี้ จากการเอารัดเอาเปรียบในระบบทุนนิยม การควบคุมของรัฐ และแนวคิดชายเป็นใหญ่

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Introduction

Migration has prominently become a critical issue of our time. The recent years have seen one of the largest global influxes of migrants and refugees to Western Europe, resulting in an enforcement of more strict immigration policies in host countries. Due to their condition as low-skilled labour and the predicament of illegal entry, many female migrants do not have many career opportunities, becoming outsource domestic workers in private households. According to an infographic statistic report by UN Women (2016), 81% of worldwide domestic workers are female while 73.4% of those are female migrant domestic workers. These migrant domestic workers are subjected to maltreatment and abuses. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010), their poor living and working conditions render these domestic workers “modern-day slaves” who “remain overworked, underpaid and unprotected” (1) due to the fact that “paid domestic work remains virtually invisible as a form of employment in many countries” (1). The urgency of this issue, therefore, necessitates awareness and attention from policymakers and global communities. In the academic realm, the issue calls for more critical studies in diaspora and migration and about the precarious conditions of migrant domestic workers in particular.

It can be observed from the ILO publications in the early 2010s that maltreatments and abuses of domestic workers became one of the main focal issues for the Organization and in 2013 the ILO was propelled to release an informative and statistical publication, *Domestic Workers across the World: Global and Regional Statistics and the Extent of Legal Protection*, that directly related to the issue. Approximately in the same period, two literary texts published in 2012 and 2013 also portray the precariousness and exploitation of fictional domestic workers in London and in Singapore. Despite the difference in genres, one a short story and another a play, these two contemporary literary texts, written in English and set against the globalised and neoliberal capitalist backdrops, can be read as an illustration of such exploited life of female domestic workers.

One of the two texts mentioned above is “The Embassy of Cambodia”, a short story by a British author, Zadie Smith. Originally published in *The New Yorker* in 2013, the story tells about a migrant domestic servant, Fatou, who works for the Derawals in their northwest London house which locates on the same street as the diplomatic building in the story’s title. In her fiction, Smith portrays the precariousness of domestic work and exploitation of domestic workers. Unpaid for her labour, Fatou can be seen as a modern-day slave who is finally fired from work without a reasonable cause only a couple of days after she saved the life of her employers’ daughter.

Another text is Haresh Sharma’s play, *Model Citizens*, published in 2012. The play touches upon the issues of multiculturalism and migrants in contemporary Singapore through a portrayal of three female characters: Mrs. Chua, a minister’s wife, Melly, an Indonesia maid,

and Wendy, a Paranakan or Strait-born Chinese woman who is Melly's employer. At the beginning of the play, a twist of fate has brought the three main characters together when Melly's boyfriend, Zul, was arrested for stabbing Mr. Chua, an MP and Mrs. Chua's husband. Wendy, who is Melly's employer, has recently lost her son who had committed suicide. The play ends with both Mrs Chua's and Melly's decision to leave Singapore to return "home". Sharma's play is a critique of "Singaporean Dream" by posing a provocative question: Who is/are the model citizen(s)?

Therefore, built largely upon prominent conceptualisations of immaterial and affective labour proposed by autonomist and feminist scholars, this paper is a study of gender and affective labour against the backdrop of global capitalist, patriarchal, and postcolonial exploitation in the two literary texts. This paper is divided into four main parts, in which I shall firstly discuss the concept of affective labour. The second part was a discussion of how affective labour was portrayed in Smith's short story. The third part was an analysis of Sharma's play in the light of affect, biopolitics, and biopower in reference to Michael Foucault's conceptualisation. Finally, in the last part of this paper I shall put forth that though the short story and the play portrays the exploitative and oppressive nature of global capitalist, postcolonial, and patriarchal systems, there are yet some possibilities in achieving a sense of solidarity and, possibly, a sense of liberation for affective workers.

On Immaterial, Affective and Reproductive Labour

One may begin a discussion of affective labour by referring to the concept of immaterial labour prominently discussed by autonomists such as Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Maurizio Lazzarato. As proposed by Hardt (1999), affective labour is "the other face of immaterial labor" (95) which is a form of labor that "produces an immaterial good, such as service, knowledge, or communication" (94-5). Immaterial labour thus is part of the third paradigm in which "service and information are at the heart of economic production." (90) Affective labour is deemed immaterial in the way that it does not produce tangible products but "a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community." (96)

Despite their contribution to a conceptualisation of affective labour, the autonomist scholars have been criticized for their insufficient acknowledgement of gendered labour. Therefore, Kathi Weeks posits in her article that "[f]eminist theorists have long been interested in immaterial and affective labor, even if the terms themselves are a more recent invention." (233) By "a more recent invention", Weeks may primarily refer to the conceptualisation of immaterial and affective labour put forth by Lazzarato in his much quoted "Immaterial Labour" (1996) and in Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000). From a similar angle to Weeks', Angela McRobbie (2010) points out, "Hardt and Negri are locked within a class model which permits no space at all for reflecting on the

centrality of gender and sexuality in the post-Fordist era, with the result that there is a failure to consider the meaning of what is often referred to as the feminization of work.” (62) In relation to the praxis of affective labour and domestic work, Sharon C. Bolton (2007) points out the problematic consequences of regarding affective labour in terms of immaterial labour that “it misses emotion work’s materiality and overlooks the fact that it is hard and productive work that is often unrewarded and unrecognized because of its association with the domestic sphere.” (2)

With the above comments in mind, for a discussion of affective and emotional labour of domestic work, I am propelled to cite prominent Marxist feminist scholars including Silvia Federici (2006) who posits that “housework is actually work for capital, that although it is unpaid work it contributes to the accumulation of capital” and “housework is the work that reproduces not just “life,” but “labor-power”. She further suggests that “the worker’s ‘capacity of work,’ [is] the worker’s capacity to be exploited. In other words, by recognizing that what we call ‘reproductive labor’ is a terrain of accumulation and therefore a terrain of exploitation”. To speak of exploitation, an autonomist Antonio Negri (1996) also posits that despite “the multinationalization of industrial activity and financial globalization” (78), the international division of labour and postcolonial exploitation have not “come to an end” but “have been extraordinarily accentuated” as he further elaborates, “But at the same time, they have lost their specificity (and thus the possibility of reactivating the theory of value in concrete instances) because that type of exploitation has itself become globalized, has flooded metropolitan territories, and the measure of exploitation has definitely declined.” (78) This discussion of the international division of labour inevitably brings to mind Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985) who has previously posited that, “the worst victims of the recent exacerbation of the international division of labour are women. They are the true surplus army of labour in the current conjuncture. In their case, patriarchal social relations contribute to their production as the new focus of super-exploitation.” (167)

Affective Labour and Globalised Body in Zadie Smith’s “The Embassy of Cambodia”

Since its first publication in 2013, Smith’s fiction has so far received positive reviews for both its narrative style and subject matters. In terms of affect, the story has also achieved its impact, as a reviewer explicitly suggests, “The Embassy of Cambodia, it transpires, turns on the kinds of empathy and understanding we offer to others – both the powerless and the powerful” (Tonkin 2013). In the academic realm, the story has also drawn attention from scholars in various fields. Beatriz Pérez Zapata (2015) scrutinizes the story in light of trauma and multidirectional memory studies while Michael J. Shapiro (2015) reads Smith’s fiction in relation to the narrative of war crimes and atrocity.

Smith’s short story portrays various forms of affective labour being performed by women are represented. In a domestic sphere, the main character, Fatou, works as a servant and a

care worker for the family. There is also a Sudanese domestic worker whom Fatou attempts to identify with as well as differentiating herself from. Affective labour in tourism industry or tourism labour is also presented. Fatou also worked as a tourism labour in a hotel on a Ghana coast before she migrated to London. A young female receptionist at the Health Club where Fatou goes swimming on account of her employer's membership pass is an affective worker in the way that she represents a healthcare service as well.

Apart from her female characters, Smith also gives portrayals of some men who practice this form of immaterial labour as well. Fatou's father, for example, works as a waiter in the same hotel as his daughter. In addition, there are male sex workers who can be seen as performing a form of affective labour. Smith portrays these two cases in a depiction of the Carib Hotel where Fatou used to work:

Her father serving snapper to the guests on the deck, his bow tie always a little askew, the ugly tourists, the whole scene there. Of course, it was not surprising in the least to see old white men from Germany with beautiful local girls on their laps, but she would never forget the two old white women from England—red women, really, thanks to the sun—each of them as big as two women put together, with Kweku and Osai lying by their sides, the boys hooking their scrawny black bird-arms round the women's massive red shoulders, dancing with them in the hotel "ballroom," answering to the names Michael and David, and disappearing into the women's cabins at night. (41-3)

Exploited affective workers in tourism industry are portrayed in Smith's short story. However, while male workers such as Fatou's father is seen as performing his labour in a much submissive manner by "crouching to hand a burger to a man waist high in water" (43), female workers are subjected to further exploitation, as it is portrayed in the story:

After all, it was her father, and not a kidnapper, who had taken her from Ivory Coast to Ghana, and when they reached Accra they had both found employment in the same hotel. Two years later, when she was eighteen, it was her father again who had organized her difficult passage to Libya and then on to Italy – a not insignificant financial sacrifice in his part. (15-6)

Therefore, female affective workers such as Fatou may find themselves being, not doubly, but triply exploited by global capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. We also see this in the scene when she is sexually assaulted by one of the hotel guests:

She had only a month left in Accra when she entered a bedroom to clean it one morning and heard the door shut softly behind her before she could put a hand to it. He came, this time, in Russian form. Afterwards, he cried and begged her not to tell anyone: his wife had

gone to see the Cape Coast Castle and they were leaving the following morning. Fatou listened to his blubbing and realized that he thought the hotel would punish him for his action, or that the police would be called. That was when she knew that the Devil was stupid as well as evil. She spat in his face and left. (44-5)

One may analyse the exploitation of affective labour that is presented here on two levels. As it happens, this can be analysed as an abuse of women in a male-dominated society where men can simply get away with their crime. In addition, on the next level, the scene can be more closely read by referring to what Mackie and Stevens (2009) call “sites of the globalised body or embodied globalization” which are explored in their article, as they put it,

These sites might include the nodes of transportation where people of different backgrounds are thrown together, the shopping malls where the products of the globe are consumed, the factories and offices of transnational corporations, the streets that provide the sites for political demonstrations, tourist hotels, resorts, bars and brothels, and the clinics that provide services to the transnational medical tourism clientele, and the home itself as the site of engagements between migrant domestic workers and their employers. (268)

On this second level, the hotel thus can be regarded as a “globalised site”, as defined by Mackie and Stevens above, that allows not only free circulations of capital, labour and commodity, but also exploitation of affective labourers. Fatou herself becomes an exploited “globalised body” in this site of capitalist, postcolonial and patriarchal agencies.

Also, there is an implication of a history of colonialism. The Cape Coast Castle in the above quote brings to mind the history of European colonisation and slave trade in West Africa. According to Hardt’s conceptualisation of the three paradigms of capitalist development that is explored in connection to immaterial and affective labour, slavery and slave trade can be unquestionably seen as symptom of the paradigm shifting from agricultural and tribal economy to industrialisation and modernization. As suggested by Hardt (1996), affective labour as a form of immaterial labour is part of the third paradigm of global capitalism development that includes a shift “from the domination of industry to that of services and information, a process of economic postmodernization, or rather, informatization”. (90)

Though much similar to linear stages of development the concept may sound, Hardt, nonetheless, insists that the relationship between these paradigms do not necessarily suggest a straight line of economic developmental stages of a particular nation or region. As Hardt points out, “There does not need to be an orderly historical progression among these forms [of production], but rather they mix and coexist; it is not necessary to pass through modernization before informatization [...]” (92-3)

This coexistence of various forms of production corresponds with the globalisation and ‘globalised body’ of affective labour. Other settings in the story such as the Embassy of Cambodia, the Derawals’ house, the Health Club and its swimming pool, the Willesden neighbourhood, and even the London 2012 Olympic Games which sets a backdrop for the story can all be viewed as globalised sites and a site of ‘embodied globalisation’ according to Mackie and Stevens’s theorisation. These places and events also serve as sites for various forms of production of affect. For example, people who visit the Embassy of Cambodia in the story are obviously tourists and they are a reminder of agricultural, industrial and service industries that coexist in several postcolonial developing countries in Asia and Africa.

A case of female affective worker exploitation is also seen in the two domestic workers, Fatou and a Sudanese girl in the newspaper, who are similarly mistreated by their employers. Fatou admits that,

[...] just like the girl in the newspaper, she had not seen her passport with her own eyes since she arrived at the Derawals’, and she had been told from the start that her wages were to be retained by the Derawals to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in. (16)

However, despite their similarities, when Fatou reflects about the unnamed girl, she shows her attempt in identifying some differences between them. Fatou figures out that she “can read English – and speak a little Italian – and this girl in the article could not read or speak anything except the language of her tribe” (16). Moreover, to justify her condition as not being “a prisoner” (17), Fatou concludes that since she is allowed to travel for the purpose of work with an oyster card on her own, she cannot be seen as a slave. This may be an implication of a possible challenge to the construction of solidarity among affective workers that will be further discussed in the conclusion of this article.

Affective Labour, Biopower and Foreign Bodies in *Model Citizens*

In Sharma’s play, a main character who performs, not only one but two, forms of affective work is Melly. She is a maid by day and a prostitute by night. Prostitution may be regarded as a form of affective work as it also provides “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion” (Hardt, 1999, p. 96). Melly’s ultimate goal is obviously to be a Singaporean citizen, a dream that could only be actualized through a marriage with a Singaporean man and Melly’s sex work is also revealed by the character herself as a way to achieve her marriage dream. To a critic of the play, “Melly’s plights and sufferings are caused by her own naivety.” (Boonsom, 2014, p. 13) However, an analysis of the play in relation to affective labour, biopolitics and biopower may reveal more about the three main characters

and the causes that obstruct the actualization of their “Singaporean Dream” in relation to love, marriage, family amidst state discipline and governmentality.

In regards to the use of state discipline and governmentality on its population, Michel Foucault (1978) theorized two concepts: biopolitics and biopower. According to his conceptualization of those terms in “Right of death and power over life”, biopower refers to the two forms of “power over life”, one “centered on the body as machine; its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: the anatomo-politics of the human body” while another “focused on species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity” (139). Biopolitics was posited as a supervision of biopower through “an entire series of intervention and regulatory controls” and “the disciplines of the body and the regulation of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed”. (139)

In *Model Citizens*, English language policy is used as a biopolitical tool of the Singaporean government. Chua Beng Huat (2003) clearly stated that under the government policy making, multiculturalism and English language policy are instrument of control and that English language, though having been implemented as a central language to locate a middle ground for multicultural and multiracial Singaporean populations, is not “neutral” (71). Mrs Chua expresses her discontent toward the government policy that has forced the population to adopt English language as Singapore’s official language. She graduated from Nanyang University, the first Chinese university initially funded by mainland Chinese associations. However, because of the English language policy, Mrs Chua and other Singaporean Chinese diaspora had to learn to speak English for their life quality and career advancement based on the idea of meritocracy. Her frustration in regards to implementation of new policies is found in the below quote.

Mrs Chua: My Life was perfect. Then you changed the rules. You wanted me to speak English. You wanted me to stop having any more children. Two is enough you said. You changed the rules. You forced me to get sterilized. Now you want more children. I wanted more children. I wanted three or even four. But I had to follow your rules. I followed all your rules. I listened, I obeyed, I submitted myself to your rules. And you just change them. You just change the rules. Who wouldn’t want to hurt you? Why wouldn’t want to kill you? (Act 1: Scene 3, 16)

Strangely but interestingly, from the quote above, the character is simultaneously lamenting over changing in policy regarding language and birth control – both relates to the body. This, inevitably, is an implication of the corporeal impact of the new spoken language. This resonates with what Deepika Bahri (2017) suggests in her text, *Postcolonial Biology*, in relation to Anglicization of the name of a city, Calcutta/Kolkata, and its affective impact. She puts it, “the corporeal commitment involved in pronouncing the Anglophone version of the city’s name requires lingual, alveolar, and glottal orchestration. Tongue, teeth, breath, diaphragm, palate, mouth, and elocutionary training collaborate in the pulsive production of language lined with flesh.” (vii) To adopt a new language, thus, requires a corporeal adjustment; therefore, language policy is regarded as the state’s biopolitical control and machinization of the subject’s body.

Nevertheless, despite the state discipline and governmentality through the machinization of the population’s body, Sharma’s play obviously suggest that an act of departure is one way of liberation from the biopower of the state. At the end of the play, Melly and Mrs Chua are seen as leaving Singapore to Indonesia and China respectively while Wendy, the only character who remains in the country would be the only one “model citizen”, a functional human capital for the development of the state. However, apart from what the author explicitly suggests, there is a possibility of liberation through affective labour. Hardt (1999) nods towards “the enormous potential in affective labor” (97) in a way that it produces “social networks, forms of community, biopower” (96), and he calls this “biopower from below” (98) since “labor works directly on the affects; it produces subjectivity, it produces society, it produces life” (99). Therefore, this is possibly regarded as a way to resist devalorisation of surplus-value of affective labour by capital, as Hardt points out that, “the production of affects, subjectivities, and forms of life present an enormous potential for autonomous circuits of valorization, and perhaps for liberation.” (100) The relationship between the three main characters who are connected through life, love and family is also a testament to this form of “biopower from below” that may as well destabilize the state’s biopolitical control.

Conclusion: Imagining Solidarity

As it has been read in the previous parts of this article that the submissive nature of service work and the exploitative nature of capitalism and patriarchy as well as the hereditary colonial exploitation have all rendered affective labourers, such as Fatou in Smith’s story, an abused slave of her employers and customers, it is yet difficult for the migrant workers themselves to see through the complex web of exploitation and be conscious of their exploited labour. Therefore, a sense of solidarity among affective workers as it is portrayed in the story is almost impossible to achieve. In this second part of my article, I shall continue my discussion on affective labour by scrutinizing the two concepts being an integral part of affective work – that

are ‘gratitude’ and ‘servitude’. By exploring the dialectical relationship of these two concepts, this part of the article will discuss how affective labour demonstrates the connection between the mind and the body – the cognitive and the somatic aspect of labour – and finally point toward the possibility of empowerment.

On affective labour, Hardt (1999) also advances an argument that, “In the production and reproduction of affects, in those networks of culture and communication, collective subjectivities are produced and sociality is produced – even if those subjectivities and that sociality are directly exploitable by capital.” (96-7) With this exploitation of collective subjectivities and sociality by Capitalism, the potential for solidarity formation is obstructed as it is seen towards the end of Smith’s fiction. Fatou’s emotional labour is exploited, as it is narrated in the story,

In fact, it was hard for Fatou to understand exactly why she was being fired, as Mrs. Derawal herself did not seem able to explain it very precisely. [...] “What you don’t understand is that we have no need for a nanny,” she said, standing in the doorway of Fatou’s room—there was not really enough space in there for two people to stand without one of them being practically on the bed. “The children are grown. We need a housekeeper, one who cleans properly. These days, you care more about the children than the cleaning,” Mrs. Derawal added, though Fatou had never cared for the children, not even slightly. “And that is of no use to us.” (64)

Ironically, according to her employer in the above quote, Fatou fails to perform her duty because she “care[s] more about the children than the cleaning”. Mrs. Derawal is trying to draw an impossible line to separate care work from domestic work as an excuse to dismiss her servant and to cover up her own failure in fulfilling her reproductive role as a mother.

The above quote shows the devalorisation of surplus-value of affective labour. Feeling mistreated by her ‘ungrateful’ employers, Fatou changes her attitude and reaction towards a fellow affective worker. She refuses to show her acknowledgement of the other’s service nor feel grateful for the past hospitality of the Health Club receptionist who once let she uses two guest passes on the same day to bring in her friend to the pool, as it is portrayed in the story,

‘Weighed down a bit today,’ the girl at the desk of the health club said, nodding at Fatou’s collection of plastic bags. Fatou held out a guest pass for a stamp and did not smile. “See you next time,” this same girl said, an hour and a half later, as Fatou strode past, still weighed down and still unwilling to be grateful for past favors. *Gratitude was just another kind of servitude*. Better to make your own arrangements. (My italic 68)

The quote, “Gratitude was just another form of servitude,” states a dialectical relationship between gratitude and servitude. This may also provide us a better understanding of the real cause of Fatou’s dismissal. The fact that she has saved the life of her employers’ daughter makes her employers see the nature of their relationship differently. They feel uncomfortable with the sense of “gratitude” that needs to be expressed towards the subjected worker”, as seen from Mr and Mrs Derawals’ individual reaction, Mr Derawal...turned stiffly to Fatou, and spoke not to her, exactly, but to a point somewhere between her elbow and the sunburst mirror behind her head. ‘Thank you, Fatou. It’s lucky you were there.’ Fatou nodded and went to leave, but at the doorway to the den Mrs Derawal asked her if the lamb had defrosted and Fatou had to confess that she had only just taken it out. Mrs. Derawal said something sharply in her language. Fatou waited for something further, but Mr Derawal only smiled awkwardly at her, and nodded as a sign that she could go now. Fatou went upstairs to collect the clothes. (7-38)

Apparently, as Fatou suggests, to feel grateful means to be subjected to the other. This is why the Derawals try to reverse the dialectical relationship and replace “gratitude” with “servitude” by instantly substituting appreciation with command. The quote also suggests interconnectedness between the mind and the body in affective labour. While servitude signifies a somatic aspect, gratitude – a feeling of thankfulness – can be seen as a cognitive aspect.

Obviously, as Smith’s short story portrays, a true sense of solidarity among affective workers, especially women, may not be easily achieved amidst the exploitative and devalorising system of global capitalism. Nonetheless, Smith seemingly suggests an alternative way to create a sense of solidarity with strangers by questioning how large “a circle around our attention” in regards to the history of the others should be, as her narrator puts it,

The fact is if we followed the history of every little country in the world – in its dramatic as well as its quiet times – we would have no space left in which to live our own lives or apply ourselves to our necessary tasks, never mind indulge in occasional pleasures, like swimming. [...] Surely there is something to be said for drawing a circle around our attention and remaining within that circle. But how large should this circle be? (23)

Fatou's interest in making sense and locating connections between the history of Cambodian regime, the genocide, and the global capital represented by Chinese entrepreneurs in Africa in relation to her own life situations, though much random and not extensive, may also suggest her possibility in achieving what Fredric Jameson (1991) conceptualises as "cognitive mapping". According to Jameson, an individual with ability to cognitively map is able to "rethink [the] specialized geographical and cartographic issues in terms of social space - in terms, for example, of social class and national or international context, in terms of the way in which we all necessarily also cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities" (52).

Apart from Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping, one can see Fatou engaging in an act of imagining the life of the others when she reflects about a Cambodian woman from the Embassy, the Chinese people in Africa, and so on. This act of imagination can be regarded as an act of solidarity and emancipation for migrant affective workers as Arjun Appadurai (2000) posits that amidst the disjunctive flows of globalisation, "one positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics of globalisation is the role of the imagination in social life" (6) as "it allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries" (6).

To conclude this article and the discussion about solidarity, it may also plausible to refer to Kwame Anthony Appiah's conclusion of the chapter entitled "Imaginary Strangers" in his prominent text, *Cosmopolitan: Ethics in a World of Strangers*:

The conclusion is obvious enough: the points of entry to cross-cultural conversations are things that are shared by those who are in the conversation. They do not need to be universal; all they need to be is what these particular people have in common. Once we have found enough we share, there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. That is one of the payoffs of cosmopolitan curiosity. We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. (97)

For migrant workers such as Fatou, their ability to cognitively map their relations to the global capitalist system may be haphazardly demonstrated, yet a sense of solidarity and collective subjectivities may still be possible to achieve. In an interestingly similar manner, the established bonding and mutual empathy among the three main female characters of *Model Citizens* also suggest the possibility in solidarity. One may conclude that, by referring to Appiah's quote above, universalism may not be the case as long as a particular group of people can communicate what is common among them. The future may lie in the common and empathy or, what I shall describe as an imagination about the life of the others. Ultimately, not only that those "alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting" will possibly be a light at the end of the tunnel leading to a true sense of solidarity and liberation for these affective workers, but through the ability to imagining the life of the others, a sense of empathy is also constructed and this will lead the global community toward mutual understandings and new insights on migration and migrant issues.

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