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Migration in the Contemporary Era of Globalization in Film: The Effect of Mobile and Variable Spaces on Migrants in the European Union

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Literatures in English

by

Shannon Kelly Falkner

Committee in charge:
Professor Rosemary George, Chair
Professor Fatima El-Tayeb
Professor Shelley Streeby

2009
The Thesis of Shannon Kelly Falkner is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego
2009
DEDICATION

In recognition of his encouragement and support; for the love and commitment that he has demonstrated throughout my graduate studies; for giving me the confidence to pursue an advanced degree; and for making countless personal sacrifices to help me work through my Master’s program, this thesis is dedicated to my husband, Daniel J. Falkner.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Migration in the Contemporary Era of Globalization in Film: The Effect of Mobile and Variable Spaces on Migrants in the European Union

by

Shannon Kelly Falkner

Master of Arts in Literatures in English

University of California, San Diego, 2009

Professor Rosemary George, Chair

Studying films that focus on migration to and within the European Union (EU) in our most recent era of globalization reveals a web of neocolonial relations that render geographical space both mobile and variable for migrant subjects and points to the problematics of disregarding spatial identities as significant determinants of migrants’ subject positions. This Thesis examines four films: Stephen Frears’ Dirty Pretty Things (2006) in comparison to Anthony Minghella’s Breaking and Entering (2008) and León de Aranoa’s Princesas (2005) in comparison to Icíar Bollaín’s Flores de Otro Mundo
(1999). I argue that a comparative analysis of these film pairs reveals that in order to effectively and productively theorize contemporary migrant subjects within the EU, we must attend to various subjects’ unique subject positions with regard to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status, as well as to the dynamics of the geopolitical relations between the countries of emigration and immigration.
Migration in the Contemporary Era of Globalization in Film: The Effect of Mobile and Variable Spaces on Migrants in the European Union

Why Study Film Now?

To examine films that focus on migration in the era of globalization is to experience the distinctly postmodern phenomenon of simultaneously examining theory and object, for the films themselves exist both as ideology and as commodity. As Jonathan Beller notes, “cinema is at once a factory for the production of representation and an economic form, that is, a site of economic production” (Beller 1). In this way, cinema is what Beller terms “money that thinks” as a result of the fact that it “fuses the protocols of representation and capitalist production” (Beller 3). Additionally, like the issues it addresses, this kind of cinema is truly a globalized process in the sense that these films are the epitome of the forces of global capital: actors and technicians are recruited from all over the world, and they come together at filming locations that can also span continents; they use equipment and technology that has been assembled in plants ranging from Mexico to China -- in a process that is likely to be funded by global media conglomerates (whose capital comes from all manner of global industry and investment). Film is truly a global medium, regardless of where a film is released, who finances it, or even who sees it. In this way, films that focus on migration in the era of globalization provide an ideal canvas on which to explore leading theories in growing academic disciplines such as migration studies, film criticism, and the economics of globalization because the very existence of these films – in their dual capacity as commodity and as
theoretical canvas -- is evidence of the ways in which these seemingly distinct academic areas of study are inextricably bound up together.

The films I will analyze each fit into a genre that scholars such as Rebecca Prime have termed “refugee films” (Prime 56). This genre is worthy of critical attention for the reason that, more often than not, the films within this genre -- such as the ones I will explore -- are not “purely” of any one traditional genre, but, instead, are “an interstitial mode of production, marked by hybridity and fluidity rather than an allegiance to generic or institutional boundaries” (Prime 56). In this way, the object (the film) mirrors its subject (the migrant). In other words, “[i]n embracing generic hybridity, these films become as institutionally displaced as the people they depict” (Prime 56). Again, the films function in dual capacities and call attention to the ways in which content and form are inextricable. Additionally, the hybridity of the films also effectively problematizes the notion of “identity” as pure or original, as it suggests that there is no source from which something or someone comes and, as a result, no potential for a simple return, an idea that reveals the fact there are no simple solutions when it comes to complex issues raised by migration in the era of globalization.

Finally, there is something unique about the visual experience that merits attention in light of new technologies that are part and parcel of what we mean when we say “globalization” today. First of all, in spite of feminist pleas to abandon vision as our primary mode of judgment and evaluation and its traditional depiction as “a much maligned sensory system in feminist discourse” (Haraway 677), as Donna Haraway notes, “[v]ision can be good for avoiding binary oppositions” (Haraway 677). By this statement, she means that although vision does not allows us to see the whole picture, so
to speak, it does allow us a kind of objectivity beyond what Haraway terms “the god-trick” or “the gaze from nowhere” (Haraway 677), which is essential if we are to get beyond the traditional postcolonial model of oppositional dichotomies -- center/periphery, local/global, national/cosmopolitan, native/foreign -- to a more nuanced understanding of the structure and organization of our world. To Haraway, “feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges” (Haraway 677), and I believe that by examining the ways in which knowledge is situated – via the camera’s eye -- in “refugee films,” a world of neocolonial relations becomes apparent. Film also serves as a particularly poignant reminder that our own vision is not without subjectivity. As Haraway notes, modern filmic technology “shatter[s] any idea of passive vision…[and] show[s] us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building in translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life” (Haraway 679).

The final duality revealed in the “refugee film” is the fact that it functions not only to mirror its subject, but it also functions to mirror its audience and call our attention to the ways in which we see, as well as to what those ways of seeing reveal.

Why Study the EU Now?

I have chosen to examine films that focus on migration to and within the European Union (EU) for several reasons. The EU, as the first politically powerful supranational organization of its kind, merits scholarly attention and sustained critique. As Fatima El-Tayeb notes, “it is this distinctive, paradigmatic European experience that in the eyes of many contributors to current discussions predestines the European Union for a key role in world politics” (El-Tayeb 654). As a major player on the world stage, this entity is certainly one to watch. However, the most pressing reason to pay
attention to the EU is that its ultimate purpose and function have yet to be determined. One of the most interesting and potentially perilous questions at stake in the EU’s identity formation is the following: will it/should it/does it function primarily as an economic entity, or are there/should there be/will there be cultural dimensions to this system as well? And, if so, what do/should/will those dimensions look like? As Fatima El-Tayeb notes, “the European Union appears as the first supranational system fit for the twenty-first century, meant to magnify the virtues and minimize the vices of the nation-states that built it” (El-Tayeb 649). Of course, the questions remain: what kinds of virtues and vices are at stake – economic, legal, cultural, historical? What is the role of each individual nation-state and how will those roles work in tandem with other EU member states and with other nations and states around the globe? And, of course, perhaps the biggest question of all: who participates in these debates and why? As a result of the fact that the EU has not yet solidified its identity, and yet it plays a major role in world politics, careful and critical analysis of its policies and practices is essential as it works to define itself by setting policies and establishing practices that will have a large and lasting effect on the rest of the world.

The films I examine reveal that, contrary to the hope that the EU will serve as a springboard to a “new” Europe, the very same “virtues and vices” that Europe displayed as a colonial power are clearly visible – and perhaps even more powerful -- in its new garb as the EU. This kind of neocolonial outlook drives any discussion or debate about what the EU is or what it should become, and the people who lose out, as always, are those who are not white Christian heterosexual Europeans. As El-Tayeb notes, “these debates [about what Europe is or will be] often devolve into an assessment of what, or
rather who, is certainly not European” (El-Tayeb 650). The films I have selected for analysis suggest that in spite of optimistic talk of globalization as the great equalizer (or even pessimistic talk of globalization as the great homogenizer), the forces of global capital are simply re-inscribing Europe’s colonial history in new and more exploitative ways, and these films offer evidence of this kind of neocolonial world order.

*A New Kind of Globalization? A Definition in Consequences*

While the term ‘globalization’ generally refers to “a late twentieth century condition of economic, social, and political interdependence across cultures, societies, nations, and regions precipitated by an unprecedented expansion of capitalism on a global scale” (“Globalization,” 120), the implications of the term are not so straight-forward. Critics of the term ‘globalization’ suggest, as Lisa Lowe notes, that “[the term] obscures a much longer history of global contacts and connections…[in which] Asian, Arab, and European civilizations mingled through trade, travel, and resettlement…[and] yet today the term ‘globalization’ is used to name a specific set of late twentieth-century transformations” that involve “Western European and North American dominance” and, thereby, suggest that this “relatively recent global interconnection” is a new phenomenon pioneered by western Europe and the United States, as opposed to a centuries old practice engineered and carried out by earlier eastern civilizations (“Globalization,” 120). In this way, the term is problematic in that in effacing historical systems of globalization, it centers Europe and the United States as the driving forces behind and primary actors in this process of transnational economic and cultural exchange.

While I recognize the histories that the term ‘globalization’ potentially effaces and the ways in which it falsely signals the end of the nation-state as a regulatory power,
I will still use the term to theorize the current economic and cultural exchanges occurring transnationally, but I will explain the way in which I intend it by focusing on what I see as its consequences. I do not see globalization as only “a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale,” or only “[as] a worldwide Americanization,” or only as “the destruction of local differences” (Jameson 57), though I believe that any of these outcomes is possible in certain contexts. I believe that Lisa Lowe and Saskia Sassen effectively express what I see as globalization’s most significant consequences. Lowe notes that “globalization both deepens the interconnection and widens the dissymmetries represented as ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ in an earlier ‘world system’ (Wallerstein 1976)” and facilitates “the rise of a new ‘global’ culture comprised of cross-border communities” (“Globalization,” 120), while Sassen theorizes that “new kinds of economic regions are emerging” (Appiah, xi), which leads to “the centrality of gender in shaping migration, the transnationalization of production, and the new dynamics of inequality” (Appiah xiv).

**Individualizing Analysis of Migrant Subjects**

I will comparatively analyze two different sets of films in order to explore the functions and effects of various spaces on migrant subjects and the ways in which migrant subjects code particular spaces differently. As Rosemary George notes, it is essential that in attempting to analyze migrants as subjects, we do not analyze “The Migrant” as a symbolic entity. Instead, we must be attentive to each migrant as an individual subject whose status as a migrant is also informed by race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and country of emigration, among other variables (“Rethinking the Migrant as Postmodern Symbol of Humanity,” 2009). I have chosen to examine the films in these pairs because I believe that, in order to effectively analyze
migrants’ subject positions within each film, it is necessary to consider the regions from which they emigrate in relation to the region to which they immigrate and the nature of the historical and contemporary relationship between these two areas. The two sets of films that I will analyze are Stephen Frears’ *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Anthony Mighella’s *Breaking and Entering* (2007) and Fernando León de Aranoa’s *Princesas* (2005) and Icíar Bollaín’s *Flores de Otro Mundo* (1999). The first pair of films focuses on female Muslims immigrating to London from countries seeking entry into the EU. The second pair of films focuses on female sex workers immigrating to Spain from the Caribbean. In each film, aspects of the subject’s identity – in addition to her migrant status – contribute to the ways in which space functions for her.

*Coded (Public and Private) Spaces and Body Politics: The Variability of Public and Private Spaces*

In the first chapter, I analyze Stephen Frears’ *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Anthony Minghella’s *Breaking and Entering* (2007) in order to demonstrate that the protection afforded by public or private space is not constant, but it is, instead, variable. In the context of migration as it relates to contemporary forms of globalization, it is necessary to reevaluate the relative safety found in public and in private spaces, as both forms of space have traditionally offered the potential for protection from persecution – either as a result of their capacity to promote visibility (public space) or to ensure invisibility (private space). The variability of public and private spaces is determined by the migrant subjects who inhabit them, and these migrants’ subject positions are always already overdetermined by their differing racial identities, sexualities, gender identities, class positions, and citizenship statuses. Space functions in variously liberatory and
repressive ways, depending on the already coded spaces a subject inhabits. In this way, space is not static, but, instead, it is variable.

As a result of these specificities, both forms of space function in differing ways to bring about the exploitation of migrant subjects, particularly when these spaces are affected by collusion between the forces of global capitalism and the powers of governance within nation-states. The films demonstrate the ways in which racialized and sexualized body politics, and the civilly dead migrant subjects who are victimized by them, function to code particular spaces differently, depending on the subject position of those who inhabit them. In this way, the nation-state engages in a kind of racialized and sexualized body politics, which brings about the civil deaths of migrants in the European Union, which then allows for these migrants’ exploitation at the hands of capitalist enterprises; this exploitation services both the nation-state and global capitalist enterprises, and thus reveals that, contrary to some accounts, these entities are actually working in collusion, and their relationship is not, in fact, one of antagonism. The multi-tiered system of rights and privileges that exists for citizens and migrants is apparent in an examination of the treatment of public and private spaces -- which function to call attention to the ways in which agency differs for various individuals, as a result of their different spatial positions.

The Mobility of the “First” and the “Third” Worlds

In chapter two, I analyze Fernando León de Aranoa’s Princesas (2005) and Icíar Bollaín’s Flores de Otro Mundo (1999) in order to demonstrate that, in the era of contemporary globalization, “First” and “Third” World spaces are not, as they have been traditionally defined, geographically situated, but they are actually mobile as a result of
neocolonial conceptions of “Third World” women and their bodies. In other words, it is not only the migrants’ physical bodies that migrate from the “Third World” to the “First World,” but the racialized space that Europeans attribute to the “Third World” also migrates as well and constructs migrants in terms that are reflective of this mobile geography. Migration, though perhaps physically accomplished, is never actually wholly achieved. In other words, space does not define subjects, but it is subjects who define space. In this way, space travels along with migrant subjects; or, alternately, migrant subjects never fully migrate at all.

Additionally, public and private spaces function in the films to reveal the ways in which, as Eithne Luibhéid claims, variables such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity “intersect with sexuality to produce complex possibilities of exclusion and admission” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal,” 295) as a result of the fact that “[t]hese hierarchies [are] inseparable from the logics of empire” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal,” 297). Additionally, the films’ depiction of public and private spaces also function to call attention to the fact that “[h]eteronormative married couples hold the equivalent of ‘most privileged immigrant status’ in the sense that their migration is most thoroughly facilitated by the state” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal,” 302) because “couple ties provide the mechanism through which the state and its assemblages attempt to transform legally admitted immigrants into ‘good’ citizens – while threatening a loss of legal status for those who fail to make that transformation” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal,” 290). Additionally, because women are traditionally depicted as bearers of culture and
tradition, the state and its residents experience a heightened form of anxiety in response to the increasing numbers of migrant women entering Europe, as there is a fear regarding the potential loss of European culture and heritage.
The Dynamics of Visibility Spaces: Public Invisibility as a Form of Agency and the Role of the Nation-State in Policing Migrant Bodies

In analyzing Stephen Frears’ *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Anthony Minghella’s *Breaking and Entering* (2007), I argue that the films demonstrate the existence of two hierarchical spatial planes located within the global city of London: one that is privileged and one that is marginalized and exploited. For subjects within both planes, agency is located in the ability to control space, though, within their unprivileged spatial plane, migrant subjects are simultaneously invisible and exposed, which complicates their capacity to control spaces in the films. I argue that it is not until migrant subjects mobilize their invisibility in efforts to move more freely through space that they can locate agency within their unique spatial positions. I also argue that the nation-state demonstrates considerable power through its ability to control spaces; a comparative analysis of the ways in which the nation-state polices the protagonists in each film reveals that the nation-state’s power over space ultimately exposes its complicity in migrants’ exploitation at the hands of global capitalism.


Frears’ *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) focuses on the lives of several undocumented immigrants living and working in London and chronicles the lengths to which they must go to survive in London and, eventually, to gain access to travel documents and citizenship identification. Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a doctor from Nigeria, fled his country after his wife is murdered by an autocratic dictator, and he now works as a bellhop at a ritzy London hotel by night and as a taxi driver by day. At the hotel, he meets
Senay (Audrey Tautou), who comes from Turkey in order to find more independence
(and perhaps to flee the conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK), and works as
a hotel maid, Juliette (Sophie Okonedo), a seemingly willing English prostitute, and Guo
Yi (Benedict Wong), a Chinese refugee who works as a porter in a hospital morgue.
Forced out of her job at the hotel by the immigration officials, Senay is forced to work in
a sweatshop making garments and to provide sexual favors to her boss in order to avoid
being reported as an “illegal.” Fed up with the humiliation and degradation of this work,
Senay gives in to a sleazy middleman named Juan (Sergi López) – nicknamed Sneaky by
the hotel employees -- who convinces illegal immigrants to sell their organs to wealthy
English citizens on the black market. Senay makes a deal, offering to sell her kidney for a
passport and travel expenses in order to get to New York. When he becomes aware of
Senay’s intentions, Okwe offers his services as a doctor to perform the operation, but,
unbeknownst to the middleman, Senay, Okwe, Juliette, and Guo Yi conspire to drug
Juan, take his kidney, sell it, and make off with the money and travel documents.

architect’s affair with a Bosnian woman and the ways in which her young son, Miro’s
(Rafi Gavron), illegal activities complicate both his affair and his marriage. Its narrative
attempts to convey a kind of humanistic narrative of multiculturalism and universality,
but is uneven in its presentation. When Will’s (Jude Law) architectural firm is
burglarized, he seeks out the thief only to find that he has been robbed by a teenage
Bosnian boy, Miro. In an attempt to gather more information about the boy, and to avoid
going home to his wife, Liv (Robin Wright Penn), and her mentally ill daughter, Bea
(Poppy Rogers), Will seeks out Amira, the boy’s mother (Juliette Binoche). Instead of
confronting her about her son’s crimes, he becomes involved in a sexual relationship with her and learns more about her life as a seamstress, working for nearly nothing, and her experiences in Bosnia, where she lost her husband and was rejected by his Serbian family as a result of her Muslim faith. Will becomes sympathetic to Amira’s plight as their affair intensifies and his marriage further deteriorates, and he decides not to reveal his initial motives in meeting her, telling his business partner, Sandy (Martin Freeman), that he never found the thief. Finally, the boy confesses his crime to his mother when he realizes that Will knows who he is, and she then blackmails Will with photos of their sexual relationship, threatening to reveal them to his wife if he presses charges against her son. In the end, the police catch the boy using DNA evidence found at the crime scene, and Will is forced to choose between saving his marriage and revealing his relationship with Amira in order to spare her son from incarceration. The film resolves itself in a fairy tale-like manner, in which Liv selflessly covers for her husband’s mistress in court so that Amira’s son will not face his sentence. Afterwards, just as in *Dirty Pretty Things*, the migrants, Amira and Miro, seemingly gladly leave England to return to their “homeland,” and Will and Liv remain in London and commit to working through their marital problems.

Frears and Minghella’s films explore issues of space and agency and their relation to migrant subjects, nation-states, and global capitalism on similar theoretical canvases: the protagonists of each film and their respective cultural and economic positions share striking similarities. Both Senay and Amira are female Muslim migrants¹ living and

¹ Refreshingly, their identities as Muslim women are not depicted in the stereotypical manner of the timid and subservient female character who finds freedom in Western culture. Instead, as a result of the more nuanced depictions, the audience can read the film not simply as a teleological march from “Eastern
working in London, who have escaped from a homeland in which they did not feel safe or free. For both women, London does not provide the safety or freedom for which they had hoped, and they are both forced to work in exploitative conditions within the garment industry to subsist in the city. Additionally, they are both forced to use their bodies as collateral for their escape from the abuses they encounter, as both women sell their bodies through their labor in London’s garment industry and through quid pro quo sexual arrangements to prevent their deportation; additionally, Senay almost sells her kidney in an attempt to gain money and travel documents. In these ways, the women are forced to commodify their bodies to escape exploitation by both government and capitalist forces.

Additionally, in both films, the nature of space and the question of who occupies what kinds of spaces are central concerns. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, the central trope is of visibility and invisibility, while in *Breaking and Entering*, the central trope is of constructed versus natural spaces. Both films, however, convey the idea that controlling space is a means through which subjects attempt to access agency and assert power.

*Spatial Dynamics in London: The Concept of Public Invisibility*

In order to understand the significance of the spatial dynamics at play in the London of these films, we must first understand the significance of London in the world economy. Contemporary migrations effectively call into question the parameters of the new forms of economic arrangements, state power, and cultural identity that are bound up in discourses of globalization, and the London depicted in these films works as an ideal canvas on which to explore the intersection of these factors as they relate to the city’s spatial dynamics in relation to the migrants depicted in these films. Saskia Sassen notes "backwardness" toward “Western enlightenment” and can, thus, appreciate the criticisms being drawn about the EU and its immigration policies.
the ways in which migrants figure into contemporary definitions of globalization by theorizing the concept of the “global city,” which she defines as “a complex duality: a spatially dispersed, yet globally integrated organization of economic activity…[that] has created a new strategic role for major cities” (“The Global City” 3). As a result of this “combination of spatial dispersal and global integration” (“The Global City” 3), the rise of global cities produces “a continuing need for low-wage industrial services” that are often filled by migrants who move to seek employment in the “sweatshops and industrial homework [that] proliferate” ” (“The Global City” 9) in cities like “New York, London, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and Paris” (“The Global City” 4). As a result, Sassen claims that “[i]mmigration is one major process through which a new transnational political economy is being constituted” (“Globalization and Its Discontents” xxi), and thus, it deserves critical attention. Sassen advises us to analyze the contemporary relationship between economics and migration not in national/global terms, but in the context of “the denationalizing of urban space” (“Globalization and Its Discontents” xx).

Dirty Pretty Things depicts a globalized London, a distinctly urban space that is multiracial and multicultural as a result of what Saskia Sassen terms “the transnationalization of labor” (“Globalization and Its Discontents” xxx). This depiction illustrates the ways in two distinct spatial planes exist in what Sassen terms the “global city.” The first plane is the visible plane – the one that is inhabited by native Europeans of a privileged class position; the second plane exists beneath this visible plane, which obscures it from view, making it invisible, and it is inhabited by migrants and other “outsiders” who are unprivileged as a result of their class status, gender, sexuality, race, or ethnicity. The film explores this invisible plane through a depiction of various invisible
spaces that exist within it to suggest that this plane is particularly dangerous for migrant subjects because, although it is invisible, it does not offer the kinds of protections traditionally associated with privacy.

Historically, the practice of being “in the closet” – concealed within a private space – has offered gay and lesbian subjects’ protection from persecution, discrimination, and harassment as a result of their concealment. In this way, the capacity to ensure invisibility makes private spaces ideal protective spaces for queer subjects; though, of course, this invisibility has also caused many queer subjects to feel voiceless. As a result, it is not only within the confines of private spaces that these subjects have found protection. For many western gay and lesbian subjects, “cultural visibility can prepare the ground for gay civil rights protection” (Hennessey 111). For this reason, many queer activist groups have hailed public spaces as bastions of safety as a result of their capacity to promote visibility and to call attention to -- and, thus, to prevent -- persecution, discrimination, and harassment. For these particular subjects, invisibility is not an ideal form of protection because it also serves to efface the queer subjects enveloped in it. Migrant subjects must seek refuge and protection from this exploitation, and both public and private spaces seem to possess the capacity to offer this sense of safety, since both public and private spaces have traditionally offered the potential for protection from persecution. However, the most vulnerable spatial position is one that combines the exposed position of the public space with the repression inherent in private spaces, and this kind of “public invisibility” is the very space within which migrants subjects exist in the film.
Similarly, Phil Hubbard argues, in his article titled “Sex Zones: Intimacy, Citizenship and Public Space” (2001), that, for queer subjects, visibility within public spaces does not necessarily precipitate the acquisition of rights nor is public space always “a democratic space where marginalized groups can seek to oppose oppressive aspects of heteronormativity” (Hubbard 63), and, in this way, he also claims that private spaces can function as spaces of protection and agency. Additionally, Hubbard argues that “space…does not simply exist as a ‘given’ but affects (and is affected by) things which are always becoming,” meaning that “space is not just a passive backdrop to human behavior and social action, but is constantly produced and remade within complex relations of culture, power and difference” (Hubbard 51). All of the spaces that the migrant characters inhabit in the film are public – even in the case of those spaces that seemingly offer a sense of seclusion – which suggests that, although these migrants may exist in the invisible plane of London, they are, ironically, unable to truly access any kind of privacy, a term that denotes the ability to elide surveillance. One such space that exemplifies the economic, social, and political disparities between “the upper circuit of professionals” and the “lower circuit of global capital” (“Cities in a World Economy” 185) is the Baltic Hotel.

The hotel stands as a symbol of the ways in which migrants are not permitted the luxury of privacy, as a result of their class positions and racial identities, and, instead, they are forced to ensure the privacy of those who inhabit the privileged, visible plane – the hotel guests. The value of privacy is that it offers a protective space within which to act as one wishes, even if that means transgressing social or cultural norms. Because these norms are ultimately unachievable for everyone (Butler 231), access to private
space is a major advantage, as it allows for an assurance against persecution for one’s violations. Señor Juan tells Okwe, “They [the hotel guests] come to the hotel at night to do dirty things. In the morning, it is our job to make things look pretty again.” Juan’s comments reveal that hotel guests are permitted to violate social and sexual norms precisely as a result of the fact that these violations occur in private. On the other hand, the employees of the hotel, almost all of whom are depicted as being from outside of Europe, are expected to cover over these transgressions, although they are routinely denied the kinds of protections that the privacy of the hotel offers to its privileged guests. In this way, Sarah Gibson claims that the hotel functions “as a metonym for the British nation [since] the hotel becomes a space to negotiate who is or is not welcomed into Britain” (693). However, I argue that the hotel also functions to suggest that migrants are welcomed into Britain, as a result of the fact that they perform certain kinds of necessary yet undesirable labor, but they are only welcomed into specific spaces.

Senay’s apartment – a seemingly private space – is also distinctly depicted as actually quite highly visible. Her apartment is always subject to raids and searches by the immigration authorities, and the camera work used to film the apartment gives the space the distinct feeling of being part of a public space. As Sarah Gibson notes, “While Thatcher defined Britishness against the racialized body of the immigrant in Britain, today the threatening stranger ‘has simply taken another form. The asylum seeker is now the luminous apparition at the end of the bed’” as a result of the fact that “the figure of the asylum seeker is frequently imagined as a parasite upon the host nation and its welfare state” (697). Early in the film, the camera follows Senay and Okwe as they engage in a highly choreographed key exchange, as Senay rents out her couch to Okwe in
violation of the terms of her status as an applicant for asylum, which forbids her from
earning money by charging rent. The very essence of a private space is the ability to
invite into it and exclude from it those whom one chooses. Senay’s apartment is not a
private space because the state bars her from possessing authority within it; she is not
able to invite Okwe in, and she is also not able to exclude the immigration authorities
who come at random to ensure that she follows the terms of her asylum application.
Considering Gibson’s comments, asylum seekers like Senay will never be able to exclude
others from space in Britain, as a result of their subject positions as seeming “parasites;”
only hosts can exclude, whereas parasites are imagined to need their host for survival,
and, thus, they cannot exclude it. Additionally, the host is constantly watching for
parasites, as the state’s police are constantly watching Senay.

The camera work, in particular, also suggests the public nature of the space of
Senay’s apartment and the ways in which those characters who enter it are watched and
policied. Each time that we see Senay or Okwe enter the space of her apartment, the
camera follows them from behind in a medium shot as they weave through the crowded
market outside of the apartment building. The camera angle results in the feeling that
viewers are attempting to follow a person through a crowded space and that that person
could disappear at any moment. In this way, the camera work conveys the sense of the
migrants’ simultaneous publicity and invisibility. Additionally, in order to get to the
apartment, Senay and Okwe must pass through a grocery store as a result of the fact that
the apartment is located above it. Because they must cut through the grocery store, the
characters’ movements and whereabouts are always public knowledge; they cannot come and go unperceived by others.

Additionally, Senay and Okwe’s lack of intimacy also reveals the ways in which migrants are excluded from accessing truly private spaces. Although a romantic relationship develops between Senay and Okwe, these characters never experience physical intimacy, which reveals the lack of the privacy for them in the spaces of London. As I have stated, Senay’s apartment does not provide the possibility for intimacy, as it is constantly policed. The closest that these characters come to the experience of physical intimacy is within two very public spaces: a cemetery and an airport. Both scenes contain rare establishing shots, which situates the audience so that viewers clearly see the entirety of the space that the characters inhabit, which suggests the spaces’ significance. Both spaces function as representative depictions of the possibilities open to migrants: accept a kind of social death, which entails a lack of intimacy, or leave, which also entails the severing of intimate ties. In both spaces, intimacy is ultimately foreclosed as a result of the public exposure that these public spaces force upon Senay and Okwe.

It is not only the hotel workers who are forced to remain in the contradictory position of being publically invisible. Guo Yi’s position is particularly interesting as it reveals the ways in which invisibility and privacy are not at all the same. While few would dispute that the film champions what Emily Davis terms “agency within invisibility” (57), this is not to say that the characters have access to private spaces, since there is no space in the film in which these characters can truly exclude others, as
Hubbard’s definition of privacy denotes (Hubbard 66). Guo Yi’s work means that he is relegated to the basement morgue of a hospital, a space that is the epitome of what Joan Dayan terms “living death.” Joan Dayan explains the concept of “living death” as being a state of “life in death” that prisoners experience as a result of being “stripped of community, deprived of communication, and shorn of humanity” (Dayan 62). She also notes that the concept of “living death” is inextricably bound up in notions of race, stating that “the construction of race (and racial stigmatization) served as the ideological fulcrum that allows a penal society to produce a class of citizens who are dead in life” (Dayan 62). Guo Yi has been granted asylum by the British government, but his spatial position in the film suggests that this kind of legal recognition is not synonymous with social acceptance within the community. Guo Yi is legally recognized, which means that he is alive as a legal person but that, as a social person, he is cut off from the larger community. In other words, Guo Yi is invisible, but he remains within a public space – the space of the hospital – meaning that he cannot set the terms of his surveillance, which is a key component inherent in the notion of privacy.

The film’s exploration of these publically invisible spaces illustrates the centrality of space as it relates to agency for migrant subjects. I argue that controlling space means possessing the capacity to access surveillance -- the capability to monitor spaces -- and the capacity to transform spaces -- the ability to fundamentally alter the ways in which space is used. It is through controlling space that characters locate agency and access power, and, while those characters that inhabit the visible plane, such as Señor Juan, watch and transform space by relying on their privileged positions within the visible
plane of London, the migrant subjects in the film control space by mobilizing their
invisibility in the service of resistance.

Throughout most of the film, we can see that it is Señor Juan who controls the
various spaces of the film, at least those that involve the hotel, and he relies on his
position of authority in order to maintain this control. Throughout the film, Juan is filmed
from a low angle, which causes the audience to feel beneath him, as though Juan can and
does see everything because his position – both socially in the diegesis of the film and
spatially in terms of filmic techniques– is above others’ positions. This power – this
ability to see all -- enables Juan to control the spaces of the hotel. It is Juan who
determines in what ways the various rooms of the hotel will function, and it is Juan who
knows who is where and when each character is in particular spaces; Juan decides if a
room becomes a shelter for a maid without a place to stay, or if it becomes an operating
room, or if it becomes a space for guests, or if it is left vacant. As the doorman tells
Okwe, “Sneaky knows everything [that goes on in the hotel].” In this way, Juan’s power
to control is derived through surveillance, the ability to know where each inhabitant is,
spatially, within the hotel. Additionally, his power also comes from his ability to
transform space so that it functions in a different way.

One scene in particular demonstrates the potential of Juan’s power to control
space. After Juan propositions Okwe to help him to harvest kidneys for sale on the black
market and Okwe refuses, Okwe, working the night shift that he always does, goes into
the surveillance room to insert the surveillance tape that records the maids as they enter
for their morning shift. When he pulls out the new tape, however, there is an envelope
from Juan, addressed to Okwe, attached to the tape. Inside the envelope is a picture of a
young girl who needs a kidney transplant. A moment after Okwe opens the envelope, the telephone rings, and it is Señor Juan, who says, “That’s the thing about being on time. I always know where you are.” Juan’s note and his call are intended to intimidate Okwe – to show Okwe that he cannot hide. In this way, Juan attempts to maintain control of space by demonstrating that all is visible to him, as a result of his position “on high” and in command.

Juan’s quote also demonstrates the way in which Juan is always in control of all spaces and that he can actually transform particular spaces so that they take on new functions. Though Okwe may think that he is the one watching others, as he is the one inserting the surveillance tape, he is actually the one being watched. In this way, Juan demonstrates his ability to transform the surveillance room from a place in which Okwe watches others into a place in which Okwe, himself, is being watched.

Additionally, this scene is one of many in which Okwe is depicted as being watched. Throughout the film, Okwe is filmed using close-ups or medium range shots, and he is almost always filmed using a high angle. The use of close-ups and medium range shots leaves the impression that the viewer is following Okwe, watching him closely, since the camera is always right behind him, moving through space exactly as he does, at close range. The high angle depicts Okwe as being below the viewer, as though he lacks power and authority, and as though the viewer can always see him, as a result of the viewer’s higher spatial position.

Okwe’s initial attempts to access power are also attempts to control space by monitoring it, though his lowly social position in the hotel and his lowly spatial position conveyed through camera angles make this control impossible. After Okwe finds a
human heart in the toilet of a hotel room, he begins asking questions. First, he asks Guo
Yi if he has any idea how the heart might have ended up in the toilet. Guo Yi responds,
“After living here for eleven years, I know not to ask questions, and I’m a certified
refugee. You’re an illegal Okwe. You have nothing. You are nothing.” Guo Yi’s
comments reveal that asking questions is a privilege only for those people who possess
power through having a legal status and that, as an “illegal,” Okwe is not one who can
ask questions. In other words, Okwe’s social position precludes him for accessing
information, from being able to monitor space, and so he must relinquish control of the
space of the hotel room as a result.

If Okwe cannot monitor space, he also cannot possibly transform it, as the ability
to monitor space is a prerequisite to the ability to transform it. In the next scene, in an
attempt to find out how the heart might have come to be within the spaces of the hotel,
Okwe asks Ivan, the doorman (Zlatko Buric), if anyone has come to the hotel but not left
it. Ivan’s response is significant; he says, “Everyone leaves. If you want to stay, don’t
concern yourself with who comes and who goes.” Again, Okwe is told that he is not
entitled to ask questions in an attempt to monitor the hotel. In this way, his social position
prevents him from acquiring power through monitoring space.²

It is through these experiences that Okwe learns that space functions differently
for him than it does for Señor Juan. Señor Juan accesses power in the hotel through his
ability to see all of the spaces of the hotel. In fact, he tells Okwe, “In the end, I find out

² Other parts of the film also illustrate Okwe’s attempts to monitor the space of the hotel. He attempts to
prevent the hotel lobby from becoming a space of imprisonment for Senay when he ensures that Ivan
prevents her from entering the hotel while the immigration officials wait in the lobby for her. He also
attempts to prevent the hotel rooms from becoming scenes of exploitation by checking in on the fifth floor
rooms to be sure that no one is being operated on within them.
everything about everyone in this place.” Okwe recognizes that if he wants to control space, if he wants to monitor space, he must not attempt to raise his profile; instead, he must actually try to reduce his profile. In other words, until this point, Okwe has been attempting to monitor space in the same way that he knows that Juan monitors space – through power gained from authority. Now, Okwe recognizes that his power will not come through authority but through his very lack of authority; instead of attempting to become more visible, he uses his lowly position – his invisibility -- to monitor space via various transgressions into spaces from which he has previously been excluded.

Okwe utilizes his invisibility to transgress and to control space in several key scenes. Okwe tells Juan that he has changed his mind and that he will agree to operate on Senay to remove her kidney in exchange for money and passports for them both; however, he has a different plan. First, Okwe and Guo Yi steal operating tools and medication from the hospital in which Guo Yi works, and they rely on their invisibility to do so. They need not break in to the hospital to gain access to these items; they simply don the uniform of the hospital cleaning crews, and then they are able to move freely throughout the hospital without arousing any suspicion, precisely because, as cleaners, they are entirely beneath the doctors’ radars. Importantly, the audience is not made aware of the fact that Okwe plans to drug Juan and take his kidney in place of Senay’s. We are not privy to Okwe’s plan, and the camera angles in the hospital scene mirror this change. Now, the camera films him almost entirely from straight on angles, as opposed to using a high angle from the back. The camera angle suggests that, as the audience, we are no longer secretly following Okwe; it is as though he has elided our “tail,” and he is now
aware that we are watching him, but he is allowing us to do so, placing him in control of
this scene.

The hospital scene in which Okwe and Guo Yi steal surgical equipment and
medication reveals another reality of space: controlling space is dependent on one’s
ability to move through it without obstruction, to transgress into spaces without being
sanctioned or evicted. Interestingly, both Okwe and Guo Yi are employed as “porters” –
Guo Yi is the porter at the hospital crematorium, and Okwe is the night porter in the
hotel. Both of their jobs involve moving unpleasant things through space so that others
are not inconvenienced or disturbed. Guo Yi is responsible for disposing of patients’
remains in the hospital, and Okwe is responsible for unclogging toilets and generally
removing messes from the rooms of the hotel. Ironically, these two migrants -- whose
jobs are entirely devoted to the fluid movement and removal of things – are not
permitted, themselves, to move freely through space and are always under the threat of
removal from the space of London. Okwe, as an undocumented migrant, is under the
threat of legal “eviction” from the EU; Guo Yi, as a certified refugee, has been legally
accepted by the EU, but he has effectively been evicted from the social spaces of London
and relegated to a spatial position in the basement of the hospital, where he interacts only
with human corpses.

In the end of the film, however, both characters insist on occupying a space within
London, and they take actions to control space so as to be able to actively inhabit it. We
can observe the ways in which control of the hotel’s spaces has changed hands in a scene
toward the end of the film. As Juan is leaving the hotel after Okwe refuses, again, to
participate in his kidney-selling enterprise, Okwe jumps out from behind a wall and
blocks Juan’s exit. The camera is situated within Juan’s car so that the audience is equally surprised by Okwe’s appearance. Okwe physically blocks Juan’s exit in order to tell Juan that he will agree to operate on Senay. Earlier in the film, as Okwe loaded the new surveillance tape, it was Señor Juan who surprised Okwe with a note and phone call, an indication that Juan was firmly in control of the spaces within the hotel. Now, it is Okwe who surprises Juan, indicating that Okwe is no longer visible to Juan, or the viewer, at all times. In this way, Okwe has capitalized on his invisibility in order to monitor the spaces within the hotel.

In the final scenes of the film, we can observe that, in addition to Okwe’s new powers of surveillance, he also uses these powers to actually transform various spaces within the hotel into the spaces of a hospital. Just as, previously, Juan was in control of these spaces as a result of his ability to transform them, Okwe is now in control of the entire hotel, as he mobilizes the whole hotel into a hospital space: he transforms the hotel kitchen into a space in which to boil his surgical instruments, he transforms the laundry room into a space in which to wash and rewash the sheets he will use during the surgery, he transforms the street outside the front door of the hotel into a space in which an emergency vehicle, driven by Guo Yi, parks and waits. Finally, we see the hotel room in which he will operate covered, entirely, in sheets so that it no longer even resembles a hotel room; the room could be anywhere and anything, and it is entirely Okwe’s prerogative to determine what this space will be. Of course, he decides that it will function as an operating room, and he decides that it will be Señor Juan who is the patient. In this way, Okwe controls the space completely, as he is able to completely transform it into a useful space that serves his own purposes.
Additionally, Guo Yi also controls space in this final scene through a form of transgression, which he has not previously attempted. Guo Yi has always abided by the laws set forth by the EU in terms of his right to access space. He applied for asylum, was granted it, and has since inhabited the invisible space of the hospital basement where he has remained out of the public view and out of the social spaces of London. In this final scene, Guo Yi serves as Okwe’s “getaway driver,” and so he waits, with a car from Okwe’s cab company, outside of the hotel. When Ivan tells him that he must move the car and that he cannot park outside of the hotel’s main entrance, he pays Ivan to allow him to stay. In this way, the film is careful not to efface the role of capital in controlling space. Finally, after the surgery, Guo Yi drives Senay and Okwe to the airport to make their escape under their new identities as European citizens. As Guo Yi drives, he giddily comments that he does not possess a driver’s license. Through his usurpation of the road, a very public form of space, Guo Yi, too, asserts himself by transgressing into a forbidden space in London. The very act of driving suggests that he is propelling himself forward in space and that he is very much in control of that forward propulsion.

Minghella’s *Breaking and Entering* also depicts the ways in which privileged subjects access agency through privacy, which provides protection, while migrant subjects exist as publically invisible and, thus, are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The film draws a comparison between Will’s family life and Amira’s, and this comparison exposes the same two planes that *Dirty Pretty Things* does: that of privileged Europeans and that of marginalized migrants. It is within their two homes – Will’s modern, spacious house in London’s suburbs and Amira’s tiny urban apartment in King’s Cross – that much of the diegesis of the film unfolds.
The contrast between these spaces is starkly representative of the general plane of privilege that each character inhabits. Amira’s apartment is cluttered with both personal items and work items, as she works as a seamstress from within the space of her home. Will’s home, on the other hand, is purely a personal space; viewers never see him working within the space of his home. It is precisely as a result of the fact that Amira must work out of her home that she is simultaneously invisible and vulnerable. She must allow clients to enter the space of her home in order to tailor their clothes, which places her in a very precarious position, as her invisibility within the home would preclude anyone from being alerted if she encountered danger there. In Will’s workplace, when danger enters, an alarm sounds, though no one is actually ever even there during the burglaries, since, for the privileged classes, work and home are located in separate spaces. In this way, because Will exists as a part of the privileged plane, he is protected through his access to real privacy.

In addition to presenting an exploration of the function of invisibility, the focus in this film is also on the contrast between constructed versus natural spaces. The film presents Will as being a kind of benevolent colonizer of “The White Man’s Burden” mold, as he attempts to improve the lives of migrant subjects, but, in attempting to improve these lives, he unconsciously reveals his own cultural blinders and his sense of cultural superiority. In the film, the city of London has contracted Will and his business partner, Sandy, to develop King’s Cross, a poor section of London inhabited primarily by migrants. Will, as an architect, seeks constantly, throughout the film, to control various spaces – particularly those inhabited by migrant subjects – in order to tame them and recreate them in the image of his own cultural ideals. However, the film reveals the ways
in which, although he believes his development project to be a kind of public service, he claims a different kind of space for himself than he allots to the residents of his building project, which reveals that he sees the residents of King’s Cross as fundamentally different from himself.

The scene in which viewers watch Will’s digital project presentation reveals the ways in which those people who inhabit the privileged plane within London assert their cultural dominance by watching and transforming space. In the presentation, Will asserts that “an urban landscape is a built landscape” and speaks out against what he calls “society’s phony love affair with nature” and “the mistaking of grass for nature, of green for nature.” However, in the final scenes of the film, viewers finally see Will’s own property in its entirety, through a long shot frame, and it contains a backyard space that includes a pond, a garden, and trees. In short, it is a natural space – or, more accurately, it is a constructed space designed to appear to be natural. In his King’s Cross design, however, he specifically refuses to “decorate it with flowers,” and, instead, he plans to make it a “built” landscape. In the project presentation, he states, “Our job is to transform the landscape…because how we feel about ourselves, how we behave, is directly affected by the space around us.” This statement confirms that while he may believe that his development project is a benevolent contribution to the King’s Cross community, he believes that the residents of this neighborhood are fundamentally different from him, as he builds them a different sort of landscape than he builds for his own family. This difference between the space he constructs for himself and for his family and the space that he plans to construct mainly for poor people of color reveals that he believes that only certain people – those who are wealthy and European -- are entitled to live in
seemingly natural spaces, while others – those who are poor or from a different part of the world – do not deserve to live in the midst of nature. In this way, Will’s own cultural arrogance is revealed.

Will’s obsession with built, urban space reveals that he perceives the residents of King’s Cross as threatening, no doubt as a result of their class statuses, racial identities, ethnic identities, and sexualities, and, as a result, he views the residents as being in need of taming, in much the same way that wild animals must be tamed in order to prevent them from inflicting harm. The film draws an extended comparison between the way that Will feels about a fox that lives in his garden and the way that he feels about the residents of King’s Cross. The fox is clearly out of its natural habitat, which the audience can see in a long shot of the fox darting through an urban street, in stark contrast to the neon lights of the city which comprise the background in this shot. An implicit symbolism is at work, suggesting that the fox, for Will, is representative of the people of King’s Cross who are primarily migrants and, thus, somehow out of place in London. In the same way that Will finds the fox in his garden a constant nuisance throughout the film, he also sees the residence of King’s Cross in the same way, as he attempts to contain them much like he attempts to protect his garden from the fox’s entrance; Will notes in his project presentation that he plans to construct a canal through the center of King’s Cross and “use it like calligraphy, like ink, to write around the development.” At this point, the camera shoots Will’s digital presentation, and we can see that the development is really a series of small and isolated islands, separated by the canal. In the same way that Will attempts to fence out the fox from his garden at home, he also attempts to isolate and fence in the residents of King’s Cross through his project.
However, ultimately, the film suggests that controlling space is an illusory and impossible task. After Will’s office, which he has set up in the center of King’s Cross, is robbed, he sits in his car in the parking lot of the office building in order to watch the building for suspicious activity. A prostitute (Romi Aboulafia), often sits with him as he watches, and their relationship also reveals the ways in which Will perceives the residents of King’s Cross. He claims, at various points throughout the film, to be working for the residents of King’s Cross, but his behavior toward Orit, the prostitute, reveals that he actually sees them as inferior and indebted to him for his benevolence. Although he eventually allows Orit to sit in his car to keep warm, he treats her as an inferior rather than as an equal. After his wife complains that he smells of perfume, he tells Orit to start wearing his wife’s perfume and presents it to her, seemingly as a gift. Orit is immediately insulted by this gesture in which he basically tells her that her smell is offensive, perhaps the oldest of colonial stereotypes intended to convey the “dirtiness” of the “natives.” In this scene, as in his building project in King’s Cross, Will offers what he calls a gift, but he is motivated not out of the selflessness that is bound up in the notion of gift-giving but, instead, out of self-gain; he does not want to cause problems with his wife – he wants to protect his family. This sort of protection is the very motivation behind his entire King’s Cross project.

Orit’s response to Will’s King’s Cross project is significant in that it is her response that directly connects Will’s building project and his quest to rid himself of the fox in his garden to suggest that both endeavors are meant to repress and to tame what is, to him, wild and – therefore -- dangerous. Orit comments that Will seeks to control his environment, and she states that the fox is “the one wild thing in [his] life and it makes
[him] crazy.” When Will denies that the fox bothers him, Orit points to the King’s Cross development and says, “Go ahead and clean it up because we will move to another alley, and we will take the foxes with us!” In her comments, Orit attempts to explain to Will that he cannot, ultimately, control space in the way that he plans to do; her comments reveal the impossibility to controlling living beings by controlling space, as living beings can always move. In this way, the film suggests that power comes not from fixing space but from possessing the capacity to move freely through it.

The scene in which Will and Bea encounter Miro and Amira outside of Bea’s gymnastics complex illustrates the power inherent in being able to traverse space, and it reveals the ways in which migrants are forced to inhabit public spaces, making traversing them all the more difficult to accomplish. In this way, the scene reveals that, just as Dirty Pretty Things comments on the ways in which migrants can be invisible at the same time that they also lack privacy, Breaking and Entering makes this same claim. Throughout the film, Bea’s childhood is juxtaposed to Miro’s in order to portray their stark differences as a result of their class positions. Although the narrative of the film attempts to portray both of their lives as challenging in the sense that they both must overcome the problems inherent within their identities – Miro struggles to deal with losing his father in Sarajevo and Bea struggles with Autism – the cinematography also suggests that Bea and Miro inhabit unequally privileged subject positions, though they work through their stress in the same way: through gymnastics.

The scene opens with an establishing shot within Bea’s gymnastics gym, and the camera films Bea from a straight on angle in a long shot in which viewers see her tumble through the space of the gym’s floor. She moves fluidly and completes complicated
gymnastic feats, which gives her a sense of excitement and accomplishment. Within the long shot, viewers can observe the expensive athletic gear and the expert help in the background – balance beams, mats, springboards, and other gymnastics equipment, as well as trainers and spotters who assist the girls are all visible, which is in stark contrast to the scene immediately outside the sports complex, where the camera cuts to a shot of Miro and other young boys using the bike racks and children’s playground equipment to practice gymnastic feats. While Miro, too, moves fluidly through space, he must transform that space so that it fits his needs, whereas, for Bea, as a result of her class privilege, space is constructed around her needs. The cuts between scenes emphasize the division between these two spaces – the privileged private space and the public space that the underclass must inhabit.

Importantly, though, the ways in which Amira and Miro transform space in order to combat their own vulnerability and invisibility reveals that they are not entirely without agency. Miro utilizes invisibility as a means by which to do just what Emily Davis claims that Senay does in Dirty Pretty Things, which is to “take[e] up the most defiant position possible within the commodity system of globalization” (Davis 56). Miro, like Okwe, Senay, Juliette, and Guo Yi in Dirty Pretty Things, capitalizes on his own invisibility to subvert the capitalist system that seeks to “pre[y] on the bodies of poor people, particularly people of color from the Third World who staff the factories owned by Europe and the US at home and perform the low-paying service jobs in the West as immigrants and refugees” (Davis 55). Miro, along with his cousin, learn to perform impressive gymnastic feats that allow them to run along, climb up, and jump between tall buildings and other urban structures, so high above other peoples’ heads that no one
thinks to look up and see them. They use these urban gymnastics to break into Will’s office and steal electronics and other technological commodities to sell on the black market. The fact that they are able to remain invisible, as a result of their height and fantastic acrobatic feats, confounds the police and the business people whom they rob; these people do not imagine that anyone could break into buildings in the ways that the boys do, and so they look to place blame elsewhere. In other words, as Davis claims, “[migrants’] very invisibility poses possibilities for resistance” (Davis 57), as they are able to take back the commodities that were likely produced, in large part, through the labor of other migrants. In this way, Miro and his cousin transform public space into a space of invisibility and, thus, it becomes a means by which to demonstrate subversion and agency.

Additionally, through his ability to move expertly and easily through urban space, Miro is able to watch others, and, in watching, there is power. Miro uses his urban gymnastics skills to leap from building to building in order to get onto the roof of Will’s office, from which vantage point he looks down, as does the camera, on Will and Sandy’s party in honor of their firm’s grand opening. From this privileged space, which exists on a higher spatial plane than even those privileged characters, Miro observes Will and Sandy’s daily routines in order to discover their cleaners’ alarm code, which he then uses to steal thousands of dollars in technology from their office space. In this way, Miro’s ability to watch those who exist as part of the upper plane works as a kind of reversal of the traditional colonial ethnographic gaze, as it allows him a privileged kind of access to spaces, which he uses to gather information to exploit those people whom he observes.
There also exists a kind of tension in the film between two potential spatial positions that Miro could inhabit: the space on the roof, looking in on the office in order to steal from it in the present, and the space within the office as an intern, looking through it in order to improve his class position in the future. This tension reveals the ways in which the position within the office is already foreclosed as a result of his ethnic identity and class position. When Miro is inside the office space during the burglary, he stops at one of the desks in order to flip through some of the architectural books. Then, in addition to the laptops and desktop computers that he steals, he also steals the scale figurines from Will’s model of his King’s Cross project and then uses them on his school project at home. Clearly, Miro is interested in the work that Will does. Later in the film, once Will begins seeing Amira, he leaves his card for Miro and suggests that Miro come by his office, since, apparently, Miro has an interest in architecture. Of course, the possibility of an internship never becomes a reality because of Miro’s involvement in thefts from Will’s office.

However, the film illustrates that even if Miro had not stolen from Will and Sandy’s office, he would still likely not be welcome within the space of their office. Once the police discover that the thieves used the cleaners’ code to enter the office, Will’s employees begin making disparaging, racist remarks about the cleaners, both of whom are from outside of Europe; one employee says, “They’re cleaners, and they’re not clean,” while another complains that their children accompany them to work and their boyfriends stop by the office. Will responds by noting that the two employees raising complaints have both invited their own boyfriends to the office on numerous occasions and suggests that it is unfair that there seems to be a double standard when he asks,
“Where do the rules say that we can have boyfriends but the cleaners can’t?” This kind of two-tiered system of rights and privileges is simply another way of theorizing space – one class of people exists within the upper sphere and has access to opportunities, while another class of people exists below those opportunities. In light of the employees conversation with Will, in which they reveal their distrust of and disgust with those who they identify as “Others” suggests that there never really existed the potential for Miro to inhabit the inside space of the office. Instead, he is doomed to be on the outside, though he ensures that his position outside is one of invisibility and power and not one of invisibility and vulnerability.

Similarly, Amira also demonstrates the ability to control space, which suggests that she, too, possesses a form of agency and power within the social and spatial context of the film. The most intimate of spaces in the film is probably the bed in which Amira and Will first engage in a sexual relationship. The bed, for Amira, is initially a space of vulnerability. In this scene, the camera films her using a long shot, which reveals her entire body, as she nervously removes her clothes in front of Will. Then, the camera focuses its long shot entirely on Amira as she stands before Will in only her bra and underwear, emphasizing her exposure and defenselessness. She even apologizes for her appearance and her nervous behavior, again, suggesting that the bed is a space of discomfort at the same time that it is a space of intimacy for her. After she engages in

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3 This idea of a two-tiered system of rights and privileges is later echoed when Bruno suggests to Sandy that everyone breaks the law, but some people can afford good lawyers to help them out of their legal issues. Bruno suggests that there is “one law for us, one for them.”

4 Interestingly, Amira engages in this relationship in her friend’s apartment instead of in her own. While it is likely that she planned to ask the friend to take pictures of her with Will and, thus, the friend’s apartment was a logical choice, it is also possible that her decision was also in an effort not to transform her own apartment into a space of intimacy, which may also reveal another sort of agency. In spite of the fact that Amira must allow customers into her apartment for work, she draws a line in terms of the extent to which her apartment becomes an intimate space.
intercourse with Will, and he falls asleep, she calls her friend to take photos of her, naked, laying in the bed with Will, which she plans to use for blackmail if Will threatens to report Miro to the police for stealing. It is at this point that the audience realized that her affair with Will is not entirely about her passion for him, though it certainly is in part, but that it is also a strategic and protective action. By taking photographs of Will, by observing him while he is unaware that he is under surveillance, Amira effectively transforms the space of the bed from a space of intimacy in which she is vulnerable and into a threatening space in which it is Will who is defenseless in it.

*Policing Migrant Bodies: The Nation-State’s Control of Space*

In addition to focusing on specific migrant characters and their attempts to control space, the films also reveal the ways in which the nation-state plays a role in controlling space, which functions, ultimately, to drive migrants into the recesses of global capitalism. Joy James draws on the work of Joan Dayan and Orlando Patterson to critique Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, which she feels has wrongly been deemed “a master narrative competent to critique contemporary state policing” (25). James claims that Foucault neglects to recognize the ways in which the state polices different bodies differently. I argue, drawing on James’s arguments, that the relative protection that any subject can find in public or private spaces is dependent on his/her subject position, which is determined by his/her physical body, and that because those subjects found to have non-normative bodies are watched more intensely and policed more harshly by the forces of the nation-state in the service of global capitalism, the degree to which they can locate agency within various spaces is limited but varied.
In her critique of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Joy James asserts that, in Foucault’s claims about “the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle[,]... the metanarrative of *Discipline and Punish* vanquishes historical and contemporary racialized terror, punishments, and control” (25). In this way, she claims, there exists an “erasure in body politics” that seeks to cover over the “spectacle of racialized state violence” (25) as a result of Foucault’s “color- and gender-blind investigations” (27).

Although her analysis is focused on black subjects in the United States and Foucault’s dismissal of their plight in his claims about the “disappearance of torture as a public spectacle” (Foucault qtd. by Jams 24), her arguments bear relevance to the subject positions of migrants in the European Union and the police state and economic forces that exist there as well.

In critiquing Foucault’s arguments, James first establishes that Foucault neglects to theorize different bodies differently, claiming that “[g]reater obedience is demanded from those whose physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive, or threatening” and that, “[c]onversely, some bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex” (26). To support her claims, she notes the US nation-state’s targeted policing of black subjects during the nineteenth century (28-29) and the policing of black urban youth in the US today (34-36), as well as the German nation-state’s policing of “those designated as biologically abhorrent – the handicapped body, the gay body, the Jewish body, the Gypsy body, the communist or socialist body, and the black body” (36-38) in contrast to those bodies deemed “normal,” which “are allowed greater leeway to be self-policed or policed without physical force” (26). As a result of these kinds of particularly intense and
excessively harsh surveillance and policing tactics, James argues that there exists “disenfranchised ethnic minorities [who are] policed by both the state and the dominant castes” through the existence of what Foucault deems “the carceral,” which, James notes, “refers to a network of regimentation and discipline, a prison without walls in turn made up of social networks for surveillance” (27).

We can observe the ways in which “the carceral” operates in both films by noting the collusion between the nation-state’s police force and the economic forces present as a result of global capitalism. Contrary to traditional conceptions of the rise of transnational capitalism as a herald announcing the demise of the nation-state, these two entities actually work together to form the kind of “carceral” or “social network for surveillance” (James 27), which is, as James claims, “customized to fit racialized body politics” (34) at work in society. An analysis of this network in both films reveals that “bodies matter differently in racialized [and gender-attentive] systems” (34) in the sense that Senay and Amira have access to agency in different spaces as a result of their subject positions.

An examination of Senay and Amira in the films reveals the veracity of James’ claims. In Dirty Pretty Things, the fact that Senay comes from Turkey, and the British

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5Saskia Sassen notes that several critics take issue with globalization’s “basic proposition…[that] discussions about the global economy concern the declining sovereignty of states over their economies” (“Globalization and Its Discontents,” xxvii), which, as Masao Miyoshi notes, leads “[t]hose who have thought of the nation-state as a historical bourgeois invention for the sake of protecting a national economy from the threats of free democracy [to]hail transnationalism’s negative effect on the nation-state…[and feel that] there is something exhilarating about the demise of the nation-state” (Miyoshi 744), when, in fact, the consequences of globalization are not so simple. Specifically, Sassen notes that this kind of logic reduces the very complex set of processes and practices that constitute ‘globalization’ to “a function of the global/national duality—what one wins, the other loses” and ignores the fact that nation-states are intimately entwined in the “production of new forms of legality” that serve to “guarantee the domestic and global rights of capital.” Sassen claims that, in this way, the nation is not in opposition to globalization but, instead, working in collusion with it, since “global capital made these claims [to need new forms of legality] and…the national states responded (“Globalization and Its Discontents,” xxvii).
nation-state, like many nation-states in the EU, regards Turkish immigrants with a particular kind of racialized disdain, partially accounts for Senay’s harsh treatment by the authorities. In this way, it is her ethnic identity that mark her out for intensive surveillance not only by the state, but also by “the dominant classes as well” (James 27). In his analysis of Turkey’s prospects for membership in the European Union, Ioannis Grigoriadis notes that “the presence of large numbers of Turkish immigrants in Western Europe and the persistence of religious and cultural prejudices have contributed to the formation of a Turko-phobic European public opinion in many countries” (157). In the film, Senay experiences discrimination that reflects the kind of “Turko-phobic” sentiment that Grigoriadis theorizes.  

In the first scene in which the audience encounters the two immigration officials in the film, the officials note that Senay is a Turkish national and demand her Standard Acknowledgement Letter, or identification as an asylum-seeker, claiming that they have reason to believe that she is illegally allowing another person to reside with her, a violation of her status as an “asylum-seeker.” Interestingly, it seems that these officials have been tipped off by her neighbors that she is, in fact, allowing a man – Okwe -- to reside with her. One of the officials tells her, “Neighbors, Senay. They see things. They say the last few days they’ve seen someone come and go.” These lines reveal that Senay is a target for policing not only by the state authorities but by British citizens as well, no

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6 Grigoriadis also notes that there is a perception in Western Europe that “Turkey would be an enormous burden for the EU agricultural and structural funds budgets” and that it would gain disproportionate representation in the European Parliament, as “Turkey is expected to be the most populous country of the Union” (156). For these reasons and others, Grigoriadis claims that “the debate on Turkey’s membership [in the EU] has acted as a proxy for a larger and overdue debate on the future shape of the European Union” (147), in which two oppositional sides have emerged: Euro-federalists, who feel that “a new, common European identity” should be cultivated as part of the EU’s future growth project, and the opponents of Euro-federalism, who feel that “the European Union should retain a heavily economic character…[and] the debate on a common European identity…[is] both commercial and redundant” (149).
doubt as a result of the prevalent anti-Turkish sentiment in the city. In this way, as James asserts, “[p]anopticism and the policing gaze are…informed by racial…bias” (James 27).

Additionally, although there are many undocumented migrants in the film, the authorities target Senay with such singular focus that their policing amounts to a mission to deport her. In fact, the state authorities are so intent on “catching” Senay that they ignore all other undocumented workers that they encounter. We can observe this intent focus on Senay in two crucial scenes. The first occurs after the immigration officials initiate a surprise search of Senay’s apartment and find a matchbook that reads “The Baltic Hotel.” Suspicious that she is working illegally as a maid, they come to this hotel just prior to the time at which the maids clock in. Although the officials witness the entrance of maids who are conspicuously anxious at the sight of the immigration officials’ presence, they simply hold up their immigration badges in a kind of threatening manner, but do not even so much as question any of them. One of the officials even comments, “This is an interesting place” in reference to the fact that there are clearly other undocumented workers employed there, though he makes no attempt to look into the matter further. Instead, the officials simply wait for Senay to enter the hotel, which suggests that she alone is their target.

The second scene occurs once Senay has begun working in a sweatshop sewing clothes. The same two immigration officials raid the sweatshop, and all of the female workers scatter. By the time the two officials enter, the male boss of the sweatshop is the only one sitting among fifty or more abandoned sewing machines. The officials ask, specifically, for Senay and willingly ignore the potentially hundreds of other undocumented workers employed in the sweatshop. Again, we see that Senay is their
singular target, as opposed to one target among many others, and her differentiating characteristic is her ethnic identity as a Turkish Muslim.

It is as a result of this carceral network that migrants, like Senay, are forced into this “private realm or underground economy of...workfare” (James 27) where their bodies are then disciplined in ways that reflect “new dimensions of dominance and terror” (James 27). In an interview with Cineaste, Stephen Frears comments on the irony of Senay’s situation and reveals the ways in which the nation-state is implicated in her economic and sexual exploitation:

Senay, the Audrey Tautou character, is applying for asylum. The law is that they give you forty pounds a week, which is about sixty dollars, and you can’t take a job and you can’t rent or sublet your apartment. The people granted asylum are given money, but they’re not given enough to live on, so of course, they all take jobs illegally. They’re immediately open to being exploited in sweatshops…and places like that. (Lucia 9)

The garment industry is one example of an industry that needs unskilled, low-wage labor, and, as Senay’s situation demonstrates, the British government, through its policing tactics, effectively provides a workforce for this industry that is comprised of financially

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7 James also notes that another part of the nation-state’s strategy to criminalize queer subjects is to reverse notions of “victimhood,” so that the exploited immigrants who work in the service of global capital to support those who stand to benefit economically from these transnational business arrangements (at a great loss/danger to themselves) are actually seen as being the dangerous aggressors, as opposed to being the exploited or the oppressed. In this way, nation-states and transnational capitalism benefits economically from their exploitation, and successfully keeps various groups of exploited individuals isolated and, as a result of that isolation, powerless. By reversing notions of who is “crazy/sane, dangerous/harmless, and normal/deviant,” European nation-states, in collusion with transnational capitalism, have effectively been able to alter notions of “oppressor and oppressed” in order to justify the exploitation and policing of nonnormative bodies, namely, those of immigrants and, particularly, those of immigrant women, who are doubly marked as Others by virtue of both race and gender (26-27).

In Dirty Pretty Things, Senay is depicted as the enemy of the state and hunted in a manner befitting that designation. Similarly, in Breaking and Entering, Amira and Miro are ultimately forced to leave England and return to Bosnia, even though Miro is found innocent of the crimes of which he is accused, and yet they feel that they have been the recipients of a “good deal.” In this way, the power of this kind of reverse victimhood is so pervasive that even the queer/migrants themselves buy into it as a reality.
strapped asylum-seekers who lack any kind of legal entitlement to fair pay, decent hours, or even humane treatment. In this way, it is the nation-state that pushes migrants into that invisible, yet vulnerable, spatial position.

Unlike in *Dirty Pretty Things*, in which the police force is depicted antagonistically, *Breaking and Entering* attempts to depict the police force – embodied mainly in the character of Bruno (Ray Winstone) – as a benevolent support network that is sympathetic to Amira and her son’s predicament. However, the film’s narrative works against itself to reveal that this state police force actually works to exploit migrant subjects. In spite of the fact that this one agent, Bruno, attempts to connect with Miro and to keep him out of prison, the system, as a whole, works against him. When Amira receives a letter from the school stating that Miro has not been attending school, she and Miro meet with a social worker – an embodiment of the power of the nation-state to determine individuals’ future life trajectories -- to discuss Miro’s attendance issues. This meeting reveals that, as soon as they entered England as refugees, Amira and Miro became targets of tracking and surveillance by the British government as a result of their refugee (read: Other) status. Amira states to Miro that part of the agreement that they made to be allowed to enter England involved promising that Miro would stay in school. Amira tells Miro, “You have to go to school – that’s what we promised with police and the court. Otherwise, they’ll put you in prison.” Her comments reveal that if they fail to comply with this agreement, Miro will face prison time, though he is only fifteen-years-old, which suggests that the nation-state polices refugee subjects much more intensely and harshly than its own citizens, just as James suggests when she claims that “not everyone is recognized as a state member with uniformly enforced and equal rights” (34).
Additionally, as in *Dirty Pretty Things*, we can see evidence that the nation-state establishes this kind of law to effectively force migrant subjects into exploitative work situations. In this case, Amira cannot earn enough money as a seamstress to support her son, but Miro is not allowed to work because he must attend school. In this way, their situation is similar to Senay’s in *Dirty Pretty Things*: the nation-state establishes laws that make it impossible to asylum-seekers and refugees to survive without turning to black market economies, which is what Miro does – he steals electronics after they are delivered to local businesses, and then his bosses sell them on the black market.

Miro, as a migrant subject, is aware of the irony of his situation, which is that while it is through the labor of migrant workers that many expensive goods are produced, these same migrant workers have no claim of ownership or entitlement to the massive amounts of money that the sale of these items generates. Miro insightfully questions the social worker about this irony; however, the social worker disregards his concerns and, thus, defends the status quo and the exploitation of mainly female migrants. Throughout the scene, Miro and Amira are filmed using a high angle, while the social worker is filmed from a low angle, as if to visually suggest their disparate planes of power within the context of the state’s office.

The social worker asks Miro, “What about you, Sonny Jim? What have you been up to when you’ve not been at school? Back thieving’? Stealing again? See, things are not things. Things are always somebody’s things. The car is Jack’s car ‘cause he worked for it. Your Prada jacket was Kevin’s Prada jacket before it was yours – cause I can see your little grin takin’ over. Before that, his Prada jacket belonged to Mr. Prada.” In response, Miro asks, “What about before that?” The social worker is confused, and he
asks, “Before what?” Miro says, “Before it was Mr. Prada’s. Did it belong to the woman who made it? Cause my mum does that. Makes clothes for other people. Slaves for other people. Or like when prisoners make trays.” The social worker abruptly ends this discussion with Amira and Miro by stating, in response to Miro’s ideas, “Next time, you’re going down. We’ll catch ya, and then you can discuss who owns the trays with your cellmates” and smacks Miro on the back of the head as he quickly exits the meeting.

Of course, the conversation in this scene gets at a quintessential component of Marxist theory: the way in which capitalism seeks to efface the presence of the worker in the commodity produced. However, it also calls attention to the way in which the nation-state is complicit in this effacement. Here, the government official threatens a refugee with prison if he seeks to question the established rules of the capitalist system. He basically tells Miro that he and his mother have no right to the clothes that she makes with her own physical body, that these clothes belong to the corporation that sells them. He even threatens Miro with prison if he continues to challenge the logic of this capitalist system.

Additionally, the conversation between the migrant (Miro) and the government of the nation-state (social worker) draws a connection between prisoners, slaves, and migrant workers, which suggests that migrants may suffer the same kinds of social and civil deaths that Joan Dayan and Joy James claim that prisoners and slaves do. Joan Dayan claims that prisoners suffer “civil death” through their incarceration, and she defines “civil death” as being “the state of a person who, though possessing natural life has lost all civil rights” (57). This definition certainly encompasses migrant workers,
since they are expected to be an invisible force that produces goods but leaves no mark and has no claim upon these goods. The most basic civil right in any industrialized society is the right to own commodities. In this way, migrants do not possess civil rights in industrialized capitalist societies, which suggests that these workers are similar to prisoners. As Miro notes, migrant workers, like his mother, and prisoners have no legal rights to the commodities they produce, which means that migrant workers and prisoners are one and the same under the law, which is to say they are not recognized at all.

Additionally, Joy James comments on the significance of this kind of legal effacement, as it is eerily reminiscent of the legal standing of slaves. James notes that “bodies matter differently in racialized systems” (James 34) and that “[g]reater obedience is demanded from those whose physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive, or threatening” (James 26), which means that “[t]he value placed on racial, economic, and sexual differences determines the [state’s] slackening or tightening of the grip on the body” (34). Consequently, “race [along with class and gender] is a marker for criminality and repression” (James 35) by the state. Ultimately, this kind of “repression” becomes slavery, as it is the most complete form of state control (35). If we examine the garment industry within the EU (and around the world, for that matter), we can readily note that its labor force is overwhelmingly comprised of “poor people and people of color” (James 30) – and almost entirely of women – because these people are “the most vulnerable targets” for state policing (James 30). In other words, since their bodies are “aberrational, offensive, or threatening” (James 26), the state is able to police migrant subjects more harshly without sanction from its own citizens, and this policing inevitably drives migrant
subjects into conditions within global capitalist networks that can effectively amount to slavery.

However, to say that all migrant subjects are forced into slavery is to ignore the powerful role of the nation-state in this process. Although one might argue that the nation-state discriminates against migrant subjects, it would be negligent to ignore the reality that the nation-state does not discriminate indiscriminately. James critiques Foucault for “ostensibly talking about the body while ignoring its uniqueness” (25), and, so, to ignore the ways in which the state polices different bodies differently would be to homogenize the experiences of migrants into a kind of universalized picture of exploitation. This kind of theorization works not in contrast to the nation-state’s domineering actions but in accordance with them, because, as Rosemary George notes, this sort of theorization transforms the migrant subject into a symbol, and symbols do not allow for nuanced differentiation in terms of various migrants’ experiences. In this way, George argues that when migration becomes a symbolic referent for contemporary globalization, individual migrants stop being unique bodies and become, instead, simply a single “postmodern symbol for humanity” as a whole, which diverts attention away from the significance of individual migrants’ exploitation, abuse, and repression. George argues that this kind of homogenizing gesture is not necessarily a reflection on society’s concern for migrants as much as it is a means of voicing anger and anxiety about the condition of postmodernity (“Rethinking the Migrant as Postmodern Symbol of Humanity,” 2009).

I argue that while Emily Davis’s argument that it is within spaces of invisibility that migrant subjects locate agency is productive, because her critique is only of capitalist
enterprises, she neglects to consider the role of the nation-state in migrants’ exploitation, as the degree to which a migrant can be exploited by the forces of global capitalism is directly dependent on the nation-state’s designation of that individual subject’s legal personhood. For example, Amira and Miro’s situation is not identical to Senay’s, in spite of the fact that they are all Muslim migrants living and working in London, the differences in their subject positions are significant. Joan Dayan’s definition of slavery reveals the ways in which slavery functions as a legal form of personhood. Relying on Orlando Patterson’s *Slavery and Social Death*, Joan Dayan notes the fallacy of the following definition of a slave: “the habitual definition of a slave [is] someone without legal personality” (Patterson qtd. by Dayan 56). Dayan states, quoting Patterson, that “[a]s a legal fact, there has never existed a slaveholding society, ancient or modern, that did not recognize the slave as a person in law” (56). The questions of import, to Patterson and Dayan, are the following: “In what ways and when were slaves allowed to be persons? When resurrected as legal personalities, what can they do, what are their possibilities?” (Dayan 57). Their questions come to the heart of the issue at stake in a comparative analysis of Senay and Amira, which is the following: to what extent do the various legal designations assigned to migrants subjects (i.e. “illegal immigrant,” “asylum-seeker,” or “refugee”) allow them to function as persons? Both Senay and Amira are not allowed to function as whole persons because neither woman is afforded the same rights, privileges, and protections that citizens are afforded, though their differing legal statuses allow them differing degrees of legal personhood.

Davis claims that a migrant subject’s ability to “maintain a sense of her personal and social limits under horrific circumstances” (Davis 56) demonstrates a kind of agency.
I would agree with Davis but add that the degree to which this kind of control is possible is directly connected to the migrant’s status within the nation-state. The degree to which Amira is able to control her situation is much greater than the degree to which Senay can set limits on her exploitation, and this difference is a direct result of the fact that Amira has been recognized by the nation-state as a “refugee,” whereas Senay is an “asylum-seeker” who has not been granted the more protective legal status of “refugee.”

Because of her precarious position, Senay is forced to perform fellatio on her boss in the sweatshop so that he does not report her to the immigration authorities. As a result, she faces an impossible choice: continue working in horribly exploitative conditions within the global capitalist system or face imprisonment or deportation from the state. Amira, too, suffers horrific exploitation, but she also exhibits greater control over the ways in which this exploitation occurs. Amira, like Senay, engages in what Davis terms “calculated economic exchange” (Davis 53), and, like Senay, her exchange locates her in a precarious position in which she must choose to either suffer exploitation at the hands of capitalist forces, by engaging in a sexual relationship with the businessman that Miro robbed, or see her son face prison or deportation by the authorities of the nation-state; but, unlike Senay, Amira is able to move visibly into the realm of the public, as a result of the fact that she has been legally recognized by the state (as a “refugee”) to mobilize “cultural visibility” to “prepare the ground for…civil rights protection” (Hennessey 111) in the same way that gay and lesbians subjects have done historically. As a result of her ability to become visible within the public space of the courtroom, Amira is able to draw

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8 I recognize that while comparing atrocities can be a dangerous theoretical road to tread, I think it is necessary to recognize the ways in which queer/migrants’ subject positions vary. Recognizing differences in subject positions need not preclude us from recognizing that all exploitation is unacceptable.
on the protections that visibility can afford migrants and use it to assert greater control and to assert a more powerful form of agency. Amira threatens to expose – to make visible -- her relationship with Will in court in order to coerce him into intervening with the state on her son’s behalf.

At the end of the film, Will goes to Miro’s trial and lies, saying that Miro is not the boy who robbed his office. Amira’s ability to mobilize agency through the threat of visibility is directly contingent upon her recognized legal status. If Amira and Miro were deemed “illegal immigrants” or even “asylum-seekers,” they would not possess agency in the public space of the courtroom in the way that they do as legally recognized “refugees.” These examples demonstrate that although Amira certainly suffers both economic and sexual exploitation as a migrant subject, she has a form of recourse and security that Senay does not: because she is a recognized legal refugee, Amira has a degree of control over her subject position that Senay does not have over hers, and we can observe this crucial difference by examining the ways in which the two women are able to make themselves visible within public spaces. To say that Amira has forms of recourse and control that Senay does not is not to say that either woman suffers more than the other; it is to say that it is necessary to recognize the discrepancies in various migrants’ subject positions in order to avoid effacing the role of the nation-state in their exploitation.

A comparative analysis of these films reveals that although migrants inhabit the invisible spatial plane of the unprivileged, they are not without agency. The films demonstrate that migrants access agency by monitoring and transforming space, though the means by which they accomplish these feats differ from the means used by those
subjects who inhabit the privileged spatial plane. Migrant subjects must mobilize their public invisibility in order to use it as a tool for shaping space. However, in claiming that migrants possess the capacity to control space, we must not ignore the fact that the nation-state also controls space or the fact that its reach is considerably greater. We must acknowledge that the degree to which migrants can control space is dependent on their legal positions within the state, and, by acknowledging this reality, we can attend to the ways in which the role of the nation-state continues to be a massively influential force in migrants’ lives.

Interestingly, the ending of each film works against its narrative and cinematographic conventions, which both attempt to reveal inequities inherent in space as a result of the influence of the nation-state and global capitalism. In both films, the migrant subjects who have complicated the spatial and social dynamics of the city leave England to escape the reaches of the state. Significantly, in most cases, they return to their “home” country, through which movement the films attempt to resolve the migrants’ problematic subject position within London. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, Okwe and Senay use their counterfeit passports to leave London in order to escape the reaches of the state’s sanctions. The final scene in the film involves an extreme closeup shot of Okwe as he calls his daughter in Nigeria and says, “At last, I’m coming home.” The extreme closeup suggests that the audience is finally getting a glimpse of the “true” Okwe and his “real” life. The scene suggests that Okwe can simply return to Nigeria in order to find his true place in the world. This kind of symbolism is problematic in the sense that it plays into the notion that identity is singular, unified, and knowable; it suggests that the world consists only of spaces of belonging and not belonging, as opposed to the rest of
the film’s narrative and cinematography, which suggest that belonging is always already
determined by race, class, gender, and sexuality – regardless of the space one inhabits.

Similarly, in *Breaking and Entering*, one of the last scenes depicts Amira and Miro walking away from Will’s office after telling him that they will be returning to Bosnia, presumably to avoid further trouble with the authorities, as Miro is clearly now on their radar, so to speak. The camera’s extreme long shot suggests that they are moving out of Will’s life, and the space of London, forever. The very last scene in the film depicts Liv and Will engaged in a tight embrace, a symbol of their renewed commitment to one another. After investing so much energy in exploring the complicated dynamics of space, the film seems to end with the notion that migrants and Europeans cannot, after all, share the same spaces and suggests, instead, that the solution to the problems inherent in shared spaces are best resolved if those people who are “problems” for European subjects simply go away. As a result of the fact that the end of a film is a particularly privileged kind of space, the endings in both films are especially disheartening, as the endings seem to negate the sympathetic stance that both films take throughout toward the vulnerable spatial positions of migrant subjects.
The Mobility of “First” and “Third World” Spaces:  

The Contingent Relationship between Sexuality, Gender, and Citizenship and the Persistence of Colonial Ideology in Modern Spain

*León de Aranoa’s Princesas* (2005) and *Icíar Bollaín’s Flores de Otro Mundo* (1999)

León de Aranoa’s *Princesas* (2005) tells the story of the friendship that emerges between two prostitutes in contemporary Madrid who come from vastly different backgrounds. Caye (Candela Peña) comes from a middle-class Spanish family but keeps her work a secret from them. As a result of her class position, Caye maintains a great deal of autonomy and control over herself and her work as a prostitute; she never walks the streets, but instead schedules her clients via cell phone. She seems to earn a decent wage (as she even has enough extra income to begin saving for breast implants). She and her friends, most of whom are also prostitutes coming from similar backgrounds, spend most of their time gossiping in a beauty salon about the “low class” immigrant prostitutes that walk the street outside the salon each day and night. They see these immigrant women as “competition” because the immigrant women’s prices are so much lower than those of the Spanish prostitutes, and the Spanish men whom they service seem to prefer the exoticism and allure of these immigrant women to the Spanish prostitutes. It is not until Caye befriends a woman from the Dominican Republic named Zulema (Micaela Nevárez) that she begins to understand the hardships that many of these women face. The film chronicles the two women’s friendship, as well as Caye’s romantic relationship with Manuel, a man who does not know that she works as a prostitute, and Zulema’s physically and sexually abusive relationship with a Spanish civil servant.
Icíar Bollaín’s *Flores de Otro Mundo* [Flowers from Another World] (1999) also chronicles a transnational friendship, which develops between Patricia (Lissete Mejía), a single mother from the Dominican Republic, and Milady (Marilyn Torres), a sex worker previously working in Cuba, as they first arrive in a small Spanish village called Santa Eulalia. Patricia marries Damían (Luis Tosar) in order to bring her children, Janay (Isabel de los Santos) and Felipe (Carlos Kaniowsky) to Spain, after meeting him at a “Singles’ Party” that this remote farming village organizes in hopes of helping the village men to meet wives. Because there are so few single Spanish women in the town, the men bus in single women from the surrounding cities, and many of these women come from the Caribbean, as Patricia does. Milady met Carmelo (José Sancho) in Cuba when he was vacationing there as a “sex tourist,” and, after many visits, he invites Milady to move to Santa Eulalia to be with him. In these ways, both women find themselves in this remote rural village and dependent on men for financial support and for protection from immigration officials. Additionally, they both encounter racist and sexist hostility from the local townspeople, as well as from within their romantic relationships, and they grow closer to each other as they attempt to negotiate their new identities as Spanish girlfriends and wives.

In terms of content, the films are quite similar: they both chronicle unlikely cross-national female friendships that develop between “queer” subjects. In Spain, the women often suffer exploitation from Spanish men and harassment from Spanish women, though the extent to which they experience this abuse and the modes of agency available to them for resistance depend on each individual woman’s subject position. As a result of this abuse, the women in both films rely on female companionship and support to negotiate
their shifting identities in Spain. Additionally, in both films, one or more of the migrant subjects comes from the Caribbean to Spain in search of citizenship papers and the opportunity to earn money to send to children at home. In all cases, these migrants engage in various kinds of sex work, and, in this way, both films explore the relationship between motherhood and prostitution. Additionally, both films address lingering colonial tensions through their depiction of these migrant women’s treatment in their respective Spanish communities. In terms of form, both films demonstrate a kind of hybridity in the sense that they attempt to function both as heartwarming “female friendship dramas” and as pointed socio-political commentaries.

Most importantly, each film explores the ways in which public and private spaces function differently for various subjects, depending on their sexuality, ethnicity, or citizenship status. Interestingly, both films juxtapose two different seemingly “queer” female subjects—Caye and Zulema in Princesas and Patricia and Milady in Flores de Otro Mundo. All four women are somehow Others within their communities, either as a result of their status as sex workers, or as a result of their status as migrants, or as a result of their status as both sex workers and migrants, as is the case for Milady and Zulema. However, while Princesas explores the bustling, crowded spaces of urban Madrid, Flores de Otro Mundo explores the isolated, desolate spaces of rural Spain, and, in both spaces, the films suggest that the relationships between Spanish men and Caribbean women reflect the connections between colonialism, masculinity, and progress. Both places contain central community spaces, which are integral to notions of inclusion/exclusion for the migrant subjects in the films; Princesas focuses on the beauty salon, and Flores de Otro Mundo focuses on the village tavern. Additionally, in each film, streets and roads
are central tropes, as they function in both films as spaces of publicity and vulnerability for migrant subjects. This vulnerability, however, is slightly different in each film; *Princesas* attends to the policing that migrants endure by the state and the ways in which that policing functions to repress and exploit them, while *Flores de Otro Mundo*’s concerns focus on the notion of social policing and the power of a community to confer social citizenship and social life upon migrant subjects and also on its ability to evict migrant subjects from the social relations of the community if they fail to adhere to expectations of heteronormative family life.

_The Conflation of Modernity and Masculinity in Contemporary Spain and the Effect of the Mobility of “Third World” Space_

As a result of Spain’s spatial position as the southernmost EU member-state, “Spanishness” is constantly being defined against the “Africanness” of Europe’s neighboring continent to the South. In light of colonial notions of “Africanness” as synonymous with “backwardness,” “Spanishness” is also constituted through performances of “modernity” and “progress,” intended to distinguish Spain as quintessentially European, in spite of its spatial proximity to Africa. Historically, Spain also occupied a kind of un-European space within the colonial world as a result of the fact that “Spain ‘lost’ its colonies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which time other European empires were at their height” (Martín-Cabrera 44). Because there was a colonial gendering of colonial space as “feminine” -- an integral piece in justifying and even encouraging imperial projects -- there is a collapsing of two distinct spaces within the Spanish imagination: the space of “Third World” lands becomes indistinguishable from the space of “Third World” female bodies. As a result of this
collapse, a dichotomy emerges in which Spain/modern/masculine is drawn in opposition to colonial/backward/feminine. As Martín-Cabrera states, “modernity is not a chronological concept…but rather a philosophy of history and a particular way of conceiving time,” which he notes reveals that “the classification of colonial or peasant societies as backward or primitive…works as a structure of domination” (44). As a result of this need for domination in conjunction with the colonial gendering of “Third World” space as “feminine,” in the films, for male Spanish subjects, the desire to demonstrate modernity is enacted through the desire to conquer the bodies of “Third World” women. In this way, temporality is inextricably tied to spatiality in the sense that controlling “Third World” space -- whether land spaces or bodily spaces -- works as evidence of progress and modernity.

**An Analysis of León de Aranoa’s Princesas (2005)**

*Desire for the Other: An Enactment of Masculinity, Modernity, and Colonial Dominance*

From the beginning of *Princesas*, the audience is aware of the “First World” males’ desire for “Third World” women, and we see various examples of Spanish men’s desire to subjugate them to assert their dominance (i.e. masculinity). Early in the film, Caye and several other Spanish prostitutes lament the decline in business that they have experienced in recent years, blaming their lack of clients on the increasing numbers of women who have emigrated from various parts of Africa and the Caribbean. After several women make disparaging, racist remarks about these migrants, one prostitute notes, “But guys like them. Whether it’s the novelty or whatever, guys like them,” suggesting that Spanish men find these women to be more physically attractive than native-born Spanish women not in spite of, but precisely because of, their appearance and its connotations of
imperial dominance. Additionally, later in the film, Zulema braids Caye’s hair in a traditional Dominican fashion, and, when her Spanish friends belittle the style and comment that Caye “look[s] black,” Caye comments that, with the braids, she “get[s] twice as much work,” claiming that she’s “going to charge for touching [her] hair.”

In her article titled “The Sex Tourist, The Expatriate, His Ex-Wife, and Her ‘Other’: The Politics of Loss, Difference, and Desire,” Julia O’Connell Davidson analyzes contemporary relations between “First World” men and “Third World” women in the sex tourism industry in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic. She suggests that former colonial spaces like these function as spaces in which “First World” men feel that they can act out their rightful position of dominance, which they feel that the “civilized” liberal states of the “First World” wrongfully restrict. In this way, O’Connell Davidson suggests that traveling to the “Third World” functions, for “First World” men, as “a means of release from the restraints that are supposedly placed on the white male’s self-sovereignty in the ‘First World’” (10). O’Connell Davidson argues that “First World” men’s desire for “Third World” women reflects the reality that while “First World” men see the liberal state as the “apex of civilization,” they also feel that the achievement of this advanced form of civilization has come at the price of losing all that is “natural,” such as “individual men’s ‘natural rights’ over themselves, and over women and ‘racialized’ Others” (10).

While O’Connell Davidson analyzes relations between “First World” men and “Third World” women, Martín-Cabrera’s arguments are specific to the dynamics of the relations between Spanish men and the women who come from Spain’s former colonies and, thus, provide additional specificity with regard to the spatial and temporal dynamics
of these relationships. According to Martín-Cabrera, Spain attempted a kind of show of modernity in the early nineties, at which time Spain hosted the Olympics, welcomed the latest high speed train technology to its stations, and generally “intended to show the rest of the world that Spain was as modern as any other country in Europe” (45). According to Martín-Cabrera, Spain has continually been engaged in a project of demonstrating its modernity since the end of its colonial empire in the nineteenth century (44), and the scenes I discuss in Princesas reveal that this kind of show of modernity is not restricted to impressive technological performances to demonstrate progress and modernity, but that it also entails performances of sexual dominance over “Third World” women as well.

The Spanish prostitutes’ observation that men prefer “exotic” women and Caye’s comment about the desirability of her hair reveal an important reality: it is not only through the sex tourism industry that exists within the “Third World” that “First World” white males seek “control…over women and ‘racialized’ Others” (O’Connell Davidson 10), but that these men also look to find this control within the “First World,” which drives them to solicit prostitutes who they perceive as “‘racialized’ Others” (O’Connell Davidson 10). In this way, “women and ‘racialized’ Others” occupy the same kind of space in the “Third World” that they do in the “First World” because the appeal of a “‘racialized’ Other” who is available for exploitation travels as the women do. In the film, Zulema may not be living in the Dominican Republic, but, even while living in Spain, she still exists for “First World” white males in the space of the “Third World” country from which she comes. In this way, her subject position is always already determined by her spatial position, and that spatial position is actually mobile, as opposed
to fixed as a result of the fact that, although her body has moved from the geographical space of the Dominican Republic to the geographical space of Spain, for “First World” men, her body carries the ideological space of the Dominican Republic even outside of the geographical boundaries of the “Third World” nation-state from which she comes.

Phil Hubbard argues in his article titled “Sex Zones: Intimacy, Citizenship, and Public Space” that “space...does not simply exist as a given’ but affects (and is affected by) things which are always becoming,” meaning that “space is not just a passive backdrop to human behavior and social action, but is constantly produced and remade within complex relations of culture, power and difference” (51). This film demonstrates Hubbard’s claim by illustrating that space is not, in fact, stationary but that it moves as subjects move and, in this way, it is not fixed and stable, as it is traditionally conceived.

*The Role of Citizenship and Space in Shaping Relations between Spanish Subjects and Migrants*

Phil Hubbard also argues that “notions of morality...create sexual geographies at a variety of spatial scales...and are thus branded onto the spaces of the body, the city, the region and the nation in constantly shifting and complex ways that, nonetheless, give order to flows of desire” (59), and he claims that “discussions about citizenship are never far away in debates about sexual politics,” since “judgments about whether groups and individuals are participating in the life of the nation in a responsible and desirable manner...centre on questions of sexuality” (52). Consequently, Hubbard argues, “those

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9 Similarly, Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler note that “ideas of origin and return are inflected by ideas of sexual propriety,” and they note that “Derrida reminds us of the combination of proper and property – and sexual alterity” (2-3). These scholars also draw a direct connection between mobility and non-normative sexual relations to suggest that there exists a prevalent perception within heterosexuality that proper (i.e. normative) behavior for women is to behave as property to men.
whose sexual proclivities are adjudged suspect, dangerous or undesirable may find their
civil and welfare rights curtailed as politicians and policymakers seek to redefine the
moral boundaries of the nation” (52); he notes that “figures as diverse as the single
mother, the prostitute, the cyber-stalker, the errant father, the spinster, the pervert and the
pornographer (not to mention lesbians, bisexuals, and gays) have been demonized as ‘bad
citizens’” (53), and he refers to these subjects as “sexual dissidents.”

While Hubbard is certainly correct in claiming that heteronormative expectations
in terms of sexuality and gender shape subjects’ positions within the nation-state, he
neglects to consider a seemingly obvious subject: the subject who is a non-citizen not
only by virtue of her status as a “sexual dissident” and also by virtue of her status as an
undocumented migrant. All of the “diverse figures” listed above are, presumably, legal
citizens, though their rights may be curtailed by the state as a consequence of their
sexualities. In other words, Hubbard argues that the “non-citizen” is a legal citizen,
though perhaps not a social or political citizen, and, in this way, he neglects to take into
account the ways in which space is bound up not only in notions of racial, gender, and
sexual Otherness, but also – importantly -- in citizenship status. Hubbard’s omission is
evidence of the veracity in Eithne Luibheid’s claim that “citizenship scholarship still
tends to presume either that all queers are legal citizens or that all immigrants are
heterosexual.” In Hubbard’s case, he presumes “that all queers are legal citizens”
(“Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship,” xxxv).

Interestingly, Hubbard notes that “[t]he female prostitute, in particular, represents
a paradigmatic figure whose legal and social regulation symbolizes and contradicts
inherent notions of equal citizenship [since] in many cities prostitutes are forced to work
out of sight…[as] authorities have sought to minimize the public visibility for sex work in a heterosexually-ordered city” (58). Drawing on Hubbard’s argument that space is a useful canvas on which to explore the influence of citizenship (58) and his argument that space not fixed but always changing (51), I argue that a comparative analysis of Caye and Zulema in *Princesas* demonstrates that there are important differences between the ways in which space functions for “sexual dissidents” who are citizens of the nation-state and “sexual dissidents” who are undocumented migrants. The fact that Caye is a native-born Spanish citizen means that she enjoys the privileges of a particular class position and racial identity, in spite of the fact that she is also a “sexual dissident.” For this reason, she is able to earn twice as much money as Zulema earns without ever having to expose herself to the public’s scrutiny of her sexual behavior. In this way, the film effectively illustrates Phil Hubbard’s claim that, for queer subjects, visibility within public spaces does not necessarily precipitate the acquisition of rights nor is public space always “a democratic space where marginalized groups can seek to oppose oppressive aspects of heteronormativity” (Hubbard 63).

The film utilizes on-going visual contrasts between the public spaces that the migrant prostitutes inhabit and the private spaces that the Spanish prostitutes inhabit in order to call viewers’ attention to the disparate subject positions that these two groups of “sexual dissidents” inhabit within the city of Madrid. The space of the street is contrasted with the space of the beauty salon in one important scene in the film. The beauty salon functions as a space where Caye and her friends, who are also Spanish prostitutes, gather to gossip and relax. The salon’s front window looks out onto a park, where scantily-clad, primarily black and brown, migrant prostitutes gather to attract clients. In the first scene
in the film in which the audience sees these two spaces, the cinematography emphasizes the fact that the Spanish prostitutes are concealed within the private space of the salon, while the migrant prostitutes are exposed in the public space of the park.

The scene begins with a long shot of the park, where viewers see several black female prostitutes milling about, dressed in bright colors – purples, pinks, and bright blues. The women’s clothing is skimpy, and the colors emphasize their visibility in the park. The camera zooms in to focus on two of these women and films them from the back as they cross the park, as though the camera is following them as they move. Interestingly, this filmic technique is used throughout the film to highlight migrant characters’ vulnerability as a result of their exposure. A police car drives through the park, slowing as it passes the two women, as if to further emphasize that these women are being watched not only by viewers, but also by the state. Then, the camera pans back and into the salon, where a Spanish prostitute is looking out of the blinds at the women in the park. The horizontal blinds are just barely visible at the edges of the shot’s frame so that viewers suddenly become aware that they inhabit this woman’s gaze. Additionally, the shots of the park are notably wobbly, and the camera zooms too quickly in and out, as if an amateur is filming. This technique heightens the viewers’ sense that they are acting as voyeurs or spies as they gaze at the women in the park, which suggests that these women are constantly being watched and monitored. In contrast, the shots from inside the salon are steady and seemingly professional in contrast to the amateur feeling of the shots of the park, which highlights the fact that it is only those women outside of the salon who are under surveillance. In this way, the cinematography suggests that the salon is a safe space, as a result of its private nature, while the park is not safe due to its high visibility.
This contrast is also apparent if we consider this scene’s juxtaposition to the previous scene in the film. This scene, which begins with a cut to the women in the park comes directly after a scene in which we witness Caye arrange a meeting with a client. Unlike the women in the park who must use visibility to find clients, Caye arranges her meetings privately. Caye’s bright pink cell phone is one of the first images the audience sees in the film, and it appears continually throughout the film as the focus of many close-up shots, drawing the audience’s attention to Caye’s privilege of anonymity and privacy, which are dependent on this phone. She schedules all of her clients via phone and, as a result, she never needs to walk the public streets in search of work. However, at the same time that the unbounded space of the wireless cellular technology functions to ensure privacy and anonymity, it also serves as a constant intrusion, which suggests that its capacity to provide privacy is not separate from its capacity to restrict.

In the scene prior to the one I discuss in the previous paragraph, Caye is having lunch with her family at her mother’s home. When her phone rings, she leaves the table and enters the kitchen where she arranges the details of her meeting. The fact that she arranges this meeting from within her mother’s home suggests the protection that Caye enjoys, as one’s childhood home is perhaps one of the most traditional images of safety and protection. However, this scene also reveals the other function of that wireless space, since, at the same time that it provides Caye with a sense of safety in arranging her work, and in this way grants her a kind of control, it also controls her, as she is always available to her clients. Of course, because Caye enjoys a fairly privileged economic position, she is not completely held hostage by the phone.
Additionally, another scene reveals the safety that Caye can access as a result of her ability to inhabit even public spaces without arousing others’ gaze. When we first meet Caye, she is entering a hospital, a seemingly public space, when she stops at the front desk. Here, a hospital employee asks her if she is a relative of the person she plans to visit. Caye tells the woman that she is, and the woman instructs Caye to go up to his room on the third floor. At this point in the film, viewers are not yet aware that she is a prostitute, which emphasizes her ability to remain in public but free of others’ suspicious gazes and judgment. In this opening scene of the film, viewers see Caye move freely within public space, as no one suspects that she is a prostitute; nothing about her appearance suggests the nature of her work, and she is, consequently, permitted to enter the hospital without difficulty. Additionally, this scene also gets at another important distinction, which is that Caye is very much in control of her work and, thus, accesses a kind of power. As soon as Caye enters her client’s room, it becomes clear to viewers that she is a prostitute, but it is also clear that she is in command within the space of the hospital room. Caye tells her clients, a group of young men, “Listen up. There’s nothing to it. First, 60 euros. Second, nobody touches anything. Only I do. You wanna touch, you pay more. And nobody goes near my backpack. And by nobody, I mean nobody, okay?” Caye’s words are forceful, as she uses language that possesses connotations of power and control (“listen up” and “by nobody I mean nobody”).

This scene works in contrast to many scenes in which we see Zulema with clients; Zulema works in a public space – that of the street -- but, unlike Caye in the hospital, Zulema is not able to move through public space without sanction or harassment. As a result, she is “vulnerable to any backlash that the putative mainstream might later unleash
on minority sexual groups” (Hubbard 64). We see this vulnerability reveal itself in several ways: first of all, Zulema is subject to constant police raids, and she often narrowly escapes being caught by the authorities; additionally, she is also susceptible to the scrutiny of the women in the beauty salon, who constantly verbally berate her, as well to the verbal and physical assaults of potential male clients who see her on the street.

In one particular scene, Zulema, who wears only a bra top and tiny shorts, leans into a car window in order to attempt to procure a client. Not only through its depiction of Zulema’s appearance but also through its depiction of her demeanor, the scene reveals Zulema’s lack of power and control and highlights her vulnerability. The camera shoots Zulema from a long shot, which reveals her entire body, suggesting her exposure. Viewers see a man’s hand reach out from the car, as Zulema leans in the window, and touch Zulema’s thighs and breasts. She laughs and asks, “Would you like something spicy from the Caribbean? 20 euros” as she attempts to swat away the man’s hand from her body. This attempt fails several times, as the hand continues to touch her, and she continues to push it away. The fact that Zulema experiences, in this scene, all of the abuses that Caye forbids her clients from attempting to perpetrate— and for a third of the money that Caye receives -- reveals the lack of control that Zulema has as a result of her position as an undocumented migrant living in Spain who must conspicuously occupy public spaces. In this way, the film calls attention to the ways in which the nation-state is implicated, through its power to confer citizenship, in the capitalist buying and selling of bodies in the sense that it allows certain bodies – those of citizens – the luxury of privacy, which can provide a kind of protection from exploitation, while denying that luxury to other bodies, namely, those of migrants.
Public Space and Modernity

Caye and Zulema’s discrepant subject/spatial positions also reveal the ways in which subjugation of “Third World” women is bound up in notions of Spanish modernity. In her article titled “Walking on the Periphery: Gender and the Discourse of Modernization,” Elizabeth Munson claims that “the question of how women would use space evolved as part of a broader discourse about Spanish modernization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (63) and that “Spanish modernizers…saw women as key to Europeanization and westernizing Spain” (67). Munson notes that “this [question of modernization] includes a discussion about how women would and should use space in a modernizing nation” (63). Munson quotes “the Spanish feminist and Socialist legislator Margarita Nelken…[who] called walking the greatest symbol of what separated the contemporary twentieth century woman from her mother and grandmother” (63), stating, too, that “when women walked they carried a great deal of ideological baggage with them” (63) in the sense that, as Spain urbanized at the turn of the century, “[urban] space created new possibilities for the performance of gender, [and] the use of space continued to reinforce gender distinctions” (64). Munson’s arguments call attention to the fact that Spanish national values have long been bound up in notions of heteronormative sexualities and gender identities.

Additionally, Munson notes that the dichotomous perceptions of feminine/private and masculine/public were maintained even as women ventured into the public realm and that the ways in which women used public spaces were designed and policed to ensure proper adherence to gender distinctions (65). For example, she notes that when women appeared in public, their appearances were for the purposes of leisure and consumerism
and notes that women were perceived as “citizen-consumers” (68). This idea bears relevance to Zulema’s use of public space in two important ways. First of all, because she uses public space to work, she is always already in violation of the prescribed role of women in public; and, secondly, because Zulema sells her body, she becomes a kind of commodity, and, therefore, she cannot exist within the prescribed feminine role as a consumer at the same time that she exists as a product, which means that the possibility of being recognized as a “citizen” is also foreclosed because it is so intimately tied to notions of consumerism and femininity.

No Safe Space: The Dangers of Privacy for Migrant Subjects

Interestingly, the film also reveals the ways in which we should also remain skeptical of the protection that privacy supposedly offers, as it illustrates that it is not solely in the realm of the public that Zulema suffers exploitation. In fact, the most severe abuse that she endures comes from a civil servant who abuses her, physically and sexually, in the “sequestered spaces” (Hubbard 60) of her own apartment and of a hotel room. In this way, I argue that the film illustrates Hubbard’s claim that “sexual minorities have too much publicity…but not enough privacy…[in the sense that] they lack the ability to exercise control over those [private] spaces by not being able to exclude others from them” (Hubbard 64); however, the film suggests that this vulnerability is experienced as a result of one’s citizenship status moreso than as a result of one’s position as a “sexual dissident,” as Hubbard claims (51).

In Zulema’s case, because the civil servant who abuses her, as a “First World” white male, subscribes to “liberalism’s…social contract that is gendered, classed and ‘raced’” (O’Connell Davidson 13), he feels that “access to [“Third World’’] women’s
bodies is...one of the ‘natural’ rights that the liberal state must guarantee men” (O’Connell Davidson 13). His belief in this sort of gendered and racialized social contract is evident, as Zulema tells Caye that it is only when she refuses to engage in a sexual relationship with this man that he abuses her. In the scene in which Zulema meets this man in a diner, hoping that he will bring the residence papers that he has continually promised her, he tells her that if she comes back to his home with him, he will show her the papers there. When Zulema refuses to go with him and demands that he show her the papers first, the camera zooms in on his hand, which grabs Zulema’s wrist as she struggles to break free of his grasp. Up until this point in the scene, when the man believed that Zulema would, as usual, agree to a sexual encounter, he appears quite calm. This closeup shot, which occurs immediately after Zulema refuses to leave the diner, suggests that it is Zulema’s refusal to adhere to his conception of her as his mentally and physically submissive plaything that causes him to become violent. In other words, in asserting authority, Zulema threatens his masculinity as well as his social position.

In a later scene, we see a more violent manifestation of this man’s resentment and anger toward Zulema for asserting herself, and this scene, in particular, demonstrates that, for “sexual dissidents” who are also migrants, private spaces do not offer the kind of protection and safety that they offer “sexual dissidents” who are citizens, such as Caye. After the encounter in the diner, Zulema continues to refuse to meet with this man again, but he calls her cell phone as she walks the park and pretends to be a client. He asks her to meet him at a nearby hotel, and she agrees, unaware that this “client” is actually her abuser. The civil servant’s use of wireless space as a means by which to access anonymity in order to exploit Zulema suggests that, as a result of the anonymity inherent
in wireless technological space, this kind of space is not entirely libratory; although this kind of space is boundless in the sense that it lacks walls, it does not only function to allow exploited subjects privacy and anonymity, but it can also function to repress and exploit them because it offers that same sense of privacy and anonymity to those in power.

The cinematography in this scene emphasizes the danger inherent in private spaces for Zulema. As Zulema enters the hotel, the camera, again, films her using a medium shot from behind, and, again, the frame wobbles, as if to suggest an amateur videographer following her into the hotel, heightening the sense that, although she is in private, Zulema is being watched. When she enters the hotel room, the “client” is in the bathroom, but, when he emerges, Zulema and the audience come to the horrific realization that it is actually the civil servant. The camera follows him as he turns up the volume on the television set, which creates an even greater sense of privacy in the room, as no one can hear Zulema as she cries out, and then the camera follows him walking toward the door. At this point, the camera cuts to a shot of the hotel room door from the outside. Because viewers cannot see Zulema anymore, their sense of anxiety as the proximity of danger increases. The camera films the civil servant from in the space of the hallway as he closes the hotel room door and places a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the handle. The camera lingers, momentarily, on this sign, and, as a result, emphasizes the precarious position that Zulema is in precisely as a result of the fact that she inhabits a private space. This scene effectively illustrates Hubbard’s claim that the notion of privacy as synonymous with safety is predicated on the ability to exclude (60); because Zulema does not have the power or recourse to exclude this man from private spaces, such as this
hotel room or even from her own apartment, those spaces offer her no sense of safety or protection and are, thus, not ideal staging grounds for sexual liberation or freedom for “sexual dissidents” who, like her, lack rights as a result of their “illegal” migration to and/or undocumented residence status within the nation-state.

Presumably, it is also not insignificant that Zulema’s primary abuser is a government employee. Through the relationship between Zulema and the civil employee, the film calls attention to the larger power dynamics at play in these scenes. In other words, perhaps this story is not one of a single migrant’s abuse at the hands of a single government employee, but it is the story of the ways in which the governments of most nation-states are deeply implicated in the various forms of abuse that migrants suffer within the national borders of “First World” countries.10

The film also reveals that it is Zulema’s status as a “Third World” migrant woman that forecloses the possibility of protection from private spaces by including a scene that openly addresses the disparate subject positions that Caye and Zulema inhabit. In this scene, Caye and Zulema are seated in a café, after Caye takes Zulema to the hospital to receive medical care after the first time in the film in which the civil servant savagely beats her. The two women are seated at a table, facing each other, and Caye encourages Zulema to report the abuse she has suffered at the hands of the civil servant. Caye claims, “He can’t hit you on anyone else. Press charges.” Zulema’s response – “Not without papers I can’t” – demonstrates that her subject position as a “non-citizen” is not the same as Caye’s, since, apparently, Caye believes that, in the same situation, she would have

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10 I recognize that there are certain dangers inherent in the act of turning a single migrant into a symbol of all migrants and in the act of turning a single government employee into a representation of all nation-states. I simply mean to point out that the film attempts, though problematically, to suggest that the nation-state is not uninvolved in the systematic exploitation of undocumented migrants.
access to a kind of recourse through the state, whereas Zulema knows that she is not protected in this way. In effect, Zulema’s lack of recourse is a result of her spatial position as a “Third World” woman illegally occupying a “First World” space. In this scene, the cinematography emphasizes the women’s disparate subject positions by using the classic shot-reverse shot pattern, in which the camera cuts back and forth between the women, never filming both women within the same frame. The editing in this scene emphasizes the division between the two women’s subject positions, as well as Caye’s understanding of Zulema’s subject position as different from her own.

The film also calls attention to the role that racialization plays in migrants’ exploitation and abuse by Spanish men by demonstrating that Caye suffers exploitation in public and private spaces only when she transforms her physical appearance so that she no longer looks “Spanish.” The scene in which Caye is on a date with Manuel at a nice restaurant demonstrates this reality. This scene opens with a medium shot of Caye from behind, as she walks into the restaurant wearing Zulema’s signature shirt, which reads “Sexy Girl 69” on the back in the style of a sports jersey. Additionally, Caye’s hair is in the braids, which Zulema styled for her. At first, even viewers are not certain that the woman in the frame is Caye, as she appears so much like Zulema, and she is filmed from the back, as Zulema often is filmed. As she finishes her date, the sound of men laughing becomes increasingly audible, and, finally, the camera pans over the other side of the restaurant, from Caye’s position at the table, and focuses on several men who are attempting to get Caye’s attention. The camera pans back to Manuel, as Caye attempts to turn her attention away from these men and ignore them, but the camera, as though Caye’s eyes, constantly pans back to where they sit, and focuses on one man, in
particular, who rudely waves his napkin in Caye’s direction, as if to get her attention. Because the camera films from Caye’s spatial position in the room, viewers also experience her sense of anxiety as she worries that the men will expose her as a prostitute in front of Manuel.

At this point, Caye leaves the public space of the restaurant’s dining room and heads for protection within the private space of the ladies room. As she washes her hands, the camera, again, films her from behind as she looks in the mirror. In the mirror, viewers see the door open and watch the man who waved his napkin enter. Caye is shocked, as he transgresses into this seemingly private space from which, by social custom, he should be excluded. Almost immediately, the man grabs Caye, touching her all over her body. She attempts to push away his hands, but he continues to grab at her. He grabs her hand and thrusts it down his pants as he throws money at her. Over and over, she pleads with him to stop, but he does not. Finally, she recognizes that he will not leave her alone, and she kneels before him to perform oral sex. As a result of the fact that, throughout the rest of the film, viewers never see Caye abused or coerced in this way, I argue that the film attempts to convey, through this scene, that it is as a result of her “foreign” appearance that Caye is abused. In light of Caye’s eventual submission, this scene functions as a kind of embodiment of Zulema’s comment, in the scene in the café after she leaves the hospital, that she eventually gives in to the civil servant’s demand for sex in order to get rid of him. In light of this comment, Caye’s experience in the restaurant suggests that she is, however temporarily, beginning to understand that Zulema’s subject position is not identical to her own.

An Analysis of Bollain’s Flores de Otro Mundo
Social Citizenship and Belonging: Manifestations of Masculinity and Dominance

Conversely, in the same way that Princesas reveals the ways in which Hubbard’s arguments about the nature of space neglect to take into account the “bad woman” who is a literal “non-citizen” (57), Flores de Otro Mundo reveals the ways in which Hubbard’s theorizations also neglect to theorize the “good woman” who is a literal “non-citizen” but is accepted as a member of the nation-state and its community in a kind of social citizenship contract. In this way, the film demonstrates the ways in which, in Hubbard’s theories about space and “sexual dissidents,” he ignores the possibility that “transgressions of sexual ‘dissidents’ into public spaces” do not always “challenge the naturalization of heterosexual norms” (51); instead, some migrant subjects, such as Patricia in the film, strategically perform heteronormatively as a means by which to attempt to acquire a kind of social citizenship. In this way, in conflating so many different subject positions in his analysis of “sexual dissidents,” Hubbard neglects to consider the ways in which specific subjects attempt to access agency even from within a repressive system and strategically perform specific identities in an attempt to secure economic gains or other forms of protection for themselves and for their families.

However, I argue that this kind of strategic performance of a heteronormative gender identity and sexuality is not unproblematic in the sense that, as Eithne Luibhéid notes, “the production of the valorized norm…is intimately tied to the abjection of queers and queerness” (“Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship,” 172). Flores de Otro Mundo extends the premise that public spaces are dangerous for those subjects who do not conform to expectations of heteronormativity to suggest that adherence to these heteronormative sexuality and gender expectations can effectively grant migrant subjects a
kind of social citizenship, even as that adherence simultaneously further represses them. In this way, to be “free” is not so simple as to become “a citizen,” since, as Luibhéid notes, “the regulation of sexuality [is] carried out in tandem with immigration control [which] has also been a central technology for continually reconstructing the nation-state and citizenry within particular [heteronormative] limits” (“Queering Migration and Citizenship,” xxiv).

In this film, a comparative analysis of Patricia and Milady’s spatial positions in Santa Eulalia reveals the ways in which they are accepted or rejected as social citizens, since Patricia is able to access social citizenship through heteronormative behaviors, while Milady is not recognized as a citizen by the community because she does not perform a heteronormative sexuality and/or gender identity. In this way, the film reveals that heteronormativity is a prerequisite to citizenship for migrants and – equally importantly – it reveals that migrants do not always challenge this dynamic but can perform heteronormatively in order to reap the benefits of legal and social citizenship, which further enhances the power of heteronormativity to repress those migrants who challenge it.

Adherence to expectations of heteronormativity is perhaps particularly important to the community of Santa Eulalia in light of the fact that it is continually depicted in the film as slowly dying. The “Singles Party” is only one piece of evidence that demonstrates that the community is struggling to preserve its traditions and its culture and ensure its continued life for future generations. For this reason, the community has a vested interest in the women who participate in community life, as a result of the conventional understanding of women as the bearers of culture who will ensure the continuation of
community rituals and traditions. For this reason, too, the migrant women in the film are seen as particularly threatening to Santa Eulalia’s residents, as they are outsiders who do not possess the cultural knowledge required to ensure the future survival of the village and its heritage. Also, because there is a suspicion among community members that Patricia and Milady have been involved in sex work, they are deemed even more threatening to the community’s heteronormative values.

*Flores de Otro Mundo* takes up the issue of sex tourism more directly than *Princesas*, as Carmelo has actually visited Cuba several times as a sex tourist and cites his pleasurable sexual experiences there with Milady as the primary reason that he decides to move Milady (whom he terms “my Cuban”) to Spain. In his essay on Dominican and Cuban sex workers titled “Selling Sex for Visas: Sex Tourism as a Stepping-stone to International Migration,” Dennis Brennan makes a claim similar to Emily Davis’s claim that self-commodification and agency are not mutually exclusive categories (37) when he states that “[m]arginalized women in a marginalized economy can and do fashion creative strategies to control their economic lives” (168).

Additionally, Brennan states that “the media’s monolithic portrayal of sex workers, such as in Cuba, as passive victims easily lured by the glitter of consumer goods [is alarming]” (155), since, he claims, the reality is that “sex workers [in the Dominican Republic and Cuba] are at once independent and dependent, resourceful and exploited” since these women “try to take advantage of the men who are [in the Caribbean] to take advantage of them” (156). Brennan claims that many of these women make a kind of fantasy bargain in agreeing to move to Europe with their visiting clients in the sense that the women “imagine that foreign men will provide them with material comfort and possibly better
treatment...[and] they expect to trade love and romance for financial security and mobility...[since these relationships] are for residencia, not for amor” (167). In the film, Milady and Patricia exemplify the dichotomies that Brennan discusses: they are at once exploited and exploiting, dependent and independent, disappointed and thrilled with their new subject positions in Spain. However, as a result of Patricia’s heteronormative identity, we are meant to see her, ultimately, as the “good woman” (Hubbard 52), while Milady is depicted as the “bad woman” (Hubbard 52) because she challenges the heteronormative expectations in place in the Spanish community.

Milady imagines that, by migrating, she will improve her social status, but she soon finds her status as an Other reaffirmed as Carmelo and Milady negotiate the boundaries of her subject position in Spain. In this process of negotiations, complications and disagreements become increasingly apparent, and these complications are a direct result of their differing conceptions of the spatial position that Milady inhabits in Spain. The conflicts between Milady and Carmelo reveal the role that neocolonial relations play in their relationship, and the film effectively reverses traditional notions of the “First” and “Third Worlds” to critique the role of these historical relationships in contemporary migrants’ subject position in Spain. Throughout the film, there is a distinct attempt to reverse the connotation of “Third World” to “backward” or “rural” and “First World” to “modern” or “industrialized/urban” by setting the film in the rural community of Santa Eulalia. Almost every other shot in the film is an establishing shot of the still, dull, rural landscape, which suggests a lack of progress and modernity, ideas conventionally associated with the “Third World” and not with a European colonial power.
Milady, in particular, functions to work against the idea of the Caribbean as a pre-modern space. Although she is depicted as homesick at various points in the film, her longing is not for a “simpler” time or place; instead, her homesickness is for a distinctly urban, distinctly modern space. Bored of sitting around the house all day, Milady ventures to Valencia on her own and thoroughly enjoys the freedom of the experience and the urban atmosphere, which is directly contrasted with the rural spaces of Santa Eulalia. In one scene in Valencia, we see Milady dancing in a club to contemporary music, bouncing up and down joyously under a flashing strobe light. Each time that the light illuminates her face, viewers see an expression of pleasure and excitement; she clearly feels comfortable and happy within this distinctly urban space.

When she returns to Santa Eulalia, however, Carmelo beats her severely for leaving, and this scene demonstrates their differing conceptions of Milady’s subject position; Milady sees herself as a modern woman who can move as she pleases, while Carmelo believes that her proper subject position is one of submission and subservience. After hitch-hiking back from Valencia, Oscar, Carmelo’s assistance passes her on his motorcycle as she is walking down the street. He drives her straight to Alfonso’s greenhouse, where Carmelo is working. The camera films Milady, as though from Carmelo’s perspective, using a medium shot as she walks toward the greenhouse. Milady approaches Carmelo and the camera, chattering on about her trip, and she gets so close that the camera is now using a close up shot to film her. Just before her face nearly touches the camera, as though she’s leaning in to kiss Carmelo, we see Carmelo’s fist come around from the right and punch her in the face. He then throws her violently to the
ground and repeatedly punches and kicks her, yelling at her for leaving. Milady is filmed using a high angle here, emphasizing her vulnerability.

The fact that both Milady and the audience are surprised by Carmelo’s sudden attack suggests a distinct discrepancy between the way that Carmelo conceives of Milady’s position and the way that she conceives of her own position. Her initial chattering reveals that she does believe that she has done anything wrong by going to Valencia. Carmelo’s violent response, however, reveals that he sees her leaving as an affront and as a violation of the terms of their arrangement. In this way, there is a fundamental disconnect between their visions of Milady’s position in Spain; while Milady sees herself as a modern woman who can come and go as she pleases, Carmelo believes her rightful position to be one of submission to his will. Milady pushes for additional independence, while Carmelo expects her to inhabit the same subject position that she did in Cuba, which is to say one of dependence and subservience to him as her “patron.”

The conflicts that Carmelo and Milady experience are as a direct result of the fact that Carmelo feels his “right” to her body slipping away from him as she becomes further immersed in the culture of the liberal Spanish state, and he feels threatened as a result of this change. As Martín-Cabrera notes, “the [distinctly colonial] notion that black women possess an excessive, uncontrollable sexuality” (51) functions, for “First World” men, to “unleash a double feeling of terror and fascination,” which is why “on the one hand, [Carmelo] totally fetishizes [Milady’s] body [while] on the other, he is absolutely terrified by her ‘uncontrolled sexuality’” (52). In this way, according to Martín-Cabrera, Milady’s increasingly independent behavior “call[s] [Carmelo’s] masculine power into
question” (52). In light of Martín-Cabrera’s claims about the already sensitive position that Spanish men inhabit with regard to modernity and progress, this kind of “questioning” of Carmelo’s masculinity is particularly unsettling for him as a Spanish male.11

The film also works, in several other scenes, to reverse traditional conceptions of Europe as “modern” and the Caribbean as “backward” or “pre-modern” by juxtaposing the position of Caribbean women to that of Spanish men. Once Patricia and Damían are married, Patricia’s aunt and her two friends come to Santa Eulalia to visit. The scene that depicts their arrival positions the women as modern while it depicts Damían’s home as pre-modern. This scene opens with a fade into a closeup of a chicken, and then pans to a closeup of women’s feet walking carefully through the dirt and hay of a barnyard. The women’s dress shoes and high heels are in stark contrast to the barnyard floor and, as a result, appear out of place. However, this sense of the women as not belonging in the environment is as a result of the fact that they appear urbane and sophisticated while the environment of Damían’s home seems rural and old-fashioned. From the beginning of the scene, viewers hear the women laughing, in a pejorative, though goodnatured, manner at the home in which Patricia lives. One woman says, “What a place. What a stench,” and Patricia’s aunt, Aurora (Chiqui Fernández), asks, “Patricia, where have you taken us?” as if to suggest that the farmhouse in which she lives is something from another world, and

11 Additionally, as a result of the special emphasis traditionally placed on women to be the embodiment of tradition and culture, and the carriers of these things for future generations, Milady’s disobedience is especially disturbing to Carmelo and the community. To them, her disappearance demonstrates that she is not a proper woman, as she cannot be trusted to preserve the community’s traditions, since she cannot be trusted to behave in ways that are sanctioned for women to behave.
the women are shocked by its lack of modernity. In this way, the film is careful to depict the women’s view of the rural farmhouse not as a place of desirable simplicity but as a place that lacks the conveniences and benefits of more urban, more modern spaces.

A later scene during Patricia’s friends’ visit also suggests the women’s modernity as it depicts the “backwardness” of Damían’s home; interestingly, it also reveals the ways in which the wireless space of cellular technology functions to restrict these women who work in the informal economy of domestic service. In this scene, the visitors and Patricia’s family are quietly eating dinner in the kitchen, when Lorna’s (Ángela Herrera) cell phone rings and interrupts the silence. The sound of the cell phone pierces the silence, and Lorna’s loud conversation, seemingly an argument with an employer, depicts her as being, again, out of place within the traditional space of the kitchen during a family meal. In contrast to the traditional dinner, Lorna, talking on her cell phone, seems rude, though she also seems distinctly modern. Interestingly, however, in this scene, Lorna’s conversation with her employer, which is made possible through the wireless technology of the cell phone, reveals the ways in which she is restricted. Because her employer can always reach her, Lorna is never free from the burdens or demands of her employers; even in the remote space of Santa Eulalia, she can be reached.

In the film, Damían and Patricia’s relationship and Milady and Carmelo’s relationship are depicted in contrast to Marrirosi’s relationship with Alfonso. A comparison between the relationship between Milady and Carmelo and the relationship between Marrirosi and Alfonso reveals that, although Milady is depicted as highly modern, Carmelo refuses to treat her as an equal in their partnership, while Alfonso
assumes Marrirosi to be his equal. The film chronicles the relationship between Marrirosi, a Spanish citizen from Bilbao who also participates in the “Singles’ Party,” and Alfonso, another man from the village; their relationship reveals the frustration that, according to O’Connell Davidson, “First World” males’ experience in pursuing relationships with other “First World” women. Marrirosi, like Milady, dislikes the village, and, as a result, she refuses to quit her job in Bilbao to move in with Alfonso. Instead, she insists that he move to Bilbao to be with her. Alfonso repeatedly expresses his frustration with Marrirosi’s refusal to do as he asks. Carmelo even suggests to him several times that the hassle that Spanish women present is not worth the effort and that Alfonso should try visiting Cuba with him to enjoy the pleasures of Cuban women who, he claims, are so anxious to be with European men, that he must “beat them away.” Carmelo is clearly disappointed when Alfonso does not agree to go along to Cuba with him on his next visit, and so Carmelo invites Damían too, who also declines the offer, much to Carmelo’s disappointment. Carmelo’s invitations to his various male friends reveal the ways in which, as O’Connell Davidson claims, “First World” males who travel to the Caribbean for the purposes of sex tourism do not see the women that they meet there as “partners” but only as “play objects shared amongst [men]” (17), which means that these women function as “conduit[s] of a relationship rather than a partner to it” (18). It is this view of “Third World” women as subordinates rather than partners that contributes to their exploitation at the hands of “First World” men.

12 Patton and Sánchez-Eppler claim that when “a body that carries any of many queering marks moves between officially designated spaces – nation, region, metropole, neighborhood, or even culture, gender, religion, disease – intricate realignments of identity, politics, and desire take place” (3). This realignment is especially apparent in an analysis of Milady’s relationship with Carmelo in the sense that Milady experiences this realignment and welcomes it, while Carmelo resents her changing subject and spatial position.
A comparison between Marrirosi and Milady’s subject position also highlights the fact that it is as a result of Milady’s position as “Third World” migrant that prevents her from being able to negotiate with Carmelo for more equitable conditions within their relationship, since we can see that Marrirosi, as a “First World” Spanish citizen, is able to do so. It is as a direct result of the fact that Carmelo does not view Milady as a partner that he does not negotiate with her when conflicts arise in their relationship; he simply orders her to obey his commands. Alfonsso, on the other hand, does negotiate with Marrirosi when conflicts emerge; he cajoles her and offers her the reasons behind his wish for her to move to his village, he flatters her and declares his love, and, in these ways, he reveals his view of her as a partner. In this way, the discrepancy between the ways in which Alfonsso negotiates with Marrirosi and the ways in which Carmelo refuses to negotiate with Milady reveals the ways in which migrants traveling from the “Third” to the “First World” retain certain aspects of their spatial/subject position even as they move, which suggests, again, that geographic space is mobile, as opposed to fixed in time and space. In other words, it is because Carmelo buys into a “‘natural’ hierarchy that is classed, gendered, and raced” (O’Connell Davidson 10) that he refuses to negotiate with Milady on equal terms and, instead, simply makes demands of her and physically abuses her when she does not adhere to his demands. In this way, we can observe O’Connell Davidson’s theory in action: Marrirosi functions as a partner to Alfonsso, while Milady does not function as a partner in Carmelo’s view.

The film also includes additional evidence to suggest that other “First World” subjects perceptually situate the Caribbean women in the film as actively engaged in a “Third World” space, in spite of the fact that they are on European soil, which reveals the
mobility of space and time. A comparison between the way in which Marrirosi and Patricia are treated on the dance floor at the “Singles’ Party” also reveals that the Spanish men subscribe to the kind of social contract that O’Connell Davidson’s theorizes. While the Spanish men dance politely with Marrirosi, when they dance with Patricia, they feel entitled to sexually assault her as they dance. In the second scene in the film in which we see Patricia, she is constantly removing her dance partner’s hands from her buttocks, and he continues to keep placing his hands there in an aggressive manner. She finally becomes fed up and leaves the dance floor angry and upset. Marrirosi’s gravest concern, on the other hand, is simply being bored with the company of the men who invite her to dance. This difference in their experiences reveals that the Spanish men view these women as somehow different enough to merit different treatment.

*The Power of Heteropatriarchy in Conferring Social Citizenship*

Later in the film, in order to reinstate his position of dominance, Carmelo requests that Milady marry him as soon as possible, and I argue that it is as a direct result of her refusal to fully reaffirm her subject position through the heteronormative practice of marriage that she is denied social citizenship in the community. Milady’s exclusion in the village, in comparison to Patricia’s relative acceptance, reveals a dichotomous understanding of motherhood and prostitution on the part of “First World” subjects that seeks to conflate mother/citizen and prostitute/noncitizen. It is as a result of these conflations that migrants who perform heteronormative identities, as Patricia does, are granted social citizenship – which correlates to social life – while migrants who perform dissident sexual and gender identities, as Milady does, are exiled and forced into social death. In other words, as Joy James claims in “Erasing the Spectacle of Racialized
Violence,” “some bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity to idealized models.” As a result of this conformity, James asserts that, for those who conform, “their bodies are allowed greater leeway to be self-policed or policed without physical force” (26) whereas all other non-normative bodies are carefully and continuously “policing by both the state and the dominant castes” (27). I argue that because Patricia adheres to heteronormative expectations, she is able to remain free of the nation-state’s policing, while Milady is not afforded that freedom because she refuses to conform to expectations of heteronormativity.

The scene in which Patricia and Milady first get to know each other, as they are driving to pick up Patricia’s children from school, reveals this discrepant subject position based on adherence to heteronormative sexuality and gender expectations for “Third World” female migrants in the “First World.” The scene opens, as many scenes in the film do, with an establishing shot of an open landscape, comprised only of sparse trees and brown grass, as if to emphasize the isolation of the space. The camera then cuts to inside of the car and films the women using a medium shot, so that both women’s faces are in the shot’s frame simultaneously, as opposed to using a shot-reverse shot pattern, which would film only one of the women at the time. Viewers see them laughing and smiling. From the beginning of the scene, as a result of the cinematography, viewers get the sense that the women have formed a bond, as the shots of the two of them in one frame together stand in contrast to the establishing long shot, which depicts a stark and quiet landscape. As Patricia is driving, Milady asks her if it is difficult to obtain a driver’s license in Spain, and Patricia responds by saying that the process is long and expensive, which is why she has not bothered to obtain a license. Surprised, Milady asks, “You’re
not scared of being caught?” Patricia responds, “No, when they stop me, I say I left my papers at home…I left in a hurry to get my kids.” Apparently, the police allow Patricia to go without further inquiry. The police, in this situation, see Patricia as “innocent” because she fits the mold of the “good citizen” (Hubbard 52), which corresponds to the “good wife and mother” (Hubbard 58), since it is as a result of the fact that Patricia mentions her children that she is spared harassment by the police.

In the next scene, which is set in Patricia’s home, Milady tells Patricia, “Carmelo wants to get married. Only, I wanted to check things out first, to make sure I’m happy, and then decide to get married.” Patricia’s response highlights the ways in which, as O’Connell Davidson claims, “the social contract [of the liberal state] is ‘raced’ as well as gendered” (9); Patricia tells Milady, “That’s fine, if you’re white and the police don’t stop you in the street.” Patricia’s remarks are significant in several ways. First of all, they work as evidence to support Eithne Luibhéid’s assertion that “heteropatriarchy” structures who is policed and who is deemed “normative” (xv). Because Patricia adheres to the heteropatriarchal construction of the family in the liberal nation-state, she is “allowed greater leeway to be self-policed” (James 26). In other words, as Joy James asserts, “some bodies [like Patricia’s] appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex,” which grants them greater freedom from the policing force of the nation-state, while “greater obedience is demanded from those whose…difference [like Milady’s] marks them as aberrational, offensive, or threatening” (26). In this way, as Martín-Cabrera notes, “[w]hile it might appear that the racial profiling practiced by the police in the form of beaurocracy and border patrolling is designed to control the flow of workers so that the market will not
collapse, in fact it also hides a Spanish anxiety about the loss of cultural authenticity” (49). In other words, heteronormativity – or, more accurately, heteropatriarchy -- functions as a means by which Spanish men can reclaim their sense of lost privilege, as it allows them to maintain a position of dominance, while, at the same time, preserving their culture and simultaneously allowing them to participate in a modernizing project.

In this way, the film suggests that sexuality is particularly important category of assimilation, as it allows for the nation-state to minimize the risks associated with migrants. As a result, the nation-state offers migrants a kind of bargain in the sense that it will allow them to have access to the benefits of citizenship – of both the legal and social variety – if they adhere to normative expectations with regard to gender and sexuality. As Luibhéid suggests, “couple relationships provide a technology for the state and its assemblages to manage the risks associated with immigration and to transform legally admitted immigrants into ‘good’ neoliberal citizens” (“Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship,”180), which is why Patricia is deemed non-threatening while Milady is deemed a threat to the community. Additionally, the car scene is particularly significant because it exposes what Luibhéid says is “the long history of how freedom and opportunity for some has generally been purchased at the expense of the many” (“Queering Migration and Citizenship,” xxvi) in the sense that Patricia’s freedom is predicated on Milady’s policing.

Another scene also allows us to observe the ways in which Patricia’s adherence to heteropatriarchical norms affords her a kind of social citizenship, while refusing to meet these expectations in terms of gender and sexuality results in Milady’s social death. When Milady first arrives in Santa Eulalia, several local men discuss her arrival in the
local tavern with the bartender, Aurora, and the men’s defense of Patricia reveals the ways in which motherhood confers a kind of social citizenship on migrants, as long as they attempt to meet heteronormative gender and sexuality expectations by marrying. This scene is set in the local tavern, which functions in the film as the primary gathering space for the residents of the village. They come here to eat, to drink, to socialize, to watch sporting events, and even to purchase goods, as it has a small market within it. Throughout the film, the tavern stands as the marker of acceptance or rejection, a role that is established as soon as Milady arrives in the village.

As Milady exits Carmelo’s car when she first comes to Santa Eulalia, she could not look any more out of place in her surroundings. First of all, she steps out of an old beat up pick up truck wearing oversized sunglasses and a Lycra unitard with an American flag pattern on the legs. The camera uses a long shot as she exits the car so that viewers can see her entire outfit, which stands out against the dull background of the lifeless buildings of the small town. The pick up truck stops directly outside of the tavern, and Milady is shot from the perspective of the people within the tavern looking out the window, as if to suggest, immediately, that there exists a divide between Milady and the residents of the village and that she is being monitored by them as soon as she arrives. As various patrons comment on Milady’s appearance, suggesting that she is attractive and desirable, Aurora states that Milady is “just like Damían’s,” another illustration of Milady’s exclusion from and rejection by the community.

However, interestingly, a local man protests saying, “No, that’s not the same. [Patricia] has kids here, it’s different.” The man’s comments suggest that because Patricia is married and fulfills the role of “mother,” she is somehow different than Milady, whom
they all see as an outsider. In this way, the men accept Patricia as a member of their community and as the kind of “good citizen” that Hubbard theorizes (52) in spite of her position as a “racialized Other” (O’Connell Davidson 5). Hubbard claims that “heterosexuality and patriarchy intertwine to create non-citizens” (57), and he notes that space works as a manifestation of this intertwining to suggest that “these geographies...define the boundaries of sexual citizenship” (59). He cites the fact that “mobility and freedom of female sex workers, lone mothers and single women is emaciated when compared to the mobility of those heterosexual women who fulfill the role of ‘good wife and mother’” (59), and Milady’s rejection in comparison to Patricia’s acceptance illustrates these claims. In this way, the village’s acceptance of Patricia only highlights the function of heteropatriarchy in migrants’ acceptance or rejection by the social community.

Even in the end of the film, we are to understand that Patricia is the model immigrant and that Milady is conniving, greedy, and untrustworthy, which makes her a kind of threat to the community. In the end, Milady “abandons” Carmelo and runs off with his young assistant, Oscar, and then she “abandons” Oscar and runs off alone. Patricia, on the other hand, ultimately remains in the village with her family, diligently playing the role of loyal wife and mother. This comparison between Milady and Patricia’s subject positions within the village suggests that Étienne Balibar is correct to claim that “[citizenship] is not an institution or statute but a collective practice” (qtd. by McNevin 147) in the sense that one’s social acceptance is determined through adherence to the social community’s norms of “decency,” which, for migrants, is always inextricable from norms related to gender, class, race, and sexuality.
Perpetually Others: The Gendering of Migration as Masculine

However, the last scenes in Flores de Otro Mundo hint at the ways in which, though she is accepted as a member of the community, Patricia’s acceptance is always unstable, which demonstrates Luibhéid’s claim that “illegalization (and legalization) is a process, not an essential quality attached to particular human bodies (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status” 292). I argue, calling on Judith Butler and Carla Freeman’s arguments about gender together, that because migrants can never fully adhere to heteropatriarchal norms, they are always doomed to be policed and, thus, both social and legal citizenship are foreclosed possibilities. In other words, female migrants are always deemed “queer” as a result of the fact that, as travelers, women automatically violate conventional “feminine” gender expectations. In this way, even Patricia is ultimately subject to scrutiny and potential rejection by the community, in spite of her efforts to perform heteronormatively.

Judith Butler claims that “[g]ender norms operate by requiring embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond” (231-232). She also suggests that gender is always performed, as opposed to a naturally occurring set of behaviors (236). Additionally, Carla Freeman notes that because globalization has been deemed “masculine,” there is a perception that “globalization is assumed to have pushed women into otherwise masculine realms of travel, migration, and labor” (1017-1018). As a result of this perception of travel as masculine, female migrants are always already “queer” in the sense that they do not and cannot properly perform traditional conceptions of femininity, which are prerequisites to social and legal citizenship in the liberal nation-state. As
Luibhéid claims, heterosexual relationships allow the state to manage threatening bodies, such as those of migrants ("Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship," 180), but because female migrants cannot properly perform femininity, they are never fully able to gain recognition as citizens, since they are always seen as a threat to the norm.

Even Patricia, in spite of her strategic adherence to gender and sexuality norms, is always susceptible to policing and social death, and one of the final scenes in the film highlights this reality. The scene begins with a shot of Damían on his tractor and out in his field with Janay, Patricia’s daughter on her lap. Patricia approaches the tractor and asks to speak to Damían. Patricia confesses to Damían that, although she married him, she was already married to a Dominican man and that, although she wanted to divorce this Dominican man, he ran off, and so she was unable to do so. Now, he is demanding money in return to his silence about their marriage. Damían responds by questioning Patricia’s moral character and suggesting that her deception has put them both at great risk: “You could be deported. Or we could both be thrown in jail…You might as well say that you were a hooker in Madrid!” Damían’s response demonstrates that, as Carla Freeman claims, “autonomy for women is closely associated with accusations of sexual promiscuity” (1018), since, because she travels and is, thus, autonomous, Patricia is deemed suspect because she violates the expectations of dependence and fixity inherent in the female gender role. As a result, Patricia is never fully trusted as an accepted member of the community; in fact, she is never even fully accepted as a “good citizen” within her own home because she can never properly perform the “good wife and mother” role (Hubbard 58). It is because Patricia has traveled extensively that Damían cannot trust her; he questions her femininity by questioning her adherence to the proper
role for a “good woman,” and his accusations about her promiscuity suggest that, in his mind, travel and queerness are always already conflated. In this way, it is impossible for a female migrant subject to perform the requisite normative gender identity and sexuality to qualify for full acceptance by the nation-state or by the social community.

A Discussion of Endings and Departures

In the end of the film, Damían does ask Patricia to stay, and she does, and the fact that she stays is equally as important as the fact that Milady is essentially evicted from this community. The title of the film comes from a conversation between Marrirosi and Alfonso, which occurs in Alfonso’s greenhouse. Marrirosi asks him what kind of flowers is growing in a particular plot, and Alfonso tells her that they are African orchids, which he is growing for the first time. Surprised, Marrirosi asks if he believes that they will grow in Spain’s climate, and Alfonso responds, “With care, anything will grow.” Viewers are meant to understand the exotic flowers as symbolic representations of the Caribbean women in the film – the floras de otro mundo. The film seems to suggest through Patricia and Damían’s reestablished commitment that, in the right relationship, a migrant woman can find happiness and thrive in Spain. However, if we consider Milady’s expulsion in comparison to Patricia’s acceptance, we see that the film also seems to suggest that perhaps these floras de otro mundo do not only need care from their Spanish men, but that these women must take care themselves not to violate the social norms of the community if they hope to thrive there. Because Patricia is careful to marry Damían, pull her weight in terms of household work, and keep a low profile in the community, she is able to thrive in Spain. In Milady’s case, though, because she does not commit to becoming a wife and a mother and because she is flamboyant in her dress and in her
behavior, she suffers social death and is eventually physically, as well as socially, exiled from the community.

Interestingly, the final scene in *Flores de Otro Mundo* depicts Janay’s first Communion in the Catholic church, which suggests that, because Patricia has been accepted by the community, she and her daughter have been granted permission to carry on its cultural rituals and traditions in the conventional mold of the woman as the bearer of culture. Of course, it is likely that Patricia and Janay practiced Catholicism prior to coming to Spain, but the ritualized ceremony of the first Communion is significant in that it embodies the preservation of tradition and culture. In one shot, which is filmed from a high angle, Janay, kneeling in her traditional white dress, accepts the host from the priest. This shot depicts Janay as the ideal Other, doing just as the rituals of the community instruct. Janay demonstrates both her own and her mother’s commitment to tradition and their adherence to cultural norms by taking the host. As a result, her acceptance of the host also demonstrates Patricia’s potential as a Spanish woman, as she proves, in this final scene that not only does she conform to the expectations of the community, but she commits to instilling these traditions in the next generation, thus fulfilling her role as bearer of culture.

The title *Princesas* also functions to reveal the ways in which migration troubles uniform understandings of Others and their spatial/subject positions with the community. The title comes from the scene in which Zulema braids Caye’s hair; Caye tells Zulema that she admires tightrope walkers for their impeccable sense of balance and notes their similarity to princesses, stating that princesses are like tightrope walkers in that they are “so sensitive they can feel the earth moving.” Caye explains, “That’s why they’re dizzy
all the time. They say they’re so sensitive they get sick when away from their kingdoms. They can even die of sadness.” Caye’s words evoke a picture of migrant women, as there is a scene in the film in which a migrant prostitute walks along a railing like a tightrope walker. Additionally, viewers have seen Zulema cry in the phone booth as she talks to her son back home in the Dominican Republic, which suggests that being away from her “kingdom” has been a particularly challenging experience for her. As a result, viewers are intended to see Zulema and the other migrant women in Madrid as tightrope walkers or as princesses in the sense that, as a result of their migration, they have felt the effects of globalization – the various movements of the earth -- quite keenly. These movements have resulted in a sense of confusion (“dizziness”), sadness, and, for Zulema, potential death, as she tests positive for HIV at the end of the film.

However, although the marketing of the film seems to suggest that both Caye and Zulema are the “princesses” to which the title refers, this scene suggests that the women do not inhabit the same spatial/subject position at all, but this discrepancy does not preclude them from forming a bond and an alliance. In fact, Caye even says that she is not at all like a tightrope walker or a princess because she has a terrible sense of balance; she says that she admires tightrope walkers’ ability to maintain a sense of balance precisely because she cannot maintain a sense of balance herself. In this way, the scene emphasizes that Caye admires Zulema’s abilities to deal with the difficult position that she inhabits in Spain, away from her family and her home and working in an environment in which she is exploited as a result of her lack of residence papers. Importantly, the cinematography emphasizes this discrepancy in the women’s positions, as the camera films Caye and Zulema using closeups a shot-reverse shot pattern in this scene so that
both women’s faces never inhabit the frame simultaneously. Additionally, the scene also suggests that Caye inhabits a more privileged position than Zulema through the fact that, as they have this conversation, Caye sits in a chair, smoking, while Zulema stands, braiding Caye’s hair. This spatial arrangement mirrors that of worker/patron, with Caye functioning as the patron while Zulema is the worker.

Finally, in one of the last scenes in the film, after Zulema discovers that she has HIV, she leaves Spain to return to the Dominican Republic to be with her son. Caye’s reaction to Zulema’s departure at the airport reveals that, again, Caye does not see herself and Zulema as being the same; however, the scene also reveals that she sees Zulema as having a kind of power even from within her unprivileged subject position, which suggests the possibilities for alliances that are not necessarily based on shared subject positions but, instead, on mutual understanding and admiration. After Zulema boards her plane, Caye approaches airport security officers and says, “My friend. She’s leaving because she wants to. No one is kicking her out. She wants to be with her son.” These lines reveal that Caye recognizes that while Zulema does not have control over many of the facets of her life as a female undocumented migrant, she is not entirely without power, and Caye admires Zulema’s ability to attempt to take control of her life in spite of the various repressive and exploitative factors at work in Madrid that make accessing agency a challenge for Zulema.

A Safe “Sex Zone”?

Phil Hubbard theorizes the concept of a “sex zone” that serves as a potentially liberatory space that functions as an “ephemeral site of freedom and control which could be used to create fleeting but transitory identifications out of which new identities and
citizenships could emerge” (Hubbard 66). Hubbard claims that this space of freedom is predicated on exploited subjects’ ability to exclude others from it. In Princesas, this “sex zone” is the beauty salon in which the prostitutes regularly gather to socialize. However, again, Hubbard’s arguments about space neglect to account for the citizenship status, class positions, and racial identities of the “sexual dissidents” who may inhabit this kind of space, however temporarily, and, as a result of this omission, he is not able to see the problems inherent in the creation of this supposedly “free” space. An analysis of the beauty salon reveals these problems.

While the beauty salon does function as a “space that sexual dissidents are able to control on their own terms…in which the views of sexual dissidents could be freely articulated and in which their identities could be freely performed” (Hubbard 66-67), the fact that they maintain exclusionary powers within that space does not create the kind of safe space that Hubbard claims. Within the simultaneously public and private sphere of the salon, the women “articulate their needs and desires in a safe and pleasurable environment” (Hubbard 68), and, based on the fact that Zulema – initially seen as an outsider by the Spanish prostitutes – is only permitted to enter this space as a result of the Spanish prostitutes’ consent, we can see that, in this space, the women can “exclude those whose presence threatens the control and freedom which inhabitants exercise over their own sexual performances” (Hubbard 68). In the salon, though, we can also see the way in which Hubbard’s idealized notion of a free space is, in fact, “a utopian prognosis” (Hubbard 67) if we consider who still remains outside the protective walls of this private space – who suffers the exclusion of those within the sanctum. The women do not only “exclude those whose presence threatens the control and freedom which inhabitants
exercise” (Hubbard 68), such as the police or those citizens seeking to promote “public decency” (Hubbard 65), but the women also exclude the other prostitutes who do not enjoy the privileges of citizenship or the benefits of befriending someone who does. In this way, the exclusion of foreign-born “sexual dissidents” reveals the shortcomings of Hubbard’s “sex zone.” Though the “sex zone” provides protection and safety to some, it does so at the expense of others – namely, those who are Others as a result of their race, class, and citizenship status -- which undermines any real attempt at creating a space in which “new citizenships based on sexual respect, intimacy and egalitarianism might ultimately emerge” (Hubbard 68).

Similarly, Patricia’s creation of a heteronormative home and family life might also meet Hubbard’s definition of the “sex zone” as a result of the fact that she is able to “exclude those whose presence threatens the control and freedom which she exercise[s]” (Hubbard 68) within that space; however, ultimately, just as the salon functions to exclude those who are deemed Others in Princesas, so does Patricia’s household in Flores de Otro Mundo. Throughout the film, Patricia’s mother-in-law, who lives with Damían and Patricia, criticizes Patricia by demeaning the way that she cooks, the way that she dresses, and the way that she raises her children. The mother-in-law even tells Patricia that her family is not welcome in their home. Damían, however, defends Patricia, and he tells his mother that Patricia has the right to invite her family to visit and to invite them to stay in her home. If his mother objects to this arrangement, Damían tells her that she must leave their house. In this way, Patricia is able to exercise control over the home space. However, Patricia’s control over this space comes at the price of Milady’s power to exercise control. Damían defends Patricia precisely because Patricia conforms in every
other way to the heteronormative expectations of the household and of the community –
she does her household chores (shopping, cleaning, child-rearing), and she obeys her husband’s wishes and orders. Milady, on the other hand, refuses to conform to these expectations and she is, thus, forcibly excluded from the community and even from Patricia’s household. Although Damían permits Patricia to invite her family over, he does not permit her to invite Milady to come to the house. In this way, Patricia’s home also functions, as the salon does, to exclude those who are already marginalized as a result of their “deviant” behavior.

In this sense, Hubbard’s “sex zone” only continues to advocate for the same people that the supposedly freeing liberal state does: those who are already privileged as a result of their race, class, and citizenship status, if not as a result of their sexual behavior. This point gets at the most troubling part of Hubbard’s arguments, which is a common problem in citizenship and migration scholarship: he neglects to note that being a “sexual dissident” carries varying consequences dependent on a myriad of others factors, and in conflating “figures as diverse as the single mother, the prostitute, the cyber-stalker, the errant father, the spinster, the pervert and the pornographer (not to mention lesbians, bisexuals and gays)” he theorizes “sexual dissidents” not as individuals with complex identities and varied experiences but as a single unified, monolithic symbol of oppression or exploitation. The problem with symbols, of course, is that at the same time that their imaginary nature serves as a rallying point for a number of minority groups and, thus, carries the potential for a powerful resistance movement for these marginalized groups, this kind of strategic essentialism also re-inscribes the very hierarchy of the liberal state, which it supposedly works against. By effacing the unique
subject positions of individuals and groups, strategic essentialism runs the intolerable risk that the unique needs of those individuals or groups who are most dispossessed are likely to remain unmet.

Neocolonial Relations at Work in Modern Spain and the Necessity of Theorizing Complex Identities: Effacing the “View from Nowhere” and the “View from Everywhere” and Problematizing Strategic Essentialism

These films effectively demonstrate Luibhéid’s claim that we must “analyze these status distinctions [between various migrants] as outcomes of contingent, changing relations of power, including sexuality (which is often framed through a discourse of family) as it intersects with hierarchies of race, gender, class, and geopolitics” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status” 289). As I have argued, historical, geopolitical relations play a large part in shaping the ways in which “Third World” female migrants are received and treated by “First World” males, which suggests that we must continue to “historicize how and why unauthorized migration occurs in relation to larger structural factors” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status” 289), as opposed to simply continuing to assume that “undocumented immigration and immigrant illegality [are] separated from larger structural processes and long histories of inequality, and are instead individualized” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status” 291).

As Saskia Sassen also insists, we must recognize “those processes binding countries of emigration and immigration” in order to recognize that “major immigration countries are not passive bystanders in their immigration histories” (“Globalization and
Its Discontents” xxxi) but that, in fact, “[i]mmigration is at least partly an outcome of the actions of the governments and major private economic actors in receiving countries…[which] tend to get immigrants from their zones of influence…[reflecting] older colonial patterns” (“Globalization and Its Discontents” 8). In light of these findings, Sassen also problematizes the “strong tendency in immigration policy in developed countries to reduce the process to the actions of individuals” and to focus on “the individual…[as] the site for accountability and for enforcement” (“Globalization and Its Discontents” 8).

I hope that my analysis demonstrates the value in attending to both the particular migrant and to the larger structural and geopolitical frameworks within which she exists. The films call attention to the role of the state in formations of migrants’ subject positions and the importance of “other variables [such as race, class, gender, and geopolitics] [which] intersect with sexuality to produce complex possibilities of exclusion and admission” (“Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status” 295). As I have argued, it is only through an analysis of these categories as intersecting and overlapping factors that we can make visible the ways in which they work together to constitute a body, which can be included or excluded from the European nation-state, depending on the pattern of identity that emerges as a result of these intersections.

Additionally, the films reveal that the consequences of the kind of conflation that Phil Hubbard, among other scholars, engages in suggests that we must remain critical of Spivak’s notion of strategic essentialism, since, as it effaces difference in the service of coalition-building, it also serves to re-inscribe the very hierarchies that it seeks to destroy.
In this way, the films problematize the idea of the “view from nowhere” – as well as the “view from everywhere” -- and insist on locating migrants within distinct, individual subject positions and refuse to compromise this position in the service of an essentializing project. Donna Haraway offers a convincing explanation of the value in situating subjects, as opposed to “the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere” (678). Haraway’s claims that “only partial perspective promises objective vision” (678). Just as strategic essentialism’s proponents defend the temporary effacement of difference in order to bring about solidarity for the larger purposes of social action, “partial, locatable, critical knowledges [also] sustain the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity” (Haraway 680), though without the dangerous side effects that inevitably result whenever we efface difference. These four films reveal that individuals do not necessarily need to inhabit the same spaces in order to form alliances, and I hope that my analyses suggest that we, as scholars, need not theorize all Others as inhabiting the same subject positions in order to critique the various forms of repression and of exploitation that they face. In fact, as I hope that I have demonstrated, attending to the complexities of particular subjects’ positions often yields more productive forms of analysis. Luibhéid claims that “the immigration control apparatus [is] a crucial target for queer intervention because it significantly regulates sexuality and reproduces oppressive sexual norms that are gendered, raced, and classed” (“Queering Migration and Citizenship,” x), and, in this statement, he calls our attention to the necessity of situating knowledge and subjectivity – if we do not situate these things, we cannot theorize the ways in which oppression functions differently in different spaces and for different subjects, and it is only through
this kind of theorization that substantial, meaningful change can be enacted and maintained.
Concluding Remarks

My argument for rejecting strategic essentialism as a means through which to form resistance coalitions from below is grounded in the belief that perhaps the greatest loss in terms of what is obscured by strategic essentialism is the syncretism that is an inherent part of cultures and particular relationships in a globalized world. I believe that it is not necessary to efface differences in the service of coalitionism because it is more effective to highlight overlapping cultural experiences, traditions, histories, exploitations, abuses, effacements, and developments. For example, in the films I discuss, each of the characters who exists as an Other in England or in Spain forms coalitions with those people who are also exploited by the nation-state or by the forces of globalized capitalism. These subjects come together to form bonds and alliances by recognizing not only what they have in common but also what makes their subject positions different. For example, in *Dirty Pretty Things*, Okwe recognizes that Senay’s position as a female migrant places her in a different subject position than his own, and Guo Yi, a “certified refugee,” recognizes that Okwe’s position as an undocumented migrant means that they do not inhabit the same space within London. However, these characters come together in order to form a resistance coalition. An analysis of their varying subject positions, though, reveals the ways in which gender, race, and citizenship status are intimately bound up in migrant subjects’ ability to access agency. Similarly, in *Princesas*, Zulema and Caye bond as a consequence of their status as sex workers, but Caye recognizes that as a result of Zulema’s race and citizenship status, she is susceptible to additional forms of exploitation and abuse, and an analysis of the differences in these characters’ positions reveals the function of neocolonialism in the lives of migrant subjects.
In other words, I believe that the future of migration studies, citizenship scholarship, and globalization theorization rests primarily on our willingness to acknowledge syncretic cultural forms and strategic particular and group alliances. This kind of acknowledgement of similarities within differences will effectively allow scholars to transgress the seemingly oppositional dichotomies from within which literature and film in a postcolonial context is traditionally read and taught – center versus periphery, local versus global, national versus cosmopolitan, personal versus political, individual versus collectivity, native versus foreign – and in doing so, allows for a framework through which scholars can recognize the overlapping yet distinct subject positions of particular migrants.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of this sort of nuanced analysis is that it allows us to recognize the various ways in which disenfranchised, marginalized, and exploited peoples are not simply victims but are also agents who resist and transform these forces in myriad ways, one of which is to form alliances based on mutual understandings of disparate subject positions. I do not believe that this kind of acknowledgement of agency will necessarily obscure unequal relations of power if we are attentive to the inequities as we explore them, as scholars such as Eithne Luibhéid, Saskia Sassen, Carla Freeman, Julia O’Connell Davidson, Emily Davis, Luis Martín-Cabrera, and many others have already demonstrated is both certainly possible and extremely productive.
Works Cited


