

The Commodified Body and Post/In Human Subjectivities in Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* and Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*

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Volume 21 Issue 1 (March 2019) Article 6**Rocío Carrasco****"The Commodified Body and Post/In Human Subjectivities in Frears' s *Dirty Pretty Things* and Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol21/iss1/6>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 21.1 (2019)**Special Issue ***Gendered Bodies in Transit: Between Vulnerability and Resistance***. Ed. **Manuela Coppola and Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol21/iss1/>>

Abstract: Following new materialist analysis, this article takes the body as the central locus of analysis, and relates it to broader questions such as ethics, ideology, power and/or technologies. Specifically, it revolves around the idea of embodied subjectivity as articulated by scholars Rosi Braidotti, Sherryl Vint or Cary Wolfe, whereby body and subjectivity are indissolubly and interestingly connected. Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) exploit the idea of the commodified body, understood here as a vulnerable body, a disposable commodity at the service of powerful and/or wealthy people. Victims of the cruelties inflicted on their bodies by advanced capitalist societies, the main characters in these movies are considered as alien, marginal and/or non-human beings. Their body organs are but commodities to be literally traded and removed to be given to the privileged ones in order to preserve the latter's integrity and "humanity". These commodified subjects do not construct a "liveable" sense of the self in the face of multiplicity, ambivalence, contradiction, inequalities and oppression, as materialist feminism advocate, but remain, however, on a marginal side. As this article sets up to contend, both movies denounce the commodification of the body or "life" trading by positioning viewers on the side of the marginal, allowing us to become part of the post/in human experience. Hence, *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Never Let Me Go* offer instances of commodified beings whose fears, pains, vulnerabilities, thoughts and feelings are available to mass audiences. In this sense, the immigrant/illegal/artificial/exploited body becomes a repository of the characters' troubled subjectivities, allowing spectators to situate themselves and reflect upon the intricacies of contemporary ideologies upon certain bodily practices. The body becomes, then, a valid tool for criticism that connects to current understandings of power and subjectivity.

Rocío CARRASCO

The Commodified Body and Post/In Human Subjectivities in Frears' s *Dirty Pretty Things* and Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*

This paper reads Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) as meditations on how alternative/marginal bodies are privileged sites for contesting—or at least interrogating—assumed and discriminatory hierarchies. By focusing on the commodified body, these films articulate anxieties that bodily practices like organ transplantation and cloning may evoke for contemporary audiences, while addressing broader questions such as ethics, ideology, power and/or technologies. The idea of embodied subjectivity articulated by critical thinkers like Rosi Braidotti, Sherryl Vint or Stefan Herbrechter, whereby body and subjectivity are indissolubly and interestingly connected, becomes useful for the present analysis.

Released in the 21st century, Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) and Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) develop the idea of the commodified body, understood here as a vulnerable body, a disposable product at the service of powerful and/or wealthy people. Victims of the cruelties inflicted on their bodies by advanced capitalist societies, the main characters in these movies are considered as alien, marginal and/or non-human beings. Their body organs are but commodities to be literally traded and removed to be given to the privileged ones in order to preserve the latter's integrity and "humanity". Organ trafficking or donations both result in physical problems and social stigmatization for givers, who are inevitably positioned as secondary citizens. These commodified bodies remain, then, marginal. Yet, and as contended here, this depiction of embodied otherness also offers a space for critical reflection and thought of the cruelties inflicted upon certain bodies by a greedy capitalism, further encouraging a multifaceted understanding of the subject as an autonomous self that does not conform to any pre-established rule. As these films show, there is an urgent need to erase old beliefs that used to privilege certain bodies (namely white, heterosexual, male) over others.

The films under discussion do not adjust to recognizable forms of filmmaking and, instead, make use of genre hybridity (social realism/thriller in the case of *Dirty Pretty Things*, and drama/science fiction in *Never Let Me Go*), which favors new types of identification on the part of spectators. Both visual texts can be considered as bioethics narratives since they deal with contemporary issues that affect our subjectivities like the ethics of cloning or the illegal organ trade, urging spectators to find new mappings for our bodies. As stated above, both movies criticize—albeit in different ways—the commodification of the body or "life" trading by positioning viewers on the side of the marginal, allowing us to become part of the post/in human experience. *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Never Let Me Go* offer instances of commodified beings whose fears, pains, vulnerabilities, thoughts and feelings are available to mass audiences. In this sense, the immigrant/illegal/artificial/exploited body becomes a repository of the characters' troubled subjectivities, allowing spectators to situate themselves and reflect upon the intricacies of contemporary ideologies upon certain bodily practices.

As a theoretical framework, my work engages with critical posthumanism and considers the commodified body as a valid tool for criticism that connects to current understandings of power and subjectivity. According to the old binary logic of Humanism, the two figurations of the commodified body proposed here—the marginal body and the artificial body—are considered as "others". In general terms, critical posthuman theory aims at breaking with dualisms and, as Herbrechter affirms, the posthuman body

makes the body omnipresent but increasingly hybridized, mediated and consumptional form, which corresponds to a fragmentation and dynamization of the body after the end of the myth of unity and identity between body and body image, or the body as a given, presupposed as either abject or sacred, untouchable physical-biological entity. (Herbrechter 99)

In *The Posthuman* (2013), Braidotti calls for a new vision of the subject that is "worthy of the present", denouncing the commodification of certain bodies by advanced capitalist societies: "these are the sexualized, racialized and naturalized others, who are reduced to less than human status of disposable bodies. We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others." (15) The belief that some humans are more "mortal" than others—which is pivotal in the two films under discussion here—has been forced upon us by the cultural imaginary. It is important, therefore, to do media critique, or, in Braidotti's words, to "detox" our world from false assumptions. The so-called "others" need to be

taken as powerful and alternative subject positions rather than as markers of exclusion and marginality. To this end, Braidotti proposes critical posthumanism.

Especially important to the discussion of posthuman subjectivity in these films is Braidotti's argument on the biogenetic structure of contemporary advanced capitalism. Our globalized world blurs the boundaries between human, other species and earth, yet in an all-consuming "commodification of life". She gives some examples of this inconsistent notion of posthumanism: the Human Genome Project, stem cell research and biotechnological interventions into animals, plants, seeds and cells, among others. This postanthropocentric hybridization offers, then, oppressive power relations:

Advanced capitalism both invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives. This context produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of the market forces that happily trade on Life itself. (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 59)

According to Braidotti's argument, the global economy is postanthropocentric because it blurs boundaries between humans, seeds and bacteria in its search of profit, aiming then at controlling and exploiting the generative powers of women, animals, plants, genes and cells. In order to contest this, Braidotti makes a call for a "postanthropocentric posthumanism", and considers the bodies of "others" as key agents for political and ethical transformation (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory* 139). This is what she names "the ethics of transformation or becoming".

The commodification of life by biogenetic advanced capitalism is, however, a complex affair, which makes us ask what happens to subjectivity in this field of data flows. It is vital, therefore, to understand the subject and its desires. Precisely, the posthuman theory as postulated by Braidotti aims at experimenting with what bio-technologically mediated bodies are capable of doing (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 61).

In this sense, the films examined here propose instances of how inhuman or posthuman subjectivities might be, taking into account how organ "donors" are conscious of their marginal and vulnerable position as commodities for trade and profit, and how it is precisely this consideration of marginality that the films aim at denouncing. As will be illustrated below, while in *Dirty Pretty Things* the characters manage to merge into the capitalist system that has excluded them in order to challenge it, clones in *Never Let Me Go* do not offer subversion to the system but assume their pre-ordered lives. In any case, their invisible and marginal bodies speak about the intricacies of our globalized world, asking spectators to find solutions for the ethical dilemmas they propose and ask them to construct a sustainable future.

In order to articulate the analysis of the commodified body as depicted on screen, this paper is divided in two parts. The first one considers the marginal body—developed in *Dirty Pretty Things*—and the second one deals with the artificial body—represented in *Never Let Me Go*. Both films are taken as portrayals of an embodied subjectivity which urges audiences to think about what it means to be human, and to find new and more inclusive ways of considering the bodies which do not adjust to the classical humanist category, or do not fit into standardized notions of it.

Hence, first I will deal with the marginal body, understood as what is subjected to political and socio-economic abuses sustained by hierarchies based on power that affect subjectivities. As will be contended, Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* makes use of several strategies in order to criticize the marginalization of the immigrant/exploited body in an urban workplace. Thus, the film subverts the usual position, mainly by focusing on the characters' subjectivities, allowing viewers to share with them their inhuman experience as victims of greedy capitalism. Then, I will analyze the other articulation of commodification proposed here: the artificial body. In Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010), very much in the same way as in *Dirty Pretty Things*, manipulated bodies—or clones—are in vulnerable position, as they cannot cope with the environment they have been placed, while their consumers (wealthy and/or powerful people who purchase their organs) are made imperious to pain, damage, ageing, or loss of health. Therefore, the artificial body can be defined here as a genetically manipulated/created body with a human-like appearance whose only purpose for existing is to endure a privileged human existence and avoid its physical pain, disease, suffering and/or ageing.

As shown in both films, it is precisely the exploration of an embodied subjectivity that does not conform to the humanist standard of a "coherent" self what urges audiences to find new ways of re-organizing the world we live in and consider ethical, inclusive and sustainable alternatives.

The protagonists of Frears's film are undocumented people living in a foreign place—London—that oppresses them, and their bodies are considered as vulnerable and ripe for exploitation. They become marginalized, or more "mortal" than others, if we follow Braidotti's ideas delineated above. Okwe (Ejiofor) is one of the many illegal immigrants working in London. He is originally from Nigeria and

works as a cab driver in the morning and as a receptionist at the Baltic hotel at nights. Senay (Tautou) is a young Turkish woman seeking asylum in London while waiting for the legalization of her papers. Both become the objects of exploitation and their bodies are taken as disposable commodities at the service of a rampant voracious capitalism. The manager of the Baltic Hotel, Señor Juan (López), is the visible head of this oppressive system as he takes advantage of their desperate situation to sustain a business that he claims to be based on happiness, although it is depicted as cruel, exploitative and unjust.

Thus, the film tells how illegal immigrants living in London become trapped in the black market of human organs, whereby they are given forged passports and artificial identities in exchange for their organs, namely their kidneys. Their marginal and exploited bodies are but commodities of life for capital, and their organs are considered as objects to be sold, exchanged and used by the wealthy. As the film develops, we learn how, out of desperation, these characters accept the humiliating rules of the illegal organ trade, just to eventually cheat the system that oppresses them and achieve their goals at the end of the movie: to get a legal identity that would allow them to flee London and become visible and/or "tolerated" beings. Thus, in order to be rendered documented human beings, the film's protagonists must comply with bodily practices that regard them as non-human, disposable, and/or vulnerable, troubling their subjectivities.

This alienated version of the body as depicted in the film becomes a tool for social, economical, political and ethical criticism. The film offers recurrent images of the marginal body, together with its parts or organs, that expresses the "state of exception" in which we are currently living. Larissa Lai analyzes Frears's film in these terms, arguing that the "the mass of humanity has been fragmented into a mass of labor power and body parts" (Lai 69). Accordingly, undocumented workers are denied coherent subjectivity, but are given agency only as a collection of organs or skills (69). Thus, certain human organs enjoy privileges that undocumented people as a whole do not, and, "insofar as those without papers have skills, those skills are extractable for their use value." Lai stresses the importance of body parts at the expense of the "bodily whole" (70). Indeed, and as it was delineated above, the organs of the marginal body are regarded as commodities to be sold and bought by the wealthy, leaving subjectivities affected and troubled.

As I have argued, the marginal body is depicted in the film as fractured and fragmented, as are the protagonists' subjectivities. The idea of an embodied subjectivity as defended by materialist analysis implies an intimate interconnection between body and subjectivity. *Dirty Pretty Things* takes up this idea of embodied subjectivity and includes social critique. The importance of the corporeal for understanding a marginal subjectivity is partly supported by Frears's cinematography. We get recurrent close-ups of the characters' suffering faces when their bodies are being exploited or objectified by the forces of advanced capitalism. Likewise, and in order to support the idea of annihilation of the immigrant body, wounded body parts and scars are visually linked to the oppressive situation they are living, a link reinforced by dark shots and a *mise-en-scène* that stresses dirt and unhealthy living conditions of an unknown part of London.

In an anticipation of what the movie intends to denounce, we get an intriguing sequence at the beginning in which the protagonist Okwe finds a human heart in the toilet of a room at the hotel he works at night. Although he has no legal permission to work as such, Okwe is a doctor and therefore knows human anatomy. Adopting the role of protector at all times, he helps the diseased/wounded bodies of the people he meets and gets medicine for them. Precisely because of his expertise, he is asked to take part in the organ trade business by working as an illegal surgeon. He finally accepts and agrees to operate on Senay before "she gets butchered." The outcome is that Señor Juan's kidney is removed and sold by a team of marginal bodies. The sequence showing the real operation employs recurrent close-ups of the surgical procedures, what reinforces Lai's argument that the provision of spare body parts is a continuation of "abject service," but a service that is beyond consciousness, intention or coercion as "one cannot be coerced into growing a kidney in the same way that one can be coerced into underpaid piece of work or the provision of sexual services" (Lai 71).

Senay is depicted as a double victim, and her body is a commodity in two senses. Apart from being dehumanized by the miserable employment options available to her (which leads her to consider to sell her kidney), she also becomes the object of sexual abuse. She is most of the time depicted as silent and passive, and the marginality of her body is visually reinforced by recurrent close-ups of her eyes, reflecting her deep sadness. Jenny Wills analyses the character of Senay, arguing that the fragmentation and corporeality of the illegal alien body is suggested by the film's excessive focus on her eyes through framing and camera angle and by the absence of her hands on screen. This fragmentation depicts the

social, psychological and political character of her exile. Wills argues that it is only when the subaltern rejects her status as an industrial slave when her working hands are visually in the film, mainly in the final sequence showing the surgery. Yet, there are some instances of resistance as, for example, when she bites her employer/sexual perpetrator after she is forced to perform oral sex on him. It is at these moments when she is granted subjectivity. As Wills contends, "the fragmentation of Senay's migrant body implies the destabilized nature of her character—liminal between nationalities, ethnicities, and identities" (Wills 123). Senay's objectified body is also suggested by the gaze: the hotel security camera records her, and other hotel workers, which implies that theirs are alienated bodies, controlled and subjected at all times by the forces of advanced capitalism.

In spite of the film's association of the marginal body with a troubled subjectivity, it also offers some subversive acts which may eventually lead to satisfaction for audiences, as the villain—a white body belonging to the "privileged" class—is finally defeated by marginal bodies that, making use of survival strategies, manage to deceive the system. Owke and Senay use the organ trade to their own advantage and punish their immediate oppressor with his own medicine. In this regard, Shital Pravinchandra argues, "viewers have the risk of becoming complicit in the immoralities of the very capitalism that the film seeks to critique. (Pravinchandra 38). Yet, despite this apparent paradox, I believe the film seeks to give brief agency to the marginal body, by allowing the invisible people to act in the search of their own justice. The subversive nature of this behavior is also pointed out by Rachel Stein, who sees it as a resistance of a form of biocolonialism: "the film presents the immigrants' cleverly strategic teamwork to successfully subvert the organ exchange for their own ends, emphasizing the intelligent agency of third world characters who resist the powerful tide of biocolonialism" (Stein 111).

Thus, the film focuses on the marginal body as a site of resistance, leaving viewers with a more complex understanding of post/in human subjectivities. In this sense, we could refer to Butler's notion of vulnerability, which she uses to theorize how the subject is constituted through social norms and relation to others. In *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016), Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay revisit the notion of vulnerability and relate it to practices of resistance. They describe possible strategies of bodily resistance that do not deny forms of vulnerability, such as practices of self-defense, hunger strikes, transgressive enactments of solidarity and mourning, etc. In this volume, Butler contends that the vulnerability to dispossession, poverty, insecurity, and harm that constitutes a precarious position in the world itself leads to resistance (12). Similarly, Senay is first depicted as vulnerable but later in the film, she manages to overcome that vulnerability, provisionally, through acts of resistance, which include the manipulation of the oppressive system for the sake of her own survival. We can appreciate an evolution of the character of Senay from a marginal position to resistance, within the limits of vulnerability.

Some scholars (Lai, Benito, Pravinchandra) have analyzed the movie in line with Giorgio Agamben's ideas on the body as exposed in his well-known *Homo Sacer* (1998), or sacred man. They ground their arguments in the way these alienated characters are forced to transform their bodies from *zoe* (the simple fact of living) to *bios* (a form of living proper to an individual who legitimately inhabits a sphere of political governance or polis). Lai, for instance, affirms that *zoe* belongs outside citizenship, in an abject and constantly violated state of exception that makes the legal world and the life of the national subject—*bios*—possible. The film is, therefore, a "harsh critique of the limits of citizenship, with all its racial and class biases extended to the global within the local, or the empire coming home" (Lai 72). In a similar way, but focusing on the idea of hospitality, Jesús Benito also deals with the idea of transforming the individual from *bios* to *zoe*: "the commodification of hospitality represented by the hotel and its devious manager runs parallel to the desecration of the body of the other (...), and to the transformation of the individual from *bios* to *zoe*" (Benito, "Hospitality Across the Atlantic" (214). Hence, it follows that hospitality is displaced from the national space and relocated at the body, mainly in the form of scars (214). The invisible migrants "can only achieve completion and presence by first accepting their perpetual incompleteness, both social and biological" (Benito 215). Once again, the body is understood as a commercial transaction. This same idea is taken up by Pravinchandra when she argues that in the film the organ is an alienated component of *zoe* whose worth is measured in monetary value. The kidney extends the *zoe* of its wealthy buyer and ascribes *bios* to its seller ("Hospitality for Sale" 40). She relies on the concept of "biological hospitality" to argue that the kidney commodifies a form of hospitality best described as biological.

Nevertheless, and according to Braidotti's proposal of an optimistic and vitalistic politics, the productive force of *zoe*, or life in its inhuman aspects, should be privileged in order to contest the arrogance of anthropocentrism (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 139). In this search for a non-opportunistic

form of post-anthropocentrism, "the bodies of others become simultaneously disposable commodities and also decisive agents for political and ethical transformation" (139). This is, I believe, the film's final message, an urge to understand and accept the subject in all its aspects and give it the necessary agency to contest power from its otherness. Thus, the emphasis on this marginal corporeality speaks both about the characters' troubled subjectivities and about the social and economic character forces governing some globalized cultures. By positioning on the side of marginal, the film criticizes these practices, advocating for a return to *zoe* in Braidotti's terms, that is, "the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself" ("Posthuman" 201)

In short, *Dirty Pretty Things* makes a social and cultural critical commentary through the marginal body, which is taken as an exploited and controlled resource and whose organs contribute to the spread of a globalized "healthier" nation. Viewers react to this unjust reality and look for other options on the margins of hierarchies. As I will argue in the next section, the posthuman as articulated by materialist thinkers stands as an alternative to Agamben's notion of *zoe*, opening up a field of resistance, transformation and inclusion.

In *Never Let Me Go* (2010), a film based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro with the same title, the 28-year-old main protagonist—Kathy H. (Mulligan)—narrates the story of her life before turning into a "donor." We get to discover how Kathy, like all the other children she met at what seemed to be an orphanage (Hailsham), have been bred and groomed to give up body organs to sick and dying humans. The film centers on the intimate relationship she has with two other "students"—Tommy (Garfield) and Ruth (Knightley)—throughout their pre-ordered lives at different institutions (Hailsham school, the so-called Cottages and the Recovery Centers). Specifically, the relationship they have with their oppressive environment and how it is linked to the values that sustain the capitalist societies they inhabit make them vulnerable and marginal. This context is fairly similar to *Dirty Pretty Things*, as rich and powerful people (which paradoxically we do not get to see much in the movies) make use of commodified bodies to provide replacement organs in case they suffer illness or disease, or just to avoid ageing. Indeed, in both texts, the characters' non-human status is used by the people in control as the main argument for their manipulation, marginalization and exploitation. Their bodies are considered as disposable objects, becoming hence mere repositories of pain and suffering.

As I will show in the following paragraphs, the body of the expendable clone ultimately serves as a comment on what it is that makes us human. The dangers of the misuses of the biomedical sciences are partly suggested by providing audiences with vulnerable human-like clones possessors of feelings, anxieties and/or consciousness. Yet, and unlike in *Dirty Pretty Things*, Butler's idea of bodily resistance within vulnerability is not totally achieved in Romanek's movie, since the clones accept their bleak destiny.

The idea of artificial clones with feelings, consciousness, or even soul (as it is suggested in *Never Let Me Go*) is troublesome, and it stands in opposition to the use of biomedical sciences by global capitalist markets. In our new genetic age, boundaries are fluid; we have already created animals to serve as organ donors, we have embarked upon the "Human Genome Project," we have manipulated food, we have undergone genetic interventions, and much more. The consequences of these practices may be destructive as well as beneficial and their regulation is a difficult issue, as it entails many ethical and political debates. Bio-ethics warn us about these dangers, urging for more regulation. For instance, Francis Fukuyama argues that the posthuman world is likely to be worse than we expect, "full of social conflict as a result" (218). Indeed, and in relation to science fiction and its depiction of the posthuman, Vint argues that "the most prevalent and realistic fear associated with the possibilities presented by genetic engineering and genetic testing is that this data will be used to create discriminatory social categories" (62). Thus, these practices can improve health but can also foster discrimination. When dealing with the posthuman body, Lisa Blackman refers to twinning and biotechnological practices that blur the boundaries between the "natural" and the altered body. She affirms that "the techniques of cloning are perhaps the closest to the contemporary fears and fascination surrounding twinning as they provide the possibility of creating doubles or multiples, human or animal, that blur these very distinctions" (116). These techniques, she continues, blur the boundaries between the natural and the technological, putting into question the origin and nature of life itself.

Never Let Me Go questions traditional limits of the so-called "natural" body, generating debate concerning the ethics on the alteration of genes for certain purposes and the social consequences of gene science. Apart from this criticism, the film provides us with instances of posthuman subjectivities as articulated by the artificial body. The clones' vulnerable position within a system of power relations and inequalities that clearly marginalize them, makes audiences sympathize—and further identify—with

the so-called "products," "tools" or "donors." This emphasis on the figure of posthuman, reinforced by the first person-narration in which the clones' feelings and personal stories are available to us, means a departure from other instances of posthuman characters in the shape of friendly robots and sentient machines which serve as helpers of the (normally male) hero, reinforcing the latter charisma and success in his deeds. I am referring to characters like C3PO or R2D2 in the *Star Wars* movies, the robot Call in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Alien: Resurrection* or the android Data in *Star Trek* series, to give some examples. In opposition to them, the commodified clone is the protagonist of the compelling story that we are told.

The last act of *Never Let Me Go*—which is set at the Recovery Centers where they are meant to donate their organs—focuses on the deterioration of the physical body after the donations, and how this affects the characters' subjectivities. Ruth, who has been characterized as manipulative and rather selfish throughout the first two acts of the movie, is seen in these last sequences as physically and emotionally affected by her eminent "termination," what leads her to make a last act of repentance for having kept Tommy and Kathy apart from each other for many years. Kathy's voice-over narration and the melancholy that surrounds many of the sequences that illustrate her pre-ordered life and that of her long-life friends—Ruth and Tommy—make us think, apart from the ethics of cloning, about the need to change the actual order of things and find new ways of approaching our mediated bodies. Indeed, most of the characters in the movie are clones who establish human-like relationships among themselves based on love, friendship, dislike, and companionship, and we get to know their feelings, fears and anxieties, while they seek answers to questions about their present, past and future.

In this sense, the film proposes an instance of how posthuman subjectivities might be, taking into account how clones are conscious of their marginal position as commodities for trade and profit. In spite of the audience's awareness of the clones' artificiality, theirs are vulnerable bodies that somehow dissolve the traditional (and negative) idea of otherness, offering instances of posthuman subjectivities. Predictably, audiences identify and sympathize with the clones, especially with the main characters, whose feelings and thoughts are made open to us. Hence, this proposal of posthuman subjectivity proves quite convincing for an audience that is aware of the dangers of maintaining a rigid hierarchy where the human being occupies a privileged position.

Unlike other movies dealing with clones, in *Never let Me Go*, the role of the "visible" human beings, mainly guardians and teachers at Hailsham, is, as Miss Lucy (Hawkins) tells them at the very end of the movie, to provide "students" with an education and knowledge of the outside world (geography, history, literature, and so on) which will be beneficial for them, a veiled attempt to free themselves from guilt and feel at ease with themselves. Hence, the issue of the soul is a latent topic. The guardians keep the students' best drawings and poetry to prove the rest of the world that they do have souls, which problematizes even more their condition as mere clones or "donors" and favors viewers' sympathy toward them.

The last issue I would like to point out regarding the artificial body is that it is shaped into the dominant human, organic standard, which has a double (and perverse) outcome. In *Never Let me Go*, the human/non-human hierarchy is never truly contested. Hence, and unlike other clone narratives, they never aim at rebelling against their creators, and instead assume their inevitable destiny in a similar way any of us would assume our imminent death at the end of our lives. Characters presume their mission is to sacrifice their organs until they can no longer survive and "terminate." In this sense, the artificial body, although serving as a metaphor of the inconsistencies of post-anthropocentric practices in contemporary societies, does not succeed in contesting power but is at the service of the "humanist" view, reproducing body, gender, sex, and social hierarchies. This inability to transcend power in the posthuman body is also at work in movies that use robotics and artificial intelligences as surrogate or supplements for our subjectivities, as it can be seen in Garland's *Ex-Machina*, to give a remarkable example.

Although one can argue at this point that these characters do not embody the affirmative idea of critical posthumanism, they do offer its ambiguity and hybridity. As a matter of fact, Braidotti comments on the ambiguities posed by the posthuman predicament and the risks of embracing the "becoming-other-than-human." Cary Wolfe also refers to this uncertainty when he affirms that the posthuman "generates different and even irreconcilable definitions" (xi). Thus, one can sustain that *Never Let Me Go* manages to offer some space for "other" subjectivities. This is done by filmic strategies that allow spectators identify with the clones and by proposing alternative models of subjectivities. After all, we see life from a posthuman perspective. It is only in this sense that a posthuman subjectivity can be envisaged.

As this analysis of the commodified body on screen has attempted to demonstrate, it is the otherness of the marginal and artificial body what allows for a deconstruction of the humanist sense of the self. The two films commented here, *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Never Let me Go* deal with the idea of an embodied subjectivity, whereby subjectivity and body are inherently connected. The two categories of commodified bodies proposed here—the marginal body and the artificial body—are intended for human benefit and both their fragmented body and subjectivity articulate a social, political and cultural critique. Hence, one can affirm that in these commodified bodies, the biological and the cultural interact and become problematized.

As I have argued, commodified bodies in their cinematic form cannot be regarded as embodiments of a truly positive posthuman subjectivity, or as metaphors of the politics of affirmation as described by Braidotti, or Vint. In order to embrace a positive notion of the posthuman, it should be considered as a fully autonomous being interacting with other bodies in a positive continuum and not as a marginal being doomed to privilege and perpetuating the humanist idea of the "natural" body. In this sense, the idea that different is positive is not totally articulated in the examples of the commodified body proposed here. They are the object of cultural admiration, while offering a dystopian reflection of the biogenetic structure of contemporary capitalism.

Yet, these films do offer an understanding of the subject, which can be considered as the first step toward the posthuman predicament postulated by materialist thinkers. In spite of their objectification, marginalization and subordination (or precisely because of it) commodified characters develop feelings, worries and memories, possess consciousness (and, paradoxically, even soul in the case of clones). Their intimate anxieties are openly shown to audiences, who actively take part in their inhuman-ness or posthuman experience. Their bodies are reflections of their (and our) complex and ambiguous relationship with the oppressive world in which they are forced to live, thus articulating ethical debates. Both Senay in *Dirty Pretty Things* and Kathy in *Never Let Me Go*, in their different bodily configurations, display embodied subjectivities and directly engage with audiences, making us reflect upon the ethical dimensions of organ donations and biotechnologies, respectively. The very idea of audiences identifying with these characters makes us adopt a certain subject position toward these concerns. These fictional proposals of the inhuman or posthuman somehow reshape our subjectivities. In relation to this issue, Vint reaffirms the importance of science fiction literature as a site of critical engagement with the discourse of the posthuman, arguing that these texts offer "a space in which models of possible futures selves are put forward as possible sites for identification on the part of the readers" (20). Although not in such a productive way, popular cinema still offers challenging depictions of what it means to be human.

The films commented here show marginal and artificial bodies as authentic subjects, within their otherness and marginality. In one or another way, they speculate on the posthuman condition and propose hybrid subjects capable of resisting dualism. These manipulated beings are vulnerable beings, projections of our conflicts with technology and the oppressive world we live in. As Vint comments, it is precisely this vulnerability that should make us take care of ourselves, one another, and the planet we live on (10). Hence, it has been my contention that the portrayal of the commodified body in the texts under discussion may lead us to a re-consideration of established hierarchies, as well as to judge the body of the other as a powerful tool for fighting against hegemonic discourses. As Braidotti contends, "the others are not merely the markers of exclusion or marginality but also the sites of powerful and alternative subject positions" (*The Posthuman* 139) We need to contest the arrogance of post-anthropocentrism by aligning with the productive force of *zoe* or life in its inhuman aspects. For that, we need first to grasp the subject, and both *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Never Let me Go* offer a space for such an understanding through the body.

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