

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Nowadays, with an emphasis on the subjects of asylum seekers and foreign laborers across borders in global cities or the marginalized Third World people, many films have similarly explored the uneven power relation between the First World and the Third World in the era of globalization. As mentioned in Chapter One, these films coincidentally depict both the pretty and dirty sides of globalization, like the immigrant problem in *Dancer in the Dark*, the illegal refugee in *In This World*, the international diamond smuggles in *Blood Diamond*, and the commodified cheap labor in *Bordertown*. Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* especially touches the above mentioned issues, that is, the dire situation of asylum seekers across borders and the commodification of their labor and even their organs in the era of globalization. The film gives us a vivid picture of the hardship of asylum seekers, the involuntary involvement with organ trades, and their inhuman lives. As we can discover, although globalization promotes the movement of people and capital across borders, it is always supported by the exploitation of cheap laborers or marginalized people. In these films, we can see that in the era of globalization, underneath the glamorous products of consumption, such as tourism, diamonds, oil and furs, dirty businesses and different power struggles prevail, like organ trade, sex trade, and exploitation in the sweatshops.

British director Stephen Frears exposes the inhuman organ trade and expresses his deep concern on the lives of the marginalized ethnic groups in global cities. To Frears, with its ethnical and cultural complexity and differences, London has “an inexhaustible supply of overlooked communities, secret societies and previously

unseen locations for filmmakers to discover” (Dawtre B3). In *Dirty Pretty Things*, people flow across borders challenges the surveillance of nation-states, exposes the problem of the citizenship gap, and unveils the need of solidarity across borders.

Dirty Pretty Things reveals that in London, asylum seekers are demonized and inspected strictly because of their ambivalent status. The conflict between the surveillance of Britain and the mobility of people across borders displays nation-states’ intention and frustration to control these legal or illegal refugees fully in the era of globalization. These asylum seekers and foreign laborers, who support Britain’s economy with cheap labor without legal status or protection of human rights, should not be ignored by the British government. The film also points out that refugees’ counter strategies and solidarity become the last resort to fight against exploitation when their predicament caused by uneven economic globalization remains unsettled.

In *Dirty Pretty Things*, because asylum seekers and foreign laborers come to the United Kingdoms due to various political and economic reasons, and because their existence arouses fears of British people, the British government inevitably has to maintain the division of ethnic self and other and monitor asylum seekers severely through panoptic surveillance. Derrida’s notion of “conditional hospitality” and Foucault’s concept of “Panopticon” help to explain the process of the British government’s demonisation and surveillance on these asylum seekers. The film exposes British people’s prejudices and fears as in Derrida’s notion of “conditional hospitality.” Through external forms of surveillance, such as institutions and apparatuses, and through internal forms of surveillance, like the internalization and the introjections of surveillance in subjects, Britain, a panoptic society, puts asylum seekers under its surveillance. In the film, disappointingly, the British government’s

policy of granting asylum or hospitality aims more at monitoring legal or illegal asylum seekers and foreign laborers passively than providing protection for those people flow seeking asylum positively.

However, undeniably, for these asylum seekers and foreign laborers have already become an inseparable part to British society socially and economically, their basic human rights should be protected or taken seriously in spite of their ambivalent status. While businessmen and capitalists exploit their labor without giving them any protection of human rights, the British government also neglects the problem for the reason that these asylum seekers are not its citizens. The exploitation of these asylum seekers and foreign laborers and inhuman organ trade in the film show “the citizenship gap” between “citizenship” and “human rights” to protect the basic human rights, such as housing, economic subsidies and humanity of “noncitizens” and “second-class citizens” in the era of globalization. The British government’s kind policies of granting asylum are hence frustrated for its own rigid restrictions and institutional deficiencies. It seems that the British government can no longer ignore these legal or illegal asylum seekers and foreign laborers within its borders only for their lack of citizenship.

In *Dirty Pretty Things*, the marginalized asylum seekers are compelled to adopt counter strategies and cooperate to rebel against surveillance and exploitation by themselves. Okwe and Senay’s ultimate revenge on Sneaky restores their agency and proves Foucault’s theory of the existence of “resistance” in any power relations. The “solidarity” among these marginalized people of different ethnicity, class, and gender manifests Laclau and Mouffe’s proposal of “radical plural democracy” as the way to fight subordination, articulate differences, and pursue freedom and equality against racism, capitalism and sexism. In *Dirty Pretty Things*, only by disarming prejudices

and forming solidarity could people overthrow oppressive exploitation and surveillance.

Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* helps us to see the uneven power relation between the First World and the Third World in the era of globalization, in which global capitalists and businessmen often exploit asylum seekers and foreign laborers as cheap manpower. As the executor of humanity and hospitality, the British government only inspects them through panoptic surveillance and regulates them rigidly, failing to engage in the problem actively. Unlike the impression of London as civilized global city, the whole London in *Dirty Pretty Things* is compressed into a world of stuffy hotel kitchens, a cold morgue, ugly and muddy passages towards sweatshops, unknown street corners, and noisy markets. In the film, images, close-ups, and shots of London are all related to the association of helplessness, death, and the hell. As invisible nobodies, asylum seekers and minor ethnic groups are struggling in the streets of London, who are often exploited as cheap laborers in global markets.

Honestly, to solve this problem needs lots of time and efforts. The overall environment of disparate development in the world results from different kinds of political or economic factors. As a result, the involvement is too broad and too complicated to identify the specific cause clearly. In addition, because no institution is legitimate enough to intervene in this unequal global phenomenon or strong enough to negotiate among nations or corporations, the issue of these exploited foreign laborers or marginalized people in the Third World becomes a gray area, which should be faced up to seriously.

Nevertheless, many international organizations, such as the United Nations and World Health Organization, have been working hard for the rights of these refugees, foreign laborers or marginalized people. The protection of these foreign laborers or

marginalized people in the Third World still requires powerful institutions to help them to fight against subordination, articulate themselves, and obtain basic dignity and human rights.

Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* pertinently unveils the exploitation and subordination of legal and illegal foreign laborers in host countries and expresses the quest for the solution in the era of globalization. By examining the mechanism of the surveillance of nation-states and the deficiencies of the system of citizenship or xenophobia, this thesis also suggests the significance of solidarity for asylum seekers or foreign laborers as a possible way to rebel against inhuman exploitation and mistreatment. It is hoped that through the teaching of *Dirty Pretty Things*, the marginalized can recognize that solidarity, which starts from the rejection of dominant ideology and hierarchy, contains the power to overthrow subordination, tolerate differences, and pursue freedom and equality.