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Emotional Life on the Market Frontier

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Abstract

As American society has become ever more dominated by the market, sociological interest in commodification has paradoxically declined. Marx, among others, noted how a worker can become estranged from his work—the doing of it, the tools of it, and the product resulting from it. Consumers can become estranged from all these, too. As workers and consumers today, we often detach ourselves from what we make and buy, and extreme forms of detachment we can call estrangement or alienation. Marx's iconic worker was (*a*) the nineteenth-century male factory worker for whom (*b*) estrangement was a static state (*c*) about which the victim had no narrative. In today's economy, we can look to the female service worker who does emotional labor to alter her state of estrangement and whose narrative may be that of "free choice." Is the commercial surrogate I met in a for-profit clinic in India an autonomous agent in a free market, I wondered, or is she the latest version of Marx's "alienated man"? This essay grapples with that question.

ESTRANGEMENTS: EXTRAORDINARY AND EVERYDAY

At dusk one evening in January 2009, a Muslim call to prayer in the air, I walked around mud puddles along the ill-lit path through a village on the edge of Anand in the northwest state of Gujarat, India. Sari-clad women carrying pots on their heads, gaggles of skinny teenage boys, scurrying children, and elderly men shuffled along the jagged path past brick and tin-roofed shacks and mildew-stained concrete homes. Aditya Ghosh, a Mumbai-based journalist, was with me. We were here to visit the home of a commercial surrogate, 27-year-old Anjali,[1] seven months along with a baby grown from the egg of a Canadian woman, fertilized by the sperm of her Canadian husband, and implanted in Anjali's womb at the Akanksha Infertility Clinic. In several dormitories, the clinic houses the world's largest known gathering of commercial surrogates—women who carry to term the genetic babies of infertile couples living in India and elsewhere around the globe (Hochschild 2009, 2012; Garey & Hansen 2011). I was to learn from Anjali, and others, how it feels to finally afford a house secure against the monsoon rains; to rent her womb to a couple who remained strangers throughout the process; to manage a detachment she felt from her womb, her baby, and her clients; and to feel she was acting out of "free choice."

I had come to Anand because it seemed to me the ultimate expression—in the words of Robert Kuttner (1997)—of "everything for sale." Over the past three decades, in the United States, India, and many other parts of the globe, influential thinkers have pressed forward the ideal of a free market, deregulation, privatization, and fewer government services. The ideas of Nobel Prize–winning University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman (1962), for example, have widely influenced practice and thinking regarding the role of the market in daily life. He links the idea of progress with the forward movement of a market frontier into all spheres of life. On one side of the market frontier lie the unpaid activities of family, friends, and neighbors. On the other side lie the goods and services for rent or sale. Services range from what, for many of us, are modern-day essentials (child care and elder care), to more optional services (birthday planners, life coaches, wedding planners), to highly specialized services used by fewer people (surrogacy).

What is the human story behind a world of everything for sale? Marx & Engels (1967 [1887]) get us started with the idea of commodification.[2] In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx (1959 [1932]) noted that a person could become estranged from—as a stranger to—the object he made (say, a shoe), from the making of it (the cutting, hammering), and from himself. The more capitalism, the more commodification, and the more estrangement (or alienation; he used the terms interchangeably). But what if we turned his statement into a question, and focused on one small part of it: When is a worker so detached from what she makes as to be estranged from it? How do workers handle their detachments? For Marx, either we were estranged or we were not and there was little we could do about it short of overthrowing capitalism. So Marx gives us a salient topic but few tools for exploring it further. For those, we can turn to the innovative

[1] All names in this article are pseudonyms.

[2] Using different terms, a number of sociologists have dealt with this question. In Granovetter's seminal 1985 paper, he proposes that we think (*a*) of markets as embedded in society and (*b*) of society as a set of social networks. Since then, some network theorists have come to talk about such social networks in increasingly threadbare terms. Uzzi (1997), for example, writes that "a network structure rich in structural holes is virtually all that is needed to induce information and resources to flow through the network like electric current through a circuit board" (p. 63). Other theorists, however, have called for bringing back the content of social ties. To help with that, Zukin & DiMaggio (1990) have recommended that theorists distinguish between structural, political, cognitive, and cultural forms of embeddedness. Zelizer (2010), a pioneer in this field, warns that "embeddedness" as a concept can avert our eyes from the "relational work" through which actors fit money (or other media of exchange) to the needs of self-differentiating individuals.

work of Zelizer (2005) and the anthropologist Appadurai (1988), and to their tool kit we can add a steady focus on emotion and all the ways we manage it.

Today we encounter commodification at every turn. Is every form of detachment a form of estrangement? How, we can ask, do we distinguish estrangement from the many useful forms of emotional detachment necessary to the commercial relations of everyday life? Do we ever imagine and choose *good* forms of detachment? (A surgeon must, after all, learn to see parts of the body as "its".) How is detachment related to the psychoanalytic concept of dissociation? What feeling rules guide our sense of how emotionally involved—or uninvolved—we should be in any given circumstance (Hochschild 1983, 2003)? That is, in addition to sensing *what* we feel (joyful, sad) there is the question of *how much* we should care at all.

The realm in which we normally think we should feel the most deeply involved—should care the most—is that of family, community, church. This realm is governed by an overarching ethic—what Hyde (1983), drawing from Mauss (2000 [1954]), describes as "the spirit of the gift."[3] If the world of the market centers on the efficient monetary exchange for goods and services and a capacity for emotional detachment, the world of the gift moves through a continual affirmation of bonds, based on responsibility, trust, and gratitude and premised on a capacity for emotional attachment.

What did Anjali think she "should feel" about the baby she carried for a client for money? Did she feel an "I-thou" relationship to the baby or "I-it"? In either case, what emotional labor did that require?[4] In Anjali we see, perhaps, an extreme example of a kind of emotional labor many people do, for many service providers are surrogates of one sort or another.[5]

This line of questioning led me to conduct over a hundred emotion-focused in-depth interviews over the past few years with providers of personal services and their clients. I have talked to clients and service providers at each stage of the life cycle: falling in love (a paid love coach and his eager, lonely, divorced client), marrying (a wedding planner who crafted a "personal legend" for her delighted nuptial clients), conceiving a child (an Indian surrogate and her American clients), raising a child (a loving Filipina nanny and her grateful long-hours clients), managing a household (a household manager and her wealthy client), caring for an elderly parent (an elder care worker "paid to love"—and actually loving—a crippled relative of a client), and death (a boat captain who scatters the ashes of the deceased on behalf of the bereaved).

FREE CHOICE ESTRANGEMENT?

Anjali told me how—half voluntarily, half not—she tried to detach herself from her baby, her womb, and her clients. So I wondered how she reordered the parts of herself that she claimed and disclaimed, and what emotional labor that required.[6] Could Anjali's story shed light on lives far closer to our own? I thought it could.

[3] Although the concept of a gift economy was first applied by Mauss (2000 [1954]) to preliterate societies, Hyde (1983) points out that, in modern life, the rules of the gift economy apply to relations between lovers, family, friends, and other forms of community.

[4] Here I am exploring what Zelizer (2005, 2010) calls "relational work," but with an eye to estrangement and the mechanisms of defense we use against it; I have tried to redirect this important topic toward Frankfurt School theory, as has been done by Illouz (2007).

[5] I introduced the idea of the market frontier in a 2004 essay (Hochschild 2004). On one side of this frontier are goods and services to sell or rent, and on the other side are goods and services exchanged as gifts. This frontier can move forward and even sometimes back. A century ago, there was a national debate about the pros and cons of wet-nursing, for example, a practice that disappeared as infant formula entered the scene. Most notoriously, of course, is slavery, which has been abolished in most—but not all—of the world (Bales 2004). Now, we are commodifying aspects of reality never before put up for sale—parts of the human genome, pollution credits, types of crop seeds. In Bolivia, in 2000, the government also tried to force citizens to pay for the right to collect rainwater on their own land.

[6] If a person were to donate a kidney to an ill child, one would detach the idea of "me" from the organ and conceive of it as a gift-for-my-child. But what if one has a child for money, and the money is for one's existing child—is a person detached

As I sat on a cot in her new concrete house, Anjali, now in her second surrogacy and contemplating a third, explained how she had become one of more than 232 surrogates to give birth at Akanksha since it opened in 2004. Her husband, a house painter, had gotten lime in his eye from a bucket of paint. A doctor would not attend him unless he was paid an amount of money that they did not have. After fruitless appeals to family and friends, Anjali fell into the hands of a money lender who hounded them for repayment. Shortly thereafter, the family paid twice daily visits, heads hung low, to the Hindu temple for daily meals. It was under these circumstances that Anjali offered her services as a surrogate. At the same time, she was mindful that neighbors and relatives often disparaged surrogacy, confusing it with adultery or prostitution. So to avoid malicious gossip and shame, like many other surrogates at the clinic, Anjali and her family moved to another village.

If her relations with extended kin and neighbors atrophied, those with fellow surrogates grew closer. For her first pregnancy, Anjali stayed nine months in Akanksha's hostel with other surrogates, nine cots to a room. (Women were only selected for surrogacy if they were married mothers, so all of them had husbands and children.) Their young children were permitted to sleep with them; older children and husbands could pay daytime visits. During their confinement, they rarely left these premises, and then only with permission.

Meanwhile, Anjali was directed by the clinic's director to maintain a business-like detachment from her clients. She met the genetic parents on only three occasions, and then briefly. The first time she spoke to them through an interpreter for a half hour and signed a contract. (Fees range from around $2,000 to $8,000.) A second time she met them when eggs were harvested from the wife, fertilized in a petri dish by the husband's sperm, and implanted in Anjali's womb. The last time she met them was when she gave birth and handed them the baby. Anjali knew little about her clients, except to say "they come from Canada." Other surrogates seemed even more vague about their clients; several said simply, "They come from far away." The main reason doctors encourage such detachment, one doctor explained, is to protect clients from the possibility that poverty-stricken surrogates will "come after them for more money later on."

The clinic director instructed surrogates to think of their wombs as "carriers" and themselves as prenatal babysitters, to detach themselves emotionally from their baby and their clients. And because they were to see their wombs as carriers, they were asked, as a matter of professional attitude, to detach themselves—the "core me"—from this part of their body, a task that might have been especially hard in a strongly pronatalist culture such as that of India. They tried to detach themselves from their babies, not because they did not want their babies, but because they wanted them as a source of money and would have to give them up.

When I asked Anjali how she managed not to become too attached to the baby, she repeated what the director said: "I think of my womb as a carrier." Then she added, "When I think of the baby too much, I remind myself of my own children." She substituted. Instead of attaching her idea of herself as a loving mother to the child she carried, she substituted the idea of the child she already had, and whose school fees her surrogacy would pay for. Another surrogate, a mother of a three-year-old daughter who could not afford to bear the second child she greatly wished for, told me, "If you put a jewel in my hand, I don't covet it. I give it to its owner." And others said simply, "I try not to think about it."

Surrogates living together in the clinic helped each other do this as well as did the practices and philosophy of the clinic itself. For their nine months under the clinic's direction, Anjali and other surrogates became part of a small industry run according to three goals: (*a*) to increase inventory (recruit surrogates and produce more babies; it now produces a baby a week); (*b*) to safeguard quality (monitoring

from the baby but attached to the money? How, I wondered, does this work?

surrogates' diet and sexual contact); and (*c*) to achieve efficiency (assuring a smooth, emotion-free exchange of baby for money). By applying this business model, the clinic hoped to beat the competition in the skyrocketing field of reproductive tourism, which has since 2002 been declared legal and remains to this day unregulated.

Anjali's story raises a host of issues: desperate poverty, the appalling absence of a government safety net, the lack of legal rights for surrogates or clients, cultures that assign greatest honor to biological parenthood, the absence of nonprofit or community answers to infertility. But the issue that so strongly drew me into Anjali's home was the very issue of applying to surrogacy a business-like model of relationships, calling for a high degree of emotional detachment all around.

Other Americans I interviewed responded to Anjali's story by drawing many sorts of moral lines. Some were heavy, others light. Some were clear, others vague. And they fell differently on various aspects of the surrogate's experience. One man reflected, "Surrogacy is fine but not as a way to earn money." Another added, "It's fine for the surrogate to earn money, but the agency itself should be nonprofit." Yet another said, "Commercial surrogacy is fine up to two pregnancies per woman, but not three." The sociologist Amrita Pande (2009a,b; 2010), who spent nine months at the Akanksha clinic talking in Gujarati to the surrogates, described conversations the surrogates had amongst themselves about Anjali, whom they felt had become too driven, too strategic, too materialistic, with her fancy new house and stereo surround-sound system. (A photographer for the *Hindustan Times* told me that he had earlier photographed Anjali weeping just after she had a miscarriage; he asked her what she was thinking, and she answered, "We were going to redo the first floor of the house. Now we can't.")

In their hostel life together, some surrogates blamed Anjali for carrying a baby "only for money." She had crossed their moral line. She was therefore "like a whore," a dishonor they themselves perhaps feared. All the Akanksha surrogates were renting their wombs because they needed money. There was little talk in the hostel of altruism, Pande found, and many enjoyed their nine months for all "the coconut water and ice cream we want." But most also took pride in not giving in "too much" to materialism and not imagining their wombs as only money-making machines. They were motherly. They were givers. They did not want to be or seem too detached from their bodies or babies. They ate "for the baby." They felt the baby kick. They felt their ankles swell and their breasts grow larger and more tender, so it was no small matter to say about the baby "this is not mine." As one surrogate told an outsider, "We will remember these babies for as long as we live." But they had to prepare to let their babies go and to do the emotional labor of dealing with the potential sadness that evoked.

Like Anjali, many surrogates seemed to take certain actions to walk this line along the market frontier (Swidler 1986). First, they avoided shame. They moved out of their villages, they kept their pregnancy secret from in-laws, and they lied about where they were. If photographers came to the clinic, they wore surgical masks. Second, as their doctor instructed, they developed a sense of "me" distinct from "not me." In the "me" they embraced was, to a limited degree, the pride-saving idea of giving a gift to the clients and money to their own families. In the "not me"—much of the time—were the womb and the baby. And third, they did the emotional labor needed to avoid a sense of loss and grief. They worked on their feelings to protect a sense of self as a caring mother in a world of everything for sale. Each woman drew for herself a line beyond which she was "too" estranged from the baby she carried and up to which she might not be estranged enough. She guarded that line through her actions and work on feeling.

ECHOES ON THE AMERICAN MARKET FRONTIER

Anjali's circumstances were far more desperate, her options more limited, her clientele

more specialized, than those of other service providers I was to interview. But her calibrations regarding "how much to care" echo a theme I heard among First World consumers, starting with one American couple who were clients at the Akanksha Clinic.

Sitting in the living room of their home in Jackson, Louisiana, the genetic father-to-be, a mild-mannered musician named Tim Mason, recalled meeting the Akanksha surrogate who would carry their baby:

> The surrogate was *very, very short* and *very, very, very skinny* and she didn't speak any English at all. She sat down and she smiled, then kept her head down, looking towards the floor. She was bashful. The husband was the same way. You could tell they were very nervous. We would ask a question and the translator would answer, just to try and make conversation. They would give a one or two word response. We asked what the husband did for a living and how many kids they had. I don't remember their answers. I don't remember her name.

Tim's 40-year-old wife, Lili Mason, an Indian-American who described a difficult childhood, a fear of motherhood, and an abiding sense that she was not "ready," reported this:

> I was nervous to meet the surrogate just because of this Indian-to-Indian dynamic. Other client couples—American, Canadian—all react *more emotionally*. They would hold hands with her. I was thinking, "That's weird"; we don't do that touchy-feely *goo goo gaa gaa* thing—especially for a service. "I am so glad you are doing this for me, let me hold your hand." She is doing a service because of the money, and the poor girl is from a poor family. I am a little bit rough around the edges anyway and this meeting isn't going to put me in a touchy-feely mood.

As it turned out, this particular pregnancy failed. But even had it succeeded, there were many factors working against the development of a warm relationship between the Masons and their nameless surrogate. Lili did not feel she "should" try to attach herself to the surrogate, nor did she say she really wanted to. For her, motherhood was a potentially core identity, but she disconnected the idea of a close relationship with her surrogate from it. And the clinic's ethic certainly allowed—even encouraged—her detachment. Although they did not say so, perhaps, too, the couple wished to avoid the shame of admitting to friends and acquaintances that they needed a surrogate to have their genetic baby. If they remained detached during the pregnancy, they might feel freer to leave the issue of surrogacy behind them, a past and shameful secret. Finally, there was the gaping chasm between First World and Third, money-eyed and non-moneyed, those with more power and those with less, all factors that discouraged the forming of a bond.

It is hard to know how typical Anjali is of other Indian surrogates or how typical the Masons are of her American clients. Still, their experiences lay bare the deeper questions of how we symbolically subtract from and add to a notion of core self, how we claim or disclaim feeling, and what emotional labor it takes to do so.

"THE EXPERTS KNOW WHAT MAKES FIVE-YEAR-OLDS LAUGH"

The relationship between an American parent and a birthday party planner traverses far fewer worlds, bears less serious consequences, and calls on far less deep parts of oneself than that between Anjali and her client. Still, for one harried, long-hours father of three young daughters, part of his core self felt at stake. Having suffered through a miserable childhood himself, working very long hours now as a father, and seeing far too little of children whom he said "mean the world to me," Michael Haber did not want to risk feeling estranged from one important symbolic act of fatherhood: planning his daughter's birthday party.

In their upscale neighborhood, all his daughter's neighborhood friends hired

birthday party planners. But as Michael told his wife one day, "It's stupid to hire a birthday *planner*. Let's do this ourselves." "We?" she replied. "Okay. Me," he answered. "*I'll* do everything. As his wife recalled:

> All of Raquelle's friends' parents hired a party planner named Sophie. All the kids loved Sophie's parties. Kids would write her thank you notes, "Dear Sophie, Thank you very much for the fun birthday. Love from your friend, Harrison." Or even, "Dear Sophie, I was wondering how you are today. Love, Maya." Kids around here come into birthday parties these days and immediately ask, "Where's the coordinator? Where's the itinerary?" It's what they *expect*.

Sophie might be wonderful, Michael granted, but Sophie had moved in where dads and mothers had moved out, as he saw it, and he, for one, was going to buck the trend. He had already taken small stands against other forms of what he considered the over-outsourcing of domestic tasks. "I walk our dogs when I'm home weekends. Why do people have dogs if they don't walk them on Saturday and Sunday?" he told his wife indignantly. He had drawn a moral line there beyond which a person was, as he felt, estranged from their own intimate life. This and other stories that he told his wife, who told me, or that he told me directly revealed how deeply important it was for him to feel attached to the labor, the tools, and the product of planning his daughter's birthday party.

So Michael sent out invitations to Raquelle's friends. He ordered a cake. He blew up the balloons. He taped up pink and blue streamers. He planned games. Even though Michael was rebelling against paying a party planner, he unwittingly borrowed the idea that the kids needed adult-crafted activities, that there should be many guests, and that the party should have a clown. His wife described the event:

> Michael dressed up as a cowboy from the Australian outback—like Crocodile Dundee [an alligator wrangler portrayed in a film of that name]. He put on a broad-brimmed hat, khaki shirt and shorts and tall leather boots. He stalked about on a pretend stage in front of the girls, describing this and that wild animal in a flat Aussie accent. And he went on for three or four minutes. Then he ran out of things to say. Michael hadn't thought out more to say. Worse yet, the children didn't think his jokes were funny. They began to examine his knobby knees. Then they began to fidget. Then the whole thing fell apart.

When Michael recalled the same event, he put it differently:

> Do you *know* how *long* two hours is? I didn't know it would be so *hard!* You have these people organize the kids into games and do tricks for them. And I thought, why not try it? So the day came, and I had all these little five-year-olds. But they needed *constant* organizing, moving, entertaining. You have to know how to *do* this. It's a *skill* running groups of twenty or thirty five-year-olds. You can't really tell them what to do. You have to quickly engage them. It's like being a continual stand-up comic. You have about two seconds to catch their attention. If there's a gap at any point, they break up into little groups. . . . It nearly killed me.

The children were, in fact, accustomed to being conducted through a series of planned activities, so when the entertainment segment of the party failed, the children did not spontaneously regroup; they acted as if leaving a theater. "When I couldn't hold the kids' attention," Michael added, "the parents had to intervene. They were tired, so they weren't so very grateful to me either." Nor was his daughter, who told him, "You're not as good as 'Spotty Joe'" (a clown she saw on television).

Meanwhile, a neighbor standing at the kitchen door watching the entire event said: "Michael, *leave* it to the experts. *They* know what five-year-olds think is funny. *They* know games five-year-olds like. We don't. Don't embarrass yourself. Leave it to them."

Chastened, Michael concluded she was right. Sophie knew better than he did what makes five-year-olds laugh. He had felt that, as a father, five-year-old humor was his to know. He did not want to feel estranged from his identity as a hands-on Dad who knew how to make his kid laugh. But in the end, Michael adapted to his neighbor's advice. He renounced his attachment to the role of entertainer and accepted the idea of paying someone to do what he had wanted to do himself because she did it better. It hurt to do so. "You could say I felt hurt afterwards, stung actually." Michael explained, "I had to pull myself out of it." His wife added, "It took him a long time to get over it." But the story he told himself about this small move from producer to consumer is that "Sophie could do it better." If Anjali spoke of surrogacy as a "free choice," Michael, who was infinitely more free to choose to do as he liked, told a narrative of expert standards: "What can you do; the experts do it better."

Like others I interviewed, Michael did what I have come to think of as a "take-back." A Los Angeles–based executive said he had asked his assistant to order flowers for his mother's birthday but said "I felt *embarrassed* when my mother asked me what kind of flowers they were. I thought to myself, daisies? Roses? I didn't know. I figured I'd do it myself next time." A professor at a large Eastern university recounted a similar experience:

> The wife of a colleague of mine had just given birth to a new baby. They had set up a gift registry at Babies 'R' Us. So I got to my computer and clicked on the Babies 'R' Us gift registry. There were about a dozen choices from the most to the least expensive. I didn't want to choose the most expensive, since I don't know them that well. But I didn't want to be cheap, so I didn't pick the least expensive either. I aimed for something in the middle, gave my Visa details, and that was that. But then, I began to feel strange. I hadn't asked them what the baby needed. I hadn't gotten in the car. I hadn't looked over toys or baby clothing. I didn't wrap the gift. I didn't write the card for the gift. I didn't deliver the gift. I didn't visit the baby! I didn't feel like I *gave* the gift. A month later I couldn't remember what the gift was, only how much it cost. So I picked up some simple plastic measuring spoons, got in the car and paid them a visit.

And, she said, "I felt relieved." The act of shopping, the registry, the recipient's experience as well as her own (the work, the tools, the product)—from all these she felt estranged.

Michael tried at a take-back and failed. The executive and professor tried and succeeded. But each struggled with outsourcing acts that at one point symbolized "me." Unlike Anjali, Michael was not forced by desperate need into estrangement from a core part of himself, nor was he faced with total social rejection as a result of it. His was a small matter woven into normal upper-middle-class American life. The conventions of his social class—already deeply embedded in the imagination of neighborhood children—forced him to surrender his claim to a treasured image of himself as a celebratory hands-on dad. He had to talk himself into caring less. He should turn things over to a better trained surrogate.

"NOT IF HE THINKS OF ME AS A BOX OF CEREAL"

In a very different way, the issue of estrangement from a symbol of self arose for a woman who hired a love coach to help her find a partner through an online dating service; she found herself on the receiving end of an overly marketized—i.e., depersonalized—way of seeing. Grace Weaver, a sprightly American 50-year-old engineer and divorced mother of a 12-year-old daughter, described how she came to hire her love coach:

> I remember waking up the morning after going out to a New Year's Eve party. I felt disappointed. I hadn't met any interesting men. I flipped on the television and watched a *Wall Street Journal* show on Internet dating. I'd always thought Internet dating would be *tacky*,

> and leave me feeling icky, overexposed, and naked. But then Evan Katz [a love coach] came on saying, "Come on, guys. There's nothing embarrassing about Internet dating." I jotted down his name, checked his web site, ordered his book, and wondered if this shouldn't be my New Year's resolution: take *control* of my life.

When Grace told her friends she was hiring a love coach, they said, "You're doing what?!" They felt, she said, that you should find a loved one by going to friends' parties, church socials, hiking clubs. It was something a family and community should do, not a paid service. They felt that they, and the realm they were a part of, were being edged out of a role, demoted, as Michael Haber had felt by the more skillful party planner. Grace loved her friends, but at 49, she "didn't want to waste time."

The love coach guided Grace as she wrote her profile and helped her select a photo of herself. He advised Grace on how to get good ROI, as he put it, return on investment of her time, effort, and money. He offered to scan the replies she received. But here Grace drew the line; she could not hire someone to scan for her; that part of "production" of her personal life had, she felt, to rest with her, if she was not to feel like a creature of the dating service, detached from herself.

Evan introduced Grace to a market way of seeing herself and to how she would be seen—in a market way—by others. "The Internet is the world's biggest mall," he explained, "[so] you have to know how to shop and be shopped for. We're going to get you a better brand. It can't be too generic. On Match.com, you have to stand out," he told her.

He also introduced Grace to a 1–10 rating system that, like a price tag, represented each candidate's worth in the Internet dating marketplace, her own included. Each rating symbolized the likelihood of a "return wink," given a person's weight, height, beauty, intelligence, occupation, and other attributes. "I see a lot of '5' men looking for '10' women, and that leaves the 4 and 5 women in the dust," Evan explained to Grace. Grace expected men to rank her just as she ranked them, informally, but she was saddened to discover a decline in her market worth when she rewrote her profile after turning what she called "the magic 5-0." "It cut my email responses in half, but I'm the same person I was a day ago."

Grace came to accept Evan's talk of dating as work, the idea of branding herself, of watching her ROI, and of 1–10 ratings. But she also drew a line beyond which one dropped a market way of thinking and picked up a spirit-of-the-gift way of thinking. While she gets to know a person online, she thought, she would be wise to think in market terms. But once she and a date agree to meet offline, she felt that a new, more intimate—and less market-feeling—phase in their relationship should begin. Once you go offline, that means you have stopped looking for someone, Grace said, "And when the man gets offline, that's what it means to him, too."

But even with the boundaries that she had felt were proper to place between herself and the market, a certain market logic crept in the back door and deeply unsettled her:

> Before I met my current partner, I got interested in two other men. I dated each for about half a year. In both cases they didn't get along with my daughter or she didn't like them, or our kids sparred. But as we ended the relationship, both men at different times told me the same thing. My first date said, "I'm getting back on Match.com. It was so easy to find you; there must be others out there." I said, "Are you *kidding* me?" He came back months later, "Oh, my God! What did I do? There isn't *another you* out there." I said, "It's too late." I'm not dealing with someone who thinks people come in facsimiles. It was very weird, but the second guy said exactly the *same* thing. "It was so *easy* to find you. I'm going back out to find another you." Ten months later, he tells me, "There's nobody out here like *you*." In his mind, too, I was a box of cereal, just like the next box of cereal on a grocery shelf.

Each suitor, Grace felt, had taken the market language and logic "too far." They had erased signs of the slow-paced, abiding, openhearted spirit of the gift. In their eyes, Grace was no longer a unique person but a model of a person that might be easily duplicated, replicated, manufactured, purchased. This was a person chillingly different from her core self. She mused:

> If he went right out to get a copy of me, was it *me* he ever really saw? I felt sad and depressed—and then disgusted. It made me re-see our whole relationship as more shallow than I'd realized. And after he came back, and that box of cereal wasn't on the shelf after all, I didn't want anything to do with him.

Michael had to detach "me" from the beloved role of planner and clown. Grace had to detach her "me" from an over-marketized view of herself. She was not, like Anjali and the other surrogates at the Akanksha clinic, forced by poverty into the strange embrace of estrangement—nothing close. But, on her First World market frontier, Grace pursued a line of action that separated her sense of "me" as openhearted and oriented toward trust, faith, gratitude—the spirit of the gift—from the men who saw her as like a box of cereal. She avoided that way of seeing things by avoiding them.

THE MOMMY MALL

A working mother named April looked over an array of parenting services available to middle-class Americans in her city, with an eye to how she felt about each one. At 35, a marketing specialist and mother of two small boys, April was led to detach herself from another "me"—the commercial citizen, the faithful believer in mainstream American culture. We were sitting together, looking over an assortment of ads for services that I had collected. These included offers for coaching parents on what to buy for one's baby (baby planner), installing safety gates and cord-free windows (safety proofers), choosing a baby's name (nameologist), potty training a child (potty trainer), teaching a child to sleep through the night (sleep specialist), teaching a child to ride a bike (sports coach), picking a summer camp (camp consultant), and creating a fun ambiance at a teen party (party animator).

For April, the important encounter was not between her sense of "me" and my body (Anjali), nor "me" and a cherished activity (Michael), nor "me" and a market mentality (Grace). April was struggling with the relationship between her sense of "me" and an idea of parent and child that she felt was implied by the entire, tempting "mommy mall." April had gladly employed a wonderful babysitter, paid a neighbor to drive her children various places (the sitter did not drive), and hired a hair delouser (when the kids got fleas) and a psychiatrist. But she also suspected that the mall was inviting her to worry about meeting the standards it invented and preying on her anxiety about her child's capacity to compete.

In the realm of work, April believed a person should get very good at one special thing—for her it was corporate public relations. In that arena, she was a great believer in the principle of specialization: outsource what you can to experts. Become a specialist in something yourself, and in this way make a better world. But how far did this principle extend? In the realm of parenthood, she grew wary. She could understand parents trying to give their children a good head start in a tough world; she was trying to do that, too. "I'm not the earth-mother type," she added. But, on the other hand, she said, "If you outsource all these tasks to a different specialist, your kid is going to feel like the car you take in for the tune-up, oil change, wheel rotation, lube job. How would he remember his childhood? Appointment. . .appointment. . . appointment. . . ."

She felt the need to distinguish between the "me" who was a good mother and the "me" who might be tempted to anxiously over-rely on expert help. She gave a recent example:

> All the second- and third-graders in our school district are supposed to do a special report on

> the California missions [built by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish missionaries]. They are supposed to build little replicas. A few years back, parents hunted up the materials themselves. Then Jimmy's Art Supply began to provide the tile material for the roof, the yarn for your trees, the green paint for your garden. Now the store has a special section that has even the precut foamboard, trees, railroad, grass. There's one kit for Mission Dolores, another for San Juan Bautista. You pull it off the hook at Jimmy's, take it home, glue four walls together, put on the roof, glue the trees and take it to school. What are the kids learning? That the store-bought mission is better than the mission they could build on their own.

This meant that a child who did not go to the store would come to school with a substandard mission. "You may be a parent who says to their kid, 'build the mission out of things you scrounge around the house,'" April explained, "but then your kid is embarrassed to walk to school with his home-made mission. I *know*."

In general, April felt that experts—specialists—typically knew more than parents. The baseball-coached child threw a better ball. The bicycle-trained child rode a steadier bike. But parents eager to help their kids get good at a wide range of things could feel surrounded on all sides by raised standards against which to measure their perfectible child. Neighboring parents lived frantic lives, she felt, because they pinned their "core me" as parents to the aim of meeting ever-ascending standards for which they hired the best and newest services. She felt this was deskilling both parents and children. Reflecting on party animators paid to get the party going at bar and bat mitzvahs, she commented, "I want my kids to learn what to do when the party turns dull."

In essence, April felt a desire to define herself at one remove from Jimmy's Art Supply store. She did not want to be "like those parents who cave in" to the heightened standards its inventory implied, from the teacher who judged results but not the process by which they were achieved, and even more, from the part of herself that was tempted to buy magical shortcuts. Like Michael and Grace, April did not feel the desperately "chosen" estrangement of an impoverished Third World woman such as Anjali. Anjali felt estranged from womb and child in a culture she unquestioningly embraced. April felt attached to her children but a stranger in the culture of her own land. If a service could really help her child, she did not hesitate to pay for it. But she felt estranged from the culture of child and parent that she saw it creating. "We know best. Trust us," so many service providers seemed to imply in the advertisements she reviewed. So to balance things out, April turned to her family, creating occasions in which they all got "back to basics." On weekends, they delighted in helping a friend with every messy detail of feeding, grooming, and cleaning their friends' horses and barn. April outsourced more than she believed in outsourcing. But she made up for it; she counter-balanced. To a narrative of " the expert does not know best" she added one of work-life balance.

ESTRANGEMENT AND MECHANISMS OF DEFENSE

In Third World and First, as provider and consumer, to different degrees, and in various ways, we daily encounter the market. With each encounter, we face a potentially important question of identity: How much "production" of intimate life should I care about? And how much should I turn over to others to care about?

Marx has given us an important issue—commodification. But he mistakenly argues that commodification under capitalism leaves the worker automatically estranged from the things he makes and the consumer estranged from her purchase. Drawing on the finer tools of the interactionists (e.g., Zelizer 2005), we can see how many ways there are to encounter the possibility of estrangement from symbols of oneself. What we need is a new scholarship that draws together the commodification, our attachment to and detachment from the things we make and

buy, the strategies we use to address it, and the role of emotion in those strategies.

Such a line of inquiry can be guided by the following observations. Apart from modern-day slaves and trafficked people whose estrangement is forced upon them, there is the world of the free-but-unfree Anjalis. Anjali felt she was acting out of "free choice." But if her choice was free, her options were few and fixed and plunged her into the paradox of a self-estrangement she "freely" chose.

And this has its costs. Environmentalists speak of uncounted costs in making or selling things as "externalities." Commodification, too, produces such externalities, except that they occur inside, through the costs in emotional labor of trying to avoid or live through estrangement.

We can also envision a continuum between the Anjalis of the world and the Tim and Lilis, the Michaels, the Graces, the Aprils—i.e., the middle-class First World consumers of personal services. Though worlds apart from the deprivation and indignity of the Akanksha surrogates, American clients of personal services struggle with milder, more mundane versions of the same task: figuring out how and how much to care about that which is bought and sold, and to manage their feelings accordingly. Those of us at this nexus of market and gift are not hapless victims of market-induced estrangement. Nor are our adaptations "natural"; we work at them.

We develop lines of action, apply feeling rules, and do emotional work so as to stay attached to our precious symbols of self. Doing what we do, personal life in market times feels personal anyway. Indeed, we have become brilliant at avoiding estrangement. Anjali used substitution. Grace used avoidance. April counterbalanced. These are mechanisms of defense—not those of which Freud talked, against dangers from within. These are mechanisms of defense such as Erik Erikson and Neil Smelser described, against perceived dangers from "without" (Smelser 2002). We need these defenses. They are our way of regulating capitalism from the inside.

At the same time, our defenses can block from view the market itself as it takes on ever more tasks of intimate life. In these modern times, surely we need many services. At the same time, we need the keenest minds in sociology to explore that which a world of everything for sale can silently crowd out, and to find ways to make room for the spirit of the gift.

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