

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Arlie Hochschild, *The Outsourced Self: What Happens When We Pay Others to Live Our Lives for Us*. London: Picador, 2013, 320 pages, \$17, ISBN: 9781250024190.

Arlie Hochschild's latest book, *The Outsourced Self* documents the encroachment of the market into the intimate life of family and household. The incursion of the market into traditionally nonmarket aspects of our daily lives is often met with feelings of discomfort, as North Americans adjust to the new realities of balancing care work and paid work. The theme of how our intimate lives interact with the demands of the market runs through much of Hochschild's work from *The Managed Heart* (1983) to *The Commercialization of Intimate Life* (2003). *The Outsourced Self* holds to a tightly wound narrative: how care work in North America is increasingly outsourced to market forces. Throughout her career, Hochschild has documented this major social transformation in which intimate life, emotions, and family are overrun by the demands of paid labour, trained experts and market forces.

Perhaps the best counterpoint in Hochschild's work to this most recent one is *The Second Shift* (1989). That book looked at the transformation in the family brought about by two-income households. The theme that stands out in this earlier text is how the work of the household limits some women's career opportunities, as men more often than not fail to make adjustments to their expectations about household labour.

In the present work, we see how more than 20 years has partly modified this situation. In the present volume, adjusting gender roles in the household is much less central. Instead, we see how the pressures of work life have hollowed out the household, and as a result, diminished its ability to provide the care work that it has traditionally performed. Central to Hochschild's thesis is that this care work has a sacred character, which is threatened by profane market relations. Friendship, love, and care are traditionally thought to be unconditional and beyond market relations and their associated self-interest.

The Outsourced Self is based on Hochschild's ethnographic observations and qualitative interviews. As with her other work, a notable strength in her new book is its demonstration of the connections between lived experience and social structure. It consists of 14 thematic chapters with an introduction and conclusion. The chapters draw out examples of

care work that appear to be devalued through commodification. Yet, the book is also startling in its attention to the many cases when care work is not devalued by commodification. For example, we meet Nolan and Joann, whose relationship becomes increasingly family-like as Nolan cares for Joann's ailing father. While this relationship is based on global inequalities between Nepal (where Nolan immigrated from) and the US, Hochschild demonstrates that it is based on more than just cold hard cash — small gifts and care are exchanged back and forth in the relationship, alongside their employment agreement.

Paid employees are not thought to be able to really love or care for the people they are paid to look after. We encounter a professional nanny, Delores, who is fired from her job when she asks for a contract. Her employers said she “must be taking care of their baby just for the money” (pp. 178–9). Or Christine, who visits elderly patients in long term care on behalf of her clients, family members who do not have the time to visit (or who do not live nearby). When one of her client's elderly parents discovers that she is paid, the client says her mother objected: “Oh then, that's dirty liking” (p. 192). Yet in other cases, the relationship is a godsend and something more than just a market transaction emerges.

Still, Hochschild does not ignore how the outsourcing of private services undermine the intrinsic value of nonmarket bonds, making personal relationships just another commodity. Online daters “play the market,” which complicates our search for intimacy. Or, in another instance, we encounter dog owners who criticize one another for not walking their dog, even on Saturdays. “Why have a dog?” one respondent asks (p. 122). It is as though at least some of the care work itself is a drag, something we seek to avoid, and which wealthier individuals can pay to outsource to someone else.

Perhaps the most astounding impression Hochschild leaves us with is that in market times, the outsourced self fills a gap in our private lives left by the transformation of the household that is such a pervasive part of the ongoing process of modernization. Personal services are an increasing source of employment for self-starting people able to transform their own precarious work situations into more stable employment by catering to the service needs of better-to-do households. Surely, the emergence of a personal services industry is partly the product of increasing income inequality in North America. Many households increasingly need these personal services to find love, organize a kid's birthday party, potty training, or life coaching because they lack the time or social bonds to be able to perform these tasks on their own. New service professions have emerged, which Hochschild documents in this book: love coaches, namologists (for naming children), wedding planners, wantologists (psych-

ologists who can help you decide what you really want), and surrogates. These developments point not only to how traditional, family-based support networks, which would once have guided individuals through the life course, have been surpassed and usurped, but also to the profound sense of *anomie* (a term Hochschild does not use, however) confronting individuals faced with unnamed social changes in their midst.

In light of this, Hochschild's story is an ambivalent one. While as always, she allows her sources to tell the story, she nonetheless also reminds us throughout of what has been lost as a result of market times. "The very ease with which we reach for market services may also prevent us from noticing the remarkable degree to which the market has come to dominate our very ideas about what can or should be for sale or rent, and who should be included in the dramatic cast — buyers, traders, sellers — that we imagine as part of a personal life" (p. 223). We have lost confidence, she argues, in our own capacities for caring, as we abandon the field to trained experts, undermining our intimate life and de-personalizing our bonds with others.

The pitfalls of this loss of confidence are too often ignored. The conservative political consensus that has cast a pall over Western societies for going on 40 years now has paid much lip service to family values, all the while promoting the free-market reforms that have, in part, helped to undermine the household and the public institutions that may have supported an alternative to the commercialization of intimate life. Perhaps a new, more progressive consensus can emerge by drawing attention to this contradiction, and offering new values to sustain support the intimate life of households and families. Yet, the market alternative before our eyes is also clearly a viable one, and is perhaps already too far entrenched. Hochschild's book leaves one both with a sense of hope that we could actually learn to get used to fine line separating sacred care and profane paid service. It also leaves one with a sense of dread that things have come this far.

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