A Reading of *Dogville*

by Michael Lattek

Who're the ones that we kept in charge?
Killers, Thieves and Lawyers.
God's away, God's away, God's away on Business, Business.
—Tom Waits

Lars von Trier's 2003 film *Dogville* has been heavily criticized for its explicit violence and its apparent anti-American attitude. This essay will only address the first claim directly and attempts to offer an interpretation that can be used to revise the political charges made against the film. The argument presented here is that *Dogville* engages in a critique of violence that stems from perverted idealism while simultaneously discussing idealism as an illustrative way of thinking that translates into an exploitative way of acting. In other words, in *Dogville* idealism appears as a "by-way-of-looking" at the world that will always confirm the idealist's preconceived notions about the world around him. In this regard, idealism is catachrestic and contains an intrinsic moment of violence. This interpretation begins by assuming that Georg Lukács's

understanding of the novel "as something in the process of becoming" in "a world that has been abandoned by God" holds some sway over the film's project.[1] What follows is a discussion of earlier engagements with the film: first, a reference to the idea of conditioned hospitality and second, a summary of a psychoanalytic interpretation of *Dogville*. As a particularly revealing scene shows, the critique of idealism can be traced back to Plato's allegory of the cave. To explain the film's interest in idealism, justice and violence, the paper engages in a reading of Derrida's *Force of Law*. This allows us to understand another moment of intrinsic violence that appears to be a matter of concern for the film's critique of idealism. The interpretation therefore seeks to highlight moments of idealist violence and moments of violence that are loosely connected with issues of justice, hospitality and forgiveness.

Lukács as a Starting Point

This interpretation acknowledges the fact that *Dogville* has been showing in movie theaters and can therefore be called a film. However, an aesthetic undecidability remains that is crucial to its interpretation. The notion of inconsistency is graspable from the very beginning as we are being introduced into the universe of Dogville via an establishing "God shot." This technique is repeatedly used and its psychoanalytic effects will be discussed later in greater detail. The establishing shot calls attention to the absence of God from the township of Dogville in multiple respects; literally in the sense that the mission house awaits a new preacher and in the meantime is only used for town meetings. This replacement is crucial to the film's critical assessment of idealism. God's absence is also metaphorical in the sense that the acts of perversion that occur in the narrative pose questions about the non-existence of a superior, moral entity. This is why Lukács' description of the historic conditions of the novel proves to be a productive starting point:

> The novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God. The novel hero's psychology is demonic; the objectivity of the novel is the mature man's knowledge that meaning can never quite penetrate reality, but what, without meaning, reality would disintegrate into nothingness of inessentiality.[2]

Lukács points out how the absence of God affects the formation of meaning and reality as being intrinsically connected. The demonic hero needs meaning for his or her reality. For *Dogville* this means that forgiveness, hospitality, and justice have to constitute themselves in reality in one way or another. The absence of God is also the absence of absolute authority and thus meaning requires a different form of coming into being—it does not emanate from outside or above—it needs enforcement of some kind and thus has to be justified. A first look at the meaning of *Dogville* from both Lukács's and Derrida's point of view (if this simultaneity is possible) therefore allows discussing the film as a meditation on the absence of justice and the necessity of violence as law creation and enforcement. If Lukács is right in arguing that the novel reacts to the absence of God—which is also the absence of justice—than the film engages in a discussion of how to cope with this lack. And the town of Dogville clearly feels a certain lack and requires "moral rearmament,"[3] but perhaps not the kind that Tom Edison (Paul Bettany) has in mind. The financially secure son of the town's doctor is a writer and philosopher who has yet to write more than "the words great and small followed by a quotation mark."[4] The people of Dogville, who are reluctant to listen to his lectures in the mission house, seem to doubt the usefulness of this kind of rearmament and are more concerned with their own business. Thus, *Dogville* introduces Tom's idealist project as being interrelated with and equal to economic patterns of thought: Nonetheless, that is the attitude that the townspeople exercise towards his lectures. He in turn also hopes to exploit idealism for a career as a writer. In the beginning, Grace (Nicole Kidman) seems to be strangely unaffected by these economic considerations and offers herself as a gift to the town.

The Idealist Heroes

It supports the Derridian notion of justice that Grace is given two weeks to prove that she can be of value to the people of Dogville. It is precisely the problem that no judgment can be passed on Grace's person until the townspeople have reviewed all the evidence. This is what Lukács refers to as the "genre of becoming."[5] Ideas of hospitality, acceptance, forgiveness, and justice develop meaning during the plot until a moment of justice, i.e., a judgment is possible. Justice is done to each of these concepts but as Derrida points out in his second aporia "justice, as law, is never exercised without a decision that cuts, that divides."[6] The very passing of judgment thus undermines concepts of totality and even in the moment of the judgment totality is absent: "either it has not yet been made according to a rule, and nothing allows us to call it just, or it has already followed a rule…."[7] The development of Tom's character is something that Lukács talks about in his typology of the hero of the novel. The idealist hero has a demonic character and as Lukács puts it: "the demonism of the narrowing of the soul is the demonism of abstract idealism,"[8] which is to say that the idealist hero seeks to eradicate differences between ideal and idea. It appears that the demonic character is more a Socratic *daimon*, "a middle place between the gods and men," but in the end a human force, which perceives reality in a certain way.[9] Lukács states that this demonic character affects the relation between the hero and the outside world: "the contact between hero and outside world becomes a purely peripheral one: the hero is merely a necessary secondary figure adorning a totality and contributing to its construction…."[10] This holds true for Tom who perceives Grace as a tool for his illustration about acceptance—she is the gift the townspeople have to welcome openly. But vice versa, Grace, in her arrogance, denies the townspeople the same morality she claims for herself in pursuit of her ideal of morally justified rebellion against the crooked father. She despises him for his lawless use of power and renders her passivity and stoic endurance into an act of rebellion. Thus, the main characters of the film pursue pure ide-

als, which entail abuses of the people closest to them. But the problem of capital also concerns the demonic hero: The people of Dogville capitalize on each instance that worsens Grace's situation in the community. When a reward is offered, Grace is pressured to work longer for less as a "counterbalance" since her being in town has become more "costly" to the town and, simultaneously, "there is also more of an incentive"[11] for her to stay. The economic terminology in this scene is no accident. It harshly criticizes the method of intermingling matters of justice and economy. In the narrative, this rhetoric jeopardizes Tom's idealist project with Grace as an illustration of a pure gift that needs to be accepted. However, it also poses questions concerning the economic structure of idealism in general. Derrida's idea of infinite justice correlates with this idea of a gift: "This 'idea of justice' seems to be irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without exchange, …without economic circularity, without calculation…."[12] The idealism of Grace and Tom thus take complimentary positions of ignorance. Tom and, through him, the townspeople accept Grace only as an illustration of one of his high minded ideals but essentially as something experimental. Grace, in turn, accepts these terms because she idealizes the town as a place morally superior to her memories of the corrupt city where her father reigns. The idealism of *Dogville* is thus subject to an economic process that is parallel to a conditioned hospitality from which Grace suffers more than benefits.

Conditioned Hospitality

In a particularly revealing instance Atkinson compares *Dogville*'s hospitality to the hospitality of Hänsel and Grethel. He states, "the hospitality offered them is conditional on their becoming a meal for their host," and argues that this conditionality leads to the possibility of turning Grace into a "'consumable thing'."[13] As his summary of Derrida's reading of Kantian hospitality shows, conditioned hospitality follows economic

rules. It acknowledges the hierarchy of host and guest and is therefore also politically and temporally defined. It allows an exchange of things of different orders, as Saussure would put it. An exchange that can go on indefinitely because "value is…not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be 'exchanged' for a given concept."[14] The problem is that this incalculable exchange underlies the idea of hospitality itself. The hosting of a guest as guest is precisely the meeting of one's needs with economic expectations. Hospitality suspends the market exchange only in terms of monetary exchange; the power relations between guest and host underlie a certain exchange of mutual acknowledgement. Grace acknowledges the terms of the townspeople. She accepts their language but both Grace and the village silently define certain terms differently. And they cannot help but do so. The way of accepting the conditions of hospitality, or better the individual interpretation of the understanding, is contingent upon the guest's and the host's definitions of each other and themselves. This poses the question to which extent the people of Dogville can be held responsible or in Derrida's words: "It is unjust to judge someone who does not understand the language in which the law is inscribed."[15] Mutual understanding therefore seems to be a precondition for both hospitality and justice. The possibilities of justice arising from this condition will be discussed in detail below. A detour into psychoanalytic readings of the film allows for a better understanding of the identification processes that are at work in the film.

Idealism and Perversion

The preceding chapters on idealism and hospitality have shown that Grace is welcomed into the community under certain conditions. The conditionality is reciprocal in the regard that Grace's idealism affects her perception of the townspeople as something other and, as the dialogue between her and her father points out, as something morally inferior to herself. It remains to be seen whether the film offers recognition of

the self in the other. In their psychoanalytic reading, Abella and Zilkha interpret *Dogville* as a parable of perversion in which perversion functions on the level of content, formal aspects and "identification with a moral position before becoming."[16] On the level of content, the authors note the "simplicity and repetition of perversion" and state that the "entire film unfolds between two poles: idealisation forms the counterpart to destructivity, sado-masochism and deception, and even underlies them."[17] This is certainly valid for the townspeople who are pushed towards Tom's idealist experiment. The immediacy and repetition of abusing Grace is due to the townspeople's split sense of responsibility. This begins with the hostility with which Grace is greeted. The few things people know about her turn them against her. And Tom's advocacy for Grace makes her his responsibility. It has already been said the idealism in *Dogville* is subjected to an economy of exchange of things of different orders. But this agreement alters the power relations between each of the town's individual and Grace substantially. The first instance of exploiting this power, or better the attempt to partake in the altered power relations appears in the form of one of the children's attempts to receive some of the niceness that Grace is obliged to offer.[18] The later and more blatant forms of violating Grace underlie the same logic of feeling entitled to receive something based on the fact that others do also. Or as Abella and Zilkha put it in discussing seduction and denial: "Through this subtle complicity, the floodgates to a limitless greed…seem to have been opened; nothing suffices, everyone wants more."[19]

The split sense of responsibility is paralleled by what Abella and Zilkha call a "splitting of the ego and the object" on the formal level of the film.[20] Changes of lighting and different camera angles are the means deployed here. The God shots that present the town in its entirety are especially important in this regard. The prologue and moments of decision like the town's decisive meeting[21] or the celebration of Independence Day[22] use that technique. Abella and Zilkha argue that these moments create an "illusion of transparency and clarity." In fact, there is a highlighting quality to these scenes. Taken independently they empha-

size that Grace is gradually subsumed into the community. As Lukács points out when discussing the novel as opposed to the epic, "totality can be systematized only in abstract terms."[23] The argument discussed here is that by using God shots *Dogville* purposefully addresses the problems of illusionary totality. There are numerous instances to support this idea. Comparing the opening shots of *Dogville* and *All that Heaven Allows*[24] enables one to see that Sirk's melodrama uses the crane shot as an introductory method to present the universe of its narrative. The opening shot presents a clock tower of a church, and then lingers over the town in which the story will unfold before tracking the first characters to be introduced. *Dogville* repeatedly returns to the total view onto the town, which interrupts and offers the spectator another point of view in a moment of pause. The fact that the town lies at the dead end of the only street leading into the Rocky Mountains invokes a sense of total separation. However, the police, the gangsters, and the penitentiary that "might or might not be"[25] build affect the developments in town. For most of the time, however, they are dismissed as unpleasant singular events and not as representative of a larger moral context. The fact is that there is *no such thing as a larger moral context* in Dogville. Everything is negotiated between the townspeople on a level of interpersonality without privacy, as the following discussion of the non-existing walls will emphasize. For the moment, the argument of a non-existing moral context needs some support. The fact that the people of Dogville hide Grace, knowing that she is involved in criminal activities, makes them accomplices from the beginning of the film. In the later developments the numerous acts of rape are rendered without any moral context as they are being described as not really comparable "to a sexual act. They were embarrassing in the way it is when a hillbilly has his way with a cow, but nothing more than that."[26] For a later discussion of responsibility it is important to keep in mind that *idealism, conditioned hospitality and a non-existing moral context degrade Grace's status as human being in Dogville. In fact, the film deploys Kidman's character as an illustration*[27] in the same way that Tom introduces her to the town. The abuse of

Grace is part of her function in the narrative as she is being introduced after the spectator has already familiarized him- or herself with the town. The spectator, like the townspeople, has to accept her as something that comes from outside.

The non-existing walls highlight the fact that totality is a matter of central interest of the film. Total visibility would be possible but it appears that the people of Dogville have interiorized what Foucault describes when analyzing Jeremy Bentham's panopticon.[28] Bentham's prison model from 1791 envisions one overseer guarding many prisoners while remaining invisible to them. The totality of visibility that each prisoner is subjected to by a constant uncertainty of whether or not he or she is in fact being watched led Foucault to conclude, "visibility is a trap."[29] The community of Dogville seems to be an adaptation to a persecution complex arising from this form of total surveillance. The various abuses of Grace take place in a realm in which everyone is an accomplice because the absence of walls has to be understood literally. In this regard, visibility is a trap that does not react to prey of justice. Justice is not the issue for the townspeople precisely because they suppose that total surveillance has rendered crime impossible. There is no doubt about the citizens' integrity among each other because they do not perceive themselves as different from each other. But only doubt about the morality of Tom's experiment, which would also entail critique of his idealist hubris, would start reflections about one's own morality and responsibility in this setting. In this constant Foucauldian state of supervision every sense of responsibility is being eliminated. The scene when Grace is chained to a heavy iron wheel as an "escape prevention mechanism"[30] serves as an example of this interiorized sense of supervision without a sense of justice. The people of Dogville do not accuse Grace of having committed an unlawful act by her attempt to escape. Therefore, she does not have to "think of this as punishment."[31] It is more a way to put her on equal level with the townspeople, which is to say to eradicate any trace of individuality she might possess. The inventor of Grace's immobilization mechanism explains that it is designed so that she could

"only move where the ground is level and the ground is level in town."[32] This epitomizes the people's belief in a totality of Dogville as an egalitarian system of supervision.

Dogville's Platonic Moment or the Sun is moving after all

The preceding chapter has shown that justice is impossible in Dogville under the conditions of total surveillance and amorality. In this configuration, idealism merely functions to maintain procedures of law whose basis has already been perverted. Another detour within *Dogville*'s understanding of idealism almost literally illuminates where the film locates the moral problem which justice eventually has to address. The scene referred to here is entitled "Chapter Three: In which Grace indulges in a shady piece of provocation."[33] In the narrative, the scene occurs close to the expiration of her two-week probation. Part of Grace's job in town is to listen to the old, lonesome, and blind Jack McKay (Ben Gazzara) and his endless lectures about sunlight in all its variations. Appealing to his vanity (he tries to conceal his blindness from the town) and desire to attend Grace with an attitude that is best described as over-fatherly, she deliberately confronts him with his blindness. This scene deserves closer analysis since it is a critique of Plato's allegory of the cave. Jack has hung dark curtains in front his windows modeling his home into a cave. Grace introduces her provocation by interrupting Jack saying she thinks "we've talked long enough about the way we remember seeing things."[34] She calls Jack's attention to the present by tearing down the curtains thus letting in a golden stream of sunlight. The psychoanalytic dynamics of denial and seduction that Abella and Zilkha talk about are functioning here but what is more important for the ideological aspect is that this scene questions the philosopher's task of educating those still in the cave. Note that Grace had to go around the house to see the windows from the outside in order to provoke Jack. Thus, she becomes the philosopher who has seen the sun and descends back into the cave of Jack's house.

She has undergone what Plato would call "the contemplation of the divine" but is not "compelled to compete…over the shadows of justice or the statues which cast those shadows, or to argue about the way they are understood by those who have never seen justice itself."[35] Plato's painful "cure for their ignorance" thus appears in a new light:[36] What if the philosopher, after having seen the sun—the divine—uses this knowledge for ideological purposes? What if, as symbolized by blindness, one cannot assume comparable apparatuses of perception? At the end of this scene, Jack offers his understanding of the sun by saying that "in Switzerland, they call it the Alpenglühen. That's the light that *reflects* from the highest peaks, after the sun goes down behind the mountains. And now it's gone."[37] Thus, the scene elaborately points to the metaphoricity of the allegory of the cave. To look at the sun itself is blinding if one does not inscribe the sun as a higher ideal of the good or divine. But this inscription is always catachrestic in that it is inevitably subjective but strives towards objectivity. Thus, the perception of ideals can never be objective since they come into being in the eyes of the beholder.

Seeing justice?

What does Dogville's critique of Plato's idealism thus entail for the possibility of justice and the inevitability of violence? Derrida continues his argument of justice as law on the basis of three aporias that are presented here in condensed form: (1) Freedom and responsibility are requirements for justice. To be just or to be a judge, one has to perform a "reinstituting act of interpretation," thus creating and destroying the law at the same time.[38] The second aporia has already been mentioned and is only recalled as the dividing nature of justice or the decision that cuts, which is always haunted by the ghost of the undecidable. (3) Justice has an immediate urgency to it that Derrida compares to the Greek usage of the word horizon meaning "both the opening and the limit that defines an infinite progress or a period of waiting."[39] It is this impossible experi-

ence, or better, the experience of impossibility of justice that is necessary in order for justice to come into being otherwise.

> I think there is no justice without this experience, however impossible it may be, of aporia. Justice is an experience of the impossible. A will, a desire, a demand for justice whose structure wouldn't be an experience of aporia would have no chance to be what it is, namely, a call for justice.[40]

It remains to be shown that the closest Dogville gets to call for justice is the call that Tom makes to the gangsters to dispose of Grace. This call is preceded by a fundamental insight of Tom's: Grace has become a threat to his system of ideals. The scene to be discussed follows Grace's address in the mission house after having fled Dogville. The townspeople assign Tom with the task of disposing Grace. In a last unsuccessful attempt, Tom tries to force himself on Grace but she rejects him upholding her ideals of love and freedom. Disappointed and enraged Tom asks: "Wouldn't it be worth compromising just one of your ideals just a little to ease my pain?"[41] At this point, Grace's belief in ideals proves to be steadfast to the same degree that Tom's are perverted. His ideals are exchangeable for things of different order, for example giving up his ideal of community translates for him into being entitled to have sex with Grace. The economic structure of idealism resonates with this instance of sexual desire. The disappointment of being rejected has an eye-opening effect on him. He deceives Grace and ponders his options: "Of course it was all a load of nonsense. If anybody was capable of keeping track of ideals and reality, he was. After all, it was his job. …Tom was angry [because] the charges were true."[42] With his vanity hurt and his career endangered, Tom decides first and foremost in favor of himself as he calls the gangsters. When they finally appear in town, power relations change instantly. Grace is freed and brought before her father who proves to be a loving parent, besides his other activities. The dialogue between Grace and her father starts out by accusing each other of arrogance:

Grace: *So I'm arrogant; I'm arrogant because I forgive people?*
Big Man: *My God! Can't you see how condescending you are when you say that? You have this preconceived notion that nobody—listen—nobody can possibly attain the same high ethical standards as you, so you exonerate them. I cannot—I cannot think of anything more arrogant than that. You my child, my dear child, forgive others with excuses that you would never in the world permit for yourself.*
Grace: *Why shouldn't I be merciful? Why?*
Big Man: *No, no, no, you should, you should be merciful when there's time to be merciful. But you must maintain your own standards. You owe them that. You own them that. The penalty you deserve for your transgression, they deserve for their transgressions.*
Grace: *They're human beings, Dad.*
Big Man: *No, no, no, of course, but does every human being need to be accountable for their actions? Of course they do, but you don't even give them that chance.*

The emphasis on accountability here points at Derrida's first aporia. Only if one assumes universal responsibility is justice at all possible. One cannot think in terms of justice without assuming one's own responsibility.[43] It is also impossible to think of one's responsibility as singular without immediately betraying the idea of justice. The moment of justice is defined in the need to maintain one's own standards. The third aporia presents this problem as the point in which justice urges to become law. In this example, justice is a defense mechanism. It presents itself as the last possible solution to maintain one's own standards, which is to say one's existence as a human being that thinks about justice as a potentially universal term. And as, *by way of illustration*, the change of light in the scene when Grace has to make a decision emphasizes the Derridian aporia of the ghost of the undecidable. Grace renders her verdict with a sense of justice that constitutes her as a human being. The narrator states her thoughts as follows:

> The light now penetrated every unevenness and flaw in…the people. And all of a sudden, she knew the answer to her question all to well. If she had acted like them she could not have defended a single on of her actions. …It was as if

> her sorrow and pain finally assumed their rightful place. …And if one had the power to put it to rights, it was one's duty to do so, …not least for the human being that was Grace herself.

Grace and the townspeople did not recognize each other as human beings on the basis of mutual recognition of similarities. Both parties emphasized differences, partly for idealist, partly for economic reasons that they then exploited. It is *Dogville*'s inhuman blind spot of recognition that renders its actions against Grace as a crime. Despite the arrogance that refuses to recognize the townspeople as accountable, Grace proves to have the necessary empathy to think in their stead. What the film eventually offers is a sense of seeing justice instead of blind justice, not blinded by the belief in ideal justice but one that contains its own realm by resolving itself between the parties involved. It resolves by undoing, by offering the greatest possible justice without insinuating future instances of justice as law.

Conclusion

This reading started with the absence of God and it returns to it in a central aspect. Lost totality and unique ideas result from this absence and idealism steps in to fill this lack. Dogville meditates on the ideas of hospitality, responsibility, forgiveness and, as a result, justice. It does so under the assumption that justice has to make itself felt as an appropriate reaction towards violence. Or, in Lukács's words, meaning needs reality to make sense. Idealism as a by-way-of-looking at the world is unsuitable in this regard. Its emphasis on ideals and ideas makes the human being a peripheral phenomenon. This also affects the perception of the other. The welcoming of Grace under idealist and economic preconditions renders her alien to the townspeople and therefore, as Atkinson rightly observes, as a consumable thing. The peripheral or conditioned perception results in a

split sense of responsibility that defies matters of morality. It is not only that individual responsibility does not apply to Grace according to the people of Dogville. Responsibility does not exist as a moral concept. The lack of totality that the absence of God created bears strange fruits in the film. On the one hand, total responsibility does not exist. On the other hand, the absence of walls makes surveillance total. The perversion and non-existence of morality and senses of justice becomes apparent in the last town meeting scene. Dogville is thus a town of total amorality precisely because it does not allow doubt, shadows, or privacy. The critique of Plato's allegory of the cave as resulting in biased objectivity is a vivid example of this. The initial misunderstanding of ideals allows idealism to be accomplice in the abuse of Grace. To do justice, one has to accept to the terms of the community and achieve mutual understanding. Both parties, the town and Grace, lead a life of strange parallelism in their use and abuse of one another. The entering of parental force into the narrative poses the question of accountability and responsibility. *Dogville* does not engage in a definition of universal justice. It calls attention to the impossibility of such a project. Justice needs enforcement in Derridian terminology or meaning needs reality in Lukács's terminology. The possibility of a moment of justice in the film is threatened as Grace is consumed entirely and deprived of her status as a human being. Grace's revenge makes justice possible on a basis of mutual recognition. She envisions herself in the situation of the townspeople and concludes that they have done evil. Their inability to understand this is punished because it threatens the fundamental sense of justice. Grace defends justice in existence and reconstitutes herself as a human being. She is obliged to do so precisely because no external force will step in. She has to substitute this external force by striving towards total understanding and simultaneously protecting her own individuality. This impossibility at some point collides with Derrida's aporias of justice and a just decision becomes inevitable on the basis of protecting one's own integrity as a moral human being.

Notes

1 Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 72, 88.
2 Lukács, 88.
3 Lars von Trier, *Dogville* (Lion's Gate Entertainment, 2005), time index 00:02:00.
4 *Dogville*, time index 00:02:40.
5 Lukács, 72.
6 Jacques Derrida, „Force of Law: The ‚Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Decon struction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. D. Cornell (New York: Routledge, 1992), 24.
7 Derrida, 24.
8 Lukács, 97.
9 J. A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 204.
10 Lukács, 106.
11 *Dogville*, time index: 01:14:00.
12 Derrida, *Force*, 25.
13 A. Atkinson, "On the Nature of Dogs, the Right of Grace, Forgiveness and Hos pitality," *Senses of Cinema*, 36, sensesofcinema.com/contents/05/36/dogville.html (19 December 2005).
14 Jacques Derrida, White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Mar gins of Philosophy*, ed. A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 218.
15 Derrida, *Force*, 18.
16 Abella/Zilkha, 1519.
17 Abella/Zilkha, 1520.
18 While babysitting, one of the children, blackmails Grace emotionally: "If you want my ma to like you, you just have to be nice to me." *Dogville*, time index 00:42:10.
19 Abella/Zilkha, 1522.
20 Abella/Zilkha, 1521.
21 *Dogville*, time index: 00:50:40: In which everyone agrees to let Grace stay indefinitely.
22 *Dogville*, time index: 01:03:50: In which Grace is officially acknowledged as one of the people of Dogville.
23 Lukács, 70.
24 Sirk 1995.
25 *Dogville*, time index: 02:20:55.
26 *Dogville*, time index: 02:05:40.
27 At the beginning of the film when Tom hears gunshots and soon after returns to

meditating on his future reputation as a philosopher, Grace is introduced at the end of his day dream as the narrator sums up Tom's method in one word: illustra tion. *Dogville*, time index: 00:11:30.

28 The use of Foucault's panopticism here is only peripheral and follows his argument that Bentham's model was influential in the development of other social institu tions. A detailed psychoanalytical reading of the film would certainly benefit from including Foucault's concept of power-knowledge but this is not the aim of the argument discussed here.

29 "Michel Foucault," *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault (19 Decem ber 2005).

30 *Dogville*, time index: 02:00:30.

31 *Dogville*, time index: 02:02:00.

32 *Dogville*, time index: 02:01:40.

33 *Dogville*, time index: 00:45:20.

34 *Dogville*, time index: 00:46:50.

35 Plato, *The Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 223.

36 Plato, 221.

37 *Dogville*, time index: 00:50:10.

38 Derrida, *Force*, 23.

39 Derrida, *Force*, 26.

40 Derrida, *Force*, 16.

41 *Dogville*, time index: 02:15:10.

42 *Dogville*, time index: 02:17:50.

43 An incorporation of Levinas' substitution would have supported the interpersonal aspect of responsibility prior to any commitment. However, it is only mentioned here. E. Lévinas, "Substitution," in *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. S. Hand (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1989).