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Domestic horizons: subliminal/sublimated realities of black women employed as domestic workers in text

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Domestic Horizons:
Subliminal/sublimated realities of black women employed as domestic workers in text

Abstract

This study is a narrative inquiry into the lives of back women employed as domestic workers. The study explores pre-existing narratives by Black women employed as domestic workers about their realities as domestic workers. Using the Fanonion notion of ontological resistance in relation to a consideration of the implication of phenomena and appearance in ontology, particularly in the forms of the virtual and the Symbolic, narratives were engaged in relation to (political) ontology. Lacanian discourse analysis was utilised in conversation with the aforementioned discussion. The aim of this research was to engage the narratives of black women employed as domestic worker on their own accounts, that is, narratives that were not responses to projects initiated by other entities and thus relatively unencumbered by other research aims and interests. These were scarce. Two books by Magona, *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1991) and *To My Children's children* (1990) were explored. In response to the scarcity of these narratives on their own account, a meta-analysis of papers that concerned themselves with the experiences/phenomenology of domestic workers post-democracy were explored. It was contended that it should be taken as fundamental the fact that black women employed as domestic workers feel trapped by domestic work and coerced into it by their need to provide for themselves and/or their family and thus consider the way domestic work is predicated on violence.

Keywords: Domestic work; Narrative; Ontological resistance; Master signifiers; Political ontology

Declaration

I declare that: **Domestic Horizons: Subliminal/sublimated realities of black women employed as domestic workers in text** is my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed this __13_____day of_____March_____2022



Cole Meintjies

Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

This study is a narrative inquiry into the lives of black women employed as domestic workers and will explore pre-existing narratives by black women employed as domestic workers. This will be done in the form of two books and a metanalysis of studies that claim to be participant-led, phenomenological, interpretive and so on. This introduction and rationale begin with theory focused on issues of black women (largely Black feminist theory but not all theorists identify as such) that identifies black women employed in domestic work as located in a position largely characterised by disavowal, theoretical importance, and strategic importance. The theory speaks to the disavowal of labour of domestic workers (that is, the lack of recognition of the role of that labour), the disavowal of the history of domestic work, and its relation to structural relation of class, gender and race (inter alia). As a site produced through these structural relations and their disavowal, domestic work has thus been identified as a point at which the avowal of people and the structural relations of the site may be generative for liberatory goals. This rationale then engages the notion of ontological resistance in the theorisation and explores a relation between narrative and ontological resistance. That is, we engage a rationale for using narrative (a particular way) for the recognition of individual subjects and taking individuals narratives as inherently necessary for any theorisation. The work is an engagement with the views of domestic workers as philosophical and political work and as praxis. As a political work and praxis, we can return to the theory that identifies the importance of the site of domestic work. As philosophical work, we engage Fanon's (2008) notion of ontological resistance, in terms of narrative, whereby the narrative is not subordinate to the ontology of the reader or of analytic tools. That is, narratives that are not only *about* certain 'facts' and not only *interpretations* of some reality but that are situated in and (re)produce their own ontological readings.

Structures through which we engage domestic work

A useful place to begin is with the tradition that views oppressive structures not as disparate categories that additively impact upon individuals, but rather as a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 1990, p. 555) in which systems of dominations are interlinked and mutually constitutive, where "each system needs the others in order to function" (Collins, 1990, p. 554). This is largely associated and taken up by theory recognised in and by the black feminist tradition. According to Collins (1990), rethinking systems of domination as interlocking requires a paradigm shift to multiple axes of oppression which escapes binary notions of the

mechanisms and effects of—and positions within—structural relations of power. According to the Combahee River Collective (1978) and hooks (2000) inter alia, within multiple axes of oppression, it is necessary for the liberation of all oppressed people to *destroy* the systems of white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. "If black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (Combahee River Collective, 1978, p. 215). This is not to say that these are the only axes of oppression but, according to this analysis, with the mutually constitutive, interlinked nature of power structures and the paradigm shift to the multiplicity of these structures, to destroy these three salient structures would necessitate destroying the matrix of oppression.

In an analysis of Claudia Jones arguments, Davies (2007) argues that black women are superexploited; that:

> black women, by virtue of being located as they are in society, among the most exploited and most underpaid of workers, tend to be the ones whose value of their labor (sic.) power various other class fractions (including other exploited workers) benefit from. (p. 43)

That is, capitalist exploitation interlocks with racial and gendered systems of oppression such that the degree of exploitation is increased and gives rise to ways in which particular kinds of labour are expected of black women (Boyce Davies, 2007, Cock, 1980). In the terms of Smith (2020) oppressive possibilities become "psychologically possible" (p. 65) because of their racialised and gendered positions.

While Jones published this argument in 1949, Vanyoro (2019)—among others, some of whom will be explored in the literature review—similarly identifies the position of women employed in domestic work in South Africa as:

> an important nexus for African women's subordination… The social relations of domestic work employment in South Africa's post-colonial context are deeply implicated with class, gender and racial structures...[1] (p. 7)

[1] Vanyoro (2019) call specific attention the implications of nationality on the positionality of domestic workers; The quote continues: "…so much that nationality is rarely invoked in the equation or reflected in the work of South Africa's CSOs…"

This is in line with Jones's (1949) analysis which finds the case of domestic workers as a "crass manifestation" (p. 10) of the neglect of black women and puts it clearly when she says:

> Usually, she has no definition of tasks in the household where she works. Domestic workers may have 'thrown in' in addition to cleaning and scrubbing, such tasks as washing windows, caring for the children, laundering, cooking, etc. and all at the lowest pay. (p. 11)

This quote functions to highlight that, in an analysis that has named white capitalist patriarchy as a strategic target, domestic work has historically been a site that has seen the manifestation of these structures, in line with Vanyoro (2019). However, perhaps the term "manifestation" threatens to mislead: it is not a particular instantiation, but itself a constructed category and an abstraction—this is to say that understanding domestic work as a manifestation of these structures is not to homogenise domestic work or reduce our understanding of domestic work to a simple by-product of larger structures. Put yet otherwise, domestic work remains a category in itself (and, in a sense, for itself) that cannot be reduced to a manifestation of other structures (which are always, in a sense, abstractions themselves).

Working in Brazil, which is described as "a similar context of social inequality" when compared with South Africa (p. 465), Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan (2019) find, in line with Jones (1949) and Davies (2007), that domestic work is structured by an imbalance of power. They state that "Although domestic work is socially useful, the remuneration for this work or the paternalistic employer-employee relationship reflects an under-valuing of this work" (p. 468). In the interviews with Dos Santos et al. (2019), women employed as domestic workers also spoke of the low negotiating power and labour that is demanded from them that should be malleable to the wants of their employer—that is, being able to add tasks and structure their work (and social life) around the events, commitments, and whims of their employers, unprotected by contracts. This consonance between Jones' 1949 analysis in the United States of America (U.S.), Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan (2019) in Brazil, and Vanyoro (2019) in South Africa is imperative to our analysis.

Domestic work can, thus, still be thought of as a site of superexploitation, the nature of which is (partially) constituted by the gestalt mechanisms and effects of the matrix of domination vis-à-vis their position as black working-class women. The work exceeds the basic contract, with this acquiescence elicited by the lack of negotiating power and the socio-economic structuring of their relationship. This can be articulated through and placed in contradistinction with the

statement that “What has been overlooked in blackness has often been overseen” (Moten as cited in Snorton, p. 194). That is to say that, in terms of the case of the black women woman domestic worker, the challenge is not for the superexploitation to become seen but for it to be seen as superexploitation. In this sense, the disavowal of domestic workers can be thought of in more precise psychoanalytic terms. According to Evans (1996), disavowal is a defence characterised by simultaneous *refusal* and *recognition* of the reality of a traumatic perception (See also Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967, p. 118 as cited in Evans, 1996). As Cock (1980) states, “[t]he neglect is significant” as in inquiry into domestic work means “questioning the accepted pattern of inequalities on which the entire social order is based” (p. 5), echoing the likes of Jones and the Combahee River Collective as per above. We, thus, require a mode of engagement that allows us to not ‘overlook’ and go beyond ‘overseeing’ the issues. This is not necessarily a question of accumulating more or better ‘facts’ but a question of shifting the process of engagement.

With this in mind our research questions are:

1. What are the narratives, produced by black women employed as domestic workers, about their lives and experience of work?
2. What is the ontology (of domestic work) available in the narratives of black women employed as domestic workers? (We might reframe the question as something like: What is the picture of reality-the categories and objects with their properties and relations- through which domestic work, and the world is situated in, is made sense of?)
3. What are the narratives produced by black women employed as domestic workers as they appear in studies that aim to be participant-led, phenomenological, interpretive and so on?
4. How are these narratives, in the studies that aim to be participant-led, phenomenological, interpretive and so on, engaged?

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Ontological resistance in narrative

Fanon (1952/2008) states: "The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (p. 10). Fanon's focus is on 'Blackness' but we can engage with the problematics provided. Part of what Fanon is speaking to in this statement is the determination of/by the Other. "I did not create meaning for myself, it was already there waiting" (Fanon, 1952/2008 p. 113). That is, part of what it means to have no ontological resistance is to be unable to 'speak back' to the Other's conceptualisation of ontology; to only be able to have ontological claims taken seriously where those claims can be accepted by the Other. As Fanon (1952/2008) states:

> In the *weltanschauung* [something like "worldview"] of a colonised people, there is an impurity or a flaw that prohibits any ontological explanation. *Perhaps it could be argued that this is true for any individual* [emphasis added], but such an argument that would be concealing the basic problem. *Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the man since it ignores the lived experience* [emphasis added]. (p. 89-90)

Fanon argues that ontological explanations which have no capacity to engage with lived experience are lacking. Or, rather, and more pointedly, Fanon argues that these ontological explanations necessarily engage lived experience but the ways in which certain kinds of subjects are engaged in (or prohibited from) producing ontological study is related to the structuring of power and knowledge production (à la Foucault). Where any individual is unable to produce a 'true' ontological explanation, certain individuals—in certain positions in society, with certain relations to power—are given greater credibility in their capacity for ontological explanations. In this sense, any study of domestic work, particularly as it has been related to structural analysis, requires this engagement with lived experience. It requires a reckoning with the question of who is engaged with the production of knowledge and in which ways. In a mode of engagement that aims to not 'overlook' the issues of domestic work and domestic workers, this study aims to think of the ontological resistance of narratives. In this sense, narratives cannot be entirely subsumed by other theories. What are the lived experiences and ontological explanations in the lived experiences of black women employed as domestic workers? One cannot engage a narrative from nowhere and to seriously consider the ontology offered in a narrative is not to abandon other ontological claims or theory but there is decided intent to take seriously and engage the ontological resistance present in the analysis. The following discussion is a framework for engaging the ontological resistance of narrative.

Using the discussion from the intro of *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 2003), it can be seen how narrative accounts of black women employed as domestic workers with regard to work and temporality can be useful for exploring the conditions of domestic workers. The appearances of domestic workers' realities give insight into the nature of reality and the appearance of the structural relations of power in the narratives. "The appearance", according to Sartre, "does not hide the essence, it reveals it, it is the essence" (p. 2). However, this is the essence of the *phenomena*, the relative-absolute. "Relative the phenomenon remains, for 'to appear' supposes in essence somebody for whom to appear" (p.2). The structure of appearances constituting the infinite possibilities of the subject (in this case, domestic workers) are instances of the series of appearances structural relations that exist in live lives of individuals. The narrative account then offers an engagement with some of the phenomena that structure the infinities of the individual subject. Put another way, narratives, phenomenology, or any subjective account provide an *ontological* reading of the world. This allows a reading of narrative that cannot be subsumed by other theory but that is always itself speaking as a kind of analysis, as an engagement with the relative absolute, as ontological resistance. However, its ontological resistance is constrained by the extent to which it is recognised qua ontological resistance.

Consider the following two quotes:

> The first quote: "Fanon's own interest [is] in exploding the temporality of the colonial mode of representation of otherness and in revealing a temporality that raises the possibility of impossibility within colonial rule, black liberation." (Keeling as cited in Snorton, 2018, p. ix)
>
> The second quote: "As Deleuze puts it, the moment of stratigraphic superimposition is time as such. In short, one should oppose here the development within time to the explosion of time itself: time itself (the infinite virtuality of the transcendental field of Becoming) appears within the intra-temporal evolution in the guise of eternity." (Žižek, 2012, p. 10)

In this sense, we can understand narrative to engage the superimposition of the virtuality—what Žižek compares to the Symbolic[2], the realm of signification—of those systems. The black liberation mentioned above requires the exploding of temporality, the end of the Becoming of

[2] Symbolic is capitalised to identify it with the notion of the Lacanian Symbolic.

structures which (re)produce oppression. This thinking troubles temporality as the neutral grounds for possibility on which events occur, rather positioning Becoming as the grounds of possibility for time. The Becoming requires that the virtual—as opposed to the event or the "the way the past 'effectively was'" (Žižek, 2012, p. 11)—is repeated[3]. Within time, for the symbolic authority of systems of power "to function as an effective authority, it has to remain not-fully actualized, an eternal threat" (Žižek, 2012, p. 4). To explore the Becoming of domestic work is to foreground the question of which virtuality (or Symbolic economy) produces the events, which Symbolic authorities (particularly in the form of master signifiers) are engaged with in the narrative? Certain empirical questions on narrative work may lead to an 'overlooking' of domestic work because they only examine the variety of *Being* in narrative. With the notion of the relative absolute as introduced above, we may allow an engagement with the virtuality in which that Being exists. Put otherwise, it is to foreground the narratives as engagement with the Symbolic network and the virtual in a way that is not entirely falsifiable by empirical data. The historical context and the empirical are not ontologically prior to virtuality.

The infinite possibilities within the temporality of the Virtual allow for part of Hartman's (2019) conceptualisation of beauty as "not a luxury [but] rather…a way of creating possibility in the space of enclosure, a radical art of subsistence…a transfiguration of the given" (p.36). The salient points of the narrative centred around domestic workers are not only self-referential phenomena, they are also part of the series of phenomena that actualize the virtuality within which we are situated and allow space for the New (Žižek, 2012) and the beauty that Hartman (2019) speaks of. An examination of reality is not just in the abstract, that reality is bound up

[3] To illustrate this interplay between the Being and Becoming of power structures consider these two discussions:

> The upshot of capital's uninformed, misshapen body-it's lack of bodily integrity being no less than the proliferating bodies whose unending labour constitutes it's "non-totalised"-is the production of two divergent movements always associated in a single vertigo. They are disguised on the one, a movement of flight, of plunging into the bodiless, and thus continued invention, of expansive additions or affirmations of new pieces…a movement of tension and on the other, a movement of institution of an organism, of an organisation and of organs of totalisation and unification- a movement of reason (Sexton, 2008, p. 192).

> We seem to be confusing the spectacle of race/racism for race/racism itself. The maintaining of racial logics directs our attention away from itself and toward some event or occurrence (a tragedy here or there, a protest today or tomorrow), while it keeps itself hidden, enabling it to disappear through its very effect" (Ko & Ko, 2020, p. 123)

The material Being, the repetition of effects/events of capital/capitalism and race/racism are sustained by their immateriality, by their virtuality. To explode this repetition would thus require an ending, not only of the effects but also of the virtual.

in the reality of individuals. The narratives are themselves an exploration of ontology, and, in this case, the ontology of domestic work and the temporality/ temporalities and Symbolic network in which it is situated. As Sartre (2003) states, "ontology will be the description of being as it manifests itself" (p. 4) and this is in terms of Being, Becoming and the virtual. A narrative exploration of domestic workers situated around their work as a site identified as one of the crass manifestations of superexploitation allows for a transitive exploration of structural relations and their reality where, in terms offered by Sharpe (2016, pp. 20-21), quotidian events are the orthography of reality. To do this and begin theorizing around what finds importance in the narrative of the work of domestic workers is to counteract the logics of domination. In doing so, domestic workers are moved from the position of objects of study upon which the manifestation of power structures acts upon to the forefront of praxis and providing the sites of theoretical development.

Žižek (2001) explores how reality is, in part, constituted by 'fictions'.

> Take the case of the ethical-political arrangement of a given community: its symbolic identities are bestowed upon it by a series of legal, religious and other values which regulate us life; these values are "fictions," they exist nowhere, they possess no substantive ontological consistency …although such a "fiction" effectively exists only in its real effects…we cannot *reduce* it to those effects. (p. 59)

With this, we can return to the statement whereby we do not take the empirical and the historical context as ontologically and logically prior to the 'fictions', the Symbolic, the 'virtual' (which is not to reverse this and refuse the import of the historical and empirical). What we have done so far is create an ontological picture that takes up the lived experiences, narratives, and signification not as mere narratives or something that only points us to empirical studies that corroborate or falsify the narrative. Where the analyses of structural relations were used to identify domestic work as a site of importance, we have engaged an ontological conceptualisation wherein these structural relations exist alongside the inherent ontological available in narratives. This ontology is then itself subject to the ontological resistance of the narratives. Put another way, in this ontology, the contingency and subjectivity of individual narratives and experiences are not opposed to some notion of an 'objective reality'. On the contrary, this contingency or subjectivity is partly constitutive of reality. Furthermore (/thus), this ontology is subject to the ontological resistance of the narratives. This study aims to recognise the ontological resistance of the narratives of domestic workers and, in so doing,

engages narratives not only as empirical data to be explained but that which can engage, challenge, and be theorized. This is why the subtitle speaks of "*realities* of black women employed as domestic workers" where it might have been something like "*narratives* of black women employed as domestic workers". Our use of ontological resistance has no hypothesis on the content of narratives. This is only a way to speak to the problem raised by Fanon (2008) in relation to narrative where it is held that certain narratives (due to the narrative or content or the subject positions from which they are articulated (or enunciated)) are subsumed by ontologies that prohibit the ontological explanations of these narratives and utilise the lived experience through the frame of the Other—i.e., these narratives cannot make meaning for themselves, the meaning is already there, waiting. This is not to de-emphasise the role of narrative or to try and transpose narrative into something else but, on the contrary, to highlight the way it is being conceived.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Cock's (1980) seminal work on domestic work in South Africa, in consonance with the prior discussion, finds domestic workers to be "among the most exploited groups in a society marked by extreme inequality" (p.5). Jones's (1910) and Boyce Davies (2007) referred to the superexploitation of black women in domestic work to highlight the way that their exploitation is imbricated with their racialised and gendered position. Cock (1980), in a similar way, describes women employed as Domestic workers as "subject to ultra-exploitation" (p.6). Cock highlights reasons for the significance of the social institution of domestic work, including the large number of black women employed*; the racialised and gendered nature of the work reflecting patterns of domination*; and the role, *materially and ideologically*, of domestic work in the *reproduction of labour power*. According to Stats SA's report from the third quarter of 2021, there are approximately 857 000 people employed as "domestic workers" (Stats SA, 2021) of which approximately 760 000 are black women, approximately 89%. Accounting for 16,5% of the employment of black women, it is the third largest category of employment for black women following "elementary" and "sales and services" (Stats SA, 2021)[4]. As Mahali (2016) states, in South Africa, when one thinks of domestic workers, it is an image dominated by black women. However, as Budlander and Bosch (2002) state, the nature of domestic work means that people employed as domestic workers are likely to be undercounted. As Magwaza (2008) notes, in a patriarchal society such as South Africa, unpaid domestic labour is often expected of women and, thus, the point at which domestic work becomes employment is itself relatively murky. Furthermore, "it is often those who are in the most severe of circumstances who are likely to be undercounted" (Budlander & Bosch, 2002, p.17) such as children employed as domestic workers (Budlander & Bosch, 2002) and migrant women employed as domestic workers (Vanyoro, 2019).

Cock (1980) uses a Marxist analysis and places "emphasis…on the system of production", that is, capitalism, in her study. Hartman (2019) discusses the case of women compelled to serve in domestic work (and other forms of work including sex work), in clearly intertextual (and transdisciplinary) Marxist terms (and, thus, providing a formal articulation of domestic worker's conditions as a crass manifestation of issues of capitalism), and, in relation to 'free

[4] The categories of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) refer to "Both sexes" then split into "men" and "women". We note the lack of space for Gender and sex identities that may be left unaccounted for in this.

exchange', states that "whether it is labour or love that is sold, economic necessity compels the sale… (p.236). Here is Marx (1887):

> In the market he (sic.) stood as owner of the commodity "labour-power" face to face with the owner of commodities, dealer against dealer. The contract by which he sold to the capitalist of his labour-labour power proved, so to say, in black and white terms that he disposed of himself freely. The bargain concluded, it is discovered that he is no 'free agent', that the time for which he is free to sell his labour is the time for which he is forced to sell it. (p. 285)

The relations of production whereby the labourer, removed from their means of subsistence by forceful historical processes, such as those of Slavery and Apartheid, is compelled to acquire their means of subsistence by selling their labour power. This historical aspect becomes muted so that the relation is naturalised and, thus, "breaks down all (sic.) resistance…the dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjugation of the labourer to the capitalist [or rather to capital]" (Marx, p. 689). This is also related to the Marxist argument that both the historical process of violence and nature of social relations are obfuscated but naturalised and, thus, maintained through hegemonic process which are, in a phrase borrowed from Wilderson III (2014, p.228) "backed up by coercion-in-reserve"[5]. The specificity of domestic labour is a raced and gendered—and historical—extension of the relation above. That many women sell their labour-power in the form of domestic work is a product of social and historical relations (see Cock, 1980; Ally, 2010; Jansen, 2019). This compulsion is seen in the findings of Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan (2019): "The notions of possible labour options were constructed very early in the life of the participants. The participants' living situation influenced their engagement in domestic work at a very young age" (p. 472). As Cock (1980) notes, there is room for theoretical debate in the specificities of domestic work *vis-à-vis* Marxist theory, however, that should not obfuscate the essential problems illuminated by Marxist analysis:

[5] This quote is about the theory of Gramsci. "[F]or Gramsci, civil society is best described not as the sphere of freedom but of hegemony. Hegemony, to be sure, depends on consent (as opposed to coercion), but consent is not the spontaneous outcome of "free choice"; consent is manufactured, albeit through extremely complex mediums, diverse institutions, and constantly changing processes. Furthermore, the power to manufacture consent is not evenly distributed in society"(Buttigeig, 1995, p.7).

> [T]he paid domestic worker is firstly a wage labourer and thus subject to the discipline of the wage, with the corollary that the worker receives less than what she produces, the surplus being appropriated by her employer" (Cock, 1980, p.14).

Let us return to Cock's (1980) argument that the institution of domestic work is significant as domestic workers reproduce labour power.[6] Cock (1980) notes that domestic workers' precise relation to capital involves theoretical issues which exceed her study. What Cock refers to as the physical maintenance of labour-power refers to the physical labour of domestic workers that supports their employer in sustaining themselves (the employer) and their capacity to work. The labour of domestic worker's in reproducing the labour power of their employer frees the time for their employers' self-reproduction to utilise elsewhere. Cock also states that the employment of "cheap, black labour is one instance" of a mechanism of "escape" from the constraints of white women vis-à-vis patriarchal domination. hooks (2000) states similarly that, "privileged men did not become equal caretakers in the domestic household, the freedom of privileged-class women of all races has required the sustained subordination of working-class and poor women" (p. 20). Cock (1980) argues that the institution of domestic work also reproduces labour power at an ideological level, that "the role of the domestic worker is important in socialisation into the dominant ideological order" (p. 9). Not only does the ideological order sustains capitalism but also, the racial and sexual power relations. Cock discusses this reproduction in relational terms wherein interactions through the asymmetrical structural positions do the ideological work. For example, Jansen (2019) states that the work of black women in private households led to "the racist assumption by even the youngest white child that black hands do the dirty work" (p 3). This can also be thought of in a visual symbolic economy. As Gqola (2010), referencing Rammasamy (1998, as cited in Gqola, 2010), states:

> …locked into bodily signification, Others were not merely emblematic representations of the [empires] most cherished ideal but also actively deployed as somatic technologies of patriarchal empire building.

This is part of the mechanism that underlies Mahali's (2016) statement that "when we think of a domestic worker in a South African context, she is almost always a woman" (p. 129) or

[6] "By labour-power or capacity for labour is to be understood as the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he (sic.) exercises whenever he produces a use value of any description" (Marx, 1887, p.164). Marx (1887) defines the use value in terms of utility and references Locke (1777, p. 28 as cited in Marx, 1887)) who says, "the natural worth of a anything consists in its fitness to supply the necessities or conveniences of human life".

Jansen's (2019) argument that black women in domestic work became emblematic of who does the 'dirty work'.

A brief engagement with the historical context of domestic work

In the history of domestic work in South Africa, we see both the continuity and discontinuity of racialised and gendered structure. This historical outlining goes beyond the aims of the paper but a brief outlining may be useful. Domestic work in South Africa finds its roots in the slave labour of the settler colony (Ally, 2010; Cock, 1980; Jansen, 2019). These slaves were predominantly black and divided in domestic tasks in gendered ways (Ally, 2010). According to Gaitskell et al. (1984,), "[black slave labour] was cheaper and more controllable and some official considered that it was more fitting for slaves than free whites to do menial work" (p. 98 as cited in Ally 2010). In the transformation to wage labour toward the end of the eighteenth century, we see the influence of capital and "the beginnings of a permanent class of wage labourers" (Pieres, 1976, p. 170 as cited in Ally, 2010). That is to say domestic work cannot be disimbricated from the positioning of a certain type of subject as a permanent class of wage labourers. That being said, the demographic makeup of domestic work was not continuous. In the 19th century, white women, particularly migrant women, made up a significant portion of domestic workers and were 'desirable' for domestic work (Cock, 1980; Ally, 2010). However, in this, just as there were gendered positions within domestic labour, so too were there racialised positions (Ally, 2010). For example, towards the end of the 19th century "[w]hite women predominated in the homes of the bourgeoisie…and the petty bourgeoisie, where they served as specialist servants, assisted by the more ubiquitous white, or 'coloured' general servants" (Ally, 2010, p. 27). In this period in the Cape, many white women "opted out" of domestic work (Ally, 2010, p. 26). Ally (2010) cites Swaisland in stating that:

> "poor accommodation and loneliness" in households where there they were the only servant, and the difficulties of "mixing black and white" servants in multiservant households made domestic service an unsatisfactory form of employment for white women immigrants. (Swaisland,1993, p. 81 as cited in Ally 2010)

That is, white women were not the ideal subject of domestic work. Cock's (1980) overview of the history of domestic work includes the statement that "[d]omestic service was always characterised by a level of exploitation; because of the low wages and poor working conditions it involved, whites escaped from it while s were *coerced into it* [emphasis added]" (p. 227). Ally (2010) also notes that one of the ways white women opted out of the institution of

domestic workers was through marriage. We can see the parallels with Jansen's (2019) discussion of enslaved white women in her analysis of the origins of domestic work: "Given the shortage of white women at the Cape the [Dutch East India trading Company (VOC)] realised that the free burghers would be more committed to farming if they had wives on the smallholdings" (p. 25). Thus, it was suggested that the free burghers bring Dutch servants to the Cape who could "serve as 'marriage candidates'" (Jansen, 2019, p. 25). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many of these women got married and were "quickly elevated from the position of being a maid in Holland to becoming an independent housewife at the Cape, and, in many cases, also a slave owner. Ally (2010) notes that in the nineteenth century in the Cape, white women were replaced by African and Coloured women, while in the interior regions African and coloured men took up domestic labour. Ally also highlights this disparity in relation to the lack of African women in the mining locations of the interior and the general structuring of gendered and racialised migration; "It was theorised that that African men had to be urbanized to be converted into waged labourers to service the labour demands of labour in formation, while African women's urbanization had to be curbed …in order to maintain a rural economy in the so-called native reserves" (Ally, 2010, p. 29). This was then followed by a period in which African women were urbanized, at least in part, to "seek economic independence for themselves and their children". However, the fact that this was found through the mode of domestic work is reflects not only their choices by the formations of capitalism and the direction of the state (Ally, 2010, p. 30). Ally takes note of the role of racialised capitalism and the focus on this as an emphasis in explanation, but takes care to specifically respond to Cock's (1980) claim that domestic service under Apartheid existed in a "legal vacuum" (p. 10). Ally (2010) argues that the state played an important role in the historical formation and demographic make-up of domestic labour and domestic work, both during Apartheid and now. Part of Ally's focus in doing so is to question the idea of greater state intervention as a solution to the problems of domestic work. The late 1970s are highlighted as an important moment as Ally argues that—following the "Apartheid machinery [gathering] steam toward the 1950s" and concomitant implementation of policies— "By the Late 1970s, domestic work was a sector enmeshed in this web of legal requirements inaugurating a modern system of legislated coercion and control" (p. 39). Ally also highlights the reference point of 1974 as the point that this new framework replaced the Masters and Servants Act. The late 1970s was, thus, a key moment in the history of domestic work wherein "the colonial and Apartheid states, together with capital and employers, structured the domestic labour market

not only in defining its demographic composition, but shaping Apartheid servitude through modern technologies of labour control" (Ally, 2010, p. 42). Ally also recognises the actions and effects of domestic workers in informing policy and in shaping their work, living arrangements, and greater lived reality. For example, the way domestic workers have evaded contracts or formalisation of work as it defers their power to state mechanisms and removes their extra-legal negotiating capacity in relation to their employers. According to Ally (2010):

> The regulation of the domestic workplace through the logics of employment (as a specific form of monetary exchange) was somewhat inconsistent for these workers because it sought to reconcile the simultaneity of intimacy and commerce by the reduction of one to the logic of the other. (p. 193)

Domestic work as a kind of repetition

This proposal made earlier mention of the Deleuzian concepts of Virtual and Becoming. Before proceeding let us get some further understanding on the notions of Being and Becoming:

> This pure becoming is not a particular becoming of some corporeal entity, a passage of the entity from one state to another, but a becoming-it-itself, thoroughly extracted from its corporeal base. Since the predominant temporality of Being is that of the present (with past and future as deficient modes), the pure becoming-without-being means that one should sidestep the present-it never actually occurs (Žižek, 2012, p.8-9)

The goal of this study is not to explore the metaphysics of Being and Becoming, however, this notion allows us to think with the repetition of effects—the (dis)continuities of being without losing sight of the mechanisms that disappear through them[7]. This removal from the corporal base shifts our focus from a more material analysis to a focus on the virtual (the Symbolic economy) through which the material is repeated. Which virtualities allow the Becoming of Domestic work? It might be useful to conceptualise the question as asking something like this: Through the history of domestic labour (not just what we currently understand as domestic work) and discontinuities, at every point at which the form, legalities, and technicalities, etc., change, what is it that is continuous? When domestic labour *becomes* this or that form, which virtualities/symbolics/logics constitute these becomings? (We are contending that narrative, as something beyond pointing to the empirical, is useful here).

[7] As per footnote 3.

> "[C]ontinuities and entanglements between a diverse range from slave to servant…domestic to prisoner…Involuntary servitude wasn't one condition-chattel slavery-nor was it fixed in time and place; rather it was an ever-changing mode of exploitation, domination, accumulation (the serving of will, the theft of capacity the appropriation of life) and confinement" (Hartman, 2019, p. 243)

In Brazil, Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan (2019) noted the history of slavery in domestic work. Cock (1980) states that "[t]he South African variant of capitalism is characterised by the extreme extra-economic coercion of the majority is associated with slavery or feudalism" (p. 11). Cock's findings also stated that women employed in domestic work "perceived themselves as slaves" and stated the exploitation of domestic worker was "suggestive of slavery". (p. 26). Cock wrote in 1980s Apartheid South Africa and this the "extra-economic coercion of the majority" under Apartheid is not the Being of today. That, being said, Fish (2006) refers to domestic work as the "last bastion of Apartheid" (p. 107). The association with servitude and slavery finds repetition. When Fish notes that despite South Africa's 'post-Apartheid' reconstruction, it has "failed to transform the severe race, class and gender inequalities that continue to structure daily life for women in this institution" (p. 108) and when Cock (1980) notes that domestic work reproduces labour-power and fulfils an ideological function, this is not separate from the repetition of the virtuality of slavery/servitude. This is seen as Snorton (2016) explores the figure of the mammy, a term that emerged as a term for "slaved black women tasked with caring for white children" (p. 120). Snorton goes on to say:

> As a matter of labor (sic.), the mammy figures a social relation of production that brought surplus value to the white families, private property and the nation…As a matter of representation the mammy was made to reproduce racial borders, her mythology was critical to developing an image that would perpetuate, in the words of Saidiya Hartman, a "racial and sexual fantasy in which domination is transposed into the bonds of mutual affection, subjection is idealized…and perfect subordination declares the means of ensuring happiness and harmony". (p. 120)

This conceptualisation, if we swapped the term "mammy" for "domestic worker" would be well placed in Cock's (1980) figuration of domestic workers, particularly in their reproduction of labour-power as well as their role in capitalist formations and in reproducing ideology. This illustrates some of the virtualities that find repetition. Ally (2010) explores the continuation of domestic work and the notion that, despite a variety of law changes to recognise domestic work

and protective agencies for domestic workers, many domestic workers state that things have not gotten better. As Ally (2010) succinctly states:

> The formalization of paid domestic work through rights…cannot aspire to much more than the maintenance of the patriarchy of liberal capitalism, in which responsibility of care is deferred to families and-because of private patriarchies within households-to women. In South Africa, the "modest but essential" reform of rights for domestic workers was coterminous with the logic that refused the socialization of care. The dual-care regime produced by the labor (sic.) reforms reinforced the inequalities of care between domestic workers and the employers for whom they worked. The individualised protection of labor rights therefore provided a necessary bulwark of protection for many workers, but it also simultaneously reinforced the political economy of care rather than disrupted it. (p. 190)

Ally makes reference to logics that are not disrupted that sustain the continuation of the materiality of domestic work as a site of inequality. In this case, Ally points out the key moment of the 1970s that introduced the modern technologies of labour control that recognised "domestics as workers" (p. 41), which was crucial in the mode of continuation (i.e., essential to the framing of the above quote). That is, an immaterial virtuality that sustains the materiality. We already spoke to the consonance between the descriptions of modern domestic work in Brazil (Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan, 2019), and South Africa (Vanyoro, 2019) and the U.S. (Jones, 1949). There is something that is not being disrupted between slavery, the mammy figure, Apartheid domestic work, domestic work in the 'post-Apartheid era', domestic work in Brazil, etc., and empirical changes within them. That is, something that has not been disrupted beyond the disruptions.

Domestic work as a structural relation cannot be reduced to personal relationships

This also raises questions about the relationships between domestic workers and their employers. Bosch and McLeod (2015) argue that this relationship is important to investigate as its place in the household renders private the "the relationship between the domestic worker and her employer [which] acts as a crucible for an intimate confrontation and a microcosm of class, race and culture issues in contemporary South Africa" (p. 135). In interviews with women employed in domestic work, Dos Santos, Rodrigues and Galvaan (2019) found that

"participants mostly had good relations with employers, [but] they were aware that there were limitations in how they related to each other" (p. 9). Not only do the material needs of the women employed as domestic workers compel acquiescence but the home-based, private, and sometimes care-based, nature of the work elicits an effort to maintain a certain social relation characterised by the comfort of employer with the employee. As Cock (1980) posits "many domestic workers adopt a 'mask of deference' as protective disguise, enabling them to conform to employers' expectations and shield their real feelings" (p. 7). Moreover, the maintenance of this informal relationship of care is one of the modes through which domestic workers exert their power and negotiate their employment. This finds expression in the finding that the personal lives and engagements beyond work of people employed as domestic workers "were usually subject of employer's choices and situations" (Dos Santos, Rodrigues & Galvaan, 2019, p. 476). This is also an illustration of the labour of domestic work allowing their employers to use their time elsewhere. Bosch and McLeod (2015) find three categories of the relationship, namely, distant, maternal and friendship. They state that their study examines the *aesthetic features* of the relationship but note, baring resemblance to the previous discussion, that "domestic work by black women in white households continues to reinforce social constructions of the household as a feminized and racialised space" (p. 134) as well as that "[i]n the context of unequal power relations between employer and employee, the apparently caring, nurturing, and empathetic values of female employers become double-edged" (p. 142) as they allow for a disguise for forms of exploitation. Despite these qualifiers, and because of them, their findings of the relationships invite some questions. One of the twelve relationships, the one between Esther and Alta, is categorised as "friendship" where "[i]t can be classified as such not only because both parties identify the relationship as a friendship, but because the relationship is *horizontal in nature* [emphasis added]" (Bosch & McLeod, 2015, p. 134). It is also referred to as "not the norm" (p. 146). To categorise the relationships on "aesthetic terms" already obfuscates that these aesthetics are mediated by power relations. Included in these aesthetic terms is also the vague notion of "redress, which involves the manner in which employers attempt to deal with Apartheid-wrongs." (p. 134). It is never explained how this is reduced to the *aesthetics* of the relationship between the employer and the employee. Is it when "Alta and her husband bought Esther a house 'to try and uplift her'"? (Bosch & McLeod, 2015, p.146). In fact, in the race and redress section we find this:

> It is Esther too who prefers to call her employer 'Madam', *despite their friendship* and *despite* Alta's request that she call her by her first name. This is reflective of the

> apartheid dialogue of difference, the so-called 'separate but equal' philosophy of the National Party (King, 2007). *Despite* how much Alta and Esther share, Esther still considers race as a defining characteristic. She considers herself and Alta to be friends *but* still says, "It is like she isn't even a white lady." (Bosch & McLeod, 2015, p.147, emphasises added)

The point here is not necessarily a denial of their friendship but it is a question of what it conceals and what it reproduces in spite of or through this (not-so) horizontal relationship. That is, we can consider how this virtuality continues to produce domestic work. In such a case, the consent of the social relation is undermined by the asymmetry of power.

> Thus, while the structure of the employer-employee relationship is completely hierarchic and unequal, in terms of content it is often coloured for the employer with emotions of kindness, affection and generosity. *It is precisely the unequal nature of the relationship and the mutual recognition of such inequality that allows the relationship to be described as a close and friendly one* (Cock, 1980, p. 132, emphasis added)

Thus, the aesthetic of friendship is also the reproduction of the gendered and racialised encounter. In some cases, it is this friendly relation through the power relations that subtends certain mechanisms of exploitation such as the framing for extra-contractual requests as exceptions and payments in kind as per Dos Santos et al. (2019). That is, the blurring of the employer-employee dynamic and concomitant power relations—which still function—allows for specific kinds, and the obfuscation, of superexploition[8]. Thus, when Magwaza (2008) states that the nature of the power relation prevents workers from making demands for their lawful rights, the nature of this relation is, in some cases, constituted by the 'aesthetics' of good 'extra-economic' social relations. "[T]he intimate labour of the domestic will define her subjection…predicated on the disavowal of violence, the insistence on the girl's agency" (Hartman, p. 27)[9]. This can be linked with Hartman's statement (2019) that "progressive reformers…were the architects of racial segregation" (p. 21) in that the virtuality is allowed to repeat and this too leads to the reproduction of domestic work. "How does she consent to coercion?". (Hartman, 2019, p. 27). Fish (2006) notes that "the global scholarship on paid

[8] As per Marxist theory (Marx, 1887; Lukács, 1989) the economic relation *is* a social relation and so the blurring between the social and economic on one level is at once, at another level, already the 'economic' and the social in the sense of a general theory of exchange apropos of Bourdieu (1986). See also footnote 14.

[9] The quote is somewhat a take of the context in which this comment arises from an analysis of the odalisque image but is not out of context in the sense that it displays the way that positionality and logics underpin and saturate different 'events' and time-spaces.

household labour repeatedly identifies the severe power asymmetries between domestic workers and employers" (p. 133) and notes, inter alia, the role of race, gender, and class. While this has been exemplified with a study referring to white women as employers and black women employed as domestic workers (both women), this dynamic can be constituted by employers and employees from different subject positions (although we have noted that the majority of domestic workers are black women). For example, Donald and Mahlatji (2006) found in their study, with black employers and employees that "[d]espite the racial similarity between employer and employee in this study, oppression based on class is evident" (p. 212). The emphasis in this section is on the level of structural analysis. In a narrative example, Msimang (2017) speaks to her unease in the structural issue of domestic labour (in this case a nanny) as middle-class black women. Toward the end of the chapter where the topic of domestic labourers is most fully explored, Msimang (2017) states (in relation to hiring a new nanny after the previous nanny had "seen through" her "as a rich woman, as an employer" (Msimang, 2017, p. 274)):

> We pay her well to massage our guilt. We offer her medical aid. We give her a thirteenth cheque. We pay her overtime far above the minimum wage. We are good people. She seems grateful but now I am wise enough to know that unfairness is built into the system so her gratitude does not change our complicity…We left [our children] in the hands of black women whose presence in our home we owed to Apartheid. (Msimang, 2017, p. 275)

While the shifting demographics of employers are notable, so too is the fact that those employed in domestic work remain largely the same. As Msiminang (2017), inter alia, indicates, this is a product of relations of power—the repetition of the effects that actualise the virtual which subtends these relations. As Ally (2010) has noted, this personal relationship that is intimately connected to work relations is not only the grounds for exploitation but also allows for the exercise of power for domestic workers as they too can leverage their personal relationship for extra-contractual (or non-contractual) requests. Thus, in this sense, the discourse (and practices), rights and state intervention, and the logics of employment mean that adherence to law and contract crowd out the space for negotiating through the discourse of the informal and personal (Ally, 2010).

¬∀L_{DW} (The non-all of literature on domestic work)

This section rubs against the linear structure of a paper (/~~paper)~~ in its reliance on chapter 4 (and chapter 2). This literature review does not exhaust all literature on the topic of domestic work, moreover it does not reflect all the arguments (and nuances of those arguments) within the literature that has been used. In accordance with the question and the organising principles of this paper (see chapters 2 and 4 in particular) particular choices were made within the relatively limited space of a singular paper (/~~paper~~). There is extensive and capacious literature, for example, on the specificities of legislation relevant to domestic work in South Africa and globally. This study is primarily concerned with ontology of domestic work (and the ontology which subtends domestic work) and the exploration of this ontology through the articulations of black women employed as domestic workers (which may come in the form, 'misrecognised' in the Lacanian sense, as narratives). This is not to say that legislation is not included in that, on the contrary, through notions such as concrete universality and the interconnected nature of the Virtual, the lines of delineation for relevant literature are blurred if not failed (Hegel, 1977; Žižek, 2013). The exploration of literature on legislation would provide a viable option for the further explication of the issues at hand and could have been revealed as necessary to the current study through the process of analysis. However, the question guiding this study and the set of interactors with which we engage meant that the specificities of legislation were an inadequate point of departure. Moreover, the range of structures within which this legislation is authorised are called into question such that the exploration of demands for legislation in lieu of this opens up a range of further questions that lie beyond the scope of this paper (/~~paper~~). (Chapters 2, 3 and 5 touch on these issues).

Chapter 4: Methodology

Attending to subtending logics

hooks' (2000) praxis for a feminist politics aims to subvert systems of power through the divesting of power. That is, the injunction to not use one's position within the matrix, and particularly the capacity to dominate others, to reinscribe relationships of domination and to instead to utilise and allow for the utilisation of that power in ways *antithetical to the logic* of the system of domination. Threatening to belabour the language of hooks (2000), this is not a redistribution or (re)investment of power in reshaping/reorganising the systems of power—although at some scale(s) of abstraction it requires a reorganising—but a *divesting* from the logic of domination which subtends these relations. As Parker (2007) states "[t]he most insidious ideological meanings appear in the formal structure rather than in the content" (p. 29). This means that this project as a praxis of solidarity requires it to, as Ko & Ko (2018) state, move towards ending the structural relations of oppression that goes beyond the material and performative but requires challenging the logic, concepts and "*narrative pins*" (p. 215, emphasis added). In so doing, it provides a challenge to the virtual. The challenge is quite considerable, as it is to produce knowledge in opposition to the episteme within which it is (at least to a large extent) situated; it is, in the words of Sexton (2008) "not a question of whether one is inside or outside the domain but rather of how one inhabits an unavoidably corrupted context for which there is no outside" (p. 178). To work to challenge the logics of the episteme requires one to avoid, or at least mitigate against, the threat of insidious corruption and requires a base of thinking about these logics and structures which *will exceed the limits of this (and any individual) research project*.

> The Other is cited, quoted, framed illuminated…The Other loses its power to signify, to negate to initiate its own historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. However impeccably the content of an "other" culture may be known, however ant-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is…the demand that…it be always the good object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces the *relation of domination*. (Bhabha as cited in Gqola, 2010).

Parker (2007) argues that the discipline of psychology constructs the subject who is studied and the researcher and contains the "underlying assumption …that psychology knows in advance what that thing is that they are going to target and record" (p. 28). This is to say to say that psychology conforms to the logics of the Bhabha quote above, situating objects of

knowledge to be studied in relation to psychology. The possible expansion of what is incorporated into psychology as theory, knowledge, and methods retains the logics of the processes of psychology 'investigating' and 'incorporating', and, therefore, reproduces the relation of domination (and the negation of ontological resistance). Parker (2007) goes on to say that for a paradigm of psychology to undermine these logics, it would cease to be psychology. The *researcher* who produces *knowledge* for *psychology* is then contained within the corrupted epistemological terrain.

Transversality

Another theory which animates the methodological approach of this paper is Snorton's (2017) theorising of trans/transitivity/transversality. "Transversality articulates submerged forms of relationalities that need not be visible to have effects…[it articulates] lines of thought and ways of being that exceed capture in language, history and metaphysics" (Snorton, 2017, pp. 10-11). This is a recognition of ontological relations in excess of and across our categories and methods of investigation—that is, our epistemological systems (although this does dismiss the constitutive element of such epistemological systems with regard to ontological relations). Snorton (2017) references the work of Guattari (as cited in Snorton, 2017) and the use of 'transversility' as "an aesthetic, ethical, and political operation that calls into question disciplinary boundaries" (p. 9). The work of Colebrook (as cited in Snorton, 2017) defines 'trans' as a "not-yet differentiated singularity" from which identities—and can be extended to all categories—are formed. This echoes Fanon's (2008) call to "descend to a level where the categories of sense and nonsense are not yet in use" (p. xiii). What this theory allows is a questioning of and opposition to the categories of *disciplines* and the *categories* of disciplines which have already been questioned in relation to their logics of domination. To be clear, this is not disavowal of power structures and the categories and identities which have come to exist (and their effect on ontological relations). To consider *submerged* (subliminal) relationalities and the opposition to discipline—and to play with a continuum including "not-yet differentiated singularity" and something like a multiplicity of categories—is to allow further exploration into the web of ontological relations which may be obfuscated by the current structures and events. This allows questions relating to the submerged realities and their effects for domestic workers. If we start from the 'singularity'— 'already somewhere in the continuum'—of black women employed as domestic workers, what categories can we abandon and take up to allow the possibilities for articulating relations that have exceeded capture? Transversality also then allows for new types of questions and allows theory that is itself not

differentiated from the lives it is 'about'. As hooks (2000) argues, theory is part of everyday living. Taken together with our engagement with the engagement between ontological resistance, the virtual, and the capacity of lived experience, the categories and objects of theory are not taken as axiomatic.

To continue with the use of the conceptualisation of trans to bring categories under question consider the prefix "Trans*", utilised by Macharia (2019). Macharia (2019) cites Sharpe ()

> I want to think about Trans* in a variety of ways that try to get at something about or toward the range of trans*formations enacted on and by Black bodies. The asterisk after a word functions as the wildcard, and I am thinking trans* in that way…The asterisk after the prefix "trans" holds the place open for thinking […] (Sharpe as cited in Macharia, 2019)

Macharia continues:

> Sharpe offers a way for us to read Fanon's questioning black body- "O my body, make of me always a man who questions"-into *Black Skin, White Masks,* as it enacts a range of trans*formations and is in turn implemented in the signifying chain that blackness inaugurates and interrupts. (pp. 34-35)

Trans* then works to interrupt. The asterisk itself interrupts the word, interrupting the modification of a word that "trans" might act on, undoing its internal coherence and placing the word at a distance to itself and re-placing the modified word under question "holding the space open for thinking" (p. 34). In re-placing the modified word under question, it interrupts the signifying chain. But what is key in this formulation is the relation to Black bodies and its relation to trans*gression of the products of signifying chain. Politics, meaning, bodies and metaphysics collide in the space opened up by "Trans*". The 'excess' and 'submerged' are questions of political ontology.

The *Author*ity (The authority of the author)

Wilderson III (2020) argues that "so called allies are never authorised by black agendas predicated on black ethical dilemmas" (p. 15) and argues that the use of "agendas" is usurped for other agendas and accepted—although a term such as 'utilised' may be better suited to the

extent to which they overlap and are not placed in contradiction with other agendas[10]. Magubane (2004) states that "black bodies [have] been…made to function …as fertile discourse sites to be mined for images and metaphors" (p. 106 as cited in Gqola, p. 69). This can be related to, although not wholly reducing it to, the argument above of a reliance on incorporation into the relations of domination and the limits of this. This opens the door to a praxis of divesting in works that are predicated on the "black ethical dilemmas" and "black agendas" without the demand that it can be incorporated into other agendas. The narratives of black working-class women employed as domestic workers are not contained by the extent with which they conform to other agendas or theoretical backgrounds. It may be put like this: It is a structural necessity that we engage the theory from somewhere, that whatever analytical tools we use are subject to some theory, politics, and some relation to the episteme. However, this study recognises this and aims to recognise the ontological resistance of the narratives engaged with. Bruner (1991) might offer a useful comparison in guiding this aim by referring to dialogue. Bruner states that we begin with the assumption that what our interlocutor states is topic relevant, even when it appears not to be, and we must make some interpretation of what they are intending to transfer to us. Similarly, in engaging in narrative, we understand the narrator as an interlocutor and must try to make sense of what they are intending to convey. That is, drawing from conversation analysis, we can consider the functional choices of structure and content in the moments of their construction, this, in order to consider how form and content are used in specific moments or in the encounter. This is again to speak to narratives not only as empirical data but as modes of communication (and modes through which ontological resistance can be realised). This notion can be further explored vis-à-vis ontological resistance through Žižek (2001) who speaks of engaging "epistemological breaks" (p. 115) through reading texts as "sacred texts" (p. 116) à la Lacan on dreams. Similar to the notion of dialogue in which we assume the statements of the interlocutor are topic relevant here we also assume that what is being communicated is *in some way correct* and when we find 'fault' with the text (such as a contradiction with prior theory or data or itself) we "put the blame on us and ask ourselves what was wrong with our approach" (Žižek, 2013, p.116). This authorial authority of the narrator is a recognition of ontological resistance and is a way of premising thought on the agendas of the narrator. As Žižek (2001) states: "The disturbing scandal authenticated by the history of psychoanalysis and Marxism is that such a 'dogmatic' approach

[10] Importantly Wilderson's (2020) use of this argument is strongly connected to broader claims of metatheory i.e., it is noted that this claim has been dislocated from its place in that metatheory.

proved far more productive than an 'open' critical dealing with the founder's text" (p. 116). The notion here is not to remain "dogmatic" to *a* reading of the text but to the 'authority' of the narrator. There is a productive capacity in taking the text (and not just in what it 'points to') to "constitute the very horizon of veracity" (Žižek, 2013, p. 116). To repeat, or perhaps reorganise some articulations, this study is not aimed at doing the work of the extensively articulating questions and explorations of onto-epistemology, metaphysics and so on, however it does not shy away from the centrality of the ensemble of questions, as Wilderson (2008, 2020) might put it, they generate, in the field of what we might call political ontology. But it might be useful to highlight (and again, this might also be conceptualised as a repetition) at this point, that the situating of the "horizon of veracity" here is not a rhetorical technique that, again, places a distance between something like a 'veracity of *narrative*' and 'reality' proper. No, once again, 'veracity' itself is falls under erasure, a la Hall(2000), and revealed in its relation to the Symbolic/virtual. Playing with the slippage of the virtual and the Symbolic, the Lacanian point here is the constitutive capacity of the Symbolic which also recognises that it is not-all and that the big Other is barred. This is thus the (failed) reflection of an ontological incompleteness.

This study could be considered as a kind of narrative inquiry. Narrative will be understood as constructed between the narrator and the audience, "[w]hen we say we 'understand' a narrative, we mean that we have found a satisfactory relationship or set of relationships between those two worlds" (Scholes & Kellog, 1966, p. 82). Despite the relational dynamic, the focus is on expounding the "meaning frame" of the narrator (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). The relational dynamic is not only between the narrator and the audience, but there is also a relation to the structure of society situated both historically and politically as per Sharpe (2016). These are connected by some process of suture which

> designates the set of processes by which the effect of meaning, which is to say, coherence and unity, are provisionally generated for a subject as it is inserted into, or represented within, the order of language amid the endless movements of signification (Sexton, 2010, p. 18).

Sexton (2010) here speaks of both the suturing of the subject to signification but also, in terms of film theory, of the audience into the meaning of the film. At this intersection there is a suture of meaning. Any analysis will be a particular suture between the narrator, the listener, the analysis, and particular matrices of signification, or discourses. This notion, leaning into its

film theory conception, requires the construction of meaning and the *concealment of certain elements to maintain that coherence* (Sexton, 2008).

Based on the methodology above and the discussion of narrative as ontological resistance, this paper will make use of a narrative inquiry regarding black women employed as domestic workers. Savin-Badden and Van Niekerk (2007) state that the stories told can be understood as a means of communication and that the focus of the inquiry is on the people who tell the stories. Savin-Badden and Van Niekerk also argue that "The role of the researcher is to be an effective listener and to see the interviewee as a storyteller rather than as a respondent. Therefore, in interviews, the agenda is open to development and change" (p. 464). While we are not using interview data, the logic remains: listen to the narrator. This speaks to the call to premise praxis on 'black agendas'. This also allows for a way of inhabiting the corrupt context which positions the interviewee as Bhabha's 'Other' by recognising the "'right to narrate', to speak. to draft a history…" (Gqola, 2010, p. 50) and, in doing so, offering a (perhaps limited) resistance to the logic of incorporating the 'Other' such that the logics of domination are maintained. It allows a way to interact with the "ever presence of *sublimated histories which reside in spaces that do not easily give up meaning* [emphasis added] …a pattern of black women's participation, not the exceptional one that is registered in national struggles" (Gqola, 2010, p.82) as well as the "Radical imagination and everyday anarchy" of women (Hartman, 2019, p.xvi) and to not reduce domestic workers to totalised instantiations of discourse. Using the thinking of Sharpe (2016)—the form more than direct application at this stage—we can see the use of a narrative project; Sharpe speaks of narratives that are singular and important in their singularity but also partly determined by the structure of society situated historically and politically (inter alia). Sharpe argues that vigilance and attentiveness to individual stories offers insights into reality and also counters "the violence of abstraction" (Hartman, 2008, p.7 as cited in Sharpe, 2016) with a recognition of the subjects for which the political agenda of liberation is for and about. By focusing on people and their narrative, narrative inquiry cuts across multiple areas of study (Connelly & Clandin, 1990) and across multiple approaches and methodologies (Savin-Badden & Van Niekerk, 2007). That is, it speaks to the transversality in which the singularity of narrative can be explored and used in a range of ways, allowing for the incorporating of submerged relationalities and the questioning of disciplinary boundaries apropos of Snorton (2017). In short, to allow for the ontological resistance of narratives. Savin-Badden and Van Niekerek (2007) also argue that a narrative by the researcher qua listener and then this relationship is somewhat inverted when the researcher 'narrates' their engagement with the

narrative in the form of their research where the original narrator, in a sense, becomes part of the audience. Thus, research itself is not removed from the position of narrative material.

Esin (2011) offers two statements on narrative theory that we might highlight. Esin states that the conceptualisation and thus the engagement with analysis depends on the theorisation of ontology. Esin also states that, epistemologically "[n]arrative analysis provides the analyst with useful tools to integrate the individual details and complexity in the construction of stories rather than analysing these stories under predetermined categories" (p. 95). This epistemological claim, like all epistemological claims, implies ontological assumptions. For example, that it is possible to not analyse these narratives under predetermined categories. We have done some work in conceptualising a picture of ontology that places importance on the structural relations, which not only highlighted the position of domestic work and have been used to analyse domestic work but simultaneously places inherent importance on narrative while allowing ontological resistance within and to that ontology and the categories used for analysis. The reader might ask: Have we not simply pre-empted an ontology in which narratives have ontological resistance? In a sense, yes, this study does is situated in analysis of political ontology which exceeds the aims of this particular paper. Moreover, any study would, in the mere usage of (something like) methods 'presumes' an ontology in which those methods make sense. For, example, any narrative study, one would have some picture of ontology in which narratives are useful for something, hence, one is analysing narratives (and what this ontology is will determine how we engage that narrative). What has been done here is to make explicit the ontology through which we see the importance of narrative and utilised theory, in which that ontology does not pre-empt the ontology and lived experience of narratives. This narrative analysis aims to use the categories of the narrator but highlights from where we do this in the first place, simultaneously situating these categories as subject to review. In other words, the 'tools of analysis' are themselves produced and what they unearth is not some metatheoretical engagement with the topics of the narrator. To engage the ontological resistance of the narratives, we expose the tools in their capacity to be resisted. To reiterate: this is not question of the content but more of the ontological understanding we use to make sense of the content.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis

We have engaged with the notion of the (Deleuzian) virtual and its comparison to the (Lacanian) Symbolic. Thus, a Lacanian discourse analysis becomes a potential tool. Insofar as

we consider the Lacanian Symbolic as "that which is excluded from sense-making is that which makes sense hang together; no two agents or qualities or postulates can be coupled or contrasted without a mediating third" (Bowie, 1991, p. 194 as cited in Ross, 2002), this directly relates to that component of suture as the production of meaning that conceals those elements (the third of the Symbolic) that sustain its coherence. As such, a Lacanian discourse analysis allows us to engage this non-sense (which might be considered subliminal). Moreover, in the engagement with Snorton (2017), Hartman (2019), Gqola (2010), inter alia, we have been alerted to the place of submerged modes of expression, gaps and silences. According to Parker (2005) "[t]he unconscious in Lacanian discourse analysis is what functions as absence in the text" (p. 171). This can be considered with the notion of *ab-sense* as that which "cannot be spoken, though it can still be signified" (Marriot, 2021, p. 5). Absences can themselves be punctuated (in the Lacanian sense) by the appearance of the signifiers which do appear. Parker (2005) also informs us that:

> A Lacanian approach to discourse has consequences for the way we think of 'criteria' for research. It sets itself against attempts to arrive at a richer, more complete understanding of a text, something proposed by advocates of 'triangulation' in research. (p. 175)

This is in consonance with our notion of narratives, implying their own horizon of veracity and not being reducible to subjects available for empirical discussion. Not only can we think of this analysis as not empirical but it can also be conceived as not hermeneutical as the goal is not to find what is "signified" and it is to take into account the antagonisms constitutive of the subject and the Symbolic—and, therefore, in texts (Parker, 2005). We also find consonance with notions of ontological resistance in the idea that the approach "implies no recognition of any substance on which it claims to operate, even that of sexuality" (Lacan, 1979, p. 266 as cited in Parker, 2005, p. 167). It is also stated that the "necessary otherness of language to the subject makes all 'analysis' an analysis of discourse" (Parker, 2005, p. 172). Due to the fact that signification always occurs in and through the signifying chain and the play of signifiers, an analysis of the text always requires us to contend with the chain of signification. That is, the configuration of the Symbolic and the way the Symbolic instantiates itself for the particular subject is essential for our analysis of the text. Hook (2012) has applied a Lacanian discourse analysis in the field of domestic work, exploring the topic of "libidinal attachments between white children and domestic workers in narratives that contributed to the Apartheid Archive Project (AAP)" (p. 40). Hook engages the role of the configuration of the Symbolic in speaking

to the use of "a matrix of latent meanings to make guesses at what is 'repressed' within a given utterance" (p. 44). Parker (2005) similarly notes "patterns of structural 'repression'" based on the play of signification. In aiming to engage what is 'repressed' (in a text and not necessarily the author), Hook (2012) engages Lapping, (2011) who quoting that "details that appear as insignificant or as having little psychic intensity may in fact be covering over the most intense psychical … forces" (as cited in Hook, 2012, p. 44) and highlights the importance of "attending to elements that connote symbolic relations outside the linear narratives of a dominant discourse" (p. 71). "[A]pparently cohesive *accounts cover over a set of more complicated relations* [emphasis added], and they pose questions that invert the obviousness of what they are seeing … [D]ominant discourse is unsettled by the construction of a symbolic juxtaposition" (p. 72). By engaging the apparently contingent and minor details of narratives and texts, we may be able to engage the Symbolic which sustains and disrupts the 'main narrative'. Hook (2012, p. 45) also brings forth the idea that "a successful interpretation should surprise the analysand. The assumption here is, of course, that a successful interpretation touches precisely on repressed material, on ideas that a subject disavows". Once again, we need not refer to the unconscious of the author per se, but of the text itself and, thus, we can simply say that the analysis may be surprising in that it touches on the texts repressed material (sometimes employed intentionally by the author). As Hook (2012) puts it later in the text, "[t]o read for the 'unconscious' of a text is then perpetually to risk 'wild analysis'" (p. 51). Furthermore, Parker (2005) states that

> The end point of a specific analysis…would not be to arrive at words or phrases that sum up what has been said as if they were 'themes' that expressed what the real meaning of the text was, or repertoires or discourses that were responsible for producing what occurred in the course of the text. (p. 168)

This is to say that the analysis provided should not reduce to themes and summaries but engage the signification of the text. This also means that, due to the constraints on space, a focus on specific moments or lines of articulation is necessary which is not to say we have picked out the most important themes or exhausted the offerings of the text. Parker (2005) also highlights that there is no fixed method and furthermore:

> every good description of a 'case' is also an elaboration of theory. The same applies to Lacanian approaches to discourse. Each reading of Lacan and of Lacanian writing about

> discourse will need to be a rewriting of their reading when it encounters each new text (p. 179)

Thus, the theory will be further elaborated as it is used.

~~Methodology~~

To (this time more directly) repeat, this study is not aimed at doing the work of the extensively articulating questions and explorations of onto-epistemology, metaphysics and so on, however it does not shy away from the centrality of the ensemble of questions they generate in the field of what we might call political ontology. We spoke above to the question of ontological incompleteness. We might now also speak to the question of the Lacanian Real, particularly the component of the real that is the immanent failure of the Symbolic as well as that which is beyond the Symbolic, through which any particular configuration of the Symbolic (and its objects and categories) carry the trace of what Moten (Moten & Harney, 2013) might call the general antagonism. That is, at one level, to (in the terms we have already used) transverse the Imaginary picture of coherence. The antagonism(s) in the text, in the theory, in the Other itself.

Moten articulates:

> I'm interested in how it is that […] interestingly, precision moves by way of a certain set of operations that are basically like making distinctions […] but that the end of precision […], in a way, produces a kind of blur (Psychosocial Foundation, 2022, 1:33:07)

This musing, offered by Moten reflects a number of points including the negativity that is central to the process(es) of signification and thus concepts and objects and the dialectical movement of precision appearing as an undoing of knowledge (and thus producing a blur). A movement that exposes the negativity in what Žižek might refer to as the non-sense that sustains sense.

Here are two excerpts of Hegel speaking to some of the points above:

> First: "Knowledge is only actual, and can only be expounded as a Science or as a system; and furthermore, that a so-called basic principle of philosophy, if true is also false, just because it is only a principle…The refutation consists in pointing out its defect; and it is defective because it is only the universal or principle, only the beginning" (Hegel, p. 14)

> And second: "The activity of dissolution is the power and work of the Understanding, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power…Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do. (Hegel, p. 19)

(Regarding the second quote, we need not hold onto an axiology by which "strength" functions as the metaphor which indicates the work of segregàre, but what is highlighted is the utilisation of refutation and dissolution *in light of* the onto-epistemological relations.) Beauty might be transposed into the mode of Imaginary which contains the operating of the whole, the complete, of fixed meaning. And this "methodological" (trans*methodological, ante-methodological and so on[11]) commitment to the use of negativity finds consonance with Fanon who states that "[w]e are aiming for a *complete lysis of this morbid universe*" (p. xiv, emphasis added). Reflecting on this usage, Moten (2013, p. 766) states that "[l]ysis is to separate, to break down walls, to refute, but also to redeem". We can also see the precise echoing of the Hegelian quotes above in this articulation: the dissolution the refutation as well as the generative capacity of this destruction.

For the purposes of this section only I will reflect back on the interplay between 'form' and 'content' of this section. It was stated earlier that the questions at hand would exceed any particular research question and particularly that of a Master's paper. Thus, the relatively oblique references to a range of theorists, that are not always understood to be reconcilable, appear "cavalierly". On the one hand, as per above, this is imbricated with the questions of (political) ontology (the barred Other, ontological incompleteness the general antagonism and so on) at hand. On another hand, there is a web of references, associations and interlocution between the references that exceed the study. This study never had any intention of suturing

[11] These articulations point again to other works:
We have spoken above to the modifier of "trans*". Elsewhere Macharia speaks to a commitment to the "antimethod" of Fanon "to the extent that an antimethod can be followed" (Macharia, 2019, p. 29). However, antemethod might be more "precise". Moten (alongside Harney) plays on the slippage between the "anti-" and the "ante-" , attaching the suffix to a range of notions(/Notions) (Moten & Harney, 2013; Moten, 2013; The Museum of Modern Art, 2015). Moten states: "When I say antenormative it's with a 'e'[…] so I'm not trying to hear the necessity for the recrudescence of the normative in the face of whatever damage the supposedly antinormative has done, 'cause the antinormative […] comes first. The normative is an after-effect, it's a response to the irregular" (Museum of Modern Art, 2015, 30: 00). This is an idea related to the (onto-epistemological) notion of what Moten and Harney (2013, p. 47) call the "anorginary drive" connected with the questions of political ontology as discussed above. In the sentence to which this is a footnote, there are two other interlocutions that I will mention with little explication. The placing of methodology within inverted commas is usage derived from Spillers and "and so on" is a motif of Žižek's work which might be an apparatus for the reflection of the non-all of the signifying chain.

the range of interlocutors into a crudified coherent terrain (which is in any case oppositional to the bulk of theorists' referenced conceptualisations of ontology) on which this study builds (which is a quotient of the theory engaged. For example, the repeated mention of the commitment to the tarrying with the negative). Rather, this study points to the interlocutors that it 'thinks' with (and that 'think' with each other). This is something like the allowing of the consent not to be a single paper, a la Moten and Harney (2013) who speak, for example, of the consent not to be one in relation to the issues of subjectivity and (/and within) political ontology.

> "…in what ways are we practicing, when we're for a dispossession of ourselves and allowing ourselves to be possessed in certain other ways, allowing ourselves to consent not to be one, at a moment that also lets people act on us and through us, and doesn't constantly require us re-constituting ourselves…" (p. 146)

This should be oppositional to the trappings of what Moten and Harney (2013) refer to as state thought, which "thinks away the private before the public and the private, but not exactly before, rather a step ahead" (p.53). A thought that, inter alia, thinks the public but only through a disavowed mode of (private) individuation[12]. This ~~paper~~ consents to its failure as a 'single paper' ("being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand"). This is a quotient of a fidelity to the ensemble of questions that sustain ~~this~~ 'study' (a la Moten and Harney, 2013).

Moten also articulates:

> Then to be fascinated by Fanon's use of the term '*lyse*,' lysis. He didn't write 'critique' or even 'analysis' but invoked this biochemical process of the breakdown of cells, which, then, experimentalists try to replicate. All of a sudden, reading Fanon means trying to find out what biochemists mean when they say 'lysis'. What might a doctor mean? Then recalling that Plato has a dialogue called *Lysis* that turns and keeps turning on what's interminable in the analysis or theory of friendship. *Fanon's text is still open and it still opens*. Now you have to go inside it. When you're inside, now, you have to go outside of it. Actually, you're being blown out of it – *this happens within the context*

[12] See also Moten and Harney (2021) in the relevantly titled *All Incomplete*. The chapter titled *Theft of Assembly* provides a particularly useful point of interlocution.

> *of a single authored piece when you realize it's not a single authored piece* (Moten & Harney, 2013, pp. 107-108, emphases added)

This quote also comes in relation to Moten and Harney's (2013) notion of 'play' (and play with the notion of 'play') where terms are not held to fixed meanings precisely (with precision's coinciding with a blur) because of the slippage in the *play* of signification, the non-all set of signifiers, the immanent interruption of the real (and so on), they function as incomplete and interactive. The terms used are referred to as "props [and]toys, and if you pick them up you can move into some new thinking and into a new set of relations, a new way of being together, thinking together" (Moten & Harney, 2013). This is a discussion both of intertextuality and the failure of meaning. As Harney (Moten & Harney, 2013) highlights, this is not just a commentary on the writing but appears in the writing in terms of form and content. And thus, in a dialectical mode, the 'cavalier' toy box and 'play' coincide with a sustained and intentional interlocution with a (non-all) set of relations.

what does it mean to write taking into account the nature of the play of signifiers and the position of the Real; with everything under erasure (or subject to erasure); with the corrosive capacities of Understanding; with fidelity to an ensemble of questions that misrecognises itself as iconoclastic? What does it mean to do this in relation to the structure of the "Masters dissertation" and the institution of the university?

Is this fidelity not directly related to the Fanonion position on the resorbtion of method? Here is Fanon (2008):

> It is considered appropriate to preface a work on psychology with a methodology. We shall break with tradition. We leave methods to the botanists and mathematicians. There is a point where methods are resorbed. (p. xvi)

To again rearticulate. Not only is there a failure to consent to resolution, there is fidelity to the ensemble of questions sustained by an engagement with Understanding and the Real, Ana-lysis and the destruction of onto-epistemological framework. In Warren's (2018) words: "Our ethics are entangled in our ontological commitments" (p. 74). Let us return to our earlier quotes which are vital articulations of the organizing principles of this paper:

> The first quote: "Fanon's own interest [is] in exploding the temporality of the colonial mode of representation of otherness and in revealing a temporality that raises the

possibility of impossibility within colonial rule, black liberation." (Keeling as cited in Snorton, 2018, p. ix)

The second quote: "As Deleuze puts it, the moment of stratigraphic superimposition is time as such. In short, one should oppose here the development within time to the explosion of time itself: time itself (the infinite virtuality of the transcendental field of Becoming) appears within the intra-temporal evolution in the guise of eternity." (Žižek, 2012, p. 10)

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

In the search for the narratives of *black women employed as domestic workers by black women employed as domestic workers*, all the narratives seemed to be based on experiences up to the 1970s. This interruption (prima facie) coincides with the what Ally (2010) identified as the beginning of what can be categorised as the modern era of domestic work (See literature review) and continues into the period following South Africa's first democratic election and new constitution. Searches for books authored by black women employed, or who had been employed, as domestic workers, found the two books by Magona: *Living Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1991) and *To My Children's Children.* This is reflected in the findings of Jansen's (2019) book that thoroughly explores the archive of representations of domestic workers and finds very few narratives of domestic workers by domestic workers (and not through interviews, studies, and other projects that might have their own aims). Jansen (2019) also notes that "it took Magona twenty-five years to publish her grievances" and that "for many decades, fieldwork done by white sociologists was the only written source of information about the experiences of domestic workers" (p. 118). Chapter 6 of Jansen's *Like Family* (2019) aims to deal with the representation and experience of "'ordinary' black women". While the large number of domestic workers *interviewed for the works* of Fish (2006, as cited in Jansen 2019), King (2007 as cited Jansen 2019), and Ally (2010) are all referenced, the chapter's material includes no books published after 1994 and very few texts authored by domestic workers or authors who have worked as domestic workers (Magona's *Living Loving and Lying Awake at* Night and *To My Children's Children* are mentioned in this chapter as well as *Thula Baba* and *Vukani Makhosikazi*, which were investigated but are not authored by women who have been employed as domestic workers). Jansen (2019) does make reference to *novels* in other South African languages (and Zulu in particular) that deal with the experiences of domestic workers, however, it seems that none of the authors have worked as domestic workers, with Jansen taking care to note that the mother of MJ Mngadi, the author of *Iziboshwa Zothando* (2004 as cited in Jansen 2019), was a domestic worker. This is not to downplay this experience or to state that experience in working as a domestic worker is necessary for good work on the subject, but this lack, precisely where this study places its focus, is unmissable. In lieu of narratives on their own account (and not through other projects, studies etc.), analyses that concerned themselves with the experiences or phenomenology of domestic workers post-democracy were explored in a meta-analysis.

Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night:

Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night is a book written by Magona and is a fictional account of the lives of black women. The books first part is comprised of an interconnected story of domestic workers, while part two is a collection of short stories. We will this take up the analysis of part one. This is not to say there is no value in part two, however, this decision is made in line with the focus of this paper and the space limitations. Magona (1990/2020) worked as a domestic worker and identifies herself as a black woman in her autobiographical *To My Children's Children* (which will be looked at next). The fictional nature of this book may direct us towards the notion of the virtual and the symbolic economy which has been highlighted as a framework with which to engage the notion of ontological resistance.[13]

The first chapter is titled *Leaving* (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 3), and the book focuses on an (as yet) unnamed woman who comes to the decision of leaving her home and her children to go find employment as a domestic worker, although it is not explicitly stated in this chapter. The second paragraph states:

> She was tired. Spent, body and mind. The tiredness of her mind and body came together as one. It robbed her of sleep. It forced her to re-live the day just passed, the day she feared and knew she never wanted to see again. But fight against it as she did, the day kept painting itself in the mind's eye. Over and over and over it kept pulling her back to itself and away from sleep and forgetfulness. Eyelids sealed, she saw it all. Trapped. Unless? (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 3)

The main subject of the first chapter's narrative is described as physically and mentally tired. However, that tiredness is precisely what keeps her awake, the physical and mental tiredness "came together as one" and "robbed her of sleep" (Magona, 1991, p. 1). What seems to be taking hold of her mind are the thoughts of the day that have left her tired. Here she is trapped

[13] If one is wondering why the book published in 1991 is being analysed before the one in 1990 there are two main reasons, beyond its value as a fictional account, which can be engaged: Firstly, relative to the second book this book first has a higher proportion specifically dedicated to the issue of domestic work and whereas the second is described as a letter to her grandchildren, this book might be perceived as directly concerned with the question of domestic work. Secondly, and I risk be 'unacademic' here it is the book I found first. If I may reference a YouTube video I once saw (It seems to no longer be up but it was a workshop by Victor Wooten titled, if I recall correctly, groove workshop). Loosely paraphrasing, Wooten tells the story of a composer who worked digitally who, despite studying the melodies, chords and phrasing of jazz horns could not get them to sound the way he wanted. Wooten contends that the reason for this is because he had not actually played a physical horn his phrasing did not include the material limitations such as needing to breath. The very, material limitations were generative of some of qualities in the melodies of jazz horns. (There is a similar discussion of James Jamerson who plucked the bass strings with only one finger giving his style a distinctive 'funky' sound). Quite simply, I received the book first and started an analysis that post hoc made sense going first in the rhythm of analysis.

in these thoughts of the day passed that pull her back and "away from sleep and forgetfulness". Trapped is emphatically stated on its own with a period before it is opened up again with the question "Unless?". The "unless?" points towards a potential escape from this entrapment, but it is a question that floats without (explicit) elaboration. Perhaps, in the structure of the narrative, we might ask why we start with this reflection at the end of the day before the narrative explores that day. In teaching 'creative writing in school', we would receive the general advice of "say, don't show". In light of this, why does the narrative say (that the character is tired from the day) and *then* show (the day that left her tired)? At least one way we might see this structure working is setting up expectations of what kind of day has left the subject of the story in this state. However, as the narrative explores the day, there is no big event that is flagged as out of the ordinary for the main subject of the narrative. In other words, the day that has left her tired and left her mind trapped in this state seems to be not dissimilar from her other days. The primary thought that disturbs her through the day and keeps her up at night is how she is to feed her children:

> Two cups of mielie-meal, two breasts that were drying up, an old hen that had stopped laying eggs, an empty kraal from which she could no longer even dry cow dung to use in making fire, so long had it held no cattle, and five children who daily needed feeding, these were the thoughts that travelled with the woman on her way to and from the river, and stayed with her the whole day through.
>
> Now as she lay awake these same thoughts stole her sleep. (Magona, 1991, p. 4)

The narrative brings up the woman's husband and the father of their children. Her husband works in the gold mines of Johannesburg for 11 months of the year and "each time he returned…she was soon with child" (Magona, 1991, p. 5). The narrative then states that the woman's "husband was not one to remember his wife once he was in the goldmines of Johannesburg…although she loved him still, she had slowly come to accept that, unlike husbands of most women in the village, her husband would never be a provider" (Magona, 1991, p. 5). Without the support of her husband the woman thinks about how she can take care of her children:

> Her heart leapt; she had found the key: I will not be a mother that way. She would fulfil her obligations as she understood them and provide for them. The only way she could be a mother to her children, she saw, would be to leave them. (Magona, 1991, p. 6)

The woman comes to the conclusion that she must transform her 'way of being a mother', deciding to leave her children in order to provide for them.

> A thorn long embedded in her heart twisted itself: Ttssp! A drop of blood squeezed out of her heart and lit the whole night-blackened sky. The stars showered light, making her path as bright as bright could be: Ttssp!...That was the spur. Ttssp ttssp ttssp. (Magona, 1991, p. 7)
>
> Instead, the thorn reminded her why she was doing what she was doing: If I don't, I would not be a mother: Ttssp. (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 10)

Magona provides the imagery of the woman's heart with a thorn in it functioning as a spur and the blood it releases as it cuts her, lighting her path. It is her understanding of her role as her mother and the thought of providing for her children that painfully spurs her towards domestic work. Hartman (1997) questions whether "the heart, the mind and the soul were simply the inroads of discipline" (p. 5). Her thoughts, which lead her to 'finding the key' to being a mother, have been showed to be connected to her struggles to feed for her children and her husband (whose job also takes and keeps him away for long periods). Her heart is punctured by this thorn when she considers what it means to be a mother. There is a way in which the centrality of violence in this chapter finds resonance with Hartman's discussion (2019) where she states: "[a]lready it is a hard place to begin, with the avowal that violence is not an exception but rather it defines the horizon of her existence" (p. 29). The characterisation of this as an 'avowal' is central to the point being made. Magona (1991/2019) opens the books and gives us the coordinates from which we move through the rest of the book in this chapter that centralizes violence.

It is true that *she chooses* to find a job, but it is clearly demonstrated that her very steadfastness and motivation, her will and agency, cannot be disimbricated from violence. Let us repeat what is said: Her motivation is a thorn in her heart (representing her children's hunger*) functioning as a spur*; the blood from this thorn piercing her heart lights the way. As she is leaving, the woman thinks about leaving her children and the "thorn-drawn drop of blood [dries]" (p. 7), leaving her fearful of leaving. As she thinks through leaving her children and who will take care of them, her "heart [begins] to bleed. But the thorn saved her that pain: Ttssp-she remembered" (p. 8). That is, she thinks about her children being left without her and leaving the responsibility of their care to others (and the older children) but the pain this causes in her heart is crowded out by the pain of the thorn which spurs her onward. "Clear as spring water

beneath mountain boulders she saw her way: Ttssp. That was the spur. Ttssp ttssp ttssp" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 7).

The chapter closes by driving home the imagery of the spurs pushing her on as she struggles through a changing terrain where 'drops of blood' keep renewing her resolve. Here is the chapter's end:

> One last sigh for the children who sent her away, whose hunger drove her through night, river, field forest and mountain. How she loved them. And a fresh drop of blood warmed her resolve anew. Her weary stride woke up, her body straightened from the slouch that had stolen over it. And although her eyes did not sing, they dried themselves and looked right ahead. Her mind was made up there was no going back. (Magona, 1991, p. 10)

In the structure of this chapter, it is clear that this repetition shows the effectiveness of the spur, the physical and mental duress the woman is willing to go through (and does go through), and the conviction on her decision. The chapter deals with the decision to leave in order to provide for her family (which is achieved through domestic work).

Another point to note in this first chapter is the reference to "the woman", where no name is given. Hartman (2019) states that "the fiction of a proper name would evade the dilemma not resolve it. It would postpone the question who is she?" (p. 14) and states that "anonymity allows her to stand in for all others" (pp. 16-17). We can see these notions at play in this first chapter of *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*. "The woman" of the first chapter is not given the fiction of a proper name (although her name is revealed later in the book) and provides the reader with the coordinates for beginning travel through the book, not with the question of 'who is she?' but by answering the question 'why did she leave?' in a way that, although idiosyncratic, allows her to stand in for others (giving a fungible character to the subject's position). It is also notable that, while the signifier of spurs dominates the first chapter and the decision to leave, the spurs are then abandoned. This might be correlated with the Gramscian movement from coercion to hegemony. As will be explored, the perspective of narration shifts and thus the third person perspective that frames the opening chapter is abandoned in favour of more direct perspectives of specific characters. It is through these perspectives that the spurs disappear.

The subsequent seven chapters after *Leaving* have the names of black women employed as domestic workers as their titles. The second chapter is *Atini* which is the name of the lead character that the first chapter referred to as "the woman". This is not directly stated but the facts (particularly from the ninth chapter) corroborate this. The analysis of the second chapter is in the expanded analysis in appendix B. However, a few moments are included here.

Atini states that her first eighteen months as a domestic worker were a "mixed bag" of experiences (Magona, 1991/2020, p. 12). It is stated that most domestic workers "wouldn't even call her [Atini's employer] a cousin to an angel" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 12). At this point, filtered through the voice of Atini, her negative appraisal comes through negated forms. She is not described as 'hellish', 'devilish' etc., and not even as "the cousin to an angel" or further, noting that "a few have voiced sentiments that she is nearer the other side of the scale, in their reckoning" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 12). We can also note the extra qualification (over and on above their "sentiments") in "their reckoning". That is, Atini, while informing us of these negative sentiments, also distances herself from them (they are brought up not to dismiss them but precisely to expose them, although in their negated form). While Atini seems to distance herself from the claims here, the content of her defence of Mrs Reeds is very restricted:

> I don't mind Mrs Reed. She is not a bad medem at all. But then I don't have that much experience of medems and my situation was so desperate that any medem would have looked like a guardian angel, I suppose (Magona, 191, p. 12)

Again, her description comes in a negated form "don't mind…", "not a bad medem…". Her positive (i.e., not in a negated form) statements are interesting. In one sentence, she undermines her position and her employer with her lack of experience. That is, Atini qualifies her defence of Mrs Reed with her lack of experience, undermining the weight of her defence. In raising her experience as a qualifier, she might be signalling that we give greater weight to the other domestic workers appraisals. In this sentence she points out that her *desperate position* and the *position* of Mrs Reed (irrespective of content as illustrated by "any medem") positioned her as one who looked like a guardian angel. "But me my friend I was destitute and the woman gave me a job" (Magona, 1991/2019, p.12). One might argue, through this use of signification, this use of apophais, that while Atini, who speaks directly to the reader, distances herself from the negative characterisation of her employer, she makes sure we are aware of it. Atini's distance from this characterisation is best explained through her position and desperation for a job.

Another notable statement is Atini's description of Mrs Reed looking for a replacement for Imelda as Mrs Reed is unable to "bear to think of herself without someone to do things for her" (Magona, 1991, p. 14). What is made clear in Atini's discussion is the focus on the inability to "think" of herself without a domestic worker and its relation to her identity. "Even a useless maid to her is better than none at all" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 14). While at different points at the book, Magona (1991/2021) points to the inability of the employers to do the tasks of the domestic workers. At this point, Atini highlights that in her first week Mrs Reed essentially did (and thus could do) all the work while showing her how to do things (Atini had no experience prior to this job). This highlights the ideological role of domestic work as raised by Cock (1980).

As the chapter draws to a close, we are informed about the role of "stories" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 16). After the other domestic workers start warming up to Atini she starts to be more involved in the world of stories. After the debacle surrounding Imelda, Atini says she does not want to find herself in "another soup" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 16). She states that she does not have time to involve herself in the hearsay, whispers and stories but that they are interesting and informative. Atini speaks to a range of stories that float around and how they can be informative about the people in their social world. However, it is also made clear that these stories are not just informational but enjoyable in themselves. Atini mentions the stories that Imelda tells about her, of which most are "not true" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 17). In fact, Atini says that the stories she *enjoys* the most are those stories that "show[her] in a much better light than Imelda" (Magona, 19912019, p. 17).

> *We sit here in my room and because I am the newest maid, each one of my neighbours is helpful in letting me know what's what.*
>
> *A whole new world is opening up right in front of me.* (p. 17)

<u>Introducing gossip as a literary genre</u>

At the end of the chapter, Atini speaks of a "soup" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 16) of stories about people, and references their informational nature as well as their enjoyable nature. In the case of Imelda in particular, there is talk of her stories "painting other people's names black" (and it coming back to her in the form of stories about her) and revealing "everybody's business" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 17). A frame we might use to analyse this is through is the idea of

gossip. I will mostly rely on a conversation between Joyce Nyairo and Keguro Macharia, chaired by Eddie Ombagi, titled *In Defense of Gossip* (ASA UK, 2021). At this point in the book, the format changes to one suited to the discussion of gossip. From the third-person narration of the first chapter, to the first-person narration of the second chapter, the following chapters appear to place the reader in the place of interlocutor with the narrator. Let us pick out some grounding points from the discussion of gossip to use as a (somewhat loose) framework moving forward.

Nyairo posits that "first and foremost, gossip is a form of storytelling. It is in and of itself literary" (ASA UK, 2021, 7:22). Nyairo later expands on this in saying that "there are ways in which it works; that are around standard literary practice, around metaphors…about contradictions and irony-like, all of those things are in there" (ASA UK, 2021, 1:02:17). That is to say, gossip has its own forms, structure, and uses of literary tools that allow it to function as gossip, to do what gossip does. It is said well with "there are ways in which it works". The discussion also highlights how gossip is not about simply producing verifiable "facts", as it is not subject to verifiability (ASA, 2021). We can connect this with our discussion of ontological resistance and the way it goes beyond producing hypotheses for empirical verification. Atini's discussion of the stories that float around has already pointed towards their function beyond providing information and the fact that they are not always true and up for questioning. For example, Atini says: "before you know it, you'll be answering questions about what you said to whom about whom" and there is the revision of the story by Imelda regarding Atini. Nyairo also links literary and cultural studies to gossip due to the fact that gossip "always works as a reading of character and situation. […] What kind of person would do a certain thing? Or what is the motivation behind certain actions? Or how did a particular context…lead to certain actions?" (ASA UK, 2021, 8:37). Macharia then goes on to discuss a range of useful points of framing (ASA UK, 2021). Macharia posits that "gossip is an invitation, right. We never gossip alone" (ASA UK, 2021, 10:36). It involves multiple people including the person with the gossip, the listener, and the subject of the gossip (ASA UK, 2021). However, as is later discussed there is no clear line between the gossip, the "gossiper" (17: 35), and the 'listener'. Macharia also speaks to the temporalities of gossip, pointing to two guiding points: the idea of 'fresh gossip—a more immediate reaction to events, the propagation of the stories through the mode of gossip—and the afterlife of gossip—the way it circulates and continues to circulate beyond the event, pointing to the way it returns and continues to exist and, in this sense, doesn't die (ASA UK, 2021, 11:05). For example, in the chapter *Atini* in *Living, Loving and Lying*

Awake at Night, there is the gossip about Atini, from Imelda following Atini permanently taking Imelda's job as fresh gossip that the other domestic worker responds to. Even Nombini, who Atini describes as her homegirl, is ashamed of Atini upon hearing this (fresh) gossip, but later the afterlife of the gossip surrounding Imelda seems to describe her as the one at fault. Macharia adds that "good gossip is delicious" (ASA UK, 2021, 14:22) and by doing so, both points to the food metaphors connected to gossip and the way "information and gossip are not the same thing; but they can be about the same thing" (14:58). There are multiple ways in which it differs but as it relates to the 'deliciousness' of gossip and the way it is "opposed to the person who *just* [emphasis added] comes and gives you information" (ASA UK, 14: 54), there is an excess of enjoyment. However, the delicious food need not be nutritious (though it may be). In fact, it can be harmful to the body and still be delicious and thus the deliciousness of food is not just the excess of food but becomes (or can become) central to it. In a similar way, the enjoyability, the deliciousness, of gossip is central to it. Macharia also corroborates the notion that that "gossip does not invite, or need, verifiability" (ASA UK, 2021, 15:23) but expands on this by saying that there is a way in which gossip is about "what will sweeten this encounter" (15:35). This point is useful in situating gossip within its role—in other words, the content and structure of gossip is subject to the dynamics of the encounter. To borrow from conversation analysis, this allows us to consider gossip in terms of "action-orientation and the way [it is] shaped for the occasions of [it's] production" (Stokoe & Edwards, 2006, p. 56). The final anchoring point from Macharia, before we put this framework to use, is there it is said that "[…] there is also a way in which gossip invites a kind of lingering with" (16:04). This, again, is and can be expanded upon in multiple ways but we are directed towards a type of gossip that keeps the encounter going where it might have ended. Linking with the previous point about the way gossip functions dynamically within an encounter, Macharia speaks to the use of different types of gossip for different points in the conversation that do different things, or, put otherwise, have different action-orientations.

Back to the book

The third chapter, titled *Stella*, sees a change in narration style and this style continues through the next five chapters. The speaking character, whose name takes the chapters' respective titles, seems to speak in paragraphs that are marked by an apostrophe at the beginning but not the end. For example:

> ‘Thank you, sure smells good. Thank you. If I had the money I’d buy myself at least coffee and put it in my room.
>
> ‘I don’t know why I… (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 18)

The apostrophe seems to mark the points at which the character begins speaking and, in between these paragraphs, there seems to be space for some response. It is an unconventional choice which, I think, can be seen to mark the beginning of their speech as well as the omission of the interlocutor’s responses. I think this format, along with various other pointers, offer themselves to an engagement with the gossip framework. The second chapter sees Atini speak, and speak directly to an audience–for example, Atini says: “But me, my friend…” (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 12)—however, it appears as an unbroken narrative from Atini (without the apostrophes at the beginning of paragraphs) and less like an active conversation. As we have noted, gossip is a social event that invites engagement (ASA UK, 2021). Nyairo speaks of a verbal invitation that invites gossip and its continuation of a kind of ‘egging on’ of the gossip. At other points in the discussion, they speak to the (sometimes intentional) failures of this continuation where the desired response is not given (ASA UK, 2021). What they seem to be implying that this is heavily reliant on affect and thus the verbalisation is more a signifier of the affective position that invites further continuation of gossip or leads to its failure. As Nyairo states, sometimes this invitation to continue is “verbalised but you can’t even find the words” (ASA UK, 2021, 22:24). Perhaps this is taken to an extreme in this stylistic choice by Magona (1991/2019) where one literally cannot find the words for the response and all that is left is the gap where the verbalisation might fit. Another piece of support for this characterisation of the style is in Sophie’s chapter, where she states that her employer is interested in “maid gossip” as she asks Sophie about the business of domestic worker. Thus, at least at that moment, characterising the business of domestic workers or its mode of transmission, as gossip.

Nyairo raises the use of nicknames “that makes it clear who you’re talking about without divulging it” (ASA UK, 2021, 25:02) and links this with “the ways in which gossip trashes. Trashes character, trashes behaviour and trashes even places” (ASA UK, 2021, 26:31). Nyairo also gives the sense of a level of pretence in these nicknames as those engaged in the gossip are meant to know who the subject is—the nickname pretends to hide the identity but, instead, creates another mode of intimacy and an opportunity for trashing. Throughout the book we are provided with reference to the employers through these nicknames, particularly Mrs Reed. Sophie refers to Mrs Reed as “legs of a bird” (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 30); Virginia calls her

"Mrs Walk on Legs" (p. 36); and Lillian refers her as "no-legs woman". The repetition of these kinds of nicknames, their common theme, and the ease with which they slide into the discussion without interruption indicates this as one of the standard "codes" in the gossip. This is an instance where the gossipers' shared criteria for evaluation comes through and frames Mrs Reed in a particular way. When Sophie refers to her as "legs of a bird" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 30), she does so in the form of asking how she is doing. However, there is no space indicating a response to this before she continues to 'trash' her. The use of the nickname functions as a mode of locating her in the realm of their continued evaluation which has found her wanting. As Macharia highlights, "there is something about particular kinds of authority figures being brought within the sphere of narrative and sometimes of narrative control…[power is] tunnelled under in a particular kind of way" (ASA UL, 2021, 31:15-31:48) and this allows for a certain way of interacting which does not quite level power but creates some sort of balance whereby the fact that one has gossip about the authority figures functions as a sort of psychical support through thinking something like: "It's ok, you can say what you want…even me I have a story" (32:04). It seems that the nicknames offer a speedy route to this tunnelling under of power, something like: 'Mrs Reed is speaking with a lot of authority not knowing that she is actually 'bird legs' who is not respected and is the target of much trashing'.

Macharia explores the ways gossip fits in to gap where "one's word and ones' embodiment is understood as itself a kind of testimony that cannot be believed" (ASA UK, 2021, 49:40). That is to say, particular subject positions are positioned such a way that their word carries less weight than other subject positions. Macharia posits that "there is a certain way that bodies become 'engossiped', if you will…which means not verifiable, not believable, under certain circumstances" (ASA UK, 2021, 50:10). There are circumstances where we 'know' it is gossip (and not empirically valid) because it comes from a particular subject position. Macharia uses the example of women and their position in biblical texts (where a women's word must be verified by men), but this may be part of Magona's choice to illustrate these narratives through gossip. This is bringing together the subversive conceptualisation of gossip as a kind of unverifiable undercurrent of a social order and a subject position which is engossiped. This notion of engossiping might be understood as a type of non-recognition of the ontological resistance of a certain subject positions (given certain circumstances). Why is it that these discussions (and here we can think of them not as delicious gossip but the exploration of their lives) are placed in Atini's kitchen, with only two visitors (who are domestic workers) at a time, and not with employers, with policy makers, with news agencies, and so on? The question

here is less about what comes to be recognised and taken up as 'valid', and more about what remains as gossip and what remains engossiped.

Moreover, this notion of where gossip fits and what it used for also engages with gossip as a way of distributing information and evaluations of character by the standards of the domestic workers (though they may be gossip or engossiped). A range of characters discuss their white employers and how they treat domestic workers and how they live. Over and above (or in tandem with) 'trashing', and the potential psychologic function it offers, this also allows for a type of action-orientation beyond the gossip in terms of what to look out for and how to engage with the various employers. For example, Lillian discusses (not explicitly) the fact that Mrs Reed's husband has sexual relations with "Black girls"(Magona, 1991/2019, p. 49), particularly those they have employed, on occasions where he stays home with the babysitter while Mrs Reed goes out; as well as Imelda getting pregnant and seemingly being taken for an abortion and a sterilization procedure; or Sophie speaking of her employer being invested in their gossip and subsequently getting her in trouble with other employers. Sheila discusses the wages offered by Mrs Reed: "I can tell you if that's what she paid the last girl she had…her wage jumps up and own all the time" (Magona, 1991/2019, p 23). These evaluations might inform the way they interact with these figures.

Nyairo argues that the gossiper "has to position [themselves] in that place of intimacy…so in building intimacies there are also terms of endearment, words of affirmation…bonds that are affirmed…" (ASA UK, 2021, 24:15). We have already noted that Atini referred to the audience as "friend"— "but me, my friend, I was destitute…" (Magona, 1991, p. 12); "Friend, by the time poor Imelda came back…" (Magona, 1991, p. 14)—and this trend continues through the voices of multiple (but not all) domestic workers through the following chapters. Some examples included: Sheila using "my friend" (p. 25) and my "my dear" (p. 29); Sophie's usage of "*mntakwethu*" (p. 30) and "my friend" (p. 30); and Lillian using "my child" (p. 46). Nyairo explores the idea that the person who engages in gossip with the gossiper might be called a "friend" even if it is a temporary positioning. Gossip, in a more general notion of intimacy building, requires (at different levels) an element of trust and also builds trust (ASA UK, 2021). "For that moment [they are] a friend…You don't gossip with strangers; when you do gossip with strangers it's because you're trying to build a friendship or build something" (ASA UK, 2021, 1: 12: 26). Thus, we have the construction of intimacy between domestic workers, indicated by these words of endearment, but shown and reproduced through the mode of interaction. This can be placed in contrast with the 'trashing' nicknames for the employers or

the formal discussion of their names where the characters recount speaking to their employers. As readers, we seem to be placed in Atini's position (as seen from the reference to 'our' employer' as the nicknames for 'our' employer, the references to Imelda, and the chapter titled *Atini's reflections*) for these 'gossip'-structured chapters and, thus, our engagement in this intimacy is mediated. We are a 'friend' to the characters because we take up the position of Atini and, at the level of the book as a work of fiction, we are distanced from this. Even in the position of Atini, we are severely limited. We have no access to the visual representation where gossip contains important elements that are attentive to performance, body language, and place (ASA UK, 2021), and we also have no access to Atini's responses in the active conversations. While we are being shown, to some extent, this "whole new world" that Atini sees through engaging in this social world, we are also placed at a distance and reminded that we are not there, that there is an enfleshed and embodied process with changing content, personal codes, things that cannot be said in a book and so on, that we are not a part of. This is further filtered through the book as a piece of fiction, as we are invited to be 'friends' (in terms of gossip and only through the position of Atini) with the characters but not with Magona (1991/2019). The materiality of the content dissipates further (past the unverifiability of gossip) and we are left with a large emphasis on the virtuality of domestic work.

Nyairo speaks of "Gossip as social order, gossip as reproducing a particular structure that people in authority feel comfortable with" (ASA UK, 2021, 34:31). We will take this in a slightly different direction than Nyairo, but let us first engage her point. Nyairo speaks of "gossip as policing" (ASA UK. 2021, 34:28) as a way in which it sustains the social order. In this sense, a way gossip can sustain social order is the when—as a mode of evaluating character in situation—it evaluates using the criteria of those in authority. For example, in Atini's discussion, the gossip that surrounds her in terms of betraying Imelda and does not implicate the choice of Mrs Reed is a way of evaluating character that is comfortable for those in authority such as Mrs Reed. Gossip in this way becomes a mode of policing by legitimizing these criteria for evaluation and producing social impacts, such as the hostile feeling Atini got from other domestic workers[14]. In *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*, the use of gossip does not seem to speak to its use as policing. For the most part, if the subjects of gossip and 'trashing' are the employers, how then does this gossip function to sustain the social structure? This is not to say that this gossip cannot lead to social resistance and organised subversion (we

[14] For further discussion of this encounter see Appendix B

have spoken to the subversive character of gossip) but this is not what is being highlighted in this narrative (or these narratives). We might here speak to the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*. As Evans (1998) states, "the term jouissance does not retain a stable meaning…its resonances and articulations shift dramatically over the course of Lacan's teaching" (p. 2 as cited in Hook, 2017) and, as Hook (2017) elaborates, there are a "variety of differing applications to which the term has been put to use in the work of Lacan's commentators" (p. 2). All this to say that *jouissance* is an expansive, sometimes vague, sometimes nebulous concept which we will only briefly 'define' (in the knowledge of the limitations of this) and then employ for discussion. Wilderson (2020) states that "*Jouissance* compels the subject to constantly attempt to transgress the prohibitions imposed on [their] enjoyment" (p. 92). As Hook (2017) adds:

> The enjoyment involved here [in *jouissance*] is to be distinguished from the everyday (banal, pleasurable) sense of enjoying; it refers, instead, to more illicit gains, to 'getting off' in ways one would not readily admit to. Hence the frequent characterization of the 'obscene', or 'perverse' quality of enjoyment that seems invariably to run counter to the prevailing norms of what is permissible or acceptable. After all, this is not something typically acknowledged in how we represent negative affects to ourselves, i.e. the possibility that once I have flown into a rage I find myself greatly excited, exhilarated by this; that in the midst of wallowing in despair I find myself deeply gratified by own misery. (p. 3)

Thus, it might be seen that gossip involves an element of *jouissance*. The transgressive qualities of gossip, of trashing, name-calling, refusing verifiability, 'engossiped' bodies, and the "deliciousness" of this all lean into a mode of *jouissance*. We are given this clue by the title of their talk, *In Defense of Gossip*—it needs to be defended against the accusations of the 'perverse enjoyment' of talking about others in this way. In tandem with notions such as trashing, information sharing, and building of intimacy, we can see the subversive element of gossip and the concomitant *jouissance.*

However, Hook (2017) argues that:

> [We] stay loyal to existing power structures…[b]ecause we enjoy the libidinal rewards that we feel are due us as a result of a broader sacrifice of jouissance. More simply put: jouissance is the reward (in effect, as Žižek (1994) notes, a type of 'libidinal bribery', the 'wages of servitude') offered to those who remain loyal to a given structure of power.

> We concede to various forms of subjugation (indeed, to sacrifices of jouissance) on condition that we are allowed our own modest allowance of enjoyment by way of compensation. We might provide the example here of a type of anti-racism that pervades much British tabloid journalism: by aligning ourselves with such a perspective, we are obliged to root out our own prejudices and to give up on the pleasures of ethnic hating, only to be rewarded by being allowed to hate racists. (p. 8)

Thus, we can question the way gossip (and all it entails) functions as *jouissance* that allows for the *maintenance* of the social structure. What is allowed for in the 'delicious' trashing of the employers of domestic work? Perhaps Magona (1991/2019), in using this gossip-style structure, is pointing us on some level, to this answer. Why have we been invited to engage in this mode of *jouissance*? This structure of the book is part of the story—it is not only that the characters speak to us through the mode of gossip but that the gossip is also reflected into the content. This is might be best shown in the chapter *Atini's reflections* where it is stated*:*

> But I am not alone. All the other women, like me, are suffering. *That is why we laugh about our troubles*. *That is why*. We have so many and they are the same-it is like a nightmare that gives us no rest. It is with us by night and by day, *so, we laugh about it*. (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 60, emphases added)

Put otherwise, this statement by Atini (with its repetition of this reasoning) can be seen as reflecting the choice of style for the book and the play between its style and content. The literary choice of what we have framed as 'gossip' allows us to reflect on the interplay between the suffering and the laughing-about-their-troubles. This *jouissance* qua libidinal bribery offers a way of thinking through this. The use of 'gossip' has offered a range of central points of tension between information passing and enjoyment, between the notion of the choice of the form of gossip and the engossiped subject positions, and between gossip as subversion and gossip as a libidinal contract sustaining social relations. In other words, this analysis hopes to make clear that the content is only one component of the story and that, beyond the choice of a fictional book, the choice of gossip structure pushes us beyond the empirical. This choice is not just a stylistic choice but is reflected into the content and issues being dealt with. At this point we will move to focus on the content of the chapters. We will explore some of the main themes of each chapter and notions that may not be central in the chapter but repeated across chapters.

Stella's chapter sees her talk about the ways in which her employer overworks her without any sense of care or thoughtfulness and the way this contrasts with how her employer portrays

herself. Stella warns the interlocutor: "[S]he could win a Mrs Sunshine Secret Smile Competition; couldn't she? Always cheerful she looks hey? Don't be fooled, I could tell you things about that woman—things you would never believe" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 18). She later goes on to say that "she wipes her sunshine smile away when she talks to me and wants to tell me something she knows is not nice" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 19). Stella provides the reader with the sense that this cheerful demeanour is a façade and that her employer is willing to drop the façade to speak to her. Her example of "something she knows is not nice" is in the form of being given extra work. As Stella further elaborates: "Now tell me this is not cruel. Here is a woman who has seven days a week like everybody else. When does she choose to entertain? On the one evening a week she knows her maid is off" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 19). Stella has, thus, been clear in her analysis of her employer, stating that she "knows" she is being "not nice" and is "cruel". These comments both refer to an example of being asked to do extra work. Stella then gives an example from her first day working for her where she was asked to clean the bath where dirty water was left with her employer's panties floating in the water. Stella says she did not wash the panties and left them aside to which her employer left a note telling her to clean them. In response, Stella responded with a note of her own stating she "did not go to school for nothing" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 19). Further:

> "Medem," I said in the note, "please excuse me but I did not think anyone can ask another person to wash their panty. I was taught that a panty is the most intimate thing…my mother told me that no one else should see my panty. I really don't see how I am asked to wash someone else's panty". (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 19).

Stella constantly exposes the intersubjective gap between herself and her employer in various ways. There is a repetition of signifiers that appear distorted in their communication, such as her employers smile and the back-and-forth letters discussing what should have been done with the panties in the bath. They appear distorted in the sense that they are conjoined with the obverse of what they might 'generally' be associated with, that is, the smile is connected with cruelty and the letters with a breakdown in communication. Stella also highlights the way she is overworked and 'utilized' by her employer. "Gets me downright mad to think of the way she has *used me* [emphasis added] over the years" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 18); "she doesn't know I need to rest. She thinks I am a donkey that can go on and on working" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 20); "She's not stingy with my strength, oh no!" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 20). The way in which agency is given to the employer is notable in these statements, as it is not only that she demands too much but that there is a way in which it is her who utilises Stella. Moreover, what

is not to be missed in Stella's phrasing is that the employer has the *capacity* to 'utilize' Stella in this way. As Hartman (2019) states in a section titled "Manual for General Housework", "Manual: to be wielded by another, to be wielded on a whim; to be wielded as an exercise of another's will, to be severed from one's own will or motives or desires" (p. 77) (see Appendix E). Later in the chapter, Stella also states "Ho! White people! You slave for them slave for their children. Slave for their friends. Even slave for their cats and dogs. And they think you with a kick in the back" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 21). Later in the book, Joyce, who discussed domestic work and her intention to leave it, states, "NO MORE. I refuse to be a slave" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 43). Lillian says "This slave work we do is no good" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 46). This choice to include the repetition of the comparison to slavery is worth highlighting. We have seen in the literature review, the historical roots of domestic work in slavery and the continued comparison. Hartman (2019) indicates the connection of domestic work to slave work and Blackness remarking, "service [domestic work] carried the stigma of slavery; white girls sought to avoid for the same reason…kind of work that possessed the entire person, not just her labour-time but her lifetime" (p. 233).

Sophie's description of her employer somewhat differs. Sophie tells us, "that woman is a person, a human being although she is white. She feels for another person" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 31). However, she goes on to say:

> Of course, I pay for her being nice so nice to me, Oo, my friend do I pay…I have a beautiful house with water and hot water; but my shoulders and knees are always burning: Work. Work. Work. I work until I drop each day. Whuwoo! Get her money right out of my shoulders and knees? That she does. (pp. 31-32)

Despite the description of her employer as "a human" and "nice", Sophie experiences the violence of the work relationship. We can also note the ambiguity of who 'gets' the money through Sophie's labour. Sophie's explicit discussion doesn't focus on the exploration of the source of the wealth of her employer (and the book in general doesn't focus on this for the other employers), thus one might think that Sophie is saying that she earns her pay through the pain of her labour and body ("[I] get her money right out of my shoulders..."). However, the writing by Magona, particularly in the answer to this question, seems to play on this ambiguity of who is making money out of her pain to say something different. "Get *her* money out of *my* shoulders and knees? That *she* does"—that is to say that her employer gets money out of Sophie's labour. Again, this is not explicitly explored and it points to the subterranean analysis

by the domestic workers of the nature of their work. Joyce's chapter gives the most explicit analysis of domestic work. Here is part of her discussion:

> The white woman can do all sorts of things for her maid…but, she, is doing for the maid what she would do for herself if she had the money.
> 'If the white woman could buy heaven itself for the black woman in her employ that would be hell… (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 42).

> *And I am sick and tired of people telling me about this one woman who bought a house for her maid* [emphasis added]. Do you hear her boss or her husband's boss crowing about how he bought a house for his employee? Why not?
> '…It is none of his business unless they are friends. Why do we become not just friends but family to the people we work for? (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 43).

Once again, there are multiple ways to open up this analysis, however, in line with the previous discussion where Sophie 'paid' for the humanity and niceness of her employer, Joyce speaks to the way in which a 'kindness' is rooted in violence and the way that being part of the family is directly a way of obfuscating the violence and exploitation of the employment of domestic workers. Returning to gossip as an evaluation of character and a situation that need not be in accordance with dominant criteria of evaluation (and this may be precisely why it appears as gossip), we see a kind of de-fetishization of 'human' capacities such as kindness. That is, kindness, generosity, niceness, etc. are not taken as, in and of themselves, entirely positive. Joyce opens the question of what allows this disequilibrium in 'human' *capacities* where certain individuals are enabled to be more 'generous' than others. This employer seems to exemplify the goodwill that Joyce refuses, contrasted with the way Imelda and Atini are positioned antagonistically (to each other) after falling out over who got the job. Joyce argues, on one hand, that employment should be treated as such and not be underpaid but, on the other hand, argues that nobody would choose this work and nobody should find themselves doing this work for their life, comparing this situation to slavery. Joyce's example "about this one woman who bought a house for her maid" (in this 1991 work of fiction) bears an uncanny resemblance to the example critiqued in the literature review, where "Alta and her husband bought Esther a house 'to try and uplift her'" (Bosch & McLeod, 2015, p.146) in a relationship characterised as friendship (and the only one in the study).

Sheila's chapter offers an interesting point of discussion in the discussion of rights and the organisation of domestic workers. She says:

> Have you heard about how maids should not let the white women call them girls or servants anymore? And we should form a group to fight for our rights? […] After all these years they're used to calling us anything they like…Do you really think they'll learn that? Me, myself, I don't think so. I really don't think so. (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 25)

What is noteworthy is the tangential discussion of rights. As per our discussion on Lacanian discourse analysis, this may signify precisely its importance and it may, then, be a productive line to follow why it would become repressed. However, in this analysis I think we cannot ignore the seeming rejection of its importance. "Have you heard" signifies an externality and its potential placement in the realm of gossip (ASA UK, 2021) and, as such, we can consider the discussion as framed by a different set of standards that allows the interlocutors to break with what they 'should' say. In fact, in this mode, Sheila reflexively indicates what they "should" be doing as well as its ineffectiveness without adding much more beyond this. The line that Sheila follows in this is not the organisation around the topic of rights per se, but does further think through organisation. Sheila responds to one of the gaps in the discussion by saying "Of course I think it is a good idea. We should have maids' groups" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 25). We can note that it might be conceived as a response to a question such as "Don't you think we should fight for our rights?", however, the explicit mention of rights only comes in the form asking "Have you heard about how…we *should* [emphasis added] join a group and fight for our rights" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 25). Sheila figures the formation of the organisation of domestic workers in tandem with her discussion of the organisation of employers. Citing what appears to Sheila as the collusion of employers on wages and treatment of workers, she states that "The women we work for *must* have their groups too" (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 25, emphasis in original) and that "[t]hey tell each other what to do about maids. Only we're too dumb to see they do this and control us" (p. 26). That is, through (what we have called) gossip, Sheila has identified a systematic quality in the conditions of domestic worker and has hypothesised not only an explanation for this (in their organisation) but a response in the organisation of domestic workers and the sharing of information following her dismissal of the realisation of "rights". That is to say, while Sheila does not dismiss rights, they are not the Symbolic authority that is turned to as the mobilising force of domestic workers. Toward the

end of the chapter Sheila returns to the issue of language thought together with the discussion of rights earlier:

> Who pays for their "Scrub my back, I'll scrub yours"? We poor domestic servants…Listen to me; I'm the first to forget I'm not a servant anymore. I am a worker I must remember that. I'm just as bad as these white women, hey? Can't teach an old dog new tricks as they say: heh? (Magona, 1991/2019, p. 28)

Once again, there are multiple ways to engage this, particularly as it does not appear as an argument. However, following Sheila raising a range of issues including underpayment and mistreatment by employers, the end to this discussion can be read with sarcasm. In fact, right after saying that *domestic workers pay* in the "scrub my back, I'll scrub yours" relation of others comes her statement that she shouldn't forget she is a worker. Calling herself "just as bad as these white women" for calling herself a servant instead of a worker following the explication of her material struggles could be read as questioning the point of call for what domestic workers "should be doing" and which avenues for the betterment of their lives are thought of *for* them (by others). It can also be read with the reflexive use of the adage of 'teaching an old dog new tricks', where there is the comparison of this modality of change to the teaching of a performance. This is not to say that there is no value in this or rights, even that the character Sheila doesn't understand this to be important.

To My Children's Children

Magona's (1990/2020) book titled *To My Children's Children* is written as a letter to her grandchildren. The letter tells the narrative of her life and, as such, the book's focus is not the explication of domestic work and its relations per se. This analysis will deal with that part of the book in which she becomes employed as a domestic worker and the reasons for this.

Magona (1990/2020) was working as a teacher when she became pregnant and resigned from her post. Magona speaks to the fact that her father "suffered scorn and ridicule for educating a girl child" (p. 106) and that she had done as predicted and fallen pregnant. Magona informs us that her position as a teacher protected her from certain forms of social punishment, but the pregnancy was still punished.

> By the time the baby was three months old, the restriction imposed by unemployment was killing me. A teaching job was out of the question, for at least two years-the 'punishment' meted out to fallen women teachers like me. (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 117)

With these restrictions, Magona went job-hunting and lists a range of jobs she applied to and advertisements she responded to before stating: "Eventually, desperate, I resorted to domestic work" (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 118) in which she worked for four years. Magona says that as a domestic worker she was 'part of' (Author's inverted commas) four household indicating the complicated way in which she is a part of these households (qua domestic worker) (p. 118). She explores these different families and different work relations.

The first family, the Garlands, were a British family and in were in South Africa "on service to Her Majesty the Queen" and, thus, planning to return to England. Magona posits that this had an important impact on their work relation (p. 119). This is perhaps best highlighted in the discussion of the children in the household who Magona states were being raised for their life in England where "racism does not carry the government's seal of approval" (p. 120). To exemplify this relation, she states that she is allowed use the library, bring her baby (at this point she had one child) to work, and the children were encouraged to do chores and call Magona by her name. In her view, "it wasn't a bad job *for a domestic servant* emphasis added]" (p. 124). In this move, Magona is not suggesting the reduction of the relation and decisions of her employers to the fact that they plan to return to England (simply in contradistinction to South Africa), but demystifies the way that such decisions are related to not only the law, but the ideological function entailed in domestic work (as explored by Cock (1980)). If evidence of this irreducibility is required (inter alia), on the one hand the Garland's advertise for "coloured cook general" despite not being "highly conversant with the colour-layered differential system in promulgated by the South African government" (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 121) and, on the other hand, their willingness to let Magona bring her baby to work is later described as making her "see them as kinder than usual" (p. 124). In the first line, Magona is able to get the job despite not being coloured and being unqualified, and this is her first job in domestic work. In the second line on kindness, Magona states that "for [that] favour [she] would tolerate many an infringement" (p. 124). Magona also describes that the employers' entertainment of guests "all but obliterated an already fragile self-confidence" and this is where she "realized, even with employers [she] regarded as somewhat more humane than the average employer, that the word of a white person was weightier than the word of a Black person employed by another white person!" (p. 125). She also explains that she also read the children to sleep and, although this was not in her contract, she was allowed no extra-pay. She explains:

> [T]he recognition that I could read, that I was capable of higher duty, that I was not limited sweeping, scrubbing, scouring and steam-ironing; in short that I, although a

> servant, had a brain, did a lot for my battered and bruised ego. It more than compensated for the absence of pecuniary gain. (p. 127)

This exists alongside the discussion of her entrance into domestic work based on desperation after trying other avenues, the continued problematising of domestic work in the book, and need for material resources. Internal to this quote, this is situated in response to the "battered and bruised ego". That is to say, the situating (in this instance) of recognition compensating for the "absence of the pecuniary gain" should not be read outside of its context in response to the "battered and bruised ego" (in the employment of relatively humane employers) in a job entered into out of desperation for resources to feed her child while having no other options. In this way, this recognition and, importantly, Magona's feeling that this compensated for pecuniary gain, allowed for further exploitation—further labour utilised by the employer without compensation. Just as Magona stated earlier in response to her employer allowing her to keep her child with her, their humaneness allowed for infringements in their contracts. We can return to Cock's (1980) statement that "It is precisely the unequal nature of the relationship and the mutual recognition of such inequality that allows the relationship to be described as a close and friendly one" (p. 132). I would like to highlight that this reading is not 'in spite' of Magona saying the recognition compensated for pecuniary gain but this reading emerges through the gap between this and the other points put forward in the book and its place in the narrative.

The second family Magona works for, The Goldbergs, is discussed relatively briefly in the narrative. Magona describes the family and then says that "They were a very close-knit family, I found that burdensome" (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 127). Magona refers to Mrs Goldberg and Mr Goldberg, their son who is away but whose pregnant wife she saw a lot, and a daughter and her son who both stayed with the Goldberg's which Magona says "came as a surprise later on my first day there" (p. 127). In explaining her leaving Magona states that she "felt exploited at having to serve not only the couple who paid me but also the back-home-again not-long-married daughter and her son" (p. 131) but when it appeared that the pregnant daughter was going to become her "burden", she decided to leave. To put it briefly, it seems that Magona expected to be working solely for Mrs and Mr Goldberg but, due to them being a "close knit family", she was required to do additional work for other members of the family without additional compensation.

The next job Magona takes up is at a restaurant called 'The Astoria', which was owned by the Paporokoulus family. Once again, the advertisement called for a coloured applicant. Magona explains: "Undeterred by not being coloured, my dire financial need giving me unaccustomed courage and making me glib of tongue, eager to please, I applied for the job" (p.131). The role of financial needs is central again and, at this point, she speaks to this need producing courage and a "glib tongue". That is to say that this courage (which is highlighted as "unaccustomed") is predicated on her financial need, violence. This quality, thus, becomes de-fetishized. In her interview for the Garlands (who also asked for coloured applicants), Magona said she did not lie but that she hid her faults and, here, she makes reference to her "glib tongue". She describes these capacities in a way that is tightly imbricated with the conditions in which she is required to use them.

With this job at the restaurant, which would provide Magona with meals, she found herself "very glad". However, she follows this with: "How soon our blessings pale when the drudgery of toil sweat and unrelieved long hours unmitigated by any appreciation, understanding or occasional word of kindness or praise take its toll (p, 133). Magona states that she feels that Mrs Paporokoulus chose to move to South Africa due to the Apartheid discriminatory laws and did not seem concerned with avoiding allegations of racism (p. 132). Magona describes her as having a "paternalistic 'natives are childlike' attitude" before saying "She voiced no such, and, by action, displayed no such. She was bent on getting her money's worth from her servant, me" (p. 132). It is notable that Magona includes that her words and actions were not the site of the violence of her racism and 'natives are childlike' attitude but, rather, it is through the market logics of 'getting her money's worth'. Conversely, in Magona's characterisation, Mrs Paporokoulos' getting 'her money's worth' cannot be disimbricated from the racism and antiblackness which sustains it. As previously alluded to, Magona (1990/2020) hypothesised that Mrs Paporokoulos had moved to South Africa having "heard that in South Africa the Black people so not enjoy the protection of the law, that the workers especially the domestic servants, were at the mercy of their employers" (p. 132). Furthermore, with this discussion, it may be worth thinking about what Magona described as the *mitigating* role of "appreciation, understanding or occasional word of kindness or praise" (p, 133). She compares Mrs Paporokoulos to the "white South African" who in spite of their relation to the law and power fights accusations of "racism, unfairness and downright cruelty to the indigenous people of that land" (p. 132). We might also remember that her recognition of Magona could stand alongside financial gain in relation to her "battered and bruised ego" (p. 127). Magona indicates a way in

which the humanity and care of employers and the (extra-contractual) defence against "racism, unfairness and downright cruelty to the indigenous people of that land" obfuscates and mitigates the "racism, unfairness and downright cruelty to the indigenous people of that land" that exists through market (and related legal) logics. Magona states that it was at 'The Astoria' where she worked the "hardest and longest hours" (p. 133), describing Mrs Paporokoulos as the most unreasonable and contradicting of all that was agreed upon in the verbal contract. When Magona left their employment, she was not paid and, as Mrs Paporokoulos had not registered her, she was not formally employed and could not be helped by the legal authorities. This speaks to the large amount of literature that explores the way in which legislation is not enforced with regard to domestic work and the aim of ensuring compliance with said legislation. This will not be included in this paper, which is not to say it is not useful or relevant but as will be explored further in the meta-analysis, this approach typifies the study of domestic work. Just before stating her issue, Magona also explains that, even for those who are registered, the employer has recourse, by nature of the work relation, and the position of domestic workers as something like what we have conceptualised as 'engossiped, to avoid this:

> Wrong things, in white women's eyes, are stealing, the synonym for misplaced (as I don't know where I put); missing (as taken by another member of the family); drunk, which could be anything from 'had a glass or two' to 'can hardly stand on own to legs' rowdy, broadly speaking this has happened whenever two friends or more dropped by; and a host of similar evils. Most improbable, for the maid, not to err. The maid is accused of such things or worse, for, otherwise, the madam owes her a month's wages for dismissing her without cause. p. 136)

This is also illustrative of the question in the literature concerned with compliance with legislature in the private relation of the work and mechanisms for securing this. The notion of engossiping turns the focus on to the fact that there is an asymmetry that allows for these transgressions and that it is the employer who is (more often and in this case) the one who benefits from this limited capacity for enforcing compliance. Holding Ally's (2010) questioning of the discourses of rights and 'state protection' that interpolate domestic workers as vulnerable, we can also ask what the conditions of possibility for these discourse are. What allows them to function? Continuing our movement backwards through page 36, Magona (1990/2020) tells us that "[t]here is a generally held myth that the [verbal] contract between maids and madams is binding. Since the contract both assumes and confirms the infallibility of madams, it binds only the maid" and that the contract can be broken so long as the employer

perceives the domestic worker to have done something wrong. To put this question (maybe too) crudely, why is it that without the 'protection of the contract', the subject position of *domestic worker* is subject to violence (more so than the employer)?

Before explaining the time of her final post in domestic work, Magona, repeatedly, in different forms, and in relatively high concentration, reminds the reader of her feelings towards domestic work. Her discussion on pages 145 and 146 are where this is most apparent:

> "More than anything domestic work did more to me than it did for me" (p.145)
>
> "Remember now, I am not ungrateful…Am I not alive? Are my children not alive? I did enough to keep my body and soul together; but at what cost!" (pp. 145-146)
>
> "my very endeavours to maintain my family contained the seeds for its destruction" (p. 146)
>
> "I could choose between being a working mother or having no children left" (p. 146)
>
> "More than two years had passed since my fall from grace. Life was a hum-drum existence, sweat for the most part with a rather bleak prognosis" (p. 146).

Of course, the quote in longform would be ideal but is worth attending to this repetition and its variety of forms, particularly considering its placement at this point in the story, describing her stance after two years in domestic work. Magona then informs us that she continued her attempts to return to teaching at this point, but did not find success. While this chapter takes a lot of focus off of domestic work itself, it deals with a number of other aspects and events of her life, including going to stay with her parents, her marriage, the birth of her second child and the introduction of her aunt, Dathini. Aunt Dathini helps get Magona her fourth sleep-in job (she mentions two sleep-out jobs and char work that she had done by this point). Her employers are Mr and Mrs Koorn. Magona describes her salary in this job as "generous", and she illustrates this by comparison with her pay when she did "eventually [go] back to a teaching job" (p. 157). She describes the work itself as "far from back breaking" and says that she learned to cook a few dishes from them (p. 157). Magona's aunt, Dathini, worked in the area and it was close to her home. However (and therefore), Magona says:

> More than any other of the families I have worked for or, later, known under a different set of circumstances, the Koorns were instrumental in my belated socialisation regarding colour of skin as determinant of social status in South Africa. The only reason

> I worked for them and not they for me, was that I was black and they were white. (p. 157)

Magona explicitly links this to the Apartheid law of the time. However, as per the third quarter report of the labour force survey, black women constituted 89% of domestic workers. While there is no number for white domestic workers ("men" and "women"), there is a potential explanation in a note on the page saying that "For all values of 10 000 or lower the sample size is too small for reliable estimates" (StatsSA, 2021). King (2007) states: "All I spoke to we adamant that no white women in Grahamstown would work for a Black employer as a domestic servant" (p. 23 as cited in Jansen 2019, p. 241) and King was not able to find a white domestic worker to interview. Magona (1990/2020) gives a description of the Koorns resembling a notion of hegemony where she says: "Unassuming and exhibiting no malice towards me, long having accepted the order of things…well meaning, unthinking sheep…naïve and dangerous by virtue of that same fact" (p. 158). This is, thus, not reducible to the law. As per the Gramscian notion of hegemony, it takes more explicit violence to set up a social order and, as this order becomes hegemonic, this violence (at least in part) recedes.

Magona then recounts an episode where, getting onto a bus, she saw an elderly woman struggle to get on the bus having to use her hands to left her right leg up the stairs and states that she:

> kept seeing the nightmare of a sixty-nine-year-old me lifting my leg with my hands to get onto a bus to go and be on my knees scrubbing, scrubbing, scrubbing…till WHEN? Till WHAT happened? […] If I had any notion of making domestic work a life-time career, the old lady I have just described cured me of that. I did not know how or when, but I was as sure can be (sic.) that I would get out! (p. 163)

Magona then says that her "prayers were to be answered, much sooner than [she] thought" (p. 163) and in an unexpected way. She became pregnant with her third child and her husband (who was largely absent and provided close to nothing) intervened by informing Mrs Koorn that he didn't want to her to work while pregnant. Thus, Mrs Koorn terminated her employment despite her attempts to continue working. Between her hearing about this and leaving, Magona states that she was furious at her husband, saying: "WHAT WILL WE EAT? RENT? [...] RENT? WHAT WILL WE EAT? EAT? RENT? And so on and so on" (p. 166) and later that she was "rescued from the deadening drudgery of domestic work, [she] was plunged straight into the hole of dire poverty" (p. 167). Thus, this marks the end of Magona's employment in domestic work.

Before concluding our engagement with the narrative of this book, we can deal with the appearance of (what we have conceptualised as) gossip. We will try not to rehash the main points, as discussed in the previous section on *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*. Signifiers of potential points of analysis (in terms of gossip) appear in a few places, for example: "From the other maids, I learnt" (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 131). A great example that speaks directly to our conceptualisations of gossip and ontological resistance is on page 139, where Magona says: "What I heard, on the buses to and from the Black townships-where one hears and learns-is as valid as any data based on scientific probing; only much more exciting, much more alive". She continues on to say, after saying the configurations of the set-up change:

> In these informal structures the domestic workers air their grievances, *share strategies*, joke about a starkly harsh and brutal work environment and console one another; thus, fortified they, they advance to tackle their individual loads.…The frustrations of the particular day or of another, long gone are thrown to the group to *examine*, compare ridicule and reduce to the absurdity they are. (Magona, 1990/2020, p. 140, emphases added)

I have emphasised the sharing of strategies. not to place them as more important than the rest but to emphasise the use of language that may escape a prima facie notion of gossip which highlights it in relation to an intentional and methodological approach used by domestic workers to make sense of, and respond to, domestic work (inter alia). This is done *through* the mode of gossip.

With this in mind, let us take a look at a few examples of the discussion of the nature of domestic work in this book. Magona (1990/2020) states in an emphatic pointed sentence: "All domestic workers are exploited." (p. 161) and "understand their exploitation" (p. 139). Magona, in terms reminiscent of Marx, says: "The function of employment, for the African in my country, is to keep the African alive; *that is, available as a worker*" *(*p. 159) [emphasis added]. That is to say, in more 'direct' Marxist terminology, that employment allows for the means of subsistence necessary for the reproduction (or maintenance) of labour-power (Marx, 1887). Hartman (2019) ties this notion of subsistence to domestic work in saying:

> Subsistence - the art of scraping by and getting over entailed an ongoing struggle to live in a context in which deprivation was taken for granted and domestic work or general housework defined the only opportunity available to black girls and women (p. 233).

Meta-Analysis

This (meta)analysis remains primarily concerned with the words of the women employed as domestic workers and what we have framed through the notion of ontological resistance. However, the claims of domestic workers are, in this form, necessarily filtered through the questions and analysis of the papers in which we have access to them. This is why I am hesitant to call this a meta-analysis because the primary concern is not the review of findings on domestic work. As has been stated, these voices become filtered through these analyses and, thus, engagement with these are required. Thus, the meta-analysis will follow much of the same methodology as before. As aforementioned, our use of Lacanian discourse analysis is not focused on finding summaries and themes in the data. Similarly, across these texts, our aim is also not to arrive at themes or summaries but to explore the "signifying elements" (Parker, 2005, p. 168) employed in the texts. In this sense, we are engaging the virtuality through which engagement with domestic work occurs. It remains in a mode of ana-lysis. A meta-analysis was turned to in response to the relative the lack of texts produced by black women who have been employed as domestic workers. Thus, the aim continues to be to find accounts of black women employed as domestic workers as (relatively) unencumbered by alternative questions as possible but now through works that aim to explore the lived experiences of black women employed as domestic workers (See appendix D).

In the engagement with the sampling of the studies in order to find those relevant to my research (See appendix D), there seemed to be aversion to the explicit mention of the participants as black and a vagueness regarding the role of race in the sampling strategy in contrast to the clear description and inclusion criteria of participants as women (See Appendix D for further discussion). This is despite the inclusion of race in both theoretical and empirical conceptualisations of domestic work. I would not say that an exploration of this is beyond the scope of this study, but space is limited and I have decided to exclude it. However, as this study employs a psychoanalytic analysis and explicitly looks to absences and gaps, this is worth raising.

I would like to note that, despite the effort to find studies that explore the lived realities of black women employed as domestic work as unrestricted by other aims as possible—and these studies describe themselves as things such as 'inductive', 'participant-led', 'guided by participants' answers' etc.—the framing of the aims is produced through the inclusion of

notions such as employment and legislation and creating a more positive experience (See Appendix D). It could be argued that there is a reification of the institution of domestic work as the aims are regarding how they experience the institutions and its relation to legislation. The studies are situated within a framework aiming for the *betterment* of domestic work and the protection of domestic workers qua domestic workers. In which ways does this framework constrain engagement with the narratives of domestic workers? (See Appendix D for further discussion).

The analyses raised a number of similar and recurring issues. However, as previously stated, the aim of this chapter is not to summarize the analyses that have occurred, but, rather, we will move through the issues raised and engage them. Let us firstly begin with the analytic method of the papers, which was thematic analyses in most of the reviewed articles. Of course, what this allows for is the generation of themes in the interviews that were engaged with. However, it is noted that the author constructs these themes (though they may conceptualise this in a variety of ways such as more theory-led or more emergent from what appears across the data). As a reader of the paper (and not the interviews), we are provided with a patchwork of the words and opinions of the participants, subject to the aim of finding themes across participants answers. This is not to say that this analysis is not valuable, but we receive an attenuated version of the participants' answers that does not allow us to engage the narrative, structure, and the totality of their (individual) responses to interview questions. We, thus, reengage the themes with a critical bent in considering the framework through which their words are arranged into the themes. However, because of this, the authors of these papers are the ones who engage the totality of the interviews while we may be forced to somewhat extrapolate. That being said, I think our critique will prove generative.

Who is saying what about exploitation?

Tolla (2013), in line with the literature, finds that "[r]esponses of the women indicated that many of their employers are not meeting the minimum standards set by the Department of Labour. The women had to work long hours for very low wages" (p. 13), as well as vague job descriptions and expectations in terms of time and duty. Tolla (2018) says that all women in the study worked for at least 8 hours a day, and, in a 2013 work, Tolla holds that that this is an example of exploitation in the workplace and cites descriptions of domestic workers as "the most exploited workers in the world" (p. 14). However, while the point of the theme is well

taken, exploitation is not defined in the paper, Tolla only states "this proves to be more than just a misunderstanding of their duties; it talks of an exploitation and mistreatment of some sort" (p. 15). Donald and Mahlatji (2014, p. 206) give greater attention to conceptualising exploitation by quoting Roemer (1982):

> Exploitation involves the *systematic* [emphasis added] use of one group's labour and energies to maintain and augment the power and status of another group (Young 1990). It frequently occurs on the basis of race and gender and is often present in menial jobs…. The distribution of outputs is exploitative when the 'the amount of labor embodied in any bundle of goods [the worker] could receive, in a feasible distribution of society's net product, is less than the labor he expended (p. 122 cited in Young, 1990; p. 52)

These descriptions position exploirarion as a structural relation and the quoted discussion in particular situates it as economic. How these conceptualisations informed the theme of exploitation in the findings is not clear. Donald and Mahlatji (2014) found, in contradistinction with the literature and Tolla's (2013) finding, that most of the domestic workers in their study reported that their working conditions did meet the requirements of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA). It is then stated that "Exploitation through the division of labour is evident in the menial tasks and hours that Mogoshadi works, and the expectation that she be on call at all times" (Donald & Mahlatji, 2014, p. 209) and the section discussing the theme ends with the statement, "Although these participants did not feel exploited, they experienced other forms of oppression". They have not examined the distribution of outputs or the "*systematic* [emphasis added] use of one groups labour and energies to maintain and augment the power and status of another group" (p. 52) which constitute their conceptualisation of exploitation. There is no attempt to reconcile thematic analyses of stories (See Donald & Mahlatji, p. 208) with the phenomena under study that have been described as structural and economic. De Villiers and Taylor (2019), in their discussion of wages, particularly the imbalance of power between employees and employers in negotiations and the non-compliance with legislation concerning the minimum wage, stated that "the women in this study *felt exploited* [emphasis added] in this regard" (p. 8).

The vague descriptions of exploitation and the seeming impossibility to question the institution of domestic work in itself raises some questions. Moreover, it is not only that these categories are not explored, definitively conceptualised, or consistently utilised, but that the authors are

the one's applying them to the responses of domestic workers. *There is no quotation from participants that makes use of the category of exploitation.*

Why I also take up this issue is that all of these articles cite *Maids & Madams* (Cock, 1980)—which, as Jansen (2019) puts, "is considered the most influential book about domestic workers in South Africa" (p. 14)—which explicitly deals with this question of exploitation. As discussed in the literature review, Cock (1980) explicitly places an "emphasis on the system of production" (p. 9) and states that "[i]n Marxist terms the concept of economic exploitation is tied to the notion of surplus value…the 'exploitative' character of capitalism is inevitable" (p. 12). Cock goes on to trouble the specific relation of domestic workers to the analytic categories of Marxism but is clear that:

> The paid domestic worker is firstly a wage labourer, and thus subject to the discipline of the wage with the corollary that the worker receives less than what she produces, the surplus being appropriated by her employer. Secondly, she plays a critical part in the reproduction of both labour power and the relations of production. She is thus an important element in the indirect production of surplus value for capital. (p. 14)

This suggest that the ending of economic exploitation (and, thus, a more expansive conceptualisation of exploitation) requires the ending of capitalism. In focusing on domestic work, the ending of exploitation requires the end of the production of surplus labour, and the reproduction of labour-power and relations of production. Interestingly, Ally (2008), in the book titled *From Servant*s to *Workers*, does not deal with the conceptualisation of exploitation but refers to wages as "the most important marker of the *level* [emphasis added] of "exploitation"". Alerting us to the issue by placing "exploitation" in quotation marks and stating that wages only indicate the level of exploitation suggests that exploitation is to be taken as a given. Furthermore, Ally (2008) repeatedly relates the changing formations of domestic work to the "changing demands of capitalism" (p. 33) and speaks to a "more radical overturning of domestic workers as a reproducing class" (p. 188). Ally does also reference a "modernizing solution to the exploitation and oppression faced by domestic workers" (p.6) in the form of considering the terms of employment in domestic work (as opposed to the fact of employment in domestic work) following a discussion on a Marxist feminist approach and the discussion of domestic work as "an institution that was crucial to the production and reinforcement of raced and classed inequalities" (p. 6). However, Ally refers to this as only partly resolving the dilemma. What does it mean that this analysis is largely absent despite these works being

recognised as important? What does it mean for the response of domestic workers to be filtered through this vague category?

Where the widely cited (in these works and beyond) works of Cock (1980) and Ally (2010) tie exploitation to structural relations, economic conditions, and capitalism in particular, these works vaguely apply the notion to working conditions and compensation of workers in a fetishized way— severed from it's the structures and processes which constitute it as an analytic category—and without the category being utilised by the participants themselves. As stated, Cock (1980) is cited in each of these studies and Ally in most of these studies (sometimes other works of theirs), yet the we find little to no engagement with the critique of capitalism's relation to domestic work and the economic and structural conceptualizations of exploitation.

Rights, Law and legislation

The studies looked at explored the question of the level of compliance with legislation by employers. De Villiers and Taylor (2019) state that most of the domestic workers interviewed in their study were not registered for the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and stated that "this made them feel as if they were not permanently employed" (p. 7). Tolla (2013) reported that just one of the thirteen participants she interviewed was registered for the UIF. Tolla found that "[l]ack of UIF registration was concerning for the women who feared that their children would not be financially taken care of if they were injured at work or if they died" (pp. 17-18). One of the participants in Tolla's 2013 study, referred to as Siphiwe, said she would "prefer it if they report that I work few hours instead of the ones I'm actually working" (p. 18) in order to be registered. The Basic Conditions of Employments Act (BCEA) is a legislative act that protects the rights of domestic workers. However, according to De Villiers and Taylor (2019) "it seems apparent that employers may not be adhering to the minimum conditions of employment pertaining to hours of work and overtime pay as stipulated by the BCEA" (p. 7). Magwaza (2008) also informs us that domestic workers are excluded from the Compensation for Occupational Diseases Act (COIDA) which "grants benefits to employees who are injured at work or who contract work-related illnesses" (pp. 86-87). Additionally, Magwaza notes that domestic workers are excluded from other forms of legislative protection afforded to other workers. Given these issues and the private nature of domestic work, there is a call from all of these articles for better legislation and monitoring of compliance with legislation for the protection of the rights of the domestic workers. Magwaza also makes clear the active role of

domestic workers in the securing of these rights and protection by the law and cites references Ally (2008) who states that domestic workers have "have had a long history of collective organisation and unionisation. They were amongst the first members of a new proletariat class to organize" (p. 3 as cited in Magwaza, 2008).

But allow us to critique the notion of legislative protection and rights and in consider what this critique offers for engaging the narratives of domestic workers. Ally (2010) contends:

> In South Africa, rights as a political technology for the modernization of "servitude" into employment contained contradictory potentials. On the one hand, rights did…provide protection that allowed workers to disrupt the sediment forms of power that in the relationships with their employers. But this rights-based approach also arguably represented a conservative (i.e., status quo maintaining), politics that constrained the possibilities of a more radical overturning of paid domestic work as a reproducing class. (p. 188)

Ally also makes clear that demographic makeup of domestic work cannot be thought of as in opposition to the legislature but, rather, it has been produced by the history of legislature and is sustained by it (see also the section on the history of domestic work in the literature review):

> In this history, then, the colonial and then Apartheid states, together with capital employers, structured the domestic labour markets, not only defining its demographic composition, but shaping Apartheid servitude through modern technologies of labour control. Treating domestic workers as a labouring class within capitalism and managing their supply as workers reflected some recognition of domestic workers as workers by the Apartheid state…In the democratic state's efforts to turn "servants" into workers, the Apartheid state's already existing recognition of domestics as workers was obliquely obfuscated. (Ally, 2010, p. 41)

Building on her analysis and in conversation with black women employed as domestic workers, Ally has argued that legislation of domestic work reconstitutes this position and has produced a script that "casts the state as the protagonist of a story in which the transition to democracy became crucial to the narrative of the emancipation of [domestic workers]" (p. 41-42).

> In the numerous sites, practices, and moments of the state's relationship to domestic workers, their availing for state protection on the basis of their "vulnerability" rendered workers the *subjects* of state policy. Paradoxically, then, state-based regulation

> intended to protect workers against the unilateral powers of their employers became a mode of subjection to another practice of power-this time of the state (Ally, 2010, p. 12, emphasis in original).

While it has been noted that the articles analysed all call for increased legislation and compliance to legislation, Magwaza (2008) includes this excerpt from an interview with a domestic worker referred to as Smarties:

> Smarties: In August 2007, I was told there was no money to pay my salary, so I had to go on an unpaid leave until the end of the year. I think this was my employer's way of avoiding the department finding out that I was not registered.
>
> Author: Did you know that this was unlawful? Smarties: Then I did not know. Later I learnt that the family's gardener (who is a man) was not only registered but had been getting a better wage than what I was getting.
>
> Author: What about the fact that the Department of Labour expects you to report employer's non-compliance?
>
> Smarties: All I know is that the law impacted on me differently. As a breadwinner that was tough. There is no way I can run to the department with a complaint. (p. 84)

Here, Magwaza highlights the power imbalance in the relationship which inhibits their capacity to demand their rights. It has also been argued elsewhere that the personal relationship of the employer and the employee makes this difficult. Through Ally's (2010) analysis, we can consider the way the protection of the law has had a negative impact on the protection of domestic workers who, as in this example, bear the brunt of employer's aversion to the law and the way law interpolates domestic workers as vulnerable workers in need of protection.

This is in line with the interviews conducted by Ally (2010), where she found many domestic workers who lived through the democratic shift describing their positions as worse off under the new legislation. Let us do a brief recap of the discussion with Ally (2010) so far with regards to the troubling of the discourse of rights and the protection of the state (without dismissing what they do allow).

The legislation (and the history of legislation) has been instrumental to the racialised and gendered demographic make-up of domestic work; the Apartheid state was already involved in the recognition of domestic workers qua workers and, thus, the modern state's efforts should

not be conceived as a radical break or in opposition to questions of racial subjection. The recognition of domestic workers by legislature subjects them to the power of the state and discursively produces domestic workers as "vulnerable", with the state as the agency able to protect workers. Legislation is viewed as the maintenance of the inequalities of domestic work crowding out a more radical approach.

A brief engagement with Hartman (1997) offers further questions:

> It is not simply that rights are inseparable from entitlements of whiteness or that; rather, the issue at hand is the way in which the stipulation of *abstract equality* [emphasis added] produces white entitlement and black subjection in promulgation of formal equality. (p.116)

Furthermore, Hartman (1997) argues that the "nascent individualism of the freed designates a precarious autonomy since exploitation, domination, and subjection inhabits the vehicle of rights" (p. 117). The "freed" here refers to those freed from slavery, however, we are considering the capacity of rights as a vehicle for the "exploitation, domination and subjection" and the ways in which they can be used in service of "the interests of an expanding capitalist economy and the preservation of a racial order" (Hartman, 1997, p. 117). Here, we must consider the way in which rights atomize individuals and produce them as subjects of "burdened individuality" (Hartman, 1997, p. 115).

Humanism and corollaries

One of the categories through which this abstract equality is produced is through the category of the human. One of Hartman's (1997) points of focus is the way in which the recognition of the human re-instantiated subjection:

> … suppose the recognition of humanity held out the promise not of liberating the flesh or redeeming one's suffering but rather of intensifying it? Or what if this acknowledgement was little more than a pretext for punishment, dissimulation of the violence of chattel slavery and the sanction given to it by law and the state, and an instantiation of racial hierarchy…Here I am interested in the ways that recognition of humanity acted to tether bind and oppress" (p. 5).

Once again, we are not dealing with the same historical conditions that Hartman focuses her study on (although as we see in in *Wayward Lives* this framework is expandable and applicable in differing contexts and we can think of Spillers speaking of grammars of the New world) but the critique of humanism remains useful.

De Villiers (2019) informs the reader that:

> A disregard for moral norms is seen to contribute to many of the social and ecological problems experienced in the world today…This is reflected in a growing interest in business theory and management practices that focus on shifting from capitalistic to humanistic business practices (Dierksmeier, 2016). This shift includes a focus on humanistic management, which, in its broadest sense, entails a concern for people and human aspects in managing organisations. A humanistic management approach is oriented not only to obtaining results through people, but also towards showing care for the flourishing and well-being of people (Melé, 2016). (p. 4)

An engagement with this theory raised by De Villiers would take us further away from the scope of this paper. We can contend with the atomizing of individuals that dissimulates the structural nature of the relationship. For example, the call for more human practices in the employment of domestic workers that fails to question the fact that poor, Black women are the large majority of this profession. This illustrates the way in which liberal humanism (and the discourse of rights with which it is connected) "enable[s] and efface[s] elemental forms of domination primarily because of the atomistic portrayal of social relations, the inability to address collective interests and needs, and the sanctioning of subordination and the free reign of prejudice" (Hartman, 1997, p. 122). The claim is not that the register of the human cannot and does (at certain scale of abstraction) *contend* with collective interests and is not opposed to prejudice and subordination, but that its constitution by notions such as the abstract equality of individuals and the atomised (and/or fetishized) social relations (re)produce inequality.

Marais and Van Wyk (2014) make continued reference to the notion of human flourishing, for example stating that:

> The overarching aim of this article is to present the voiced accounts of domestic workers' experiences of flourishing within their employment relationship. *The negative accounts of participants' lived realities constituted the bulk of the data generated* during the interactions with them. *By deliberately extrapolating the positive aspects of*

> *their employment engagement, the principles of the broaden-and-build theory* (Fredrickson, 2001) could be applied in order to explore the notion of flourishing as a construct. (p. 95, emphases added).

And continue to argue that:

> Positive emotions have the capacity to *divert the focus away from negative emotions* [emphasis added] (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003) thereby enabling a mindset that is appreciative in nature and allows for the attainment of even more positive outcomes (p. 102).

Here they are referring to a notion of Human flourishing, explicitly predicated upon the disavowal (in the psychoanalytic sense) of negative accounts and emotions and that ignores and, thus, sustains material inequality. Hartman (1997) explores the way that disavowal of pain and the "stipulation of excess enjoyment" (p.36) sustains subjection. This is part of Hartman's (1997) conceptualisation of a way in which the "recognition of humanity itself becomes an exercise of violence" (p. 35). In consonance with our contention with the notion of (negated) ontological resistance, Hartman (1997) speaks to the "simulation of consent", partly through this disavowal of pain and recognition of joy, pleasure and humanity: "in the context of extreme domination was an orchestration intent upon making the captive body speak the master's truth as well as disproving the suffering of the enslaved" (p. 38). I will clarify again, that this reading does not need us to consider the women employed as domestic workers as slaves. We can also consider the speaking of the master's truth as the negation of ontological resistance; in this sense the 'recognition of humanity' (and the concomitant capacities for joy, agency etc.), logically prior to the enunciation of content, constitute the 'speaking of the master's truth'. The aim of the work by Marais and Van Wyk (2014) contends with the repeated material demands of domestic workers within these texts. Marais and Van Wyk, in their article three, explored domestic workers describing themselves as trapped, being forced into domestic work by their material needs, the inability to fulfil their own needs and the needs of those dependant on them and their income, and wanting their children to be able to escape the profession. However, in article 4, guided by the aim to extrapolate the positive statement that "the meaningfulness of work is therefore often linked to the nature of past, present and perceived future engagement between the various parties of the employment relationship… Both the employer and employee may experience an overall sense of well-being as a result of their human engagement" (Marais and Van Wyk, 2014, p. 95). The Marias and Van Wyk (2014) paper is used for illustration but,

generally speaking, in the papers dealt with, a gap appears between the material demands of workers and the goal of humanising domestic work. This gap points to moments at which the negation of ontological resistance occurs. To be clear, it is not that these explorations by Marais and Van Wyk offer nothing or are reducible to what has been outlined above.

Exploring Gaps

The previous sections touched on a gap between the framework through the experiences of domestic workers and the issues raised by the domestic workers. Through the notions of gossip and the work of Magona (1991), we have contended with the notion that certain positions and subject positions become engossiped and that some positions, thoughts, and comments remain, strategically in unofficial, unverifiable, and unrecognised contexts. Here, we can further explore the way gaps and silences might be indicated in the text. Furthermore, we should consider not only this silence as an additional piece of information but must be willing to reflect these issues back into the (analysis of the) content that appears in the interviews.

We have taken a look at the sampling which all relied on voluntary participation (see Appendix D). Donald and Mahlatji (2014) inform us:

> several domestic workers who were approached were considered unsuitable because they were employed by agencies that subcontracted their services to disabled people…two potential interviewees cancelled their appointments because their employers arrived home early and they were unable to leave their place of work. Lastly, a few domestic workers chose not to participate because they were concerned that the researcher may be from the Department of Labour and that despite assurances, the interview could have a negative impact on them. (p. 209)

Further explanation on the domestic workers that excluded from the study due to the fact that they are employed by "agencies that subcontracted their services to disabled people" would be useful. The stated goal of their study is:

> to gain insight into: The work experiences of domestic workers in the context of new socio-economic-political legislation promulgated to protect their social rights in the new South Africa How domestic workers experience power relations and embedded

> tensions with their employers in the context of the new legislation. (Donald & Mahlatji, 2014)

Thus, we can consider how this is conceptualised and who is excluded from these notions of domestic work, that is, whose experiences are deemed useful for these aims. Why is it that those subcontracted by agencies to work for disabled people were deemed the wrong type of experience for the stated aim? Without further explanation by the authors for this exclusion, we must ask how the assumptions that guided this decision become reflected back into the interviews and analysis of the article. Consider also Marais (2014, pp. 76-77), whose inclusion criteria included "first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation" over and above the inclusion criteria of "their membership in the identified sector" (p. 76). What is highlighted here is not only that individuals positioned in relation to domestic work in certain (largely unexplained) ways were excluded from this study, but the way that the framework that guided these decisions is reflected back into the interviews and analysis (See Parker, 2005).

The fact that domestic workers cancelled their appointments because their employers arrived and because they were sceptical of the assurances of protection against negative impacts (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006) is also, in itself, something worth taking note of, as well as the way these issues and concerns may have impacted those who did take part in the study. That is, we don't know who is willing to come forth for these interviews and what they are willing to say. Of course, this limitation is not specific to this topic, but these reasons, their relation to findings, as well as our engagement with the notion of gossip gives us the opportunity to place further weight on this question. We can further engage De Villiers and Taylor's (2019) paper and, to return back to our tool of Lacanian discourse analysis, Parker (2005) argues that focuses on difference which "accords with one of the founding principles of discourse analysis in psychology, in which the analyst looks to the 'variability' in accounts rather than divining a deeper unitary principle that would bring diverse statements together" (p. 168). De Villiers and Taylor (2019) interviewed (non-dependant samples of) domestic workers and employers and organise the themes separately (domestic worker's themes and employer's themes) before bringing their themes together in a section on implications and recommendations. We will focus on the gaps between the themes of the interviews and the employers. Most of the domestic workers said they were not registered with UIF, while all but one of the employers interviewed had registered their employees (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019). In the employee's themes, we find a theme named "Part of the family", where "[t]he notion of the domestic worker being regarded as part of the family emerged as a theme for all of the employer

participants" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 9). De Villiers and Taylor (2019) state that these "findings suggest employment relationships characterised by mutual caring, and the willingness of employers to contribute more than required by the relevant labour legislation" (p. 9). De Villiers and Taylor (2019) report in their domestic workers themes that "all of the participants reported a positive working relationship with their employers and said that they felt free to discuss work-related problems in an open and honest manner" (p. 8). However, there is notably no mention of being 'part of the family' here and the author's note (what they seem to characterise as exceptional) responds where the employees state that they feel the employers dictate the terms of conversation and there are no quotes that substantiate the positive relation (De Villiers &Taylor, 2019). It is also apparent that the employers theme touches on the way their relationship goes beyond an employer-employee engagement, while the employee section refers to honest communication regarding "work related problems" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 8). Jansen (2019) following an exploration of the accounts of domestic workers, posits:

> What is likely to linger on the minds of those who stop to listen is how sharply these personal histories contrast with the fond nostalgia of those who recall nannies and other domestic workers as having been 'like part of the family'. As such, these voices shatter many comfortable - and comforting- illusions.[15] (p. 138)

We might also look at the theme titled "wages", where the example of a participant who is said to have reported a "largely positive work" experience is quoted only saying "I am happy with everything *except money* [emphasis added]" (p. 7). De Villiers and Taylor (2019) also state that:

> Responses in relation to income included phrases such as 'I don't complain', 'I'm not complaining … there is nothing much to do here' and 'it's not legal … but I am keeping quiet because I need the job … if I complain, after that he can say ok you can go'. (p. 7)

I would like to reflect these statements back into the discussion of the positive employer-employee relationship as well as contend with the fact that that the authors (and potentially the participants as well) situated these statements separate to the discussion of the relationship[16].

[15] This gap also appeared in *Vukani Makhosikazi* (Barret et al., 1985) see Appendix C

[16] It may be useful here to think with Magubane's exploration of the construction and separation of the categories of the economic the social and the political and the function that this separation achieves in mystifying the way in which they are constructed. It is not only that these categories are do not deal with the

That is, the discussion of the participants' choice to not complain and the strategic situating of this choice in terms of what such complaints are capable of doing and the risk associated with complaining adds complexity to the characterisation of a positive relationship and the potential strategic situating of this characterisation by domestic workers. This explicit stating of choosing not to complain and the possibility of punishment for doing so is also a point of difference from the 'part of the family' theme raised by employers. This can also be placed in contradistinction with another theme raised by employers, identified as "Respect" (De Villiers, 2019, p. 9). It is reported that an employer spoke about the challenge for the women employed by her to raise work-related problems and De Villiers and Taylor (2019) argue that "this challenge highlights the importance of establishing a culture of dignity and respect, through open and trust-based communication" (p. 9). De Villiers (2019) end their exploration of the theme in the analysis by stating that "[i]f a culture of respect and dignity is practised, children in homes with domestic workers grow up lessons regarding class, gender and equality, and treating others with respect" (pp. 9-10). As stated above, here we are placing our focus on the gap not as something to be reduced but which may be understood as revealing an irreducible difference (Parker, 2005). What can be learned from the theme of "Respect" appearing for employers but not domestic workers?

What we see in the "Implications recommendations" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 10) allows us to think further through this gap. There are four sections in this component of the paper. Here are the openings of 3 of the 4: "*Although* domestic workers generally reported a positive working relationship…"; "Domestic workers did not openly share concerns about retirement planning; *however*…"; "*Although* domestic workers did not explicitly raise the issue of respect […]" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 10-11, emphases added)[17]. In these statements the gap

correct content or the interrelation of their content but also the very function of the creating and delineating them as categories. Magubane utilises a number of useful quotes to illustrate the point, including:

> The nineteenth century invented the talk of a 'social problem', an 'economic problem' and the like, problems to which finally the Great Geometer in London or Washington is to solve with a compass or a straightedge…Someone who has persuaded you to speak of inequality of income as a problem has accomplished the most difficult task" (McClaskey, 1990, p. 155 as cited in Magubane, , pp. 2-3)

(And in this quote, we can consider the referral to London and Washington alongside Ally's discussion of the turn to the state as the solution to the problems of domestic work.)

> The emergence of the social domain involved the specification of a set of problems that was related but not coincident with the political and economic issues (Poovey, 1998, p. 8 as cited in Magubane, , p. 3).

And this construction of separate categories can also be thought together with Hartman's (1997) discussion of the (categories of) abstract equality that allows for the continuation of inequality.

[17] Recall the following passage from the literature review:

between the answers is alluded to by the authors, however, the gap is resolved by referring to the answers of employees with a qualifier and the gap itself is not attended to (disavowal). This is further problematised by domestic workers explicitly saying that they did not feel they could complain or that complaining could help. Does this not raise the question of what *is* said and why? The studies stated purpose was "to explore the factors that contribute to a positive work experience for domestic workers in South Africa" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019), and the implications and recommendations include four sections, including "compliance with legislation". The three other sections share titles with the themes from the employers' interviews and begin by noting the gap between the answers of employees and domestic workers. We can also note that the one section that did not start by challenging the responses of domestic workers, "compliance with legislation", appeared in the domestic workers section as the themes "job security" and "wages" accompanied by the statements that they felt uncomfortable complaining. I would contend that, based on the discussion in this study (and, again, I recognise that I do not have access to the interviews themselves and am extrapolating from the condensed analysis which appears in the paper), there is a gap between the domestic workers discussion of wages and registration with the UIF, which centres around the question of procuring material resources, as well as the "implications" section that views this as collapsible to the notion of compliance with legislation. That is to say, domestic workers' responses may be understood as concerned with procuring and securing access to material resources and secondary to that is a recognition of UIF and BCEA as an avenue (that the theoretical framework of the interview allows) through which these can be secured. What should be highlighted is that this gap does not only appear between the employers and employees but between the framework and the domestic workers. The analysis does not present themes in the interviews of domestic workers that align with the authors motivation to contribute to "strategies to enhance the positive nature of the domestic work experience" (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 1). While I critique this study in particular, my aim here is to illustrate the more general point of the ways in which the responses of black women employed as domestic workers are mediated by a framework anchored in humanism, legislation, and a

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It is Esther too who prefers to call her employer 'Madam', *despite their friendship* and *despite* Alta's request that she call her by her first name. This is reflective of the apartheid dialogue of difference, the so-called 'separate but equal' philosophy of the National Party (King, 2007). *Despite* how much Alta and Esther share, Esther still considers race as a defining characteristic. She considers herself and Alta to be friends *but* still says, "It is like she isn't even a white lady." (Bosch & McLeod, 2015, p.147, emphases added)

reified notion of the institution of domestic work, despite these being questioned in relation to domestic work.

We can also note the gap between Ally (2010) and the studies explored here. Ally found domestic workers questioning the legal framework and arguing that legislation had made things worse and employing strategies that subvert their inclusion as rights-bearing subjects in order to utilise other strategies. Ally describes the work as beginning from a critical position with regards to rights and this enabled further discussions. This is not to say that, in particular, Ally has used the right framework to extract the Truth about domestic workers' opinions on rights, but rather to indicate that by questioning the discourse of rights, Ally received quite different narratives that raise questions for the studies above and highlight that these issues are not contended with. These contentions themselves become invisible (or subliminal).

We looked at the goals and aims of these studies (See appendix D) and the content, which brings into focus a framework that is concerned with the legal protection of domestic workers (as workers) and the humanism of domestic work. As previously stated, we can consider the framing that could be understood to reify domestic work and call for certain types of responses (for example, they do not invite the question of the institution of domestic work itself) in troubling the discourse of rights and humanism, and we can further consider these constraints as well as the functioning of these studies.

Inherent problem.

Parker (2005) highlights the notion of *points de capition* in a text as relevant to the discourse analysis. "These 'master signifiers' function as anchors of representation in a text through such rhetorical tropes as the insistence that 'this is the way things are', that it is not subject to challenge or dissent" (Parker, 2005, p. 170). We have noted the ways that work (and the institution of domestic work and exploitation), law, and humanism appear in and frame these texts and we can highlight two points to be made here. Do these anchoring points not mark the points at which their ontological resistance is attenuated? Are these the points at which they become engossiped—the points at which they do not have the 'relevant knowledge of the phenomena under study'? The master signifiers of the (big) 'Other' are those components that give the "necessary illusion of fixed meaning" (Evans, 1996, p. 151) and, thus, Parker (2005) describes them as "not subject to challenge or dissent" (p. 170), that is, not subject to resistance. Thus, ontological resistance requires the traversal of these *points de capiton*. Firstly, while these framings appear as anchoring points from which the narratives of domestic workers

engaged, I have challenged them primarily through the works of Cock (1980) and Ally (2010), whose studies are about domestic work, and Hartman (1997) who applies this framework to domestic worker, inter alia, in *Wayward Lives* (Hartman, 2019). This remains exemplary and far from exhaustive. These texts have also made efforts to engaged the experiences of domestic workers but have come to findings that transverse the anchoring points of the analyses included in this meta-analysis. Secondly, we can consider Hartman's (1997) attempt to 'brush history against the grain' and the notion of gossip and ask how domestic workers navigate these interviews with an awareness of these as anchoring points. As Hartman (1997) states:

> The effort to 'brush history against the grain' requires excavation at the margins of monumental history in order that the ruins of the disremembered past be retrieved, turning to forms of knowledge and practice not generally considered legitimate objects of historical inquiry or appropriate to adequate sources of history making and attending to the cultivated silence, exclusions relations of violence and domination that engender the official accounts (p. 11)

We can, thus, attempt to read, through these studies, the responses of black women employed as domestic workers 'against the grain'.

Marais and Van Wyk (2014) find that the "lack of choice was cited as [the participants'] *main reason* [emphasis added] for becoming a domestic worker" (p. 79). Lack of job opportunities and the need to provide for themselves and/or their family is cited as the reason for entering the profession. Tolla (2013) finds that "[t]he major reason why most women enter domestic work is so that they can provide for their children and also secure their future by sending them to school" (p. 27) and that domestic workers "described entering domestic work as a way of coping with the poverty that they were faced with at home" (p. 28). Donald and Mahlatji (2014) note that most of the women are sole breadwinners and argue that "the mere fact that the participants have found jobs in a context of high unemployment, indicates agency in dealing with their impoverished circumstances" (p. 212). Marais and Van Wyk (2014) speak to domestic workers feeling pride in their work—the excerpts are not about domestic work per se but rather about being able to provide:

> Connie said, "…that is why I go to be a Domestic Worker to work for my child …" Similarly, Sammy said, "… if you work as a domestic worker, your child can eat, they have clothes …" Participants provided accounts of how the income they received—

> albeit limited—enabled them to care and help others, including the church and burial societies they belonged to (p. 80).

There are also range of responses that take issues with components of their work that can be seen as framed as inherent to the job. For example:

> 'Thus Mahlatsi says "Not going out of the yard *is part of the job*' [emphasis added] (Donald & Mahlatji, 2014)

> Elise stated, "… If you ask them, 'Where do you work? I don't wash somebody's panties, you know?' It's like that, so which means they are better than you...Amina, when talking about the future of her children said, "…the young youth, they say, 'I can't wash panties for me and for another lady'. That's why, yes. Because everybody you've got a friend that's not working, you're working. After this she come to you, she ask you a money, but if you tell her, 'Go to find you a job,' she say, 'I never work for a domestic worker, no. I can't.'" Expressing her feelings about these comments, Elise said that "… it breaks my heart … I'm just telling them it's a job. There's nothing you can do, but it's a job[18] …" (Marais and Van Wyk, 2014, p. 79)

Tolla (2013) offers, as an example of fact that domestic workers' duties are vague, this excerpt from an interview with Fezile:

> in the morning I had to make their beds…start picking up clothes from the kitchen to the rest of the house…when my employer is sick, she does not mind vomiting on the floor and I have to clean that up…when she goes to the bathroom and uses the toilet, she does not flush, I have to flush… (p. 14)

Without taking away from the issue that Tolla has raised, it seems to me that this excerpt is not about, or at least not only about, the vagueness of the job contract (of course, we are here without the context of the excerpt). It seems that this quote is speaking to the fact that the job is to do tasks for the employer that the employer should be doing for themselves, or that they should not be doing for an employer. This notion may, on one level, equate to a vague description of required tasks, however, even if these tasks were specifically outlined in a

[18] The recurrence of washing underwear while not explored here is worth noting. Hook (2012, p. 44) looks at the continued appearance of animals in narratives of white South Africans in the Apartheid Archive Project and asks (before his continued analysis) "what is their narrative function; at what precise point do they appear within the narrative?". These quotes appear as excerpts but the repetition of the signifier of underwear may be worth analysing further in a similar mode.

contract, I don't think that would negate the issue being raised. On one hand, it seems that in many cases the vague outlining of the task is the nature of the job and, on the other hand, that there is something to the fact that although the vagueness of tasks is bemoaned by researchers, there is no delineating of the "real tasks", or the jobs that constitute domestic work separated from those which should be abandoned as a violent excess. We might consider this alongside Hartman's (2019, p. 77) offering in the "Manual for general housework":

> Manual: as opposed to automatic, as opposed to starting or functioning by itself and for itself, as opposed to deliberation and judgment, as in the need for direction, as in the imposition of a mistress or master.

At another level, these two hands might be on the same hand. That is to say that the nature of the job as vague and the relatively loose deployment of labour power for domestic tasks cannot be separated from the fact that there is no hard line separating the elements of the job that should be eliminated to engender "human flourishing", "dignity" in the workplace and "respect" and those that constitute the 'job itself'. A participant referred to as Solani says:

> Show me one person who is proud of being a domestic worker or a child that dreams and desires to be in this kind of a job some day. *Does that not tell you something about this so-called 'job'?* [emphasis added] Besides, my situation is worst as my very own people exploit me. My employer does not respect nor has ever referred to the law you say protects workers like me, and the pay to which I am entitled (Magwaza, 2008, p. 84).

Tolla (2013) found that a "coping strategy" (p. 29) for domestic workers was the hope of a changed situation particularly through the education. Tolla (2014) found that their participants viewed their education as limiting their possibilities. A participant referred to as Sylvia stated: "all my life I have been a domestic worker, I will never leave this job… I am not educated" (p. 28). Similarly, Marais and Van Wyk (2014) their participants "regard education as a way out, and thus access to education and the completion of school for the next generation is an ongoing commitment and acts as driving force in their daily work tasks" (p. 81). Marais and Van Wyk also reference a general feeling of hopelessness and feeling trapped. Donald and Mahlatji (2006) include a section in their findings titled "Agency" and inform the reader that "[t]wo key strategies regarding the participants' agency emerged. The first is managing the current situation to prevent further deterioration and the second is attempting to find alternative employment" (p. 11).

What I would like to contend is that we should take as fundamental the fact that black women employed as domestic workers feel trapped by domestic work and coerced into it by their need to provide for themselves and/or their family (or perhaps be more conservative and just ask: why is this not taken as fundamental?). There is no indication of the desire to be a domestic worker in and of itself[19]. There is a desire to improve the conditions of domestic work (particularly, there is an emphasis on job security and wages), there is a desire to find better jobs, and a desire for a future in which their children do not have to take up domestic work. People engage in domestic work because they need to procure material resources. Given these issues raised by domestic workers—about the nature of the work, its relation to capitalism, the position of specific subject positions in this work and this relation to ideological reproduction, the abstract equality of humanism as reproducing inequality—can we understand the institution of domestic work as inherently violent? As stated, I take a risk in attempting to read against the grain and risk what can be understood as wild analysis, but I do believe I have grounded my work in the narratives and responses of black women employed as domestic workers and relevant theory. The goal here was not to explicate these issues as far as possible but to show that the interviews with black women employed as domestic workers, supposedly participant-led, find themselves constrained by certain anchoring points. There was much in the topics raised and the theory that could have been explored further. What was also raised was the fact that traversals of these anchoring points were included in the literature on domestic work and, in particular, the works of Cock (1980) and Ally (2010) were widely cited. Snorton (2017) speaks of, in "Marxist and psychoanalytic terms", a "kind of hermeneutic sleight of hand, in which a narrative, formally and as a vehicle of ideology accrues its meaning by constructing other forms of knowledge as unthought" (p. 180). Our aim here is not to make accusations against the authors and interviewers about their intentions and commitment but, as indicated to by the relation it has to a Marxist and psychoanalytic framework, to figure these limitations structurally, i.e., the 'sleight of hand' is not reducible to that of the individual but rather is structurally generated. In particular, the relation of the institution of domestic work itself to capitalism and racialised and gendered subjugation, the limits of the discourse of rights,

[19] Furthermore, suppose that following the literature promoting the positive aspects of the work allowed for interventions that somehow engendered this positivity as the predominant response. Would this not be, in Hartman's terms, the success of using abstract equality and humanism to (re)produce other forms of inequality. If this role characterised by exploitation, and the 'bodies as images' of who does the 'dirty work', remains dominated by black women who speak to the positive nature of their work will this literature have succeeded? (which, to be clear, is also not to say that if this work is taken up by a different demographic we will have 'succeeded' either).

critiques of modes of abstract equality, inter alia, have been thought to be in direct relation to domestic work and the narratives of domestic workers. Taken together with our use of gossip as a literary genre and Magona, our engagement of the gaps in the research, the aims and frameworks utilised, and the reflection of the issues raised back into the other content, it is argued that the hermeneutic field is constricted in quite particular ways. In an attempt to think with these, we can read in the responses of domestic workers' fundamental problems with the institution of domestic work itself and, through the institution of domestic work, question "the accepted pattern of inequalities on which the entire social order is based" (Cock, 1980, p. 5).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Before concluding, it may be worth repeating Parker's (2005) points on Lacanian discourse analysis: The analysis does not aim to find the 'real' meaning of texts or 'deeper' meanings of the text or discourses that produce the texts. Belsey (1985) provides useful conceptualisation in considering this as a work to "release the possible positions of [the texts'] intelligibility" (p. 58). Thus, our conclusion remains in tension with the irreducibility of the analysis or the texts themselves. Moreover, we have to contend with the place of absences, gaps, and *ab-sense*. We might here redeploy the words of Hartman (1997) adjusted for our purpose: "Above all, I do not contend that the [analysis establishes] *the* meaning, application or interpretation [of these texts], and for the most part I try to resist the certitude of historicist conceit" [emphasis in original] (p. 171). In this analysis, "I hope to illuminate the limits" of the general frameworks through which we engage engagement with domestic work and attend to the "subterranean affiliations" between the narratives, quotes, and statements of black women employed as domestic workers (Hartman, 1997, p. 171). And All of this in accordance with the conceptual framework and methodology discussed.

The aim of this research was to engage the narratives of black women employed as domestic workers on their own accounts—that is, narratives that were not responses to projects initiated by other entities and, thus, relatively unencumbered by other research aims and interests. These are almost non-existent, or at least difficult to find by the methods employed in this study. This is corroborated by Jansen's (2019) investigation of the history and representation of domestic workers which searched for texts in English and Afrikaans in which domestic workers were represented. As is seen in Jansen's (2019) exploration of narratives based on domestic workers, these works were based on experiences up until the 1980s and only the works of Magona were

authored by someone who had experience doing domestic work. Due to this, the analysis of those parts of Magona's books, *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* and *To My Children's Children* that deal with domestic work were included. It was noted that the books were based on experiences up to the nineteen eighties which seemed to (prima facie) coincide with what Ally (2010) identified as the point of instantiation of what can be considered a modern era of domestic work. Moreover, this did not include experiences after the formal end of Apartheid, which offers another category of a modern era of domestic work. In lieu of these texts, a meta-analysis of projects that referred to themselves as 'guided by participants' was included. We should not separate this result of the search from the analysis. It is necessary to consider what conditions (re)produce this state of affairs and that these conditions do not remain excluded but are, in some way, conjoined with conditions of the samples that are found. As this paper is concerned with the analysis of narratives, we can retroactively return to this question with the findings of our analysis.

Magona's *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night* (1990) was a fictional work in which part one (of two) was a narrative of domestic work. The first chapter concerned a woman's decision to leave her children to look for work and repeatedly emphasised the role of violence in her decision, particularly the need to provide for her children. The structure of the book then changed in chapter two and again in chapter three. We engaged the structure of the narrative in, and following the third chapter, using the gossip as a literary genre. With this framework we considered the sharing of information, the building of intimacy, and the enjoyment (in 'gossip') of the characters and domestic workers. This framework allowed us to engage the dialectic of the subversive choices and capacities of domestic workers as well as the way domestic workers are 'engossiped' available in the book. Moreover, we engaged the dialectic of this subversion with the maintaining capacities of *jouissance*. Magona's autobiographical *To My Children's Children* (1990) explored Magona's reasons for entering domestic work as well as her experience of domestic work. Magona (1990) was clear that domestic work was one of her last options that she undertook in desperation to provide for her child (and, later, her children). She explored her experiences with four families and discussed the violence experienced as a domestic worker on account of her specific employers, but also of domestic work itself.

Our meta-analysis engaged four studies and placed them in particular discussion with the issues raised By Cock's *Maids & Madams* (1980), Ally's *From Servants to Workers* (2010), and Hartman's (1997; 2019) analyses. In the appearance of exploitation in the papers, it was argued

that, while the widely cited (in these works and beyond) works of Cock (1980) and Ally (2010) tie exploitation to structural relations, economic conditions (and capitalism in particular), these works vaguely apply the notion to working conditions and compensation of workers in a fetishized way—severed from the structures and processes which constitute it as an analytic category—and without the category being utilised by the participants themselves. While Cock is cited in all these studies and Ally in most of these studies (sometimes other works of theirs), we find little to no engagement with the critique of capitalism's relation to domestic work and the economic and structural conceptualizations of exploitation. It was also argued that the studies generally spoke to the issues of rights and compliance with legislation despite the critiques of Ally (2010) and Hartman (1997) and that domestic workers were filtered through this framework. In Magona's 1991 work, rights seemed to appear precisely as a framework given to domestic workers as something they *should* fight for, but did not coincide with their framework of engagement. We also explored, through Hartman (1997), the ways in which calls for the recognition of humanity may dissimulate, produce, and maintain violence. This found consonance with our exploration of Magona (1991), where domestic workers 'paid' for the humanity of their employers. We explored the idea that these framings appear as anchoring points from which the narratives of domestic workers engaged and that that traversal engaged remained exemplary and far from exhaustive. We noted that works of Cock (1980), Ally (2010) and Hartman (1997; 2019) also made efforts to engage the experiences of domestic workers, but came to findings that traverse the anchoring points of the analyses included in this meta-analysis. With this in mind, we considered Hartman's (1997) attempt to 'brush history against the grain' and our conceptualisation of gossip to ask how domestic workers navigate these interviews with an awareness of these as anchoring points. With these issues in mind, the quotes and themes of domestic workers were re-engaged.

As was discussed, Fanon's discussion of the negation of ontological resistance includes the notion that the meaning of Other is "already there waiting" (Fanon, 2008, p. 113). It was contended that ontological resistance requires the traversal of these *points de capiton*. In trying to read the words of domestic workers in these texts beyond these anchoring points, it was contended that we should take as fundamental that domestic workers feel trapped by domestic work and coerced into it by their need to provide for their family. There is no indication of the desire to be a domestic worker in and of itself. There is a desire to improve the conditions of domestic work (particularly, there is an emphasis on job security and wages), there is a desire to find better jobs and a desire for a future in which their children do not have to take up

domestic work. What is necessary to highlight is that these engagements with the framework were exemplary rather than exhaustive and, crucially, these critiques were based on works that were widely cited and widely cited by authors *on domestic work* in the cases of Ally (2010) and Cock (1980) and explicitly *applied to issues of domestic work* in the case of Hartman (1997; 2019).

The use of the 'gossip' (or gossip-like) approach of Magona (1991), with its dialectical constitution, points towards a subliminal engagement with domestic work by domestic workers. This found parallels (particularly as a strategic choice) with points within the meta-analysis where it was explicitly noted that black women employed as domestic workers chose not to engage in the studies on account of the potential consequences of doing so and within the studies explicit references to thinking through the consequences of their statements in conjunction with our analysis of gaps and absences. It was posited that, by reflecting this into the content of what was said, we can consider the way responses were strategically situated with regard to the framework of the studies—in conversation analysis terms, we can consider the answers as produced for and in the encounter. For example, consider the gap between the answers here and those in Ally's (2010) study (See chapter 5, "exploring gaps"). This lack of recognition of ontological resistance, attention to consequences and strategy, as well as the existence of modes of analysis through modes such as gossip (subliminal with regard to the 'texts' by Black women employed as domestic workers that this studied hoped to find) might give a loose answer to the question of the 'lack' of production of these texts by the methods employed. However, as this is not the question of this study, we will leave this as a loose description[20].

Considering the history of domestic work, its demographic constitution and the analyses above (obviously drawing heavily on other analyses), is it not worth questioning the very existence of domestic work? Doing so, as Cock (1980) stated "involves questioning the accepted pattern of inequalities on which the entire social order is based" (p. 5) as well the virtuality, which it is subtended by.

[20] And perhaps we can contend with the way this study is positioning these methods as 'subliminal'. That is, despite speaking of subliminal in relation to the methods of this study and particular frameworks, are we not missing the fact that these are not always subliminal to those who employ them? A full exploration will not be attempted here however I think it is worth raising that we are dealing with the way that these methods are deliberately 'subliminal' to 'official' methods and the reasons for this.

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Appendix A- A note on gender

We do not have the capacity here for an extended exploration and conceptualisation of gender. The following quote will guide our brief point of order:

> Insofar as gender…has never only been a mere positivistic reference to genitalia but has been a system of value by which to organize desire, sexuality, and kinship (on the European psychoanalytic level) and integral to the logic of Capital to enforce the reproduction of economic systems of wealth and the material divisions of labor (on the Marxist level) it is necessary to comprehend how gender has been mobilized vis-à-vis Black life within colonialism and chattel slavery.…*gender becomes less about individual human creatures and more about the fundamental arrangement of the racialized reproduction of Western histories (plural) that often justify our present form of "humanity"* [emphasis added] (Paris, 2018, p. 209)

It has been noted that the categories given by the statistic of StatsSA may be limiting and reductive (see footnote 3) and that in the sampling (see Appendix D), it is unclear how participants were identified as woman and whether they identified themselves as woman. Despite these questions, what is apparent is the (mis)recognition of black women in this position. That is, black women are (mis)recognised as the "image" of domestic work in its fundamental arrangement and economic, racialised reproduction. How this relates to the relations to gender of individuals employed as domestic workers remains unexplored in this analysis.

Appendix B- Chapter of *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night*

This appendix deals with a longer version of the analysis on chapter two, which was almost entirely cut from chapter 5.

Chapter 2: "Atini"

The chapter, *Atini*, begins with: "I am Atini, though Mrs Reed calls me Tiny. I have been working for Mrs Reed for eighteen months now" (Magona, 1991, p. 12).In the first chapter Magona chose to omit her name and we mentioned the notion that this allowed her to stand in for others and contrasted this with the fact that a name would have postponed the question "who is she?". There is shift in style, in this chapter, from third to first person narration.

Atini later says

> Oh the Tiny comes from my name, Atini. I feel funny being called Tiny; I am a large woman…But Mrs Reed said: 'Oh I can't say your names, they're difficult. All those clicks and things. I'll call you tiny.'

This chapter includes discussion on her employer, how she came to be employed by her, her relation with other domestic workers and another domestic worker by the name of Imelda. We will follow the structure of the chapter as this is taken as important.

Atini state that her first eighteen months have been a "mixed bag" of experiences (Magona, 1991, p. 12). It is stated that most domestic workers "wouldn't even call her a cousin to an angel" (Magona, 1991, p. 12). At this point, filtered through the voice of Atini, her negative appraisal comes through negated forms. She is not described as 'hellish', 'devilish' etc. but as not even "the cousin to an angel" or "a few have voiced sentiments that she is nearer the other side of the scale, in their reckoning "(Magona, 1991, p. 12). We can also note the extra qualification (over and on above their "sentiments") in "in their reckoning". That is, Atini, while informing us of these negative sentiments also distances herself from them (but why are they brought up: not to dismiss them but precisely to expose them although in their negated form). While Atini seems to distance herself from the claims here, the content of her defence of Mrs Reeds is very restricted:

> I don't mind Mrs Reed. She is not a bad medem at all. But then I don't have that much experience of medems and my situation was so desperate that any medem would have looked like a guardian angel, I suppose (Magona, 191, p. 12)

Again, her description comes in a negated form “don’t mind…”, “not a bad medem…”, her positive (i.e. not in a negated form) statements are interesting. In one sentence she undermines her position on her employer with her lack of experience. And in the same sentence she points out that her *desperate position* and the *position* of Mrs Reed (irrespective of content as illustrated by “any medem”) positioned her as the guardian angel against which she introduces the distance from angel. “But me my friend I was destitute and the woman gave me a job” (Magona, 1991, p.12). One might argue through this use of signification that while Atini distances herself from the negative characterisation of her employer she makes sure we are aware of it. And Atini’s distance from this characterisation is best explained through her position and desperation for a job.

The chapter then goes on to allude to the story of Atini getting her job form her predecessor, Imelda. Atini reveals that she originally felt some some animosity from other domestic workers as they as they “didn’t like the way [Atini] got the job” (Magona, 1991, p. 12). Atini states that she feels the other Domestic workers have forgiven her as they come to visit her at night. Atini is confused by the fact that she never has more than two domestic workers visit at a time and states that:

> Really, these women of the town are not the same as the women in the village. I suppose I’ll learn to be like them one day after I’ve been here long enough to forget the ways of the village (p. 13)

Atini’s questioning of whether she did anything wrong in getting her job and the above statement point to her finding some nuances in the social structure she has entered and of which she is still coming to terms with. Her phrasing of learning her new social positions as following her forgetting of “the ways of the village” seems to suggest that she (thinks she) cannot have both. (perhaps she understands them to be contradictory).

We then get into the story of Atini getting her job. After arriving in the city, Atini stays in the room of Nombini, “without her *umlungu* woman knowing” for two months with other domestic workers helping her with food and clothes (Magona, 1991, p. 13).

> They don’t like that, the Mlungu women, that the maid should keep someone in her room. They say that makes the girl steal to feed the person in her room(Magona,1991, p. 13)

After two months, Imelda asks to go home for three weeks as someone in her family is sick. Mrs Reed tells her she cannot leave until she finds someone to stand in for her. Atini is then offered this job despite having no experience and Imelda leaves. Imelda is gone for eleven weeks and when she returns Atini retains her job permanently. Atini states that Mrs Reed was happy with her work after one week and started paying her double what Imelda was earning and then also states that she couldn't see how Imelda expected her job back after eleven weeks. That is, she does not feel she took the job from Imelda but rather that it was out of her hands that Imelda was going to lose her job whether she stayed on or not (And in Atini's telling, Mrs Reed explicitly states this). When Imelda confronts Atini about taking her job Atini states : "But you stayed way longer than you said you would. And if I'd left you'd have lost it anyway" and reminds Imelda that she had said she had not wanted the job and said Atini would be "more than welcome to it" (Magona, 1991, p. 15).

> 'Atini, my sister, let that white woman go find her own maid. Don't do this to me. How can you?' This she said in Xhosa, our mother tongue the likes of which Mrs Reed had never bothered learning. (p.15)

Atini acknowledges that both of them need the job but sees no benefit in them both leaving. We then return to the notion that originally people did find fault with Atini's actions and she felt their animosity but she is clear that she was there to provide for her children and not to worry about who likes her. Atini tell us that over time the other domestic workers started talking to her as they realised she was ignored their discussion of her situation with Imelda. It is notable that the discussion of fault circulates around Atini and is never shifted to Mrs Reed nor the structures. Of course it is mentioned that they are both desperate but this desperation appears as a fetishized object and is never the target of discussion in any way. That is not to say they were not aware of the structural relations but that there seems to be a specific way in which they appear in this narrative. Imelda does raise the possibility of Atini also leaving the job with Mrs Reed leaving Mrs Reed to "go find her own maid". In this framing Imelda refers to Atini as "my sister" and says "don't do this to me", speaking in their shared mother tongue of Xhosa (Magona, 1991, p. 15). In this effort she seems to provoke a type of comradery between her and Atini insinuating that that she would be doing something hurtful to her by staying. And while she calls on Atini to and her to act in unison in a way that does not make them compete for the job it is still framed such that the moral problem rests on the shoulders of Imelda and Atini and not Mrs Reed. Imelda's effort is a plea for Atini to not "do this" to her. The refusal of which leads to Imelda continuing to blame Atini (as is returned to through the book).

Another notable statement is Atini's description of Mrs Reed looking for a replacement for Imelda as Mrs Reed being unable to "bear to think of herself without someone to do things for her" (Magona, 1991, p. 14). What is made clear in Atini's discussion is the focus on the inability to "think" of herself without a domestic worker and the relation to her identity. "Even a useless maid to her is better than none at all" (Magona, 1991, p. 14). While in different points at the book Magona (1991) points to the inability of the employers to do the tasks of the domestic workers, at this point, Atini highlights that in her first week Mrs Reed essentially did all the work while showing her how to do things (Atini had no experience prior to this job) and thus highlights her ideological role.

As the chapter draws to a close we are informed about the role of "stories" (Magona, 1991, p. 16). After the other domestic workers start warming up to Atini she starts to be more involved in the world of stories. After the debacle surrounding Imelda Atini says she does not want to find herself in "another soup" (Magona, 1991, p. 16). She states that she does not have time to involve herself in the hearsay, whispers and stories but that they are interesting and informative. Atini speaks to a range of stories that float around and how they can be informative about the people in their social world. "Atini states a whole new world is opening up right in front of me" (Magona, 1991, p. 17). However it is also made clear that these stories are not just informational and but enjoyable in themselves. Atini mentions the stories that Imelda tells about her of which most are "not true" (Magona, 1991, p. 17). In fact Atini says that the stories she enjoys the most are those stories that "show[her] in a much better light than Imelda" (Magona, 1991, p. 17).

We sit here in my room and because I am the newest maid, each one of my neighbours is helpful in letting me know what's what.

A whole new world is opening up right in front of me (p. 17).

Appendix C-*Vukani Makhosikazi* and *Thula Baba*

These two works, *Vikani Makhosikazi* (1985) and *Thula Baba* (1987) were explored as potential candidates for the exploration of narratives of Black women employed as domestic workers. However, neither of them are written by black women employed as domestic workers (*Thula Baba, as dicussed below,* is not as clear). Both were also published in the nineteen eighties and thus do not qualify for our meta-analysis. Without these works we were left with only the works of Magona outside of the meta-analysis. Considering why they were considered as potential candidates for our study (as discussed for each below) it was decided to engage with them (outside of the analysis proper) to allow for a more expansive engagement with the topic. Outside of the 'official analysis' of the paper a brief engagement is offered below however this is not essential to the main line of argument and is included more so in response to fact that we have ended up with only Magona's work outside of the meta-analysis. Once, this is not an attempt to condense these works (or the words of domestic workers on them) or even pick out the 'main' points of these works (or the words of domestic workers in them).

Vukani Makhosikazi

Vukani Makhosikazi: South African Women Speak is a 1985 book that aims to "document the experience of women in South Africa" (Barret et al. 1985, p. v). As described by the authors:

> As white intellectuals with the university training we felt like the booklet was good opportunity to share with our fellow South Africans, some of the substantial work research we had done on women in South Africa (Barret et al. 1985, p. v).

It is thus clear that this is not a book of narratives of black women employed as domestic workers. The book is however based on interviews with and quotes from black women from six different papers and, to quote at length from the authors:

> The intention is not to give a comprehensive account of the experience of women, or of the many forms of organisation and resistance. Rather, we have tried to bring out main issues as women experience them. So references to individuals to individuals and organisations have been chosen by way of example and not given any particular importance or priority to them. This is specifically so since we are all based in Johannesburg. We hope, however, that the information contained in this book will serve as a useful resource

> The process of writing the book allowed us the chance to speak to a wide range of women about their lives and women have been only too pleased to tell their stories.…We hope that the book gives an accurate reflection of their lives and goes some way towards enlightening other South Africans about their problems and their potential as a force within a struggle for real change in South Africa.

The aim of speaking about issues "as women experience them", the idea of focusing on examples as opposed to aiming towards or claiming some kind of generalisability, the wide range of women and the attempt to accurately reflect their stories all mark this as a work that may be useful for engaging the narratives of black women employed as domestic workers (with its limitations). We will do so briefly by engaging chapter two "Women at Work" and focusing on the statements by black women employed as domestic workers (Barret et al., 1985). Once again, this engagement is brief and there is a lot more that can be taken up.

In a section titled "Why domestic work?" (Barret et al., 1985, p. 27). The book covers excerpts from three women which include: "Well what could I do with so little education and I had to earn some money because my family were so poor. All I could do was domestic work to earn money"; "I wanted to become a nurse but you can't do that with so little education. The only thing I could do was housework"; "I had to find work in a house because my cousin was unable to support me. Anyway, I did not have much learning or any skill so I have to do this type of work" (Barret et al. 1985, pp. 27-28). In these excerpts the choice of domestic work is attributed to a lack of choice understood as a product of a lack of education and skills. In a section titled "Families" the excerpts speak to women needing to provide for their families and the money earned not being enough to do so. This finds repetition through the chapter and in a section titled "Low wages, little security." (Barret et al, 1985, p. 27) this is brought to the fore (though at the time of the chapter's writing there was no minimum wage for domestic workers). Flora Manyono (as quoted in Barret et al, 1985, p.34-35) states that "You work very hard in this job and earn very little. My madam, she does nothing, but she can live in this house and have fat children. My children are hungry". The inequality, for Flora Manyono, is apparent, every day, in the comparison of how hard she has to work to provide for her family and her employer who "does nothing" and yet has the means to (under)pay for her labour power and feed her own children well (See Marx, 1887).

In a section titled "Being 'part of the family'", Barret et al. (1985, p. 36) state that "[v]ery few domestic workers enjoy their work. They see employment as a fact of life, an inescapable

necessity". They give three comments that are described as "typical" (Barret et al. 1985, p. 36): "There is nothing good about the work, but at least I have a job"; "I hate being called 'the girl'. I am 48 years old now and I'm still a girl"; "The children are terrible. I am older than their mother but they shout at me and swear at me. And their mother says nothing. They would not say those things to their mother". This is placed in contradistinction with the responses of the employers who "see the relationship differently" and describe the employees as 'part of the family' (Barret et al., 1985, p. 36). Barret et al. (1985, p. 36) do no directly attempt to explain this gap and are relatively sparing in their analysis but give a few further points to think this section with. Barret et al. (1986, p. 36) state that "[b]eing 'part of the family' seldom means sharing in any of the household facilities" and touches on the disparity in the facilities of the domestic workers and the employers. Barret et al. (1985, p. 36) notes that the work is predominantly performed by "black working-class women" and also speaks to gap between the importance of housework and its low status while further positing that white children "grow up in an environment where the African domestic worker is the servant and the parents are the masters" (Speaking to the notions of ideological reproduction and bodies as images as per the literature review). It is also alluded to that the employment of domestic workers allows their employers to utilise their time elsewhere (in consonance with the literature review). As previously stated the analysis in the book is relatively sparing - and deliberately so, this is no claim at its inadequacy-but is made clear is that there is a gap between the responses of domestic workers and of employers of domestic workers however the authors choose to respond to this by highlighting the inequality in the relationship. In a largely indirect, although not unclear way, the authors question the phrase 'part of the family' and all it entails. Barret et al. (1985) reveal the gap between the employers' and the employees' characterisation of their relationship as well as the inequality their relation.

Thula Baba

Thula Baba (1987) is described in the editorial note as "moving account of the everyday life of a group of domestic workers told by a literacy teacher. It is based on the firsthand experience of some of her learners" (p. 6). The book is a fictional story "written after many discussions between a group of adult learners and teachers in literacy classes.

The book is written in a diary-like format with dated entries and written in the first person. The book is also written in short sentences and in a largely descriptive manner with little (explicit) evaluation. (The relation of this style to gaps and absences is thus a potentially generative mode

of engagement which will not be taken up here). This book has a pronounced focus on the issues of childcare for the domestic workers in the story. Many of the characters are dealing with their children having to stay in the 'homelands' and not in the city with them. This is shown as both a product of the legislature under Apartheid but also due to the position of the employers. Masthepo has to take her child, Tshidiso back to the homelands after a raid by inspectors. Tembi gave birth to her daughter Nomsa in the city and then sent Nomsa to stay with her mother. Tembi's mother sends Nomsa to Tembi in the city because she is sick and it is found out that she has T.B. and is hospitalised. When the doctors release Nomsa they tell Tembi to keep her in the city and take her back to the clinic at some point but her employers tell her "she must choose. She can keep her job or her child" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 35) and thus Tembi finds a new job where "The money is bad. And her room is too small. And the work is very is very hard; But the madam is happy for her to keep her child" (p. 36). Ntombi, the book's 'writer' has to balance childcare with the demands of her employer. Lindiwe is Ntombi's fourth child and, as she puts it: "She is my last child. But she is also my first child. I sent my other children away. But now my madam says I can keep Lindiwe with me" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 12). Ntombi informs us in her earlier entries about her not having enough time to feed Lindiwe. Later on in the story, Ntombi's employer tells her that Daniel (her child) has not been happy since Lindiwe has been born and thus Ntombi agrees to leave Lindiwe alone in her room while she works (as opposed to carrying her on her back). "The big house is full of toys and nice things for children. But Lindiwe must stay alone in a dark room. She is not happy" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 51). Later on, Lindiwe is hospitalised. Ntombi's employer apologises for Lindiwe not getting enough food and offers to pay for everything and when Lindiwe is released from hospital is more lenient and accommodating to Lindiwe and Ntombi. When Lindiwe returns Ntombi states "My madam is good to me now" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 60). What I think is worth raising, in tandem with what the editor's note explicitly focuses on, is the place of *capacity* in the story. This is apparent in this component of the narrative and elsewhere. This is highlighted in the compassion and remorse of Ntombi's employer after Lindiwe's hospitalisation compared to before and in the gap between Tembi's new employer "allowing" her to keep her child where her old employer did not. That is to say, the compassion, leniency, accommodation (and so on) of the employers is not celebrated in the story, it is always written against the capacity to not do so. Page 34, in contrast with the later compassion, is illustrative, it follows Ntombi returning from a first visit to the doctor concerning Lindiwe where she is informed Lindiwe is fine but needs to eat more.

I get back late. I went in the kitchen.

My madam came in the kitchen. She told me I must cook

For supper.

Lindiwe started to cry.

I tried to tell madam

she was hungry

But she wasn't listening to me.

She wasn't thinking about me

or Lindiwe.

She didn't' even look at us. She was thinking only of the supper I was cooking.

Mafutha.

I stood there cooking supper for them.

All I heard was Lindiwe crying.

All I thought was that she was hungry.

All I want is to feed her.

So I tried to cook quickly.

The food did not taste nice.

My madam was cross.

When I came back to my room

this evening Lindiwe was so hungry.

She was eating her fingers.

She was all wet.

Even the blanket was wet.

She is still so small.

She is only six weeks old.

It made me very sad to see her like this. (Ntombi, 1987, p. 34)

When Lindiwe returns from hospital to a more accommodating environment where she is no longer left alone in a dark room without food, she returns to health and Ntombi is clear that both her and Lindiwe are happy. Not only is Ntombi employer "good to [her] now" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 60) but her employer is happy with her work at this stage. However, there is no explicit expression of gratitude for her employer's help and change in treatment. The page quoted above illustrates a more explicit violent treatment by Ntombi's employer, leaving Lindiwe hungry following her return from the doctors saying she needs to eat more. This page placed in contradistinction with the change in treatment (and the absence of gratitude) and centring the question of capacity illustrates that there is a violence that is not reducible to the treatment by employers. The editorial notes speak to being "subject to the whims of their employers" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 5). To (again) redeploy the words of Wilderson (2020, p. 45) (at a different level of abstraction): "The essential problem is not in the performance of their antagonistic feelings, but in the structure of an antagonistic relationship". This is also apparent in Tembi's case where she is able to find an employer who doesn't mind Tembi keeping her child with her. Ntombi meets a woman on the street who has a child the same age as Lindiwe who was fired for being pregnant and has been searching for a job for three months. Ntombi is reminded of people who have no work, and are struggling to provide for themselves and their families. Elsewhere Ntombi states that "[i]f one of the white people don't like you they can call the inspectors" to take away your children, speaking of the capacity to mobilise the resources of the state in response to the precarious position of domestic workers. In contrast when Tembi leaves her old job, that will not let her keep her child, she decides not to inform them and to leave her work unfinished on a day her employer has an important dinner. This reflects Hartman's (2019, p. 161) discussion in which she states: "The revolt of black woman against 'the personal degradation of their work' and 'unjust labor conditions', expressed itself in militant refusals: 'soldiering', sullenness, petty pilfering, unreliability and fast and fruitless change of masters". However, the difference in capacity in this narrative is clear when Tembi's intentionally rebellious act is placed alongside the hospitalisations, separation from children,

hunger (inter alia) that occurs as a product of the everyday running of the institution of domestic work.

Another component worth mentioning is, as described in the editorial note, "[o]ne important way of coping is through friendship with other domestic workers and the development of support networks" (Notmobi, 1987, p. 5). In the book, the women employed as domestic workers, help and support each other in a variety of ways. For example, after inspectors find Matshepo's child Sipho staying with her, Matshepo comes to Ntombi, crying and Ntombi "told her what she must do" (Ntombi, 1987, p. 64) and together with other domestic work they pull together the money for a train to the homelands and stay with her while she packs and waits to leave. This theme of support and help recurs throughout the book. This speaks to the building of intimacy and (unofficial) networks between domestic workers working in the same area as was shown in the works of Magona.

And in thinking with the similarities with Magona it is also worth considering the form of the work. Why is it that these 'direct' explorations of domestic work (as opposed to through interviews, studies, analyses etc.) are produced in the form of 'gossip', a letter and a diary?

Appendix D- Sampling and Aims of metanalysis papers

The "black" is silent?

In selecting relevant studies an engagement with the discussions of their papers and their sampling was necessary. The aims was to find studies that dealt with the lived experiences of black women employed as domestic workers insofar as. Let us briefly read through the titles and their sampling.

Donald and Mahlatji's (2006) paper is titled *Domestic Workers' Experiences of Power and Oppression in South Africa.* Donald and Mahlatji (2006, p. 207) begin by stating that that their sample was made of "[n]ine females". Race is not mentioned in their discussion of the sample and there is a table of the demographic characteristics of participants where gender (and sex) and race are not included in this table. The authors cite the use of snowball sampling but do not include any demographic based inclusion or exclusion criteria. They do not state racial characteristics of their participants however the introduction states that:

> In this study, the term 'African' is used to refer to people in South Africa who were required by the apartheid government to carry passes, who had no representative in the tri-cameral parliament and who were designated to a homeland because of their ethnicity…this study focuses exclusively on African domestic workers with African employers" (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006, p. 205).

And it is then stated that "[a]ll interviews were conducted in Sepedi by the second author who is an African woman and therefore shared certain characteristics with the participants" (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006, p. 209). This seems to imply that all the participants were identified as 'African'. Without the demographic inclusion and exclusion criteria we might assume that the authors are suggesting that it was not necessarily their intention to have all their participants be 'African' and 'female'. If this is true then it they did not explore the implications of this sample except to say that "[w]hile convenient, this sampling method could introduce bias and limits the ability to generalize the results" (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006, p. 209). Nonetheless it seems that the sample is made of black women and is thus relevant for this study.

Magwaza's (2008) paper titled *Effects of Domestic Workers Act in South Africa: A Steep Road to Recognition* is based on in-depth interviews with 28 domestic workers. Magwaza (2008, p. 81) states that their interest in the topic was "sparked…[by] Methodist church volunteer work that was capacitating domestic workers with computer skills. Whilst learning computer skills

they chatted endlessly about their work, employers and difficulties they face in different households". Referrals from this community were utilised. A commitment to a feminist approach is cited and it is explicitly stated that the study chose to have women as their participants and it was not explicitly stated that the women were black and or that race informed inclusion criteria. Magwaza (2008, p. 90) also states, "In most studies on domestic workers, 'the employer' is readily understood as a person who is both white and oppressive. This study challenged this fact as four of the six participants employed by black families reported some shocking and exploitative labour practices by - as they put it, 'our black sisters'" . Which seems to both imply that the participants were black while simultaneously ignoring the fact that while the demographics of employers shifted the occupation of domestic work remains racialised in particular ways. Magwaza (2008, p. 83) states that it is important to explore "the multiple forms of vulnerability and oppression experienced by female domestic workers: as women, black, seen as servants rather (sic.) than employees and belonging to the poor working class in particular (with some as foreign nationals)". That is, in explicating the use of intersectionality Magwaza (2008) characterises domestic workers as black women. Magwaza (2008, p. 84) informs us that the focus of the "discussion is on female domestic workers because women constitute the bulk of the informal-sector labour supply (Sarkar S and Bhuimali, 2005) and that domestic work is the largest single sector where women are employed (Madonsela, 1994)". As is shown by the data, it is not only a large employer of woman (although not the largest) but is predominantly made up by black woman. Approximately 92% of the women employed in domestic work are categorised as "Black African" (StatsSA, 2021). There is also an acknowledgement of the 'men' in the sector, in the section exploring the continued feminisation of domestic work which men employed as domestic workers tend to be older than the women employed in the sector. It is stated that the "continued feminisation of the domestic labour force is one of the significant factors that contribute to the low regard attached to the sector" (Magwaza, 2008, p. 82). But the notion of race (inter alia) does receive the same attention. While Magwaza (2008) characterises domestic workers as made up by black women the sampling strategy explicitly states and discusses the inclusion criteria of 'woman' and the theoretical and empirical reasons for this, it is unclear how race figured into the sampling strategy.

Tolla's (2013) work, titled *Black women's experiences of domestic work: Domestic workers in Mpumalanga* interviewed 13 women employed as domestic workers. Tolla (2013) does not explicitly state that the sample is made up of black women although this is implied (and is *in*

the title). There are multiple references to the racialised and gendered nature of the institution. For example, the abstract states that "[d]omestic work is the second largest area of employment for black women in South Africa" (Tolla, 2013, p. 3) and the end of the section titled "theoretical framework", which states that the study is feminist, argues that:

> [g]iven that domestic workers in South Africa are primarily women who are black and poor, a feminist framework was appropriate for this study as it pays attention to the issues of gender and other inequalities in the lives of domestic workers. (Tolla, 2013, p. 9)

Thus, it seems that this qualifies as a study attempting to investigate the experience of Black women employed in domestic work. We can note that while the framework and the implications point us to the authors conceptualisation it is unclear how gender was approached in the sampling. Tolla (2013, p. 10) informs us:

> The sample for the study came from a purposive sample of domestic workers in Hoyi village, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga province. Participants were recruited from the local Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) school where many domestic workers attend after-hours lessons. Permission was requested from the center manager to talk to the women in classes and…

It is unclear whether this class only contained women or was a class for women, whether only the women in a class containing domestic workers were approached, whether these participants identified themselves as women, and so on. Moreover race is not explicitly dealt with in the sampling despite the framework being guided by the framework which recognises that "domestic workers in South Africa are primarily women who are black and poor" (Tolla, 2013, p. 9).

Marais (2014) submitted a thesis in fulfilment of a doctorate in the form of 5 articles. The doctorate was titled *Lived Realities Of Domestic Workers Within The South African Labour Legislative Context: A Qualitative Study*. We will focus on two articles, namely, article 3: "Future directiveness within the South African domestic workers' work-life cycle: Considering exit strategies" and article 4: "Affirmation of Ubuntu within a flourishing work relationship as voiced by South African domestic workers: A positive labour perspective" Marais, 2014, p. vii). Both of these articles are authored in collaboration with Marais's (2014) promoter Professor C. de W. Van Wyk. Both of these articles were based on interviews with domestic

workers and specify the use of an interpretivist analysis. Twenty Black female domestic workers participated in the interviews (Marais & Van Wyke, 2014). Marais and Van Wyke (2014, p. 76) state that "2000 leaflets were personally distributed at taxi ranks, on public transport and in passing within the geographically demarcated area of the study" In article 4 they state that this occurred over 2 months. It is unclear whether they only called for black women in their leaflet, whether only black women responded or whether they purposefully selected black women (and also unclear if they self-identified as black women). Marais and Van Wyk (2014a, pp. 76-77; 2014b, pp. 97-98) then state that they purposefully selected participants "based on their willingness to participate in the study and engage with the researchers…, their membership of the identified sector… and their firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation". It is often difficult to articulate the criteria in the framework of the methodology for a particular study however I think it is appropriate to question how these criteria were evaluated, particularly the "firsthand knowledge of the phenomena understudy" (and particularly how to do so without begging the question).

De Villiers and Taylor (2019) have a somewhat different focus in their paper *Promoting a positive work experience for South African domestic workers* stating that "[t]he purpose of [their] study was to explore the factors that contribute to a positive work experience for domestic workers in South Africa". Although they later state that their research design is "used to understand the everyday lived realities as voiced by participants" (De Villiers, 2019, p. 5) marking it at as a candidate for our study. The studies sample consisted of 7 domestic workers and 7 employers of domestic workers in East London. "The seven domestic workers who participated in the survey were all black women… The seven employers of domestic workers were all white women…" (de Villiers & Taylor, 2019, p. 6). de Villiers and Taylor, (2019, p. 6) state:

> The participation of the domestic workers was obtained through convenience sampling. This was achieved by approaching the coordinator of an outreach initiative that offered basic computer training to domestic workers at a local church. The coordinator was contacted, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and permission was requested and granted to inform domestic workers attending the training about the study… Inclusion criteria set by the researcher included that the participants must be employed to perform household chores within a private household and worked for a minimum of 6 h per day, for 3 days per week, for a single employer.

There is no indication of this intentional demographic homogeneity (All domestic workers were black woman and all employers were white women) or reflection upon this outcome. The two interviews were analysed separately using thematic analysis before a the analyses were brought together in their implications and recommendations and conclusion. The interview questions were such that they could be considered to be about the experiences of black women employed as domestic workers.

The goals and aims of authors

The study is concerned with the narratives and lived experiences of domestic workers and thus looked for studies that aimed at generating data base on these were as largely participant lead Let us attend to the stated aims, objectives and goals of the articles at hand as well as the role of the participants is guiding the topics.

Tolla, (2013, p. 8) states:

> the overall objective of this research is to explore the subjective experiences of domestic workers, to understand how they cope in balancing their work and personal lives. The research also aims to explore how these workers understand their work and the meanings that they derive from their work

Tolla (2013) also states that the semi-structured interviews allowed the interaction with the participant to guide the direction of the interviews.

> The study aims to gain insight into: The work experiences of domestic workers in the context of new socio-economic-political legislation promulgated to protect their social rights in the new South Africa How domestic workers experience power relations and embedded tensions with their employers in the context of the new legislation (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006, p. 207)

The authors state that the semi-structured interviews allow "participants to tell stories about their experiences, perspectives and concerns" (Donald & Mahlatji, 2006, p.207). The authors do state that they aim to produce narratives relevant to their questions but state that their questions are intended to "stimulate the participant's main narrative" and from there they are encourage to produce narratives-with a beginning, middle and end, uninterrupted, from which the researcher "noted any themes mentioned by the participant but which needed to be explored

in more depth at the end of the narrative". This suggests that this paper is relevant to our study. However, Donald and Mahlatji (2006, p. 208) state that following the piloting of the interview they found that:

> Participants needed *slightly more guidance as to how to answer than the generative question provided* [emphasis added]. Therefore the guide was altered to ask participants to tell stories of their experiences as domestic workers, *followed by a statement regarding some of the themes of interest (hours of work, leave, relationship with employer) in order to provide them with an idea of what to cover* [emphasis added]. The themes of interest were based on the literature and legislative changes.

Magwaza (2008) state the paper's aims as seeking "to find out domestic workers' knowledge of the Act, how it has impacted on their lives and if they had begun to reap benefits from it" (Magwaza, 2008, p. 79). However, Magwaza (2008, pp. 80-81) also states that, guided by feminist theory, "all attempts were made to allow and encourage the participants to lead the discussions". This study was widely cited and was selected due to some of the longer quotes form participants included and the stated procedure of letting participant guide the conversation despite the aim not being entirely in line with our discussion in that it is specifically about legislation.

De Villiers and Taylor (2019, p.1) state:

> The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that contribute to a positive work experience for domestic workers in South Africa…[Motivation:] Because of limited work opportunities and a lack of access to finance and education in South Africa, domestic work will continue to provide a source of employment in the future. It is thus important to implement strategies to enhance the positive nature of the domestic work experience (de Villiers & Taylor, 2019)

They state that their interview questions were developed in consultation with those of Tolla (2013) and despite their aim at exploring positive work experiences their interview schedule explored all experiences (not just 'positive experiences'). The authors also state that they use a phenomenological research design which they describe as "research design used to understand the everyday lived realities as voiced by participants" (De Villiers and Taylor, 2019, p. 6).

Marais and Van Wyk (2014, p. 76) describe their study design as interpretivist and state that "the researchers' primary purpose was to explore individual's subjective perceptions of their

own experiences as they relate to social phenomena in a non-interventional manner". Marais (2014, p. v) states that:

> Rich, dense descriptive verbatim accounts of participants' lived realities confirmed data saturation. In-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed through an *inductive* [emphasis added] process of data reduction. Emanating themes confirmed that the South African domestic workers sector is far from being voiceless if we are only willing to listen. Making these voices heard constitutes a progressive step in future efforts to empower this neglected sector of the labour market.

Marais (2014, p. iv) also states that:

> It is hoped that the study will engender more sensitivity towards the needs of this vulnerable group of workers and promote positive employment relations within the South African labour market.

Appendix E- Hartman's Manual for General Housework

Below is the fully re-presented "Manual for General Housework" from *Wayward Lives, Beautiful experiments* (Hartman, 2019, p. 77):

> Manual: of or pertaining to the hand or hands, done or performed with the hands. Now especially of (physical) labor, an occupation, etc., as opposed to mental, theoretical. Manual as distinguished from the mind and the intellectual. Manual: as of a weapon, tool, implement, etc.; that is used or worked with the hand or hands. Actually, in one's hands, not merely prospective. (Manual: short for manual exercises, i.e., physical labor, and not the exercise of reason or imagination.) A tool or an object, within one's grasp, not speculative, not a proposal for black female genius. The use of the body as tool or instrument. Of occupation or possession. Able to have in one's own hands, as in possession is three-fifths of the law, as in possession makes you three-fifths of a human, as in property handled by another. Also to be possessed. To be handled as if owned, annexed, branded, invaded, ingested, not autonomous. Manual: to be wielded by another, to be wielded on a whim; to be wielded as an exercise of another's will, to be severed from one's own will or motives or desires. Manual: as opposed to mental, as in not an exercise of rational faculties. As opposed to the formation of critical reflections; as opposed to contemplation of the self or the world. A method of operating or working. A function. Short for manual exercise. Short for manual tool. Manual: as opposed to automatic, as opposed to starting or functioning by itself and for itself, as opposed to deliberation and judgment, as in the need for direction, as in the imposition of a mistress or master. Manual: As of pertaining to the hand or hands. The hands to be outmoded or made obsolete by the machine. Of or pertaining to the mule more than the machine. Worked with the hands, finished with the hands. No more than a pair of hands. Hands cracked and swollen from harsh soap and ammonia. Hands burnt taking the pies out of the oven. Hands stiff and disfigured from wringing cold sheets and towels outside in the winter before hanging to dry on the line. Hands, no longer yours, contracted, owned, and directed by another, like a tool or object. The hands that handle you. The hands up the dress, the hands on your ass, the hands that pull down your undergarments, the hands that pin you to the floor. The hands that pay you two dollars for the day or thirteen dollars for the week. Manual: as of subject to use, made a tool, handled, grasped, palmed, slapped, fondled, hugged, harassed, caressed; as of pertaining to the hand. Manual: as opposed to contemplation, or theory. As opposed to the use of the intellect.

As opposed to looking, viewing, contemplating. As opposed to thinking, reflecting, scheming, plotting, planning, weighing, brooding. The use of the hands as opposed to a conception or mental scheme or paradigm. Manual: the concrete, the physical, the embodied as opposed to abstract knowledge and the formulation of it. As opposed to reason. Manual: as pertaining to ignorance, obtuseness, stupidity, and as opposed to erudition. As related to handle, as to be handled, as to be handled with no regard, as to be handled as a tool or instrument; as to be handled like a slave, like a wench, like a bitch, like a whore, like a nigger. Handled as pertaining to that part of the thing which is to be grasped by the hand in using it or moving it. To be grasped by the hand or sometimes by the neck, the ass, the throat. Colloquial: to fly off the handle; to go into a rage; to fuck shit up. Figurative: that by which something is or may be taken hold of; one of two or more ways in which a thing may be taken or apprehended. To manipulate, manage; to subject to the action of hands, to touch or feel with hands. As opposed to: Don't touch me. As pertaining to: Hands up, don't shoot. To manage, conduct, direct, control. To be handled by men, to be manhandled, to be seized by men, to be used by men, to be used up by men. Handled, as related to use of the thing, to do something with the tool, as opposed to directed by will and desire; as opposed to consent, as opposed to leave me the fuck alone. To deal with, to treat as you wish, to serve, to use, to accumulate, to expend, to deplete. Manual: as related to a book, etc.—of the nature of a manual intended to be kept at hand for reference. A concise treatise, an abridgment, a handbook