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Domestic work–affective labor: On feminization and the coloniality of labor

Encarnacion Gutierrez-Rodriguez

Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Germany

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SYNOPSIS

This paper argues for an understanding of domestic work as affective labor. It engages with the affective quality of reproductive labor by interrogating the organization of paid and unpaid domestic work in private households. Thus, while it attends to debates on emotional labor, its main focus is on the affective dimension of the social.

It does so by focusing on reproductive labor, in particular, domestic work and developing a feminist critique of affective labor through the analysis of the cultural predication of feelings associated with and infused in domestic work. In this regard, the cultural predication prescribing the social meaning attached to domestic work will be explored within the framework of feminization and coloniality. Thus, domestic work will be discussed as affective labor surfacing at the juncture of feminization and coloniality. Following this argument, the article firstly engages with feminist analyses on reproductive labor, feminization and domestic work. Secondly, it looks at private households and affective labor. Thirdly, it examines the relationship between paid domestic work and migration regimes from the angle of the coloniality of labor. Using these insights, the article explores the sensorial corporeality of racialized affect negotiated in and around domestic work. It concludes by arguing for a conceptualization of domestic work as affective labor.

Introduction

This article's focus is on domestic work as affective labor. It engages with the affective quality of reproductive labor by interrogating the organization of paid and unpaid domestic work in private households. Thus, while it attends to debates on emotional labor (Carrington, 1999; Hochschild, 1983; Illouz, 2007), its main focus is on the affective dimension of the social. As such this article engages with the impact of feelings and emotions on social relationships and spaces (Ahmed, 2004; Brennan, 2004; Sedgwick, 2004). Following Spinoza's (1994) observation that affect drives us to act, the article explores the twofold character of affect as a texture of the social and as socially textured. It does so by focusing on reproductive labor, in particular, domestic work and developing a feminist critique of affective labor through the analysis of the cultural predication of feelings associated with and infused in domestic work. It thus contributes to the debate on affective labor in feminist theory (Corsani, 2007; Federici, 2012; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Weeks, 2011).

Engaging with the affective corporeality of domestic work, this article argues for an understanding of feelings and emotions as interlaced in the social semantics of place and time. In this regard, the cultural predication prescribing the social meaning attached to domestic work will be explored within the framework of feminization and coloniality. Thus, domestic work will be discussed as affective labor surfacing at the juncture of feminization and coloniality. Both processes describe social classification systems related to the creation of a hierarchical social order. In order to illustrate this rather abstract yet material dimension of corporeal affectivity in domestic work, the article uses interview extracts from a study conducted with colleagues on the interpersonal relationships

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between female migrant domestic workers and their female employers in Austria, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom between 2002 and 2004[1] (Caixeta, Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tate, & Vega Solís, 2004), other observations from research on undocumented Latin American domestic workers employed in private households in Germany and the United Kingdom conducted by the author between 2007 and 2013 are also considered (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010).

The discussion engages firstly with feminist analyses on reproductive labor, feminization and domestic work (Caixeta et al., 2004; Corsani, 2007; Federici, 2012; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004). Secondly, it moves to look at private households and affective labor. Thirdly, it explores the relationship between paid domestic work and migration regimes from the angle of the coloniality of labor (Quijano, 2000, 2005, 2008). Using these insights, the article explores the sensorial corporeality of racialized affect negotiated in and around domestic work. It concludes by arguing for a conceptualization of domestic work as affective labor. First, let us begin with the debate on reproductive labor, feminization and domestic work.

Reproductive labor, feminization and domestic work

According to the ILO, majority of domestic workers are women (82%), many of whom are migrants or children whose "work is undervalued, underpaid, [and] poorly regulated" (ETUC, 2012: 10). These characteristics resonate with features, which feminist activists and scholars have discussed as associated with the feminization of labor (Bair, 2010; Bakker, 2007; Elson, 1998). Domestic work epitomizes the social devaluation of feminized labor (Mies, 1999). This is articulated economically as the productive contribution of domestic work is consistently ignored in official calculations of GDP (cf. Ferber & Nelson, 1993; Folbre, 1994; Hewitson, 1999; Himmelweit, 1995; Pérez Orozco, 2004, 2010; Waring, 2004). It is also articulated socially as domestic work continues to be perceived as unproductive and unskilled labor, devoid of any societal value (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010; Weeks, 2011).

Feminist theory has challenged this perception (cf. Barrett, 1980; Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Delphy, 1984) and insisted on the constitutive value of domestic work for social reproduction (Bakker & Gill, 2003; Barker & Feiner, 2010; Bedford & Rai, 2010; Benería, 1979; Dalla Costa & James, 1972; Federici, 2004; Kofman, 2012; Molyneux, 1979; Peterson, 2009). This calls into question Marxist views that restrict this labor merely to the sphere of reproduction by underscoring its productive force (cf. Jacobs, 2010; O'Hara, 1998; Redclift, 1985). More recently, feminist research has highlighted the emotional character of domestic work (cf. Boris & Parreñas, 2010; Carrington, 1999; Hochschild, 1983, 2003; Lan, 2006).

Taking these observations on board and considering the transformation of the organization of labor in post-industrial societies, feminist theorists and activists in Spain and Italy have placed a renewed focus on the question of reproduction (Benería & Sarasúa, 2011; Corsani, 2007; del Río, 2004; Fantone, 2007, 2011; Federici, 2006; Pérez Orozco, 2004; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004; Ruido, 2008; Sconvegno, 2007; Vega Solís, 2009). In doing so, they consider care work (Spanish: *trabajo de cuidados*) in particular as a pivotal axis for organizing precarious work. For example, the Madrid-based feminist group Precarias a la Deriva has drawn attention to the significance of care work for social reproduction by focusing on personal caring activities and re-evaluating the ethical implications of care for society (Precarias a la Deriva, 2004). Thus, Precarias has complicated the Marxist division of productive and reproductive labor. Introducing care work as a hybrid category, Precarias defines care work as a hinge between reproductive and productive labor. Care work articulates the increasing interpenetration of these spheres in post-industrial societies, a tendency that they coined "the feminization of precarity" (Precarias a la Deriva, 2004). In a similar vein, other feminist analyses of the impact of the economic crisis in Spain and Italy suggest that we depart from taking the feminization and the precarization of labor as vantage points from which to understand crisis capitalism (Benería & Sarasúa, 2011; Carraquer Oto, 2013; Carrasco Bengoa, 2013; Federici, 2012; Martín Palomo, 2008, 2013). Acknowledging that feminization does not simply refer to the quantitative dimension of the gendered division of work, that is, to the overrepresentation of women within low-income and insecure work sectors, this debate has drawn attention to the historical and cultural implications of feminization as a process of labor devaluation. Thus, feminization connotes the cultural predication of work historically delivered by feminized subjects as "inferior."

While the feminist analysis of crisis capitalism emphasizes the relevance of reproductive labor through the lens of care work, some feminist research warns us not to subsume reproductive labor under the umbrella term "care work." "Care work" refers to a specific range of activities engaging with direct or indirect personal care (Folbre, 2006) and to professional pathways such as nursing, child care or care of the elderly. In contrast, domestic work is not considered a profession—with the exception of the "housekeeper" in Germany and Austria, which involves the management of the household and household workers. Subsuming domestic work under the term "care" may obfuscate the "dirty work" of physical activities dealing with dirt (Anderson, 2000). Yet, as numerous studies have shown, in light of everyday practices care workers very often need to deliver domestic work and domestic workers are requested to do care work (c.f., Anderson, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Lan, 2006). As Silvia Federici (2012) notes, despite the interchangeability between domestic and care work, the assumption that reproductive labor is care work and thus "affective labor" needs to be critically interrogated.

Federici stresses the historical conditions through which reproductive labor has been imposed on women and become a terrain of women's agency and struggle. She notes that the practices developed in this field that have been passed on over generations represent the creation of common wisdom and collective knowledge acquired through experiences of oppression and resistance (Federici, 2004). For Federici, subsuming reproductive labor under the label "affective labor" fails to acknowledge the persistence of a gendered division of work, whereby reproductive labor addresses a specific quality of labor that is related to certain physical tasks, personal and emotional skills. Thus, "the fast-food female workers who must flip hamburgers at McDonald's with a smile or the stewardesses who must sell a sense of security to the people she attends to" (Federici, 2012: 122) are not synonymous with the care workers who need to complete specific physical tasks and deploy emotional

faculties in caring for people. Considering "affective labor" as "a component of every form of work rather than a specific form of (re)production" (Federici, 2012: 122) blurs the prevalence of the gendered division of work and its constitutive role in supporting the cycle of capital production and accumulation. For example, caring for a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person requires specific physical and emotional skills that are not interchangeable with the skills expected of teachers, office clerks, or flight attendants. While the latter are required to deal with emotional demands at work, they are not immediately involved in the physical care of a person, and their work is not explicitly defined by the parameters of feminization.

While this critique rightly warns of an overgeneralization of terms that might obscure the intricacies of the gendered division of work and the substantial significance of feminized labor in supporting capital accumulation, the analysis of the affective dimension entails more than a consideration of care work. The analysis of affect is not intrinsically related to care work, though care represents one of the axes of analysis. Rather, as previously mentioned, the focus on affect addresses the affective fabric of our being as it highlights the social texture of our affective becoming. Social encounters and relations of production and reproduction unfold in spaces of affective (dis-)encounters such as private households.

The private household and affective labor

Private households are saturated with people's feelings and emotions. While these feelings and emotions are individually experienced as sensations, their affective character goes beyond personal experience. The relational and spatial character of affect transcends the sphere of the personal as affect defines the impact of feelings on bodies, objects and spaces (Ahmed, 2004; Brennan, 2004; Massumi, 2002; Tate, 2009). As such, affect addresses the impact of feelings circulating in a dispersed manner, which are expressed in fleeting encounters, and have an impact on people's bodies and psyches. The orientation towards a specific addressee is not always rationally conceived in the expression, impression, and circulation of feelings; and, because they evolve within a social context, they become tangible and intelligible because they bear social meaning.

Within the private sphere of the household, domestic workers are immersed in the immediate intimate relations of the household members. While not always explicitly part of these relationships, domestic workers unwillingly and unwittingly become involved in them purely by inhabiting the space. Thus, they not only cognitively participate in emotional work, that is, by attending to the caring needs of the household members, they are also (in)directly addressed by the emotions and feelings that circulate within the household. Thinking about affect in private households points to how feelings affect us and how we are affected by the energies of others. In contrast to emotions that engage with the cognitive dimension of feelings, affect are sensations or stimuli (Spinoza, 1994). These are driven by life forces such as desire (*cupiditas*), joy (*laetitia*) and sadness (*tristitia*) (Spinoza, 1994: 160ff.). Affect motivates our thinking and actions as these energies, intensities and sensations compel us to act and transform passion into action.[2] As such, affect is a relational category, an outcome of encounters and energetic circuits, which permeates our bodies, and results from our ability to feel.

In everyday encounters feelings are transmitted from one person to another, from one space to another. This transmission of affect, called affection (Brennan, 2004), may increase or diminish our energies. It can affect us in positive or negative ways. Thus, we might feel relieved, enhanced or depleted as a result of the impact that energy has had on us, leaving us with a positive or negative sensation, intensity or feeling. For example, in the case of joy and love, one can feel energized, but "when one carries the affective burden of another, either by a straightforward transfer or because the other's anger becomes your depression" (Brennan, 2004: 6), we are left depleted, sad, exhausted, or apathetic. Our affective encounters can increase or diminish our energies, they can "animate" or "disanimate" us.

Considering this affective dimension of domestic work in private households, the first striking aspect in the narratives of female domestic workers and their female employers is the depletion of energy associated with this work. Numerous accounts speak of the "draining," "exhausting," "monotonous," "repetitive," "apathetic," "lifeless" feelings attached to the delivery of tasks like cleaning, making the bed, sweeping the floor, washing clothes or dishes; but also the routine structure of preparing meals, grooming or dressing children, as well as just doing the tasks that need to be done, which no one feels like doing and no one notices when they are done. The feelings connected to these tasks are not felt just because they are supposed to be boring. Instead, boredom is attached to tasks because boredom is related to the cultural perception of this work as "banal" and lacking any social, professional or financial recognition. Within this context, the feelings and emotions that are ingrained in domestic work and felt by the people delivering the work are expressed, impressed, exchanged, and circulated in the private households. Affect, therefore, not only unfolds context (Massumi, 2002), but is also produced in a specific context. Thus, while they are expressions of immediate bodily reactions and sensations, which are neither rationalized through language nor situated in a dominant semantic script, they impact people and places, and are situated in a social space, such as a private household.

The affective energies attached to the organization and dynamics of unpaid and paid domestic work in private households evolve within the logic of the feminization of labor. As Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkowitz assert, feminization describes the "declining terms and conditions of employment, so that a large proportion of the labor force has come to experience "feminized" (that is, poor and insecure) conditions of work in some cases through deregulation at the national level." (Phizacklea & Wolkowitz, 1995: 3) Domestic work signals this terrain of deregulated work, which is abject and devalued in society. The subjects providing this work are culturally predicated by signifiers of "inferiority," produced through processes of feminization, and, as we will see below, also by racialization.

In conversations with female employers and domestic workers alike, the sentiment of "inferiorization" is expressed in their reflection on their positioning as "mothers" and "housewives." Employing another woman to perform domestic work releases them from this positioning and enables

them to experience positive feelings. For example, Antonia, a teacher who lives with her daughter in Vienna, stresses how "happy" they are with the person they have employed to do the household work. She describes her in the following words, "Our fairy, she simply helps us—we both sense it quite strongly. This just makes us happy. She is like our fairy. I say it too. She is a fairy [laughs]—a real miracle. She lives and flourishes! And she works like one too." (MAIZ, 2004: 69), (Antonia, employer, Vienna).

Antonia uses flowery terms to refer to their domestic worker. Her vital ("she lives") and productive ("flourish") potential is noted. Employing a domestic worker enables the household to engage with positive feelings, which affect the household and its members in animating ways, while the domestic worker takes on the negative affective burden ingrained in this work. For the employer, employing another person to deliver this work means that she is exempt, at least for some of the day, from doing this work. Thus, most of the employers share the feelings that Stephanie summarizes succinctly, "I would get sick of the sight of these four walls. I mean, I stayed at home for four and a half years. I was basically the cleaning woman, the nursemaid. Ultimately, I am happy, that I have a job outside of the home where I am not confronted with the household or children—my own children." (MAIZ, 2004: 63) (Stephanie, employer, Linz).

Stephanie's feelings toward the option of becoming a stay-home mother are associated with illness, connoting a state of physical and psychic deterioration. What is interesting about Antonia's and Stephanie's accounts is that the feeling of "happiness" appears in association with another person doing the household work. "Happiness" seems to be felt the moment somebody takes over the depleting aspect of domestic work, thus freeing up time to engage with professional ambitions and aspirations, or just to relax with the family, children, partner, or friends. This sense of recouping time and personal autonomy might be what the employers experience when they employ another woman to do the cleaning or caring work. In employing another woman to do the domestic work the disanimating feelings related to domestic work are shifted from the female employer to the domestic worker. The female employers succeed in escaping the cultural inscription associated with domestic work as devalued labor and evading the ascription of their bodies as inferior under the signifier "femininity". Releasing themselves from the responsibility of performing household work enables these women to regain a sense of well-being in a terrain that is historically determined and symbolically prescribed by correlating femininity with subordination, serfdom, and exploitation. In addition, the affective burden impressed upon their bodies is transferred to other women. While employing a domestic worker allows them to partially escape the abjection projected onto them, they still remain responsible for delivering and managing this work in the household (Caixeta et al., 2004; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010). Further, in most cases, the female employer monitors the work performed by the domestic worker. This is also due to the fact that the male members and/or the children in the household often fail to fulfill their household duties or are not involved in household work. As managing household work is delegated to the adult female members of the household, in cases where they refuse to perform these tasks and where finances allow, outsourcing domestic work becomes an option. However, this option is subject to economic and political conjunctures such as migration regimes.

Migration regimes and the coloniality of labor

The contemporary organization of domestic work in private households in Western Europe is sustained by outsourcing domestic work (Anderson, 2000; Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000; Lutz, 2008; Triandafyllidou, 2013). Women, who are poor, migrant or minoritized have taken over this work. In the case of migrant women, migration policies play a significant role in determining their access to the labor market. It is through migration policies that differences are established between the national (citizen) and the newcomer (migrant) populations. Thereby, this process of differentiation reactivates a mental matrix that is rooted in colonial racial classification. While not explicitly operating within the racial matrix, migration policies reactivate this logic of differentiation through the classification of the population into different categories of citizens, denizens, and aliens.

When a migrant woman, and in particular an undocumented migrant woman, is employed to deliver domestic work in private households, the differential system established through migration policies becomes tangible in the encounters between domestic workers and their employers. Coupled with discursive regimes and historical perceptions of the "Other" to the nation as racially and culturally different, migration policies are experienced cognitively and also sensed. These feelings and emotions become palpable in the everyday encounters between domestic workers and employers, as well as in the places they inhabit. When a migrant documented or undocumented worker is employed, migration policies enter the field of the private household and with it, as previously mentioned, a whole cultural realm of imagining the nation's Other is reactivated. These imaginings are transferred and negotiated in direct and indirect ways in social spaces, finding a particular expression in the feelings associated with objects and places as we see in Carmen's words next.

> "The worst for me, we could say, are the toilets! So, you, you see people who are really spick and span, but you can forget it. Really! So I wear gloves everywhere. You know rubber gloves?! […] Because I don't know?! It could be, they are people who may be super clean, but to the outside world! But you, you know the people in the kitchen and in the toilets! So, really! Brushes are available everywhere! Thank god we drink only tea now! [Carmen smiles] Brushes, these toilet brushes are available everywhere! At least, what can you do? What you can do is make it a little bit cleaner. But it is sprayed all over! Pee all over! The men cannot pee properly at all! (….)", (Carmen, domestic worker, Hamburg)

With a gesture of disgust, Carmen comments on the situation in the household where she works. Finding the toilet dirty leaves her with a sensation of neglect and ignorance. As Rosie Cox (2006) notes in regard to the relationship between dirt, cleaning, and status, the way a domestic worker is socially perceived and treated is related

to society's cultural conception of "dirt." Those who work with sewage, collect rubbish, or clean are poorly paid and mostly exposed to unsafe and insecure working conditions. Doing "dirty work" signals the lowest rank on the social ladder (see also Anderson, 2000). As Cox notes, the "status of the worker becomes inseparable from the status of the work and it is impossible to improve dramatically the standing of either without challenging deep-seated feelings about dirt" (2006:7). Yet, dealing with "dirt," as Carmen tells us, not only signals a low social status, it also refers to the affective economies within society and private households.

All the domestic workers told the research teams about the depleting feelings they encountered in the households when it came to the more "banal," "simple," and socially disregarded tasks, such as cleaning the floors, removing fluids, hairs, and general dirt. These tasks are intrinsically linked to our basic needs and are a constant reminder of our human condition. As the domestic worker deals with the physical and affective traces of our lives, the barriers and boundaries of social differences crumble. This destabilizes the power asymmetries engraved in the relation between the domestic worker and the employer. Not only do affective bonds emerge between the female employer and female domestic worker, as well as between the domestic worker and other household members, the domestic worker also becomes a silent bystander in moments of absolute intimacy and an addressee of emotions and feelings circulating in the household (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2007). Getting to know the toilets, as some of the domestic workers told us, is getting to know about the "inner lives" of their employers. Toilets are instilled with people's energies, which have an impact on the domestic worker's body and mind.

Leaving the toilet dirty or not cleaning it with the brush transmits an explicit message of contempt. For William Miller, "contempt" transmits the sensation of not being "noteworthy" (1998: 215). While the users of the toilet might not intend this, the feeling of contempt is conveyed through the non-use of brushes, fluids, and dirt found. The way the household members use the toilet reveals a lack of care in regard to the person cleaning this space. This attitude uncovers the invisibility attached to domestic work and to the person delivering this work. Involuntarily, the domestic worker must face these energies, which negatively impact her and cause her to feel revulsion and disgust.

Disgust is a strong feeling and, as Sianne Ngai (2007) suggests, it is "a structured and agonistic emotion carrying a strong and unmistakable signal" (335). For Ngai, disgust is not ambivalent about its objects. Within the context of domestic work, the feeling of disgust expresses a sensation carried by the social meaning denoted by this labor. In addition to this, the social significance of domestic work is defined through the historical legacy of colonialism, slavery, indentured labor, serfdom (Banerjee, 2004; Davis, 1983; Morgan, 2004; Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992), and the contemporary organization of a heteronormative social order (Carrington, 1999; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2013).

While the feelings expressed in and impressed upon domestic work do not always emanate from it, they do unfold within it. The impression of feelings of invisibility and worthlessness are negotiated within this social context, reviving the cultural logic of abjection as these evolve from a racializing and feminizing script of power. When it comes to employing an undocumented migrant domestic worker, the social context prescribing how domestic work in private households is seen is defined through gender relations and the logic underpinning migration policies. Within the logic of the coloniality of power, migration control and management policies enforce processes of subalternization and the dynamics of inferiorization are enforced.

Anibal Quijano (2000, 2005, 2008) identifies the "coloniality of labor" as one of the axes along which the "coloniality of power" establishes a societal system of exploitation based on the correlation of "race" and value. As Quijano states, during colonial times labor was racially codified. While the labor extracted from those codified as "white" was considered productive and "superior," the labor power extracted from the indigenous and enslaved populations was seen as "inferior" and, as such, conceived as "free exploitable" labor (Quijano, 2000). As Quijano (2000, 2005, 2008) and Enrique Dussel (1995) state, what lies behind this model is the colonizers' perception of the colonized population as pure objects of exploitation. As Dussel notes, perceived as the "Other" of Europe, the colonized population was "subsumed, alienated and incorporated into the dominating totality like a thing or instrument" (1995: 39). In other words, this population was reduced to a "thingness" and treated as "raw material." Thus, Spanish and Portuguese colonialism established a "new model of global power" on the basis of which the capitalist mode of production would evolve (Quijano, 2008).

This logic of subjugation inherent in the establishment of a racially coded social system still reverberates in the construction of the nation's Other in Western Europe, although it does not always explicitly operate in racial terms. Though wrapped in a vocabulary of culture that refers to differences in regard to religious beliefs, language, norms, and values, the construction of the "Other" in Western Europe bears the traces of a pattern of thinking reminiscent of colonial times. As such, the construction of the "Other" as the negation of a European self, imagined as white and Christian, remains the neuralgic point in "the structure of power" that "was and even now continues to be organized on and around the colonial axis" (Quijano, 2008: 216). Thus, the coloniality of labor refers to the social organization of labor and division of work sustained by this system of cultural codification.

This same model is reactivated within the context of migration policies. While a colonial system of classification is not explicit within contemporary national migration policies within the EU, the divide between "citizen" and "alien" (migrant and refugee) reverberates with the logic of coloniality. This becomes apparent, for example, in the requirements for migrants and refugees to be granted entry and settlement, so that they may establish themselves within the EU. Indeed, migrants from non-EU states must comply with the constantly shifting and increasingly restrictive national requirements. Changes in family reunification policies (Kofman, 2011; Kraler, 2010; Kraler, Kofman, Kohli, & Schmoll, 2012), visa policies and, in particular, student visas are making entry and settlement in EU member states increasingly difficult.

Most of the participants in my research from Latin America arrived in Germany with a tourist visa. Some of them were planning to pursue postgraduate studies, but encountered barriers when attempting to enroll in university

programs, as their Latin American degrees were not considered valid or, as they were told, they needed to improve their language skills. The three-month time frame they received with their tourist visa was insufficient, leaving them with the option to return to their countries, to continue onward to another country, or to go underground. The decision to remain in the country is also a decision to live without legal residency status. Being without legal residency means avoiding places where they could be detected by the police, which severely restricts their access to the regular labor market. Obtaining employment in a private household as a domestic worker represents one of the few options for making a living.

The private household remains an employment sector that is precluded from standard labor regulations, which makes the household shaky ground when it comes to the protection of workers' rights (ETUC, 2012). This is shown in the working conditions of domestic workers, which are characterized by oral contracts, unregulated working hours, as well as unsafe working conditions. Being without legal residency means falling through the cracks of official protection schemes (Düvell, 2005; Maroukis, Iglicka, & Gjmaj, 2011). In this context, it is not only the universal human rights principle of the right to a dignified life that is suspended, but also basic civil rights. Indeed, this process of exclusion produces the "undocumented migrant" as an "exteriority" to the civil and legal national norm.

Coming back to the affective dimension of being subjected to the logic of inferiorization, the position of "exteriority" that undocumented migrants inhabit is not only conveyed through the low social status and devaluation of their labor, but also through the affective circuits to which they are exposed and with which they engage. Negotiations around domestic work between domestic workers and their employers in private households occur on both the social and affective levels. While the social dimension speaks about the legal and labor conditions attached to this work, the affective dimension draws our attention to how these conditions are felt and sensed. Sensing the social, feeling the cultural script imposed on bodies, spaces and objects refers to the realm of affective encounters.

Thus, the transmission of affect between the domestic workers and their employers relies on affective bonds developed, on the caring tasks performed, and on the spatiality and relationality within which this work unfolds. As Carmen tells us, the arrangement of objects can transmit energies that might have an impact on the person sorting out the space. The attribution of inferiority and worthlessness can thus be affectively transmitted through the arrangement of objects and through those racialized affects which haunt spaces.

Racialized affects

While not directly addressed to a person, affect pervades spaces and has an impact on people's feelings, bodies and minds. When a domestic worker faces revulsion, contempt, or being despised, these feelings can produce reactions of refusal and revolt. Set in this context, Carmen's feelings towards the toilet remind us of what Ngai (2007) describes as the racialization of affect. While Ngai develops this approach through an analysis of the cultural representation of racialized bodies, the affect transmitted to Carmen seems to attend to a similar dynamic. As Ngai notes in regard to racialized affect the context of racialization "turns the neutral and even potentially positive affect of animatedness ugly pointing to the more self-evidently problematic feelings" (2007: 32). In the case of undocumented domestic workers in private households, this context is underscored by the exclusionary boundaries set up by migration policies that subtly underlie the encounters between domestic workers and their employers. It is in this regard that feelings circulating in the space and expressed in these encounters turn "ugly," imprinting residues of a racializing script and attributing "inferiority" onto the body of the domestic worker. Feelings circulating within a context of racialization do not always incite us to act, they can also immobilize us. The feeling of being made invisible, of being ignored, infuses the domestic worker with the feeling of social insignificance, it carries the sensation of disanimation. This stands in contrast to the impact that domestic work has on the household as an animating force. Thus, while not explicitly spelled out in any job description, the domestic worker's presence in the household, and the performance of quotidian tasks that contribute to the household members' well-being, infuses this place with life. Therefore, domestic work has an "animating" quality, although this effect is not commonly perceived or valued.

While the domestic worker is required to care for the household and, as such, contributes to the creation of positive affective energies, the tasks she is supposed to deliver as well as the dynamics she occasionally encounters, affectively impress upon her a low status and a sense of devaluation. Furthermore, her position as an undocumented migrant places her in a human rights void and makes her more vulnerable to exploitation and denigration. When delivered by an undocumented migrant woman, domestic work becomes a neuralgic node in which the "multilayered texture" (Combahee River Collective, 1983) of oppression crystallizes.

Working with and through the affective texture of domestic work not only makes us aware of how our ability to act is emotionally driven, but also how emotions and feelings intersect with as well as carry social meaning. The analysis of domestic work illustrates that affect focuses on the transgression of the script of representation and (re-)cognition. As well as this affective dynamics evolve in a social context, even though they emanate from the spontaneity of our existence, instantly transforming the normative texture of intelligibility. Affect dwells in-between the agitations and arousals of our relational lives and our attempts to make sense of them. Thus, while emotions and feelings reflect the affective immediacy of ordinary encounters, they are mediated through social meanings that also reflect historical becomings and geopolitical positionings.

Set within the context of racism and labor exploitation, the analysis of affective encounters in private households that employ undocumented migrant domestic workers sheds some light on how emotions and feelings are not just intentional, but are impressed upon objects and spaces. Thus, the exploration of affect in domestic work tells us about the impression of "ugly" feelings on people's bodies and how this affects their minds and well-being or, in other words, how these feelings can work to immobilize or "disanimate" them. Yet, as we have seen through Carmen's words, the

response to feelings related to attempts at denigration and subjugation can also be answered with feelings of rebellion and resistance.

Considering these affective dynamics, the analysis of domestic work as affective labor not only addresses the emotional and physical qualities of this labor. Rather, it places the impression, expression, and circulation of feelings and emotions in the private household as a point of departure in any such analysis. Thus, seeing domestic work as affective labor draws our attention to the productive character of care and to the extensive dynamics of societal reproduction. It also brings to awareness the emotional economies organizing the immediacy of employment relations. The feelings and emotions circulating in the private households which domestic workers are exposed to and need to deal with, are expressions of social asymmetries and articulations of global inequalities.

Conclusion

The employment of undocumented migrant domestic workers in private households articulates the re-shuffling of global inequalities on a local level (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). Set in this context, the understanding of domestic work as affective labor asks us to contextualize the expression and impression of feelings within a societal context. Immersed in the energies of private households, crossed by the racializing effects produced through migration policies and the logic of the labor market, domestic work is mediated by and derives from affective dynamics.

Focusing on the emotional faculties deployed in caring for others and the affective fabric of the social, the analysis of affective labor addresses the expression, impression and circulation of feelings and emotions and how these dynamics impact bodies, objects, relations and spaces. Thus, the analysis of affective labor addresses the sensorial corporeality of the social. As such, it speaks of the more legible cognitive dimension of feelings and emotions as well as of the dispersed and unruly dynamics of feelings, emotions, sensations, and intensities.

The analysis of domestic work as affective labor reveals the sociability of affect and the *affectivity* of the social. This could lead us to raise the question on the value this discussion could add to domestic workers' organizations' claims for standard domestic workers' rights. Thus, on the level of domestic workers' rights, the conceptualization of domestic work as affective labor not only invites us to address demands regarding the professionalization and regulation of domestic work,[3] but also to go a step further. While the claims for dignified working conditions (ETUC, 2012; FRA, 2011), "portable workers' rights"[4] (Piper, 2007) and the social recognition of domestic work as work are fundamental claims in the struggle for domestic workers' rights, putting affect on the agenda of working rights strengthens the argument raised that domestic work is fundamental for the reproduction of society. Looking at the affective dimension of domestic work makes us realize how this work is intrinsically linked to the pulses of life, the relational, reciprocal, and interconnected character of our social being. Labor in general, and domestic work in particular, as such need to be conceived in relation to the feelings, emotions, sensations, and intensities that drive them, which become embedded in places and experienced in ordinary encounters. Indeed, the tasks performed in domestic work are intrinsically linked to sustaining personal well-being. Therefore, recognizing this affective dimension in domestic work requires that we place it at the core of debates on convivial futures.[5] This perspective enables us to set domestic work as affective labor at the center of the capacity for creating a 'good life' and enabling a 'living together'.

Endnotes

[1] This study was an EU research project on the interpersonal relationships between domestic workers and their employers in private households conducted in Austria, Germany, Spain and the UK between 2003 and 2004. Twenty-five in-depth interviews and ten focus groups were held in each country with domestic workers from Eastern Europe, West Africa and Latin America, and with middle-aged, professional White women who were their employers.

[2] For Spinoza "passion" is affect produced by external causes (Spinoza, 1994: 154).

[3] For further discussion, see "European Parlament Resolution on Regulating Domestic Help in the Informal Sector". Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P5-TA-2000-0542+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN.

[4] With this term Nicola Piper discusses the possibility for migrant workers to claim rights while they are on the move. In particular, she makes the case for workers that have worked in a country and have been deported or needed to leave the country of employment to be able to claim their salary, redundancy rights and other workers' rights, although they no longer reside in the country (Piper, 2007).

[5] As I argue elsewhere in regard to a decolonial ethic of care (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2010), domestic work is driven by the principles of care and sustainability. This affective fabric of domestic work urges us to reconsider Carol Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care. Gilligan's discussion of the ethic of care addresses the question of moral judgment departing from contextualized and interconnected moral claims. In this sense, the sphere of care becomes a "moral imperative" from which to approach questions of reciprocity and responsibility. As feminist theorists engaging with the ethics of care (Bowden, 1997; McDowell, 2004; Tronto, 1993, 1995) have argued, a society based on solidarity needs to share the common understanding that care and love (Kittay, 1999) are fundamental for communal life (Paredes, 2008).

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