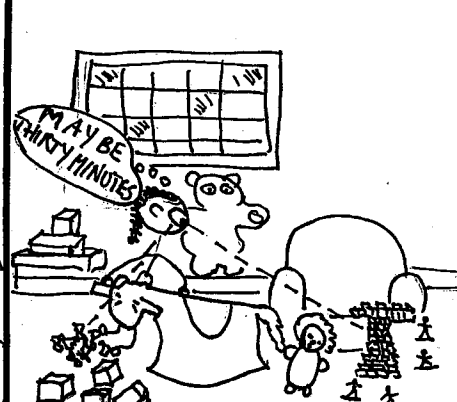
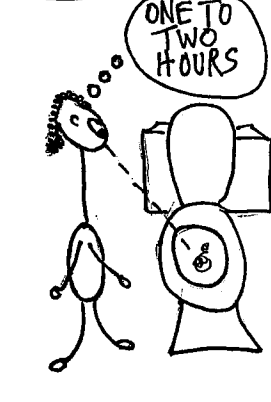


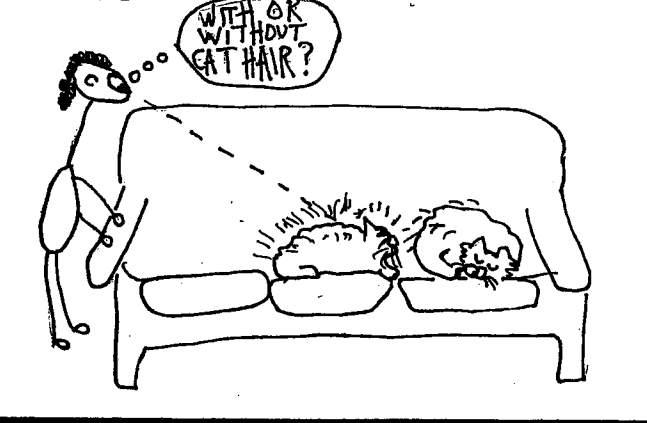
1: CLEAN



So. YOU WILL CLEAN TWO BATHROOMS... THREE BEDROOMS... THE PLAYROOM...



...THE LIVING ROOM... AND THE KITCHEN OF COURSE.



NOWADAYS, HOUSEHOLDS THAT WANT SOMEBODY TO DO DOMESTIC WORK IN THEIR HOME HIRE A CLEANING PERSON IF THEY CAN AFFORD IT. HAVING A PRIVATE COOK IS NOW AN EXTRAVAGANCE.

AND CARE MEANS A BABYSITTER, A NANNY OR AN AU-PAIR (IF THEY CAN AFFORD IT), OR A CAREGIVER FOR AN ELDERLY OR SICK RELATIVE (AGAIN, IF THEY CAN AFFORD IT).

IN THE PAST, EVEN HOUSEHOLDS WITH MEAGER INCOMES WOULD EMPLOY ONE WOMAN TO PERFORM ALL THESE TASKS. THE FRENCH TERM "BONNE À TOUT FAIRE" LITERALLY MEANS "GOOD TO DO EVERYTHING." SHORTENED TO "BONNE," IT TRANSLATES AS "MAID-SERVANT" IN ENGLISH.

IT'S NO WONDER THAT PAINTINGS
IN WHICH MAID-SERVANTS FIGURE
OFTEN SHOW THEM ASLEEP.
IT'S NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE
LAZY, BUT BECAUSE THEY'RE
TIRED.



{ "A Maid asleep" J. Vermeer (1657)
Metropolitan Museum, NYC }



{ Still from "The Favourite" (2018) }

"After the Party," Frederic Hardy,
1876, Private Collection



"Young Knitter Asleep,"
Jean-Baptiste GREUZE ©1759
The Huntington Gallery



"Idleness," Patrick Allan-Fraser, ©1871



"Interior with a Sleeping Maid
and her Mistress," (detail),
Nicolaes Maes, 1655
The National Gallery
(London UK)

MAIDS WORKED LONG HOURS,
SLEPT LITTLE AND WERE
INDEED EXHAUSTED.



A young woman would find work as a domestic servant - a workhorse really - as she had to carry heavy bags of laundry to the wash house, she had to clean the house, and do the shopping and the cooking.

HANNAH CULWICK, THE MAID-SERVANT
WHOSE DIARY HAS PROVIDED FIRST-
HAND INFORMATION ABOUT THE
EVERYDAY LIFE OF A MAID IN
VICTORIAN ENGLAND, WROTE
IN ONE ENTRY...

Clean'd the steps and
flags[⊗] on my knees.

Clean'd the street flags[⊗]
too on my knees.

Wash'd up in the scullery.

Clean'd the pantry on
my knees and scour'd
the tables.

Clean'd the hall and steps
and flags on my knees.

Swept and dusted the rooms.

Got breakfast up.

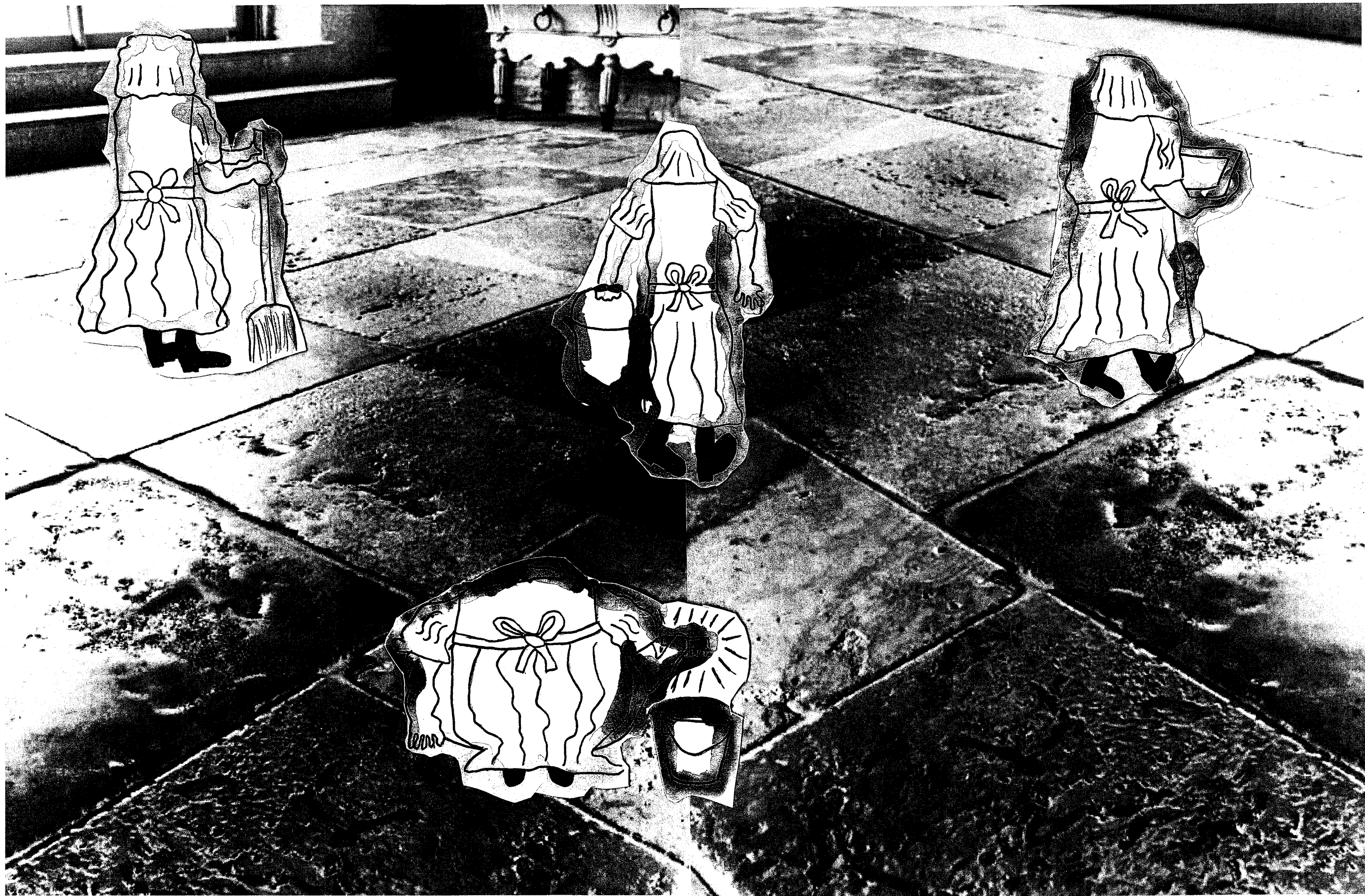
Made the beds and emptied
the slops.

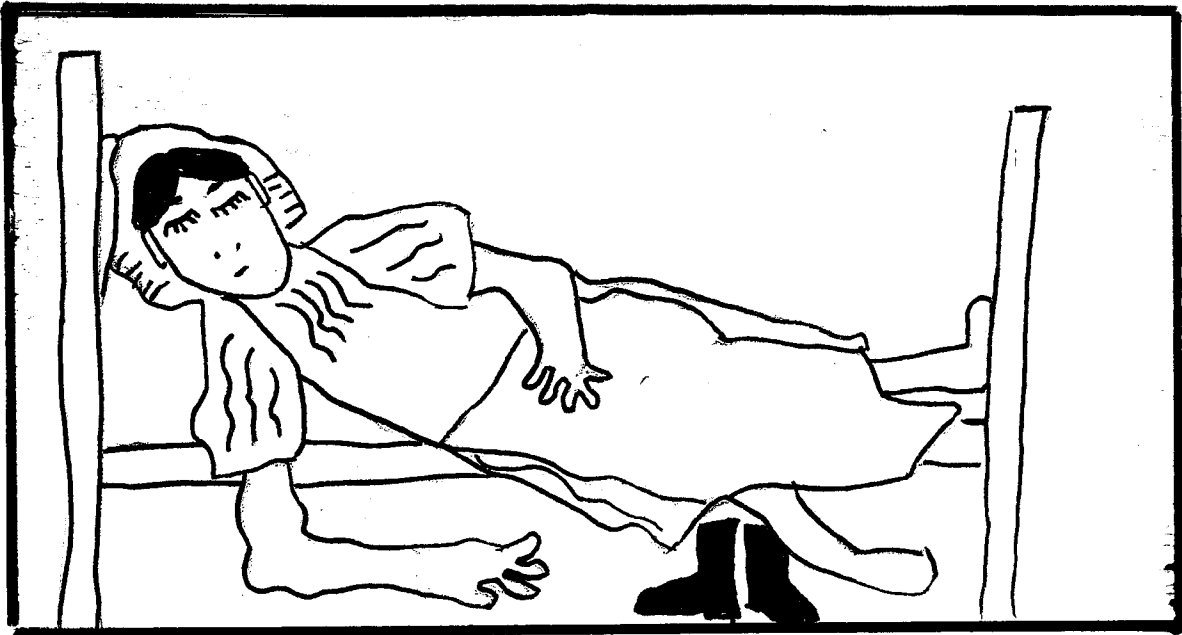
Clean'd and wash'd up and clean'd the plates.

Left the kitchen dirty and went to bed
very tired and dirty.



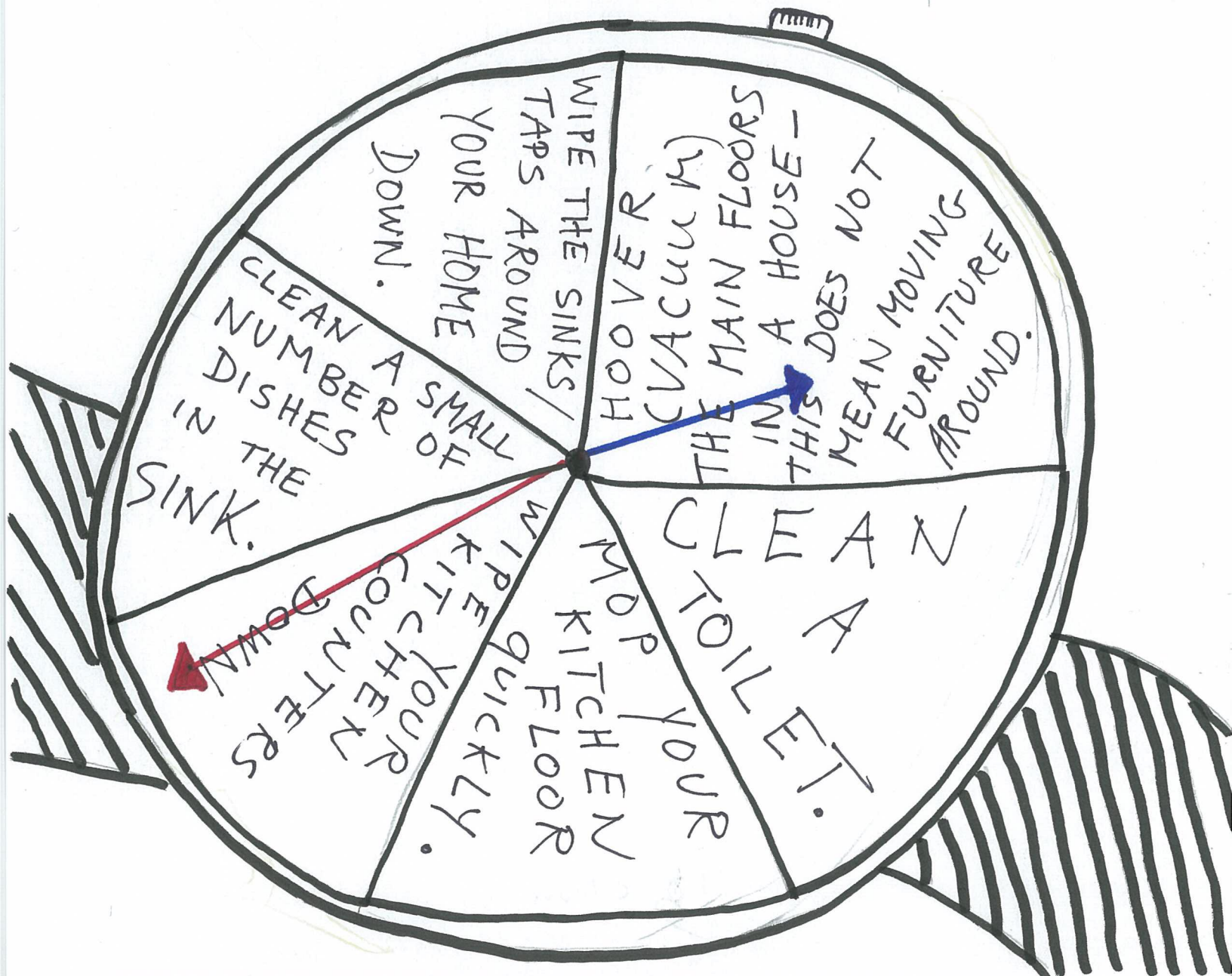
⊗ flat stone slab



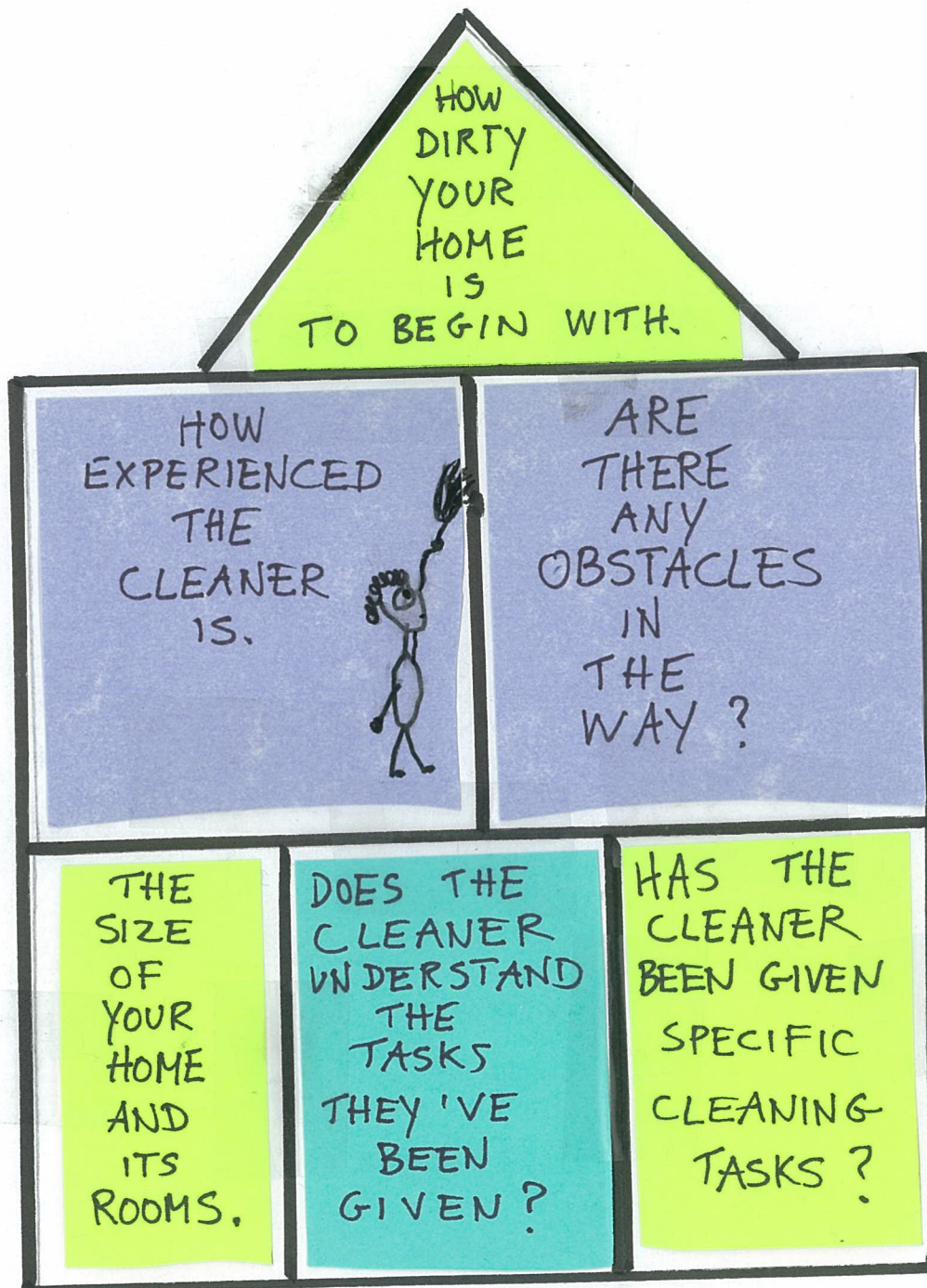


WITH A RISE IN LABOR PROTECTION IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY, HAS THE INTENSE PACE OF WORK PERFORMED BY A PERSON WHO IS HIRED TO CLEAN CHANGED MUCH? IN ENGLAND, THIS DEPENDS ON WHETHER THEY WORK FOR AN AGENCY OR WORK FOR THEMSELVES.

THE WEBSITE <https://inthewash.co.uk/cleaning/what-can-a-cleaner-do-in-2-hours/> STATES THAT A CLEANER CAN ACCOMPLISH A LOT IN JUST TWO HOURS:



THE WEBSITE GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE TWO-HOUR MARK IS NOT AN ABSOLUTE AS MANY FACTORS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE TIME A CLEANER MIGHT NEED TO CLEAN A HOME...

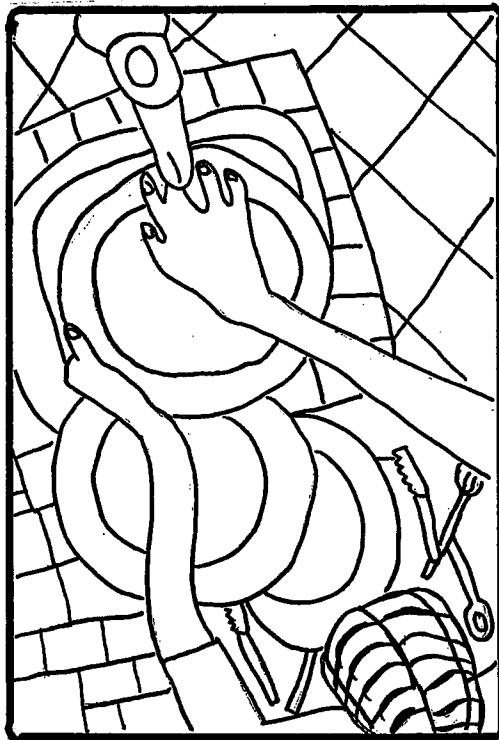


THE CURRENT HOURLY WAGE
OF A CLEANER VARIES FROM
COUNTRY TO COUNTRY AND REGION
TO REGION. THE UK WEBSITE
REMINDS THE READER OF THAT
COUNTRY'S MINIMUM WAGE (A
LITTLE UNDER 10 POUNDS/HOUR
FOR THOSE 25 YEARS AND OLDER)
(2021 FIGURES).

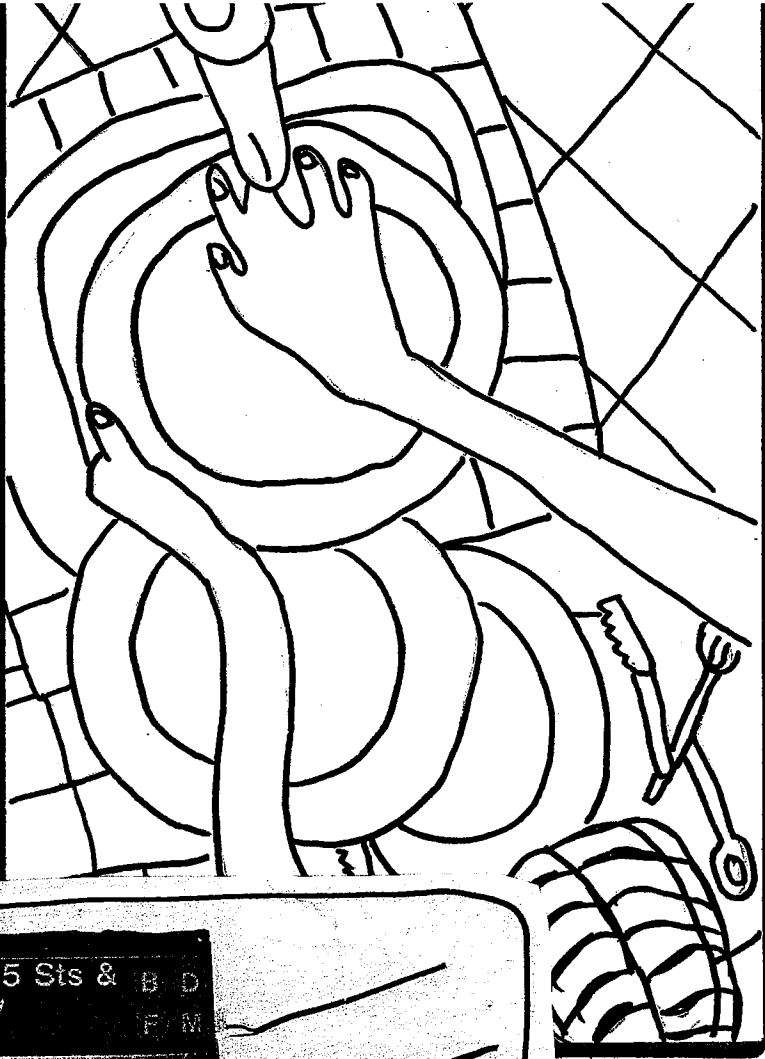
Nice that our twenty-first
century sisters are
finally earning a fair wage.

Well.
Some.

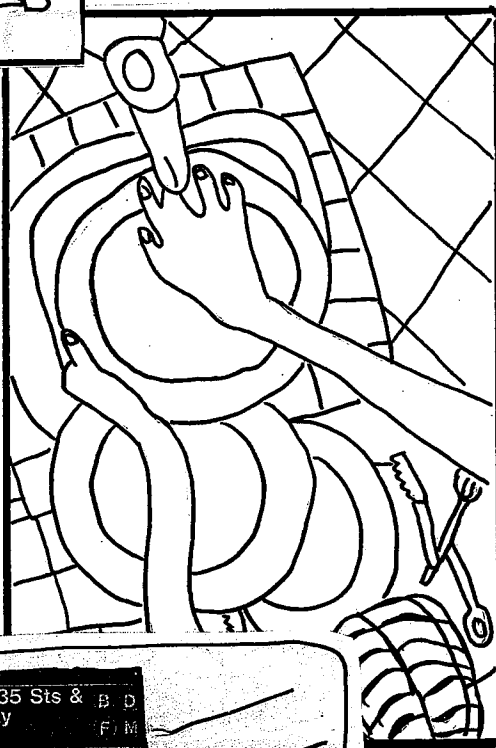
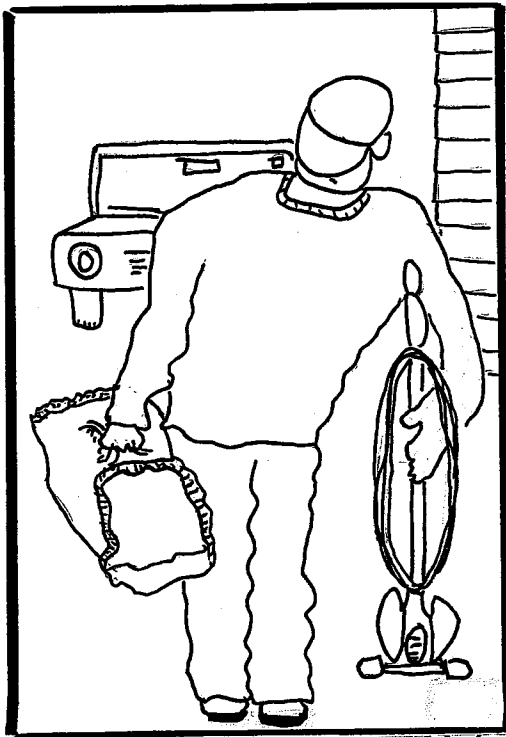




In New York City, Jenny (not her real name) works for my mother. She cleans the apartment, does the laundry, cooks dinner, sets the table and does the dishes. Sometimes she ~~recres~~ as well (my next chapter), as she did for my father when he was bed-ridden with Parkinson's at the end of his life.

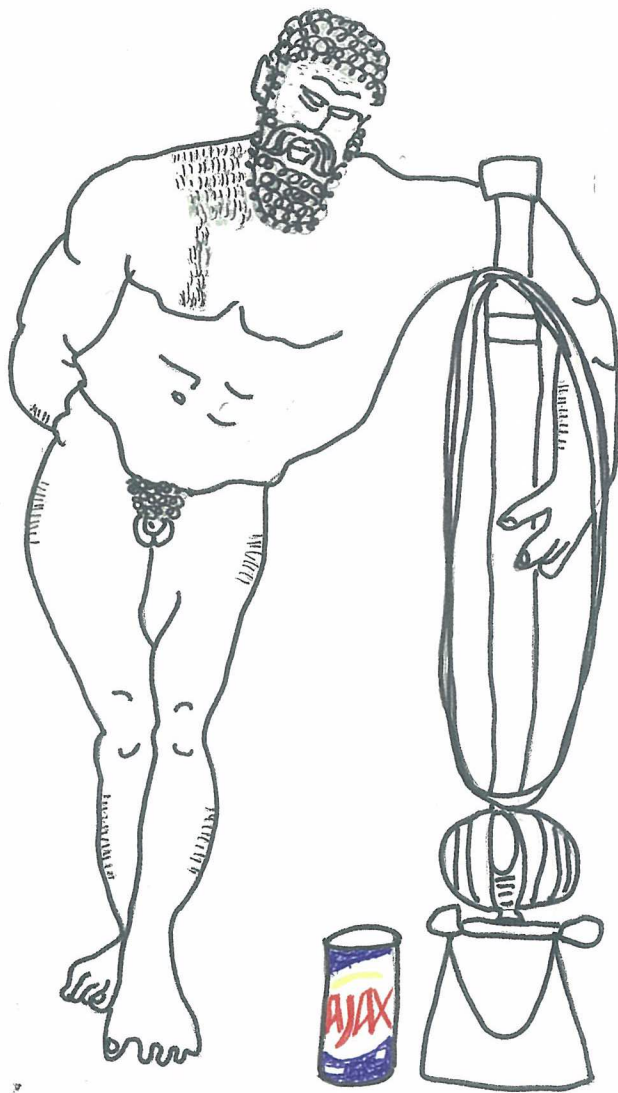


"Jenny" is never certain at what time she will be done with her job because her employers (she works for several families) often ask her to stay late, to cook dinner or stay with a child or elderly person while the other members of the family go out. Her days are long, and so is her commute.



While I write and illustrate this graphic history, a man is literally cleaning my house. His name is Bob. I watch Bob carry in bags of cleaning supplies and the vacuum cleaner from his car when he comes every other week. He has a bad back and yet he has a very orthodox work ethic. Keep working. Don't ask for help. He cleans for six or seven hours. When he leaves, the house sparkles. I can't make the house sparkle the way Bob can. Thank you Bob.

AJAX ? NO, HERCULES !



CLEANING IS LITERALLY
BACK BREAKING WORK.

BACK IN THE DAYS OF LARGE
HOUSES WITH LARGE STAFFS,
DOMESTIC SERVANTS OFTEN
LIVED IN THE HOME OF THEIR
EMPLOYER. LODGED UNDER THE
RAFTERS, SERVANTS SHARED A
ROOM ON THE COLDEST, DRAFTIEST
FLOOR.

THEY CARRIED HEAVY LOADS
OF WATER, LAUNDRY AND DISHES
UP AND DOWN MULTIPLE SETS
OF STAIRS AND DOWN LONG
CORRIDORS.

THEY HAD FEW BREAKS
AND FEW DAYS OFF.

IT SEEMS IRONIC THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE SO PHYSICALLY STRONG -- YOU HAVE TO BE TO DO THIS KIND OF WORK -- ARE SO IGNORED BY THE PEOPLE WHO EMPLOY THEM.

ONE REASON MIGHT BE THAT THESE PHYSICAL LABORERS DO NOT BELONG TO WHAT IS TRADITIONALLY DEFINED AS THE "WORKING CLASS."

LITERARY CRITIC BRUCE ROBBINS BELIEVES THAT THE SERVANT CLASS, WHICH WAS THE BIGGEST SOCIAL GROUP DURING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, WERE AN ANACHRONISM BECAUSE THEY DID NOT PERFORM "INDUSTRIAL LABOR.."



The Repetitious deep cleaning of the crevices and corners of grand mansions is not only political but also social, making it impossible to build solidarity. By contrast, factory workers worked side by side, would go on strike and join labor unions for better wages and safer working conditions.

THE JOB OF CLEANING ITSELF
BECAME AN ANACHRONISM AS
WAR AND TECHNOLOGY DIS-
PLACED THE LABOR FROM
HOMES TO FACTORIES, AND
FROM MANUAL TO MECHANICAL.



In the Twentieth-Century, especially following the first world war, men employed as domestics left their jobs to take more lucrative jobs in the industrial and service sectors. Many women who had replaced male workers in the factories during the war also left the domestic trades after the first world war.

The servant class shrunk dramatically, as machines entered households making the task of cleaning easier for the mistress of the house.

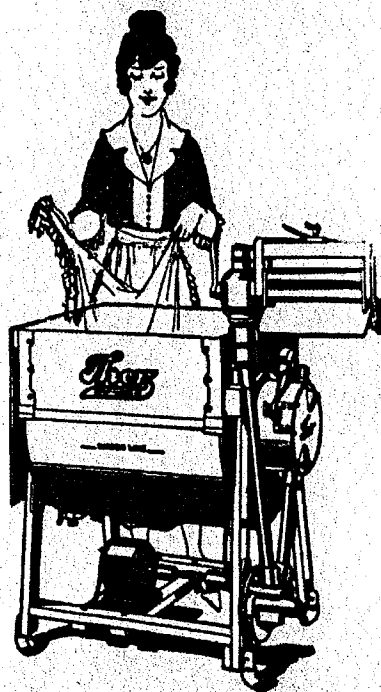
THE

Thor

Really Makes
Washdays
a Pleasure

Only a woman knows the joy of an easy washing—an ever-plentiful supply of clean linens and fluffy fineries, and only a woman knows how much more freedom the THOR ELECTRIC WASHING MACHINE gives her every week; how much easier the power driven wringer does the wringing. And she knows the THOR saves money every week it works in the home.

Electric Washing Machine



DESPITE ALL THESE UPHEAVALS,
CLEANING IS A JOB THAT STILL
NEEDS TO BE DONE, AS ROBOTS
HAVE YET TO REPLACE HUMANS.
IN FACT, QUITE THE OPPOSITE
IS TRUE.

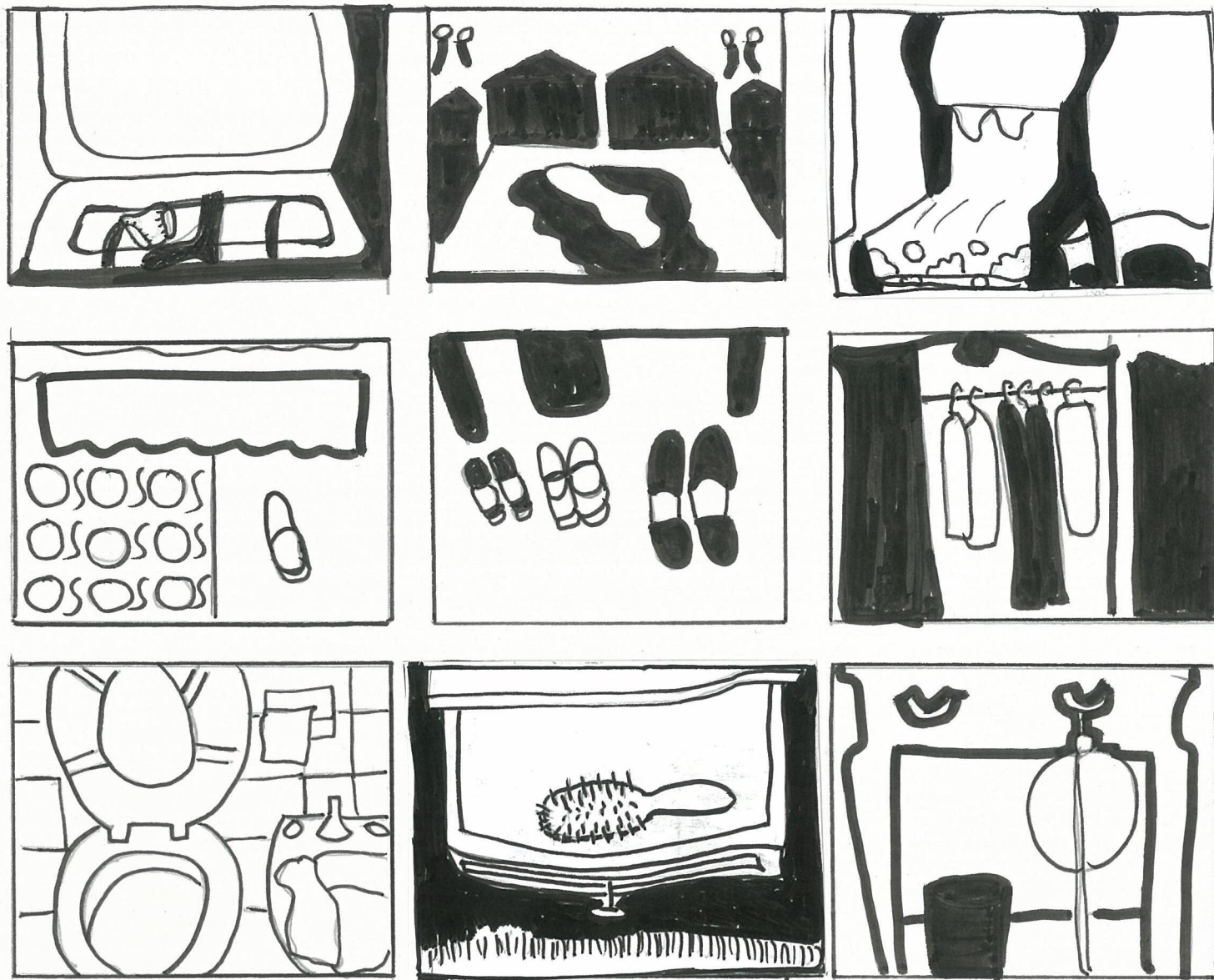
WHO CLEANS HOUSES (AND HOTEL
ROOMS, OFFICES, HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS,
MUSEUMS) TODAY ?

CLEANING HOUSES CAN PROVIDE A
GOOD INCOME FOR THOSE WHO WANT
TO WORK IRREGULAR HOURS OR HAVE
SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR SCHEDULE.
MANY ARTISTS AND WRITERS WHOSE
MAIN INCOME COMES FROM CLEANING
HOUSES CLAIM THAT THE FLEXIBLE
SCHEDULE AND THE INCOME THEY EARN
FREES THEM ENOUGH TO PURSUE THEIR
TRUE INTERESTS.

MANY OF TODAY'S DOMESTICS
ARE NOT MAKING A
CAREER OUT OF
CLEANING (OR NANNYING
OR CARETAKING).

LOUISE RAFKIN, THE AUTHOR
OF THE TELL-ALL MEMOIR,
OTHER PEOPLE'S DIRT (1998),
THE NANNY DIARIES' AUTHORS
EMMA MCLAUGHLIN AND NICOLA
KRAUS (2002) AND STEPHANIE
LAND WHOSE LIFE STORY THE
SERIES MAID IS BASED ON
(2019-2021) ARE JUST THREE
EXAMPLES OF MANY AUTHOR-
DOMESTIC WORKERS WHOSE
INCOME SUBSIDIZES A MORE
CREATIVE ENDEAVOR, NAMELY
THAT OF WRITER.





On Monday, February 16, 1981, I was hired as a temporary chambermaid for three weeks in a Venetian hotel. I was assigned twelve bedrooms on the fourth floor. In the course of my cleaning duties, I examined the personal belongings of the hotel guests and observed through details lives which remained unknown to me. On Friday, March 6, the job came to an end.

Sophie Calle, L'hôtel

THERE ARE THOSE FOR WHOM
CLEANING SUBSIDIZES THEIR
CREATIVE ENDEAVORS, AND
THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO
TAKE A "CLEANING BREAK"
IN ORDER TO MAKE A POINT
ABOUT THE OPPRESSION OF
THE WORKING CLASSES.
OR SOMETHING ELSE.



John R. Coleman, as president of Harvard College, explored the gulf between the academic life and the world of manual labor, which he detailed in a book, "Blue-Collar Journal." Here, he worked as a street cleaner.

A kind of precursor to Barbara Ehrenreich's 2001 book "Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America," "Blue-Collar Journal" was published in 1974 to enthusiastic reviews and made him a popular interview subject for print and television journalists.

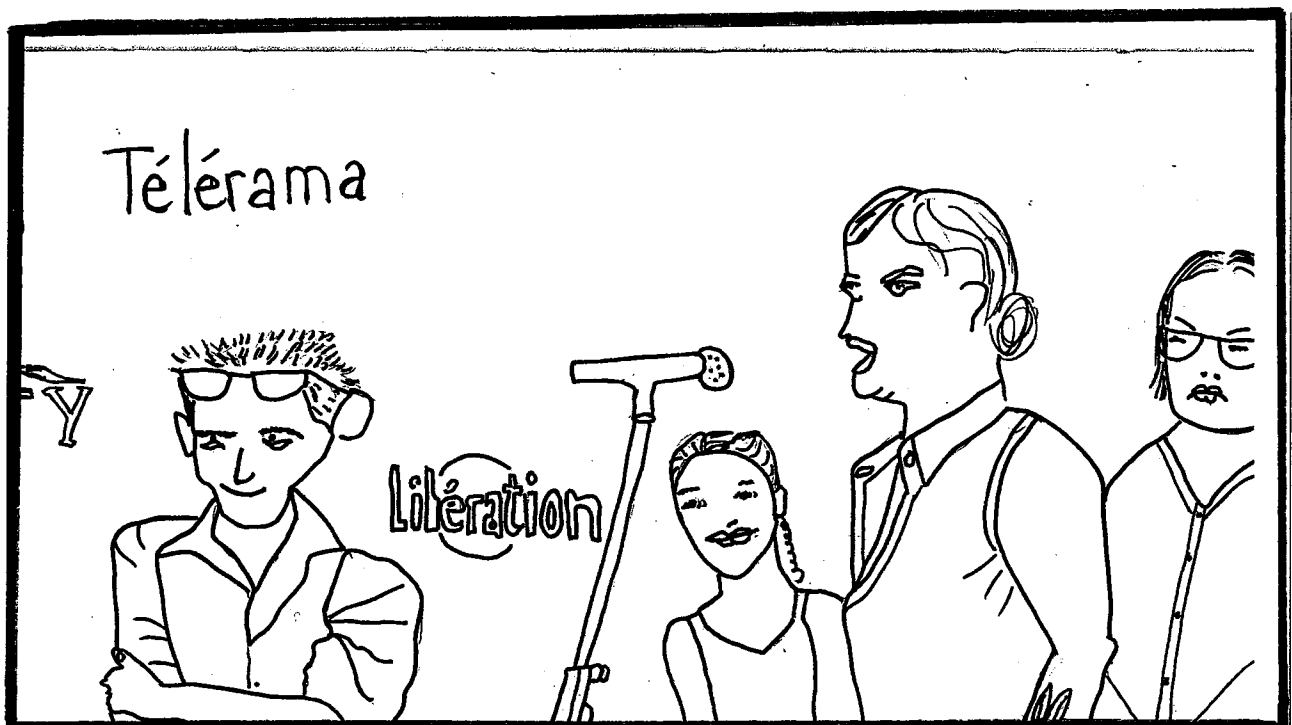
In his abbreviated career as a blue-collar worker, he concluded that academia was not quite as artificial as he had thought and manual labor not nearly as satisfying. Jobs, whether mental or physical, he decided, had "frustrations, joys, pains and dreams in just about the same mixture."

NYT sept 8 2016

THE FRENCH ACTRESS JULIETTE BINOCHE
STARS IN "OUISTREHAM" (ENGLISH TITLE
"WHO YOU THINK I AM"), A MOVIE ABOUT AN
INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST WHO IMPER-
SONATES A CLEANER IN ORDER TO RENDER
THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE.



IN FACT SHE RENDERS VISIBLE...



... THOSE WHO DO THIS WORK, WHO PLAY THEMSELVES IN THE FILM.

SHE ALSO RENDERS VISIBLE THE UNLIKELY-HOOD THAT SOMEBODY AS GLAMOROUS AS JULIETTE BINOCHÉ COULD BE A CLEANER ON A FERRY.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO "EXPERIMENT" WITH CLEANING AS A PROFESSION IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE TEMPORARY HARDSHIP AND EXPOSE IT TO THE WORLD.

THERE ARE THE SOPHIE CALLES OF THE WORLD WHO CLEAN FOR ART'S SAKE.
AKA VOYEURISM. ???

FOR COMPASSIONATE REASONS, PERHAPS, POPULAR CULTURE CONTINUES TO SHOW AN INTEREST IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO CLEAN FOR A LIVING (GUILTY AS CHARGED WITH THIS GRAPHIC HISTORY).

CLEANING AS A THEME IN POPULAR CULTURE SEEMS TO HAVE ALSO BECOME QUITE LUCRATIVE, JUDGING BY THE NUMBER OF BOOKS, FILMS AND TV SERIES THAT HAVE LATCHED ON TO IT. AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.

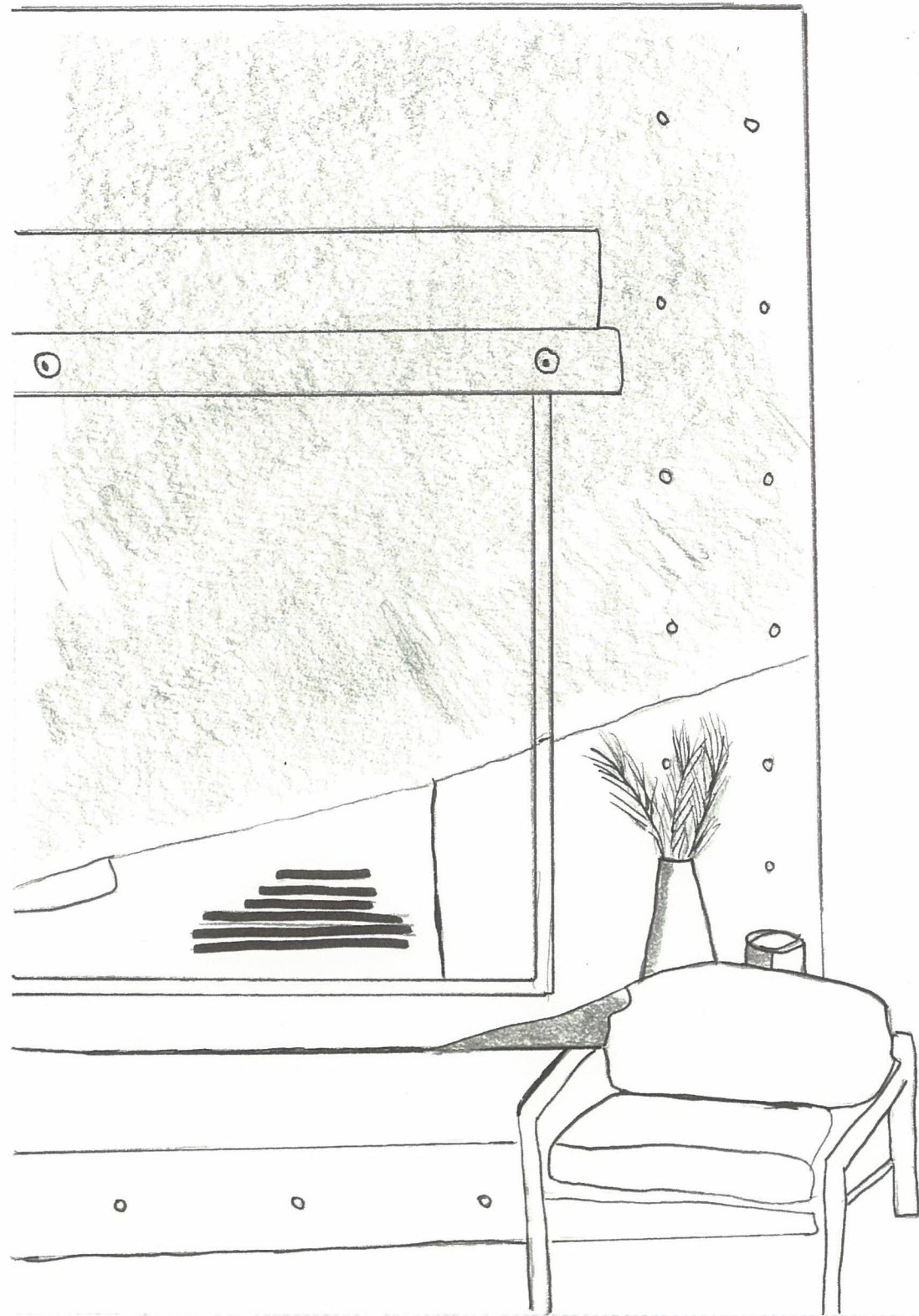
DOES FICTION ENABLE CHANGE IN WORKING CONDITIONS? DOES IT RENDER THE "INVISIBLE" "VISIBLE" TO THE POINT WHERE THE JOB BECOMES MORE PRESTIGIOUS, BETTER PAID AND LEGALLY PROTECTED?

SO FAR, NOT REALLY.

CLEANING AS A CAREER HAS YET TO GAIN PRESTIGE IF NOT RESPECT. WHEN CLEANERS ARE PORTRAYED BY GLAMOROUS ACTRESSES LIKE JULIETTE BINOCHE IN "OUISTREHAM" OR JENNIFER ANNISTON IN "FRIENDS WITH MONEY," ONE MIGHT THINK THAT THEIR PRESENCE MAKES THE JOB ITSELF MORE ACCESSIBLE AND INTERESTING TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.



ULTIMATELY, WITH WHITE ACTRESSES LIKE MARGARET QUALLEY (IN "MAID"), JULIETTE BINOCHÉ AND JENNIFER ANNISTON PLAYING MAIDS OR CLEANERS, ENLIGHTENING OTHER WHITE PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A MAID, PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR A REALITY CHECK.

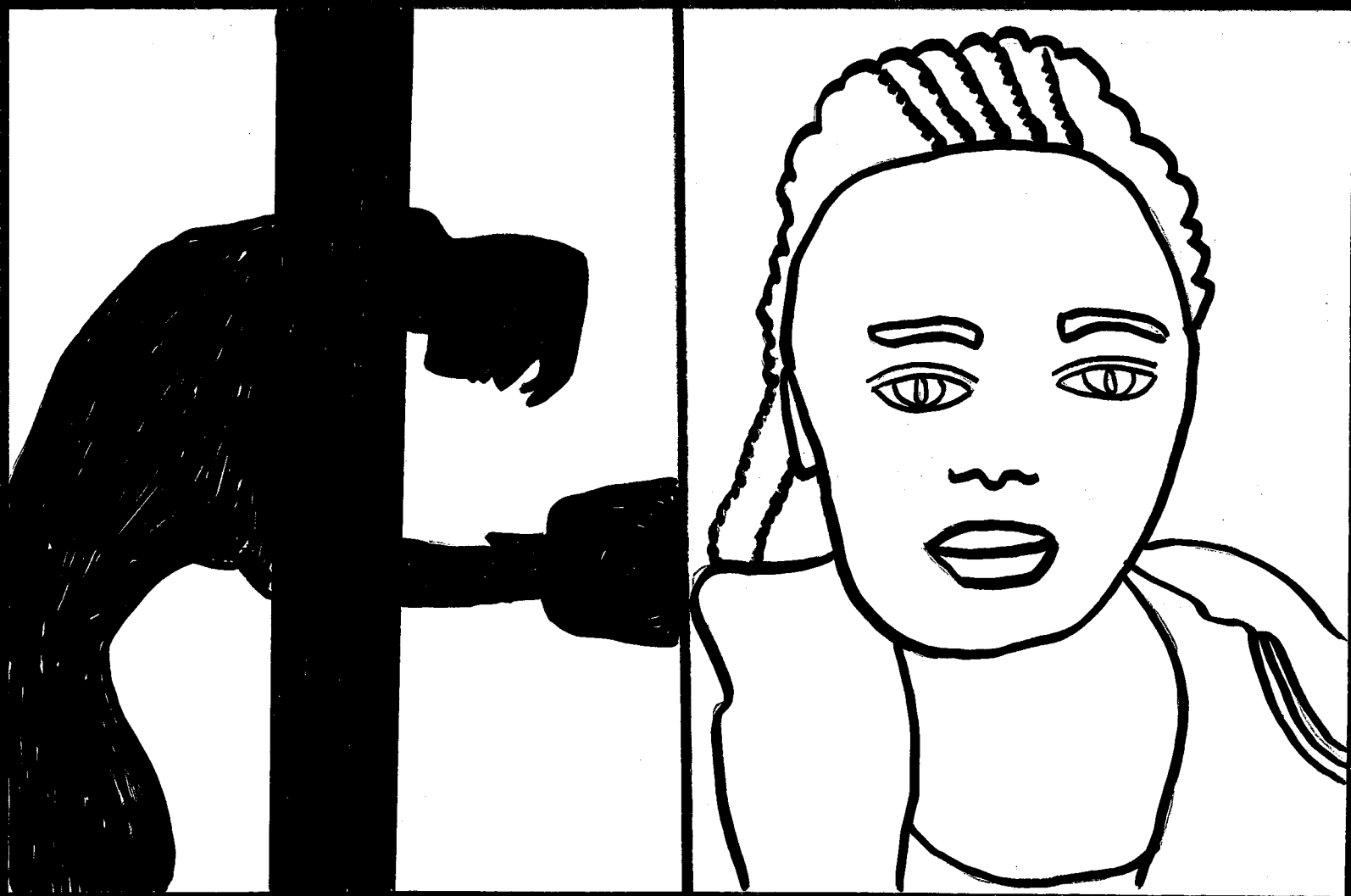


Alex in «Maid» (Netflix), 2021

CLEANING WAS OFTEN THE ONLY OPTION FOR BLACK WOMEN LIVING IN AMERICA'S DEEP SOUTH (UNTIL THE CIVIL RIGHT'S ERA) BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY JOB THEY WERE ALLOWED TO HAVE.

CLEANING IS OFTEN THE ONLY OPTION FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN WHO HAVE LEFT THEIR HOME COUNTRY AT GREAT EXPENSE AND PERSONAL RISK TO MAKE A LIVING AND PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILY.

IN CELINE SCHIAMMA'S FILM, "BANDE DE FILLES" ("GIRLHOOD"), THE MAIN CHARACTER, MARIÈME, REFUSES TO FOLLOW IN HER MOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS, A SINGLE MOTHER WHO CLEANS OFFICES AT NIGHT. THE CLASSIC IMMIGRANT TROPE, THE SINGLE MOTHER WITH LITTLE EDUCATION IS PERCEIVED AS A NEGATIVE ROLE MODEL FOR THE DAUGHTER.



(FICTIONAL) MARIÈME'S PARTICULAR SITUATION ASIDE, AS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR (REAL) WOMEN HAVE INCREASED ALL OVER THE WORLD, CLEANING JOBS ARE STILL PERFORMED BY "IMPORTED" LABOR, NOTABLY IMMIGRANT WOMEN. LOOKED AT GLOBALLY, UNIVERSAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOMESTIC SERVICE LABOR MARKET INCLUDE THE CONSTANT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MIGRATORY FLOW OF LABOR FROM REGION TO REGION AND COUNTRY TO COUNTRY. OTHERS INCLUDE A GREAT DEAL OF ABUSE ON THE PART OF THE EMPLOYER AS IMMIGRANT WOMEN ARE SUBJECT TO LITTLE TO NO LEGAL PROTECTION.

ACCORDING TO AUTHOR JOY ZAREMBKA...

...While some abusive employers use violence and the threat of violence to keep their domestic workers captive, others rely on psychological coercion. In one recent case, Hilda Rosa Dos Santos, a dark-skinned housekeeper from Brazil, was trapped for twenty years, with no pay and insufficient food, in the home of a Brazilian couple who convinced her that Americans disliked black people so intensely that she would likely be raped or killed if she went outside.



Unfamiliar with the English language or with American culture and laws, these women live as prisoners in the homes they clean.

IN HER BOOK ON IMMIGRANT LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES, GRACE CHANG OUTLINES THE KEY PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH IMMIGRANT LABOR AND THE TASKS THAT THEY ARE EXPECTED TO PERFORM WHEN SHE STATES THAT...



... These women's vulnerability is further exacerbated in a global market and political structure that enables both sending and "host" countries' governments and private employers to avoid ultimate responsibility for "overseas" workers.

SIMILARLY JANET MOMSEN WRITES THAT...

... This commodification of the transnational "maid trade" between the global south and the rich industrialized nations of the north is beneficial to both exporting and receiving countries, and has become highly politicized, with profits being taken by official and unofficial agencies at all stages of the migration process.



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROTECT
IMMIGRANT DOMESTIC LABORERS?
THE CONTINUING DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST AND ABUSE OF IMMIGRANT
DOMESTIC LABOR IS FACING
RESISTANCE FROM IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITIES THAT ARE ORGAN-
IZING AND FIGHTING BACK.

GRACE CHANG WRITES...



... Thus, while the intended effect and, to a large extent, the result of these attacks on immigrants by lawmakers and common "citizens" have been to teach or allow racism and sanction violence, they have also inspired action and forged unity among the targets of these attacks.

At the same time that restrictionist efforts breed hatred against immigrants and people of color, they also breed renewed commitment to pull together, to survive, and to fight back.

le Disposable Indispensable cs Domestic

WITHOUT US,
NOBODY
WOULD CARE
FOR YOUR
CHILDREN
AND THE
ELDERLY.

Without us,
your houses,
offices,
hospitals,
schools and
hotel rooms
wouldn't be
cleaned

Immigrant women
must keep fighting
for better wages
and working
conditions.

Immigrant women
are unjustly treated.

Immigrant women
play an essential
role in the U. S.
and world
economy.

ing Grace Chang