Ukusebenza/Ukuphangela: Raiding the Work of the Future

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Abstract

This paper is not about work or labour itself, and how it changes historically in South Africa (from pastoral, to agricultural and industrial; native labour, wage labour, migrant labour etc.), but about how the meaning of 'work' and 'labour' itself changes. What we want to suggest, is that an 'original' meaning of the tasks/duties associated with 'work' was 'woman': *ukusebenza*. What men did, does not constitute 'work' but something else entirely: raiding, moving, occasional, going etc.: *ukuphangela*. It is in the latter term, *ukuphangela*, that the term 'raid' emerges, and the argument draws on this notion and meaning of raid to underscore the re-thinking of gender, the subject and her relation to work, and history. The paper operates in two registers, focusing on the historic meanings of work and labour in the Eastern Cape and tracing lateral translations of these meanings into East London in the 1950s. It argues that in re-thinking meanings of labour and work through multiple temporalities, and through the contested meanings of the isiXhosa terms *ukusebenza* and *ukuphangela*, these word fragments are read as 'entryways to a wordliness' that puts lateral universals and temporalities of work back into circulation. As such, we pose the question rather, following Anne Kelk Mager and Helen Bradford, of whether it is gender (and what it means to be a man or a woman) that is at the forefront not only of class and race struggles, but of what comes to constitute the meaning of 'work', a concept whose provenance and meaning changes, as we have noted, with the making of modernity, industrialisation/capitalism, and the 'Europeanisation' of the world.

Keywords

labour, work, gender, race, East London, Eastern Cape, lateral universals, temporalities, translations.

Philosophy tends toward universality. History is wedded to particularity. How can their collaboration inform an idea of universal history that does not sacrifice differences of historical experience but honors them?[1]

To discuss all Xhosa [pastoralists, peasants, farmers] as men masks the fact that they were predominantly women[2]

Discourse of the Cape – The (white) pastoral

We are accustomed to thinking about the 19th century Eastern Cape as a killing field, the 'hunting ground' of empire. Today it is a landscape of visible and invisible graves into which has been inscribed a history of pillage and resistance as much as of a settler public sphere that sought to drown out the thinking and voices of those who opposed the violence that colonial land appropriations and settlement visited on the older African/Xhosa presence. Our turn to the Eastern Cape, and the return to a more distant time than the present with its disciplinary and epistemological certainties and 'exclusionary appropriation' of the past, is not a return to some kind of 'authentic' past, or an attempt to recover African voices. It is prompted, rather, by an ongoing discomfort with the notion of the 'frontier' which, the ubiquitous Eastern Cape Tourism road sign 'Welcome to Frontier Country' notwithstanding, is a contested concept that 'immediately implies unsettled states of meaning'.[3]

We want, therefore, to think the Eastern Cape, that other Cape, *iMpuma-Koloni* (the *isiXhosa* term invoking above all the relation to Imperial power that has so dominated our historical understanding of this region of South Africa) in its material and epistemological indeterminacy and entanglements, not just as a space of physical conflict and conquest, but one in which meaning and the authority to impose meaning itself was contested, layered, conflicted.

In what follows here, we treat words as 'entryways' and, following Susan Buck-Morss and Walter Benjamin and reading alongside Helen Bradford and Anne Kelk Mager, we think with the Eastern Cape as a portal, a gateway not just for a reckoning with the settler colonial racialised past that haunts South Africa as much as it does other parts of the world, but also for a new way forward to think about three things: gender, the subject and her relation to work and labour, and history.

At the heart of the colonial project on this 'frontier' lie three ideas, the desire for (1) land and (2) labour, and, alongside but deeply imbricated in these, a need for (3) language that could translate and instrumentalise a cacophony of different meanings, events and a range of different ways of being.

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1   S. Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', October, 172 (Spring 2020), 147.
2   H. Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, C. 1806-70', Journal of African History, 37, 1996, 353.
3   A. K. Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work" on the North-Eastern Cape Frontier, South Africa' in A. Fleisch and R. Stephens (eds.), Doing Conceptual History in Africa (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 74.

Despite the weight of the land, it seemed to us that it is 'work' and 'labour' that become central both to the meaning and to the unfolding of everyday life when African/*amaXhosa* women and men yielded to the presence of 'European' settlers, wanderers, missionaries and magistrates.

J. M. Coetzee usefully – to our thinking about 'labour' and 'work' – introduces the 'centrality of the question of labour in the [dystopia of the] South African pastoral'.[4]

> Pastoral in South Africa therefore has a double tribute to pay. To satisfy the critics of rural retreat, it must portray labour; to satisfy the critics of colonialism, it must portray white labour. What inevitably follows is the occlusion of **black labour** from the scene: the black man becomes a shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then to **hold a horse or serve a meal**. In more ways than one the logic of the pastoral mode itself thus makes the incorporation of the black man – that is, of the black serf, man, woman, or child – into the larger picture embarrassing and difficult. For how can the farm become the pastoral retreat of the black man when it was his pastoral home only a generation or two ago? [our emphasis]

> The constraints of the genre therefore make silence about the black man the easiest of an uneasy set of options. If the work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building, is what inscribes it as the property of its occupiers by right, then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen. Blindness to the colour black is built into [the] South African pastoral.[5]

Notwithstanding whatever reservations one might have about Coetzee, this '[b]lindness to the colour black', this removal of 'native labour' to an epistemological territory 'outside' of history that can maintain its ignorance of the 'disturbing realities of land and labour' – 'scandalous' because 'always more or less involuntary, never adequately rewarded' – constitutes a literary occlusion of native labour that we think inaugurates an epistemological and ontological pattern. This is of course written in the context of the rural/farm/preindustrial (which nevertheless hovers uneasily on the sidelines of 'the wilderness of the new cities'), but it does not take a major leap of the imagination to read in the above an already uneasy discourse of 'labour' and 'work': although 'labour' is Coetzee's chosen term, 'work' is already present in the

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4   Coetzee suggests that the discourse of the Cape, particularly in the literature of 'such unsettled settlers with so uncertain a future as the whites of South Africa' can be understood as 'pastoral': 'it looks back, usually in a spirit of nostalgia, to the calm stability of the farm, a still point mediate between the wilderness of lawless nature, and the wilderness of the new cities…'. The 'pastoral', specifically the South African pastoral (landscape art and landscape writing) needs to be thought of here alongside 'pastoralism' – that defining concept and mode of production of the amaXhosa. Coetzee attributes the idea of 'dystopia' to the 'great antipastoral writer' Olive Schreiner. J. M. Coetzee, White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 4.

5   Ibid., 5: '… the spectacle of native labour in South Africa, always more or less involuntary, never adequately rewarded, has its own scandalous force. The literature of white pastoral … marks off for itself, and defends, a territory 'outside' history where the disturbing realities of land and labour can be bracketed off, and questions of justice and power translated into questions of legal succession and personal relations between masters and servants'.

black 'man' who – invisibly – holds a horse or serves a meal and who does the 'work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building'.[6]

After the Pastoral – The industrial

Coetzee's formulations find resonance in the subsequent emergence of the 'native question' in South Africa, and in the formulations around 'native labour'. As Barchiesi has argued, if:

> … in colonial terminology, the 'native question' defined as its problematic the management and governance of African difference, the 'labour question' brought the 'native' under the mark of a paradigmatic homogeneity as a 'labourer', not even a 'worker' or an 'employee', terms which were reserved for the white working class. The 'labour question' was an expression specifically used in relation to the control of flows of black employment as a necessary condition of profitability for mining capital in the context of post-war [SA War] reconstruction and national unification. [Such management and governance] entailed, however, imperatives of productive discipline aimed at African populations that were reluctant to work for wages or prone to work avoidance.[7] [we will return to this 'reluctance' or 'avoidance']

The emergence of 'cheap native labour', then, essentially emerged as the basis for making black work 'invisible', producing an archetypical figure – the 'unintelligent but powerful native',[8] 'outside' of modern (SA) industrial history, a figure whose work was manual, unskilled, primitive, an untranslatable figure of a 'capitalism with fetters, or a consciousness waiting to be sublimated'.[9]

Susana Narotzky has recently provided a useful, if also northern and therefore selective and historically particular, re-statement and overview that historicises labour. She argues that three aspects – productivist, social, and individual – become entangled in the concept that political economists inherit and that, in turn, Marx will develop as the cornerstone of his theoretical construct. As a consequence, the dominant concept of labour rests on an idea of society or a collective good, an idea of individually self-contained creative energy, and an idea of the objectification of energy in material production; this in contrast to an early sense of work as '*Mühe, Qual, Last*' (trouble, torment, weight) in the sense of a manually harrowing activity.[10] These elements are present in the labour theory of value and in the triad of aspects

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6   Coetzee, White Writing, 11.
7   F. Barchiesi, 'The violence of work: revisiting South Africa's "labour question" through precarity and anti-blackness', Journal of Southern African Studies, 42, 5, 2016, 875-891, 878.
8   See, for example, E. P. Rathbone, 'The Native Labour Question' in The Nineteenth Century, Vol. LIV, (New York: Leonard Scott Publication Co., July-December 1903), 408.
9   S. Pillay, 'The Marikana massacre: South Africa's post-apartheid dissensus', Economic and Political Weekly, 48, 2013, 37.
10   But also 'work: the conscious/deliberate action to satisfy needs, part of the fulfillment of human existence ('"Arbeit": das bewußte Handeln zur Befriedigung von Bedürfnissen, darüber hinaus als Teil der Daseinserfüllung des Menschen'). See O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (eds.), 'Arbeit' [Work], in Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1974), 154.

that support it, namely the concrete, social and abstract forms of labour, defined in the capital-labour relation; labour, in this understanding, is generally paired with capital and referred to historical contexts where work is somehow connected with the process of capital accumulation.[11] Although 'native labour' in the South African case is also paired with and necessary to capital accumulation, the pairing of 'native' with 'labour' has its own 'scandalous force' of rendering the black person who worked as forever lacking, inadequate to and outside of the 'worker' or an 'employee' associated with the white working class. Put slightly differently, that this is happening under conditions of colonialism/apartheid provides another layer of 'removal' and rendering invisible.

What we might call 'black muscle power', invoked by Arnold Selby as the basis of wealth in the society, in part, in the context of the strike at Good Hope Textile Mills in King William's Town/Zwelitsha between June 1951 and September 1952, has a resonant locality in meaning and makes visible Coetzee's occlusion of black labour in the pastoral and in the untranslatable 'native labourer' of the industrial.[12] Makhulu has recently restated this longstanding framing, arguing that the 'classic figure of the wage labourer' and the 'ideal-typical figure of the miner and migrant worker' forms the backbone of narratives of exploitation and oppression in the apartheid economy and the legislative framework of white supremacy and, equally, the grounds for political agency, struggle and democracy, giving Selby's play on 'labour power' a determining trajectory and framing in black labour studies.[13]

In the broad strokes of summary form, labour studies in South Africa positioned itself as against 'cheap native labour'. Drawing on materialist and social history frames, it can be initially located within van Onselen and Phimister's readings of '*chibaro*' and its rational industrial opposition, resistance, and the emergence of African 'worker consciousness'.[14] It can also be read alongside Legassick and Wolpe's sign of the 'migrant' manual labourer as foundational to the racialised capitalist basis of South African industrialisation,[15] where denying black workers the franchise, trade union power and other 'human rights' and locating reproduction in the sub-subsistence homelands made possible the extreme exploitation and denigration of cheap black labour, rendering the labour of 'natives' not only invisible but also inconsequential (in stark contrast to Narotzky's European model).

Subsequently elaborated in the translations of these workplace relations of exploitation into class and national politics asserting the centrality of the black industrial working class, this has been relatedly tracked by an array of studies characterised by their focus on the emergence and dominance of the urban worker as the source of po-

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11   S. Narotzky, 'Rethinking the concept of labour', JRAI 24, 1 (Special Issue: Dislocating Labour: Anthropological Reconfigurations), April 2018, 29-43, 31.

12   B. du Toit, Ukubamba Amadolo: Workers' Struggles in the South African Textile Industry (London: Onyx Press, 1978), 61.

13   A. Makhulu, 'The Conditions for after Work: Financialization and Informalization in Posttransition South Africa' (London: Cambridge University Press: Special Topic Coordinated by Vicky Unruh, October 2012), 782-799.

14   I. R. Phimister, and C. Van Onselen. Studies in the history of African mine labour in colonial Zimbabwe. (Mambo Press, 1978). See also C. van Onselen, 'Worker consciousness in black miners: Southern Rhodesia, 1900–1920', The Journal of African History, 14, 2, 1973, 237-255.

15   M. Legassick and H. Wolpe. 'The Bantustans and capital accumulation in South Africa', Review of African Political Economy, 3, 7, 1976, 87-107.

litical freedom: the 'citizen-worker'.[16] As Peter Delius observes, in his recent introduction to 'A Long Way Home', and as part of a skeleton guide to the historiography of migrant labour, these critiques have 'deepened' an understanding of migrant labour as a prevalent toxic and intractable legacy'.[17] Alongside this, though, he persuasively points out that this emphasis on the collusion of capital and the state, and a focus on compulsion and underdevelopment, left little room for an analysis of the lives, experiences, agency and consciousness of the men and women at the heart of the system, which includes tracking different 'independent' local origins for and in migrancy, the complex interplay of urban and rural factors, the fact that it did not 'emerge as a form of cheap labour', but that, instead, it took a long and profound struggle to achieve that always incomplete form of 'cheap meaning' held and practised by different formations of racial capital and state, amongst others.

As significantly, though, Barchiesi has characterised the outcome of these readings of the 'citizen-worker' as 'precarious liberation', arguing that wage labour and its rhetorics of the 'dignity of labour' as the basis of 'the human (nonracial) subject' masked the fact that wage labour and the 'labourer' are both (a) located and reproduced within the precarious violences of 'native labour' colonial and apartheid subjugation and (b) that this productivist work ethic is 'incomplete', not exactly 'enchanted' and holding 'refusals' in and of its capitalist and colonial and apartheid relations.[18] As Lawhon et al. have argued, via Barchiesi, such accounts underemphasise the very real opposition to participating in the modern (white, colonial) economy'.[19]

But what if we return to work and the meanings of work to think/rethink this history of labour and its 'incompletions', and not simply read it as a forced 'partiality', as in partial proletarianisation, or 'cheap (migrant) native labour' only partially integrated into the racial capitalism/capitalist relations of production. Narotzky has argued that English-speaking scholars often use a distinction between 'work' and 'labour', where labour is defined as human effort which pertains to capitalist relations of production, and work describes the rest of human energy expenditure in relation to non-capitalist realms, whether these be reproductive tasks (which eventually became subsumed by the 'care' concept) or socially relevant, non-market-orientated tasks (generally but not solely productive) in the margins and interstices of the capitalist market system or in non-capitalist historical or present-day societies.[20]

While she goes on to add that these conceptual distinctions cannot be drawn in 'other languages' (languages such as French and German don't have this distinction between labour and work – they mean more or less the same thing), the difficulties/limitations but also the act of translating those terms into the context of colonialism and, in particular to another language such as *isiXhosa*, holds important possibilities

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16   Ibid.. See also Barchiesi, 'The Violence of Work'.
17   F. Rankin-Smith, L. Phillips, P. Delius (eds.), A Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds 1800 – 2014 (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2014), 315.
18   Barchiesi, 'The Violence of Work', 878.
19   M. Lawhon, N. Millington and K. Stokes, 'A labour question for the 21st century: Perpetuating the work ethic in the absence of jobs in South Africa's waste sector', Journal of Southern African Studies, 44, 6, 2018, 1115-1131.
20   Narotzky, 'Rethinking the concept of labour', 31-32.

for re-thinking both labour and work.[21] Weeks has relatedly argued that we need to think 'work' as 'productive cooperation organized around, but not necessarily confined to, the privileged model of wage labour'.[22]

The African Pastoral

Though Coetzee's attention to the rendering invisible of black labour is notable and suggestive for our own thinking, there is more than the 'double tribute' he writes of, to pay here. For this we need to return briefly again to the more distant time of the *amaXhosa* past, to '*Ums'obomvu*/Red dawn' and '*Intlazane*/Milking time, late morning', a time before European expeditions, militias and settlers. First, the 'pastoral' in South Africa must always reckon with its cognate, 'pastoralism' as the defining feature of what it meant to be *amaXhosa*, both as a system of reproduction and as a philosophy/identity. But perhaps more importantly, it is what is rendered invisible by Coetzee's repeated use of the term 'the black man' (notwithstanding his enumeration of 'woman' in the list quoted above) that is chilling: the pastoral mode of the *amaXhosa* itself rendered women – and women's work – invisible.

In Bradford's formidable intervention into Eastern Cape history, she points to the ways that women's work becomes invisible, which can be read alongside Narotzky's reflection on the ways that English has differentiated labour and work, placing women's work into 'reproduction'.

One powerful fragment from Bradford's seminal and defining work on the violences of gender, work and indigenous meaning and dispossession in the Eastern Cape will have to suffice. Women walked on special paths to 'avoid treading on the same ground as cattle; they walked backwards when approaching men's political arenas. "*Hai andingumuntu!*" – "I am not a person," stated one, lugging fuel' – working.[23] In a slight riff on Bradford's sharp wording at the head of this essay: 'To discuss all Xhosa [pastoralists, peasants, farmers] as men masks the fact that they were predominantly women' and that most of the work was done by women.[24]

The pastoral mode of the *amaXhosa* thus rendered women and women's work/labour invisible, even in the 'golden age' when people had land and could devote themselves to cattle rather than land as the key resource.[25] Subsequent processes of colonial dispossession of land further concentrated the materiality of men's labour

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21 Kathi Weeks also refuses the understood/normative distinction between work and labor, which calls into questioning the dichotomies of waged/unwaged, productive/reproductive; the English (and we might add colonial distinction) promotes different hierarchical forms of value attachment, as well as that they are distinctive and cannot be simultaneously present – it is either the one or the other; see K. Weeks, The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

22 Weeks, The Problem with Work, 14.

23 H. Bradford, 'Peasants, Historians, and Gender: A South African Case Study Revisited, 1850-1886', History and Theory, 39, 4 (Theme Issue 39, 'Not Telling': Secrecy, Lies, and History), 2000, 93.

24 H. Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, C. 1806-70', Journal of African History, 37, 1996, 353.

25 H. Bradford, 'Not a Nongqawuse story: An anti-heroine in historical perspective' in N. Gasa, Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo: Women in South African History (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009), 63. 'Xhosa wives were thus distinct from most of their peasant counterparts in southern Africa: their agrarian workloads were lighter. To be sure, contributing eight to ten children to peasant labour forces involved recurrent risky childbirth, and heavy domestic labour. Nonetheless, wives tasted the leisure and flirtations that occupied much of their husbands' time.'

into migrancy and cattle, while women's labour became further subjected to men's attempts to restore what Bradford calls 'milking time' – halcyon days when men had been able to shift 'away from plunder' and real '"men" were patriarchs who controlled cattle, fed their dependents on milk, [and] defeated those who threatened their breadwinning roles'.[26]

Approach: The fragment – lateral universalism – translation

To think with the concepts 'work' and 'labour', then, before they succumbed to 'imperial airs', requires, following Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Walter Benjamin and Susan Buck-Morss, a process of translation 'laterally across distances in time' – a task that is at once 'impossible', interminable, never complete, but necessary if we are to 'rescue a historical idea of universality' that does not sacrifice difference but honours it.[27]

This 'distant past' is made more distant by the knowledge project of colonialism, which has not only deluged the archive with written texts in 'European tongues' (Bradford), but has drowned out the categories and concepts of knowledge of those it sought to control and subject. This is thus also an ongoing search, a work of retrieval across diverse forms of surviving sources – written, oral and material – for fragments.

Buck-Morss has argued that one way to attempt to reconfigure knowledge in this way is to turn to what she calls a 'method'. Sub-headed as 'combining the incommensurable', she argues, via Benjamin, for the importance of the word and its 'indexing of a historical object named by the word and experienced by particular human beings at a historically transient moment in time … [where] the object is indispensable for establishing the Wörtlichkeit, the wordliness, of historical translation, and hence its truth'.[28] She argues that, for Benjamin, 'to speak of historical objects, and more, to speak afterwards about what is written of them, is to deal with ghosts, icons, avatars, monuments, fetishes, afterimages, ruins, and not the historical object itself'.

> Philosophy as historical translation would then strive to bring to life the residues of a still-distant past, to resurrect them or, if theological language is to be avoided, to bring their wordliness back into circulation, transforming knowledge of both past and present in the process. […] the translation process is intrinsically philosophical, defined by what Diagne refers to as lateral universality: 'Philosophy can only be universal if it moves across differences.'[29]

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26 Ibid., 58.
27 Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 151-2.
28 Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 149.
29 For Diagne, '"It is distance that constitutes philosophy". [He] is speaking of linguistic distance, but the claim might apply to temporal distance as well', Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 150-152.

She adds: 'the detail that counts is the one that arrests the reader because it does not fit that narrative'.[30] Here, the detail that arrested us – a fragment – was one that emerged from Anne Kelk Mager's 'impossible' and suggestive undertaking of the translation of 'work' as the concept at the very heart of the 'sociopolitical struggles' in the Eastern Cape ('the North-Eastern Cape frontier'): the conflict over 'the colonial settler demand for labour and […] the meaning of "work"'.[31]

The concept of 'work' was neither 'straightforward' nor 'pristine' in *isiXhosa* at the time of the colonial encounter, she writes, and two terms in tension with each other stand out:

> *Ukusebenza* is translated by colonial lexicographer McLaren in 1915 as a transitive verb meaning 'to work, labour, operate'. …

> *Ukusebenza* was used by colonists for physical work and derived its meaning from the concept of 'work' spelled out in the Masters and Servants Act …; it was a restricted and utilitarian concept.

> … isiXhosa speakers had a somewhat different understanding of the meaning of work for wages or reward. *Ukusebenza*, as activity that results in a reward (*ubaso*), derives a key element of its meaning from the term *ukuphangela*, derived from *ukuphanga*, and is translated by McLaren as 'to do with speed or force or violence; to hasten; do hurriedly, eagerly; to take by force, rob, plunder from'. …

> [and] engaging in cattle raids as ordered by the chief.[32]

The 'golden days', when the substance of men's work and the meanings of man-hood shifted from plunder and raiding, to protecting and getting the rewards of 'milking time' – controlling cattle and feeding their dependents on milk – had ended with *Imfazwe yeMida*, the War of the Boundary Lines (1809-12) which halted the westward expansion of the *amaXhosa* and laid the groundwork of their ultimate dis-possession. 'Having shifted from martial towards pastoralist definitions of masculin-ity, men had chosen to protect their herds rather than fight over land'.[33]

However, the changing terms of work, with men increasingly drawn into a migrant labour system, effected further transitions in the meanings of male work and masculinist translations of the raid, of related meanings in *ukuphangela* returned.

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30 Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 149.
31 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 74.
32 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 76-8: 'In the Xhosa conceptual universe in the mid-nineteenth century, every man was expected to do his share for the homestead by joining in action beyond the homestead and bringing home the reward, i.e. ukuphangela. This meant responding to the defence of the chief, the principal protector of the clan or tribe and engaging in cattle raids as ordered by the chief'. Suggestively, one genealogy of the 'arrest' is the police raid, which resonates with the violence of policing (illegal) migrant labour in the context of 'influx control', the endemic violence of the (mining) compound, and the xenophobic violence against illegal immigrants in the post-apartheid era.
33 Bradford, 'Not a Nongqawuse story', 67.

Here, migrancy to get money, if initially as forced labour and as the result of the demise of cattle, and thereafter for taxes and in relation to 'rolling waves of dispossession', ultimately re-routes [re-turns] to these meanings and to cattle as the material object of *ukuphangela*: migrancy as going to work in the colony is increasingly understood as 'the raid'. In time, *ukusebenza* is the term that primarily became associated with migrant and wage labour, but even there, an element of *ukuphangela* endured, as men went to work for just long enough to secure what they needed for their families.

'Labour' and 'work' are words that are so ubiquitous and quotidian that we seldom stop to think about their location at the intersection of the social, the economic and the historic. As sites of contestation and struggle central to the colonial project (in which the encounter between the languages, English and *isiXhosa*, itself required translation and transcription, a task on which missionaries embarked almost immediately as a project of conversion, classification and world- and word-making with historic consequences for the intellectual lives both of colonists and the *isiXhosa*, particularly in the Eastern Cape),[34] their meaning moves across (etymological and historical) time and space and is by turns sedimented and eroded by repetition, acceleration, durability, difference and malleability.[35] They continue to have an effect and are conceptually polysemous.

A second fragment is important here. As Mager points out, there was 'an uneasy and incomplete convergence between these terms [*ukuphangela* and *ukusebenza*] and between missionary and colonial concepts of "work"'.[36] From her discussion of Moravian missionaries' concepts of 'work', it emerges that **gender** – in particular the meaning of what it is to be a man or a woman – rather than 'work' itself is key to understanding this unease. Missionaries recognised **women's** productive activity: tilling the soil, collecting fuel, building houses and cooking, and described them as hard-working and industrious. In the missionaries' world view, however, much of this needed to be designated as domestic work as the appropriate sphere for female activity, and they urgently needed men to do what they recognised in the type and quality of work that women did. Helen Bradford puts this somewhat more sharply: women were the original (ideal and actual) wage labourers.[37] But those desirable 'qualities' associated with women's work could never easily be transferred to men, who ridiculed white/European people:

> [When] they saw the men work with pick and spade, they said: 'You are such stupid people, to work so hard – we would never do that! We would rather die than put our body through such hard labour!'[38]

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34 Coetzee's note about the 'quest for an authentic language', a 'language to fit Africa' in the South African pastoral – 'he [the European] must know the language "from the inside" as well, that is know it "like a native", sharing the mode of consciousness of the people born to it, and to that extent giving up his European identity' – speaks, although not self-consciously here, of the kind of violation/transgression – a violent penetration – that inheres in this quest; see Coetzee, White Writing, 7.
35 A. Fleisch and R. Stephens (eds.), Doing Conceptual History in Africa (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 2.
36 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 77.
37 See Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism'.
38 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 78.

Reflected in this is the idea that such 'hard labour' was unacceptable for a real man and that it was 'authority over the labour of others, (principally women)' that constituted manliness and masculinity.[39] And so, in an intriguing translation/ transference between two different, although not completely unconnected, registers – but one that we think foregrounds the critical importance of gender to the simultaneously 'mutable' and 'durable' characteristics' of 'work' in this context of a troubled African/missionary/settler encounter in the Eastern Cape – the missionaries used the meanings associated with what it meant to be a 'man', and transferred those to the concept of 'work'.

Missionaries' ideas about work revolved around notions of tireless, perfection, resilience, orderliness and improvement, and the concept of 'work' was 'tightly linked to discipline and control'. In the Xhosa conceptual universe these concepts of discipline and control were not associated with 'work' but with gendered adulthood/ maleness.

> [U]budoda, **what it meant to be a man**, implied forbearance, controlling one's temper, ability to strategize, courage in conflict, loyalty to one's chief and the ability to keep order, control. [our emphasis][40]

And so the missionaries needed to remove these values from 'gendered authority', i.e. the meaning of what it meant to be a 'man', and 'graft them onto the meaning of "work".[41] Those values, then, resonated with a male understanding of work as raiding/ *ukuphangela*; and in turn resonated with migrant labour, not just as something imposed by the needs of industrialising capitalist society in South Africa, but as something chosen by African men themselves as an at least partially acceptable (see below) expression of their manliness.

> [T]he limited mutability of indigenous conceptions of 'work' in colonial South Africa was due to the refusal of people to embrace a notion of 'work' that denied indigenous values and restricted agency and experience. Over time, and as colonialism strangled the possibility of living outside its orbit, indigenous concepts of 'work' became more entangled with colonial concepts. However, their original meanings were not entirely displaced and remain imbricated in contemporary usages of terms such as *ukuphangela* and *ukusebenza*.[42]

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

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39 Ibid., 84.
40 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 78.
41 Ibid., 79.
42 Ibid., 85.

East London

In the remainder of this paper, we want to turn to East London in the 1940s and 1950s. Minkley has argued elsewhere that this is East London's phase of 'rapid industrialisation' (1945-1957). This is a period that is seen to mark the 'core' of South Africa's industrial revolution, or, what liberal conservative economist Hobart Houghton, after Rostow, called its fourth 'drive to maturity' stage.[43] It is also read as the decade of 'structural change' to the development of industrial manufacturing in colonial Africa. In East London, then, this period and following this explanatory framework and periodisation was defined as having an 'expanding labour market', at a rate of an increase/addition of 'twenty additional men per working week maintained over ten years'.[44] Assumptions associated with this period of transformation/ industrialisation argue for the equally rapid emergence of a black manufacturing working class (and their significant displacement and substitution of white labour), which becomes socially and politically central thereafter.

In our attempt to 'situate situating', then, a brief summary of the persuasive, indeed, dominant interpretation of black workers (not tribesmen, 'red' or schooled, encapsulated or plural, or whatever), located within a system of maximizing benefits according to the labour market and its conditions, enter and occupy violent, industrially (and not paternalistically) disciplined racialised work situations in which they are subjected to 'industrial violences' as much as they are to racial and gendered ones. This violence is systemic, as it draws the migrant labour system irrevocably into the factory system. These workers are not free, they are often drawn into involuntary work, 'immobilised' by systems of migrant (incomplete) dispossession and the reproduction of cheap migrant labour by sub-subsistence homeland countrysides, and excluded from permanence and stability by work practices and influx control. They are certainly not 'content' with forms of entry, recruitment, participation, working situations, supervision, management and dismissal, reproducing and drawing on historical narratives of work as forms of colonial 'punishment' and disciplining power. Regional notions of '*isibhalo*' and '*chibaro*' (forced labour), or working for '*baroko*', for 'nothing' are powerful and constant reminders.

There have been a number of persuasive accounts/explanations of these forms of refusal and the nature of the 'reluctant' and hesitant, incomplete and uneven emergences and 'work avoidances' associated with waged labour, or of a 'partial' participation and incorporation of black labour, with conceptual frameworks running from partial proletarianisation, through those of workplace 'moral economies', to those of resistances related to the emergence of a 'worker consciousness', or of local

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43   See D. Hobart Houghton, Economic Development in a Plural Society: Studies in the Border Region of the Cape Province (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1960).
44   Hobart Houghton, Economic Development in a Plural Society, 298.

'meanings of class'.[45] Minkley has drawn on many of these arguments elsewhere, suggesting the ways that black workers contested, disrupted and disputed the enduring and the changing local constructions of 'native labour' within what he called 'local meanings of class', where these representations and discourses were intrinsically mobilised to 'handle' and 'counter' the alienation and dislocation of fragmented proletarianisation and its implicated 'cheap native labour class' in East London in this period and beyond. He argued then, that this newly discovered black worker was in the early 1950s unresponsive to the moulds prepared with so much difficulty by management's ideological brokers. There was no 'easy' second or third generation workforce, no pre-existing pattern and culture of capitalist work and skill, no clear-cut separation from the land, no unambiguous conception of private property, not even the necessary acceptance of alienated industrial time in East London in the 1950s.[46]

Elsewhere, Minkley has traced the understandings of labour and meanings of work articulated by white journeymen and apprentices, by prevailing local fractions of capital, amongst commercial, business, factory and 'infrastructural' owners and supervisors, by various local and national state officials and by those located within the domestic economy – the masters and madams. He argues that there were overlapping, mutually relational, but also distinctive meanings of work 'that drew on' lines of class, race, gender and age, in particular around universal imaginings of the terms, conditions and values of work and of their past 'origins' and future projections.[47]

In summary form: (1) white artisan workers drew on their discourses of craft, of an identity as 'journeymen' and apprenticeship skills as <u>civilisational European 'white skills'</u> and argued for their maintenance and racial separation based on a primitivist discourses of black labour's unsuitability. (2) Low level white factory workers and machine operators (who were not artisans, supervisors or clerks), largely emergent in the 1930s, drew on a more generic <u>settler discourse of masters and servants</u>, placing their labour within the 'master's' discourse of labour welfare rights and entitlements, while defining black labour as 'lazy', as 'useless' and as servile, cheap, manual and temporary – as 'kaffir labour'. (3) Basic Sector (construction, municipal), domestic, service and commercial capital, while also drawing on these discourses, <u>emphasised the migrant and temporary status</u> of 'Xhosa labour' and deployed a discourse of the threat of competing labour, where this 'Xhosa labour' carried many of the associated stereotypes of encapsulated practices of timeless rural 'tribal' superstition and ill-discipline. (4) Finally, factory owners and managers, in engineering and in textiles, food, chemicals and motor industries, made a range of assertions, but it is here that a

45 Lawhon et al., 'A Labour Question', say, in relation to this formulation 'Only through a reorientation of meaning, brought through shifting values in part through missionary cultivation, could being a worker become a valued subject position.' … Chakrabarty notes the workers' 'intimate and plural relationships to capital, relationships that range from opposition to indifference and, presumably, to acquiescence' … and with reference to Fred Cooper: 'Their refusal to work; their questioning of the universal, empty time of capital; and their counterposing of alternative cultural forms, values, and modes of productivity all hinted at the possibility of a more thoroughly contingent history of work', 1115-1131.

46 G. Minkley, Border Dialogues: Race, Class and Space in the Industrialisation of East London, (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1994), 232-246.

47 Ibid..

most clearly <u>productivist understanding of 'native labour',</u> capable of workplace integration and stability, and of acquiring 'skills' emerged. Here, languages of responsibility, efficiency, reliability and work discipline were articulated, albeit alongside their opposites, which were attributed to inferior 'native capabilities' and which were understood to be inherent in 'the native'. In part, these associations were also influenced by the emergent presence and development of multi-national corporations and their more universal, Europeanised/global discourses which paid lip service to a 'concept of labour [that] rests on an idea of society or a collective good, an idea of individually self-contained creative energy, and an idea of the objectification of energy in material production' (see Narotzky above), but which nevertheless ultimately defined 'native labour' as outside of the white/European ideal and sense of self-worth. These contradictory meanings attributed to, and identified within, factory labour then required appropriate industrial practices of selective recruitment, supervision and reward, where black labourers would 'become industrial' (would be turned into 'industrial workers'), as a 'group who had reached economic standards'.[48] The parallels to the rhetoric/justification for separate development are evident. These four approaches to black labour effectively covered all the discursive possibilities/bases, and – together/collectively – created an insurmountable barrier for 'native' workers and produced an insurmountable force of exclusion, control, precarity, temporariness, fragmentation and occlusion.

Lateral Traces: Punishment and theft, manliness and movement

Across all of these formations of 'native labour', though, the overriding language is one of 'boy', as opposed to Hobart Houghton's formulations of 'non-White labour' and its various associative forms and to 19th century missionary understandings of what it meant to be an amaXhosa man (see above). In essence, this translated as an understanding that black muscle power could be replaced by black 'operative' labour power, because both still belonged to 'boys' and white superiority meant this could be 'owned'. This is precisely captured in the words of the Border Chamber of Industries' (BCI) President in 1943: 'The local native is **useable** and will be **used** for machine work. Machine work cannot be tribal work and it cannot be on the migrant labour system on which this city depends'.[49] The need to stabilise, and de-casualise

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48   CA, 2/ELN, 2/1/2, Civil Cases, 1939-1948; Bel Bole 35, Company Reports and Correspondence, Native Labour. The records reflect this context by the time of the Welsh Commission, with continued and consistent material of a generalised complaint of seasonal mealie-planting, and periodic employment of three month periods. Report, 22 November 1948, 'Notes on Native Labour', 13 June 1948, and Minutes of Round Table Conference on Native Labour, 22 April 1950, reflect this in particular.

49   BCI, Box 33, Minutes of Meeting, 4 July 1943. The 'address' of the BCI president quoting Dr F. J. van Biljon, the Secretary Social and Economic Planning Council, 6 December 1944. The records of the BCI contain a summary of an address given to a Conference on Native Labour organised by the Pretoria Branch of the National Council of Women, 8 and 9 September 1944, in which much of the language and basis of argument used by the BCI president originates, and is locally applied.

the workplace entailed the need to, at least, gain control of the working day, and wherever possible the working week.[50]

So, for the first time, employers began to establish a weekly wage contract that included information on the individuals employed, the use of lists and identity documents, and, through this, a system of regularisation and of performance evaluation, and exclusion emerged.[51] It is in these lists and documents in engineering and steam milling records, which became common practice after the early 1940s, that the turning of men into 'boys' is most evident: Samson No. 3568, Shortie No. 1990, Jackson No. 3908 on the docks, or 'Kenneth, 33, unmarried, reliable' and 'Jim – Site No. 1761 – Kentani – good boy'. From then on, they increasingly included performance records, and estimations of their laziness, receptivity to discipline, surliness, physicality, and importantly their 'rawness', education, and ability to understand, and communicate, in English. Companies began to establish 'blacklists' and explicit forms of/ reasons for exclusions. These were based, in part, on 'on the job' performance, but also on daily, weekly and longer-term regularity, punctuality, and seasonal and migratory patterns.[52] Ironically though, these measures, designed to universalise industrial clock-time and labour discipline, intensified associative lateral translations between work and regulation (of force), as well as the need to do work **hurriedly** for reward, now practically given form and expression in registers, in 'clocking' shifts and days, measuring periods of necessary labour and wages, estimating departures and exercising self-control and discipline within these hastened punctuations of work, where absenteeism, loafing, leaving early and related irregularities in working days and weeks were far less tolerated or possible.

Increasingly, also, site and lodgers' permits, as well as work permits began to be taken more seriously by employers, and the cases of workers being refused, or even dismissed from work for failing to produce the correct documents, or demonstrate their 'permanence', began to mount.[53] Together with the far more active process of registration, the form and nature of the relationship between labour and 'pass legislation' began to change, and expand into one between the workplace and job stability and the local state and its interventions. The 1945 Urban Areas Act extended these connections of not only regulating movement, migrancy and Location and Reserve spatiality, but also, ambiguously, of tying workers to their jobs and to

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50   We also want to acknowledge here that this paper does not directly address the associated engagement with migrancy and migrant labour, in terms of the ways that the actual form and meanings of work associated with migrant labour have been remarkably absent, with a few exceptions, as in the work of Dunbar Moodie and Andries Bezuidenhout and Sakhela Buhlungu as important examples: T. D. Moodie and V. Ndatshe. Going for gold: Men, mines, and migration (California: Univ of California Press, 1994); A. Bezuidenhout and S. Buhlungu, 'From compounded to fragmented labour: Mineworkers and the demise of compounds in South Africa', Antipode, 43, 2, 2011, 237-263. In other words, despite the massive literature on migrant labour, there is a parallel relative absence of considering the nature and form of work and its meanings associated with migrant labour and an equally relevant and important lateral tracing of these meanings under the sign of the migrant. While this paper touches aspects of these readings, it is not explicitly engaged, remaining as work to be done. We wish to acknowledge the reviewer who made these connections.

51   BCI, Box 35, Company Correspondence; also Company Archives, and Interviews, B.1-W 3, December 1986-January 1987.

52   BCI, Box 35, Company Correspondence between the Registration Office, and the BCI Secretary, 25 June 1946, provided an estimate of registrations, refusals, and 'complaints' and requests from 'native workers' between 1939 and 1945. The registration figures rose from 2,820 (in 1939) to 13,122 (in 1945), while the number of refusals and complaints rose from less than a 100, to 'approximately 3,000', although it is very unclear what refusals and complaints actually entailed or signified beyond these statements.

53   Ibid..

the workplaces, and the Location/s in potentially long-term and permanently dependent ways.

The intensification of these governmentalities of work translated notions of force onto forms of labour. The lateral connections between *ukuphangela* – **to do work with force** –and these discourses were readily made, and connected in terms of what was both forced into the workplaces and regimes of work, but also in terms of meanings of work.

Black workers contested these translations, as did many of the employers, and the workplaces became arenas of conflict as the 'consent' of casual, seasonal, and mobility traditions of native labour was placed under threat and work **hastened** to fit rewards within the **speeded up temporalities** of 'temporary' governance and urban presence (under the Urban Areas Act and its implementation) that became increasingly visible. And these contestations became increasingly racial and racist. The interventions of the local state in the process assisted this, but in the workplaces the prior 'uncivilised' notions of 'native labour', and of the conceptions of labour as a route to civilisation, became much more the accepted facts of difference, and of supervision and control. This served to harden attempted control and stabilisation through intensified force: in supervision, and regimentation of wage-labour 'productivity' levels, time-work impositions, and, inversely, in opposition to the daily invocations of the lazy and undisciplined 'kaffir' stereotype.[54]

Alongside these, the local and national state and official discourse uneasily maintains and subsequently narrows definitions of 'native labour' as subject to regulation, influx control and to what was colloquially known as 'sex-ten' (Section 10 of the Urban Areas Act), maintaining racial and tribal discourses of temporary 'native labour', while translating meanings of work into forms of racialised labour governmentalities. Section 10 was seen as the 'law that compels a man to remain in his job for at least 10 years', and the law that 'marries us to our employers'. For East London's migrants it also seemed to take away 'the little freedom we had in choice of job. Nowadays [1957/58] you are liable to be chased out of town if you don't stick to your job, so you have just got to stick to it, even if it is a bad one and underpaid'. The threat of 'endorsement out of town' within 14 days, once a 'work-seekers permit' had been acquired, also **hastened** employment, forcing migrants to take the first job offered, and to 'stick to it' to get the reward of labour as quickly as possible. This perceived 'unholy alliance' between employers and authorities served to both unify migrant and permanent workers in their antagonism to the pass system

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54 BCI, Box 35, Company Correspondence, including engineering, food, distributive, port and stevedore companies, and even the municipality, engaged in this practice. Dated 11 January 1945, 16 February 1945, 23 September 1945, 13 March 1946, and 22 September 1947, the correspondence reflects this in an inventory of growing complaint of what was seen as an alarming growth of 'hostility to Native labour', reflected in the ever more common lodging of complaints of abuse, unfair dismissals, and 'physical attacks', to a reverse series of 'problems' and 'explanations' which had the common theme of insubordination, laziness, and 'cheek', of the 'kaffir becoming white'. Part of the explanation offered was that white supervisors were increasingly young and inexperienced and reflected the 'attitude of youth'. This, in itself, is interesting for its suggestive connection into the 'habitus' of race and difference as 'fact'.

and to local capital, but also to differentiate understandings and meanings attached to the temporary status of work and in their temporary place in Location life.[55]

In terms of this meaning, the popular local interpretation of the pass system, its origins, and its implementation, was significant. Seen as a 'white device to keep the amaXhosa down', and as the 'cruelty of white people ... making these laws specially for us … I hate their way of oppressing us by these passes, permits, and regulations', influx control was interpreted as a deliberate punishment for the 1952 riots, as an outcome to them and to prevent any further political activity that would challenge 'whites'. In the day to day routines of life in '*iMonti*' (East London) the deportations, **raids**, the lines of thousands of people outside 'the office' renewing their lodger's permits every month, and 'the queues' of arrested pass and permit offenders, swollen by regular additions, forcefully marching behind the policeman to the police station, all reinforced, continuously, the fact that 'you go to jail here for nothing at all … it has made this town a very bad place'. The extent of daily repression, where everyone 'knows someone who has been arrested and fined, or expelled', if it was not a directly personal experience, meant that the pass system and its enforcers translated the meaning of work as that of **punishment** just as it had done in the context of coerced labour on the Eastern Cape 'frontier' in the 19th century.[56] But alongside this, or perhaps within these associations, it also connected work with the raid, in the sense of a means to enforce work on the one hand, but equally, in the sense of the possibility of a legitimate way to undertake and control work, on the other hand.

Read differently, this is best illustrated by taking the example of the Market Square Bus Terminus on any Friday afternoon in the early 1950s: jostling queues of people and parcels, overcrowded buses, the destinations of Kwelegha, Keiskammahoek, Idutywa and Mount Frere reaffirming old and generating new contacts and unities, discussions and connections. Of these migrants – weekly, fortnightly, and monthly East London workers going 'home' to the Ciskei and Transkei for the weekend – many would return 'in time', but many would not be outside the factories and workshops on Monday mornings, taking advantage of 'our time, not the whiteman's'.

For many of these migrants, in a conventional view, wage labour was an attempt to:

> [G]et enough to get back to what was important for me ... I grew up on the land and then I worked here at different places to earn money to plant and build up my farm ... later that all changed and I had to work here to earn a living and I lost sight of the land more.[57]

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55 Interview, S. Mjiwi, East London, 6 February 1989; ELM, Municipal Records, 16/17/5, Correspondence from Clr. Malcolmess to City Council, 12 March 1955, and from A. Curren to Council, 3 August 1958; See also P. and I. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 56-61; BCI, Box 21, Correspondence from A. Curren to BCI, 3 September 1957; Latimer papers, Letter from unspecified source to Latimer, 3 April 1958; and correspondence between Latimer and Curren, 2 February 1957 to 16 September 1959.

56 P. and I. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 56-61; Interviews with J. T. Kophi, and S. Mjiwi confirmed this interpretation; interview by G. Minkley and C. Sanqu, East London, 27 June 1989; BCI, Box 21, Correspondence, DIL, and Bel, and Individual Companies, 15 April 1960, and attached correspondence.

57 Interviews, June and December 1987 with a number of workers of the 1950s. These interviews, conducted principally with black but also some white workers, referenced according to initials, interview no. and date. See also BCI, Boxes 11-13, for the 'Migrancy Sub-committee' and Files 38-40 including details of 'Industrial Conflict', Executive and DIL meetings/ report, 1953 and 1954-1958. Interview, NTM., 3-E, East London, 27 June 1987.

The representations that 'the native has no understanding of modern time ... he will arrive late, leave early, not work on Mondays ... the time spent on work is probably only half of what it should be'[58] acutely reflected the distance from/with which many black workers 'valued' the workplace, or more accurately how they valued it differently.

Reading back into the archive, we argue here that when workers complained that work 'starts too early and coldly', that work was too exacting and treatment was 'bad, like rubbish' and of being paid *akukho mvuzo* (nothing wages), these complaints were all meaningfully accurate commentaries on the racialised workplace and relations of exploitation that prevailed, and the tensions between wages, rewards and meanings of work translated more readily on a scale between work as punishment and work as something to plunder or raid.

So, if one worker left work because he became tired of riding a bicycle, another because of the 'language of the sjambok', a third because he 'needed a rest at home', and others because they had to plough, herd or marry, these 'worlds of labour, the factory, the railway shed, the backyard, and the unsuitability and instability of occupation meant that the pick and shovel railway worker was as likely as the engineering machine operator, the weaver as likely as the stevedore worker, to engage in the patterns of 'resisting colonial white work' as much as they were subject to its violent determinations.[59]

Work patterns were also different. The difference between the time, speed and rhythm of seasons and cows and ploughs, and the sweat, heat, tiredness and strain of mechanised and heavy, repetitive manual work remained stark, and it was resisted and evaded as far as possible. Complex arrangements of rest, slow work, managed machine faults and breakdowns, and 'looking for rests in the work', as well as the search for **quick rewards** through constant job movement and regular migration and then of 'going missing' and 'disappearing', being able to re-appear elsewhere in the labour market based on the continuous need for manual/unskilled labour: all this patterned experiences and reflected the alienated nature of what was routinely identified by many as 'white work'.[60]

Expected work routines were also upset by the *iseti* and *amakhaya* (home-men) who would live, and work together as much as was possible. The solidarities of kinship extended into a food factory for example, where workers found a member of a rival kin group employed in the processing section and refused to work while he remained. More generally, kinship asserted and reinforced migrant attachments to particular rural areas, encouraged their continuance, and provided a subjectivity that was not easily broken into by the demands of permanent waged 'native labour' in

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58 BCI Archive, Company Records, Letter dated Jan 1951.
59 Interviews, Minkley and Sangcu with workers KM, SC, East London, June 1987, and June 1988; Daily Dispatch, Feb. 1951. See also Mayer and Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 21-25.
60 CA, LIE File 11, Ref 08; and BCI Box 34, Company Records, and Correspondence on Native Labour, 1939-1947. The Inspection Reports and the correspondence in the CI Files reflect this commentary from firm to firm – with statements like 'sufficient but a lot of them useless', 'natives come and go', 'not very satisfactory', 'difficult to get good labourers', 'unreliable', 'requires constant supervision', 'big wastage'. The overall context is one of mobility, and that the 'type of labour' was 'not very good'.

East London. The *amakhaya* also 'provided jobs' for both employers and associated workers to draw on, and many factories adopted the practices of 'encouraging family and close tribal connections' amongst their workforces.[61] This facilitated job selection, but also made it 'easier to go home and return later and still have your job'. It also meant that workers avoided 'heavy work' and 'bad employers' through the solidarities of kinship, when first arriving in East London but even in times of desperation. This encouraged 'the discretionary nature of the native job market on a significant scale ... bad employers feel their effects in particular ... the message goes out and some factories are known to be avoided in some country areas.'[62]

The potential loss of 'managing one's own life' and of having to labour in 'the white man's world' was doubly felt as a removal of independent male and personal control over work and production, and as having to increasingly rely on those 'who took my life away in the first place and are now doing it again in spirit and manliness in work not fit for men'.[63] This, equally, affected the degree of incorporation and acceptance of wage labour in East London in the 1950s, and its avoidances and often, at this time, temporary acceptance can be read here as sporadic raids/incursions/forays into wage labour for reward which influenced a consciousness of work that was reflective of a deep and uneasy reading of the nature of 'industrial' work – of *ukusebenza* – and of the presence of alternative meanings of work more accurately reflected in *ukuphangela*.

No longer directed and controlled by the same African men, not only did the nature of work change but also the content. African men, forced into wage labour, could no longer rely on the labour of wives and 'juniors' as in the rural areas, and found the pressures of long, continuous and seemingly never-ending occupation at the various points of production very different to the gender divided and male-controlled practices of the Ciskei and Transkei rural relations of production. More, 'harder' and different work, and diminishing control and ability to influence their own participation in it, engendered a hostility to 'independent women' and 'tsotsi youth' outside of the workplaces, but also contributed to their instability inside.[64] Movement, as often as possible, back to the rural areas, and wage labour in order to secure the rewards that would enable re-entry to the 'declining patchwork rural slums' in the 'reserves', was also an attempt to control 'the women' on whom their power and access to the rural areas rested to a significant degree. In many ways this invokes 19th century expectations and is an example of the semantic scope of that other version of work: *ukuphangela* described by Anne Kelk Mager when 'every man was expected to do his share for the homestead by joining in action beyond the homestead and bringing home the reward'.[65] So, women were ironically resented and bemoaned as they 'made life more difficult', made that different work more real

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61   Daily Dispatch, June 1956; Interviews, KM 3-C, 12 Jan.1987; BCI, File 43, Correspondence; Daily Dispatch, Sept. 1955; Interviews, 3, S-U, 19-30 June 1988; Company Records, W, 8 December 1986.
62   BCI, Boxes 6 and 7, Committee Minutes re 'problems' of employment in the 1950s. Interviews, MM, 3-R, East London, 24 June 1988.
63   Letter, Daily Dispatch, June 1956.
64   Interviews, 3, G, June 1987; Daily Dispatch, June 1956; Interviews 3, C, Dec./Jan.1987., BCI, File 43.
65   Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 76.

and more necessary, and increasingly 'refused to listen'.[66] The answer lay, in part, in reasserting patriarchal control through what was often men's privileged access to the city and to wage labour in order to reassert production and control in the reserves, and ironically and **because** of the need to reassert production and control in the reserves, its avoidance, on a regular and systematic basis, in order to retain 'manliness' and a presence at home.

The 'dishonesty/injustice'[67] identified with low wages exemplified the differences in material and cultural life between white and black. For one of the black workers interviewed it meant that:

> [A] white employer who pays his native employees a small wage is a very bad man; he is no better than a thief, because he takes advantage of the fact that if you refuse the pay there is another man who will take the job. With this fact in mind you accept the small wage. The thing to do then is to steal when the chance presents itself. It is not sinful to steal from another thief ... You cannot force him to pay you a living wage; all you can do is get your own back somehow ... Is it wrong to take that which belongs to you but which is being fraudulently retained by your employer?[68]

The emergence of the '*isonka*' system (of stealing/**robbing** to supplement wages) became widely prevalent in East London in the 1950s, and was greatly admired. It also was not seen as illegal, as 'the valuable things that have been taken are not those of anybody I know. They belong to a white man, whose only connection with me is employment'. The resonances here with raiding/stealing/robbing – *ukuphangela* – and the conceptual link to 19th century understandings of work beyond the homestead but for its benefit as well as to the age-old legitimacy of such 'work' are striking. *Isonka* would likely not have been admired, if industrial work had provided adequate wages or a recognition of peoples' worth, just as *ukuphangela* would not have been the appropriate term or description for 'someone who plundered unjustly; such a person was not respected, but condemned as one who injured (*ukuoona*) someone else.'[69]

The pervasive sense that factory wage labour was fraudulent and illegal 'theft', and the everyday visibility of racial and cultural difference and experience in the

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66 Minkley, Border Dialogues, 232-246.
67 This notion of 'dishonesty/injustice', or one could say hypocrisy, that resided in the various and often convoluted (theoretical) justifications for perpetuating a low wage system for Black workers, was noted by Hobart Houghton who, as Maylam argues, 'propound[ed] the "target worker" thesis – that migrants often moved to urban areas for a limited time so as to earn enough money to achieve a specific objective. This notion gave rise to what was known as the "backward-sloping supply curve of African labor" – a theory used to justify the low wages paid to African migrant workers, on the assumption that if higher wages were paid, workers would spend a shorter time at the workplace, a stint no longer than was needed to acquire their targeted amount of earnings. Hobart Houghton believed there was "much truth in this view" – a view which came to be widely discredited for downplaying the coercive nature of labor migrancy and for seemingly justifying the low wages paid to African migrant workers', see P. Maylam, 'The life and work of a South African economist: Desmond Hobart Houghton, 1906-76', Journal of the History of Economic Thought (forthcoming). Preprint at SocArXiv, osf.io/preprints/socarxiv 12-13. It should be noted that African/black workers undoubtedly both recognised the perversity of such justifications and also, and perhaps therefore, strategically invoked old (behavioral) patterns of raiding, in order to secure what spoils there were to be had from work in the modern industrial sector.
68 Mayer and Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 145.
69 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 76.

workplace afforded a stark illegitimacy to property and production in industry, partly reflected in the ragged, uneven and divided nature of industrialisation, and its emerging segmented labour markets. Black workers were also patently 'not equal before the law', and had little 'freedom' in haphazard and discriminatory 'contracts' of waged work. Workers were not and did not contract and participate in wage labour as 'individual real people' in conventional class terms, in the eyes of most industrialists and the local state as much as in their own sense of themselves.[70]

For Norman Duka, for example, getting employed depended on running on 'speed' and related aspects of 'luck', 'chance', and 'hoping to be seen by the white man with power', and thus on the arbitrary selective choice of the manager and his assistant. It was also an experience of helpless frustration to have to look for a job, but one that simultaneously reinforced work as *ukuphangela*, as a kind of raid on the factory gates reflected in the speed needed to get there first:

> Once I got the pass I began looking for a factory job. The first day I went to Standard Canners. I found hundreds of men, young boys, and women standing in front of the gates. It was very early and the factory hadn't opened yet ... When the manager finally came out he chose people near the front. He couldn't even see those of us who stood and held up our passes at the back of the crowd. I left and ran to another factory. Again, no luck. Then to another, and another – I can't even remember how many. I began to realize how difficult it was to get a job; out all day, running from factory to factory and still no job. I returned home hungry and tired.[71]

The experience of factory work, and the dominance of manufacturing capital, did not break down racial realities and conceptions, it rather reinforced them. This had as much to do with the way workers made sense of their changed realities and imposed their conditions on the workplace, as it had to do with 'the desires' of capital, or the pressures of the apartheid state. So, to be called '"kaffir" or "boy" was to be called a useless uncivilized and accepting worker ... but to call oneself an "African" was to identify oneself with pride and assert one's own rights and values as a working person'.[72]

Ukuphangela: Labour and lateral universals

Central, then, was the attempt to make the economic relations of industry in East London a human relationship through an assertion of the opposites of capital/state definitions, of a different form.

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70   Interviews 2a-2d, Dec-Jan, with HG, Z, RT and SB East London, January 1988. See also D. Chakrabarty, 'Conditions for Knowledge of Working Class Conditions: Employers, Government and the Jute Workers of Calcutta, 1890-1940', Subaltern Studies, 4 (Oxford, 1990), 180-185, for a penetrating opening of these approaches in a different context.
71   N. Duka and D. Mercer, From Shantytown to Forest, the Story of Norman Duka. Vol. 1. (Richmond, BC: LSM Press, 1974).
72   Interview, 3, H, East London, Dec-Jan 1987.

The meaning of work can be well demonstrated in the way the 'language about labour', constructed in East London in this period, was challenged in the 'language about work'.[73] For industry, black workers were 'kaffirs', 'boys', 'natives', 'non-Whites' and 'the Xhosa'. For workers, management was 'master' or *umlungu* (whiteman), but hardly ever 'boss', unless with significant expressions of irony or in recognition of governmentality. Labour was 'for the whiteman', who became 'master' on the floor, and 'by the boys', who became 'worthless kaffirs' if they refused to work as expected. But workers in their own everyday experiences amongst each other were 'Africans' and 'the men'. It was this mix of past and present, remembrance of colonial dispossession, the limitations of factory 'inclusion', and the inabilities to transform and legitimise waged work as meaningful and desirable, that translated to the ongoing presence of other meanings of work. Capital could not conquer and transform the 'blue sky and the green field, this we took with us to the looms of the whiteman ... you cannot wall and enclose people's heads, they are not stupid machines ... 1234 push, 1234 pull ... never ... never more than a taste on our lips'.[74]

Alongside these, other – what we might call lateral – understandings of industry, are not only historically visible, but temporally congruent meanings, themselves 'becoming industrial' as they are translated in these aleatory encounters. Here it is important to note that, over the last two years, we have returned to some of this original interview material collected by Minkley and Sangcu between 1987 and 1990 in East London.[75] Based on this series of interviews with elderly workers in Duncan Village and Mdantsane, and influenced by Mager's provocations of thinking about the conceptual bases of work (elaborated above), we think that an important different reading emerges.

Relistening to these recordings, what became starkly evident is how routinely many of these men referred to the work they did in the 1940s and 1950s as '*ukuphangela*' rather than *ukusebenza*. This was not conceptually explored in the interviews – neither Minkley nor Sangcu noted a distinction then – but we do now.[76]

There are other genealogies to the associations between work and the raid. Work is uncomfortably lodged within the racist discourses of 'native labour'. The

73 Comaroff and Comaroff draw a distinction between realistic and rhetorical or poetical modes of historical representation between a 'symbolic elaboration of the contrast between work and labour'. They argue that the contrasts between work (itirela – as creative, constructive, 'making oneself') and labour (bereka – derived from 'werk' and meaning working for whites/wage labour, destructive, alienating, and so on) are neither timeless, nor neutral. They represent the historical practices of 'organising their experience' and 'wrestling with the conflicts' of colonial social and economic dispossession and change. Centrally, in this context, the experience of wage labour was mediated by an existing set of cultural categories, and filtered through indigenous notions of human activity. Thus it is in the implicit language of symbolic activity, and not explicit statements of common predicament; in the rhetorical 'suggestive oppositions' or 'contrasts', that historical change, positioning and identity, and the associated consciousness and 'sense' of this, should be sought. See J. L. and J. Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant: work and labor in the historical consciousness of a South African people', American Ethnologist, 14, 2, 1987, 191-209.
74 Interview, SM, East London, June 1987.
75 These interviews, conducted in the height of civil war and the states of emergency, are marked by the tensions of politics, race, research, translation and conflict. For our purposes here, though, we simply wish to iterate that, following ethical agreements with a number of workers, their names remain anonymous, except where permission was granted, although many agreed to the use of their initials or surnames. These interviews are referenced accordingly.
76 Clearly there could be a much larger discussion on questions of translation, transcription and indeed, in our case, re-translations and re-transcriptions and the related associations of transliteration. Simply for clarity here, the initial interviews in the late 1980s were jointly conducted by Minkley and Sangcu, in both English and isiXhosa. Subsequent translations and transcriptions were partial and selective, for many reasons. Over the last few years (and during lockdown) the interviews were more completely re-translated and transcribed, opening up these different readings.

'Native Labour Question' drove political, social and economic debates/maneuvering throughout the 20th century, centring around the question of 'how far the Kaffir can be induced to work'.[77] Yet even in these racist discourses and other articulations of agency as disruptive, the particular of agency hints at other meanings of work, particularly in relation to work as raiding, or the raid as work.[78]

Elsewhere, in conservative liberal economics in the 1950s, Hobart Houghton's invocation of the 'target worker', while significantly subject to van Onselen's sustained critique as being a liberal, paternalistic and racist account of migrant labour,[79] does retain, we suggest, a translation, located in the very wording of 'target' in relation to 'plunder' or 'raid'.[80] This formulation, actually, sits at the heart of the Xhosa in Town trilogy, when read alongside each other.

We can also find resonant traces in the *isibhalo* (forced) labour system,[81] where chiefs – calling on the right to summon men, originally for *ukuphangela*/raiding or warfare – in KwaZulu-Natal supplied the state with forced labour in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, or as Delius has reconstructed,[82] the travelling 'parties' of 'Bassuto' migrants.

With these in mind, though, we want to return to, draw on and follow the much more critical and nuanced understandings offered by Mager. As such, we want to further associate the conceptual meaning of 'raid' inherent in the meaning of the word '*ukuphangela*' which, as an industrial meaning of work, is both a fragment of a different spatialised temporality of meaning, and one that can be seen as a lateral translation that disrupts the dominant/prevalent/accepted/historic discourses of 'native labour'. Alongside these disruptive translations, we argue that *ukusebenza* coheres distinctly around forms of women's work, equally prompting further lateral translations.

We want to think about the processes of replacing white textile factory operatives and the recruiting of their African male replacements at Consolidated Textile Mills (CTM) as one such case fragment and disruption. It was a large factory, with over 500 African workers by the end of the 1940s. Processes of substituting white female labour over this decade (at the rate of ten per week) with black men and their recruitment involved various skills tests with safety pins to test 'dexterity and powers of observation'. Managing the process of factory floor substitution and incorporation

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77   E. P. Rathbone, 'The Native Labour Question' in J. Knowles (ed.), The Nineteenth century and after (New York: Leonard Scott Pub. Co., 1903), 407.

78   See H. H. Johnston, 'The Native Labour Question in South Africa' in The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review, 53, 309 (November 1902), 727-729; A. Fox, J. McDonald and H. E. Seebohm, 'The Native Labour Question in South Africa', The Contemporary Review, 83 (Jan. 1903), 540-553.

79   C. van Onselen, 'Black workers in central African industry: a critical essay on the historiography and sociology of Rhodesia', Journal of Southern African Studies, 1, 2, 1975, 228-246.

80   It is useful to remember that Hobart Houghton was the Director of the East London centred 'Xhosa in Town' trilogy, that produced his own account – Economic development in a plural society: studies in the Border region of the Cape Province (1960) – together with Mayer and Mayer's Townsmen or Tribesmen, and Pauw's The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among the Urbanized Bantu in East London (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963).

81   J. Lambert, 'Chiefship in early colonial Natal, 1843-1879', Journal of Southern African Studies, 21, 2, 1995, 269-285. See also B. Carton, 'The Migrant Kings of Zululand' in Rankin-Smith, Phillips, Delius (eds.), A Long Way Home.

82   P. Delius, 'Walking 2 000 Kilometres to Work and Back: The Wandering Bassuto by Carl Richter' in Rankin-Smith, Phillips, Delius (eds.), A Long Way Home.

was volatile and contested, as it involved constructing a 'moving fence' between white and black workers, until it was completed.

This process of substitution and replacement involved, quite literally, constructing a fence between white women and black men and progressively moving this fence between them, which gradually replaced the white women with black men. This is, in another register and time, in itself is a fascinating translation/transference process, with resonances to the 19th century: just as missionaries could not accept the 'industrious' African woman, despite acknowledging her considerable skills, discipline, hard-workingness etc., and had to replace her with male labour, here the industrialists cannot countenance the entry of white women into places of work (presumably during WWII) nor their continued presence there (that would have undermined mid-20th century notions of manliness and family, just as in the 19th century when Xhosa women disrupted Victorian notions of gender identity and place), and needed to replace them with male (black) labour. Here we have a repetition, which will not have been invisible to men (see the references above about 'difficult' women, and the seeds for domestic violence) of the denigration, emasculation and infantilisation of men, which constituted a double/triple insult: low wages/bad work conditions/racism AND being a (lesser) substitute AND being constituted as 'native', not equal to white workers (not even equal to white women workers). Racism does more violence to this by assuming that African men would not have been aware of all of this.

One woman remembered:

I decided to leave before that bloody fence put my machines onto the other side, ... before it swallowed where I stood, ... that way I left before they dismissed me like I was worthless. The funny thing was we didn't know it was going to be the whole factory to become kaffir until it was too late, and then finally we all just left when we saw this, and it became the first kaffir factory. Then I knew, I said to my father, the kaffirs will take all this work and he said I should join the auxiliaries, ... and then after the war I became a bank clerk until I got married.[83]

This process of substitution and replacement did not mean that high labour turnover ended or that the presence of the 'native workers' stabilised. Far from it. High turnovers, despite rhetoric to the contrary, were recorded and work remained volatile and episodic. Alongside this there was also a related side of recruitment and of understanding work.

In the time of the war. I came to East London to avoid the 'war-thieves' [a reference to a perceived practice of forced army mobilisation of Africans in the reserves] and to hide with my family. My brother sent me to this man in North End in this white man's suit he had … with a house full of

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83   Interview, 50, EA, East London, 28 January 1991.

everything, you could hardly move, ... and it was this man Kadalie. He made it so that if I joined his organization, with money, he found me a place to stay, and organized my papers – lodgers permit it was, and he gave me this card of ICU, and a letter, and he sent me to Welsh (High School), ... I gave in this letter, and then I was to be examined ... studied in a room with a string of pins (motions with hands) and nails and things, ... but I didn't know now what was going to happen ... In here (taps his head) I was confused, and ah ... scared, you know, how did this have to do with getting the job at Maubergers [Consolidated Textile Mills]. I was useless, … my hands couldn't work, but they sent me to the factory, and I got the work. I think it was because of the Kadalie card, ... yes ... and this was for lots of us in there.[84]

In what we want to call this 'field of labour', the role of Kadalie was significant. Aspects of this have been explored elsewhere, but for our purposes we want to point to how these workers came to be seen as 'Kadalie's captives', as the local commissioner of police called them. Again, we want to return to Mager and point to the resonance with that other version of work: *ukuphangela* in the 19th century. In that temporality and space '[c]attle raids were also a means of demonstrating and establishing power relations and of summoning opponents or troublemakers to negotiation'.[85] While 'Kadalie's captives' showed a particular set of qualificatory attributes, they were young men and boys – like those who had 'practised the art of riding and driving cattle at speed … admired for their skill and prowess in raiding' for the chief[86] – largely from the Ciskei, and some had 'some education', others were described as 'raw'; the majority of these workers were not as stable, reliable, long term or productive within the anticipated regimes that had been established by the white women workers. They 'used' this CTM factory's substitution of white female labour and incorporation of 'native' labour as a means to get a job, get rewards, and in some measure, also reward Kadalie and the ICU. Here the ICU and Kadalie became like a 'chief' and, if we think with Mager again, '[m]en … maintained themselves in readiness to play their part [responding to the defence of the chief] and receive their share of the spoils' as they had done in another time.[87] While management called this 'tribal', workers invoking '*ukuphangela*' as the conceptual term for this work, were, as it were, engaged in waged 'industrial' cattle raids for a new and different chief and for themselves: '… as ordered by the chief', in this case Kadalie and the ICU.[88]

This meant that, on the one hand, factory floor supervision and 'control' became patterned through ICU 'authority' networks, and, on the other, that the factory's new labour design described this relationship between the ICU, supervision and

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84   Interview, V. Madikane. East London, 16 June 1989.
85   Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 76.
86   Ibid., 76.
87   Ibid., 76.
88   Ibid., 76. This is a play on the terms/concepts related to work for cattle and for the homestead, but notably, this is not a return, therefore, to the traditionalist/essentialist and anti-industrial/modern, but rather another form of industrial work.

shopfloor management as a form of 'tribal discipline'.[89] Workers remembered that being on the shopfloor was not unlike encountering 'a factory policeman now … like on a police raid', and later on an '*indoda*' – an elder who called for respect – ordering you to work quickly, to speed up, to work harder.[90] Again, workers did not necessarily object; speeding up meant the raid for wages could be achieved – plundered – more quickly, enabling a return to cattle and homestead, until the next industrial raid was forced or required.[91] If the 'ICU indoda's got their eye to you, it would start with your paypacket ... you would find reductions, and they would tell you that next you would be out, with no work'.[92]

Our argument here for a thinking with industrial work as 'the raid' holds that these are not expressions of work performed by what liberal economists have labeled 'target workers' (and within which van Onselen's trenchant critique holds, see below), or of residues of pre-industrial work habits gradually being eroded, or of ideas about work articulated from some nostalgic or authentic past. These are lateral translations of the meanings of work from the 19th century that are located within industrialisation and remain inserted within formations and discourses of gendered, racist and industrial violence, exploitation and contestation. However, they do so **horizontally** and, as Mager reminds us, across and between competing meanings of work. In these encounters, associative meanings between 'raid', for example as a police activity engendering control, translated into the workplace, as a form of engaging wages and labour, migrating in and out for quick reward, as theft and as an '*isonka* system', as an episodic rather than a continuous activity, as an authorised work directive and practice, as a form of work materialised in the on-going well-being of cattle and homesteads, as the form of masculinist labour enabling differentiation and subjection of women's work and as a means of resisting the punishment of colonial wage labour.

Temporalities too, in their translations were identified as multiple, and 'clock-time' or industrial time was more pleated, or 'crumpled',[93] rather than uniformly determined. From within the meanings of *ukuphangela*, smaller (in the sense of seconds or hours rather than days or weeks) and simultaneously experientially faster temporalities within industrial and social accelerations of work and life, meant a shortened 'raiding of industrial time', both in working presence and duration, as actual performance quickened reward. *Ukuphangela* – to work with speed, to hasten – was translated from other forms of industrial time meant to stabilise and discipline

89   BCI, Box 38, CTM Records and Correspondence, 1939-1946, relating to the 'novel' experiment, and unusual level of interest, correspondence, and organisational investigation around CTM; BCI, Box 38, CTM Records, especially Correspondence, 22 February 1944, and attached correspondence; also Interviews, J. Kophi, and S. Nongwevu, East London, 16 December 1981; BCI, Box 38, CTM Correspondence Files; Interview, S. Nongwevu, East London, 16 December 1981; BCI, Box 38, Letter from CTM management to BCI, 12 March 1943.
90   Interview, S. Mjiwi, 6 February 1989; Interview, S. Nongwevu, East London, 16 December 1987.
91   Ibid..
92   Ibid..
93   See L. Nead, Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 8.

working life, and taken up within their lateral meanings in 'the raid'. Speed: running for a job, new dexterities of the hand, disciplined clocked hours and breaks all emphasised the capacity of the raid to continuously define and redefine work and its rhythms, tempos and meanings as punctuated and episodic.

Staying longer, inserted into punishable 'nothing wages' to do the white man's work continuously, of insertion into the meanings of *ukusebenza*, was, if possible, avoided, carrying meanings of punishment, rather than of dignity and value.

Ukusebenza – The work of women

As Minkley has argued elsewhere, the Location/s were sources of distinctive and gendered paths of urbanisation, migration and occupancy.[94] In particular, the origins, patterns and changing basis of female migration to the City reflected a permanence and an 'independence' very different to, and often in opposition to, those of male migrancy and rural and Reserve patriarchy. In the 1920s and the 1930s the East London Location/s had become known as the 'place for widows', and these 'widows' and 'deserted mothers' dominated female migration and occupation of the Location/s as opposed to 'married women', joining their husbands. By the 1940s, a further category, that of 'runaway girls', had also emerged, as had a much larger category of male voluntary and patriarchally 'supported' migration and growing urban 'permanence'. Of central defining importance in patterning these changing dynamics was the desire for some form of 'independence' and/or 'recovery' from varying, but massively intensifying new and exacting dimensions of patriarchal controls linked to the productive and social disintegrations of the Reserves (and particularly the Ciskei) in this period.

These young and older women, often with little else than a name, and perhaps a child, found their way into the Location/s, or into the backyards of East London, and into complexly differing relations of autonomy, dependence, and 'orders', free from the homestead, the brother, and the father, but also ruled by the madam, the master, the Location Manager, the policeman, and the differing categories of men in the Location/s to varying degrees. Whatever the ambiguities and forms of gender domination – and there were many: from the traditions of kinship and lineage, through male migrant 'liaisons', to the attempt at the imposition of western 'nuclear' family and practices; from within the shackyard single rooms to the white suburbs; and in the 'extraordinary high' incidences of rape, infanticide and sexual abuse – there was also another side to gender in the Location/s by the 1940s. The experience of domestic labour – the most regular and for all intents and purposes, the only form of (gendered) wage labour up until the late 1940s for the huge majority of 'native girls' – was

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94 G. Minkley, '"I shall die married to the beer": gender, "family" and space in the East London locations, c1923-1952', Kronos: Journal of Cape History, 23, 1, 1996, 135-157.

not a marginal activity. In fact, during the 1940s it became the reverse.[95] This lowest paid of all 'native work' had little to recommend itself: it was arduous and demeaning, paternal and racist. But it was also the central source of 'food' for the Locations, with many 'natives living on scrap brought from houses'.[96] This was an important and basic ingredient in establishing a connection, and a relation of dependence in the largely migrant and 'single' male Location population, and in the shack-rooms and 'families'. But these material needs or dependences on women's work extended beyond the poverty of daily food requirements. In particular, beer-brewing, and the ownership, and letting of rooms was dominated and controlled by women, usually 'single'. This pattern emerged in the 1920s and the 1930s, and by the 1940s 'every street was always busy with drinking', controlled by an internally differentiated 'class of independent women', while between 60-70% of the 'springs that do not die' – the 'rack-rented' backhouses – were owned by women, and managed by either themselves or by women relatives and friends. It was from these two bases, brewing and renting, that women in the Location/s established themselves, and together with the 'material rewards' of domestic labour, were able to secure an 'independent' and permanent means of existence.[97] Their role in shaping the Location/s from these bases, not under 'somebody else's rule', and 'independent from *umlungu*', also involved a freedom to 'do as you please', and to be 'both the head and the wife'.[98]

These impulses and successes were recognised in official circles and by 'business' and 'industry'. A number of reports spell out a begrudging and 'puzzled' sense of the fact that women were much more 'industrious' and much more 'dedicated to their work and to their jobs'.[99] There were three moments when these discourses emerged most visibly. The first was around the 'registration of domestic servants contract', involving a levy and a labour contract and subsequent reports around these contracts. Despite extensive racist characterisations of 'domestic servants' as 'lazy,' 'clumsy,'

95　CA, 2/ELN, 2/1/2, Civil Cases, Native Commissioners Court, 49/39; BCI, Box 33, Letter from MOH, Sinclair-Smith to Bel President, 17 July 1945, in response to request for information on the extremely worrying presence of a growing 'mass' of 'detached girls' in the city; CA, 3/ELN, Box 1353, Correspondence re establishment of labour bureau for domestic servants, 1942-1947, and 1949-1952; BCI, Box 34, Investigation into 'native labour', which also contained material on 'servant girls' and their increasing occupational stability, and of numbers, and wages. By c1947, there were about 9-10,000 domestic workers, including about 2,000 'garden boys', many who moved between 3 or 4 houses in a week. Interviews, 3a-v, and 4a-w, provided much of the context of the racist and paternal nature of this work, and of life in the backyards, and work in the houses, albeit equally in very 'typical' terms, as described by J. Cock, Maids and Madams (Johannesburg, 1980), esp. Ch. 9 CA, LIE File 11, Report of United ICU, and of the Bantu Employees Association to the Wage Board, and Minutes of Discussion, no date, but sometime in October 1941, for example; but also Interviews, 3q, TV, 16 September 1987, and 3t, SG, 2A, East London, September 1987, as well as 4r, 15 August 1989, and 4u, DR, East London, 2 September 1989 independently affirmed this as one of the crucial determinants of domestic work, which became much more constrained after the 1950s.

96　Ibid..

97　Mayer and Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 247-250; Interviews, 3q, 3t, 4r, and 4u in particular, but also 3i, FS, East London, 5 September 1987; 30, AS, East London, 12 September 1987; and 4d, 10 September 1989. These women lived and worked in the East Bank Location from before the war, as well as during the 1940s and 1950s.; Pauw, The Second Generation, ch. 8 and 10. The terms of 'udidi" referring to an internal ranking of people of like kind, operates as an incipient internal class categorisation, while those of matrifocal and patrifocal are used here in descriptive terms, and do not seek to pre-determine western nuclear family structures with categories of civilisation and modernity.

98　CA, 3/ELN Boxes 17 and 18 contain some of the detail on brewing in the Location/s, as do Boxes 1165, and 1348. As Minkley argued in his paper, 'Married to the Beer', which also drew on Interview material, brewing was differentiated between domestic, small and larger shebeen networks of production, which all catered to different sites, amakhaya, and generational clientele, and which had established competitive differences of resources, profitability and evasion. The point however remains that it was practised by 'single' women on the whole, and that for many this was the major source of income and of 'independence', albeit in these differentiated contexts of scale and possibility; CA, 3/ELN, Native Commissioners Court, 2/1/2, Civil Cases 1939-1948, 6/41; 15/43; 'J/43; 07/47; 21/48, which provide selective details of this process;

99　CA, 3/ELN, Box 1353, Correspondence re establishment of labour bureau for domestic servants, 1942-1947, and 1949-1952

'unintelligent' and so on (these terms become so ubiquitous that there is little need for their constant elaboration), there was also a record of representations of these women as being 'the most industrious', that they 'seldom miss a day's work', 'that they stay in their jobs, it is usually the employers who dismiss them, often for no reason' and that these workers were 'an example of what native labour could be': 'hardworking', 'valuable', 'respectful' and 'tireless'; that many work long hours with little complaint, are punctual and show 'constant improvement'.[100] Secondly, women's industriousness emerged around their 'independent' activities as washerwomen, brewers, lodging renters, and in their other occupations, providing food, and other 'informal' activities and services, but also in their work in churches, 'welfare' organisations' activities and in the various social spaces of the Location/s. Here, similar attributes are identified and elaborated: their industriousness and their capacities to independently undertake and sustain hard, routinised, regular and disciplined work, to make an independent living and receive their 'just rewards for hard work'.[101] In addition, the women and their 'industriousness' were often favourably compared to the 'lazy', 'useless', 'cheeky', 'stupid' and 'unstable' labour of 'native men' – they are the example to be followed and the epitome of *ukusebenza*!

The third moment is much more idiosyncratic. It emerges out of a labour dispute on the East London docks. In June 1947 'stevedores', 'gangway boys' and 'berthing boys' refused to work on Mondays. They had begun to call Monday '*isiphelo*' – the death of one's hopes! In a weekend disagreement between shorehandling and steve-doring workers and harbour officials over productivity, the harbour berthing master had likened casual workers to '*umhlambi* girls' (washerwomen) who always rest on Mondays. The following Monday, 'about 200 native servants [women!] arrived at the docks' claiming they were coming to 'offload the ships' as their 'men had stayed at home to do the washing' – literally taking the harbour master at his word and calling his bluff.[102] In a significant turnaround, and somewhat incongruously, given the irony of the situation, the women were employed on the docks and for three Mondays in a row they did much of the work of the 'gangs'. Although there is little actual description of what they did, clearly it involved heavy, manual and intense stevedoring work. In a report by the Docks Manager, though, a tribute to the industriousness of the women (by now recognisable, see above) emerges, where he says, that if he could, he would employ these women on a regular basis and that they showed a 'willingness and ability to do the work that put the men to shame'. They were 'efficiently organised, got the ropes quickly and made no mistakes'.[103] Overall, it was their ability to do the work without complaint and 'with a fashion of rank that quickly won the respect and admiration of my gangers'. In his reasoning why they could not be employed on a permanent basis, though, the Docks Manager resorted back to arguments about

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100 CA, 3/ELN, Box 1353, Correspondence re establishment of labour bureau for domestic servants, 1942-1947, and 1949-1952; Service contracts, 1945-1958; BCI, Box 34, Investigation into 'native labour', which also contained material on 'servant girls' and their increasing occupational stability, and of numbers, and wages and of their conditions of work.
101 CA, 3/ELN Boxes 17 and 18 contain much of the detail on brewing, renting and other forms of work in the Location/s, as do Boxes 1165 and 1348.
102 SAR&H, CES, Files 15 - 17, Report on 'Disturbances', August 1937-November 1951.
103 Ibid.. Report dated 21 August 1947.

gender, maintaining that, despite or precisely because of the example these women set, they had the potential to disrupt the 'moral order of the men's authority' and the 'natural order of things'.[104]

In the single interview Minkley had in 1987 with one of the women involved, she recalled that

> We put on the pants – the suits – and we showed those men how to work. It was very hard work, but we were strong – carrying washing to and from the whites and washing in the streams on the boulders, we were tough already, already ready for that *umsebenzi* of carrying and loading, all day long. … I think the *umlungus* wanted us to stay because we showed them how to *umsebenzi* … to work … to earn our pay, but it was only short and then it was over, but we showed those lazy men … all they wanted to do was drink, and run away, not work.[105]

Meanings of work, then, both locate and extend the senses that Mager documents and that Bradford details for the early colonial encounters of the 19th century, where gendered women's work was the archetype around which colonial and 'civilised' notions of work could most readily cohere, but also where those forms of industriousness were subject then – both in the indigenous pasts, and subsequently thereafter in the white and black worlds of 'native' and industrial labour – to masculinist and patriarchal refusals and subjections. When the meanings of women's work were pushed back into the discourses of 'reproduction', 'minority' and the 'home', to non-waged work and an apparent wageless life, this further contributed to the seeming 'untranslatability' and yet stubborn persistence of the multiple meanings of *ukusebenza* and *ukuphangela*.

Conclusion

This paper is not about work or labour itself, and how it changes historically in South Africa (from pastoral, to agricultural and industrial; native labour, wage labour, migrant labour etc.), but about how the meaning of 'work' and 'labour' itself changes. What we want to suggest, is that an 'original' meaning of the tasks/duties associated with 'work' was 'woman'/*ukusebenza* (what men did, does not constitute 'work' but something else entirely: raiding, moving, occasional, going etc.: *ukuphangela*).

Weeks, in *The Problem with Work* (2011) notes that questions about 'whether or not various forms of productive activity … will be recognized as work … have long been at the forefront of class, race, and gender struggles'.[106] What if we pose the question rather, following Anne Kelk Mager and Helen Bradford, of whether it is **gender** (and what it means to be a man or a woman) that is at the forefront not only of class and race struggles, but of what comes to constitute the meaning of 'work', a concept

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104 Ibid..
105 Interview, Minkley and Sangcu, with Victoria L, East London, December 1991.
106 Weeks, The Problem with Work, 14.

whose provenance and meaning changes, as we have noted, with the making of modernity, industrialisation/capitalism, and the 'Europeanisation' of the world ('for the patriarchal German missionaries … men should lead the way to modernity by embracing Christianity and practising sedentary agriculture based on the application of technology'[107] and, similarly, if later, men should lead the way to industrialisation)? The 19th century is a time in which the meaning of the concept of 'work' – in the South African context always also conditioned by colonial relations and under the prerequisites of race/racism – is both being made and changed to 'fit', adapt to, serve the requirements of the move from agro/pastoralism, to fully 'sedentary agriculture', and then to industrialisation.

For that to happen the meaning not only of 'work' had to change, but the gendered nature of women's and men's productive activities, and the meaning of the terms associated with them, as well as the meaning associated with what it meant to be a woman or man, also had to change. From the missionaries' (and later industrialists') perspective, this meant that women, and women's 'work', needed to be relegated to the home or the homeland, and the meaning of what it meant to be a man had to change.

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Word fragments and the different meanings of work – here *ukuphangela* and *ukusebenza* – can be read as what Susan Buck-Morss, after Benjamin, has called 'entryways to a wordliness' that puts lateral universals and temporalities of work back into circulation. In translating what Fryxell has called these alternate 'shapes of time into history',[108] these meanings of work move across differences, across distances and times, where they meet, clash, mingle with and confront one another. In what can be identified as these lateral translations and temporalities of the meaning of work, the idea of the colonial imposition of industrial time and 'native labour' as an enduring vertical slice of history – a wall, or perhaps more apropos, a 'fence' – 'understood as the established narrative that the present tells about itself' begins to break. As Buck-Morss suggests, 'the detail that counts is the one that arrests the reader because it does not fit that narrative'.[109] Here, the detail that counts and that this paper has tried to think with is the durability and the polysemy of the meaning of 'work' contained in the pairing (and translation): *ukusebenza* and *ukuphangela*.

This means that we can rethink, in moving laterally across the differences in these meanings of work to encounter their distinctions, their social and material differentiations differently, and to allow for an encounter with altered translations and arresting similarities between productive labour and 'reproductive work' and between waged and 'non-waged work' and their meanings. Alongside this, the invisible walls (fences) around 'native labour' and its vertical slices (enclosures?)

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107 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 78.
108 A. R. P. Fryxell, 'Time and the Modern: Current Trends in the History of Modern Temporalities', Past and Present, 243 (May 2019), 285-298, 298.
109 Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 149.

are breached – raided if you will, re-opening questions and formulations about the dominant discourses of the 'citizen-worker' and its productivist assumptions in the 'field of labour'.

Laterally, though, the circulations of the meanings of work as *ukusebenza* – primarily reverberating with the 'industriousness' of women's work – provides entryways for translations of difference and time that undo horizontal universalisms in indigenous, colonial and industrial discourses. Read differently, it is black women's work that provides the actual, sustained, arduous and repetitive work in the 'fields of labour' – something that the missionaries of the 19th century Eastern Cape clearly recognised, even if this did not sit well with 'the Moravians [who] designated domestic work as the appropriate sphere for female activity'[110] – and where the sources of the dignity of industrial labour and the 'citizen-worker' more coherently could and should have resided. Perhaps, though, across these lateral universalisms of work, these ideas of the meanings of the 'dignity of industrial labour' of the predominantly male 'citizen-worker' might make visible, following Buck-Morss, how these 'presumed concepts and categories (binaries of difference) of labour, applied to meanings of work are **exposed as deceptive**' [our emphasis].[111] In this 'other cape' of the meanings of work, a different wordliness of labour is projected.

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110 Mager, 'Tracking the Concept of "Work"', 77-78.
111 Buck-Morss, 'Translations in Time', 147.