

BREAD & ROSES:

AN INVESTIGATION OF GENDER,
MANUAL LABOR & RESISTANCE THROUGH
ADS, CLOTHING AND MUSIC

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Abstract

By means of a cultural studies approach, this thesis investigates how social hierarchies are reinforced by the fact that manual labor is coded as gendered. It does so by employing auto-ethnography, media-analysis, material culture analysis and discourse analysis, framed by feminist theory.

An assessment is made of gender relations concerning manual labor, as well as of inconsistencies in this divide, for instance in relation to cooking. It is informed by the historical development of capitalism and industrialization, and the way these changes have influence gender relations including the division of manual labor. In this light the remarkable moment that women were urged to take up manual labor jobs in WWII factories is assessed as well, through the analysis of the emergence and disappearance of safety clothing for women. This results in an elaboration on the 'unisex fallacy', as an example of 'othering' women in paid manual labor.

The following section focuses on the relationship between music, manual labor and resistance. By following for instance the political developments concerning Beethoven's Ninth Symphony the political dimensions of music are investigated. These are then elaborated on by first tracing the history of music and politics, as well as the history of music and manual labor. This section will further comment on the value of music in relation gender manual labor and resistance, which will result in the assessment of expressing Selfhood through songs in this context.

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Introduction

Though academic writing often employs a certain 'professional' distance, I would like to start this introductory part of my thesis with a personal contextualization because it explains where my research interest is rooted. Before I became a university student I was a high school drop out and I needed money to sustain myself. My options were limited due to lack of education, but through some friends I managed to get hired at a tent building company. They had been operative for around three decades and provided festivals across the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium with a selection of bigger and smaller tents, custom scaffolding and things like stages and dance floors. It was seasonal work and every year between May and October the cycle of festivals and the occasional wedding repeated itself. You got to know certain people from other companies, such as shipping container companies, caterers and technical crew responsible for sound and light. What was remarkable is that the available jobs were mostly gendered. Not in an absolute sense, but generally they were.

The company I worked for was one of the few that had women working for them 'in the field' (as opposed to for instance office administration) and also within our group the women were outnumbered by men. In itself I did not mind this; I was hired to do a job which I felt was not connected to my gender and in general I liked my colleagues. What was annoying was the social context 'around' our group. Building festivals means creating small towns in a few days, which means a lot of communication and cooperation has to happen between all contributing parties. This involves working in each other's vicinity, overlapping workspaces and no private 'office' where you can work separately from other companies. The permeable boundaries of our working group made it possible for a lot of gendered assumptions to seep in from the outside. From women tent supervisors not being taken seriously to people from other companies dropping their work to 'help' a woman from our group even though she was doing fine on her own, and sometimes being catcalled and gawked at.

The catcalling and staring were definitely unpleasant and often left an unpleasant ambiance that would linger. More often smaller remarks, assumptions and snap judgments were made, which you then had to explain or debunk. This process could be tiring; frequently these comments were not meant to be mean or degrading as far I could tell, just really uninformed. These assumptions would prove to be, however, woven in the fabric of our work environment so tightly that they became indistinguishable from it and, invisible or not, they produced extra hurdles to jump. This naturalization of beliefs about gender could evoke a sense of not belonging at our place of work as women. Of course I cannot speak for my women colleagues as a whole, but these kinds of experiences were discussed and there could be a sense of relief when we were able to work without these hindrances.

I stuck around this job until I went to university four years later and I learned a lot. Not only did I get stronger, I also became more confident in my skills as a builder. I gained material knowledge, learned to use certain tools, to load a truck and drive a forklift among other things. Especially without a diploma these things felt really good because it offered a sense of making progress, contributing, finishing something and a feeling of self confidence. To me at the time, being able to do manual labor like this was a way to extend myself, and it still is. After the tent building years I expanded into backlining and tour managing in the world of live music and installing solar panels, all jobs in which I made a lot of use of previously

acquired tent building skills. Additionally, in no small part I drew on the knowledge that I was able to learn new skills if I needed to.

These acquired skills were not enough, however. They were considered 'men's jobs' and doing those as a woman was not enough to do away with the conviction that a gendered division of manual labor was legitimate. This was remarkable because the job got done all the same, so what was at play here? My aim with this project is to investigate the structure of gender relations in manual labor by asking how certain social hierarchies are reinforced and maintained by the fact that manual labor is coded as gendered. To answer this main question I made use of several supporting questions: what does the theoretical context look like concerning gender and manual labor? What is the historical background of gender and manual labor? How can gender relations concerning manual labor be traced in cultural outlets such as ads, clothing and music? And lastly, how can music be helpful in the resistance of these hierarchies? What follows is an overview of the different elements that this thesis touches upon in order to investigate these questions.

The first chapter focuses on the *theoretical framework and contextualization* of the relationship between gender and manual labor. It starts by positioning this project and a short explanation of the term 'manual labor'. Because this definition will prove to be too vague, Hannah Arendt's notions of *labor, work and action* are then considered to get a better sense of the parameters of work and manual labor. Arendt's connection of labor, work and action to *freedom and plurality* will be addressed, as will her hierarchical conclusions about race and the problems that generates. This notion will offer a provisional insight into the interplay of different societal issues, and the understanding that inequalities can have an appearance that seems inherent, but is actually *naturalized*. Precisely this kind of naturalized hierarchy is what this thesis aims to investigate, because it causes culturally generated customs to be mistaken as immanent. Such hierarchization also has its effects on manual labor and gender, which can be seen, for instance, in the description of certain jobs as *blue collar* or *pink collar*.

In order to get a better sense of how these demarcations were able to come into existence in the first place, the next section will provide a historical overview of women and work. With the help of historian Alice Kessler-Harris the changing manifestations of work are traced from the pre-industrial commons to recent history. It will show how, in general, the collectively self-sufficient gave way to the individual, how the *public* and *private* became important gendered spheres, and how gendered, white, middle class and heteronormative so called 'proper roles' came into existence, among other things. These historical developments are then connected to the division of public manual labor in recent history. With a range of between 1 and 10 percent of women occupying these jobs, it is clear that there still is a big divide. An argument that is often used to explain this difference is the claim that there is an evident biological difference between men and women.

Because biological assertions of this nature are quite common they will be addressed with the help of geneticist and ergonomist Karen Messing. Messing argues that on average there are differences between the physical bodies of men and women. It is, however, ill-informed to see biology as an exact science, and by extension it is inaccurate to conflate averages and estimates with the absolute. In reality, Messing argues, men and women overlap in their capacities, but are divided by culturally informed connotations about these capacities. This also influences the assessment of the actual physical demands of certain work. Women's work tends to be framed as not heavy, even if it is. Conversely, men tend to be expected to do work that is actually too heavy for them under the guise of being 'manly', resulting in a proneness to injury.

The next section will explain how in this thesis the terms *sex* and *gender* are tentatively used in order to investigate the historical and contemporary climate of manual labor. It will be explained how gender can function as an analytical tool to understand history and to name and address certain power relations that have led to inequalities. This approach sees gender as an expression of custom, expectation and ideology, which will be connected to the work of Simone de Beauvoir. In her work she reveals how the cultural can pretend to be the natural, and argues that this has long been the case in relation to gender. Additionally, Judith Butler argues that not only gender is a social construct, but sex as well. The benefit of this notion is that it addresses how much more things are contingent and less clear than society has compartmentalized before.

Both De Beauvoir and Butler focus on how influential binaries are for 'Western' thinking, which will be briefly addressed. In addition to the man/women dichotomy, De Beauvoir noted others, like mind/body, public/private, and Self/Other. Butler argues how such binaries are part of a heteronormative architecture of human behavior that interlinks sex, gender, the body, desire and sexuality. These norms do not *describe* 'the truth', but rather *prescribe* it by reiterating power relations. Because it concerns social constructs it is possible to destabilize them; ultimately these binaries are unstable.

The passage that follows addresses how race is a social construct too, and that in this thesis it will be used in a similar way as how 'gender' is used. This means that, even though it might concern a construct, the consequences are too real to ignore and that there is value in using the term in an analytical sense. The point is not to reify, but to describe society's geography, an approach that historian Paul Gilroy calls *anti-anti-essentialism*. In combination with philosopher Gayatri Spivak's notion of *strategic essentialism* the benefits and pitfalls of essentializing are explored. Owing to lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, the case will be made for a tentative use of categories by virtue of their power to feature the otherwise omitted. When failing to do so, for instance the black woman will keep on being 'the other', as writer Audre Lorde makes clear.

The chapter ends with the question: why is it important to talk about manual labor and gender? On the one hand there is a practical answer: certain manual labor jobs pay well and offer flexibility. Some in particular inhabit a growing market and it would not make sense for women to not benefit from this opportunity if they would want to, but these are gatekept. As seen, this absence of women in manual labor jobs is based on arbitrary customs. On the other hand there is a more philosophical answer: in a move that resembles Arendt's distinction between labor and work, De Beauvoir distinguishes *immanence* and *transcendence*. The latter is connected to Selfhood and freedom, to be able to add something to the world, to choose from plurality, and to take part in the human project. If someone does not get the choice, and is continuously forced in the role of the Other this means that they are deprived of their humanity. So to stop dividing manual labor along the lines of gender would be a more sincere way of living, because it would involve a bigger share of freedom. Lastly, De Beauvoir argues, to be a true Self is also to strive for the freedom and Selfhood of others.

The second chapter concerns *methodology and method* and explains what kind of academic perspective are fundamental to this thesis, and what kind of theoretical tools it will use. Elementary for this research project is a cultural studies approach, which allows for openness, engagement and a variety of connections between subjects. This description is then followed by an overview of the methods that were used, such as autoethnography, history, media analysis, material culture analysis and more. Lastly, the chapter will address

how it is informed by feminism, not only by means of theory, but also in its investigation by asking why are women missing?

The third chapter returns to *manual labor and gender* in order to assess the messiness of this relationship and to pinpoint some of the places where inconsistencies can be found. With the help of sociologist Sylvia Walby's concepts *private patriarchy* and *public patriarchy*, it becomes clear how in general private gender norms are copy pasted in the public realm by means of three examples. The first example concerns cooking and will demonstrate how gender norms can switch along the lines of the public and private. The historical norm of women cooking at home is shown by means of media analysis of ads from the 1950s and 1960s, after which the gender divide in the context of professional chefs is assessed. Who cooks will prove to be a matter of the public versus private realm, both at home as in the labor market. Another example of deviation in gendering work in relation to the public and the private will be shown in the conditions of farm work. Lastly, this is followed by a contemporary example of resistance against gendered manual labor norms in creator Christine McConnell's work who combines the public and the private in a specific way due to the interface of social media..

After that the World War pleas for women to come do factory work will serve as a case study of how transgression of gendered work norm is sometimes accepted. This section will assess how a state of emergency changed what was possible and desirable for women to do and how they were recruited through propaganda and advertisements. It will also address the limits of this kind of tolerable transgression, the ambiguity in the accommodation of the women workers, and the continued expectations put on their appearance to stay feminine. Additionally, it will be explained how this transgression was reversed again after the encouraged transgression.

Next, the arc of women being allowed to work in factories during the World Wars will be linked to their safety clothing. By means of a material culture analysis of coveralls for women it will become clear how there has been a development, a short lived presence, and then a regression in the accessibility of manual labor in this specific sense. The point is not to dramatize the disappearance of a coverall with drop seat that is functional for women, but to show how the decision to stop making them is arbitrary. This notion is linked to the tendency to erase women by demanding them to adjust to the standard set by men, which in this case can be visible in labeling actually unaccommodating clothing 'unisex' and be done with it. This unisex fallacy is an example of how the relationship between men and women as Self and Other respectively can be uncovered and examined in the material world.

Chapter 4 is the last chapter of this thesis and will examine another kind of cultural expression, which takes place where *music, work and resistance* meet. As will become clear, this connection has a long history and is worthwhile to explore because it can be a powerful exchange. Starting from literary critic Raymond Williams' notion that "culture is ordinary," the chapter first will explore his broad definition of culture. This will then be reinforced by cultural theorist Stuart Hall's insight that by *representing* people or things in certain way, we ourselves *give meaning* to them. How we assess the world around us depends on our conceptual maps; how things *speak* to us depends on the internalized road maps we are taught. Additionally, these internal structures are connected to *power*.

From here, the chapter will first address the relationship between *music and the political* by following the history of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and its later added lyrics in relation to the European Union. This will give a tentative sense of how cultural meaning can change, and how much impact it can have. To further define what music can mean in relation to political experience, the subsequent section will concentrate on sociologist David

Hesmondhalgh's concept of *human flourishing*. These concepts will be lended support by connecting them to the emergence of Swing-culture among young people in Nazi occupied Europe and will explore the question what music meant in a political context. This section is followed by sociologist Deena Weinstein's investigation of protest and popular music in more recent years and will explain different kinds of protest lyrics as well as the correlation between music and resistance.

Secondly, the chapter will focus on the relationship between *music and work* by means of sociologist Marek Korczynski's historical overview of this connection. By retracing industrialism's impact on work it will become clear that work and music have been bluntly divided from each other with the emergence on capitalism. It will become clear how this split gradually evolved into a different relationship and how music, sound, silence and work have interacted in recent history.

The last segment will briefly investigate different ways in which music can function as an expression of the relationship between manual labor and gender. It will cover three examples of songs that relate to gender, manual labor and resistance and read them as texts in the broader sense of the word. What meaning do these songs express and in what way do they add to for instance human flourishing?

Bread & Roses

Lastly, the title of this thesis, *Bread & Roses*, is borrowed from a speech from 1911 by suffragist Helen M. Todd that was later turned into a poem and combined with music by different composers. It reflects the notion that to survive is ultimately not enough; beautiful things are also elemental to human sustenance, or at least the freedom to engage in such things is.¹

¹ Helen M. Todd, *Bread & Roses* (1911), retrieved August 15, 2021, <http://unionsong.com/u159.html>.

Chapter 1 Theoretical framing and contextualization

In the introduction I mentioned my own experiences with manual labor to contextualize my own experience and interest in the topic. I assume that I am not alone in my experiences, and that there might be different knowledge to find in different manual labor disciplines. That is why in this chapter I aim to connect the inklings formed by personal involvement in manual labor practices with the realm of the collective and the academic by describing the broader context in which I am intervening and defining the theoretical groundwork of my analysis.

First, this project will be positioned in 'the West', followed by a tentative explanation of manual labor and a more in depth account of labor, work and action in Hannah Arendt's work. The racist connotations that are connected with this hierarchy of work will be explained next. After that, a historical account of women and work will be given, in which the emergence of private and public work will be addresses, as well as what this meant for gender relations concerning work. The effects of this divide can still be seen in the numbers of gender and manual labor, which will be addressed next.

In order to take away some common convictions about manual labor and gender, the ensuing section elaborates on gender and biology, followed by an explanation of the use of *sex* and *gender* in this project rooted in the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. Their work will show how prevalent and influential binaries are in our thinking and that they can be destabilized. Next, *race* will be assessed in the same light, while exploring in what ways essentializing can be useful, and when it is harmful, followed by the added value of intersectionality and what is at stake if ignored.

Lastly, the necessity of talking about manual labor and gender will be evaluated. The need to have this conversation will be supported by a practical argument of gatekeeping and a somewhat more philosophical argument of De Beauvoir's notion of transcendence.

'The West'

To clarify the range and aim of this project, some demarcation and definitions are in order. The broader context and focus of this project is the 'West' and its history in approximately the last century and a half. Though the term is problematic and linked with for instance colonialism it serves a purpose in this context exactly because it is connected to other (outdated) systems that are still of influence on the topics discussed in this thesis.² The term will be used between scare quotes in order to both acknowledge its disputable origin, but at the same time still use the demarcative value it holds in its surrounding context.

The term 'Western world' is a tricky one that does not have a uniquely single meaning, but which depends on context. Historian William Hardy McNeill describes how the term developed and changed in meaning and scope throughout history. McNeill emphasizes the role of connotations of "us" versus "them" that follow the lines of colonizing Western Europe and its overseas colonized settlements in the USA, Australia and New Zealand, for instance.³ He also describes that at the time of writing the text *What We Mean by the West* in 1996 the term came to include countries that assimilated to 'Western' norms, such as Japan.⁴ Because the term is vague and has problematic connotations it is important to describe its intended use and meaning.

² Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options. Latin America Otherwise: Language, Empires, Nations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), xii-xiii.

³ William H. McNeill, "What We Mean by the West." *Orbis* 41, no. 4 (1997): 513, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387\(97\)90002-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387(97)90002-8).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 514.

In the context of this thesis the term the 'West' and its derivatives will be used to mean Western Europe and the Westernized colonies such as the USA, Canada and Australia. These countries have a predominantly Judeo-Christian cultural history and followed a comparable arc in the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century.⁵ Though the involved countries have a plethora of differences there is a sense of common ground; they overlap in cultural background and comparable historical issues can be discerned throughout, such as specific issues like voting rights for women or working classes unionizing. Using the term 'the West' allows for an approximation of a social and cultural environment in which certain comparable hierarchies are of influence on how manual labor has been coded as gendered and keeps on being reinforced as such up until today. To not mention a colonial term like 'the West' in the context of the history of manual labor, industrialization, and gender would be an omission since they are so closely linked historically. By explicitizing the background of 'the West' and acknowledging its biography and current influence the term might still be somewhat useful by means of revealing beliefs about other issues that are connected to it.

Manual labor

In colloquial use 'manual labor' seems so simple that it can be seen as self-explanatory. It is work that you do with your hands, which includes mining, plumbing, woodworking, construction working, etcetera. Upon further inspection, though, there is a framework of connotation and interpretation surrounding the term. As architecture and sustainable built environments professor Jonathan Bean describes, in 'the West' manual labor is often held at a tension with what is called knowledge work.⁶ What is done with the head is systematically divided from what is done with the hands and/or body. This dichotomy, Bean argues, is a false one. Using contemporary examples he shows that jobs that are considered manual labor are actually a combination of the physical and the cerebral, two of which will be mentioned here because they offer insight into a common fallacy. Firstly, a machinist needs extensive knowledge of their tools, ranging from operating a lathe to a metal sheet folding machine and it does not really matter if this is done directly by hand or by typing commands into a computer. Likewise, a grocery store cashier operates a register, which functions as a database system, while at the same time they can be expected to do calculus from the top of their head and to perform emotional labor towards customers in the name of serviceability.⁷ This goes to show that the membrane between manual labor and knowledge work is porous and contingent. In other words, societal ideas about labor and work are shaped by cultural interpretation.

Hannah Arendt on labor, work and action

If these categories of human endeavours are not exclusionary, but are still used as such, what is behind them? Hannah Arendt investigates the issue of work as distinguishable from labor and a category she calls 'action' in her work *The Human Condition*. In order to shed a light on the human condition Arendt starts by describing the distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, respectively the active life and the thinking life. Though the ancient Greek philosophy these terms stem from is way more intricate than there is room here to explain, in general the *vita activa* was linked to the more elementary needs of

⁵ *The Darker Side*, 13, 154.

⁶ Jonathan Bean, "Bridging Knowledge and Labor." *Interactions* 28, no. 4 (2021): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3466164>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

sustaining life and seen as lesser than compared to the *vita contemplativa* that was seen as more noble and dignified.⁸ The *vita activa* was lower in hierarchy and merely a necessary evil in order to get to the pinnacle of human achievement as found in the *vita contemplativa*. Arendt argues that first, this hierarchy is erroneous, and second, that by dismissing the *vita activa* as an inferior and uniform phenomenon important distinctions about human reality are lost and will fall by the wayside.⁹

Rather, the *vita activa* is more complex and can be divided into three elements: labor, work, and action. Firstly, in the eyes of Arendt *labor* concerns the realm of the necessary, that which the human animal shares with other animals like eating, drinking, shelter and sex. It involves the things that are the (biological) conditions for staying alive, which is why they are considered the least human since it is not what makes the human stand out from other animals.¹⁰ By extension, labor speaks of urgency and leaves no traces behind apart from the fact that it sustained its producer.¹¹ When the meal is eaten it is gone, and though it had a very important function it can not be shown after it has fulfilled its purpose except maybe indirectly. The essentiality is exactly what makes labor unfree, in the eyes of Arendt; there is no choice but to do it in order to stay alive.¹²

Secondly, Arendt describes *work* as productivity that lasts. If labor seemingly vanishes into thin air once it is completed, work does something different. Work manipulates the natural world in order to make it more to the liking of the human inhabiting it, which for instance can take shape in the form of human artifacts such as architecture, art or furniture.¹³ The peculiarity of the output of work is that it is more durable than that of labor. It will last (at least some time) and tells of the human as different from the animal, because it concerns human's impact on nature instead of vice versa as is the case with labor.¹⁴ Where labor is immediate and reactive to the environment, work is directorship over surroundings with an eye on longevity. This distinction also parallels with the difference between being controlled and being the one in control over something else.

These categories of human ventures are complemented with Arendt's third element of the *vita activa*, which is defined as *action*. While work has a bigger sense of freedom connected to it than labor, work still is unfree insofar it concerns a means to an end and an instrumental approach towards the world.¹⁵ Through work the human makes things and influences the world in ways that result in something more or less permanent; at the end the creator can point at the outcome of their efforts. To Arendt the lack of freedom lies in the fact that the value of that which was created is dependent on its use and that the intrinsic value is made to disappear, or rather made to have never existed in the first place.¹⁶ The category of action, on the other hand, does concern itself with intrinsic value as well as with the concept of freedom. To Arendt, "to act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin [...], to set something in motion."¹⁷ Freedom lies in the ability to take action and *start* something that is unexpected. This stands in contrast to the character of necessity of the

⁸ Hannah Arendt, Danielle Allen, and Margaret Canovan, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 12-14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83, 84.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹² *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 135-146.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

realm of labor and the character of expectedness of work. The latter will always be a means to an end and in that sense will be highly predictable.

Next to freedom the concept of *plurality* is also essential to the category of action in Arendt's work. It entails that humans are equal in capacity, but not all the same in practice. In the realm of action the plurality of the human, with all its individuals, can be found. This action does not concern itself with anything physical as such, like labor and work do, but with the interaction between humans as humans.¹⁸ This is why action takes place in the realm of the public and the political; it relies on the interaction between free humans and their capabilities to take initiative. Here people are simultaneously the same in their freedom, and diverse in their actions.¹⁹

Hierarchical classifications and race

Though the *vita activa* as a whole is not less valuable to Arendt than the *vita contemplativa*, the three constituent factors of the *vita activa* are hierarchized in relation to each other and their level of freedom as mentioned above. Respectively, labor, work, and action correspond to an increased degree of freedom. Unfortunately these hierarchies in freedom are not taken as trivial by Arendt. The link between labor and the realm of the animal is reified into categories of humans, instead of mere unranked and contingent modes of human existence.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt couples the hierarchy of human activity to several ethnicities. She argues that 'tribal' and 'savage' African communities were connected to nature in a such a way that there was a unification with it; no difference between nature and the people living in it. With Arendt's explanation of labor in mind, this means that the people she described had no freedom, no power over nature, lead lives immersed in the realm of biological necessity and left no traces of humanity behind.²⁰ There is no denying that this kind of life is part of human existence. It goes without saying that biological needs need to be tended to in order to stay alive. Then what is the reason to look down on the provision of sustenance?

To Arendt, the connection between necessity and a lack of freedom is evident, as mentioned before. This is why the participation in work and action has more value than the participation in labor. Arendt's analysis of African 'tribal'²¹, 'savage'²², and 'barbaric'²³ populations is that they lack history and a culture of their own, especially in comparison to 'the West'.²⁴ This lack is connected to the focus of the specific human activity of these populations. Arendt argues that all three forms of activity are fundamental to the human condition:

"With the term *vita activa*, I propose to designate three fundamental human activities: labor, work and action. They are fundamental because each corresponds to one of the basic conditions under which life has been given to man."²⁵

¹⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., 175-176.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 192-194.

²¹ Ibid., 193.

²² Ibid., 185.

²³ Ibid., 209.

²⁴ Arendt, *The Origins*, 186.

²⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

However, instead of inferring different modes of expression of these forms of human activity, Arendt argues that since the categories of work and labor she encounters in some instances do not look like how these are expressed in 'the West', they do not exist at all. The consequence of this assessment is that it leads to the erasure of humans that have not assimilated to the hegemonic. In turn, this misreading of non-existence results in problematic outcomes that contribute to the fabrication of certain races and cultures as 'lesser than'. In addition, it omits the fact that human artifacts and political organisation does not have to mimic 'the West' in order to be valuable.

The point of evaluating Arendt's framework of human activity is to create awareness about the fact that firstly, ideas about labor and work can be connected to notions of hierarchy and secondly, that such hierarchies can be linked to other societal issues. As will be further mentioned in the following passage, Arendt relates to Marx by the rejection of his primacy of labor. Though Arendt's explanations of the meanings of labor and work are not the conclusive definitions, it does uncover how certain human activities are appreciated and how they create schisms that might *appear* naturalized. In the same way, even though Arendt's assessment of Marx opposes her hierarchy of what kind of activity is most important to apprehend humanity, it underlines a corresponding structure.

To Arendt, Marx sees labor as the epitome of the human. The labor that humanity delivers lies at the core of what it means to be human, as Arendt describes: "...the seemingly blasphemous notion of Marx that labor (and not God) created man or that labor (and not reason) distinguished man from the other animals..."²⁶ A massive body of work exists when it comes to Marx and the interpretations of what Marx meant and how he has been assessed by others varies widely. For instance, in Arendt's view of him, labor and work overlap unjustly and need to be hierarchically distinguished from each other in order to say something useful about the worth of human activity.²⁷ Someone like philosophy professor Sean Sayers points out that Marx indeed did view labor as hierarchized, only in a different way.²⁸ Additionally, Marx argued that some races would be better in boosting their country's productivity than others based on their 'natural capabilities'.²⁹

Marx' use of the word *race* might be broader than its contemporary use, at certain instances he also used it to describe the working class for instance. Still, in both cases it indicated a demarcation in society in connection to work. In turn, these demarcations have been explained in such a way that they underscribed, reiterated and strengthened the notion that some work was better suited for specific people on the basis of their (hereditary) identity.³⁰ In other words, in Marx' framework, like in Arendt's, the possibilities of what a human can do in the realm of labor and work (and action) is linked to their being in relation to society. The expectations of what is fitting and feasible work for a particular person is not solely connected to their factual capacities as an individual, but also, in an overarching, cultural way, to others' interpretations of them. This means that society's prejudices about the capacities of groups of people are of direct influence on the human activities they will be able to perform in life. This important aspect will come back later in this chapter.

²⁶ Ibid., 85-86.

²⁷ W.A. Suchting, "Marx and Hannah Arendt's the Human Condition." *Ethics* 73, no. 1 (1962): 47-55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2379799>.

²⁸ Sean Sayers, "The Concept of Labor: Marx and His Critics." *Science & Society* 71, no. 4 (2007): 449. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40404442>.

²⁹ E. Van Ree, "Marx and Engels's Theory of History. Making Sense of the Race Factor." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 24, no. 1 (2019): 60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2019.1548094>.

³⁰ Ibid., 65-66.

The aim of this project is to delve in to how preconceived hierarchical notions about manual labor in relation to gender are expressed and how they have manifested themselves in society throughout recent history. How do our internalized ideas about manual labor reflect back at us through clothing, tools and music? As mentioned above, manual labor is a somewhat vague term because it can be argued that the line between physical work and knowledge work is not as clear cut as it may seem. By focusing on the working class as a supporting method of classification the connection between physical work and social stature is expressed. However big the implications of class are, there is more at play in the realm of manual labor than 'just' that. In reality the societal geography of manual labor is more nuanced, for example through the axis of race and gender in addition to class. These nuances make for a more accurate description of what labor and work mean from different perspectives and societal positions. At the same time this makes things more complicated and sometimes contradictory. This is visible, for example, in the common practice of categorizing jobs by the color of their collar. The demarcation of blue and white collar jobs denotes the rough divide that has been addressed before between physical and knowledge based jobs that are linked to waged and salaried earnings and lower and higher levels of training or education respectively.³¹ Looking more closely, it becomes apparent that they sometimes overlap, for instance in grey collar work, which can be used to describe someone who in some way bridges the gap of blue and white collar work. This can mean that someone combines practical work with knowledge work, is vocationally trained, or maybe someone who is academically trained but works 'below' their level of training.³² Next to grey collars, the term green collar job has emerged relatively recently to signify jobs that aid in sustaining the environment in the face of climate change.³³ Because this market is growing and seems to be prosperous this category of work offers a kind of upward mobility in the sense of better pay and stability, taking away the precariousness of blue collar work.³⁴ While most color codes in this context express a definition of work on the basis of their contents, the term pink collar job refers to gender as a means of classification. Coined by sociologist Louise Kapp Howe in 1977, *pink collar* was a phrase developed to describe the phenomenon of women without a college degree being underpaid in certain jobs that were deemed 'for women'.³⁵ In this instance, the collar does not reflect the actual color of the uniform worn which referred to the white shirts prevalent in knowledge based work environments and the blue denim or indigo worn by physical laborers. Instead, it makes use of the societal connotation of pink with femininity in order to indicate 'women's work' that is often seen as less 'serious' and more 'dead end'.³⁶ Howe's introduction of pink collar work articulated that even though women might have gained certain rights, society's assessment of women and their work still reflected particular prejudices. The next section will delve

³¹ Duncan Gallie, "New Technology and the Class Structure: The Blue-Collar/White-Collar Divide Revisited." *The British Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 3 (1996): 447–448. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/591363>.

³² József Hajdú, "Colours of the collar in the labour market." *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: forum: acta juridica et politica*, 1 no. 1 (2011), 263-264.

³³ *Ibid.*, 259-260.pre-

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 260.

³⁵ Louise Kapp Howe, *Pink Collar Workers: Inside the World of Women's Work* (New York: Avon, 1978).

³⁶ Nadežda Silaški, "X-collar workers in the new economy—the role of metonymy in coining new terms," In *Jezici i kulture u vremenu i prostoru* [Languages and Cultures Across Time and Space], ed. S. Gudurić (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet, 2012), 399-406.

deeper into such gendered value judgements and further connotations of work and manual labor.

The history of women and work

Historian Alice Kessler-Harris is the author of *Women Have Always Worked*, in which she offers an overview of the developments concerning work and gender. Although the main focus of the book deals with the American context, some major motions can be extrapolated to and have been paralleled by other 'Western' countries, for instance due to analogous advancement of industrialization. The historical analysis of Kessler-Harris offers insight into how current ideas concerning gender and work have come into existence historically, which now can still be retraced in a term like 'pink collar jobs' and its minimizing connotations.

Starting with a description of pre-industrial life, Kessler-Harris explains how the economy in Europe at the time was organized around relatively self-sufficient households and commons, where almost every family member worked, regardless of gender or age.³⁷ The emphasis was laid on producing sustenance, not so much wages. Due to a surplus of available people relative to the work that had to be done, the tasks were divided into indoor and household tasks for women and outdoor and seasonal tasks for men, roughly.³⁸ The economy changed during the 17th and 18th century when trade was on the rise and merchants would demand specific products from families, who would then no longer control their output. What they did control still was their own time and pacing of work, but that would change too when merchants' demands for products rose and even more so when the steam engine was introduced.³⁹ The commons disappeared, large landowners started to emerge and families were driven to the cities where newly materialized factories would thrive on the high concentrations of the displaced poor, which functioned as a sheer endless supply of cheap labor sources.⁴⁰

Simultaneous with these developments, the previous emphasis of collective well-being was replaced by an individual notion of success, which went hand in hand with competition and legal restrictions were put in place to discourage unionization in several occasions.⁴¹ The male laborer was seen as an individual, and around him a mythical narrative of opportunity was created: working hard would get him a better place in society and this in turn was connected to being a morally good person.⁴² This meant that even if the laborer did not ever reach this goal he would live like he would, he would work hard and in the case of not succeeding he would carry the weight of failure as his own responsibility. Kessler-Harris emphasizes that this account of opportunity through labor omitted everyone but the white male laborer; for enslaved black people, immigrants, free black, latina and white women even the legend of opportunity was not an option, let alone actually succeeding at it.⁴³ The alienation of not being white was expanded by the expectations put on women; the white middle class lady became the ideological goal, which was not attainable for a lot of people and which left them more stratified.⁴⁴ When white men were expected to adjust from pre-industrial work to the industrial era, the social role of white women changed too; divorced

³⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked: A Concise History*. 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

⁴⁴ Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 102.

from paid labor they were expected to support the men with the newly competitive aspirations in their vicinity toward upward mobility.⁴⁵ The emphasis was no longer put on the production of goods, but rather on running the household and care giving. The competitive, cold and aggressive realm of men's work in public was to be balanced and grounded with the private nurturing, supportive and caring realm of their wives.⁴⁶

This private work was however not seen as 'actual' work, because it was not paid. Even though the men in these families were expected to be supported by their spouses, the work of the latter was taken for granted. Often explained away as 'women's nature' and 'auxiliary', white women's contributions to the labor force were disregarded as non-essential notwithstanding the societal and moral pressure they were under to do so.⁴⁷ The cascading influence of dividing work by gender, the reduction of community support and the moral expectations of being a 'good woman' and a 'good man' resulted in the fact that women were paid less if they were to work. Since a paid working woman did not exactly fit the picture of a 'good woman', it became an argument to pay women less. There was no real prestige, women were expected to do paid work temporarily until they would not have to anymore and they were thought to work only in preparation of their role as 'homemaker'.⁴⁸ These constructs were all the more injurious for women and their families alike who in fact did rely on their paid labor as income. Because black, immigrant and/or poor men already were at a disadvantage when it came to paid labor the added burden of underpaid 'women's work' made it even harder to come by, even though their added income was more necessary.⁴⁹

In another book, called *Gendering Labor History*, Kessler-Harris explains in more detail how culture and socialization are not only constituent of creating women's 'proper roles', they also solidify these roles in such a way that they seem inevitable and unchangeable.⁵⁰ This process has been absolutely essential in stratifying labor and work along the lines of gender because it aids in justifying division in such a way that it goes unquestioned. By defining 'proper roles' according to gender and attaching them to work people who do not meet these standards fall by the wayside, as mentioned before. The consequences of exclusion are very real, since making money is of such fundamental value in a capitalist society. Kessler-Harris shows how these societal roles are in fact not immanent to women, firstly by showing how the content of what is deemed 'proper work' for women changed over the years, and secondly by acknowledging that certain work has been done by black and/or lower class women for a long time already before it became acceptable for middle class white women to do.⁵¹ Unfortunately, though certain steps have been made in recent history, Kessler-Harris argues, ideas about 'proper work' for men and women are still active in our societal and cultural consciousness. Also, the similarly continuing presence of ideas about race and class should not be omitted, as well as the newly pried open sliver of legal room conquered by the LGBTQ-community when it comes to gender roles and the family in relation to work.⁵² The propositions Kessler-Harris establishes concerning the ongoing influence of ideas about gender, race and class in the context of work are elementary to this project.

⁴⁵ *Women Have Always Worked*, 13-14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁵⁰ *Gendering Labor History*, 98.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 111-116.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 115-116.

This project follows the historical thread of manual labor as gendered into the present, the analysis of clothing and tools will provide insight into the current attitude towards gender and manual labor. Additionally, the importance of music in transforming and resisting gender roles will be examined in order to assess how the legacy of gendered work continues today and where changes are being made. In order to do so, several further contextualizations and explanations of terms are beneficial, starting with the present status of manual labor and gender.

The contemporary state of gender division in blue collar jobs

In general, the contemporary numbers of women participating in blue collar manual labor fields range between less than ten and less than one percent. For instance, in Belgium and the USA 9% of construction workers are women^{53,54}, 4% of tradespeople in British Columbia, Canada are women⁵⁵, 6.3% of construction workers in Italy, 0.3% of tradespeople in the UK, and 0.2% of tradespeople in the Netherlands (the latter numbers were reported in the same paper).⁵⁶ Considering critical mass theory, which argues that a presence of around 30% is needed to get from token or exception to a pivotal point when it comes to influence, all these countries are lacking in equality by great numbers.⁵⁷ It seems not more than reasonable to assess these differences in numbers between men and women as significant, so what is going on behind these numbers? In Kessler-Harris's dissection of gender and work the idea of what is deemed 'proper' for women was already mentioned, as was the fact that the sense of 'proper' work for a certain gender could change on the basis of cultural and societal opinion.⁵⁸ However, in order to consolidate the role of women in society, anchors have been sought outside of the realm of the changeable. To justify women's status of 'not suitable for public work', it has become custom to do a deep-rooted appeal to biology and the alleged 'essence' of women's nature.⁵⁹ This argument is so common that it must be asked: are the wielders of the biology argument on to something?

Manual labor and gender analysis by means of biology

Geneticist and ergonomist Karen Messing wrote the book *One-Eyed Science*, in which she thoroughly analyzes women's occupational health and the omission of women when it comes to research about work, health and safety. The foreword by Jeanne Mager Stellman is opened by a clear explanation of the inconclusiveness of biological measurements, stating that "Biological measurements are inherently inaccurate and imprecise."⁶⁰ Biology concerns

⁵³ "Vrouw in de bouw: stijging veelbelovend, maar nog ontoereikend," Bouw & Wonen, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://www.bouwenwonen.net/artikel/Vrouw-in-de-bouw-stijging-veelbelovend-maar-nog-ontoereikend/46990>.

⁵⁴ Salman Azhar and Miranda K. Amos Griffin, "Women in construction: Successes, challenges and opportunities—A USACE case study," paper presented at the 50th ASC Annual International Conference, Blacksburg, Virginia, March 2014.

⁵⁵ "Build TogetherHER - Women of the Building Trades," Build Together BC, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://www.buildtogetherbc.ca/>.

⁵⁶ Van Der Meer, Marc, "Gender and Ethnic Minority Exclusion from Skilled Occupations in Construction: A Western European Comparison," *Construction Management & Economics* 23, no. 10 (2005): 1025–34.

⁵⁷ Oliver, Pamela, "Critical mass theory," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (2013), accessed July 22, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm059>.

⁵⁸ *Gendering Labor History*, 110.

⁵⁹ *Women Have Always Worked*, 12-13.

⁶⁰ Messing, Karen, *One-Eyed Science: Occupational Health and Women Workers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), ix.

itself not with true values, but with expected values and statistical averages that are always in close connection to their specified conditions. The example given to demonstrate this is that the boiling point of water is dependent on external pressure, even though it is commonly known to be 100°c.⁶¹ In other words, it is important to consider assumed 'hard facts' in the context of their specified and arbitrary conditions.

Messing scrutinizes the conditions under which assumptions about gender and manual labor are made. She starts by acknowledging both nature and nurture arguments, and proposes a nuanced synthesis. This synthesis consists of four main components, which hold that 1) the average man and woman are physically somewhat different, though there is substantial overlap, 2) if they get the chance workers will adjust their work environment to their needs, 3) some actually demanding jobs that women are asked to do are not considered demanding, 4) if the numbers of injuries are high in a workplace this means it is not suitable for any group of workers, regardless of gender.⁶² Through these factors Messing combines social, biological and political facets with historical context in order to create a fairer assessment of manual labor capacities. Messing warns against misinterpretation, and points at the differences between genes, biology and capacity.⁶³ Biological variation is not always caused by genetics, but is also largely dependent on environment. These factors together are of influence to someone's capacity.

Messing goes on to explain that genetically, the *average* man and woman differ from each other by one chromosome, emphasizing that this difference only concerns a small part of human heredity and that a strict biological basis of sexsegregation can be questioned.^{64,65*} The correlation between chromosomes and sex should absolutely be taken as fractional and must be connected to environmental aspects like nutrition and exercise.⁶⁶ Keeping these connotations in mind, the average man was found to be taller, have bigger muscle proportion and bigger feet than the average woman, while the average woman would have different leg proportions, be more flexible and have different hips. The average should, however, not be extrapolated to everyone on account of overlap in the normal distribution of men and women so stratifying all men or all women from certain jobs is senseless to Messing.⁶⁷

She continues by investigating the claim that gendered labor division is based on *strength*. This is measured to create health and safety guidelines by running three kinds of tests that all undervalue women's average relative strength to men, either by dismissing alternative approaches to work, using equipment designed with the average man in mind, or not proportioning tests to adequately assess women's strength.⁶⁸ The biological argument for stratifying manual labor by gender, then, seems to be less absolute than is often proposed. However, Messing argues, also if strength testing is done in a more accurate way, the average woman is less strong than the average man.⁶⁹

Additionally, she demonstrates that traditional beliefs about gender, work and manual labor tend to live beyond the realm of the factual; gender differences are drawn attention to even if they are actually contradicting. An example Messing gives is that male firefighters

⁶¹ Ibid., x.

⁶² Ibid., 24.

⁶³ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁵ Messing acknowledges that more chromosome options exist, but does not address transgender nor non-binary workers explicitly in this chapter.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 27

⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 29-33.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 33.

who are out of shape and/or too old to carry a possible unconscious colleague are allowed to keep practicing, while women are refused from joining the squad in the first place on the basis of their lack of strength when it comes to carrying the same colleague.⁷⁰ The biological claim is also used to keep men working beyond their strength; while the average woman would not be able to carry a certain heavy load on their own at all, the average man might just be able to pull it off. Such repeated strain just outside a man's comfort zone leads to a tripled amount of back injuries compared to women, leaving men to do jobs they are not fit to do reinforced by a gendered narrative of being unmanly if they fail to carry out such dangerous tasks.⁷¹ Messing asserts that a great deal of improvement can be made by adjusting work environments to the specific needs of the worker. Regardless of gender but with a focus on worker's biology in a personal way since workplace design and living up to capacity go hand in hand.⁷²

Lastly, Messing debunks the idea that 'women's work' is not physically demanding, including the previously mentioned pink collar jobs that were deemed less serious. Sewing, for instance, can demand pushing 16,000 kg of force a day, bank tellers stand 90% of the time, cleaning jobs can demand stretching, stooping and cramped scrubbing, daycare workers includes repeatedly lifting (sometimes uncooperative) children, and finally, heart rates of some laundry workers echo those of mine workers due to a great deal of lifting in high temperatures, not to mention the physical activity demanded in the 'non-work' of homemakers.⁷³

To reiterate: through Messing's research it becomes clear that average biological differences which serve as estimates are commonly epitomized as absolute characterizations of men and women. In fact, biology's role is smaller and inconclusive and needs to be linked to cultural factors concerning gender. These nuanced have generally been overlooked, leading to the conservation and reification of the average man as the norm. An example in which this becomes clear is that 'women's work' can be veritably physically demanding in its own right. Accordingly, such omission of factuality when it comes to gender and manual labor has negative implications for men and women alike because it neglects actual worker's needs, capacities and limits. These outcomes are the result of faulty premises when it comes to sex and gender, and their connotations of manual labor. In order to further investigate the reinforcement of social hierarchies through the gendering of manual labor the status of the terms 'gender' and 'sex' will be explained in more detail.

The positions and tasks of sex and gender

This project will not have an answer as to how sex and gender exactly relate to each other. Like Messing's appreciation of biology it seems they are open ended categories that articulate estimates, the enmeshment of which is unconcluded. This does not mean that their entanglement needs to be solved completely before aiding in knowledge production, rather they can be of use while being open ended. Kessler-Harris describes how for her analysis of gender and labor history the term 'gender' functioned as an analytical framework that helped to make understandable certain dimensions in society that would otherwise have kept flying under the radar.⁷⁴ By using gender as a tool to investigate interhuman relations surrounding

⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁷¹ Ibid., 34.

⁷² Ibid., 34-35.

⁷³ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁴ *Gendering Labor History*, 137.

work Kessler-Harris pursues a demystification of societal roles that have wrongly been interpreted as immanent.

She goes on to explain that the phenomenon of 'gender' helps to analyze power relations by uncovering the mutual connections between custom, expectation and ideology; not only is there a difference, this difference results in privilege. She makes an important argument for the unity of home and work that exists in a liberal capitalist society that claims to rest on individualism and still highlights the chance of upward mobility, while these are actually closely connected to the interplay of gender, class and work.⁷⁵ By filtering out the contingent that is seen as immanent Kessler-Harris works towards a more nuanced interpretation of the consequences of representing the accidental as the inherent.

This parallels the distinction between sex and gender; from around the 18th century on sex was seen as biology that mainly consisted of a dichotomy between male and female.⁷⁶ Gender was coined to deal with the social implications that were connected to sex, which proved to be necessary because someone's sex categorization held massive societal significances that did not follow from mere biology.⁷⁷ By using 'gender' it became possible to dig up solidified and unquestioned ideas about society's interpretation of sex that were seen as fundamental.

One of the answers to the commonplace biological essentialism of the time was given by Simone de Beauvoir who contended that the body ('female') was not sufficient to explain the societal implications that were connected to the category of 'woman'.⁷⁸ De Beauvoir demanded to address the faux-innate ideas about sex as a category that had gotten the status of common sense by exposing them as cultivated routines, because she saw and experienced their absurdity.

Judith Butler argues that a distinction between sex and gender is not evident at all, and that the body in the end is also a cultural construct. She does so by highlighting that the cultural meaning of the body too is contingent, for instance in relation to the supposed binarity of gender.⁷⁹ This means that there is no basis to presuppose that there is an underlying 'core' onto which 'gender' is applied, but rather the amalgamation of sex and gender as a whole is all a matter of performativity, reiteration and sedimentation.⁸⁰ By repeating cultural norms they start to give off the atmosphere of being natural, which gives them a status of authority. Butler's work uncovers these naturalized structures to reveal that a lot of things are a) contingent, and b) not as precise as they may seem at first.

The differentiation between nature and nurture has been debated extensively and opinions diverge widely. Since the discernment of the two does not make for a clear distinction of their mutual relationship, the answer to what sex and gender mean depends on who is asked. In light of this thesis both De Beauvoir's and Butler's work are valuable when it comes to the terms gender and sex because they question cultured definitions on the basis of experiences. The metaphysical question of what sex and gender exactly are is not relevant to investigate widespread experiences. Sex and gender here are viable categories because they are acted on by society, which means they influence that society's reality.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 139-141.

⁷⁶ Mary Holmes, *What Is Gender? Sociological Approaches*, (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2007), 22.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

⁷⁸ Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Thurman, *The Second Sex*. (Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage, 2011), 330.

⁷⁹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520-21, 531.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 524.

Following Kessler-Harris' notion of gender as an analytical framework, De Beauvoir's understanding of the ubiquitous cultural meanings attached to the 'natural' is a useful tool to examine the reinforcement of social orders through the gendered coding of manual labor. The realm of manual labor and its history has closely been connected to such assumptions of gender as naturalized, and still is. The terms 'men' and 'women' will be used on the basis of their potency to aid in the analysis of the naturalized gendered narrative surrounding manual labor. Additionally, Butler's work rightfully opens up the potential to look further than these historical categories that are, while very useful, maybe limited in their descriptions of human gender experience. Still, De Beauvoir's work is also serviceable in the analysis of dichotomies, which recur in several instances.

The presence of binaries

As mentioned before, the context of De Beauvoir's work is that of an environment highly divided by a naturalized conception of differences between men and women. Not only did this demarcation run deep, it was also exhaustive in the sense that there were no feasible other options than 'man' or 'woman' except the highly derogatory 'deviant'.⁸¹ De Beauvoir's reaction is situated in this kind of context; René Descartes had had philosophical impact with his mind/body dualism, Georg Hegel wrote about the dialectical relationship between the opposing poles of the master and the slave, and her partner Jean-Paul Sartre's argued absolute freedom of the individual.^{82,83,84} Of course, there were many more influences, but these roughly illustrate De Beauvoir's attention towards dichotomies and the influence of the cultural on the body. Her work concerns binaries like man/woman, mind/body, public/private, and Self/Other. The latter refers to the relationship between men and women, in which men are the Self and women are the Other. This is based on Hegel's dialectic idea of inequality in pairings that are linked to each other, called the master-slave dialectic, and which roughly correspond to pairings like superior and inferior, essential and inessential, active and passive.⁸⁵ Such intertwinedness of sets in which one has power over the other are so ingrained in 'Western' thinking that they still need to be dissected today, as will become visible in chapters 3 and 4. These binaries are not monoliths, but rather they flock together around gender; women are not only seen as less rational, but as belonging to the realm of the private, the body, the animal and the passive all at once.⁸⁶ Added up like that it becomes clear that the characteristics ascribed to women through such dichotomies are degrading, making it easier to dismiss them, something Kessler-Harris previously alluded to too. It makes sense, considering their prevalence and pseudo-intrinsic stature in society, to acknowledge these structures and their impact. De Beauvoir's approach then, is a helpful tool in uncovering naturalized accounts of gender and their interwoven ideas about dichotomies. That is not to say that these binary pairs are 'the truth'. As seen above in Messing's work, the categories of men and women are not as straightforward as they might seem at first; biological data is good for delivering estimates and bell-diagrams. In actuality,

⁸¹ Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons, and Kathleen Lennon, *Theorizing Gender* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell, 2002), 100.

⁸² "Dualism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified September 11, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/>.

⁸³ "Hegel's Dialectics," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified October 2, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-dialectics/>.

⁸⁴ Margaret A. Simons, "Beauvoir and Sartre: The Philosophical Relationship," *Yale French Studies* 72, no. 72 (1986): 172.

⁸⁵ *The Second Sex*, 27, 46

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 205, 224.

differences between men and women themselves can be big, while differences between the two groups can be smaller and not everyone falls into those categories in the first place.⁸⁷

Opening up and destabilizing heteronormativity

As mentioned before, Butler problematized the distinction between sex and gender. This standpoint falls within a bigger framework that argues the instability of binaries, such as the binary of men/women. To Butler, such categories and their joint structures are cultural constructions.⁸⁸ They offer a sense of stability, but they are not 'real' in the sense that they say something about any 'true essence' of people.⁸⁹ Instead, the normative structure of heterosexuality serves as an architecture around which different human behaviors are organized in a normative way.⁹⁰ These include sex, gender, the body, desire and sexuality, which are not fundamentals in their own right, but rather the effects of power relations that are enmeshed in society.⁹¹ Normative heterosexuality needs the man/woman binary and designates this dichotomy with behavioral norms.⁹² That these restrictive binaries are actually artificial constructs is clear because they were already bursting at the seams from the beginning; there are 'deviants' waiting in the margins who are not accounted for.⁹³ The existence of these 'outsiders' demands the reevaluation of the arbitrary but normative connections between the body, gender and desire, because the body does not determine gender expression nor sexual attraction. In fact, there is no causal relationship between these factors and Butler argues that they are profoundly incoherent and interrupted.⁹⁴ Additionally, they are not stable either.⁹⁵ Butler's work then, asserts the instability of categories that have been taken as immutable and interlinked. This does not mean that these divisions have vanished; they are still deeply entwined with contemporary culture and the lens of heteronormativity gets internalized.⁹⁶ To fail at 'doing your gender' in the right way means you can be punished and ostracized for it.^{97,98} The notions of masculinity and femininity in this sense are based on the idea that there is some sense to the gender binary and certain corresponding gender expressions are appropriate.⁹⁹ What it means to do gender 'right' highly depends on social and cultural context which provides a solid argument against gender essentialism, which also provides an opportunity for a destabilization of binary gender ideas. An example of a change in what is deemed proper in relation to gender and work will be addressed in chapter 3 in the section about acceptable transgression. For this project it is important that Butler shows how destabilizing the gender binary opens up the potential of debunking the ingrained cultural convictions about heterosexual norms.

⁸⁷ One Eyed Science, xvi-xvii.

⁸⁸ *Theorizing Gender*, 97.

⁸⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York etc.: Routledge, 1999), xxviii.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xx, xxviii-xxix.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, xxix.

⁹² *Theorizing Gender*, 99.

⁹³ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 116.

⁹⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 23.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxix, 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁹⁷ Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, 522.

⁹⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

Destabilizing race and strategic essentialism

Not only gender has been revealed to be a social construct; race too is a socially defined category. Messing repeats about race what she said about biological sex: the demarcations are unclear and there are no 'true values'.¹⁰⁰ Historian Paul Gilroy acknowledges that there is no 'racial purity' or essence, but rather that identities are instable and mutable, also when it comes to race.¹⁰¹ At the same time, though the category of race has been made up, it has very real implications and there are still racialized power structures operational.¹⁰² Gilroy points towards anti-anti-essentialism to characterize the combination of undefinedness and definedness. On the one hand, race is a construct, at the same time this does have grave and continuing implications based on power structures.¹⁰³ The status of race as a naturalized category gets destabilized with this, a structure similar to the previously mentioned denaturalization of sex and gender. Another approach that tries to bridge reconcile distinctness with collectiveness was coined by philosopher Gayatri Spivak, called *strategic essentialism*. Though she later retracted her endorsement of the term, if used properly it makes a case for a practical approach of change. Especially in a reactive sense, Spivak argues, it can be useful to take the category that has been enforced upon you, even if it is based on nothing, and employ it to make change happen.¹⁰⁴ The works of Gilroy, Spivak and Kessler-Harris in some way all make the argument that it can be plausible to use terms in a historical and explanatory sense. More specifically, contingent categories that have been proven to be falsely naturalized can still be of use in the process of analyzing their current continuing influence on the structure of society because they have shaped experiences and judgments of people. That does, however, not mean that such categories are always helpful.

Intersectionality and essentializing sensibly

Spivak's retraction of 'strategic essentialism' as a tool displays an important issue revolving categories and their limitations. For Spivak, it was clear that the 'strategic' element was to be taken as such; a means to an end, not a description of the 'true' essence of something.¹⁰⁵ However, the goal of overcoming endless differences in order to facilitate solidarity and striking power was soon overtaken by a tendency to uncritically essentialize people without a defined purpose in mind.¹⁰⁶ Without a clear understanding of motive and context such monoliths leave the overlooked by the wayside.

In a similar vein, lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote an article about how black women are structurally omitted when it comes to assessments of gender. Feminism extrapolated the issues mainly white women ran into to signify 'women' as a whole, while antiracism extrapolated the concerns of black men to signify 'black people' as a whole.¹⁰⁷ Respectively, racism and sexism were reproduced in these settings, because they focused on another issue. Instead, Crenshaw argues, it would be closer to the truth to recognize that such

¹⁰⁰ *One Eyed Science*, xvii.

¹⁰¹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), xi, 101.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰⁴ "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution: An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." *Thesis Eleven* 10-11, no. 1 (1985): 183-184, doi:10.1177/072551368501000113.

¹⁰⁵ Sara Danius, Stefan Jonsson, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *Boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (1993): 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1252.

categories do not stand on their own, but rather that they intersect and are not set in stone.¹⁰⁸ Intersectionality is aware of the constituent interdependence of categories that are commonly singled out, such as race, class and sexuality.¹⁰⁹ To address only white women's issues is neglecting serious issues experienced by black women, so much so that it makes it necessary to critically reflect on the strategic use of 'women' as a category.

The consequence of neglecting such analysis is, as writer Audre Lorde insists, the repetition of an unequal dichotomy resulting in the creation of the 'other'.¹¹⁰ This makes the black woman into an alien on the outside of both feminism and antiracism, and is in fact a similar structure as De Beauvoir's definition of the Self/Other dichotomy. To exclude black women from feminism like this seems to defeat the purpose of addressing inequality and ingrained prejudice, especially if the consequences are dismissal and negation of personhood.¹¹¹

In other words, without analytical categories it is likely that differences are overlooked and that hegemonic prejudice that poses as 'common sense' stays authoritative. Categorization can be useful to point out and examine difference and inequality, but there lies a danger in essentializing in a reifying way. Instead, this can be bypassed by consciously categorizing and defining the purpose of doing so. Additionally, it is important to recognize that the interconnectedness of these categories might lead to different outcomes on and in between each cluster. Lastly, the function of a category is not to express permanence, but rather to inspect a context.

Why is it necessary to talk about manual labor and gender?

As described by Kessler-Harris, historically there have been many cultural connotations attached to work, such as what is 'proper' work stratified along the lines of for instance gender, race and/or class. These demarcations have travelled into the now and are still deeply ingrained in society. So much so that they still influence the customs, expectations and ideologies surrounding the division of work. This has practical consequences that are reflected for instance in the participation of women in manual labor jobs.

Put in a bigger perspective with the exponential growth and predicted stability of for instance green collar jobs, this means that it is unlikely for women to directly generate income from this new market. Also certain skilled trades jobs like plumbing are known to be flexible in hours, offer job security and providing a good income; to be excluded from that possibility on the grounds of arbitrary customs is an unnecessary hindrance.¹¹² Especially within the realm of a capitalist society, in which a relationship with money is inevitable, there is a wryness to such a set up because it narrows down the choice of how to relate to the financial constraints of existence. It can be argued that the exact relationship between capitalism and freedom is up for debate: can you be really free if you are obliged to sell your time for money? Still, the case for working towards as much choice and relative freedom as possible is strong. For instance, the historical struggles to end slavery, end child labor and to obtain an eight-hour work day have resulted in (some) changes for the better. These

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1244.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1244-1245.

¹¹⁰ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, The Crossing Press Feminist Series. (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 114-117.

¹¹¹ Lester C. Olson, "The Personal, the Political, and Others: Audre Lorde Denouncing 'the Second Sex Conference,'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 33, no. 3 (2000): 259-260.

¹¹² Joanna Moorhead, "Taking the man out of manual," *The Guardian*, January 17, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jan/17/gender.uk>.

struggles and their consequences still influence contemporary society, but the efforts that have been made before have created wiggle room and more relative freedom. This must be said with the huge connotation that there continue to be major sites of inequality, both regionally and globally. However, the point is that this inequality is not immanent, which means that it can be changed: if it has been done before it is plausible that it can happen again.

An example of the overarching value of such aspirations can be found in De Beauvoir's work. Through the concepts of *immanence* opposed to *transcendence* she describes what it means to take part in the world in relation to work. The first one involves a merely vegetative existence that repeats life and nothing more, reminiscent of Arendt's idea of labor. The latter, on the other hand, means that the individual human being gets to engage with the world among other free beings, transforming the world, participate in self-expression and to create new futures, to add to the encompassing human project that goes beyond sustenance.¹¹³ In terms mentioned before, you get to be a Self, instead of an Other. Since there are still structures at play that function as if not every human is a Self it is important to address the locations where that happens. To be on the receiving end of an unnecessary dichotomy has impact on the quality of someone's life because it limits opportunity and choice. Also, De Beauvoir argues, to be free and equal means to strive for others to have the same footing because that is how projects of transcendence are perpetuated and how humanity does not 'get lost in the void'.^{114,115} The stakes when it comes to work, then, are to create more relative freedom so that less people will be stuck in a vegetative way of living due to falsely naturalized societal convictions if they do not want to.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has looked into different kinds of work and the social and hierarchical connotations that are linked with it. By tracing Hannah Arendt's division of the *vita activa* into labor, work and action, a difference in amount of freedom and plurality became visible, which stood in connection to race. This meant that not all humans were afforded the same amount of humanness. This thesis aims to address such embedded falsely naturalized ideas, a structure that is present in both gender and race.

What followed was an overview of the historical developments concerning work and gender. In comparison to a pre-industrial self-sufficient collectively organized way of living and working, the process of industrialization meant a lot of change. The emphasis was put on an individual notion of success, opportunity, and the myth that working hard would pay off. In this picture the white, hetero, middle class couple became the norm and aspiration, omitting everyone else. These developments meant the birth of the public/private, divide of men and women. This is where women's work became auxiliary to men's work and where 'proper roles' came into existence. These norms still have effect on how family roles are seen, making the hetero economic unit the measure.

It was shown that this dichotomy can still be seen in the gendered proportions of manual laborers. Because this is often linked to biology, what followed was an assessment of what it is about these biological arguments that holds true, and what are its limits. It was argued that biology deals with estimates and averages more than with exact predictions.

¹¹³ Andrea Veltman, "Simone De Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt on Labor," *Hypatia* 25, no. 1 (2010): 59-60.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, Margaret A. Simons, Marybeth Timmermann, and Mary Beth Mader, *Philosophical Writings* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 137.

Karen Messing's work showed that often the average differences between men and women are highlighted, while the similarities are omitted. This results in convictions about gendered biology that are actually based on cultural ideas, for instance the idea that 'women's work' is not physically demanding. In other words, on the basis of faulty premises about sex and gender social hierarchies are reproduced.

Subsequently, the functions of sex and gender were presented. By viewing gender as an analytical framework it becomes a practical tool for the investigation of custom, expectation and ideology. This was shown to be in congruence with both Simone de Beauvoir's notion of gender as a way to extract nurture from nature, as well as Judith Butler's notion that all is nurture. For the investigation of manual labor and gender in this context it is enough that they question cultured definitions on the basis of experiences, and that they acknowledge the existence and influence of dichotomies. For example Self/Other, mind/body, active/passive, which are closely connected to power relations. It was shown how Butler problematized the distinction between sex and gender, and how heteronormative sexuality offers a framework for human behavior. Because this structure is artificial, its elements can be destabilized.

Next, it was argued that race is socially defined and naturalized too. Paul Gilroy offered the notion of *anti-anti-essentialism* to simultaneously express that race is not real, its consequences are. Gayatri Spivak added *strategic essentialism* as a tool to address problems, with the warning not to reify race. It was addressed that there are risks involved with essentializing people, but the risk of not essentializing people at all can lead to them and their problems getting overlooked. This is also where Kimberlé Crenshaw's notion of *intersectionality* was introduced, supported by Audre Lorde's understanding that neglecting people makes them into the Other.

Lastly, the chapter addressed why it is important to talk about manual labor and gender. On a practical note, it was argued that it seems unnecessary and wry to gatekeep people from certain jobs they are capable of, especially in a capitalist context where money in certain ways can represent relative freedom. On a theoretical note, to structurally deny the Other of freedom and plurality is exactly what makes them the Other. This deprives them from taking part in the transcendent human project, and of being a Self. Since manual labor division is based on the arbitrary othering of women, they are deprived of freedom and plurality, which means a restriction of their personhood.

Chapter 2: Methodology & Method

In hindsight the ingredients of this thesis project have been simmering for quite some time. My own experiences of doing manual labor as a woman have been diverse and sometimes noteworthy. On the one hand positively in the sense that it spoke to my feeling of self-actualization and pride; at the end of the day I had created and added something, provided for myself and gained self-confidence through learning new skills. On the other hand it became clear that I was thrown into a pre-existing world where I did not get to decide how I was received and where simply doing the task was not enough to change that reception. Heavy objects have been grabbed out of my hands more than once without either my consultation or any indication of risk; it was culturally decided that I was not supposed to carry that thing. Other times, my presence was questioned all together and I had to explain my reasons for being there in the first place. Was I not there to cook?

In order to investigate the status of manual labor and gender I chose a cultural studies approach as methodological perspective. Literary critic Raymond Williams took it upon himself to analyse a range of words connected to culture. He did so not on the level of words as words on their own (etymologically), but on the basis of their *meaning* and *relation* to each other.¹¹⁶ By tracing the changing meanings of the words *industry*, *democracy*, *class*, *art* and the term *culture* itself, Williams showed how intricately the social, political, economic are connected and how they are telling of how we think about what he calls 'common life'.¹¹⁷ Though this project is not a literary analysis it is firmly planted in the idea that common life and culture reflect meaning, and that those meanings can be retraced in a plethora of research domains.

The field of cultural studies ended up letting go of Williams' primary focus on the linguistic, making room for a multitude of disciplines. As described in the book *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, the point of cultural studies is to keep an openness when it comes to research, which is why its definitions are not clear cut but rather tentative.¹¹⁸ Cultural theorist Stuart Hall has been a central figure for the field and has lead the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1970s. Hall describes cultural studies' affiliation to examining social concerns in order to explain what cultural studies does:

'From its inception, [...], Cultural Studies was an 'engaged' set of disciplines, addressing awkward but relevant issues about contemporary society and culture, often without benefit of that scholarly detachment or distance which the passage of time alone sometimes confers on other fields of study. The 'contemporary'—which otherwise defined our terms of reference too narrowly—was, by definition, [too] hot to handle. This tension (between what might loosely be called 'political' and intellectual concerns) has shaped Cultural Studies ever since.'¹¹⁹

There is a certain difficulty in making use of a methodology that is insistent on staying open and undefined, especially in a section designed to scientifically position and justify this project. The fundamentals, however, definitely do correspond with cultural studies' aims as

¹¹⁶ Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New edition, second ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 18-19.

¹¹⁷ Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), xi.

¹¹⁸ Hall, Stuart, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, (London: Hutchinson, 1980), vi-vii.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

mentioned above. This project addresses the meaning that society has given to gender, specifically in relation to work, and how convictions about manual labor reiterate social hierarchies. It concerns itself with contemporary issues and the run-up to them; that both stem from cultural beliefs, as well as consolidate them. Additionally, it intends to let the intellectual and the political meet in order to explain what is at stake at the crossroads of manual labor and gender in the setting of common life. (Also, the awkwardness is definitely accounted for in the section about butt flaps in overalls.)

A one-liner that I could not shake in the duration of this process is “anything goes”, the soundbite from Paul Feyerabend’s *Against Method* describing his ideas about *epistemological anarchism*.¹²⁰ It goes well with cultural studies’ endeavors in the sense that it does not try to guide research into a fixed paradigm of what is deemed ‘correct’ science in advance. Methodologically it holds the door open for anything to aid in knowledge production, because “... we can change science, and make it agree with our wishes.”¹²¹ Additionally, it means that carefulness is needed in research, because nothing is evident or objectively true or valuable, only in context.¹²² Instead, every step is a choice, which means that a researcher has to hold themselves accountable. With this principle in mind, I have connected to several methods in my analysis. During the process I would see where my research would take me, all the while returning to the interplay of the political, the intellectual and the practical. The foundations of cultural studies and epistemological anarchism have brought me to a collage of research that I did not necessarily expected from the start, and I experienced a great freedom in being able to investigate manual labor and gender without it having to ‘make sense’ in a dogmatic way because it left room for the unexpected.

Methods

This project relies on different methods, some of which used more consciously than others. The initial affinity came from personal experience of working as a manual laborer as a woman. Obviously, at the time they were not part of an autoethnographic research project because I had no idea they would ever be significant in such a way. They did, however, add in a sense of ‘epiphany’, as described by Carolyn Ellis, et al.: they were moments that made significant personal impact that lead me to question my lived experience and the my surrounding culture and context.¹²³ By pulling at the thread of my own experience I used autoethnography to inform me about what the eventual site of my research would be. I knew I have formal rights as a woman, but how and why do they get lost in practice? Autoethnography allowed for a collapse of dichotomies like researcher-researched, personal-political, objectivity-subjectivity and self-others.¹²⁴ The aim became to examine my experience as something contextualized under the presumption that it was not unique to me by definition, but part of its surroundings. Due to the changes in what has been deemed

¹²⁰ Radner, Michael, and Stephen Winokur, *Analyses of Theories and Methods of Physics and Psychology*, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 4. (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), 26.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹²² Feyerabend, Paul, Marjolijn Stoltenkamp, and Klukhuhn André, *Tegen De Methode*, (Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, 2008), 21.

¹²³ Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview”, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (November 24, 2010), *passim*.

¹²⁴ Ellingson, Laura, and Carolyn Ellis, “Autoethnography as constructionist project,” *Handbook of constructionist research* (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 450.

'proper' work for men and women throughout history it became clear that the meaning of 'suitable' work is a social construct and depends on context.¹²⁵

I made use of historians' work to contextualize the broad and long past of gender and manual labor. After browsing authors and summaries for some time, Alice Kessler-Harris reemerged often and proved to be aware of intersections of class and race when it comes to gender and work. This suited the project well, since it was important to me to not over-absolutize my own experiences.¹²⁶ By means of media analysis I went to investigate what women's 'proper place' was as reflected in advertisements. In order to do what cultural analyst Michael Pickering call "close reading of social phenomena", I selected illustrations that specifically mention work or the implicit position of women in relation to men at work.¹²⁷ The realm of advertisement spoke to me because it is almost by definition an expression of aspiration: something to live up to. Who is in and definitely also who is out of these pictures says a lot about the ideal of the time. I followed this section by investigating instances where transgression concerning work was accepted and sometimes even encouraged. By comparing propaganda outlets to historical research the ambiguity and limitations of those transgressions became visible. I traced some of these ambiguities and limitations into the now by analyzing creator Christine McConnell's work, who makes use of manual skills in a self-defined way of work.

In order to get a better grasp of the continuation of convictions about manual labor and gender from the past into the present I set out to answer the question how the history of manual labor is inscribed in contemporary clothing. Again informed by my own experiences I knew that it can be hard to find fitting workwear if you are a woman. (That is not to say that that is the only instance in which that can be hard.) The choice for a material culture analysis of clothing was made because we often are in an intimate and dependent relationship with them. Especially in manual labor they can be an extension of us and define how well or safely a job can be done. To be demanded to adjust to your tools and clothing instead of the other way around means a lot in that context. With the use of material culture analysis I went to investigate the cultural beliefs embedded in certain clothing.¹²⁸ I selected the history of the coverall and up until its current status because it shows a similar curve as the previously mentioned transgressions of work, which means it relaxed under strict limitations and then tightened again.

I added to the material culture analysis by looking into music and its connections to factors like power on the basis of Stuart Hall's work. Because how do songs and music reflect change in gendered perceptions of manual labor? By combining historical analysis with discourse analysis I delved deeper into the connections between music, politics, work and resistance. To get a better sense of what music can mean in the process of changing social hierarchies, I selected three work songs. It took a while to get to only three songs, since there is a rich history of music, work and resistance. In the end I chose three that each address another kind of change and resistance, with hopes of covering as diverse examples as possible.

Besides the aforementioned approaches and methods, this project relies on feminist theory as well. Because of the hegemony of 'man' as normal as discussed in the previous

¹²⁵ Ibid., 447.

¹²⁶ Pickering, Michael, *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*, Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 195.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹²⁸ Prown, Jules David, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 3.

chapter about contextualization, often feminist research can seem like it is a reaction instead of research in its own right. For instance, I use geneticist Karen Messing's work who debunks common misconceptions about gender and genetics. To address her work as *genetics* might be factually right, but it covers up some of the specifics of her important work. The same goes for Alice Kessler-Harris, who is a historian, but who did significant work by writing a *gendered* labor history. Though 'feminist' might be an adjective in this sense, it is an important factor for more accurate knowledge in a lot of fields. In this project I have aimed to do justice to the feminist endeavor of filling in the glaring blanks left by the naturalized omission of women. I have done this based on the conviction that the everyday is a feminist issue and that the personal and the political are interconnected.¹²⁹ If certain hegemonies are reproduced, especially in a world that is structured around and heavily influenced by capitalism, it seems important to assess silent convictions about who gets to do what work.

¹²⁹ hooks, bell, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, Women's Studies/Black Studies. (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1989), 2.

Chapter 3: Manual labor and gender

When I was 18 I worked some odd jobs, which I obtained by letting my friends and network know that I was looking to make some money. An acquaintance asked me to help them with their cannabis harvest to which I agreed. I did not really know these people and neither did I know what to expect. When I got there I was set down at a table to undo the plants' tops from the leaves they still carried, which lower the value significantly when selling. We got to talking and it was made clear that they had asked me because I am a woman. They said something along the lines of "this task requires such fine motor skills, it is really a woman's job". I did not expect the semi legal business of cannabis processing to be gendered, but here it was presented to me as a matter of fact.¹³⁰ I rejected the pontification, but I stayed because I needed the money.

The stratification of work along the lines of gender has a rich history, as mentioned in chapter 1. Kessler-Harris' work has aided in explaining societal ideas about women's 'proper roles' concerning work and how they have been subject to change over time and depending on context. In order to further explore the relationship between manual labor and gender this chapter will first look more closely at a few examples that demonstrate the messiness and instability of the gender-work connection and connections between the public and private patriarchy. The first example concerns the different valuations of cooking and gender, supported by advertisements about cooking and gender relations. The second example pertains to farm work and notions about gender. The third example is that of creator Christine McConnell's manual labor and her rejection of labor as gendered. Next, the chapter will address the phenomenon of acceptable transgression and its limits in the context of WWII with the aid of wartime propaganda. These limits are then traced from WWII into the now through the history of women's workwear in general and coveralls in particular. The 'unisex fallacy' will be discussed, as will the fact that refusing to make a certain type of coverall specifically designed for women is a matter of custom.

The messiness and instability of the gendered division work

The division of labor along the lines of gender seems to be a widely acknowledged phenomenon. Both more progressive as well as more reactionary analysts recognize allocation of specific kinds of labor along the lines of gender in different societies, even though they might not be in agreement beyond this point.^{131,132,133} However, the conditions of the exact expression and the appreciation of that division differ. The precise demarcations of gender and labor depend on cultural and historical contexts, which, as argued before, often come across as a given fundamentality and a 'natural' matter of fact. Through such naturalization the artificiality of these divisions can go unnoticed, which in the framework of 'the West' has resulted in a continuation of patriarchal customs. As sociologist Sylvia Walby explains, the patriarchy occupies two realms: the private and the public. In the case of *private patriarchy* the site of the private home and its specific kind of labor is what oppresses

¹³⁰ The Dutch policy for shops selling cannabis makes it legal for them to sell, but illegal for them to buy their stock. This results in a legal logical fallacy, see Dirk J. Korf, *Cannabis Regulation in Europe: Country Report Netherlands* (Transnational Institute, 2019), 2.

¹³¹ "The Gender Division of Labour," ILO International Training Centre, Module on Gender, Poverty and Employment, accessed May 18, 2020, http://www.glopp.ch/A5/en/multimedia/A5_1_pdf2.pdf.

¹³² Joan C. Chrisler and Donald R. McCreary, *Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology* (New York: Springer, 2010) 401-402.

¹³³ David Peetz, and Georgina Murray, eds. *Women, Labor Segmentation and Regulation: Varieties of Gender Gaps* (New York, NY, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79-97.

women based on their gender. *Public patriarchy*, on the other hand, is manifest in the sites of public employment and the state; presenting itself through expressions of prejudice against women and collective societal assumptions concerning them. Such assessments then hierarchically segregate women from men both in the private and the public sphere.¹³⁴

In case of private patriarchy women are expected to live up to the ideal that they are caring, nurturing homemakers who stay out of public life, while men are 'breadwinners' and are one with public life, as seen in chapter 1. At the same time this public/private division has some stereotypical idiosyncrasies that follow different rules. Such as the 'man's job' of handling electrical and technical things and repairs, even if it is within the private sphere. Here the bias of 'the technical' being 'for men' overrides the public/private divide. By the same token in some Bhuddist households, handling money is seen as a 'woman's job' because money is seen as an inferior and undignified affair, while in other societies money is seen as a 'man's responsibility'.¹³⁵ Despite the evidently arbitrary nature of these practices they can be rigid customs in their respective contexts. (This kind of conviction of certain kinds of labor being appropriate for certain genders might also have been what made my acquaintance so sure that processing cannabis was a thing for women.)

In the context of public patriarchy Walby argues that some progress has been made, such as the legal rights to vote and work, but in practice there still is a definite hierarchy in public life.¹³⁶ Kessler-Harris' work lends support to this evaluation with her historical account of the expansion of women's working life in the first half of the 20th century. She describes that due to several changes in the approach of marriage, such as doing it a bit later in life and marrying for companionship instead of survival, a little bit of breathing room was created for women to work in the public sphere in general. These jobs, however, often would end once a marriage was entered into and/or children were to be taken care of, leading to women occupying more disposable job positions that were deemed to congrue with a woman's caring and nurturing 'nature', like teaching, nursing and social work.¹³⁷ Usually, jobs deemed fitting for women were jobs that were less risky and less unsafe in a directly material and bodily way, steering women away from 'heavier' jobs.¹³⁸ Along these lines jobs in the public sphere were gendered too: a more 'feminine' branch of jobs aimed at supporting 'lower level' tasks like nurturing, caring and propping up others, and a more 'masculine' branch of jobs that consist of heavier bodily work, often with an outlook on promotion and paid better. This division can still be found in the division of jobs along the lines of gender by means of 'colored collars' mentioned in chapter 1.

That the rigidity of the place of women in the public sphere was based on convention can be seen in the example of how American women were pleaded to with vigor to take so called 'war jobs' during the First World War in order to keep society and the war efforts going. Many of them did, only to urgently be asked to back down again afterwards during the 1930s depression to make room for men to take the scarcely available jobs and more over asked to return to do 'men's jobs' yet again during the Second World War.¹³⁹ Wartime meant an exception as to what was deemed an appropriate women's job. While pre-wartime it was unthought of for a woman to work on the factory floor, in the state of emergency something seen as an almost intrinsic impossibility became a feasible alternative. This turbulent and

¹³⁴ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Reprint ed. Oxford u.a.: Blackwell, 1991), 228-229.

¹³⁵ ILO, "The Gender Division of Labour".

¹³⁶ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 229.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 158-161.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹³⁹ *Women have always worked*, 147-158.

capricious chain of events will be addressed more in depth in the section called *Acceptable Transgression*.

Cooking

The example of cooking provides another insight into how the dichotomy of the public and private can express itself in distorted gender archetypes, and follows a roller coaster of customs through the realm of the private and public. On the one hand, in the context of an industrial-era hetero family mode it was deemed the woman's task to cook and provide the day to day preparation of food.¹⁴⁰ This belongs to the heteronormative category of the woman as a so called *homemaker*, with a defined set of duties at home. In this instance a few aforementioned elements come together: the woman portrayed as taking a proper role in the private sphere of the home, undertaking the distinctly nurturing task of cooking for the family.¹⁴¹ Though cooking in this context is not a paid job, this kind of work is labor, as Kessler-Harris described, since it sustains an economic unit and the paid labor depends on it.

In this context cooking explicitly belongs to the private realm and is seen as a particularly feminine endeavor. This ideology and corresponding expectations can be found in advertisements aimed at selling items related to cooking. Figures 3.1 through 3.3 below show US magazine advertisements that have been printed in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance. Of course advertisements have often been and often still are hyperbolic, but they do provide insight into the cultural consensus about what was deemed acceptable and aspirational, humorously or otherwise. It seems plausible that the more an ad resonates with you, the more likely you are to buy what it is selling. The home, and with it cooking, was synonymous with the woman's realm and responsibility, which was reiterated in commercial publications and used to target the right audience.

Firstly, figure 3.1 makes use of the gender divide of public and private work of the time by portraying the homemaker as a "doctor" in homemaking, a title obtained by being smart, financially economical and thrifty. The quotation marks indicate that she is not a 'real' doctor, but that she can aspire to be 'specialist' nonetheless by saving money and time. The ad reiterates that the women's private realm is a given and has strict boundaries; it is mentioned that the husband's income might not be a lot, but she will specialize in making that work. The option that is given to her is to translate values from the public realm (the high esteem from having a doctor's degree) into the private realm; that she will not actually participate in the public seems a non-issue in this ad. Secondly, figure 3.3 revolves around the moment the private realm of women's cooking is inaugurated. The newlywed wife and husband are still in their wedding clothes while she takes a dish out of the oven. She wears an apron over her wedding dress and he has his hands behind his back. In a sense she covers up her public wedding clothes with something that belongs to her cooking duties in the private sphere. This is her domain and the accompanying text chronicles that cooking, caring and planning meals for her husband is something she dreamed about as a child.

¹⁴⁰ Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 1.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Meet "Doctor" Homemaker!

Specialist in Proper Family Nourishment

She's smart! She's thrifty! She makes her food dollars go a long, long way. Although her husband's income would not be considered high, her family is among the *best nourished in town*. Her title may be just plain Mrs. Homemaker, but when it comes to proper feeding of her family, *she's a specialist!*

There are many American homemakers just like her but unfortunately not enough of them. She knows the advantages of "waterless" cooking, *top-of-stove broiling, roasting and baking*. She serves the foods she cooks in the same beautiful utensils in which she prepares them. She is a woman of high degree! Meet "Doctor" Homemaker! She uses GUARDIAN SERVICE!



Figure 3.1 "Meet "Doctor" Homemaker," *Lost L.A.: Cookware for the Modern Mother*, April 6, 2010, https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/home_blog/2010/04/lost-la-guardian-service-century-metalcraft.html.

Successful Marriages
start in the kitchen!

Now the new mistress of the house can go right ahead with some of those girlhood dreams—planning lovely meals for her man, preparing all sorts of interesting little dishes and safe in the knowledge that Pyrex is going to make failure-free cooking easy.

The not-so-glamorous tasks of the kitchen become fun, too, with Pyrex. Just one dish for cooking, serving and storing, and when it comes to washing up, the suds banish grease from Pyrex in the twinkling of an eye!

EVERY SENDING "AGEE PYREX" PRODUCT IS GUARANTEED AGAINST SHOCK BREAKAGE

MARKETED BY CROWN CRYSTAL GLASS PTY. LTD.

AGEE
PYREX

Now available from all leading stores

Figure 3.3 “Successful marriages start in the kitchen!” Agee Pyrex advertisement from Crown Crystal Glass Company Limited published in *Australian Women's Weekly*, January 11, 1947.

The ad describes a thread that can be traced from childhood to adulthood aimed at becoming the manager of the private realm in the context of a marriage. The ad also acknowledges that it can be ‘not-so-glamorous’ to do kitchen work, but also mentions that a successful marriage starts in the kitchen.

The ads both stress the significance of cooking as a woman's task, the expectations are for her to make sure to nourish her husband and support him. If this is not yet possible this task can be outsourced to a restaurant, but dressed up in a way that heavily leans on the conviction that cooking is connected to femininity, the private and ultimately is a women's task as a homemaker. The ideology of men's and women's 'proper roles' is not hard to find in the ads, and even though these are just two examples there are a lot more with similar themes, for instance in *Food Is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* by historian Katherine Parkin.¹⁴²

Who was generally missing in such advertisements were African Americans, who were not commonly advertised to up until the 1970s.¹⁴³ On average, black women were 50 percent more likely to have a paid job outside the house and tended to have larger families, which is why they were more likely to be interested in the use of 'convenience foods' in their meal preparations.¹⁴⁴ These are for instance canned, packaged or pre-processed goods like beans or ready-made meals.¹⁴⁵ Still, black women were omitted in advertising and the tendency was to portray the white middle class woman as the ideal and norm when it came to cooking. People outside that realm were still sold the aspiration, consolidating the image of the white woman as homemaker-cook. Keeping 'others' out of focus and consolidating the image of the white woman as homemaker-cook.¹⁴⁶ So, women who did not fit in the picture of solely managing their family's private sphere as a housewife were overlooked, drastically reducing the acknowledgement of women's experiences. In other words, the advertisements shown can serve as an indication of how prevalent the ideology of the private realm dwelling, white, middle class, hetero woman homemaker was and how connected this was to cooking. This typification, however, is limited because it erased actual experiences from for instance black women, who still did cook in the private realm, but had their own approach to it. In general though, it were mainly women cooking in the private sphere.

On the other hand, once cooking is done outside the home most cooks are men.¹⁴⁷ While in the the private realm of women's cooking justification is sought in convictions about 'natural' and 'obvious' caregiving, the tables turn when unpaid labor becomes paid labor. Cooking as a paid job is generally done by men. The scope of this can be seen in the number of chefs in the US¹⁴⁸, the UK¹⁴⁹, Netherlands¹⁵⁰, which vary between 10 to 30 percent women in the field. The gap gets bigger when looking at prestigious Michelin star restaurant chefs, in which women made up 2.7 percent in 2018.¹⁵¹ The higher the publicity, status and

¹⁴² Katherine J. Parkin, *Food Is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Paul Freedman, *Food The History of Taste* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019), 350.

¹⁴⁶ Parkin, *Food Is Love*, 83.

¹⁴⁷ Nancy Lee, "Why celebrity, award-winning chefs are usually white men," *The Conversation*, January 9, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/why-celebrity-award-winning-chefs-are-usually-white-men-106709>.

¹⁴⁸ "Chefs and Head Cooks," Data USA, accessed May 19, 2021, <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/chefs-head-cooks>.

¹⁴⁹ "ONS Data Shows Drop in UK Chef Numbers," The Change Group, accessed May 19, 2021, <https://www.thechange.org.uk/blog/ons-data-shows-drop-in-uk-chef-numbers/>.

¹⁵⁰ Ellen Willems, "Vrouwen in de keuken: Je moet wel een dikke huid hebben," *Algemeen Dagblad*, March 8, 2019,

<https://www.ad.nl/koken-en-eten/vrouwen-in-de-keuken-je-moet-wel-een-dikke-huid-hebben~a0ad4dd1/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

¹⁵¹ Anne-Laure Mondesert and Paloma Soria, "Why do women chefs keep missing out on Michelin stars?," *The Jakarta Post*, February 8, 2018,

prestige, the less likely women statistically are to occupy the job when it comes to cooking. In the same vein Black and Asian men are missing from chef's positions, with numbers around 15 percent in the US and two Black Michelin chefs in the UK.^{152,153} The higher up in status, the more white male dominated the field of cooking gets. The changing relationship between the public/private dichotomy and 'proper' roles in cooking seems to depend on gendered connotations about success. Kessler-Harris' earlier description of the gendered division of work can be traced in the phenomenon of cooking; the industrial-era change from work as collective self-sufficiency into the individualized pursuit of the success myth gets reflected in the current status of 'proper' roles concerning cooking. The more prestigious the job, the more likely it is that connotations of cooking with the feminine will be overruled. The term 'cook' will change into 'chef' following the same structure. This is reminiscent of Arendt's distinction between labor and work. In the context of private patriarchy cooking is deemed a supportive and nourishing women's role, which has a history of being erased by labeling it 'non-work' as described by Messing. When women got more room in the public sphere, however, this allocation of cooking as a feminine task did not work in their advantage. Rather, in the context of public patriarchy a repetition of the private cooking-dichotomy happened; the cooking man more likely at the top as 'chef' making more money, and the cooking woman making less money in a more insignificant job.

Lastly, the echoing of the public/private dichotomy in the realm of the public does not only occur in case of cooking, nor does it only apply to gender. The tendency to obscure certain labor from the public realm is a strategy that makes it easier to dismiss people outside the hegemonic as a whole and cover up their working conditions, which can be traced along the lines of race, class and their intersection with each other and gender. In different capacities this scenario can be seen for instance the division of household labor between hetero couples^{154,155} or the heavy reliance of 'the West' on fast fashion laborers.^{156,157} The public/private dichotomy and ideas about 'proper' roles in relation to work and labor form an intricate web that is deeply rooted in customs, expectations and ideology. In reality these assumptions do are not based on actually immanent properties, but on naturalized ideas about these properties. The next section will address how farm work uses

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2018/02/07/why-do-women-chefs-keep-missing-out-on-michelin-stars.html>.

¹⁵² "Household Data Annual Averages 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>.

¹⁵³ Aamna Mohdin, "One of the UK's only black Michelin-starred chefs: 'Racism is their problem, not mine'," *The Guardian*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2018/dec/06/one-of-the-uks-only-black-michelin-starred-chef-racism-is-their-problem-not-mine>.

¹⁵⁴ Shun Ting, Francisco Perales, and Janeen Baxter. "Gender, Ethnicity and the Division of Household Labour Within Heterosexual Couples in Australia". *Journal of Sociology*. 52, no. 4, 2016: 693-710.

¹⁵⁵ Jill Suttie, "How an Unfair Division of Labor Hurts Your Relationship," *Greater Good Magazine*, November 5, 2019, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_an_unfair_division_of_labor_hurts_your_relationship.

¹⁵⁶ Victoria Stafford, "Factory Exploitation and the Fast Fashion Machine," *Green America*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.greenamerica.org/blog/factory-exploitation-and-fast-fashion-machine>.

¹⁵⁷ Kalkidan Legesse, "Racism is at the heart of fast fashion – it's time for change," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jun/11/racism-is-at-the-heart-of-fast-fashion-its-time-for-change>.

a different interpretation of gender and manual labor, underlining its reliance on custom and expectation.

Farm work

In the case of farm work another development has taken place. In the pre-industrial era most life was private, in the sense that the focus was on self-sufficiency and men and women alike worked to achieve this.¹⁵⁸ This changed along the lines of the gendered public/private dichotomy, resulting in what sociologist Jolene Smyth et al. describe as *rural masculinity* and *rural femininity*. These terms refer to a labor division of farm work that is still often highly gendered, but when compared to work in general, the 'women's tasks' include jobs that an outsider might label 'man's work'.¹⁵⁹ The industrialization has made impact on the farm itself as well as its relationship to the rest of the world, resulting for instance in farming men combining manual labor with being the head of a business. At the same time farming women combined the expectations about women as homemaker with sub-culture like gender expectations about farm life.¹⁶⁰ The farm has an idiosyncratic framework when it comes to the division of public and private in relation to gender and labor. Like cooking it still makes use of the public/private dichotomy, but translated to its own framework of labor. Someone who has created her own particular framework concerning the public/private gender divide in relation to manual labor is Christine McConnell. Her approach will be discussed in the next section to provide a contemporary reflection on the ways to relate to gender and manual labor.

Navigating manual labor transgression with Christine McConnell

Someone whose work shows a personal approach towards the public/private dichotomy and gendered work is Christine McConnell. She started out as a beautician and baker, and gained a substantial Reddit and Instagram following by staging pictures of horror related self portraits and horror inspired baked creations. Some of McConnell's skills are markedly feminine in a contemporary context, like hairdressing, baking and make up application. These are reflected in an almost 'hyperfeminine' outward appearance which consists of a 50s-60s 'housewife' aesthetic including hair extensions, manicured nails and a full face of make up, as shown in figures 3.4 and 3.5.

After the Reddit and Instagram success Netflix commissioned a show, which was called *The Curious Creations of Christine McConnell*. Every of the six episodes revolves around spooky twists on baked goods, with some crafts added. McConnell showcases a high level of expertise and uses sanding tools, clay modeling tools and airbrushing for her projects. In the series the transgression that is most evident is the juxtaposition of McConnell's hyperfeminine presentation with her use and knowledge of tools and her inclination towards the spooky. In the show her character demonstrates knowledge of axes, murder, poisoning, and mechanical engineering.¹⁶¹ The show was cancelled after the first season because the target audience was unclear and it was hard to pinpoint it to a genre.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked*, 1-2.

¹⁵⁹ Jolene Smyth, Alexis Swendener and Emily Kazyak, *Women's Work? The Relationship between Farmwork and Gender Self-Perception*, (DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 2018).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ *Curious Creations of Christine McConnell*, season 1, directed by Christine McConnell, aired October 12, 2018 on Netflix.

¹⁶² Meghan O'Keefe, "Justice for Netflix's 'The Curious Creations of Christine McConnell,' the Best Halloween Show Ever," Decider, October 20, 2020, <https://decider.com/2020/10/20/curious-creations-of-christine-mcconnell-perfect-halloween-show/>.

When the show was cancelled McConnell turned to Youtube and Patreon in order to keep making content and reach her audience. Every couple of weeks a new project gets put online which range from Victorian curtain draping to woodworking a coffin for a friend's beloved pet that passed away.¹⁶³

McConnell works from home, but her work is still public in a new sense, because it can be found online and reaches 330.000 YouTube subscribers, 517.000 Instagram followers and 14.080 patrons on Patreon (of course these are not all unique people, there will be at least some overlap).^{164,165,166} At the same time it concerns a very specific kind of public work, since it is on screen, where the visual is prominent. McConnell uses this space to generate her own world in which she can make as she pleases. This means that she combines her (hyper-)feminine appearance with skills that are culturally seen as masculine, such as wielding a chainsaw, frequently using a Dremel tool and woodworking.¹⁶⁷ These are alternated with episodes about antique make up transferring, napkin making and floral arranging, which would be culturally coded as feminine.¹⁶⁸



Figure 3.4 Christine McConnell.

¹⁶³ "Christine McConnell," Patreon, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.patreon.com/ChristineHMcConnell/posts>.

¹⁶⁴ "Christine McConnell," YouTube, retrieved May 10 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxBP2kM134kzwiPC4PLzUzA>.

¹⁶⁵ "Christinehmcconnell," Instagram, retrieved May 10, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/christinehmcconnell/>.

¹⁶⁶ Patreon, "Christine McConnell."

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.



Figure 3.5 Christine McConnell.

McConnell's framework of working in private and broadcasting in public creates the space for her to engage in manual labor without being restricted because of gender. This way she can alternate between skills that culturally are seen as either feminine or masculine, without being bothered with what is societally 'fitting'. By ignoring the cultural genderedness of certain skills and focusing on the extension of her skill itself there is no sense of taboo or stuntedness. Instead, McConnell flows through different skills regardless of gender and focuses on a personal learning curve and interest. In a way, McConnell circumvents the public/private dichotomy of manual labor by taking it home and erasing its contents. Subsequently, she offers the results on her terms to the public realm in a more or less one-way direction through different platforms. In a way, by doing so, she has more direct influence on the public realm than it does on her. The following section will elaborate on how such independence is not a given by tracing the development of women doing 'men's work' in WWI and WWII and the expectations put on them to 'compensate' for this transgression.

A history of accepted transgression and its limits

As mentioned before in this chapter, during the World Wars women in the US were petitioned to start doing factory work. This meant that the transgression of certain existing rules about work became possible and was even encouraged. In this case the concern of the war effort exceeded the concern of women staying in 'women's jobs' and their transgression was framed as a patriotic act of service. Leaving the private realm for the public as a woman became a heroic thing to do because the state of exception of war was translated into a state of exception of gendered work. A paradigm shift caused by a state of emergency led to a different assessment of what was deemed appropriate work.¹⁶⁹ However, even though these transgressions proved that work boundaries along the lines of gender were more subjective than society held on to before, they did not lead to a total overhaul of the relations between gender and work. Following the depression after WWI American women were

¹⁶⁹ Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*, 114.

asked to make room for the returned men to take on jobs because there was a scarcity of work.¹⁷⁰ During World War II women were asked to join the war effort yet again by working as plane builders, nurses and other occupations in the public sphere. This rollercoaster of expectations was aided by government campaigns that pushed the ideology of that moment.¹⁷¹

One of the most familiar and often reiterated icons of the WWII campaign to recruit women for factory work was the character of Rosie the Riveter, a fictional personification of the woman as a factory worker who crossed the gendered labor barrier to help the troops overseas.¹⁷² Figure 3.6 and 3.7 show depictions of Rosie that were meant to encourage women to start their war effort factory job. In both of them Rosie is either wearing blue collar coveralls or overalls with a blue collar shirt. These pictures aided in the normalization of the image of a) a woman in pants and b) of her taking part in a labor area previously exclusively accessible for men. Figure 3.6 shows Rosie the Riveter from 1943 by Norman Rockwell, a painter known for his depictions of everyday American life and current events.¹⁷³ Figure 3.7 was made by graphic designer J. Howard Miller also in 1943. Technically it is not a Rosie the Riveter, but has been widely associated with the character because of the similarities between them and the emergence of the phenomenon of the manual laboring woman as an ideal.¹⁷⁴ A song called *Rosie the Riveter* as well will return in chapter 4. Simultaneous with the approved work transgression a certain kind of conservatism emerged. Women now held certain 'men's jobs' in public instead of home and with that the urge for a specific emphasis on womanhood also grew. Figure 3.7 shows what such a combination of expectations could look like; of rolled up coverall sleeves are paired with a fully made up face and the hair is covered for now, but promises a feminine finger wave when the rag comes off. Figure 3.6 is also a stylized depiction, but focuses on the more everyday event of lunch time. Rosie is wearing overalls and on her face both make up and dirt can be seen. She seems less polished, but the setting suggests that that is ok; the flag behind her and the collection of blood donor and civilian service badges dress her with an air of patriotism and accomplishment.¹⁷⁵ Also, she has her foot on Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Both 'Rosies' shown here served the goal of getting women to work or keep them going in their new jobs from a perspective of the common good and to keep the war effort afloat. Women were asked to fulfill 'men's work', which led to certain accompanying need to reaffirm womanhood. In commercial ads women were encouraged to keep up their feminine appearances by using nail polish and make up like eyeshadow. These items had not been rationed since they were not made of metal and they were thought to be aid in women's sense of well being.¹⁷⁶ In contrast, metal casings for lipsticks, bobby pins and fabrics were rationed since metal and textiles were scarce. Workarounds were created, like lipstick in plastic or paper, because there still was an expectation for women to express their femininity

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*, 114.

¹⁷² María Cristina Santana, "From Empowerment to Domesticity: The Case of Rosie the Riveter and the WWII Campaign," *Frontiers in Sociology* 1 (2016).

¹⁷³ "About Norman Rockwell," Norman Rockwell Museum, retrieved May 18, 2021, <https://www.nrm.org/about/about-2/about-norman-rockwell/>.

¹⁷⁴ William L. Bird and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 78.

¹⁷⁵ "Rosie the Riveter," Norman Rockwell Sculpture Reflections, retrieved May 19, 2021, <https://normanrockwellsculpturereflections.com/sculpture/rosie-the-riveter/>.

¹⁷⁶ Page Dougherty Delano, "Making Up for War: Sexuality and Citizenship in Wartime Culture," *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 53, passim.



Figure 3.6 *Rosie the Riveter* by Norman Rockwell, 1943.



Figure 3.7 We Can Do It by J. Howard Miller, 1943.

though their appearance, compensating for the 'loss' of their femininity by doing 'men's work'.¹⁷⁷

The priority of women holding up a feminine image while occupying factory jobs also came with safety hazards. While wearing make up under a welder's mask might have not provided any additional danger, other expressions of femininity did. For instance, long hair could get in the way. This led to propaganda for safer hairstyles, such as the U.S. News Review 'Safety Styles' informational movie. It featured Veronica Lake, a movie star at the time, who switches out her signature side swept loose peekaboo look for an updo without any loose hanging hair.¹⁷⁸ Though women were asked to adjust to their new work, the workplace was not always adjusted to them. Gender studies professor María Cristina Santana describes in her article *From Empowerment to Domesticity: The Case of Rosie the Riveter and the WWII Campaign* how safety equipment had no priority when women first started doing factory work. Steel toe shoes had not been available in 'women's sizes' and women who went on to become welders endured injuries such as chest burns because there was no fitting protective equipment available.¹⁷⁹ As seen in Messing's work mentioned in chapter 1 it is still the case that equipment is not made with women in mind and that they are expected to adjust.

Though the exceptional circumstances of war time broke down some gender boundaries, they were neither permanent nor universal.¹⁸⁰ On the one hand the example of women working in wartime shows that there is no real reason to stratify such jobs by gender. They were capable of working paid jobs outside the home that were more public and technical. On the other hand it reveals that it has not been enough to merely show up as women. Instead, femininity had to be showcased and there was a lack in safety accommodation for women in a significant sense. The transgression of work and gender in war time jobs turned out to be temporary and reversible. The reversibility might even have been a condition for people to accept the change; if it was only for a short while it was maybe easier to accept.¹⁸¹ The numbers of manual labor and gender mentioned in chapter 1 show how much segregation there still is between blue and pink collar jobs, even though wartime jobs have shown that women could occupy these functions. The public life of work remains divided along the lines of gender and ideas about 'proper' masculinity and femininity. The reversible nature of gender and manual labor divisions as seen in the example of the world wars is reflected in the history of the development, regression and cultural remains of the coverall for women doing manual labor. The following passage will describe how the arrangement of appropriate safety wear has risen and disappeared again along the lines of gender.

Work, gender and clothing

Though pants for women were not completely new during the 1910s, they did make a significant shift from the realm of leisure to the realm of factory work.¹⁸² At the end of the 19th century pants, bloomers, and knickerbockers were used by women to ride bikes, play

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. Office of War Information Bureau of Motion Pictures, "U.S. News Review: Issue No. 5: Safety Styles," published 1943, video, 15:47, <https://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/IULMIA/items/show/78>.

¹⁷⁹ Santana, "From Empowerment to Domesticity."

¹⁸⁰ *Women have always worked*, 127.

¹⁸¹ Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked*, 154-155.

¹⁸² Daniel D. Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 137.

tennis, and swim for instance. (And were sometimes used as feminist statements.)¹⁸³ As mentioned before the first world war lead to women starting to do 'masculine' work in factories. Since contemporary women's wear was not safe and comfortable enough to do factory or other work in the demand for women's work wear increased. Long loose skirts, long loose hair, and higher heeled shoes proved to be unpractical and hazardous. The wartime was seen as an exceptional circumstance in which the gendered expectations about work and clothing changed. Levi's Freedom-Alls are an example of workwear designed for women doing manual labor, fitting right in the change of demand. After the war the change did not stick, resulting in a return to skirts as mainstream clothing for women.¹⁸⁴ During the second world war a similar shift involving clothes and working followed This time, however it eventually lead to the mainstream acceptance of women in pants at the end of the 1950s.¹⁸⁵

Though pants for women in everyday wear have been normalized since the 50s, the presence of safety wear for women in general has not. Safety wear for women can be found, but it is less widely available and often ill fitting or misdesigned. Making workwear 'for women' is regularly dealt with by labeling work clothing 'unisex' and making minor adjustments that do not really make a difference.¹⁸⁶ This is done, for instance, by installing a piece of elastic band and buttons in the waistband of unisex safety pants. However, this is hardly enough to cater to women's needs concerning safety clothing; some need actually smaller waistband sizes, shorter leg lengths and differently proportioned clothing all together.¹⁸⁷ Of course women do not all have the same sizes and needs, and neither do men. However, smaller sizes and specific fits are hard to find, which happens to be a part of the spectrum women often are part of as mentioned by Messing. This means that most safety wear is aimed at taller, bigger, straighter 'men's bodies' and less so to smaller and curvier 'women's bodies'. By labeling workwear 'unisex' without properly fitting clothing being actually available, women are erased from the field of safety wear.

In other words, though technically the term 'unisex' is true for all clothing, in this case the intended purpose is not met. 'Unisex' here does not broaden the scope of people able to wear the item, but overlooks and dismisses women by sticking to men as the norm to which women are the Other. The result of a term like 'unisex' in the context of safety clothing does not entail gender liberation and diversity in the realm of manual labor, instead it actually does the opposite. As mentioned before, working without the right equipment, like welding without a properly fitting protective apron, can be dangerous. Likewise, working in ill fitting safety clothing is a hazard. The unfortunate thing is that often it is not one item that will fit you badly. Personally, I have often tripped over my pant legs because they were too long, especially when they got wet, while also working in mandatory safety shoes that were a couple of sizes too big (safety shoes often start at a European size 41 because that is the smallest size 'for men'). I would try to solve that issue by wearing two pairs of thick socks, also during heat waves. The gloves I was given were way too big and the arms of rain jackets would reach to my knees. Added up, on average my work environment was less safe for me than for my colleagues who were men. Ironically this was because my safety wear

¹⁸³ Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould, *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 75-79.

¹⁸⁴ Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 138.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁸⁶ Vanessa Ronald and Zanele Kumalo, "The big problems with working women in working men's clothing - and these are the women fixing them," *News 24*, March 25, 2019, <https://www.news24.com/w24/work/jobs/the-big-problems-with-working-women-in-working-mens-clothing-and-these-are-the-women-fixing-them-20190325>.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

was less capable of keeping me safe. In a sense, this made me the Other in my field of occupation; I was there, in the public sphere of manual labor and I could adjust, but I was no equal.

Ideally safety clothing should be designed around the question: as a worker, what protection does your body need? Since this kind of clothing is a tool to get you through the day safely the material should be shaped according to the wearer, not the other way around. This premise would also mean that ultimately gendered safety clothing would not be necessary at all, since the body itself would be leading instead of its gendered connotations. Such a diversification of safety clothing would be a better meaning of the term 'unisex'. In the meantime, since in this context the Other is not seen as a Self, safety wear for women is still largely missing, which makes it useful to still use gendered terms to describe this erasure. The next section describes such gendered inclusion and exclusion in more detail, by following the evolution of the coverall for women.

Coveralls: gendered inclusion, erasure and leftovers

In 1918 Levi's introduced their 'Freedom-Alls', which were a version of coveralls designed for women as shown in figure 3.8.¹⁸⁸ It was a two piece garment, comprised out of a tunic which reached the hip about half way and loose fitting pants with a so called 'drop seat' which essentially is a flap that allows the wearer to open their trousers from behind, such as in figure 3.9, which made toilet visits more easy. Contemporary coveralls marketed at women do not have this feature anymore. Instead, they have the same zipper or button closure the men's coveralls have in the front of the suit, starting from the crotch seam up to about the waistline or belly button. When looking for 'women's coveralls' or 'women's overalls' marketed as safety clothing for work the drop seat is nowhere to be seen. Only when it comes to thermal safety clothing and thermal sports wear such as snowboarding gear does the dropseat make an appearance again. The dropseat feature, then, seems to have disappeared somewhere between the Freedom-All and contemporary non-thermal safety clothing. The design that was aimed at women doing manual labor specifically was erased along the way. This is relevant because for a lot of women or vagina havers in general such a front-zipper is not enough to comfortably and quickly use the bathroom, especially not during work shifts. Essentially in such circumstances, the coverall functions the same as a romper or jumpsuit. This means that the wearer has to fold up the upper section of the suit and hold it while using the toilet, take it off altogether or use a pee aid. Women on Reddit have discussed the best strategies to use the bathroom while wearing drop seat-less coveralls because it is uncomfortable and unhygienic to drop them on the floor of a building site or factory bathroom.¹⁸⁹

The romper or jumpsuit is a leisuretime fashion choice which wearability is notoriously inconvenient in relation to bathroom visits. This hassle is occasionally referenced in pop culture, such as in figure 3.10 and 3.11. These also illustrate what the women on Reddit were trying to avoid.

¹⁸⁸ "Throwback Thursday: Before Women Wore Jeans," Levi Strauss & Co., February 18, 2005, <https://www.levistrauss.com/2015/02/18/throwback-thursday-before-women-wore-jeans/>.

¹⁸⁹ "Anyone Else Rock The Coveralls?," r/BlueCollarWomen, Reddit, december 6, 2018, https://www.reddit.com/r/BlueCollarWomen/comments/a4m6r9/anyone_else_rock_the_coveralls/.



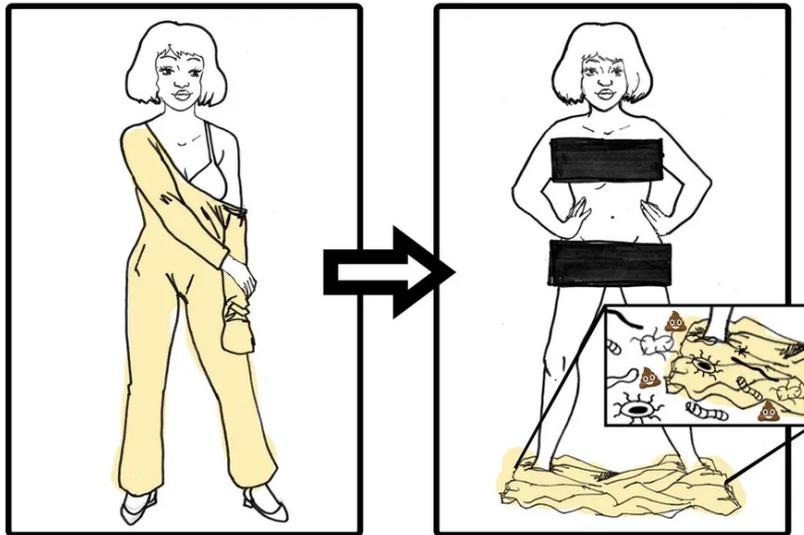
Figure 3.8 Levi's Freedom-Alls, circa 1918. Figure 3.9 Snowboarding overalls with a drop seat.



Figure 3.10 Toilet romper by Loryn Brantz.

DON'T!

(JUMPSUITS)



DO!

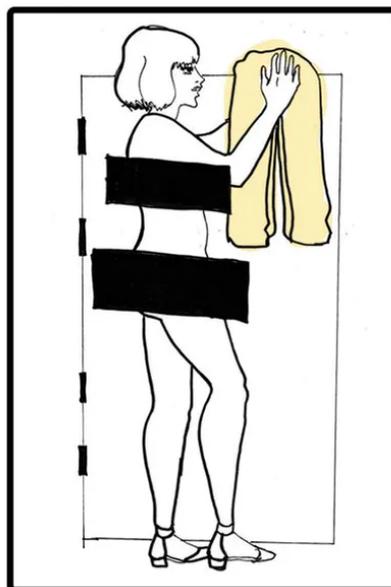


Figure 3.10 *Jumpsuit toilet instructions* by Brittany Holloway-Brown.

The combination of the romper's popularity as an item of leisure clothing on the one hand, and its widely underlined toilet impracticality has led to a couple of businesses developing 'toilet friendly' rompers. Examples of this are Leim with their 'Leim ezp™ jumpsuit' on Etsy¹⁹⁰ which features a dropseat, and designer Jolie Coquette, who offered a kickstarter campaign for a romper with hidden snap closures worked in to the crotch seam¹⁹¹. This means that also in the 'leisure realm' of the fashionable romper and jumpsuit its impracticality is present enough to inspire a reinvention of the drop seat. Nevertheless, in the realm of safety clothing this feature is missing, even if it concerns something so essential as practical and safe toilet use. The practical solution invented for women's workwear has been generally erased in its original context and now traces of it can be found in the realm of fashion.

Conversely, there are a ton of jumpsuits for women on the market that do allow toilet visits without the romper-bother, for instance at Walmart.¹⁹² However, these jumpsuits are designed and sold as sex clothing. The point is not to shame these garments, but to address that somewhere along the line the collective cultural custom has developed that in the context of work wear drop seats would disappear, while in the context of sexuality such crotch access is no problem to design and manufacture. Sometimes the gender divide of labor gets repeated through and reinforced by the material world. This does not happen because these differences are innate, but because there is a custom of accommodating men and wrongfully interpret them as the norm. Such omissions can lead to a self fulfilling prophecy that boosts the idea that women are unfit for certain jobs, or that they are 'just not interested', even though there is evidence for the contrary. This makes it harder to get rid of the gender gap, and also it expresses a limit to the acceptance of transgression in relation to work and gender. The history of coveralls provides an example of how the material can express implicit societal convictions about gender and the irrationality of certain customs surrounding the topic.

Conclusion

This chapter has expanded on the relationship between manual labor and gender, in some of its various expressions. Different contexts and intersections of identity result in different standards for 'normal' gender divisions of work. In their contexts, these standards can be rigid. Sylvia Walby's notion of public and private patriarchy offered a functional tool to investigate some of these gender divisions; the more feminine jobs often lower level and more supporting, the more masculine jobs often paid better and with an outlook on promotion. The gender segregation of cooking offered an interesting example of the impact of public and private patriarchy. Within the home, unpaid cooking is generally seen as a woman's job. The interconnectedness of gender roles and home cooking has been underscored by means of mid-century advertisements, to provide a sense of the tenacity of this trope. All the more remarkable that cooking turned out to usually be a man's job if it's for pay. The proportion of men cooking goes up significantly in relation to the job's status and pay.

¹⁹⁰ "We Are Leim," Etsy, retrieved May 5, 2021, <https://www.etsy.com/shop/WeAreLeim>.

¹⁹¹ "The Playsuit: The Ultimate Suit for the Modern Woman, Created by Kimber-Lee Lorraine Alston," Kickstarter, retrieved May 5, 2021, <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/568699158/the-playsuit-the-ultimate-suit-for-the-modern-woma/description>.

¹⁹² "Women Striped Sheer Bodysuit Zipper Long Sleeve Open Crotch Jumpsuit White/Black New," Walmart, retrieved May 5, 2021, <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Women-Striped-Sheer-Bodysuit-Zipper-Long-Sleeve-Open-Crotch-Jumpsuit-White-Black-New/311266130>.

Next, the farm was noted as a site of *rural masculinity* and *rural femininity*, which are associated with gender norms about work that also follow the public/private division, but in a specific way. A contemporary example of navigating the realms of the public and private was presented through the work of Christine McConnell. Due to the fact that she shares her work through digital outlets, she combines the freedom of doing manual labor in the private sphere with the public.

In the section that followed, the arc of acceptable transgression was traced in relation to gender and manual labor in WWII. Examples of wartime propaganda served to explore the ambiguous position women were put in, swapping one framework of being a 'proper woman' for another, leaving the women with little choice than to adjust. After the war the expectations largely returned to what they were before, and the temporarily accepted transgression turned out to be just that.

The same limits can be traced in women's safety clothing; often ill fitting, and therefore unsafe, women are frequently expected to make do with work wear that is designed for men. Another option is that safety clothing is marketed as 'unisex', which pretends to be a solution while continuing to ignore women. This is the *unisex fallacy*. The history of the coverall in particular is descriptive of a regression in accommodating women in manual labor. The coverall with drop seat was designed for women specifically to work in factories, be safe, and take convenient bathroom breaks. This item has, however, disappeared from the market, except for some thermal (snowboarding) coveralls.

The consequence is that in the realm of manual labor women are expected to wear men's coveralls, which is often impractical and unhygienic. In the meantime, in the realm of fashion coverall-adjacent rompers and jumpsuits are widely available. Facing the same problems regarding bathroom breaks, some companies have now started to make non-safety drop seat jumpsuits. This means that women can wear a drop seat jumpsuit, just not at work, where they were designed for in the first place. A wry realization is that another domain where jumpsuits which allow easy bathroom breaks is that of sex clothing.

The following section will explore manual labor and gender in relation to resistance by means of music. Though this is such a different realm of cultural expression than clothing, hopefully the two investigations will complement each other and together will provide a broader view of gender and manual labor.

Chapter 4: Music, work and resistance

The following chapter will explore the relationship between music, work and resistance. It will start with an account of what culture is with the aid of Raymond Williams, followed by an account of how we *give meaning*, and *represent* through languages in different shapes with the help of Stuart Hall. The chapter will then first focus on the relationship between politics and music, with the example of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the controversies around the lyrics. The relationship between music and the political will then be expanded on and nuanced by means of the work of David Hesmondhalgh, who describes a political aesthetics of music. He defines five categories in which the experience of music can have political value. These concepts are explained and then applied in the analysis of Swing Jugend in Nazi-Germany. Hesmondhalgh's categories are supplemented with Deena Weinstein's description of protest songs.

After that, the chapter will focus on the relationship between manual labor and music. Marek Korczynski will provide an overview of this connection along the lines of industrialization. He describes how the loss of self-determination, as mentioned earlier by Kessler-Harris as well, influenced the aural space as well as the experience of music. Individualism and consumerism have become the standard when listening to music, the parameters of which will be featured too.

For the last part of this chapter and thesis three songs will be analyzed, which all connect to gender, manual labor and resistance in different ways. They will be investigated in order to get a sense of what meaning they convey, and how they aid in resistance.

Cultural expressions

The aforementioned literary critic Raymond Williams famously said that "culture is ordinary."¹⁹³ To him popular culture can tell a lot about the times it stems from, just like the ads and comics from the previous chapter. While high-brow culture is culture too, it reflects only a limited division of it, which is mainly accessible by higher classes. Instead, Williams argues, human societies express cultural meaning in way more manners, which include different outlets such as arts as a whole, various institutions and education altogether.¹⁹⁴ At the same time this is no definitive description, as societies keep on finding further outlets of meaning, being under constant influence of the give and take between the established and the newly discovered. Culture in Williams' sense is both traditional and creative; it is the ordinarily common as well as recently discovered possibilities in conversation with each other. It is society providing training in previously corroborated meaning and its yet to be discovered unforeseen expansions.¹⁹⁵ Williams holds a lot of space for this multifacetedness of culture, and the blurred interlinkedness of different parts of human society. This goes for the relationship between the mainstream and the individual as well as the relationship between the economic realities of a society and its manifestations of culture.¹⁹⁶ In other words, there is an ever mutating correspondence between culture and other expressions of the human context.

Exactly *what* culture is in its own right is hard to define; definitions of the terms 'culture' and 'pop culture' are notoriously diffuse. By extension the difference between the

¹⁹³ Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), 5.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 7.

two is not always clear.¹⁹⁷ As Williams described: “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.”¹⁹⁸ What he offered in order to tackle this complexity were three main manifestations of the meaning of culture. Firstly, he describes culture as the general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, the notion of which stems from the 18th century. Secondly, he defines culture as indicative of a specific way of life. This can pertain to a quite broad array of matters: a people, a period in time, but also a group or humanity in general. Lastly, he describes a branch of culture that refers to ‘the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity’. This includes music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre and film. Another way to put this is that they are cultural *texts* that generate meanings.^{199,200} Not only do these definitions have a massive combined wingspan emphasizing the ubiquity of culture, they also intertwine and overlap. Though one might ask if it is productive to look at culture to generate knowledge if it is such a disorganized mass, it still can be worthwhile to analyze cultural phenomena since they are capable of telling so much. In this methodology the added value of cultural analysis lies exactly in its multifacetedness of expressions and its interconnections.

To cultural theorist Stuart Hall the analysis of culture is valuable too because it is capable of informing us about *representation*. In a lecture Hall held in 1997 he explains that representation is the process of actively giving meaning.²⁰¹ An example he uses is how in visual media, a certain depiction of an event *gives* it meaning; the framing, the images and the approach influence what it will express. There is no truly objective, *a priori* meaning that will be unlocked once the representing has been done in ‘the correct’ way, because that does not exist. Instead, meaning is created in the representing itself. This means that the perspective from which representation takes place will shape the outcome.²⁰² In other words, *how* we describe people or events shape the meaning they will have, because the way they are represented defines how they are interpreted.

In the same lecture Hall addresses the question of how we classify and organize the world: culture offers us complex ‘conceptual maps of meaning’ that help us structure and organize the world around us.²⁰³ The crux is that these concepts are not innate, as mentioned before. We are not born with such notions, but rather we learn them. Hall describes that “[...] to become a human subject is precisely somehow to learn or internalize the shared maps of meaning with other people in your culture.”²⁰⁴ These internalized road maps that function to make sense of the world are in itself a form of representation. Since they are not immanent they are a lens through which we look. How we assess things, groups of people and events is shaped by our internal maps.

These maps are complex and they are not limited to the individual. Hall emphasizes that *language* is an example of a widespread system of representation, but in fact visual communication, art, customs and habits are methods of representation too.²⁰⁵ In a sense these are all forms of language, which means to Hall that they are methods of externalizing

¹⁹⁷ Katie Milestone and Anneke Meyer, *Gender and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 3-4.

¹⁹⁸ Williams, *Keywords*, 87.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁰⁰ *Gender and Popular Culture*, 2.

²⁰¹ Stuart Hall, “Representation and the Media,” (Media Education Foundation lecture transcript. The Open University, 1997), 6.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Gender and Popular Culture*, 7-8.

the internalized concepts we accrued in life.²⁰⁶ This happens not only in the shape of the individual, but also that of an individual in a society, or that of collective society as a whole.

Additionally, to Hall the phenomena of language and representation are closely connected to the issue of *power*. If meanings are not objective and innate, but actually human made notions used to make sense of the world and assess people and events, it is indeed an important question to ask who *benefits* from the internalized power dynamic. As mentioned in the first chapter, societal hierarchies depend on customs and belief systems, which, according to Hall, are expressed through the representations we learn to read and express. Such social structures are maintained through their given meanings and beliefs about them, which in turn are represented through language, images and social practices.²⁰⁷ In other words, language, as well as social structures, inequality and representation intertwine, sustain and influence each other through their interconnection.

Following Hall, if language in the broad sense of the concept is part of such a rhizomatous structure that at least includes power, media, internalized concepts, in connection to meaning, it seems that the textual analysis of expressions about gender and manual labor can be beneficial in order to dig up naturalized belief systems and their contemporary status. Especially since in this framework meaning seems to never be really objective, or inherently 'true'. In order to further contextualize the relationship specifically between music and its societal surroundings, the next section will address interconnections between music and the sphere of the political.

Music in relation to politics and resistance

When talking about music and its connection to politics there is a long history to be taken in consideration, as well as a plethora of different expressions as a result of that connection. Music is an ubiquitous phenomenon and knows many shapes, subjects and variations, and content-wise politics have been connected to songs for a long time. In the middle ages, for instance, martial and political news was often shared through song, which was passed on mouth to mouth from town to town in big parts of Europe. They were frequently combined with other kinds of information like gossip, and the number of these 'news packages' increased during times of conflict.²⁰⁸ Sometimes well known melodies were used to function as a template for a new text, which made it easier to remember and repeat, which made it more likely to spread further.²⁰⁹ In a sense this can be seen as a kind of mass media making use of popular culture in order to get the word out and express meaning.

Another example of the longevity of the connection between music and politics can be found in the history of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. Written between 1822 and 1824 the piece, which would later go on to become the anthem for the European Union, was comprised of part of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and a poem by Friedrich Schiller. Even before it was published political developments influenced the piece, which is why Schiller is thought to have adjust the title from *Ode to Freedom* to *Ode to Joy*. The reason behind this revision was that the French revolution, with its projection of utopian dreams, turned out to be way more problematic, violent and bloody than what was popularly believed before.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Hall, "Representation and the Media," 11.

²⁰⁷ *Gender and Popular Culture*, 8.

²⁰⁸ Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, "Political Poems and Subversive Songs: The Circulation of 'Public Poetry' in the Later Medieval Low Countries," *Journal of Dutch Literature* 4 (2015), 2.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²¹⁰ Conor Farrington, "Beyond the *Ode to Joy*? The Politics of the European Anthem," *The Political Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2019): 525-33.

This change in political interpretation can be seen, for instance, in the phrase that used to read “Beggars will be the brothers of princes” that was turned into the famous “All men will be brothers”.²¹¹ Though technically the latter includes the former, it is meaningful that the previous specific allusion to class is replaced with a far more vaguely humanistic alternative. Musicologist Caryl Clark goes on to analyze the relatively recent history of the emergence of the European Union in relation to *Ode to Joy*. With the horrifying hardships of World War II fresh in mind, France, Italy and then West-Germany wanted to join forces in a so called supranationalist state which would be an entity ‘above’ the nations.²¹² After a long time of deliberation about the music, the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth was chosen as *The European Anthem*. It was separated from Schiller’s lyrics since they were in German, which was too painful after WWII and unmarketable at the time. The previously established connection between the two, however, never really went away and people still saw the works as a unit.²¹³ Nonetheless, the European Union itself has been and still is very clear on the issue. On their website it reads:

“In 1972, the Council of Europe adopted Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" theme as its anthem. In 1985, it was adopted by EU leaders as the official anthem of the European Union. **There are no words to the anthem; it consists of music only.** In the universal language of music, **this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity.**”²¹⁴

The text is bold like this in the original, and the main text on the webpage itself is less than 250 words. It seems that it was really important for the European Union to underline that Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and *Ode to Joy* are not the same and should be kept separate.

Historically, there are many sides to the story of Beethoven’s Ninth; it has been around for almost two centuries and in the meantime it was used in many ways. From the naively utopian to the ornamentation of national socialist Germany, to the current ‘sanitized’ version that is meant to represent unity. Clark aptly mentions that though it might be understandable where it came from, it might be wry in a certain way that the initial lyrics that were meant to give hope have been taken away from the hymn.²¹⁵ This way the literally textual message of *Ode to Joy* was abstractly removed, while the music of Beethoven’s Ninth carried the same intended message because the meaning given to it stayed intact. The European Union kept on using it for its implied meaning it for the purpose of unity and hope. The German language in this case became its own text in the sense that it conveyed meaning independently from exactly *what* was said with its words, instead the expression of German itself was a politically charged factor.

Additionally, there have been a number of critical analyses about the cultural meanings of Beethoven’s Ninth itself. Feminist critics, for instance, have added to the analysis as well. One analysis from 1987, by musicologist Susan McClary, interpreted Beethoven’s Ninth as an expression of the hegemonic and patriarchal, linking it to attempted

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Caryl Clark, “Forging Identity: Beethoven's ‘Ode’ As European Anthem,” *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (1997): 789–807.

²¹³ Ibid., 769.

²¹⁴ “The European anthem,” European Union, retrieved June 6th 2021, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/anthem_en.

²¹⁵ Clark, “Forging Identity,” 802.

rape.²¹⁶ This move by McClary, in turn has been named a ‘musicological strawman’²¹⁷ by colleague Paula Higgins, and it inspired musicologist Pieter van den Toorn to accuse McClary of “an aversion for male sexuality.”²¹⁸ Subsequently this was reacted to by Ruth Solie with the article “What Do Feminists Want? A Reply to Pieter Van Den Toorn.”²¹⁹ Lastly, Van den Toorn replied with the book *Music, Politics, and the Academy*.²²⁰ In a sense, interpreting the cultural meanings of Beethoven’s work has become a field in itself. At the core lies a conviction not only about the factor of *experience*, but also about the connection between the musical and other domains. As made clear by the trajectory of the discussion above, there is no universal understanding of the cultural studies premise that different fields influence each other. The next passage then, will concern a distinct explanation of such a connection by linking music to the political and the aesthetic. Simultaneously, it will address how the interplay between these aspects is actually *valuable* for humans.

Music and human flourishing in a political light

In the book chapter *Towards a Political Aesthetics of Music* sociologist David Hesmondhalgh connects several previously mentioned concepts by describing the value of artistic experience in the context of modern societies. He argues that those experiences have to be defended in general, but the chapter itself focuses explicitly on music. The fact that it concerns a *political* aesthetics is based on the idea that music can aid in what Hesmondhalgh calls *human flourishing*, of which the five different expressions will be addressed shortly. These will be placed in context of some of the cultural studies theories mentioned earlier in order to consolidate their plausibility and value. Additionally, for Hesmondhalgh it is a political act to aim to bloom as a human in a modern capitalist world.²²¹ His goal is to defend the intrinsic value of musical experience, by divorcing it from the commercial. At the same time he wants to recognize the social dynamics that influence and stunt such experiences, because there can definitely be a close connection between the experience of music and capitalism. Hesmondhalgh’s approach consists of the exploration of five dimensions of human flourishing he identifies and their connection to music, which will be summarized below.²²²

The first way music can help humans is by, as he describes, *heightening people’s awareness of continuity and development in life*.²²³ This is based on the strong memories and feelings music can evoke, such as taking the listener back in time, conjuring up emotions, or memories of particular circumstances. Here an interesting phenomenon takes place: because most people hear the most repeated music when they are younger, often older people are taken back into their youth by music they know. This can result in positive

²¹⁶ Susan McClary, “Lives in Musicology: A Life in Musicology-Stradella and Me,” *Acta Musicologica* 91, no. 1 (2019): 16.

²¹⁷ Paula Higgins, “Women in Music, Feminist Criticism, and Guerrilla Musicology: Reflections on Recent Polemics,” *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (1993): 178.

²¹⁸ Pieter C. van den Toorn, “Politics, Feminism, and Contemporary Music Theory,” *Journal of Musicology* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1991), S. 275-299 (1991).

²¹⁹ Ruth A. Solie, “What Do Feminists Want? A Reply to Pieter Van Den Toorn,” *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 4 (1991): 399–410.

²²⁰ Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

²²¹ David Hesmondhalgh, “Towards a Political Aesthetics of Music,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 364.

²²² *Ibid.*, 371.

²²³ *Ibid.*

memories, but also in negative ones such as a realization of the loss of time. Sometimes memories get warped because of the distance to their occurrence. This can result in nostalgia, which relies on a cognitive bias that drapes a filter of positivity over someone's youth memories. Accordingly, nuances from the past are omitted and its negative elements are translated into ones that feel more positive. Interestingly, that kind of nostalgia is valuable for music institutions that commodify music, since it turns out that the repetitions are doing their own marketing by tapping into memories that have already been covered by rose-tinted glasses. Unsurprisingly, Hesmondhalgh says, it is cheaper to make money off of the repetition of something that is already familiar. Remembering Hall's earlier definition, in a sense these music companies make use of a framework that has been set up in the past that holds *meaning* to the listener. Because this stays with them over time it will connect the past with the present, offering a tool to reflect on previous experiences.

Hesmondhalgh's second dimension of human flourishing is the way *music can enhance our sense of sociality and community*.²²⁴ Music often offers shared experiences, which can fortify a feeling of community and belonging. Additionally, such experiences frequently consist of multiple stimuli, which means that not only the music is heard, but also further physically and emotionally experienced. Subsequently, music can create community by offering a framework for individual self-expression through a collective sense of taste. Hesmondhalgh mentions, however, that as a downside to this there is a substantive chance of status conflicts. These take place in the realm of competitive individualism, where things mainly revolve around the privileged modern person and their individual sense of success. In such a setting the sense of community is actually decreased because the focus has shifted to competition. Again remembering Hall, Hesmondhalgh's notion of community in this way is compatible with that of language. Individually expressing yourself within a framework of collective taste could be seen as a way to communicate within a specific group. In the same way someone can 'speak' by using such language to self-enrich by boosting their status. If there is no community to interpret these expressions as prestigious it could be argued that they got lost in translation.

The third dimension relates to the possibility of music offering *a healthy integration of different aspects of our being, combining reflection and self-awareness with kinetic pleasure*.²²⁵ The combination of stimuli mentioned above has additional value in its own right because the mix of thinking and feeling can help with integrating the mind with the body. The two are often torn apart (similar to Descartes' mind/body dualism). This possibility of integration does however not go without racist connotations, Hesmondhalgh explains. Black people have a history of being reduced to their physicality, which lives on in how Black musicians are seen. By erasing the mental aspect of Black music Black musicians are more likely to be viewed as somehow devoid of thought, reflection and skill. On top of that, he says, the physical is in turn often reduced to the sexual when it comes to Blackness. This finding is reminiscent of the hierarchy of work by Arendt mentioned in chapter 1, which correlates Black people with the so called 'primitive', the physical and the animalistic. This kind of racist thought pattern is part of a way bigger framework that makes the Black person into the 'Other', as seen in Lorde's work. This has resulted in, as Hesmondhalgh mentions, a false assessment of Black music by the hegemony of 'the West', portraying Black music as solely physical. In this sense, the tenacious tendency to portray Black people as Other leads to erasure here as well.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 372.

Fourthly, music can *heighten our understanding of how others might think and feel*.²²⁶ Because music can capture emotion and is able to transport the listener through time and space it can put them in someone else's shoes, which happens by tapping into a language that is not verbal. Instead, the language is the *sound* itself. This musical language can travel in two ways: *synchronically*, between different societies existing at the same time, or *diachronically*, from the past into the now through music from other times. Hesmondhalgh emphasizes, though, that it is an easy trap to assume any 'true' transparency. Since all language, including musical language, relies on convention, there will always be a gap if these practices are not familiar to the listener. This means that some things will translate more easily, while others will not. Like the previously mentioned example, there is a chance listeners misinterpret music through their *own* projection of meaning, based on their frame of reference. Negligence leads to the erasure of specific kinds of culture and meaning by wrongfully overriding the unknown with something hegemonically familiar. Hesmondhalgh mentions that awareness and education are important exactly because of this phenomenon. This relates to the structure of the Self and the Other, as seen before; by acknowledging that the Other is actually another Self, it becomes possible to appreciate them accordingly.

Lastly, the fifth element of human flourishing is that *music is potentially very good at being a practice*.²²⁷ Because this might seem somewhat vague at first glance, it is good to know that Hesmondhalgh describes practice in an Aristotelean sense. This means that the *internal benefits* of doing a certain activity are in itself the goal; the purpose of music in this sense is its intrinsic value. The aim is to do something well, without focusing on external rewards like money, power, prestige or status. Hesmondhalgh describes how a musician can practice endlessly in order to become very well at their skill because of this; the pleasure is in the learning and playing itself. Hesmondhalgh does mention as a downside that there is a chance that this leads to the self-exploitation of the musician. Since the commercial musical world is one where supply overflows demand, it is common for musicians to get underpaid and play for the intrinsic value of their skill. The capitalist framework profits off of this by appealing to this sense of intrinsic reward and elevating it to the norm. This is similar to the erasure of women's work, by explaining it away as something innate that does not have to be paid, as seen in Kessler-Harris' evaluation of the history of women and work. In reality, though, this free labor generates profit, but it is not recognized as such. Following Hall, this reflects how representation and meaning influence each other; by framing the act of music making solely as a passion project, it will stay just that.

Hesmondhalgh's definitions start from the premise that music can help people thrive. He does so by acknowledging and describing the positive possibilities of music, while at the same time reflecting on their limits and the societal difficulties that would be naive to ignore in this context. By doing so he provides an insight into the strengths and the complications of music, which fit in a larger theoretical framework of cultural studies. This allows for an analysis of music that takes into account its interconnectedness with different aspects of human existence, and by extension Hesmondhalgh's idea of *political aesthetics*. Not all humans are set up to thrive because of different systems of oppression, such as the racism, sexism and classism mentioned before. If music can aid in human flourishing, a political connection between music and the political is something to seriously take into account, as Hesmondhalgh argues. This does not only come to expression through verbal manifestations of music (such as lyrics), but also through the awareness of continuity,

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 373.

experience of community, mind/body-integration, understanding of others, and the experience of practice as intrinsic pleasure. In combination with Hesmondhalgh's notion that it is just as relevant who *does* get to participate in these dimensions as who does *not*, the theory of human flourishing offers a practical guide to examine music in a broader societal and political context. The next section will provide an example of how such a connection between music and the political can manifest itself by means of a case study of the musical subculture of Swing-Jugend in Nazi Germany.

Swing-Jugend and human flourishing

Hesmondhalgh's idea of music as an aid in human flourishing takes into account how music can express meaning without literally saying it; through a shared frame of reference this meaning comes into existence, and allows the 'speakers' to communicate through it. This means that music can be political not only by its verbal contents, but also through the cultural meaning it has come to represent. An example of this can be found in the subculture of Swing-Jugend that came into existence in the whirlwind of WWII, which became an expression of resistance under Nazi pressure.

After WWI had subsided, it became fashionable among the European elite to distinguish yourself by listening to jazz. This genre of music was new at the time and because it had to be imported from the USA it was considered chic and avant-garde to be involved with it.²²⁸ Subsequently, National Socialism started to rise, and when it found steady footing in the 1930s it expressed a disdain for jazz. Different European youth groups who listened to jazz became politicized by this rejection and the Nazi regime branded them 'Swing-Jugend'. However, the groups referred to themselves as for instance 'Hot-Boys', 'Swing-Heinis', 'Schlurfs', or 'Alster-Piraten-Club', depending on their location.²²⁹ The political aspect of these groups was not always already present: they *became* political when their taste in music and culture was forbidden by the Nazi's. The framework behind this ban was that, in the eyes of the National Socialist government, jazz was 'degenerate' because it stemmed from Black and Jewish musicians. On top of that it would encourage 'sleaziness', Anglophilia, and Americanophilia.²³⁰ The Swing-Jugend rejected the Nazi's ideology of nationalism and uniformity. They started to import jazz music from America, where jazz was already political mainly along the lines of race. By importing it in a new political setting, it became political in a different way; a layer of meaning was added. A change in cultural framework changed the meaning of the subculture. The musical genre of jazz in itself became political in this context, and as such an expression of counter culture; jazz became a new language through which to reject National Socialism. This happened not only in general, but also in particular; for instance when the act of whistling the beginning of a certain swing-song became the password for a clandestine club forbidden by the Nazi's.²³¹

The Hesmondhalghian dimensions of human flourishing provide a helpful tool in analyzing Swing-Jugend culture and the relation between music and the political. The perception of *continuity and development* in the jazz community changed drastically, for instance. Since Swing culture started to come into existence before the totalitarian power of the National Socialist government, the influence of political pressure was distinctly palpable

²²⁸ Anton Tantner, "Jazz Youth Subcultures in Nazi Europe," paper presented at the Fifth Isha Conference Utrecht, The Netherlands, April 4–8, 1994: 22.

²²⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

²³⁰ Ralph Willett, "Hot Swing and the Dissolute Life: Youth, Style and Popular Music in Europe 1939-49." *Popular Music* 8, no. 2 (1989): 158-160.

²³¹ Ibid., 160.

through the absence of freedom, self-determination and connection. The contrast between what was possible inside the defiant sphere of the subculture and the Nazi 'outside world' was huge.²³² The Nazi's themselves realized jazz could not fully be stopped, and reacted by allowing *some* of it under very specific terms; such as versions re-recorded by white non-American artists, sanitized and subdued versions, and versions with explicitly pro-German lyrics inserted.²³³

Both the pro- and anti-German sides played in to a sense of *shared community and sociality* through music to aid in their political beliefs. By being able to express a shared interest and point of view through being together the group feeling was cultivated and sustained. The Nazi's could not deny jazz's popularity, and decided to use its vector to their benefit by morphing it into something that would reinforce their cause; here Hall's awareness of the dimension of power in relation to meaning giving is valuable. To the Swing-Jugend music offered some dry land in a sea of propaganda.²³⁴ The framework of Swing-culture was a way to keep in touch with like-minded people and to keep from isolating in a hostile environment. It would have been so much harder to keep on being defiant and not get overpowered while being confined from community.²³⁵ Simultaneously, by coming together, Swing-culture provided a way to get out of the grim political reality and to escape into a self-made sanctuary.

This place of refuge provided a place to let loose through the experience of music and dancing. The custom dancing style associated with Swing was rejected by the Nazi's for being too outrageous and erratic.²³⁶ Combined with an overall suppression of freedom from a totalitarian dictatorial regime, this made dancing and music participation a political answer, *integrating reflection and self-awareness with the kinetic*. The freedom of moving in an unruly way was at odds with the restrictive nature of the regime, and taking up space as an individual while dancing in a 'transgressive' way accommodated not only an expression of the personal and the political, but also of one's relation to 'big concepts' like freedom.

By coming together, experiencing music and dancing, Swing-Jugend created havens that were not only a place to come together, but also a place to imagine another world. By participating an appeal was made to people's imagination, a different possible world based on both a *synchronical and diachronical understanding of how others might think and feel*. Jazz and Swing music offered a glimpse into another world, both looking at the contemporary US as well as reminiscent of earlier European freedoms. This served as a reassurance that there were others with similar values. The Swing-Jugend's interpretation of jazz was aspirational in the sense that the contexts in the US and Europe were different, but an overarching ideal of freedom could be translated into a relevant meaning in a different situation.²³⁷ Of course, there was a reactionary side to embracing something the Nazi's rejected, in the sense of being for something because your enemy dislikes it.²³⁸ That being said, jazz did offer a confirmation of the existence of like-minded people who also thought things could be different. Both in the case of Nazi Germany as well as that of racist America, the language of jazz was related to a desire to express freedom and a reassurance that it

²³² Ibid., 157-158.

²³³ Ibid., 157.

²³⁴ Ibid., 160.

²³⁵ Tantner, "Jazz Youth," 26.

²³⁶ Willet, "Hot Swing," 160-161.

²³⁷ Ibid., 160.

²³⁸ Ibid., 158, 160.

was reasonable to reject the oppression that was going on. In the meantime, jazz provided spaces of micro-freedom where a different approach to life could be experienced.

Lastly, because Swing-Jugend culture was politicized as a whole, the participation in their dance evenings changed meaning too. Because the dances represented freedom and an alternative to the regime, Swing-culture became *very good at being a practice* of uncorrupted living. The outside world was defined by Nazi norms, which did not correspond with Swing-Jugend's own values and ideas. The latter created spaces that allowed for an alternative expression of what they deemed 'good living', or at least a rejection of 'bad living'. By dancing, playing, and overall participation they turned those beliefs into a practice, which became an act of defiance in itself.²³⁹ On the level of the musician and the audience themselves there was a sense of intrinsic value too, because they got to do those things simply to find joy in the doing itself. Outside the world of restrictions they could play music or dance in a way that felt good to them.

As the example of Swing-culture shows, Hesmondhalgh's framework of human flourishing is a productive tool in the analysis of political aspects of human music experience and their meaning. It highlights different aspects of the relationship between music and the political in a broader sense than the mere literal (though the literal is not excluded). Instead, there is an acknowledgement of the value of the wider experience of music. This framework makes it possible to look at the experience of music as an additional layer of language in itself; the experience and participation are capable of representing meaning in their own right. Of course, the literal contents of music itself can be political too, it is not a case of either/or. The next section will elaborate on protest music and lyrics, and at the same time reaffirm that lyrics are not by definition what makes a protest song just that.

Popular music & protest

As mentioned before, some Swing-music was re-recorded by the Nazi's with pro-German lyrics in order to influence the meaning of the songs. Since the lyrics were important, this way the element of protest was erased and turned into propaganda. The Swing music that stayed intact sometimes was protest music through its associated meaning of resistance as mentioned before, while other times its lyrical contents were explicit objections to Nazi Germany. It goes without saying that lyrics can be a large component in the expression of meaning.

Accordingly, sociologist Deena Weinstein has investigated lyrics of popular protest music between approximately the 1950s and the 2000s in the book *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*. In it Weinstein describes the following three main categories of protest song on the basis of lyrics. The first are songs that cover broader subjects of unjust authority in general, such as police brutality or civil rights.²⁴⁰ The second kind zoom in on a specific event that has been unjust.²⁴¹ Weinstein mentions the example of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's song 'Ohio' which was a reaction to the Ohio National Guard shooting students who were protesting the Vietnam war. Lastly, there is a section of songs that aim to inspire action, and cause impact.²⁴² Weinstein's example is Minor Thread's song 'Straight Edge', which tried to convince people to reject drugs by addressing how

²³⁹ Ibid., 160.

²⁴⁰ Deena Weinstein in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., 4.

unnecessary it is to “Hang with the living dead.”²⁴³ Weinstein adds that these are tentative categories and that some borders are unclear. The categories can overlap and what counts as protest music is in part a matter of interpretation and subject to discussion. Weinstein mentions that what they share is a quality of resistance. The fact that the experience and interpretation of particular injustices lead to the production of a song underlines discontent with and defiance against what is deemed unacceptable.²⁴⁴

Weinstein goes on to describe the collective cultural misunderstanding that a majority of rock music is protest music. Though political rock music does exist, it is not as big a percentage as is commonly thought.²⁴⁵ She explains that in the 1960s a lot of protests happened, for instance in the pursuit of American civil rights or the termination of the Vietnam War. Coincidentally, many people who were interested in these protests were also interested in rock music.²⁴⁶ The collective idea of rock as protest music might have been a hemorrhaging between the separate memories of an era rock and an era of protest, through a shared sense of rebelliousness.²⁴⁷ This was further consolidated because this specific generation was the first to keep listening to the music they had been listening in their youth, taking the amalgamation of protest and rock with them into their adulthood.

As Hesmondhalgh described earlier, such awareness of the passage of time can go hand in hand with the generation of distorted memories, conflating simultaneity with unity. In this case the historical context of protest was added to the songs themselves through the cognitive bias of nostalgia.²⁴⁸ As has been mentioned, though, the meaning that is expressed by a song does not solely rely on its mere literal contents, but also on the meaning and context that it was given by virtue of a specific framework. For rock music this has meant an association with protest. The connection in itself is not wrong, but the origins of the ties with protest more often than not turned out to be wrongfully assigned to the lyrical contents of rock music. Additionally, Weinstein corroborates the notion that music can be meaningful in more ways than its verbal expression, by highlighting rock’s capacity to offer emotional support, rally the troops, and keep up morale.²⁴⁹ Her description of different aspects of protest music reflects how meaning is created depending on the framework in question, and how slippery and fuzzy things can become because they overlap or change.

The previous sections of this chapter have focused on the connection between music and the political in order to generate a better understanding of its geography and nuances. The next sections will elaborate on the connection between work and music, what value music adds in relation to work, how they got separated and how the relationship changed over the years.

Music and work

In the article *Music at Work: Towards a Historical Overview* sociologist Marek Korczynski offers a compact but helpful overview of the historical connection between music and work. He does so by tracing the development of this relationship along the lines of industrialization in ‘the West’. According to Korczynski sociology of music as a field has a tendency to forget music’s special connection to work, because capitalist industrialization created a stark divide

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 5-6.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 14-15.

between work and leisure which resulted in the categorical divorce between the two.²⁵⁰ What actually happened is that the frameworks surrounding music and work changed. Though industrial development did not happen simultaneously in every region of 'the West', it did follow a similar pattern. This structure lead Korczynski to define three analytical categories of recent music history in relation to work, which focus on its contextual changes: the *pre-industrial*, the *industrial* and the *post-industrial* era.²⁵¹ Additionally, each category involves two elements: the nature of the *contemporary labor process*, which includes the implementation of the aural dimension, and the nature of *music production and consumption* of that era.²⁵²

Firstly, in the *pre-industrial era*, the regulation of labor was often a combination of the collective and the autonomous; there was relatively little hierarchical supervision and this was directly reflected in the way music was produced.²⁵³ As Kessler-Harris mentioned as well, it was common to be collectively self-sufficient and produce your own sustenance. The production of songs echoed that priority, which resulted in so called 'work songs'. This kind of music was based on actual work experiences and often workers collectively created their own songs during the labor process itself.²⁵⁴ This way, for example specific work songs for miners, tailors or sailors came into existence that aided workers in their specialized activities. Noteworthy as well about the pre-industrial connection between work and music is that work and play were not seen as binaries, but as a whole; the entertainment of music was woven into the fabric of work, and the other way around.²⁵⁵ This kind of entanglement is significant, because it would disappear in later eras.

To illustrate whether or not such entanglement applies, Korczynski borrows two concepts from film theorist Michel Chion. In the context of movie scores Chion differentiates *screen music* from *pit music*, which Korczynski employs to evaluate the relation between music and work.²⁵⁶ In film theory, screen music is the music that comes from within a scene itself. It originates within the here and now of what is depicted and characters might react to it.²⁵⁷ For instance when someone is shown playing the guitar, and this sound is heard by the surrounding people on screen. Pit music, however, originates from outside the scene. In this case, what happens on screen does not produce the music and there will be no on screen reaction to it.²⁵⁸ For instance when music is added later on to emphasize a certain mood.

Normally, screen and pit music would exclude each other. However, Korczynski argues, pre-industrial work songs remarkably combine them because the capitalist divide between work and leisure had not yet taken place.²⁵⁹ Work songs provided a rhythm to physically work to, while simultaneously allowing the mind to wander, relax, have fun and be entertained. In this sense music made it possible to have a work experience that was rooted in inevitable material demands as well as not get overpowered by them.²⁶⁰ In other words,

²⁵⁰ Marek Korczynski, "Music at Work: Towards a Historical Overview," *Folk Music Journal* 8, no. 3 (2003): 316.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., 315.

²⁵³ Ibid., 317.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 319.

²⁵⁷ Michel Chion and Claudia Gorbman, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 80.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Korczynski, "Music at Work," 319.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 319-320.

work songs served as a kind of work enhancing escapism by combining work and leisure, resulting in a better experience of work.

With the emergence of the *era of industrialization* such entanglement of work and play gradually ceased to exist. Instead of self-sufficient collectivity and relatively horizontal organization hierarchies became central to the work experience. This was also the era of the 'Big Split', which meant that work and leisure were divorced from each other and a firm barrier between the two became the norm.²⁶¹ In the labor process two big changes took place with the rise of industrialization, as mentioned by Korczynski. Firstly, machines gained priority in the production process, which meant that the workday was no longer scheduled by workers themselves. Due to the shift towards hierarchies factory management decided on the speed of the machines and workers had no choice but to accept these decisions and to adapt to the determinant factor or the rhythm of the machines.²⁶²

This change in agency could be heard in a way, too. The second big change in the labor process was management confiscating the aural space during work time. Music, whistling and singing at work became punishable. One Manchester factory, for example, handled a fine of a shilling for whistling during work time.²⁶³ The 'Ford Whisper' is another example, referencing how workers would talk without moving their mouths like ventriloquists in order to stay out of trouble with their supervisors.²⁶⁴ In general, individual noise production was forbidden, music included. Contrastingly, the factory itself did make a lot of noise, both through its machines as well as through speaker systems which were used to issue top-down notifications.²⁶⁵ In congruence with the factory's hierarchical position and the 'Big Split' work time became the factory's time and play time, including music, did not take place during working hours anymore. The impact of the separation of work and music in a capitalist society reached beyond the factory, as the coming section will address.

The era of industrialization also meant a big shift in the production and consumption of music. With the rise of industrialization and capitalism people in general did no longer create their own music, as was customary before, but rather bought and consumed other people's music. With this development a relatively small group of people specialized in making music for others.²⁶⁶ This led, in turn, to the creation of 'the audience'; the part of the silent listener that took the performance in but no longer participated in its production.

These changes in music consumption and production reflected back at the factory worker. Firstly, music and play were dissected from each other and the unique overlap of pit and screen music dissolved. While workers would first make music among themselves, they would now listen to others in a structure that was more binary than before.²⁶⁷ Screen and pit music were separated from each other, with an active music maker and a passive listener. Secondly, the silenced environment of the factory was a very good match with this new way of music consumption. After taking work songs and other sound making away, music was reintroduced into factory life. With the rise of radio broadcasting factories started to let workers listen to music again.²⁶⁸ This did happen, however, in a new order. Listening to music became hierarchically determined; it was decided on top down, with primacy of production in mind. The aural space was in hands of the factory and music would be

²⁶¹ Ibid., 320.

²⁶² Ibid., 321.

²⁶³ Ibid., 321.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 322.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 326.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 326.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 322.

presented as a gift to the workers, interrupted with company messages. Also, the music that would be played had to be background music, nothing that would entice too much active listening.²⁶⁹ The cynical analysis would be that after being deprived of music in the factory, workers would be happy with anything that was thrown their way to drown out the noise of the machines and the tediousness of repetitive work.

As mentioned before, though, the relationship between music production and music consumption in general was changing in society. Korczynski addresses the cynicism with which academics have dismissed this so called 'muzak', arguing that it is not a fair evaluation of the role of music in relation to work.²⁷⁰ Fact is that the relationship with music changed, but that does not mean it lost all its meaning. Rather, the emphatic role of popular music played in factories became that of pit music, which transported the listener away from their job.²⁷¹ Korczynski argues that this was no small feat since this music would really help people through their day. The popular music that would be played in the factory reminded the worker "of freedom, of autonomy, of expressiveness, even of hedonism," as he puts it.²⁷² It reminded workers of why they would put up with this work in the first place, what they traded their eight hours in a shift for. It also passively reminded the worker that they were human, not a machine among machines, and it would take them away to a place where that humanity was central.²⁷³ This bargaining about the aural space settled somewhere where the factory was still in control, with enough of a vent to keep workers compliant.

The third category of the relationship between music and work is that of *post-industrialism*. The big split that had been essential to the era of industrialization was bridged again in some ways. Decentralized music consumption became more prevalent with the rise of the personal stereo, the availability of sound carriers like cassettes and cds. This made it possible to be the DJ of one's own soundtrack during the workday and it made for a big increase in niche-genres catering to a plethora of tastes.²⁷⁴ The relationship between pit and screen music became the individual worker's choice in this sense, just as the combination of work and play. These relative freedoms were, however, still limited.

Firstly, music during work in the post-industrialization capitalist context became a tool to cope with the working environment. The worker gained the agency to be their own broadcaster, but that is about it as far as freedom went. The work domain itself remained outside of the worker's control and music became an individual coping strategy.²⁷⁵ Secondly, new kinds of jobs have arisen after the era of industrialization. Service work, for instance, has become an important factor in the labor market. With the emergence of service work, the relationship between employer and employee became a triangular exchange. The customer got a central role in this. In this structure the customer is centralized in such a way that they have the idea of being sovereign.²⁷⁶ This includes the aural space, through which management (subliminally) influences the pacing of work by influencing both the customer as well as the worker. Such influencing through music is a field of study on its own that is still developing, both in marketing as well as in for instance office environments.

What is clear, though, is that the relationship between work and music has several different expressions depending on context. Also, Korczynski argues, music as a tool to

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 324-325.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 327.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 327.

²⁷² Ibid., 324.

²⁷³ Ibid., 324.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 327.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 328.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 328-329.

influence workers is definitely limited. An example he mentions is that of the 'company song' that serves as a corporate anthem. These can make use of lyrics like the following:

"KPMG
We're as strong as can be
A dream of power and energy
We go for the goal
Together we hold
On to our vision of global strategy."²⁷⁷

These lines were highlighted on a website built by Chris Raettig, who started collecting corporate anthems out of a cult status like curiosity.²⁷⁸ The website itself no longer exists, but a *The Guardian* article from 2001 describes how popular the website was, with larger websites linking to it. This led to 10,000 visitors a day, which would stop by in awe of the cringe that emanated from these artificial corporate attempts to construct a sense of belonging and culture within their organizations.^{279,280} Apparently, some kind of line was reached and then crossed, in relation to work, resulting in mostly ironic interaction with these anthems that did an outstanding job at defining what was wrong with corporate culture, despite their initial non-ironic venture. Though indirectly, this relationship between work and music is meaningful in the sense that it highlights the discontents of working in such a context. So much so that these songs about work would even be looked up in free, 'play' time, because they resonated with so much people. Apparently they did a very good job at expressing the discontent and grievance of the workers. In this way, a song can come to mean something else due to interpretation and frame of reference. As long as it resonates with people it has value.

The tasks of songs in relation to work and their aid in gender resistance

As the previous section has shown, expressions of the relationship between work and music have transformed significantly in the last few centuries. The changing nature of the correspondence between music and work has resulted in a multitude of meaning and value that music has offered in relation to work. The following segment will present a brief overview of *why* people would relate work to musical expression. What functions and tasks did work songs fulfill for people?

Firstly, to reiterate, professions in a pre-industrial context generated their own, idiosyncratic work songs combining *rhythm* with *escapism*. Despite their diverse contents, a lot of these manual labor jobs benefited from the rhythm a work song would provide, Korczynski describes.²⁸¹ Miners, handloom weavers and agriculturists, for instance, made use of this feature. Sailors had work songs called *sea shanties*, which were specific to certain jobs due to their particular cadence.²⁸² The element of escapism has been a broadly shared experience and intent too. For instance for slaves imagining freedom through their

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 329.

²⁷⁸ John Naughton, "KPMG hits wrong note as its anthem rocks the world," *The Guardian*, December 9, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2001/dec/09/theobserver.observerbusiness14>.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Korczynski, "Music at Work," 329.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 317.

²⁸² Ibid.

work songs.²⁸³ In the same analogy Korczynski uses, screen music during work is often used as pit music for an imagined scene. Materially, the worker had to be present, but mentally they could still leave, regaining a virtual sense of freedom by imagining it.

Sometimes, however, the demands of the material world would be at the core of the song. This is why a second common use of work songs was to *express grievances*. The collectively oriented work in pre-industrial context, for instance, did not always run smoothly and one way to express objections in this regard was for the crew to sing specific songs.²⁸⁴ Songs were an outlet to express meaning in a unified manner: it collectivized individual voices because people could join in, which made it more likely they would be heard. During the Big Split songs were initially forbidden in factories because of this powerful potential of rallying workers.²⁸⁵ Outside the factory, though, grievances about work were shared and often siphoned into songs, which more and more started to revolve around inspiring change on top of expressing complaints.²⁸⁶ The union song became more prevalent and, though it is argued that some would have been written never to leave the printed page, certain union songs became massively popular and influential.²⁸⁷ The use of songs unified workers by alluding to shared problems and an envisioned solution, which heightened a sense of unity and connection both in general life and during strikes²⁸⁸

Correspondingly, songs were very useful in narrating *oral history*. Like the 'news rounds' of oral history in the middle ages, telling important stories through songs was a good way to spread them and to keep memories remembered. The events of the collapse of a mine could be commemorated like this, for instance.²⁸⁹ In the case of general knowledge, oral history could be important to, as can be seen in the example of *The Owslebury Lads*, a song that was orally spread through society and kept alive for 75 years before it was written down.²⁹⁰ Because of this preservation it is now known that 600 men were executed after striking for better wages and rioting in England, and that this event has aided in the unionization of workers there.²⁹¹

Additionally, songs can be simply *entertaining*. As was explained earlier, the relationship between work and music as entertainment has been under pressure throughout the development of industrialism. In more recent periods there has been a partial return to this use, for instance by bringing a personal stereo.²⁹² The current way of listening to music for entertainment in relation to work is, however, largely passive, and happens by buying records or streaming them.²⁹³ It turns out that this kind of listening can have a lot of worth for people; such as listening to the radio in the factory, or working from home with music playing.²⁹⁴

As music historian Ted Gioia says, work songs are dead from a certain perspective. The relationship between music and work right now is mostly that of entertainment and light

²⁸³ Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50, 76.

²⁸⁴ Korczynski, "Music at Work," 318.

²⁸⁵ Korczynski, "Music at Work," 321.

²⁸⁶ Ted Gioia, *Work Songs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 229.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁸⁹ Roy Palmer, *The Sound of History: Songs and Social Comment* (Oxford: Faber and Faber, 2008), 95-96.

²⁹⁰ Gioia, *Work Songs*, 231.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 243.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁹⁴ Korczynski, "Music at Work," 124, 128.

escapism. Songs about work are currently harder to find, which is why the next three examples of songs that concern gender, manual labor and resistance are not recent. The purpose is, however, to show the value they had and what meaning they expressed.

The first example is called *Won't Get My Hundred All Day*, which deals with the particular intersection of labor, gender and race. It was recorded in the 1920s, but had been around for longer getting passed on orally.²⁹⁵

“Way down in the bottom
Where the cotton boll is rotten
Won't get my hundred all day
Before I'll be beaten
Before I'll be cheated
I'll leave five fingers in the boll.
Black man beat me.
White man cheat me.
Won't get my hundred all day.”²⁹⁶

It was used by cotton picking black slave women, and addresses issues particular to this position. The lyrics deal with cotton picking itself, as well as the struggles of being exploited. The ‘hundred’ was a quota slaves were ordered to pick, with the false promise that after the abolition there would be a living wage; as long as they worked hard now the picker would be rewarded in the future.²⁹⁷ The song reflects the knowledge that this was untrue, reflected in the ‘rotten’ cotton ball at the bottom.

Additionally, the singer knows she has an inferior position in relation to the white man, the slave owner, as well as the black man, who she would be inferior to from the moment black people would be emancipated. The song gives expression to a complex relationship of societal issues, reflecting the insight of intersectionality that combined societal disadvantages can result in specific problems. The lyrics describe a framework of reference that is particular to black women at the time, expressing what the impending changes will mean to them. To come to the conclusion that it will not get a lot better, but a new version of an old disadvantage.

In Hesmondhalghian terms, the song reflects a continuity through time while the knowledge that it should have been a song about the discontinuity of injustice. By expressing the unfairness that will result in more toil the singer describes being stuck in the status of the Other, giving voice to what her reality is despite the erasure she endures from her environment. In this sense she represents herself through the expression of song, construing her identity in defiance of the circumstances as much as she can. Sometimes resistance is based in the sheer fact of staying alive and present against the odds. In this particular situation *Won't Get My Hundred All Day* helps the singer to persist and to create a space where they are able to summon their own identity. Reaffirming their existence as an act of resistance like this is in itself a political act, expressing a need to be recognized as a Self and to be able to take part in what De Beauvoir called the transcendent.

²⁹⁵ Gale P. Jackson, “Rosy, Possum, Morning Star: African American Women’s Work and Play Songs” An Excerpt From Put Your Hands on Your Hips and Act Like a Woman: Song, Dance, Black History, and Poetics in Performance,” *Journal of Black Studies*. 46, no. 8 (2015): 789.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

The second example tried to conjure up an identity that did not yet exist by appealing to a collective imaginary ideal. As mentioned in chapter 3, in WWII *Rosie the Riveter* came into existence as a kind of collective mascotte, appearing not only in visual propaganda, but also in a song from around 1942:

“While other girls attend their fav'rite cocktail bar,
Sipping dry Martinis, munching caviar,
There's a girl who's really putting them to shame,
Rosie is her name...

All the day long, whether rain or shine,
She's a part of the assembly line.
She's making history,
Working for victory,
Rosie [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter.

Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage
Sitting up there on the fuselage
That little frail can do
More than a male can do,
Rosie [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter.

Rosie's got a boyfriend Charlie,
Charlie, he's a marine
Rosie, is protecting Charlie
Working overtime on the riveting machine.

They gave her a production "E"
She was a proud as a girl could be,
There's something true about
Red, white and blue about
Rosie, [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter.

Ev'ry one stops to admire the scene
Rosie at work on the B-Nineteen
She's never twittery nervous or jittery,
Rosie [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter.

What if she's smeared full of oil and grease
Doing her bit for the old Lend-lease
She keeps the gang around
They love to hand around,
Rosie [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter.

Rosie buys a lot of war bonds
That girl really has sense
Wishes she could purchase more bonds
Putting all her cash into national defense.

Senator Jones, who is "in the know"
Shouted these words on the radio,
Berlin will hear about,
Moscow will cheer about
Rosie [rat-at-at-at soundeffect] the Riveter."²⁹⁸

In the context of this song women were convinced to start working in the factories during war time by making Rosie into a new role model. Before, 'proper' women were expected not to work in public, let alone in paid manual labor jobs. The war provided a guise of acceptable transgression and now to be a 'good' woman was framed as help the war effort by working the assembly line. A new division between 'good' and 'bad' women is set up by comparing Rosie to 'other women' who are portrayed as being inferior to her because they are nervous and leading upper-middle class lives. In contrast, Rosie is 'one of the boys'.

The song shows more instances of transgression of gendered behavior, such as Rosie protecting her boyfriend, protecting the factory from sabotage, and buying war bonds. At the same time, as mentioned in chapter 3, women were expected to keep a certain feminine appearance and just before the war the women who were now dismissed in the song would have been the aspirational objective and the norm of femininity. Though *Rosie the Riveter* as a song might have represented a relief from previous gender expectations for some women at the time, the question remains what level of freedom actually goes behind it.

What might be of importance in this case is that this song was not written by a 'Rosie' herself, but by a male lyricist and composer for an all-male quartet.²⁹⁹ The political manifests itself in this song differently; not from an intrinsic struggle to claim selfhood, but as an idea about others. The song was structured around a mythical ideal of others *imposed* on women, instead of an expression of women's own wants. The song represents a lack of agency, freedom and plurality, and additionally, women were again positioned as the Other, not a Self. It is no surprise, then, that right after the war women were expected to give up their temporary pseudo-freedom again, and fulfill a role that was remarkably similar to the one from before the war. What the song does offer in relation to manual labor, resistance and gender is the notion that this personification of women as Rosie was possible; under certain circumstances changes like these could be made.

The last example shows the effects of the cancellation of the previously accepted transgression of women taking up manual labor jobs. In 1971 singer-songwriter Peggy Seeger wrote the song *I'm Gonna be an Engineer*. Because it is quite long, a few highlights will be shown here:

"When I was a little girl, I wished I was a boy,
I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys,
Everybody said I only did it to annoy
But I was gonna be an engineer. [...]"

No, you only need to learn to be a lady,
The duty isn't yours for to try and run the world.

²⁹⁸ Gypsy Teague and the Southwest and Texas Popular Culture Associations, *Presentations of the 29th Annual SW/Texas Regional Meeting of the Popular Culture and American Culture Association: Gender* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 202.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

An engineer could never have a baby!
Remember, dear, that you're a girl. [...]

Then Jimmy come along and we set up a conjugation,
We were busy every night with loving recreation.
I spent my day at work so he could get his education
And now he's an engineer!

He says, 'I know you'll always be a lady,
It's the duty of my darling to love me all her life.
Could an engineer look after or obey me?
Remember, dear, that you're my wife.' [...]

Don't I really wish that I could be a lady?
I could do the lovely things that a lady's s'posed to do,
I wouldn't even mind if only they would pay me,
And I could be a person too. [...]

The boss he says, 'We pay you as a lady,
You only got the job 'cause I can't afford a man.
With you I keep the profits high as may be,
You're just a cheaper pair of hands.' [...]

I been a sucker ever since I was a baby,
As a daughter, as a wife, as a mother and a 'dear'.
But I'll fight them as a woman, not a lady,
Fight them as an engineer!"³⁰⁰

In contrast to *Rosie the Riveter*, *I'm Gonna be an Engineer* provides an insight into gender and manual labor that is grounded in experience and some ambiguity. It describes the hypocrisy that results from gender arbitrariness and the influence that can have on someone's sense of personhood and identity. Seeger describes what the effects are of the continued segregation of manual labor along gender lines; freedom of choice and plurality are first denied, and she is Othered. Then, when the Self in the shape of her boss, is in need of cheap labor, the transgression suddenly is possible after all, but only under the condition that she would be paid less on the grounds of her gender.

Additionally, Seeger addresses the overarching systems of class and capitalism that factor in; she needs to get paid in order to stay in existence. However, the aspirational standard of the 'lady' ensures that she will be paid less if she chooses to try and work, because it is not the 'right' way to express femininity. By describing this impossible split, Seeger creates a sense of community for the ones who recognize the situation. It expresses how frustrating it can be to show up and be dismissed on the basis of gender, and how narrow, absurd, and hopeless it can be to navigate the gender bias bottom line. It can be valuable for someone to articulate such grievances in a song because it gives words to

³⁰⁰ Peggy Seeger, *I'm Gonna be an Engineer* (1971), retrieved June 6, 2021, <http://www.peggyseeger.com/listen-buy/peggy-seeger-live/peggy-seeger-live-song-texts/im-gonna-be-an-engineer>.

issues someone might not have been able to put their finger on yet. This potential sense of recognition and community is combined with the affirmation of the song that repeats 'I'm gonna be an engineer'. In an environment where it is uncommon or challenged to say such things as a girl or woman this can be a simple but powerful practice. Seeger knows what it is like not to be a Self among other Selves in the context of manual labor and that just being there can have political significance.

A shared feature of these examples of songs that deal with manual labor from a gender perspective is that they in one way or another connect to the establishment of Selfhood, as seen in De Beauvoir's analysis. The first and last song actively pursue that goal, by expressing what they are missing to be a fuller person and to be seen by others as such. With *Rosie the Riveter* the force to create a 'someone' is external, which is exactly why it gets a slightly uncanny feel. In reality it is a repetition of the creation of an Other by the Self; the power relations are still functional. Where *Rosie* might be funny or entertaining, *Won't Get My Hundred All Day* and *I'm Gonna be an Engineer* express a real craving toward Selfhood and transcendence.

According to Gioia the work song is dead, as mentioned before. The relationship between manual labor and music has changed, and work in general is hardly ever the lyrical subject of songs anymore.³⁰¹ This does not mean that music has no meaning to us anymore when it comes to work. In fact, half of the time we listen to music it is during, or connected to work.³⁰² The values of entertainment and escapism are just what predominates this era, which proves to be valuable and relevant as well.

Conclusion

To start, this chapter culture was shown to be ambiguous, multifaceted and ubiquitous. Cultural studies has acknowledged these characteristics and leveled the playing field accordingly; culture is ordinary. Additionally, Hall's encouragement to not look at meaning as an *a priori* understructure has made it possible to see conceptual maps of meaning as collective creations. This means that frames of reference and the meaning they generate are not given, but in fact culturally structured. Additionally, by assessing cultural expressions that are not verbal as variations of language too, there is a chance to reflect on their contingent meanings. This makes it possible to inspect meanings as expressions of representation and power relations. On these grounds a cultural studies approach allows for an analysis that connects the cultural expression itself with other relevant societal phenomena that influence the meaning it conveys.

An example of the interplay between music and the political can be found in the rich history of Beethoven's Ninth, Schiller's *Ode to Joy* and the European Union. Schiller's lyrics were changed due to the political implications of the French Revolution and added to Beethoven's melody. After WWII the EU separated the two because the German language had such negative connotations that it was unthinkable to have an anthem with German lyrics. The meaning of the German language as a whole had changed, resulting in a cultural dismissal of it. However, the collective memory that people had of the music and lyrics together was still intact, and this connection was hard to erase. In turn, this has led the EU to officially state that its anthem is instrumental only and that the text of *Ode to Joy* is not part of it. This narrative is only a part of the interpretations that have been made about Beethoven's Ninth. Other analyses, such as some feminist ones, have found different

³⁰¹ Gioia, *Work Songs*, 249.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.

cultural meanings expressed through the symphony by connecting it to different frames of reference. In other words, the political can be retraced in musical expressions in various ways.

To take a more nuanced look at music and the political, Hesmondhalgh's five dimensions of human flourishing were explained and then applied to the Nazi-era Swing Jugend. The example of the Swing-Jugend provided an insight into what these dimensions of human flourishing can mean by examining the role the experience of music had in relation to the political climate of the time. Music provided several ways to (temporarily) thrive within a politically tumultuous environment. The participation and experience itself came to bear meaning, and represent resistance. Weinstein then assessed different forms of protest songs, concluding that a definition of protest music is tentative and somewhat fuzzy at best because it can take various shapes.

The focus was then shifted towards the relationship between music and work, described along the lines of industrialization. Along the way it was explained how self-sufficient collective organizing ceased to be common, and how this changed the aural sphere of the factory and the aural experience of the factory worker. A phenomenon similar to the influence of industrialism on gender relations as seen before; the hierarchy and the sharp public/private divide made a lot of impact. It was then addressed how the post-industrial relationship between work and music looked like, which turned out to be a lot of focus on escapism and entertainment, and little focus on work as a subject of songs.

The last section of the chapter addressed several other values of work songs, as well as three examples of songs that concern gender and manual labor. Their potential for aiding in resistance was elaborated upon, and two songs turned out to express a longing for Selfhood and transcendence. The middle song did not do such a good job at this, because it resembled a Self overpowering an Other.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

On the one hand it has been satisfying to be able to pull at a thread that has been present in my personal life since I started doing manual labor. To see where an intuition that was built on a collection of experiences is able to take you, because auto-ethnography is taken as a viable strategy. It has been valuable to be able to get the two mutually exclusive worlds I used to switch between to communicate to each other. On the other hand I recognize that you will never be done. In that sense the assertion 'It is just a draft' still goes. With that in mind I think of this as a preliminary conclusion.

Informed by my own experience, the aim of this project was to investigate the structure of gender relations in manual labor by asking how certain social hierarchies are reinforced and maintained by the fact that manual labor is coded as gendered.

In order to give this question the footing it requires, I started out with chapter 1: theoretical framing and contextualization. Since the scope of this project is limited and I would write from my own experience situated in 'the West' I started by defining this concept for this project. I then moved on to an explanation of manual labor, but because it can easily overflow into for instance knowledge work, I moved towards Hannah Arendt's notions of labor, work and action because they carry with them a hierarchy and a sense of power inequality. Though I do not agree with Arendt's conclusions towards for instance Black people, I found that the structure of Othering people and the ranking along these lines has a lot of descriptive value. The architecture of naturalizing something artificial comes back in a lot of places of this thesis, and is in fact elemental to it.

I turned to Kessler-Harris' work for a historical background of my topics, to be able to find continuations from the past into the now. Here, and in several other places, the influence of dichotomies became clear from a historical perspective. Then I made sure to address biological claims about gender and manual labor, because the physical will make itself emerge sooner or later in this context. Messing's work allowed for a nuanced view that focuses on capacity, and from there I went on to address sex and gender in the context of this project. I followed Kessler-Harris' notion of gender as an analytical tool because she showed how well it worked in the assessment of manual labor history. I then expanded on this notion with De Beauvoir's approach of extracting the nurture from nature, and Butler's notion that everything is nurture, put bluntly. These approaches proved to be useful because they keep open space for agency, while acknowledging that gender does not take place in a vacuum and that society will reify cultural beliefs such as gender and race as natural.

The second chapter was aimed at methodology and method, in which I built on approaches that pursue openness. A cultural studies approach did just that, which meant I was able to cross reference and freely associate between different cultural phenomena in relation to gender.

From this groundwork I was more comfortable to wander back into a more detailed assessment of manual labor and gender to explore some of the inconsistencies of the gender division by means of different examples, such as cooking and farming. I also went more in depth into the example of women participating in WWII, to get a better sense of an instance where transgression concerning manual labor and gender was encouraged. I saw this structure of encouragement and retreat reflected in safety clothing and picked the drop seat coverall as case study to further explore the relationship between the public and private, and the masculine and feminine. I addressed the unisex fallacy of work wear because it reflects so well how women are othered in manual labor and consequently, if they want to

stay they will have to stay despite their environment. In this way I explored hierarchies concerning gender through material objects, finding that I was able to trace them.

In chapter 4 I set out to do something similar in the realm of songs. Here, I started by investigating the case study of Beethoven's Ninth and its political context. This example spoke to me because it can be traced from the past into the now. I then added the more structured approach of Hesmondhalgh's dimensions of political flourishing, which do justice to the idea that the everyday and personal experiences can have a political dimension as well. I investigated what this personal version of political experience could like in practice by linking human flourishing to Swing Jugend Culture. I then focused on the historical background of music and manual labor, which followed a similar structure on the basis of industrialization along the lines of the private and the public, as well as an increased degree of hierarchy with the rise of capitalism. I ended the chapter with an investigation of how the relationship between manual labor and gender is expressed in music, and what value it adds to the human in question. Through three songs I explored the relationship between manual labor, gender and music. I found that the songs that I assessed to be genuine expressions essentially contested the idea that they were seen as Other and not as a Self. Given the notion that the relationship between Self and Other is hierarchized and takes root in inequality I would argue that such songs express a certain self-assertion of personhood.

In conclusion, this thesis has applied a cultural studies approach informed by auto-ethnography in order to gain insight into the structure of gender relations in manual labor. Gendered structures concerning manual labor can be historically traced in correlation with industrialization and the guise of naturalization keeps these hierarchies intact because it makes them *appear* immanent to gender. I have traced expressions of gendered hierarchies about manual labor through ads, clothing and music by assessing them as parts of a framework through which meaning is expressed. The conclusion is that gender assumptions get translated in to for instance an object, like a coverall, or a lack thereof. Music can be helpful in the resistance of these hierarchies in many ways, but a profound ability it has is to express the experience of a lack of personhood. I would argue that this claim of aural space and gesture of mental self-assertion serves an act of self-affirmation as a person, or an attempt towards it.



Figure 5.1: *Shoes* by Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890), Paris, January-February 1887.³⁰³

³⁰³ Vincent van Gogh, *Shoes*, 1887, oil on cardboard, Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam, accessed August 14, 2021, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0127V1962>.

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