The price of 'golden' exploitation: How money flows from the super-rich to domestic workers support inequalities

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Abstract
Wealthy people can afford full-time domestic staff at home to be served every day. Some of them spend huge amount of money in domestic service. Working for the rich, domestic workers thus receive wages, gifts and compensations in kind. They can potentially improve their standard of living. Why do super-rich pay so much for their household staff? Following the intuition of Paul Segal about inequality as enti-tlement over labor, I argue that money as entitlement over labor rests on what I call the 'golden' exploitation of the workforce. Substantial rewards do not call into ques-tion the exploitative relationship. High value gifts and high salary support exploita-tion even in situations where it is most likely to be undermined. The case of the 'super-rich' domesticity illustrates a hidden production of social inequalities: money compensates for the unlimited drudgery of the employees.

Key words:
family economics, elites, employers, wages, work

JEL classification:
J33 payment method, M54 personnel economics, Z13 economic sociology

1. Introduction

When she takes me into her villa on the shores of a lake, Julie,[1] a Swiss woman in her 40s, gallery owner, married to a male trader, asks one of her eight domestic workers to make us a cup of tea and set us up in the large living room. We sit on a white leather sofa, on which are two gift packages. Julie takes them, and calls another employee, Ada: '[Ada], can you put these two packages in my bedroom closet? I'll take them out when the girls come back'. She looks at the packages in her hands and tells me they are gifts for two of her employees who have just gone on vacation for a week. Julie plans to give each of them a gift when they

1 All first names mentioned in this article are anonymous.

come back home because, she says, 'they deserve it'. When I ask her what's in the packages, she says, 'They're two handbags, two Chanel bags'. Unable to contain my surprise, which she then reads on my face, she smiles at me and explains, 'Yes, I spoil my employees'.[2]

Julie is not the first employer I have met for in-depth interviews who offers gifts to her employees. The employees themselves often tell me that they receive gifts from their employers, and sometimes they do not even know what to do with them. Nevertheless, I am always surprised, even after becoming familiar with the practices and lifestyles of the wealthy people I interview, at the value of some gifts, or on the contrary, at the incongruous nature of some—such as oranges for Christmas. The recurrence of the types of gifts made by employ-ers, and at the same time, their great diversity, led me to take a closer look at them. I then gradually discovered that relations between employers and employees are constantly punctu-ated by a certain number of exchanges: besides emotional exchanges, highly codified exchanges of objects and money regulate these relations.

1.1 Money and gifts for a 'golden' exploitation

It is not surprising that employers give gifts to their domestic workers. Several decades of re-search on domesticity throughout history and around the world have shown that employers, and especially women employers, give items to their employees (Laslett, 1965; Katzman, 1978; Rollins, 1985; Colen, 1989; Enloe, 1989; Macklin, 1992; Romero, 1992; Borgeaud-Garciandía and Lautier, 2011; Cognet, 2014). The most popular gifts are clothing, small decorative objects and food. These gifts are presented by the employers as donations: they are an expression of the generosity toward their employees. As in any gift economy, however, there is nothing disinter-ested about gifts (Mauss, 1954 [1950]): at least, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, gifts are very representative of the 'interest in disinterestedness' that governs domestic service relationships be-tween employers and employees (Bourdieu, 1998 [1994]). In domestic service, gifts contribute to blur the economic relationship between employers and employees, and create a debt for the lat-ter, that should be filled by a surplus of work: 'Unlike other forms of gift-giving, which involve reciprocity between parties exchanging gifts, gift-giving in domestic service occurs only in one di-rection. One-way gift-giving thus places the domestic under obligation to the employer to per-form additional physical and emotional labor [. . .]' (Bakan and Stasiulis, 1997, p. 15). Because it is a one-way gift-giving, the employer's gift to the employee solidifies the supposed material and emotional interdependence that binds them together and contributes to a denial of the economy that obscures the salary dimension of work. Like the artistic, intellectual or religious field, domes-ticity is characterized by the valuation of free work in that it reflects a commitment to the nature of the work and not to its monetary rewards (Bourdieu, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1996 [1992]). This is the affirmation of a domestic economic logic based on a denial of calculation in favor of generos-ity and dedication, what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'inverted world' in that this domestic economy is opposed to the capitalist logic (Bourdieu, 1970, 1990). Dedication and economic disinterest are the heart of the moral underpinnings of employee–employer relations.

Gift-giving to get commitment and extra work from domestic workers is thus well known. However, there is a lack of studies exploring in detail the nature, frequency and value of gift giving. This is a central question for understanding how the domestic labor market produces social inequalities between employers and employees, and among

2 Reconstructed narrative from my field notes taken during the interview with Julie, December 2017, at her home in Geneva. Verbatim is translated from French into English.

employees. Feminist materialist work shows that the domestic labor market is structured by the intersection of class, race, and gender: an inequality between employers and employees on the one hand, and between employees on the other hand, whose skills are essentialized (Dorlin, 2009; Galerand, 2015). From this theoretical perspective, domesticity is based on an exploitative relationship, which subjugates poor, immigrant and racialized women all the more. In the case of undocumented domestic workers, who are barely paid and live with their employers, the exploitation appears obvious from a materialist point of view (Anderson, 2000; Byrd, 2009). When it exists, the gift then comes to euphemize the violence of this exploitation, through its emotional dimension. But what about other work situations, where the gift or money given by employers is not merely symbolic, but provides significant material rewards to the employee?

My fieldwork among domestic workers and super-rich led me to question the evidence of the exploitative relationship between employers and domestic workers. I noticed that employers spend a considerable amount of money to be served on a daily basis, by giving important salaries or expensive gifts. This money and these gifts are real material rewards to the employees, who not only live a vicarious rich life (from their position as subordinates to the rich), but also have the financial means to afford expensive consumption and leisure activities. I met butlersæ who earn more than $10 000 per month, excluding bonuses, and who build up significant savings through domestic work. Can we say that these employees are out of the exploitative relationship? Why do the super-rich give so much to their employees?

I propose to think about these two questions by analyzing in detail what employers give to their employees, and how they calculate and justify their expenses. It is precisely because they are very rich and employ several domestic workers that their case is opportune to ques-tion the foundations of the exploitative relationship to work. The theory of inequality as entitlements over labor proposed by Paul Segal (Segal, 2021) allows me to think about the multidimensional character of exploitation, and not only its economic aspect. In his article, he talks about domestic work and evokes the case of domestic workers who have access to certain consumer goods previously reserved for the middle class, in Brazil: he says 'while upper middle-class quality of life may not depend on consuming ever-more goods, it does depend a great deal on the affordability of other people's labor. That depends not on real income as usually measured, nor even on income shares, but specifically on entitlements over labor. By measuring the capacity to command others, and the social hierarchy that flows from that capacity, entitlements over labor capture a socially- and politically-salient aspect of inequality that standard measures do not'. (p. 27). With the case of the domesticity of the super-rich, I would like to further explore this idea of capacity to command others, and how entitlement materializes in everyday relationships. In this article, I argue more radi-cally that this entitlement over labor rests on what I call its 'golden' exploitation. The diver-sity of expenses encountered, including the most important ones, do not call into question the existence of an exploitative relationship. In other words, high value gifts and a high sal-ary, on the contrary, maintain exploitation even in situations where it is most likely to be undermined.

Indeed, the exploitation of domestic workers does not involve the deprivation of their economic capacity to afford goods, or even the fruits of their labor. The wages of some employees would allow them to have domestic workers of their own. However, as important as the money they earn and the value of the gifts they have, their bodies, and their time, belong to their employers. The deprivation of space and time to themselves, and the physical drudgery of the work, inhibit their ability to have a private life, to spend their money and to be served.

Here, I demonstrate that this 'golden' exploitation is based on two principles. The first is that employers' money not only creates inequalities between them and their domestic workers, but also between domestic workers. Because they spend unequal amounts of money from one employee to another, employers build, through the division of labor, gender, race and class hierarchies, and thus assign different values to those who serve them. Where there is proximity between employers and employees, money and gift-giving serve all the more to ensure symbolic and economic distance, and to legitimize employer superiority. The second is that the money given by employers to domestic workers proceeds from calculations and justifications that aim to moralize exploitation, in other words, to make it acceptable, and even desirable, in their eyes. Their entitlement over labor is part of a logic of moralization of capitalism, differing according to the experience that the super-rich have of domestic work.

1.2 The 'circuits of money' into the privacy of wealthy homes

In the houses of high-net-worth people, money and gifts, and their counterpart in physical and emotional labor, follow 'circuits' in the sense of Viviana Zelizer (2000, 2005). Zelizer's theoretical apparatus is particularly well suited to study the domestic relationships occurring at home between employers and employees. In this particular workspace, which makes the salary nature of these relationships insidious, the opposition between intimate social relations and economic transactions is artificial, since they are constantly intertwined. In addition to giving gifts to her employees, Julie also gives them holidays, and her husband gives them monthly bonuses. In fact, in the 'circuits of money', there are several types of 'instruments of exchange' (Zelizer, 2000, 2004) that regulate the domesticity relationships among the wealthy, with a plurality of 'social meanings' corresponding to them (Zelizer, 1994).

Possession of a very large fortune on the one hand, and paying for multiple domesticity on the other, exacerbate the diversity of the instruments of exchange circulating in the homes. This research on the domesticity of wealthy people is an opportunity to understand all that goes into the circuits of exchange from employers to employees: for example, a but-ler does not receive the same thing from his employers as a cleaning lady or a cook; just as a male employer does not give the same to his employees as a female employer. Moreover, in these households, intimate transactions are particularly frequent and numerous because they compensate for an excess of work by employees who are at the mercy of their employers. What is exchanged in domesticity relationships between the wealthy and their employees? What are the social meanings of these exchanges? To answer these questions and to demonstrate the two principles of the 'golden' exploitation, I successively develop two points. First, I suggest a typology of the instruments of exchange used by the super-rich to 'pay' their staff, showing that it is part of an economy of 'enrichment' (Boltanski and Esquerre, 2020 [2017]), reflecting the high expenditure and consumption of luxury goods typical of these elites (2). This typology is three-dimensional: employers both use 'raw money' (2.1), 'marked money' (2.2) and 'invisible money' (2.3) to pay their employees. The kind and amount of money used illustrate the symbolic and material inequalities they create among employees. On the other hand, I will show that these consumptions, as expensive as they are, do not however mean a lack of rationalization of the money spent on staff: however rich they are, the super-rich calculate their expenses and tend to reduce the cost/labor ratio of domestic labor (3). In fact, their uses of money for domestic workers more broadly reflect what I call a 'moralist' relationship to money, and to domestic service (3.1), which is based on different kinds of justifications among 'Old money' and 'New money' (3.2.). In the end, these calculations and justifications moralize the entitlement over domestic workers, by making exploitation invisible or 'normal'.

1.3 Methods and data

The super-rich employers I am talking about have been met for a multi-site research study on the use of full-time domestic services are all among the richest 1% of the population. They own at least several million dollars, and some are billionaires.[3] Ninety-nine percent of them live in heterosexual couples with or without children: all of them are multi-owners and have at least one residence in France. The great fortunes encountered can be classified into three generations of access to wealth: 'Old money', who are French aristocrats ($N = 50$) hav-ing inherited their economic capital for many generations (Pinçon-Charlot and Pinçon, 1998 [1996]); 'New money second generation' whose wealth goes back to their parents ($N = 22$); and 'New money first generation' who are the first in their line to reach the status of millionaires ($N = 51$). The two generations of 'New money' are globalized elites, highly mobile on an international scale, for their work or leisure (Cousin et al., 2018). Table 1 below shows the distribution of employers by several characteristics: gender, average age, marital status, average number of children, occupation, nationality and average number of homes.

Employers' characteristics One hundred and twenty-three employers were interviewed, corresponding to 108 households (15 interviews were conducted with employer couples). Men and women I met hold high professional positions in the public or private sectors: only 16% of women are not engaged in paid work, but are devoted to leisure time, maintenance of social life and to philanthropic, patronage or volunteer activities.

What also characterizes all of these high-net-worth individuals and was a factor in their selection in the field, is that they all employ at least one full-time domestic worker in their homes, and often many more—between 1 and 75 employees for the sample selected. Their use of domestic services is presented as an inherent practice in their lifestyles, which defines them as elites who can afford to be served in their homes on a daily basis by a whole team. 'New money' own and live in the highest volume of homes and have the highest number of domestic workers. Multiple domesticity situations are more common among them, who are also wealthier than 'Old money'. Table 2 below summarizes the distribution of houses and domestic workers among the employers.

Average numbers of employees working for the super-rich The different generations of access to wealth are also marked by different experiences in domestic service: indeed, the employers from the aristocracy I met all grew up with full-time domestic staff, whereas this does not concern any employer of the 'New money first generation' and only four employers of the 'New money second generation'. The uses and representations breakdown between

3 To estimate this wealth, I used the criteria of wealth and income, objectifying them in several ways: the occupations held by the employers; the number and value of their residences and the possible income they get from them; their material goods; the possession of financial shares and inherited money; and more broadly, their lifestyle (food, travel, children's education, for example). Also, I chose from the beginning of the survey to talk about money head-on, explaining that it was an important dimension for my research on domestic work. I was surprised by the ease with which the people I met talked about money, or about their standard of living.

Table 1. Employers' characteristics

Characteristics	Old money ($N = 50$)		New money second generation ($N = 22$)		New money first generation ($N = 51$)	
	Women ($N = 26$) (52%)	Men ($N = 24$) (48%)	Women ($N = 16$) (73%)	Men ($N = 6$) (27%)	Women ($N = 32$) (63%)	Men ($N = 19$) (37%)
Age, years (average)	53.5	56.2	44	47	42.1	43.5
Marital status	23 married 2 divorced 1 single	17 married 4 divorced 3 singles	14 married 1 divorced 1 single	3 married 2 divorced 1 single	28 married 4 divorced	16 married 2 divorced 1 single
Children (average)	2.3	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.6
Occupation	Six secretaries Five without occupation Two librarians Two artists Two architects One company executive One teacher One doctor One engineer One lawyer One gallery owner One translator One freelancer One laboratory assistant	Eight CEO Two doctors Two human resources managers One lawyer One conductor One notary One lawyer One senior civil servant	Four company executives Three graphic designers Tw CEO Two without			
occupation One lawyer One doctor	Two business owners One investment banker One human resources manager One prefect One lawyer	11 company executives Five without				
occupation Four store managers Two CEO Three lawyers Two human resources managers	Seven traders Three investment bankers Three corporate executives Two doctors Two CEO One art trader					

continued

Table 1. *Continued*

Characteristics	Old money ($N = 50$)		New money second generation ($N = 22$)		New money first generation ($N = 51$)	
	Women ($N = 26$) (52%)	Men ($N = 24$) (48%)	Women ($N = 16$) (73%)	Men ($N = 6$) (27%)	Women ($N = 32$) (63%)	Men ($N = 19$) (37%)
One gallery owner	One consultant					
One model						
One doctor						
One secretary						
One pharmacy assistant						
Nationality	45 French Two French and British One French and Belgian One French and Swiss		Seven French Four English Two American Two French and British One French and Swiss One French and Italian One South-African One Swiss One Italian One British and Russian One Chinese		20 French Eight American Four British Three Italian Two Swiss Two French and German One Egyptian One Ukrainian One Dutch 1 Moroccan and British 1 Israeli 1 Greek 1 French et Polish 1 French and Swiss 1 French and British 1 German	
Homes (average)	4.1		4		4.7	

'Old money' and 'New money' that this article highlights are related not only to their relationships to money, but also to the length of their experience of the role of employers and domestic service. On average, employers have employed domestic workers for 16 years at the time of our meeting. However, there are disparities among them. The length of domestic service is highest among aristocrats, and lowest among the 'New money first generation'. With the average age of employers in each category and the average length of their experience in domestic service, we can estimate the average age at which they started employing domestic workers. These data are reported in Table 3 below. We see that aristocrats are both the oldest employers when I met them, and those who started employing people at the youngest ages. Their experience is therefore the longest.

Length of the use of domestic service The long semi-structured interviews with very wealthy employers were conducted in France at their homes or workplaces, or in cafés, squares or by Skype when the distance between us was too long (typically, when they lived

Table 2. Average numbers of employees working for the super-rich

Number of inhabited houses	Old money	Average number of employees New money second generation	New money first generation
Families with two houses			
Main house	1.7		
Other houses	0		
Total	1.7		
Families with three houses			
Main house	3.6		3.2
Other houses	0.6	2.3	2.3
Total	4.2	7	5.5
Families with four houses			
Main house	4.6	6	4.8
Other houses	1	2.5	1.5
Total	5.6	6	6.4
Families with five houses			
Main house	2.7	6.3	3.1
Other houses	1.3	2.3	2.7
Total	4	8.5	6.1
Families with six houses			
Main house	3.8	4.8	6.3
Other houses	1.6	4	6.3
Total	5.4	7.5	9.3
Families with seven houses			
Main house			4.7
Other houses			2.3
Total			8.3
Families with 10 houses			
Main house			5
Other houses			3.5
Total			8.5

in one of their home in another country). To penetrate the inner circle of the wealthy, I was helped by three people more particularly: the director of a directory listing the French bourgeoisie and aristocracy, called the *Bottin Mondain*; a friend who works as a housekeeper in Paris' upper class; and a 'friend of a friend' who is a trader and knows many circles of 'New money'. These contacts then allowed me to find and negotiate interviews by word of mouth, being recommended by the employers I interviewed to their friends or family. In the field, I always introduced myself as a sociologist, explaining that I was doing research on domestic work.[4] This research topic was relatively well received, and contrary to my expectations,

4 All the interviewed mentioned in this paper allowed me to quote them and write precise information about them, if their name is anonymized. I never mention their city of living, excepted if it is a capital one. The interviews were recorded, and whenever people requested it, the recording was turned

Table 3. Length of the use of domestic services

	All	Old money	New money second generation	New money first generation
Length				
Average	16 years	24 years	13 years 5 months	9 years
Median	13 years	24 years	11 years	8 years
Age of the employers[a]				
Average	47 years 11 months	54 years 10 months	44 years 5 months	43 years
Median	46 months	54 years	43 years 6 months	43 years
Age of the time of the first recruitment*				
Average	31 years 11 months	30 years 10 months	31 years	34 years
Median	33 years	30 years	32 years 6 months	35 years

without much suspicion. As shown in Table 1, 60% of the people I met were women. They were the ones who responded most to my request, sometimes being asked to do so by their husbands. The fact that I was directed toward wives is indicative of the role they play in their households. Even when domestic tasks are delegated to others, it is the wealthy women who are primarily responsible for maintaining relationships with domestic workers (*anonymous paper from the author quoted*). However, men are particularly involved in money matters. This explains the interest of the 40% of men in my sample in talking to me about domesticity and their management of money. Money was the theme that interested them the most, since as soon as I mentioned the concrete work that their employees do, they became very allusive.

These interviews are a part of other materials collected for a research on high-net-worth individuals' full-time domesticity, carried out between 2016 and 2019. In this research, I also interviewed full-time domestic employees working in the homes of super-rich people ($N = 113$), with various nationalities. These interviews are an important part of my research, but they are only partially mobilized in this article. Here, I wish to focus on the employers' point of view, even if I will occasionally mention the domestic workers' perceptions of them to clarify certain arguments. Knowledge about the lifestyles of these high-net-worth individuals and their relationship to domesticity was also generated from my two immersions as a nanny and kitchen helper in two very wealthy families with several employees, for whom I worked part-time and full-time in France and China. The survey also consisted of immersions in four international Butler academies, schools where people learn how to be a high-end domestic worker (France, China, South Africa and the Netherlands). I also met managers and employees of luxury domestic staff placement agencies to understand their role in the domestic and luxury services labor market. This part of the survey, which was the subject of two subsequent publications, is therefore not mobilized in this article.

off. Mindful of the ethical issues of the research, I do not disclose any information that employers have presented to me as secret.

Table 4. Gifts from employers, reported by employers and employees in the field

Frequency (in interviews)	Old money employers	New money employers (first and second generation)
>80%	From women to women + men Pâtés, rillettes, confits and jams and other French specialities Chocolates, sweets and biscuits brought back from travels in Europe Guest-provided liqueurs Used sweaters and shirts of the employer or children Sunglasses, scarves and hats donated by guests or used ones	From women to women + men Chocolates, sweets and biscuits brought back from trips around the world and/or from renowned caterers (Ladurée or Hermé macaroons, Italian biscuits, Swiss chocolates, Japanese pastries, American cookies…) Alcohol offered by the guests, brought back from cellar visits or offered by the employer's clients (Champagnes La Veuve Cliquot, Mumm, Dom Perignon, etc., liqueurs, French, Australian and Argentinean wines, Russian, Chinese, Caribbean strong alcohols…)
>50%	From women to women Aprons and kitchen gloves bought in supermarkets Jewelry won or offered by merchants Family umbrellas Bibs, bodies and toys for new children or children of the family	From women to women Custom, designer or runway dresses never worn by employees Luxury branded clothing and shoes (Chanel, Gucci, Vuitton…), leathers and furs, offered by customers or purchased for the employee Luxury perfumes offered or purchased Luxury accessories and jewelry (watches, bracelets, sets from Cartier, Din Vanh, Van Cleef and Arpels, Bvlgari, Winston…)
>30%	From women to women New kitchen utensils (nutcracker, potato masher, meat knives…) New Kitchen Robots New coffee machines New luxury embroidered tablecloths	From women to women Decorative objects and crockery: vases, statues, clocks, porcelain plates, crystal glasses, from luxury brands (Baccarat, Daum, Bernardeau, Villeroy and Boch…) offered or

continued

Table 4. *Continued*

Frequency (in interviews)	Old money employers	New money employers (first and second generation)
	Used books	purchased, or brought back from trips (Moroccan dishes, Japanese chopsticks, Peruvian bowls. . .) Paintings and other works of art, imitations or originals (real status of Jeff Koons, professional imitation of Van Gogh), offered by clients or the artists in question Photo books Binoculars New Children's Toys
>10%	From women to women Family heirlooms	From men to men Multimedia devices: smartphones, laptops, televisions, cameras, touch-sensitive tablets, connected watches. . .donated by customers, used or bought new for the employee Bikes Cars (minivans or family estate cars, Toyota, Mercedes, Citroën) purchased for the employee

Here, the understanding of the uses of the money of wealthy individuals in domestic service is primarily approached in a qualitative manner: the ethnographic approach and in-depth interviews are particularly relevant tools for understanding the social mechanisms of the 'worlds of wealth' (Herlin-Giret, 2019), which are known to be particularly closed, and the often-invisible phenomenon of domesticity.

2. A typology of the instruments of exchange used by high-net-worth couples

Money is used by employers to qualify and adjust relationships with employees by anticipating or rewarding a behavior or a practice. Across the world, the majority of domestic workers earn very low wages (Anderson, 1997; Blofield, 2012): but at the super-rich' places, the levels of employee' salaries, and the value of other things offered to them, can be high and so, often unprecedented, and reflect the opulence in which they live. To compensate their employees, availability, employers use various instruments of exchange with plural social meanings. Viviana Zelizer constructs this notion around the meaning of the uses of different types of currencies, which also include 'local currencies used' in defined trade channels (Zelizer, 2004). In the domesticity of the very wealthy upper classes, the work of employees is remunerated by three types of instruments of exchange: the money I qualify as 'raw money', such as wages and bonuses; the money I qualify as 'marked money', such as the pro-vision of housing, medical care, food; and the money I qualify as 'invisible money', such as objects, leisure activities, which are considered as gifts. 'Marked money' and 'invisible money' are both compensation in kind: however, I separate them because they do not have the same meaning for the employers.

2.1 'Raw money'

Wages and bonuses are the type of instruments of exchange that most visibly reflects the salary relationships between employers and employees. Wages are often paid by bank transfer or cash. Bonuses, on the other hand, are mainly given in cash. All the employers I met pay a salary to their employees: the amount and the accompanying bonuses are subject to arbitration. These arbitrations are made according to the position the employee holds, his/her qualifications or unusual performance; and they depend above all on his/her characteristics, his/her experience of domestic work, and more generally, on the trust employers have in him/her. There is no common reference salary grid among the employers I met. A minimum wage is estimated from labor law, collective agreements and the cost of labor. These legal frames of reference are multiple: in another article, I show that they are partly conditioned by the nationality of employers and employees, the country and city in which they employ them, and their knowledge of labor law in a given context.[5] Nevertheless, trends emerge in the ways in which wages and bonuses are determined. The increase in the employee's experience of the house, the degree of specialization of the position and his/her place in the domestic workers hierarchies raise the amount of the salary, hence the fact that certain employee profiles are better paid than others: they are men, graduate employees (diploma in catering sector, tourism and hotel industry or management and business) and white 'western' employees. Subjective elements of appreciation of the employee and his/her effective work adjust these trends. Employers evaluate if their employees do what they consider a good job, which means, tasks performed as required, in quality, time and intensity.

Here's how Joseph (Old money category) justifies the ways in which he pays his four domestic workers. This Frenchman in his 50s, bank executive, aristocrat and member of the Jockey Club,[6] employs with his wife, a company manager: a nanny, Sophie, a 28-year-old French-English woman who takes care of her two children; a multi-tasking employee, Ilona, a 39-year-old Polish woman who takes care of the housework and cooking; a driver, Yazid, a 34-year-old French-Moroccan man, who drives Joseph and his wife to work; a housekeeper, Katia, a 57-year-old Polish woman who manages her three colleagues.

> *Joseph*: 'It's simple, [Katia], I give her…wait, we give her €2,700 per month, that's it. Housing and food, laundered, etc. That's it. And then, [Ilona], well, it's more than €1,300, that's a lot, already, for her, yes, she's Polish, it's a lot.

5 *Anonymous paper from the author quoted.*
6 The most selective worldly elitist circle of the French aristocracy.

For her?
Joseph: Yes, I mean, she's much less experienced than [Katia], and [Katia] is our housekeeper, well, that's it, we can't compare. [Ilona], well, she's there to do the cleaning, the cooking, she sometimes takes care of the children with [Sophie], that's it. [Katia], she has a high position, she's in charge of the whole team. Anyway, it's normal that she earns twice as much as [Ilona].
And [Sophie], how much does she earn?
Joseph: Oh well [Sophie], well, you have to see that she still has a degree in English. But [Sophie], she's turning 2,500, 2,540 I think. But there you go, almost like [Katia]. But that's a bit normal because [Sophie] is a teacher, so, well, she makes the kids do their homework, she wakes them up, that's normal, we should give her a...a good salary, right. Then, she has a lot of responsibility, she has the children, she has studied.
And [Yazid]?
Joseph: Ah, [Yazid], he's been here for a very long time, yes. Well, [Yazid] is really at least 3,000. He started, I think...at 1,700, yes. Then, he's been working for us for six years this year. I like him a lot, he's...there you go, he's someone you can count on. He's been a great help to me and my wife. Especially when she was...[He hesitates] Uh...when she had a cancer, there he was, he was there, waiting for hours at the hospital...we mobilized him at night, all the time, he was there. So, it's true that following this episode, quite dramatic I must admit for the family...we wanted to thank him.
Yes...and [Katia], how long has she been here?
Joseph: Oh, it's been quite a while too! More than...seven or eight years! Ah yes, we keep our employees. She also got a nice pay raise because my wife likes her...well, sometimes I think it's good that we're generous with her. In Poland, she certainly wouldn't earn that!'[7]

Joseph justifies the differences of wages between his employees by their positions and their responsibilities, as well as by the experience in their employment with him and the affinity he and his wife have with them. Katia and Yazid are the two highest paid employees: they are the most experienced employees in the family, and they are particularly appreciated by their employers. Although Yazid is under Katia's direction and has slightly less experience in the family's service, his salary is higher. His increase is justified by Joseph because of the commitment he would have shown when his wife was ill, which resulted in his permanent availability. Later in the interview, Joseph confides that he was not paying the driver's overtime at that time, and that it was because Joseph did not claim anything that made him decide to increase his salary. The apparent disinterest of employees in money is regularly rewarded by employers, which also fuels interest in employee disinterest. Another reason for adjusting the amount of salaries is mentioned by Joseph: on two occasions, he states that Ilona and Katia are Polish, and that their respective salaries are high for employees of that nationality. Like him, employers often take the nationality of employees to justify their salaries. Sometimes they refer, as Joseph did, to the supposed standard of living in the country in question, and project the situation that their employees, working in their country, would have there. They then believe that the wages they give to these employees are good wages, and so justify that they earn less than others. By symmetry, the nationality of the employees can therefore also play in favor of a wage increase. In addition, employers attribute qualities to employees on the basis of their nationality, and more generally on the basis of their appearance, which they racialize. Among the very wealthy, the activation of racial stereotypes, which are also very present in domestic work (Glenn, 1992), contributes to wage setting.

In 82% of cases, employees' wages are often increased by bonuses, which can be substan-tial for the most experienced and specialized employees. Bonuses reward consistency of

7 Interview with Joseph, May 2017, at his home in Paris (translated from French into English).

work and commitment, or particularly valued services and behaviors, and can sometimes double the wage. For example, I met butlers leading a dozen or so employees who have a monthly salary approaching $8000, including bonuses. The median salary of the butlers employed by the super-rich we met is $5000, and 25% of them earn more than $7000 per month (excluding bonuses). These very high salaries are intended to maintain a relationship of trust with employees with high responsibilities and guarantee the secret of culpable knowledge they have access to. These high levels of salaries and bonuses are intended for male employees. Also, the payment of the raw money is a man's business among employer couples: men emphasize their involvement in this type of transaction, which is all the more pronounced among those who run a business, are self-employed or work in finance. They take credit for their expertise in money and its handling, while women employers, with the exception of those who live alone (only two cases in my sample), assert their disinterest or incompetence with regard to money.

> *So, you're the one who pays their salaries.*
> *Amal*: 'Ah no. No, that's my husband, that, oh dear, I don't touch that, all that is. . .money management like that, no, that's my husband's specialty, and so much the better because I really don't like it [she pouts]! But I'm helping him see more clearly'.[8]

Amal (New money first-generation category) is a woman of almost 40 years. She lives in northeast Africa, and she is married to a Frenchman in his 40s, who is the CEO of a multinational corporation. She has no profession. Her words illustrate the monopoly of men in fixing and paying raw money to employees. In my sample, 96% of women in couples say that their husbands help set wages and are those who pay the employees. This cross-sectional result for all the couples interviewed answers one of the questions asked by Viviana Zelizer concerning the money paid in US bourgeois circles at the beginning of the 20th century by working men to their inactive wives (Zelizer, 1994): should women have as little contact with money as possible or should they have it at their disposal to maintain the household?Here, the active and inactive women I met have money, and are not deprived of contact with it, even when they do not earn any: on the other hand, it is not with the money made avail-able to them that employees are paid. It is the men who are engaged in this task, and it is in line with their more general investment in the management of the couple's wealth and assets. The salaries and bonuses paid to employees is a first flow of money that marks the inequalities between employees. The super-rich place white, 'western',[9] male employees with degrees in the positions of butler, driver and valet and give them more money. The next highest paid employees are white, 'western', educated women who work as governess or nanny. These employees are the ones to whom employers attribute the most economic value, in the sense that they feel their racial and gendered characteristics, and their professionalism, should be compensated significantly. The division of labor among domestic workers and the associated wages reflect the social distances between employers and employees. The lower the social distance, the more money employers spend on the employee concerned, as if the money given serves to ensure this social distance. In exchange, these employees provide a considerable amount of work and must be available 24 h a day. This unlimited availability

8 Interview with Amal, January 2018, at her home in Paris (translated from French into English).
9 I use the term "Western" in quotation marks because it refers to a social construction of the hierarchical division of the world that is very questionable (see Said, 1978).

is facilitated by the fact that employees live at home or very close to their employers. Among the employees of the employers we met, 48% live in the house where they work, 16.2% live in the same building, 7.2% live in a small independent house in the employers' domain. In total, 71.4% of the employees live in the homes of the super-rich we met. The rest live in the same neighborhood (22%), and only 6.6% of domestic workers live outside the neighborhood where they work.

Residential proximity and availability of domestic workers is seen as less obvious and simple to obtain from employees who could work elsewhere than in domesticity because of their skills, their whiteness and/or Western origins. Employers act as if they need to further compensate for the exploitation of 'valuable' employees. In these cases, the 'golden' exploitation is at its peak. In addition to the resemblance to employers, the salary differentiation legitimizes the dominant position of the non-'Western' super-rich, who give even higher salaries to the 'Western' employees they employ. Amal employs four employees in her main residence, including two British employees and two Egyptian employees. During our interview, she almost only tells me about the two British employees, respectively, a butler and a driver, and repeats their salaries ($14 000 and $9000), telling me that she pays 'even better than the westerners'. Here, the money Amal can give to her employees affirms her wealth and status as an employer and is part of a distinctive and hierarchical logic specific to the super-rich, which I noticed during my research: non-'Western' and/or non-white rich people would be less legitimate to be rich and to be served by 'Western' and/or white household staff.[10]

2.2 'Marked money'

The second type of instrument is used by employers in intimate transactions. This is 'marked money', i.e. expenses that employers incur to cover costs that should be paid by employees. These may include the cost of housing, food, laundry, medical expenses, vacations or schooling for the employee's children. The money used to pay for these expenses is not given directly to the employees: it is paid by the women employers, and again, by the men. Nevertheless, women are much more involved in decisions about marked money than they are in decisions about raw money. Specifically, they are involved in decisions about certain expenditures: those related to food, health, recreation and education of employees and possibly their families. Rent, on the other hand, is a man's business: 87% of male employers in a couple I met decide where and how employees who do not sleep in the employers' home are housed.

Among women from the aristocracy in particular, marked money is part of an explicit desire to moralize the uses of money made by their female employees. They share a common judgment about the latter: they would not know how to spend their money wisely. By deciding for themselves how some of the money will be spent, they are also expressing their intention to teach employees how to spend their money 'well'. They therefore categorize spending according to the usefulness and necessity they attribute to it: spending that is deemed superficial is not part of the money being spent and is subject to criticism. Gersende (Old Money) is one such employer who is particularly involved in decisions about spending marked money. She is a French aristocrat of almost 50 years, a painter, married to a French aristocrat lawyer. She has been employing a multi-skilled employee, Samia, for more than seven years. Samia earns a salary of €1300 per month. She lives with the couple, where she is fed and laundered. Gersende and her husband pay for Samia's doctor's fees and health insurance, as

10 *Anonymous paper from the author quoted.*

well as for the few holidays she has (about 3 days, three times a year). Gersende decides where Samia should go when she is on holiday.

> *Gersende*: '[Samia] came back from holidays there and she was happy, I think, to have visited the Mont Saint Michel, because it is still our heritage, and she has to know our heritage. So, well, I know she would have preferred Mauritius, or something like that, because she told me that her friend, who works for our neighbors, went there, but, frankly, Mauritius, so that she could stay by the water's edge and do nothing, no, not at my place. They do what they want, but I don't. Then the price isn't the same, eh?
> *You told me you paid for the doctor the other day... is that often?*
> *Gersende*: Ah well, yes, always! We really pay her everything, so she doesn't have to pay for anything. It's like that, it's a principle, [Samia], she's a family member, now it's normal. Good except...the little things, futile, that are not useful, or, well, the things I don't necessarily validate, well... [Samia], I pay the doctor, it's normal, but her nail polish, it's her, don't push it'.[11]

Samia's health costs are an obvious expense for Gersende, unlike make-up, which she does not consider necessary. She also values holiday destinations with a cultural dimension where her employee is likely to learn things rather than 'do nothing'. Employers from the aristocracy echo their concern to educate through travel and to open their employees to legitimate culture (Bourdieu, 1987). The educational and moral work they do for their employees is expressed through the use of marked money. The costs of housing, food, health and hygiene are considered necessary, and those related to leisure are only useful if employees learn from these leisure activities. When aristocratic employers pay holidays to their employees, these holidays are essentially in the country where the employees are working—so in the majority of cases encountered, in France. They see this as the ideal compromise between cultural learning and limitations on the amount of marked money spent on female employees, as Gersende points out. This moralization of women's spending is part of a gendered structuring of the uses of money in couples and families that is not only specific to aristocratic circles (Henchoz, 2008). Women's money does not always have the symbolic status of 'adult money' (Langevin, 1990), and even when women earn a significant salary, they save to put it to the benefit of the family, and to ensure that 'needs' take precedence over 'desires' (Wilson, 1987; Tichenor, 2005). This traditional gendered use of spending is claimed by the aristocratic women I met: their role in the domestic economy is to ensure that money is not wasted and is primarily reserved for collective spending, or for the 'needs' of their family members. They thus teach their employees to be reasonable in their spending, to be satisfied with little, and to put aside their desires to satisfy those of others—and especially those of their spouses when they have one. These women, who often insist in interviews on the importance of saving money, including when organizing events, are careful not to incur lavish and ostentatious expenses, which they attribute to 'New money'. Part of this involves controlling the wages and marked money paid by their husbands to female employees.

This money education concerns not only female employees, but especially female employees who are racialized from the employers' point of view—because they are foreign, immigrant, non-white and/or non-'Western'. Employers portray them as women who are lucky to be employed to serve them by constantly referring to the (real or supposed) living and working conditions in their countries of origin. I found that these racialized women (62% of the employees of the super-rich I met), employed alone or as part of a team of

11 Interview with Gersende, January 2018, at her home in Paris (translated from French into English).

domestic staff, are paid on average less in raw money than other non-racialized female employees in equivalent positions (on average $200 difference), aside from having their expenses covered in marked money. Employers talk about these women as if they could only settle for a small amount of money for their work, and who would prefer to be paid in kind. These women thus appear to be the least 'expensive' employees in the 'golden' exploitation system.

2.3 'Invisible money'

Gifts are an essentially female instrument of exchange: it is the female employers who offer them and sometimes buy them, and it is the female employees who receive them. This transaction between women is particularly discriminatory: the only employees rewarded are those who the employers say they appreciate, over and above the work done. Gifts are not so much used to pay for the content of the work as for the quality of the relationship between women in the household: 'Note that the proportional relationship established between market value and emotional value is used explicitly to signify the intensity of the bond'[12] (Monjaret, 1998, p. 494). Thus, 19% of 'New Money' women do not offer gifts to their employees. These are the women who have the least experience in the use of domestic service (less than 5 years) and who express the most concern about keeping their employees at a distance. On the other hand, women who have more experience in this practice or who have grown up with domestic staff, and aristocratic women, offer many gifts to their employees. The analogy between the ways in which these women decide on gifts and marked money highlights similar differences in practices: aristocratic women give gifts that cost less than those given by 'New Money' women, and the former place more emphasis than the latter on the family and collective usefulness of the gift. Women aristocrats also say that they compensate cheap gifts with a high emotional investment in their employees.

To shed light on these variations between the gifts offered by female aristocrats and women with recent fortunes who are familiar with the use of domesticity, the table below lists the gifts that the women I met say they offer to their female and/or male employees. While female aristocrats favor gifts of food and clothing, 'New money' women offer a wider variety of gifts, new or never used, and often luxury brands. The list below is an exhaustive list of the gifts quoted during the interviews with the super-rich. In this list, I have separated the gifts according to the frequency of their appearance in the interviews.

Gifts from employers, reported by employers and employees in the field The differences in the gifts given by employers to their employees reflect the lifestyles of the families met, on the one hand, and the separation between their consumer goods and the goods offered to employees, on the other hand. The table shows significant variations: the range of gifts given by women with recent wealth is much greater, their economic value is higher overall and they come from different sources and countries. For these women, gifts to employees are a continuation of their own consumption, and of the gifts they give to their friends and families. They make little distinction between the status of the people to whom they give gifts: for them, what matters is the affinity they feel for the people receiving the gifts. This continuity is justified by the fact that attachment to these people is 'priceless'. It is interesting to consider what this absence of price means here. The symbolic value of the gift and the obliteration of its price is characteristic of the gift economy: the gift is 'a kind of message or symbol

12 I translate from French to English.

that creates social ties' (Bourdieu 1994, p. 191), and 'should not appear to be economic in nature' (Simmel 1987, p. 336). Pierre Bourdieu writes that 'in the exchange of gifts, the price must be left implicit (this is the example of the label): I do not want to know the truth of the price and I do not want the other to know it'[13] (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 182). While this apparent absence of a price confers symbolic value on inexpensive items, the giver and recipient are nevertheless aware that the gift is part of a game of economic calculation in which one has to pretend that the price does not exist, and where one has to give back. This is what Jacques T. Godbout and Alain Caillé call the 'hypocrisy' of giving (Godbout and Caillé, 2000 [1992]). Note that although much less than their wives, men also give gifts to employees; however, they only give them to men, and these gifts are always very expensive and perceived as 'man to man' gifts: cars, jets, electronic equipment. . .Here again, the act of giving a gift has a gendered dimension that makes men's gifts for men even more exceptional.

Families in which gifts are abundant and expensive, and the employees they meet who receive such gifts from their employers, have in their hands multiple forms of merchandise that characterize the economy of 'enrichment' theorized by Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre. In their book of the same name, they argue that capitalism encourages individuals to enrich themselves by multiplying the forms of commodities that connect distant markets around the world. They further state that 'while the economy of enrichment is primarily directed at the rich and the very rich, one of its specificities is to address others as if they were rich, or at least richer than they are[14] (Boltanski and Esquerre, 2017, p. 65). By offering globalized lux-ury consumer goods to employees who are much less wealthy than they are, women employ-ers contribute to their 'enrichment', by enhancing access to that enrichment. The less well-paid domestic workers still enjoy the benefits in kind (e.g., gifts, housing, health expenses, transportation) that make domestic work attractive to them. It is also a way for some employers to give low salaries in relation to the number of hours worked (rarely counted): besides, their employees benefit from other compensations in kind, and from a luxurious environment. But non-white and non-Western employees receive fewer and less valuable gifts. When I ask employers to justify such discrimination, their response is unanimous: because their employee comes from a poor country, he or she can therefore make do with little.

The access of women employees to various goods is shown as a sign of generosity and sharing, but it does not obscure the expected counter-gift of the gift: here, there is no interest in disinterestedness, but an interest that is made explicit by the price, which attests to the economic and emotional value of the gift. The availability and complicity of the employees are the counter-gift expected from the employer: 'It justifies the fact that I expect a lot from her', says one of them. The gifts given by the super-rich, and in particular, by 'New money', are characteristic of the 'golden' exploitation: their ostentatious dimension appears in total opposition to a relation of exploitation. In more than 81% of my interviews, employers consistently state that employees who receive their gifts are 'happy', 'well treated', 'not to be pitied', or 'very privileged'. The register of happiness at work that would result from material goods is an integral part of 'golden' exploitation. It is used by almost all the employees I met (97%) to value their work and relativize the suffering they express in interviews.

It seems obvious that the super-rich can afford domestic workers no matter where they live.

An economist would probably say that their wealth itself is a sufficient indicator of

13 I translate from French to English.
14 I translate from French to English.

inequality relative to others to describe it. They are right. But where Paul Segal is also right is that we should not just look at income and wealth as such, but at what they produce as social relations. On this point, the ethnographic approach is precious because it reveals, behind the figures, what is at stake between those who have the money and those who are paid by it. Here, the domestic workers who receive the money of the super-rich in the various forms I have described are likely to become rich themselves: without becoming millionaires, they can expect good salaries and valuable gifts. For the less well paid, they still enjoy the benefits in kind (gifts, housing, health expenses, transportation) that make domestic work attractive to them. Does this mean that there is little inequality between them and their multimillionaire employers, since they too have access to various consumer goods, or good compensation? No. The big difference is that the super-rich can afford almost anything, including a very large number of domestic workers, and the most 'expensive' ones on the market. Their money allows them to subalternate people from various social backgrounds, including the middle classes, and to keep those who earn money and gifts from them in a subordinate relationship.

3. Small calculations and big savings

The ways in which the three forms of money are used by employers reveal the differentiated consumption patterns and relationships to money of super-rich. 'New money' has more expensive consumption patterns rooted in the globalized capitalist economy than 'Old money', which favor local products and goods deemed necessary. From the point of view of household staff expenses, they are globally higher among 'New money', which are also the richest employers in my sample, and which employ the largest number of staff. In the large houses, the employees are more numerous, therefore more specialized, and better paid. However, one should not be too quick to oppose the old and new uses of their expenditure: on the one hand, because, as I have already shown, expenditure on their staff varies according to their experience and familiarity with the use of domesticity; and on the other hand, because all the high-net-worth rationalize their money and evaluate what seems to them to be the fairest cost of domesticity, which means, the minimum cost to make the exploitation 'golden'. The different fractions of the wealthy classes I met in fact have a rationalist and 'moralist' relationship and use of money, which is expressed in two ways. There is a continuum between the moralization of money, their educational work toward their domestic workers through the money given, and what it means to them to be served.

3.1 Reduced costs through marked money and gifts

Among 'New money' female employers, there is no desire to moralize the expenses of their female employees, contrary to what I have shown for aristocratic employers. However, among all the employers I met, including those whose practices are most part of an enrichment economy, a desire not to spend 'too much', and above all, not to waste money, is expressed. There remains this idea that money is earned and that it is the result of a long process of accumulation and management (Herlin-Giret, 2017), and that it must therefore be spent wisely. The moralist use of money thus requires a complementary adjustment of the uses of the different forms of money: in aristocratic families, a low wage can be compensated by more frequent gifts, or by marked money. Among the 'New money', a very high salary does not prevent a gift of great value: but very often, this gift is not directly bought by employers for employees. It is offered by a friend, by the employer's company, by loyalty vouchers, and therefore the real cost to employers is lower than the value.

I worked as a nanny in China for a French couple, whose wife is the founder of an art center, and whose husband one of the directors of a multinational, and their two children. The money and gifts offered to their employees are the subject of regular discussions between the two of them, during the rare dinners they take together at their villa. On several occasions, I attended these discussions when I was heating the dishes with the family's cook, Ai Jie.

> [We are setting [Christian] and [Catherine]'s plates and cleaning the fridge. [Ai Jie] doesn't understand what her employers are saying, unlike me, since they speak French. [Christian] informs [Catherine] that he is going to make the envelopes for the employees' salaries tomorrow. The wages are fixed, they talk about bonuses. He wants to give ¥300 to [Mei Yu] [the linen maid] because she had to work long hours at night because of [Christian]'s big birthday ceremony. [Catherine] tells him that he could give more, and he tells her that she doesn't realize that it's almost €40, that it's huge for China, and that they also have to be reasonable because they have bonuses to pay to the staff who work for them in Paris. He offers another bonus of ¥600 for [Qi Xiang], the driver, because according to [Christian], he worked much more this month. No more bonuses this month. 'Not even for [Lo Shen]?' [Christine] asks beggingly. [Christian] refuses, standing in front of her and making a total calculation of all the bonuses to be paid to the Chinese and French staff, which he estimates at €4,000 for this month. [...] [Catherine] tells him about the gifts she wants to give to [Lo Shen] 'to compensate', as she says. [Christian] grumbles and tells him not to waste his money: 'don't forget that I work like crazy for this money'. So, she assures him that she will give him a red silk scarf that a friend gave her.][15]

Christian and Catherine pay their Chinese employees working at their villa in China on the black market in cash. They do not pay them overtime, but compensate them with gifts and bonuses, the latter being reserved for men. Christian manages the raw money. Salaries and bonuses are higher in France than in China, and Christian justifies this by the differences in the cost of living between Paris and the Chinese big city where they live, and by the fact that the Chinese employees would, in their view, be happy with little. This translates into more gifts for Chinese female employees, chosen by Catherine. Christian often challenges Catherine's gifts to his female employees, as he does that night: he finds that she is never reasonable, and the fact that Catherine does not earn any money legitimizes his right to control her spending on gifts. So, more than 75% of the gifts Catherine gives to her Chinese employees are gifts that she herself receives, or that she gets for free in stores as a result of her purchases. When I left the family a year after staying there, Catherine gave me a farewell gift which was a pen with the insignia of her art institute, made by a sponsor and distributed to her most generous patrons.

Many gifts are therefore not directly bought by the employers: the Chanel bags offered by Julie, whom we met in the introduction of this article, were in fact not bought by her or with her husband's money. I learned during our conversation that these are two gifts that the Chanel company gave her as a result of a partnership with her husband's company. Julie confided to me at the time that her husband would never have forgiven her for buying Chanel bags from the new collection for her two employees, 'with his hard-earned money'. The first mode of justification for the moralist uses of money that these examples highlight is the men's hold on it: the very wealthy men I met are those who hold the household economy in check, excluding their wives from the rationality that it would require. The amounts of

15 Excerpt from field notes taken at Christian and Catherine's home after the conversation in China in July 2012. These notes are translated from French to English.

bonuses and salaries are set by them: it is above all in the words of the men that I find certain objective reference points to arbitrate them, such as the average and minimum wages in the country where they live, the estimated hours worked by the employee, or the employee's experience. Women, for their part, mobilize the emotional register to a greater extent to evaluate the value of their employees, often to the point of assigning themselves to the image of women who are 'too sensitive', 'too emotional', who, if they listened to themselves, would be too generous with their employees. This is consistent with the fact that women are those who, in the home, devote themselves to 'emotional work' (Hochschild, 1979) with employ-ees, while men avoid conflict and relationship management as much as possible.

Money flows from employers to domestic workers shed light on the gender dynamics of heterosexual couples in relation to wealth. Here, 'Old' and 'New' money do not always have the same patterns of consumption and life, but rather a rather traditional and patriar-chal view of gendered roles in the use of domesticity, and thus in the home. Men manage money and women manage relationships. This is how they define their place in money, and in the social environments in which they live.[16] A remarkable result is the place of the male employer upstream of strictly economic decisions, and so, their active role in the implementation of the 'golden' exploitation: they are partly responsible for deciding how to make the exploitation acceptable to them and to the employees. In fact, more than half of the male employers I met told me that they would give their domestic workers a slight increase in salary or a little extra pocket money after an illness, a work-related accident, or a period of physical fatigue. When I asked them why, they all answered that this allows employees to 'better accept' the difficulty of the work, and to reduce their downtime as much as possible in order to return to their duties as soon as possible. In these situations, the extra money given is an element of pressure to get the employees to work.

3.2 Normalizing opulence by paying 'the right thing'

In her book about the very wealthy people of New York, Rachel Sherman asks what wealth does to their daily lives. She analyzes the ways in which the very wealthy talk about money, use it, moralize about it, and the extent to which they make a distinction between them (Sherman, 2017; see also 2018). In particular, she explores what she calls the 'cultural logic of legitimate entitlement' to 'inhabit' wealth. The words and practices of the very wealthy people she interviews show that there are 'good' and 'bad' ways of inhabiting wealth, and that this partly involves a 'normalization of affluence', that is, 'the larger cultural process by which the top comes to seem like the middle' (Sherman, 2017, p. 232). Very wealthy people, in order to moralize their situation, but also because they are anxious about a wealth that they consider potentially volatile, want to show that they have 'reasonable' lifestyles and manage their discomfort with privilege. The use of full-time domestic services allows me to discuss Rachel Sherman's thesis: what she observes in the grand fortunes of New Yorkers

16 Academic studies on domesticity throughout history and the world has tended to overshadow men, with the emphasis on relations between women. As specific as the case I dealt with in this article is, it calls for a broader view of the domesticity relationships that take place in all households, including the most modest ones and in the countries of the South, by providing information on the place that male employers have in them. It is this gendered construction of employer roles and the ways in which relationships to money shape them that the article invites researchers specializing in domesticity, but also in family and consumer goods, to look into.

can also be observed in the employers I met, the normalization of opulence being the second mode of justification for the moralist use of money spent on domestic staff. Prudence in consumption, as well as the valorization of work, marks the speeches and practices of the super-rich. In the ‘Old money’, the normalization of opulence is translated into an affirmation of the taste for sobriety, things considered simple and basic. It is therefore very common for their staff to receive gifts that combine quality and simplicity, and in which the employers put ‘more love than money’, as one of them put it. Dounia, a French multi-skilled employee in her 40s of northern Africa origin working for a couple of descendants of the royal family, explains the emotional branding of the instruments of exchange used by her employers.

> *Dounia*: ‘Here, it’s quite regular, I’ve been working for Madam and Sir for four years, I’ve been between London and Paris, and I always have the same thing. I am paid…€2,100 per month, it has increased by €50 per year, and Sir, the rare times we talk, he tells me that it’s a reasonable price, which translates…well, it’s what it takes, as he says. And Madam, she often gives me presents, she’s…generous.
> *What kind of gifts?*
> *Dounia*: Some…well, when they come back from Normandy, and when I don’t go there to guard the apartment, caramels, of very high quality, a large package, and cheese, also of high quality. And there is also…in the summer, often, I have the right to a week’s holiday, which they offer me, in the mountains, in a spa, because Madam says it’s good for your health…and then, at Christmas, I have oranges, delicious, oranges from the most expensive greengrocer in the neighborhood. So, all these attentions, I appreciate […].
> *And you think all this … it costs them a lot?*
> *Dounia*: Oh! They pay the right price, they’re not stingy, but close to their money…Madam always says she likes things that are sober, that are of good quality, but not…extravagant and that are useless. Well, after that, toffees are only two or three times a year maximum, oranges, a net…holidays in the mountains, it’s the brother of the gentleman who runs the spa, so I think they have discounts, well, I’m sure they do. We’re three employees, so yes, they can’t spend all their money either. But it’s love, she always tells us, I’m giving you this because I like you a lot, and what counts in gifts is what you put in them’.[17]

The instruments of exchange used by Dounia employer reflect moderate expenses for her employee, who sleeps in her grandson’s room. Dounia emphasizes the simplicity and emotion her employer points out when she uses invisible and marked money, and the rationality of her employer’s claim that it is the ‘right price’. What she receives and the ways in which her employers justify it characterize what I find in the words of ‘Old money’. In ‘New money’ families, gifts, vouchers, travel, are more abundant and expensive, as I have pointed out, since they are in continuity with their own modes of consumption, but a striking fact is that they systematically insist on their ‘normal’, ‘discreet’ and ‘modest’ aspect. Jill, a French American woman in her 30s (‘New money’), a plastic surgeon married to an ambassador, has been using four full-time domestic workers for the past 5 years, since the birth of her first child. In the excerpt below, she explains her concern to lead a ‘normal life’, as she puts it, through the intimate transactions that govern her relationships with employees.

> *Jill*: ‘You know, just because we’re millionaires doesn’t mean…we drink champagne from breakfast to dinner (Laughs). (Laughs) What I mean is, we’re still normal people. I’m not gonna feed my staff foie gras every day, either. And when I give [Yaëlle] dresses, they are… discreet.

17 Interview with Dounia, May 2017, at her employers’ home in Paris (translated from French to English).

Discreet, meaning?

Jill: Well, I'm not giving her the designer sequined long dresses, but dresses that she can wear every day. I mean, she's not going to walk out of this building dressed like a doll, you see, and then...well, with Jacques, we want to show them, the employees, that we're simple people. So, I share candy with them when I'm on the couch in front of the TV, I give them magazines like...Gala, Vogue, you know. So yes, their salaries are correct, even more than correct, because [Yaëlle], our housekeeper, earns $7,500 a month. But she deserves it because she works well. On the side, I give her a vacation in the Seychelles, yes, but...we don't tell our friends about that, and she keeps it a secret.

Oh, yeah? Why?

Jill: Because we're simple people, we want to keep it simple, and there's no point in telling everyone how we spend our money. Also, if I say that I pay two weeks every Christmas to two of my employees in the Seychelles, just for them, my friends are going to stress me out, tell me to be careful because money goes fast, so there you go, no'.[18]

There are two interesting things in Jill's comments. The first is her desire not to appear different from what normal people would be to her, not to make her wealth a cause of her not conforming to a model of simplicity. This includes the choice of dresses she offers to her employee Yaëlle, or the candy and magazines, which she equates with popular consumer products. On the other hand, she acknowledges that Yaëlle's salary and holidays in the Seychelles do not fall within the scope of 'normal' consumption that is accessible to everyone. Later in the interview, I learn that she does not tell those around her how much her staff costs: 'I imagine they also give good salaries, but we don't talk about that'. This is the second thing to remember about her comments, which reflects her desire not to be seen as someone who ostensibly spends her money on the one hand, and who spends it irrationally on the other. She says it herself: she does not want to be admonished by her friends about how the couple arbitrates her household expenses.

The normalization of opulence that Rachel Sherman theorizes on her own fieldwork concerns the super-rich I encountered and legitimates the expenses they make for their household staff. It serves here to justify, limit, and rationalize the price of domesticity, while at the same time being in keeping with the values, practices and lifestyles of the wealthy. Because they are very wealthy, the employers interviewed have a range of choices for paying, rewarding and maintaining trust. Paradoxically, the diversity of the instruments of exchange available to them is sometimes a source of concern insofar as it requires tradeoffs, governed by the desire to be 'fair', generous, to show affection to staff, without however allowing themselves to be overwhelmed by their emotions. In fact, Jill's comments show that women are actually very good at making the adjustments they make with invisible money. They are even more attentive to the moralistic use of gifts to staff because they are laden with emotions that cannot be rationalized. During the interview, Jill talks about the sweets she gives her staff when she eats them herself and concludes by saying: 'I give them two or three, but then I close the bag of candies: because if I give too much, it's like everything else, the salary, the holidays, I show that what I spend on them is unlimited, and that my sensitivity is also unlimited'.

The normalization of opulence acts here as a normalization of having domestic workers. By optimizing the flows of money and presenting themselves as 'normal' people, super-rich trivialize domesticity, and thus the social inequalities they produce by being served. I found that this register of normalization is very much related to the length of the super-rich's

18 Interview with Jill, June 2017, at her home in Paris (translated from French to English).

experience of domesticity. Having all inherited the family tradition of having servants at home, the ‘Old money’ claim the properly aristocratic origin of employing domestic workers, explaining that they ‘naturally know how to deal’ with them. Their role as employers is taken on without difficulty, and ‘golden’ exploitation appears almost easy in their discourse and practices. This could explain why the financial and material compensation for the dedication of domestic workers is lower than that of the ‘New Money’. Among the latter, and even more so among the ‘New money first generation’, who are the employers in the sample with the least experience with domestic workers, the normalization of opulence and the concern to pay employees well ‘without doing too much’ reflects a certain anxiety. The entitlement over labor appears less obvious and easy for them. This is perhaps why the exploitation of domestic workers is even more ‘golden’ in families that are not (yet) accustomed to the role of employers, and do not (yet) assume their new dominant place in the capitalist system allowed by their recent access to wealth.

4. Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how the super-rich exploit those who serve them, taking the right to be served every day, having someone who serves their needs and desires without limits. Far from being subject to the budgetary constraints of middle-class families who employ housekeepers, childcare or part-time home help, having full-time staff at home is not presented as an option, but as a matter of course in that this practice helps to legitimize their social and economic status. Working relationships between employers and employees give rise to multiple money flows. If, among the very wealthy as well, the maternalist register that makes the employee a ‘family member’ exists, the relationship cannot be reduced to it there. In the first part of the article, I showed that in universes where money abounds, it cannot be totally invisible and given as gifts: in fact, by using three types of money, raw, marked and invisible, that is, by paying salaries, vouchers or paying benefits to employees, by offering them objects of a certain value, the salary dimension of domestic relationships is clearly expressed. Where many fields have highlighted the obliteration of wage relations between women employers and employees, in very wealthy homes, they are clearly expressed through certain types of exchange—typically, wages. It is noticeable that it is above all by men that these domestic relations are marked by this salary character: they are perceived as the breadwinners of their families, and the budget holders of the houses, their skills in financial management and rationalization of money being essential. In the second part of the article, I showed how this rationalization was expressed through a normalization of the opulence of grand fortunes. If money abounds, this is not why it is spent without calculation or symbolic boundaries. The moralist use of household expenses shows that they are subject to arbitration done in couples, and to compensation mechanisms for the different instruments of exchange used. It is part of a logic of normalization of opulence which reflects both the concern of the very rich to appear like the others, and not to lose the money they consider hard earned. By making the very rich talk about the money they spend on domesticity, one draws a thread from their wider relationship to money, and from the paradoxical complexity of being rich.

That being said, discourses of normalization of money and ways of remunerating employees do not only serve the purpose of self-presentation within the very wealthy circles or in front of the sociologist. In fact, they contribute to normalize exploitation, and to normalize the existence of social hierarchies. These discourses are accompanied by concrete practices of spending money on domestic workers, which, by being unequal, materialize inequalities between employees, and, by being lavish, mask the total monopolization of their bodies and time. This is what I call the 'golden' exploitation: the domesticity of the super-rich sheds light on cases of workers being exploited while being very well paid and having several compensations in kind. The exploitation here is not so much the deprivation of money as the deprivation of freedom to use it, and to dispose of one's body and time to be something other than the servant of the super-rich.

At of the super-rich' homes who have multiple domestic workers, there is a parallel escalation of exploitation and money given away. This article proposes a reflection on the price of exploitation, showing that not all workers are exploitable at the same price. The characteristics of domestic workers, their skills, their experiences, and the way they are essentialized by employers, determine what price employers must put on them to ensure they are available for them. Thus, some domestic workers are easily exploitable in the eyes of employers, and therefore cheap. But, as low as some wages are, they are calculated by employers at the minimum price of moral and acceptable exploitation, a price determined by a subjective assessment of the employees' worth. Among the super-rich I have met, I have not found a case of an unpaid employee, or one who did not have compensation in kind in addition to a salary, however low. Cases of unpaid and abused employees do exist, of course, and these cases sometimes make the news. But, I showed that exploitation is not only expressed in one way, and that working conditions should not be thought of in a Manichean way. The 'golden' exploitation is probably more widespread, because it allows to dilute the exploitation by money and overall, by gifts. In short, what happens in the homes of the super-rich illustrates how exploitation of labor can be implemented in societies that paradoxically denounce it. The super-rich take on the role of capitalists who skillfully play with the legal, physical and emotional rules so that the exploitation of those they employ is not perceived as such—by the rich themselves, by the employees, and by society.

Obviously, the super-rich produce inequality by the fact that they have a very large amount of money. It is less obvious, however, that they primarily produce inequality because that money gives them the power to be served by others who cannot use their money as they wish. Yet, the gifts, salaries and other amenities that the super-rich provide to their domestic workers are unheard of in the labor world. One might even be tempted to believe in a real redistribution of individual wealth, which would basically benefit everyone. This would undermine Paul Segal's theory. But, it is not that simple. The super-rich create the social hierarchy between themselves and others, and between others, because they do not lose, by giving away their money, their ability to command others. And they deprive their domestic workers of this power, since their ability to command others is reduced. The benefits that domestic workers receive depend, in essence, only on the goodwill of their employers, and on all the personal sacrifices, they make on the side to serve them.

The 'golden' exploitation is a further step in the entitlement over labor. What characterizes it is that the money, gifts and real material conditions offered by the dominant can potentially allow the dominated to consume and in turn exercise power over others. A few employees manage to save and invest in real estate and consume luxury goods. None of them, however, exercise real power over others to the point of being served. And most domestic workers sacrifice all their time for their employers. On this point, I go one step further in the theory of inequality as entitlement over labor. The ability to command others depends, above all, on the ability to free up time to command others and to accumulate economic, social and symbolic capital. By buying the services of domestic workers, the super-rich buy time to make their money grow (by working, by investing it), to devote to their leisure activities and to build their social network. This time, precious for maintaining one's privileges, is basically what domestic workers lack. I believe that being able to free up time for economically or socially productive activities by delegating domestic work is central to the construction of inequalities.

What do the workers involved think? In this article, I wanted to give voice to employers, whose views are rarely explored in studies about domestic work and exploitation. But, the broader research I have conducted on the domesticity of the super-rich shows that the mechanisms of 'golden' exploitation put in place by employers work effectively: working in the service of the rich is attractive to employees, both for its symbolic and material gains. They are also grateful to their employers, and are willing to sacrifice their lives for them, with varying demands for compensation. More than three-quarters of the domestic workers I met give up or end a family and social life once they are in the job and live it as a sacrifice.

What then are the limits of 'golden' exploitation? Domestic workers are not blind to their condition either. When their bodies and emotions can no longer withstand the shock of working around the clock, and occupying a subordinate position in the home, they leave their jobs. The 'exit' (Hirschman, 1970) is a radical solution to end exploitation, and explains the important turnover in this labor market. In fact, it is probably once they leave domestic work that domestic workers leave the exploitative relationship, as long as they do not then find another one in another job.

The 'golden' exploitation is not a situation reserved for domestic work among the rich. On the one hand, middle-class families can maintain, on their economic scale, this mechanism, by trying to compensate 'correctly' for the work of their housekeepers, while at the same time having the requirement that she does as much as possible in a short time. On the other hand, it seems to characterize a certain number of well-paid jobs that require in return an intense work, which leads to burn out, and breaks bodies. I am thinking of the jobs that are usually held by people with diplomas and high rankings in companies, the public sector, and certain sectors of the artistic industry. Some of these people are themselves employers of domestic workers and can reproduce the mechanisms of 'golden' exploitation to which they themselves are subjected. However, not all exploited people are on an equal footing. Perhaps, the difference lies in the possibility of getting out of the chain of exploitation: it seems to be conditioned by the possibility of occupying another position in the chain of production (and reproduction), a possibility that is only available when one has cultural, economic and social capital that is sustainable in the long term, which is far from being the case for all workers.

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