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Article

Articulations of eroticism and race: Domestic service in Latin America

Peter Wade

University of Manchester, UK

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Abstract

'Service', particularly 'domestic service', operates as a specific articulation or intersection of processes of race, class, gender and age that reiterates images of the sexual desirability of some women racially marked by blackness or indigeneity in Latin America. The sexualisation of racially subordinated people has been linked to the exercise of power. This article focuses on an aspect of subordination related to the condition of being a servant, and the 'domestication' and 'acculturation' that domestic service implies in societies where black and indigenous people are often linked to 'backwardness'. Perceived racial otherness, class subordination, gender, age and domesticated servitude together reinforce an erotic image of sexual availability, particularly in younger women.

Keywords

Colombia, domestic service, eroticism, gender, Latin America, race, sexuality

This article explores how 'domestic service' operates as an articulation of race, class, gender and age that reinforces images of the sexual attractiveness of young women racially marked by blackness or indigeneity in Latin America, despite pervasive images of inferiority. It has long been noted that black women have been subject to powerful processes of sexualisation and eroticisation in the Americas and elsewhere.¹ The situation is parallel in some ways, but also different, for women of indigenous origin.² The sexualisation of black and indigenous women is not generalised, but is mediated by other factors. Age is important, such that images of older black women can be desexualised – for example, in stereotypes of the faithful older servant.

Corresponding author:

Peter Wade, Social Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, UK.

Email: peter.wade@manchester.ac.uk

Ideas about beauty and race in Latin America confront the contradiction that blackness (less so indigenouness) is frequently associated with sexual desirability, yet is also often related to ugliness – giving rise to an industry of skin-lightening, the straightening of *pelo duro* (Spanish, hard hair) or *cabelo ruim* (Portuguese, bad hair), and the elimination through plastic surgery of the ‘Negroid nose’ (Candelario, 2007; Edmonds, 2007; Moreno Figueroa, 2008). This raises the issue of the relation between beauty and eroticism. In Western thought, there has long been a distinction between a morally pure aesthetic beauty and morally tainted animal sexuality, linked to hierarchies of power – and to a distinction between whiteness and blackness (Craig, 2006: 168; Mitter, 2000: 48). Yet erotic desirability cannot be simply opposed to aesthetic appeal: ‘beauty’ can lead to sexual appeal, just as the ‘erotic’ can be seen as beautiful; the two are intertwined in complex ways.

In Latin America, this intertwining is reflected in the particular image of the *mulata* – the brown-skinned, mixed-race woman who, in her younger guise, has been made into a nationalist icon in Cuba and Brazil, evoking erotic and aesthetic appeal. It is reflected too in the image of the young *chola* – the semi-urbanised or acculturated indigenous woman, who has been glorified as the embodiment of national or regional sentiment in some Andean countries (De la Cadena, 2000; Weismantel, 2001). I argue that the eroticisation of these figures has led to their aestheticisation as national icons insofar as they represent a process of cultural domestication, racial mixture and ‘whitening’.

The eroticisation of the *mulata* has been explained as a result of her hybridity: Roger Bastide (1961) argues the ‘dusky Venus’ of Brazil is seen in dominant ideologies as a combination of the sexual availability attributed to black women (often seen as ugly) and the physical features considered aesthetically appealing in white women. For Natasha Pravaz (2003), the *mulata* is eroticised because she symbolises the racial mixedness celebrated in ideologies of nationhood in Brazil, since the early twentieth century. For Vera Kutzinski (1993: 13), the Cuban *mulata*’s mixedness became a site where white and black men could ‘rhetorically reconcile their differences’, agreeing on their common sexual domination of her.

The *mulata* does symbolise this mixedness, but I argue that the *mulata* is attractive because the hypersexual imagery around black women is tempered by the idea that the *mulata* – understood in the context of ideologies of mixture in these countries – is seen to be taming herself, morally improving herself, bringing herself closer to the heart of the dominant society and, above all, making herself ‘available’ (to dominant men). This is part of what makes her ‘attractive’, combining erotic with aesthetic appeal and revealing the complex dependencies between beauty and eroticism.

Likewise, the *chola* is in transition, distancing herself from ‘pure’ indigenouness, which is associated with animality, even if it lacks the hyperbolic sexual imagery constructed around black women. De la Cadena comments that in intellectual circles in 1940s highland Peru, men believed that ‘Indian women became mestizas (cholas) just by transforming their racially conditioned sexual xenophobic

deportment' (2000: 202). By becoming less 'xenophobic' – and thus apparently more sexually available, at least in deportment – they also stopped being fully indigenous and became racially transitional.

The perceived attractiveness of the *mulata* and the *chola* derives from their status as transitional figures in Latin American ideologies of *mestizaje* (mixture) as the basis of society. This status is understood to include 'making oneself available' and 'being of service' to the needs and desires of the dominant class. Domestic service is a site in which these transitions, articulating race, gender, class and age, are seen to occur, producing a powerful sexualisation. To be clear, my argument is *not* that domestic service simply explains the sexualisation of black, indigenous, *mulata* and *chola* women: this sexualisation is a multi-faceted phenomenon. My argument is that domestic service is a site where various historically specific dimensions of race, gender, class and age together produce a particular and intense form of sexualisation. This site shares common ground with the site of the *mulata* and the *chola* insofar as they both rest on ideologies of *mestizaje*, which make the transitional female, quintessentially a servant, into a sexually – and thence potentially aesthetically – appealing figure.

Intersections and articulations of sex and race

In explanations of how racialisation and sexualisation work together in gendered ways (see Wade, 2009: Ch. 2), it is common to invoke the concepts of intersection and articulation, suggesting that race, sex, class and age work together and shape each other in social life. The implications of these concepts are not always clear.

Intersectionality has its origins in feminist critiques of the 1970s, which argued that experiences of sexism were not the same for all women – racism was an important differentiator, ignored by white feminists (Amos and Parmar, 1984; Smith, 1983). Going beyond the 'triple burden' of classism, racism and sexism that working-class black women might suffer (Cock, 1980), intersectionality developed as part of a wider attempt to get away from 'additive' approaches, which simply summed the effects of different forms of discrimination (Butler, 1993: 18; Collins, 2000: 18; Crenshaw, 1991; McClintock, 1995: 5). The point was that 'when race intersects with sex it changes the meaning of both' (Weismantel, 2001: 241). The challenge is to show how that happens in practice; the danger is that 'intersectional projects often replicate precisely the [additive] approaches that they critique' (Nash, 2008: 6).

Articulation derives from Antonio Gramsci and developments of his work by scholars such as Stuart Hall (Grossberg, 1986). The concept refers to how discursive elements are stitched together through non-essential, non-necessary connections and how these elements are linked non-deterministically to political subjects, who may also be linked to each other in non-essential ways. Articulation implies an historical approach – one perhaps lacking in concepts of intersection – analysing how certain elements come to be articulated together, acquire certain meanings, and become linked to certain subjects; these processes follow certain tendential

lines, but are always subject to change and contestation. Discursive elements about race and sex/gender can thus become historically articulated together and linked to specific sets of actors, not necessarily or inevitably, but as an effect of practices that constantly reiterate such linkages, building material-symbolic sedimentations, which are nevertheless subject to contestation and re-articulation.

I will analyse domestic service as an historically developing intersection or, as I prefer, articulation of elements of race, class, gender and age hierarchies that, by shaping each other in a process of mutual constitution, play an important role in the sexualisation of black and indigenous women (including *mulatas* and *cholas*). Domestic service is, of course, not the only factor at work, nor does it operate in relation to all black and indigenous women, many of whom have never been domestic servants. The sexualisation of black men is not so clearly linked to domestic servitude – arguably, this is in part why it has a different character – while the relatively low eroticisation of indigenous men seems unlikely to have a clear relation to domestic service. We are not dealing here with homogeneous ideologies of gender and race, but with sets of ideas and practices around domestic service and the trajectories of certain categories of women involved in that service. Domestic service is a site in which race, class, gender and age articulate together with a particular intensity to produce images of sexualisation.

Domestic service

Studies of domestic service in Latin America reveal that gender, class and ethnic-racial hierarchies combine to subordinate servants, who are generally female, poor and often seen as blacker or more indigenous than their middle- and upper-class employers.³ These studies often centre on gender and class (and migrant status), but a number highlight racial and ethnic dimensions. In work on transnational migrant domestic workers, there is a greater emphasis on race, as in Europe and North America the migrant domestics are generally a clearly racialised category (Anderson, 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Salazar Parreñas, 2001). The role of age is also mentioned by some studies. As a job requiring no formal qualifications, it is open to young, poorly educated women, and is often seen as a way into the urban job market for migrants and young women. Beyond this, the role itself tends to be seen as a junior one, even if older women also work as domestics.

Many studies mention, usually in passing, that sexual harassment and abuse are frequent problems. Leslie Gill (1994: 25, 74) says this was a constant threat for indigenous women in La Paz, Bolivia, and Sarah Radcliffe (1990: 387) states that sexual abuse was ‘shockingly common’ in Lima, Peru: ‘middle-class young men were, it was said, expected to become initiated sexually with the domestic’.⁴ Studies of transnational domestic service show similar trends (Anderson, 2000: 135). Yet, despite growing attention to domestic service as a site of moral, affective and emotional work and relations (Goldstein, 2003; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Silva, 2010), it is striking that studies of Latin America

pay almost no attention to domestic service as a specific site of the articulation of elements of race, class and gender, where the sexualisation and eroticisation of race might be reinforced in the Latin American context (cf. McClintock, 1995: 75–180).

Domestic service and the articulation of class, race and gender

A starting point for understanding this articulation is the apparent over-representation of black and indigenous women in domestic service. There is not much statistical evidence for this, but there are telling indications. For Brazil, 2009 survey data show that over 61 per cent of female domestics are black (Ipea, 2011). One study in Rio de Janeiro found that about 40 per cent of women classified in Brazilian terms as black and brown worked as domestic servants, compared to 15 per cent of 'white' women (Bello and Rangel, 2002: 50). Elizabeth Silva (2010: 24) cites 2001 Brazilian national survey data showing that 24 per cent of black women were employed as domestics, compared to 14 per cent of white women.

In my fieldwork in Colombia in the 1980s, I also found a marked over-representation of black women in the domestic service sector of Medellín, which was mainly staffed by non-black women, as the city as a whole had only a very small proportion of black inhabitants.⁵ In a city-wide sample, 60 per cent of black immigrant working women were domestics compared to 24 per cent of non-black immigrant working women; this pattern remained even when the black immigrants' relative youth and lower educational levels were controlled for. Surveys of local low-income settlements that had concentrations of black migrants showed an even more striking over-representation of black women in domestic service: 31 per cent of black migrant women were domestics compared to only 6 per cent of non-black migrant women. Controlling for differences in educational level and years spent in the city did not alter the size of this bias.⁶ A sample drawn from an NGO that had a legal aid programme for domestic workers indicated that black domestics were much more likely to be live-in workers and to have children, many of whom had been left in the region of origin to be looked after by kin (Wade, 1993: 187–190). This clearly suggests that the city's labour market was channelling black women into domestic service. The stereotype of the black woman as maid was very strong and many black women, who were not domestic servants, recounted being offered work as a maid by people on the street who assumed this was what any black woman would be looking for.

To grasp the significance of this stereotype (as an articulation of race, class, gender and age, attached to certain subjects – black women), we need to understand the location of blackness within the historical formation of the Colombian nation. I will focus on Colombia for the moment, but similar arguments can be made for other Latin American countries.⁷

In Colombia, black and indigenous people were originally seen as labour resources to be exploited, through slavery or other labour systems. Indigenous

people were segregated, objectified as an administrative category with specific rights and duties, but could abandon that status. Black people, once individually freed from slavery, became 'free people of colour', a non-slave, non-indigenous, non-white category, which included freed black, mestizo, and acculturated indigenous individuals.⁸ Black slaves, indigenous people and free people of colour were located in a graded socio-racial hierarchy, with whites at the top and black slaves at the bottom. Some movement up this hierarchy was possible, involving changes in appearance, occupation, wealth and geographical location. Lighter skin, less African and indigenous features, whiter parentage, more prestigious occupation, more wealth and greater proximity to urban spaces all interacted to define higher status. Actual social mobility was highly constrained, especially for the lowest rungs, but possibilities for movement existed.

Albeit not the only avenue, domestic service brought black and indigenous people, and especially women of those categories, into contact with such possibilities.⁹ Although black and indigenous women worked in rural occupations (mining, agriculture) in colonial Colombia, and black men worked in urban services, domestic service was typically a female occupation, as it has remained. Also the possibility of having children with lighter-skinned partners was much more open to women than to men. White men could and did have sexual relationships with black, indigenous and darker-skinned women, including domestic servants, without this tarnishing their 'honour', while white women rarely did so, as this would be seen as 'dishonourable' (Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, 1998; Martinez-Alier [Stolcke], [1974] 1989).

By the end of the colonial period, blackness and indigeness could be highly segregated and othered – located as brute labour force in rural mines and plantations, or as tribute labour in rural indigenous communities, or simply as 'wild Indians' – yet also intimately close to and accessible for the dominant classes, in the form of urban service workers and domestic servants. Such accessibility also connoted some movement away from the perceived barbarity of blackness and indigeness towards urbanity. The provision of service and making one's body and labour accessible and proximate to the dominant classes within their own domains implied processes of incorporation as well as subordination. Domestic service was a particular site for the provision of such service, especially intimate and proximate, and it was typically a female activity.

In independent Colombia, as in many other regions of Latin America, colonial processes of *mestizaje* (mixture) began to be reformulated as the basis for nationalist narratives. The nation was seen as having been formed from the mixture of three 'races' – or more precisely of white men with black and indigenous women – which blended to produce a unique mestizo population. Black and indigenous people were seen, in accordance with colonial conceptions and with dominant European science, as inferior inputs into the developing mestizo nation, led by whites and European parentage and values. Yet they were also seen by elites as a resource for the nation; to be sure, in need of uplift, education, civilisation, hygiene, acculturation and, if possible, biological whitening by physical mixture

with whiter people, but at least partly redeemable (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Stepan, 1991). As before, they could be thought of as simple brute labour (or cannon fodder) – in which case they seemed alien and other – but they also figured as people who could be transformed if they made themselves ‘willingly’ available and accessible to the forces of civilisation and whiteness – for example, through the provision of services to the dominant classes in the towns and cities.

Gill’s work on domestic servants in twentieth-century La Paz illustrates these processes and the intersections of race and class involved. Discourses of health and hygiene became part of the way employers talked about domestic servants around mid-century, with the lower classes associated with dirtiness and ‘filth’ and the employers associated with a clean modernity (Gill, 1994: 53). Ideas about cleanliness were an integral part of disciplining servants and making the households, and by implication the servants in them, ‘modern’. The class connotations of cleanliness and dirt are familiar (McClintock, 1995: Ch. 3; Palmer, 1989), but the articulation of race and class emerges when the historical specificity of a discourse about dirtiness and indigeneity is taken into account. In the Andes, for example, the epithet *indio sucio* (dirty indian) is a very common one (Collorado-Mansfeld, 1998; Weismantel, 2001). Andean female town market vendors labelled as *cholas* or *mestizas* were also linked closely to the perceived filth of the market place (De la Cadena, 2000).

The class positioning of the Bolivian domestics is thus constituted through a discourse about the racial hierarchy of the nation, with light-skinned employers at the top, modern and clean, and indigenous (and black) people at the bottom, primitive and uncivilised, close to the earth and the dirt, but redeemable through hygiene, work, education and acculturation – all practices seen as conducive to a process of gradual ‘whitening’. This is more than simply racial subordination existing alongside class subordination, in an ‘additive’ relationship. The articulation of race and class shapes both because the racialised discourse historically constitutes the working classes – who will, among other things, fill the positions of domestic service – as a naturalised class of people who have one foot in an indigenous (or black) world and are thought to carry with them, internally and externally, the mark of those origins.

Gender is central here because, throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, domestic service was a major, although not the only, niche for black, indigenous and mestizo *women* to enter urban spaces in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America, especially as the middle classes expanded and demand grew – and it remains so today.¹⁰ As in colonial times, domestic work continued to be seen as a quintessentially female occupation, so that the particular mode of transformation and ‘being accessible’ that domestic service involves was open mainly to women. In addition, the whole discourse of *mestizaje* was and remains a deeply gendered one, as it typically refers not just to ‘mixture’ but to sexual relations between European/white men and indigenous and/or black women (Smith, 1997; Wade, 2009). Thus the possibilities of transformation and acculturation enunciated in the racialised discourse of *mestizaje* are powerfully gendered, with darker-skinned, lower-class

women seen as the 'beneficiaries' of the sexual attentions of privileged white men. As in colonial times, the possibility of transformation through having lighter-skinned children was biased, at least for some time, towards women. In Colombia, as in other areas of Latin America, it was not uncommon to find higher-status, lighter-skinned men having informal relationships and families, outside their formal marriage, with darker-skinned, lower-status women (Goldstein, 2003; Gutiérrez de Pineda, 1975; Smith, 1997). Increasingly as black men have become more socially mobile, they have 'married up' in racial terms, thus balancing the bias (Moutinho, 2004).

Radcliffe's work on domestic servants in Lima helps at this juncture (Radcliffe, 1990). She argues that domestic service is a mode of incorporation into the mestizo nation, in which young women from the Andean highlands who have a 'peasant ethnic identity', strongly linked to indigenous origins, are transformed or disciplined into 'mestizos' who are encouraged to deny their indigenous family roots and adopt middle-class values. Radcliffe emphasises the role of family relationships in this process, in which the young domestic is said to be like a daughter, and addressed by terms meaning 'girl' (*chica*, *muchacha*), which can act as virtual synonyms for maid. This ageist terminology highlights the fact that the transformations in question are seen as processes of education and maturation. A 'junior' member of society – whose juniority is defined not only by her age, but also by her status as migrant, lower class, uneducated, racially marked and indeed female – can gain some measure of maturity through performing domestic service. The structure of the job limits this – many servants I talked to spoke of the work as *humillante* (humiliating) because they were treated like children (Wade, 1993: 191) – but the location of the job as a junior one speaks to the perception of domestic service as a process of acculturation and 'progress'.

These historical and contemporary accounts reveal that domestic service is a particular site of articulation or intersection of class, race and gender, in which each dimension of difference shapes the other. The provision of a certain type of work, specified in class terms, is powerfully associated with specific racialised and gendered meanings, by virtue of a long-standing discourse about the potential for incorporation, transformation and mobility of racialised subordinates, especially women – a process understood as their approximation to 'civilisation' (or later, 'modernity'), urbanity and whiteness. This is enacted through the provision of service, making oneself available to serve, making oneself accessible – apparently willingly – to the demands of the dominant classes, practices mostly quintessentially performed through domestic service. It is telling that domestics and scholars alike note that one of the characteristics of domestic service, especially for live-in servants, is the constant availability of the servant to cope with endless demands (Goldstein, 2003: Ch. 2; Rubbo and Taussig, 1983).

The work is thus specified by race and class and is further articulated with gender meanings insofar as domestic work is seen as women's work. This is more than just an 'addition' of class subordination (which creates low paid, exploitative jobs) and gender subordination (which decrees that women should do

domestic work): the productive articulation or intersection emerges in the fact that domestic work is low paid *because* it is seen as women's work; more than this, work that loses its value also ends up being seen as women's work.¹¹ Women do not only come to a gender-neutral labour market, disadvantaged by having certain skills that a sexist society has defined as suitable for females; the labour market is itself pre-constructed by ideas about gender, which define the value of work, skills and wage-earning according to who performs them.

Discursive elements of class, race and gender thus interlock and produce something more than the sum of their parts or the simple addition of three forms of difference: the intersection of race, class and gender changes the meaning of all three. The disproportionate representation of black women as domestic servants in Medellín is over-determined by this articulation of meanings. Domestic service is linked to the provision of service, understood as a route to modernity and urbanity for people seen as low on the social scale, and particularly those associated with the primitive and the marginal, such as black and indigenous people. Domestic service is also seen as women's work, thus it is perceived to have an elective affinity with black and indigenous women, and more generally darker-skinned women, because ideologies of *mestizaje* locate these women as the recipients of the sexual advances of white men. Finally, domestic service is seen as low-status work and thus linked first to women in general and specifically to low-status women, especially those marked by race. In short, elements of race, class and gender have been historically articulated together to produce a conjuncture in which low-status work, blackness/indigeneity and being female are stitched together into a self-reinforcing constellation, in which each element connotes the other in the practice of domestic service.

Domestic service and the eroticisation of race

The preceding discussion opens the way to considering domestic service as a particular site for the reproduction and perhaps intensification of sexual imageries surrounding black and *mulata* women and, to a lesser extent, indigenous and *chola* women. One argument might be that domestic servants are simply vulnerable women, conveniently located in the intimate spaces of the household. They are therefore subject to sexual abuses and may become eroticised in the eyes of the men of the household, simply because they become easy targets for the expression of the men's feelings of sexual dominance. To the extent that domestic servants tend to be darker-skinned and racially marked, their racial otherness becomes eroticised as a result, figuring as an object of these men's combined sexual and racial dominance.

There is some truth in such arguments. But a more subtle effect is also in operation, linked to the articulation of race, class and gender outlined above. It is not just the simple accessibility and vulnerability of young women servants in the domestic sphere that sexualises them and makes them desirable. My point is that domestic service exists as a space in which women associated with blackness and indigeneity are *by definition* perceived as being in a process of racial and moral transformation, by virtue of 'offering' themselves through service to the dominant

classes and, within those classes, to the men; just as black and indigenous women are said to have offered themselves sexually – or at least to have been available – to dominant white men in the narratives of *mestizaje* which undergird the idea of the nation in Latin America. The domestic servant is stereotypically the junior black or indigenous woman in transition towards modernity, urbanity and whiteness – a transition that stereotypically creates the figure of the *mulata* and the *chola*. The transition is performed through making oneself available to cater to the desires of dominant people and, moreover, traditionally or mythologically facilitated through sex with a whiter man. The urbanised, culturally transformed non-whiteness of ‘the servant’ *pre-constructs* her as apparently accessible and available before she gets to the domestic service sphere.

The sexualisation of black men raises an obvious problem for my argument. If domestic service plays a role in reproducing the sexualisation of race, why is there powerful sexual imagery surrounding black males (Moutinho, 2004; Pinho, 2005; Viveros Vigoya, 2002), when domestic service is uncommon as an activity for them in Latin America? The answer is, first, that it is not only domestic service that creates a sexualised imaginary around race. An approach based on articulation does not depend on making essentialised links between discursive elements or between them and subject positions. Domestic service does not necessarily have to create sexualised meanings, nor do sexualised meanings depend on domestic service. My argument is that the complex of domestic service, as it has developed in the Latin American context, serves as a site for a particular articulation of meanings of class, race, gender and age that reproduces the sexualisation of race for women in a specific and quite intense form. It is noticeable that the sexual imagery surrounding black men often casts them as a more threatening and predatory presence, as well as a sexually desirable one. This seems to me to relate to the fact that black men, in Latin America, tend to work more in occupations requiring strength and resilience. In Medellín, for example, black migrant men were over-represented in construction, and they specialised in the digging of trenches and pits for foundations, some of the most physically demanding work on the market. Black maleness therefore did not appear as labour offered to cater to white middle-class domestic demands.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show how domestic service can be understood as a site formed by the historical ‘articulation’ (or intersection) of elements of race, class, gender and age, which mutually shape each other to create a space where eroticised images of young black and indigenous – and especially *mulata* and *chola* – women gain particular imaginative traction. Such eroticism has a complex relationship to ideas of beauty. Blackness and indigeneity in Latin America are often associated with ugliness, whereas the ‘domesticated’ *mulata* and *chola* can, as sexualised national icons, be linked to beauty.

But how do black or indigenous domestic servants respond to the sexualisation of their position? Certainly, domestic workers in general reject and complain about sexual abuse (Chaney and García Castro, 1989b: 363–447). Bridget Anderson's study of migrant domestic workers in Europe shows that some of them take steps to avoid sexualisation by, for example, advertising their services with the proviso 'No Sex' (Anderson, 2000: 79). On the other hand, I encountered men in Medellín who talked about sexual relations they had in their youth with – in their view – willing, indeed eager, domestic servants. Soap operas and romantic comics sometimes also portray consensual sex – which may be depicted as motivated by misplaced love on the part of the woman – between household men and maids (Butler Flora, 1989). It is possible that consensual sex does sometimes occur – although what 'consent' means under such conditions of structural inequality is a moot point to say the least – but these are very one-sided accounts, which do not square with the accounts of sexual harassment and abuse that domestics themselves relate. Domestic workers demand 'respect', which includes the freedom to work without the spectre of sexual harassment looming over them (Chaney and García Castro, 1989a: 7).

At the same time, my research with young black domestic servants in Medellín suggests that, in their free time, they worked hard to make themselves beautiful – and becoming a beautician was a frequently stated plan (cf. Craig, 2006: 171). Beauty was an aesthetic inflected by class and race: middle-class employers often laughed at the – to them – vulgar and flamboyant style of clothing and make-up, seen as 'typical' of these young black women, fresh from the villages. A local black migrants' support organisation offered young women classes in make-up, attempting to 'tone down' styles seen as 'extravagant'. Beauty was not divorced from sexual appeal insofar as one aim of free time on Sundays might be to land a boyfriend. But it was beauty and sexuality on their own terms, whereas the appeal that they might have to men of the households where they worked, while potentially flattering, always threatened not only to entail harassment, but also to overwhelm their beauty with images of sexuality, by virtue of their racialised position.

The role of domestic service and the way it can act as a site for sexualisation is changing in some respects, suggesting topics for further research. First, in Latin America, there are indications that the employment of live-in domestic workers is decreasing over time. For example, Brazilian data show that between 1998 and 2008, daily workers grew from 17 per cent to 25 per cent of the domestic service workforce.¹² This tends to reduce the intimacy of domestic service, may reduce the threat of sexual abuse and may alter the way domestic service as an institution articulates race, class, gender and age to reiterate sexualised images of race. Second, although domestic service workers have been notoriously hard to organise, regulate and protect, there have been advances in this respect and it seems likely that regulating domestic service would reduce the sense of availability in a strictly practical sense, even if the symbolic availability that is created by black and indigenous women being 'incorporated' into the modern nation through service remains in place.

On the other hand, it is clear that domestic service has become a much more transnational phenomenon, with women from the global South, usually marked as racially different, working in the global North (Anderson, 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002), as well as moving within the global South (Staab and Maher, 2006). Racialisation seems to increase, but it is difficult to tell whether sexualisation is also on the increase. The fact that the global movements of domestic workers overlap a good deal with movements of sex workers (Jeffreys, 2008), and that some women may alternate between these types of activity (Hurtado Saa, 2008), suggests that sexualisation may increase, even if it is no longer inflected by the specific Latin American narratives of *mestizaje* that I have discussed.

Notes

1. There are various sources for Latin America (Giacomini, 2006; Gilliam, 1998; Goldstein, 2003; Kutzenski, 1993; Moore, 1997; Pravaz, 2003; Rahier, 2003; Ruf, 1997; Viveros Vigoya, 2008; Wade, 2009). More generally, see also Craig, 2006; Hobson, 2005; Sharpley-Whiting, 1999; Collins, 2000.
2. The sexual imagery surrounding indigenous women is ambiguous. In some accounts they are said to be seen as asexual, while in others, they are said to be seen as sexually desirable, if ambiguously so, as they may simultaneously be seen as bad smelling or 'cold'. For references, see Wade, 2009: 184.
3. See Bunster and Chaney, 1985; Chaney and García Castro, 1989b; Gill, 1994; Goldstein, 2003: Ch. 2; Radcliffe, 1990; Rodgers, 2008; Rubbo and Taussig, 1983; Saldaña-Tejeda, 2012; Silva, 2010; Smith, 1973; Staab and Maher, 2006; Tokman, 2010.
4. Cf. Hale (2006: 160) who reports the assumption in ladino (non-indigenous) households in Guatemala that 'adolescent boys would practice sex with young domestics'. See also Nelson, 1999: 199.
5. I did anthropological fieldwork in Medellín in 1986–87, researching the experiences of black migrants from Colombia's Pacific coastal region, where they formed under 2 per cent of the city's population. (Colombia has an 'Afro-Colombian' population of about 10.5 per cent [2005 census].) I obtained data from a state household survey, re-analysing its city-wide sample to compare Pacific coast migrants with others. I obtained data from city council surveys of specific low-income settlements where concentrations of these migrants lived; and from the records of an NGO (non-governmental organisation) that provided legal advice to domestic workers. Working in Spanish, I carried out many interviews with migrants and their families and did participant-observation research in migrant support organisations and other locations where migrants gathered.
6. For the city of Cali, another study showed similar patterns, although less marked, with 27 per cent of Afro-Colombian women working in 'home-based personal services' compared to 19 per cent of non-Afro-Colombian women (Barbary et al., 2004: 100).
7. There are many sources for this historical background. For a guide, see Wade, 1993, 2009, 2010; see also Lockhart and Schwartz, 1983; Appelbaum et al., 2003.
8. Mestizo was and is typically a term applied to people deemed to have a mix of white/European with Amerindian ancestries, but can be applied to include black/African ancestries. By 'acculturated indigenous', I mean an indigenous person who had moved away from the indigenous community, language and dress that are strong indicators of indigenous identity.

9. For some examples, see Wade, 2009: 101–106.
10. In Medellín in the 1980s, about 80 per cent of domestic servants were female migrants (Wade, 1993: 193). See also García Castro, 1989. For Latin America, ‘domestic workers constitute 27% of women employed in the informal sector and 12 per cent of women’s urban employment’ (Tokman, 2010: 3).
11. For examples of how gender structures pay and skills, see Beavon and Rogerson, 1986; Humphrey, 1987; Joeke, 1985.
12. ‘Empregada doméstica dá lugar a diarista’, *Folha de São Paulo*, 1 November 2009, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/dinheiro/fi0111200914.htm>. For Latin America, 1998 data show that 5.9 per cent of households had live-in domestics compared to 9.0 per cent that had a daily domestic (‘Domestic workers in Latin America’, <http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata112.htm>). The International Labour Organization notes that daily work is the ‘most frequent’ mode in many Latin American countries (OIT, 2011: 3).

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