WAS FOURIER'S JOY IN WORK SO UTOPIC?
RESEARCHING WORK AND PLEASURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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'*When people ask me if I'm playing tonight, I answer: "No, I'm working"'*.
(Musician, London, February 2011)

Introduction

Every musician, dancer or choreographer I have met during the last fifteen years of research felt that s/he often had to fight against the presupposition that, because s/he was enjoying what s/he was doing (or at least some of it, as we will see later), it could not be considered 'real work'. S/he would therefore feel a need to have his or her friends or family, as well as some 'employers', understand that artistic work comprises many of the dimensions that are considered to be more 'classical' for work: it includes some tiring and stressful activities, it is time- and energy-consuming, there may be economic constraints on what and where they are performing, power relations are present and so on.[2] I was so struck by the discrepancy between the daily workload and work-related anxieties that artists expressed during formal and informal discussions, and this common view of artists as '*individuals who do not work, because they are having fun playing/dancing with friends*', that it forced me to question the inadequacy of thinking in terms of a duality between work and pleasure, not only for artistic work but in every work situation.

Common assumptions, media and political discourses in Western Europe usually present work as a source of displeasure (if not of deep suffering), often linking this negative perspective on work to the Latin and French etymology of the English word 'labour' ('toil, exertion, hardship, fatigue, distress, pain, work' (Klein 1967: 855)); the Latin etymology of the French word 'travail' (*tripaliare*: torture with an instrument called *tripalium*); the Christian perspective of God cursing Adam and Eve to have to suffer in work (Genesis 3:17-19),[3] as well as to give birth with 'painful labour' (Genesis 3:16);[4] and/or the Protestant ethic of life which emphasises the necessity to work

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[2] Although a specific area of sociology has addressed the question of 'artistic work' for decades (Becker 1982, Buscatto 2002, 2004, Faulkner 1983, Menger 2002), it remains seldom acknowledged outside of it and is a continuing struggle in the everyday life of artists. One can also note striking resonances with the situation of academics (on this note, see Latour 2001).

[3] Hannah Arendt insists on the fact that God's punishment is not work per se, but the harsh dimension of such activity (1958: 107). She quotes J. Leclercq: 'La peine du travail est le résultat du péché original… L'homme non déchu eût travaillé dans la joie, mais il eût travaillé' (1946: 31, quoted by Arendt 1958: 107).

[4] The words 'labour' / 'travail' are still used in English and French to describe the process of giving birth.

hard on earth to deserve one going to heaven afterwards.[5] Pushing the argument only a bit further, one could say that, if there is pleasure, it is not work.

More surprisingly maybe, not so many social scientists, including anthropologists, seem to have questioned this assumption, although, as the German anthropologist Gert Spittler has argued, 'the answer to many questions about the way people work depends on certain basic anthropological assumptions: do people enjoy working by natural inclination or do they find it abhorrent? (Spittler 2008: 144).' Spittler continues, stressing that most scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who have written about work and labour start their philosophical, economic, political or sociological reflections with the assumption that 'man has a natural aversion to work (*horror labouris*)' (2008: 144). Closer to us, work is also more often than not looked at from the viewpoint of hardship and suffering (Volkoff 2006, Michel 2011), domination (Absi et al. 2015), and so on. Yet, one singular author departs from such a consensus: the French philosopher Charles Fourier (1772-1837). According to him, Man naturally enjoys working provided certain conditions that Fourier develops in what he calls his '*theory of attractive labour*' (1808) and that he suggests putting into practice through a utopian new society, *Harmony,* which he describes at length and in meticulous detail in his numerous volumes. Born into a merchant family, at the heart of the development of a new industrial society driven by technological progress and concentrations of money that deeply modified the conditions and structure of work through a radical transformation of the systems of production and economy, Fourier is not against such progress, but condemns its negative consequences in terms of the terrible working conditions and unequal distribution of wealth it gives rise to. At a time of a lack of social legislation protecting workers, and when the organization of workers in trades unions was only at its early stages, Fourier, like several other thinkers at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Owen, Saint-Simon and Louis Blanc, to name but a few), is seeking a socio-economic answer rather than a political one. However, Fourier himself vigorously rejected the description 'utopist'. And indeed, as Brémand (2014) has pointed out, the expression 'utopian socialist' that is frequently used to describe these authors (both in Fourier's time and up until today) can be problematic, as it is often used in a derogative way to minimize or even discredit their suggestions, implying that the latter were simply unrealisable pipe dreams, or even totalitarianism in the making (Brémand ibid.). My understanding of the notion of 'utopia' follows a different path, closer to that developed by Maskens and Blanes in the introduction to this issue, and suggesting a productive combination of fiction and reality, a process of imagination rooted in reality, which permits both reflection and action to be expanded further. In

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[5] On discussions of the notions of 'work' and 'labour' in various Indo-European languages, see for instance the distinction made by Arendt between *labour-travail-Arbeit* and *work-oeuvre-Werk* (1958: 79ff.). See also Godelier and Ignatieff 1980.

this article, I therefore suggest that Fourier's apparently utopian notion of 'joy in work' could help us bring forward the notion of 'pleasure' in anthropological research in order to shed new light on today's anthropology of work. As some of the fieldwork invoked here has only just started (see below), this article should be seen as involving exploration rather than producing a very polished theory, exploring this utopian suggestion at two entangled levels: the theoretical and the methodological.

To follow the alternative route of 'joy in work' permits us to explore further the numerous issues surrounding 'work'. I argue that the combination of work and some kind of pleasure exists to some degree in every working activity, and moreover, I advocate examining pleasure as one of the motors for work. Indeed, if we take the other side of the etymology of 'travail', the *tripalium* can also be looked at as an instrument that permits something to be produced (in this case, unfortunately, prisoners' confessions),[6] hence the question becomes: *How does work produce pleasure?* However, the notion of 'pleasure' must be made more complex. As various authors have stressed,[7] 'pleasure' can be approached as a combination of the individual level (psychological, emotional, neuro-physiological and so on) and the collective level (as a socially, culturally and historically constructed set of values and of ways to express them), thus encompassing a wide range of positive feelings such as joy, happiness and satisfaction, but also desire or lust. This concerns in particular two fields of anthropology, the now well-established anthropology of emotions (Lutz and White 1986, Crapanzano 1994, Beatty 2005) and the newly growing anthropology of happiness (Walker and Kavedžija 2015) and well-being (Corsín Jiménez 2008), the scope of which is too large for this article to be able to review all of them. In the specific context of work, the notion of pleasure is often linked to the processes by which workers attempt to give meaning to their work activities. The sociologist E.C. Hughes paved the way for such approach (1951, 1962) and was then followed by reflections concerning the 'self-satisfaction' and 'realization' of workers (Applebaum 1984), the 'meaning(fullness) of work' (Gamst 1995; Overell 2008; Spittler 2008), and the 'value of work' (Zimmerman 2011).[8] By revisiting Fourier's own notion of the 'attractiveness of work', I intend to connect these various perspectives.

Despite claiming a rather optimist perspective, I do not intend to embrace a naïve irenic one, and shall try to avoid the down-pits of ideologies such as the National Socialist slogan *Arbeitsfreude*

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[6] On this suggestion to reverse the Latin etymology of 'travail', see also Vatin 1999.

[7] For a good overview of the notion of *bonheur* (happiness) in anthropology, see Berthon et al. 2009, as well as the articles in their collection, in particular Demanget 2009.

[8] A vast quantitative sociological research on 'happiness and work' was also conducted a decade ago in France under the direction of Baudelot and Gollac (2003).

('joy in work'; see Campbell 1989), or more recent management's discourses (Savignac 2009).[9] Indeed, I do not wish to negate the difficulties or suffering that work situations can produce, but to reflect on them from a different perspective. By postulating that work is hard *per se*, existing studies of work and labour induce researchers to focus on difficulties and problems, thus mainly approaching the dimensions of 'pleasure at work' as ways in which workers have managed to cope with what is perceived as the fundamental negativity of work.[10] Departing from this restrictive perspective, an approach focused on 'pleasure' could shed new light on what is work about, though not only on its good parts, as we will see shortly. In other words, what is work 'made of' that leads to it being both enjoyable *and* difficult? A good example of this connection could be this remark made by a choreographer of Israeli Folk Dance during a three-day workshop in France: 'I'm so tired! It's difficult, but I'm here because I love it. I love it, but it's hard'.[11]

To explore further this hypothesis of pleasure also implies rethinking the methodology involved. What are the methodological consequences of this theoretical choice? How can one conduct an ethnography of 'work and pleasure'? Building on the research already mentioned with dancers, choreographers and musicians (Gibert 2007, 2011, 2014; Gibert and Meinhof 2009; Gibert and Kiwan 2016), I have decided to attempt a comparison between professions usually perceived as 'pleasurable' and those more commonly thought of as 'unbearable', hence exploring the two ends of a continuum constituted by stereotypes of what one considers to be the most and least pleasurable professions. By 'pleasurable professions', I mean professions or 'work worlds' (Becker 1982) in which the notion of work seems to overlap very much with the notion of pleasure. The so-called 'vocational professions' belong to this category (see Weber 1904-1905, Sapiro 2007). Conversely, 'unbearable professions' are professions in which the work-and-pleasure combination is rarely if ever mentioned or perceived, at least by outsiders to it. According to 'the man on the street's' perception, but also to the relevant literature,[12] and dedicated scientific publications (Corbin 1982, Corteel and Le Lay 2011, Dagonet 1997, Douglas 1967, Fourrier 1808, 1829, Hughes 1951, Jeanjean 2006, Lhuilier and Cochin 1999, Perry 1978, Volkoff 2006), activities conducted by waste workers (rippers/garbage men, sanitation/sewage workers, street cleaners,

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[9] See, for instance, the emergence of the label 'Great Place to Work'; or the movement towards 'liberation management' developed by the consultant Tom Peters (see his own website : http://tompeters.com/writing/manifestos/).

[10] There are some notable exceptions, such as Marchand's research on what he calls 'the pursuit of pleasurable work' (2015), or Corteel's article on the internal logic articulated around the notion of *Spaß* (pleasure, amusement) within a group of factory workers (2005).

[11] This comment was made in Hebrew. Translations from the author unless otherwise stated.

[12] See, for instance, the impressive novel by Tristan Egolf, *Lord of the Barnyard : Killing the Fatted Calf and Arming the Aware in the Corn Belt*, New York : Grove Press, 1998.

cleaning ladies, and so on) are amongst the hardest and the least desirable professions,[13] largely because, as Corteel stresses (2010), such professions concentrate a large proportion of 'dirty work' together (also Hughes 1962). I have therefore chosen them to constitute the frame of my second case study and am therefore currently conducting participant ethnography with French *cantonniers* (street cleaners). This somehow tongue-in-cheek framework permits me to first examine the hypertrophy and paradoxes of the imbrications between work and pleasure within artistic work in order to shed further light on their relationship in many other work situations, but in a less visible manner.

As this research with street cleaners has only just started,[14] this article should be seen as explorative rather than a well-polished set of results. In both cases, in addition to the more 'classical' and inductive participant observation, I also intend to develop an alternative way of conducting fieldwork in order to encourage people to reflect on the 'bright side' of the working parts of their lives[15] and hence to acknowledge fully the subjective dimension of pleasure. My interest on 'what does one like in his/her work' is soon announced when meeting new people during fieldwork and is one of the main themes of formal interviews. This has so far provided interesting results in terms of surprisingly rapid and copious comments from whoever hears about my research focus, as well as providing a stimulus for the workers to point out everything that is not enjoyable in their work.[16] In addition, in the case of the street cleaners, I heard many appreciative comments of this subject from workers who felt that they are usually only perceived negatively (their work is dirty, under-qualified, degrading, and so on) and who expressed their pleasure at showing the good sides of it. Yet, I am fully aware that this type of prompting creates a specific bias, starting with the risk of ascribing my own optimistic view of life to the people I am

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[13] They easily fit into the '3 D's jobs', a category deriving from J. Connell's work in Japan, with its notion of the 3 K's jobs: *kitanai* ('dirty'), *kiken* ('dangerous') and *kitsui* ('difficult') (Connell 1993).

[14] Three months of participant observation were conducted between May and July 2015, in full light, with the authorization of Lyon Metropole, but no formal interviews have as yet taken place. I first took part in an induction or training week for new street cleaners and then went on working with them, on average for three full days (6am-1pm) per week. I therefore worked in the morning shift of two different depots, each of them composed of approximately twenty workers divided into smaller teams, some of which I have not directly worked with. In depot #1, most of the workers work with small trucks in and around three villages in the suburbs of Lyon. In depot #2, everyone is a *cantonnier à pied* (walking street-cleaner) in a rather wealthy neighbourhood of Lyon city centre. Although most of the street cleaners in Lyon are male, the depot #2 team was composed of more than one third women. This is one of the reasons why I was sent to this depot, not because I had asked for it, but because the management enforces the rule that access be provided to specific changing rooms for any female worker, myself included.

[15] By using the phrase 'the working parts of their life', I reject the expression 'work-life balance' often used both by management and social sciences. Although this article is not the place to develop my position, I would argue that this expression merely leads to an intellectual dead-end by opposing work and life.

[16] For instance, one day, when I was questioning my co-workers after the shift on 'tasks that they like more than others', one answered: 'Well, let's say that some activities are less difficult than others', hence challenging my positive formulation.

working with.[17] I am therefore continually monitoring such bias in many ways. First of all, this focus on 'pleasure at work' only started in 2013; hence participant observation and formal interviews conducted with the same artists prior to this date offer a good 'control group'. Secondly, during my fieldwork with street cleaners, prompted discussions are brought into comparison with informal conversations and verbatim statements constructed during work, at times when my co-workers are not explicitly focused on my interest on 'pleasure', yet have been informed, so might still be very aware of it. Finally, comparisons of my first results with those of other researchers also working with waste workers (in particular rippers and sewage workers) have so far shown to be quite consistent with them (Corteel and Lelay 2011; Jeanjean 2006; Lhuilier and Cochin 1999; Perry 1978; Volkoff 2006).

In the next section I will briefly describe Charles Fourier's notion of the 'attractiveness of work' before confronting it with one specific work-world which, at first glance, could be seen as a model of 'joy in work', the world of artistic work. Using this discussion as a point of departure, the next part of this article will move to the other end of the pleasurable—unpleasurable continuum to present exploratory data constructed with street cleaners. Drawing on these two sets of data, the final section will interrogate further the combination of work *and* pleasure by unveiling unexplored dimensions of work.

Fourier's joy in work

Made desperate by his observation of work and economy of his lifetime (1772-1837), at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, the autodidact philosopher Charles Fourier became convinced of the necessity to re-evaluate labour, to reorganize it and with it to reorganize the entire way of living of his fellow citizens. In order to do so, his reflections follow various interlinked trajectories.[18] The overarching one is his 'theory of passionate attraction', which permits him to discover what he calls the 'riddle of the destinies' (i.e. God's plans for the universe) and to discard 'reason' as an inadequate way to organize human life. Within this larger theory lies his 'theory of attractive labour' (*industrie attrayante*), which will particularly interest us here. His second set of thoughts is dedicated to the organization of a new society (*Harmonie*) composed of communities (*Phalanges* or Phalanx), in which it would be possible to reorganize one's entire life according to his 'theory of passionate attraction'. Even though, through lack of financial support, Fourier

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[17] On the consequences of the ethnographer's own values for the process of 'taking sides' in the field, see, for instance, Armbruster 2008.

[18] A large part of Fourier's life was devoted to this gigantic project, giving rise to thousands of pages of analysis and projects. This section of my article is an attempt to convey Fourier's main ideas concerning work, and has no ambition to be exhaustive. A vast literature on Fourier exists, for instance, Beecher 1986, Beecher and Bienvenu 1971, or a recent issue of the French review *Critique* entitled 'Fourier revient' (2015).

himself was never really able to experiment with his own plans, several attempts by either communities or enterprises following Fourier's directions in part or as a whole have been conducted over the centuries (on such attempts, see Desmars 2014, Lallement 2015, as well as Beecher's biography of Victor Considerant, Beecher 2001).

In a nutshell, Fourier postulates that, if God has given various passions to human beings, it is not in vain: human passions are good in themselves, but they have been corrupted by the social use we have made of them. Therefore Fourier's aim is to understand how human passions work (hence his '*calculus of the mechanism of passions*') and from there, to completely reorganize life (including work) around the human passions, instead of against them:

> The first science that I discovered was the theory of passionate attraction. When I had recognized that the progressive series assure full development to the passions of both men and women, and to people of diverse classes; when I had recognized that in this new order the more passions one has, the stronger and wealthier one will become, I surmised that if God had given so much influence to passionate attraction and so little to reason, its enemy, his purpose was to guide us to the system of progressive series, which is completely consistent with attraction. Then I supposed that attraction, which is so much maligned by the philosophers, must be interpreter of the designs of God concerning the social order. By this means I arrived at the ANALYTIC AND SYNTHETIC CALCULUS OF PASSIONATE ATTRACTIONS AND REPULSIONS. (C. Fourier, *Oeuvres Complètes*, T.5, 1841: 149, translated by Beecher 1986: 65)

It was within this framework that Fourier developed his theory of 'attractive labour', based on the assumption that humans are by nature attracted to work. Furthermore, he postulated that, provided that work is properly organized around Man's passions, it is not simply a pleasure for the human being, but the answer to an essential need, the only way for the individual to realize him- or herself fully (Beecher 1986: 274). His theory is therefore an attempt to understand the conditions that will permit work to regain its attractiveness. According to him, a few dimensions are of particular importance in inducing and enhancing the pleasure in work:

(1) Not every human being likes to do the same thing, and there is an enormous range of tastes amongst humanity. This permits every workload to be taken care of.[19] Therefore, the activities of each member of the Phalanx will depend on what he or she likes to do, and will be chosen freely by the worker. As a corollary, specific education aimed at developing personal passions must be created and enforced amongst the children, which he calls 'vocational education'.

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[19] See, for instance, Fourier's idea of the 'Little Hordes': groups of children aged 9 to 15 who will take care of dirt and filth, based on his assessment that a majority of children before puberty 'incline to dirtiness and impudence', hence will perform with pleasure, 'honour and intrepidity any repulsive work' (*Théorie de l'unité universelle*, t.5, pp.140-148; reproduced in Charles Fourier, *L'attraction passionnée*, Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1967, pp. 180-4).

(2) Boredom at work often comes from repetition, therefore activities have to be changed frequently during the day.

(3) As human passions play an important role in social relations, they should not be repressed, but on the contrary their potentialities should be exploited to enhance the pleasure of working (Fourier insists in particular on competition and seduction). As a corollary, co-workers must be chosen freely, and by common choice, with no overarching authority deciding for them.

(4) Remuneration must be by means of a share of profits (not wages), according to a combination of a/ the attractiveness, difficulty and utility of the work; b/ the economic capital invested by the individual in the community; and c/ the skills, abilities and efforts displayed by the worker. As a corollary, pleasure can only be complete if the workers are free from anxiety over their (or their dependents') welfare. Therefore, in the Phalanx, there must be a guarantee of a minimum income sufficient for present and future needs.

(5) The work place itself must be attractive (clean, elegant, etc.).[20]

At first glance, artistic work seems to corroborate many of the points suggested by C. Fourier for attractive labour to be realized. Would this mean that utopia has become reality? Let us have a closer look…

The *attractive labour* of artists

If one listens to discussions with and between artists on their perceptions of work, what they consider to be so pleasurable in their professions are the dimension of creativity, the pleasure in playing and/or dancing, the good feeling of producing something which gives pleasure to others, the diversity of 'work places', and the autonomy and freedom of time, space and companionship management. These elements fit into two overarching themes that resonate highly with Fourier's reflections on the conditions for the 'attractiveness of labour':

(1) Freedom of choice: what, where, when you work, how, with whom, for what, for whom;

(2) Diversity of what composes one's work in terms of time, space, actions and people.

However, what emerges from fieldwork (conversations, interviews, observations) is that this apparently ideal situation is full of invisible and contradictory limits, and moreover, it is precisely

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[20] I have rephrased these five dimensions from Fourier's numerous texts. See in particular *Théorie de l'unité universelle II* (1812/1822) and *Le nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire, ou invention du procédé d'industrie attrayante et naturelle distribuée en séries passionnées (*1829). For translations into English and discussions, see Beecher 1986, Beecher and Bienvenu 1971.

certain dimensions linked to these two overarching themes that seem to fail to provide pleasure to the artists. In practice, their artistic creation and pleasure are actually undermined and sometimes heavily influenced by a vast series of constraints that are precisely linked to some of the characteristics of such 'pleasurable jobs'. On one hand, their 'self-organization' incurs very self-demanding, unscheduled working times, often consisting of a succession of 'paid work' and 'unpaid work', the later often being composed of very time-consuming tasks. Indeed, in order to succeed in obtaining paid gigs, concerts, shows and workshops, a large part of their time must be spent in activities for which they are usually not paid, and which in addition to be time-consuming, might include intensive physical effort (mechanical and mental), boring repetitive actions and tasks requiring competences very different from those required to play or create music or dance. Beyond the now well-studied unpaid tasks of rehearsing and creating,[21] other such activities consist in meetings with other artists, musical/dance industry actors and/or financial providers; on feeding the news of various online and offline social networks and other medias in order to develop and nourish their own networks; and on listening to and watching other artists for inspiration and information. Artists might even find it necessary to accept unpaid or underpaid gigs that they see as 'communication work', since such exposure might help them secure paid work later on. In addition, another large part of their time is usually devoted to administrative and logistical tasks[22] unless they are sufficiently well paid to allocate some of their earnings to an accountant and/or an agent. This range of activities has only recently been conceptualized in the social sciences under the terms of 'relational labor' (Baym 2015),[23] 'reputation work' (Zafirau 2008) and 'informational labor' (Menger 2009, Dumont 2015). As a consequence, one of the more recurrent problems mentioned by the artists themselves is to let themselves be swamped by the social-public work times (i.e. performances and concerts, but also workshops and classes, meetings, networking activities etc.), as well as administrative and logistical work (accountancy, communication and promotion, financial applications, and so on), and therefore to neglect individual-private work-times, in particular creative ones, even though 'doing only music or dance' was *precisely* why they wanted to make it as a profession on the first place. In addition, not only are such activities often unknown or unrecognized dimensions of artistic work on the part of the outside world, so also are

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[21] Apart for artists working for a monthly salary, it is very rare for an artist to be officially paid for rehearsing or creating. Among the main exceptions to this are commissioned work or artistic residencies for which an artist receives payment (as well as working space and accomodation in the case of residencies)–in order to create a specific piece of art.

[22] Ranging from 'basic' grocery shopping by the choreographers and teachers of Israeli folk dance, who offer food and beverages in each of their dancing sessions, to sophisticated travel arrangements for gigs and workshops all around the world.

[23] By 'relational work', Baym is referring to how musicians are engaged in 'regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work' (Baym 2015: 16).

those are tasks that they themselves were often not expecting when they embarked on artistic activity, tasks they were not trained for and/or that they strongly dislike.

Regarding the 'freedom of choice' aspect, according to artists this freedom seldom occurs, as working conditions are more often decided by contingency than by choice. Strong discrepancies between musicians' artistic desires and their professional constraints were already studied by Becker as early as the 1950s, followed more recently by Faulkner (1983), Menger (2002, 2005, 2009), Buscatto (2004, 2008, 2010), Cottrell (2004) and Perrenoud (2007), to name but a few. This conflict is a common figure for professional musicians, who often need to water down their artistic standards to satisfy those (audience and producers) who will provide them with a salary and career opportunities. We have talked elsewhere of 'the tri-dimensional matrix' when this two-dimensional conflict is combined with a transnational dimension (Gibert 2011; Gibert and Kiwan 2016). Indeed, there are multiple indirect and often invisible constraints and sources of authority that play a role in their artistic production: the demands of the 'client' (event organizer, audience, financial support, etc.), peer pressure for recognition (to be good and to remain so), conflicts of ego and self-censorship, the need for connections, the 'burden of representation' (Tagg 1988), and so on. Moreover, Fourier's suggestion that use be made of human passions such as competition and seduction could be developed here, as the question of social interactions and relations of power is quite central for artists, though apparently seldom researched *per se*. A positive perspective on rivalries or seduction processes between co-workers as a possibility to provide and enhance pleasure at work is indeed rarely adopted by researchers, for whom interactions such as help, humour, play or antagonism are more often looked at as strategies to cope with the difficulties of work (see Mainsant 2008, Gernet and Le Lay 2011), although, as Corteel has shown (2005), some workers have indeed imagined other ways around this.

At this point in the analysis, it seems that Fourier's suggestions for reaching pleasure in work might indeed only be utopian, as in the case of artists such conditions seem to produce more constraints than pleasure for the workers. However, I suggest we confront this result with a world of work that is considered particularly 'non-pleasurable' from the outside.

Au bonheur des cantonniers[24]

According to their job description, the labour of street cleaners consists in keeping the streets and roads clean, that is, in removing any discarded object (paper, plastic, cigarette butts, etc.) or any matters (dust, excrement, etc.), including 'natural' matters that are perceived as dirty once on the ground of a street or city (weeds, leaves, etc.). They are also expected to report any problems with

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[24] Paraphrase of Emile Zola's title, *Aux bonheur des dames* (1883), a novel in which he describes the working conditions of department store employees in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century.

or malfunction of the public space and street furniture. Hence the main activities of *cantonniers* consist of cleaning the streets with brooms, pliers, water and shovels, regularly emptying wastebins, shovelling dead leaves, cutting grass springing up sidewalks, etc., as well as collecting any rubbish dumped beyond the circuit of the rippers or that is not the proper shape for the rippers' domestic garbage trucks (large electrical appliances, car tyres, etc.).

When prompted on their satisfactions at work,[25] street cleaners emphasise what they call the 'advantages', such as:

- security of employment,[26] stressing that this is not so common for under-qualified workers;
- specific working hours (6am-1pm for the morning shift, 1pm-8pm for the afternoon one), which permits workers to have what they consider to be 'a second life', i.e. to spend time with their families, to practise leisure activities intensively (sport, art, etc.), to have an additional part-time job (with the authorization of the employer), and so on;[27]
- a good atmosphere within the team, between colleagues and with the boss, being happy to go to work every morning, or at least not being stressed out:

> We're lucky. For the guy who has been assigned to a warehouse with a nasty boss, or colleagues he doesn't get along with, it's a nightmare! [28]

Some of them also stated their appreciation of being able to work in a nice environment,[29] as well as it being a pleasure to contribute to keeping the city clean: 'Why should I despise my work? This [a clean street] is what I want to see when I go for a walk in a city'.

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[25] Since formal interviews have not yet been conducted, such prompting has so far only happened during informal discussions held during fieldwork, in particular when I first introduce myself to a new team or worker.

[26] The choice of two very different case studies (artists vs. waste workers) also permits a comparison between the situation of self-employed, irregularly paid workers with no retirement schemes (true for most of the artists I have been working with) and a situation of wage labour in which waste workers are often civil servants, or employees of outsourcing enterprises hired by national, regional or local authorities. My own research is taking place with a group of workers who are territorial civil servants and local council workers.

[27] Informal discussion during a demonstration of street cleaners in Paris in October 2015 revealed that they were demonstrating against the Paris council because 'they want to have us work on day time hours'. (Many thanks to M. Fansten for pointing out this event to me).

[28] All the quotes of this section are informal comments (i.e. not obtained during formal interviews) in French (translations by the author). I scribbled them down on my notebook as soon as possible. For reasons of anonymity, unless it is necessary for understanding, I have not indicated who made them.

[29] This was particularly the case during the first half of fieldwork, when I was working in small villages in the area of Monts du Lyonnais, with its beautiful landscapes, where the workers would often comment on a nice view or panorama. This also appeared during induction week, when I announced to the group what my research was about. One of the future street cleaners exclaimed that it reminded him of one day when he was a ripper and was covering for another worker in a round that he did not know, in the Monts du Lyonnais: 'It was getting light, and I was collecting collecting, collecting, bin after bin, without looking around. At some point we had a bit of 'haut le pied' [technical jargon to designate the moments when rippers are travelling instead of running beside the truck fetching and empting containers in the dumpster; this can either be done standing on the back of the truck or sitting by the side of the driver] so I looked around, and it was incredibly beautiful: the sun was rising out of the vineyards. So I got my phone out and took a picture!'.

Therefore, in this case, and contrary to what arises from research conducted with artists, prompted discussions convey a sense that working conditions provide these workers with greater satisfaction than the content of work itself (the activities performed). Indeed, as one worker explained to me: 'I will not tell you that I like what I do, but I like the conditions of it.' He soon nuanced this comment with a laugh by adding: 'But well, I won't say that it is not very hard when you wake up at 5 am!'

However, observant participation during the working activities themselves (i.e. unprompted) underlines the additional dimensions that seem to bring the workers some satisfaction at work. First of all, many workers expressed their appreciation at having a diversity of tasks composing their everyday labour, as well as the possibility to organize them according to their or their team's own wishes, depending on various conditions and priorities that they can analyse themselves:

> Let's cut [weeds] and blow [the weeds in the gutter] at most today, because tomorrow the mechanical street sweeper will be here, so he'll collect them in no time, and the streets will be perfect!
> Let's go to street X, I've seen yesterday [when he was off duty] that it's getting full of leaves.

Other research conflates this pleasure with a degree of autonomy in work and decision-making: authors have shown that many street cleaners or rippers appreciate 'being alone', that is, with no management around (Corteel 2010, Corteel and Le Lay 2011, Jeanjean 2006). Research and social movements advocating greater autonomy for workers are also echoing this satisfaction. Indeed, this freedom of organization is directly linked to what the workers described as a relation of trust within their team, and with their boss:

> He (the boss) knows that we are working well, and that he can always count on us if there is an emergency, so he knows that if one morning we cannot work as hard as usual [because we're very tired, or because it's very hot, etc.], we'll work harder the next day and the streets will be clean anyway.

However, this feeling of freedom to decide how to organize their tasks is qualified by an understanding of the limited spectrum of their possibilities of decision, as this comment shows:

> We are the ones doing ('*les exécutants*'), they are the one thinking ('*les têtes pensantes*'). [If] they say we must not touch those [cut weeds in specific areas], we do not touch, even if we don't understand why.

Gibert, Fourier's joy

In addition, they also feel that this ability to prioritize their tasks is being challenged by the ever-growing number of streets that they are supposed to be taking care of within the same amount of time.

Secondly, every street cleaner I talked to has, at some point, mentioned the potential for finding and/or recycling discarded objects, although this advantage is never completely disconnected from the downside of manipulating dirt and potential danger.[30] This is a subject on which one can hear unending anecdotes. For instance, one Saturday morning, while I was arriving at depot #2, I met one worker who told me that prior to his shift he would rush to the area around the nearby discos, as he would often find objects or cash left over by partygoers who had been sitting on the outside pavements there. One can also see in both depots several objects found in the streets by the workers, who then use them to furnish or decorate the depot or their personal lockers,[31] a practice that acts to provide them with a working environment that they enjoy.[32] This benefit of finding useful objects echoes one of the first invitations I received from workers of depot #1 to participate in their informal work routines: 'In this job you can always manage to find something useful. You should go and have a look at the dumpsters [recycling disposal containers in the depot yard] – you might find something for yourself'. This aspect of finding useful or unexpected objects contrasts interestingly with *cantonniers'* resentment at performing endlessly repetitive labour, as the streets they have just cleaned must repeatedly be cleaned again.[33]

Thirdly, while workers often mention how their work in the public space can be source of conflicts with local residents, shopkeepers, pedestrians and/or car drivers, many of them also underline in both informal discourses and their actions how much they appreciate the dimension of social contact with these various local actors. One day, when we were discussing the importance of fostering good social relations in the field, one of the workers exclaimed: 'Before, it was the postman who was doing this kind of link, now there is only us left to do so'. Hence some workers even consider their work to be part of the vast professional group involved in 'care', as they feel that they are providing services ranging from exchanging greetings with lonely neighbours to giving directions to lost tourists. They also often link these additional services and their feelings of usefulness to the society directly to what is considered to be the main function of their job: to provide a nice (i.e. clean and safe) public space. Yet, regrets at not being recognized as such often

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[30] In her work with sewage workers, Jeanjean also notes that workers underline their paradoxal power of changing filth into gold when they find jewels within the dirt of sewers (2006: 91).

[31] So much so that it has led one French anthropologist, D. Corteel, who has been working for several years with garbage collectors, to start a new project on waste recovery (introductory speech to her conference paper, AFEA, July 2015).

[32] For a more general perspective on such practices of personalizing work places, see Monjaret 1996.

[33] On this repetitive dimension of labour, see Arendt, for whom this is a distinctive criterium between labour and work : 'unlike *working*, whose end has come when the object is finished, *laboring* always moves in the same circle' (1958: 98).

follow such discussions, permitting us to reflect on the paradoxical visibility and invisibility of workers in the public space.[34]

Finally, the use of mechanical tools (mainly leaf-blowers, weed-cutters and street-sweeping trucks) seems to be a source of enjoyment for several workers I have met (though not everyone). Already during induction week, I was surprised by the numerous enquiries made by the new staff regarding how long they would have to wait until they can finally get to use them, arguing that this is one of the highlights of the job.[35] Similarly, one day when we were talking about a worker from another depot, someone exclaimed: 'Yes, with him, as soon as you put down your (leaf) blower, forget it! He seizes it, and he doesn't want to give it back. I guess he loves it!' In addition, I personally soon started to really enjoy using such tools, both because I felt like 'playing with toys' and because they gave me the feeling that you could get more work done in less time than with just your broom and shovel. Hence other workers often teased me about my 'new friend the blower', though did not seem surprised by my apparent pleasure in using it.[36] However, this does not mean that pleasure only comes from such activities: the tools are heavy and often produce musculoskeletal pain, thus bringing us back to the notion of hardship and suffering. They are also quite noisy, and consequently often source of conflicts with residents, who complain about their disturbing sound, especially when they are being used in residential areas early in the morning.

From utopian ethnography to the invisible dimensions of work

Fourier's theories and ideas are rather complex and luxuriant, if not obscure, as well as being theoretically imprecise or even problematic.[37] I do not propose to adopt them as a theoretical framework, but some of his analysis and imaginative suggestions can be quite stimulating, in particular his starting point that work should be seen as a positive activity, a need, a pleasure for a human being, provided that some conditions are respected, which need to be thoroughly studied (and in his case, experimented with).

With this perspective in mind, research with artists has shown how a situation that is apparently close to many of Fourier's suggestions is bringing results the reverse of what would be

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[34] See similar comments and feelings amongst rippers, described in Corteel and Le Play 2011, Pueyo and Volkoff 2011, Soares 2011. On the articulation between public space management and the notions of dirty and clean, see the recent issue of *Ethnologie Française* entitled *'Propreté, saleté, urbanité'* and its introduction by Guitard and Milliot (2015).

[35] This type of satisfaction could be linked to what Gernet and Le Lay have described as 'seeking the 'beautiful gesture' (*beau geste*)' (2011: 263-4), a conscious display of agility and force by the rippers when throwing rubbish bags into the truck.

[36] Obviously this remark is only at its anecdotal stage, but to integrate the pleasure of the researcher within the *dispositif* of observant-participation is also one of my methodological concerns and part of my framework.

[37] For instance, Fourier adopts a pre-evolutionist perspective, suggesting that evolution's phases for human beings are: 1-Eden; 2-Sauvagerie; 3-Patriarcat; 4-Barbarie; 5-Civilisation (his time and society), and 6-Harmony, yet to be achieved through his work (see, for instance, his foreword to *Le nouveau monde industriel,* 1829).

expected. At first glance, what Fourier analyses as the necessity to change activities often parallels the proclaimed pleasure of artists in having a job which comprises diverse activities, but this is soon challenged by their real difficulties in managing and mastering them all. In contrast, street cleaners' unprompted discussions show that it is precisely the diversity of tasks that provides them with some satisfaction at work, even though this is not seen as one of its main characteristics. Hence this apparent contradiction becomes useful as a starting point from which to reflect on the multiple layers and dimensions composing any specific work and their unequal visibility. As already pointed out by E.C. Hughes, a single work label (here designations of 'musician', 'dancer', 'choreographer' or 'street cleaner') may encompass a wide multiplicity of tasks and dimensions of work in terms of actions, protagonists and/or working conditions.[38] Yet, what has come to light very clearly when focusing on two very different types of work is that many of these dimensions are partly or completely invisible, that is, unknown, unrecognized and/or 'hidden' (Wadel 1979), although as important (if not more so) as the known and recognized dimensions, precisely because they play a central role in what really brings pleasure for and/or constraints on the workers. While it seems particularly the case with artistic work, as seen earlier, the study of *cantonniers* has shown that this multilayered character of work also exists in other work situations. The fact that each of these invisible dimensions is invisible potentially provides workers with different types of feelings and emotions (satisfactions, frustrations, and so on), hence calling for an in-depth study of each layer to be able to unpack the multiple dimensions of a human multilayered activity further.

In turn, the invisibility of the side-dimensions of a specific profession often goes along with a lack of their social and/or official recognition. For instance, in the case of what are considered to be the 'passion' or 'vocational' professions, what is very striking is how 'to have pleasure at one's work' creates an external perception of this work 'not being a serious job', 'not a hard job', 'not a proper job',[39] although research has shown that pleasure does not mean a lack of seriousness, of huge physical effort, of affective implications, and so on.[40] More surprisingly, perhaps, the process seems to be identical for street cleaners: they feel that they are not recognized for some of the dimensions to which they precisely attach importance, such as bringing some 'social well-being' to the public space, whilst this is precisely one of the hidden dimensions of their work that provides

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[38] See also Godelier: 'a work process can never be reduced to its material and social aspects because these imply the active presence of diverse types of representations which are an essential part of it, the '*idéelle*' one (…), and diverse values attached to these various forms of work which are conferring different status to those practising them, inferior, superior or equivalent to status given by other forms of human activities' (1991: 718).

[39] Hence the need felt by artists to reinforce the difference linguistically, as shown in the opening quote of this article. Similarly, the anthropologist must often explain: 'No, I'm not on holidays, I'm doing fieldwork'.

[40] This had already been analysed by Karl Marx, who stated: « Que le travail soit *travail attractif*, auto-effectuation de l'individu, (…) ne signifie aucunement qu'il soit pur plaisir, pur amusement (…) Des travaux effectivement libres, la composition d'une œuvre musicale par exemple, requièrent à la fois un sacré sérieux et l'effort le plus intense » (*Manuscrits de 1857-1858*, Paris, Ed. Sociales, 1980, t.2, p. 101, quoted by Vatin 1999 :16).

them with satisfaction. In addition, what the ethnography of artistic work has shown is that, precisely because their work is mainly seen as bringing them pleasure, it is often inferred that they should consent to many unpleasurable invisible dimensions, including the extra load of unpaid work in order to foster potential future paid engagements.[41] In other words, if it is not (recognized as) 'real work', why should it really be paid?

Finally, this invisibility of tasks within a specific type of work also raises the question of expertise. As one musician in London pointed out, 'You have to be able to survive, so you become a handy man, but you don't master any of the things'. While a professional musician is apparently judged mainly on his expertise in playing such and such an instrument or repertoire, in creating music and so on his working experience shows him that he must also acquire competences in very different domains, sometimes to the point that the skills needed to satisfy the side dimensions of his work will overwhelm the skill needed for its core activity. Hence the multiplicity of unknown facets of one's work brings with it the risk of failing to master all of its dimensions. Here we could also invoke Fourier once more through his suggestion that the world contains a much wider variety of human tastes than one usually assumes, and that to examine it more closely could permit individual interests and collective ones to be combined, rather than their being opposed. Myth or reality, one former ripper told me once how one of his colleagues, an amateur rugby player, was pleased by his work as a ripper because he saw it as paid exercise fostering his sporting life!

Towards a utopian anthropology of work

How can work provide satisfaction and pleasure to workers? How can anthropologists deal with this perspective both theoretically and empirically? How can utopia meet ethnography? Considering Fourier's so-called utopian 'attractive work' as an imagined yet possible reality that one has to search for through fieldwork, rather than as an impossible fiction, as would a depreciative acceptation of the term 'utopia', has permitted discovering 'what is going well' – yet in close relation to 'what is not going so well' for the workers. It is precisely because I was explicitly searching for 'work and pleasure' that I paid specific attention to many aspects of fieldwork that I might have neglected otherwise, as did my interlocutors and co-workers. This is particularly true for my own pleasure as an anthropologist at work! Doing so is not merely to admit 'the uncomfortable fact that [I] was always already implicated in "the field"' (Collins and Gallinat 2010: 3), but to make proper use of 'the ethnographic self as resource' (ibid.; see also Halloy

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[41] This situation also calls for a development of what is fundamentally different between Fourier's model and the situation of non-salaried artists. Indeed, as Fourier stressed, real pleasure can only be achieved if work is freed from anxieties over subsistence, an idea that is at the centre of today's social movements that are advocating a guarenteed minimum income (see, for instance, the notion of a '*revenu universel*' developed by Mylondo 2010).

2006). Without moving towards what I would call an egocentric ethnography,[42] which would generalize my own perceptions and values, but nonetheless using my senses and experiences on the field as hints to further my investigations, this reflexive process was mainly conducted in two directions: what I would feel while performing my work as apprentice street cleaner,[43] and how a reflection on my own multi-layered work as an academic (a teacher and researcher in anthropology) would resonate with artists' or street cleaners' own professional experiences:

> This morning, I feel that I am again very clumsy with my broom and shovel, and then a feeling of ease comes back. I also decide (after several trials) to place my broom on my shoulder when I make the clamp with the shovel (before that I was placing it under my armpit, mimicking someone but I forgot who it was… I remember I observed several, but maybe I did not copy right). It feels a lot better, and this way the stick is not caught in my safety jacket [which is] a bit too big for me… It's funny, I was sure I had tried this way before and that it was not comfortable. . I also practice on the strength to give to the broom: in the course of the morning, I test several positions in order to find the perfect angle which will give enough strength to properly scrape, yet not too much (it stops the broom!). I thus recall the discussion we had with B, C and E before setting out into the streets: a comparison between different professions. It happens often; sometimes it starts out from something about my own work [as a teacher-researcher in anthropology], sometimes not. I was telling them that there is a technical nature to their work, and some technical jargon. They had a laugh, reproaching me 'to say so in order to please them'. I didn't have time to explain what I meant, we had to leave. (field notes, 27/7/2015)[44]

This quote touches on both of the trajectories mentioned earlier. On the one hand, my own perception of the activity – here my growing satisfaction with being able to master my tools slightly (broom and shovel), the pleasure given by a gesture that I finally find efficient, and a hint of the use I can make of this personal experience to discuss it further with other workers – although here the attempt fails, as I do not have time to develop the discussion. When I picked up this thread on another day, explaining to them how I would experience several gestures, positions and so on, they were quite surprised by my description, but validated it and started to describe their own beginnings. On the other hand, here one can catch sight of the way my own experience as an academic (with its pleasure and displeasure) is brought up in the field (often at their demand) to debate with my co-workers about their own work. In the case of the artists this comparative mode soon became regular, as we were often struck by the many similarities: beyond the apparent evidence of having chosen to make a living out of activities we enjoyed even before they became our professions and the same frustration with our relations' misunderstandings of the sense of our

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[42] Not to be mistaken for 'auto-ethnography', that is, 'fieldwork in which the ethnographic self is the only informant involved' (Collins and Gallinat 2010: 10).
[43] Although an experienced amateur dancer myself, I did not actually 'practice' being a professional musician, dancer or choreographer the way I practised being a street cleaner. However, I did participate in several invisible dimensions of artistic work, such as helping in administrative, logistic or communication tasks.
[44] Notes in French, translated by the author.

activities ('I'm not spending time making friends, I'm doing fieldwork') appeared to involve a similar intellectual pleasure of finally finding the right way to express, whether through music, dance, or anthropological analysis and words, something that one 'has inside oneself'.

To summarize, this voluntary perspective has brought to light various aspects of work, both pleasant and unpleasant. Could this be a pathway for a more applied anthropology of work in the 21st century? What if research focused on the good things that one could emphasize and expand, from there seeing how it could be developed to enhance the pleasure of/at/in work? Could this help us to grant pleasure to the thousands of workers who are indeed suffering in their professional lives?

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