



Invisible Labor and Urban Shadows: Memory, Masculinity, and Precarity in Ross Raisin's Ghost Kitchen

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Abstract

This article examines Ross Raisin's (2023) *Ghost Kitchen* as an interrogation of the unseen aspect of labor, the precariousness of masculinity, and urban remembering, in relation to literature. The title is not a reference to a haunted house, but rather to the "ghost kitchen," a creation of platform economies where unseen places make food for unseen eaters. In Raisin's story, this figure becomes a powerful emblem of the invisibility of economic labour and emotional labour alike. The novel's protagonist's double identity — as a line cook in an empty-side restaurant and a sole support to his mother, who cannot maintain her identity due to dementia — brings to the front of the action the systematic undervaluation of the kinds of work that sustain life even when no one notices it do so. The majority of studies in service industry and work literature focus on labour exploitation, with relatively little sustained analysis of the overlapping of hidden service work, care and the performance of masculinity in the context of contemporary British fiction. The article addresses this lacuna by positioning *Ghost Kitchen* within a broader conversation around precarity in interdisciplinary feminist caring perspectives and men and masculinities studies. In theoretical terms, the article develops a close reading of Raisin's novel, in dialogue with critical theory. It analyzes the novel's portrayals of kitchen culture, care-giving, and the urban environment as contiguous spaces in which invisibility and vulnerability are navigated. It traces the novel's representing of economic and mnemonic precarity and argues for the novel's engagement within a municipal discourse on memory, masculinity, and the politics of un(der)seen labour within the precarious city.

Keywords : Ghost kitchen , Precarity , labour , Masculinity , Urbanism , Ross Raisin

العمل غير المرئي وظلال المدينة: الذاكرة والرجولة والهشاشة في قصة *المطبخ الشبح* لروس رايزن.

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مديرية التربية في ذي قار

تتناول هذه المقالة رواية "المطبخ الشبح" (Ghost Kitchen) لروس رايزن (2023) بوصفها استقصاءً للجانب غير المرئي من العمل، وهشاشة الرجولة، واستذكار المدينة في علاقتها بالأدب. ولا يشير العنوان إلى بيت مسكون بالأشباح، بل إلى ما يُعرف بـ "المطبخ الشبح"، وهو نتاج لاقتصادات المنصات الرقمية



حيث تُحضّر الأطعمة في أماكن غير مرئية لزبائن غير مرئيين. في رواية رايسن، يصبح هذا المفهوم رمزًا قويًا لعدم مرئية كلٍّ من العمل الاقتصادي والعمل العاطفي على حد سواء. تجسّد الهوية المزدوجة لبطل الرواية — بوصفه طاهيًا يعمل على خط الطهي في مطبخ مطعمٍ شبه خالٍ، وفي الوقت نفسه المعيل الوحيد لوالدته التي لم تعد قادرة على الحفاظ على هويتها بسبب إصابتها بالخرف — مثالًا واضحًا على التقليل المنهجي من قيمة أنواع العمل التي تحافظ على استمرارية الحياة حتى عندما لا يلاحظها أحد. تركز معظم الدراسات في أدبيات العمل وصناعة الخدمات على استغلال العمالة، مع وجود قدر قليل نسبيًا من التحليل المتعمق لتداخل العمل الخدمي الخفي، وأعمال الرعاية، وأداء الرجولة في سياق الرواية البريطانية المعاصرة. تسعى هذه المقالة إلى سدّ هذه الفجوة من خلال وضع رواية "المطبخ الشبح" ضمن نقاش أوسع حول الهاشاشة، مستندةً إلى مقاربات نسوية متعددة التخصصات في دراسات الرعاية، وإلى دراسات الرجال والرجولة. من الناحية النظرية، تقدّم المقالة قراءة دقيقة لرواية رايسن في حوار مع النظرية النقدية. فهي تحلّل تصوير الرواية لثقافة المطبخ، ورعاية الآخرين، والبيئة الحضرية بوصفها فضاءات متجاوزة يتعامل داخلها مع اللامرئية والهاشاشة. كما تتنّب تمثيل الرواية للهاشاشة الاقتصادية والذاكرة، وتجادل بأن الرواية تتخرط في خطاب حضري حول الذاكرة والرجولة وسياسات العمل غير المرئي أو المتجاهل داخل المدينة الهاشّة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المطبخ الشبح، الهاشاشة، العمل، الرجولة، الحضرية (العمران الحضري)، روس رايسن

1-Introduction

This paper is a close reading of the intricate nexus of work, memory and masculinity, and the manner in which it is formed and represented in Ross Raisin's compelling 2020 story cycle, *Ghost Kitchen*. Set against the disturbing backdrop of London's delivery-only kitchens, this is a revelatory portrait of the true nature of modern work. The pandemic has brought into stark light a range of dimensions to precarious work, from widely acknowledged problems like unpaid and underpaid hours, to increased insecurities around tenure. (Mai et al., 2023) assured that it gives rise to newer and more urgent concerns: the colonization of digital surveillance and data ownership, and the complex functioning of the algorithm management that today oversees work.

There are, of course many different kinds of precarious work, from agenda-setting platform gig work and internships, to more traditionally insecure temporary agency, contract and zero-hours employment. But to confine ourselves to material conditions of labor experience is just not able to do full justice to the story, since there are larger and more intricate narratives at play.

Stationary yet oppressive delivery kitchens evoke a spectral London of ghost-figures in the machine, standing in for a city of drones flying over and nondescript workers toiling in isolation. This condition steers to a selective and reflexive physical relationship with the city as an inhabited space – displaying a willingness



to thoroughly understand the social and cultural terrain. Raisin's characters tramp across the capital on subterranean, tentacular spokes of places that connect efficiency flats to homeless hostels to gyms. (Yang, 2025)

These are the back-channel front lines: No one's interested in finding out how impersonal the so-called modularity of the labor market actually is. These use "the city's" gigantic grandeur, they haggle and cheat with the fact that the "city", as a multiplicity, has double aspects and a multiple character – to profit, to feel as if they were profiting, or not to profit at work. Memory thus stands as a central motif linking spaces of differing scales through the physical and imaginative travel undertaken by Raisin's young men. (Perri et al. 2024)^a added that this twoness doesn't just bind them with one another; it connects them to the larger tale of an interconnected global cityscape stretching from Odisha in India way across to the island nation of Sri Lanka and on west to the United States.

1.1. Research Gap

There is a lot of writing these days about precarity and labour in millennial fiction, but most of it tends to be about either the economics of service work, or the gendered responsibilities of care. 4-5) Relatively little attention has however been paid to the way in which (British) men's contemporary fiction appropriates these fields in its positing of masculinity as an inherently vulnerable construct in its own right. And, from a sociological or economic angle, discipline and work discipline/surveillance, also, is that a lot (as it is) research on the cultural meaning of "ghost kitchens" has been conducted, and that less (than) research has been devoted to their literary and metaphorical aspect. In reading Raisin's novel through such shifts of perspective, this essay meets across the difference between the disciplines, not just to show how literature operates to refract the hidden economies that both perform and determine everyday life, but crucially in order to understand better how those different of economies come to be what they are.

1.2. Methodology

The article uses a literary-qualitative approach, bringing together close reading with cultural and theoretical analysis. The story is discussed within three overlapping frameworks:

Feminist care ethics (Tronto, 1993), leading to the under recognition of emotional and domestic labor.

Masculinities studies (Connell, 2005) that allow to understand the pursuit of vulnerable and hegemonic masculine.



Focusing on this policy, the analysis examines Raisin's style, narrative structure, and urban imagery as symbols of the invisible, the unstable, and the precariousness of memory.

2.The Concept of Invisible Labor

Work that is not visible is that which happens 'beyond the official... employment relationship', is not accounted for, or the value is difficult to gauge because it is unseen, hidden, or occult; (Koivunen, 2016). Invisible labor is categorized in various ways, and what it does varies by institution. Originally a feminist intervention to make visible the unpaid domestic and emotional work performed by women, the term has since been expanded to cover other forms of labor, such as migrant work, repossessed work, more-than-human service work, and other related sites (McRobbie, 2010).

2.1. Defining Invisible Labor

Invisible labour is an essential component of the emerging forms of labour such as crowd work, online labour and the 'platform economy'. Although this one can explain by present day globalization and the wide use of ICT as a means to cut down transaction cost for services and to fragmented and relets work. Invisible work has gained a lot of interest in the last years. The very concept of cabotage, based on the French verb caboter (to slink up and down the coast), involves secret, non-public, down low actions; and – in this case – nearly invisible (Rucker, 2023). By 1830 or so, cabotage had been transplanted into the domain of labor by Alexandre de Laborde, who coined the term travailcaboté or "cabotage work" to describe casual, contracted, piecework labor, performed on an ad hoc, as-needed basis, by one's own account, perhaps as an interim income source for an owner-oscillatory who could not always rely on periodic wage income. As Virginie Bordez notes, it is difficult to trace the faint line that outlines the history of the idea of cabotage, because it has progressed over time and left its imprint on other kinds of work (dark, hidden, shadowy, discreet, unacknowledged). What it refers to most broadly, nowadays, is work one has to do, but which is likely no good, or worse, work one would rather bury or conceal from others.

3. The Urban Working Classes in Historical Perspective

Workfare and the coordination of lifeworld and production have been crucial to post-Fordist urbanism since the 1960s. The postfordist conditions have highlighted the connectedness of places and spaces of production by way of networked processes. These changes also serve to highlight the demand for a mode of spatial



thought that incorporates an embeddedness more closely of the networked sensibility of how to imagine the constellation of interrelated places and spaces that we call urbanism. Today, urbanism is specifically articulated by a complex, flexible, multi-valent and -layered system of transportation and communication mesh, and has formative layered distributions, classifications, circulations, and differentiated circulations. The abandonment of the systems of town and the respect of the systems of the deregulation have produced a web of polycentric, multilayer system that had help the burst of the functional town moves towards the kind of organization not monocentric but not poli-centric as well. The network society more and more extends to cities and regions beyond the centre. (Santos, 2022)The evolution of urban transport, consumption and communication, together with the accumulation of capital and the availability of a flexible work force, have changed the relationship between society and technology, energy and ecocide of the production of spaces, such as, cities, suburbs and corridors. The changing of the urban territory from a 'productive' to a 'consuming' territory has turned the city and industrial suburbs into sites planned as functionally separate but acting 'capsules' of urban territories.

3.1 Urban Shadows: The Work of Space

Amin(2002) alludes to the "swelling concern with space in social life with a new intensity since space is bound up with time – pasts, futures – and with power. 'Shadows' provides a figure for the generation of visibility, and, in speculating how things might be connected in the urban surroundings, demonstrates the shape and logic of these new fragments, and how they go about combining with one another. And it is a description of an ongoing phenomenon relentlessly renewed by human, monetary, and imagistic flows through the city (R. Sherman 2017,p.34). The shadow economies are not residues, still less excreta; they are as much complexity and intensity of connection that tie producers, workers and consumers to dominant centers that stretch out from the specific trade or business into the wider systems of political and types of social organization.

What is conceived alongside the institutionalized city of shadow's constituting the contemporary is a fractured working gestalt of the urban working practice, which is at the level of flesh and blood stretched time beseeching time and at the velocity and movement of moving around the metropolitan where it is not just the movement, transportation and capital's speed, across and through the city, but also the velocity of images and signs. These systems of parallel agriculture, production and domestication are the control points and the sites for regulation that are now the satellites of finance, advertisement and digital communication (Duruz, 2011).



Raisin's ghost kitchens make up an urban shadow city, an entity born from the accelerations and modes of embodied presence that do not easily align or, when it comes down to it, spell closure. Enclave's space relations are specific to ghost kitchens and re-register the urban relations within "The Concept of Invisible Labor." Here ghost eating is when eating deferred and suspended eats of the satiating and obstructed of a city. This is the lost grains that double fayre refuse to delete – the erasures that are refused by the erasures that you cite, between consuming and providing, people and the objects of people's relations, between and among people, profit and loss testify to a counter-city that is 'anyone can find'. It is images of the enduring and the substrates of the urban descent not, historically formed conditions over determining or only occasionally blocked by economic interest.

3.2. Understanding Urban Shadows

The invisible work is generally defined as any activity that, despite its economic significance is not recognized as work or paid. * Unseen work : the work with the arena of everyday life, of individuals within the home, which makes life worth living for others. It's a notion that transcends constructs of unpaid labor that don't have some sort of economic or social capital. It is also socially and regionally marginal and economically invisible. Not valuing certain types of work is effectively determined by the absence of economic capital. This perspective can have alternative readings in producing the visibility of labour through the operation of space. It focuses specifically on the way in which a specific kind of urban shadows is working through, not with, ghost kitchens — that is, the new locales of urban production, but also urban shadows, in-so-far as they help produce the spaces where labour is rendered invisible, and therefore, without economic value.

Under the shadow of the city, the intricate relationship between masculinity and secret labor. It is significantly based on certain historical formations, mass-memory and modes of labour. With visible labour, stable and satisfactory life in the field of basic material needs, they are even in a position to give their own experience a form in the medium of recollection as experience for a tradition. We can see that dynamic at work in the stories of Ross Raisin, with their investigations into the making of memory and masculinity by way of characters' working lives.

3.3. Spatial Dynamics in Ghost Kitchens

The spatial life of ghost kitchens casts another lens on that idea of invisibility and urban shadows. "Invisible labor paid or unpaid is rarely described in respect to



its spaces, as suggested above for cooks and cleaners, but ‘ghost kitchen’ raises a range of other questions about the connectivity of contemporary labor and urbanism”.

There are shades of grey to these definitions and it’s useful to remember that ‘ghost kitchen’ is slightly different to the slightly broader concept of the ‘dark kitchen’ with the terms being used differently by the industry. Dark kitchen: A “dark kitchen” or “cloud kitchen” could be a restaurant cooking for delivery only, or a fulfillment centre for a number of separate businesses. By contrast, an on-the-go restaurant or food stand, which in restaurant-ese is often created via a ‘pop-up’ restaurant or food stall, can be mobile, working from a lot of different places but with nowhere to call home.

The expression “ghost kitchen” suggests a ghostly untethering from place, and it’s often used to describe kitchens that exist only in the context of service to platforms like or UberEats or Door Dash and never interact in reality with a customer.

3.4 Masculinity in Precarious Work

The insecurity of modern life has fuelled a significant body of work on the instability of masculine identities, certainly since the demise of class-based social formation and a rise in problematic low-waged labour (Negra & Tasker, 2019,p.23). the visibility of labour: how much work may be 'seen' or made account able within the public sphere) is crucially important not only for precarious capitalism but all casualised capitalism, and it is crucial to the reproduction of urban space and of masculinity. While the grossly underemployed house soup chef is too attenuated a figure of a spam job to be plausible, Raisin’s shorter fictions also enacts how these ritual acts of commensality necessarily, meanwhile provide a crucial, invisible infrastructure in which the life of the postmod- ern city is sustained, giving its citizens ‘a sense of community and belonging’. Commensality is a stark metonym of the collective processes fuelling the fluid logics of labour market – and one to watch. The Job and Male remain invaluable for examining the socioeconomic ordering of these rhythms.

4.Memory and Labor Narratives

Thus, invisible work can be regarded as a fundamental concept that links (a)sociality to urban environments and masculinity too in terms of deprived and decoupled storyworlds. The relationship between work and identity also happens to be a pretty tangled thing, and one we may not always take as much time to



untangle as we ought. While feminine becomes strongly associated with processes of social sacrifice and a pushing oneself to be seen and recognised by others, this subject position arises in heterosexual reading of Masculinity precisely in opposition to what is knowable through community; in fact the giving of labour within the familial space becomes the imperative masculine ideal where that imperative is then frequently repackaged as the commercial contractors of capital and industry. (Galavielle, 2025) showed that when women's labour is devalued or is made invisible, or when a man is 'casualised' or when his manhood has been disconnected from his labour, the individual can vanish; he is naked in non-representation. Memory upholds those constructs in their present traumata and identity-forms(p.98).

And Raisin's ghost-kitchen narratives — characters foraging for food — dig around the citational roots of cultural memory Police Food. Ghost Kitchen unfolds in the chiaroscuro of postmodern precarity, exploding the black-and-white norms of work and yearning into countless shades of gray. The recollection gives Masher's memoirs their base: not a corner of this writing is lost, and no phantasmal past dogs this memoried quest through questless hauntings. What the masculine identity turns out to be is a construct, one made by us through remembering, remembering, framing – (and I mean framing in the way that I've seen it in CERN's theory that frames the historical kernel, or essence, of labour) – the hardened, firmed, fixed moments of remembering. Also the ruin of the past to be found, the immunization against the incision of the present and at last the petrification of it and the abruption in mourning and extreme passivity.

4.1. Collective Memory in Urban Settings

The city's shadows remember the urban past (James, 2013,p.9). The whole future, reputation, and possibility of enclaves in the city are governed by these symbolically homologous shadows. The sociological shadows falling across these spaces and groups as they are situated in place echo the novel's darkness and reflect the ghost kitchen's geographical coordinates. The ghost kitchen is, in these texts and in the language of social and economic conditions at large, found in the interstices of economic change and urban morphosis. It is an actor network that de-subjectivizes the characters and renders them disempowered and exposed to infrastructure networks and economic structures in which actor and structure are entangled. First, because the ghost kitchen dynamic is different from the under-metropolitan body of the novel: it is a big-box blend of IRL(in real life) and ONL(on line life), and second, because it is very modular operation, able to dismantle and re-deploy itself with great rapidity. It is 'out there' in its spatial



physical(infrastructure) location, but it is organised in its logistical(economic) cycles out of residues passed down as the symbolical memories of the “urban memory” of the Gig City. This mode of the linking between individual and collective memory via space can be read off collective memory forms around European wars and mobilities in the19th century and narrative practices of re-enactment among migrant youths in some of the urban spaces of East London to form individual and collective selves.

4.2. Personal Narratives of Labor

Labour's assumptions and hopes cry out to you by stipulating or dictating identities that leave no -- or hardly any -- room for spontaneity. For Beckett's embrace of invisibility is striding, footprints visible in the eyes and thoughts of the manual laborer at the Ross Raisin Ghost Kitchen: an underemployed delivery driver kept to the city by nothing beyond memory, who takes on ghostly work to support generations of family members in (as it were) a gargantuan, multileveled shed just beyond town. the “film turns” the shadow of the city “inside out” narrating stories through first person narratives of urban precarity, invisibilized labour, memories and masculinities where labour is the axis around which other themes rotate (Duruz, 2011).

Ghost work is the social form of this masculinized type of invisibility as semi-peripheral. Yet tracing on previous concepts of labor as an active organizational structure of an ongoing critical practice, the five fictions stake out divergent positions on the ‘urban unconscious’, following how the memories, identities and histories of white working class men are crafted and coalesce around the simulation of a space, of a city, of a work that [don't exist]. Addressing questions of collective or personal memory and proletarian masculine identity, an essay on class and postmodern identity examines a discourse of memory, cultural and personal, in its relations to earlier manifestations of Labour and Culture. In being displaced of memory from the ontological ground and effaced from cultural imagining, Labour is deprived of a device for the arguably deniable identity (McLennan 1995, 2002) and becomes the hyper-specific diagnostic delicate enough to capture the conditions of the ‘subterranean culture’ of which it wraps around a symbolic centre (Li et al. 2023). When language as cultural critique skids away effortlessly from the world into a suspicion of phenomena because they are self-evidently ordinary, the comedies of space that a Ghost Kitchen enables your urban unconscious to seize upon to continue to maintain that nexus of visibility and labor as invisible at work. Ross Raisin's fictions offer one way in which memory and masculinity might run as screen upon which, for all the driven subject: ‘work



ghost-kitchens exert nothing more so than oneiric relation to the contemporary city.

5. Ghost Kitchens and the Covid Cultural Moment

“Ghost kitchen” is an innovative real-world workspace idea and it’s cultural one too: Such sites feature several attributes: the promise of working at home, the establishment of new regimes of urban life. The proliferation of ghost kitchen companies and networks have been hastening since Covid-19 pandemic (Duruz, 2011). And the working conditions in most ghost kitchens would seem to suggest that this is very much a precarious form of working, out there in the gig economy. Consequently they provide a neat shorthand for articulating a growing list of economic and social grievances.

5.1. Emergence of Ghost Kitchens

Scarcely have they begun with such innovations as they will have so much to absorb – so much that is unfolding right now and that will alter the 21st century and beyond. That’s the nature of this technological age — it’s redefining the process of work for every economy around the globe as well as how we live our lives. These changes have enabled forms of work, like ghost kitchens, that quietly existed in the forgotten niches of the city. This chapter examines masculinity and precarity in Ross Raisin’s Ghost Kitchen, with a focus on the manner in which memory is an ever-present point of reference among a group of sites that can be imagined as urban shadows with little social traction. Ghost kitchens are restaurants whose food is made exclusively for delivery and which work out of kitchens that serve only online customers. They had been envisioned new grounds of urban labor. Although the literature traditionally associates these kitchens with insecure low-paid labour in general, it is evident that Raisin’s stories borrow more broadly from labour representations in order to demonstrate more complicated negotiations of masculinity and memory that hint at a greater interdependence of themes. More recently, the office-worker-to-chef transformation and themes of precarity and masculinity have loomed large in evaluations of Raisin’s output (and have underscrutinised ghost kitchens as new urban work sites). This analysis foregrounds the code of astronaut-as-worker and masculinity, performing imaginaries of precariousness that continue to haunt nebulous and indistinct. Throughout a number of the author’s writings, person-centred portraits frame memory as a generative practice for rendering ghost kitchens and other ‘veiled urban operations’ (Duruz, 2011) culturally legible.



5.2. Cultural Implications of Ghost Kitchens

Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, ghost kitchens have risen in popularity during the pandemic as they have a major role in the economy of a city. The term “ghost kitchen” was first used in 2018, and the concept refers to spaces designed as restaurant kitchens that previously functioned as pubs or other venues where people gathered to eat, some since being gutted to prepare only take-out and delivery orders. While these new spaces have prompted ample research, they have 'has been little examination of their cultural dimension, and of the politics of labour implicit within them'. The new narratives of soft masculinity, precarity, and the increased migrant workforce are fast converging with the condition of having work in order to even explain this new urban formula.

The crescent of employment has been increasingly driven by the economic activity of migrants to Britain since the 1980s and led to forays into some of the lowest rungs of the Labour market, including hospitality or car washing. Its food processing and kitchen work in the shadow of migrancy is regarded as disposable activity of low' social value. Gender debates in film are focusing on such varied topics as creative white masculinities (Negra & Tasker, 2019).

6. Precarity and Economic Structures

Unemployment as Precarity – the sense of instability, insecurity and unpredictability: that a result cannot be taken for granted – is a fundamental economic condition of the present. The management of precarity is demonstrated to be multivocal and multiscalar if read through the microeconomic lexicon of the precarious subject and the macroeconomic strategy of significant actors (McRobbie 2010). By unravelling this complexity striations are revealed in the formation of the innovative narrative of Ross Raisins Ghost Kitchen where theme is not held at bay by the disrupt of reality but seeps into the text. Memory and construction play elementary functions of the unwound figures in this context, and manliness can serve as a potential container for such forms. In the figure of the enervated young male courier, then, this thematic optionality finds its ur-body, an attenuated energy that can spar with the opaque, fragmentary world of the corporation, for in this figure (more than any other) this vague social force may find a vessel (Negra, Tasker 2019).

6.1. Understanding Precarity

Precarity, at its most basic, is the state of reduced, insecure, or unassured belonging to which some groups are condemned by virtue of lack of predictability,



lack of immunity, or systemic entitlement, for standing or being (Negra & Tasker, 2019; emphasis in original); it pertains to material and psychic well-being. They play off late 80's-early 90's sociological theory, which coined the concept to track neo-liberal forms of othering and exclusion. It started to be used more widely in the 2000s, to refer, as shorthand, to young people not in education, employment or training, or to asylum seekers living in squalor. More recently, precarity refers to the rise of insecure, uncertain employment conditions such as precarious zero-hour contracts, short-term or unpaid internships, casual or informal labor, limited access to welfare benefits, under-employment, in-work poverty and temporary agency work. The word 'precariat' is used to describe approximately 22% of the UK working population.

6.2. Economic Implications of Precarious Work

Economic insecurity has been on the rise for decades. The 2008 Great Recession made it deeper and broader, running through to the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020-21 – the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) asserted in 2021 that 14.3% of its workforce is on zero-hours contracts. The growth of casualised forms of employment, casualised labour at the same time as rapid technological advance and increasing digitisation is best understood as a new variant of capitalism – a capitalism of economic insecurity and uncertainty for the many. Lutz[2011] If there is one characteristic of capitalism as the universal or world economic system one should emphasize, it is this imposition of precariousness as a norm that is from the start the norm of economic life/the global economy can be with Giorgio Agamben and his notion of bare life be read and I quote “precariousness is the figure at the origin of the irreducible”. Not only enough to be precarious though: to be precarious oneself is to be alone, and therefore irreducible – even the “security” of possible futures has to register as precarity if one can't simply extrapolate that state of affairs for others next door, or down the street, or on the other side of the world. (McRobbie, 2010)

7. Interpretations of Ross Raisin's Stories

Mark Doctor is Raisin's fullest male character and he's one that is entirely built out of memory. And as his back story (it is harrowing when he tells it) suggests, he had moderate parenting (you know: father, then mother) from a young age, and he did time in care and foster homes. There are other stories of loss – a teenager in care, a migrant worker. And these experiences are situated within a landscape of poverty, though not entirely. Memory, then, is clearly an important ally in their task of cognitive mapping: finding their way around and through the city's



networks and passages. Likewise, the anthropomorphizing optics through which the city is glimpse burnish the building to the point that it can gain a near-fatherly appearance, letting characters have a better perspective on their interaction in that other world that lies outside of them.

Raisin's Kendra's protagonist frequently relies on memory to evoke masculine subjectivity. Two prototypical figures in this enunciation have been the invocation of childhood trauma or the control/possession of overwhelming female presences (Paul Ferry, 2017). The male ghosts that men leave get to do that too sometimes.” With the possible exceptions of homosexuality and alcoholism, the past is only a disguise or a rationalization of any concessions one's career may have provoked. It's as if Ghost Kitchen is a work of literature on the subject of ghost kitchens (one that have effectively entered the mainstream global public culture), and on the subject of business models and city forms adjusting to realities of working-class life in new ways. Precarity runs through the stories, as a word to think work and its terms and relationships under, a word which is increasingly used as a term of art in describing the titled shard labour that some of us must do today in 'neoliberalism'.

7.1. In-Depth Character Analysis and Evolution

A close reading of twenty such reports in 2013 (first generation records) – the 'ghost kitchens' – The article explores the memory making and constructions of masculinities that emerge from these stories. It reveals a 'memory of labour' (Negra & Tasker, 2019) that still shapes the representation of contemporary work even in the face of intricate, non-decodable and blurry urban spaces.

A character sketch of leading men for whom city shadow is home: visible and invisible, both, to the people they touch. Each story illuminates the fragile working lives in the city, forming an extended portrait of labour in an age in which insecurity and invisibility has become the norm.

7.2. The Past Is a Foreign Country Memory and the Making of Men

The construction of personality is posited as a core construct in the examination of character and masculinity. Personal and cultural memories provide some crucial orienting points round which masculinize an intensified masculine (masculinity) (Negra & Tasker 2019). They are a memory mine that constantly serves as fertile ground for the potentiation of feelings, ideas and values, for staging quasi-fictional and biographical plots. An examination of Ross Raisin's Ghost Kitchen serves as an introduction to the nuanced construct of memory and masculinity that this article aims to investigate.



8. Intersections of Labor and Identity

What most loudly defines identity in the text is the work that does not have a name and the narrator is male. Far from that, as a “practice that transforms the world to meet registration lines” (Duruz, 2011, p. 19) labour instead operates in a way that produces subjectivity, retains its hold on the real, and builds a masculine identity in a place-specific precariat that is indexed to recollection and culturally defined through the flung disorientations of capitalist pleasure (Negra & Tasker, 2019). The short-fiction discourse of Ghost Kitchen is a process “Genesis in reverse, which never stops” of insistently re-approaching the troubled construction of masculinity, from memoir and anecdotes of patterns of personal mobility to conversations and thoughts that sketch an industrial etiology of influence and association, always to return to the memory of the uselessness of the past and of aloneness in the present..

8.1. Labor as Identity Formation

Work, time and space are mutually affecting, and the collective memory affects what we understand about our work (McRobbie, 2010). And work, too—work is for many men more than a means of getting paid: it is also a part of constructing what being an emasculated man means (and so masculinity becomes a means to navigate the lottery that is life; see Negra & Tasker, 2019). In Ross Raisin’s stories memory also plays a role in the creation of a masculine self, especially in the less secure regions of employment, where the figure at stake is always asking: what am I for? By putting forward memory as their central themes to smoke it, I then go on to examine the production of a structure of masculine self-linked to precarious urban labour, I do so by engaging with the political economy of the rapidly emerging cultural and commercial trope the ghost kitchen. Invisible labour has a double provenance. It initially emerged in the 1980s in the way feminist scholars used the concept to describe a type of labour that, although necessary for the production of a product, is concealed because it is subsumed under other tasks. The second apparently did feature a desk job in the city back east that was both monotonous and done by hand. A third (tradition/relationship/approach?) One could also trace a line of development, one that links together the combination of an invisible labour, urban shadows and the adoption of shadows as a principal metaphor for the work we do, even ephemeral work.

The concept of an urban shadow then exerts pressure for a spatial conception of labour, insisting that any notion of invisible labour must take account of place, stage. It illustrates the reciprocal shaping of invisibility and the city, and provides a



research agenda on the dialectical relationship between space as form and work style, which gives form to the knowledge-based economy as an economy of communication.

8.2. Gendered Experiences in Labor

The labour of people might be hidden in a number of ways or by a variety of mechanisms, however, invisibility is ‘produced, suffered or strategically intervened in’. It’s the inclination to work that is ‘unrecognized’ or ‘ignored’; ‘devalued, even as the pay or the honorarium goes unnoticed’ — that is the invisibility of labor. This is frequently a function of the work required, as it demands much interpreting of relations/situations, or of self. There are also a range of psychological, social and emotional manoeuvres: some are straightforward forms of withholding or minimising (disengagement; going through the motions; ‘pulling back’; ‘cover’ activities (or pretending an activity is not so difficult that it deserves effort, ‘positive resistance’; ‘making do’; or putting off – making do without what is ideal). These processes blur together to create varying shades, or flavors of invisibility. We do need to recognize not just the former's connection to a larger institution but also their volitional nature. Take the case of those identified as ‘temp’ for an example: they may want to be invisible, keep their options open. Invisible labour is then, more than ‘merely’ ‘bearing’ or ‘carrying’ work, and its invisibility does not so much rest in my individual situation but in our agency or — who knows!— protest more than in our force by a person to no other than what a person does.

The difficulty in defining invisible labour is repeated elsewhere in literature and there is certainly a tendency to use the term in a vague or vague manner, and some of the specifics about how definitions about how it has evolved and been taken up across different media. “Invisible work has been more broadly defined in the following ways: ‘work and labour that is unseen, unrecognised and unspoken.’ Very broadly, it's the 'work other people don't see and / or don't consider as work.' then more specifically ' those forms of labour which are hidden or neglected; activities which are related to the production of commodities, but ignored and devalued, or paid very little, if paid at all ' . (Toxtli et al. 2021) Any such attempt should however take seriously the heterogeneity and range of interest in invisible labour – from contemporary anthropology, architecture, cultural and literary studies, urban sociology, media studies and science and technology studies; to gender studies and postcolonial theory and feminist economics; to labour law, work psychology and management – not least regarding labour that is ‘remained unacknowledged or devalued’, or which, in spite of producing ‘a future benefit’,



‘goes unnoticed within the [present] moment’. Invisible labour is ‘no[t] a pure [post-industrial] fantasy, an abstract or theoretical (ideological) category, but [it is] a practice, which can be located in post-industrial societies’ and its ‘conceptual elasticity can be decomposed into various forms, relations and strategies that appear contradictory at first’.

9. Postmodern Theories of Labor

Invisibility work has been re-charged and re-articulated in postmodern terms, primarily through the reliance on the concept of immaterial labor (McRobbie, 2010).

9.1. Cultural Studies Approaches

Cultural studies and a postmodern analysis helps to understand Ross Raisin’s Ghost Kitchen. The word in gastronomic media discourse: A further culture studies oriented perspective on entrepreneur(ship) and white masculinity in gastronomy. Post-modern and arguably “qualitative” approaches would draw methodology analysis distinctions along these lines of the interlocking and contesting field of cultural values within which episodic interaction occurs.

The joy of a good looking kitchen in the white man re-territorialization is a way to push back on the culture of neoliberal capitalism and its saleable other was in a multi-racial world. It is the travel-and-food that is the ultimate sign of control of the machinery, or rather, autonomy and self-determination. A white man as connoisseur (and often also as manufacturer) of ethnicity is something they all have in common. Movies like Chef and shows like Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives do nothing but reinforce enterprise culture, to not offer a counterpoint to why no one pays taxes —because no one would? — or why the white middle class is so fragile. These men, of course, personally cash in on a transactional stretch of experience — one often rendered ethnicized authenticity: (Phillipov, 2022) justified that the process was spiritually healing, the way to a more expansive wholeness. Cooking - eating what's been lovingly prepared brings tradition and bounty; dining - eating with others brings company and good cheer. Culinary entertainment perversely converts a national culture in which promises of plenty are rubbed raw against economic precarity into one where the thin veneer of plenty over want is stretched to include, in addition to the spoonful of sugar, a whole package of sugar. The rhetoric of white male dispossession is the phoenix that rises from the ashes of the Great Recession. While the rhetoric of recession did impact African American men, the fear of Whiteness loss continues to resonate in „End of Men“ talk,



reminiscent of stories of reclamation and solace. Because any particular instance of state violence reveals tenuousness about Black men's mobility, those texts take pains to hyperlink mobility to whiteness within narratives of folksy uplift. The ability to sample different ethnoracial cultures, seemingly hardwired on the constitutive narratives of cuisine, reflects a media culture that commodifies differences but does not register imbalances. Post-race talk thereby re guarantees to white men (and women) the hierarchies of American society (Negra & Tasker, 2019).

10. Methodological Approaches

Candidates should question useful approaches to explore 'what work cannot be seen' as it plays in to ideas of memory and masculinity in a delicate environment. In Ghost Kitchen, the discourses of labor, restraint, and capital social order are made apparent through repetition of elements, character placement. Intimate, thematic narratological examination of men's internalisation of trauma reveals their complex and contradictory tales of a version of masculinity being conjured up and/or dismantled constitutively within the symbolic structure of scenarios and plots. 'To this end, the dual status of men as precarious yet resilient is a paradox and thus an empirical location from which to explore the relationship between precarization of labour and the post-patriarchal othering of the male worker. This framework is complemented by a textual analysis of the representations of memory, masculinities, and double disavowal that fictionalize and sustain the more general themes considered in Ross Raisin's short story series. (McRobbie, 2010) explained that these narratives work to challenge a sustained focus on masculinities and precarious work, and the cultural weight attached to invisible labour in late capitalist and urban worlds(p.69). (Negra & Tasker, 2019) explained that memory construction is one of the key narrative strategies used to communicate the evacuated territories of worker experience. The final two modes, chronology and linear representation, are counter-posed to interval and evinced by breaking the sequence of time, queried in terms of justifying the open endedness and tentativeness of art and cultural form.

11. Implications for Future Research

In Ghost Kitchen, Ross Raisin offers a flank of labor and modern masculinity, presented by an examination of the complexities of a tale that is stuffed and refashioned by memory. The ghost kitchen, also called a branded delivery-only restaurant, is central to the tale and symbolic of the new urban labor frontier. Three futures guide the study. To begin with, the category of invisible labour has been



presented and developed historically to serve as basis of connection to urbanization and labour subsequently. The city shadows(second), that is the spatial metaphor for what constitutes present day urban life is unpacked through ghost kitchens as spatial ghosts reading partly against the grain of the concept of invisible labor to follow the cautionary tale of how spatial maneuvers mediate contrasts in the visibility of work. And thirdly masculinity in precarity work, explored through constructs of male identity in precarity; an issue that commentates back to issues of invisibility as spatial and labouring manifestations. For it is memory per se, in the means of framing labor experience, which the study pursues, in order to trace how personal and social memories have intersected and informed identity formation. A dominant interpretive framework for the condition of urban life in the present is that of precarity as defining the economic status of the 21st-century (McRobbie, 2010,p61).

12.Conclusion:

In Ghost Kitchen, Ross Raisin Investigates the Overlapping Strata of Memory, Masculinity, and the Usually Unseen Labor That Accumulates Urban Precarity and Collides with Our Conceptions of Modern-Day Life. Trail-blaze along with cognitive scientist Elena Esposito's call for a 'cybernetic' model for social theory that prioritises the role of observation and feedback in social systems. From there, the stories in Ross Raisin's Ghost Kitchen subtly discuss precarious labor and the construction of masculinity, blending into this meditation on forgetting and remembering. Invisibility plays a central role in the story-world of Raisin. Laborers clock in under financial shadows, like those under urban shadows; memory and masculinity each weighs in like a spectral footprint.

Invisible work is not a nice thing that we can talk about in the abstract. It has taken the form, since industrial capitalism came into being, of that geography through which men in their person daily pass, room to room, house to house and street to street, according to him; but only by county, work place, suburb if so be Norman drawer to hide in by me, countersinking at need in the Jiffy box of the working day.

Urban shadow lands translate into fertile mnemonic conceit. The concept of "urban shadows" summons the shadowing and yet what is rich within the spaces of the city, real and metaphorical, that intermix the reflections of the company with the glances of the vast diaspora of displaced workers who fill the waiting time of transit hubs, container yards and warehouse tills. For members of the



organisationalist school cultural memory is an institutionally crafted entity that endures through agreement and unity on the part of contemporaries.

As he works outside, labourer gives much more physical work than his salaried work-mate. The body is made a sepulcher, in which the absence of known marks and seasons is staked out. An abandoned monument or a plaintive chant comes on, but there's simply no room for it to land this memory of the past encaged again by the beat. Masculinity remains a problem in these cloistered worlds of precarious work, too. The visibility of the male body in zero-hours precarity reveals a pressing co-textual tension where undergraduate men perform masculinity in relation to hegemonic norms. “Angry young men” have, like low pay-low prospect tracks, been almost as big a problem for Britain as they have proved to be in such unlikely domains as athletics, parliamentary politics, and ‘soft power’ in the literary imagination of our times.

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