

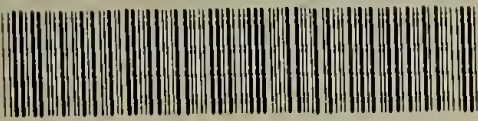


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"WEBS OF SIGNIFICANCE"
ITALIAN TEXTILE LABOR AND THE FABRIC OF SOCIETY
1750-1850

A Thesis Presented

by

DOROTHY M. DUMONT

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Department of History

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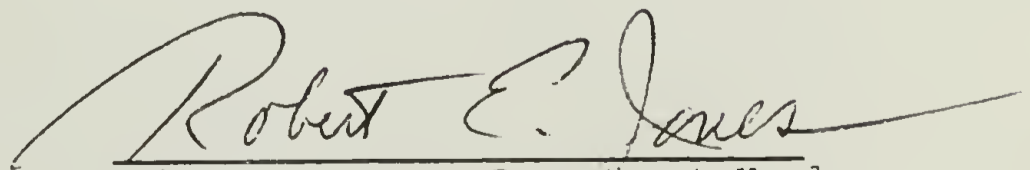
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Weavers are a race of men on their own, distinct from other workers and artisans; I feel a great sympathy for them ... the other with the brooding, almost dreamy, somnambulist's look is the weaver.¹

A simmering July passed in exploring the Archivio di Stato di Roma provided the groundwork for this study. The collection of documents on textile production there at first offered distressingly little direction. Gradually, however, the very lack of centrality assumed its own meaning and dynamics. The study took two lines: first, of revealing the vast range of the population with interests in, or directly involved with, the production of textiles in the pre-industrial Papal States; second, of testing certain models frequently encountered in European labor historiography on the basis of those findings. The intent is not to inflict upon the reader some sort of post-modern disintegration of convenient conceptual categories, but to explore some of the limitations of those categories. Similarly, the project does not necessarily move the figure of the laborer from the periphery to the very heart of historical study, but rather regards that figure as one integral thread in the pattern of the

¹Vincent Van Gogh, quoted in Jürgen Kuczynski, The Rise of the Working Class (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p.26.

social fabric. By following that single thread, one eventually crosses the dynamics of many others.

The textile industry remains a favorite topic among scholars of the English and Continental industrial revolutions. But there are less technical attractions about textile production as an historical subject: the aesthetic appeal or symbolic value of some of its products; the complexity of global interaction; the involvement of every stratum of society as producer, consumer, or both. The reader might be a little more skeptical over the choice of the Papal States as the chosen field for study, given how little was 'going on' there in comparison with the rest of Europe. In fact, a closer look at the territories of the Holy See reveals fertile ground for this type of historiographic inquiry - if, in fact, the historian needs to justify an inquiry into a region not undergoing cataclysmic change. There may be as much to learn from a backwards Rome as a Manchester. The slowness of her industrialization makes it easier to explore the interaction of Braudelian systems with years of abrupt change; it also offered the laborers themselves different possibilities from those accompanying earlier, rapid industrialization. Though the emphasis is largely on Rome herself (partly because so many policies implemented on the textile industries only applied to the city proper), the study offers occasional comparisons with Bologna, which held a special place in the Papal territories by virtue of her comparative independence.

The century between 1750 and 1850 witnessed the slow but definitive move towards the threshold of a modern Italian mentality in both politics and economics, among not only the leaders of the time but all residents of the states. Unless one can believe that the plunge into Unification, industrialization, and unionization was utterly disjointed from the preceding decades, inhabitants of the Papal States did not have to be fortunetellers to sense that the undercurrents of their daily life were swept up in the whirlwind of physiocratic reform spreading across Europe. The period, furthermore, constitutes a substantial span before and after the dissolution of the guild system. As one of the most powerful symbols of a new era of labor, this event is a touchstone for before-after comparisons.

The following chapters address a variety of considerations raised by the conjunction of this time, place, and activity. Chapter two provides background in some of the 'mechanics' of the textile industry before industrialization, and explores the viability of the category as a tool in labor history. Chapter three attempts to balance continuity and change in the state's policies on the textile industry. Chapters four and five examine the various strata of textile laborers, and raise the question of just who the 'average' or unspecified laborer of much labor history really represents. One question underlying these two chapters is how far to subdivide standard categories: is it more meaningful to agree that there was a common state of miseria of nearly all textile laborers and let it go at that, or are the differences between the rural and the urban weaver, between

the silkspinner and the woolcarder, between the male and the female laborer too significant to be overlooked? Chapter six attempts to place the laborer back within the context of wider economic and political history by judging his/her role within capitalism's new guise and the political stirrings of centralization. Finally, chapter seven makes some comparisons between the Papal states and other parts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe.

The state of Italian labor historiography is constantly under siege, albeit in a mild and indulgent form. While recent works on the subject have begun to emulate English and French historiography, Italian labor history in general has remained stuck in the leadership oriented research of the 1960s, and seldom merges with recent trends in social history. The starting point for both labor and economic historians continues to be the economic histories and Storia del lavoro of Luigi Dal Pane.

How to treat the guild system remains one of the more controversial issues in Italian labor studies. Social histories of the guilds are rare indeed, though few historians ignore the question altogether. There are two camps regarding the guild and its laborers. One maintains that guild membership until the end carried sufficient benefits even for non-masters to make its abolition disastrous for the laborer. The other camp finds its most recent champion in Stephen Epstein, whose Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe presents the guild as a mere tool in the hands of masters and merchants, even in the medieval heyday

of the system. Even less attention has been paid to an historical subject that might clarify the above debate, the actual abolition of the guilds. An early venture is Dal Pane's Il tramonto delle corporazioni in Italia, which is merely a collection of documents and excerpts of economic writings. Massimo Costantini's recent L'Albero della libertà economica: Lo scioglimento delle corporazioni veneziane offers a far more substantial treatment of the subject, but even it does not delve into the import of the existence or dissolution of the guilds in the lives and mentalities of laborers. The present study is thus heavily, albeit reluctantly, reliant upon works on European guilds in general.

On the other hand, an increasing amount of work is being done on the 'social marginals' of the Papal States; Stuart Woolf's studies of the Italian poor, Vincenzo Paglia's "Pietà dei carcerati", Timori e carità: I poveri nell'Italia moderna (Giorgio Politi, ed.), and a spate of articles on the recipients of charity and/or state-provided employment contribute to an understanding of the lower classes. Several studies of the Italian labor movement include sections on its pre-Unification origins: Amintore Fossati's Lavoro in Italia and Fossati's Lavoro e produzione in Italia remain in wide usage. Nicola La Marca's work on industry and economic reform and the first of Giulio Trevisiano's three volumes on the labor movement are also helpful. On textiles, Carlo Poni is the name most often encountered.

Two points must be made about the nature of the evidence used in this study. First, the quantitative evidence now available

does not seem to hold up under closer scrutiny - not because census-takers or compilers are suspect, but because of the nature of pre-industrial employment. High rates of fluctuation, both random and seasonal, 'hidden labor' (illegal or otherwise unregistered), simultaneous or alternating employment all throw the seemingly precise numbers into doubt, as chapter five will reveal. The second point regards quantitative evidence. A substantial amount has been drawn from general data on the Italian states or Europe in general, rather than sources dealing specifically with the Papal States. This problem will be further addressed in chapter 7. The speculative nature of certain passages will hopefully be accepted as exploratory surgery, rather than blind mutilation of existing data.

CHAPTER 2

INDUSTRY, HONOR, ART

The sturdier wagons contained fat, pipe-smoking men.... The leanest, meanest lot were those with carts pulled by themselves or by dogs.... The women struggled alongside their men, heavy ropes cutting into their shoulders. But prosperous or poor, they all shared one item¹ - a polished wooden loom strapped to their cart or wagon.

Historians are still notorious for understating the Islamic influence on medieval cultural and material development in western Europe. The Italian peninsula in particular rose to European predominance by learning from, then supplanting, Islamic luxury textiles.² Local setbacks notwithstanding, the peninsula as a whole retained its hold on the European market until the late fourteenth-century challenge of cheaper English and Flemish goods. The second blow fell with the ascension of Louis XIV, who prompted the development of a competitive French industry, adding the Versailles mystique to fabric along with food and culture. The Italian textile market dwindled more rapidly after that, not least because Italian nobles themselves bought into the new French mystique; a contemporary observed that "Italian princes and aristocrats do not believe they are well-dressed

¹I.J. Singer, The Brothers Ashkenazi (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1985), pp.3-4.

²See Maureen Mazzaoui, The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages 1100-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, . 1981).

unless their fabrics are imported from Paris, Lyons, or Tours."³
In the seventeenth century, too, the Italian industries lost their lucrative Turkish markets to English, Dutch, and French competition. By the dawn of the modern era, the Italian states were industrially second-rate; textiles, furthermore, were the only industry to fail to recover after the 'seventeenth-century crisis.' Though Bologna had been successful in establishing international markets, the Papal States in general could not even look back on past glories for inspiration or consolation. Rome herself never rivalled Luccan, Florentine, or Sicilian production, except in a tiny market of ultra-luxury, especially ecclesiastical, silks.

Italy's late industrialization has accumulated a stock of standard explanations. Contemporaries largely blamed guild resistance to new technological - and by extension, ideological - progress. Whether or not their analysis was valid, the Italian states were late to import even rudimentary developments - the Jacquard loom, the spinning jenny, the flying shuttle. In an age when a fabbrica was still likely to resemble a workshop more than a modern factory, technology and its accompanying reorganization of labor were only slowly entering the public consciousness. Neither artisanal nor proto-industrial production, after all, relied on such methods. Like children eyeing new toys, budding entrepreneurs were just beginning to wax enthusiastic over the presumed virtues of such innovations during the period

³Antonino Santangelo, A Treasury of Great Italian Textiles (New York: H. Abrams, 1981), p.165.

in question.⁴ The Reverenda Camera Apostolica (hereafter RCA), in fact, was granting monopolies for domestic and especially foreign inventions. An 1819 grant to make "una Macchina atta a rompere e lavorare la canapa ed il lino" praised the enterprise for the social utility of its inventiveness; almost fifty years earlier a Frenchman was granted a similar monopoly on the condition that he largely employ subjects of the Holy See.⁵ From the beginning, technological innovation was monitored for its social repercussions.

To speak of one textile industry can be misleading; the cotton, wool, linen, and silk trades frequently had only the basics in common with one another: both market orientation and the organization and conditions of labor were open to wide variance. Whatever the origin (cotton, silkworm, sheep, or flax) and market of the fiber, though, all textiles shared most of the steps in production (some twenty six in all), giving rise to division of labor to an extent experienced in few, if any, other industries. The major steps included cleaning the fiber, spinning and weaving and their respective preparatory tasks, fulling, and finishing, including dyeing. The diversity of expertise, materials, and tools required and the time-consuming nature of certain steps minimized the likelihood of any one working unit conducting the

⁴"Machines improve the physical and moral condition of a nation, since they are the perennial sources of wealth." P. Pigozzi, "Le macchine," Il Commercio 30 (26 aprile 1835), p.117.

⁵Archivio di Stato di Roma (hereafter ASR) Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 14, fasc. 1; Ibid., b. 13, fasc. 1.

entire operation from start to finish (hence the overwhelming role of entrepreneurship). Certain processes were more likely than others to engage the labor of women and children. Preparatory stages in particular relied almost exclusively upon such labor, while men dominated the finishing stages. It is important to recognize, however, that such categorization was only nominal in reality. In both town and country, labor patterns were far more fluid than that, one obvious example being that of male agricultural laborers who during the slow winter season would spin alongside their wives and children. Until the decline of family-oriented labor, 'the laborer' was only a nominal unit, often trading off places with another family member, and always working as part of the family unit, rather than as an individual wage-earner.

Similarly, location was a key line of division in industry, but one subject to fluid boundaries. The eternal European tensions between town and hinterland were fully played out in the papal territories. Yet like any symbiotic relationship, this was one less of outright hostility than of a species of love-hate relationship. The failure to prevent proto-industrial (i.e. rural) production was a stark contrast to the late-medieval forays into the countryside to break up looms operating there. Simultaneous with the removal of most production from city to countryside was the gathering of workers together in makeshift factories. In the early nineteenth century, there were 30 private enterprises

registered in Rome, of which only two had more than 25 looms,⁶ compared with the hundreds gathered under one roof in England by then. The limited size, however, did not curtail laborers' resentment of the new organization: like the nascent mechanical changes and the libertà di lavoro so praised by reformists, factories were greeted at their very birth as disruptive to workers' self-control and independence.

Such enterprises were an indication that producers were slowly becoming more concretely tied in with international currents of economy and thus thought.⁷ Laborers in remote rural regions found themselves producing for non-local markets, making them far more vulnerable to fluctuations in international economics or politics. Fledgling technology also made uneven development a major factor, especially in spinning-weaving relations. Since traditional production required about six spinners per weaver, new technology in either process created a dramatic, if brief, flowering of employment in the other, and equally dramatic unemployment in its own.

The stock explanations for Italy's late industrialization are intensified when applied to the Papal States, which were backward even by Italian standards. Aspiring capitalists constantly bewailed papal protectionism and a reputedly uncooperative

⁶ Renzo De Felice, Aspetti e momenti della vita economica di Roma e del Lazio nei secoli XVIII e XIX (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1965), pp.228-30.

⁷ Irina Turnau, "The Organization of the European Textile Industry from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century," Journal of European Economic History 17 (1988), 583-602.

population ("Imagine a people, one third of which is composed of priests, one third of people who do not work, and one third of people who do nothing at all" is the famed injunction - in which many Milanese, for that matter, continue to believe). In fact, the bottom line of Rome's developmental problems was that she was essentially a tourist town.⁸

In an age ever more interested in mass than ultra-luxury production, Rome seemed doomed to fall behind. She produced the usual range of products, but complaints of poor quality abounded more so than in most other European territories. Of the factories operating in the early nineteenth century, for example, the wares of sixteen were rated as buono; three were mediocre, one "assai irregolare," and eight were flat-out cattivo.⁹ As a reflection of the papal government's interest in nurturing the textile industries, the majority of the city's largest opifici produced or worked with textiles.¹⁰ Near the middle of the century, even her few industries began to fail rapidly, the wool factories falling from seventy-three in 1824 to thirty-eight in 1846, and

⁸ The agricultural situation was equally bleak; see Carlo Travaglini, Analisi di un'agitazione contadina nella campagna romana all'epoca della Restaurazione (Roma: Istituto di Storia Economica, 1981), esp. chapter 1.

⁹ De Felice, pp. 228-30.

¹⁰ Nicola La Marca finds that of the 49 largest firms in Rome in 1827, 26 were lanifici, five produced cotton cloth, one was a tintoria, and one produced silk - a total of 33. (Saggio di una ricerca storicoeconomica sull'industria e l'artigianato a Roma dal 1750 al 1849 (Padova: Casa Editrice Dott. A. Milano, 1969), Appendix 1.)

employment plunging from 12,000 to 2,000 in fewer years still.¹¹ The silk industry, small as it had been, began suffering even earlier, during the Napoleonic years. Bologna, which had been far more successful than Rome, grew closer to her ranking by the mid-eighteenth century, having fallen victim to severe de-industrialization.

Foreign competition appears as a major concern in petitions to raise duties or prohibit certain imports outright; the Collegio dell'Arte della Lana complained in 1759 that their rivals, the Vaccinari, were undermining Rome's economy - "Because these people had already declared that they did not want to lower their prices for the Merchants of Rome, but rather for Foreigners, one was forced to pretend that the Buyer was a Foreigner..." to add the moral weight of local business to their claim.¹² Non-material considerations, after all, continued to prevail in the textile industry, though cloth itself had long lost the symbolic, sometimes mystical role it still plays in some non-Western societies. Weiner and Schneider attribute this to changes in the economy:

Capitalist production ... reordered the symbolic potential of cloth in two interrelated ways. First, altering the process of manufacture, capitalism eliminated the opportunity for weavers and dyers to infuse their products with spiritual value and to reflect and pronounce on analogies between production and reproduction. Second, by encouraging the growth of fashion ...¹³

¹¹Domenico Demarco, Tramonto dello Stato Pontificio: Il papato di Gregorio XVI (Giulio Einaudi editore, 1949), pp.133, 80.

¹²ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri, b. 18.

¹³Annette Weiner and Jane Schneider, eds., Cloth and Human Experience (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1989), p.4.

The early relegation of textiles to an almost strictly utilitarian emphasis is not to say, however, that they ceased to be a theatre of aesthetics and social complexities. Stripped of their metaphysical qualities, textiles retained their artistic and sociological overtones until this period; hence the presence of medieval and early modern clothing regulations, or the medieval practice of knotting sleeves up to exhibit one's wealth in superfluous cloth. Instead, cloth was starting to draw meaning within the context of the new consumerism, reflecting the slowly growing 'democratization' of daily life as the lower classes became ever more able, much to the dismay of the elite, to dress comparatively elegantly. Fashion became a dual tool - the consumer used it to proclaim a role or status in society, the entrepreneur to simultaneously control weavers and keep one step ahead of competitors.

Those engaged in the making of cloth embodied its implications. Honor and dignity were burning issues to clothmakers, constantly visible in a hundred small ways: their documents always refer to their long-standing legal heritage; punishment for defective cloth included its public and shameful burning 'in mezzo della piazza.'¹⁴ Such pride was taken up and reflected by non-manual laborers as well; the Guynet firm declared that in the interests of both the factory and the RCA, "None will be received as laborers

¹⁴ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri, b. 18.

but intelligent persons."¹⁵ Even more explicitly, guilds maintained a close watch over the moral, conduct of their members.

Finally, it should be remembered that an aspect of changing production patterns often overlooked by historians is the separation of art from industry. Producers of the finer cloths must have suffered two-fold as the century progressed, for even as their labor became a commodity, so did their art. The creation of cloth, after all, could be a personal and creative process, and not simply a way to earn a living. Pre-industrial textile production could not be reduced to the simple mechanics of warp and weft; the cultural and social implications of cloth, its making, and its makers were intrinsic parts of the industry.

¹⁵ Marina D'Amelia, "Intraprendenti, lavoratori e Camera Apostolica: Potere e protesta in una fabbrica del '700," Movimento operaio e socialista 2 (1979), p.22.

CHAPTER 3

POPES, PROFITEERS, AND PAUPERS: GOVERNMENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TEXTILES

"There is no sovereign more venerated by his subjects than the Pope, and less feared and obeyed."¹

Nominally governed by the same body, Bologna's political character was substantially different from that of Rome. The northern city's comparative independence from the region's capital had historically set her off from the rest of the Papal territory, a condition that was heightened by her longer occupation by French forces. Bologna's administration was more secular as well; the Bolognese Legate was far less a presence than her Senate was. Both cities were covered by the substantial umbrella of papal protectionism - of all Europe, second only to the Kingdom of Two Sicilies - but Rome herself emphasized the administrative distance between the two cities by implementing policies applicable only to the capital city. Between this preferential treatment and Bologna's own deindustrialization, the two had drawn closer together in terms of economic status.

The central government - under both the pope and the Napoleonic regime - maintained an ongoing interest in textile production. Medieval attention to textiles had largely stemmed from the fact that they were one of few ways to get rich quick, and this line

¹Franco Valsecchi, L'Italia nel Seicento e nel Settecento (Torino: Tipografia Sociale Torinese, 1967), p.679.

of thinking continued to motivate governmental involvement in textiles. An attempt to create a Roman industry was only part of their reasoning, though; textile production was also a means of social stabilization and control.

Papal involvement took two forms - industrial assistance and direct employment - which between them established industrial contact between the highest echelons of government and the entire range of the laboring and business populations. Industrial assistance took one of two forms: actual partnership, or less direct service in the form of legal, administrative, or outright financial aid. In either form, the goals were the same: the promotion of local economic growth, and the persuasion of employers to retain their workers in hard times - a sort of trickle-down approach to social stability. Among the best-documented cases of the state as actual business partner are the Guynet and de Pellegrin enterprises, established in 1776 and 1769 respectively.² Both were typically Roman in their dependence on foreign skill and in the presence of the state as a very active partner. In both cases the RCA, acting under the aegis of the Pope, did not simply finance the company and step back. It continued to be involved in the administration of the firms - particularly labor disputes and discipline - and indeed made the final decisions regarding the firms' very existence. In rhetoric at least, it was the state's duty to be so involved. "If every branch of industry contributes

²The two have been well documented in two articles; see D'Amelia, *op. cit.*, and Eugenio Lo Sardo, "The Cotton Industry and Public Intervention in Rome in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," *Textile History* 20 (1989), pp.79-90.

to the general good of the State, and for that merits being animated and protected by the government," an 1809 document notes, one that provides necessities as well as luxuries deserves even more attention.³ The moral duties of industry and government were reciprocal, and each in turn was to remember the public good at all times.

More frequently, the papal government entered the workings of the industry without such a formal business partnership. The implementation of extensive tariffs was vital to local producers, who would have stood little chance in competition with markedly superior imports (the lifting of this protection immediately after Unification, in fact, largely caused the industrial backwardness of the South in modern times).⁴ The government also issued monopolies to local producers and supported mechanical innovations. At times, governmental assistance was even more direct, as during the drastic 1790s in Bologna, when the Senate financially supported textile firms to avoid further mass layoffs.⁵

While beneficial to local industry, these policies infringed upon standard guild privileges, which claimed authority over production and labor. Not that interventionism in and of itself was antithetical to the guild system; both were fundamental tenets of the old moral economy. But by the mid-eighteenth century, the

³ASR Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 14, fasc. 1.

⁴Martin Clark, Modern Italy 1871-1982 (London: Longman, 1984), p.24.

⁵Giuseppe Guidicini, Diario bolognese dall'anno 1776 al 1818 (Bologna: Società Tipografica, 1886).

the state was challenging guild autonomy on some of its touchiest issues: hiring, job training, granting monopolies. (The fact that many privativa recipients were foreigners did not help matters.) Guilds continued to call upon the state to intervene or mediate in business (even, for that matter, after they were officially abolished), but the latter increasingly acted against their interests as the century progressed.

Despite implementing economic policies that countered guild regulations, the pope hesitated to make any definitive statement regarding the guilds until 1801. In that year Pius VII issued the first of three motu proprio that progressively abolished guilds in his territories. The first two of these decrees were primarily directed against foodstuffs corporations; the third, of 1806, swept away all remaining guilds. The relationship between this legislation and the Loi Le Chapelier is unclear, but given that most of the other Italian states had abolished their guilds in the 1770s, there is no reason to assume that the pope's decision was solely the result of the French occupations. Here, too, the comparative independence of Bologna was visible; her guilds had been abolished and their goods confiscated in 1797. The primary difference between the two cities in this case was the conflict between Bologna's guilds and her aristocratic city government.⁶

In Rome, the 1806 dissolution of the guilds was apparently less definitive than the pope had intended. Some corporations

⁶Carlo Poni, "Norms and Disputes: The Shoemakers' Guild in Eighteenth-Century Bologna," Past and Present 123 (May 1989), p.82.

in fact continued to operate far into the century, though they did so as isolated pockets, rather than as units in a network. They provided at least rudimentary health and unemployment assistance, especially before the rise of mutual aid societies, and continued some of their public functions (funerals, feasts, and charity, for example). The inefficiency of the government may have been exacerbated in this case by the general uncertainty of a functional distinction between corporazioni, as economic-religious entities, and confraternite, as purely religious organizations.⁷ Even aside from such confusion, however, there were cases of corporate bodies more openly existing between 1806 and 1852. An extensive dialogue between the University of Young Woolworkers and the Society of "Signori Sacerdoti Secolari," circa 1835, involves the church of S. Lucia alle Botteghe Oscure.⁸ In 1824, the University had filed a request to be officially recognized as a corporate body.⁹ Since this petition was rejected, their claim to legitimacy was quite tenuous (a point repeatedly made by the Sacerdoti Secolari). The University's status may or may not have been technically valid - e.g., was it specifically exempted from the 1806 decree, as it claimed? - but the very fact that the "Young Woolworkers" presented themselves as a

⁷ This uncertainty may also have contributed to historians' speculation that confraternities were but disguises for workers' associations when the latter had been banned.

⁸ ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri, b. 18.

⁹ Elio Lodolini, "Il tentativo di Pio IX per la ricostituzione delle corporazioni (1852)," Rassegna storica del Risorgimento . XXXIX:1 (1952), p.667.

corporation in an official appeal to the state indicates that some guilds still operated quite openly.

This situation continued until 1852, when Pius IX issued another decree permitting, indeed urging, the re-establishment of guilds in Rome.¹⁰ This decree was met with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. There is some debate as to whether the new guilds were designed to promote a general moral regeneration, as Pius claimed, or whether they were intended foremost to forestall other, more militant and/or subversive workers' coalitions. Pius's recognition of the moral imperative of such a move was actually quite logical, considering the possibly moral but certainly educational abyss left by the guilds. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the general concern with controlling the working classes in post-1848 Rome. So few occupations responded to the offer anyway that it almost seems a moot point.

Neither the 1806 nor the 1852 decree, then, was as definitive as their language implied. Governmental textile policies changed dramatically between 1750 and 1852, but that alteration is more readily visible in reactions to various petitions than in these two major programs. Both the attempt to deny guilds public legitimacy, and the attempt to reinstate them in public life, were less effective than the cumulative effect of minor but ongoing policies.

¹⁰See Lodolini, op. cit., and Bartolomeo Sorge, "Documenti pontifici agli inizi del movimento operaio," La civiltà cattolica 117:2782 (21 maggio 1966), pp.335-349.

The authorities in both cities dealt directly with the laboring poor as well. As mentioned above, the government would intervene in times of crisis to prevent massive layoffs. In a number of guises, the state would even more directly employ the needy, an immense number of whom were provided with textile labor - a testament to the wide spread of the skills involved, no matter how roughly executed ("There is no place in which one cannot introduce factories of cloth," advises a business journal).¹¹ The matter-of-fact suggestion to use such factories to alleviate widespread miseria suggests that textile work was already the obvious choice for such a program; such was the logic, for instance, behind the "casa d'industria" in Bologna during the Napoleonic period, which provided textile work for local unfortunates. The state provided textile work in other institutional settings as well. Of the 34 fabbriche di drappi in Rome proper at the end of the eighteenth century, four were public, whose production made up in quantity what it definitely lacked in quality. The workshops at S. Michele a Ripa, the Conservatori Pio e dei Mendicanti, and the Ospizio dello Santo Spirito not only provided fairly gainful employment for orphans, mendicants, the aged, and other unfortunates; they clothed the inhabitants, prison inmates, and the armed forces for a good deal less than anyone else would.

But these programs were all designed for the 'sub-standard' laborer. The social mentality, reflected in the legislation of

¹¹Il Caffè, 1794.

the RCA, knew to pity the young orphan, the single woman, the aged or infirm; their place was well writ in the old social order. But the laborer suddenly left jobless through the sheer force of economic trends was not yet incorporated into that order; no safety nets yet existed for the able-bodied, skilled worker whose position was lost due to recession. The guilds, after all, had theoretically functioned to prevent just that from happening. Dal Pane points out that the state helped those who were chronically unable to work, but "took no interest in the unfortunate laborer left destitute by economic crises."¹² Work provided by the state was, after all, not merely Christian charity, but a form of social control as society increasingly feared and rejected the poorer classes.

The French years are often presented as the definitive transition into a new era in the Papal States. The structure of the textile industry was altered substantially under the Napoleonic regime, by both the French emphasis on cottons and the sudden and drastic unemployment among textile labor, especially the northern silkweavers. The ideological impact of the French years is more difficult to determine. Dal Pane suggests that the French Revolution was responsible for awakening (possibly importing) class consciousness in the Italian states¹³; for the poor, Woolf sees the period as marking a "transition in mentalità, in social attitudes toward poverty and charity, from the hostile rationality

¹² Luigi Dal Pane, Storia del lavoro in Italia dagli inizi del secolo XVIII al 1815 (Milano: Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1944), p.257.

¹³ Ibid., p.305.

of much enlightenment criticism to the Catholic philanthropy of the restoration."¹⁴ The abolition of the guilds, too, fell within the same time frame. Yet physiocratic reform had been evident long before 1796; just as in France herself (where corporations continued through the nineteenth century despite the Loi Le Chapelier), periodization by Jacobin years is relative to the underlying continuity of papal poor and labor policies.

To a certain degree, the textile industries can be used as a barometer of the political climate in the Papal States. More so than other industries, it was a forum for questions of charity and social control. In this respect, governmental involvement in textiles continued to play out pre-industrial conjunctions of finances and the social question, through 1852.

¹⁴Stuart J. Woolf, The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: Methuen, 1986), p.130.

CHAPTER 4

GUILDS AND GUILD LABOR

The laborer inscribed in the Guild did not represent an atom, an isolated unit in the society in which he lived, but in him was realized the body, at times extremely potent, of the association.¹

From its medieval inception, the guild was an immensely complex but well-ordered web of relations, rules, and ideology. This web became, by the one hundred years in question, more of a confused tangle than a coherent pattern. There was no standard textile guild format; aside from a basic separation by the fiber used, organization varied nearly on a case-to-case basis. The Arte della Lana included a vast range of people involved with the working of wool, but only a merchant could be a member "in the true sense of the word."² The Università di Tessitori da Seta (the silkweavers' guild) was a craft guild that contained other processes as well;² the Università de Giovani Lavoranti Lanari is an example of a general laborers' guild. There were also umbrella organizations aside from the civil authorities; witness a Collegio, which could contain several arti, or the Assunteria of Bologna, designed to facilitate intra- and interguild relations (but which

¹Dal Pane, p.204.

²Here is an example of the corresponding confraternity diverging from the guild. The silkweavers of Rome joined the confraternity of the linenweavers, "to which they felt tied by a greater affinity of interests," even though silk was a luxury and linen a low-class cloth. Antonio Martini, Arti e mestieri e fede nella Roma dei Papi (Bologna: Casa Editrice Licinio Cappelli, 1965), p.187.

ended up conspiring against the guilds altogether in face of encroachment by the Bolognese Senate).³

Within the archetypal guild, composition was theoretically well-defined; by our period, relations were rather more confusing. The system as a whole and all its categories had evolved (or mutated, depending on one's point of view) substantially from their medieval prototypes. Particularly in the textile industries, the traditional ranks of master, journeyman, and garzone had turned into four discernible categories, adding merchants to the hierarchy. Thus the 1759 Statuti dell'Arte della Lana distinguished a "Merchant, that actually exercises our Art"⁴ from one who merely bought, sold, and distributed fiber and cloth. Master artisans were visibly disaffected by the encroachment of proto-industrialization and urban capitalism. With the removal of most or all entrepreneurial functions to the hands of the merchants, many masters gradually became little more than salariati, while a handful - despite the best efforts of the guild ethos - moved up to the rank of capitalist merchant. The splintering of the masters' rank was especially rapid and noticeable in the textile industries, given the extent to which entrepreneurial functions were an integral part of the industry. Between every step in the production process, the fiber or cloth had to be distributed to workers, then recollected, checked for quality (theoretically, anyway), reimbursed, and passed along to the next group of workers

³Poni, p.102.

⁴Statuti dell'Arte della Lana (Roma: Fratelli Salvioni Stampatori Vaticani, 1759), p.16.

for another process. The process of obtaining fibers in the first place (whether from sheep, silkworm, flax, or cottonfield), and customers in the last also became increasingly dependent upon far-flung business connections. The amount of organization and business functions involved was thus far greater than in most other industries. This gave rise to more possibilities for an individual to gradually amass control over multiple functions than in industries involving fewer steps in production.

Whereas the master artisan tended to lose (or more rarely gain) rank, the journeyman remained mired in his (more rarely, her) rôle. In Italy, the medieval master-journeyman relations had broken down early; well before the eighteenth century, the latter was no longer welcome at his master's dinner table. The degeneration of the guild system under proto-industrialization further bound him in a static category, barring the journey up through the ranks. Contemporaries observed with some justification that these guilds had become little more than oligarchies. Restraints were not only legalistic - statutes outright reserving mastership for the sons of present masters - but financial as well; lavoranti could seldom afford the deliberately high fees. Like the garzoni, journeymen were obliged to pay guild fees without attaining effective membership. Partially contradicting this rigidity, guild restrictions were simultaneously breaking down in the reverse direction: the Università dè Tessitori di Seta complained in 1781 of the "abuses, that are intrinsic in the Guild, and from which derive the Prejudice of the Public against the Manufacture We know very well, that in our Guild there

are many who were first Laborers, and others outside the Craft as well, that have not given proof of their mastery..."⁵

Some historians have drawn a correlation between the number of women employed by a system and that system's status. Without guild archives themselves, it is difficult to guess what the gender ratio was in textile corporate bodies. One might assume that there were few women indeed in the merchants' associations, but their standing in craft guilds is less clear. The authors of some documents treated women as anomalies, even as intruders, in the guilds. But when dealing with almost any type of historical document, the real revelations tend to lie in what is not said, as much as in what is explicitly stated. Nearly every guild statute reiterated the injunction against admitting women to the guild, unless they were closely related to a master. Why would this be such a persistently articulated concern, unless the possibility of "too much" female guild labor was a constant threat? In fact, evidence elsewhere suggests that women were traditionally more of a presence in the guild system than some might have wished. Lorella Grossi found that in the case of the Bologna silkweavers' guild, the "professional composition had evolved in favor of an increase of the female presence."⁶ A 1781 petition by the silkweavers' guild offers the incentive that "the above-mentioned Guild would be able to employ in the same thousands more people,

⁵ASR Camerale II, *Arti e Mestieri: Calzettari e Tessitori*. This latter reference is to the 'masterpiece' that prospective masters traditionally submitted to a jury.

⁶Lorella Grossi, "L'archivio dell'Arte dei Tessitori da Seta Cotta," *Il Carrobbio* 14 (1988), p.200.

as many Men as Women."⁷ The guild system had some clearly 'sexist' reasons for specifically limiting women members, giving rationales such as "Women are incapable of supporting the weights associated with our Art,"⁸ and employing generally hostile language. On the other hand, the very language employed can also suggest the extent to which women did constitute a presence in corporative life - probably to a lesser degree at the masters' rank, but a substantial one overall. The statutes were referring to women who entered as members in their own right: in an age of family economy, many more wives and daughters worked alongside their husbands and fathers, and were thus 'invisible labor' (invisible, i.e., to the recorder and the historian). Even as such, they were occasionally the objects of particular, if nominal, official recognition. The 1757 wool guild statutes include the following prohibition:

No Merchant, when Women come to him, either to take materials to work, or to return work already completed, or for any other reason, may force said Women to do other than pluck, rinacciare, and sburrare the cloths without paying them,... and that for only an hour.

Such an injunction is evocative less of the protection over women than of their additional exploitation by the employer. The more

⁷ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Calzettari e Tessitori.

⁸Statuti, p.28. The question of female strength is often addressed by textile historians (e.g., the weaving of wool demands great strength; did many women perform this function anyway?); yet as Ivy Pinchbeck notes for England, many women worked at all the most physically demanding jobs - including, for example, mining.

⁹Statuti, p.10.

extreme abuses of power over women were checked (at least on paper) by the guild and state.¹⁰ If social ideals or guild hard-liners did not want or expect women to constitute their proportionate share of the labor force, their presence in the labor force was at least recognized and dealt with.

Gender relations constituted only one form of internal dynamics. Other ongoing tensions included those of guild standards of quality and members' standing. The former was represented by constant accusations of adulteration and other fraud; the latter, by the increasing straying of some members into capitalist modes of production and commerce.

If there was conflict within the guild, there was just as much between that body and society at large. Complicated and heated arguments arose over matters of jurisdiction among the guilds of different fibers, partly because of rising rates of membership in more than one guild, but more because so many textiles were 'mixed' rather than 'simple'. The Arte della Lana might inform its merchants that they might produce any kind of cloth "in which wool is a part,"¹¹ but what was the silk guild to do if such cloth was 70% silk and defective? The quarrel between the Roman Arte della Lana and the Vaccinari is one such example

¹⁰ Such a mentality is akin to the early modern community's watch over marital relations; a man might beat his wife as a matter of course, but such action during the month of May or with excessive harshness at any time made him vulnerable to a charivari. See Pieter Spierenburg, The Broken Spell: A Cultural and Anthropological History of Pre-industrial Europe (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), and Natalie Z. Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

¹¹ Statuti, p.19.

of two guilds disputing their jurisdiction; the petitions entered on both sides acclaim the number of laborers they hire and the public good they thus sustain, but the real purpose of the dispute was to determine who had the right to open a woolens shop.¹²

Disputes were also common between linked merchant and laborers' guilds. The merchants claimed "that the sons, and brothers of Merchants are not subject to the University of the Laborers, nor to the payment of the Tax of said University ... they may not nor must they consider themselves as Lavoranti to any effect."¹³ One assumes this runs directly counter to the statutes of the University of the Laborers.

The traditional function of the guild was to protect society as much as the guildmembers. It acted as economic watchdog by controlling production to forestall both overproduction and shortages, and maintaining quality control. The guilds' social protective functions were at times even more literal than that: a Bolognese citizen recorded that nocturnal disturbances by "la plebe" in 1796 prompted an order "to all the massari of the guilds to send twenty men apiece to form a guard."¹⁴

But guilds were as much moral as commercial watchdogs; the emphasis upon morality in the guild ethos could only have been appreciated by the society at large. Guilds had their own judicial codes and proceedings; when Domenico Cunni bought wool from

¹²ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari.

¹³Statuti, p.31.

¹⁴Guidicini.

an unauthorized seller in a piazza, he was convicted and fined by the Tribunal of the Collegio dei Drappi di Lana, not by the city government.¹⁵ Guilds closed their membership lists to "Persons of bad repute" in addition to anyone even "that has been investigated, and much more condemned" of a crime.¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that "crime" was more likely to refer to something like debt, which accounted for the majority of prisoners. rather than personal injury or other violent action. On the other hand, the wool guild was early on careful to cover its bases with the following stipulation: "And we furthermore concede privilege, that the seals,.. and all the possessions of said Guild will not be confiscated for any case, and crime, no matter how atrocious, even if extremely atrocious."¹⁷ (The precise nature of the possible atrocity is left, apparently, to the reader's imagination.) Guild relations with society at large were, of course, more complex than that of guardian and grateful citizen-consumer. Points of contact also included the notably tense town-rural interaction; a rural populace did not necessarily agree with the "'just and economic principle' that 'the crafts must be carried out in the city and not in the countryside'."¹⁸

As already mentioned, many guild functions continued to operate after their official dissolution in 1806. Certainly craft

¹⁵ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari.

¹⁶Statuti, p.27.

¹⁷ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari.

¹⁸Poni, p.87.

collectivities continued to characterize labor relations; the guild gave way to the society of mutual aid, but it did not abruptly die. The relationship between the two, and later with the earlier unions, remains unmapped.¹⁹ Clearly corporations and confraternities were of a vastly different creed than even the earliest trade unions; even specifically lavoranti's organizations were often juridically dependent on the corresponding masters' or merchants' guild. Even when independent, the *raison d'être* of laborers' corporations was not really predicated upon opposition to employers. Still, Dal Pane among others finds within these organizations the early stirrings of class consciousness.²⁰ That class consciousness, though, was inseparable from a more general pre-industrial mentality that also encompassed food riots, *charivaris*, and religious disputes within the framework of labor. Thus laborers were not necessarily willing to give up a form of organization which they shared with their employers. Costantini notes for the abolition of the Venetian guilds:

The workers demonstrated a greater attachment to the old associative forms, in which they continued to see, confronted with the menacing advance of bourgeois individualism, the only instruments of defense of their working conditions; their abolition constituted for many of them a catastrophic event, that produced unemployment, misery, and exodus in forms and manners until then unknown.²¹

¹⁹This task has been admirably fulfilled for the case of France by William Sewell. Knapp has suggested that as a general rule, European guilds were absorbed into, rather than destroyed by, the emerging system. Vincent Knapp, "Europe's Textile Artisans and the Early Stages of the Industrial Revolution," Studies in Modern European History and Culture 3 (1977), 95-110.

²⁰Dal Pane, p.314.

²¹Massimo Costantini, L'Albero della libertà economica: Il processo di scioglimento delle corporazioni veneziane (Venezia: Arsenale Editore, 1987), p.53.

Aside from all the cultural and social trappings of the guild, Venetian laborers simply had more faith in their old collectivities than in any emerging - if there were any yet. For their Roman counterparts as well, 1806 signified the coup de grâce in the long process of corporate loss of voice in city politics, of juridical and productive self-control, and, finally, of public legitimacy.

There are, in sum, two interpretations of the effects of 1806 on textile guilds and guild workers. On the one hand, the papal rejection of the corporate ethos was a token gesture, an official acknowledgment that the formal rivals of free and corporate labor had been longtime, if uneasy, bedfellows.²² On the other hand, corporate bodies were stripped of non-material forms of property in 1806 that undermined the very nature of labor, and thus of life, for many.²³ The motu proprio of Pius VII invalidated not only a system of production, but a way of organizing life and its corresponding world-view. Functions remained, but they were left without public validation.

²²Valsecchi, p.793.

²³Sewell has shown how in ancien regime language, 'property' was non-material as well - it referred to the knowledge and right to exercise a craft. Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Ancien Regime to 1848 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

CHAPTER 5

NON-GUILD LABOR: FROM LUMPEN TO LAVORANTI

To the bourgeois classes they were indelibly stamped with vice, akin to the criminal classes; their condition and their revolt was often confused with that of the criminal classes; but so they were in their own eyes.... on the edge of the city and its civilization, a different, alien and hostile society.¹

Although the Roman economy is considered artisanal through the mid-nineteenth century, guild labor represented only one form of textile production - and, numerically speaking, not necessarily even the most significant one. A wide range of non-guild labor emerges from passing references in the archives. Textiles were produced in the orphanage, poorhouse, and prison; in the countryside, informally at home, and illegally nearly everywhere. This range of producers was made possible by the subdivision of processes in textile production, as well as the range of quality in demand. Some functions (spinning is the obvious example) entered nearly every household. Even religious institutions had their own workshops. Gross considers their involvement in textiles so extensive that they were partially responsible for the late rise of a native industry in Rome; they disposed of too much of the unpaid labor pool.²

¹Louis Chevalier, Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Howard Fertig, 1973), pp.394, 398.

²Hanns Gross, Rome in the Age of Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.90.

The economic stage of proto-industrialization has received a great deal of attention since it was first presented by Franklin Mendels twenty years ago.³ Building upon Mendels' theoretical basis, Gutmann suggests that this economic development led to a social process of 'hybridization'; both individuals and communities became a blend of 'typical' industrial and peasant types.⁴ He presents several different categories among proto-industrial workers: the early model of the peasant family supplementing its income with industrial work; a growing "distinct subpopulation" of full-time industrial workers; and full-time spinner families, at the bottom of the community's economic and social scale. Each group fit differently into traditional and newly-emerging networks of alliances in the local community.

Proto-industry originally offered no serious challenge to traditional community networks (examples of which include patronage, kinship, or the gathering of women in the evening to simultaneously work and socialize). The growing demands of rural industry meant that agricultural and industrial labor had to be rebalanced; the growing need for cash wages led the rural population towards its own proletarianization. Even before this, turn-of-the-century rural labor experienced a substantial change on several fronts. Aside from fitting textile wage labor into the broad context of the rural social structure, the rural textile worker began

³Franklin Mendels, "Proto-industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process," Journal of Economic History 32 (1972).

⁴Myron P. Gutmann, Toward the Modern Economy: Early Industry in Europe, 1500-1800 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), p.146.

to lose various advantages as the century progressed. Dependence on the merchant (the distributor of materials and work) grew just as the abolition of the guilds freed up the urban labor market; by 1848, contadini were "already accustomed ... to accepting work as an act of kindness on the part of the boss."⁵ Once weaned away from a seasonal balance of agriculture and textile work, and towards a dependence on wages, rural laborers lost much of their highly valued independence, whether they migrated to town or held their ground.

The abolition of the guilds affected the urban laborer more directly. Between 1600 and 1750, there had been a fairly constant flow into the hinterlands, especially in the Bologna area. Artisans, as well as merchants, were attracted by lower prices, an escape from guild control and duties, and better living conditions.⁶ Around the turn of the next century, the direction was reversed, and the customary trickle into urban centers became a flood. The migratory population, however, was no longer a skilled and enterprising one; instead, it added to urban poverty and mendicancy at an alarming rate. Working poverty was nothing new; it still even had a place in the social order. The disturbing elements were the newcomers' lack of ties to their new community, and the sheer numbers of the added unskilled labor and begging. Newcomers strained already-insufficient public resources to the limits.

⁵Giulio Trevisiani, Storia del movimento operaio, vol.1 (Milano: Edizioni del Gallo, 1965), p.147.

⁶Dal Pane, p.390; also U. Marcelli, Saggi economico-sociali sulla storia di Bologna (Bologna: n.p., 1962), p.XII.

A substantial part of the urban working poor thus became both newly arrived and transitory, a disturbing phenomenon to a society held together by complex webs of neighborhood, patronage, and family ties. As the guilds weakened in the late eighteenth century, a population of minimally-regulated salariati grew, largely characterized by textile labor working on a steady but day-to-day basis. After 1806, the two labor pools grew closer together, and the salariati were joined by a substantial number of artisans formerly employed on long-term bases.

Libertà di lavoro moved work contracts into the private realm, to be more or less decided by the employer alone. Factories inherently constituted a last resort for most non-guild laborers anyway. They preferred to "live by the day rather than undergo the harsh working conditions in the factories." The state and employers tended to interpret this attitude as laziness;⁷ it was, rather, the willingness to forgo certain benefits to hold on to one's independence.⁸ Independence and free movement were already threatened by the introduction of the benservito. This measure was reaffirmed in Pio VII's decree of 1820, nominally as an attempt to regulate the quality of wool production.⁹ It seems more likely that the practice was a governmental favor to employers; as was common in U.S. labor tactics, such a certificate became a convenient method of labor control, including

⁷Trevisiani, p.57.

⁸Cf. George J. Sheridan, Jr., "Household and Craft in an Industrializing Economy: The Case of the Silk Weavers of Lyons," Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe, John H. Merriman, ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980).

blacklisting. All woolens laborers of both sexes had to provide themselves with a stamped benservito within a month of the publication of the 1820 decree; the document was to "contain the first and last name of the laborer, the quality of the trade s/he exercises in the making, and the place in which s/he lives and works. The employer ... will write out without leaving any blank space the reason for dismissal.... Finding in the benservito a weekly debt, the employer that takes on a laborer will be obligated to retain every week the agreed upon quota."⁹ This last stipulation was a standard aspect of textile work. Laborers were fined for 'poor conduct' or defective cloth; often they were required to deposit money with the employer upon being hired - for which they usually had to take out a loan with the employer.

One can only imagine the effect the emerging 'free labor market' had on familial relations. It is hardly logical to speak of "a pre-industrial laborer" as the primary working unit was not the individual but the family. But with the rise of individual competition in the labor market, men began to view women and children in the same light as machines: as cheaper, threatening competition.¹⁰ From playing a supplemental - more, an integral - role in the family's upkeep, children and especially women became either resented or exploited as laborers. Local officials were more likely to side with employers in the matter, since social order was at stake here as well; Poni notes that any scarcity

⁹ASR Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 13, fasc. 2.

¹⁰Alfredo Gradilone, Storia del sindacalismo (Milano: Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1959), p.26.

of silkwork drove the Bolognese women and girls en masse to prostitution.¹¹ Concern for female honor also accounted for state-subsidized dowries and prizes awarded for textile skill.¹²

A significant amount of textile production, however, was not the result of free enterprise, but of state-funded institutions. There were four public 'factories' - simultaneous financial and charitable enterprises - in Rome proper. The Conservatorio Pio (which included an orphanage) turned out the best quality, more or less fit to compete on the open market. At the other end of the scale, the Conservatorio dei Mendicanti produced cloth destined for Rome's prison population. The S. Michele a Ripa factory was not only a well-funded effort to resuscitate the Roman woolen industry; it also functioned as a trade school. A letter to Benedetto XIV suggests how these institutional workers interacted with mainstream labor; the "Poor women, Orphans and Old Maids of the Conservatory of the Mendicants of Rome" joined with the College of the Wool Guild "and others" in asking for the revocation of an edict on the price of wool.¹³

Another form of state institutional labor was the Bolognese casa d'industria, in which the majority of work was textile-related. Instituted during the Napoleonic period, the

¹¹ Carlo Poni, "Per la storia del distretto industriale serico di Bologna (secoli XVI-XIX)," Quaderni storici 73 (April 1990), p.96.

¹² ASR Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 14, fasc. 3. This was a form of charity frequently practiced by guilds as well.

¹³ ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari.

'house of labor' was a comparatively humane version of the poorhouse. Financial assistance was provided in the form of wages, and confinement - which involved the breakup of the family - was not a requirement. The major difference between this and other systems of poor relief was that 'houses of labor' extended aid to able-bodied, unemployed laborers, a group customarily overlooked by public assistance.

The limits of benevolence in the case d'industria, however, were readily visible - two-thirds of all weavers and fully one-half of all spinners employed by the system did not earn enough for simple survival.¹⁴ This assured that the 'houses' did not gain a reputation as an easy way out. They were, after all, a form of charity - as such, they were no simple act of Christian kindness, but a forum for acting out concerns regarding social control over a variety of social marginals. The three sources of charity - state, Church, and individuals - were all rethinking their policies by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Some contemporaries felt (clearly as part of a broader liberalist platform) that charity should be left to individual benevolence, and that its beneficiaries should, furthermore, exclude all fit and healthy workers.¹⁵

This division of unfortunates into categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' was a new preoccupation. Categorization seems

¹⁴Massimo Marcolin, "The Casa d'Industria in Bologna During the Napoleonic Period: Public Relief and Subsistence Strategies," Mèlanges de l'École Française de Rome - Moyen Age-Temps Moderns 99 (1987), p.871.

¹⁵Dal Pane, p.259.

to have depended more on one's attitude than upon either physical or moral condition per se, though the latter naturally played a role (an able-bodied unemployed youth, for example, was likely to meet with little sympathy as a mere victim of economic stagnation). An appropriate subservience and self-denigration became the new standard for deserving charity recipients, along with an appropriation of elite values; "to be poor was to identify oneself as separate from all other members of society."¹⁶ Traditionally, the poor had held a place well within the fabric of Christian society; now that place was threatened even as their ranks swelled with the unemployed.

Textile production crossed the lines of poverty and entered the ranks of the criminal population. The employment of prison labor was common practice in the textile industry; the majority of 'criminals,' after all, were incarcerated for debt, rather than violent crimes. Silkweavers in particular filled this category¹⁷, possibly because their occupation was particularly subject to economic fluctuations.

The advantages of prison labor were clear: the supply was constantly replenished, labor could scarcely skip town mid-warp

¹⁶Stuart J. Woolf, The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: Methuen, 1986), p.63. Cf. the distinction between deserving and undeserving supplied by Sandra Cavallo, "Conceptions of Poverty and Poor-relief in Turin in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy 1600-1800, ed. Stuart J. Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁷Vincent Paglia, "La Pietà dei Carcerati": Confraternite e società a Roma nei secoli XVI-XVIII (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1980), p.62.

and it was dirt cheap. The Castel S. Angelo enterprise complained to Pius VI that its supply of braccia schiave was running low; the workshop, they pointed out, had been specifically granted the right to this cheap labor.¹⁸ Ironically, in using this class of labor, the bourgeoisie fulfilled its own growing fears about the convergence of the laboring classes and the dangerous classes.

A final element that precluded the existence of a single, unified textile labor force was what one might call 'informal' production. Technically speaking, of course, a good part of this informal production was quite illegal. Many contemporary observers were willing to overlook that fact, recognizing it as a basic survival tactic for many workers, rather than an indication of willful criminality.¹⁹ Among Genovese spinners (presumably the situation was similar elsewhere), fraud was something "with which lavoranti and garzoni defended themselves against masters and these, in their turn, against the silk merchants"; it assumed "an importance not secondary in determining one's survival as urban mastery."²⁰ It might best be compared with much medieval forgery - what to the modern observer seems a straightforward crime had a certain moral justification.

These small-scale frauds or thefts (in which it seems at times nearly everyone participated) were not, of course, limited to desperate workers; the 1759 Wool Guild statutes were forced to

¹⁸ASR Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 14, fasc. 4.

¹⁹La Marca, p.99.

²⁰Carola Ghiara, "Filatoi e filatori a Genova tra XV e XVIII secolo," Quaderni storici 52 (1983), pp.154-5.

repeat the injunction against the use of old wool, especially that drawn from hospital mattresses - an offense which presented a grave public risk of infection.²¹ At any and every social level, 'informal' production was both an individual and a collective enterprise, of which officials caught an occasional glimpse - "spinners charged with theft alluded to a complicated network of buyers and sellers inside and outside the artisan world, that formed an alternative market to the official one....The spinner was at the center of a subtle game."²² More than a game, and often far from subtle, an immense black market existed for textiles. How, after all, could illegal production be effectively distinguished from permissible home production for personal use? Both physical and legal lines were blurred between the two.

Pre-Unification 'plebeian labor' (to use Hobsbawm's phrase) was inseparable from questions of charity and social order. Reflecting the precarious nature of employment and the fluidity of lower social categories, the laboring poor were far from "the edge of society"; they were worked into the geographic and social heart of the city. Viewing capitalism (especially in the form of food speculation) as far more immoral than the debt or theft for which many of them were imprisoned, they still held a place in the developing order.

²¹Statuti, p.20. (The ineffectiveness of such proclamations is seen in the charges brought against a Jewish merchant some twenty years later. ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari.)

²²Ghiara, p.155. The 'game' was played even in (and by) governmental production centers; wages were simply deducted at the end of the week for materials stolen by workers at the casa d'industria. (Marcolin, p.874.)

CHAPTER 6

NEW CONFRONTATIONS WITH POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

An infuriated crowd of women ... shouting,
"We want bread; we want the Republic no longer!"¹

Pre-industrial collective action has become a favored topic of social historians, but Italy remains under-represented in the current general literature. One can only speculate whether the field has yet to be explored, or if the Italian rate of incidence was significantly lower than others. Implicit though 'national mentality' may be in much of social history, it is difficult to credit that Italians were somehow more docile or passive than their French or English counterparts. Confronted with the same general themes of political and economic modernization, Italians either reacted in roughly the same ways (supporting the theory of a general Europe trend) or responded in a significantly different manner. If this is so, then studies purporting to extrapolate 'European' models from French or English data must be reconsidered. This, of course, constitutes a separate study; here, collective action is examined only within the confines of the Papal States. Any case study, though, must keep these comparative questions in mind.

Industrially backward as papal territory was, the twin systems of Tilly's thesis - capitalism and political centralization -

¹Antonio Cretoni, Roma giacobina: Storia della Repubblica romana del 1798-99 (Roma: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1971), p.359.

had the same impact on daily life. In some form, capitalism had centuries-deep roots in the Italian economies. The novelty and intensity of the two systems lay not in the general phenomena, but in their eighteenth-century intersection with liberalism. Physiocracy linked the two, but it also began to separate them in daily life in a way unlike the traditional experience of the laborer.

Whether or not laborers had a conceptual understanding of the process, liberalism in politics and economics overwhelmed their lives, not least because of the sheer size of the new systems and their increasing centralization of all functions. This was felt long before either large factories or the Piedmontese forces entered Rome. The laborer had to learn to operate in a world changing from the pre-industrial, moral economy to a capitalist one. In the former, merchants were morally and socially marginalized in keeping with Aquinean philosophy; in the latter, positions were reversed: the merchant was centralized, and labor instead became marginalized. When and how did labor begin to discern this change? How did it adapt?

There were two general ways to make grievances or wishes known: a legalistic appeal to the operators of the system, or a more forceful (though not necessarily violent) articulation in the public sphere, especially in the streets. The upper echelons of the textile labor force continued to make use of the former, occasionally appealing directly to the pope himself or the RCA. Equally popular was the method Berengo found in Veneto, where weavers considered court appeals a futile gesture; they were

far more likely to head directly for the streets to make their grievances known.² Even in the Papal States, non-corporative laborers had little enough legal protection to fall back on. Actors in both street and courtroom differed in the means they judged most effective, but they were both making claims upon public authorities. Street activity was more spontaneous, its organization less complex, but both types reflected a struggle against the same economic and political themes.

This held true for a wide range of protests or petitions. The dispute between the University of Young Woolworkers and the priests of the S. Lucia church (see chapter 3) was over a strictly religious function - control over the upkeep of the chapel - with no explicit political or even economic issues at stake. But the woolworkers not only appealed directly to the highest public authority; they did so on grounds of their role in the public order. Their public legitimacy as a collective body formed the basis of their legal challenge and defense.³

²Marino Berengo, La società veneta alla fine del Settecento (Firenze: G.G. Dansonì, 1956), p.58.

³The priests, disputing the right of patronage over the chapel, "say in the second place that they do not know 'with which class of persons they are dealing with, and if they have the right to exercise it,' and for that they demand to know 'the foundation of this society, its constitutions, and its statutes.'" The woolworkers reply that theirs is a Corpo morale - a moral body - and that the rest is of no concern to the priests. "They must be satisfied with knowing that this body has existed for more than two centuries, and has its own sales to support it,... And not only has it existed, it is protected by the Principato in a special manner, after having been exempted from the suppression of almost all the other Universities..." ASR Camerale II, Arti e Mestieri: Lanari. I quote this at length to illustrate the legal points deemed most relevant by both sides.

Similarly, the laborers of the Guynet firm demanded the continued subjection of "ideas and actions of the entrepreneurs and managers ... to the control of governmental bureaucracy and to the principle of state supremacy in social relations."⁴ Laborers at other times rebelled against the codification of factory regulations; here it was held desirable. Written rules reduced arbitrariness on the part of the employer; more importantly, it permitted concrete grounds for juridical challenge - the discussion of factory issues, that is, in the public sphere. While some of the language employed is evocative of northern European nineteenth-century labor concerns (e.g., issues of worker control and self-discipline), the underlying assumption is of a moral, not a modern, economy.

As craft-related incidents, these constituted only one category of collective action, and not necessarily the most typical. Textile laborers merged with the community in a broad range of public activities. While we are seldom informed of participants in more specific terms of occupation, age group, place of origin, etc., gender at least prompted additional commentary by some onlookers. Women had a split image in places on the brink of industrialization. They were eagerly recruited in the labor market as cheaper and more docile than men; at the same time, their role in the streets and the marketplaces was well-known (if not to say notorious). Contemporaries still declared that they were far 'worse' than men in food riots; a reputation attributed then, as now, to the woman's direct responsibility for feeding her family. An English

⁴D'Amelia, p.317.

letter of 1807 is typical of European sentiment in its warning that

Women are more disposed to be mutinous; they stand less in fear of law, partly from ignorance, partly because they presume upon the privilege of their sex, and therefore in all public tumults they are foremost in violence and ferocity.⁵

Even if not striking or otherwise protesting themselves, women hurled cobblestones beside their men or contributed in other, less direct (and visible) ways.

If the composition of the crowd remains unclear, its motivation is even more problematic. Neufeld provides an example of one reason for this: submitting that demonstrations were definitely politically inspired before 1860, he concludes that "Inevitably, workers and peasants must have surged in revolt" alongside middle-class radicals fighting for political freedom.⁶ The uncertainty of his language is matched by his assumption that workers and peasants shared the cause of the middle-class rebels, rather than operating on their own agenda. In fact, more historians feel that laborers participated in political events during the Risorgimento out of economic motives. The rhetoric of the Risorgimento held little attraction for the laborer; it referred incessantly to il popolo, but was silent about la plebe or il lavorante, except when calling on them to forget their particular grievances for the greater good of la patria. If "both the urban

⁵Quoted in E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present 50 (February 1971), p.116.

⁶Maurice Neufeld, Italy: School for Awakening Countries (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), pp.46-7.

proletariat and the contadini were regarded with diffidence by the revolutionary activists,"⁷ then the feeling was mutual. Workers across Italian state lines participated in 1848 not out of pure patriotism, but because "they had identified the fight for liberty and independence, against the absolute princes and against Austria, with the struggle for the improvement of the conditions of their lives."⁸ Sinisi identifies the same themes in the anti-Republic revolts of 1799. Such activities were not directed solely against the political situation; they were provoked by economic hardship and deep-rooted hatred of the galantuomini - the gentlemen who flourished as they, the laborers, suffered more each day. These popular revolts played out a variety of social tensions, but the primary objective was always the defense of the moral economy against the new bourgeois one.⁹ It was in this sphere that the bourgeois obsession with both individualism and political centralization was experienced and directly challenged.

Need we, given the above, agree with Trevisiani that such laborers were "far removed from political activities"?¹⁰ Those who wish to argue the contrary are hampered by the lack of

⁷ Stuart J. Woolf, "Storia politica e sociale," in Storia d'Italia (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1973), p.383.

⁸ Trevisiani, p.169. Woolf similarly notes that they took advantage of this opportunity to "obtain the diminution of taxes" (op. cit., 383).

⁹ Agnese Sinisi, "Antigiacobinismo e sanfedismo," in L'Italia giacobina e napoleonica (Milano: Teti editore, 1985), pp.228-9, 235-6. An example of the other dialectics present is the strength of the urban-rural dichotomy; Sinisi finds that antijacobin protests often assumed the dimensions of direct conflict between city and surrounding rural villages (233).

documentation. One might argue that any appeal to public authority or action within the public sphere constituted a political orientation, insofar as it claimed a voice within the public order. The pre-industrial mentalité, after all, did not separate politics from other daily experiences; nor did laborers see themselves as distinct from the sphere of political (i.e., public) power. In that respect, many affairs that were not explicitly political assumed a political element anyway.¹¹

Laborers were certainly aware that political and economic systems were changing, and their struggles reflected a mixture of antiquity and modernity: "The popolo minuto of the city followed the nobles against the plan of Pius VI just because they, too, obscurely felt that the new system signified the full victory of the forces against which they had fought for centuries,"¹² and eighteenth-century conflicts were rooted far back in the "old conflicts between gentlemen and contadini"¹³; yet the struggles of 1799 were directed against the "new bourgeois

¹⁰Trevisiani, p.61.

¹¹The opposite side of this is that non-political movements become explicitly political when met with repression (see Travaglini, for example). In general, it seems a grave mistake to cling to a one-sided interpretation. Fine examples of alternative approaches include Louise Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 1 (1971); William Reddy, "The Textile Trade and the Language of the Crowd at Rouen 1752-1871," Past and Present 74 (February 1977); Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France 1830-1968 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). The latter authors conclude that strikes are inherently political (pp.343-344).

¹²Marcelli, p.XV.

¹³Sinisi, p.229.

economy."¹⁴ We are thus presented with two different chronological interpretations of popular protest in the Papal States before 1848. One is that it was merely the continuation of pre-industrial protest, of which the keystone was an enduring if abstract faith in the king-figure.¹⁵ The special case constituted by the pope, and the sacred nature of the government more generally, may have further dampened revolutionary fervor among the laboring classes. Toppling Christ's Vicar, after all, was a far cry from running your average duke out of town. Proponents of this continuity, however, tend to suggest that such activity was entirely apolitical.

The other alternative is that these protests reflected a more specific struggle against emerging systems - or more accurately, a struggle between the old and the new. Within this confrontation between modernization and conservation, "something of depth was changing."¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p.235.

¹⁵The clearest articulation of this mentality that I have encountered was in a novel: Simone Zelitch, Confession of Jack Straw (Seattle: Black Heron Press, 1991).

¹⁶Travaglini, p.125.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: BROADER DIRECTIONS

"When Thomas saw the loom working day and night and doing all alone the work of eight hands," resumed Colas Gheel, "he said nothing, but he trembled and sweated like one a-feared. They laid him off one of the first And those reels kept on a-creaking, and the iron arms kept on weaving the cloth all alone.... I understood then that our machines are a scourge, like war, or the high price of victuals, or like cloth from abroad..."¹

Participating in a cognitive experiment the other day, I asked the graduate student conducting it, "What are the practical applications of your research?" The irony of that question didn't strike me until afterwards. What possible importance can reside in looking at pre-industrial labor of the Papal States?

One broader question at hand is, to what extent can we rely on generalizations like 'laborer,' 'industry,' and even 'European' in a case study? Clearly this study has fallen into the trap of relying upon such generalizations. Even more, in the absence of available documentation for the Papal States themselves, I have relied also on French, English, and other Italian data.² Having thus assumed that there was indeed a European model of

¹Marguerite Yourcenar, The Abyss (New York: Farrar, Straw & Giroux, 1976), pp.45-46.

²I have tried to use such data both sparingly and judiciously. Ghiara's findings for Genova, for example, were included only because I found references to fraud in Rome suggesting the two cities were comparable in that respect. Authors purporting to discuss 'Italian' or 'European' phenomena were also fair game.

the textile industry and its laborers, how well did the Papal States fit that model?

There is no question about the industrial backwardness of the papal territories in 1850. The size of the industries, the technology and organization employed, output, quality, and market success were negligible even compared to those of northern Italy. Their most distinctive feature was the preferential treatment they received from the second most protectionist government remaining in Europe. That "singular and strident union of cosmopolitanism and provincialism"³ was as evident in local business as it was in European affairs. Even as the papal government expanded its field of jurisdiction,⁴ it began to pass labor issues on into the private sphere. Did governmental involvement do more harm or good to the textile industry and its laborers? Physiocrats, of course, would have pointed to interventionism as a leaden weight on industrial growth; laborers themselves believed that recourse to the government was their right (and sometimes their last hope).

But the viability of the textile industry as a category is more complicated than its variants or the role of the government. How do less tangible aspects of textile production affect categorization? One might, for example, take the case of religion.

³Marina Formica, "Potere e popolo: Alcuni interrogativi sulla Repubblica romana giacobina," Studi romani 37:3-4 (1989), p.237.

⁴This was especially so as the public rights exercised by guilds (e.g., the right to give one condemned man a reprieve every year), control over production and quality, etc. were stripped away.

Though mercifully free of the bloody religious disputes of other parts of Europe, Roman industry and production were traditionally more intimate with religion and/or religious politics. The city's guilds were of a more religious bent, subject as they were to papal authority.⁵ Did the latter see their leader as more pope or prince? Like other rulers, the pope was alternately cheered by affectionate crowds and driven out of town.

How far back should we seek the roots of class consciousness within an industry? Where does the age-old awareness of a rich-poor dichotomy turn into such consciousness? As chapters four and five indicate, one can hardly speak of a 'typical' textile laborer in the Papal States. The range of the industry, furthermore, created bonds of community and culture simultaneously broad and narrow. Convents, guilds, confraternities, mutual aid societies, even prisoners' and beggars' guilds⁶ existed for solidarity, but among whom? Consider (keeping in mind, too, the problem of quantitative evidence) some figures on Bologna:

Table 7.1
Population of Bologna by professions and
branches of economic activity: 1840

<u>Profession or Condition</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total in industry	7,677	9,924	17,601
In textiles and clothing	2,337	9,422	11,759
Housewives	-	9,690	9,690
Idle or destitute	-	-	9,738

Source: Athos Bellettini, La popolazione delle campagne bolognesi alla metà del secolo XIX (Bologna: Zanichelli editore, 1971), p.193.

⁵Gross, p.97; consider, too, the number of references made to morality or the public good in industry-related documents.

⁶See Paglia and Woolf, respectively.

We know that domestic production, whether putting-out or for personal use, occupied many if not most housewives.⁷ It is also quite likely that some of the 'idle or destitute' had recurrent spells in the workhouse or prison, and chances were high of their being given textile work there. Even official statistics on the numbers working in textiles, then, can be misleading.

Perhaps inadvertently, Bellettini highlights another quantitative problem: that of categorization. The "stable" population of Bologna is listed in the following manner in 1837:

<u>noble</u>	<u>well-to-do</u>	<u>mediocre</u>	<u>worker</u>	<u>needy</u>
2.9%	5.2%	18.5%	29.2%	44.2%

For the following year, the categories become:

<u>rich</u>	<u>well-to-do</u>	<u>artisans and workers</u>
9.1%	19.9%	71%

Has the lowest group of the 1837 system been included in the last, or left out altogether? And what has become of all the mediocre (whatever they may have been)?⁸ Even aside from their inconsistency, such attempts at categorization are suspect given the constant flux, both social and geographic, of the population.

Pius IX's attempt to revitalize the guild system in 1852 could provide a valuable clue to the state of solidarity. Why

⁷ Thus Poni calculates that female winders and weavers accounted for 70-80% of Bologna's labor force. Carlo Poni, "Per la storia del distretto industriale serico di Bologna (secoli XVI-XIX," Quaderni storici 73 (aprile 1990), p.136.

⁸ Athos Bellettini, La popolazione di Bologna dal secolo XV all'Unificazione italiana (Bologna: Zanichelli editore, 1961), p.74.

did it meet with so little enthusiasm? Was this a reflection of changing inclinations regarding labor relations? Or was it more an indication of the "moral gap" that Pius feared had existed after 1806? The following year saw the first congress of Italian mutual aid societies, an event equally open to interpretation in its blend of pre-industrial and modern conceptions of labor relations. Though Bologna was among the first city to have società di mutuo soccorso, Rome was not; nor were textiles among the first groups formed. If there was some general movement toward an Italian working class, it is not apparent among the subjects of this study.

Papal laborers shared several explicit concerns with northern Europeans. Fear and hostility toward mechanical innovation, resentment against factories, and the weight of debt and blacklisting bound northern and southern labor into a common ground; Romans and Bolognese did, after all, join in the rebellions of 1848. But the trappings of capitalism can provoke similar feelings in an entirely different place and time.¹⁰ Were papal laborers "European"? What did that mean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

⁹ASR Camerale II, Commercio ed Industria, b. 13, fasc. 1.

¹⁰Nicholas D. Kristof, "Factories in a Changed China Suffer Strikes and Sabotage," New York Times, 10 June 1992, p.A1.

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