The Killing Mountain

Work, Gender and Politics in an Italian Marble Quarrying Community

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Except where the contributions of others are acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my original research.

.. [redacted] ...

Alison Leitch

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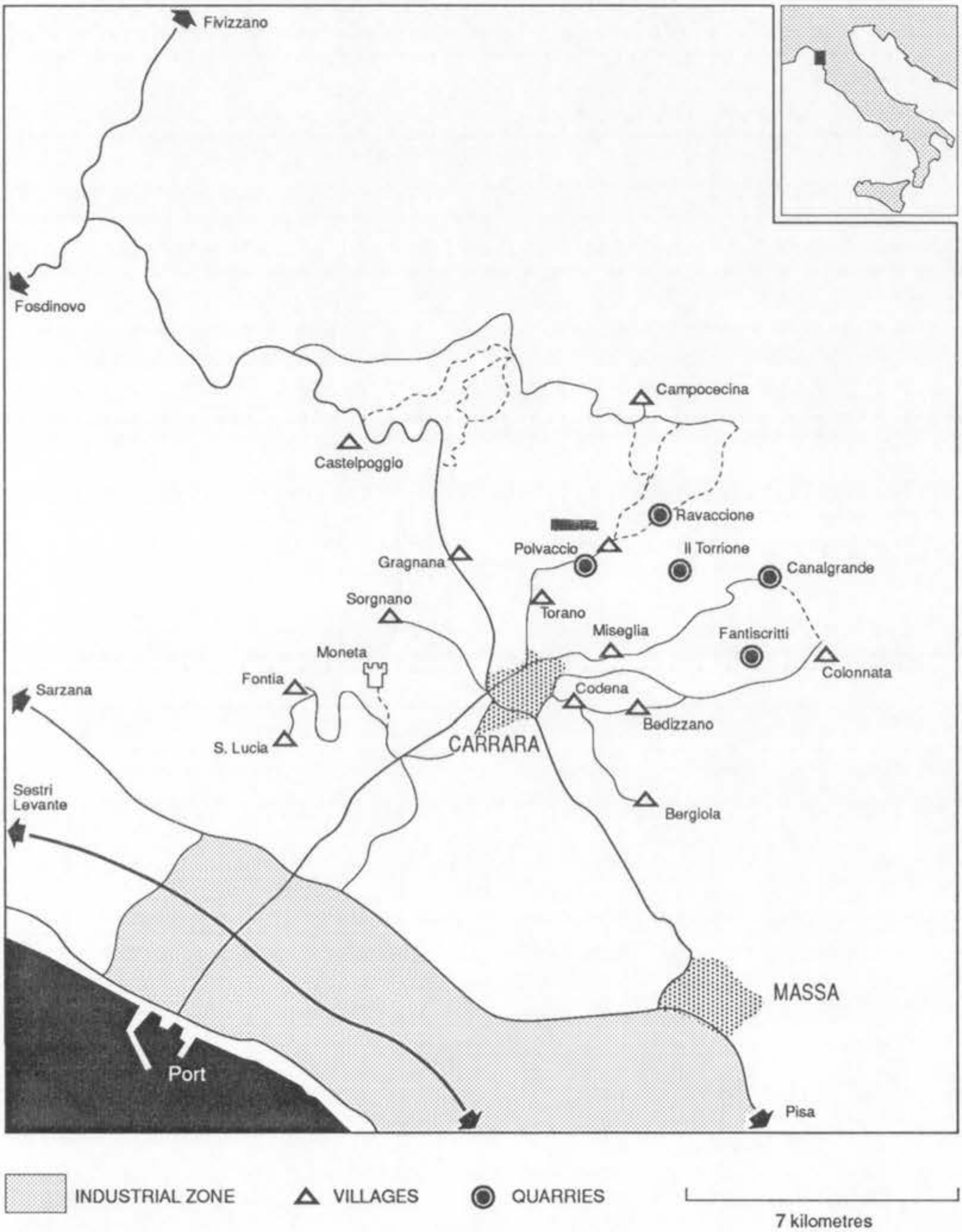
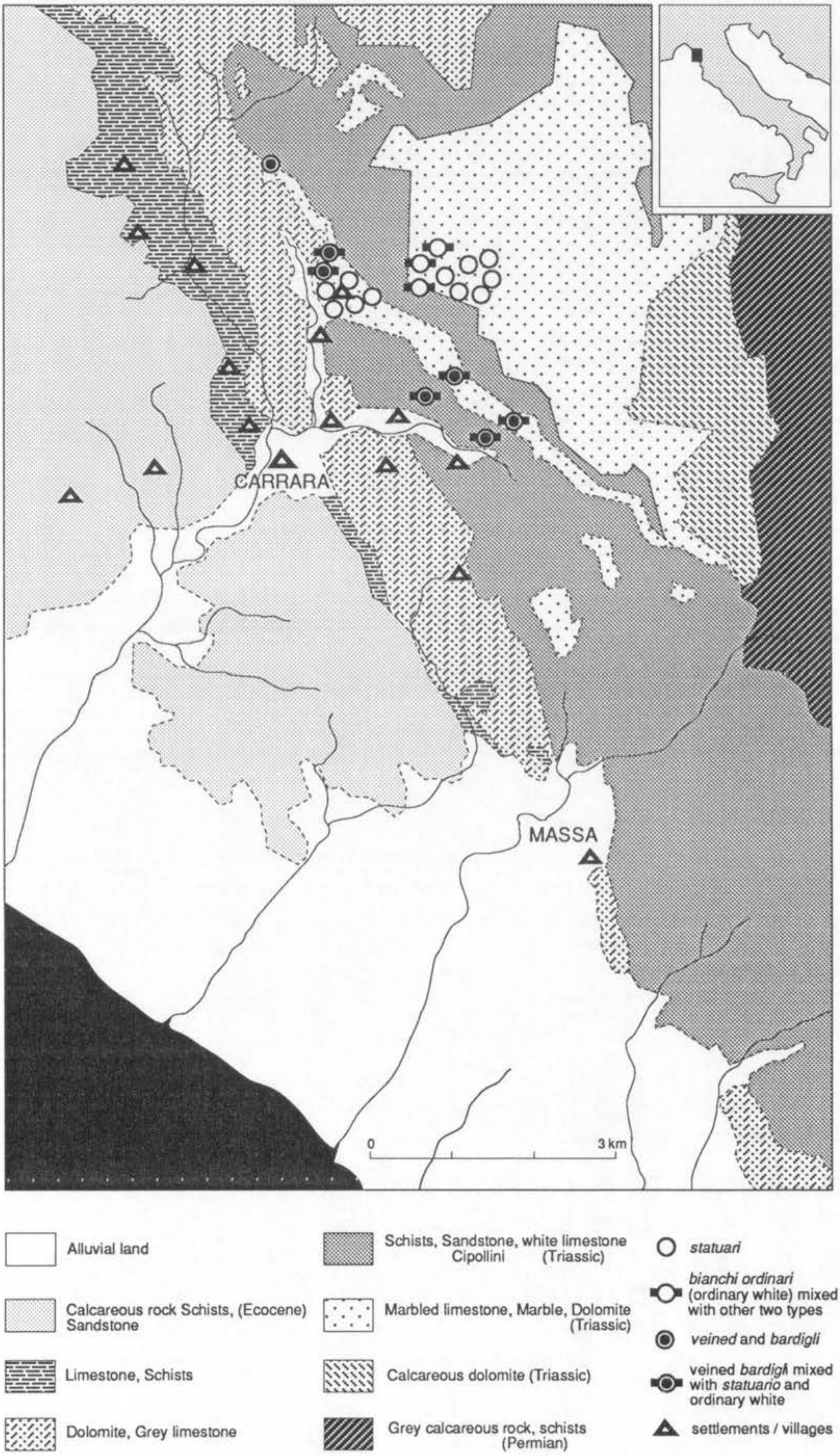
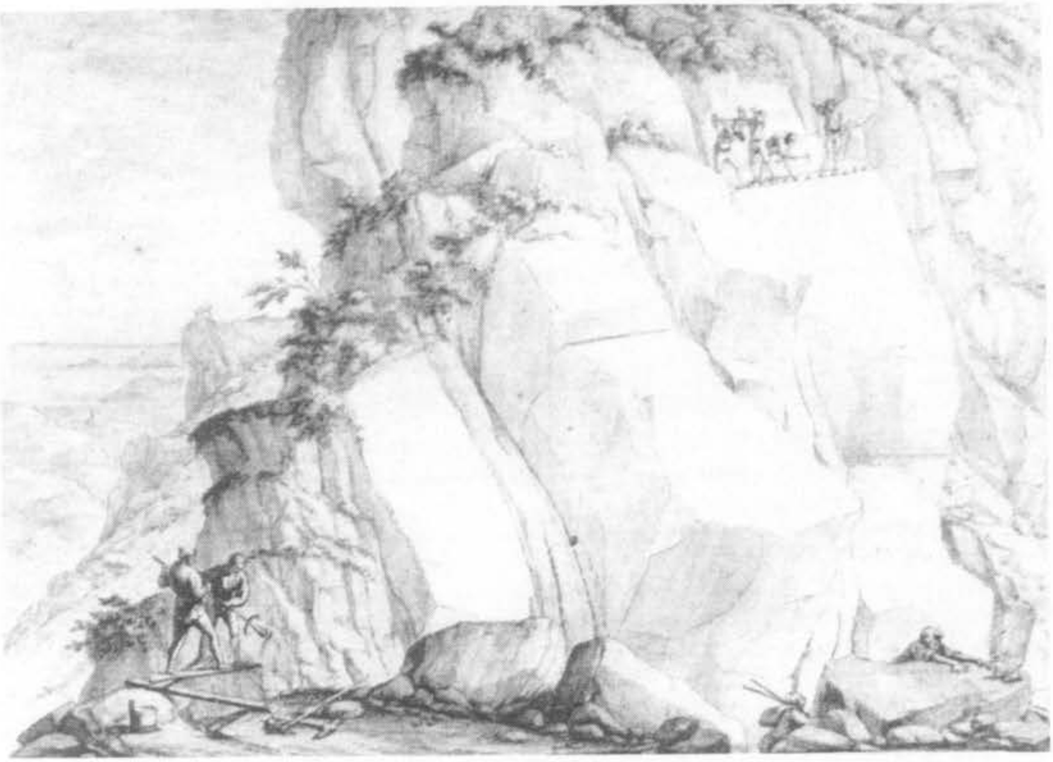
CARRARA AND THE MARBLE VILLAGES


Fivizzano
Fosdinovo
Campocecina
Castelpoggio
[redacted]
Ravaccione
Polvaccio
Il Torrione
Gragnana
Canalgrande
Sorgnano
Torano
Miseglia
Fantiscritti
Moneta
Fontia
Sarzana
Colonnata
Codena
Bedizzano
S. Lucia
CARRARA
Sestri Levante
Bergiola
MASSA
Port
Pisa
INDUSTRIAL ZONE
VILLAGES
QUARRIES
7 kilometres

GEOLOGICAL MAP OF CARRARA WITH MARBLE TYPES


CARRARA
MASSA
0
3 km
Alluvial land
Calcareous rock Schists, (Ecocene) Sandstone
Limestone, Schists
Dolomite, Grey limestone
Schists, Sandstone, white limestone Cipollini (Triassic)
Marbled limestone, Marble, Dolomite (Triassic)
Calcareous dolomite (Triassic)
Grey calcareous rock, schists (Permian)
statuari
bianchi ordinari (ordinary white) mixed with other two types
veined and *bardigli*
veined *bardigli* mixed with *statuario* and ordinary white
settlements / villages



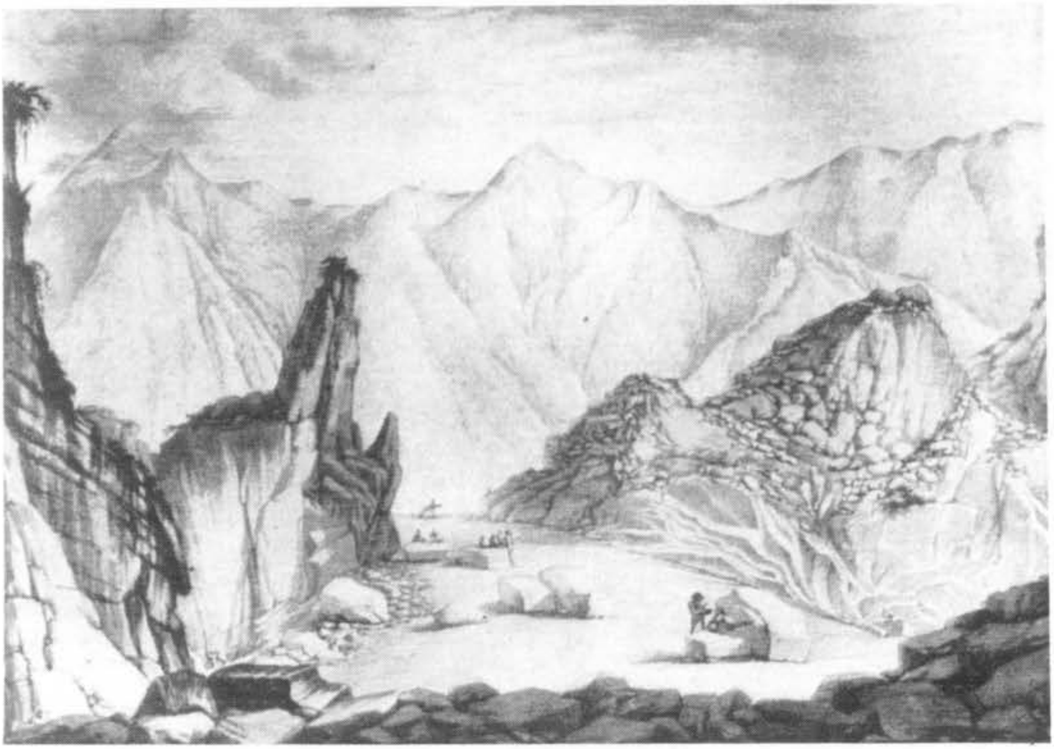


Plate 1. Quarry workers in Carrara making the *formelle* and placing explosives in 1810. (From a drawing by Saverio Salvioni. Archivio Stato Massa).

Plate 2. Polvaccio in 1810 (Saverio Salvioni. Archivio Stato Massa).

INTRODUCTION

> In Sardinia, as in Lunigiana and Calabria, and everywhere where observation . . . reveals a hiatus between the society and the broad movements of history . . . it was above all for the simple reason that the mountains are mountains: that is, primarily an obstacle, and therefore also a refuge, a land of the free. For there men can live out of reach of the pressures and tyrannies of civilization: its social and political order, its monetary economy . . . The hills were the refuge of liberty, democracy, and peasant "republics" (Braudel 1986: 39–40).

THREE kilometres of undulating bitumen road separates the village of Gragnana from the city of Carrara. Travelling east, the road climbs slowly through a narrow mountain valley, bounded on both sides by thick chestnut tree forests, small fields and scattered farm buildings. During the last year of the 1939–45 war, this road fell just inside the Gothic line, demarcating the occupied north from the liberated south of Italy, and the German army fought groups of partisans concealed here in mountain hide-outs. A few kilometres further north, the ragged turrets of the Malaspina castle at Fosdinovo make a sudden appearance through the dark forest landscape of the Lunigiana, recalling the strategic importance of this route in Medieval times. The ruins of other ancient and crumbling towers in these villages bring to mind the even earlier lines of resistance drawn between the Byzantines and Longobards, who battled over this region. But these days the road is little more than a back-road through the picturesque Apuane foothills and an alternative route to the coast for the sparsely populated villages of the Lunigiana hinterland.

On the other side of the valley, to the south, the villages of Torano, Bedizzano, Colonnata, Codena, Bergiola and Miseglia form a semi-circle above Carrara. Here, marble saturates the landscape. For travellers gazing upwards, the towering peaks of Mt Sagra, Mt Maggiore and Mt Betogli, appear on the horizon as impenetrable rocky barriers to the more luxuriant valleys of the Garfagnana beyond. Rivers of white marble rubble, the waste material from the quarries, form other man-made obstacles, engulfing ravines and swallowing valleys as they shift ominously towards these small settlements. Blocks of marble are strewn haphazardly beside the road. The quarries – huge, gaping and cavernous holes – are clearly visible from the windows of village houses. The sounds of quarry work punctuate the mountain air. Constructed out of marble, these villages appear as organic extrusions of the natural landscape.

Between 1300 and 1600, these villages, then known as the *vicinanze*, comprised the medieval corporations of marble workers and sculptors who extracted the marble from the quarries by hand and fashioned it into slabs and blocks for sale to "foreign" sculptors like Michelangelo, Other village inhabitants worked from home, chiselling blocks of discarded marble into small household objects like vases and mortars for sale to other foreign entrepreneurs; mainly powerful Genoan merchant families. Even earlier, Roman slaves populated these villages, constrained to work with more primitive tools and constructing giant wooden sleds to transport the blocks of marble down the precipitous mountain slopes to the port on the coast at Luni. The great monumental works of the Roman empire, as well as some of the more extraordinary artistic works of the Italian Renaissance, were built and sculpted out of Carrara marble.

Mountains, as Braudel suggests, are often places of refuge, "a land of the free". They are also, perhaps paradoxically, places of movement. The Lunigiana, the area comprising the western section of the Apuane mountains as well as the hilly forest and agricultural zone behind Carrara, is a region set apart from the rest of Tuscany. Here the dialects of the coastal region of Liguria meet those of the more remote sections of Emilia Romagna. Over the centuries people living in this area moved across this landscape as bandits and pilgrims, as traders of forest products, as shepherds searching for pastures and as agricultural workers looking for a solution to rural dispossession in the equally precarious marble quarries of Carrara. Later, when the chestnut forests failed, these marginal forest dwellers and neophyte industrial workers left for other more remote and foreign locations, in Argentina and East London. Foraging for a livelihood, the people of the Apuane lived off the land.

With its easy access to the sea, the Lunigiana was also a region of occupation and has a rather convoluted political history. The Roman defeat of the Liguri-Apuani in 180 B.C. was followed by the feudal reign of the Ecclesiastical court of the Bishops of Luni until 1215 when an independent *comune* of Carrara was declared. This *comune*, completely independent for only a century, was distinguished by its lack of an urban centre. Indeed, the original federation of autonomous and economically self-sufficient villages, or *vicinanze,* continued to maintain considerable autonomy over their affairs until their final abolition in 1812, when the Lunigiana was amalgamated with the principality of Lucca, governed by Elisa

Baciocchi, Napoleon's sister.[1] During the intervening centuries Carrara and the *vicinanze* became a spoil of war for the numerous feuding cities and noble families of the Italian peninsula – the Pisans; Castruccio Castracani, Prince of Lucca; the Rossi of Parma; the Marquess Spinetta Malaspina, ruler of Verona and various members of the Visconti family of Milan. In 1473, a period of relative stability ensued as Carrara and Massa came under the control of a local family, the Malaspina, who later married into the Cybo family from Genoa. This dynasty continued its rule, with only minor interruptions, until it was gradually absorbed into the Dukedom of Modena during the 17th and 18th centuries and was finally officially incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy in the mid-19th century. But despite this apparently tumultuous political history, perhaps its most significant consistency is the enduring provincial and peripheral status of the region.

In addition to marble, Carrara is famous for its association with anarchism and my interest in this region of Italy grew out of a long-standing fascination with the anarchist history of the city. In anarchist texts, Carrara is eulogised as one of the few areas outside Spain where libertarian ideas and traditions are deeply embedded in popular culture, surviving the growth of the Italian communist party in the post-Second World War years. Although modern historians do not agree on the origins or reasons for the persistence of the libertarian tradition in Carrara, most have argued that there is an explicit connection between the experience and organization of work in the quarries and the generation of the "libertarian spirit" (Gestri 1976: 47).

This ethnographic and historical account of work culture in Carrara is broadly concerned with describing, theorising and evoking, the experience of life and work in the quarries of Carrara and the "marble villages". It thus focuses on three interrelated areas: work, gender and politics. While intending to contribute to anthropological knowledge of work cultures, the dissertation is also a critique of the sub-discipline of the sociology of work. An integral part of modern industrial culture, work is best understood, I suggest, through an analysis of its experiential dimension. Taking into account the historical context of work in the marble industry and the region's social, economic and political history, I argue that work is itself an important, and too often unexamined arena for the construction of local knowledge, meanings and gender identities. The study also takes issue with certain sociological and historical representations of miners and mining communities, giving precedence to the voices of quarry workers, the *cavatori*, and their families in evoking and constructing the experience of work.

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[1] There is considerable historical debate over the degree to which the *vicinanze* maintained political and economic independence over the centuries. According to Marco della Pina's (1979) detailed research on the history of Carrara in the 17th and 18th centuries, the final abolition of the *vicinanze* in 1812 is an event which must be understood in terms of the complex transformations in the local economy and society occurring during the two preceding centuries.

Thus in contrast to Aiwah Ong's (1987) recent ethnography of emergent cultural forms and identities among neophyte women factory workers in Malaysia, this study attempts to understand the deeply embedded nature of craft identity among the workers of the marble quarries of Carrara. Identities which might be seen as threatened by recent transformations in the work process, but which nevertheless remain extraordinarily pervasive and continue to inform the ways in which quarry workers and others perceive and experience their lives. But in common with Ong, I have been concerned to place human interest and the meanings of work at the centre of the ethnographic endeavour.

In a recent collection of essays on the historical meanings of work, Patrick Joyce (1987: 1) asserts that work is a culturally constructed activity rather than simply an economic one. This insight, long commonplace to anthropologists, has only recently, it seems, come to the attention of historians and other social scientists (Kaplan and Koepp 1986; Godelier 1980). As Pahl suggests (1984) much of the theorising about work has proceeded from assumptions about the inevitably alienating experience of work in modern industrial societies (Braverman 1974; Illich 1978; Ollman 1971; Wood 1982) and has utilized stereotypical representations of earlier forms of work, such as craft work. These conceptualizations are grounded in the implicit assumption that the evolution of modern industrial capitalism completely eradicated earlier forms of work and work experience. This view is based on the idea of work as mechanics (Moorehouse 1984): the idea that it is the mode of production itself which determines the ways in which work is experienced. Thus despite the vast amount of literature on work and its symbolic centrality in political economy and moral philosophy, work itself is often inadequately theorised.

I see work as psychological (Wallman 1979: 2), indeed aesthetic, as much as economic; a lived experience which may be partially elucidated through attention to the more objective features of the mode of production but which is also powerfully evoked and expressed through the stories of workers themselves. These narratives – which are in themselves creative self-representations linked to culturally significant notions of work as a pathway to maturity and self-realization (Kondo 1990: 230) – reveal the sense in which work may be experienced as a creative and meaningful activity, even within the constraints of modern industrial capitalism. Moreover, these meanings cannot be deduced through *a priori* assumptions about particular forms of work. Thus although miners have often been represented as the epitome of alienated workers (Bulmer 1975: 64), as we will see, Carrara quarry workers rarely describe their work as completely alienating.

In formulating these concerns I have been influenced by the work of anthropologists such as Nash (1979); Kondo (1990) and Metcalfe (1988, 1990); historians investigating the earlier meanings of craft identity, including Farr (1988); Scott (1974); Rule (1985, 1987); Rancière (1986); Sonenscher (1987a, 1987b); Thompson (1963); and by sociologists questioning reductionist and teleological depictions of work in industrial societies, for example, Sabel (1982). Although I am not directly concerned with the debate over labour process theory – a debate termed "Bravermania" (Littler and Salaman 1982) because of its proliferation in recent sociological studies of work – it is impossible to ignore Braverman's (1974) classic work nor that of his numerous critics, for example Burawoy (1979), who argues that the production process is concerned not only with the production of objects but also involves the creation of social relations which in themselves "manufacture consent". While this study is principally an ethnography of work with a bias towards history, I am also interested in incorporating recent insights from sociology as well as the historiography of work for as Godoy (1985: 199) asserts, although "the miner, like Geertz's peasant, was recently discovered by anthropologists", there have been very few ethnographies devoted to mining or to the study of work in industrial settings.

Throughout this study I have attempted to blend theoretical analysis with ethnographic description, but it is appropriate at this point to acknowledge the influence of some specific works on the way I have approached these issues. June Nash's study of the Bolivian tin miners inspired my fieldwork project and her concern at foregrounding the voices and experiences of workers themselves has been instrumental in my own thinking about these concerns. Similarly, Andrew Metcalfe's (1988) work on the Australian coal miners of northern New South Wales, while more theoretically than ethnographically oriented, has influenced my view of miners as people who not only make their own history (Thompson 1963) within the constraints of the wage-capital relationship, but who struggle for and assert their dignity in ways which do not always fit the heroic representations of miners in the sociology of work. I came across Dorinne Kondo's (1990) ethnography of work in a Japanese sweet firm in the latter stages of finishing this thesis. Her critique of essentialising notions of selfhood and identity, work or otherwise (Butler 1989), challenged me to question the ways in which I had represented quarry workers and others in this text. Likewise, I share her concern with the humanist argument for complexity, despite its problematic legacy of Enlightenment versions of "man". As a way of highlighting these issues it is apposite to refer here to Kondo's definition of culture which she sees as deeply embedded in the assumptions of everyday life. From this stand-point,

> Culture is . . . no reified thing or system, but a meaningful way of being in the world, inseparable from the "deepest" aspects of one's "self" – the trope of depth and interior space itself a product of our own cultural conventions. These cultural meanings are themselves multiple and contradictory, and though they cannot be understood without reference to historical, political and economic discourses, the experience of culture cannot be reduced to these nor related to them in any simple, isomorphic way (1990: 300–301).

This definition of culture is also useful for thinking about a further central theme in this thesis: the representation of miners in historical, sociological and literary texts. It is obvious that Metcalfe's (1990) insightful discussion on the ways in which miners as a group have acquired an iconographic status in the history of capitalism has been important in framing my analysis. But I have also been influenced by other discussions stemming from miners (Burt 1924; Chaplin 1978; Douglass 1977a, 1977b; Jones 1977) or from people who have an intimate knowledge of the experience of work (Carter 1925; Derrickson 1988; Douglass and Kreiger 1983; Leger and Mothibeli 1988; Samuel 1977; Trettin 1987; Colls 1977, 1987). For whereas in much of the sociological literature on work miners are viewed as archetypal proletarians (Harrison 1978: 2), miners themselves often perceive their work as embodying the ideas of independence and workers' control usually associated with earlier forms of craft work.

As Metcalfe (1988: 129) suggests, "miners lost some of their iconic stature in the 1960s, when the New Left was identifying backward or bourgeois traits in "traditional" working class politics", a period in which Braverman (1974) was also criticised for the allegedly utopian, or romantic, manner in which he described the craftsman's loss of skill (Johnson 1978: 42; Littler 1978: 185). This debate has led to a peculiarly ambivalent portrayal of miners in the sociology of work: alternatively vanguards of the working class, or retrograde craft workers, "aristocrats of labour", whose lifeworlds are irrevocably linked to assumed backward and conservative notions about the historic role of the working class.

Regardless of how they are portrayed, one conclusion which emerges from my research, is that miners are not easily assimilated to either of these stereotypes. While their particular incorporation into the wage-capitalist system may certainly be regarded as idiosyncratic – as the product of a particular local history and culture as well as the unique features of the production of marble – Carrara quarry workers regard themselves as both craft workers with a heightened sense of independence and industrial workers with similar interests and concerns to other industrial workers within the exploitative social relations of wage-capitalism.

As other historians have noted, however, these apparently paradoxical images are only contradictory if we accept the assumptions about the inherently conservative nature of craft work referred to above. While historians continue to debate these issues, there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that artisans, at least in Europe, were extremely influential in the 18th century popular revolts, as well as in 19th and 20th century labour movements.(Farr 1988; Rule 1985, Gray 1987, Scott 1974, Prothero 1978).[2] Much of this literature, however, implicitly suggests that political consciousness is the product of a particular form of work or mode of production. In a recent critique of this tradition, Rancière (1986) insists that understanding the craft workers' world view involves more than a study of workplace relations and the "property of skill" for:

> With the good intentions of limiting ourselves solely to the professional experience of the workers, we . . . run the risk of reconfirming the old philosophical adage that recommends that workers not concern themselves with anything beside their work. We imagine a carpenter turning his phrases as he turns wood, seeing the world through his tools. Thinking we can define his militancy on the basis of his trade, we wind up defining it from the standpoint of our own functionalist preconceptions. And at the same time, we are ready to give credence to certain descriptions of workers' practices that transform political bias into ethnological traits (1986: 330).

This critique is also applicable to the study of modern labour movements. Italian labour historians, for example, have incorporated similar assumptions about the primacy of workplace relations for understanding political consciousness in their analyses of the relationship between mechanization, industrialization and the formation of the modern Italian working class. According to one of Italy's pre-eminent labour historians, Guiliano Procacci (1972: 19–28), the Italian working class arose "from a process of mechanization [which] tended to negate [earlier] labour hierarchies and [which] reduced both workers from an artisan background and newcomers to a similar condition of wage labour". Similarly, Stefano Merli (1973: 846) concludes that in Italy, working class consciousness and political action originated far more in the discovery by workers of the "mechanism of rationalization which prevailed in the factory" than in the continuity of previous forms of culture and organization.

Although these conceptualizations – which negate the legacy of artisan culture and the importance of struggles outside the factory walls in early 20th century labour movements – have been challenged elsewhere (Gutman 1977; Sewell 1974; Stedman Jones 1974), they remain extraordinarily pervasive in Italian labour historiography (Bell 1978, Passerini 1987). This problematic relationship between political consciousness and work highlights a further theme in my study; the widespread fascination with and romanticising of the class solidarity of miners and mining communities.

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[2] See Prothero (1978: 4–6) for a lucid discussion of the confusion and difficulty involved in defining the "artisan" with reference to a particular form of work or work organization.

In the sociological literature on work, mining and other "single occupational communities" have been singled out for special attention. The dependency of these communities upon a single economic resource, the fluctuating global market for their product, and their geographical isolation, are among the usual explanations of their legendary militancy as well as their remarkable similarity across cultures. Kerr and Siegel's work of the 1950s, which characterized miners as an immobile, introverted, "isolated mass" – the result of the remote geographical location of the workplace, the nature of mine working, and a number of other material conditions peculiar to mining – has been seminal to this approach (1954: 191–3). The idea of the "occupational community", first explicitly articulated by Blauner (1960), also emerged from this formulation although it already underpinned Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's (1956) ethnographical study of the Yorkshire coal mining community of Featherstone, *Coal is Our Life*. This study, which links the assumed militancy of miners to the nature of their community and promulgates a series of stereotypes about working class life, became a standard sociological text and is still widely cited today. David Lockwood (1966) also drew upon this tradition in his influential article which identified miners as archetypal "traditional proletarians", in contrast to "traditional deferential workers" and "privatised workers".

Given the centrality of miners and mining communities to discourse about working class life and the sociology of work, it is, perhaps, surprising that there are so few empirical studies or ethnographies of mining. Metcalfe (1988) has cogently argued that stereotypical views of the political culture of miners have blinded analysts to other forms of class struggle, as well as misrepresenting the interests of miners themselves. Although I am not directly concerned with the question of class and class struggle, I am interested in highlighting the complex and often contradictory experiences of life and work in the marble villages.

In particular I argue that assumptions about the homogeneity and solidarity of mining communities are partial in both senses of the word. Focusing on the political struggles of male miners means little attention has been given to those of women. The problem is not merely that women are excluded from view, but that female resistance and militancy is itself narrowly defined. Much of this literature assumes that the political aims of women are congruent with those of men. Thus even when women are accorded a consciousness of their own, it is measured by their support for only the most public and overt aspects of class struggle – strikes – and by their participation in women's auxiliaries or housewives associations. If these organizations are not visible or are unsuccessful, and if female support for strikes is not apparent, it is assumed that women either lack an adequate sense of class consciousness or that men prevent their participation. Even when women do participate in these organizations, they are sometimes chastised for their lack of feminist consciousness (Williams 1981: 123). In defining female propensity to rebel by the degree to which women identify with workplace struggles, these authors project a view of women as essentially passive, which takes little account of women's own perceptions of their role or their interests in these communities (John 1984).

With these considerations in mind, I argue that any study of political consciousness must take into account the complex set of relationships which link the family and home to the workplace (Whipp 1990). Just as the consciousness of male workers "is crucially formed in the experience of the interaction of the family-household with the workplace" (Donaldson 1991: 98), the consciousness of women is developed through the enmeshment of the mining community in the wage-capital relationship. The interests of men and women in the marble villages are brought closer together by the shared sense of vulnerability and dependency which dominates the experience of so many mining communities across cultures. But while acknowledging the interrelationship of home and work, it is also critical to recognize the points at which female experience differs from, and is even opposed to, that of men. Adequate examinations of politics and political consciousness, must therefore explore the less public forms of protest associated with the family and the neighbourhood. For it is within these forms of protest that women, rather than men, appear as central figures.

The experience of work within the household itself is a further theme developed in this thesis. Indeed I argue that domestic life is not a peripheral arena of social analysis, but is central to the formation of social consciousness (Yeatman 1986; Grey and Mearns 1989). In highlighting the symbolic importance of housework to constructions of femininity, I have drawn upon Goddard's (1987) important study of female sexuality in Naples as well as Angela John's (1980, 1982, 1984) work on the history of women and work in mining communities. The narratives of women themselves, however, were instrumental in alerting me to the importance of female labour within the household economy in previous generations.

The crucial economic contribution of women to the household illustrates the difficulty posed for any sociological theory which assumes that political militancy can be explained by one single overarching theory based on the mode of production or any other supposedly uniform feature of these communities.[3] For as the important collection of essays, *Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers*, edited by Raphael Samuel (1977) reveals, one of the distinguishing features of these communities is their diversity and, in the 19th century at least, their imperfect incorporation into the wage-capital system. Indeed, it might be argued that a sensitive study of the history of mining would challenge many of the assumptions about the evolution of industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries. In Carrara, mining was an activity carried out in conjunction with a variety of other occupations; an economy in which household production played a major role until the end of the Second World War.

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[3] The search for a general explanation for miners' militancy is still a current issue in labour history. (See Church, Outram and Smith 1989).

Just as sociological accounts of mining are constructed within master narratives serving particular political agendas and promoting essentialist notions of the miner, the history of anarchism is similarly constructed within a web of meta narratives which rarely articulate the concerns of anarchists themselves. I have drawn upon these local and national historical narratives to explore a set of recurring images involved in the representation of quarry workers, the *cavatori*, as anarchists. While there is no single history of anarchism in Carrara, I have found the work of Gestri (1976, 1982); Mori (1958) and Bernieri (1952, 1961) detailing the history of the local labour movement in the 19th and 20th centuries particularly useful. Similarly, I have drawn extensively upon the work of Masini (1969, 1981); Cerrito (1971, 1977); Woodcock (1983) and Kaplan (1977) to contextualize this local history within a national and international perspective. Here too, the narratives of anarchists themselves have served as a counterfoil for these representations, alerting me to the importance of actual historical events as transforming experiences in people's lives.

In presenting this first ethnography of work in the marble quarries of Carrara, I use the word ethnography to refer to a partial account of the culture of work in the marble villages. As most anthropologists now acknowledge, the process of creating an ethnography is a complex task involving a mixture of selection and writing, of interpretation and reflection, often only possible when the researcher has left the field "in a sometimes violent attempt to recover meaning in the flux and chaos of everyday life" (Kondo 1990: 7). While ethnographies are not total inventions, they are creations; they evoke rather than translate. In this ethnography I have quite consciously selected those aspects of life and work which appeared most salient to me for evoking the experience of life and work in the world of marble. This experience, it seems to me, is expressed most powerfully through the risks of work, through the silence of death, and through the ways in which work identities are constructed in the "killing mountain".

FIELDWORK IN GRAGNANA AND THE MARBLE QUARRIES

Several years before fieldwork in Carrara, I lived for two years in Empoli, near Florence. Once on a train journey up the coast towards Genoa, my fellow travellers pointed to the white-flecked Apuane mountains to the east, rising suddenly out of the coastal plain. As is often the case when travelling in one of the shared compartments typical of Italian trains, a conversation ensued. In impeccable Italian, a Siennese woman told us all in dramatic tones about the beauty and fame of Carrara marble, while simultaneously saying to me, "That's where the anarchists live". One year I visited Carrara with a friend on May Day. Wandering around the empty city streets, we were disappointed to learn that the May Day march had finished earlier in the day and that the anarchists were in all probability having a picnic up in the mountains behind the city. We consoled ourselves with lunch in a local restaurant – tripe and wild boar – and in the afternoon took to the streets again to ascertain the anarchist presence in the city. It was then that I noticed a monument in Piazza d'Armi dedicated to the anarcho-syndicalist, Alberto Meschi, who I knew was a central figure in local trade union struggles. While we were looking at the monument we were joined by a woman dressed in black, a widow, who placed some flowers on the monument. As we stood there together in self-conscious silence, she turned around and to our bemusement started singing. I found it difficult follow her song at first, but it ended with the words:

> Give flowers to the fallen rebels
> with your eyes turned towards the dawn
> to the brave man who fights and works
> to the prophetic poet who dies.[4]

Years later, during fieldwork, I realized that this song is the traditional May Day memorial hymn, sung each year on the lst of May in front of the Meschi monument. But my experience of hearing this woman sing it without understanding all the words or knowing much about the history of the city, was perhaps seminal, the incident which generated my interest in this region.

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[4] This is the last verse of Pietro Gori's May Day memorial and the words in Italian are as follows:

> Date fiori ai ribelli caduti
> collo squardo rivolto all'aurora
> al gagliardo che lotta e lavora
> al veggente poeta che muor!

During this same period I lived for a year in Milan where I met Aurora, the daughter of a prominent local anarchist, who had emigrated to Carrara from Sicily at the end of the 1945 war. Several years later when I was formulating this project, I wrote to Aurora to ask her about the feasibility of doing research in Carrara, and while she was not totally averse, she was less than enthusiastic. It was, however, through her efforts that I came to live in Gragnana, the village where I lived and worked for almost three years.

Contemplating the indiscriminate conglomeration of houses and buildings remarkable only for their drab and dilapidated appearance, my first impressions of this village were also rather negative. As arranged, I picked up the key to the house where I was to live from a woman who became one of my closest confidants in the village. Alda, as I later describe, was instrumental in teaching me about the nuances of village life and I gradually became adopted and adopted myself into her family. Initially, however, I felt abandoned, nervous, daunted by the task of gaining access to the obvious sounds and signs of life behind what seemed like impenetrable doors.

It is almost commonplace to suggest that the setting trope – the narrative convention which begins most ethnographies – is one of journey; a voyage of personal discovery as much as the creation of a semblance of order out of the inchoate events and experiences of fieldwork. But tropes owe their rhetorical effectiveness to their grounding in social life. References in my fieldwork diaries to the sounds and silences of village life represent the beginning of this experience for me.

One of my first impressions was the way in which villagers often communicated with one another, by shouting, both inside the house and outside in the street, relaying messages and greetings between houses through adjacent windows. "*Affacciati!*", "Come to the window!", was the way my neighbours called me for a morning coffee in their houses. In the late afternoon and evenings before dinner, the noise level increased as men, drinking wine and playing cards in one of the numerous bars or political clubs in the village, hurled insults and jokes, slapped each other, and pounded the tables as they won a particularly good hand of *briscola*.[5]

Memories of life and work in past generations were also often expressed through references to particular sounds: the clinking of hobnailed work boots on the cobblestones as men marched through the village on their way to work in the early hours of the morning; the songs women sang while doing their housework. Today, nostalgia for the past and memory of place is as often marked and articulated through the absence of these familiar sounds. As Katerina, a neighbour in her 60s, recalls,

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[5] A card game which uses a lot of tricks and signals between partners.

> They [the men] . . . used to sing. At four in the morning you used to hear people going by in the street. Now you hear the bus, that's all. But before they used to sing *stornelli*[6] when you went to bed. But now! The women used to sing while they did their work. But now! Who sings any more?

But demeanours also evoked silences. In the early months of fieldwork people in the village seemed to view my presence with a great deal of ambivalence. Wandering around the maze of alleyways and passages which pass for streets, I often felt dismayed when my attempts at friendly greetings met with stony stares. While my immediate neighbours were extremely hospitable, often inviting me to eat with them or to watch television in the evenings in their homes, other people looked askance and talked about me in the third person: asking others, "Who is this *figliola*?" (daughter). I began to feel that the dire predictions of friends in Carrara that I would not survive the "toughness "of the Gragnanini would be fulfilled. I was reminded too of the marble plaque I had seen embedded in the gate house of the Fabricotti Villa on the road to Gragnana, which prophetically warned, "*Badi agli affari tui e Non t'impiccia degli altri*". Roughly translated: "Mind your own business and don't stick your nose into others".

After a while I came to realize that this reserve towards me was in part a matter of style, a reticence with words, at least in casual conversation with strangers. My stranger status, as well as my position as a single woman living alone, inhibited the kinds of easy communication I had previously experienced living in other parts of Italy. With time, as I began to be seen as more of a permanent resident and as villagers were able associate me with my neighbour's kinship networks, I was included in the easy banter, indeed often ribald conversations, which characterize communication between women in the village. This process was greatly facilitated by the friendship extended to me by my neighbour, Alda, who included me on her shopping expeditions, and took me to visit her relatives and friends in the village.

Alda's house became my home, but I was always a guest. Although I gradually became incorporated into this household, I continued to live alone. During the first few months of fieldwork I ate with Alda's family almost every day and eagerly looked forward to the lunch time television soap operas which are assiduously followed by all the women I knew in the village. I became an expert on the foibles and defects of all the protagonists in these American serials, and could narrate the plots with exactly the same facility as others in the village. Alda and her friends, especially Lilliana, also taught me to cook the village specialities, although I never attempted the giant rice custard which is made for festive occasions and feeds at least 20 people. I loved to watch the sensuous pleasure on these women's faces as they rolled and re-rolled the balls of pasta dough into transparent sheets, fashioning it into intricate shapes with their hands.

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[6] These are semi-improvised song duels, transmitted in oral form, found mostly in southern Italy and Tuscany.

Thus although I began my project as an investigation of work in the quarries, my initial contacts were with women. In retrospect this was fortuitous, although I did not think so at the time. Initially I felt frustrated at the difficulty of getting men to take me and my research seriously. For a start, I was not the first person interested in the marble quarries of Carrara; indeed, several films and documentaries had been made about the area and quarry workers were quite used to being romanticised by outside observers. Moreover, I was a single woman, a fact which eliminated any possibility of actually working in the quarries. I tried to turn myself into an honorary man by engaging men in conversation in the village bars, but I felt uncomfortable and self-conscious, especially as I was the only woman and single. In any case, being plied with numerous glasses of red wine was not necessarily conducive to rigorous "data" collection.

It was eventually through my contacts with women, often the wives of quarry workers, that I was able to spend time with men at work. After several months of living in the village and several casual visits to the quarries, I received my first invitation to accompany Elio, Alda's husband, to work. Over the next few months I spent many days in Calacata (the name of his quarry), observing the work process, talking to the men and other people who came to buy marble. I later spent time in other quarries, particularly Polvaccio, where Lilliana's husband worked. After a while, other men in the village asked me why I had not been to visit them and women, commenting on my dusty boots, jokingly asked me if I had been visiting my boyfriend or more to the point, their husband. Some people also saw me as a kind of mascot, a novelty, nicknaming me the "*Madonna dei Cavatori*".[7]

As accounts of the fieldwork experience readily acknowledge, gathering data is a painstaking and often frustrating process in which the most valuable insights and intuitions are revealed by luck, or by the willingness of people to humour the anthropologist in what must seem at times an extraordinary invasion of privacy. One of the apparent contradictions of my fieldwork experience is that as time went by I found it relatively easy to organize formal interviews with the quarry workers I had met in the quarries, while my attempts to interview women at home were resisted. In part this was due to the demands of domestic life which leave women with very little spare time to sit down and talk privately. Thus while I could talk with women I knew well while they were ironing or preparing food, it was difficult to arrange interviews with other women in the village who also guarded their privacy. However, despite their frequent assertions that they had little to say, the conversations I eventually had with women in the village became an extremely rich source of material for the arguments put forward in this thesis.

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[7] There is actually a Madonna of the quarry workers as well as a monthly broadsheet which goes by the same name, published by the local Catholic church. A statue to the *Madonna dei cavatori* was erected in the quarries [redacted]), in the late 1960s. But as far as I was able to ascertain, there is no religious cult associated with this figure, rather, the statue was erected as a move on the part of the Catholic church to counter local anticlerical sentiment.

One of the most important themes in this study is the importance of voice. In creating this ethnography I have used a variety of voices including those of historical texts. This archival research, conducted in Florence and Carrara, was in itself a voyage of cultural discovery into the extraordinarily labyrinthine experience of Italian libraries where it is often difficult even to find a seat. I was aided in this endeavour by Professor Lorenzo Gestri, whose own work on the local history of the early labour movements in Carrara oriented much of my research.

People in the village of Gragnana familiarized me with the local dialect. Although dialect is not taught at school, and standard Italian is understood and spoken by everyone, people in the villages use dialect in their day to day interactions. The local dialects vary from village to village and while I became reasonably proficient in the speech nuances of the Gragnanini, I was never able to master those of the Colonnatese or the Montignosini. Fortunately people in the village were very patient and I had the highest regard for Alda who, without speaking a word of English, was always able to communicate my whereabouts to the people who rang me from Australia. Many of the quotations in this thesis are derived from Italian texts, and except where otherwise acknowledged in the bibliography, they are my own translations. In most cases I have used people's real names, except when I have thought they would prefer to be disguised.

This thesis is therefore a collage, a text created in a particular moment of time out of a number of different experiences and voices. Although culture may be an invention tied up with the invention of anthropology, it also has a lived counterpart in the world (Hastrup 1990). While the anthropologist is obviously a positioned subject and not a blank slate, the "objects" of social analysis are also creative participants, not only with respect to the ethnography, but also in their world. In this ethnography I have juxtaposed the narratives and voices of quarry workers, women and anarchists with those of labour historians, sociologists and others in an attempt to evoke something of the experience of life in the world of marble. My intention is also to illuminate the disjunctions between these voices: the contradictions and lack of homogeneity, as well as the ways in which the narratives and analyses of labour history and sociology have sometimes silenced the voices of those they seek to articulate.

THESIS OUTLINE

The first two chapters focus on the claims quarry workers make about the independence and unique status of their work. The first chapter historically contextualizes and describes the organization of the production of marble in Carrara. One of my main aims here is to illuminate the idiosyncratic features of marble quarrying within a cross cultural perspective. The first half concentrates on the quarries, the history of the technology of marble production and the contemporary work process. In the second section I look more closely at the organization of the marble industry and patterns of ownership. The second chapter turns to a closer examination of the labour force where I look at the processes of recruitment, the division of labour and work conditions. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the hierarchy of skill and the continuing importance of notions of craft and skill to work identities, despite recent transformations in the work process.

The third chapter deepens this discussion by further analysing workers' perceptions of their work and their cultural constructions of work identity. In particular, I explore the ways in which quarry workers contrast practical knowledge and skills embodied through the work experience with the more technical and scientific knowledge of outside experts. This leads to an examination of quarry language as an expression of work and gender identity, and an argument that the experience of work itself is an important and often neglected arena of social analysis in contemporary debates about work.

The history of occupational injury in the quarries is the focus of chapter four. In detailing the risks of work and the high rate of injury, I suggest that injury is a normal consequence of the work process in an inherently dangerous work environment, but through an analysis of labour rhetoric and the close examination of an event known as the "Bettogli Disaster", I argue that the conditions of risk are as much socially and culturally constructed ideas as material realities. In opposition to current sociological and psychological models of occupational health and safety, I argue that the risks of injury and body mutilation constitute an important arena for the construction of work identities which in turn, contribute to apparently contradictory responses to questions of safety in the quarries. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the experience of death as an expression of class and gender identity.

This last theme is further explored in chapter five, which is broadly concerned with the relationship between home and work. Here I coin the term "the economy of fear" to describe to the ways in which women emotionally manage fear, in a community where death and body mutilation is a frequent and catastrophic event. This chapter also analyses the roles of women within the household and the political culture of the village and examines the processes of female exclusion and domestic containment through constructions of femininity in a gendered work culture.

The concluding chapter uses historical and literary texts to discuss the association of Carrara in the national imagination of Italy with a long tradition of anarchism. In these texts a causal relationship is often drawn between work in the marble quarries and the survival of anarchism as a political tradition. While not wanting to negate the empirical and historical reality of anarchism in Carrara, I conclude that some writers, Italian labour historians in particular, have misinterpreted the connections between the organization of marble production and anarchism.

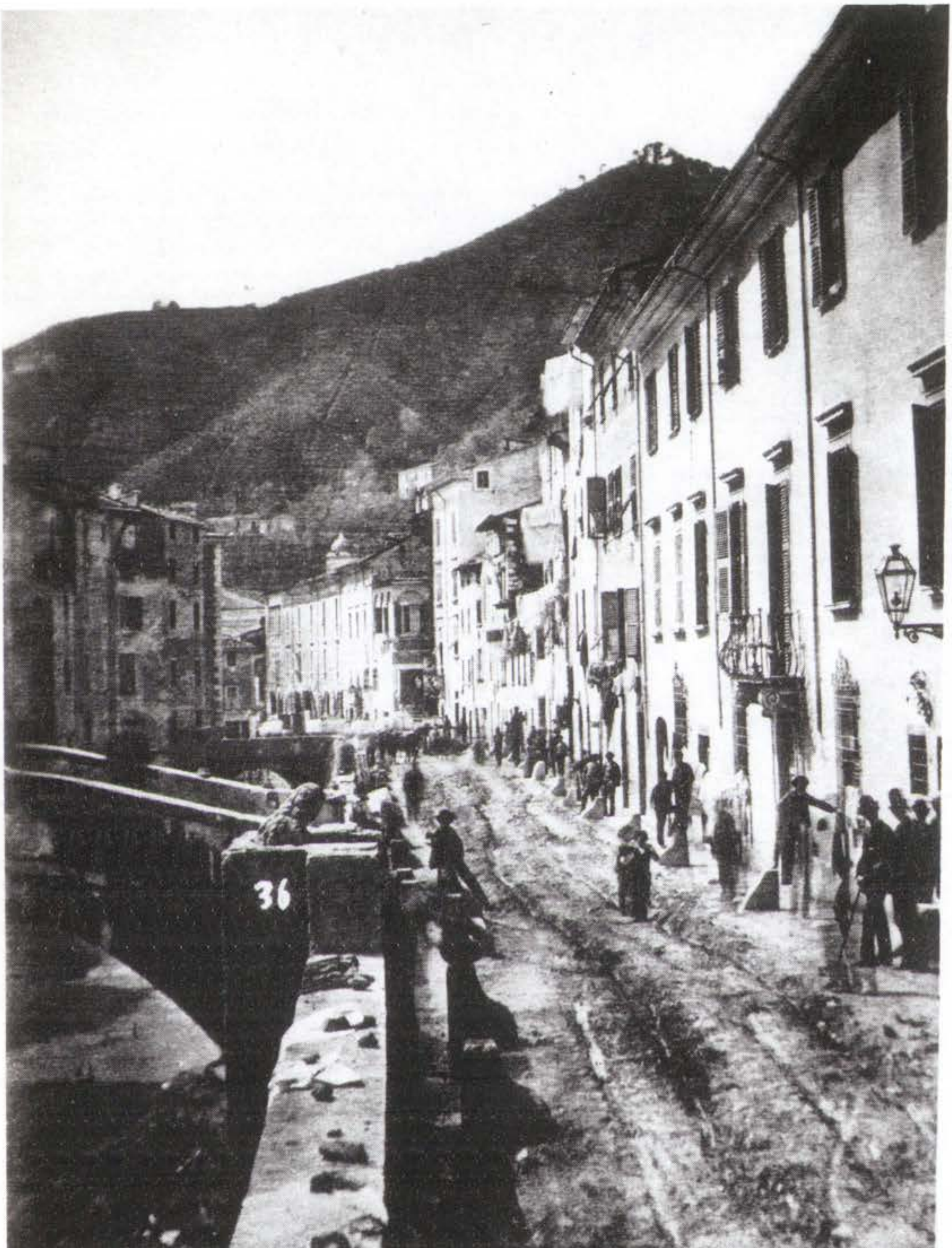

Plate 3. Via Carriona in Carrara at the turn of the century.

Plate 4. View of quarries from Campo Cecina.

CHAPTER ONE

The Marble Industry of Carrara: History and Organization

> Marble is, of course, central to the whole discussion: the city developed as a result of the history of marble. In reality the real culture of Carrara is the culture of marble (Borgioli and Gemignani 1977: 9).

THE CITY of Carrara is constructed from and out of marble. The history of the city is inextricably tied to the exploitation of this material which, from the time of the Roman empire, has been a symbol of power and wealth. In the texts of Roman geographers and natural scientists, the fame of marble from Carrara was rivaled only by that of Paros, which in the hierarchy of stone was linked to a vision of fantasy and a literary reference to unparalleled beauty. But while the authors of these ancient texts referred in rapturous tones to the quality of the marble from Carrara, they made little reference to the way it was produced or to the Roman slaves who struggled to extract this "white gold" from the sheer face of the Apuane mountains. The history of Carrara and the production of marble is also bound up with the people who quarried this material, either as slaves, medieval artisans or industrial workers; people who often risked serious injury or death in obtaining the object of so many people's vision of perfection.

These men, the quarry workers of Carrara, have been variously portrayed in literary and historical texts. They have been described as a "distinct class of people; energetic, proud and intolerant of any form of power abuse" (Milani 1894: 21); as "a race of cyclops, wild men . . . predisposed to every form of excess" (*La Nazione* 19 January 1894) and the "artery and black flame of the marble industry in Carrara" (Lodovici 1930: 160). They have also been defined both as "primitive communists" (Bernieri 1961: 89), and as workers with a "heightened sense of individualism" (Mori 1958: 150). They are alternately "expert workers . . . trained from birth"

(Stoppani: 1920: 449) or "drunken delinquents" (Magenta 1871: 103).[1] For just as Carrara evokes immediately the image of marble, the extraction of this material is also inseparable from the quarry workers themselves; a group of workers who are defined by others and define themselves, as intrinsically different from all other workers.

Quarry workers often assert that their work is incomparable to other types of work. Older quarry workers in particular, categorize all workers who labour outside the mountain quarries, in factories or in the numerous workshops and laboratories associated with the production of marble, as workers *al piano* ("on the plain"). They also claim that quarry work allows them a degree of freedom and independence which other workers "on the plain" lack. As one quarry worker suggested,

> On the plain they don't have the freedom we have in the quarry. They have to clock in and clock out.

And a retired quarry worker living in Gragnana, further remarked that

> Even in my day the quarries weren't too bad. We had a lot of free time. We were free. In the quarry if you don't want to go to work one day no one says anything to you. There's more freedom. If I got drunk one evening I wouldn't go the next day. If someone said, "Why aren't you going?" I'd say, "Because I don't want to."

There is a remarkable correspondence between the way in which contemporary quarry workers like to define themselves and their representation in historical and literary texts. These texts emphasise the romantic aspects of quarry work and, perhaps surprisingly, pay little attention to the more prosaic details of work organization upon which these representations depend. Paradoxically, it is the widespread fascination with quarry work which has precluded a comprehensive examination of the production process and the organization of work in Carrara quarries. This absence is all the more noteworthy given the dramatic transformations to work over recent years; transformations which, although greatly altering the production process, have only marginally affected quarry workers' perceptions of themselves and the nature of their work.

The first two chapters of this thesis explore these issues. This chapter focuses on the wider organization of the marble industry and the production of marble in Carrara in order to contextualize arguments which recur in subsequent chapters. I explore the claims made by quarry workers about their work through an examination of the history of marble production, the work process and the peculiar features of quarry ownership. One of my main concerns is to describe the idiosyncratic and unique features of marble and marble production in Carrara. In the second chapter I turn to a closer examination of the labour force. Here, I focus more specifically on the organizational features of quarry work: the division of labour, the process of recruitment, work conditions. I conclude with a discussion of the hierarchy of skill.

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[1] The concluding chapter deals more specifically with these kinds of representations, in particular, the representations of quarry workers as anarchists.

SECTION ONE: THE MARBLE QUARRIES

The quarries of Carrara are unearthly places. Seen from the coastal strip they appear as a series of indelible and inaccessible white lesions, corroding the barren and inhospitable mountain range, the Apuane, which rises up sharply from the heavily industrialized and populated plain. The physical and geographical division between coast and plain is dramatic. There are few places in the world where mountains engage coast at such close quarters creating a wide range of microclimates in a relatively short distance. Before the construction of housing estates and factories along the coast, vegetation ranged from lush orange groves near the sea, to chestnut tree forests in the subalpine areas, with barren rock and marble the further one ventured into the high mountain range.

This extraordinary physical environment shapes initial impressions. On first entering these quarries it is almost impossible to remain unaffected by their appearance, suspended, one on top of the other, along the sheer perpendicular face of the Apuane mountains. As Stoppani (1920) an early traveller suggests, the best view is from the top. From here, perched on the edge of a virtual precipice, there is a spectacular and continuous view down into the mountain valleys and to the sea beyond. It is a barren and desolate scene. The sides of the mountain are covered by rivers of white rubble running down into the valleys below and the quarries are only barely distinguishable as a series of smooth indentations etched into the rock face. Amidst them, crisscrossing and slashing the mountain at regular intervals, are a number of white zigzag markings. These are roads, notorious for their hairpin bends, built on top of the rivers of waste material known as the *ravaneti*. Numerous trucks, dwarfed by huge teetering blocks of marble, can be seen negotiating these tortuous curves.

For early travellers, the eerie sounds emanating from work in the quarries, were equally impressive. Writing in the late 19th century, Stoppani records that

> If you wish to see really "fevered" work, then look for those places high up from where you can see 30 or 40 quarries situated one on top of the other along a steep decline, each one facing onto incredibly steep precipices; each

> one seemingly inaccessible. Everything swarms and reverberates. In the midst of a continual and indistinct racket, the sounds of hundreds of people hitting the rock with hammers and chisels; a sound which reminds one of an oncoming storm, one can hear the feeble howling of the siren which warns of danger. There is also the sound of explosions which shake the earth; the din of huge blocks of marble rolling over the huge mountains of accumulated waste material; the sound of quarry workers shouting; the screams of the ox-masters and the bellowing of their oxen. It is something which could be likened to the Tower of Babel, the battle of the giants or the music of the future(1920: 444–5).

Even earlier, Magenta provided another description, which again stresses the distinctive clamour of quarry work. "There is nothing", he suggests,

> which strikes one's imagination so much as finding oneself amongst the arduous and intense work of the valleys of Torano, Polvaccio, Crestola, Forno and Altissimo. It seems as if the huge solid white cliffs are likely to collapse on top of you at any moment and at any place. Terrifying sounds of explosives thunder and roar from everywhere, while simultaneously the earth shakes and dissolves under your feet. Here one can see herds of men, intent upon lowering solid and uncut blocks of marble onto the *lizze*.[2] Shortly afterwards, the overloaded *lizza* will begin its slide down the valley. In addition, there is the monotonous shouting of the labourers who assist the teams of strong and patient oxen and finally, a piercing echo which reverberates around and around these mountain valleys where this unceasing and titanic work is carried out. All this, occurring amidst magnificent and cultivated mountains, is enough to flabbergast even the coldest observer. Indeed, there are few other places on earth where man's struggle with nature is more apparent, more active and ferocious, than here . . . where despite the gloomy terror of explosives and general anxiety, there are hopes for riches which rarely fail (1871: 8).

And Nice (1952), writing only 40 years ago, describes a more prosaic industrial landscape, but again emphasises sound.

> The sides of the mountains are entirely slashed with quarries creating extraordinary and hugely varied shapes in the landscape. The *detrite* (marble waste) which – because of its extreme whiteness, from a distance resembles giant piles of snow – covers the underlying slopes . . . Another characteristic aspect of the area is provided by numerous buildings of all sorts which . . . complete the picture of an arid and solemn industrial landscape, all the more

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[2] The *lizza* is a wooden sled made from three long pieces of wood tied together with rope. As I describe in more detail later in this chapter, this sled was used to transport "squared" blocks of marble to the base of the quarries from where they were either loaded onto the marble train or transported by teams of oxen to the port.

> noticeable when contrasted with the barren white rock. All this is pervaded by sounds of various sorts; the hissing of the helicoidal wire; the rumble of the pneumatic drill; the crashing of the *detrite*; and once in a while, the sound of the alarm, followed by the thundering of the explosives which reverberates throughout these mountains (1952: 150–52).

Today, older quarry workers narrating their past work experiences also recollect the noises associated with previous technology and work organization. Their descriptions of work are often punctuated by spontaneous mimicry of the sounds of chisels and hammers hitting against the marble, or the chants used by teams of men engaged in the heavier aspects of quarry work. They also refer to the sound of the siren, known locally and onomatopoetically as the *mugnon*, because it made the "mooing" noise of a cow when signalling a serious accident.[3]

A further theme in the memories of these quarry workers is movement, usually underscored with references to the huge numbers of men who once worked in the quarries. One worker, vividly reconstructing work conditions of only thirty years ago, described the quarries as

> giant ant heaps. You could see men for miles everywhere. The mountains were full of them.

This description bears little resemblance to contemporary conditions. Reminiscent of lunar landscapes, the quarries are now impressive for their sheer lack of movement and the small number of men employed. The noise continues – the sound of chisels and hammers has been replaced by bulldozers reversing, jack hammers, industrial saws and excavators – but it is often difficult even to locate workers in the bigger quarries. As if to emphasise the rate of change, one retired worker remarked that quarry workers today seemed to him like "Martians in astronaut suits". While the landscape, with its weird conical shapes and rock forms created by the extraction of marble, remains awe-inspiring, the quarries themselves appear more like building sites, with enormous bulldozers and cranes doing most of the work once done by hand.

All the quarries are situated within three mountain valleys which radiate out in different directions above the city of Carrara. From left to right, these three valleys are known locally as Canal Grande, Canal Bianco and Canal di Colonnata. The sub-valleys or zones, where quarries are concentrated within the three main valleys, often derive their names from the shapes carved out of the landscape through generations of quarry work. One example, Campanile or "Bell tower", is located at one of the highest points in the mountains overlooking the city of Carrara. From below these quarries appear as a series of giant, shimmering white rock outcrops, sharply profiled in rectangular fashion against an ever-expanding skyline. Similarly a quarry located at the apex of Canal Grande, called *tecchione*, is named after the huge cliff of stone which rises above the quarry, casting its shadow over the men working in perilous conditions, fifty metres below. Another quarry called *il dente* or "the tooth", appears as an enormous gaping hole on the mountainous horizon, a visual point of reference for the people in the area. All these quarries are dramatic testimonies to the effects of human and technological agency on the transformation of the natural landscape; a transformation which, as I later demonstrate, is reiterated and emphasised in the quarry workers' own accounts of their relationship to their work environment.

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[3] I discuss the *mugnon* in more detail in chapter four, which deals with the responses to work injury and death.

The names of other quarries reflect the long history of marble quarrying in this area. Quarries like Polvaccio, Zampone, Fosse dell'Angelo, Ravaccione, Calacata and numerous others, are mentioned in texts dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries when sculptors, including Michelangelo, Bologna , made regular pilgrimages to the Apuane mountains to personally select their blocks of *statuario* marble.[4] Similarly, Fantiscritti is named after a Roman marble bas-relief discovered in this quarry. Depicting three Roman deities, Hercules, Jupiter and Bacchus, this bas-relief became an icon of artistic pilgrimage when it was eventually placed in the Academy of Fine Arts at Carrara in 1863.

Some quarries are named after the people who own or control the quarry or concession. When questioned about where they worked, quarry workers would often give the name of the local family associated with a particular quarry rather than the precise geographical location. Thus names like Figaia, Mazzucchelli, Lorenzoni and Bertogli are local reference points for the location of quarries, as well as indicating the unique mode of marble production and pattern of ownership at Carrara, which has as one of its principal characteristics the proliferation of small family-owned quarries.

In 1989, approximately 135 active quarries registered with the local council fell roughly into four categories according to the number of employees. Forty-one employed from 1–5 men; another thirty-eight from 5–15 men; nine others employed 15–30 men, while the last group of four included three large cooperatives and employed from 41–88 men. The number of men working in any particular quarry does not, however, provide an accurate indication of either ownership patterns or production. For example, the three cooperatives – Lorano, Canal Grande and Goia – employing respectively 60, 49 and 88 men, are reluctant to reduce the size of their

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[4] *Statuario* marble, as I elaborate later, is the most highly prized marble at Carrara.

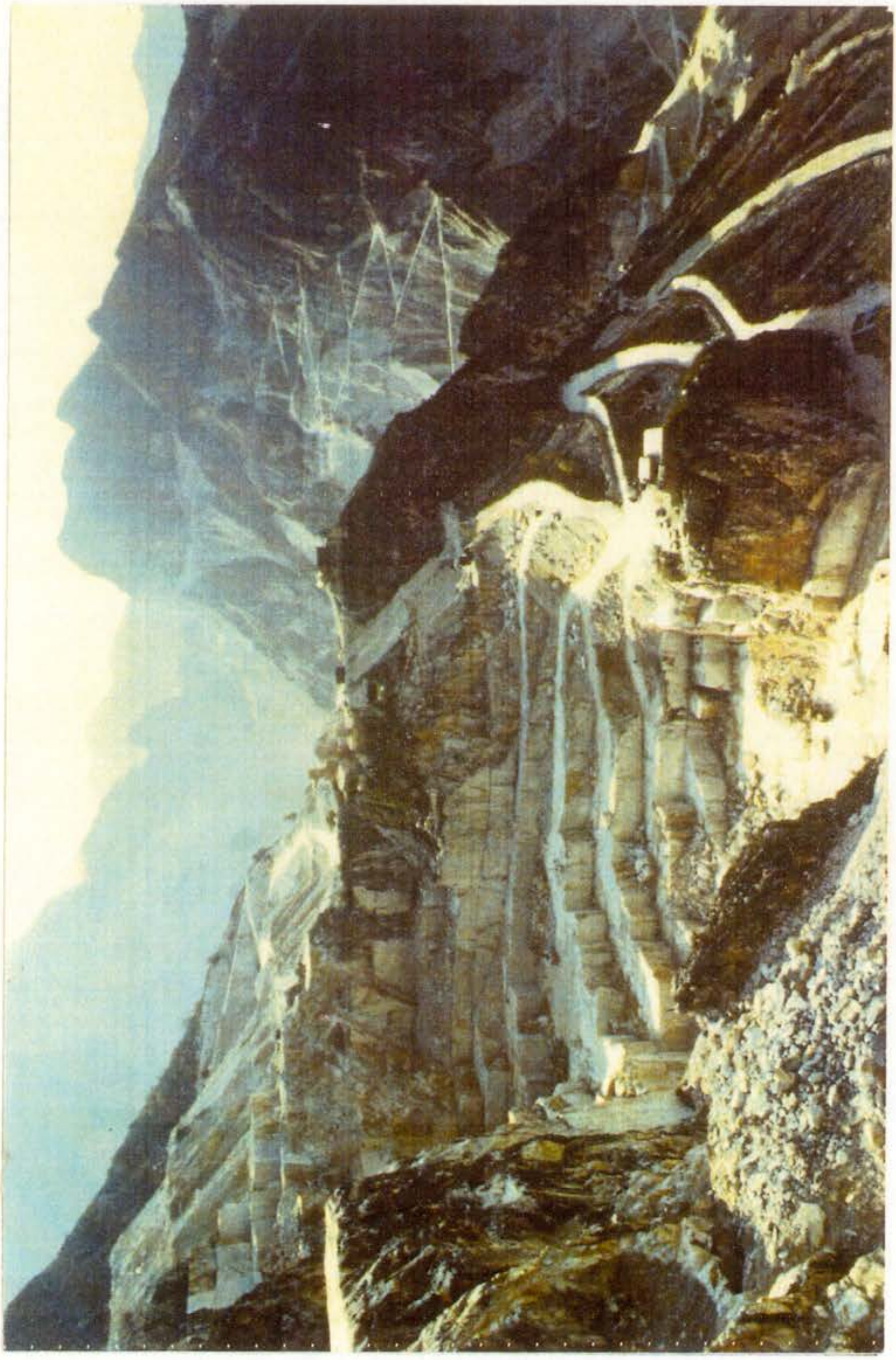

Plate 5. Lorano.

labour force. In the case of Goia, maintaining jobs for sons and son-in-laws is considered more important than the introduction of new and more efficient technology, and Goia is one of the very few quarries at Carrara which continues to utilize the older and slower helicoidal wires for cutting marble.

The recent introduction of new technology is rapidly removing the necessity for large numbers of workers in even the biggest quarries. Today, large scale marble production in any quarry is increasingly dependent upon the ability to provide high levels of investment in capital equipment and other infrastructure in a very competitive industrial environment. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of marble as a product ensures that some quarries worked by only one or two individuals, without expensive machinery still provide a minimal livelihood. For example, one quarry I visited, located in Canal di Colonnata, was worked by only two quarry workers who relied on manual expertise, as well as the older and less expensive helicoidal wires, to extract a highly prized marble unique to this quarry. Indeed, the coexistence of artisan techniques with capital-intensive technology is one of the most important features of the production of marble at Carrara; a mode of production which is also distinguished by diverse patterns of ownership, enormous variations in capital investment and, perhaps most importantly, the uneven geographical distribution of high quality marble.

THE HIERARCHY OF STONE

Unlike most raw materials which are quarried or mined, marble varies enormously in quality. Writing rapturously about the qualities of marble in the 15th and 16th centuries, sculptors and authors almost always mentioned marble from Carrara as being one of "the most compact, the 'softest' and the most beautiful to work" (Cellini 1568: 54).[5] Today, Carrara marble is highly regarded, even within Italy itself where there is an abundance of other types of well-known marble. But Carrara is also renowned for the sheer quantity of marble found in the mountains, which rise to 1200 metres behind the city.[6]

Marble is categorized according to both its structural characteristics and its colour and patterning. Because its crystalline qualities depend upon the process of metamorphosis, there is a great variety of marble – distributed quite unevenly –

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[5] Klapisch-Zuber's (1973) work on the history of the marble industry in Carrara between 1300 and 1600, is particularly useful for a discussion of Renaissance ideas about marble.

[6] Walser (1956: 15) estimated that the main area of marble production – approximately 67 square kilometres – contained a minimum of 60 thousand million cubic metres of marble.

A further obvious ramification is that just as there is a wide variety of marble at Carrara, there is also a great variation in the price of any single block.[8]

THE TECHNOLOGY OF PRODUCTION

The three valleys of Torano, Miseglia and Colonnata, located in close proximity to Carrara, together constitute the oldest area of marble extraction within the entire Apuane region. The Roman colonization of the area now known as the Lunigiana, began with the defeat of the local population of Liguri-Apuani in 180 B. C. and the construction, a few years later, of a Roman colony in the area now known as Luni. This city, the subject of numerous references in ancient literary texts, was located on the coast a few kilometres from the quarries and was consequently particularly well placed for the sea transportation of marble to Rome. In the course of only a few decades, Luni developed from a military settlement to a major centre of marble production.[9]

References in Roman texts to the use of Lunese marble in both domestic house construction and monumental works demonstrate that the excavation of marble at Carrara began between 89 and 48 BC. (Dolci 1980: 31), reaching its period of maximum expansion under Augustus, who used Lunese marble in his grand building programme throughout the Roman empire (Dubois 1908: 3–17).[10] Archaeological artifacts rather than literary texts provide the best source of evidence for Roman technology. Thus while Strabo and Pliny both indicate that saws were used to cut marble blocks into slabs, modern archaeologists insist that it is highly unlikely that this technology was used to extract the marble from the rock face (Dolci 1980: 34). Rather, Roman slaves used more primitive tools and brute force to break off large sections of marble which subsequently may have been cut into smaller blocks and slabs by these saws.

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[8] An indication of this difference in price may be gauged by the following example: In 1982 *Calacata Macchia d'Oro* cost 800.000 lire/mc; white veined *statuario* cost 450.000 lire/mc; white *ordinario* in one area cost 330.000–400.000 lire/mc, and in another, 270.000–340.000 lire /mc. The price for the blocks of damaged marble, called *informi*, ranged from between 40.000–60.000 lire per ton (*Progetto Marmi*, 1983: 16).

[9] In Roman texts this city was known as *Luna* perhaps because of the port's moon-shaped appearance. See Dolci 1980.

[10] Strabo notes, for example, that "Luna . . . is a city and also a harbour . . . the harbour is shut in all around by high mountains . . . And the quarries of marble, both white and mottled bluish-grey marble, are so numerous, and of such quality (for they yield monolithic slabs and columns), that the material for most of the superior works of art in Rome and the rest of the cities are supplied therefrom" (*Geography* Book V: II).

Like modern quarry workers, these slaves took advantage of the natural crevices and fault lines in the rock to facilitate their work. Initially they placed soaked wedges of hardwood into these crevices, which – through the slow expansion of the soaked wood – were gradually enlarged so that large pieces broke off. Later this technique was slightly modified with the introduction of metal wedges which were similarly hammered into the rock crevices, producing the grooved, wedge shaped openings called *formelle*, when cutting blocks, or *tagliate*, when referring to large sections of marble still attached to the quarry. Today, the marks of these grooved *formelle* and *tagliate* are clearly visible in areas adjacent to some quarries and sometimes – as older sections are reopened – in the quarries themselves.

Once extracted from the mountain face, the large mass of rock was chiselled and shaped by hand into smaller blocks or sawn into slabs. Pliny the Elder provides us with the first description of these Roman sawing techniques. In *Natural History* he notes that the *sectores serrarii* used an untoothed metal saw which

> cut the marble slowly on three sides . . . helped by the addition of wet sand, and taking who knows how long to saw through (Book XXXVI: I).

The utilization of an elaborate system of pulleys supported by various weights kept the saw straight when cutting the block. This system of hand sawing persisted, with only slight modifications, until the late 1880s, despite the introduction of mechanical water-powered saws around 1700.

The difficulty posed by the movement and transportation of these marble slabs and blocks from the mountain quarries to the base of the valley is not noted by these Roman commentators. Some authors have postulated that these ancient quarry workers simply dragged large blocks of marble to the edge of the quarry and pushed them over (Fabricotti 1926b: 158). It is more probable, however, that a primitive version of the giant sled, or *lizza*, which I describe in more detail below, originated in this period. After reaching the bottom of the quarry or the mountain valley, the marble was once again loaded onto carts drawn by oxen and taken to the mouth of the river Magra, near Luni, where it was hauled by ropes onto small boats destined for Rome (Fabricotti 1926b: 158).

This system of production, which remained substantially intact until the mid-16th century, fostered the development of unique work practices as well as a work language which are still evident in many quarries today. It is worth noting, for example, that until quite recently blocks of marble were named according to their dimensions. Cubic blocks were called *tambùr* or *quadron*; rectangular blocks were called *làpida*, unworked blocks were called *pèz* and sometimes *pzón*' or *pzòt* ; smaller pieces were called *bugét*, *tavulin*', *nòl*, *nòlét* whereas the smallest unusable and discarded pieces were known as *badón*'. (Borgioli and Gemignani 1977: 43–44).

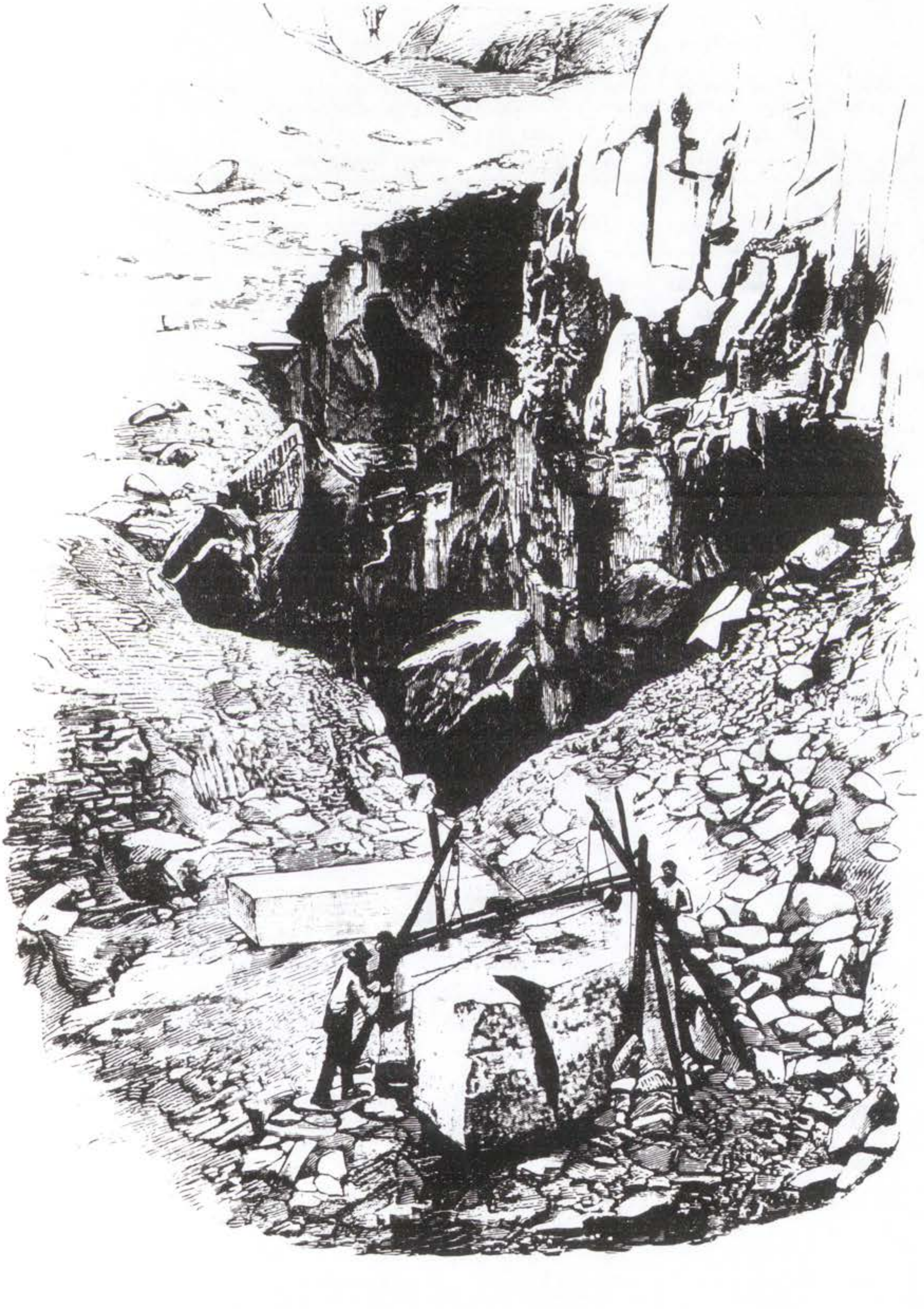

Figure 1. Hand sawing in Polvaccio (in Pareto 1880: 839)

The important point to note here is that this typology is the product of a technology which produced blocks of marble which were not homogeneous in size or quality.

The first significant change to these basic techniques of extraction came with the invention of gunpowder, which was widely employed in the quarries from the mid-16th century onwards. Gunpowder was used to literally explode and break off large sections of the rock face and from these other blocks of marble were subsequently fashioned by hand. While commenting with great approval on the the increased speed of production, one local marble industrialist, Fabricotti, simultaneously notes the negative effects of the widespread use of gunpowder and explosives in the 17th-19th centuries:

> [It] created deep fissures in the rock which were extremely dangerous and damaged the quarry. Furthermore [it] increased the amount of *detriti* which invaded and suffocated other quarries. These inconveniences were even more serious with the prevalent use of "French mines". By placing muriatic acid into circular holes made by hand in the rock, these mines provoked huge explosions – the so-called *varate* – which effectively broke off entire cliffs of marble which then rolled down into the valley, completely burying the underlying quarries (1926b: 165).

These explosions irrevocably transformed the physical shape of the the quarries and the surrounding landscape, facilitating the opening up of many new quarries. However, the problem of the huge piles of waste material they generated, continued to plague the quarries until well into the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Although most of the quarries are located within ten kilometres of the coast and port at Carrara, the transportation of marble from the high mountain quarries to the valleys below was extremely difficult until the construction of roads in the 1950s. In all quarries the main system of transportation was via the *lizza.*: a sled consisting of three beechwood trunks, shaped like giant skis and tied together with hemp rope. Using a system of ropes and pulleys, teams of quarry workers hauled the blocks of squared marble onto this sled which was fastened once again by ropes. Once loaded, other workers – the *lizzatori*[11] – gradually lowered this sled down the precipitous mountain slope using long ropes attached to poles of wood, called *piri*, which were placed into hexagonal-shaped holes all the way down the narrow zigzagging paths known as the *vie di lizza*. Other pieces of hardwood, the *parati*, were thrown underneath the sled as it slowly made its way down the mountain. After reaching the valley, the marble was loaded once again onto carts drawn by oxen, which took the marble to the beach near Carrara. Stoppani provides us with a vivid description of this system of transportation around 1870.

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[11] I describe the work organization of the *lizzatori* in much more detail in the next chapter

> The largest piece of marble I saw while I was in the city was at the entrance to Canal Grande. It was lying on top of a cart pulled by six pairs of oxen. I was astonished at how precisely and quickly the swaying cart descended the narrow and dusty path. As it came nearer I threw myself out of the way and with my back pressed against the rocks which lined the road, I watched the threatening load pass by. The ox-men – one for every pair of oxen – are armed with spurs, and sit on the backs of the oxen or walk beside the cart . . . . A huge piece of marble, measuring more than one cubic metre, is tied behind the cart on a long chain. This large piece of marble, which goes its own way dragging itself like some stubborn adolescent – shouting and jumping as if it has convulsions – acts as a brake for the cart which risks falling down the slope at any moment . . . I was sitting there absorbed in this spectacle when suddenly the whole convoy came to a halt . . . The road was blocked by some sort of obstacle . . . . The ox-men, who had been sitting on the rump of the beasts, jumped down beside those accompanying the cart. Suddenly they were all mercilessly attacking those poor beasts, hitting them repeatedly with the long points of the spurs until their bare flesh was exposed. Provoked in this manner, the oxen contracted their muscles, sinking, until their stomachs almost touched the ground . . . but the cart was immobile . . . like a rock. Adding to the ox-men's loud shouts and cries were the terrible bellows of the oxen as they tried to throw off their unrelenting attackers. By now I couldn't see anything except a group of tense bodies, twisted faces, bloodshot eyes, and the puffing mouths of both oxen and men in the midst of a huge cloud of dust which filled the eyes, ears and nostrils. All at once there was a terrible noise as the collapsed cart made a sudden movement, almost somersaulting through the air. The chain straightened and the huge weight which was buried in the dust, made a sharp jerking movement and continued its macabre dance behind the cart which once again began its triumphant descent (1920: 436–437).

These teams of oxen remained the principal means of transportation until the late 19th century, when the effects of the industrial revolution began to be felt.

From 1880 all aspects of the production of marble were transformed by the introduction of new machinery which progressively replaced many of the tasks previously accomplished by human effort alone. Fabricotti provides one example of this process in his description of the hauling and manoeuvring of marble blocks within the quarry.

> The huge mass of rock extracted from the quarry has to be turned over and over in order to square it. It has to be moved in preparation for transportation. In the past this was done by hand with ropes and picks or with hand winches. This work often required many men to work several days. With electric winches this job can now be accomplished in a few minutes by two or three men (1926c: 265).

With the electrification of all the quarries in 1910, many other aspects of quarry work were mechanized. Electric motors quickly replaced steam power within the saw mills, artistic workshops and quarries, increasing the pace and extent of production in all three spheres. Pneumatic drills were also introduced in this period. But the most important new technology was the helicoidal wire.

The helicoidal wire was widely used from 1895. As the name implies, these wires were made of two strands of steel wrapped around each other in opposite directions. Powered by an electric motor and aided by the continual application of sand and water, the helicoidal wire cut through the rock face on three angles. The wires were attached to a series of fly wheels positioned at the top and bottom of the quarry and then placed in holes made by hand underneath one section of the rock face. The final separation of the block was accomplished by positioning another wire in the natural crevices within the rock face. The helicoidal wire was also used to cut the main block into smaller sections which could then more easily be squared by hand. This innovation had an enormous impact in the quarries, dramatically reducing the need for frequent explosions which in turn ameliorated the enormous damage to marble and reduced the quantity of waste material. A further technical change occurred only two years later, in 1897, with the introduction of the diamond drill and the penetrating pulley.

The sawmills and artistic laboratories were also mechanized. Fabricotti captures succinctly the general atmosphere of perceived progress and modernization in his description of the "modern" workshop where, he suggested,

> Anyone who enters . . . must be impressed. The lathes are so quick that they shape blocks into various dimensions within minutes; vases, bowls, busts, columns. Here you will find machines which shape raw pieces of marble into elegant frames within seconds; whistling cutting machines with Carborundum disks which . . . [slice] through huge blocks of marble with the greatest of ease; polishing machines [which] turn the surface of the marble into a veritable mirror; and finally . . . the pneumatic chisels echoing throughout the workshop as they beat the marble lightly and rapidly, creating all sorts of beautiful objects as well as precious statues. This is a triumph of applied mechanical expertise; a tribute to our modern industry as well as art (1926c: 270).

In 1876 the construction of a railway track, the *marmifera*, connecting the three main marble valleys to the main railway line located near the coast, facilitated the transportation of marble and equipment to and from the quarries. Another local industrialist, Frugoni, experimented with a system of mechanical transportation where marble was loaded by electric winches and cranes onto carts which ran along narrow metal tracks. This mechanical *lizza* was not entirely successful, particularly in higher quarries which were too steep for the construction of tracks. Various industrialists constructed cableways connecting some of the more remote mountain quarries with the mountain valleys below. These cables were mainly used to transport sand and equipment, while the teams of *lizzatori* continued to organize the transportation of marble.

Contemporary industrialists, like Fabricotti, who were obviously fascinated by the impact of this new technology probably exaggerated its influence on the organization of production within the quarry where many aspects of work retained their craft-like status. Indeed as Gestri (1976: 50) suggests, the innovations in some instances led to a further entrenchment of earlier categories of skilled labour. One example is the introduction of the helicoidal wire, which actually increased the value of the skills of the "cutters", whose expertise and extensive knowledge of marble became essential to the placement of the helicoidal wires within the rock face. Similarly, despite the introduction of new cutting techniques, marble continued to be squared by hand[12] and as I have already noted, the *lizzatori* continued to transport marble on their giant sleds until the late 1960s. In the next chapter I discuss these categories of work skills in more detail. The point I want to emphasise here is that despite the rapid mechanization of many work tasks, industrialization did not eliminate, or dramatically alter, the essential craft characteristics of quarrying, which continued to rely on an intricate knowledge of marble and skills learnt through years of practical experience and informal training.

There is no doubt, however, that mechanization from the 1880s substantially increased the amount of marble produced within individual quarries as well as facilitating the opening up of many new quarries. The number of quarries grew from 365 in 1885 to 497 in 1904. Coinciding with a favourable period for Italian export industries, this expansion continued until 1913, when the local council registered 638 active quarries and a huge growth in the number of people employed in every sector of the industry (Gestri 1976: 32–35). Given the enormous influx of workers to the quarries, it is perhaps not surprising that this period also coincided with escalating industrial agitation and one of the longest lockouts ever experienced by quarry workers in this region, during the long winter of 1913–14.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 signalled the end of this expansion and during the inter-war years the industry oscillated from crisis to crisis: the most serious of these occurring during the global economic down turn of the

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[12] The squaring of marble was a skilled task which required a precise knowledge of the stone in order to avoid unnecessary waste of material or time. The "squarers" used a number of metal instruments, like the *mazzuole* (hammers) and *subbie* (chisels), to produce blocks of marble which were sold according to their dimensions.

1930s. Significant changes to the work process only eventuated in the years following the end of the Second World War, when roads were constructed to the high, and previously inaccessible mountain quarries, although roads did not reach the very highest quarries until the late 1960s. During this decade, trucks gradually began replacing the giant sled, or *lizza*, despite the resistance of the teams of *lizzatori*.[13]

As well as radically transforming the system of marble transportation, roads facilitated the introduction of other machinery, such as bulldozers and excavators, which are used extensively in contemporary quarries. Over the last two decades there have been a number of other technological innovations, in both the quarries and the saw mills, which have revolutionised production: the most important being the introduction, in 1978, of the diamond wire which quickly replaced the helicoidal wire in most quarries.

This steel wire studded with industrial diamonds has significantly altered the work process and increased the pace and extent of production. Highly abrasive, it cuts through the rock face without the addition of sand, ten times faster than the older helicoidal wire. It can be positioned at any point in the quarry and requires only one or two men for its operation. Moreover, unlike the helicoidal wire, the diamond wire cuts the rock face into already squared pieces which are then easily cut again into smaller blocks. Because these blocks are no longer cut by hand, they are much larger and produced far more quickly. Whereas the implementation of the helicoidal wire required a precise knowledge of the stone and years of technical experience, the operation of the diamond wire is much simpler. As describe in the following chapter, this new technology – together with similar transformations in the sawmills which now use circular diamond saws – has dramatically altered the process of recruitment and system of apprenticeship in the quarries. It has not, however, necessarily changed the way in which quarry workers continue to regard their work as a particular kind of craft which relies on practical skills impervious to technological innovation. In the next section looking at the work process, I examine the implementation of this new technology in more detail.

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[13] The replacement of the *lizzatori* with trucks was not accomplished without conflict. During my fieldwork many informants described this road construction as a shattering experience for the teams of transport workers, provoking a series of physical confrontations between these workers and the bulldozer drivers employed to make the roads. Despite the fact that some younger *lizzatori* subsequently became truck drivers, for others, roads meant the disappearance of a livelihood and a way of life. As I describe in the following chapter, the *lizzatori*, had a particularly privileged position in the hierarchy of skill within the quarries, and regarded themselves as the "aristocrats" of quarry work. Other quarry workers were more sanguine. For them roads meant that they no longer had to walk to work and many reported to me that they were quite pleased to see the end of the *lizzatori*, whom they saw as rivals. Hence, when talking to *lizzatori* during this period, quarry workers often remarked: "*A te, la ruspa* !" or, "You're getting the bulldozer!"

THE CONTEMPORARY WORK PROCESS

Although there are some underground quarries, *gallerie*, at Carrara open-cut quarries predominate. In this section I describe the more common features of the work process in these open-cut quarries.[14]

In most quarries there are several different stages to the work process: referred to in agricultural terms as the "cultivation of the quarry". Depending on the number of people employed and the condition of the quarry – whether for instance it is a new quarry or one that has been quarried for a while – these stages may be carried out concurrently or separately.

Before production proceeds, the quarry must be prepared and "cleaned". In new quarries this means using explosives and excavators to gouge out an area in the rock face where the heavy machinery and bulldozers can work. Road building often accompanies new excavations. Workers use bulldozers and excavators to construct these access roads on top of the discarded material from other quarries. Sometimes roads are also constructed in older quarries when it becomes difficult to work under protruding overhangs, or where the main section of a quarry can no longer supply high quality material. This work can last for several months at a time, and while quarry workers are engaged in all aspects of this preparation, outside contract workers are sometimes employed to help with excavation and the removal of waste material and rubble.

Occasionally, explosives are used to break off entire sections of the mountain, especially in steep terrains where it is impossible to construct a road. Due to the scale of these explosions, their preparation is long and complicated, sometimes taking several men up to a fortnight to complete. For example, in order to place the explosives it is often necessary to construct scaffolding and platforms high up on the sheer rock face, before any other work can begin. Although these massive explosions are rare, smaller explosions may occur frequently in quarries where there is a lot of broken material.

Once the quarry has been accessed, excavation can begin. In general, the excavation of marble proceeds in a vertical direction, from the surface downwards.

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[14] It is important to bear in mind, however, the complexity of marble production in Carrara. The diversity in size and location of these quarries, together with differing levels of capital investment, which in turn affects the type of production. results in a lack of uniformity in the work process. Here, I outline the more general features which are apposite to most quarries.

As marble is cut from the mountain face, the height of the cliff facing the quarry, or *tecchia*, increases, reaching a height of up to 100 metres in some older quarries. Although diamond wires are now used to make the initial incisions into the mountain, the cutting procedure is similar to previous techniques. Using pneumatic drills, workers drill four holes at the top and bottom of the marble mass, or *bancata*. They then pass the diamond wire through these holes. The wire, which is attached to an electrically powered control panel monitoring its speed, cuts the marble on three sides: first horizontally, then vertically. The last cut, which finally separates the marble mass from the mountain, is made at the back, in a vertical direction.

Although the mass is now cut from the mountain, a further separation is required in order to cut it into smaller blocks. There are several ways of doing this. Occasionally explosives may be used, but in the majority of cases the marble mass is slowly pushed away from the mountain face using metal cushions, or alternatively metal compressors, the *martini*, which are placed within the cracks made by the diamond wire. The cushions are slowly inflated with air or water and once fully inflated, fall to the bottom of the marble mass, creating a space which allows the next operation to proceed. The compressors work in a similar manner. They are attached to ropes and placed into holes made by pneumatic drills at the back of the block. Under pressure from the compressors, the marble moves, creating a space between the block and the mountain. As this space widens, the compressors fall further down the back of the block and from there, continue to push the mass further into the quarry, until finally, it is completely detached. Once separated in this manner, the mass still has to be moved further into the quarry. Very large and heavy sections, are moved with bulldozers and ropes, smaller sections with metal levers. But regardless of the choice of technique, the separation of the *bancata* from the quarry is an extremely dangerous operation because unforeseen faults may appear within the marble causing the block to split without warning.

The following account, detailing such an event, provides us with a further illustration of the techniques used in this phase of the work process.

> In the higher section of a quarry called "x", a large mass of marble had been cut by the diamond wire. This mass measured 2.5 metres in width and 12 metres in length. It had been cut on all three sides and was completely free from the mountain. Two quarry workers, A.L. and P.A., were in the process of moving this mass further from the mountain into the quarry where it could be cut into smaller pieces. A.L. and P.A. took various pieces of equipment with them to begin this operation, including the main water hose, two metal compressors, a rope, and a pneumatic drill. From the top of the marble section they began making the *pozzetti* (holes) into which they would place the expanding compressors. The first push opened up two vertical faults in the rock which appeared to divide the block into three parts. The central section,

> where they had made the first push, had opened up completely, while the two side sections had moved only a few centimetres. They continued pushing the central section and succeeded in moving the western side of the block, while the eastern side remained in the same position. A.L. and P.A. decided to work only on the central and western sections, without positive results, as part of the mass broke off leaving the bottom section still "attached" to the mountain. At this point A.L. and P.A. decided to work only on the central section. As the compressors moved further down the hole, the block began to move. At the same time, they threw other rocks into the hole to prevent the mass falling back onto the mountain. After about ten minutes the mass opened up to a width of one metre at the top but was still attached at the bottom. It was leaning at a dangerous angle into the quarry. A.L. and P.A. continued pushing the central section. The western section was also moving. In the afternoon. A.L. and P.A. continued trying to push over the central section. Standing on the eastern side, which was still "attached", they began reinserting the compressors. With this action the central section fell over taking with it the top of the eastern section on which the quarry workers were standing. The top part of the eastern section had broken off due to a "hidden" fault in the rock. As a consequence, A.L. and P.A. fell together with the marble into the quarry below. Both workers were seriously injured.[15]

This case study demonstrates the inherent danger of many tasks in the quarry. Since these workers were not wearing ropes, it also illustrates the general lack of adherence to safety procedures. While most cases of work injury are less dramatic than the one described above, it should be emphasised that all workers risk serious injury as a normal consequence of the work process itself.[16]

After the *bancata* is completely separated from the mountain and positioned in the *piazzale*, or centre of the quarry, it is ready to be sectioned into smaller blocks. Once again this is accomplished using the diamond wire or sometimes mechanical saws. Positioning the wires still requires a certain expertise and knowledge of the stone. When making the first cut underneath the block, quarry workers often have to work for some time underneath the block in order to thread the wire. Furthermore, "difficult" blocks (those blocks of marble which contain visible faults or *peli*) may require more attention from the "cutters". The wire cutting the block of marble on one side can become blocked, requiring quarry workers to remove debris, which again is a dangerous task because of their close physical proximity to the stone. All situations where workers labour underneath the block, or between blocks, are potentially dangerous due to the unpredictability of faults and the possibility of splits

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[15] This is one of several case studies collected by a team of local health and safety officers in 1986–87, during an enquiry into the high rate of work injury in the quarries. I am indebted to Dr. Rita Ansuini and Enrico Ligeri for allowing me to use this unpublished material.

[16] Chapter four deals with these issues in much greater depth.

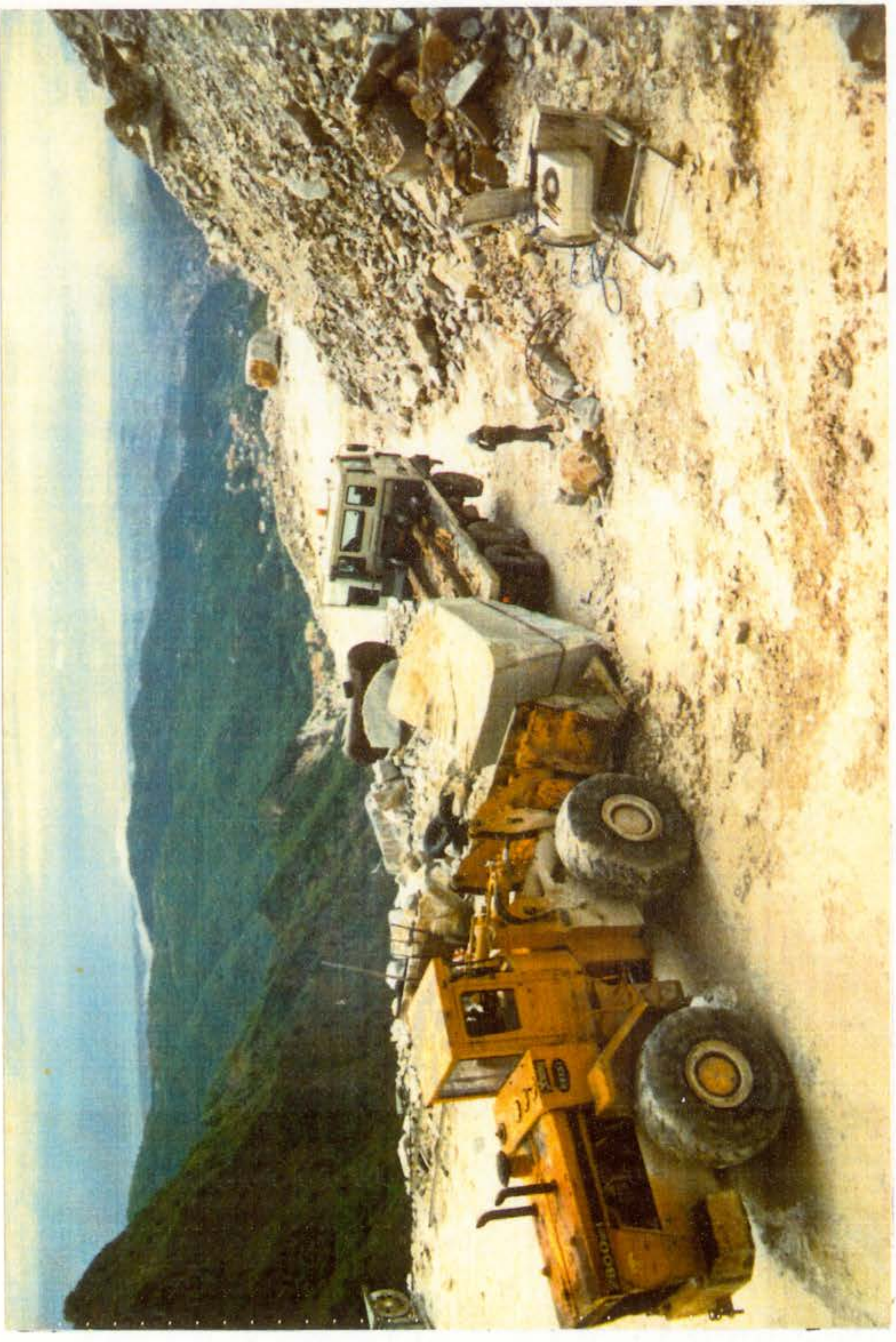

Plate 6. Truck loading a marble block.

in the rock and, during my visits to the quarries, I frequently heard of injuries occurring in this manner.[17]

The blocks cut from the *bancata* usually measure between two and three cubic metres and are priced according to both size and quality. Some blocks known as *informi*, are not worth "squaring" as they contain faults or defects which make them unsuitable for cutting into slabs. Once cut, the blocks of marble are either kept in the quarry for inspection by individual clients, or loaded by bulldozers and ropes onto trucks, which make the the tortuous journey down the steep zigzagging mountain roads to saw mills or storage depots at Carrara. This completes the cycle of marble production within the quarry.

This section foreshadows some of the issues which reappear in later arguments concerning the nature of work in the marble quarries of Carrara. One of my main concerns has been to illustrate the idiosyncratic features of marble and marble quarrying, and the kinds of technologies used in its production. From a description of the quarries and the work process, I now turn to the wider context of marble production at Carrara. Here, I focus briefly on the organization of the marble industry, in order to contextualize the pattern of quarry ownership, which in turn, foregrounds the discussion central to this chapter: the claims made by quarry workers about the unique status of their work and their perceptions of relative independence vis-a-vis other workers.

SECTION TWO:
THE ORGANIZATION OF MARBLE PRODUCTION AT CARRARA

THE MARBLE INDUSTRY

At the beginning of the 1970s, Italy excavated 70 per cent of the total world production of marble and other stone used in building construction. Between 1971 and 1981, the Apuane region contributed 37 per cent of this national production (*Progetto Marmi* 1983: 245). Carrara, however, is not only an important centre for the extraction of marble as a raw material: the city's development as Italy's pre-eminent zone of marble production occurred alongside the growth of a vivacious importing and exporting industry and a number of secondary firms associated with the transformation of the raw material.

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[17] The diamond wire itself is equally dangerous, for it quite often breaks without warning, sending ricocheting diamond bits throughout the quarry. For this reason, quarry workers refer to the diamond wire as a "loaded gun" and the diamond pieces as "bullets", and while safety barriers are obligatory, in practice they are not always put in place.

Apart from companies dealing exclusively with the import and export of marble and other stone such as granite, the manufacturing firms include marble sawing companies which cut the excavated blocks of marble into slabs for building construction; companies which deal predominantly with the supply of luxury building material and high quality marble;[18] firms which deal with the manufacturing of more standardised building materials such as tiles and window frames, etc.; small specialized firms which concentrate on particular aspects of the transformation process, such as polishing; artistic workshops which produce good like marble stands for trophies and garden statues; companies which supply tombstones and other objects for cemeteries; design studios as well as a variety of other firms dealing with associated aspects of marble production, such as transportation or the manufacturing of packing cases. The relationship between the excavation of marble and these other sectors of the marble industry is extremely complex and worthy of an entirely separate study. A brief, but necessarily limited, discussion of this relationship is, however, important in order to contextualize both the processes involved in the excavation of marble and the social organization of work in the quarries.

A recent study of the marble industry at Carrara delineates two distinct markets for marble (*Progetto Marmi* 1983). On the one hand there is the market for high quality blocks of marble destined for the less standardized and in general highly lucrative types of building construction, and on the other the market for inferior blocks of marble, the *informi*, which are used to make more standardised kinds of materials used in domestic building construction. This latter market occupies the predominant place in the local economy in terms of volume of marble produced and sold, but is disadvantaged in respect to the former by the high value placed on the production of high quality marble.

Marble excavated at Carrara differs both in terms of quality and price. Whereas the price for *informi* and lesser quality marble is highly susceptible to external alterations in market demand and internal competition between firms, the price of the high quality marble (by quality I mean both the variety and the structure of the block) remains relatively stable. This price resilience is due to both the natural limitations on the production of a scarce and irreplaceable product, and the pattern of ownership of quarry concessions, in which a few firms controlling the supply of the best quality marble are able to dominate the luxury end of the market.

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[18] I am referring here to the marble used in both large commercial and public buildings, like skyscrapers, large shopping centres, airports, railway stations and theatres as well as privately owned houses, hotels, and, in the case of the Sultan of Brunei, horse stables.

The organization of the marble industry at Carrara may be visualized in terms of a pyramid (*Progetto Marmi* 1983: 5). The extraction of marble is situated at the apex of this pyramid, whereas the associated firms and laboratories, dealing with the buying and selling of various marble products, lie at the bottom. Breaching the gap between firms which extract marble and those dealing exclusively with marble products, are the companies and firms involved in the transformation of the raw material into other products. This pyramidal structure is not merely descriptive, but reflects the hierarchical relationship between marble companies which control the quarry concessions, in particular the quarries which produce high quality marble, and firms which have no direct relationship to the extraction of marble but rely on others for their supply of raw material. Before proceeding to look at the system of quarry ownership, it is necessary to briefly outline the organization of these other firms which deal with the transformation of marble and the selling of marble products.

The firms can be broadly divided into six categories. First there are the sawmills which specialize in the cutting of marble slabs for building construction. These companies work either on commission or engage in the direct selling of marble slabs. The recent introduction of new technology, particularly the diamond saws, which require considerable capital investment, has reduced the number of these companies and increased specialization. While some sawmills are independent entities, others are owned or have connections with firms extracting marble.

The second category consists of companies dealing with the supply of building material, including marble slabs, for luxury construction. These companies work entirely on commission, contracting to supply all the material necessary for the finished building, and are consequently engaged in all aspects of the transformation process, from sawing and polishing to design. They deal with a high quality product which is cut according to precise, rarely standardized designs. These firms may be further subdivided into two categories: medium to big direct producers of marble, and purely commercial agencies, which rely on other companies for both the raw material and the transformation of the finished product. The necessity to supply large quantities of high quality material, which is homogeneous in colour and patterning, effectively limits involvement in this sector to companies with sound finances or assumed supplies of a large quantity of this homogeneous and high quality material.

Firms dealing with the transformation and selling of more standardized products, such as floor tiles for ordinary building construction and other objects, like the marble bases for trophies, make up the third category. Here too, the recent introduction of new technology, in particular the *tagliablocchi*, a machine which cuts the previously unusable irregular and defective marble blocks, called *informi*, has fostered greater specialization and competition.

The fourth category includes companies dealing with the production of other kinds of building material for either the domestic or luxury market. These companies produce items like stairs, window sills and door frames, etc., products which are only partially amenable to standardization. The fragmented nature of the market for these products, combined with the large number of companies involved in this sector, results in a high level of competition and low prices for their products.

In the fifth place, there are the small workshops which deal exclusively in the polishing and finishing of marble products, generally on commission for other companies. These workshops are effectively excluded from other aspects of the production by the high volume of water required for the polishing process.

The last category consists of mainly artistic workshops producing funeral objects, like tombstones and statues, as well as a huge variety of other small objects for domestic use, such as vases, mortars, and bowls, etc. Today, this sector of the marble industry in Carrara is in crisis, due to both a reduction in demand for these types of products and a lack of skilled artisans (see *Progetto Marmi* 1983: 85–6).

This brief summary of the main types of companies involved in the marble industry in Carrara gives some indication of its complexity, the range and variety of the processes involved in the transformation of marble as a raw material and the different markets for marble and marble products.

PADRONI, PADRONCINI, PADRONCIONI: QUARRY OWNERSHIP IN CARRARA

In terms of the previous brief description of the organization of marble production in Carrara, it is obvious that, in theory at least, the people who exert control over the supply the raw material, the quarry or concession owners and leaseholders, are advantaged in respect to other firms in the cycle of marble production. The owner of a quarry, and all are men, is able to make a number of strategic choices about where and to whom he sells his marble. He can, for instance, sell single blocks of unsawn and uncut marble to local entrepreneurs, who in turn sell these blocks to other local firms or cut them themselves, or alternatively, he can sell directly to sawmills or to artistic workshops. In a few instances a quarry owner may also be involved in other spheres of the marble industry, either independently or in association with others. Marble companies diversified in such a manner have a clear advantage over single interest firms in terms of selling the raw material and controlling the price of marble.

These observations do not, however, take into account the peculiar features of quarry ownership in Carrara, where the majority of quarries are leased or sublet to third parties.

The present system of quarry ownership at Carrara can be traced to a series of laws passed in 1751, by Maria Teresa Cybo, Duchess of Modena and ruler of Massa-Carrara. This legislation, known as the Estense legislation, divides quarry concessions into two categories. The *beni estimati* are owned outright and can be bought, sold and rented like any other private property. The *agri comunali* belong to the the *comune* (council) of Carrara, and are leased to private companies or individuals. The majority of quarries at Carrara fall into the second category, as the *beni estimati* applies only to those quarries which were already in operation in 1751.

The precise motivation for the formulation of this legislation is the subject of historical controversy. While some authors have argued that the Estense legislation was designed to protect the local small producers of marble against the intrusion of foreign capital (Bernieri 1961; Piccioli 1956, 1967), others have asserted that these laws merely reflected the growing power and economic force of a small number of local marble producers who were concerned to increase their already substantial control over the production of marble (della Pina 1979; Gestri 1976, 1982; Klapisch-Zuber 1973). But whatever the reason for its formulation, the Estense legislation continues to affect the nature of quarry ownership at Carrara, as well as the way in which marble is actually produced.

The *agri comunali* are leased to private individuals for a period of 99 years. These leases are renewable unless the quarry has been abandoned for a period of two years. The individual who controls the concession may in turn sublet it to others upon payment, either in kind or value, of a seventh of all the marble excavated in the quarry, or a seventh of the best quality material. Thus, while in theory the Estense legislation recognizes the public ownership of quarries, in practice it favours a relatively small group of people who, while not necessarily directly involved in production, maintain control of their concessions by subletting them to others.

This system of subletting has deleterious consequences for the production of marble. The necessity to supply a set proportion of high quality marble in "rent", provides little incentive for subrenters to invest in expensive machinery or infrastructure like roads and they are far more likely to follow a type of production in which the most accessible and highly priced marble is extracted first. As a consequence, many quarries which become difficult to work, are eventually abandoned by the majority of smaller producers who lack access to further finance capital. Local unions also blame this kind of production, dubbed "*produzione alla rapina* " ("production by plunder"), for increased job loss and a high rate of work injury.

Not surprisingly, the reformulation of this legislation has been a constant topic of debate within local governmental bodies and the council.[19] But although the Estense legislation favours the monopolistic control of quarry concessions and the "*produzione alla rapina*", it has also fostered a certain entrepreneurial spirit among local quarry workers and their families, whose skills in extracting marble may also be utilized by opening up their own independent quarries, however precarious. The high proportion of small family-operated quarries in Carrara is reflected in a local expression – "*Padroni, padroncini, padroncioni*" or "Bosses, small bosses, big bosses". While perfectly apt as a description of the nature of quarry ownership at Carrara, quarry workers mainly use this expression when comparing work conditions in small and marginal quarries with larger and more financially secure firms.

The following chapter describes these work conditions in more detail, but in the context of this discussion it is important to note one consequence of the pattern of ownership for quarry workers themselves: the system of payment. Up until the 1970s, piecework was the usual system of payment in most Carrara quarries. However, in some of the most marginal and unproductive quarries – often let to a third party by the original subrenter -workers were not paid until after the marble was sold. In periods of crisis, this meant a long wait, perhaps months. Sometimes they were not paid at all but issued credit notes, called *buoni*, which allowed them to purchase goods on credit in local shops. During my fieldwork, this subject always emerged in conversations with quarry workers about their work and it was made abundantly clear to me that these kinds of credit arrangements were universally despised.

This last point brings me back to a consideration of the claims quarry workers make about their independence. It is obvious that the proliferation of small family-operated quarries in Carrara often created exploitative work conditions for many quarry workers who, because of limited alternative employment in the region, were dependent on these quarries for even a minimal livelihood. At the same time, the Estense legislation and the system of subletting it promoted, allowed quarry workers to open up and work their own independent quarries. The history of marble production in Carrara is full of examples of these kinds of local entrepreneurs,[20] who despite limited initial capital eventually succeeded in becoming wealthy marble traders and industrialists. The career of one of these entrepreneurs, by no means atypical, is instructive.

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[19] The Estense legislation and the system of subletting was also a frequent topic for debate in *Il Cavatore*, the labour movement newspaper. In the 1920s, Fiaschi, a local lawyer, wrote a series of articles for this newspaper promoting the public nature of quarry ownership. These articles were entitled "*Cavatori: the quarries are yours!*" (30 January 1920; 14 February 1920; 28 February 1920) and were reprinted at the end of the 1939–45 war when the Estense legislation, once again, became the topic of fierce public debate.

BARRATINI

I first met Barratini in a quarry called Polvaccio. In the course of thinking about work in the quarries, I had become fascinated with the number of quarries owned or operated by people who seemed to come from relatively humble backgrounds. Superficially, these people appeared no different to other quarry workers. Indeed, in smaller marginal quarries, the quarry "owner" was indistinguishable from the foremen, who, while responsible for overseeing production, worked alongside other quarry workers. Although he made daily visits to Polvaccio, Barratini did not actually work in his quarry. But like many other local marble industrialists, he had been a quarry worker in his youth and could talk easily to his employees about the problems of production. He spoke in local dialect and quite obviously understood and utilized the idiosyncratic work language of the quarry.

After a few months of casual visits to Polvaccio, I asked Barratini if he would talk to me about how he had become a marble industrialist. He readily agreed, clearly pleased that I wanted to interview him about his life. The story which follows here is Barratini's own account which I have paraphrased for the purpose of brevity.

Barratini was born in 1941 at Carrara in a zone known as La Foce, the area close to the mountain pass between Massa and Carrara. He was one of five brothers. Like many families in the area, the Barratini family had a small family orchard and a plot of land and kept a few animals like rabbits and chickens. His father worked as a builder but had also worked in the quarries. In 1952, Barratini's father, like many others, left Carrara in order to find work in France.[21]

As a young boy, Barratini helped till the family plot of land and collected figs which he sold in the markets of Carrara and in the surrounding villages. The family also sold other produce, like grapes and chickens. When he was ten, Barratini began working in a quarry located in Canale di Goia, an area close to the family house. Like many other young boys as an *bagascio* (apprentice), he began carrying the water and sand used in cutting the blocks of marble and assisting in a wide variety of manual tasks. He worked in this quarry for six years, gradually learning other aspects of marble quarrying.

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[20] See della Pina (1979) for a fascinating insight into the story of the rise and fall of the del Medico family in the 17th century.

[21] During the last years of the 1939–45 war the production of marble had completely ceased and there were few possibilities for work during the immediate post-war years. Many families either emigrated or left temporarily for other areas of Italy or overseas.

At 16, dissatisfied with the irregular system of payment, Barratini left the quarry to work with his father as a builder. After three years he managed to save a small sum of capital and at 19, he and his brother, who worked as a "squarer", or *quadratore*, decided to rent a small abandoned quarry in the area known as Zampone. The two brothers quarried small blocks of marble and fashioned marble vases and other objects which they subsequently sold to shops in Carrara or to local businesses exporting to America. At the same time they began buying a few blocks of marble from other quarries in the area, depositing them in a vacant piece of land near the family's house at La Foce. After they had accumulated a number of these blocks, they began selling them directly from this improvised depot. According to Barratini, this business was very successful as both brothers were well-known and had already built up a solid clientele in their previous business. They were now able to employ one other person to help them.

By 1974, Barratini had made sufficient money from trading marble to buy a large piece of land at Bonascola, an area located between the city of Carrara and the coast, known as the "Industrial Zone". From this location he continued to buy and sell blocks of marble, gradually accumulating a surplus and building up a marble warehouse. During these years he formed a partnership with a nearby sawing firm in order to supply a steady stream of clients with building slabs as well as unsawn blocks. His knowledge of the quarries, together with an apparently reliable reputation in terms of prompt payment in the quarries, enabled him to consolidate this business. The inaccessible nature of the quarries also worked to his advantage as "outside" clientele were effectively prevented from dealing with many of the direct producers of marble located in the high mountain quarries. As Barratini notes,

> When the outsiders came to buy marble they didn't know where to go. In those days you couldn't go by jeep to the quarries. You had to go on foot. I used to go up there on foot where everyone knew me. I could get the best marble because I was trained as a quarry worker. I knew the quarries and the people who worked there. They trusted me because I always paid . . . I was advantaged because I had been a quarry worker. In this business it is important to know about marble, to be a *cavatore* [quarry worker]. The business just grew and grew.

In 1987, Barratini formed another partnership with two other people from Carrara who wanted to invest money in a quarry. Together they bought two quarries, both *beni estimati*. Both of these quarries are internationally renowned for their high quality marble.[22] While continuing to supply good quality material, Polvaccio needed large scale capital investment in order to guarantee future supplies. It required the construction of a new road to the higher reaches of the quarry and investment in new machinery, like an extractor to remove an overhanging rockface which had become increasingly dangerous. Despite the risks, Barratini and his partners were convinced that Polvaccio would be a good investment in the long term. As Barratini suggested,

> Polvaccio is famous. Of course it's always a risk with this kind of investment. After all who can go inside the mountain? Who can see inside the mountain? The company needed to expand. In the long term companies which have direct access to production win. Otherwise it's a disaster. Quarry owners always have an advantage but these days you've got to have money. You've got to be in commerce as well. It's not like the old days. Of course it's still gambling. You can win but you can also lose. But it's like any other investment. We invested here because it's our work.

Barratini's story highlights a number important of points. It clearly illustrates the connections between local knowledge and the possibilities for involvement in other sectors of the marble industry, particularly commerce. As someone who was familiar with marble and who had close connections with other quarries, Barratini was very well positioned. Capitalizing on this knowledge, Barratini was able attract a large clientele essential in the formative stages of any successful marble business. As a local, he knew where to get good blocks of marble at a competitive price. His career also illustrates the importance of diversification as well as partnerships with other firms or individuals. Through his association with the sawmill he was able to further expand his clientele. Ultimately however, as Barratini suggests, the key to his success lay in gaining permanent access to a quarry and a secure source of high quality marble. By acquiring Polvaccio, Barratini and his investors took a calculated risk, for while Polvaccio is internationally famous as a source of high quality marble, most of this marble was inaccessible at the time of purchase. Even after the construction of a new road to the higher reaches of the quarry, there was no absolute guarantee that the quarry contained a large quantity of *statuario*. Thus despite Barratini's apparent success, there was no way of telling whether the investment would pay off in the long term.

It is important to bear in mind the context of this narrative. Like other stories of quarry work collected during my period of fieldwork, this story is "invented" (Wagner 1975), or rather created, in the sense that "ethnography is historically determined by the moment of the ethnographer's encounter with whomever he (sic) is studying" (Crapanzano 1986: 51). My desire to learn about the meteoric rise of a simple quarry worker, coincided in this instance, with Barratini's own sense of identity as a self-made man, who had begun his career as a wealthy marble trader "selling figs from his family's orchard". However the themes it underscores were reiterated in many other accounts narrated by and about similar local entrepreneurs. In this sense, Barratini's story is not the story of one individual who had particular entrepreneurial talents, but a collective story of quarry workers at Carrara, where the idea of the self-made man, in this case a simple quarry worker, is deeply embedded in popular consciousness. These kinds of narratives, thus reinforce and give credibility to claims which distinguish quarry workers as independent figures in the complex organization of marble production at Carrara.

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[22] Polvaccio is one of the most famous quarries at Carrara and the quarry where Michelangelo got much of his *statuario* marble.

Men like Barratini are common at Carrara. But his career spans a period of dramatic change in the quarries. Today, the highly industrialized nature of marble extraction, the levels of technology required and the necessity to inject large amounts of capital into such enterprises, effectively precludes many contemporary quarry workers from following a similar path. Furthermore, although there are many success stories, there are also just as many failures. The majority of quarry workers do not become marble traders but continue to labour in the quarries for others who may be ex-quarry workers or, more likely, "outsiders" or business men, who have absolutely no connection to quarry work and who know little about the art of marble extraction. These quarry workers, who still define themselves in terms of their relative independence, are the subject of the next chapter.

Plate 7. Abandoned village in the Lunigiana hinterland.

CHAPTER TWO

The Labour Force and the Hierarchy of Skill

THE REGIONAL dependence on marble production, together with its export orientation, leads Federico to describe the Carrarese economy between 1896 and 1913 as an "export monoculture" (1979: 43). A conservative estimate indicates that it employed 30 percent of the local population in 1901, and a decade later this had risen to 45 percent.[1] Up until the 1950s, the marble industry was the single most important industry at Carrara.

But despite the importance of marble production, agriculture also played a major and often underestimated role in the local economy during this period. Indeed, until very recently, small scale agricultural activities conducted at a household level supplemented and sometimes replaced wages from the quarries in periods of economic crisis.[2] The links between agriculture and the marble industry emerge as early as the mid-16th century, when the enclosures of common land in the high mountain hinterland region of the Lunigiana drew large numbers of rural workers to Carrara and the marble quarries (della Pina 1979: 150–51). These waves of migration were repeated in later periods of agricultural crisis – in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Gestri 1976: 47), whereas during the 1930s many unemployed marble workers resumed their past agricultural activities (Nice 1952: 189–90). This migration created a large surplus of unskilled labour which in turn facilitated the expansion of the marble industry during this period (Gestri 1976: 48; della Pina 1979).

According to Repetti, a natural historian and geographer writing in the early 19th century, in Carrara

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[1] Gestri (1976: 57) notes even higher figures. He suggests that in 1893 the marble industry employed 7,198 people out of a total of 10,461 registered in industrial occupations. In 1903, this figure had risen to 7,937 out of 11,809 industrial workers. Federico estimates that between 1896 and 1913, 80–85 percent of marble excavated at Carrara was exported outside Italy.

[2] I discuss the household-economy in more detail in chapter five.

> agriculture and work in the marble industry counterbalance each other . . . when the quarries are active, agricultural production is less. If however the marble trade slows down then the ever active and industrious Carrarese leaves his chisel and runs back to look after his fields with greater attention (1820: 74).

Seventy years later, Milani comments again on the role of agriculture within the local economy noting, however, that

> Agriculture is a minor occupation. Few workers derive an income exclusively from this occupation . . . In general, agriculture is conducted by workers who are unemployed or waiting for a job in one of the many occupations in the marble industry (1894: 5).

An interdependence between agriculture and quarry work is not unique to Carrara. Surveying the literature on 19th century mineral workers in England and Wales, Samuel (1977) notes that a common feature of mining and quarrying in this period was its distinctly non-industrial character and its lack of uniformity. For miners and quarry workers in many regions of Britain – the Purbeck marblers, the Clydach limestone quarry workers, the coal miners of the Rhonda valley and Staffordshire, the Aberdeen granite men, the lead miners of the northern moors and dales, the copper miners of Devon, the Cornish clay workers and the free miners of the Forest of Dean – mining and quarrying was regarded as seasonal work rather than a principal occupation and was work conducted in conjunction with a variety of other occupations, from farming to fishing. In mid-victorian England, as in Carrara, mining and quarrying was not necessarily a hereditary occupation nor an exclusive pursuit. Indeed, as Samuel (1977: 67) argues, the mining population in the mid-19th century was

> notoriously restless and unsettled. The "roving disposition and migratory habits" of the miner were as much a commonplace of contemporary social comment as their heredity and fixity is today.

By the late 19th century, agricultural production in Carrara no longer provided rural households with a secure or independent income. This decline was due to many factors: the end of free trade practices in France and England, new post-unification fiscal policies resulting in heavier indirect taxes on rural producers, the destruction of vineyards by phylloxera as well as the opening up of numerous new quarries in the mountainous regions behind Carrara (Sereni 1947: 59; Gestri 1976: 45–48). The general impoverishment of households still relying on agriculture for a livelihood and the importance of the marble industry as an alternative to emigration is recorded by Raffaelli (1882: 232) who observed that

> There is no peasant who lives more miserably, or more marginally than those who live on the plain at Massa . . . if it weren't for the marble industry these peasants would literally lack the means for making any sort of livelihood.

An attempt to create an alternative industrial base for the local economy in the wake of the 1930s depression, was curtailed by the onset of the 1939–45 war. In the immediate post-war period – a period of massive unemployment and social crisis – new industries were attracted to the area along the coast between Massa and Carrara, known today as the "Industrial Zone". These industries, centring around the production of chemicals and some other manufacturing, provided ex-quarry workers and young men from the marble villages with an alternative to work in the marble industry. Today, the local manufacturing sector is also in crisis and it is the marble industry, in all its facets, which has remained the backbone of the Carrarese economy.

In recent years new technology has dramatically reduced the labour force in the quarries which now employ approximately 1,900 full-time workers. Many of these men still live in the small villages situated near the three main marble valleys where quarries are concentrated. Although reliable statistics are unavailable, it is more than likely that these "marble villages", with hereditary connections to certain quarries and quarry work, have always contained a high proportion of quarry workers. In these villages, where memory of place is often embodied and articulated through the experience of work, life itself revolves around the the daily vicissitudes and routine of the marble quarries.

RECRUITMENT TO THE QUARRIES

"Ca, Cava, Bac'il e Let", "House, Quarry, Water container and Bed". This local expression is often quoted in the village of Gragnana to sum up the life of a marble quarry worker in previous decades. While there were few alternative work possibilities, family tradition was an equally compelling motive for the recruitment of young men in these villages to the quarry.

As boys and adolescents, quarry workers were inspired and socialized in many different ways to follow their grandfathers, fathers and uncles into the masculine and adult world of quarrying. The socialization of many young boys into this world of work began at an early age, on excursions to the quarries either for fun or in order to bring food to fathers and other relatives working on 24 hour shifts. Arimante, the foreman of a well-known quarry, described his recruitment to the quarries as the inevitable outcome of this kind of socialization and talk of the quarries. Having travelled widely in his youth and despite holding several different jobs, Arimante eventually returned to Carrara. As he suggests, he was attracted to the idea of being a quarry worker because

> even as a small boy I worked in the quarries . . . the first present I ever had was a chisel and our toys were the quarry. I've always had a positive relationship with marble. My grandfather, my father – always talked about their work. My grandfather was a foreman. My father was a *lizzatore*. At home they were always talking about work especially if there was a strike or some other crisis. They used to tell me about these difficulties. I've always had a contract with marble. We live immersed in the quarry environment. People in the marble villages have always had a close association with the quarry and marble.

Other quarry workers in the village of Gragnana similarly commented on their boyhood experiences and their aspirations to follow their fathers' footsteps as specialized workers within the quarries. In these villages of closely knit and intermarried families, job vacancies were often communicated by relatives through word of mouth. Today, this process of hereditary recruitment continues, especially in the large cooperatives where jobs are literally handed down from father to son or son-in-law. For others, however, eventual recruitment to the quarries was less a choice, than economic necessity, because of the death or serious injury of a male relative at work.

Most older quarry workers in Gragnana have had little formal education.[3] Formal schooling was never a real economic possibility for the majority of children growing up in the village in earlier decades and perhaps, for this reason it was never a high priority; families placed greater emphasis on education through practical experience. In conversations with me, many of my informants expressed a sense of deep regret that they had lacked both the opportunity and encouragement to continue their schooling but given the dearth of alternative employment in the region, these minimal educational qualifications, and the familial connections with quarries, a career as a quarry worker was the most logical outcome for young men in the village. Today most families value education more highly as a route out of the almost predestined nature of quarry work, which in turn is viewed more ambivalently by younger and older generations alike. On the one hand parents are extremely reluctant to encourage their sons into a career as a quarry worker; on the other hand, young men are still attracted to the quarries because of improved work conditions, high pay and a continual shortage of other jobs in the area.

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[3] Compulsory secondary education until the age of 14 was introduced in Italy only in 1962.

The majority of young boys I interviewed cited peer group pressure as one of the main reasons for leaving school early and entering the wage force as a quarry worker. One young quarry worker, Carlo, who like many others had not completed secondary school and had begun working at the age of 14, stated that

> I went to the quarry because I didn't want to study. I saw what happened to my brother. My mother really worked hard to keep him at school. For what? He left and went to work. When you're at school all you can think about is earning some money. Maybe to buy a motorbike. That's why people leave school early.

With hindsight, Carlo expressed a sense of regret about his career choice, for as he asserted,

> My father, my grandfather, all my family worked in the quarry. When I began there was a lot of unemployment. It seemed like a good opportunity. It was easy to find work in the quarries. They came and called you at home. You found out about jobs in the village. The owner of the quarry where I worked came to ask my parents. At the time a lot of the older men were retiring. At first I really liked it. It was quite dangerous and it was a bit of a thrill. It was good to be in the open and it wasn't anything like the assembly line. We were always doing different things. We weren't tied to a machine. But after a while I got sick of it. Always the same faces and the same discussions. I didn't do well at school. I didn't understand. But the awful thing is that now I know what it's like to work.

Although it expresses some sense of failure, this comment also underscores the way in which younger men without any previous work experience of any sort, continue to regard work in the quarries in a positive light – as work which offers a degree of independence. For apart from the possibilities of earning a regular wage and the relative ease of recruitment, these young men also asserted that the quarries offered them more free time and some control over the hours they worked. Perhaps not surprisingly the idea of working in a chemical factory was particularly unattractive. But when I asked about the alternatives to quarry work, such as factory work, the majority of these younger men responded that they would prefer the quarry. According to one young worker the quarry offered,

> a different type of life. In the factory you don't know anyone, whereas in the quarry families all work together. In the quarry you're not tied to a machine for eight hours. You work out in the open. You're not there every day under the same roof. I like everything about the quarry. I like the timetable. You've got more free time. It's great to work in the quarry. I wouldn't go anywhere else.

For many young men in these villages becoming a quarry worker was a foregone conclusion, as Carlo again suggested,

> In Carrara, in the villages, everyone works in the quarries because what is the foundation? Marble . . . Everyone is either the son of a *cavatore* or a builder here. The only possibilities are those ones. There's nothing else.

This view is not shared by everyone. Some boys, influenced by their parents, hold strong opinions about the inherent danger of quarry work and its gruelling lifestyle. These adolescents are similarly preoccupied with entry into the adult world of work and the possibilities for earning their own regular wage, but firmly state that they would prefer working in a trade, such as plumbing, building or becoming an electrician. Other young men find themselves in the quarry despite having completed high school and aspiring to more professional occupations. Others again, work in the quarries when they would really prefer working in some other facet of the marble industry.

Whatever their aspirations, young men from the marble villages often find themselves working, either temporarily or permanently, in the quarries. This process of work recruitment must be understood in terms of both a local regional economy which provides limited alternatives to work in the marble industry, as well as a work culture which, as Willis (1977) argues, effectively prepares young boys for manual labour. The positive view of quarry work vis-a-vis other forms of manual labour, in particular, is best understood in the context of this work culture, where familial connections to quarry work facilitate the process of recruitment both physically and emotionally. A young man's desire to enter wage work as a quarry worker is inspired in many cases by the positive imagery of quarrying as an hereditary skill contained within "the blood" and handed down through the generations. Furthermore, as Donaldson (1991: 8) has observed, entry into wage work is a significant rite of passage for many working class boys, separating adulthood from boyhood and providing a sense of independence, self-worth and personal validation through the social recognition of wage earning. In the marble villages, long term unemployment especially among younger men, is not accorded a positive valuation. Indeed, as one young quarry worker noted, to be unemployed is to run the gauntlet of social condemnation.

> If you're unemployed they call you a "vagabond". The argument goes like this: Someone who works, eats one loaf of bread but someone who doesn't, eats three.

In a work environment where, as I later demonstrate, masculinity is positively associated with quarrying and its inherent danger and skills, becoming a quarry worker demonstrates both a young man's masculinity and his ability to meet the imposed generic social obligations on males as wage earners. In the face of unemployment and the absence of any form of social security benefits, young men in the quarrying villages view the quarries as one avenue towards independence and adulthood. For many young men in the marble villages, becoming a quarry worker is symbolic of becoming a man.

THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

Despite the presence of a technical quarry school in Carrara, most young boys begin their apprenticeships in the quarry. The most important feature of the quarry apprenticeship system is its informality and emphasis on training through practical experience. There is no set time period of apprenticeship and no system of gauging from outside the quarry when a young boy is considered capable of being a mature *cavatore*.[4]

Before the introduction of the diamond wire, apprentices did all the most menial and heavy fetching and carrying work associated with the cutting of marble and the deployment of the helicoidal wire. Every quarry had at least one apprentice or *bagascio*. The tasks of the *bagascio* included looking after the work instruments; fetching and carrying the sand and water used in the cutting process; transporting food and provisions to quarry workers living in the barrack-like accommodation in the higher mountain quarries and assisting in all the tasks involved in the work process, from cutting, manoeuvring blocks of marble to transportation. In recounting their experiences as apprentices, older quarry workers often emphasised the arduous nature of their work and the lack of adequate financial remuneration. As one retired quarry worker remarked,

> As a *bagascio* you were exploited by the boss. You weren't a slave but you were treated like one. You had to keep up with the work. It was really tough. The best ones always earned a little more.

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[4] Even in the medieval period, Klapisch-Zuber (1973: 177) notes that the apprenticeship system differed enormously from contemporary European apprenticeship systems. In this period Carrara quarry workers belonged to a guild of specialized workers called the *L'ars marmoris* formed in 1450 in order to protect local workers from the intrusions of "foreigners" into the "art" and production of marble extraction. In contrast to other apprenticeship systems, the quarry apprentice in Carrara was always a wage earner who sold his labour to the "master", initially at a low price which rose as he perfected his art.

These feelings of exploitation and mistreatment of young boys by older workers, were repeated to me on many other occasions, and are captured linguistically by the the use of *bagascio*, rather than *boccia*, which is the alternative local expression for an apprentice. *Bagascio* is derived from *bagascia* which means prostitute.

But while apprentices are expected to be at the beck and call of other workers in the quarry, they are also trained in the art of marble extraction. In past generations, when much of the work was done by hand, apprentices learned the highly specialized skills of quarrying by watching other quarry workers and by gradually trying out these skills themselves. As one older quarry worker commented, "the quarry was my school". Often they were taught by fathers or other relatives who worked in the same quarry. Others were taken under the wing of the foreman or another skilled worker who took responsibility for protecting these young boys from the more dangerous tasks. Referring to the more positive experiences of apprenticeship, one young man acknowledged that

> the old guys treat you like their own son. They often go under the blocks themselves because they want to protect you. They say that they'd rather go themselves because they're old instead of sending a young man who's still got all his life ahead of him. The old guys really look after you. In the quarry it's like working with your family.

The apprentice's training develops the essential technical skills used in the extraction of marble as well as teaching him about the properties of the stone itself. Up until the 1960s, a minimum period of two or three years' practical experience was considered essential to even begin mastering the technical aspects of cutting and squaring marble. The end of the period of apprenticeship depended upon the collective recognition by other quarry workers of a young boy's capacity to learn about marble and his technical expertise. In the words of one older quarry worker, it ended when

> the foreman saw that you were good enough. This one here is ready to become a man.

Today, with the elimination of hand squaring and the introduction of the diamond wire, less importance is placed on these technical skills and the period of apprenticeship has shortened. While there are still no formal guide-lines for the length of apprenticeship, a young man can now expect to be paid an adult wage at the age of fifteen, after perhaps only six months training. These changes are, however, sometimes interpreted negatively by older workers who still make distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers based on the the length of time spent training as an apprentice.

While the adult wage packet, as I have already suggested, serves to mark the transition between apprentice and mature worker, many older quarry workers insist that training continues throughout their working lives. A *cavatore's* craft, they suggest, is never completely mastered because apart from technical skills, it depends upon an intimate knowledge of marble, acquired only through years of practical work experience. Moreover, according to these older skilled workers, men who have not been trained as apprentices can never expect to become fully qualified and skilled workers, as the following comments indicate:

> We're all OK at being labourers but only some people are capable of being skilled.
>
> After thirty it's impossible to be anything but a labourer.
>
> What can you learn at thirty! Labourers are those who go to the quarries late.

A period of apprenticeship, preferably under the tutelage of an older more experienced worker, is thus essential to these notions of skill and the division between skilled and unskilled labour. Rather than being "born" in the quarries, young men are transformed through their training in the art of marble extraction, becoming not only quarry workers but also men. Like other categories of workers who learn their "trade" through practical experience, the young quarry workers of Carrara can thus be viewed as serving a period of "unfreedom" in return for becoming a man.[5] Today, this notion of training, as well as skill, is increasingly challenged by the impact of new technology. While modern quarry workers still have to master the technical skills of quarrying, a knowledge of marble is less relevant and younger men are subverting the apprenticeship system by becoming operators of the new machinery almost immediately they start work.

THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

In significantly altering the work process, the introduction of new technology has also affected the organization of work and division of labour within the quarry. Whereas in previous decades quarry workers were organized in terms of specific categories of skill, today many tasks may theoretically be carried out by any quarry worker, regardless of training. In practice, however, quarry workers themselves still conceptualize their work in terms of a division between skilled and unskilled labour. These notions of skill are reflected in contemporary work practices as well as in the division of labour which persisted up until the end of the 1960s.

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[5] See McClelland (1987) for a similar observation concerning shipbuilding.

Evidence for the ways in which work was divided in the quarries is derived from my informants' descriptions of work organization and from various collective contracts outlining rates of pay. These work contracts demonstrate that in the 1960s the labour force was divided into at least nine pay categories as follows:

1. *Capo-cava*	Foreman.
2. *Sotto-capo*	Deputy Foreman
3. *Riquadratore*	Squarer (specialized and unspecialized)
4. *Tecchiaiolo*	Person specialized in cleaning the *tecchia* .
5. *Filista*	Cutter (Specialized and unspecialized).
6. *Minatore-fochino*	Explosives expert.
7. *Uomo al masso*	Man who moved the block of marble.
8. *Manovale specializzato*	Skilled labourer.
9. *Manovale*	Labourer.

This formal division was not always consistent with work practice and in smaller quarries there tended to be some overlap between categories. Broadly speaking, however, the main division was between the more skilled categories – the squarers, the cutters, the *tecchiaioli*, the *fochini* – and the less skilled workers – the labourers and the *uomini al masso*. Whereas the former tended to work only on tasks appropriate to their particular category, the latter generally applied themselves to the multitude of less skilled tasks. In their work narratives, retired and older quarry workers defined themselves in terms of these nine specific categories, but also stressed the basic division between the skilled and unskilled tasks.

At least two of these categories, the *tecchiaiolo* and the *fochino* do not refer to work roles, but specialized tasks undertaken only periodically in the quarry. Working from platforms constructed high up on the quarry face or from ropes attached to metal posts implanted at the top of the quarry, the *fochino* places the explosives into holes drilled into the rock face. In the 19th century this was a complicated task accomplished with two metal rods of different lengths. The *pistoletto* was a rather short instrument, whereas the *mina* referred to any rod which measured more than two metres. When a large explosion was planned, at least two men worked together, one holding the *mina* while the other hammered it into the rock. This hole was then cleaned and further perforated with a smaller instrument called the *mestolino*. Sometimes nitric acid was poured into it, creating a large cavity for containing the gunpowder. Once the fuse was lit, the *fochino* had to escape quickly up the rock face out of the range of the explosion. Given the extensive use of explosives in the past, the *fochino* was relatively important. Today, although detonators and pneumatic drills have obviously made this operation easier, expertise in the handling of explosives is still required and every quarry has at least one expert.

Similarly, the work of the *tecchiaioli* is less frequent today, although the methods they employ remain unaltered. Known in the quarries as *uccelli volanti* or "flying birds", these men attach themselves to long ropes and slowly pick their way down the quarry face prizing out loose stones and rocks with a short metal instrument called a *palo*. In quarries with extensive broken material, two or three *tecchiaioli* may work simultaneously, each one attached to a separate rope, but in the past, it was not uncommon to see ten or more men working together. Today, the widespread use of the diamond wire has improved the condition of the *tecchia* while increasing its height. The cleaning operation is still carried out but often only once a year, in the spring. According to quarry workers this "spring cleaning" is necessitated by the vulnerability of marble to extreme temperature change. During the winter, when some quarries are covered with snow and may close for several weeks, the marble expands. When the snow or ice melts and the temperature rises the marble contracts and loosens, increasing the risk of unforeseen ruptures in the marble and the rock face which could cause injury to workers below.

Although their role has diminished in modern quarries, the *tecchiaioli* are still regarded with some awe by other quarry workers. My informants pointed out that it is not possible for all quarry workers to become *tecchiaioli*. Their work is seen both as highly skilled and as requiring individual attributes such as "not being afraid of heights" or more simply "not being afraid". As individuals pitched against the environment, engaged in work which involves a high degree of personal risk, great skill and ultimate responsibility for the collective welfare of all other workers in the quarry, the figure of the *tecchiaiolo* perfectly encapsulates a collective vision of the highly skilled character of quarry work.

The other skilled categories of workers outlined above include the cutters or *filisti*, and the squarers, the *riquadratori*. As a specific category of specialized workers, the squarers have completely disappeared from modern quarries, although some of the skills involved in squaring may still be applied to blocks of marble containing defects. However, squarers are still regarded as one of the most skilled categories within the quarry. They worked alone and were paid according the number and size of the blocks they squared which were measured in *palmi* (palms). The squarers thus utilized their knowledge of marble to cut blocks quickly and increase their rate of pay.

Unlike the squarers, the second category of skilled workers, the cutters or *filisti*, occasionally worked on other tasks apart from cutting. But their work was nevertheless highly skilled, requiring a precise knowledge of marble. The positioning of the helicoidal wires and the flywheels to which they were attached, was a skill in itself. The flywheels were placed at angles depending on the grain and direction of the stone: the *contro*, the *verso* and *secondario*.[6] In periods of high demand for marble, the cutters often worked 24 hour shifts and because they continually applied sand and water to the wire, their work was extremely tiring.

The utilization of the new diamond wire, by contrast, is relatively simple. Because it easily cuts though all kinds of marble, it can be positioned at any point in the quarry regardless of angle and young quarry workers may begin using the wire almost immediately. While readily admitting that cutting is less tiring today, older workers complain of increased stress because the high velocity of the wire allows less time for adjustment. Cutting has become monotonous and less challenging; less dependent on traditional skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, cutters still set themselves apart from less skilled workers.

The *uomini al masso* were regarded as more skilled than the labourers, but both these categories worked in teams, on tasks which required brute force rather than a knowledge of marble. Coordinating their movements to the rhythm of chorused work chants, the *uomini al masso* used ropes, pulleys and their own bodies to manipulate and move large blocks of marble within the quarry in preparation for further cutting and squaring. The most numerous category of workers, the labourers, were engaged in a variety of less skilled but equally heavy tasks, such as carting sand, water or equipment and getting rid of the waste material.

Today, bulldozers are used extensively to manipulate blocks of marble within the quarry while minor labouring tasks are carried out by apprentices or by the few labourers still employed. The bulldozer drivers, while not figuring within the traditional hierarchy of skill are now regarded as skilled workers of a different order. In other words, new definitions of skill, based on technical expertise alone, are slowly replacing previous notions of skill defined by both technical expertise and a practical demonstration of one's knowledge of marble derived from years of practical work experience.

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[6] These terms, which are almost impossible to translate, refer to the geological position of marble within the quarry. I explain them in more detail in a section of the following chapter dealing with work language.

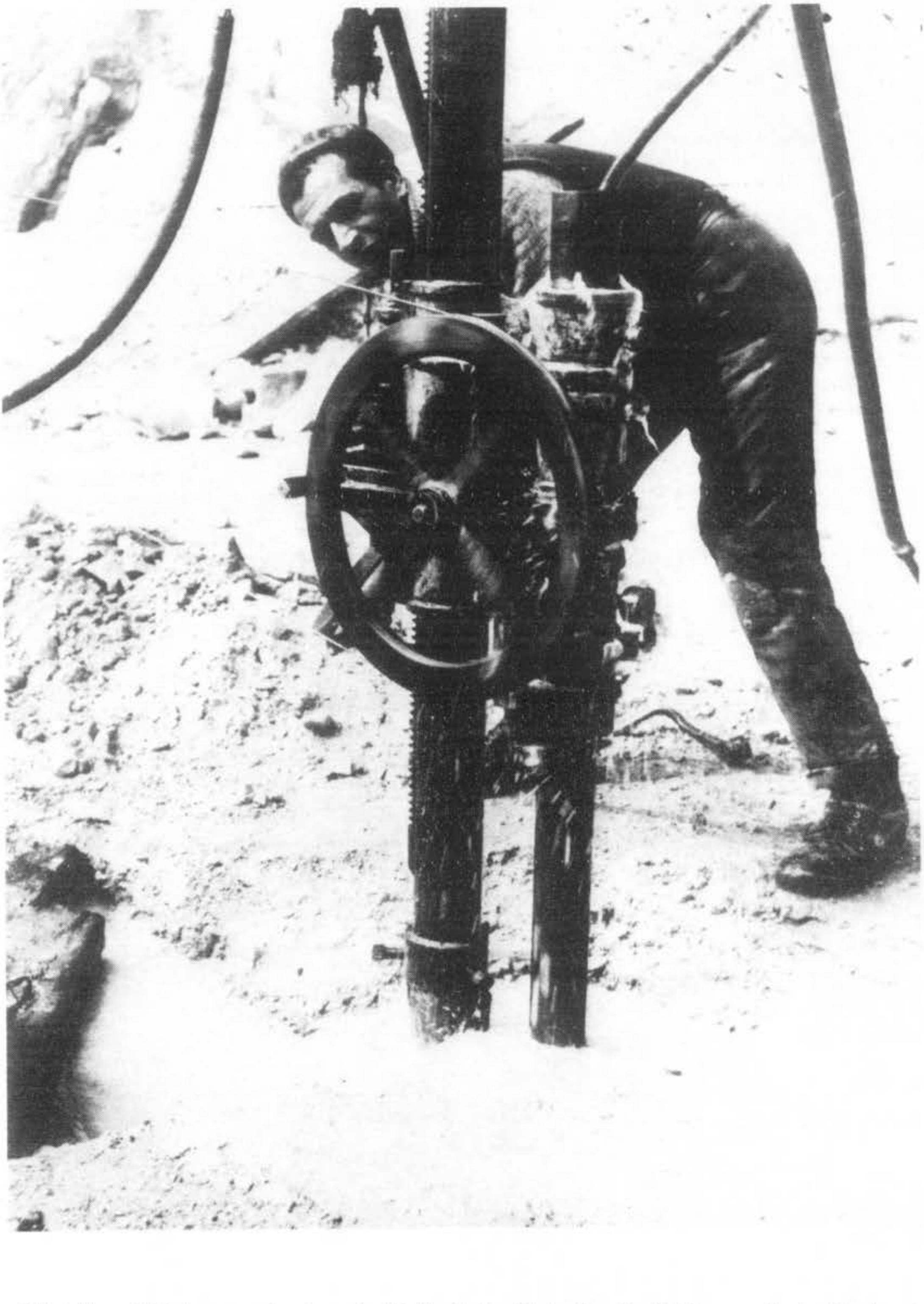
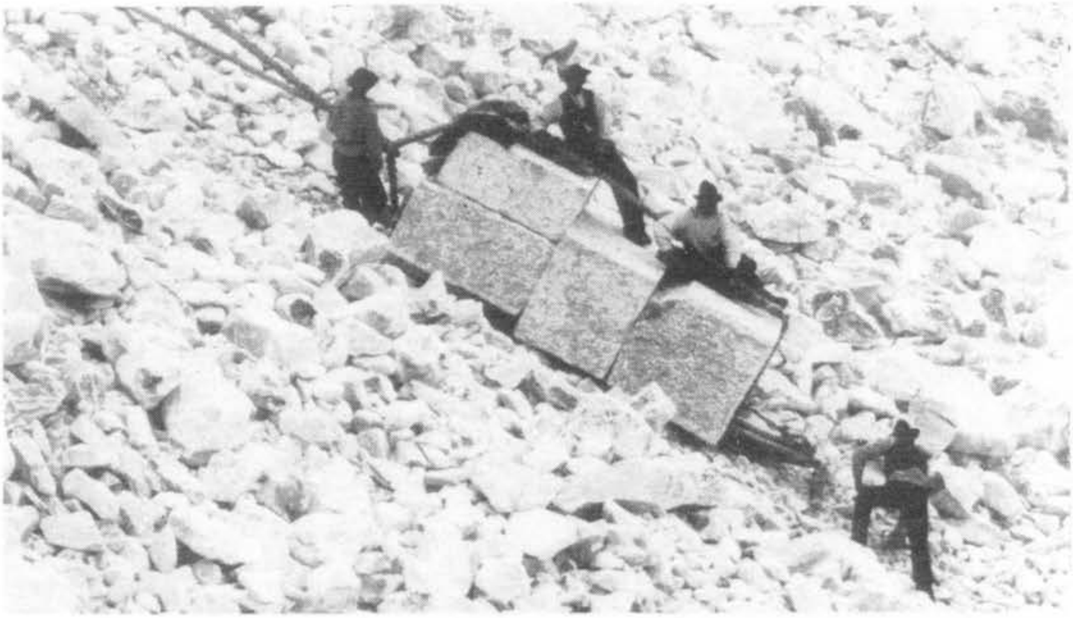


Plate 8. *Filista* preparing to cut with the helicoidal wire. (in *Il Marmo...Ieri e Oggi*, ed. Società Editrice Apuana, 1970).



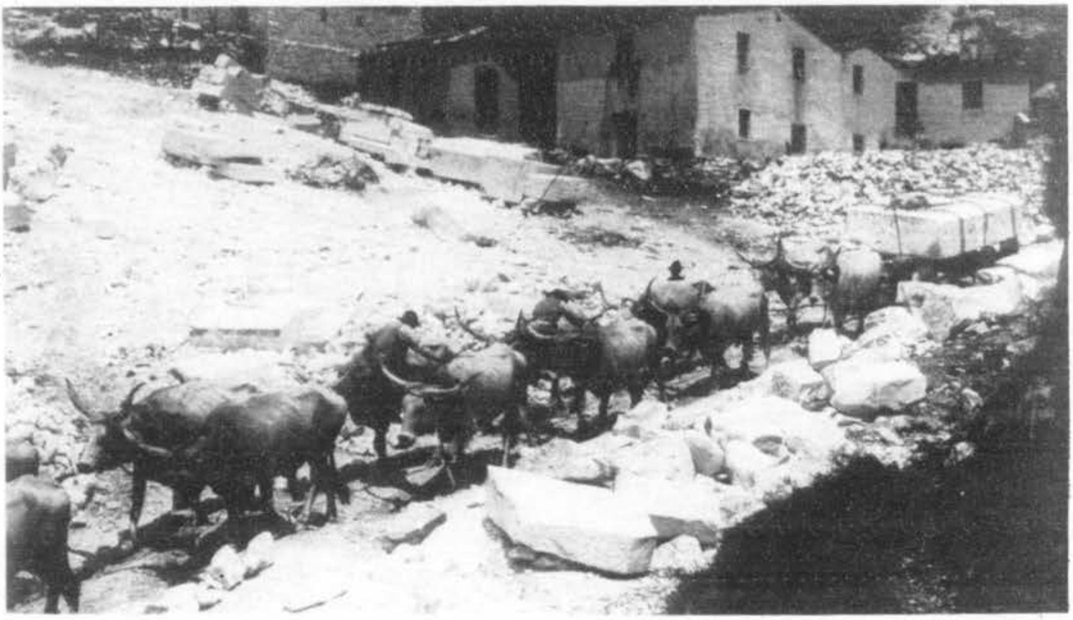


Plate 9. Team of *lizzatori* (photo by Ilario Bessi, from catalogue of exhibition: *Raccontare il Marmo: Immagini dalla fine degli anni '20 all' inizio degli anni'50*).

Plate 10. Team of oxen (photo by Ilario Bessi, from catalogue of exhibition: *Raccontare il Marmo: Immagini dalla fine degli anni '20 all' inizio degli anni '50*).

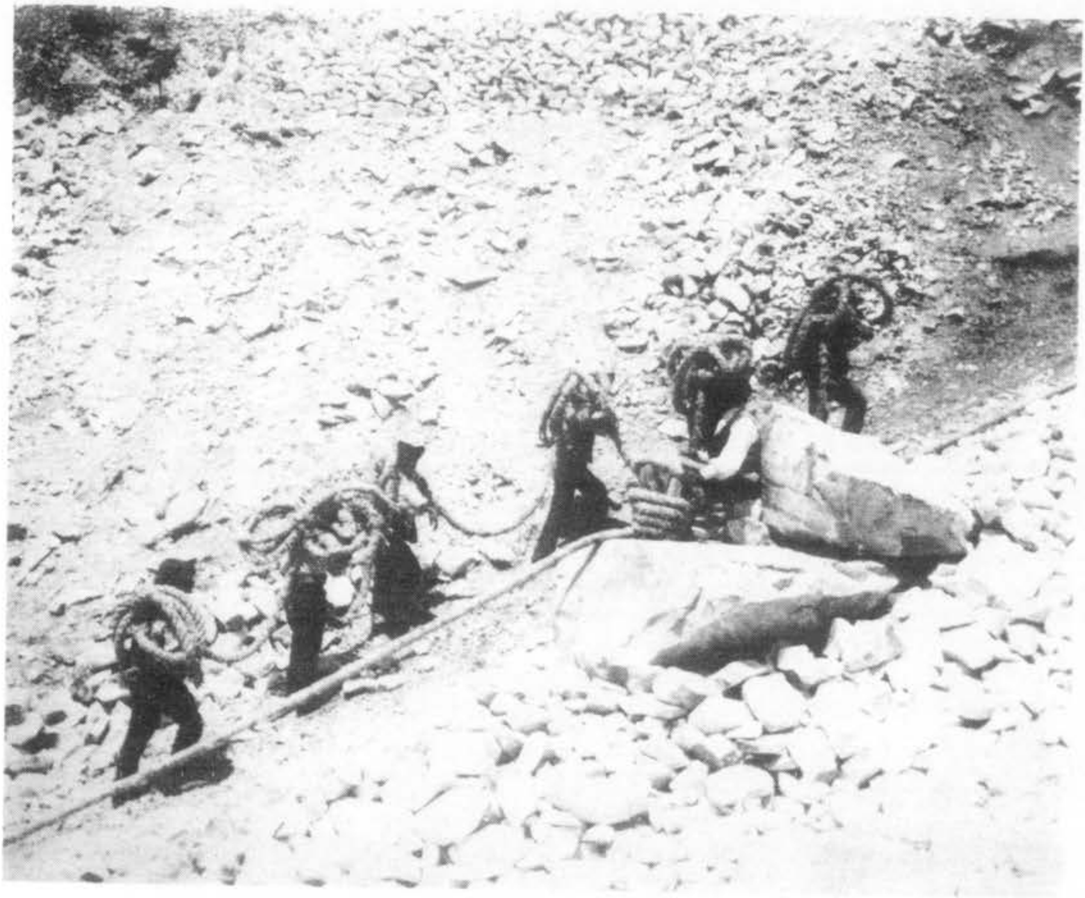


Plate 11. Men carrying the ropes for the *lizza*. (photo by Ilario Bessi, in Barratta, *L'Ultimo dei Lizzatori*, 1988).

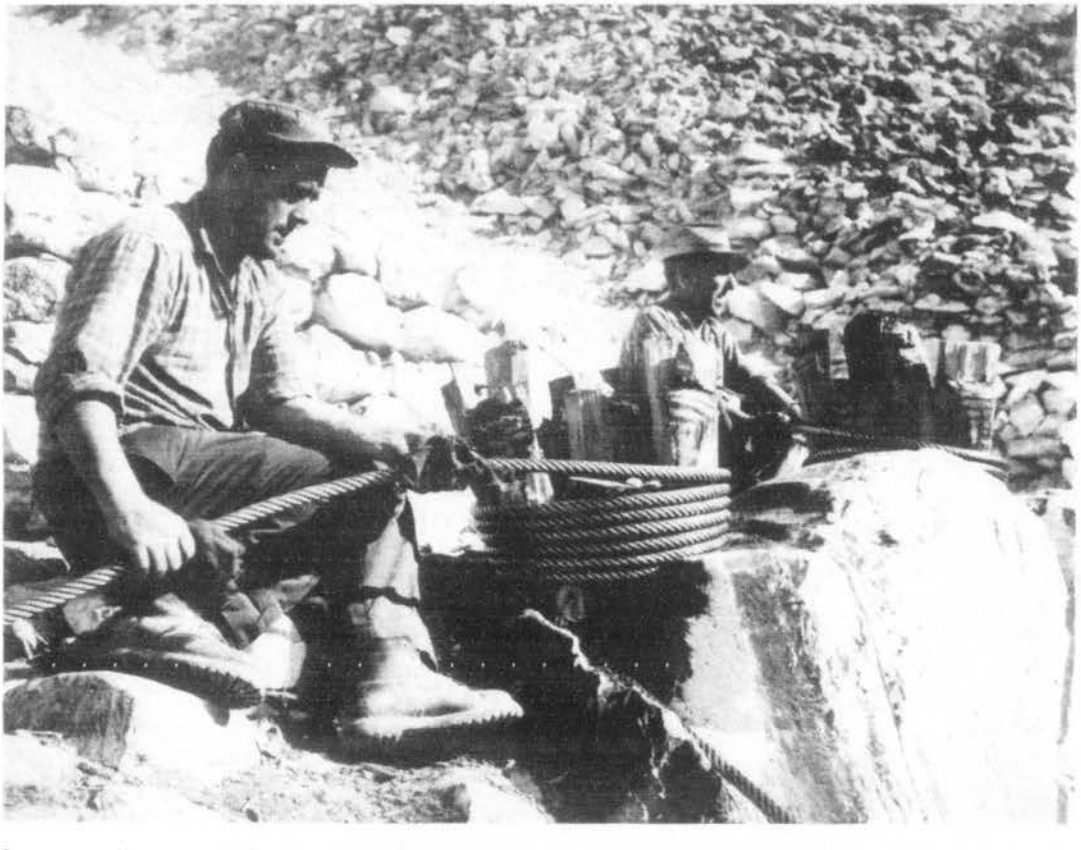


Plate 12. A *mollatore*, Canarin (photo by Ilario Bessi, in Barratta, *L'Ultimo dei Lizzatori*, 1988).

TRANSPORTATION

Like the quarry workers, the teams of transport workers, or *lizzatori*, were divided into various categories based on a hierarchy of skill. These categories included:

Capo-lizza	foreman.
Sotto-capo	deputy foreman.
Mollatori	men who held the ropes.
Piratori	men who looked after the *piri*.
Unghino	man who greased the *parati*.
Manovali	labourers.

The task of coordinating the movement of the giant sled down the mountain was shared between members of these teams, which were usually composed of 14–15 men. Three *mollatori* were responsible for holding onto the ropes, which were attached to the *lizza* and wound around the wooden stakes called *piri*. Coordinated by the foreman's work chant, the *mollatori* alternately loosened and held onto these ropes, slowly letting the *lizza* move further down the mountain path. As the name implies, the *piratori* looked after the *piri* which were frequently weakened by the constant friction of the ropes. These men also threw the shorter pieces of wood, called *parati*, under the sled as it moved down the path. The *unghino* was responsible for waxing these pieces of wood before they were thrown in front of the *lizza*.

While the labourers assisted in all these tasks, they were more important in carrying the material and equipment used for the operation of the *lizza*, from the mountain valley to the top of the mountain where work began. Six men alone were required for the transportation of the ropes, which weighed between 200–220 kilos. The *mollatori* were responsible for carrying the pieces of wood which made up the *lizza*, while the foreman carried the pick or *palo*, and the *grillo*, a huge steel clasp weighing ten kilos, which held the ropes tied to the sled. In contrast to the quarry foreman, the *capo lizza* was usually the direct employer of other members of his team having inherited all this equipment from a member of his family, usually a father or uncle. But like the organization of work in the quarries, the *lizzatori* also distinguished between the skilled and less skilled tasks, as well as emphasising the notion of specific individual talents for particular tasks.

In order to complete their work before the arrival of other quarry workers, the teams of *lizzatori* began working in the very early hours of the morning, often at two or three o'clock, but were paid according to the length of their journey, rather than an hourly rate. Because they had often finished working by the time the other quarry workers arrived, the *lizzatori* appeared to have more free time than other workers which, according to popular mythology, they spent drinking in the numerous wine bars of Carrara. It is this feature of their work which explains their image of themselves as quarry aristocrats; as free and independent, notwithstanding the extremely arduous and dangerous nature of their work.

THE SUPERVISION OF WORK

In theory there are two people responsible for the supervision of work in the quarry; the foreman and the "*dirigente del lavoro* " or the "director of work". In general, the foreman is responsible for all the day to day decisions concerning the "cultivation of the quarry", while the *dirigente del lavoro* ensures that all the legal requirements – the application of health and safety regulations, for instance, as well as certain industrial legislation covering employment- are met. In practice, however, the owner or subrenter of the quarry often nominates the foreman as his *dirigente del lavoro*, while in many smaller quarries, as I have already suggested, the foreman and the subrenter are precisely the same person.

Apart from advising and supervising in all the practical aspects of quarry excavation, the foreman's other major role is ensuring that conflict between workers is minimised and that they work the required number of hours. Apart from reprimanding late comers and signalling the lunch break and the end of the working day, in some cases the foreman may also hire and fire employees. Consequently, in the majority of quarries it is the foreman, rather than the owner or subrenter, who is ultimately responsible for work discipline.

There are, however, a number of factors limiting the foreman's disciplinary powers at work. As I have already illustrated, the work process itself is not conducive to close supervision of individual workers. Because workers are engaged in a number of different tasks, often carried out simultaneously, the foreman is physically unable to keep a close eye on every individual or operation. The unpredictability of marble as well as the enormous diversity in its condition in the quarry, also affects supervision. In all phases of the work process, quarry workers confront difficulties which cannot be predicted when they commence their work. A block of marble which appears sound may contain hidden faults. A *bancata* may be more difficult to move than was initially envisaged. When confronted with these problems, quarry workers themselves often have to make immediate decisions about how to proceed or they may consult the foreman in particular instances. In all these situations, emphasis is placed on collaborative decision-making between the workers involved in a particular task, although the foreman takes ultimate responsibility, especially in cases of injury. Most important, however, is the attitude of quarry workers themselves to the foreman in his disciplinary role. In general quarry workers resist close supervision because they regard themselves as skilled workers whose knowledge of marble is only marginally inferior to that of the foreman. In most cases it is greater than that of the owner, who is not only unfamiliar with the peculiarities of quarrying, but also with the men, their language and their customs.

The foreman's role is clearly ambiguous. Ultimately answerable to the quarry owner or subrenter for the amount of marble produced, the foreman is therefore responsible for maintaining the work timetable and disciplining recalcitrant workers. But because the work process requires a collaborative form of decision-making, his relationship with other workers in the quarry is normally one of mutual respect. This tension and ambiguity emerges in the work narratives of older quarry workers, who assimilate recent changes to the work process to a transformation of the foreman's role.

According to these accounts, in previous generations a foreman rose through the ranks of other specialized workers, from *bagascio* to squarer or cutter. Acknowledged as one of the most highly skilled quarry workers, he was also imbued with certain leadership qualities and knew, in the words on one quarry worker, "how to talk to the men". He was also admired for his ability to teach younger and more inexperienced workers the secrets and art of marble extraction. Agu', a foreman today, spoke to me about his admiration and respect for his first foreman who displayed all these qualities.

> He consulted us all, even me the *bagascio*, because he said you must consult everyone, even the *bagascio*. He was passionate about teaching us about marble. He knew how to get the young ones interested.

Other workers also recounted similar experiences but emphasised the essential relationship of equality between themselves and the foreman. Although paid at a higher rate, the foreman works under exactly the same conditions as other workers in the quarry, eating with them and often living in the same village. As one worker remarked to me, "He isn't different because we all live together."

However, some quarry workers also asserted that they thought the foreman's role had changed over recent decades. One ex-foreman, Mauro, forcefully asserted that

> one becomes a *capo cava* like in all other jobs, because you are the best. Now no. The *capo cava* could be a complete illiterate at work. Play the spy. But before it wasn't like that. They were the people who were most suitable, who knew more about the job than the others. They were the men who knew the mountain and who talked to the mountain. They've degenerated because the big companies have put in spies.

But as the following conversation between two retired quarry workers illustrates, even in previous generations, the foreman was often viewed ambivalently.

B: The foreman were always terrible people.

P: They were always the most capable They knew everything about the mountain.

B: The foreman was the one who had most authority. He was someone who had initiative, someone who knew how to talk.

P: Not everyone is capable of being a foreman.

B: You really have to know about the quarry. But there are those who are good and those who are not so good. We say that the best foremen are the workers. We say that because when the foreman said to cut that marble there, "There's good stuff", a specialized worker always did it. The foreman didn't cut it. He told us where, but we got it out.

P: The foreman is like the trainer in a football team. The quarry was more difficult before.

B: The foreman knew how to distinguish between the men. He knew where to put them.

P: Some foremen were bad, arrogant, but others were good.

This conversation reveals an essential point which emerges in all discussions about the relationship of the foreman to other workers; that despite his disciplinary role, the foreman is regarded by other workers as a highly skilled worker, equal, but not really superior to other skilled workers in the quarry. The ambiguity and tension which surrounds the role of the foreman, is precisely an indication of the underlying egalitarianism of quarry work; an egalitarianism which once again is grounded in a notion of skill.

THE CONDITIONS OF WORK

In the marble villages today, older women look back on their youth when the quarry workers "left home with the moon and returned with the stars". Until the construction of roads, quarry workers walked to work, sometimes from villages situated two or three hours away. In many substantive aspects, the physical conditions of work in the quarries had not changed greatly since 1904, when a government minister investigating work conditions in the marble industry at Carrara wrote:

> One can calculate the number of workers in Carrara as from 10,000 to 12,000. A good number of these are anarchists or other socialists. The word "anarchist" should however not be understood in a political, but in a social sense. Thus one can say that these workers, more than anarchists, are simply discontented with their lives; a life which they are forced to lead . . . in a rough and tough occupation that forces them to battle against the elements in order to produce a product which does not go into their pockets but into those of the owners. They can work only during certain hours of the day and only after walking many kilometres in the mountains. If it rains they have to stop which means that the work is intermittent and in any case the the wages are never commensurate with the hours worked. In general, the life they lead in the middle of the elements and in the midst of all the forces of nature, far from all human contact and every joy and sign of affection, has led them to form a sullen and contrary character which opposes them to the society from which they are condemned to remain apart. When they go to work, they kiss their wives and children goodbye as if it were the last time, which unfortunately is often the case . . . Work related injuries are extremely frequent, occurring because of carelessness and workers taking for granted the danger of the job. On Saturdays when they [the quarry workers] return from work to the village, they prefer the wine shops and the *cantina* (bar) to the joys of the family. The anarchists and socialists, however, have similar dispositions. In sum they are threatening and powerful (in Gestri 1976: 55).

With characteristic understatement, Gestri (1976: 51) describes the working conditions of quarry workers at the end of the 19th century as "particularly difficult". Apart from the arduous nature of quarry work and its intrinsic risks, quarry workers worked long hours in all kinds of weather conditions which also affected their rate of pay. Although the hours they worked were commensurate with other contemporary industrial occupations, ranging from six-seven hours in the winter and eight-nine hours in the summer (Milani, 1894: 14), this did not include the hours of walking to and from work. As indicated above, this sometimes meant that they worked up to fifteen hours a day while being paid for a maximum of nine. In some of the higher mountain quarries, work ceased completely during winter when snow and ice covered the quarries and quarry workers were forced into long months of unemployment.[7] Working in the open, quarry workers were also subjected to the extremes of normal weather conditions which range from a searing and blinding summer heat to below freezing point in the winter.

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[7] Mori (1958: 43) asserts that quarry workers worked on average only 220–240 days per year although he does not provide a source for this calculation.

Work in the quarries was also extraordinarily dangerous. As early as 1875 a local doctor, Giuseppe Tenderini wrote:

> Every day some kind of minor or serious accident occurs in the quarries or while transporting the marble. On average one can calculate fourteen deaths every year during working hours; then there are those who die some weeks after they have been injured and these are on average six. Finally there are those workers who remain permanently debilitated or mutilated which on average reach four per year. Broken arms and bones, not to mention numerous dislocations are common and certainly not less than fifty per year (in Fabbri 1883: 34)[8]

Injuries from the prevalent use of explosives were also frequent and Mori (1958: 42) calculates that for every 20,000 tons of marble produced, at least four workers were killed and eleven gravely injured. Despite this high injury rate, pension funds and worker's compensation payments were non-existent. Furthermore, although mutual aid organizations existed in Carrara, they predominantly served other categories of workers. Milani (1894) paints what must have been an accurate, if dismal, picture of the situation of injured and mutilated workers, given the absence of any form of social security.

> Elements of consumption, they vegetate in forced inertia . . . and in moral abjection . . . The ranks of these dispossessed increases every day and if in Carrara they are not seen often, it is because the majority leave, going elsewhere to beg their daily bread, gaining the pity of the public, by showing repugnant stumps and by recounting never too fantastic descriptions of the quarries (1894: 58).

Although, according to one contemporary local observer, quarry workers' wages compared reasonably well with other Italian workers and were certainly "not the worst" (Magenta 1871: 74), this assessment does not take into consideration the days' pay lost due to poor weather or the extremely long working day. Skilled workers were paid at a higher daily rate than unskilled workers but, according to Milani's (1894: 39) calculations, the average wage of the majority of contemporary quarry workers was barely sufficient to maintain a family of four people. In many cases, given the necessity to purchase clothes as well as food, the families of quarry workers relied on credit from local shopkeepers. In any case, as I have already indicated, because of the prevalence of piecework and the custom of paying "*a misura*", or in other words paying only after the blocks of marble were sold – a system of payment which endured up until the late 1960s – many quarry workers were not paid in periods of economic crisis.

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[8] In reality these figures on work-related injuries and deaths are conservative as many cases of injury were unreported. Reliable statistics on injury rates for quarry workers were only gathered from the late 1880s onwards. Tenderini's assessment provides us with the first evidence that the question of safety in the quarries was beginning to be addressed. I deal more extensively with this issue in chapter four.

If quarry worker's wages were, on average, insufficient by contemporary standards and their employment precarious, living conditions were equally miserable. Only a minority of quarry workers lived in the city of Carrara itself, and the majority of these lived on the outskirts of the city in the medieval workers' quarters still standing today. Because the population of the city had doubled, quarry workers and their families lived in extremely overcrowded conditions, in houses lacking ventilation, sanitation and most basic amenities. According to Milani (1894), the space inside these "dark cells" was

> absolutely insufficient for the number of inhabitants. Every space, every hole from the ground floor to the roof, is used and lived in. Dreadful cellars on the level beneath the street, completely lacking air and light, damp and slimy, house up to three families. These humble abodes are in a complete state of disrepair with loose and broken floors; walls covered with sticky sweat and grime and dusty rotten ceilings (1894: 32).

In the marble villages located closer to the quarries, the situation was not much better. In these "rat traps", as Milani describes them, most families were accommodated in two rooms, the kitchen and a single bedroom. Sanitation was completely lacking and rubbish was thrown into narrow ditches called *corti* surrounding the houses on three sides. These ditches were filled with straw, which was presumably used to make compost for the small household gardens and orchards, but which "emitted an incredible stench and polluted the subterranean water supplies of the village" (Milani: 1894: 34).

During the winter months these accommodation problems were exacerbated by the regular influx of people from the mountain villages looking for work or who were reduced to beggary, living in any space available, from cellars to animal stalls.

According to another contemporary observer, houses were poorly furnished and diets inadequate.

> Few have beds and linen sufficient for the number of occupants. A chest, a table, a small bed are all the furniture one finds in these mean abodes. On the plain . . . the daily meal is *polenta* [a dish made of corn flour and water], sometimes mixed with cabbage and beans, and bread made with the same

> flour . . . In the mountains the diet is based on chestnuts (Raffaelli 1882: 337–8).[9]

Meat was usually limited to festive occasions whereas the consumption of carbohydrates like bread and pasta was high, although according to Milani's calculations, completely inadequate given the quarry worker's energy requirements (1894: 39). There was also a high incidence of alcoholism which quarry owners actually encouraged, by paying their employees every fortnight in the Carrara wine bars in which they sometimes also held a financial interest (Gestri 1976: 56).[10]

During the first two decades of the 20th century some improvements were made to these work conditions. In 1902 the local quarry workers' union won a significant victory after a strike involving all sectors of the marble industry and established their first collective work contract. While this contract reduced their normal timetable by half an hour, more importantly it established the *poggio* (a piece of land at the bottom of each marble valley), rather than the quarry, as the point of entry to work. This effectively reduced the working day for the majority of workers who worked in the higher mountain quarries, as well as creating the preconditions for further improvements to the work timetable for all. Wages were also increased by 25–50 percent in all categories (Gestri 1976: 271). But although the 1902 contract established the important precedent of collective bargaining, quarry workers had to wait until 1911 before other demands – like partial payment for rain and poor weather – were met. The 1911 contract further increased the rate of pay in all categories and reduced the working day to six hours and 40 minutes from the *poggio*. In the wake of these successes, a pension fund for quarry workers was finally established in 1912.[11]

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[9] Milani (1894) similarly comments on the lack of furnishings in these houses. He specifically mentions that woollen mattresses were luxury items and that many households had sold their copper cooking and household utensils. This is interesting in the light of my observations of houses in these villages today where copper cooking utensils take pride of place as decorative items on the kitchen walls of many houses and woollen mattresses are assiduously refilled at regular intervals. These items, which today are superseded by sprung mattresses and aluminium and stainless steel cooking pots were, even in recent generations, some of the few items of value in the house. Similarly household linen is still a principal component of a young girl's trousseau.

[10] This supposition is supported by numerous commentaries in the local union newspaper, *Il Cavatore*, and by the evidence of another contemporary researcher, who observed that the debts incurred drinking wine at the bar ensured that hard drinkers effectively worked for nothing, or at least a very reduced wage (Betti 1905:13–14, see also *Il Cavatore*, 12th September, 1912).

[11] I discuss the history of these developments and the 1911 contract in more detail in chapter four.

But despite these improvements, little else changed. The majority of quarry workers were still paid as pieceworkers and the work remained extremely tiring and dangerous. Moreover, the years between 1915 and 1918 marked a period of crisis for the marble industry when many quarries closed. From 1920 until the end of the Second World War, this crisis continued. During these years, unemployment increased and wages were substantially reduced.

Further significant improvements to working conditions only emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, with the construction of roads to the quarries. Instead of walking to work, quarry workers were able travel by bus or motor bike. Today, they often drive to work in a jeep provided by the quarry owner, or they go in their own cars. The working day is now calculated from arrival in the quarry and is commensurate with all other blue-collar occupations. In general quarry workers work a 38 hour week over five or six days. In winter the day begins at 7 a.m and finishes at 2 p.m, whereas in summer, work commences at 6 a.m. While piecework persisted as the principal system of payment until the late 1960s, all quarry worker are now paid a weekly wage which compares well with other industrial workers in the region. Some skilled workers are paid above the official rate of pay and many work overtime in the afternoons or on weekends. Like all other Italian workers, they also receive sickness benefits and compensation for injury. Moreover, like other categories of workers covered by the state's industrial legislation, quarry workers receive a pension when they retire. Further, with the introduction of bulldozers and other heavy machinery, much of the fatigue associated with previous methods of work has been eliminated and quarry workers themselves admit that their working lives have dramatically improved.

Despite these improvements, the work remains extremely dangerous. Instead of fatigue, quarry workers now complain of increased stress and monotony which they associate with the introduction of new technology. Some tasks, like cutting, seem less satisfying and boring, while at the same time the pace of work leaves less time for safety considerations. Working conditions in the underground quarries are extremely unpleasant as workers are exposed to extremely high noise levels, as well as mud and fumes from the heavy machinery. Even in the open quarries, noise from the excavating machines, bulldozers and drills is a constant source of irritation which provokes frequent reminiscing on an earlier, and as quarry workers often assert, "more humane" rhythm of work.

Plate 13. Foreman, Arimante, measuring a block of marble for cutting.

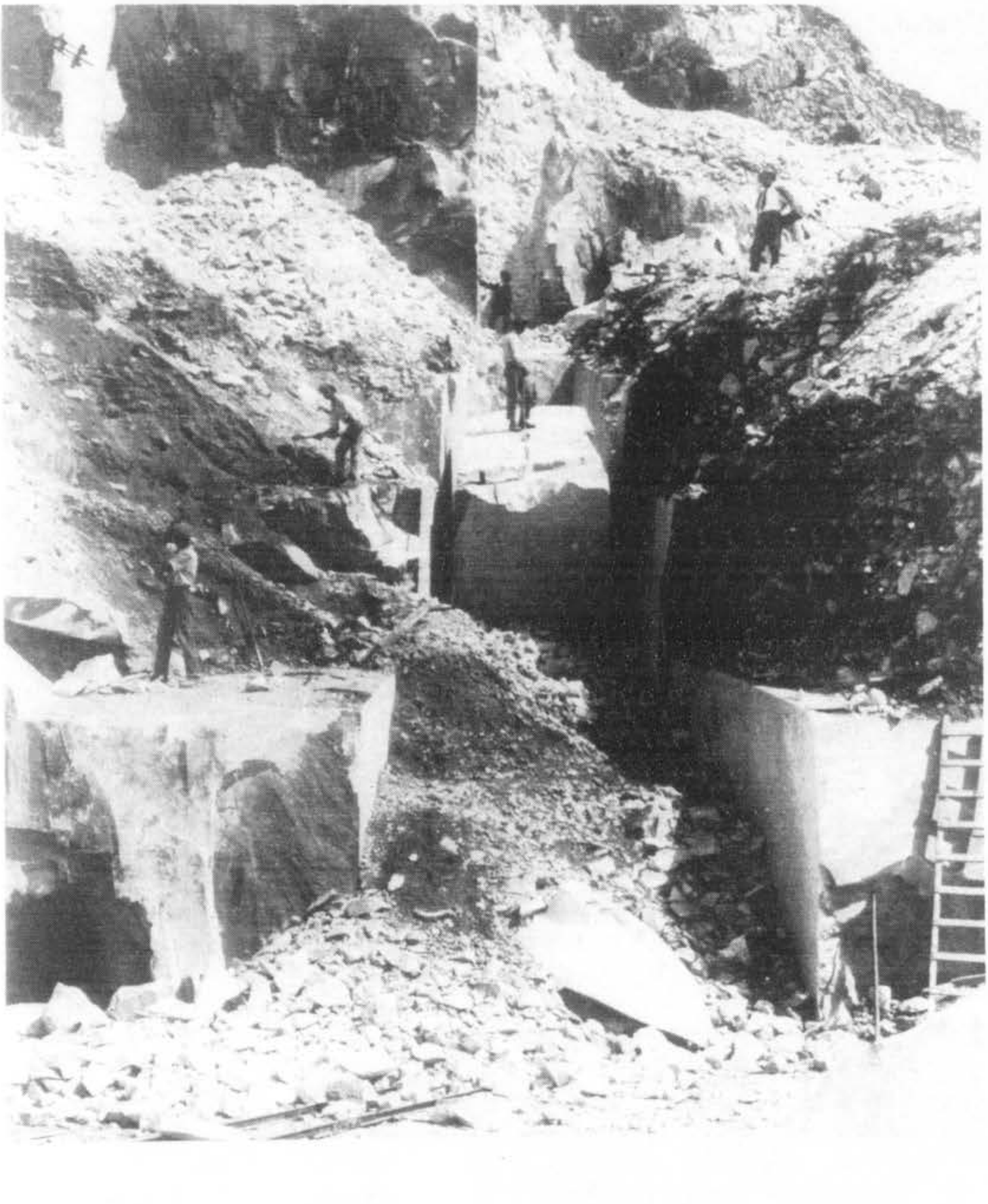

Plate 14. Quarry around 1910 (photo by Ilario Bessi, from catalogue of exhibition: *Raccontare il Marmo: Immagini dalla fine degli anni '20 all'inizio degli anni '50*).

TIMETABLES, THE *SPARTANI* AND NOTIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

Although quarry workers generally agree that the eradication of piecework and the application of uniform work timetables within the quarries has led to greater economic security and an enormous improvement in their lifestyles, some people lament the passing of an era in which they could decide, within limits, their own working pace. For these quarry workers, piecework was not associated with exploitation, but with notions of independence and autonomy.

For some of those engaged in quarry work, particularly the specialized workers, the lack of a regular timetable was interpreted positively as representing their ability to control when and when not to go to work. As one ex-pieceworker or *cottimista* remarked to me "we didn't work under the boss, we were free to come and go as we pleased".

Recalling his experience of work during the 1950s, Mauro similarly emphasised the positive aspects of the piecework system.

> We didn't call ourselves workers, we called ourselves collaborators. As a *cottimista* you could work when you wanted. On Mondays few of the *cottimisti* went to work. Sometimes someone would say, "Figaia's[12] looking for 50 people. Let's go!" The other said, "What are you saying? Yes go with Figaia and afterwards you'll have to go every Monday[13] and if you want to go home at two o'clock he won't let you". Then he says, "Oh well, I won't go then."

Historians of 19th century mining in Britain have also noted the association between piecework and these notions of independence. Some authors have argued that this flexibility in work timetables reflected the continuing influence of rural lifestyles on the organization of the mining industry. But as Jones (1977) argues in his study of the Welsh slate men, this should not be overestimated, for

> This defense of the freedom to decide . . . when one worked, to some extent reflected the rural patterns which still exercised some influence over the quarrymen . . . [but] most quarrymen held little or no connection with the land and lived their lives in the terraced streets of the quarrying villages. The skilled men, especially the slate pickers, were normally drawn from these villages and their attachment to freedom seems to have been as great as the

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[12] Figaia is the name of a well known marble firm which is distinguished locally by its reputation for regular and secure payment.

[13] Monday at Carrara is the regular market day and a day which many quarry workers took off after the weekend. That this was a regular occurrence is illustrated by a local expression; "*fare la lunidiana*" or in other words "to have an attack of Mondayitis".

> rockman's and greater than the labourers, who were, very often recent recruits from the land and who were in any case, often attracted to the quarries by the shorter hours worked there as compared to hours on the land (1977: 112).

Others have argued that the ability to regulate one's own hours at work was closely related to the piecework system itself. Samuel (1977) suggests, for instance, that at the Clydach limestone quarries time keeping was definitely contingent upon the piecework system, for although there were regulation hours

> the rockmen could enter the place at will with no works entrance at which to clock in, or foreman's looking glass to spy them out, little was done to make sure they were observed. A quarryman was allowed to come in his own time and finish in his own time. His wages were according to what he quarried and what he filled (1977: 51).

Similarly, Thomas Burt (1924: 91) records in his autobiography that coal hewers also decided their own timetables, entering and leaving the pits when they liked and working sometimes at night, in preference to the day.

In Carrara, the perceived independence of pieceworkers vis-a-vis regular wage labourers, is reinforced by the presence of another archetypal figure in the system of marble production, the *spartano* . Perhaps the most marginal of all quarry workers, the *spartani* proliferated towards the end of 19th century in the face of rural poverty and dispossession. The *spartani* worked completely outside the normal work organization of the quarry. Like the rural workers who made a living from collecting and selling forest products, the *spartani* supported themselves from the blocks of marble they found in the huge piles of waste material discarded from the quarries. While some *spartani* made arrangements to pay a percentage of the sale of their block to the owner or renter of the quarry, others claimed that the marble was theirs by right. In some cases this practice extended to stealing already cut and squared blocks from the quarries at night. Noting the prevalence of such activities, Milani (1894) comments:

> There are 84 workers who are categorized as temporary. In reality these workers are individuals without employers and who are not interested in being regularly employed because their work borders on the illegal. However, they manage to earn a good wage. Their legal speculation involves rummaging through the discharges of waste material from the quarry and utilizing those fragments and blocks of marble, which may still be sold, but which in the confusion of work have unwittingly been lost amongst the slag heaps or because the owner has decided that it is not worthwhile paying someone to retrieve them. This is not so bad. What is bad is the situation in which these individuals cunningly use the common entrance points of the quarries to audaciously steal already worked blocks of marble, taking them at night and

> burying them, temporarily, at a previously decided point under piles of waste material, or marking them in such a way as to make them unrecognizable. Sooner or later they find an opportunity during the day, amidst all the confusion of daily work to transport these blocks to the bottom of the quarry, where they always find a sympathetic local industrialist who buys the block at a mutually convenient price. This has been a huge problem for the normally well organized local economy and has assumed such a level as to threaten private property and the public order (1894: 8).

As many of my informants attested, *spartani* continued working in the quarries until the late 1960s, sometimes tolerated by quarry owners but in other cases reviled. Many quarry workers I spoke to revealed that they had begun their work careers in the quarries as *spartani*, working either individually or with other members of their families. Indeed the practice was so common, that the term "to work *alla spartana* ", became a synonym for piecework or working an irregular timetable of one's own choosing.

A number of factors led to their gradual disappearance. These included the implementation of industrial legislation abolishing piecework; the construction of roads which made the quarries more accessible but which also created the possibilities for increased surveillance and control of the waste material and the lack of market demand for small blocks or objects fashioned from these blocks.

The presence of the *spartani* in Carrara is evidence of at least one possibility for local people to make a living outside the constraints of wage labour. Despite their obvious economic marginality, and ultimate demise, the figure of the *spartano* still epitomises the notion of the relative independence of quarry work. For some men at least, the *spartani* were a bench-mark of self-respect and a symbol of resistance to the dehumanising aspects of wage labour, as these excerpts from an article published in *la Nazione* illustrate:

> "Ode to the last *Spartano* "
>
> Who is the *spartano* ? . . . One is dealing with men who like to avoid crowds, who have a perfect knowledge of the mountain and who are expert workers . . . Tradition has it that the *spartani* are almost lords of the *ravaneti* because no boss has ever expelled them from his area except in the case of danger . . . Even today, while others are looking for a more "secure" job – jobs with no responsibility – the *spartano* is up there constantly challenging the unpredictable for the love of freedom which fills him . . . He can't accept the rigidity of a timetable, the anonymous grouping, the subjection at even a symbolic level to a boss . . . He works harder, he risks more, but he's free and sometimes he even earns more than the others (6 July 1963).

However, this rather romantic portrait makes little reference to the hardship incurred by families who depended on the wages of such precarious work, and as one ex-*spartano* admitted to me, "Often there was bitterness at home".

Furthermore, as Metcalfe (1988) has recently observed in his study of the Australian coal miners of the Hunter Valley, these strategies of resistance – including high rates of absenteeism, drinking and other hedonistic behaviour (which he terms "larrikinism" in the Australian context) – were ultimately self-defeating for

> Insofar as it helped larrikins bear their oppression, it perpetuated the oppression, and insofar as larrikins depended upon the strategy for self-esteem, they depended on the oppression in which the strategy was framed (1988: 88).

This point is also relevant for an interpretation of the *spartani* at Carrara. For although working for themselves, the *spartani* did not always entirely escape the constraints of the wage-capital system. While there were some exceptions, like Barratini, the majority of *spartani* eked out a meagre living, working more from economic necessity and a sense of survival, than motivated by any real strategy of resistance.

Nevertheless in modern Carrara, the notion that quarry work embodies independence is extraordinarily pervasive. Despite the implementation of uniform timetables and industrial work discipline, quarry workers still insist on taking a day off for recreational activities, like hunting or going to the beach. Holidays associated with the village saints are written into work contracts and in the case of injury or death, the entire work force abandons the quarries for the day. Younger quarry workers also assert that the flexibility in work timetables is one of the most attractive features of their work. The point is, as Whipp (1987a: 211) suggests, that contrary to the belief that the history of industrialization has inevitably been accompanied by an all embracing single time/work discipline, in many cases, such as the quarries of Carrara, time has always been seen as a negotiable commodity: as a means through which workers attempt to assert a sense of their own self-worth and humanity even within wage-capitalism.[14]

The fact that this kind of negotiation has historically been a common characteristic of the mining industry in particular, raises some interesting questions. As I have already suggested, the figure of the "independent miner" is not unique to Carrara but emerges in many other historical accounts of the mining industry. According to Harrison (1978), the essential difference between miners and other craft workers, in the 19th century at least, was that the miner's skills were expendable:

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[14] See Hareven (1982) for an insightful discussion of the ways in which "family-time" intersected with "industrial time" in a New England industrial community.

> What made the miners different was that the kind of control which skilled engineers or skilled builders, compositors or glass workers might establish over the supply of their labour was beyond their reach thanks to the plebeian downward pressure upon aristocratic aspirations. If the Independent Collier was proud of his skill, he knew that it was hardly transferable to any other calling. If it was sometimes better rewarded than that of recognized craftsmen, earnings and employment were subject to more dramatic fluctuation than in typical coal skilled trades. Thus the Independent Collier tended to be an ideal type, rather than a securely rooted character (1978: 7).

In the concluding section of this chapter, I return to this question of skill to examine claims of quarry workers, who take precisely the opposite position: that their skills are still essential to quarrying marble, even in the face of rapid technological change.

THE HIERARCHY OF SKILL

In earlier sections I described the division of labour which persisted in the quarries up until the 1960s. I noted that technological innovation over recent years has led to the disappearance of some specialized categories of workers while simultaneously reducing the size of the labour force. I argued, however, that despite these transformations, quarry workers themselves have remained extraordinarily resistant to attempts to change work organization in the quarries. In particular, it appears to me, the new technology has not essentially altered the way in which these workers think about their work; as a craft which is organized in terms of a hierarchy of skills.

According to Cockburn (1983: 113) skill may be defined in three distinct ways. Firstly as skill in the man; or in other words the accumulated knowledge a person accrues over a lifetime of work in a particular occupation. Secondly, there is the notion of skill in the job which may or may not match the skill in the worker and thirdly, there is the notion of the political definition of skill, or in other words, the way in which skill is defined or redefined to meet the wider objectives of trade unions or the challenges from other groups of workers. In her study of print workers, Cockburn utilizes all three definitions of skill to argue the case against Braverman's (1974) thesis that de-skilling necessarily leads to the degradation of work. While the following chapter discusses this issue in more depth, here I want to concentrate on quarry workers' perceptions of skill in the light of Cockburn's third definition: the idea of skill as an embattled idiom within the context of wider technological and political transformations to the work process.

For the quarry workers of Carrara, skill is defined in terms of an individual talent for a particular task, as well as the collective store of knowledge essential to the craft. In this sense, the division between skilled and less skilled workers expresses more than a technical division of labour within the work process. This hierarchy of skill epitomises what Sabel (1982) has elsewhere referred to as a career at work; the notion that different groups of workers have particular ideas about work which become a kind of "compressed cosmology that defines what virtue is and how to test it; in short a world view" (1982: 80).

One of the essential aspects of this hierarchy of skill is the emphasis on individual capacity and talent. Indeed the very logic of its existence is encapsulated in the idea that each person working in the quarry has particular abilities which are appropriate to specific tasks. This logic extends even to the quarry owner, whose job, according to one quarry worker is, "to be able to sell blocks well". Similarly, squarers, cutters, *tecchiaioli* and explosive experts, are all viewed as people who had earned these specializations through the collective recognition of individual talents. For example, one quarry worker asserted that "when you become a quarry worker you are good at doing almost anything but some quarry workers are good at being *filisti*, others are better being *quadratori*, and others good at doing something else again".

Quarry workers also maintain that in the past they chose their specializations within the quarry according to these notions of individual capacity and liking for one task over another. In other words, these men progressed from unskilled worker to skilled worker by demonstrating talents for particular tasks, and skilled workers at least, could move easily between quarries.

The assumption of individual talent and ability as a mark of skill also implies, however, that the individual abilities of unskilled workers – the labourers – were fixed. Many quarrymen I spoke to explicitly suggested that labourers, especially those who had not been apprenticed in the quarry, were less capable of becoming fully developed quarry workers. As one retired *quadratore* remarked,

> In the past manual workers weren't *cavatori*. To be a *cavatore* you needed to have experience. Today everyone is a *cavatore*. But in the past a *cavatore* was someone who knew how to work in the quarry.

Similarly another quarry worker defined a *cavatore* as follows:

> Who is a real *cavatore*? A *cavatore* is a person like myself; someone who goes up the *tecchia*. A *cavatore* is someone who knows how to extract a

> block, to sell it well. You have to know how to open it . . . When do you become a *cavatore* ? When you have experience.

These comments, however, illuminate another essential aspect of the hierarchy of skill; the stress placed on learning skills through practical experience. Although quarry workers emphasised individual talent and ability as a measure of suitability for particular tasks, they also recognized that these skills and abilities – except in the case of manual workers who came late to the quarry – were not fixed. The definition of a *cavatore* is predicated upon the notion of movement through the hierarchy of skill. Individual skill and the possibility of moving between categories is emblematic of the idea of work as a career; an idea which is reinforced by the notion that one's training is never completed in the quarry and that it is never possible to completely master the "art" of marble extraction. This again was a constant theme in my interviews with quarry workers. Thus a foreman with over thirty years experience in the quarries affirmed that, "I've worked for over thirty years in the quarry and I'm still not a *cavatore*".

Similarly, a *filista* asserted,

> One has never finished learning to be a *cavatore*. A *cavatore* has to continually invent, to improvise. Everyday we learn new things . . . In no other work does one feel as proud as when one is a *cavatore* . . . I would sooner go to the quarry without a leg than to the council.[15]

These men see their work as creative. They describe it as an "art" rather than a job; a career rather than an occupation. It is in terms of these definitions of work that we can argue that skill in the quarries is collective. Quarry workers thus see themselves as possessing skills which are on the one hand unique and individual and on the other collective. Men become *cavatori* through the shared expertise and training of other workers. Despite the emphasis on individual skills and expertise, an individual moves through the hierarchy of skill only by the social recognition of abilities taught to him by other workers. Quarry work is thus viewed as a collective enterprise in which all the skills necessary for marble extraction are collectively "owned" and passed down through the generations to members of a specific group – the quarry worker families. As Sabel (1982) has recently argued, this kind of apprenticeship system – together with the notion that one's technical mastery of a craft is never completed – is integral to the definition of the craft worker's world view:

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[15] "Working on the council" in Italy is, to a certain extent, synonymous with the idea of working in the public service. In other words, it is a metaphor for a job which is completely secure in the sense that it is difficult to be sacked. (This seems to have changed since my fieldwork.)

> For the young worker one implication of this lesson . . . is that his new craft collectively possesses a huge store of concrete knowledge, increased in some ways by each generation and passed by example from master workman to tyros. Another is that technical mastery is a standard by which to judge other craftsmen. Jointly they lead him to distinguish within the craft itself a hierarchy of prowess without, however, forgetting the collective origins of technical knowledge (1982: 83).

There is, however, a further sense in which the skills learnt in quarrying may be described as collective. As I have already demonstrated, the production of marble within the quarry relies upon the collective work of all categories of workers, regardless of skill. In the past particularly, the extraction of a single block of marble was possible only through the efforts of all the quarry workers, including the manual workers. Many of the tasks, especially those which required strength and brute force, were carried out by groups of workers. Like the *lizzatori*, the *uomini al masso* coordinated their efforts in manoeuvring the huge blocks of marble, heaving and pulling the ropes to chorused work chants. Even the squarers at times worked together on a single block, coordinating the movement of their chisels and hammers as they worked together to "open" a large block of marble. Similarly, the *tecchiaioli* risk their lives in making sure that the quarry is safe for everyone. Furthermore, although quarry workers differentiate themselves in terms of skill, they are all exposed to similar dangers and the mistakes of one worker have repercussions for all those working nearby. These features, together with the fact that these men are often related and live in the same village, tend to suggest that the hierarchy of skill is best described as an "egalitarian hierarchy" and quarry work as an essentially collective, rather than individual, enterprise.

What I am suggesting is that a view of work as a collective enterprise which emphasises both individual skill and talent, as well as fostering egalitarian attitudes among workers is an essential element in the cosmology of the quarry workers of Carrara; a cosmology which rests on a conscious, and almost mystical view of skill, but which simultaneously demands that all quarry workers be treated like men. Thus contrary to theories of work which argue that industrialization is inevitably accompanied by de-skilling (Braverman 1974), or alienation, (Blauner 1964) or theories which suggest that production processes based on new technology are compatible with only one kind of work place organization, I argue that work in the quarries of Carrara continues to be conceptualized and organized in terms of "craft" and "craft identity".

Other authors (Samuel 1977; Carter 1925) have similarly pointed out that mining and quarrying appear to have been occupations characterized as a craft, rather than an industrial organization, even when they comprise a large scale industry. As Campbell and Reid (1977) have suggested for the coal miners of northern Scotland and Jones (1977) for the slate quarrymen of North Wales, these occupations were characterized by values which have more in common with the independent artisan than modern industrial workers. Jones' description of the work organization of slate quarrymen, in particular, is remarkably similar to that of the marble quarry workers of Carrara, especially in its references to a hierarchy of skill. What is perhaps unique to the quarry workers of Carrara is the persistence of these attitudes and this kind of work organization, despite a long history of industrialization and more recent technological changes. Indeed, one might argue that industrialization and mechanization had little effect on work practices before the construction of roads allowed heavy machinery like bulldozers and industrial saws into the quarry itself. More recently again, skill has become more of an embattled idiom with changes to the apprenticeship system. But despite these transformations, the quarry workers resist new definitions of skill which challenge the craft identity of their occupation. As recently as 1986, a report into safety conditions within the quarry cites the hierarchical division of work into categories based on skill as a major obstacle to the reform of work practices. This report states that

> The organization of work and its hierarchical structure has not shown any evident signs of change. The general management and organization of production in the quarries does not seem any different to the traditional mode of organization and new technology has only marginally altered the production process and way of working which reflects, perhaps too much, past experience. A formal subdivision of categories remains which no longer corresponds to the reality of production. . . . Today we can no longer talk about a *filista* a *tecchiaiolo* or a *fochino* expert. These jobs today are generalized and at a much higher level and everyone has to know how to do everything in the same way (*Commissione di Analisi del settore marmo e prevenzione infortuni* 1987: 7–8).

To the chagrin of these commissioners and the despair of contemporary trade union officials, who want to redefine traditional notions of skill, quarry workers assert the opposite; not only are these categories relevant to their perceptions of work, but that individual workers cannot "do everything in the same way". In the following chapter I examine the implications of these notions of craft for other constructions of work identity.

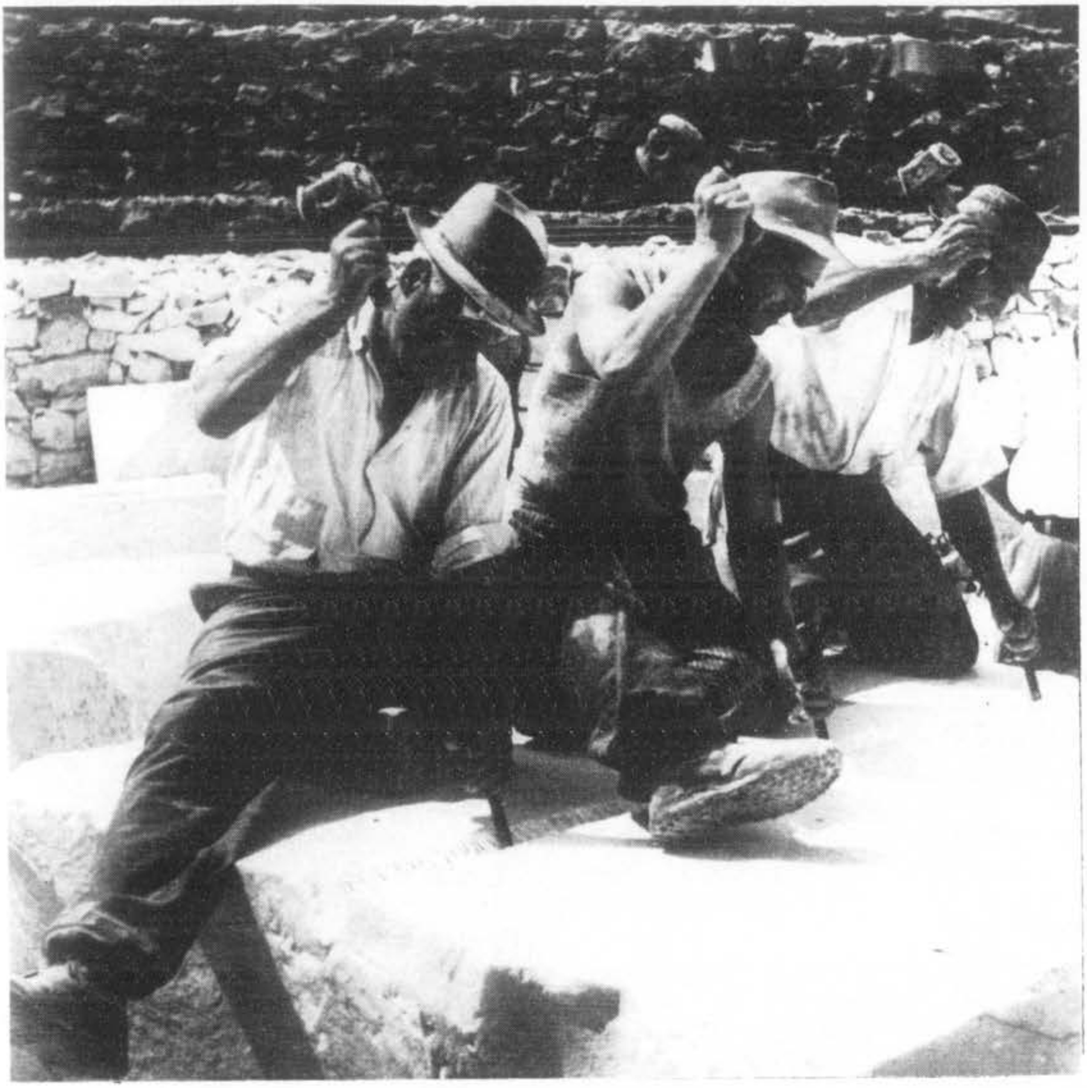

Plate 15. Squarers working together to make a *formella* (in *Il Marmo...Ieri e Oggi*, ed Società Editrice Apuana, 1970).

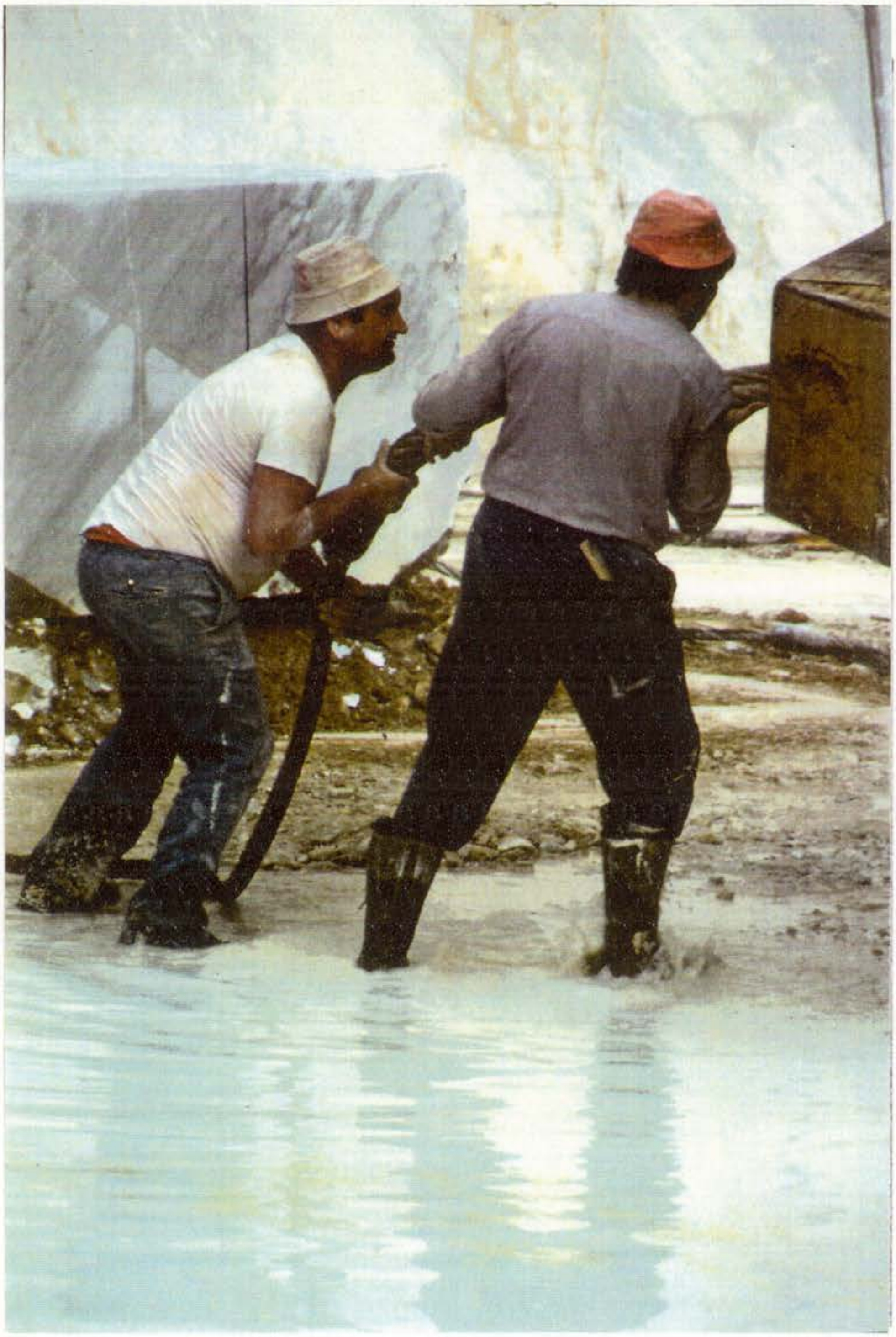

Plate 16. Andreino and "Baccalà" attaching a steel rope to a bulldozer in Polvaccio.

CHAPTER THREE

The War of Marble

QUARRY workers, like miners, occupy an ambiguous position in the history and sociology of work. In popular literature as well as scholarly accounts, miners, particularly coal miners, are often identified with the most exploitative forms of work under capitalism. For some socialist writers especially, miners have been represented as archetypal proletarians; the precursors of modern factory workers, working in appalling and dangerous conditions, pitching their bodies and muscles against a hostile and filthy environment, the mine. In describing his journey "Down the Mine", Orwell (1958) iterates some familiar themes.

> When you go down a coal-mine it is important to try and get to the coal face when the "fillers" are at work . . . The time to go there is when the machines are roaring and the air is black with coal dust, and when you can actually see what the miners have to do. At those times the place is like hell, or at any rate like my own mental picture of hell. Most of the things one imagines in hell are there – heat, noise, confusion, darkness, foul air, and, above all, unbearably cramped space. Everything except the fire . . . It is impossible to watch the "fillers" at work without feeling a pang of envy for their toughness . . . They really do look like iron – hammered iron statues – under the smooth coat of coal dust which clings to them from head to foot . . . nearly all of them have the most noble bodies; wide shoulders tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinewy thighs, with not an ounce of waste flesh anywhere. In the hotter mines they wear only a pair of thin drawers, clogs and knee-pads; in the hottest mines of all, only the clogs and knee-pads. . . . Watching coal-miners at work, you realize momentarily what different universes people inhabit. Down there where coal is dug is a sort of world apart which one can quite easily go through life without ever hearing about . . . More than anyone else, perhaps, the miner can stand as the type of the manual

> worker, not only because his work is so exaggeratedly awful, but also because it is so vitally necessary and yet so remote from our experience, so invisible, as it were, that we are capable of forgetting it as we forget the blood in our veins (1958: 34-45).

In this piece, Orwell, like other observers, dwells on the separation of coal miners from the superficial everyday world and the extremely unpleasant conditions of their work. According to these accounts, coal miners inhabit a world apart from ordinary mortals, buried alive beneath the surface of the earth; a world in which filth, heat, and darkness are counterpoised by a fascination with muscular strength, nakedness and an admiration for physical fortitude. Although invisible, miners are ennobled through their work, symbolically representing proletarian endurance in the face of unrelenting capitalist exploitation.

In other historical descriptions, as Metcalfe (1990) has recently observed, rather than being ennobled through their work, miners have been viewed as less than fully human: bestial, immature, immoral and sick. In Metcalfe's compelling analysis, this dual image of miners as on the one hand the apotheosis of proletarianism and on the other quintessential bestiality, reflects the iconographic status miners as a group have acquired in the history of capitalism. Associated with hard manual labour, working underground in difficult and dirty conditions – in darkness rather than light – miners have been singled out as a race apart from other wage labourers, alternately despised and held in awe; morally marginal and symbolically central precisely because they represented the proletarian essence, embodying, "the profane against which the bourgeoisie could define and seek the supremacy of its own moral order" (1990: 53).The miner's iconographic status can thus be likened to other figures analysed by Michael Taussig (1984).

> Hated and feared, objects to be despised, yet also of awe, the reified essence of evil in the very being of their bodies, these figures of the Jew, the black, the Indian and woman herself, are clearly objects of cultural construction, the leaden keel of evil and mystery stabilising the ship and course that is Western history (1984: 470).

But if, as Metcalfe (1990: 56) argues, the ritual denigration of the coal miner has been "a major means by which the bourgeoisie has culturally constituted capitalism as a natural order and the proletariat as a naturally inferior and dangerous segment of the population", labour historians, socialists and sociologists of work have also consistently characterized miners in terms of contradictory stereotypes. Miners and mining communities have been represented in the sociological literature on work both as models for working class militancy, and as examples par excellence of working class conservatism.

This dichotomy reappears in much of the historical literature which has tended to view miners, especially colliers, as either the "original and quintessential proletarians" (Harrison 1978: 2), or as craft workers linked to pre-capitalist forms of production embodying the inherently conservative values of inward-looking communities and corporate, rather than industrial, unionism. Oscillation between these two views of miners as either "archetypal proletarians" or "aristocrats of labour", as "the heroes or villains" of the working class (Metcalfe 1990: 47), reveals more, I suggest, about the theoretical concerns of labour historians – in particular a certain teleological depiction of work in industrial societies as inevitably alienating and divorced from nature and the material world – than the concerns of miners themselves.[1] Moreover, as Samuel (1977: 3) observes, fascination with coal miners as exemplars of the mining industry has often precluded an interest in other kinds of mineral workers, including quarry workers, who are perhaps less easily assimilated to the expectations of this kind of polarized view.

In all these accounts of miners and mining little has been said about the miners' experience of work or their relationship to the natural world. Like other categories of workers who are engaged in hard physical labour, miners are often assumed to be as alienated from their work as they are from the products of their labour. The mine itself, as I have already noted, is often viewed as a hostile place in which miners daily risk injury and death in conditions over which they have little control. In this chapter I examine the veracity of these claims for the quarry workers of Carrara who, despite their incorporation within a capitalist mode of production, albeit idiosyncratically, retain a large degree of control over their work and the production of marble. In examining the everyday work language used in the quarry and the generation of practical knowledge as well as the construction of gender identity at work, I will argue that the quarry workers of Carrara are not necessarily alienated from their immediate work environment but rather construct identities through work; identities which embody an active rather than a passive interpretation of their effect on the natural world. Implicit in my argument is a critique of the ways in which work and specific categories of workers have been theorised as embodiments of static and undifferentiated stereotypes; stereotypes which not only do not take into account the wide diversity of work within capitalism, or any other mode of production, but which also display an ethnocentric vision of the history and development of capitalism itself. It is also a critique of the tendency in theorising work to avoid any account of the subjective experience of work and the construction of meaning by and for workers themselves. Work is not only meaningful for the *cavatori* of Carrara, but the work experience itself constructs this meaning.

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[1] See especially labour process theorists such as Harry Braverman (1974) who, links the growth of capitalism to the introduction of scientific management, mass production technology and the development of an inevitable division between professional classes of "mental" workers and an increasingly alienated class of manual workers robbed of their former craft skills. For a fascinating and insightful discussion of the problem of dealing with the nature of craft work and the politics and aesthetics of artisanal identities in an industrial setting, see Dorinne Kondo's (1990) recent ethnography on work in a contemporary Japanese sweet business.

SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

In the previous chapter I argued that quarry workers define their work as an "art" rather than a job; an "art" which emphasises both collective and individual skills learnt through practical experience in the quarries and passed down through the generations of quarry worker families. In interviews, quarry workers often accentuated the creative aspects and intrinsic satisfactions of their work. Working in the quarry was repeatedly contrasted with working in a factory where, they asserted, you are a "robot", a "number". The quarry, on the other hand, was "like working in a family" where you are an "individual" and a "man". One factory worker living in Gragnana, an ex-quarry foreman, expressed his nostalgia for the quarry, suggesting that

> There was satisfaction in the job. At the end of the day you had something to show for the hours you had worked. You had created something, even if that were only a block of marble.

While on other occasions quarry workers sometimes contradicted this view, noting the more tiresome aspects of their occupation, they never described it as completely alienating.[2] These notions of work satisfaction are obviously linked to the craft character of quarry work and, more importantly, to notions of craft control. Like the print workers of Cockburn's study (1983: 54), the quarry workers of Carrara have "a sense of knowing best: not only knowing better than an outsider, but knowing better than their supervisors and managers, how to obtain (or impede) production".

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[2] The fact that quarry workers described their work in contradictory ways is not surprising. As Kondo (1990) has so forcefully argued, work identities, like other identities are not fixed and immutable categories of cultural or social analysis. Collective identities are not fixed essences but "strategic assertions, which inevitably suppress differences, tensions and contradictions within" (1990:10). In my attempt to provide a coherent exegesis of the craft nature of quarry work and a collective portrayal of work identity, I am perhaps guilty of her critique that "selves which are coherent, seamless, bounded and whole are illusions" (1990:14). At the same time these generalizations are the result of numerous conversations and interviews with quarry workers. It is obviously important to bear in mind that these work narratives are contextual. In other words the very act of narration is itself a creative exercise in which my own interaction as a female fieldworker played a part. Like Kondo, I found these descriptions of work as creative especially compelling although, as a female researcher, I was perhaps privileged with particular narrative versions which emphasised the empowering, rather than demeaning, aspects of quarry work.

In the quarries, this practical knowledge generated through the direct experience of work is contrasted to scientific expertise. As experts in what they consider to be the "art" of marble extraction, quarry workers remain highly sceptical about the notion that schooled intelligence is superior to practical expertise. This is clearly manifest in their resistance to the interventions of scientifically-trained personnel – geologists, engineers and health and safety officers – who have certain legal responsibilities in overseeing production within the quarries. Engineers are singled out for ridicule, not only because quarry workers are contemptuous of their judgements about the best way to proceed with excavation, but because engineers are often perceived as corrupt and susceptible to bribes from some employers concerned more with speeding up production than with safety issues. Health and safety personnel are similarly held in low regard, not necessarily because they are unconcerned with workers' interests, but more often because their recommendations conflict with quarry worker's own interpretations of safety and work practice. These kinds of conflicts – between a perception of the world based on scientific versus practical training and the power relationship this distinction implies – are a reflection of the strongly embedded craft characteristics of quarry work; craft characteristics which essentially rely upon a precarious combination of manipulative skill and practical training requiring both intelligence and experience. The resulting work practices and "knacks" of the trade, as well as a knowledge of the stone and the quarry itself are not easily communicable to outside experts or others who are unfamiliar with these methods and the idiosyncratic language of quarry work and who are rarely exposed to the injuries which occur due to their own procedural misjudgements.[3]

During my excursions to the quarries, workers delighted in parodying the engineers, ridiculing both their knowledge of marble and their lack of practical expertise. Like other "outside" experts, the engineers visit the quarries infrequently, often only during an annual inspection. In discrediting the engineers' assessments of the manner in which excavation should proceed, quarry workers emphasised both their lack of contact with the quarry and their reticence to physically enter the more dangerous sections of the quarry. The sensual experience of work embodied in the everyday practices of quarry work defines this practical knowledge; a kind of knowledge where visual and audible references to the stone and the mountain can be read as metaphors of work identity and counterpoised by more scientific and technical appraisals of the work process in which engineers appear as disembodied and uninvolved adversaries. These themes – highlighted in the following conversation between four *cavatori* – were reiterated on countless other occasions during conversations with other quarry workers about their work.[4]

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[3] In an interesting article entitled *Skills, Coal and British Industry in the Eighteenth Century* , Harris (1976) explains the paradoxical lack of technological literature in the coal industry during a period of rapid industrial invention and innovation in terms of the difficulties involved in translating these "knacks" and craft techniques into familiar scientific language. He argues that the dearth of such literature in Britain has led to a biased reading of technological progress in the period immediately following the industrial revolution for "Contemporaries found it easier to convey in print the nature of mechanical invention, as in the textile industry, than they did the operation of furnaces, the nuances of empirical metallurgy, the making of refractories or even the cutting of coal" (1976:181).

> Ri: If an engineer came into the quarry today and saw the mountain as it stands, what would he see?
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> Ro: He's a layman in the subject.
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> Ri: Let's not talk about preventing accidents but when the engineer comes here does he know the mountain? Perhaps he knows the material from which it is made but he doesn't see the mountain. Why? Because we're the sort of people who know the mountain so well we can look through it. Engineers come up here and get lost.
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> Ro: The *cavatore* is born a *cavatore* and only he can get results. Technical knowledge is of no use. The *cavatore* lives by practical work and whatever he does he does to perfection because he was born a *cavatore* by instinct. We were born in the quarries of Carrara. We've worked here from generation to generation. It's in our blood. See that youngster there. He was a mechanic . . . You may wonder why he became a *cavatore* He was a mechanic. The fact is that he grew up in this environment . . . in the quarries. He's heard his parents, friends, relatives and grandparents talk about the quarries and it's as if he's always known them. I don't know why and it's irrelevant but he works in the quarries . . .
>
> Ri: What if you are working in the quarry and an engineer comes along and asks you to work with him. You go with him and then he says: "I want you to cut it like this". You know he's wrong, but what do you do?
>
> Cain: I say you are the engineer of your interests but I am foreman.

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[4] I am very much indebted to a local sculptor and photographer, Dominic Stroobart, for alerting me to these themes. This conversation is translated from the catalogue of an exhibition he prepared for the Venice Biennale in the late 1970s called *Behind these Stones*.

> Ig: These days the engineer drives to work in a jeep. Before they had to walk up here on their own . . . These days the engineers meet the boss and the boss buys out the engineer.[5]

In the marble quarries these notions of skill and practical expertise are linked to ideas of work autonomy and control. Quarry workers believe their own knowledge of marble and quarrying is superior to that of scientifically trained experts and resist their interventions in the quarry just as they resist other encroachments on craft control.

There is, however, yet another dimension to the way in which practical knowledge is opposed to scientific knowledge. This emerges in the context of the relationship of quarry workers to the natural environment. For contrary to many other accounts of miners and mining which, as I suggested above, depict the work environment as a hostile and alienating place, the quarry workers of Carrara strongly identify with their work environment; an identification which, I argue, reflects their relative autonomy and control of their immediate work conditions. This relationship is most clearly illustrated through an exploration of the everyday work language used in the quarries and quarry workers' own theories on the formation of marble.

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[5] This distinction between practical and scientific expertise in the quarries is also reiterated outside the work place in popular literature and in fictionalised accounts of work in the quarries. One account worth quoting here for its similarity to the conversation I have reported above, comes from a recent quasi autobiographical novel written by a local author, who narrates the story of a man called Mario. Immediately after the 1939-45 war, Mario works briefly in a quarry near Carrara. In the following passage Mario asks another quarry worker, Tonino, how things are going at work. "Like always. Every three or four days the boss arrives with the surveyor. Those idiots think you can find marble with a line and a compass. You need a lot more. You need the nose of a good truffle finding dog to uncover a good seam of marble. Only then is it worthwhile organizing a huge explosion like the one at Fantiscritti where they found all that beautiful marble. How did the Romans get the marble out? They didn't have surveyors or those other people who say they understand the earth and can tell you what lies beneath the stones. The old *cavatori* dug and sweated like the dammed, but they always managed to find marble in the end. How long have our mountains been like this? I tell you there's nothing you can do to find marble. You need the old *cavatori* : they can take a piece of stone, look at it, hold it in their hand and then they say, "That's it. Put the explosives over there." Today they want to go all modern and they go around with all these instruments that serve no real purpose in the quarry. You know how much marble they got out of that explosion in Fantiscritti, the one organized by that old fox, Cantoni from Bedizzano? Eight thousand tons! My god! . . . And then the boss says, 'There's no more marble left. The markets are slow, the marble has run out, the quarry is too much of a liability and we're going to close and you poor workers are going to have to lose your jobs.' Bastards! . . . meanwhile they make millions and we're left with the crumbs" (Storti 1987:142).

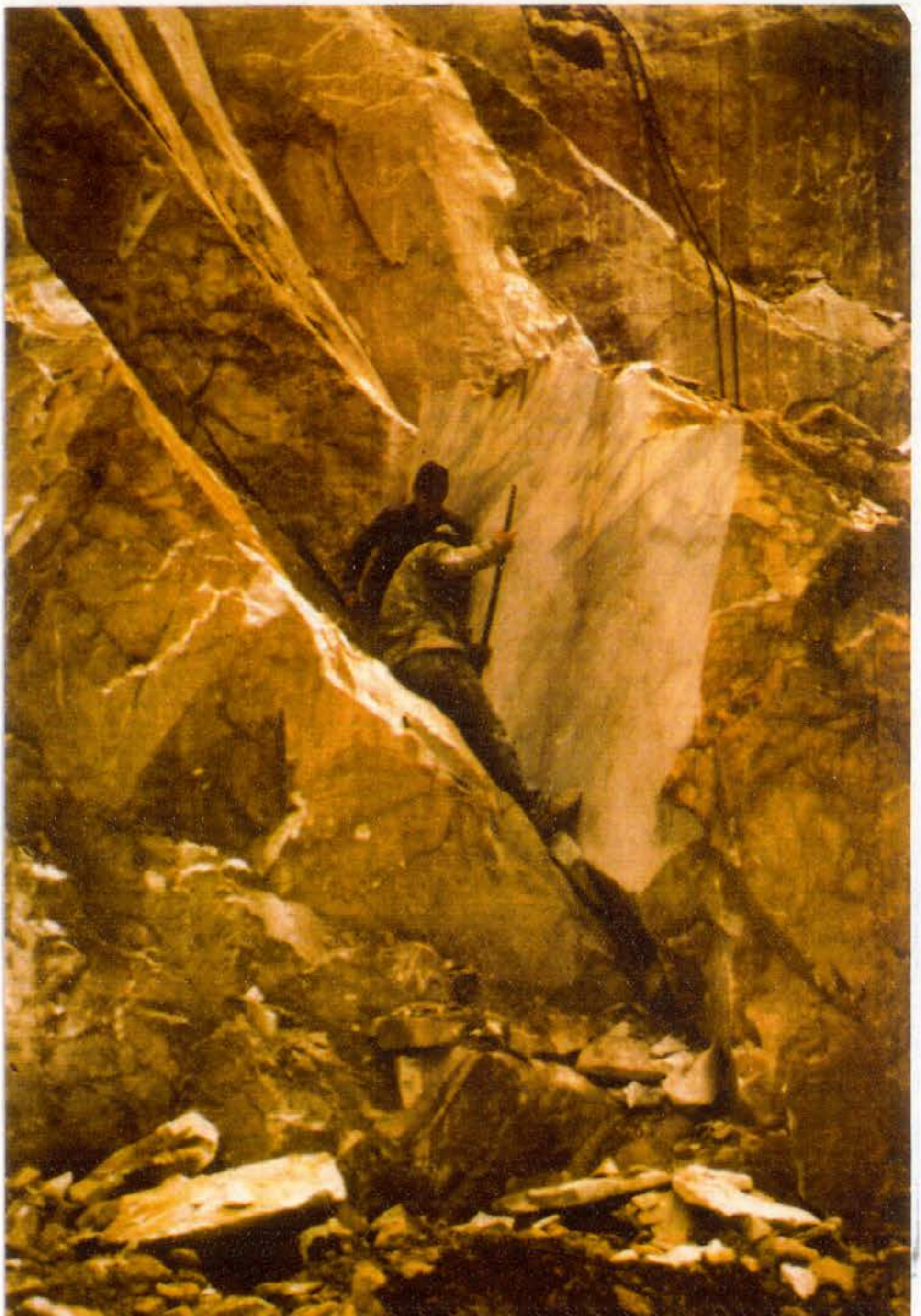

Plate 17. Elio and Alberto working on a "difficult" block in Calacata.

THEORIES OF METAMORPHOSIS

In his seminal work on the origins and history of alchemy, Eliade (1978) demonstrates that in the medieval period and perhaps earlier, the earth, or at least the subterranean world, was conceptualized as a mirror image of the surface, in a constant state of growth and transformation. Ores and other precious stones were not only associated with various magico-religious properties; they were also seen as living and reproducing in much the same way as plants or animals. Ores were metaphorically likened to embryos which, if left untouched in the earth, would eventually metamorphose into "ripe" metal or gold. These theories underpinned the efforts of early alchemists to speed up this natural process of organic transformation and to turn all ores into gold. Eliade argues that pre-industrial metallurgy was similarly likened to a subterranean form of agriculture, which sustained life by giving humans a feeling of confidence and pride through their ability to transform the natural world. Rituals such as animal sacrifice, which often accompanied the opening up of new mines, and the many myths surrounding mines and mountains were, according to Eliade (1978: 57), "multiple manifestations of the sacred presence which is affronted by those who penetrate the geological strata of life".[6]

In the early days of fieldwork I was struck by the way people in Carrara, particularly the quarry workers, talked about the quarries as living entities. I do not mean that they held mystical notions about the quarries, but rather that they referred to the production of marble in agricultural terms and to marble as a material which grows. The marble quarries are known as *agri marmiferi* or "marble fields" and like other fields are "cultivated". The cultivation of a quarry, like farming, requires good management practices and more importantly a knowledge of how to locate new supplies of marble. Although specific quarries may become unprofitable when the most obvious seams of marble are depleted, marble itself is viewed as an unlimited resource. One comment from a quarry worker clearly illustrates this point. When asked about what would happen to the marble workers when the supplies of marble ran out, a question which most visitors to the area immediately ask, he replied incredulously, "Where will the fishermen go when the sea runs dry"? Given the huge quantity of marble at Carrara and the industry's long history, it is perhaps not surprising that quarry workers assume that marble is an infinite resource. What is more surprising is that they think of marble as replenishing itself; as growing.

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[6] Eliade proceeds to draw a symbolic analogy between obstetrics and mining, where the mine symbolises the uterus, the mine shaft the vagina and the miner an obstetrician. Leaving aside his less than convincing analogy between female anatomy and mining, Eliade's image of the miner as an obstetrician is nonetheless illuminating and powerful, metaphorically capturing, I believe, an essential element of the way in which many modern miners or quarry workers conceptualize their relationship to the natural world; a world which they perceive as a living and "organic" environment in a constant state of transformation.

Although quarry workers are familiar with the notion of metamorphosis as the scientific explanation for the formation of marble, their conceptualization of the metamorphic process, especially the time scale involved, diverges radically from contemporary geological discourse. For while the metamorphic process logically contains a sense of growth or, rather transformation, these changes occur within an immense time frame and are observable only through archaeological and geological investigation. In contrast, quarry workers refer to marble as a renewable resource which grows relatively rapidly in a manner which is discernible in their everyday work practice. While not explicitly articulated, these ideas on the growth of marble and its regenerative characteristics emerge implicitly in the work language of the quarry, as well as in various "indigenous" theories on the formation of marble. These theories, manifested in work practice and language, form part of the general body of practical knowledge which constructs identity at work; an identity which is predicated not upon a sense of indivisibility of person with nature but an understanding, albeit different to that of scientific experts, which allows quarry workers to transcend nature and ultimately transform it. It is in this sense that quarry workers perceive themselves as substantially in control of their work environment.

Pliny provides the first reference to these indigenous theories on the formation of marble. In *Natural History*, he reports that

> Among the many marvels of Italy itself is one for which the accomplished natural scientist Papirius Fabianus vouches, namely that marble actually grows in its quarries and the quarry men moreover assert that the scars on the mountain side fill up of their own accord . . . If this is true then there is reason to hope that there will always be sufficient marble to satisfy the demands of luxury (Book XXXVI).

Centuries later Repetti, an Italian 19th century natural historian, again refers to these ideas. He quotes Gautieri, an earlier traveller to Carrara, who wrote:

> . . . the quarry workers can't understand those who don't see the mountains move and who think they are inert. They believe . . . that the mountains are constantly moving, producing secretions and excreting substances and like other organic bodies are in a perpetual state of destruction and reproduction (1820: 38).

Obviously fascinated, Repetti added:

> The marble workers like other mineral workers have their own language which natural scientists should try to understand and utilize. Although they know nothing about physics or chemistry, the marble workers at Carrara say

> that marble isn't purged just like miners who say the mud isn't mature. Chemistry and metallurgy still haven't invented equivalent expressions to explain phenomena which are still part of nature's mysteries (1820: 39).

At a time when contemporary Italian geologists were still debating the process of metamorphosis and attempting to explain the peculiar features of marble in particular – a time in which the regimes of scientific discourse had not entirely succeeded in replacing other systems of knowledge – the idea that marble purified itself through a gradual process of purgation and separation of pure from impure materials, presented a view of metamorphosis which natural scientists found difficult to rebut in terms of any other contemporary scientific theory.

Like the early alchemists, quarry workers obviously believed that marble within the mountain was in a constant state of transformation and that all marble eventually rid itself of impurities, forming the highly prized white and translucent marble called *statuario* or, more euphemistically, "white gold". The formation of *statuario* depended upon the presence of a large vein of greyish-yellow material still known in the quarries today as the *madre macchia*, or "mother vein". The quarry workers believed that this large vein of impure metallic material gradually drew out all the impurities from the surrounding marble; a process which reduced the size and quantity of other veins and imperfections and eventually resulted in pure white *statuario* marble. As an example of this process, Repetti quotes the case of a pile of dirty wax-coloured marble which, after being left for a long period in the quarry, had apparently transformed itself into "beautiful, fresh, purged and white marble, equal to the highest quality of *statuario*" (1820: 39). These theories, based on empirical experience and observation, provided a coherent explanation for the huge variety of marble within any one quarry and were also used to predict the location of new supplies of *statuario*. When these predictions failed, quarry workers would merely assume, according to Repetti, that "the *madre macchia* wasn't good enough or that the purging process was not yet completed and without any hesitation would suggest that in time the marble would purge itself of all impurities" (1820: 37).

Some other contemporary Italian geologists, such as Savi (1847), incorporated this theory of purgation into their own accounts of metamorphosis and the formation of marble.[7] Others like de Stefani (1884) argued that the different qualities and variety of marble were due entirely the way in which marble was originally deposited during metamorphosis and that the theory of purgation was completely extraneous to this process. Zaccagna, who later became the principal authority on the geological formation of the Apuane region, concluded that while the purity of the *statuario* marble could be traced to the purity of the original deposit, during metamorphosis there must have also been some process of separation of pure from impure material. According to Zaccagna (1932: 187-88), the *madre macchia*, like other layers of metallic material, may have had some role in this process together with other factors. Thus, by the early 20th century, Italian geologists, like their European and British contemporaries, agreed that the peculiar features of marble were principally the result of changes ocurring during metamorphosis and that marble, like other similar material, was deposited in layers with various impurities which were simply the result of that process.

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[7] In the light of Eliade's observations on pre-industrial perceptions of metallurgy, it is interesting to note Repetti's rationalization of this process of purification. In pondering the mechanics of crystallization and noting these empirical theories of purgation, Repetti reproduces a conceptualization of the earth as a mirror image of the surface remarking that "If one reflects on the roots and the branches of trees which grow increasingly finely in proportion to the size of the trunk and which provide the tree with all the nutrition it needs from the air and the soil; if one also

But while geologists debated these theories amongst themselves, the *cavatori* of Carrara remained adamant that marble was an organic material which continued to purify itself from one day to the next. While contemporary quarry workers know and accept the scientific explanations of the formation of marble and metamorphosis, they also insist on the organic properties of marble and its propensity to change and grow. In other words, modern scientific explanations of metamorphosis coexist with other theories generated and verified through practical and historical experience of work in the quarries, and utilized in everyday work practice.

WORK LANGUAGE IN THE QUARRIES OF CARRARA

An active use of a rich vocabulary of words and expressions describing every aspect of marble demonstrates the implementation of practical knowledge and the sense of affinity between quarry workers and their work environment. One of the distinguishing features of marble, as I have already noted, is its qualitative diversity. Large sections of broken material separate solid layers of marble which are in turn marked by various faults, alternately hindering or aiding workers during excavation. Like wood, marble has "knots" and "grains", or in the language of the quarry, *peli*, the fine lines which criss-cross the marble blocks at irregular intervals. The section

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considers how the blood and humours in the bodies of animals flow from the fine and subtle veins eventually meeting in one large vessel; similarly if one notices how the surface of the earth is covered by small streams which feed into larger rivers and eventually flow into the sea, then it is easy to see how the hypothesis explained above demonstrates the harmony of nature in its three realms" (1820:113).

of marble which runs against the "grain", or in other words parallel to the sedimentary layers is called *contro*, whereas the side following the "grain" running along the sedimentary layers is known as *verso*. Other lines, known as *peli del secondo*, run across the block of marble parallel to the inclination of the mountain. While older quarry workers easily recognize the *verso*, *contro* and *secondo* in any block of marble, even after it has been cut from the mountain, younger workers, unfamiliar with previous technologies, as well as "outsiders" like myself have much more difficulty. Hidden faults, or those faults which are either invisible or created after the block of marble has been cut are known as *peli nemici* or "enemy faults". As the name implies, these are the faults which often cause injury, especially if they develop when quarry workers are working close to the stone.

Quarry workers are also familiar with every small imperfection within the stone. The small quartz particles which shimmer in the rock face are called *luzca*, whereas larger pieces or nuggets of quartz are known as *focchaia*. Holes perforating the marble producing a honeycomb effect are termed *tarogli*. Small sections of loose stone and rock stuck together within the marble are *colloticcio* ; the seams of broken material separating the seams of more solid marble are known as *linea di finamento*. Quarry workers also distinguish between the different crystalline structure or "grain" of marble and its translucent qualities. Marble which breaks easily like "glass" is thought of as being more "alive" or as having greater *vivezza*. This marble is often termed "glass" or "bell", due to the sound it makes when hit with metal instruments. Certain terms used in the quarry to describe the properties of marble are anthropomorphic. Marble "sings" and has "nerves" which make it strong. It "sleeps" and "wakes" and is sometimes described as containing an *anima* or "soul". Recently excavated marble is *fresco*, or "fresh", while marble which lies for a long while in the quarry is known as *posato*, or "rested". This terminology, the patrimony of generations of *cavatori*, reflects the extraordinary degree of practical knowledge developed in the course of working in the quarry; a knowledge which is also the product of previous hand technologies and used by quarry workers in facilitating their work and avoiding accidents. It reflects as well, the deep sense of affiliation quarry workers have developed with the quarry itself; an affiliation on which their material and physical lives depend and which generates both meaning and a sense of identity.

This work language also expresses notions of the growth and the organic characteristics of marble. Quarry workers point to the numerous white and yellow markings in the marble at Carrara, called respectively *biancherini* or "white fish", and *calamari* or *gamberoni*, or "big prawns", as evidence of the organic origins of marble. Like the abundant shell and animal fossils unearthed during the work process, in the view of the quarry workers, these coloured markings indicate the presence of fish trapped in the rock face as marble was being formed. But like their predecessors, present day quarry workers also attribute discoveries of Roman workings in the quarries to the propensity of marble to grow.

As indicated above, marble which is extracted from the mountain is thought of as having different properties to that which is still "attached". This marble is called "cooked" as it solidifies the longer it is left in the quarry. Uncut marble within the quarry also transforms itself either autonomously or in reaction to the quarry workers' interventions. One worker's explanation of the qualitative diversity of marble in the quarry illuminates this concept. "The mountain", he suggested,

> moves. It recreates itself. Some quarries however move while others grow. You can see the way they grow by how much the marble is broken at the bottom. It gets more solid at the top. So it must be growing from the bottom to the top. If you lighten the load at the top some quarries solidify at the bottom.

Although all quarries, like the mountains themselves, are thought of as being in a constant state of motion, as solidifying, growing and breaking, it is in the context of conversations concerning danger at work that this movement is most frequently articulated. Marble workers, like other miners, are highly sensitized and attuned to minute transformations in the rock face and to the sounds which predict rock-falls and cracking. As they watch and listen for these movements and noises, they refer to the mountain as being "awake", as "never sleeping". They suggest that "the weight never sleeps"; in other words that large sections of cut marble, often leaning at dangerous angles into the quarry, may break at any moment. By cutting off prominent overhangs, quarry workers assert that they are "putting the mountain to rest"; counteracting the mountain's reaction to their own interventions. Sudden rock-falls ocurring during the early hours of the morning or in the late afternoon are explained in terms of the mountain "strengthening itself" against the assaults of the previous day.

The ability to discern these movements and shifts in marble and the rock face depends upon the quarry workers' sensitivity to their work environment; a work environment which is metaphorically and materially conceptualized as a battle ground between an animate natural enemy, the mountain, and human agency in the form of the quarry workers who attempt to control its excesses. While on the one hand quarry workers often assert that they are able to "defend themselves from the machinery", they also readily admit that they are unable to completely "defend themselves from the mountain", which is perceived as continually reinforcing itself in reaction to the daily attacks made by quarry workers themselves. As my neighbour, Elio, succinctly stated,

> Accidents are inevitable. We attack the mountain here and there. It's useless. One day it will avenge itself falling on top of you.

Similarly, another worker commented that

> Accidents happen because we annoy the mountain. The mountain reacts! It makes a noise like a living person. The mountain wants its share.

Like soldiers at war, the quarry workers express respect for their opponent, the mountain and the quarry; a respect based on perceptions of both material and physical vulnerability and ultimately their dependence on the material with which they work. Alberto, another neighbour, explicitly asserted that

> You have to respect the mountain like you respect the person in the street. We talk to the blocks of marble. It's our bread and butter. We have to look after it.

As the conversation turned to the impact of new technology, he added:

> The quarry is sometimes offended. We offend the quarry. Every cut to the mountain is an offence because the mountain is not fully metamorphosed. It already has a lot of defects. Every cut is an extra defect.

Work language in the quarry thus implicitly suggests an ambivalent relationship between quarry workers and their work environment where respect and a sense of affiliation are counterpoised with notions of vulnerability and dependence. To further illustrate this point it is worth quoting part of another discussion concerning accidents at work which reveals this ambiguity. Speaking passionately about the quarry, Alberto asked rhetorically,

> What is the quarry? It's the mountain. It's nature. You shouldn't try and change nature. We're like a lot of rats scaling away. Eventually it moves.

Later, however, he asked again,

> What is the quarry? It's not really nature. Slowly , slowly it moves. It pushes. The mountain is a traitor. It never tells you precisely when it's going to move but I suppose that's natural. If you attack it, if you push it, you see it moves. He moves when he wants to. We shouldn't try and attack the mountain. We should leave it be.

This metaphorical representation of the mountain as a "traitor", the most insidious of all enemies, encapsulates succinctly this sense of vulnerability and dependence which emerges in all conversations about work in the quarry. During this same discussion I asked my neighbour whether he had been afraid to return to work after a serious accident. He replied with characteristic stoicism,

> No, it's like any other job. You get used to it.

But later he admitted that

> On the other hand where could I possibly go? Who would take me?

But despite their vulnerability, quarry workers also attempt to assert control over the material with which they work. Not fully metamorphosed, the mountain continually recreates itself, threatening to engulf those workers who stoically endure its betrayal and defend themselves against its most catastrophic ravages. The essential element in this resistance is their own skill and expertise. Fortified by their extensive knowledge of the mountain and the quarry and empowered by their control of technology, quarry workers view themselves as agents in the transformation of the natural world. As the mountains are gradually eroded, the quarry workers experience a sense of their own power and control; a control over the landscape itself which is shaped and moulded through human rather than natural intervention. An evocative vocabulary of military imagery and metaphor expresses this aspect of work identity. Hence quarry workers "do battle" with the mountain; they "argue" and"fight" with marble that refuses easy extraction. As one worker suggested during a strike meeting after a series of fatal accidents

> When we go to work it's as if we are at war . . . In the quarries we're in the trenches . . . The marble of Carrara is not white. It's red, tinted with the colour of blood.

In the quarries, this metaphor of war evokes the experience of work. The marble mountain, referred to as the "killing mountain", inscribes images of body mutilation and death. But while it may be a hostile environment, the quarry is also the arena in which quarry workers construct work identities defined primarily by a notion of craft control. In this "war of marble", quarry workers thus utilize practical skills and an extensive knowledge of marble to simultaneously transform the mountain, and to defend themselves against its possible retaliation – injuries and death.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

In a provocative essay on shop floor culture, Paul Willis (1980) reminds us of the experiential dimension of work, noting that

> Excruciating noise is probably the most unpleasant sensual concomitant of industrial work. Its invocation serves to remind, even those who pride

> themselves of their penetration on the consumer-egalitarian liberal mythology, that not only are commodities produced under specific and determinate social conditions, but also that they are produced under specific and determinate experiential conditions (1980: 185).

Although work is often viewed as the most transparent facet of human experience, Willis argues that an analysis of the experience of work should be central to our understanding of modern industrial culture. Culture in this sense is understood as the practices of everyday life which produce the commonplace understandings, feelings and responses essential to social life. For Willis therefore, work is a central cultural activity not only because it constructs these meanings so integral to everyday life, but also because it is an important site for the articulation of gender.

These comments serve to illuminate a paradoxical lacuna in the sociology of work. For despite a burgeoning literature on the construction of masculinity, particularly since the 1970s (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985), there has been only a cursory and fragmentary attempt to understand the connections between work and the construction of masculinity. While some studies are exemplary, particularly for their observations and theorising of masculinity and technology (Cockburn 1983, 1986,1985; Game and Pringle 1983), very little work has been done on men's gender consciousness (Tolson 1977; Willis 1979; Buchbinder 1987; Kaufman 1987) and even less on gender consciousness at work (Livingstone and Luxton 1989; Willis 1980). The most obvious reason for this dearth of literature is that theorists of work have been primarily concerned with models of working class consciousness not with the subjective experience of work and furthermore, the connection between masculinity and manual work in particular, appears so obvious that it requires little comment.

Recently, however, some attention has been directed to exploring this issue. Arguing from the perspective of labour process theory, which continues to dominate contemporary debates about work, West (1990) asserts that gender is integral to the culture and meaning of work, influencing not only the sexual division of labour but also such things as the social construction of skill. She argues that gender is, "materially embodied in the texture of work itself, in work relations and in the on-going practices of exclusion within the work place " (1990: 267). Gender, in other words, is inscribed in the everyday practices of life, including work practices, and as Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 590) also note, while masculinity is concerned with power and the subordination of women, it is also about collective practices, including work place practices, and the institutional acknowledgement of those practices.

This section draws on some of this literature on masculinity and work especially where it pertains to the construction of masculinity in the marble quarries of Carrara. My concern is to illustrate how masculinity is socially constructed, materially embodied at work, and utilized as a cultural idiom of maturity and self-realization which reinforces notions of craft identity and control.

The mining industry, as Bradley (1989: 114) has recently observed, is a paradigmatic case of gender-based worked segregation and a gendered work culture. Not only has the mining industry presented an archetypal model for working class family life, emphasising the role of the male breadwinner and female housewife, it has also established the boundaries for the kind of work which is popularly defined as exclusively male: dirty, dangerous, strenuous and demanding a sense of male camaraderie which it is assumed could never be achieved in a mixed sex environment.

Until the legislation of 1842 which excluded women from mining in England, the main female tasks in coal mines were concerned with the transport of coals. Women worked as "hurriers", "drawers" and "putters", dragging and pushing trucks or *coves* of coal. In Scotland, women were similarly engaged as "bearers", carrying coal in baskets, and in Wales they were "windlass" women, winding coals to the surface. Women were also employed in aspects of facework, unloading, weighing and sorting through coals or operating pumps. Similarly, in tin, lead, copper and zinc mines, women worked at dressing the ores, washing, sieving and sorting or wheeling wheelbarrows around the mine sites (Bradley 1989: 104). In the Bolivian tin mines, some women work as *palliris*, pulverizing ore and selecting out the metal but rarely enter the mine itself (Nash 1979: 13). In all cultures, except in crises like wars when men are deflected into the army, women have been excluded from the skilled jobs in mining, despite the obvious fact that many of their less-skilled tasks also required considerable strength and endurance.

In Carrara, male and female roles are similarly dichotomised. Although some women in past generations were engaged in carrying bags of sand to the quarries or in repairing the access roads, they were never employed directly in the skilled tasks of marble extraction. As I elaborate in chapter five, while the female contribution to the domestic economy was extremely important, work within the marble industry, particularly the quarries, was regarded by women and men alike as an exclusively male preserve.

In the previous chapter I foreshadowed some of the contributing factors in the socialization of young boys into this male work culture. I argued that entry into wage work is a significant rite of passage symbolising and articulating the sense of "becoming a man".[8] The wage packet itself, as Willis (1980) has argued, is fetishised in many working class communities and its association with masculinity effectively adds to the devaluation of female contribution to the domestic economy. Negative experiences at school, along with a peer-group culture which positively associates masculinity with toughness and manual work, in this case the quarry, were also suggested as contributing to many adolescents' leaving school early. Paradoxically, however, despite the positive association of masculinity with manual work, many young boys who become quarry workers today express feelings of regret about a perceived lack of occupational choice. Older quarry workers, as I have also already pointed out, suggest that quarry work is the last occupation they desire for their sons. In other words, many young boys entering the quarry for the first time experience a sense of failure alongside the other positive connotations of work itself. This sense of failure is felt more deeply by those men who, despite other credentials, are forced to work in the quarries through a real lack of alternative employment. As Sennett and Cobb (1977) have noted in their path-breaking study of American working class subjectivity, failure is internalised by many working class men in a society which measures dignity and self-worth in terms of individual achievement. Although there are no similar studies in the Italian context, recent trends, including the spread of consumerism and credentialism to all levels of society, seem to indicate that Italian society is similarly becoming increasingly atomised along this American model (see Ginsborg 1990).

The collective culture of men at work can, however, counter these perceptions of failure. When a boy enters work for the first time he enters a world of collective masculine identity. He becomes part of what Andrew Tolson (1977: 47) calls, "collective masculine history, of confrontations and alliances, with its memories of war, depression, lockouts and strikes". In interviews with quarry workers, this sense of collective identity was often expressed in terms of a family idiom emphasising common generational experiences between fathers, grandfathers and sons and where, moreover, work itself was valued for qualities reminiscent of family life. Working in the quarries was likened to "working in a family" where "we look after one another". "In the quarries", offered one young worker, "we are all brothers". Solidarity towards other workers in the quarry in the case of work injury and industrial struggle was also expressed in terms of manliness. As my neighbour commented,

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[8] Although other studies of mining (Bradley 1989; Burton 1976; Douglass and Kreiger 1983; Roberts 1984) indicate that young miners often undergo initiation rites which emphasise physical endurance and male sexuality such as the greasing of genitals, submersion in pools, electric shocks and so forth, I did not find any instance of similar rites in the quarries of Carrara. Either these rites do not exist at Carrara or as a female researcher I may have been excluded from knowing about them.

> In the quarry there's a brotherhood. We need everyone. The old quarry workers always agreed on everything. It was necessary otherwise we didn't go home. There's solidarity in the quarry; a solidarity we teach our children. Work is collective. We work together. There's brotherhood.

In the village, as another worker pointed out, scabs were often treated with disdain by other men:

> They had to avert their eyes when we met them on the street. They were afraid of being men.

But work practices themselves also contribute significantly to this collective masculine identity. Alongside the formal subdivisions of work dictated by the technology of production, other more subtle practices and definitions distinguish "insiders" from "outsiders". These group definitions may range from informal work groups and notions of skill to a common work language which defines quarry workers vis-a-vis others. In using this language, quarry workers not only define themselves as a separate and distinct group of workers, they also define themselves as men.

The most obvious connection between work language and masculinity is the explicitly sexual innuendo embodied in descriptions of some work tasks. Although the quarry workers I spoke to were, perhaps not surprisingly, rather circumscribed in providing these kinds of details, women in the village were less so. One work instrument, the *punciotto* – a small metal chisel with a rounded head used with another v-shaped instrument to make a series of holes in the marble – seems to be associated in particular with sexual intercourse. In casual conversation, women sometimes referred to making love as making *punciotti*. Similarly, drilling holes deeper into the rock was also likened to sexual intercourse. Interestingly, however, men used the masculine pronoun *lui* or "he" when referring to the mountain. As I suggest in chapter five, some work practices seem to indicate male preoccupation with sexual honour and virility, rather than sexual intercourse itself. But although other accounts of shop-floor culture have highlighted the extent to which manual workers engage in sexual bragging, "horse-play" and game playing in general (Willis 1980; Burawoy 1979), I found little evidence in the quarries of Carrara to suggest that game playing and sexual innuendo were particularly exaggerated.[9]

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[9] It may well be the case that as a female researcher and "outsider" who did not directly participate in the daily work regimes of the quarry, I was unable to observe or hear of such behaviour.

A less obvious connection between work language, group definitions, work practices and masculinity is the identification of masculinity with skill. This is manifested in a variety of ways. In the first place, the demarcation of all skilled workers from the manual workers carries connotations of masculinity. Older manual workers who have not gone through the informal apprenticeship system or for various reasons are deemed by other quarry workers as incapable of learning skilled tasks, are sometimes disparaged and regarded as slightly emasculated figures. On the other hand, skilled workers do not seem to make similar distinctions between the various gradations in the hierarchy of skill. Rather, skill is measured in terms of individual talent and capability. Thus, while a *tecchiaiolo* is revered in the quarry for his courage and technical expertise, he is not considered more manly than a skilled *filista* or a particularly accomplished *quadratore*.

These observations tend to suggest that quarry workers associate manliness with these demonstrable skills and with an individual's practical knowledge of marble, rather than with the toughness of the job itself. While unskilled manual workers, particularly in past generations, worked as hard if not harder than skilled workers, their inability, lack of willingness or absence of opportunity to master the "art" of marble extraction, effectively excluded them from full incorporation into ranks of skilled workers imbued with masculine attributes. Similarly, the association between skilled jobs and masculinity might go some way towards explaining why women in most cultures were permitted to work on the less skilled tasks in mining and quarrying – tasks which involved considerable strength and endurance – but were generally excluded from working underground or in other skilled areas.

As Cockburn (1986, 1983) has so insightfully argued, recognizing the subjective dimension of skill, skill is not simply an ideological category imposed on certain types of jobs by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it (Phillips and Taylor 1980: 79), it also has a material base within the texture of work itself. The feelings of emasculation the print workers she studied associated with the move from hot metal to "cold" composition can only be understood in terms of a

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I do not mean to suggest, either, that quarry workers do not play practical jokes or that they do not have a sense of humour. It seems to me that although a great deal of emphasis is sometimes placed on the degree to which manual workers as a group engage in explicitly sexual joking behaviour, it is difficult to assess whether this is greater than among other workers, for instance, office workers. I think the more important point to make about male sexuality in these contexts is perhaps the highly stylized form it takes and the association between particular work instruments and male and female anatomy (Tolson 1977). Even this may stretch the point too far. It is interesting to note, however, that authors like Burawoy (1979), whose thesis focuses on game playing in the work culture of manual workers and the way in which management colludes with workers to secure their consent, has little to say about the role of these games in the construction of a masculine work culture.

work culture which positively associates masculinity with particular kinds of technology and skills, regardless of how these skills might be technically defined. Cockburn's study thus suggests that exclusionary practices involved in notions of craft identity and skill are deeply embedded in the texture and sensual experience of particular kinds of work histories and cultures, and that there can be no simple correlation between the level of technical expertise and these ideas of skill.

But while skill is certainly an important correlate of masculinity, the purely physical dimension of work is equally significant. Masculinity "invests the body" (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 595). At the most fundamental level, men who labour in physically demanding occupations are preoccupied with their bodies because so much of their work relies on muscular strength and flexibility. As Donaldson (1991: 17) has observed,

> What is sold at the point of production is a pair of hands, a back, a set of muscles, a body. Labouring men are preoccupied with their bodies because if they malfunction the repercussions are dire.

In the quarries of Carrara men are similarly preoccupied with their bodies.[10] Physical strength is admired in equal measure to ingenuity. Although quarry workers are concerned about the physical effects of work injury, like other manual workers, they reinterpret the unpleasantness and brutality of work "into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task" (Livingstone and Luxton 1989: 253; Donaldson 1991: 11; Willis 1980: 188). Quarry workers often display severe and minor work injuries as "badges of honour", while difficult and dangerous work conditions are often viewed as challenges to masculine prowess rather than the result of employer negligence. As I argue later, these perceptions of masculinity, together with a long history of neglect of safety issues in the quarries, have played an important part in individualizing explanations of industrial injury.

The importance of physical strength, however, is also apparent when one considers the tasks involved in quarrying marble in past generations. As I have already described, many of the tasks involving the manipulation and moving of huge blocks of marble relied on brute force. In interviews, quarry workers stressed the physically demanding aspects of quarry work and the subsequent effects of work on their bodies. Watching older *cavatori* hammering the blocks of marble, or struggling to free a particularly difficult block, I was continually reminded of the extremely arduous conditions in which they worked. Although some older workers were allocated easier jobs, others like my neighbour (who was in his late fifties), prided themselves on their ability to work on the most physically demanding tasks. For many quarry workers, the toughness of the job was symbolic of being a man. As Franchini, an ex *capo-cava* , commented,

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[10] Kondo argues that artisanal identity and notions of selfhood are also connected to the physical nature of craft work through the ways in which skills and techniques become committed to muscle memory becoming a palpable part of the self. In the Japanese sweet factory "those who have put in their years of training; those who have tempered their skills to the point where skill is attached "to the body" have also become more mature in the process" (1990:238-239). These observations are similar to the argument Cockburn (1986) makes on the textual nature of skill and can, perhaps, be generalized to all types of craft work. The idea that skill is actively *embodied*, is also useful for thinking about its "portability". In other words, the relative ease with which skilled quarry workers, particularly in past generations, were able to move between jobs in different quarries, is partially explained in terms of the ways in which skills were attached to the person.

> Except for the fatigue the work is the same. Men used to be twice as strong as they are today. They weren't afraid of working . . . The quarry is still the same but the men have changed . . . Thirty or forty years ago men were much stronger. Today men are dead. Only the word "man" remains.

In interviews and casual conversation, quarry workers often expressed manliness in terms of strength, endurance and a certain stoicism. But they also readily admitted that until recently, work in the quarries had been extremely tiring. As one worker remarked,

> We were slaves of work . . . when you make a man work more than 15 hours a day you render him similar to an animal . . . We weren't men. We were animals.

Although technical innovation over recent years has eliminated many of the tasks involving individual strength and team work, the majority of *cavatori* do not seem to equate these improvements with a loss of masculinity. Rather, quarry workers experience these changes as humanising. The effects of new technology are experienced as emasculating only when they threaten loss of craft control; when quarry workers say they begin to feel like "robots" rather than "men". Rather than toughness alone, skill and the sense of power experienced with technological and craft control, is the most important component in the construction of masculinity and work identities in the marble quarries of Carrara.

ON ALIENATION AND THE QUARRY WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF WORK

As I observed in my introductory comments to this chapter, miners have often been portrayed as the epitome of alienated workers, assumed to be as alienated from their work environment as they are from the products of their labour. This representation of miners as archetypal proletarians and exemplars of modern industrial alienation owes much to the iconographic status miners have acquired in the history of capitalism (Metcalfe 1990), but is also due to a sociology of work which has refused to look seriously at the meanings created through work for workers themselves. The material I have presented in this chapter provides the basis for a critique and an alternative conceptualization. In my view, the experiences of work and the cultural meanings generated through these experiences, are as important in understanding the constitution of oppression (or for that matter consent, freedom and resistance), as the more structural social determinants of work, such as ownership of production or control over the means of production.

One of the central contentions of this thesis is the importance of focusing on the meaningful symbolic and experiential dimensions to work and taking seriously the voices of workers who are so often silenced in sociological and historical studies of work. When we begin with these voices – with the literature on mining written by miners, or by authors reporting the direct experiences of work – an important image emerges. The mine, described elsewhere as a hostile and alienating place, sometimes becomes a sensual environment, saturated with familiar sounds and movement, in which workers experience a deep sense of affiliation. Sid Chaplin (1978: 69), a Durham coal miner, describes the pit as

> A wrought place, [the pit] was as real and as intimate in its associations as the house where you were born, but more importantly it was the arena and testing ground where for good or ill, you found your rank and integrity. It's not for nothing that for every miner the pit is a "she" . . . There was a sensual satisfaction in holding your place down there against her.

Similarly, Douglass (1977a: 215), another Durham coal miner, remarks that

> A coal mine has little in common with a factory . . . Most factory workers would regard the mine purely and simply as a black and filthy hole; funnily enough, the miner, in turn regards the factory as a prison and its operatives as captives.

Exploring the way in which the Quecha-speaking Bolivian tin miners are locked into both a relationship of exploitation and dependency, epitomised so poignantly in the title of her book, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* (1979), Nash argues that the tin miners are not necessarily alienated from their work situation or from the community in which they live. Rather, miners identify with the mine and the excitement and danger of work; "there is a greater fulfilment of expressive needs – at least for the male population – than in other occupational groups" (1979: 12). When she asked one miner about the fears he had upon entering the mine, he replied,

> I don't have any fears. I was born to be a miner! I like the mine. I like the excitement of putting myself in danger to prove my manhood and my capacity. I like it when, after working hard and sweating, I throw water on my head and feel the coolness and I imagine all sorts of power in me. I like the comradeship. I believe we all ought to live like brothers in a family, the way we workers feel inside the mine (1979: 12).

Michael Taussig's (1980) examination of the devil belief system as a cultural/symbolic representation of alienation similarly draws on the story of another Bolivian tin miner, Juan Rojas, to illustrate the way these miners feel closely related to their work environment. In paraphrasing this account, Taussig suggests that

> In the autobiography of the miner Juan Rojas, it is strikingly clear that the miners are preoccupied with the life of the mine as a living entity, so to speak. From Rojas's detailed account the reader sees and feels again and again how the miners' work is a process of empathy with the mine, nourishing it as much as excavating it. They are forced by the management hierarchy to struggle with the rock face and to hate the work which destroys their lungs and shortens their lives. Yet, at the same time they care for the mine. Their attitude is more than respect: it is reverential, stemming from the interaction on which miners depend. This sense of mutuality is a daily lived practice of coparticipation with other workers in a highly dangerous enterprise requiring common trust and fine coordination. It is also the sensibility of coparticipation with the ways of the mine itself. This sense of affiliation with the mine comes from the experience and skills that are painfully learned at the rock face as one gradually enters the metabolism of the mine (1980: 146).

In this chapter I have been equally concerned to develop this issue of the reciprocal relationship between the quarry workers and their work environment. Like Bolivian and English miners, the workers in the marble quarries of Carrara do not describe their work as alienating. Although these workers are separated from the products of their labour (except in the case of some quarries where workers also own or control the quarry concession), and separated from the means of production (in the sense that they do not control the technology of production), they are not necessarily alienated from the work environment itself or from a sense of meaningful self-involvement in the work process. Rather, in the experiences of work – through language and informal work practices – the quarry workers construct work identities which position them as competent and powerful subjects with substantial job control.

Since the publication of Braverman's classic work, *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism* in 1974, labour process theory has dominated contemporary debates about industrial work. But the conclusions it draws are not necessarily applicable to industries like mining which still embody the craft characteristics of earlier industrial work. Labour process theory tends to assume both uniformity in the development of capitalism and industrialism as well as homogeneity in this development across cultures. However, the material I have presented in this chapter and in the two preceding chapters on work illustrates the idiosyncratic and uneven nature of a particular industrial development within a national economy which is dominated by transnational capitalism. Even more importantly, while labour process theory has highlighted the importance of the process of de-skilling and the means by which management secures the control (Braverman 1974) or consent (Burawoy 1979) of industrial workers, it has largely neglected an analysis of the subjective experience of work.

This chapter has underscored the importance of such an analysis. Through an interpretation of work language and the implementation of practical knowledge, I have argued that workers in the quarries of Carrara construct work identities which position them more as empowered than as alienated subjects. The material conditions of work and the work environment itself emerge as important arenas for the construction of these subjective identities. Furthermore, the construction of gender consciousness at work constitutes a form of power which is independent of property, groups or class; power which is neither essentially repressive nor constraining (Knights 1990: 318) and hence is an important dimension of power relations at work. For the quarry workers of Carrara, masculinity is deeply embedded in the texture of work itself. Work language and practice – the sensual experience of work – thus constitute an important site for analyses redressing stereotypical representations of miners and teleological depictions of work in industrial societies.

Constructed within a wider web of power relations, the meanings of work are, however, sometimes ambiguous. The creative and empowering aspects of craft identity are constructed within contested political terrains and larger economic and political transformations (Kondo 1990: 230). Recent feminist scholarship has linked the formation of craft solidarity to the exclusion of unskilled workers – especially women (Phillips and Taylor 1980; Berg 1987; Scott 1988). In the quarries of Carrara, craft identity is increasingly becoming an embattled idiom, as notions of skill are threatened by wider technological and economic transformations to the work process. At the same time, the meanings of work are in themselves often contradictory. In the following chapter I explore some ramifications of these contradictions with respect to issues of safety and work injury.

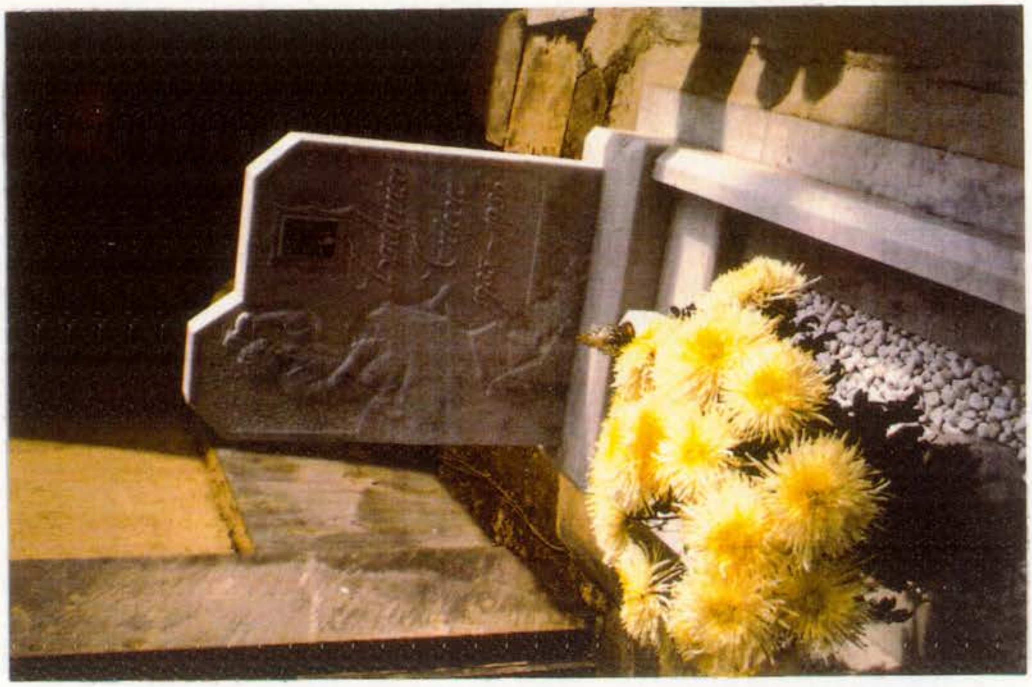
CHAPTER FOUR

The Killing Mountain

> We workers of the mountains are less than animals. But who is this man who gets up in the middle of the night saying goodbye to his loved ones and his soundly sleeping children to confront the mountain, often the killing mountain? Who is this man who is engaged in a battle of titanic proportions tearing away the bloodstained white marble? He is the *cavatore*, the *lizzatore*, the man of the mountain! . . . This man is used to danger. In fact sometimes this man likes to challenge danger, to forget about it. ("Accidents in the quarries" *Il Cavatore* 24 July 1947).

WHILE marble evokes ideas of luxury, wealth and prestige and is associated with aesthetic notions of beauty, translucency, light and transcendence, for the quarry workers of Carrara, marble is inextricably linked to a life world which in generating meaning and identity, simultaneously inscribes images of body mutilation and death. The quarries of Carrara have an exceptionally long history and high incidence of industrial injury, and although new technology has dramatically decreased the labour force over recent years, it has not eliminated the risks of work.

In the small cemeteries located on the outskirts of each quarrying village, cramped marble tombstones and plaques are poignant reminders of the precarious and dangerous nature of quarry work. Intricate figurines, sculpted out of white Carrara marble and depicting the specialized roles of squarers, cutters and *tecchiaioli*, are often found on the tombstones of these workers; tombstones which otherwise provide little indication of the cause of death. Few families in the village where I lived are unmarked by the death or mutilation of a relative at work. In these villages, the funerals of quarry workers killed at work are moments of collective mourning in which the entire village participates, lining the streets and alleyways through which the coffin passes.



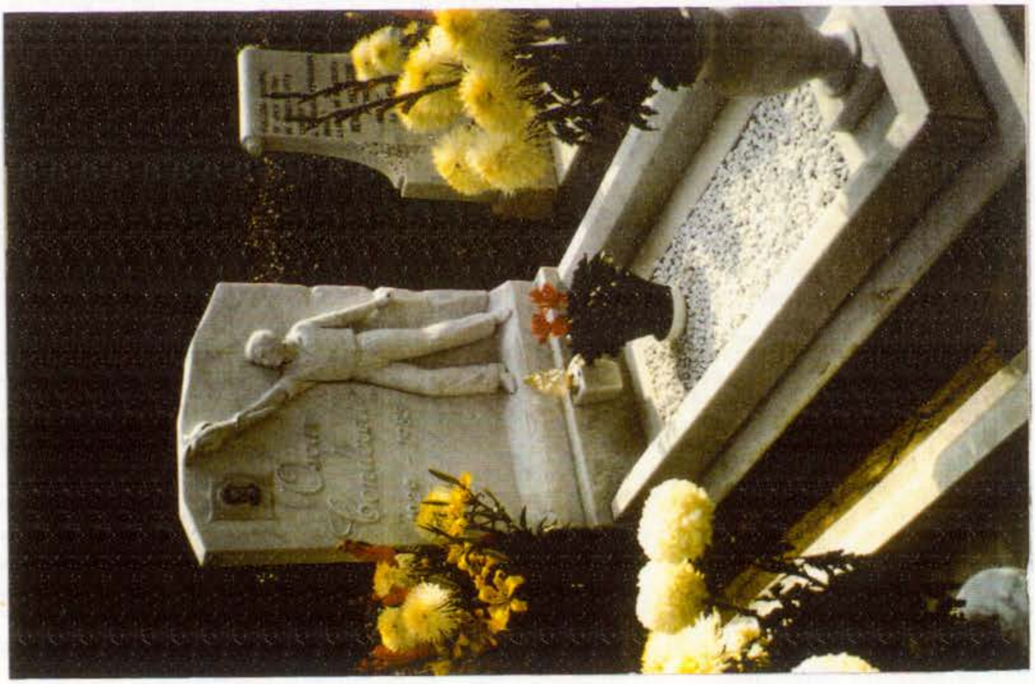


Plate 18. Gravestone of a squarer in Gragnana.

Plate 19. Gravestone of an anarchist in Gragnana.

Despite improvements to work conditions, including higher wages and more secure employment, the memory of death and injury incurred through work is often invoked in explaining a reluctance to encourage sons into quarrying as a lifetime occupation. Women, rather than men, are more likely to articulate these fears. In casual conversation with me, often in the context of discussions about entirely different matters, women spontaneously narrated their own experiences of the death or mutilation of male relatives at work. These accounts were remarkable in their emotional intensity. However, while women were often moved to tears in the process of articulating these memories, men were initially far more reticent in recalling such events and their accounts were characterized more by appeals to stoicism than by the open expression of emotion.

During my fieldwork, the issue of safety in the quarries became a topic of public debate in the context of a continuing investigation into accident prevention. In the numerous wine bars and political clubs where men congregate after work, I frequently became involved in passionate discussions about this investigation and workers' own interpretations of safety and danger in the quarries. In many cases these interpretations differed quite substantially from the conclusions drawn by health and safety personnel – especially the suggestion that foremen should be charged in the case of proved negligence – although the latter had consulted extensively with workers and conducted what might best be termed "consciousness raising" workshops among groups of quarry workers on safety issues. Significantly, in the light of the analysis which follows, these conversations centred more on perceptions of the inadequacy of rescue operations than on the lack of adherence to safety procedures. Quarry workers were often extremely guarded in discussing the details and circumstances of particular cases of work injury and continually referred to the inevitability of injury and death in an occupation which they regarded as inherently dangerous. They were not averse, however, to talking about or displaying in dramatic gestures their own work injuries; injuries integral to a work culture which reinterprets the difficulties of work in terms of masculine prowess, while simultaneously inscribing individuals' work histories upon their bodies. In more intimate moments, away from the gaze of workmates, some quarry workers unexpectedly revealed their private angst and preoccupations concerning the risks of their work. On these rarer occasions, men were much more forthcoming about the specific course of events which had led to an injury or the death of a fellow worker. While these accounts emphasised the inherent danger of the quarries, individual negligence as well as over-confidence was also often cited as a major reason for injury.

What is particularly surprising in all these accounts is the lack of emphasis placed on those organizational aspects of work which health and safety personnel insist are the principal causes of injury. Furthermore, quarry workers rarely blamed employers for the inadequacy of safety precautions and, despite their reputation for industrial militancy, rarely expressed their concern for danger in the quarries in class terms.[1] Similar contradictions emerge in an examination of the history of the labour movement in Carrara: while the dangerous conditions of quarry work have often been the impetus for significant industrial struggles, these have been limited to questions of compensation for injury, pension payments and the provision of adequate first aid facilities. Because the labour movement was preoccupied with these concerns, it largely neglected to organize around the specific issue of safety within the work place itself. In this chapter I examine these complex issues. While I briefly look at the history of the labour movement to illustrate the idea that notions of risk are socially constructed within contested political terrains and wider fields of power, my main concern is in illuminating quarry workers' own responses to danger and perceptions of safety and work injury. These perceptions are, I argue, the product of contradictory notions of craft identity in which the creative and self-fulfilling aspects of work are counterbalanced by its inevitable association with the experience of body mutilation and death.

THE RISKS OF WORK

The extraction of marble is an intrinsically risky enterprise. Many work-related injuries and deaths are directly related to the peculiar characteristics of marble and to the topographical conditions of these mountain quarries. As I have already described, quarry workers work in close physical contact with the stone and the mere weight of the material itself ensures that many injuries are severe. Workers often report the crushing of various body organs like the lungs or the spleen as well as injuries to hands and limbs. Working in the open, under huge cliffs of stone and marble, they are also constantly exposed to sudden and unpredictable rockfalls. Conversations about work in the quarries persistently underlined these risks; when working in the quarry, space is defined vertically, with one's gaze always directed upwards to examine the rock face and the mountain beyond for possible indications of broken material.

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[1] The question of the definition of "class" is of course a central problematic in social theory. Here I am using "class" as a shorthand for suggesting that workers in the quarries do not express their concerns about safety and danger as the outcome of a set of oppositional structural social relations between themseves as a group of wage labourers and the quarry operators. For an eloquent discussion on the limitations of structualism and structural definitions of class see Metcalfe (1988). While I do not address this issue directly, much of my thinking about work and the experience of work has been influenced by the arguments made by Metcalfe that "class conciousness is not antecedent to practice" (1988:211).

Quarry workers were also extremely apprehensive about the effects of the new cutting technology in increasing the height and size of the rock face under which they work and often narrated stories, perhaps apocryphal, about narrow escapes from rockfalls or the collapse of large sections of marble.

While their insistence on the frequency of these events and their devastating consequences is not necessarily an indication of the actual incidence of work injury – at least in the contemporary work environment – the persistent high rate of work related injury supports workers' perceptions that the marble quarries are inherently dangerous work places. In the two year period between 1985 and 1986 when approximately 1900 workers were employed, fifteen deaths were reported in the quarries of Carrara. During the same period a number of dramatic rockfalls and collapses of marble occured throughout the region. While these events were not necessarily causally related, together they shattered the previous managerial and local governmental perceptions of an increasingly modern marble industry, characterized by rapid technological innovation, a huge increase in marble production, the elimination of antiquated work practices and an improved safety record. These alarming figures also provoked a series of investigations by local health authority personnel of safety in the quarries.

None of the reports which emerged from this research offered a conclusive analysis of the causes of work related injury, despite some indications that many of the injuries were the result of inadequate, or a lack of adherence to, safety precautions. One report carefully documenting the incidence of injury over the 10 year period between 1977 and 1986, revealed that while some serious injuries were directly related to rock falls during the the process of cutting marble, the majority of injuries and consequent deaths occurred when cutting and removing the large sections of marble known as the *bancate*.[2] The most serious of these injuries were due to workers being crushed by sections of marble or falling from the top of the *bancate* into the quarry below. But in other phases of the work process also, injuries were often severe. In the numerous case studies attached to this report, lack of adherence to safety rules was consistently cited as a major cause of these instances of work injury. The introduction of new technology, in particular the diamond wire which was largely untested at the time of its first appearance in 1978, was also linked to the high rate of injury occurring over the last decade.

The correlation between the introduction of new technology and a high rate work injury is, however, far too simplistic as an an overall causal explanation of work injury. Technology previously used in the quarries, especially the once prevalent use of explosives, was equally dangerous. As I have already noted, up until 1900 at least, gunpowder and explosives were the principal means of extracting large quantities of marble from the mountain. Massive explosions, or *varate*, occurred frequently, providing a spectacle which inspired many a writer's pen. Rough and crude as a means of extracting marble, producing extensive damage in the quarry and provoking many unforeseen injuries, the *varate* nevertheless symbolised the superior force of human agency in the "war of marble". Although explosives are used less frequently and more strategically today, massive explosions still elicit feelings of great excitement as well as apprehension and it is quite common for quarry workers to remark that the "quarry needs a bit of powder". One writer describing an explosion in 1870 provides us with a vivid account of some of the risks involved in this phase of the work process.

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[2] This unpublished report, *Commissione di analisi del Settore Marmo e Prevenzione Infortuni*, was commissioned by the local council in 1986 and the results made public in 1987.

> Three detonations alerted everyone to watch the mountain closely and the long deep sound of the *corno*[3] gave the signal for the man to light the fuse. This man, who was tied to a long rope, lit the fuse and escaped swinging on the rope over the cliffs of marble for more than 60 metres at the speed of the wind. He then had to climb like a monkey for another 20 metres up the rope until he disappeared behind the crest of the mountain where the others were waiting for him (Zoffanelli 1870: 41).

Jervis, an English geologist visiting Carrara in the 1860s is also moved to describe a similar explosion, calmly noting, however, the deleterious consequences to human life:

> Some years ago a prodigious mass of ordinary marble was blasted out of this place from an extremely elevated position in the mountains. This mass of marble descended down the *ravaneto*, crushing the smaller stones to powder and raising a cloud of dust like a cannon firing. Suddenly it leaped like a football of titanic proportions, rushing up the opposite side of the quarry with the impetus it had acquired, while a torrent of stones it had displaced rattled, danced about and tumbled over and over, dashing violently against the rock ledges. Meanwhile, the huge mass swayed around once more, continuing its headlong course for nearly half a mile until eventually it broke into two pieces, but not before killing some poor quarry workers who had no means of escape. Those who have not witnessed similar scenes can scarcely imagine such grandeur (1868: 4).

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[3] The *corno*, also known as the *mugnon*, was a horn used to warn workers in nearby quarries of an impending explosion. As I describe later, it also sounded in the case of death or serious injury. The original horn used in the quarries was a kind of long trumpet, whereas today an electric signal is used.

Lack of reliable statistical data contributes to the difficulty in documenting or assessing the causes of work injury. While the high rate of injury in the quarries of Carrara was noted as early as 1875 (Fabbri 1883: 34), many work related injuries were unreported because there was no legislation covering work practices in this period and consequently no official reporting procedures. Reliable statistics on injury rates only began to be collected from the 1880s when the state, in the guise of the Ministry for Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, attempted to introduce uniform legislation governing work practices throughout the extractive industries. In the official industry journal, *La Rivista del Servizio Minerario*, Carrara is consistently singled out as reporting a higher percentage of deaths and injuries than any other similar industry. In the ten year period between 1881 and 1890, for example, the journal reports 136 deaths and 307 serious injuries among approximately 5,000 workers in the quarries of Carrara. These figures provide some indication of the extent of the problem, especially considering that many less serious work injuries remained unreported and that a large, but indeterminate, number of quarry workers worked unofficially as *spartani* in the informal economy.

The first attempt to investigate the causes of the high rate of work injury occurred in the aftermath of a local armed uprising against the state in 1894, known as the "Lunigiana revolt". This uprising, which ended with the military occupation of Carrara by the Italian armed forces under the command of General Heusch, involved significant numbers of quarry workers. Although it erupted in the context of other events, most notably the social upheaval of peasant workers in the south of Italy and the beginnings of socialism and an organized Italian workers' movement, the revolt at Carrara aroused a great deal of comment and drew national attention to work conditions in the quarries.[4] Two separate reports, both commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, isolate the absence of safety procedures as a major factor contributing to the high rate of work related injury. In the first report dealing specifically with the question of safety, a local doctor, Mazzetti, concluded that

> . . . the majority of injuries in these quarries must be attributed to inadequate work organization and a dearth of suitable or qualified personnel who can supervise work in the quarries. This is due to the greed of the quarry owners who, in attempting to save money, neglect to enforce all the necessary precautions which could save workers' lives (1894: 249).

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[4] The 1894 revolt, which I describe in more detail in chapter six, is a significant event in the history of the local labour movement in Carrara.

In the second report, examining workers' health issues in their wider social context, Milani (1894) again referred to the inadequate safety precautions in the quarries and drew attention to workers' lack of regard for their own safety. Noting the extremely high rate of injury and death, he suggested that

> The principal factors are lack of or inadequate safety measures in a situation where danger is integral to the work process and where the workers' lack of attention makes them reckless and incautious. The instantaneous deaths occur when workers are crushed under blocks of marble or when pieces of marble fall from above or are launched like bullets in an explosion hitting their heads and chests (1894: 51).

Later however, he highlighted the mode of production and the process of intense industrialization as a more important factor in work injury and death, asserting in the final sections of this report that

> In many cases accidents in the quarries are due to nothing less than the crass lack of foresight . . . based on the absolute lack of value placed on the life of a worker . . . The man machine in the quarry is never appreciated for his intrinsic value and even less for what he produces; . . . if this machine breaks or is worn out, it is eliminated straight away (1894: 54).

The official response to this situation was an attempt to enforce legal solutions. An inspection service for the quarries had already been established in 1890. In 1893 national legislation for the policing of mines and quarries was approved and two years later came into effect at Carrara.

Despite initial optimism and the accumulation of statistics and case studies, reports in the official industry journal increasingly acknowledged that legal measures and regular inspections appeared to have little effect on the rate of work injury. Government engineers continued to explain work injury in terms of the inherent danger of the work and the lack of safety precautions, although they also recognized the difficulties of enforcing legislation in the quarries.

However, by 1904, the emphasis had shifted away from the irresponsibility of quarry owners to the carelessness of workers themselves. A note from the principal engineer responsible for the inspection service claims that

> One of the principal reasons for the increased number of accidents is the great recklessness with which workers and overseers alike confront the risks and dangers of the job; a recklessness which more often than not is considered necessary to the job (*Rivista del Servizio Minerario* 1904: LXXIV).

And again, in 1905, the engineer attributes a surprising reduction in work injury "to luck more than anything else as the situation in the quarries has not changed and the recklessness of workers is unabated" (*Rivista del Servizio Minerario* 1905: 65).

Almost a century later, in 1986, similar explanations of work injury prevail. Most of the literature generated from the recent enquiry into safety emphasises the problems which stem from the organization of work rather than the dangerous nature of the quarry itself. While acknowledging that the issue involves complex factors, including the increased pace of production and the difficulty of enforcing legislation and safety procedures in the numerous small quarries scattered throughout the region, these reports locate the principal cause of work injury in the structure of work organization and the cavalier attitudes of quarry workers towards their own safety. Various solutions were proposed, such as consciousness raising workshops designed to alert workers to antiquated work practices and to reinforce the necessity of adherence to safety precautions. At another level, in 1986, the local council began a process of reforming the Estense legislation governing the rental of quarry concessions with the unstated aim of eliminating many of the small marble producers and rationalizing the industry at a regional level. The application of this new legislation would, the council argued, "lead to a more rational system of excavation and will create the conditions for greater safety, overcoming the problems of disputes over boundaries, roads and waste material (*Commissione di Analisi del Settore Marmo e Prevenzione Infortuni* 1987: 10).

Quarry workers themselves, however, remain highly sceptical about both these analyses of the problems and the proposed legal solutions. They continue to maintain that risk is integral to their work and remain highly resistant to "outside" interpretations of safety. While admitting that lack of attention to safety procedures often results in unnecessary death and injury, they point out that the combination of financial incentives rewarding the more dangerous tasks in the quarry (for example the bonus pay given to *tecchiaioli)* with a regime of safety regulations and procedures, denotes a certain degree of acquiescence towards the inevitability of injury. From their perspective, safety regulations seem less designed to discourage dangerous work practices than to protect employers and companies from legal repercussions and to defend the role of experts (James 1987: 48).

The following sections of this chapter explore quarry workers' responses to the danger of their work and their resistance to the issue of safety. Contrary to the arguments promoted by health and safety officers at Carrara, I argue in support of workers' own perceptions of risk: that occupational injury is inherent in the production of marble. As Claire James (1987: 49) has argued in another context, occupational injuries in highly dangerous industries should not be defined as "accidents" for they are "a predictable outcome of a given productive process". For this reason, I have studiously avoided the term "accident" in outlining the risks of work in the quarries. I argue that injury is a probability, rather than a chance event and that workers' own perceptions of danger and risk must be understood in this context. While I conceptualize occupational health and injury as embedded in the social relations of production and the work process rather than the outcome of individualistic or psychological factors, I also argue that conditions of risk are as much socially and culturally constructed ideas as material realities. In the next section I examine the rhetoric employed by the labour movement at Carrara to illustrate the ways in which the notion of risk was utilized to support other demands linked to improvements in work conditions.[5]

THE RHETORIC OF RISK

In 1902, the famous anarchist lawyer and poet, Pietro Gori unveiled a marble plaque to the "fallen at work" in Piazza Alberica in Carrara and concluded his speech with these words:

> No more massacres, no more slaughter. Let us bow down, even you *carabinieri* [military police] and police guards; let us bow down before this marble sacred to the martydom of the workers of the Apuane valley; marble which throughout the centuries has transmitted the voices of the *cavatori* from Carrara who will have justice as their monument (Bernieri 1952: 42–43).

Thirty leagues[6] from the year-old *Camera del lavoro* or Chamber of Labour and more than 6,000 people attended this ceremony marking the resurgence of the organized labour movement in Carrara. This reorganization occurred in the context of specific local events, as well as the new climate of political reformism fostered by the election of the Zanardelli-Giolitti government in 1900. The national union movement was beginning to reassert itself, (albeit in a climate of fierce debate over revolutionary or reformist ends), after the preceding years of repression. In Carrara, the labour movement emerged with new directions and strategies in the aftermath of the military occupation and state of emergency declared in 1894. During the same period, from

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[5] I have chosen to look at the social construction of risk from the point of view of the labour movement, rather than of the marble industrialists, partly because of the documentation which was available to me. In a fascinating study of Michigan copper mine workers, Lillian Trettin (1987, 1990) looks at the way in which the management of the copper mines also continually reconceptualized risk in response to changing market demands for copper.

[6] The word *league* is the English translation of *lega* which has a particular meaning in the history of the Italian labour movement. It refers to the early groups of workers who formed local associations within specific occupational categories rather than broad national trade unions.

1896 to 1900, the production and exportation of marble from Carrara increased substantially (Gestri 1976: 237). This expansion, however, had little effect on work conditions in the quarries.[7]

In this new liberal and reformist climate, the *Camera del lavoro* reorganized itself at Carrara in 1901 with 8,000 members. During this year there were over 20 strikes, the majority involving the local leagues of marble industry workers. This move was counteracted by the formation in September 1901 of an employers' association, the *Associazione fra gli esercenti le industrie marmoree* with 54 member companies. The stage was set for a five year period of industrial conflict characterized for the first time by clearly demarcated class interests. A complete history of the labour movement in Carrara is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter. It is possible, however, to outline some of the more significant events of this history, in order to highlight and contextualize the central issue of the labour movement's perceptions of occupational injury and safety in the quarries.[8]

In 1902, the year in which Gori made his speech to the "fallen at work", the marble workers in Carrara achieved a major industrial victory with the signing of the first collective contract for marble workers in the region. For the first time, a uniform timetable and pay rate was negotiated for all the workers in the numerous scattered quarries throughout the Apuane mountains. Its significance is underscored by the fact that this contract and the work conditions it established remained the bench-mark for another collective contract negotiated nine years later, in 1911. Between 1902 and 1905, the local labour council sought to establish similar contracts and work conditions for other categories of workers in the marble industry and to extend the boundaries within which these conditions could be legally negotiated. During this period – a period marked by endemic industrial conflict, strikes and lockouts – the activities of the local labour council, led by an anarchist-republican coalition, were curtailed and constrained by the industrial might of the united employers' association, together with internal conflicts within the labour movement itself.[9]

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[7] In 1900 the *Federazione Italiana delle Camere del Lavoro*, (the Federation of Italian Chambers of Labour), held its third national meeting in Milan. Thirteen organizations sent delegates. A previous conference had been held in 1897 at which twelve organizations were represented (Gestri 1976:237). One of the best references for the history of the labour movement during this period is Procacci (1970) *La lotta di classe in Italia agli inizi del secolo XX.* For some indication of the huge bibliography on the Giolitti government and its relationship to the labour movement see Candeloro (1974).

[8] The history of the labour movement at Carrara has been well documented by Gestri (1976:235-339). In the last chapter I discuss other aspects of this history, specifically the re-emergence of a strong anarchist presence at Carrara and its role in the labour movement.

[9] In Carrara as elsewhere in Italy, socialists and anarchists were divided on the role of the union in the labour movement. While this debate has to be understood in terms of its national and

Most of the strikes involving workers in the marble industry during this period concerned the fundamental issues of increased pay and shorter working hours. Grievances over relatively minor issues, which initially concerned a limited number of workers, often escalated into major strikes involving all categories of workers in the marble industry, so that the immediate demands of specific groups of workers were often subordinated to the overall strategy of the labour council, which increasingly viewed industrial agitation in terms of revolutionary and class objectives. The local marble employers were equally intransigent and in 1905, a minor dispute involving one team of *lizzatori*, which subsequently spread to include all the transport workers of the area, resulted in a lockout of all categories of workers "from the mountains to the sea" (Gestri 1976: 331). This dispute ended after fifty days with a demoralizing defeat for the labour movement and an agreement which largely prevented any group of transport or dock workers taking further strike action in support of other industrial struggles in the area. This defeat severely weakened the

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historical context, in Carrara the conflict became particularly acute. During these years, socialist factions vied with the anarchist-republican alliance for control of the local labour council. Whereas the anarcho-syndicalists asserted their influence over the large number of leagues of marble industry workers on the plain, (eg: sawmill and transport workers), the socialists' major influence was among the leagues of quarry workers. In 1901, the socialist-controlled *Lega di cavatori* had 3,000 members (Gestri 1976:249). In later years, this league refused to join the local labour council or to support the various strikes and initiatives it organized. Moreover, the socialists and anarchist tendencies set up rival industrial organizations for marble workers. While there was an obviously political aspect to this conflict, at an ideological level it manifested itself through radically different ideas on the role of the union in industrial conflict. Whereas the socialists in Carrara, as elsewhere in Italy, were committed to more reformist ideas, the anarchists (particularly the anarcho-syndicalists), looked to revolution as their final goal.

For the socialists then, the union movement, or what was called *leghismo*, was more a means of "consciousness-raising" and improving the immediate work conditions with the aim of creating a more egalitarian society within the framework of democracy. As the local socialist paper, *La Battaglia* , noted in 1901, " . . . the goal of the leagues is not to achieve the miracle of completely changing society. They are useful in raising the morale and consciousness of the working class and in preparing the working class for a different future but their major role is to alter the immediate economic situation of workers and the bourgeoisie . . . The *Leghe di resistenza* and the labour council should not be asylums for politicians who mask their convulsive tendencies with economic programmes; nor should they be recipes for dreamers who hope to completely change the world through huge salary increases and incredible reductions in working hours" (12 October 1901).

On the other hand, the anarcho-syndicalists viewed the union movement as the first step towards social revolution. Strikes, resistance, sabotage etc. were all ways of creating a revolutionary consciousness within the working class; a revolutionary consciousness which would, according to the anarchists, lead to the general strike and consequent social upheaval. The contemporary debates on adherence to the notion of the "general strike" must thus be understood in terms of these differing views.

labour movement. Indeed, for a brief period the *Camera del Lavoro* completely disappeared and it was reconstituted only in 1906, with 522 members, as opposed to 6,400 in January of 1905 (Gestri 1976: 337).

In the years from 1906 to 1910, there were no significant improvements in working conditions in any sphere of the marble industry. In the quarries, the perpetuation of piecework and other work practices eroded the conditions established in 1902. Despite promises after the repression of the "Lunigiana revolt" in 1894 to establish first aid facilities, by 1904 little progress had been made and moves to introduce compulsory insurance for marble workers had been largely unsuccessful. Similarly, the question of pensions for marble workers, first posed by General Heusch, remained unresolved. Although these issues were fervently debated, it was not until 1912 that the battle for pensions was finally won and only after a protracted and polemical campaign conducted by the combined forces of workers in the marble industry under the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist, Alberto Meschi. From 1911 until the period of fascist repression beginning in the 1920s, the *Camera del Lavoro* and the labour movement in Carrara made significant gains. This period coincided with the resurgence of the labour movement at a national level, together with a renewed interest in the ideas of revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism.

Although demands for compensation for work injury, pensions and first aid facilities were of central concern during these years, there is little documentary evidence to suggest that safety itself was an important issue. Few of the numerous strikes and lockouts were directly concerned with safety, although the demand to decrease the hours of work may have been indirectly linked to this question.[10] Despite numerous articles in *Il Cavatore* , the labour movement paper, devoted to the high rate of injury in the quarries and the lack of attention to safety, when it came to industrial action the important issues were the inadequate provision of first aid facilities and the lack of compensation for injury, but not the direct causes of injury. Nevertheless, the high incidence of injury and death in the quarries became a powerful symbol of exploitation under capitalism; a symbolic and rhetorical device which was increasingly used in the discourse of the labour movement to unite the various and disparate categories of marble workers against the local marble industrialists. If in 1894 eschatological and millenarian images fostered and fed social rebellion in Carrara,[11] two decades later, death and the images of mutilated bodies were potent metaphors of exploitation; a rhetoric of risk which in creating and reproducing the psychological and social conditions which lent impetus to further industrial action, nourished the ideas of class war.

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[10] There is very little evidence in the documentary records to indicate the reasons why workers were demanding reduced hours. Official strike records usually document a list of demands and a list of outcomes with little discussion of the issues. Similarly, newspaper reports give very little information on these questions. It is significant, however, that workers in the quarries today still argue that a shortened working day is the only way to reduce work injury. As I discuss later, this has become even more important with the introduction of new technology which speeds up production allowing less time for a consideration of safety. Workers also complain of increased stress and fatigue which they also implicate in the cause of work injury. Health and safety officials generally ridicule these demands for a shortened working day, calling them utopian. But given the argument that risk is inherent in the production process, these demands might also be seen as the only rational solution to the high rates of injury in the quarries.

Given the history of the labour movement in Carrara quarries and the obvious real risks of the work, it is perhaps not surprising that death and injury had a special significance for the quarry workers and their families. But while the imagery of death and mutilation was often invoked in contemporary accounts of work conditions written by outsiders, an incident occurring in 1911 provides us with perhaps the clearest example of the way in which this imagery was linked and exploited in struggles to improve working conditions.

On the 21 July 1911, ten men were crushed to death and buried by the collapse of a section of the quarry. Significantly, the collapse of the rock face had occurred while the quarry workers were having lunch in a section of the quarry which had been abandoned for some time. In other words it had occured precisely in the manner in which *cavatori* talk about the possibilities of danger in the quarry. Quarry workers repeatedly emphasise that the movement of the rock face occurs in response to their own interventions and further, that the possibility of rockfalls is highest immediately after a period of work when the mountain "reinforces itself" against the "attacks" on it by the workers themselves. The fact that the rock face collapsed while the men were having lunch in the afternoon and were thus "defenceless", is consistent with these notions of their relationship to the quarry and perceptions of risk; perceptions of risk which, I argue, reinforce themes of vulnerability and dependence as well as of resistance and control. These themes reappear in newspaper reports of the incident, but it is significant that while newspaper reports also dwelt on the vulnerability of the dead workers, they emphasised that neglect of safety precautions was not a causal factor in this case.

The republican paper, *l'Independente*, began its report of this "grave and irretrievable misfortune" with an account of the circumstances in which it had occured.

> The white mountain which produces marble has been reddened once again with workers' blood. It was around one o'clock – the hour when our *cavatori* look for a small corner of shade to eat a piece of bread and have a brief rest from

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[11] I discuss the idea of millenarianism and the 1894 revolt in more detail in the last chapter.

> their long and heavy work . . . Around one o'clock they sought refuge under a hump in the mountain under the quarry face in a place which hadn't been worked . . . The foreman was just a boy who left for a few moments to look after something in the hut where they keep all the equipment. He hadn't gone more than 100 metres when the hump under which the workers were resting suddenly broke making an enormous noise and burying fourteen workers. Soon after the foreman returned to the quarry and saw the catastrophe. He was stunned but could do nothing except call the other quarry workers in nearby quarries to come and help (22–23 July 1911).

La Battaglia, the socialist newspaper, also emphasised that "there was nothing that could have been done to predict this disaster" and that the "foreman and another four workers had escaped by a miracle" (22 July 1911).

The accounts continued with a description of the rescue operation which emphasised the dimension of the disaster and the difficulties facing the rescuers. *L'Independente* reported that

> The first workers to arrive at the scene of the disaster were confronted with an enormous pile of marble which measured 10 metres high and four metres wide. The fourteen workers were buried under around 400 cubic metres of marble . . . They began digging a metre wide hole in the precise spot where the workers had been sitting and were soon able to touch the bodies of two workers . . . After they extracted these two they pulled out a dead body which was followed by others. Eventually they managed to extract eight bodies. It was a horrifying spectacle which made the other *cavatori* tremble; the same *cavatori* who are in constant contact with death and who challenge death everyday . . . Four thousand workers were present and as they continued to dig through the rubble they uncovered the bodies of another two workers (22–23 July 1911).

According to *La Battaglia*, the rescue operation, which continued without interruption for two days and two nights, was punctuated with "tortured screams and desperate appeals for help which emanated from beneath this marble tomb" (22 July 1911).

The image of mutilated and entombed bodies permeated accounts of the reaction to the disaster and the subsequent funeral. *La Battaglia* wrote that at the hospital

> . . . a crowd has gathered, dumbfounded, anxious and full of sorrow. Certain scenes have occured which would make even stones weep. Every stretcher that arrives . . . is greeted by the cries and implorations of women and wives. Everyone . . . wants to see and kiss for one last time those inanimate and unrecognizable bodies which they will never see again . . . Honour to these martyrs and victims of work . . . In the white, all too white room . . . in the cold of this marble perhaps excavated by the victims themselves . . . there are ten *cavatori*, lined up against each other, defenceless, rigid, contracted, contorted and swollen in their last gasp of life. There are broken limbs, protruding bones,

> pools of congealed blood, bodies reduced to a uniform mass and a conglomeration of bone, blood and flesh. It is a horrifying and frightening spectacle (22 July 1911).

In the aftermath of the disaster, the city of Carrara came to a complete standstill as a mark of respect for the dead workers and their families. As was the custom in the event of serious injury and death, work in the quarries ceased. This was followed by the closure of local workshops, factories, laboratories and shops. All the various political parties and groups displayed their flags and banners in the city streets and the walls of the city were plastered with posters and funeral notices. According to *L'Independente*, more than 30,000 people attended the funeral in

> a never ending procession . . . grieving for the ten bloody bodies which were carried by their workmates . . . There were hundreds of banners from more than ninety associations. The funeral was a plebiscite of pain and a collective demonstration of mourning and suffering (22–23 July 1911).

The anarcho-syndicalist paper, *Combattiamo*, was more extreme in its condemnation of the disaster and more cynical about promises to assist the victims; the "martyrs of work". Commenting on the funeral, the editor wrote that

> Thousands of people wanted to pay tribute to those poor *cavatori* who were swept away by the white blocks of marble; marble which signifies wealth, well-being and happiness for the local bourgeoisie but for us *cavatori* means hard work, misery and sometimes death . . . We hope that the promised charity offered by the marble industrialists when they were confronted by our companions' mutilated bodies will not be forgotten, as so often has happened in the past . . . We are waiting for those gentlemen to do their work and we will not hesitate to give our support if they really want to help the families of the martyrs of work. But if we find they want to swindle the workers like they have in the past, they will find us to be the most terrifying adversaries (July 1911).

The Bettogli disaster, as it was known, was a crucial event in the history of the labour movement at Carrara, serving as powerful propaganda at a critical moment, when the local *Camera del lavoro* was beginning to reassert itself after the impasse of preceding years. In labour discourse, the images of mutilated bodies and the association of marble with death were juxtaposed with equally familiar ideas of marble as a symbol of wealth and prestige. The image of injured workers entombed in marble thus became a potent metaphor: simultaneously evoking the experience of work and class exploitation.

In August of 1911, only one month after the "Bettogli" funeral, the quarry workers, under the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist controlled *Camera del lavoro*, easily managed to win a major strike which not only renewed the conditions already established in the 1902 contract, but shortened the uniform work timetable to six and a half hours from the *poggio*.[12] From 1911 the labour movement at Carrara won several other demands. The most important of these was the establishment in 1912 of a local pension fund for quarry workers.[13] During these years, the anniversary of the Bettogli disaster was regularly commemorated in local newspapers. A few days before the strike for pensions, *Il Cavatore*, for instance, wrote that

> Now that the martyrs have been buried, or should we say the victims of a bloodthirsty and exploitative capitalism, the quarry workers are continuing their battle for organization . . . only the slightest attempt to improve working conditions . . . was sufficient to enrage all the small and big leeches who live off the backs of the quarry workers . . . The class struggle is about to begin again. The conflict between worker and boss is becoming more and more violent every day, divided by an enormous accumulation of tombs and martyrs . . . workers are now ready to move on the question of workers' pensions (19 July 1912).

And once again, on the eve of a major lockout in 1913, *Il Cavatore* polemised that

> Unfortunately the book of proletarian martyrdom has not been closed with the huge Bettogli tomb. The mountain which moves in this white valley is never satiated in its demand for proletarian flesh. Perhaps the "Bettogli disaster" was the most horrific that has ever occured but how many victims before and after this disaster will we have to count? . . . Today is a day of mourning for the proletarian family. We are thinking of all the victims of work . . . To all those who fearlessly challenge death . . . We send our greetings . . . while we kneel

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[12] The *poggio* refers to an area at the bottom of each of the three mountain valleys leading to the quarries. While some quarries were located quite close to the *poggio*, others were much further away and some workers had to walk for two or three hours to reach the highest mountain quarries. By calculating the working day from the *poggio*, rather than arrival in the quarry, quarry workers achieved a significant reduction in hours worked and also a greater uniformity in work timetables. (In English mining this is known as working "bank to bank"). The six and a half hour day won in 1911, represents a very significant victory, especially considering the much longer hours worked by other contemporary miners and workers in Italy.

[13] As I have noted, the question of a pension fund for marble workers had been under discussion for some years but, due mainly to the weakness of the labour movement, nothing had been done. In 1911, with the resurgence of the *Camera del lavoro*, pensions were once again put on the political agenda. One proposal named for its advocates, the Cucchiari-Chiesa-Paretti project, was rejected because it required a contribution from the workers themselves and because the money collected was destined to the building of local infrastructure as well as pensions. After a general strike, lasting over two weeks and supported by all the marble industry workers, an alternative formula was accepted. This called for a pension fund based on a general tax on marble without contributions from employees.

> before the flag of proletarian rebellion we acknowledge all the victims of capitalism (19 July 1913).

In later years local newspapers continued to record the anniversary of the Bettogli disaster and death and work injury clearly symbolised the exploitation of workers within capitalism. But while the rhetoric of risk constructed catastrophic images of the dangers of work in the quarries to promote the ideas of class war, the labour movement paid little attention to the immediate causes of injury or to the issue of safety. One explanation for this lies, I believe, in the unwillingness of the labour movement to confront workers' own perceptions of their work which stressed on the one hand, the inevitability of work injury and, on the other a certain degree of control over their immediate work environment. Despite the rhetoric of risk, these perceptions, which often led to individualistic explanations of work injury, were not challenged by the labour movement, which continued to conceptualize work injury in class terms. In the following section I examine the ways in which these apparently contradictory perceptions of risk and and responses to safety are made manifest in work practices in the marble quarries today.

PERCEPTIONS OF RISK

Despite the contribution of sociological explanations of occupational injury in male-dominated industries such as coal mining, there are surprisingly few examinations of workers' perceptions of risk. One reason is that up until the early 1980s the literature on occupational health and safety was dominated by industrial psychology and its offshoot, ergonomics. Both these approaches arose in response to the problems associated with the development of early industrial work organization, and were influenced in turn by the ideas of Taylor, Ford and others.[14]

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[14] There were various antecedents to industrial psychology. In an article tracing the historic development of the European science of work, Rabinbach (1986) notes that 20th century industrial psychology effectively replaced an earlier approach to the problems of industrialization, initially epitomised by the Hermholz school of fatigue studies. In the mid-1890s, two further German schools – the physiological school of Fisher, Braune, Zuntz and Rubner and the psychic-physical school of Krapelin and Münsterberg – further developed what became known as the "science of work". The objectives of "science of work" differed to those of Taylorism in that they were generally opposed to the view of the working body as a machine. Instead of time and motion studies, they advocated a shorter working day. In essence the "science of work" was more inclined to support the interests of labour than those of capital and played an important ideological role in early 20th century struggles over the organization of work.

Industrial psychology was primarily oriented to the goals of management rather than workers, in that its main object was to deal with problems of productivity, lack of co-operation, apathy and worker-management conflict. Early industrial psychologists largely denied the structural dimensions of conflict within the work place, labelling worker disaffection the consequence of deviance, misunderstanding, or illness, including mental illness (Quinlan, 1988: 191).The dominance of these psychological theories has had far-reaching effects, the most significant of which is the promotion of an individual rather than a collective notion of injury causation. As Quinlan (1988: 192) succinctly observes, "notions of worker apathy, deviant or incorrect work practices and carelessness . . . pervade the accident prevention and safety literature" and have historically fostered the legitimisation of explicit forms of "victim blaming", even in the absence of supporting evidence.[15]

In contrast to this literature, sociological theories tend to locate the causes of occupational ill health and injury in the wider organizational and technological environment. While the former approach is often conveniently termed "blaming-the-victim", the latter is known as "blaming-the-system". In some critiques of psychological models of occupational health and injury, sociologists have argued that too much attention has been directed towards the behavioural characteristics of individual workers to the exclusion of an examination of work place relations. Furthermore, this emphasis on individual explanations of ill health has reinforced and fed into the dominant notions of health and medical care in Western industrial societies which also understate the incidence of work-related illness.[16]

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[15] Quinlan (1988) notes four separate examples of "victim blaming": accident proneness, ignorance/carelessness, machismo and malingering. In some cases these explanations of individual susceptibility to work-related illness and injury have been associated with certain ethnic groups. Most notable, in Australia at least, are the allegations that recent immigrants are prone to suffer injury at work more than other workers. As several authors have observed (Quinlan 1988:192; Lee and Wrench 1980), in the 1960s and 1970s, terms like "Mediterranean back" and "Greek back" etc. were coined in response to the high rate of back injury reported amongst some groups of immigrant workers, but this labelling ignored the concentration of these immigrants in heavy or dangerous jobs. Similarly, the malingering theme, in other words the idea that certain workers deliberately injure themselves at work or falsify the severity of their injury, has led to the accusation that workers' compensation claims are often fictitious or at the very least exaggerated (Quinlan, 1988:193). Despite the obvious limitations of these explanations , they have found wide support in psychological and medical literature dealing with injured workers. In my opinion, however, the notion of machismo as a factor in injury causation in high risk occupations such as mining has perhaps been underrated in critiques of these psychological models.

[16] One of the central premises underlying all the sociological literature in this area is that ill-health mediates social relations, including work place relations. One example of this is the way in which "sickies", or absenteeim may be used by workers as a means of dealing with the pressures of work. On the other hand, there are also many situations in which workers do not take sick leave even in

More recently, sociological research has attempted to demonstrate that occupational illness is embedded within the social relations of production. These researchers argue that the origins of work place injury are located within the realms of authority structures, production imperatives and payment systems, rather than in the aberrant or deviant behaviour of individuals. In one such pioneering study, Nichols (1975), commenting on the surprising dearth of literature about work injury, asks rhetorically why it is that sociologists

> should find it important to study "mortifications of self" as per Goffman and "degradation ceremonies" as per Garfinkel . . . that so few should concern themselves with mutilation at work; that in sociology, "dirty work" should come to suggest something about "deviance", not coal-mining; that in the overwhelming number of cases, injury and ill health should simply not figure in the works of industrial sociologists (1975: 217).

In this study of work injury, Nichols argues that the structure of control within the work place both legitimates and encourages hazardous work practices. Similarly, in her analysis of work injury in a glass factory, James (1987) found that management and workers differed in their perceptions of the reasons for injury. Whereas management focused on the individual worker as a precipitating factor in work injury, the glass workers perceived work injury as the inevitable result of the work process itself, adopting a number of informal responses to work hazards such as regular absenteeism and other "protective" labour practices. Research by Dwyer (1983) also emphasises authoritarianism and financial incentives as integral factors in the social production of so-called industrial accidents. And more recently again, Quinlan and Bohle (1991) have suggested that sociologists studying occupational health and injury should broaden the focus of their research to include current debates about labour process theory and the influence and impact of the state.

In view of the concerns raised in this brief overview of the study of occupational health and injury, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a distinct lack of interest in examining workers' own perceptions of risk. However, in focusing on the "system" – in other words by locating the sources of work injury entirely within the social relations of production – sociologists of work have in my opinion largely neglected the subjective and cultural dimensions to occupational health and injury. In the conscious over avoidance of psychological theories of work injury, this research

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the case of actual injury, for fear of losing their jobs. Thus in examining the causes of worker absenteeism, sociologists argue that it is essential to look closely at the social context mediating industrial relations at work. The fact that injury became the legitimate terrain for industrial relations is also as Carson (1985) argues, the result of historical processes within Western industrial societies, which have promoted an emphasis on prevention of injury, rather than financial compensation.

has often omitted, or at least seriously underestimated, the degree to which the experience of work creates subjective identities; identities which must play an important role in any discussion of work injury. It is not only that the perceptions of risk in an inherently dangerous occupation are socially constructed; I argue that work injury and body mutilation in turn constitute an important arena for the formation of subjective work identities. Furthermore, workers' perceptions of risk or safety shed some light on the perplexing paradox arising out of much of this literature: even when risk is viewed as part of the wider conflict between capital and labour, workers in hazardous industries often appear to neglect even the most rudimentary of safety precautions.

I argued in the previous chapter that the *cavatori* of Carrara conceptualize their relationship to their work environment in terms of both feelings of vulnerability and of control. These two dimensions of their work identity are also related to their perceptions of risk and safety in the quarries. On the one hand, quarry workers view their work as inherently dangerous; on the other hand, they assert some kind of control through the practical and collective knowledge generated in the course of a lifetime of work in the quarries.

This kind of practical knowledge, or what Kusterer (1978) terms "tacit skills", has its counterpart in other studies of mining. Durham coal miners, for example, call this knowledge "pit sense". Douglass (1977b), describes "pit sense":

> [It is] a kind of instinct, an intuition coupled with actual experience of many underground happenings. An ability to take notice of minute warning signs, sounds and smells. A miner with pit sense will immediately recognize something as different . . . and know at once that something is the matter (1977b: 334–335).

In their study of Yorkshire miners, Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1969: 41) also note that "[Men] come to know those sounds in the roof which suggest a fall, and sometimes a whole team of colliers must scurry into the roadways which are more permanently settled and better supported". Similarly, in a study of South African gold miners, Leger and Mothibeli (1988) describe the way in which these miners are able to predict rockfalls through the "talking rocks"; audible signals which warn of danger. One South African miner describes this:

> You hear sounds, fine stoff [sic] falls and the whole place becomes dusty. When the supports also bend – that is a sign of a rockfall. The rockbolts – when it falls from the roof – tells where there is going to be a rockfall. Once that sound "kwoe" happens, once or twice, after that sound there is just a minute or less, then there's going to be a rockfall. I tell my workers to run out. At times these sounds happen twice a week (1988: 230–231).

In his important study of the Rocky Mountain miners' struggles for improved health care, Derrickson (1988) also notes the ways in which miners utilized these signals to protect one another from injuries, quoting one miner, Malcolm Ross, who observed:

> You are alone with your partner for eight hours, dependent on him to be alert for danger, whether small hurts or death . . . The rock is always treacherous. It is good to be working with an old-timer whose miner ear catches the secret shifting in the disturbed load overhead (1988: 59).

However as Douglass and Kreiger (1983) suggest, changes in the labour process, particularly the noise accompanying mechanization, can interfere with "pit sense", increasing the possibility of work injury:

> Every day new equipment is produced . . . . which is likely to make all who use it deaf, and also render them defenceless against the earth by robbing them of their highly tuned "pit sense" and sharp ears for the moving of the roof and the crack of the coal. Without these subtle warnings the miner is easy victim to the pit (1983: 22).[17]

Like these other miners, Carrara quarry workers also utilize these acquired skills in their work and frequently asserted that they could ascertain with some degree of certainty the signals which warn of a major rockfall or the cracking of a block of marble. These signals emanating from the quarry or sometimes the mountain, were either visual or a combination of visual and audible signals: visible cracks in the rock, the *peli*; the sounds of rocks falling from the top of the quarry; other less well defined sounds of the marble shifting within the quarry. Thus, although one young *cavatore* described the experience of working in the quarry as like "Russian roulette", he maintained that

> The mountain warns you when something is going to happen. It makes a cracking noise. It is protesting.

Similarly, when talking to me about these issues, other quarry workers tried to imitate the sounds of the mountain as it cracked and shifted in response to excavation. They described these sounds as either a sharp "cracking" noise or a slow heavy "groan" of the weight of the rock moving within the mountain which indicated the possibility of some future rupture. Although they were not always able to detect the precise moment of splitting, they professed that they were much more attentive to visual signs of breakage when they heard these sounds. A stray rockfall from the top of the mountain was often the incentive for sending one or two *tecchiaioli* up the mountain to "clean" the rock face – a task which is otherwise regularly carried out in the spring – and men sometimes refused to work under sections of the rock face which they regarded as extremely dangerous.

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[17] I have quoted these examples at length in order to demonstrate the ubiquity of this kind of practical knowledge which appears common to all types of mining and quarrying. Given its extent, it is surprising that many writers appear to dismiss these kinds of acquired skills as of little importance (see Leger and Mothibeli 1988:236).

When working closer to the stone, visual rather than audible signs were more often utilized to predict breakages. As I have described, quarry workers are highly sensitive to the many cracks and imperfections marking the blocks of marble. They maintain that they could quite accurately determine the way a block would break by close observation of these cracks; cracks which are often hardly perceptible to people unfamiliar with marble. This kind of knowledge, which is clearly linked to notions of skill, enables workers to confront their daily work tasks with some sense of control over their immediate work environment. But despite their confidence in their ability to predict certain quarry dangers, most quarry workers recognize that no controls are absolute. Cues may be missed or misinterpreted or in certain cases may not be forthcoming. For example, some blocks of marble contain *peli nemici* or "enemy faults", which are hidden within the marble block or within the mountain itself. These faults are often invoked in explanations and justifications of work injury where all the normal precautions have been taken. In other words, injury itself does not contradict or undermine the notion of the importance of practical knowledge and skill; rather, it reinforces the contention that without this kind of knowledge, injuries would be far more frequent.

The link between practical knowledge and the prevention of injury is also apparent in work organization within the quarry. Older and more experienced workers often take on the more dangerous tasks. In particular, younger workers are prevented from working underneath blocks which appear especially dangerous and, theoretically at least, the foreman is consulted in all potentially dangerous work situations. Furthermore, quarry workers generally maintain a great deal of latitude and respect for the personal fears, wishes, and personal idiosyncrasies of others. For example, while *tecchiaoli* are generally revered for their courage, other less skilled workers are not pressured to take on more dangerous tasks. But conversely, as I have pointed out, the notion of skill conveys not only the idea of individual talent but also the capacity to deal with some of the more dangerous and unavoidable problems. Thus skilled workers in the quarry – in contrast to unskilled workers – inevitably describe themselves in terms of ideas about their own masculinity vis-a-vis others.

Although cowardice is not a major theme in the stories of *cavatori* who in more private moments admit the presence of fear in themselves and others, the individual capacity to deal with danger in the quarry is associated positively with masculine prowess. In one conversation, Arimante, the foreman of a well known quarry commented that

> In the quarry we are men above anything else. It depends on how well we can get the marble out . . . Marble is tough, but we are tougher.

Being tough, and not showing obvious fear, is an important component of work identity which also has implications for an explanation of the frequent neglect of safety procedures. Even a casual visit to the quarries would alarm anyone who has the slightest familiarity with these procedures. On my visits to the quarries it was a standard joke to draw attention to all the hard hats, prescribed for normal daily use, hanging up in the canteens. Men laughed about the fact that they put these on only when they were informed of an impending visit from health and safety officers. Although ropes were sometimes used when quarry workers constructed platforms high up on the mountain face, they were usually avoided during other more routine, but equally dangerous operations, such as moving the large *bancate* of marble. While safety barriers were normally erected to protect workers from the diamond wire, the wire was rarely stopped when workers had to pass in front of the machine or adjust its movement. Workers dealing with tasks higher up in the quarry, often inadvertently sent debris falling down into the base of the quarry, sometimes narrowly missing others intent on tasks in this section of the quarry. Blocks of marble were often precariously balanced when loaded onto trucks and I witnessed personally two minor injuries as blocks slipped off the truck, scraping workers standing nearby. Thus while a common adage in the quarries was that *cavatori* "could defend themselves from the machinery, but not the mountain", in many situations, quarry workers quite obviously maintained extremely cavalier attitudes towards safety procedures.

There are several possible interpretations for this behaviour. Quarry workers readily admitted that they were inhibited in conforming to safety regulations for fear of being regarded by other workers as "weak" or "soft". To insist on wearing a rope or a hard hat was in a sense to leave oneself open to the disparaging comments of others and to put one's masculinity into question. Even when individual workers were well aware of the risks they took by not conforming to well established official safety procedures, they often remarked to me that they found it extremely difficult to go against their peers in the context of these more informal collective work practices. More importantly, however, most quarry workers insisted that these kinds of safety precautions, such as wearing a hard hat or using ropes, would not prevent injuries. Indeed, they argued, some of these procedures both hindered their work and were also quite useless in the event of a rockfall or breakage in the rock. They asserted, furthermore, that the necessity to maintain a high rate of marble production meant that they could not afford the time required for strict adherence to these safety regulations.

In essence they regarded safety precautions as designed more to protect employers from legal repercussions than to lessen the risks of work.

The increased pace of production associated with the introduction of the diamond wire was commonly viewed as contributing to an increase in work injury. But in discussing the risks involved with these transformations, it is significant that many quarry workers focused not directly on the new technology, but rather on the effects of this technology and consequent rapid production on the mountain itself. As one experienced quarry worker stated,

> The mountain is avenging itself. It doesn't have time to recuperate any more. The mountain needs to be excavated more slowly and less suddenly. It's changing too quickly.

Similarly, another younger worker, commented,

> Before the work was much more tiring but today there's too much production. The mountain is continually reinforcing itself from one cut to another. The *tecchia* is getting too high and the mountains are being worked too quickly. There's no time any more to be aware of the dangers.

Workers frequently complained of the increased stress associated with the diamond wire which also inhibited their ability to detect audible or visual signals warning of potential danger. Transformations in the production of marble are thus reinterpreted and expressed in terms of work identities constructed around a direct relationship between work and the physical environment. Technological innovation not only alters the work process, it also undermines the fundamental assumptions through which these identities are formed. In asserting that they are "no longer tranquil" in the the quarries, quarry workers are suggesting that their own established notions of skill and practical knowledge are becoming less effective in protecting them from danger. At the same time, they place little faith in the solutions imposed by health and safety officers who have no experience of work in the quarries and whose life experience is regarded as far removed from the life and work situations the workers encounter. For their own part, health and safety officers generally regard the often-quoted workers' solution to injury – a shortened working day – as utopian.

One apparently paradoxical consequence of these perceptions of risk is that quarry workers tend to deny that work injuries have class characteristics, frequently explaining work injury in terms of their own carelessness and over-confidence rather than as the result of employer neglect. Thus according to Roberto, an experienced foreman,

> Accidents will always occur in the quarry, always, always. As long as there is the quarry there will be accidents. It's not always the owner's fault. It's the

> confidence the worker has in his job. It's a habit we have. We're used to working like this.

In terms of the common assumptions about the industrial militancy and class interests of miners, this statement, superficially at least, seems difficult to understand. If, however, we no longer assume that there is any necessary or *a priori* connection between particular forms of work or work organization and a certain kind of political consciousness, it becomes more comprehensible. If, furthermore, we take into account the experiences of workers themselves and seriously consider their own world views and perceptions of work, then I think we are closer to understanding the ways in which people participate in the creation of meanings and construct unique and coherent work identities which make sense, at least to them.

Rather than as a job, quarry workers see their work as an "art"; a craft which relies on individual and embodied skills as well as on collective knowledge. They are confident that their knowledge of marble and the mountain will usually protect them in their routine confrontations with danger. When this knowledge fails, they blame themselves, rationalizing their failure in terms of the inevitability of danger and possible death. This willingness to accept blame is a direct result of a perception of work which emphasises individual and collective control over the immediate work environment. Although asserting that injuries are inevitable, ultimately quarry workers blame themselves for particular injuries which, they insist, often occur through their own carelessness or from behaving with too much confidence in their work; a kind of professional hubris. This professional pride is certainly one element which impedes improvements to safety. But rather than an indication of "false consciousness", I would argue that these perceptions of risk are empirically validated by the extremely hazardous nature of work in the quarries. Quarry workers resist the interventions of safety and health personnel precisely because they experience directly the risks of work, and because they place more faith in their own knowledge and skill than other palliative measures. To some extent, the labour movement's neglect of safety issues in the quarries is also an outcome of these perceptions of risk. Today, quarry workers continue to argue that first aid facilities and an improved rescue operation for injured workers are the really crucial problems.

As involuntary conscripts in what they regard as a kind of guerilla war, the *cavatori* of Carrara therefore find some consolation in the technical control of their work environment and in their conviction that they are equal to the dangers and risks of daily work. In the face of all the danger, this control is a last line of defence; a defence which, however, occasionally leads to their own downfall.

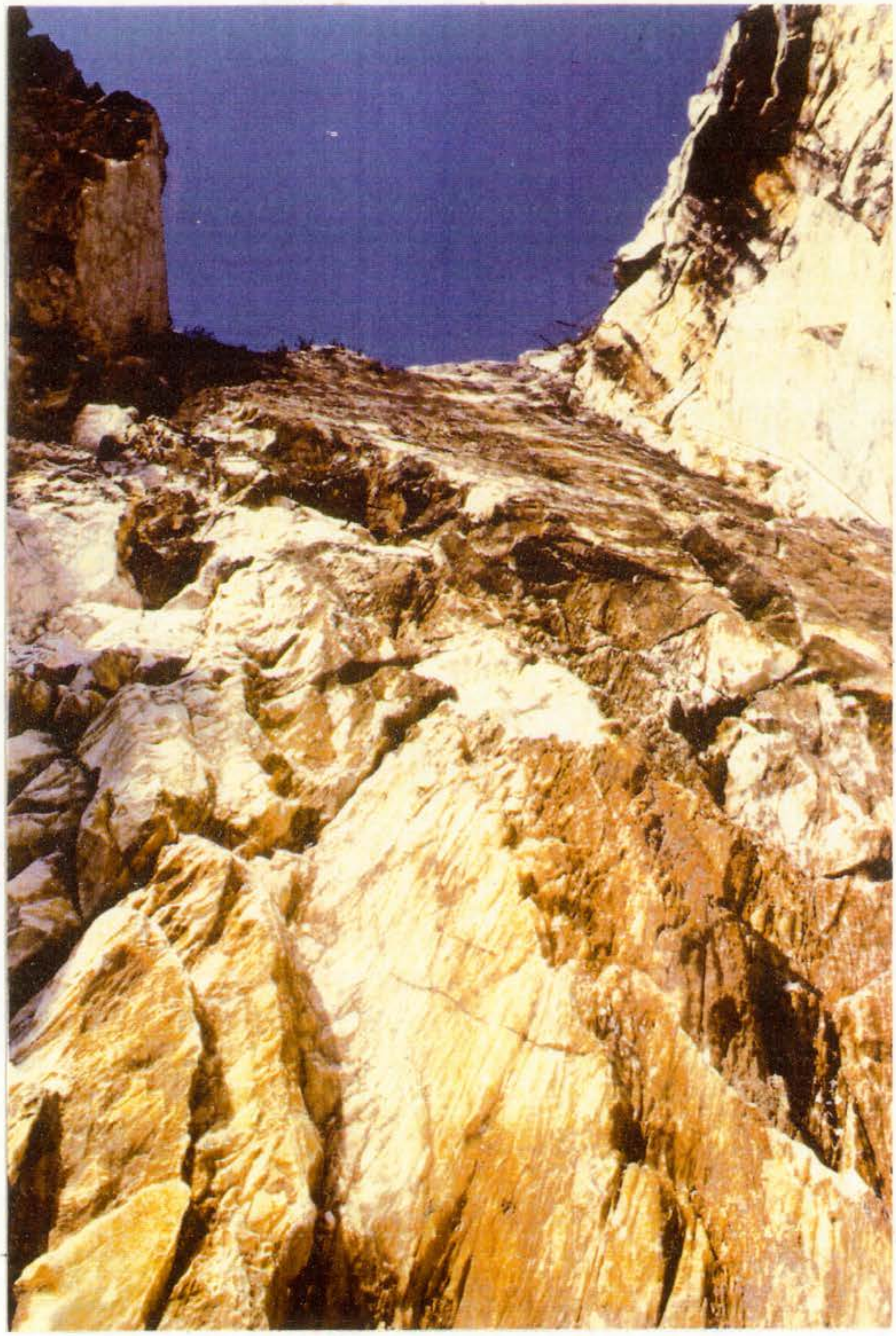

Plate 20. The *tecchia* from below.

THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH

In the marble villages, as with other mining communities, death and work injury is a collectively lived experience. The funerals of quarry workers are moments of collective mourning and public demonstrations of the extent to which the fear of death or body mutilation affects the whole community. The death of any village inhabitant involves the entire community, but the death of a *cavatore* resonates more intensively: funeral processions display class solidarity as well as respect for the dead. The funerals of quarry workers are usually large affairs involving relatives and friends as well as work mates. As the procession moves through the village, women and children line the streets to watch and village shopkeepers lower their shutters for the duration of the procession. The banners of the various political parties and groups in the village are always prominently displayed on these occasions, and in anti-clerical funerals these banners follow immediately after the coffin, replacing the usual role of the village priest. The brass band which leads the procession through the streets plays political songs, rather than religious hymns or funeral dirges, and funeral wreaths are placed on a marble plaque dedicated to the "martyrs of work".

The collective experience of death and work injury extends beyond the confines of the physical work environment and the social relations of the production of marble. It is linked not only to the collective campaigns of quarry workers to improve their working conditions, but also to the experiences of families in a community where unexpected or early death was a common and often catastrophic event. A death in the quarries epitomises and reveals themes of vulnerability and dependence, felt and expressed in class as well as gender terms.

One of the most powerful and eloquent images of the collective response to death and injury in the quarries, is what was known as the *catena* or "human chain". Before the construction of roads, the mountainous terrain and the scattered nature of the quarries inhibited rescue operations for injured workers. First aid stations were located at various points at the bottom of the three main marble valleys, or *canali*, and consequently, at some distance from the higher mountain quarries. In the absence of road transport, workers had few alternatives other than organizing the transportation of injured workers themselves.

Until recently, a serious injury or death was signalled by the sounding of the *mugnon* (horn). This horn sounded once for a serious injury, three times for a death. When the sound of the *mugnon* reverberated through the marble valleys, quarry workers in all the nearby quarries immediately ceased work in order to help with the rescue operation. While workmates dealt with the immediate retrieval of the body, other quarry workers began forming two teams of men to carry the body to the bottom of the valley, or at least to a place where the injured worker could be taken more easily by road to the first aid station or the hospital at Carrara. The dead or injured man was placed on a rudimentary stretcher, often constructed out of a flat piece of marble tied with the rags or rope lying around in the quarry, and covered with a piece of white material if he was still alive, or black if he was dead. This stretcher was then tied with rope onto the shoulders of the two teams of men who, supported by other men, ran with the stretcher down the steep mountain slope. While the "human chain" was the only means of quickly rescuing an injured worker, it is not difficult to envisage the effects of this means of transport upon a person who had already suffered severe injuries. Indeed, dead workers were often not taken to the hospital at all, but rather to the village women who specialized in the reconstruction of bodies.

Arimante, whose grandfather had been killed in the quarries and rescued through the "chain", gave me a vivid description of the state in which dead workers reached the village and the work of these women:

> When there was an accident in the quarries you didn't find an ordinary death. The body always had to be put back together again. The body was usually completely squashed . . . maybe under a block of marble . . . it was always squashed. It was horrifying to even look at it and in the villages there were always women who were specialists in putting the bodies back together again. They tried to make the bodies look like men before their relatives saw them.

A death in the quarries not only brought work to a complete halt in the workplace, it also affected life and work in Carrara and in the marble villages. Stoppani (1920) powerfully evokes the atmosphere in Carrara in the late 19th century as the news of death reached the city:

> Every time one heard of a death or injury in the quarries, it was customary to ring the church bells inviting the faithful to prayer. Not a day passed when one did not hear those terrible chimes and each time there was a jump of terror and a terrible anxiety for the hundreds of fathers, mothers, wives and girlfriends in the whole city. Everyone who heard those bells had relations in the quarries. Inspired by humanitarian motives, the religious authorities were thus forced to prohibit the ringing of the bells on these occasions (1920: 447).

The frequent abandonment of work in the event of serious injury and death also became a major topic of debate when local marble industrialists attempted to apply the disciplinary practices of Taylorist-inspired work organization in the quarries. For example, Fabricotti, a prominent marble "baron" controlling several large quarry concessions, singles out this practice in his influential treatise entitled *The Scientific Organization of Work in the Marble Quarries of Carrara* (1927). Progress in the quarries of Carrara, he suggested, would not be achieved simply through technological innovation. A more efficient work organization depended, he maintained, upon the elimination of all the work practices involving a loss of labour time, including the abolition of the sounding of the siren and the prevention of the mass exodus of workers from the quarries in the event of injury or death. At the same time, he acknowledged reluctantly that this depended upon the installation of an improved casualty and first aid service.

Despite these suggestions, the sounding of the siren continued and few improvements were made to the rescue service until the construction of roads which allowed access to ambulances. Today, local council authorities are debating a helicopter rescue service and although the "human chain" is no longer necessary, workers continue to abandon the quarries when they are notified of a serious accident or death. The immediate and collective responses of quarry workers to the death and injury of work mates must therefore be understood primarily in terms of the lack of alternative rescue services and inadequate first aid facilities. Their concern with these problems, rather than the issue of safety and prevention of injury, is however also the outcome of a collective work identity in which mutual aid and fraternalism is a primary constituent. While the experience of work fosters individual explanations of work injury, collective work practices, like the "human chain", or the mass abandonment of work, poignantly express the sense of vulnerability felt by all quarry workers to the possibilities of death or body mutilation at work; a vulnerability which is partially exorcised in overt and public demonstrations of mutual aid and fraternal solidarity.

The limits to this kind of fraternal solidarity are, however, also highlighted by the manner in which death is publicly announced in the village. As I mentioned in my introductory comments, while the issue of safety was a constant theme in my conversations with quarry workers during fieldwork, these men were usually reticent in providing details of the causes of injury. Women in the village, however, were often provoked into narrating highly emotive accounts of the process in which they had been informed of the death of close kin in the quarries. One of the most compelling aspects of these accounts is that the announcement of death in the village is, in fact, articulated through silence. Whereas in villages located in close proximity to the quarries, relatives were informed of an injury through the sounding of the siren, in other villages like Gragnana, located in valleys outside the marble basin where the siren could not be heard, the first indication of death or serious injury was the early return of workers from the quarry. In both cases, relatives of injured workers were not directly informed of what had occurred but rather were expected to learn through the downcast gaze and silence of quarry workers as they filed though the village. As one woman in Gragnana commented,

> We were just expected to know. You imagined the worst. The whole village came to a complete halt. Life stopped when the men came home early. Sometimes they told you that so and so had had a minor injury but was all right. You went to the hospital and there he was, dead.

Narrating the story of how a close neighbour had been informed of her husband's death, another woman from Gragnana similarly evoked the silence which surrounds these events:

> I'll never forget that day. I go all cold thinking about it. I saw Michele, who had come home earlier than usual. Me being a loud mouth said, "What's up?" He made a sign to be quiet but I didn't understand. I'm such a big mouth. I asked him again, "What's happened?" He made another sign and then I realized. I suddenly realized that something had happened. But . . . the wife was really clever. She came to the window. She had realized. "Has it happened to me?" and it was true. Her husband was dead but Michele didn't have the courage to tell her. No one had the courage to tell the relatives. Usually someone said something like, "He's been hurt", which meant that he was dead. I'll never forget that day. I get the shivers when I think about it.

The manner in which people were expected to understand through the silence and gaze of others that a close relative had died is again evident in the following account. It concerns the death of the father of a woman who worked in a local bakery.

> Everyone knew what had happened. They looked at her strangely in the shop as they passed by. When she finally discovered that her father was dead she exclaimed, "That's why everyone has been looking at me so strangely!"

Male relatives were also subjected to this code of silence. Recalling as a child the death of his grandfather, one man from a nearby village commented emotionally,

> No one told me. I noticed that he hadn't returned with the others. Finally I asked one of his workmates who said, "Don't you know? He's dead." They didn't tell you.

While I was living in the village, these kind of stories were related so frequently, and with such emotional intensity, that I began asking why close relatives were not directly informed of death or injury. For although some degree of silence surrounds any death or disease in Italy, in the marble villages it is articulated in a highly exaggerated and dramatised form. I was puzzled by the disjunction between the overtly public announcement of death in the quarries and the silence which it invokes in the village. I was frustrated, too, by my inability to elicit verbal explanations of the lack of direct communication of death and injury to close relatives, for my persistent questioning usually got no further than incredulous comments on my stupidity. As Lucia, a widow in her late seventies exclaimed,

> They didn't say anything to the family. You were supposed to imagine. It's happened to me! You know it's not exactly an easy thing to say. At Gragnana everyone worked in the quarries. It happened quite often. Are you mad? . . . The whole village was sad . . . In those days you really felt it when someone died. The loss, the misfortune!

The only explicit explanation for this silence was "lack of courage". Recalling her constant anxiety when quarry workers returned home early from work, Assuntina narrated the story of how she had heard of the death of her brother-in-law.

> Bruno [her husband] had a terrible habit of staying until the last moment to help out. When the men came home early I used to ask them about the accident. One day I asked the first person I saw. He said, "Why are you so curious? But then he said, "I'm sorry". I said, "Tell me". He said, "Your brother. I don't know exactly". They didn't have the courage to tell you. We went to the hospital but he was dead. They were all too demoralized.

Another quarry worker was more explicit:

> When something happened the family was the last to know because no one was courageous enough to tell them. When the *mugnon* sounded you always thought the worst. A fatal or serious accident. It sounded so that other *cavatori* could come and help out . . . When the women came out of their houses it hurt to gossip. There was a sense of solidarity towards the family. If no one said anything you assumed it was one of your family.

Contrary to this explanation, however, women do not always experience the silence surrounding the announcement of death as an expression of solidarity and compassion towards them or their families. Rather, women in the village interpret the inability of men to directly inform them of a death or serious injury in terms of the men's "lack of courage". This interpretation highlights a crucial dimension of the experience of death in these villages: women are actually excluded from knowing about the causes of death through the fraternal solidarity of men. While I will examine more closely the processes of female inclusion and exclusion in the world of marble in the following chapter, here I want to note the implications of this exclusion for male work identity.

If the "human chain" was an expression of the practical solidarity extended towards injured work mates, the non-announcement of death in the villages illustrates, at least in part, the degree to which quarry workers hold themselves responsible for injuries. Because quarry workers often explain injury in terms of their own carelessness and lack of attention, they also feel partially responsible for the death or injury of others. Thus when they cite "lack of courage" as the principal reason for not informing relatives of the death of their kin, *cavatori* are referring not only to the difficulty of being the bearers of bad news, but also to the negative consequences of a perception of work which emphasises individual control over the immediate work environment. This sense of collective responsibility for death or injury is one reason for their reticence in providing detailed accounts of the circumstances in which injury occurs. As one man succinctly remarked, "In the quarries there is *omerta*".

Thus while the silence, or *omerta*, surrounding death and explanations of the causes of injury protects workers and their employers from possible legal repercussions resulting from their lack of adherence to safety regulations, it also expresses the feelings of collective guilt exposed in the event of the death of a workmate in the quarries. At another level, the power to withold or distort information reminds us that people in positions of disadvantage may use any tool they can to maintain their sense of self-worth. The code of silence may therefore also be comprehended as a form of resistance to external interpretations of the world of marble; a world in which meanings are created only through practical, rather than scientific or purely technical experience.

The difficulties in interpreting the meaning of this silence are also related to problems of representation in ethnographic writing. As Hastrup (1990) has recently observed,

> A too narrow focus on verbal statements distorts the experiential reality of people where silences and other negativities also define the world. In the real world silences remain unspoken; they make no "events", no speech-acts. Ultimately, this is why we can never actually represent other cultures, only evoke them. In language we can encircle the lived reality, but it remains a shadow in our text. Life is no text, and is not reducible to one (1990: 53).

In the quarries of Carrara, the code of silence thus evokes the experience of death, but is not reducible to a single interpretation of "reality". However in death, silence becomes visible as an integral component of the culture of work in this world of marble. Through silence, the preoccupations of a community in which injury is a constant and predictable consequence of work and death is a frequent event, are made manifest. In the following chapter, I explore the implications of this silence for women.

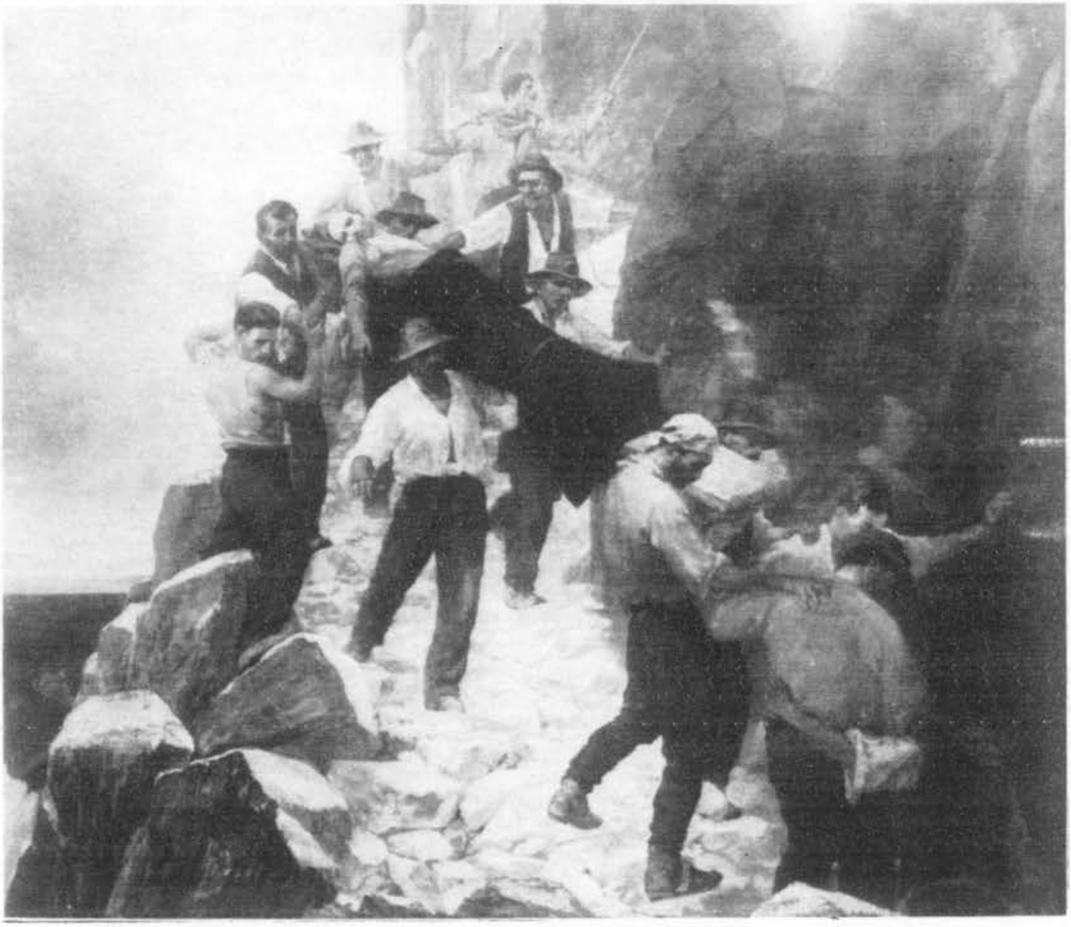

Plate 21. The *catena* (painting by Sergio Vatteroni, from catalogue of exhibition: *Raccontare il Marmo: Immagini dalla fine degli anni '20 all' Inizio degli anni '50).*

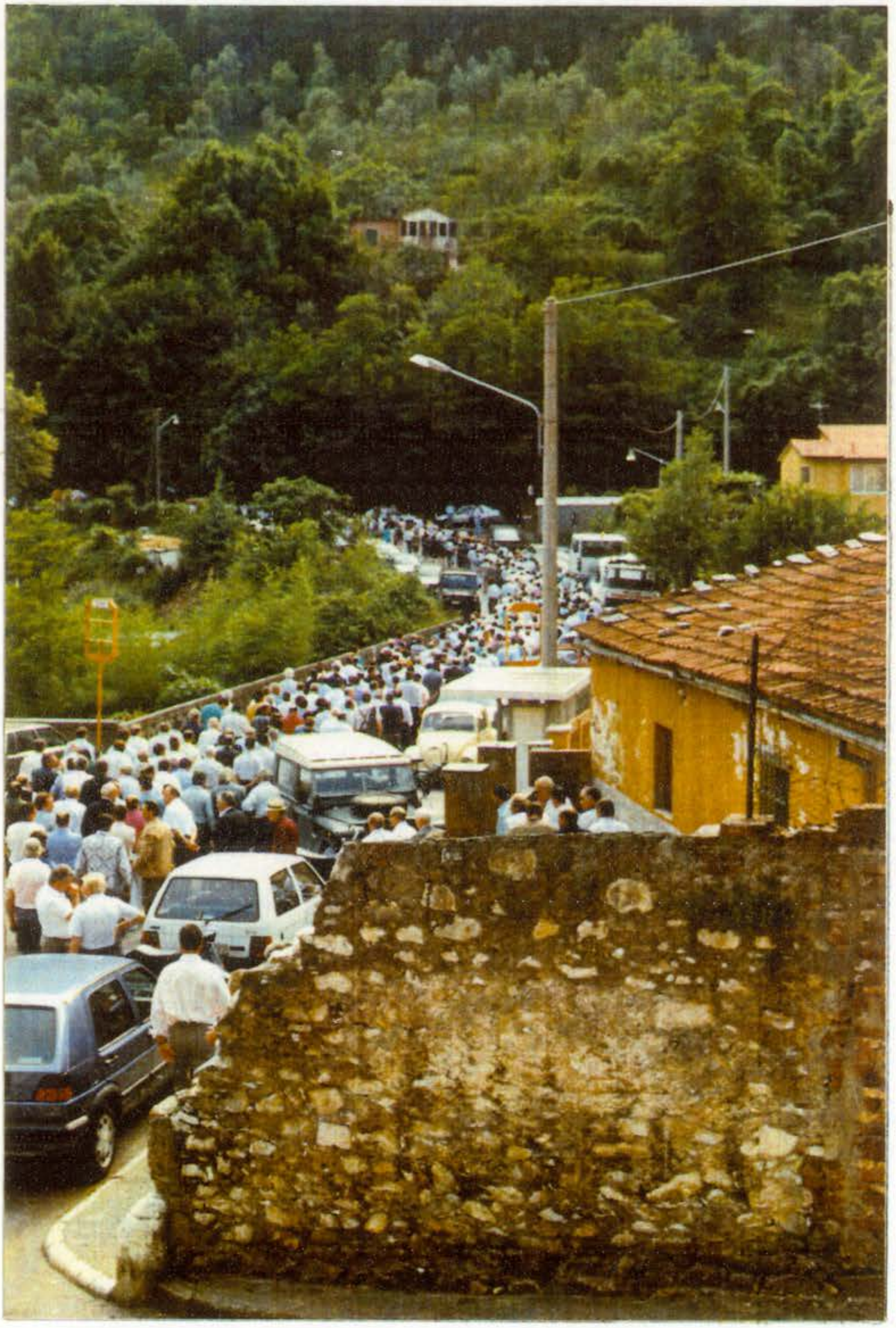

Plate 22. Funeral of a *cavatore* in Torano.

CHAPTER FIVE

Home, Work, and Politics in the Marble Villages

"*Qui nacque, visse, morì, l'uomo più duro nel mondo*" (The hardest man in the world was born, lived and died here) – village saying.

ALTHOUGH studies of mining and mining communities figure prominently in the sociology and history of work, this literature gives little attention to women. One reason is labour history's long tradition of stressing the separation of home and work; of drawing away from the evident interrelationships between work place organization and the domestic economy (Bornat 1978). Sociologists of work have also retained models or conceptualizations of work which, in focusing predominantly on the production process, obscure the complex relationships linking the household to the work place.[1] Consequently, the few women who appear in this literature, are often described solely in terms of their reproductive roles as mothers and wives, while their economic roles are ignored.[2]

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[1] This is not just a problem in the mining and work literature. As Yeatman (1986) points out, although gender has been placed on the sociological agenda, the major theoretical paradigms in sociology as well as anthropology still have a masculinist bias where there is no room for "domestic space or a new conception of the 'domestic sphere'". She argues that this privileging of the "public" has the effect of making the public domain appear falsely as self-sustaining and self-sufficient. In this context, " it is not just that "the economy" looms larger in theoretical terms than "love" but that "love" disappears altogether from theoretical view. We have a theoretical accounting of social life which proceeds on the basis of *omission* of love relations and domestic life" (1986: 159 emphasis in original). For two recent historical studies integrating family and domestic relations with the workplace, see Hareven (1982) and Whipp (1990).

[2] Interestingly, as Cole (1991: 78) has noted, these sociological representations of women in mining communities mirror the anthropological representations of women in southern Europe, including Italy, which also relegate women almost entirely to the domestic realm of social life and neglect any analysis of their contributions to the local economy.

The emphasis on women's family roles legitimates otherwise unexplored inferences. It is often asserted, for example, that it is the dependence of women upon a single male breadwinner which subordinates women to men in these communities. Furthermore, just as male miners have been represented as archetypal proletarians female subordination in the mining family is often generalized to the entire working class. One problem in assessing these claims is the dearth of empirical studies of women in mining towns and villages. It is debatable, for example, whether the enduring influence, indeed almost iconographic status, of *Coal is our Life* (Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter 1956), the study of a Yorkshire mining village in the 1950s, is due to its epistemological salience or to the lack of alternative literature. As one of the few works discussing gender relations it was, perhaps, remarkable for its era, but its continued relevance for analyses of other communities as distant in time and space as Australia three decades later (Williams 1981), must surely be questioned (Pahl 1984: 4; Lummis 1985).

A further problem is the common assumption that the working class family can realistically be defined as a type of family; that it is the mode of production itself which determines the ways in which families are organized, and which imposes the constraints within which women may or may not operate. While it is common for women to depend upon a single male breadwinner, it is by no means a universal feature of working class families. The ways in which dependency is articulated, as well as the strategies families employ in learning to survive and support one another within the constraints of the wage-capital relationship, are as yet not deeply examined. In such circumstances an assumption that women are subordinated within the mining family may prematurely close interesting avenues of inquiry.

This chapter is broadly concerned with social and cultural relationships between home and work. Here I am using "home" to refer to the everyday practices of life in the village as well as the more intimate social relationships within the household. I see these practices and relationships not as a peripheral arena of social analysis but, rather, as central to the constitution of social consciousness in the world of marble. The first section discusses what I term the "economy of fear": the ways in which women assume emotional responsibility for danger in the quarries. A discussion of the important contributions of female labour to the pre-war household economy leads onto an account of the role of women in household management today. This section also looks at housework, and at its association with cultural constructions of femininity; an association, I argue, which is as much a reflection of contemporary ideologies of domesticity as of cultural codes of honour. The second section extends this analysis, focusing on the socialization of young women towards marriage, the importance of motherhood and the control of female sexuality. In the last part of chapter, I discuss women and politics and argue that although women do not play an active role in either work or party politics, this should not be interpreted as a lack of political consciousness. Rather, I suggest that while these communities are characterized by a shared sense of vulnerability and dependence, women and men do not always share the same political interests or goals.

A final introductory point: while recent feminist scholarship highlighting the necessity to explore difference,[3] has questioned the universal applicability or relevance of the sociological category "women", in my opinion a focus on the female experience of life remains productive and insightful within a body of literature where women as social actors are largely underrepresented and undervalued. I agree whole-heartedly with Marilyn Strathern's (1987: 278) comment that "[N]o one any longer can talk unselfconsciously about the position of women" in ethnographic writing. In trying to present a sensitive account of the differences between women in this community, I am only too well aware that in confining "women" to one chapter, I risk the ire of those who insist that anthropological writings about women are part of a western and masculinist epistemology which "posits the possibility of a disembodied and therefore uncontaminated reason; namely objectivity" (Kirby 1989: 18). I can only reply that I prefer to attempt to express Carrara women's voices, although, of course, this representation is as much my own invention (Wagner 1975) as that of the women who speak in this text.

THE ECONOMY OF FEAR

In a variety of ways the marble quarrying villages of Carrara display many of the characteristics of dependency described for other mining communities. The close physical proximity of the villages to the quarries, the regional dependence on marble as both a raw material and export product as well as its susceptibility to periodic fluctuations in market demand, are all important features of the marble industry at Carrara. As in other mining communities, the effects of industrial crises such as strikes and lockouts are felt primarily by the families of workers involved. Furthermore, as outlined in the previous chapter, the dangers inherent in the quarrying of marble tend to bring the inhabitants of the quarrying villages together in a shared sense of vulnerability. It is, however, precisely in an exploration of this notion of shared vulnerability that the themes of female exclusion and inclusion, separation and embodiment, are revealed.

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[3] This body of literature is enormous. I have found it useful to look at the recent anthropological debate on the problems of applying recent feminist theories of difference to ethnographic writing. In particular, Kirby (1989, 1991); Strathern (1985, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1990); Stacy (1988); Mascia-Lees et al (1989); Caplan (1988a, 1988b), Moore (1988), Jennaway (1990); Larbalestier (1990).

As I argued in the previous chapter, solidarity towards other male workers takes precedence over informing wives, daughters and other female relatives of death and injury. In maintaining silence, quarry workers not only protect one another, as well as their employers, from possible blame and legal repercussions; they also reiterate a view of work which places them as central protagonists and arbiters of their own individual and collective fate. The "code of silence" may thus be viewed as a means through which quarry workers assert their own vision of work vis-a-vis that of outside experts.

But this silence also excludes women. Women are never allowed to know the precise circumstances of injury, nor are they ever directly informed of the death of close kin. Family members are expected to interpret these events through the looks and glances of those fellow villagers who are incautious enough to directly ask the men returning from work early. Exhorted to give details, men frequently brush aside the fact of death with assurances that injuries are slight. This silence partially explains the atmosphere of tension and anxiety which envelops the village on occasions of death or serious injury in the quarries. At the same time, fear of the death or possible injury of close kin is a powerful underlying theme which orients the daily organization and preoccupations of women's lives in these villages.

At one level this is illustrated by the degree to which male work routines structure the domestic activities of women in Gragnana. As I describe in more detail later, the wives of quarry workers generally ensure that they are at home when their husbands return from work in the mid-afternoon and they are fastidious about rising early in the morning to prepare their husbands' lunch and breakfast. Similarly, excursions out of the village and recreational activities are all carefully coordinated with these work routines. In conversations with me, these women emphasised that although they sometimes felt constrained by these timetables, being at home when their husbands returned from work was a measure of respect for the arduous and risky nature of quarry work. Guilt may also be a motivating factor, illustrated, at least partially, in the narration of cautionary tales. One story, narrated by the wife of a quarry worker, refers explicitly to this tension:

> A woman once said to her husband, "Darling these feathers are pricking my skin. I need to go to the beach. He replied, "Darling if you need to go, go". The next day when the woman was at the beach her husband died in the quarries.

As I describe later, these cautionary tales are ambiguous in their moral message; on the one hand parodies of the way in which women feel constrained by their husbands' work timetable, on the other hints of genuine feelings of remorse if they were away from home when their husband died at work. In everyday conversation in homes and in the village, salutations such as "*fat a mòdr*", "be careful", manifest the degree to which danger permeates daily practices of both women and men.

Female assertions that they fear the quarries encapsulate these preoccupations more dramatically. One of my neighbours, Alda, commented on several different occasions that the first time she had seen her husband's quarry she "had gone white with fright". In the context of talking about the possibilities of serious injuries in the quarries, she related the story of her husband who had almost died after being crushed by a block of marble some years previously. She explained that, afterwards, she always worried:

> I thought it [an injury] wouldn't happen again and then it did. I always think about it . . . even though the quarries are safer now. When Elio had his accident I wasn't interested in going to see the quarry again. I'm always worried. Perhaps if I went to the quarries more often I'd get used to it and it wouldn't bother me.

Maria Rosa, asserted that she had never been to see where her husband worked. Although she was able to give a detailed description of his work, she stated that she had never wanted to see exactly what he did. When I asked her why, she explained that

> One day my husband said to me, "come and see the quarry". But I didn't go. If I saw the quarry I'd die! I live in darkness. If I don't know anything then I'm not thinking about it all the time. If I think about it, I can't sleep, day or night.

In the marble villages female knowledge of work is mediated through the experiences of men. Most women in the village today have no direct experience of quarry work. The majority of younger women asserted that they had never seen a quarry at close quarters, despite their geographic proximity and the way the quarries visually dominate the natural landscape. But although women are physically separated from the quarries, work routines impinge upon the everyday practices and conversation in village households. The wives of quarry workers are familiar with the daily vicissitudes of their husband's work and are able to give detailed accounts of the problems incurred in the work place. They are familiar, too, with the character and personalities of the employers and know personally the men with whom their husbands work. Furthermore, the bonds of friendship formed between these women foster a sense of solidarity between men and women in times of industrial crisis. But while male quarry workers are usually stoic about the dangers and rigours of their occupation, women often amplify these risks. In expressing, more precisely, exaggerating, their fear of the quarries, women also voice the preoccupations of their men, who are less willing to admit their own vulnerability. Women in this sense take on the role of worrying for men.[4] In worrying, they express their solidarity with men. But while men are perceived as the protagonists in the "war of marble", their identity defined by their role on the front-line, women are only admitted into the communion of battle, by upholding the exploits of men from behind the barricades.

This brief discussion highlights a number of important points. Firstly women are not only physically separated from the quarries, they are also excluded from any direct participation in quarry work. In the crucial instance of industrial injuries, this exclusion is elaborated in the non reporting of details in the village. The solidarity of men in the work group is thus not always extended to women and mutual aid is defined fraternally. Secondly, despite this separation and exclusion, the lives of women in the marble villages are oriented around the activities and work routines of men. The wives of quarry workers support both physically and emotionally their husbands' work. In articulating and exaggerating their own fears and preoccupations, they also express those of their husbands. Thus in the world of marble, home and work cannot be regarded as separate spheres of human experience, but rather, as mutually dependent and connected.

WOMEN AND WORK IN THE PRE-WAR ECONOMY

Any account of women and work must be situated within the development of the regional economy and opportunities for female employment in the period following the end of the 1939–1945 war. This development largely mirrored transformations in the national economy of Italy.

In 1987, William Scobie, an *Observer* journalist, wrote:

> Italy has become, in 1987, one of Europe's greatest success stories. Suddenly this is the land of upward mobility, of vital computerized industry, bustling young business managers and slick middle-aged tycoons who have abjured their sixties ideals in the sacred cause of profit. Class war is passé. Export or die (in Ginsborg 1990: 409).

Today, Italy vies with Britain as the fifth largest industrial nation in western Europe. But in the mid-fifties Italy was still, in many respects, an underdeveloped country. "Most Italians", notes Ginsborg,

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[4] See Dona Lee Davis's (1986) study of a Newfoundland fishing community for a similar account of the way in which women take on the burden of worrying for men in this community.

> still earned their living, if they earned it at all, in the traditional sections of the economy: in small technologically backward, labour-intensive firms, in the public administration, in a great proliferation of small shops and trades, in agriculture. Standards of living remained very low. In 1951 the elementary combination of electricity, drinking water and an inside lavatory could be found in only 7.4 per cent of Italian households (1990: 210).

From 1945 to 1970, a period popularly dubbed the "economic miracle", Italy underwent massive transformations in economy and society. The economy changed from one based largely on agricultural activities to one in which the industrial and manufacturing sectors predominated. This development, fostered by the huge growth in international trade and fuelled by the mass production of consumer goods for mass markets, produced an unprecedented period of prosperity.

Far from increasing opportunities for female employment, this prosperity saw a decrease in the number of women in the workforce, particularly married women with children. Although the big industrialized cities in the north provided employment opportunities for younger unmarried women, in the 1960s the percentage of women in the Italian workforce was one of the lowest in Europe (Ginsborg 1990: 244). While many women were engaged in part-time work, much of this was piecework, either at home or in the informal sector. New patterns of leisure as well as an emphasis on home-based living and consumption, fostered by advertising, saw more Italian women than ever before becoming full-time housewives. The gender division of labour within the household became increasingly marked, while at the same time there was increased secularisation and urbanization. These factors are important in understanding the changing nature of families and gender relations in contemporary Italian social life.

From the late 1970s, the Italian feminist movement campaigned for civil reforms, including equality in education and an end to sexual discrimination. In 1974 a new divorce law was passed, followed by a law allowing abortion in 1978.[5] Carrara women supported these campaigns, even though as I later demonstrate, contemporary feminism seems to have had a limited impact on the way in which many older women in the marble villages see their roles within the family.

For the older women in contemporary Carrara, the last years of the 1939–45 war had been particularly difficult. Work in the quarries had completely ceased and many men were conscripted into the army. From late 1943, Carrara was part of the occupied zone in northern Italy. Factories constructed along the coast became targets for allied bombing raids and much of the local infrastructure, including bridges and roads, was destroyed. The occupying German forces used starvation to combat the local resistance movement and they massacred entire populations of several mountain villages.[6] During this period, many women from Carrara undertook the long and arduous trek, over the mountains to Emilia Romagna, in order to procure food for their families. Others were reduced to begging. Many women I spoke to in Gragnana vividly recollected their experiences of these events, speaking about them with bitterness, but also with a sense of pride in their own survival. As Pia recalls,

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[5] See Caldwell (1981) for a history of the controversy surrounding the passing of the abortion legislation. This law is still quite restrictive as women under 18 still require parental permission.

> We went to Parma for flour. We were lucky if we had shoes! I remember one time when I was away for sixteen days to try and get something for the family and children to eat. I went part of the way by train, then a got a lift by truck. I came home on a cart. I had on a soldier's skirt, dry, covered with blood. We went to Equi on foot. We went to get chestnut flour. We were barefoot!

During the post-war years the agricultural sector of the local economy continued its decline, accelerated in succeeding years by increased urbanization along the coast and a further depopulation of the high mountain villages of the Lunigiana.[7] Immediately after the war, some local families of marble workers emigrated to the Val d'Aosta in Piedmont, another important area for marble production. Other unemployed men eventually found jobs in the chemical and manufacturing industries, constructed during these decades. However, these industries provided few work opportunities for women. Today, the local tourist and service industries are the most significant arenas of formal female employment in the region.

Earlier, I referred to the interdependence of agriculture and the marble industry in the pre-war regional economy. I noted that agricultural activities were still important in household economic strategies, despite the overall decline of agriculture in the formal economy. Thus while the Carrarese economy in earlier decades has been characterized as an export monoculture, oriented primarily around the marble industry, this description ignores the ways in which households continued to utilize small-scale agriculture to survive in times of economic and industrial crises in the marble industry.

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[6] In one celebrated moment of local resistance, in July of 1944, the German army was forced to withdraw an order for the evacuation of the city after a mass demonstration by Carrara women (Mosti 1973: 72–73).

[7] Statistical evidence provides a measure of the scale of this decline. From 1936 to 1971 there was a decrease of 87 per cent in the number of people registered as earning their living from agriculture alone (Borgioli and Gemignani 1977: 27).

This became clear during my fieldwork when women spoke about their lives in the village during and before the war. Reconstructing this economy through these women's accounts, a picture emerges of an economy reliant on small-scale agriculture, self-sufficiency, limited consumption and the exchange of products rather than cash; an economy in which the household is the basic unit of production and the concept of labour is indistinguishable from wage-work.

The question of periodization is relevant here. Older women in the village tend to talk about the past in vague terms, merging all times before the present. Other women in their thirties and forties talk about the past more specifically, referring to their experience of girlhood in the 1950s and 1960s. In both cases, women distinguish the "past" from the "present", in terms of the kinds of transformations in economy and society I referred to above. In other words, more than a generational time difference, the "past" represents a period when life itself was dramatically different. As Luisa Passerini (1987: 17) reminds us in her study of memory and working class culture during fascism, these kinds of oral testimonies are "first and foremost, statements of cultural identity in which memory continuously adapts received traditions to present circumstances".[8] In the account of the domestic economy which follows, I have mainly used the testimonies of older women in the village, women whose self-representations and identities are linked to the period during and before the end of the second world war, when women and children played a major role in household production.

At this time, produce derived from small family plots of land and products collected from the nearby forests supplemented or replaced incomes from wage-labour. Families grew their own vegetables and fruit trees and kept a variety of animals including chickens, rabbits, pigs, even cows. The meat from pigs killed during the autumn was used to make salami and sausages, supplementing diets otherwise scarce in meat. Some households with access to larger tracts of land, grew other staples like corn, which ground into flour was often cooked with cabbage in a huge caste iron pot, the *polenta incatenata.* There were also a few full-time shepherding households in the village. The men in these families were responsible for looking after the small flocks of sheep, taking them in the summer to the nearby mountain pastures; the women made cheese and other sheep milk products which were sold or bartered in the markets of Carrara or in the village. Other household produce, such as milk, eggs and rabbits, was commonly sold door-to-door in the village. Households thus employed a myriad of different strategies to make a living, utilizing the unpaid labour of all members of the family. As one older quarry worker remarked to me, "Every marble worker defended himself with the small orchard". In other words, in periods of unemployment or no regular cash income from paid work, these strategies were critical to the families' survival.

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[8] Passerini notes importantly that in many cases the self-representations of individuals in oral history demonstrate a reliance on recurring collective stereotypes with mythological and cosmological reverberations. Thinking about these kinds of collective self-representations allows us to think about the links between the past and the present; about continuity and identity, "not as gradual process taking place in accordance with evolutionary models, but as lives which include, apart, that is, from the long repetitive grind, sudden and dramatic changes and the splitting of personality" (1987: 63).

Barter or exchange of homegrown produce and forest products also circumvented reliance on cash transactions. This system of informal exchange was used extensively throughout the marble villages and, combined with limited consumption, permitted a degree of household self-sufficiency. As Assuntina, a woman in her seventies, recalls,

> We survived on homegrown products. Every three buckets of chestnuts, they [the mill] took one. We exchanged like that. They gave me bread at the bakery and I gave them wood. We were self-sufficient is a small way.

Households exchanged products collected by their own labour for other products available in the village. The local bakeries played a key role: exchanging wood for the flour from which bread and pasta was made, and arranging credit at other local shops for their regular wood suppliers in return for a quantity of bread. Occasionally they also paid cash for wood, at a price determined by the quality and size of the bundle. Raw chestnuts collected in the forest were exchanged at the local mill for a percentage of their weight in flour. Corn was exchanged in a similar manner, while women making their own bread left a certain number of loaves at the bakery in return for using the ovens. Skills and labour were similarly reciprocated in house maintenance.

As mentioned earlier, in periods of economic crisis, some more marginal quarry operators also used a system of credit in lieu of regular cash wages. Although quarry employees and their families derived some benefits from these credit arrangements, the system of payment through *buoni*, credit notes, was resented throughout the marble villages. Women especially, disliked having to rely on one particular shopkeeper, who, frequently, according to their accounts, supplied inferior or surplus products and was often not even located in the village. As the following comments reveal, shopkeepers were often regarded negatively.

> The shopkeepers were sitting fine, curse them. They didn't even ask you what you wanted especially if you were one of those people who couldn't pay [in cash].

> Perhaps they [the shopkeepers] gave you what they wanted, not what you wanted. The shop was never liked because you could see profit in the shop. Not having a secure monthly salary, the *cavatori* had to trust the shopkeeper. For the *cavatori* the shopkeepers were sometimes good people because they gave you credit!

In these kinds of more unequal credit arrangements, quarry worker families were aware of their double exploitation as both consumers and producers (Nash 1979: 92).

Whereas the system of barter and exchange of products reduced the need for cash and shop commodities, the charcoal trade provided women with an additional source of income. Just as shepherds utilized the communal mountain pastures for grazing their sheep, some households exploited the forest resources to produce charcoal. These people depended upon the labour of inhabitants living in villages closer to the coast to transport their product to the markets of Carrara. The village of Gragnana, situated midway between these mountain pastures and Carrara, was especially well placed. In the charcoal season, teams of women and children made daily journeys of several kilometres up the narrow mountain paths to purchase the charcoal, which they subsequently sold at a higher price in the market or to individual clients. As a young woman during the war, Katerina had gone on many charcoal expeditions; she vividly remembered the extremely arduous nature of this work. As she recalls,

> for the entire period of the war . . . all of Gragnana, all the women and all the children, young and old . . . the whole of Gragnana. Sometimes in the morning there were fifty of us. Even those who hadn't slept, who were really tired. We all went for charcoal. We carried huge sacks. Every so often we had a rest until we reached Gragnana. We were exhausted! We carried huge sacks of charcoal on our heads and backs. Sometimes we carried forty or fifty kilos down those paths. There wasn't a road in those days.

In all these activities – the charcoal trade, the gathering and selling of forest products, the cultivation of household gardens and orchards, the exchange and barter of household produce – the contribution of female labour was crucial. And while some women looked back nostalgically to this period, the relative hardship of their lives was also emphasised in their descriptions of themselves as virtual packhorses. The following comments, gathered from several interviews and discussions with older women in the village, illuminate both this sense of independence and the hardship.

> We were self-sufficient in a small way . . . People made do with what they could from their fields. Today no one wants to have anything to do with them!

> The woods today are all dressed but before they were nude. Away for wood! Away for half an hour! *Tun*! *Tun*! *Tun*! to the mountains! We left the children sleeping in bed. A boiled chestnut to eat, then away, home. We had the children still in bed!
>
> It was a terrible life. My back is all broken because of the work I had to do. Everyone was like that. Life was hard for everyone. You didn't earn a lira.
>
> Women's lives were harder. The mountains were completely beaten down they were so walked upon . . . Women were everywhere . . . for wood, for charcoal, in the fields or in the family plots . . . Every so often we used to stop and rest. Then we'd have a singsong. Life was harder but it was more harmonious.
>
> We used to do odd jobs to stay alive. Firewood and charcoal. We used to go for charcoal. Everyone at Gragnana used to go for wood and charcoal . . . The woods were full from elbow to elbow.
>
> Wood, charcoal, hay and good company! Wood, wood, wood, above all. There wasn't work for everyone at the quarries. At Torano there was always more possibility of work because they lived closer to the quarries. Gragnana has always been quite a big village and there wasn't enough work for everyone and there isn't anything else. We didn't have those factories then. At one time there might be charcoal, then hay. When there wasn't anything else we went for wood.

Some women were also employed casually to help in the heavy fetching and carrying tasks associated with the quarry. Women sometimes carried bags of sand to the mountain quarries and occasionally worked as manual labourers, removing stones and repairing the access roads. Others organized themselves into work teams to supply food and provisions to men who spent most of the week in the higher mountain quarries. A few of these more remote mountain quarries also employed permanent female cooks, often wives or relatives of resident men. Thus, as in other mining communities, women were occasionally engaged in some of the heavier unskilled tasks of quarry work, despite being excluded from working in the quarry itself.

Despite the limited opportunities for formal wage-work, many women were engaged in part-time work at home. Some took in washing for more wealthy households at Carrara, and for widows at least, laundering was a principal means of making a living. Others worked part-time as housekeepers and cleaners. Dressmaking was also an activity which sustained families; there were numerous small workshops and tailors who employed women on a piecework basis. Women also played a major role in village retailing, managing small businesses selling wine and other goods, and in Gragnana the three bakeries were all run by women. Given the exclusion of women from work in the quarries, these activities provided women with alternative means of earning their own independent income.

In the pre-war economy of the marble villages, female labour was therefore not only valued, it was indispensable. Despite the dependency of these communities on the marble industry for wage-work, in periods of economic crisis, the labour of women and children enabled households to survive. Limited consumption patterns, as well as the system of barter and exchange in which women played a major role, fostered a sense of economic self-sufficiency. The transformation of this economy, from one oriented around marginal agricultural activities and equally marginal quarry work, to an economy based on an expanding industrial and manufacturing sector and a more secure extraction industry, was accompanied by a trend which saw more women than ever before not only confined to the home, but also becoming full-time housewives. This was the outcome of both economic transformations and the new domestic ideology and culture of the post-war period. The 1950s and 1960s were the first decades when working class women could become full-time housewives and it is not surprising that they also aspired to this role.

WOMEN AND WORK IN CONTEMPORARY GRAGNANA

Despite the transformations in the Italian economy in the post-war years, very few married women in Gragnana are today engaged in full-time wage labour. Whereas mothers often encourage their unmarried daughters to find paid work as a first step towards marriage, older married women define themselves primarily as housewives and mothers, and eschew paid employment outside the home.

Like their husbands, older women in the village had rarely continued their schooling past primary school level. Even with the introduction of compulsory high school education in the 1960s, many women now in their 30s had not been encouraged to further their educational qualifications. Rather, they were socialized to become full-time housewives and taught all the arts of good housekeeping. Many women of this generation in the village had attended a school run by Catholic nuns, where they were taught embroidery and dressmaking. After school, some worked casually as shop assistants or as dressmakers, while others worked as part-time cleaners and housekeepers. Today, a small group of women work full-time in a men's clothing factory in Carrara, while a few others, younger married women, also work full-time as teachers, secretaries, accountants and nurses.

Part-time cleaning work is also common. Several married women in the village have casual cleaning jobs, employed either in private houses or by the local council. Women also supplement the household income with various activities

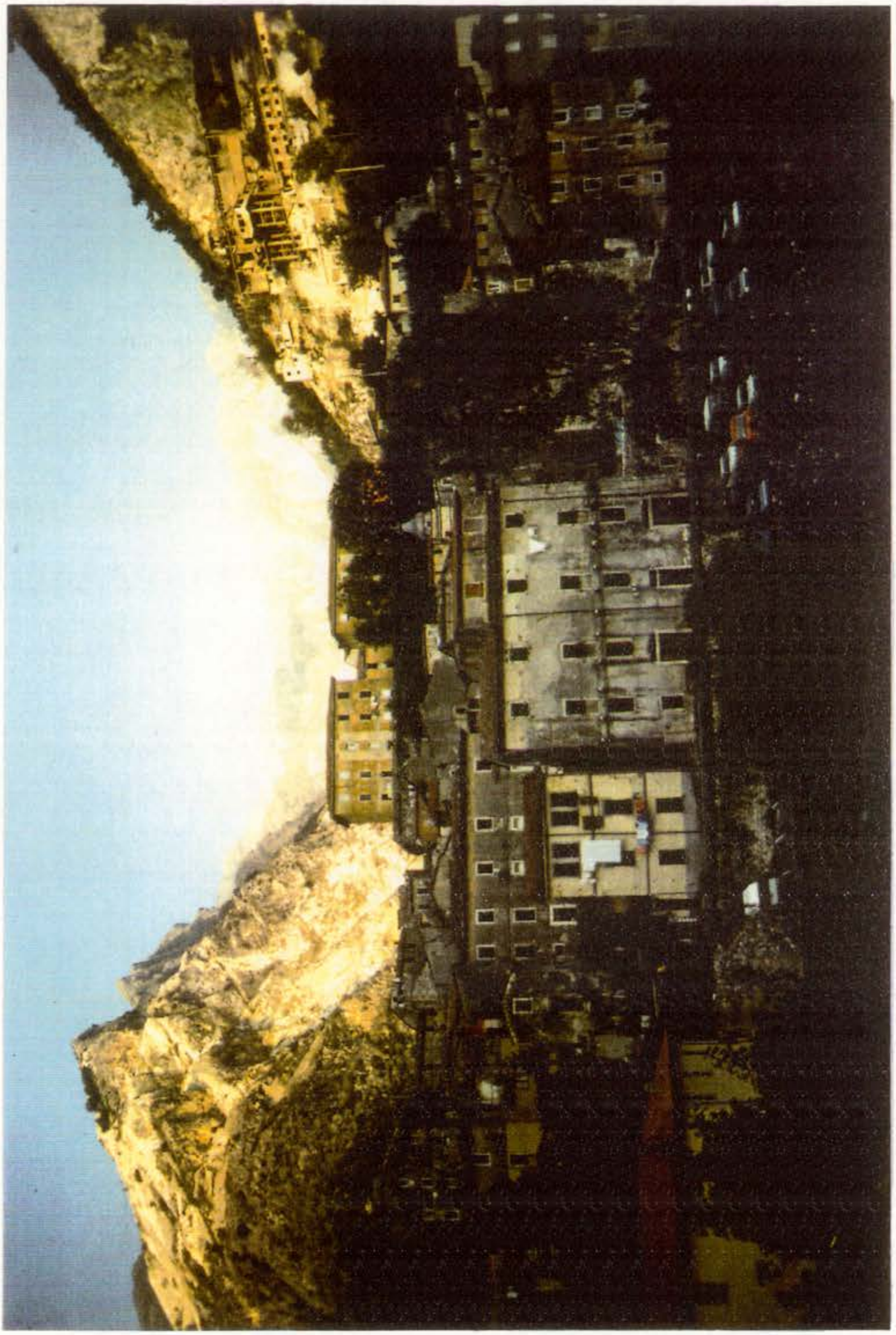

Plate 23. Torano.

Plate 24. Bettino and his sheep in Gragnana.

conducted from the home like dressmaking, knitting, embroidery and hairdressing. Until recently, many also worked as pieceworkers, sewing boots for a local shoe factory. During the summer months, some women work in the tourist industry, as cooks or waitresses, and several shops in the village are owned and operated by women.

Although the few women who have full-time jobs suggested to me that they gained a sense of autonomy through being able to earn their own independent income, economic necessity is the main motivation for part-time work. Comparing their lives with the increased opportunities for younger women today, these women expressed a sense of regret about their own lack of education. But apart from lack of educational opportunity and the predominantly male occupational structure of industry in Carrara, women are often prevented from working outside the home by negative social attitudes towards female wage labour.

In an interesting reinterpretation of the role of women in the pre-war domestic economy, both men and women suggested to me that men feel degraded by their wives working outside the home because it reflects badly upon the male role as principal breadwinner. Domestic work in private houses is especially disparaged for reasons which are consistent with both notions of male pride and cultural codes of honour. Domestic work in the houses of strangers is viewed as particularly dangerous. Women themselves confirmed this association between loss of reputation and domestic work, inferring that women who worked as cleaners are seen by men as easy prey to the advances of their employers. There is the constant danger, in the words of one informant, that "the *signori* might touch the bottoms of their servants". This preoccupation was reiterated on many other occasions, although most women also maintained that these kinds of attitudes were the product of "old-fashioned mentalities". However, even in cases of economic necessity, men sometimes still oppose their wives' working outside the home. As one man explained,

> I won't send her. I don't trust them. A woman should stay at home. There's plenty of work at home without doing other people's housework. Doing other people's housework is humiliating for me and for her. Men have their pride.

Thus despite economic necessity, the preservation of masculine pride and honour within essentially patriarchal notions of masculine and feminine roles, is an important barrier to women taking up the kinds of work which are available to them.[9]

However, women themselves also see their identity very much linked to the domestic sphere. Most married women regard housework and parenting as full-time occupations requiring their undivided attention. Housework for many women is not a sacrifice but is rather an improvement on the lifestyle of their mother's generation, when female production was crucial to the household economy and household tasks including childcare were additional work. Indeed, one could argue, that contrary to the conventional view that Italian women have always ideally located themselves entirely within the domestic sphere of social life, the idealization of domesticity in contemporary cultural life is a more recent phenomenon; the product of post-war economic transformations, fuelled by mass consumption and the mass media. Liberated from the necessity to labour outside the home, many more women are now "self-confined" to the home, defining themselves primarily in terms of their reproductive roles as mothers and wives.[10] Domestic life is viewed positively and activities which take women away from the domestic sphere, like wage-labour or outside domestic work, conflict with women's own perceptions that their proper place is at home.

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[9] See Goddard (1987) for a detailed discussion of this paradox in Naples.

Early accounts of housing and living conditions in these villages, do not evoke the idea of a bucolic existence. Living standards only improved in the post-war years with the introduction of sanitation, running water and electricity. Houses are often extremely small with a few tiny rooms. There is a shortage of accommodation and while widows often live alone, widowers generally share a daughter's house. Until they marry, children also usually live at home with their parents.

The demands of housework are onerous not merely because it takes time and energy, but also because it is perceived as a task requiring total dedication (Goddard 1987: 187). Within the household there is a strict division of labour, with women as the primary care givers and domestic workers. All work within the household from cooking, cleaning and shopping to childcare is carried out by women and girls. Single men are looked after by female relatives, while women who are unable to attend to their normal domestic duties rely upon other female relatives, or friends, to do the shopping and cleaning for their families.

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[10] I am drawing a distinction here between the concept of honour and these domestic ideologies. While a preoccupation with honour is taken as a given in many Mediterranean societies and linked to the control of women's sexuality and a concern to control property and resources (Goody & Tambiah 1973) as well as creating and defending boundaries between different groups (Tillion 1983, Schneider and Schneider 1976) and controlling female labour (Cutrufelli 1975), it is unclear, as Goddard (1987) suggests, to what extent honour is an exclusively male code and how women perceive it. Here I am using the idea of a domestic ideology as a more positive construct to examine women's lives. In other words, whereas the code of honour also ideally links women to the domestic sphere of life, it seems to me that only recently has it been economically possible for women in positions of economic disadvantage, to adhere totally to these ideas of domesticity. While it might be argued that, far from liberation, this idealization of domesticity is just another form of female oppression, in the context of Italian ethnography it seems important to isolate the ways in which women do or do not actively participate in the reproduction of these ideologies.

The domestic routine begins in the early hours of the morning. The wives of quarry workers often rise before their husbands to prepare breakfast and organize the lunch boxes taken to work. In some larger quarries, canteens have been installed at the request of workers and while women usually commented that they preferred the convenience of these arrangements, they also stressed that the food prepared there was inferior to their own. Some men also complained about the quality of the food and insisted on taking their own lunches to work. The link between home and work; between women as caring and nurturing figures within the family and men as principal wage earners outside the home, is reinforced and symbolised by the provision of food (Nash 1979: 75) and the degree of attention women give to men before and after work.

This attention is also measured by the care women take with their daily domestic duties: in cleaning, shopping and preparing food for the whole family. Housework itself is a demanding activity which seems to expand to fill almost every moment of available time during the day. During the mornings women regularly clean and polish their houses, air and make the beds for all members of the household and do numerous loads of washing. While nearly all households in the village have washing machines, a few women insist on doing their washing at the much more inconvenient communal washing tubs, asserting that the water from the river is more efficacious for washing than town water. Shopping too is taken very seriously and is a daily activity usually at the village shops. Women take a great deal of care in purchasing food, seeking the freshest and best quality products, as well as paying attention to the particular preferences of family members. These daily shopping excursions in the village are as much moments of sociability as domestic duty and provide the possibility for conversation and exchange of gossip. Older women, whose domestic tasks are less onerous, also make good use of the chairs provided in these shops which at times take on the appearance of professional waiting rooms. After shopping women return home to prepare the midday lunch, which nowadays is a rather haphazard affair, at least during the weekdays.

The wives of quarry workers usually prepare two midday meals. One for themselves and their children around midday, and another meal for their husbands returning from work during the mid-afternoon. The period between their own lunch and their husband's return from work was usually the best time to visit my female neighbours at home. This is the one period during the day when they felt totally free to engage in their own pursuits outside their normal domestic tasks, to have a coffee together with other friends in neighbouring houses and to watch the afternoon soap operas on television.[11] After the preparation of the mid-afternoon meal, the wives of quarry workers usually spend the rest of the afternoon engaged in other domestic tasks, like ironing or sewing. In the early evening they begin the preparation of the evening meal, which is the main meal of the day and the time when most of the family is gathered together.

As I suggested earlier, men's work timetables circumscribe the domestic routines of women in the village. Excursions out of the village and visits to neighbouring houses are all carefully timed to coordinate with these routines. Many women, but especially the wives of quarry workers, are reluctant to leave the village during the afternoon. This is most apparent during the summer, when the exodus of young people to the beach leaves the village with a rather forlorn and empty air. At other times, I noticed that afternoon coffee sessions were also often interrupted by the arrival of husbands back from work and women often seemed agitated, if for some reason they were unable to be at home during the afternoon.

During conversations with me, the wives of *cavatori* admitted to feeling constrained by the necessity to be at home during the afternoons. But other women, whose husbands worked more regular timetables, also asserted that they needed to provide excuses for being out of the house during the day, even while the man was at work. One woman who was not married to a quarry worker asserted,

> My father didn't care where I went. My husband is very different. Whenever I go to Carrara I have to tell him before.going. My father never asked me. He never said anything. With my husband I always have to say. On the other hand, my husband never tells me when he's going out. Men have a lot more freedom to do what they want. I don't know whether that's right or not but the fact is they can do what they want. It would be good if women could do the same but we can't.

This comment underlines the perception of many women that they have less autonomy than men in terms of freedom of movement outside the house and village. The limitations placed on or accepted by women to move outside the domestic space, defined as the village in some contexts or the house in others, are linked to cultural notions of femininity. Female identity, at least that of married women, is constructed within the domestic sphere. The identification of women with domesticity and motherhood is thus the product of both individual ideas of self worth, and the social construction of femininity in which housework itself takes on a particular symbolic load.[12]

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[11] These programmes, on four different channels, are assiduously followed by the majority of women in the village who delight in narrating the plots and describing the personalities of the characters in these mainly American serials.

THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSEWORK AND DOMESTICITY

Housework in the village is a public as well as a private affair. While an extraordinary amount of time is devoted to cleaning and polishing the interiors of houses, the public spaces adjacent to houses are similarly meticulously swept and washed daily. Women are judged by their abilities to clean and cook and the dedication with which they pursue housekeeping tasks is, to a certain extent, synonymous with a woman's moral reputation.

The preparation of food in particular, is closely bound up with a woman's social and moral reputation and linked to her family. The execution of village specialities, such as the *torte di riso*, a huge baked custard made with at least twenty eggs, or wild boar is the subject of a great deal of friendly rivalry, particularly on festive occasions when women cook their cakes in the village bakeries. Although recipes vary in only the minutest of details, every woman in the village insists that hers is the correct and best recipe, or subject herself to self-criticism if for some reason the dish fails. Men too, proudly comment on their wives' cooking prowess and the success of the various political festivals, held over the summer months in the village, depends largely on the quality of the food prepared by women. This was made clear on one occasion when, during a discussion over the viability of the anarchist festival, one prominent anarchist commented that it was essential for the festival to have the continued support of the anarchist women in the village. Other women, he said,

> can't be trusted. Who is going to make the *stoccafisso* (boiled cod)? Other women might not be clean.

Gesticulating, he commented further that, "Who is to know if they will touch their vaginas and then the food?" A number of issues arise out of this comment, including the association of a man's political reputation, indeed manliness itself, with the support of wives for these public events; an issue which I develop later in this chapter. Here I am more concerned with the reputation of women and the symbolic connections between housekeeping abilities and cleanliness as a gauge of a woman's moral worth.

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[12] I do not mean to suggest here that all women in the village share similar ideas about the association of femininity with domesticity. Individual women, as well as different generations of women, will obviously have quite different ideas about this. What I am trying to suggest is that despite these differences, there are nonetheless hegemonic views of femininity which were consistently presented to me while I was living in the village. Women not only articulated these ideas, but the everyday practices of life seemed to me to be consistent with these conscious evocations. If they are stereotypes, then they are stereotypes which were actively enacted, practised and embodied.

Certain linguistic expressions used in the village illustrate this association between housework and female virtue more precisely. One example is the term "*brava donna*"or "good woman", which is frequently used as a positive descriptive reference by and about women in the village. When I asked women what they meant by this expression, they gave very similar replies:

> *Brava donna*! Someone who minds her own business and doesn't go to bed with other men. No! Who's *brava*? Someone who *fa corni*![13] Who drinks! Oh *figliola*! (daughter).
>
> *Brava donna*! When you don't *fa corni* and someone who minds her own business and doesn't gossip.
>
> A *brava donna* is someone who looks after her husband and not another man. Who doesn't gossip and who stays with her husband.
>
> The *brave donne* are the real women. The ones who dedicate themselves to their family and their husbands.

Similar comments were elicited by questions about the qualities of a good wife. One woman asserted that "for a woman the most important qualities are honesty and intelligence and above all not to *fa corni*". Another suggested, "a good wife is someone who knows how to do the housework well; who's precise; who knows how to look after her husband and the kids; who knows how to spend her husband's salary; who doesn't *fa corni* and who knows how to respect her husband". According to these informants, most women in the village were considered *brava*. As one of my neighbours asserted, "No one's perfect. We all have our faults but we're all *brava*". The opposite of a *brava donna* is a *donna leggera*, or a woman who is "easy" and who "goes round talking and letting her husband go out of the house with crumpled clothing".

These comments emphasise the association between a woman's performance as a caring and nurturing figure and female virtue. Cleanliness and dedication to domestic duty measure a woman's dedication to her family and husband and are indicative of her moral worth. A woman who has a dirty home or who is perceived as being lazy and bad at housework, is not only frowned upon, but is also quite likely to be considered morally suspect. All these aspects of a woman's identity are conflated within this notion of the *brava donna*; a figure of speech which is consciously referred to and acted upon in the daily routines of women in the village. Here too, speech itself, in the form of gossip, reiterates these same ideas and the behaviour of women is either modified or controlled by its negative effects. One neighbour's comment is sufficient to illustrate this point. Referring to her desire not to be socially conditioned by what she called the "mentality of the village," she asserted:

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[13] Literally, *fa corni* means "to grow horns" and is an abbreviated version of "*fare le corno al marito/alla moglie*", or being unfaithful to one's husband or wife.

> Here they are very keen on cleaning and housekeeping. There's trouble if you're not. They stand and watch what you do and make comments. They watch to see if you spend a lot of money. If they see you spending they comment, "Look at that spendthrift! How come she's able to buy all those things? She gets the same amount of money as everyone else. Where does all the extra money come from!" Do you understand what I mean?

The inference is that the woman must be prostituting herself.

Thus while in public, and often in conversations with me – an outsider to the village – women insisted on reiterating these stereotypes, in private, they also referred to the hypocrisy and double standards contained within such associations. Indeed they sometimes used the term *brava* ironically. The tension and ambiguity contained within the ideals of femininity and their actual practice, is also epitomised in a number of exemplary stories narrated to me while I was living in the village. One such story, illustrating the connection between work in the quarries and the duties of wives, concerns the cleaning of work boots.

Quarry workers are often denoted by various expressions concerning their work attire. "He wears boots", for instance, is equivalent to saying "He is a quarry worker". In the village it is common to see women fastidiously cleaning their husband's work boots outside their homes, and a.quarry worker's house is easily recognized by the appearance of these work boots resting on benches or steps just outside the front door, or by washing lines decked with numerous pairs of the heavy grey woollen socks used in quarry work. The cleaning of work boots is thus an explicitly female task which symbolises the domestic duties of wives in general.

> There was once a woman who never cleaned her husband's boots. One day her husband, who was really fed up with his wife came home, took off his boots and stuck a rolling pin into them. She soon got the message.

This story, which I was told on many occasions, is certainly laconic, but it is precisely the matter-of-fact quality and the centrality of the two major symbols which give it force.

Similar stories repeated in the village have as their central theme both the unreasonable demands by men upon women and the inevitability of punishment. Another story reported by a woman in the village is typical.

> There was once a man who came home from work to find that his dinner wasn't ready for him. He said nothing to his wife at the time but took to his bed and refused to eat for several days until his wife learnt her lesson.

Another common story in this cautionary mode is interesting because it underscores the limitations placed on women to engage in leisure activities to the detriment of their domestic duties. This story concerns the desire of women to go to the beach; an activity which in the past at least, was associated with luxury and idleness. The story also illustrates preoccupations about quarry work I referred to earlier and the expectation that women remain home during the afternoons.

> There was once a woman from Torano who insisted on going to the beach. She told her husband that the doctor said that her children needed the sea air and the sand. Her husband didn't say anything at the time but the next day he went to the quarry where he worked and collected a truck load of sand. He took the truck home and dumped the sand outside his house telling his wife, "There you are, if you need sand, here it is!"

It is unclear to me whether I was to read this story as fictitious or as referring to an actual event, but when I repeated it to other women in the village, it seemed to strike some sort of chord and they often laughed uproariously. Like cautionary tales elsewhere, these exemplary stories exaggerate their moral message, and in their exaggeration are simultaneously parodies and conscious expressions of a domestic ideology which ideally locates women wholly within the domestic realm of social life. Narrated by and about women in a humorous vein, these tales might be seen as challenging the kinds of stereotypes epitomised in the idea of the "good woman". But as I have already suggested, women also positively identify with these notions of domesticity. Women's domestic labour represents not only a measure of respectability and an indication of an individual's moral reputation in the village, but also a claim over the home itself; a workplace over which they claim total control.[14]

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[14] Angela John (1984) makes a similar point suggesting that this aspect of female identity in studies of mining communities has not been adequately addressed.

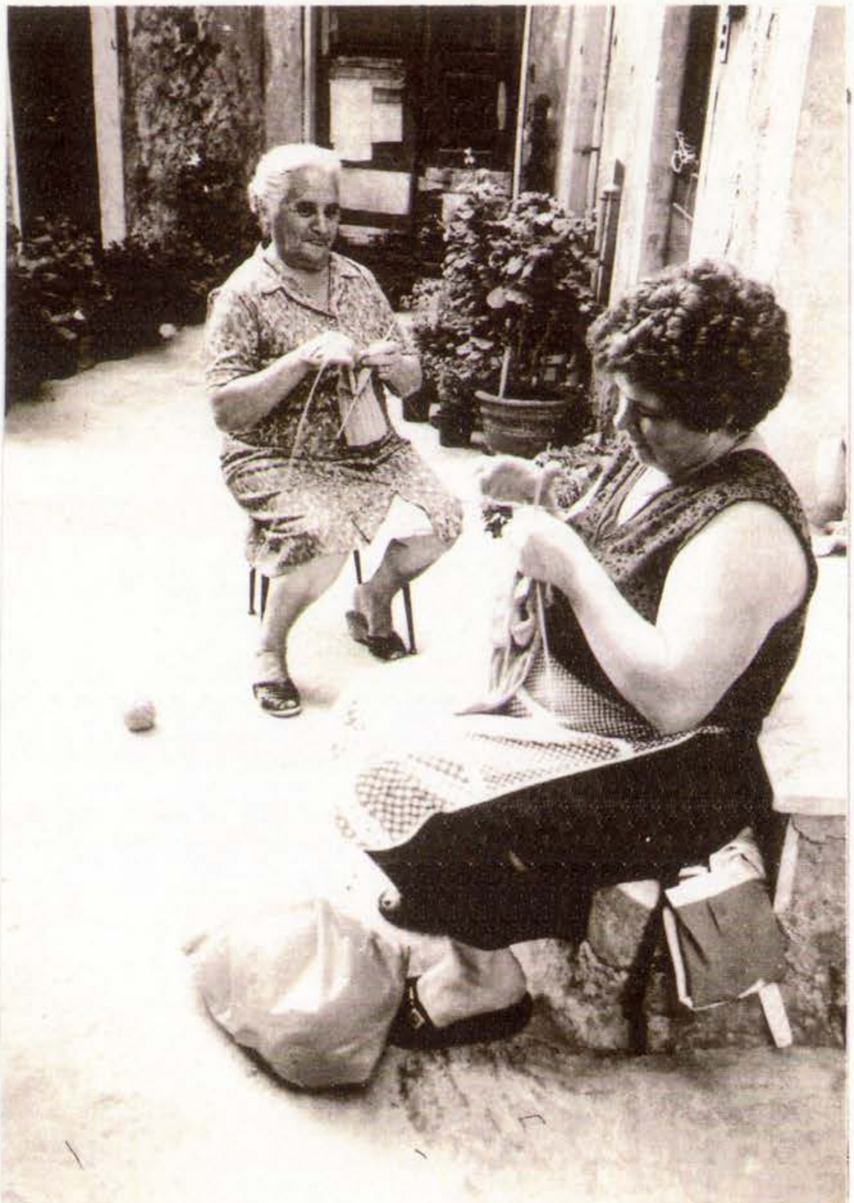

Plate 25. Alda and a neighbour knitting woollen work socks *al murello* .

Plate 26. Cleaned work boots.

THE HOUSEHOLD MANAGERS

In addition to their role as nurturing figures within the family, women are also responsible for all aspects of household budgeting. Thus, although dedication to domestic duty and the family limits a married woman's autonomy, her role in controlling household finance gives her considerable independence within it.

In most households the usual practice is the "common purse": combining all incomes in the family. The wages of children still living at home as well as those of husbands, are usually put towards the maintenance of the household, under the management of women. Older relatives receiving pensions also make an important contribution to household income. While the old age pension is barely sufficient for independent living and is contingent upon the support of families, other pensions, such as war and disability pensions, are often quite substantial. Women looking after their older relatives on a full-time basis at home, are also able to claim a "wage" or benefit from the state.

Household budgeting involves looking after the weekly expenses of general household maintenance, such as shopping and bill paying; items of personal expenditure like clothes for children and husbands; as well as major household expenses, such as the purchase of a new car or furniture. Indeed, when one of my neighbours moved to Carrara, she continually referred to the new house as "her house", implying that she had bought it even though she did not have a paid job. The house was "her house" in the sense that through careful budgeting she had managed to save the deposit and buy all the new furniture; an achievement which she liked to talk about and which, justifiably, made her feel intensely proud. Husbands are expected to give their entire wage to their wives, keeping aside only a small amount of cash for their own personal use. Children who work are more likely to keep a part of their wage for themselves, but they also make a substantial contribution towards food and their keep. In some households, mothers also make budgeting decisions for their children, especially when it comes to the purchase of expensive clothing or jewellery. Women are also more likely to consider the needs of their children and their husbands before their own, and the purchase of new clothing for themselves is usually initiated by an invitation to a wedding or a similar social event. Decisions over household budgeting are mainly oriented towards the collective needs of the family, rather than individuals and is is rare, for example, for married couples to spend money on an expensive holiday to the detriment of their children.

Control over the household budget, especially a husband's wage packet, underscores the role of women in the distribution of income within the family. While most women are dependent upon the wages of men and children, by entrusting their wages to mothers the family relies on the budgeting talents of women for their collective well-being. Women are judged by their abilities to balance the family budget; a role which they valorise. Household budgeting is the one social arena in which women feel they should have total autonomy and independence. For example, when I asked one woman about the qualities of an "ideal" husband she replied that "a good husband is someone who loves you, who goes to work and brings in the money and lets you spend it". Men, however, do not always agree and as the following comment suggests, withholding a wage packet can exacerbate pre-existing tensions within a marriage.

> My husband gives me his unopened pay packet. I give him a little for his cigarettes and petrol, but after that he has to make do. I do everything else in the house. This is already an open minded attitude. There are many in the village who keep their wages for themselves and give their wives only a little bit of money for housekeeping. I know quite a few here of those men. When their wives have to buy something, even underpants, they have to ask their husbands! I'm free and independent as far as that goes. I can do what I want.

Although men in some households use their wage packets as a mechanism for female control, women themselves see such strategies as antithetical to the idea of family, and in some cases, a reason for marital rift or separation. The role of women in household budgeting also alters with the life cycle of the family itself. The contributions of children towards household expenses diminish as young men and women prepare for marriage. In turn, as parents grow older their income in the form of pensions is redirected once again towards the family and their children.

As part of their budgeting role within the family, women alone prepare and distribute food. In Italian social life food is imbued with potent symbolic and emotional significance. Within the family, food is emotionally associated with the positive values of generosity and sharing and linked to the nurturing role of motherhood. Indeed, the family itself is defined by the people who share food together. Sunday lunch is probably the most important meal of the week, when all members of the family, including engaged couples, gather together to eat. On Sundays, women prepare quite elaborate dishes which invariably include expensive cuts of meat and homemade pasta. The preparation of this pasta is a time-consuming and complicated art, learnt by young girls watching their mothers from an early age. On Sundays, commercially-manufactured pasta is not tolerated and all members of the family expect to eat the village specialties, which are always prepared in exactly the same way. As in other parts of Italy, people in Gragnana have an extraordinary emotional attachment to their own regional dishes, which is, perhaps, linked to the importance placed on the role of mothers in family life.

The practice of the "common purse" links women and the domestic economy with wage-labour at the point of production. Highlighting the role of women in the redistribution of family income, throws some doubt, I suggest, on any assessment of women as completely subordinate to men because of their dependency on the male wage. The question of the mother's role as the receiver of this wage, suggests the possibility of economic power for women, at least within the household. But as John(1984) has noted in her study of Welsh mining communities, the ability of women to maintain their position as banker in servicing the needs of the family is, however, ultimately reliant upon both external and internal forces: the labour market and wage system as well as the willingness and support of husbands and children.[15]

In this section, I have contrasted women's roles in the pre-war domestic economy with the contributions of women to the management of the household today. In the pre-war economy female labour was essential to the survival strategies of individual households in the village; in the post-war years women have become increasingly dependent on a single male wage. Despite this increased dependence – which also has ramifications for female independence in other spheres of social life – I suggest that women still have important economic functions within the family as household "bankers" and budgeters. I have also argued that there is a direct relationship between the transformations in the national economy and those contemporary post-war ideologies of domesticity which, far from increasing the opportunities for women to engage in full-time wage-work, have valorised the idea of full-time housework and motherhood.

The second section of the chapter examines other aspects of the construction of female identity within the family, focusing on the socialization of young women towards marriage, the importance of motherhood and the control of female sexuality.

WOMEN AND FAMILIES

As in any small community, gossip is the life and breath of daily social interaction, alleviating boredom and invigorating village routines. Gossip amongst women provides both a constant source of entertainment and a means of defining a female vision of the world; a world in which the domestic life of the village and the concerns of women are valorised. In this sense gossip is a positive construct: an activity essential to the creation of an autonomous female world separate from that of men. Gossip can, however, also be interpreted as a mechanism of social control; a means of reinforcing hegemonic, and often patriarchal, views of the world.

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[15] This argument need not hold in all cases for, as Whipp (1987b: 113) notes, a woman's responsibilities as "domestic manager", especially when mixed with the demands of a job, can lead to her increased exploitation, with women's diet and health the victims of these demands.

In the village gossipers are disdained. But everyone engages in gossip of one sort or another. Certainly people who gossip too much, the "trumpets", as they are called, are not readily trusted as friends. "Friends", as one of my neighbours whispered to me, "are people you can trust and confide in", people you can confide in and trust not to tell anyone else.

In a community where windows face onto houses not more than a metre away, and walls are imperfect sound barriers, it is impossible to entirely escape the curiosity of others. Within the house, confidential conversations are conducted in whispers with curtains drawn and shutters closed. Shutters are used to simultaneously observe and conceal: the shadow of a hand or the creak of a hinge is the only sign of close observation. Passing people in the streets one is not asked, "How are you?", but rather, "Where are you going?" or "Where have you been?" Privacy is a commodity in short supply.

Windows carry an extra symbolic load in this regard. People communicate through windows, shouting messages or simply chatting in a break from housework. Shouting like this is probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to learn to do and it literally took me months before I could summon up the courage to yell greetings to my neighbours, as they called to me through their windows. When arguing with a neighbour, the maximum insult is *not* to come to the window but to hurl insults from the kitchen behind closed doors. Windows also allow the flaunting of one's affluence: new sheets, linen and clothes are hung to air in the sun directly outside the windows of neighbouring houses. My own failure to follow this practice was noted: a particularly nosy neighbour eventually asked me why I never washed my sheets!

Consequently women value the privacy of their homes as the only retreat from constant public image management. Female friendships are denoted by the ease with which a woman is invited to, or spontaneously visits, another's house. According to one neighbour, visiting another person's house was, "invading the space of others", and apart from two or three close friends, is generally avoided. But while most people try to maintain cordial relationships with their neighbours, conflict and tension is unavoidable.

One woman suggested to me that increased prosperity had led to greater conflict between village households. Whereas the earlier emphasis on self-sufficiency and limited patterns of consumption often required cooperation between households, increased social mobility has led to "jealousy":

> Jealousy divides the community. If things go badly, people are sympathetic but as soon as you lift your head a bit they're jealous. I think this is jealousy. Before, people in the village helped each other out. They helped each other. Now they're more in control of things they don't think about those people who might need help.

It is extremely difficult to say whether this comment truly reflects changing attitudes in the village. While living in Gragnana I had the impression that although increased consumption had perhaps led to a deterioration in the values of community solidarity, people still valued the idea of mutual aid and in situations of real crisis, they did indeed lend financial and other material assistance, especially to their own own kin.

But although kinship networks are extensive, disputes between family members of different households are also quite frequent. The problems involved in equal property inheritance are often the main source of conflict, but politics also plays a part. Both of these were involved in a longstanding feud in my neighbour's family, which led to a complete lack of communication between two separate households, living one on top of the other. Such disagreements, where families cannot agree on how property should be partitioned, often lead to the abandonment of houses.

Thus apart from some socializing with friends, women spend most of their time at home with their families. Women as nurturing figures, as mothers and providers of food, are central to the organization of family life in the village. "House" and "home", with its connotations of comfort, are equivalent concepts in Italian social life, and synonymous with the idea of family.

As in many other parts of Italy, in Gragnana, motherhood is valorised as a crucial component of female identity, essential to the achievement of full social status (Goddard 1987: 186). Although nowadays, girls are often encouraged to complete high school and go to university, many young women leave school at the earliest possible age, around fifteen, and those who complete their schooling, rarely consider a career as an alternative to marriage. Although many mothers are keen for their daughters to study and do well at school, they are equally concerned for them to marry and have a family. An unmarried woman may be considered a social failure which reflects, to a certain extent, upon the girl's family. For this reason, mothers encourage their daughters in all sorts of ways to marry.

The socialization of daughters towards marriage begins in the early stages of girlhood. Young girls are expected to assist their mothers with domestic tasks and contribute to overall household management. From the moment of birth, mothers begin to collect items for their daughter's *corredo*, (trousseau), a kind of "glory box", largely consisting of household linen. This task is taken very seriously and by the time a girl reaches 18, she can expect an entire wardrobe full of sheets, towels and embroidered pillow-slips. Young girls often spend a great deal of time embroidering their own linen which is put carefully away in sealed packages, ready for her future household.[16]

In contrast to descriptions in much of the anthropological literature on Italian women, young women in the marble villages appear to enjoy a reasonable amount of personal freedom.[17] While as very young girls their movements are curtailed, as adolescents they are actively encouraged engage in a variety of recreational activities which increase the possibility social interaction with young men. Much of this socializing is conducted in groups, usually of one sex, but occasionally it includes brothers or male cousins of the same age.

The summer is the most fruitful period for this social interaction. During the long summer holiday months, young women from the village spend most of their days out of the village at the various bathing establishments built along the beach front near the port of Carrara. This part of the coast is an extension of the more fashionable area located around Viareggio and Forte dei Marmi, which normally attract hordes of holiday makers and visitors from all over Italy. While far less fashionable, the Carrara beaches are equally crowded and provide an important meeting place for local adolescents.[18] Dancing at one of the numerous discotheques located along this part of the coast, is popular among adolescents in the area, especially on Saturday nights. On Sunday afternoons and on weekday evenings after school, adolescents meet in Via Roma, the main street of Carrara and take part in the *passeggiata*, or promenade, a major feature of social life in most Italian cities.

The *passeggiata* takes place in the late afternoon around 6 p.m. when like clockwork, the main street suddenly fills with a huge number of people, shopping, having a coffee or a drink at one of the bars in the main street, or simply walking hand in hand watching and observing other people. Just as suddenly, around 7.30 p.m, the crowds disappear as everyone retreats home for dinner. The *passeggiata* is one expression of the importance placed on public social interaction in Italy. Whereas the house is viewed very much as a place for familial sociability, the street and the bars are the more usual sites for other kinds of social interaction. Young people often dress up and in the past, the *passeggiata* was one of the few occasions to meet a possible marriage partner.

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[16] I think this emphasis on linen collection is interesting especially because it seems to have been one of the most portable forms of wealth in the past. Women in the village today love to buy new linen and there are numerous linen stalls in the Monday markets. Travelling salesmen also sell linen in the villages.

[17] Having access to a car makes a big difference to the mobility of adolescents in the villages. The bus service to the village does not operate after 8 p.m. Cars also provide young men and women with some possibility for sexual intimacy outside the home.

[18] In contrast to Australian beach culture, in Italy, swimming is not important. People of all ages go to the beach more because they know there will be lots of other people there.

The casual friendships made during the course of such social interaction do not always lead to a formal engagement and subsequent marriage. Indeed, young women might form several casual attachments to boys without any fear of moral condemnation. This type of informal courtship, known as "*fidanzamento fuori casa*" ("engagement outside the house") is of a different order to a formal engagement. Mothers often actively encourage girls to form these kinds of attachments by providing attractive and fashionable clothes for important social events and, even, in the case of my neighbour, by her buying her daughter rather risqué underwear. A girl's sexuality is flaunted, rather than disguised, and every effort is made by girls to present themselves in the most attractive manner. Birthday gifts of very expensive gold jewellery to daughters are also part of this attempt to "*fare bella figura*" or "present a good public face".

Formal engagements, called "*fidanzamento in casa*" or "engagement at home", are taken much more seriously by both the family and the girl concerned. This type of engagement is established when a girl asks her family to formally recognize her intent and invites her prospective husband into her parent's house. From the moment a girl is formally engaged in this way, both her family and her fiancé expect her to devote herself entirely to this relationship. Previous friendships with other female friends may deteriorate and excursions out of the house or village are more limited. Future sons-in-law are regularly invited to family meals when prospective parents-in-law make every effort to make them feel at home. Once engaged, young women also spend a considerable amount of time visiting their fiancé's family and after a period of time the potential in-laws will also visit each other. If all goes well plans for marriage will take place.

Although virginity is still important, it is certainly not an essential criterion for marriage. What seems to be more important is the public, as opposed to private, demeanour of engaged women. As Goddard (1987) also notes in her important study of female sexuality in Naples, within the privacy of the parental home, couples are often permitted to engage in sexual experimentation which, as elsewhere, can result in full sexual intercourse. Given the influence of feminism and the mass media, as well as Madonna, it is obviously difficult to generalize about the sexual behaviour of young women in the village, but many older women told me without any hint of embarrassment that they were pregnant before they married. Indeed, one 97-year-old woman spoke to me gleefully about her early courtship with a man from the village when, as she narrates, they made love in the cemetery.

> I used to go with him to the cemetery to make love. He always found a place. We used to make love on the tombstones. All the girls were pregnant when they got married. You weren't supposed to go out of the house but everyone was pregnant. They always manage to find women.

Furthermore, the marriage in the local church of a young woman visibly seven months pregnant, attracted only minimal social condemnation. While pregnancy is sometimes used as a reason for hastening marriage, the availability of contraception means that it can also be avoided. Although it is difficult to generalize, younger women in the village seem far more likely to use some kind of mechanical contraception or the pill than their mothers, who often said they relied on the "control" of their husbands.

Within the terms of this more formal courtship, a young woman is therefore free to engage in sexual activity with her prospective partner and, providing pregnancy does not occur, there are all sorts of excuses for breaking an engagement, despite the involvement of both families. Where pregnancy does occur, pressure is exercised on young men to marry, although abortions may also be arranged. However, women who engage in sexual activity outside the home are in a much more vulnerable to attacks on their reputation. This is one reason why it is extremely rare for a young woman to leave home to live by herself. I knew of only one unmarried woman in the village who, against the wishes of her parents, had gone to live alone at Carrara. Although she was completely financially independent and regarded herself as a feminist of sorts, she experienced continual conflict with her family, as well as other villagers, who talked of her with a great deal of disapproval. As a single female researcher living in the village alone, my own position was equally ambivalent, although as a foreigner, I was accorded comprehension, even pity, for my single status.[19]

Once plans for marriage are in place, working daughters begin saving for the wedding ceremony. While parents also make a financial contribution, the wedding ceremony is often a very elaborate and expensive affair and the ability of a young woman to contribute financially to her own wedding may make a great deal of difference to the length of her engagement. My neighbour's daughter's wedding was largely financed by the daughter, although her fiance's parents helped with the restaurant expenses. Her parent's only contribution, by no means insubstantial, was the gift of a $4,000.00 wedding dress.

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[19] It is important to point out that these attitudes should not be taken as generalizations of contemporary Italian attitudes towards female sexuality. Having lived in other parts of Italy, where I experienced much more relaxed attitudes to female and male sexuality, I was quite surprised to find young women in the marble villages still conforming to these rather rigid engagement rules. In Carrara too, some friends did not strictly adhere to these rules, although even women who defined themselves as feminists often said to me that they sometimes felt constrained by their parents' "old-fashioned" ideas.

A daughter's wedding is one of the most important events in a woman's life; a culminating event in which mothers fulfil many of their own aspirations for their daughters. The wedding ceremony involves months of preparation and a whirl of social engagements. For at least a month before the wedding, the prospective bride's home is open for all invited guests and others to visit and give their best wishes. Guests deliver wedding gifts which are put on display in the house for all to see. During these visits, the future bride and her mother offer hospitality in the form of drinks and sweets, and present small gifts, as well as sugared almonds, to their guests.

Young women, like their mothers, show a strong preference for church weddings and even in vigorous anticlerical families, a daughter's preferences usually win out over politics. When my neighbours' daughter married, her father, who espoused uncompromising anarchist principles, agreed to accompany his daughter to the church door, but refused to enter the church itself. His daughter was quite happy with this arrangement and while the wedding ceremony proceeded, he and the other anticlerical men held their own party in the anarchist bar. To the great embarrassment of his daughter at the wedding lunch later in the afternoon, he led all the guests in the singing of traditional anarchist songs.

As I discuss in the following chapter, Carrara has a long history of anarchism and anticlericalism. I have insufficient evidence to even hazard a guess on the influence of these ideas on marriage, or on notions of female and male sexuality. Most women who identify themselves as anarchists in the village today have married, many of them in the church. Some younger communist women advocated civil marriage ceremonies but rarely suggested that they would live with a partner outside marriage. A few women in the village had had children out of wedlock and had remained in the village. The 97-year-old woman I referred to earlier, had lived with her husband for many years before marrying in order to receive the war pension. In her case, it was more that her husband, an anarchist, refused to marry her. In general women viewed marriage as a form of economic protection as much as a romantic union, especially in the past.

For the majority of young village women, marriage is still the only means of escape from their families and their one hope of setting up independent households. Sometimes, due to the shortage of inexpensive accommodation, couples are forced to compromise by living with their parents or parents-in-law during the initial stages of married life.[20]

MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE CONTROL OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

As I have already suggested, although women in the village often identify positively with their domestic roles, and although they see motherhood as an essentially fulfilling and a full-time occupation – an improvement on the lifestyles of their mothers and grandmothers – they nevertheless sometimes complained to me about the more restrictive and boring aspects of domestic life. One of their major dissatisfactions seemed to be the lack of free time available for couples to join in pleasurable leisure pursuits, outside the normal domestic and work routines of daily life. This problem is exacerbated by the tendency of many men to spend most of their free time after work and on weekends, in the company of other men at the village bars. As the following comments from two of my neighbours suggest, women complained about feeling neglected by their husbands and also about their greater responsibility within the house:

> Women have to look after the house and the children and know how to spend the money. When a man comes home from work he's free but a woman's work is never done.
>
> Men and women should be equal, but in our village we're not equal. We're not free. We've got more responsibility. He's got something extra. He can go out after work. I don't have that freedom. Women work as well but they can't go out like men do.

Men too, sometimes asserted that they felt inhibited about being seen contributing to housework or shopping, suggesting that other men would regard them as slightly emasculated figures. And indeed, as I have already noted, very few men in the village, ever contribute to any aspect of household domestic work.

One man in Gragnana, an exception to this rule, lived alone. This particular individual insisted on doing all his own shopping and cooking, although his daughter occasionally visited to help him clean the house. Few women or men had any sympathy with his plight, as he was a habitual drunkard and had, according to the women I knew best in the village, regularly beaten his wife before she died. Whereas in most other situations widowers are looked after by other female relatives, this man was regarded as so difficult that no one wanted to have much to do with him. Women also despised his public demonstration of great remorse and love for his wife by daily visits to her tombstone.

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[20] It is difficult to understate the problem of the shortage of accommodation in Italy. Although many young women I spoke to said that if they could choose they would definitely prefer to rent their own houses, this was often impossible. There did not seem to be any pattern about where they lived after marriage, although some women said that they would prefer to remain within their own parents' house if they could find no other alternative.

Although women dominate the practical aspects of household organization, men are the central figures of authority within the family. As much of the anthropological literature on honour and shame suggests, there is a direct connection between the domestic behaviour of women and men, and reputation and honour in the wider society (Davis 1973). In particular, a man's public reputation, and indeed his masculinity, is linked to his ability to control the sexual behaviour of female members of the household, particularly his wife. While there are obvious problems with the way in which this literature has represented honour as a purely male code – as the competitive struggle by men to control an essentially passive female sexuality – my own experience as a single female researcher living in the village alone, illustrates some of these connections.

During the initial period of my fieldwork, I was viewed ambivalently in the village. Arriving in Gragnana in the early days of autumn, a period when the community begins to prepare itself for a long period of winter hibernation and social life disappears behind the closed doors of individual houses, I was struck by my social isolation. In the cold light of those autumn evenings the village, with its deserted streets and alleyways illuminated by only the flickering fluorescent light from televisions, looked very uninviting. Venturing outside my door became something of a daily ordeal; I was subjected to the scrutiny of silent stares from people who otherwise refused to acknowledge my presence, while in the village shops, conversation immediately ceased when I walked in the door. Negotiating the public spaces and intimate social networks of the village was eventually facilitated by the friendship extended to me by the wife of a quarry worker in a neighbouring family. Alda's welcome invitations to coffee and tours of the various shops provided me with an invaluable contact through which I gained access to other families in the vicinity of my house, a zone known as the *murello*.[21]

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[21] The village was divided up into sections according to particular features of the streets and alleyways. For example, one exceptionally narrow alleyway was known as "*La ruga*" or "the wrinkle". Everyone who lived in this street referred to living in *la ruga*. Similarly, *murello* comes from the word *muro*, or wall, and the street in which I lived fronted onto a small wall. People in this street were located as living "*al murello*".

Alda and her family were good friends with the couple who owned my house who, although residing at Genoa, were well known in the village and had been regular visitors over a period of twenty years. The public recognition of my connection to these two families was important in two ways. Firstly other people were able to locate me in terms of the pre-existing kinship and friendship networks of the village. Thus when people asked in the third person, "Whose offspring is she?" the reply was always along the lines of, "She's living at Alda's" or "She's living at the house of the "Genovese" *al murello*. Secondly, once this relationship was established, my own behaviour was constrained by a concern with the threat I might pose to the reputation of Alda and her family and perhaps, more directly, that of the "Genovese".

This was made clear to me during a conversation after dinner at my neighbour's house when Alda and another neighbour spoke in rather cryptic terms about the "Genovese". They indicated that the "Genovese" were "respected" in the village and that I should be careful as I was living in their house. When I asked what they meant by this the neighbour replied, "Nothing, but you should know that the name of Elio is respected here". From the conversation which followed it was obvious that they were preoccupied with the gossip that a single unmarried woman living alone would inevitably attract and that although the name of the "Genovese" afforded me a degree of protection against such gossip, I should do nothing to damage this reputation. Thus although I was unconnected to any male authority figure and an "outsider", by mere association with the "Genovese" and the families of the *murello*, I was automatically connected to them, and my own moral reputation was therefore seen to reflect on theirs.

In her essay on Neapolitan women, Goddard (1987) links a concern with the control of female sexuality to the role of women as boundary markers and carriers of group identity. Arguing against a common interpretation in the anthropological literature of honour as a male code and women as essentially its passive victims, Goddard makes two important points. Firstly, whatever the origin of this code, its meaning and significance has no doubt varied both historically and across cultures. Whereas in Cuba, concern with female chastity has been linked to a preoccupation with class stratification and colour endogamy (Martinez-Alier 1972), in Sicily the code of honour as been historically connected with the provision of cheap female labour, either in antiquity (Schneider 1971; Schneider and Schneider 1976) or more recently with the emergence of 19th-century capitalism (Cutrufelli 1975). Secondly, despite the large body of literature which interprets honour as a competitive battle between men for scarce resources, women are the essential agents of its operation. It is precisely because women negotiate the allocation of their own sexuality within these rules of the code of honour, that women have the capacity to undo not only the reputation of individual families, but also that of the group.

As far as I am aware, there are few social histories of women in Italy, but historical evidence from my own fieldwork supports this argument. As I suggested earlier, family life in the marble villages of Carrara today is largely the result of post-war prosperity and of ideologies of domesticity which have been attainable for the majority of women only in recent generations. In the pre-war period, when women laboured independently outside the house and when men were absent for long periods, male surveillance and control of women was, at best, difficult. In the marble villages, the general lack of concern with female virginity, at least at the point of marriage, could thus be linked to the economic and social history of this area During its period of greatest expansion, the marble industry attracted a large number of itinerant and single male workers who contributed to a kind of frontier society, where both men and women were doubtless more concerned with making a living than with questions of honour. Thus, while I am not suggesting that the code of honour did not exist at Carrara, its practice is much more flexible than most of the literature on honour and shame suggests.[22]

Goddard's (1987) second point, that women themselves negotiate the rules within any system of honour, is also illuminated by the women's stories about defying male authority within the household. While older women often claimed that male relatives attempted to control their movements outside the house, their stories emphasise the imperfect nature of that control and the delight which women felt in escaping from their normal domestic duties to go dancing or to pre-arranged assignations outside the village. As Pia, a woman in her late 60s, recalled,

> We used to escape. In those days they were much more severe. We used to say, "Let's go! Let's go for wood! and then we used to run off. It was already arranged. We had already agreed to go dancing. We used to leave the wood beside the road and go off. We got a beating when they found out but that didn't stop us.

Other women commented on the common trick of tipping out the supply of water in the *bacil* (water container) in the house, as an excuse to go to the local fountain where there was always the possibility of meeting one's secret admirer. In the village, women laughed at these accounts of attempted female rebellion against male order and if men were concerned with honour, women, it seems, were not always worried about being shamed.

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[22] Furthermore, rather than viewing a concern with honour as defining the boundaries of a culture area, I would argue that the control of female sexuality is a common preoccupation across most cultures. Its elaboration in the Mediterranean context is certainly interesting, but is not the only feature of gender relationships worthy of description, especially in contemporary Italy.

But despite the lack of overt concern with female virginity, men are certainly preoccupied with the chastity of wives. Other stories narrated in Gragnana underline male perceptions of female sexual voraciousness and men's anxiety about their ability to satisfy adequately these desires. Here too, the physical separation of the domains of men and women is an explicit theme.

As I have remarked, some work instruments are imbued with sexual significance. The action of hitting the *punciotto*, (a metal chisel), against the natural openings in the marble is likened to sexual intercourse. Similarly, the *mazzuolo*, (hammer), symbolises a penis. Sometimes, while men were working on a block of marble, the hammer broke and according to many people in the village, both men and women, men used to joke about this. But although this joking was part of normal sociability at work, the man concerned took it quite seriously and sometimes, in the face of his workmates' ribald comments, returned to the village early in order to ascertain the movements of his wife. Another woman also told me about the practice of unemployed men patrolling the bars at Carrara for evidence of female infidelity. According to this informant, if women were discovered in these bars, a message was sent to the husband concerned who on return from work beat his wife in public. The interesting thing about this account is that this practice of male solidarity was euphemistically called "mutual aid". It is difficult to verify such practices in the past, although I saw little evidence of their occurrence during my fieldwork; but their continued reporting is significant. If nothing else, they represent powerful allegorical examples of the ambivalent nature of male control in a work environment where men were physically separated from their wives and families and where, as a consequence, constant male surveillance was difficult.

This ambivalence is further demonstrated by the extent to which men resorted to the direct physical control of women through domestic violence and wife beating. Here, however, I believe that it is the conditions of work in the quarries, rather than a code of honour, which is of greater interpretative value.

Older female informants described violence at home and wife beating as widespread in the past. Women were extremely vocal to me in their descriptions of this violence and expressed no sense of embarrassment in narrating their personal experiences of being beaten or seeing their mothers being hit.

> We led a hangman's life. I had it bad but my mother had it worse than me. We were like beasts. Life was terrible for women and men. The men were terrible. They used to get drunk and then they would hit the women. They didn't need an excuse . . . In those days the men gave the orders . . . Beatings! They were just delinquents. And all *brave donne* too! The husbands used to bet with the

> money. It wasn't like these days when there's divorce. In those days you got married and stayed together whatever. A friend of mine told me that one day a woman would arrive who wears pants. And here we are now. It's happened.
>
> Men were violent. They were only interested in hitting you! In the evenings they used to take bets in the bar to see who was able to beat their wives the most. The man whose wife was the most bruised the next day usually won. My husband was like that. He used to come home drunk. I never knew what to do. The men were more violent than they are today. They were also sick of working and being badly treated. Between the fatigue and the dirt. The boots tied with bits of rusty wire which cost six lire when you earned three! Some weeks we didn't eat.
>
> The men used to be complete egotists. They drank their wages, hit their wives and the women had to fend for themselves.
>
> In the past the men used to beat their wives. My mother was never beaten but in her day the men used to be more violent. They used to come home drunk and if the dinner wasn't ready then they would hit their wives. The women took the blame and they were all *brave donne* too. The dinner had to be ready, if not, there were beatings.

One story in the laconic cautionary mode style is also instructive:

> There was once a man from Miseglia who found his wife with someone else. He didn't say anything at the time but later at home he tied her to a hot burning stove and watched while she burnt to death.

Today women who suffered directly this kind of domestic violence tend to condemn the perpetrators. As one woman angrily exclaimed,

> When I think about how terrible they were it makes me angry. If I had them here now before me I'd wring their necks!

But while these women certainly recognize the collective nature of male violence in the past and vigorously denounce it, many of their comments and explanations indicate a sense in which they felt that wife beatings were the direct result of the brutalising conditions of work in the quarries. As one woman reflected,

> When I think about it now I almost forgive them. Their lives were so terrible They had nothing. If it happened today I wouldn't agree with it. I'd have no sympathy. There's no excuse. But in those days it was different. We used to be frightened of the men when they drank. They actually tried to hit you. It wasn't ever an accident. It didn't matter where. There wasn't any money. The quarry made them drink. They were sick of working.

This comment suggests that women interpret this violence as a kind of compensatory mechanism for the frustrations felt by men in the work place. The bar was the only retreat, and drunkenness and violence the inevitable consequences of poverty and humiliation. As another woman suggested, "the men used to beat us because they wanted to feel like men". Masculinity, became associated with physical violence towards women.

Although it is extremely difficult to ascertain degrees of domestic violence, I had the impression that it had certainly diminished. Referring to the difficulties of disguising the sounds of wife battery, one woman exclaimed, "You don't hear the beatings now!". While a male drinking culture is still alive and well in the village, younger men tend to drink less, or at least more often at home than in the bar. Thus while individual incidents of wife beating still occur, it is no longer a collective or public feature of a male work culture, and men, as well as women, condemn it.

This account of widespread domestic violence in the past does, however, provide a counterbalance to my earlier interpretation based on the stories of men.which emphasise the empowering, rather than demeaning, aspects of quarry work. For if it is true that work in the quarries gave men a sense of independence and control within their immediate work environment, then this violence towards women appears all the more problematic and contradictory. If, on the other hand we accept the explanations of these women – that male violence towards women was directly connected to the dehumanising conditions of work in the quarries – then its demise must also be linked to improvements in these work conditions, as well as transformations in general life styles.

There is nothing inherently contradictory in these two interpretations : work skills in a dangerous and dehumanising work environment may well provide a source of independence and control, but only in a very limited arena of human affairs. The stories of women are, however, important for underscoring the ways in which female perceptions of life and work in the marble villages differ from those of men. In the next section looking at politics, I explore this issue in more depth.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Before arriving in the village of Gragnana to begin fieldwork, I stopped in Milan with a friend who had grown up at Carrara. Her parents had emigrated to Carrara at the end of the war and her father had been a prominent anarchist activist in the post-war years. She spoke about Carrara in rather negative terms mentioning among other things that the women at Carrara were "*mezza calzetta*" or "half stockings", meaning that they were politically conservative and were not very courageous in challenging some of the gender stereotypes which promote the idea that a woman's proper place is at home. In the course of the same conversation, this friend spoke approvingly about the activities of Carrara women during the years of fascism, when they risked their lives acting as go-betweens for groups of partisans living in the mountains. Later, when I was living in the village, this conversation haunted me and I became equally perplexed with what I at first perceived to be a disjunction between the heroic deeds of the past and the lack of feminist consciousness in the present. As the months progressed, however, I became acutely aware of the strength of these women. In their stories of work and life in past generations as well as in their demeanour today, these women embody toughness and resilience, as well as, perhaps ironically, a sense of independence which many contemporary feminists would undoubtedly admire. They, too, represented themselves as survivors.

While a complete history of the role of women in the Italian Resistance remains to be written, Carrara women certainly played a major role as messengers and suppliers of food for the various male partisan groups. Furthermore, women, perhaps even more than men, suffered the consequences of this guerilla struggle through frequent fascist reprisals during the last years of the war, when entire villages of mostly women and children were exterminated.[23] During "these years of starvation", women used any means possible to procure food for their families, trekking long distances across the mountains on foot, and it was through their activities that families survived.

Although largely undocumented, there is also some evidence suggesting that women from Carrara were involved in the earlier bouts of social protest associated with the formation of the Italian state. From 1860 to 1890, when republicanism vied with socialism for the dominant position in post-unification politics, a vigorous anticlerical and rationalist movement emerged to challenge two fundamental bastions of Catholicism: marriage and the family. Socialists of all tendencies, began to create their own civil baptism ceremonies, christening their children with names like Atheist, Freedom, Ideal, Germinal, Equality or, more simply, after the names of revolutionaries like Cafiero or Spartacus. They advocated free love and civil marriage ceremonies, as well as eschewing church funerals. Instead of priests and hymns, they carried revolutionary banners and sang revolutionary songs. The ashes of the dead were collected and put in the cemetery in places which are still known today as the "walls of the rebels" (Bertolucci 1988: 51).

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[23] Even before the war, during the initial years of fascism, women were often the victims of political violence. In Gragnana one family was singled out as the object of fascist violence. This family saw themselves as die-hard anarchists, who would under no circumstances make compromises to fascists in the village. They were also a family of shepherds and while many other militant anti-fascists were forced into exile during this period, this family refused to give up their livelihood. As Pié, a descendant of this family, recalls, "We were known as a race of bastards and delinquents. The area where we lived became known as the "beaten zone" because it was completely annihilated during fascism. The whole village was against us". One woman from this family was killed and another paralysed. Even today, the memory of these events provokes strong reactions in the village, and a song detailing these events, composed by the woman who was paralysed, is sung only on May Day.

There were also some groups of women amongst the early Socialist International associations. Nearby, at Pisa, one group of women identifying themselves as anarchists, espoused the aims of anticlericalism and class solidarity in their manifesto, declaring that "the union of male and female workers is necessary as we have the same needs, being the victims of the same enemy" (in Bertolucci F. 1988: 192). Similarly, in Carrara a female section of the International was formed with the "criminal aim", according to police records, of "freely exchanging husbands" (in Bertolucci 1981: 19).[24]

While there is still a strong tradition of anticlericalism in Carrara, men are its main adherents. For anticlerical men, a "funeral without priests" is a matter of extreme symbolic importance and indeed, of honour. Most women on the other hand, prefer church weddings to civil marriage ceremonies and generally insist on a church burial.[25] But for many women anticlericalism is not necessarily equated with being anti-religious. Although the church congregation in the village is predominantly female, many women, who did not describe themselves as anti-religious, never went to church. As one woman, referring to what she saw as a certain hypocrisy amongst some of the church goers, remarked, "Perhaps I'm more of a Catholic, even though I never go, than all the others who break their shoes to get there".

Similarly, Lilliana explained eloquently that there was no contradiction between her religious beliefs and her adherence to anarchism, asserting that she was,

> an anarchist because of the ideas but I have always gone to church. I was baptised, and married in the church. All my children have been confirmed. I don't confuse the two ideas. I believe in God and I believe in anarchism perhaps because I want to be free. But not free in the sense that it is sufficient to to be an anarchist to be free. I mean freedom in the sense of equality. I'm not interested in politics. I don't vote because I'm an anarchist. I don't believe

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[24] The following chapter discusses the history of the International in Carrara in more depth.

[25] I knew only one girl in the village who had refused communion. She said that this had been a difficult decision for her, not because her family, who were anarchists, disapproved, but because when children are confirmed they generally receive a number of presents from well-wishers and family members.

> in party politics. Our family have been anarchists for generations. I was married in the church but there are anarchists who don't believe in God, who haven't been baptised and who never go to church. It' s a matter of belief but I can't stand the priests and nuns.[26]

Just as men, rather than women, publicly identify themselves with anticlericalism, women play no part in institutional party politics. Perhaps even more surprisingly, while women in Gragnana were unquestionably supportive of strikes and other industrial action carried out by men, there is no history at Carrara of organized women's auxiliaries or housewives associations. This absence, however, does not mean that women did not organize amongst themselves in everyday life, as well as in moments of crisis.[27]

Although in theory, communist and anarchist ideologies project egalitarian gender relationships, in practice, communist and anarchist men are no different from other men in the village who, according to one woman, "expect women to stay amongst the saucepans" because "politics is men's stuff". Female participation in party politics is limited to voting for one's husband's political party at elections, or in the case of anarchist women, not voting at all.[28] Women tend to follow their husband's political affiliations upon marriage and to a certain extent, the ability of a husband to influence the vote of his wife is symbolic of his manhood. Indeed, divergent political opinions are likely to cause marital conflict and, as one woman commented, in these circumstances, "mattresses have often been divided". Party politics is defined as a masculine activity, not only because women are excluded, but because public political activity in itself is another dimension of the social construction of masculinity. Just as men who are not involved in party politics risk being regarded by other men as emasculated figures, competition for votes, takes the form of a competition between men.

The annual political festivals which occur over the summer are the most public demonstrations of political affiliation. These festivals in every Italian village and town are both fundraising exercises and moments of social conviviality. Whereas in the major provincial centres the festivals have an explicitly ideological agenda, in the small villages they are primarily social events in which ballroom dancing and the preparation of regional food specialities take precedence over politics.

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[26] While I was living in the village this anticlerical sentiment was exacerbated by a dispute between the lay nun, who had more or less controlled church affairs for years, and a newly arrived young priest from Milan. For a light-hearted account of this dispute see Leitch (1989).

[27] Even in the most significant lockout in the history of this region, lasting three months over the winter of 1913–14, the local anarchist-controlled Chamber of Labour took responsibility for organizing the communal kitchens set up in each of the marble villages. These kitchens, known as the "kitchens of solidarity", were run by the leagues of male cooks and waiters affiliated with the local labour council.

[28] When this subject emerged in conversations with anarchist women they often said that while they normally did not vote in general elections, they supported the 1970s divorce and abortion law reforms and had voted in their favour.

In Gragnana all the political parties, apart from the socialists who were not considered a major force, hold their own festival. The first festival, organized by a few local anarchist families in the late 1960s in order to raise money for the national anarchist newspaper, *Umanità Nova*, was quickly followed by the republicans and the communists. Later, in a move to counter the influence of these political parties, the church also organized a village festival called the festival of sport. The success of these festivals depends upon the number of people they attract as well as the willing participation of women. In contrast to Bologna, where male communist party officials by waiting on tables or assisting with cooking made a conscious attempt to reverse the normal domestic roles of men and women and reinforce the idea of gender egalitarianism (Kertzer 1980), in the marble villages the participation of women is crucial. This was clearly illustrated to me when on one occasion the refusal of the anarchist women in the village to cook for the festival caused its cancellation.

The anarchist festival was a constant source of polemics in the village. Originally a local initiative, its fame had spread throughout Italy and over the years it attracted a large number of outside participants who camped on the outskirts of the village, sometimes for weeks. While enormously successful in terms of numbers, the behaviour of some of the visitors had caused the local anarchists a great deal of embarrassment. Conflict over musical taste, as well as activities like nudism, were among the reasons some anarchists gave for their opposition to the festival. Internal conflict amongst anarchists themselves was another inhibiting factor, but whereas leading male anarchists were keen for the festival to continue, their wives were not. When faced with the refusal of their wives to cook the village specialties, like boiled cod, tripe, wild boar and the *torte di riso*, the anarchist men were forced to capitulate. Even when it was suggested that other women could be found to help, these men were not convinced. They maintained that the participation of their wives was essential as other women could not be trusted to be clean or *precisa*. In other words, what was in question was not so much the logistical organization of the festival, but the political reputation of the anarchist men. Although the cancellation of the festival was viewed as a set-back to the anarchist presence in the village and a symbol of their demise, it was the preferred solution. To rely on other women or, even worse, on men to cook was, according to one anarchist, "too shameful" or more explicitly, an affront to his manhood.

The exclusion of women from party politics is not perceived by women in totally negative terms. On the contrary, women attach very little importance to party politics often ridiculing the machinations involved. Women regard the meetings men attend as yet another social activity which takes men out of the home but has little practical effect in altering the conditions under which they work. Indeed, female informants often suggested to me that the political concerns of men in the village were irrelevant to them. On the whole they were far more interested in the practical issues directly affecting their lives and those of their families; issues like the price of food, polluted water supplies and the installation of natural gas. When it came to changing any of these aspects of daily life, women asserted that party politics was useless and divisive. As one of my feisty neighbours exclaimed,

> When it comes to getting anything done around here it's better to leave the men and politics at home. They're useless. All they do is fight amongst themselves.

When they wanted to initiate changes in the village or organize protests, women were far more likely to rely on their own networks of female friends and neighbours, than call on the support of either individual men or political parties. In this regard, Anna's account of the way in which women in the village organized together to obtain the installation of natural gas for the whole village is instructive:

> Women wanted natural gas. For us women what do we care about who is white, black or red. Why should we care about party politics? They didn't want to put on natural gas in this street, so what did we do?.Women in the street got together. We went directly to the local council. The day before had been International Women's Day! When they saw all these women in the streets people said, "What, is today the festival of the women?" We went to the council and we were very well-behaved. We didn't even shout. No one quarrelled with anyone and we succeeded. But then they decided they would only install the gas in half of the village! You can imagine! When they started work all the women in the village went down to where they had begun to dig out the holes and we sat down there and didn't let them work. After that we all went down to the council again. They told us that they only had enough money to do half the village. They couldn't do more than that. "What am I paying all my bills for all these years? Instead of giving us the money for ten people give it for twenty and do the whole village!". They didn't understand straight away and afterwards we had to all go together again to the office for natural gas. We got onto the director and kept arguing with him for the entire morning. Eventually we succeeded. We succeeded because we were united together, all the women in the street.

While I was living in Gragnana women were involved in organizing other public demonstrations. On one occasion, as a protest against the polluted water supply during the summer, they set up a series of barricades across the main street of the village, blocking all through traffic, including the marble trucks. These barricades were removed only after a visit from the local mayor and his assurances that the problem would be rectified. Similarly, in Carrara, there was a long-standing dispute regarding the emissions from a factory producing pesticides. Over the years, women living in the immediate vicinity of this factory, had been instrumental in demonstrations to close it down and had conducted long vigils outside the factory gates.[29]

These examples of female protest and action provide counter evidence to the claims that women in mining communities lack an "adequate" sense of feminist consciousness (Williams 1981: 123). Women in the marble villages certainly identify with and support male workplace struggles, but they are equally concerned with the problems affecting their own work within the household. And while they are actually excluded from party politics, this is not evidence for a lack of interest in some political matters or the lack of a political voice. Indeed, in many situations they see themselves as more politically effective than men.

Any study of mining communities must take into consideration the different experiences of men and women. This is only possible, as John (1984: 73) suggests, through an analysis which does not hermetically seal off one sex from the other but rather examines "different responses to apparently similar circumstances". Despite the frequently assumed solidarity of mining communities, the material presented here suggests that men and women do not always share exactly the same interests or experiences. At the same time, through the memory of industrial crises, death and mutilation – through a shared sense of vulnerability in the economy of fear – men and women are brought close together. In the marble villages, home and work are intimately entwined.

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[29] During my fieldwork, concern about this factory – called the Farmoplant and owned by Montedison (a major force in the production and manufacture of chemicals in Italy) – was highlighted with a popular referendum calling for its closure. After this referendum, which had received overwhelming public support, the regional governmental authorities decided to investigate its safety. This investigation concluded that the plant was 99.9 percent safe. Needless to say, two weeks after the publication of these results, on the 17 July 1988, a container of the pesticide, known as Rogor, blew up. This incident provoked a series of violent demonstrations as well as panic amongst the local population with many people reporting irritations to their mucous membranes and eyes. This "accident" is, however, only the last in a series of incidents which have alerted the local population to the dangers of chemical manufacture.

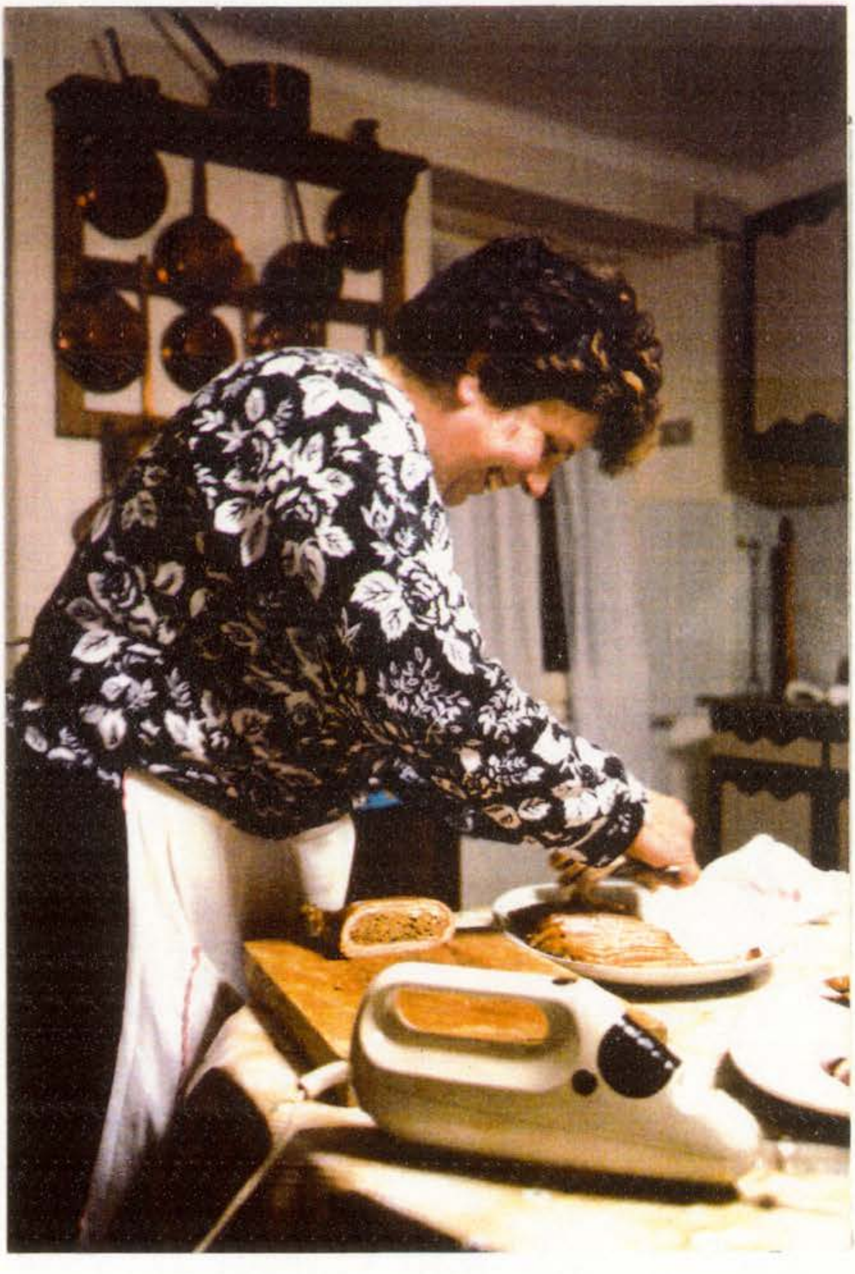

Plate 28. Lilliana in her kitchen.

Plate 29. Women playing *tombola* (bingo) *al murello.*

CHAPTER SIX

Quarry Workers as Anarchists

> Carrara is known as a world centre for the production of marble . . . Anarchism is really at home there. Every *cavatore* is proud of his craft, of his professional ability, of his independence. The *lega* or the local union branch is the social centre of every village. The area is rich in anecdotes, memories and revolutionary stories . . . This Carrara still exists and is not on the point of extinction (Vega 1978: 83–4).

> Carrara is a city that many would like to embalm as the sanctuary of the anarchist movement, as a sort of self-contained zoo which will entice tomorrow's anthropologists to study that strange race of individuals called anarchists, who want a utopia: a free and self-managed society ("Open letter to the comrades", *Umanita Nova*, 28 September 1986).

IF what distinguishes communities is the manner of their imagining (Anderson 1983: 15), then Carrara is quintessentially an anarchist city. Literary, scholarly and popular texts represent it as a mythic *topos*, preserving unaltered the radical libertarian traditions of nineteenth-century Italy. Local interpretations of Carrara's history reiterate similar narratives of a libertarian past; narratives which are constantly referred to in current discourse on contemporary events. In one sense at least, popular culture in Carrara is an anarchist culture.

For many anarchists both from Italy and from other countries, Carrara epitomises the survival of an anarchist tradition and political culture. My own fieldwork was inspired initially by a fascination with the anarchist history of the city and during my three years living in the area, I was constantly assailed with people's personal memoirs of events in this history. In conversations, quarry workers, union officials and members of political parties often invoked the memory of an anarchist father, grandfather or grandmother, especially when talking about the hardship and deprivations suffered during long strikes and lockouts. My close neighbours in the village of Gragnana, for example, were descendants of an anarchist shepherding family who had experienced directly the effects of fascist violence and reprisal. Their tales of death and imprisonment, endured because of their relatives' refusal to abandon what they termed "the idea", constantly reminded me that the local anarchist culture in Carrara positioned itself with respect to memories of significant national historical events and local life histories.

Anarchism has a topographical aspect in Carrara for relics of its history mark the public spaces and landscape of the city. Immediately confronting visitors as they alight from buses or park their cars in Piazza Farini, the commercial heart of the city, the fading and unkempt banner of the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana*,[1] is prominently displayed on the outside of the Politeama Guiseppe Verdi, an imposing building constructed in 1892 to house lyric opera and now a movie theatre. Nearby, in one corner of Piazza d'Armi where local families promenade during the long hot summer evenings, is the large marble monument dedicated to the famous local anarcho-syndicalist, Alberto Meschi, and the 1911 collective contract for marble workers. In Piazza Alberica, the older medieval heart of the city, a marble plaque eulogises the death of Francesco Ferrer, a prominent Spanish anarchist and pedagogue, [illegible] while on the opposite side of the square, another plaque commemorating the "martyrs of work" was erected in 1902.

Just as space resonates with meanings derived from political history, so too does time. May Day, for example, is an anarchist event in Carrara, unlike elsewhere in Italy, where the official union movement generally organizes the marches. Visitors from other cities, local anarchist groups and individuals march through the city singing anarchist songs as they pass monuments and plaques ceremoniously decked with wreaths and black and red ribbons. When the procession ends in front of the Meschi monument, anarchist banners are unfurled to the resounding strains of Pietro Gori's famous May Day memorial hymn, followed by other anarchist songs. These monuments are also reference points for anarchist anticlerical funerals and the city cemetery contains the tombstones of national, as well as local anarchist figures.[2]

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[1] *La Federazione Italiana Anarchica* or the Federation of Italian Anarchist Groups (F.A.I), was the name given to a new national organization of anarchist groups formed in 1945. The choice of Carrara for the first conference of the F.A.I, held from 15–19 September, 1945 (Feri 1978), was not accidental. Even in 1945, the Italian anarchist movement regarded Carrara as a quintessentially anarchist city with a long history of anti-fascist activities. During the last few months of my fieldwork, the building which houses the local anarchist archives and meeting rooms was bought by a local developer, an event which provoked a heated debate in the local press on the legitimacy of the anarchist occupancy.

[2] Gino Lucetti, a local anarchist who made an assassination attempt on Mussolini in 1926, is buried in the this cemetery along with Giuseppe Pinelli. During the late 1960s, Pinelli and another

While the anarchist usurpation of May Day cannot be explained simply as the substitution of one labour organization for another, the importance of May Day is linked to the role of anarchists in the local union movement, as well as to the history of fascism and anticlericalism in Carrara. The origin of May Day in the struggles of the American labour movement in the 1860s to obtain the eight-hour day in the 1886, resonates with similar attempts to reduce the working day in the quarries of Carrara.[3] Falling just after the Easter holiday celebrations, Mayday has also become an anticlerical alternative to Easter and indeed anarchist texts and newspaper editorials in earlier decades often referred to May Day as the "resurrection of the workers".[4] During the period of fascism, local anarchists continued to hold clandestine May Day picnics where they sang anarchist songs, often called "hymns", in protest against fascist rule. As many local anarchists remarked to me, to "sing anarchy" during these years was a symbolically subversive act, which could also lead to imprisonment or exile. Similarly, today, to "sing anarchy" on May Day is to sing about a collective political identity which, while having minimum influence in

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Milan anarchist, Valpreda, were accused of bombing the Banca d'Agricultura in Milan, an event which became a *cause celebre* in Italy, and which was never resolved. In the course of police interrogations, Pinelli mysteriously fell to his death from the 4th floor of the Milan police station. These events, still controversial in Italy, have been dramatised in Dario Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist.*

[3] The city of Chicago was the main centre of agitation for the shortened working day in America and anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists were in the forefront of the movement. In 1886 a bomb was thrown into a group of policemen who had begun to disperse a crowd of demonstrators in the Haymarket in Chicago's West side. One policeman was killed and several others were wounded so severely that they died later. The police immediately opened fire, and before the Haymarket riot ended, several demonstrators were killed and at least 200 wounded. Although there was no sound evidence of their involvement with the bomb-throwing, eight male anarchists were indicted. Seven of them were condemned to death, and one, to fifteen years' imprisonment. The "Haymarket Affair" as it was called, was a seminal incident in the history of the American and international labour movement at the end of the 19th century, and the eight anarchists became known as the "Haymarket Martyrs". (See Foner 1969). In the anarchist bar in Gragnana there are photos of the eight "martyrs" along with pictures of people like Kropotkin, Malatesta and Alberto Meschi.

[4] These references often appeared in the May Day editorials of local anarchist newspapers, including, *Il Cavatore*, the journal of the Carrara Chamber of Labour. On this note it is worth pointing out the words to the first verse of Pietro Gori's May Day memorial, also called a hymn, and sung to an aria in Verdi's *Nabucco*.

> Come oh May, the people are waiting
> they will greet you with free hearts
> sweet Easter of the workers
> come and shine in the glory of the sun

For the history of May Day in Italy, see Antonioli (1984).

contemporary Italian politics, has deep significance for those individuals whose life histories reveal traumatic events and long periods of suffering; the unintended consequences of their adherence to "the idea" and their resistance to fascism.

THE BRESCI SCANDAL

The representation of Carrara as an anarchist city became a topic of national interest during my fieldwork. In 1985, the communist-controlled city council voted to erect a marble monument dedicated to the memory of Gaetano Bresci, the Italian anarchist who assassinated Umberto I at Monza in 1900. At first glance, Bresci is a most unlikely figure to represent the anarchist history of Carrara. He was, after all, not even born in the city and spent most of his adult life as an immigrant in America.[5]

The idea for the monument was the personal initiative of Ugo Mazzucchelli, a local maverick, anarchist, resistance leader and marble industrialist, then in his mid-eighties. According to his biographer, Mazzucchelli wanted to commemorate Bresci, not because he was in favour of terrorism, but because he thought the monument would draw attention towards a reinterpretation of the events which preceded the assassination of Umberto I, including the shooting of several hundred people during the Milan "bread riots" of 1898 and the repressive measures taken in the aftermath of the 1894 revolt in Carrara; events which, according to Mazzucchelli, had been neglected in Italian historiography (Bertolucci R. 1988: 184). Although the local council initially opposed Mazzucchelli's plan, apparently his idea gradually captured the imagination of a number of prominent historians and local anarchists, who organized a series of public discussions and conferences on Bresci and the history of the Italian state at the turn of the century.[6] Perhaps due to this local debate, but more likely because of Mazzucchelli's persistence, eight years later on 25 March 1985, the council reversed its earlier decision and agreed to allocate an area of land near the main city cemetery for the monument.

Although initially reported only locally, this decision quickly became a matter of national debate, and soon after, the sixteen council members who had voted in favour of the monument were accused of *Apologia di Reato*, a crime which carries a sentence of up to twelve years imprisonment.[7] In the ensuing furore, the monarchist movement, led by the pretender to the Italian throne, the Duke of Aosta, threatened to march on the city and the Italian minister for Internal Affairs became involved in the prosecution of the councillors.

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[5] Bresci was born at Coiano, near Prato in Tuscany. He emigrated to America in 1869 where he lived in Patterson, New Jersey, a city with a large Italian emigrant population which included a number of well-known anarchist militants. For an account of Bresci's life as well as a review of the contemporary events surrounding the assassination of Umberto I, see Galzerano (1988).

[6] For the discussion and papers presented at one of these conferences see Bertolucci (1986), an edited volume published by the Bresci committee.

Not surprisingly – given its obvious potential for burlesque – the "Bresci scandal", provoked a veritable barrage of media comment between March 1985 and July 1986, when numerous print and television journalists descended on the city to discover and interview the "last inheritors of the great tradition; the "knights of the ideal" (*L'Espresso* 20 June 1986). Newspaper reports evoked Carrara as the "homeland of anarchism" (*Il Giornale* 30 March 1985); "the last city of anarchism" (*La Nazione* 13 April 1985); "the moral capital of the anarchists" (*La Repubblica* 4 June 1986) and the "ancient heart of anarchism" (*La Stampa* 6 June 1987). The local liberal newspaper, *La Nazion*e (23 June 1987) writing in support of the monument described Carrara as

> not the land of kings. The only king to have stopped here was Vittorio Emanuele, only stopping long enough to inaugurate the Academy of Fine Arts . . . It was an anxious stop amidst a prepared and waiting army . . . The anarchists were put in gaol for three days during the visit . . . for security reasons. Here the communists usually win the elections . . . but 10,000 people don't vote. Among these people of the Apuane, cooked by the sun and the wind, there are some people who have never voted.

Arguments about the monument also raised questions about the nature of Italian democracy in the 1980s. Referring to the anti-terrorist legislation of the 1970s, one commentator suggested, "It is useless to fight against terrorism when one tolerates public administrators who erect monuments to assassins" (*L'Avvenir* 29 March 1985).

Others likened Bresci's gesture to past symbolic acts of liberation, performed by popular heroes such as William Tell or Brutus, suggesting that the scandal raised the question of the decision-making autonomy of local councils. The debate widened to consider questions of a historical nature, such as Bresci's motivation. Was Bresci's gesture the act of a mad man, an individual who had planned his trip from America to kill the "good king", as Benedetto Croce had termed Umberto I? Or was he a liberator, assassinating "the butcher king" who had been responsible for the repression following the uprisings of Sicilian peasant workers and Carrara quarry workers in 1894, as well as for the events in Milan in 1898? Many commentators suggested that the Bresci monument was an important symbol for a reinterpretation of modern Italian history. *La Nazione*, for example, wrote:

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[7] There is no English equivalent for this term. To be accused of *apologia di reato* is to be accused of speaking in support of a known crime, in this case the killing of a king. None of the prosecuted council members were anarchists. They included communists, republicans, socialists and one christian democrat.

> When talking about monuments it's legitimate that everyone has their own taste and therefore it's legitimate to be for or against the monument. However there is little to discuss when it comes to talking about true history. It's historically verifiable without doubt that before his assassination at the hands of Bresci, the "good king" ordered an impressive number of assassinations; from the repression of the Sicilian Fasci and the quarry workers in Lunigiana, to those massacres in 1898, when General Bava Beccaris ordered the cannons to fire and when more than a hundred demonstrators were killed (3 August 1986).

And in *L'Unità* the national communist party newspaper, Enzo Santanelli wrote:

> Historically linked to the ancient traditions of the quarry workers at Carrara, the local council has voted in favour of democracy. It seems to us that this is precisely the manner in which one is able to recover the memory of a past which has its roots in popular traditions while, at the same time, creating a more tolerant atmosphere in order to erode old-fashioned and conformist views of history (27 July 1986).

Others made lesser claims, focusing more precisely on the history of Carrara and work conditions in the quarries to explain and justify the monument. *L'Avvenir* noted, for example, that

> Carrara, as everyone knows, is the homeland of libertarianism, born at the beginning of the century and perhaps even earlier in those marble quarries where the work was really slave-like (28 March 1985).

And Paolo Spriano, a well known labour historian exclaimed,

> I can't see the motive for all this scandal . . . that which elsewhere might seem debatable is easier to understand in the city of marble and in terms of its history (*Il Messaggero* 11 July 1986).

By the time I left Carrara in late 1989, the Bresci debate was still unresolved – a vacant area of land outside the cemetery was covered with a red and black banner reading "We will put it up".

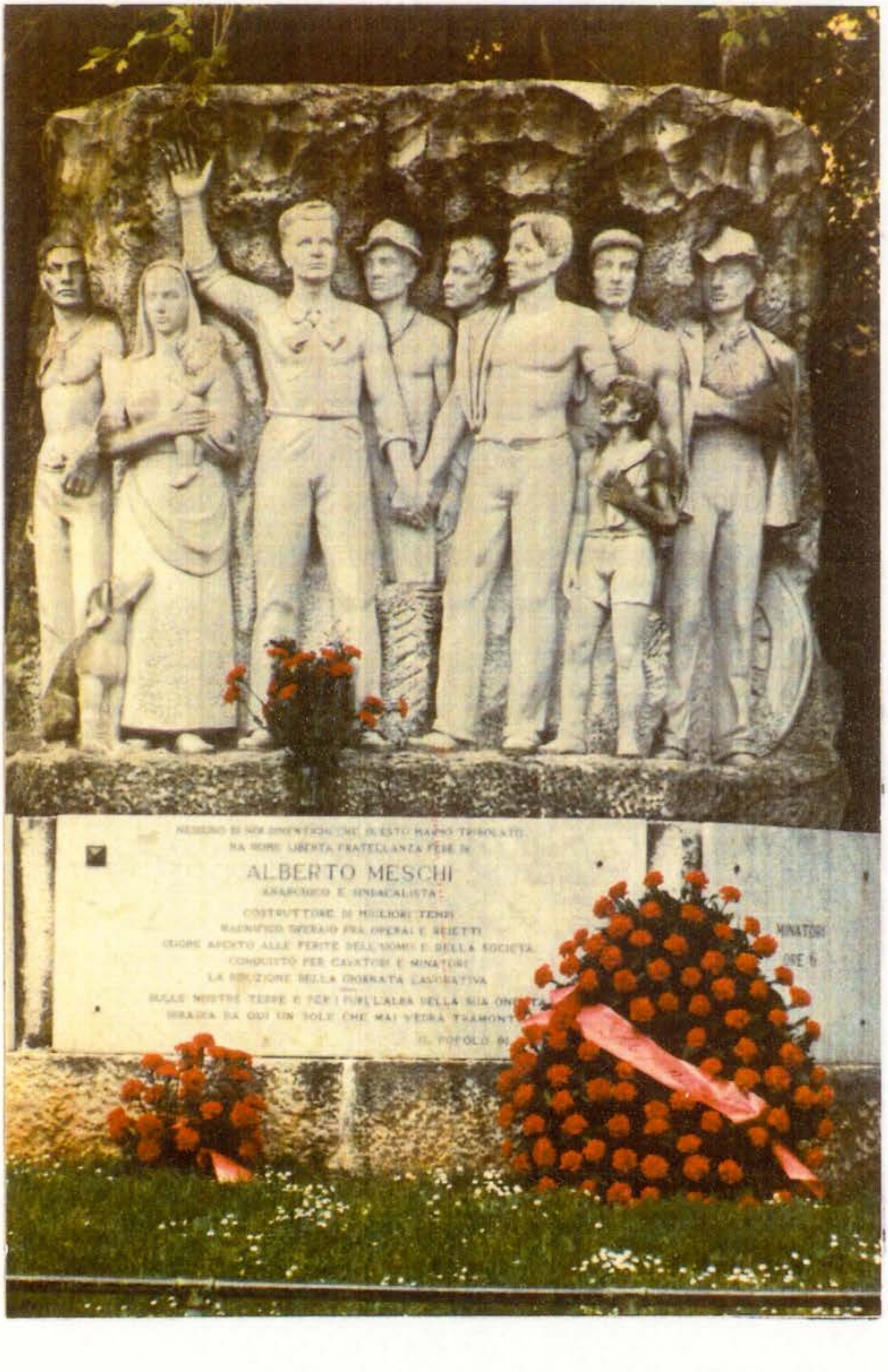
NESSUNO SI NON DIMENTICHI CHE QUESTO MARMO TRIBOLATO
HA NOME LIBERTÀ FRATELLANZA FEDE DI
ALBERTO MESCHI
ANARCHICO E SINDACALISTA
COSTRUTTORE DI MIGLIORI TEMPI
MAGNIFICO OPERAIO FRA OPERAI E REIETTI
CUORE APERTO ALLE FERITE DELL'UOMO E DELLA SOCIETÀ
CONQUISTÒ PER CAVATORI E MINATORI
LA RIDUZIONE DELLA GIORNATA LAVORATIVA
SULLE NOSTRE TERRE E PER I POPOLI L'ALBA DELLA SUA ONESTÀ
IRRADIA DA QUI UN SOLE CHE MAI VEDRÀ TRAMONTO
IL POPOLO DI
MINATORI
ORE 6

Plate 30. The Meschi Monument in Piazza d'Armi in Carrara on May Day.

ANARCHISM AND LABOUR HISTORY

This raises the question of why anarchism, often seen as a discredited political philosophy linked to specific forms of nineteenth-century protest, should have such a living presence in Carrara. One possibility is that this presence is not as strong as first appears. While outside commentators evoke an image of Carrara as a self-consciously anarchist city, local explanations of this long and enduring anarchist history were usually phrased simply in terms of an indigenous rebellious spirit. According to one local quarry worker:

> At Carrara we're rebels. We're a population of rebels.

For Silvano, one of the few remaining shepherds in the area and the cousin of my anarchist neighbour, anarchism is ingrained "in the blood". The composer of many local anarchist songs[8], Silvano thus explained the enduring tradition of anarchism in Gragnana in terms of his own family history:

> We're not educated and we may be ignorant but anarchism has always been a matter of blood at Carrara. Everyone is an anarchist. . . . Anarchism means equality. We have always been against money. If there wasn't any money there wouldn't be divisions in society. If you ask the anarchists at Gragnana they won't be able to tell you why they're anarchists. Only that anarchism means equality between people. Communism is dictatorship. We are for a society of equals. Anarchism at Gragnana is a matter of race. We all talk about anarchism . . . Anarchism is difficult to achieve. It will come when we are more developed . . . when society has reached a higher level.

Historians, seeking a deeper explanation for the persistence of anarchism, have seized on Carrara's unique characteristics and attributed the development of anarchism to the history of marble production. For many contemporary Italian labour historians, anarchism is an anomaly, a 19th century aberration which survived in Carrara only because of the peculiar nature of quarry work. But despite the explanatory weight placed on it, few of these accounts provide any description or analysis of work in the quarries. Even more surprisingly, there is no detailed analysis of the history of anarchism in Carrara.[9]

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[8] See Appendix for a selection of these songs.

[9] Although there is no single work devoted to the history of anarchism in Italy, there is a large bibliography documenting particular periods of this history. For a general bibliography of articles and books on anarchism in Italy see Cerrito (1971; Dada 1984). For journals and newspapers Bettini's two volumes (1972, 1976) are indispensable. For other more general works on anarchism, see Santarelli (1973); Masini (1969, 1981); Cerrito (1977), Dada (1984). For Carrara, the most useful works are Gestri (1976, 1982); Mori 1958); Cerrito (1984); Bernieri (1961, 1952); Feri (1978); Fedeli

An examination of sociological and historical representations of miners as a stereotyped group – the boundary markers for a kind of proletarian essence – is a major theme of this thesis. In this concluding chapter, I want to enhance and deepen this analysis by focusing on the representation of quarry workers as anarchists. This is not an attempt to interpret the history of anarchism in Carrara – a subject worthy of an entirely separate study. Rather, I interrogate aspects of this history in order to scrutinise a set of recurring images and assumptions which are involved in the representation of quarry workers. Following Taussig, my subject in this chapter is "not the truth of being but the social being of truth, not whether facts are real but what the politics of their interpretation and representation are" (1987: xiii). In other words, I am interested in the social uses and repercussions of the imagery of anarchism for the representation of work and workers within the marble quarries of Carrara. This task is not easily accomplished in a brief analysis because these representations – linking the emergence and persistence of a libertarian tradition in Carrara to apparently idiosyncratic features of work in the quarries – are enmeshed within master narratives serving larger national and international projects.

Anarchism should always be read as anarchisms. As a political ideology it shares a common heritage of symbols and practices but, perhaps more than any other political ideology, these practices are irrevocably linked to local concerns and to diverse social settings. Because of its emphasis on non-hierarchical forms of organization and local accountability, the history of anarchism is a history of reinterpretation and reinvention of these practices and symbols within local political, social and economic contexts. In common with other emancipatory ideologies, anarchism is always an emergent cultural and political form embodying different meanings for different people with different histories and cultures. Although closely involved in the history of the Italian national labour movement, Italian anarchism was thus also the product of numerous local industrial and economic concerns. Moreover, even in comparison with the most widely known historical example of anarchism as a broad social movement, in Spain, the history of Italian anarchism is notoriously fragmentary, for it was dramatically transformed in ideology and practice during the 19th and 20th centuries.

My exploration of the ways in which labour historians have represented the *cavatori* and quarry work as integral to the emergence and experience of anarchism in Carrara, thus requires both an outline of the history of anarchism within the national labour movement, and attention to the particular local conditions which marked its development in Carrara itself. Both the information and the space

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(1952a, 1952b, 1952c); Bianco (1961). On anarcho-syndicalism in Carrara see Rolland (1972), Gestri and Bernieri (1977).

available to me, have led me to concentrate initially on an exegesis of the development of the more conspicuous institutional and organizational forms through which libertarian ideas were articulated. But in examining the extent to which the persistence of an explicitly anarchist ideology has been articulated through analyses of the successes or failures of these institutional forms, I want to demonstrate that modern historians have relied on a series of meta-narratives in which quarry workers and others are consistently represented as inarticulate, irrational and de-politicised subjects: as people who have no voice in the making of their own history and whose engagement with the world is often reduced to teleological and mechanistic versions of the evolution of a "modern" political consciousness.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANARCHIST ORGANIZATIONS

In Italy, anarchism emerged in its early 19th century variant from the republican and nationalist movement led by Mazzini and Garibaldi. For many contemporary observers as well as anarchists themselves, early anarchism was indistinguishable from the secret Masonic and republican societies with their emphasis on insurrectionary politics, direct action, anticlericalism and opposition to the feudal aristocracy. After 1861, the post-unification Italian state was antithetical to democracy as Procacci (1978) observes:

> . . . the Italian state was born with a heavily bureaucratic and censorial stamp, and for a great majority of its citizens was personified by the tax-collector and by military conscription. Hence the state's rapid unpopularity, the more acute for the great hopes aroused by the general political upheaval that had taken place. It was this very unpopularity, this gap between government and governed, that was the heaviest price Italy had to pay for the way unification had been achieved (1978: 325).

The south of Italy in particular experienced unification as a form of northern domination and in the following decade numerous uprisings directed against the state occurred throughout Italy. Some of these were directly inspired by the anarchist and internationalist teachings of Bakunin, who was sent by Marx and had arrived in Italy in 1864 to promote the cause of social revolution.[10]

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[10] One of the most significant of these uprisings occurred in 1868 when a series of violent revolts occurred throughout the Italian countryside in response to the introduction of the grist tax. In effect, this was a tax on bread, paid as a percentage of the grain ground into flour. The revolt was eventually suppressed, although 47 people were killed, 163 wounded and thousands of people arrested (Masini 1969: 43).

An independent anarchist movement evolved after 1869 when the first section of the International Workingman's Association was established in Naples. Disillusioned with the failure of republicanism and Risorgimento politics, and inspired by the apparent success of the Paris Commune in 1871, many Italian republicans and intellectuals turned to the International movement as a more hopeful and potent solution to issues of social injustice and inequality.[11] In Italy, the International was a specifically anarchist organization in the sense that the Italian sections, together with some Swiss and Belgium sections, argued against the idea of a central organizing committee and the hierarchical organization put forward by Marx in 1871. In 1872, a national congress in Rimini resolved to establish a separate Italian Federation of the International as a simple network of autonomous sections whose only common organs would be correspondence and statistical bureaux. One year later, 53 delegates representing 150 local sections gathered at the Federation's second congress held in Bologna and by 1874, membership had grown to more than 30,000, representing an organizational network which operated through ten regional federations and extended into every Italian region, including Sardinia (Woodcock 1984: 314–316).

Throughout the 1870s, the International turned increasingly to insurrectionary politics as the means of promoting the ideas of social revolution, creating a clandestine wing called the "Committee for the Social Revolution".[12] In 1878, the Italian government – concerned about the rapid growth and influence of the International – attempted to outlaw the organization as an association of malefactors, and although this strategy was unsuccessful, continual police repression combined with obvious failures of insurrectionary politics, led to the dissolution of the International organization towards the end of 1879.[13] While anarchist militants and intellectuals, like Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero, continued to promote the cause of an anarchist social revolution while in exile, in Italy conflict and confusion within the remnants of the International federation as to how to translate anarchist ideology into a programme of political action, produced what has been described as an "era of terrorism" throughout the 1880s and 1890s (Masini 1981).

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[11] For an insight into the influence of the Paris Commune on the growth of anarchism in both Spain and Italy during this period see Civolani (1981).

[12] The "social revolution" was a phrase coined to counter the idea of the "political revolution" of Risorgimento politics. It implied the idea of the destruction, rather than the gaining of power. The early Internationalists wanted a decentralised organization and advocated the emancipation of the proletariat and a future society based on a federation of work collectives. For a discussion of these ideas see Masini (1969).

[13] Two of the most well-known insurrectionary attempts occurred in 1874 in Bologna and in 1877 in the southern region of Campania, at a village called Letino, near Benevenuto. These are described in Woodcock (1983) and Masini (1969). See also della Peruta (1954).

During these years the defection of several notable anarchist militants, such as Andrea Costa and Saverio Merlino, reflected the growing trend towards social democracy within the Italian labour movement. In the absence of a national network, anarchism in Italy became the preserve of constantly changing, largely autonomous groups in small towns like Carrara; a situation which led to individual acts of terrorism. Indeed, during this period individual Italian anarchists were responsible for some of the most notorious European assassinations, killing the French President Sadi Carnot in 1894; the Spanish Prime Minister, Antonio Canovas, in 1897; the Empress Elizabeth of Austria in 1898; and finally King Umberto, after two attempts, in 1900 (Woodcock 1983). At the same time, some Italian anarchists went abroad to realize their ideals in utopian colonies, such as the Cecilia colony in Brazil, which lasted for four years in the early 1890s.[14]

While the Italian anarchist movement held national congresses in 1891, 1907 and 1915, there was no continuous independent national organization during these years. Instead, anarchists became closely associated with socialists within the Italian labour movement, although they were divided on the question of revolutionary or reformist strategies. In general, anarchists worked within their local Chambers of Labour (*Camere del Lavoro*),[15] which remained largely autonomous and in some areas, like Carrara, were extremely influential. As a result, while anarchism remained weaker than socialism at the level of institutional politics from the turn of the century to the First World War, its values, symbols and language remained deeply rooted within Italian working class popular culture.[16] Localism, anti-Statism, *operaismo* (workerism), and anticlerical and anti-militarist sentiments prevailed (Marshall 1992: 449).

As in France, it was syndicalism which revived the libertarian trend in early twentieth-century Italy. Two groups emerged in the Italian union movement – the federalists, who advocated strong national unions, and the cameralists, who stressed local solidarity through the Chambers of Labour. In 1907, many anarchists joined the Council for Social Resistance, an organization established to counter the more moderate socialist-controlled trade union organization, the *Confederazione Generale*

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[14] For an insight into the ideas and aims of this colony and the personality of its principal adherent, Giovanni Rossi, see Franco Bertolucci (1988: 87–8); Masini (1969: 250–260).

[15] Dating from the 1890s, the *Camere del lavoro* operated as worker-controlled local unions and were sometimes involved in operating credit services and co-operatives etc.

[16] The final split between socialists and anarchists occurred at a conference in Genoa in 1892, and in 1905 the Italian Socialist Party was eventually established.

del Lavoro (C.G.L.).[17] In 1913, a final split occurred in the trade union movement with the formation of the *Unione Sindicale Italiana* (U.S.I.), a specifically anarcho-syndicalist trade union, which emerged as an open rival to the C.G.L., promoting the idea of the general strike as the means of finally overthrowing the monarchy and the state and producing a definitive expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Although by 1919 the U.S.I. claimed a membership of 500,000, largely among the industrial workers of Turin and Milan (Woodcock 1983: 332), the failure of the strategy of the general strike and the Turin factory occupations of 1920 – together with the exile or imprisonment of many anarchist militants and the emergence of fascism – signalled the defeat of organized anarchism in Italy until the end of the Second World War.[18]

In some areas, however, most notably Carrara, the influence of anarchism remained deeply rooted within popular culture: in a rich heritage of stories and songs; in a strong anticlerical and anti-militarist tradition and sentiment; in a continuing adherence to the ideas of grass-roots decision-making within local union organizations; in events such as the annual May day marches, picnics and other festivals as well as in the more fluid, but less immediately discernible, practices of everyday life.[19]

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[17] The C.G.L. was founded in 1906 in reaction to the revolutionary syndicalists. It was closely related to the Socialist Party from which it derived its leadership.

[18] Apart from the 1920 factory occupations in Turin, in which U.S.I. played a major role, the other attempt to utilize the "general strike" as a means of inciting a general insurrection in Italy occurred in 1914. In the context of civil discontent and the shooting of some anti-militarist demonstrators in Ancona, Malatesta called for a general strike which was taken up in different parts of Italy. In the "Settimana Rossa" or "Red Week" which followed, the railway system came to a complete halt and fighting broke out in many areas. Some towns declared themselves self-governing republics. For an account of these events and the role of U.S.I. and other anarchist militants see Cerrito (1977). For the history of U.S.I see Barbadoro (1973); Fedeli (1957); Sereni (1975).

[19] The enduring presence of anarchism in Carrara can also be related to the history of anti-fascism in this area during the 1920's. Furthermore, during the last years of the Second World War, anarchist partisan groups (one led by Ugo Mazzuccelli), were engaged in guerilla warfare against the occupying German army. Although largely undocumented, according to several informants this anti-fascist activity extended to the urban centres, where there was a network of anti-fascist cells which supported the activities of the partisan brigades operating in the mountains. (see also Cerrito 1984) If we take these activities into account, it is possible to argue that anarchism in Carrara continued to maintain strong links with the local population during the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, there was also a strong fascist presence in the city, and during the 1930s, quarry workers were organized (not necessarily voluntarily) within the national fascist unions. During this same period, Montecatini, a company which had strong links with the fascist state, managed to buy almost 50 percent of the quarry concessions at a public auction in Carrara. Alberto Meschi documents these events in a series of articles published in 1945-46 in *Il Cavatore*, in which he refers to Montecatini as "*La Piovra*", or "The Octopus". (see *Il Cavatore* 13 October 1945, 15 December 1945, 9 October 1946). It is interesting to note that Montedison (once Montecatini), the company which produces pesticides in

ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION IN CARRARA

At an institutional level, the history of anarchism at Carrara broadly follows the national trends outlined above. From 1849 onwards, Carrara was noted as one of the most active centres of republicanism in Italy with three major insurrectionary attempts taking place in 1853, 1854 and 1856, and two declarations of a state of emergency in 1854 and 1857 (Mori 1958). After unification and the failure of the republican project, secret societies and clandestine groups proliferated in the area. Some authors have linked the emergence of these groups to the disintegration of the rural economy and work conditions in the quarries. According to Mori (1958: 46), while these people appear in police records as "small landowners" involved in crimes against the state, many of them were in all probability dispossessed and unemployed rural workers who were continually looking for work in the quarries. Poverty alone, however, is insufficient as an explanation for these insurrectionary tendencies in Carrara, for people in other areas of Italy were equally poor and equally outraged by social inequality and rural dispossession (Sereni 1968). A more significant factor for the development of what we might call "class consciousness" among these workers was the enormous potential for wealth created by the industrialization and rapid expansion of the marble industry in the mid to late 19th century.

From 1860 this expansion resulted in a huge increase in the quantity of marble produced in Carrara and the opening up of many new quarries which gradually came under the control of a small number of local and foreign entrepreneurs. This process of monopolization had in fact begun much earlier, in the mid-16th century, when a dramatic increase in the local and global demand for marble fostered the intervention of Genoan mercantile capital; a process which was partially responsible for the disintegration of the medieval corporations of marble sculptors and quarry workers who had previously controlled the production of marble in Carrara (Klapisch-Zuber 1973).[20] This trend towards monopolization continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and by 1889, the 338 active quarries were controlled by roughly thirty families who also owned and operated a number of marble sawmills (Gestri 1976: 44). Given these developments and the increasingly obvious gap created between a

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Carrara and which owns many other similar chemical manufacturing plants throughout Italy, still has strong links with the Italian state.

[20] The Estense legislation, referred to in chapter one, was in part a response to this situation. Although historians have debated the precise motivations for its formulation it seems fairly clear that it was designed initially to protect local marble workers from this process of monopolization. At the same time, it also facilitated the entry of "foreign" capital into the quarries from the mid 18th century (see della Pina 1979).

the mass of recently impoverished rural workers and the wealth of these new "marble barons", it is perhaps not surprising that the Bakuninist aspirations of the First International found fertile ground amongst dissident republicans as well as other groups.

After the failure of a further Mazzinian-inspired uprising in 1870, followed by a strike which paralysed the marble industry in 1872, the first Carrara section of the International appeared in 1873. In Carrara, as in the rest of Italy, the 1870s saw a rapid growth in membership and the formation of many new groups. Local sections were also involved in the national insurrectionary projects of 1874 and 1878, when all the leading militants of the International were arrested (Gestri 1976: 101).

As Thompson has observed, "the inarticulate, by definition, leave few records of their thoughts" (1984: 59). Lack of documentary evidence – apart from police records and trial documents- inhibits a clear understanding of the precise political and ideological orientations of these early dissident and clandestine groups in Carrara. It is fairly clear, however, that most of these groups were inspired by insurrectionary politics of one sort of another, as well as anticlericalism. In 1867, one police report describing the extent of these activities in Carrara stated:

> There is a party which is quite widely represented and involves quarry workers and other people who also work in the quarries. It is quite possible that they would be capable of disrupting the public order as they are inspired by the principles of pure socialism (in Mori 1958: 61).

It is possible that this report refers to a group called "La Congiura" or "The Plot", which first appeared in 1865. According to Mori (1958), this group espoused a radical communistic philosophy and advocated the redistribution of wealth. Another group, known as "La Spartana", came to the attention of police authorities in 1867, reappearing later in 1874 as one of the groups openly affiliated to the International federation in Carrara. Its name is possibly derived from the word "*spartire*", which means "to distribute in equal shares", but could equally refer to the local expression "to work *alla spartana* ", which as I pointed out earlier, indicates the most marginal kind of quarry work associated with ideas of independence and resistance to wage labour. But regardless of the etymological significance of its name, there is some evidence to suggest that "La Spartana" was a specifically anarcho-socialist group which also advocated the redistribution of wealth as well as the abolition of the state, the church and even the family (Mori 1958: 63).

Even after the dissolution of the International federation in 1878, these ideas continued to flourish, albeit clandestinely. According to Fedeli (1952b: 3), anarchist propaganda and literature was widely circulated in the numerous recreational workers' groups which sprang up in the city and surrounding villages.[21] Indeed some of these groups operated as night schools for workers, where literate individuals read and explained anarchist texts to others. The anniversary of the Paris Commune was regularly commemorated, with posters and leaflets appearing on walls of the city streets. At the same time, the widening of universal suffrage in 1882 created other strategic possibilities for social reform and during these years there was a rekindling of the local bourgeois democratic forces (Gestri 1976: 107–108).

In 1883, a new local federation of anarchist groups emerged with the aim, according to its manifesto, of "reorganizing the revolutionary forces in the area of Tuscany through propaganda and other revolutionary means in order to achieve the "social revolution" (Fedeli 1952b: 14).[22] In 1884, at least nineteen groups affiliated to this organization and two strikes, occurring in April and November, bore the obvious marks of this renewed libertarian influence among workers in the local marble industry (Gestri 1976: 125).[23] Despite constant police repression and surveillance, this federation spawned several new groups during the following years, as well as numerous newspapers and journals which appeared and disappeared at regular intervals. By 1889 the anarchist federation at Carrara comprised 55 separate groups with a combined membership of more than 2,500 people (Gestri 1976: 130; Mori 1958: 163). According to Gestri, however, this numerical strength should not be interpreted as evidence for the influence of anarchist ideas within the early labour movement in Carrara. On the contrary, he argues that anarchist revolutionary intransigence and opposition to reformist strategies as well as the absence of strike activity in this period, was an indication of their fundamental immaturity, which later "was translated into a mere passive protest nurtured by the religious expectation of an eschatological moment" (1976: 134).

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[21] These kinds of workers' libraries still exist in Carrara. Some of the local anarchist groups have their own bars where they keep a small collection of books and magazines as well as their own archives.

[22] Fedeli (1952b) quotes this document in full. The emergence of this new federation of anarchist groups was as much due to the aspirations of anarchist intellectuals, like Malatesta, as to local initiative. Malatesta and other exiled anarchist internationalists tended to view the Apuane region as a "well-armed stronghold" of anarchist sentiment (Gestri 1976: 106). Gestri maintains that this reputation was unjustified given the return towards more reformist rather than revolutionary politics in Carrara.

[23] The names of these groups give some indication of their ideological orientation. They appear on a poster which circulated at Carrara on 18 March 1884 in anticipation of the thirteenth anniversary of the Paris Commune. Given the atmosphere of repression, it is perhaps remarkable that the poster appeared at all. The nineteen groups were as follows:

Luce e libertà (Light and liberty), *Rivoluzione* (Revolution), *Terra e Lavoro* (Land and work), *di Campagna* (of the country), *Anarchia* (Anarchy), *A Cipriani*, *Riscossa* (Revolt), *Ateismo* (Atheism), *Monte d'Armi*, *Fuoco e pugnale* (Fire and knife), *I figli della Fame* (the children of hunger), *di Resistenza* (of the resistance), *Fuoco ai Borghesi* (Fire to the Bourgeoisie), *Rivendicazione sociale* (Social revenge), *Nikilismo* (Nihilism), *Dinamite* (Dynamite), *M. Bakunin* (1), *M. Bakunin* (2), *Animosa* (Courage), (in Gestri 1976: 123).

This view, I believe, is unnecessarily dismissive and perhaps underestimates the degree to which other organizational strategies were possible in an extremely repressive political climate. More important, however, for this discussion is the subtext of this interpretation. Like most other modern labour historians, Gestri reiterates the almost universally accepted characterization of 19th century European anarchism as inherently millenarian and utopian (Hobsbawm 1959); as a movement which was destined to fail because of its emphasis on spontaneous, rather than hierarchical, forms of organization.[24] Interpretations of the 1894 revolt in Carrara have similarly described it as a "fundamentally religious experience" (Bianco 1961: 351), emphasising its spontaneous and millenarian character. However, this view largely ignores the evidence, some of it presented here, of a longstanding history of insurrectionary politics in Carrara; a history which should admit at least the possibility that the 1894 revolt as well as anarchism in Carrara, were not necessarily entirely spontaneous, nor essentially millenarian.

1894 is an emblematic date for most accounts of Carrara anarchism.[25] On the 13th of January a strike of all workers in the area was declared. This general strike – ostensibly in support of the uprising of Sicilian peasant workers, the Fasci – rapidly escalated into an armed insurrection against the state, provoked initially by the deaths of a demonstrator and a policeman at Carrara. Although the insurrection lasted only three days, it involved a significant number of quarry workers. During the first stage of the revolt, armed demonstrators shouting cries of "Long live Sicily!", "Down with the taxes!" attempted to take control of the city (Fedeli 1952a: 4). At Monterosso, demonstrators attacked the police station and subsequently blocked the main road between Massa and Carrara with huge blocks of marble. In Avenza, armed conflict ensued between several groups of demonstrators and local police, resulting in a number of deaths. Demonstrators attacked the customs office, destroyed tax records and severed the main telegraph wires between Sarzana, Massa and Avenza. When police reinforcements arrived, the demonstrators retreated to the mountains behind Carrara, shouting "Long live Anarchy! Long live the Social

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[24] As Temma Kaplan (1977) has observed in her discussion of Andalusian anarchism, these interpretations have misunderstood the way in which notions of spontaneity in 19th century anarchist thought were linked to ideas about non-hierarchical forms of organization including workers' control and community autonomy. "Spontaneity" was she suggests, "the sole basis for what anarchists called administration and what we like to call political and social life" (1977: 207).

[25] See Mori (1958: 192–203); Bernieri (1961: 150–162); Fedeli (1952a, 1952b, 1952c); Gestri 1976: 154–165); Bianco (1961: 335–352).

Revolution!" (Bianco 1961: 336). During the next two days, insurrectionary groups appeared in almost every village in the Carrarese. Battles occurred at Fossola and at Torano, where 600 people had gathered to march on the city. On the 16th of January there was another battle on the road between Castelpoggio and Gragnana.

The revolt was eventually suppressed by General Heusch, who declared a state of emergency and arrested more than 600 people. At the subsequent trials, 464 people found guilty of involvement in the insurrection were given prison sentences lasting from one to thirty years. While it is impossible to determine the precise number of people who participated in the revolt, contemporary observers estimated that several thousand people were indirectly involved (Bianco 1961: 345). Trial documents further reveal that while the majority of those involved directly in the revolt were *cavatori*, significant numbers of rural workers and peasants, as well as artisans, such as blacksmiths, shoemakers, builders, carpenters, barbers and bakers also played major roles.

Although both contemporary and modern interpretations argue that the uprisings in the south of Italy were the spark which ignited the revolt at Carrara, it is also apparent that the idea of insurrection had been current for some time. According to police records, "for quite a few days there had been rumours that a great tumult was about to occur" and the idea of a "revolution that was going to change the face of the earth was so widely known that even children and women openly talked about it" (in Fedeli 1952a: 5).

In the following years the "Lunigiana uprising" became a potent symbol for the labour movement at Carrara; a symbol of the fundamental injustice of the old feudal and monarchist order as well as of the exploitation experienced under industrial capitalism during the first decades of the 20th century.[26] This was foreshadowed by Ceccardo Roccatagliata Ceccardi, a local poet and writer who, in providing the only sympathetic contemporary account of the revolt, anticipated its subversive potential. Comparing the trial to the Dominican Inquisition, he wrote plaintively that

> It was a heartrending scene when those poor condemned men – most of them young – were put on the early morning train. On that morning dawn was rising slowly over the Apuane mountains; the mountains where perhaps their fathers had died. . . crushed under a block of marble rolling down the *ravaneti* or under a horrendous explosion . . . and all to earn a crust of bread . . . It is true that they wanted a revolution. They were sick of being exploited, of dying for a few cents a day, ignored . . . but they did not really understand what a

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[26] A labour movement journal entitled *Il 1894* appeared regularly during the following years and several anarchist groups named themselves after the revolt, eg: the "*Circolo Malatesta*" in Gragnana was originally called "*Circolo di Gragnana Gennaio 1894*".

> revolution was . . . People do not forget . . . and if it is true that revolution brings repression, it is equally true that after this revolution will come a greater and more powerful revolution (in Balli 1969: 523).

The failure of the revolt coincided with the failure of insurrectionary politics throughout Italy and during the following decades anarchist militants began to work more closely with other socialists within the organized labour movement. In Carrara the socialists emerged as the major force in local politics between 1901 and 1903, when quarry workers achieved a major victory in their struggle to improve working conditions, with the signing of the first collective work contract in 1902 (Gestri 1976: 342). In Carrara, the national debate between anarchists and socialists on the fundamental question of revolutionary versus reformist strategies, manifested itself through the formation of two opposed groups within the *Camera del lavoro* : the socialists, who promoted the idea of a vertical form of union organization with all categories of marble workers enrolled in the national socialist controlled union, the *Federazione Nazionale Lavoranti Arti Edile*, and the anarcho-syndicalists, who advocated a locally accountable union organization, divided horizontally into specific work categories with equal representation. While the socialists maintained strong links with the quarry workers, the anarcho-syndicalists began organizing among other categories of industrial workers on the plain and in 1902, supported by the republicans, they usurped control of the *Camera del Lavoro* from the socialists.

I have already briefly outlined the role of anarcho-syndicalism in local trade union politics in chapter four. Here it is important to reiterate that anarchism, particularly anarcho-syndicalism, continued to play an important role in local politics and the union movement until the beginnings of fascism in the 1920s when left-wing militants of all varieties were forced into self-imposed exile.[27] During these years, anarchists, as well as communists and socialists, were involved in clandestine anti-fascist resistance groups operating within the urban centres as well as in organized partisan groups during the last years of the 1939–45 war (Cerrito 1984). Indeed, many people today identify Carrara anarchism specifically with the period between 1911 and 1920 when the local *Camera del Lavoro* was controlled by the anarcho-syndicalists under the leadership of Alberto Meschi and when significant gains were made for local workers within the marble industry. At the end of the war, more than 50,000 people gathered in Piazza Alberica to applaud Meschi's return to Carrara after his years of exile in France. According to Ugo Mazzucchelli, the maverick marble industrialist mentioned earlier, "there was never any difference between unionism and anarchism at Carrara". And Meschi himself, writing under his pseudonym, the "Man of Stone", wrote:

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[27] It is interesting to note that in the years immediately prior to the beginnings of fascist repression in the mid-1920s, there appear to have been at least 20 different anarchist groups in Carrara. The names of some of these groups refer directly to the 1894 revolt. For example, in Gragnana, the group was called *13 Gennaio* (13 January), while others were named after prominent anarchist figures, like Pietro Gori or Franceso Ferrer. There were also references to anticlericalism, utopian thought and insurrectionism. For example, in Bedizzano the group was called *L'avvenir Siam' Noi* (The Future is Ours), in Montignoso, *Ne Dio Ne Padroni* (Neither God Nor Master), and in Melara, Gruppo *Luce e Progresso* (Light and Progress Group). The names of these groups appear in the local paper *Il 94*. (10 October 1920).

> In the Apuane mountains . . . [the anarchists] . . . have always been a numerical force . . . Apuane anarchism . . . has always had profound roots within the general population but especially within the working classes (*Appunti per la cronaca del Movimento Anarchica Apuane:* 1947 ed, Gruppo Anarchico S. Faure e L. Bertoni).

This brings me, finally, to the central issue of this chapter. So far I have outlined the history of Carrara anarchism in terms of its apparent successes and failures at the level of institutional politics as well as its influence within early trade union organizations during the first two decades of this century. This history suggests that anarchism in Italy, as well as in Carrara, cannot be reduced to a single ideological current but rather that it underwent a number of transformations in ideology and practice throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Modern labour historians, however, have consistently under-emphasised the role of anarchism in the formation of the Italian labour movement and have perpetuated a peculiarly static interpretation of the emergence and persistence of Carrara anarchism. They portray anarchism as an essentially irrational or millenarian phenomenon: the outcome of 19th century insurrectionism as well as the peculiar features of quarry work.

CYCLOPS OF MARBLE

This interpretation of Carrara anarchism as millenarian and irrational – the unique product of an idiosyncratic form of work – also emerged in contemporary accounts of the 1894 revolt. Indeed, the themes encountered there are reiterated, albeit in a slightly modified form, in modern accounts of the role of anarchism in the local labour movement. In both cases, these accounts assume an explicit connection between the peculiar features of quarry work and the development of what Gestri (1976: 47) calls the "libertarian spirit". In other words, these explanations suggest that the quarries of Carrara mysteriously bred a psychological disposition towards rebellion and, moreover, that anarchism itself was an essentially irrational response to the appalling work conditions in the quarries. In this section I explore the ways in which labour history has represented quarry workers as anarchists, but I begin with these contemporary accounts of the 1894 revolt as a means of foregrounding the issues which are central to this discussion.

Two related explanations for the revolt emerged in the contemporary bourgeois press. The first of these focused on the political content of the uprising, arguing that whereas in Sicily the revolt came from the "stomach", in Carrara it had been inspired "by brains" (*Natura e Arte* 1893–4: 676–685). Refuting any economic motive, *La Nazione* asserted:

> For us it's clear that the events in Carrara are not due to the suffering or misery of the working class. What might be true of various places in Sicily is certainly not true in Carrara where there is no lack of work or possibilities for those who want to work . . . if there is one region in the whole of Italy where the worker is least poor, it is here (16 January 1894).

And two days later, *La Nazione* further expounded that the revolt

> in Carrara is nothing but an anarchist uprising: it is the instinct of robbery and blood; hatred towards other classes, property and capital, which ably insinuated and preached for years, has inflamed the workers in the quarries (18 January 1894).

During the following weeks, this explanation was tempered with various admissions that the *cavatori* in Carrara were perhaps not quite as well off as initially suggested. The more progressive paper, *La Tribuna*, for instance, asserted:

> Work conditions in the quarries . . . are not as the press has almost unanimously described . . . The average daily wage is L.2,80 and there is also the fact that due to rain, or other holidays, workers are unemployed for at least 100 days in the year . . . There is no form of assistance for the workers and work insurance is completely unknown. The big industrialists are completely unconcerned about these matters and are entirely preoccupied with gaining a monopoly in the marble trade to the great disadvantage of the small business class. In this fiercely competitive atmosphere, small marble businesses which were once envied for their wealth at Carrara, are slowly disappearing (8 February 1894).

And even the ultra-conservative *Corriere della Sera* modified its initial optimistic description of work conditions in the quarries in a article by Luigi Arnaldo Vassallo, who wrote:

> I have never been to the coal mines but I don't think that those miners could possibly be jealous of the marble workers of Carrara . . . forced to work in the blinding light with one foot on the edge of an incredible precipice. It is not true to suggest that accidents are infrequent. On the contrary, every quarry has its victims. They earn well up there, in that life of the dammed but for what

> purpose? On Saturday evenings they get drunk and one night's mournful orgy has to compensate them for a week's perils and hardship (18–19 January 1894).

The second explanation emerged in an article by Carlo Forza, whose theory on the intrinsically rebellious characteristics of the quarry workers, was widely quoted and embellished in a number of newspaper accounts. According to this theory, quarry workers demonstrated an innate and "supreme immorality" and a "natural ferocity"; a characterization which was then generalized to the entire Apuane working class in which anarchists were identified as criminals who were inspired only by the "desire to let blood flow" (Gestri 1976: 163). The language of race invoked in these explanations, focused on scatological imaginings of quarry workers as wild and savage creatures whose work propelled them towards excessive, uncontrollable behaviour such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity. Thus, according to Forza,

> These men of the Apuane mountains . . . are ferocious in their individualism. They hate the state as the state . . . These people of the Apuane are impervious to every sort of danger in their jobs as quarry workers . . . to kill a soldier is not considered an assassination, nor the crushing of a prince (*Illustrazione Italiana* 18 January 1894).

He maintained furthermore that

> Whoever has not seen how a small group of men can cut these blocks of marble from the mountain, can't possibly understand the sense of superiority [these workers] . . . feel. They are used to watching death pass by them at least ten times a day . . . In the Apuane Alps the person who remains on top is always right and an outlaw can always challenge whoever comes looking for him simply by moving a single foot in the *ravaneti*. Here people make revolutions as if it were sport: to challenge the authorities and the armed forces – these are the only means and ends of their philosophy (*Natura e Arte* 1893–4: 676).

Reiterating this psychological thesis, *La Nazione* further suggested that the insurrectionaries were motivated by

> a supreme immorality. They want to enjoy their six *franchi* a day without bothering to work. Educated as children to torture the necks of the oxen with long knives; oxen which . . . drag huge blocks of marble from the quarries, these men have hard hearts. Working in the quarries they are in constant contact with danger and death. This makes them fierce and they become increasingly hostile, aggressive and violent. They are a race of cyclops, wild men, pieces chipped off from marble, predisposed to every form of excess . . . They are rebels without a cause . . . the only explanation [for the revolt] lies in

> their supreme arrogance. Elsewhere people ask for bread and work! These people have bread and sustenance but they would like to get it for nothing. They wanted a revolution? The repression is quite justified (19 January 1894).

In his work on 19th century coal miners in Britain and Australia, Andrew Metcalfe (1990) has argued that the vilification of coal miners gave the bourgeoisie a moral world order which legitimated capitalism and their position as capitalists. This observation is also applicable to 19th century *cavatori* in Carrara. The necessity to provide some sort of justification for the imposition of a state of emergency to quell the revolt was not based on any objective assessment of the work conditions and economic situation of Carrara quarry workers. This was made clear in subsequent government reports documenting the work conditions in the quarries and the complete lack of accident and health insurance in an industry noted for its high rate of death and injury (Milani 1894; Mazzetti 1894). The representation of these workers as on the one hand an economically privileged group, and on the other as uncontrollable animals – as subhumans- motivated by an insatiable desire for violence, quite clearly resonated with the interests of the local bourgeoisie, in particular the small group of substantial marble industrialists who over the preceding years had been increasingly threatened by the emergence of an organized labour movement in Carrara. Moreover, the revolt in Carrara was, in essence, a further demonstration of the growth of a national oppositional movement inspired by the goals of revolutionary socialism and the Bakuninist tendencies of the first International. The initial repressive measures imposed under General Heusch thus indicated the extent to which the Italian state felt threatened by these revolutionary tendencies which, in Carrara, had been manifest for at least two decades earlier.

Modern historical interpretations of the 1894 revolt also emphasise poverty, not wealth, as a motivating factor for the uprising. Paradoxically however, these accounts incorporate some of the assumptions of contemporary bourgeois observers concerning the fundamental and almost innate irrationality of the *cavatori* as well as their propensity for spontaneous violence and rebellion. Taking his cue from Hobsbawm (1959), Gino Bianco (1961: 350) suggests, for example, that anarchism and the 1894 revolt was a quintessentially millenarian movement which was characterized by "a total repudiation of the contemporary world as intrinsically evil and the aspiration to create an entirely new society; a chiliastic ideology and a fundamental lack of clarity on how to achieve this new civilization".

According to Lorenzo Gestri (1976: 104), perhaps the most rigorous of these historians, by the end of the 1870s

> anarchism had made a significant impact in the area and was recognizably the typical form of protest and inspiration which animated the numerous

> agitations occurring among wide sections of the local population – a kind of marble proletariat. But rather than a precise ideological choice, anarchism constituted a type of mood or a state of mind, which even in the face of constant and bitter police repression, was impossible to erase.

Quoting a 19th century commentator, Gestri further concludes that insurrectionary activities and the 1894 revolt became "almost a psychological necessity for the marble workers and the general population in Carrara" (1976: 104).

As I suggested in my introductory comments to this chapter, these interpretations are enmeshed within a number of representational narratives central to labour history discourse. Marxist narratives for example, generally assume that anarchism itself is essentially a "pre-political" ideology: emerging in the context of the social upheavals of pre-industrial Europe but disappearing with the beginnings of industrial capitalism and a more "mature" form of organized socialism. This interpretation is, however, problematic when we look at the history of anarchism in Carrara. For here, anarchism developed in connection with the marble industry and was deeply embedded within the local labour movement until well into the middle of the 20th century.[28] But despite the significant role of anarcho-syndicalism in Carrara, many labour historians have continued to portray these tendencies in terms of the assumed psychological propensity of quarry workers towards irrational forms of rebellion, Thus for Gestri (1976), anarcho-syndicalism was essentially a continuation of 19th century millenarianism:

> Utopia was simply reabsorbed into *leghismo*: the form of organization promoted the notion of mass spontaneity as the only real instrument of direct emancipation which was to form the basis of a new society. The *lega* was transformed into a vehicle of libertarian values: an anguished eschatology was reintroduced by the idea of the "general strike" and the myth of social liquidation (1976: 258).

Apart from the theme of millenarianism, historians have also sought to explain the persistence of anarchism in Carrara in terms of the assumed individualistic nature of work organization in the quarries. In other words, these accounts not only accept the common view of anarchism as an aberrant and inherently individualistic form of socialism, they also reiterate the view that craft work in itself is diametrically opposed to the formation of a modern class consciousness. Mori (1958) claims, for example, that

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[28] The "Hobsbawmian" view that anarchism was an essentially 19th century phenomenon is empirically contradicted by its strong influence in other 20th century labour movements, for example, in Germany and Sweden (See Cerrito 1971). It is also important to point out that despite their important strategic differences, 19th century Italian socialists incorporated many utopian elements into their own ideas of a future society, sharing with anarchists a common oppositional culture. For example, the songs of the anarchist lawyer and poet, Pietro Gori, were also sung by socialists. To isolate anarchism as an inherently utopian movement, thus misinterprets the nature of 19th century Italian socialism, as well as the influence of anarchism in 20th century international labour movements.

> The tendency towards an "independent style of life" and a heightened individualism favourable to the growth of anarchist ideas was undoubtedly influenced by the peculiar nature of work in the quarries where the risks and dangers of work accentuated a spirit of initiative and emphasised instinctive qualities . . . The *cavatore* doesn't have a lasting relationship with other workers which facilitates the growth of a sense of solidarity and community of interests and needs, but works in small isolated groups which are not even technically linked to the production process in other quarries (1958: 150).

Bernieri (1952, 1961) locates the origins of anarchism at Carrara in a kind of "primitive communism". His account of the work process in the factory, where "the production process unites groups of workers and individuals forming an objective basis for solidarity and association" (1952: 10), is like Mori's, contrasted with that of the quarry

> [in which] various specializations are transmitted from father to son, acquiring, in a certain sense, craft characteristics. This kind of work is not conditioned by tools or machinery but carried out on the basis of experience, intuition and instinct. While certain skills and experience are required, the production process is itself rather elementary . . . and contributed to the development of a spirit of individualism among the marble workers . . . the anarchist movement in Carrara had a typically petty-bourgeois and individualistic character which when linked with the spirit of individualism among the marble workers . . . transformed then into direct producers of the *agri-marmiferi* (1952: 11).[29]

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[29] Bernieri's thesis is slightly different to other accounts in that he links the development of anarchism in Carrara to the disintegration of the feudal territorial and legal units called the *vicinanze*. Territorially, these correspond roughly to what I have called the "marble villages" today. According to Bernieri (1961) the abolition of the *vicinanze* around 1800 resulted in the expropriation of their land and common resources, including the quarries, in favour of the *comune* of Carrara. Bernieri argues that this loss was accompanied by a sense of injustice "which was passed down from generation to generation" and anarchism, or what he terms "sectarianism", "expressed the essentially petit bourgeois aspirations of the re-establishment of a regime based on the distribution of individual private property" (1961: 83). However, as I noted above, research by Klapisch-Zuber (1973) suggests that the disintegration of the *vicinanze* occurred much earlier, around the mid-16th century. Furthermore, della Pina's (1979) account of the rise and fall of one local family, the Del Medico, reveals a much more complex picture of these social and economic transformations.

And Gestri (1976) also asserts that the emergence of the anarchist movement in Carrara was linked the growth of the marble industry and the expansion of a marble proletariat "of relatively recent formation exposed to a work organization based on essentially individual procedures which favoured an ideological and political form of individualism" (1976: 70). He further concludes that "the difficulties involved in transforming the marble firms into the form of a "concentrated industry", with a large and unified labour force, deriving from a work process characterized by small groups of highly skilled workers scattered throughout the mountains, explains the diffusion of these values and their ideological and political orientation" (1976: 47–8, 1982: 100).[30]

But despite the centrality of these kinds of explanations – linking the emergence of anarchism in Carrara to the peculiar features of work in the quarries to labour history discourse – it is patently obvious to me that these assertions are based on *a priori* assumptions about the characteristics of craft work and not on a detailed examination of work within the quarries. For as I tried to demonstrate in the earlier chapters, while work within the quarries is characterized by the importance placed on craft identity, this identity is not antithetical to the generation of a notion of collective identity or indeed of class consciousness. Although the hierarchy of skill certainly fosters the idea of individual talent and skills which are attached to the body, it also promotes the view of work as a collective experience; generating the sense of egalitarianism essential to occupations which are inherently dangerous and where all workers are equally vulnerable to the risk of death or mutilation.

Furthermore, as I have also argued, political consciousness cannot be understood simply as the product of a particular kind of work organization or work process. The meanings of work are generated as much through the practical and sensual experience of work as through the work process and the mode of production. These meanings, as well as the construction of political consciousness, are also the product of the collective and individual experiences of life outside work; in the marble villages and at home, where life itself revolves around the daily vicissitudes of work in the quarries. Thus, in my view, labour historians have not only misrepresented anarchism in Carrara as an essentially 19th century chiliastic philosophy; their representations of quarry workers as natural anarchists, also fundamentally misunderstand the nature of work in the quarries.

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[30] All of these views share an assumption common to most accounts of anarchism, not just Marxist ones, that there is a fundamental disparity between the idea of class, or other forms of human solidarity and individualism. The uniqueness of anarchism as a political philosophy lies precisely in the idea that while recognizing that there is always a tension between these two forms of human sociability, they are not essentially contradictory.

CASUALTIES OF HISTORY: QUARRY WORKERS, LABOUR HISTORY AND ANARCHISM

In the introduction to *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson (1984) makes an emotional plea for the rescue of the forgotten forebears of modern working class movements from the "enormous condescension of posterity". "Their crafts", he suggests

> may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward looking. Their communitarian ideals may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience; and, if they were casualties of history, they remain, in their own lives, as casualties (1984: 12).

Rescuing the forgotten casualties of Italian labour history, however, poses enormous problems. In the first place there is a great dearth of material and research on changing forms of labour organizations in the 19th century and in particular those forms of organization which existed outside the national elite.(Tilly et al 1975).[31].Given Gramsci's emphasis on the study of subaltern classes and popular culture and his dictum that the "lesser forms" of cultural life should be treated as serious subjects worthy of study (1975: 2309–17), this neglect seems particularly ironic. For despite Gramsci's influence, Marxist historiography has had a peculiarly ambivalent relationship with the study of popular culture in Italy and there are very few studies of the cultural traditions of the labour movement. In conceptualizing class as a "thing" rather than as a "relationship" (Thompson, 1984: 10), Italian Marxist historiography has tended to conflate the subjectivity of the working class with its principal historical organizations so that the history of the labour movement is viewed almost entirely though the successes or failures of its more apparent institutional forms. The failure to conceptualize subjectivity and consciousness outside the material conditions of predetermined groups is also evident in the more recent Marxist accounts of the labour movement where, as Passerini notes, "workers' subjectivity is thought of as being automatically political, and not liable to manipulation or ambiguity" (1987: 6).[32]

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[31] The best general Italian source for this history is Del Carria (1966).

[32] Passerini (1987) critiques this tradition in her important study of fascism and popular memory in the Turin working class. Suggesting that it is impossible to comprehend fully the ways in which fascism incorporated oppositional groups without an analysis of popular culture and an understanding of the importance of symbolism in the practices of everyday life, Passerini argues against the common interpretation" of the primacy of politics suggested by certain histories and activists' accounts. This is especially the case when the working class is conceived as disembodied –

The question of what constitutes the "political" or how to define it, is extraordinarily problematic for any account of popular culture but it is particularly difficult in analyses of forms of popular protest and oppositional culture in 19th century Italy; a period characterized by a complex mixture of social relationships within a newly-created nation state noted for its extreme regional diversity and lack of nationalist sentiment.[33] The idea – implied in Hobsbawm's (1959: 2) evolutionary scheme – that 19th century forms of popular protest were in some way "pre-political", assumes that the participants engaged in these popular uprisings against the state were not organized in any collective sense and furthermore that they were somehow incapable of organization, or at least, less capable than 20th century revolutionaries. In suggesting that these forms of protest were irrational and primitive, this view also makes it difficult to understand the specific cultural, economic and social contexts of these kinds of collective actions and assumes, erroneously, that they were only tangentially related to issues of power and the struggle for social change (Tilly et al 1975: 290).

Given the prevalence of this type of analysis and the dominance of a Marxist meta-narrative in the study of labour movements and 19th century popular protest, it is perhaps not surprising that labour historians have tended to describe 19th century European anarchism as the product of pre-capitalist social formations, which were inherently millenarian and utopian, as somehow outside the realm of organized politics. This view is not only ethnocentric, it also denies the extent to which ordinary people are capable of organization outside the boundaries of institutional politics and conceptualising a radically transformed vision of the world based on their own experience.

Although recent historical and anthropological studies have attempted to dispel this myth of millenarianism in the case of Spanish anarchism,[34] the problem remains

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a working class that is cast in the role of a conscious force for emancipation but remains largely ethereal, without a material existence and an everyday life" (1987: 16).

[33] In his recent study of Bengali jute workers, Dipesh Chakrabarty (1989: 219) also questions the applicability of Marxist history to a culture which is predominantly characterized by pre-capitalist relationships and which is not necessarily dominated by the hegemonic values of liberal democracy.

[34] Temma Kaplan's (1977) work on the anarchists of Andalusia and Jerome Mintz's (1982) study of the anarchists of Casa Viejas are the best sources for this argument., Kaplan presents compelling evidence which demonstrates that the millenarian theory is far too mechanistic as an overall explanation of Spanish anarchism. The millenarian argument, as Kaplan puts it, "implies that popular religion forms the background, hunger serves as the trigger, and anarchism is the result" (1977: 210). Kaplan's work illustrates that Andalusian anarchism was deeply rooted in the social world of working class culture at the end of the 19th century and firmly embedded in union organization and urban life (1977: 206–212). Similarly, Mintz's detailed study of the anarchist

in many analyses of Italian anarchism. Whereas in Spain anarchism emerged in the 1930s as a firmly entrenched political and social movement and proved capable, albeit briefly, of running the national economy and achieving a radical transformation of Spanish society, in Italy an anarchist social revolution did not occur. Historians have thus found further material in Italy to support the thesis that anarchism was a peculiar response to the changing social conditions in 19th century Europe and was destined to fail through lack of organization and a "mature" perception of the historic role of the working classes and organized socialism. As I have attempted to demonstrate, historical accounts of anarchism in Carrara share these assumptions about the "pre-political" nature of 19th century anarchism. An alternative historical interpretation of Carrara anarchism would, I suggest, place more weight on the ways in which these episodes of violence and protest intersected closely with other contemporary ideologies oppositional to the hegemonic bourgeois view of the world; a world of rapid economic transformation in which insurrection or radical socialism might seem the only rational solutions to rural dispossession and social dislocation.

As with work, what is said about anarchism depends upon who says it. One of my main concerns has been to foreground the voices of quarry workers themselves and I have argued that their perceptions of work are crucial to any interpretation of the ways in which the experience of work constructs identities. It is therefore appropriate that I end this thesis with the voices of the people in Carrara who still identify themselves as anarchists. According to Ugo Mazzucchelli,

> Carrara doesn't have an anarchist culture. Anarchism came about here because of the struggle, not because of the culture. The quarry workers were all illiterate. The men who were involved in those struggles had an incredible courage. It was the courage which came with the necessity to defend one's life.

Similarly, Roberto, a foreman from Gragnana, described himself:

> I have always been an anarchist. I am on the side of Meschi. Meschi was respected in Carrara . . . He was a man who was always on the right path. Everyone trusted Meschi because he couldn't be bought, not like these modern unionists.

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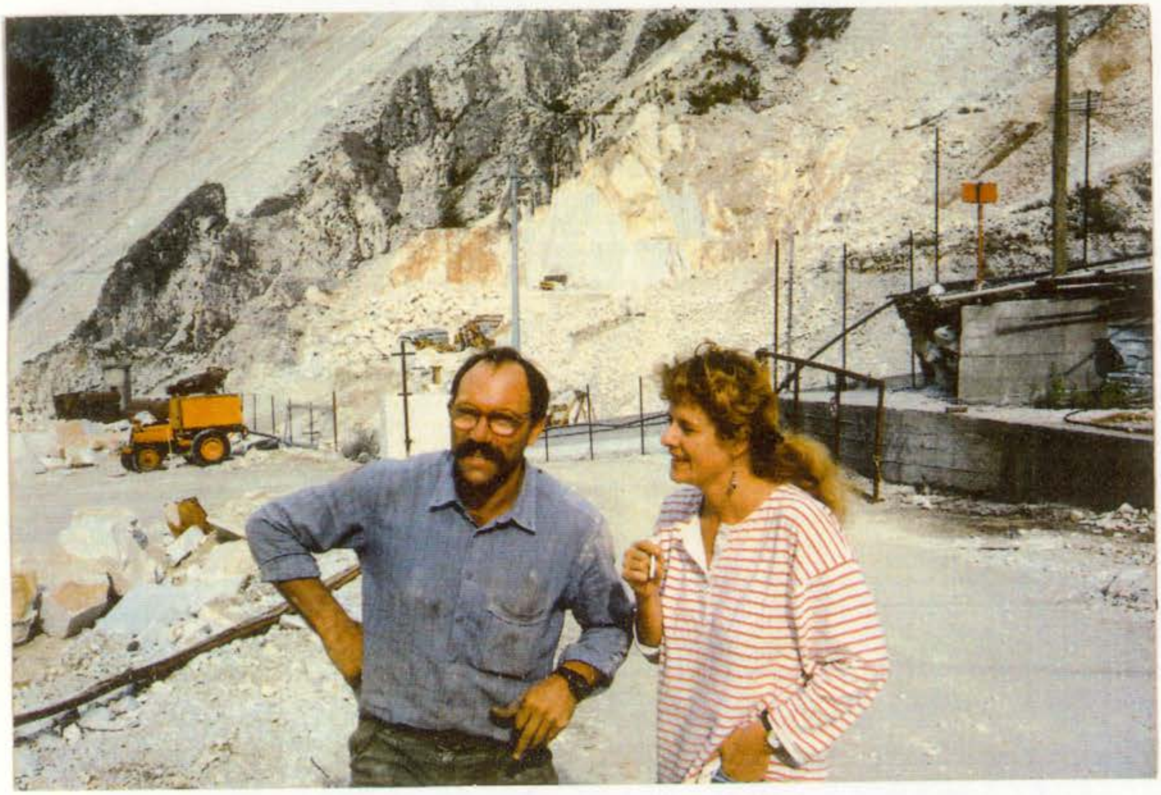
uprising at Casa Viejas in 1933, presents substantial evidence which counters Hobsbawm's evolutionary model of anarchists as "primitive rebels" arguing that, although unsuccessful, the uprising demonstrated the extent to which the national anarchist movement was deeply rooted in both the countryside and urban centres. (1982: 271–276). Martha Ackelsberg's (1991) study of Spanish women anarchists, again demonstrates the degree to which Spanish anarchism engaged with popular culture and proposed practical, rather than necessarily utopian, solutions to social transformation.

For Mazzucchelli, like many other Carrara anarchists, anarchism is identified with anarcho-syndicalism and with the struggles to improve working conditions in the quarries. For Katerina my neighbour in the *murello*, "anarchism is in the street"; in the everyday practices of life in the village. And for yet others, like Silvano, anarchism is inscribed much more broadly – "in the blood" – in both the traumatic memories of members of his family and in the songs he composes for his own pleasure.



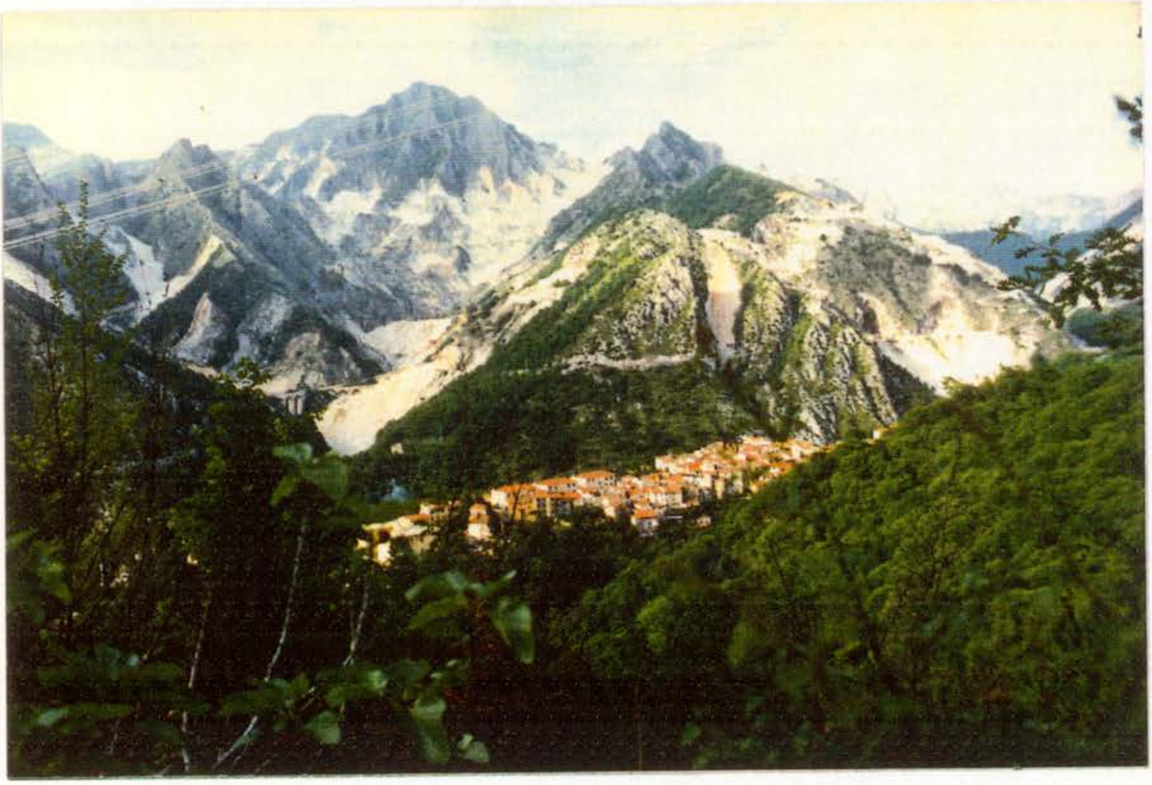


Plate 31. The anthropologist and Arimante at work.

Plate 32. Codena and the quarries.

APPENDIX

LOCAL ANARCHIST SONGS

These songs are sung by anarchists in Gragnana, often on May Day, and as far as I know they are unpublished elsewhere.

Le Votazioni	Voting Day
Laggiù a Montecitorio[1] casa abitata da furfanti che stanno li seduti col voto degli ignoranti	Down there at Montecitorio house inhabited by scoundrels who manage to stay put with the vote of ignorant people
E sprecano milioni alle montagne e al mar le spese c'é le fa paga' chi deve lavorar'	And waste millions from the mountains to the sea the expenses are always paid by those who have to work
Se con la votazione pensi d'averci guadagnato sei un povero illuso perche sei sempre uno sfruttato	And if with your vote you think you have earned something then you are deluded because you will always be exploited
Voti Democrazia[2] lo sai che cosa fa ti fa lavorar' tanto e poca libertà	If you vote for the Democrats you know what they will do they'll make you work a lot and there won't be much freedom
Se voti Comunismo partito d'operai ma poi te ne accorgi che sono sempre guai	If you vote for the Communists party of the workers afterwards you'll realize that there's always trouble

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[1] House of Representatives in Rome.

[2] Reference to the main Italian conservative party, the Christian Democrats.

Se speri Socialismo[3]	If you have hopes for Socialism
collibri e col martello	with the book and the hammer
mandali a goverar'	if you send them into govern
che poi lo vedi il bello	then you'll really see what happens
Poi c'è anche la Malfa[4]	Then there's still la Malfa
voto di minoranza	vote of the minority
non ne devi parlar'	we don't have to talk about that
perchè non c'è sostanza	because there's no substance in them
Se voti Almirante[5]	If you vote for Almirante
è un voto criminale	it's a criminal vote
da cinquantanni ad oggi	for fifty years
lui non fa che ammazzare	he hasn't done anything except kill
Io che non voto mai	Me who never votes
devo seguir' di voi la sorte	but who has to follow your fate
piuttosto che un governo	rather than a government
preferirei la morte	I would prefer to die
Se tu vuoi migliorare	If you really want to improve
la tua situazione	your situation
la strada è una sola	there's only one way
è la rivoluzione	and that's the revolution
Se noi sarem' compatti	If we all unite together
questa è la giusta via	that's the right direction
all'or potremo gridare	and then we could all shout
evvia L'ANARCHIA!	long live ANARCHISM!

(Words by Silvano, music the Bandalero stanco)

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[3] The Socialist Party.

[4] Reference to Ugo La Malfa, who was secretary of the Republican Party between 1965 and 1975, before becoming its president.

[5] Until recently, Almirante was the secretary of the M.S.I., a political party which has strong links with fascism.

La Festa

Ogni anno a Gragnana
facciamo una grande festa
siamo gli anarchici
di Gruppo Malatesta[6]

Questa non è una festa nuziale
è nemmeno clericale
l'abbiamo organizzato
per l'aiuto del giornale[7]

Il giornale non mentisce
è nemmeno vi tradisce
perchè dice la verità
uguaglianza ed umanità

Nella festa non c'è l'imbroglio
non c'è interesse di portafoglio
solo si parla di Anarchia
per combattere la borghesia

E lo stato e il Vaticano
quei fascisti van per mano
e con dell' aiuto dei questori
picchiano i lavoratori

Ma nessuno ci può fermare
siamo pronti a lottare
le manette di polizia
non la fermerà l'anarchia

(words by Silvano)

Every year at Gragnana
we hold a big *festa*
we are the anarchists
from the Gruppo Malatesta

This is not a wedding party
nor a clerical one
we organized it
to help the newspaper

The newspaper doesn't lie
and it won't betray you
because it tells the truth
equality and humanity

The *festa* won't cheat you
we're not interested in making money
we only want to talk about Anarchism
and fight the bourgeoisie

And the state and the Vatican
those fascists who go around
and with the help of the police
beat the workers

But no one can stop us
we're ready to fight
the handcuffs of the police
they won't be able to stop anarchism

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[6] The anarchist group in Gragnana.

[7] Reference to *Umanità Nova*, the national anarchist newspaper

La Ballata del Pinelli[8]

O Signore vi narrò la storia	O Gentlemen I'll tell you the story
della bomba che esplose a Milano	of the bomb that exploded at Milan
questo fatto non è troppo strano	this incident is not so strange
per chi vuole questa strage capir	for whoever wants to undertand it
Magistrati di tutto il paese	Magistrates all over the country
sensa farsi nessuna ragione	without giving any reason
incomincia la perquisizione	sent out the search warrants
e gli anarchici ci vanno arrestar'	to arrest the anarchists
Ma fra tutti questi arrestati	But why among all those arrested
al Pinelli toccò la sventura	Pinelli had the bad luck
di trovare la morte in questura	to die in the police station
certo questo non riesco capire	I'll never understand
Ha lasciato la moglie e due figli	He left a wife and two children
era un uomo stimato a Milano	he was well regarded in Milan
Precipitato da 4 piani	falling down four floors
certo lui non voleva morir	he didn't want to die
Poi l'arresto viene al Valpreda	Then Valpreda was arrested
Se il tassista l'ho riconosciuto	if the taxi driver saw him
Se ha fatto questo io l'ho rifiuto	if he did it I won't defend him
l'anarchia non si deve infangare	anarchism must not be tainted
Io la penso così e mie signore	That's what I think gentlemen
Se la legge cambiasse la pista	if the police looked elsewhere
e nella strage c'è il piede fascista	and the fascists have their mark in it
Ma qualcuno lo vuole mascherare.	but someone wants to cover it up

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[8] There are several versions of this song in Italy. For another more famous version, see the anthology of anarchist songs, *Cantare Anarchia, Lottare*, published by Gruppo Anarchico di Ragusa, Edizioni la Fiaccola, 1986. This song also appears with other anarchist songs on the recording *Canzoniere Internazionale: Gli Anarchici 1864-1969* (folk,fonit-cetra Turin).

Vi saluto mie cari compagni	I greet all my dear comrades
difendiamo il compagno Pinelli	let's defend our comrade Pinelli
inalziamo i cartelli	let's put up posters
l'anarchia deve sempre avanzare	anarchism must advance.

(words by Silvano)

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