

Laura Corradi. *When Night is Day. Women, Everyday Life, and Nightshift Work*. Published in Italy as *Il Tempo Rovesciato. Quotidianità femminile e lavoro notturno*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 1991.

Laura Corradi's book is a significant sociological study of women who work the night shift in an Italian biscotti and pasta factory; the book holds implications for all countries in late capitalism.

The study rescues the concept of class from several decades of criticism by cold war theorists, as well as from feminists and ethnic historians who have downgraded class differences. Implicitly, the study is in accord with Antonio Gramsci's concept of the subaltern classes, a view that deepens the marxist concept of economic exploitation to include negation of culture, or what contemporary Italians call "le culture negate."

When Night is Day also reminds me of Mariarosa Dalla Costa's writings of the 1970s analyzing the unpaid labor of housewives. Sensitively, and I think brilliantly, Corradi demonstrates how the night shift for women brings alienated labor one more rung downward. One of her informants said, "the factory kills." Evoking the myth of Persephone's abduction into the underground, she limns the lives of workers who are indispensable to the economy who live a life-long winter, with no hope of emerging into the light, no hope for springtime and regeneration. These workers are the dark shadow of workers who transitorily benefited from postwar economic development and "progress" and who are today slipping into their own darkness of joblessness and homelessness.

Night work for women increased in the 1980s as the Italian economy bounded into unprecedented ascendancy in the world—now the fourth or fifth industrialized nation of the earth, ranking with Japan as the two most rapidly developing economies of the world. Corradi's study has international relevance as late capitalism follows Japanese and Italian patterns.

The innovative aspect of the work is that instead of letting capitalist premises of the western world—or conventional marxist premises of Italy's very large left—determine the work, Corradi begins with the Italian feminist assumption that time for women is different. Exploring the gendered nature of time, Corradi finds that women who are forced into night work suffer more than the customary double exploitation of work in the factory and work in the home. A woman who gives up life in the sunlight to work in a factory in the darkness subtracts irretrievable time from her own life, and from the lives of those she loves.

She contrasts the rhythm of everyday life and the rhythm of work at night in a mechanized factory. Work conditions that are considered anachronistic in advanced societies still exist to guarantee high rates of profit, even in highly developed countries like Italy and the United States. Women's "progress" in entering the external work force has been paid for by a double shift of work for women (at home and in the factory) whose cost must be multiplied by women's work at night.

A striking aspect of Corradi's work is that she transforms conventional sociological methodology, using the interview technique to listen to women free-associate about their concerns. Lives of interviewer and interviewee become complicit. She conveys the sense of the observer as unwittingly determining the responses of the interviewee, a dialectical process that results in the interviewer also feeling determined. "In the period I was doing the interviews I dreamed I was a black child. . . . I knew I had to act in a particular way because this is the way white men imagined us to be." The persisting image was that of "a thin veil between me and them like a mosquito net" in which "me and them" became inextricably entangled.

Corradi realizes that free time for one's self is nearly nonexistent in our complex late capitalist civilization. Intellectual labor, Corradi points out, is time rendered free to intellectuals by the dominant class who profit from the wealth produced by workers; some of this capitalist profit is extended to the intellectuals who provide the dominant class with the ideology that they need to sustain an exploitative system. Reminding me of Gramsci's discussion of "organic intellectuals," and of Ernesto De Martino's definition of an authentic intellectual as one who puts into question the culture in which we are born and reared, Corradi points to the complicity between the scholar and the person being studied.

Free time, she concludes, is not simply the number of hours off the job. If conditions of work are alienating, free time can be apathy, meaningless activity, and boredom. When work is alienated, there is no clear-cut division between work time and free time. Can the woman who works as an airline attendant turn off her artificial smile when she comes home?

Women who work in alienating conditions, particularly those on a night shift, become hollowed humans with no time to fulfill themselves. Tiredness from unnatural sleep rhythms prevents a woman from renewing herself (as she did traditionally) in everyday work in the home. In Italy, an often helpful husband often does these traditional women's tasks. She has no time to work in her garden, becomes increasingly tired, more stressed, and ages rapidly.

So tired she can hardly realize the implications of having her time turned upside down. How do you tell your kids in the summertime to be quiet so you can sleep? "If I see my boyfriend I may be there physically, but I'm too tired to be there mentally."

Corradi says she is trying to rescue the subjective level of memory. Describing the everyday lives of women forced to work at night she realized she was "drawing outlines of new social inequalities." Television and radio advertising jingles of the biscotti and pasta factory sing, "Where Barilla is, is home." Corradi spears the irony in this jingle. Italy (in contrast to its partner in rapid economic advancement, Japan) by "forcing people to work at night, with the blackmail of being fired," is committing "a humiliating act of violence that consumes and insults people."

Corradi's work subverts conventional premises of development and underdevelopment. Progress for whom? For a shrunken factory working class that continues to produce almost everything we see, use, and eat, the cost of progress has been a deepening deterioration of life. The price of the well-being of Italy (and of other countries in late capitalism) is paid for by a few people, especially women, against another backdrop of irony: Italy may have the most successful women's movement of the world.

Increasingly in late capitalism, women work around-the-clock shifts in textiles, food processing, and machinery. In Italy, this is only the tip of an iceberg of a submerged cottage industry (*lavoro nero*) that women have chosen so that they can work at home with their children. In the United States, the equivocal "progress" of women is suggested in the number of women who have started their own enterprises and then work around the clock to try to make them successful, never-ending work unalleviated by legal supports of Western Europe (medical care, child care, free education, government help to small business, et al.) and unsoftened by cultural supports like the extended family of Italy and Asian countries where the whole family sees to the children and everyone often works around the clock to make an enterprise successful.

Recently, Laura Corradi and women in the parliament of the European Economic Community tried to secure a prohibition of night work for women. But "enlightened" male legislators insisted on pitting "equality" against "difference" (Italian feminists insist on equality with difference) and the new law stipulates that women must work "equally" at night with men. Progress?

Corradi's study poses profound and troubling questions for Italy and for other highly developed countries, questions that suggest the relevance of a spiral view of history. We need to spiral back to the late

1960s and early 1970s when Italian feminists and the new left emphasized *autogestione*, or self-management, and declared that the aim of revolution (today called transformation) is liberated work in a liberated work space. For everyone.

Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum
Institute for Research on Women and Gender
Stanford University

Giorgio Caproni. *The Wall of the Earth* (1964-1975), translated by Pasquale Verdicchio. Montreal: Guernica, 1992. Pp. 92.

This is the first book length edition of Caproni's poetry to appear in English. The volume contains the texts in English translation only along with a six page introduction ("Giorgio Caproni's *The Wall of the Earth: Writing in the Shadow of Absent Walls*") by the translator and one page of explanatory notes.

Instead of translating, as is more common, an anthology of Caproni's poems, Verdicchio chose to render an entire work into English because of the text's central image: "the wall [...] establishes a sort of topographical mark from which a reader could begin to approach Caproni's work." This idea is appealing and provides one with the satisfaction of reading a complete collection of poems in translation as opposed to bits and pieces removed from their original context. Besides giving us some background information on Caproni, Verdicchio lays out his concept of translation as an act that reaches "for depths of textual creation," one whose "processes involve a recreation of the primary event of writing through a handling of its materials, and a moulding of these into a form similar to the original, yet lightly touched by the spirit of interpretation."

For the most part the translations in this book are "faithful" to this poetics; they are indeed creative rewritings of the originals. Their creativity directs them back towards the Italian poems because they usually retain a similar constructive process. Verdicchio's definition of translation places him in the company of previous poet translators such as Leopardi, Montale or Ungaretti all of whom considered translation a creative act or rewriting as opposed to mechanical transposition from one language to another. Leopardi's own "translation" of Arnault's "La feuille" was included in the *Canti* under the title "Imitazione." Thus Verdicchio's notion of translation as a creative, imitative act has roots in the Italian lyric tradition.