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Who are Servants? Defining Domestic Service in Western Europe (16th - 21st Centuries)*

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In 1752, a certain Giovanni Serantoni (or Sartoni) asked for admission to the servants’ confraternity of the Italian city of Bologna. He obtained it. Later on, however, it was discovered that he was a porter without a permanent position, working, when he did, also as a sedan-chair carrier. Quoting the statute, which allowed the admission of “actual servants” only, it was argued that those doing the job of porter or sedan-chair carrier could not be considered as such. Consequently, Serantoni’s membership was revoked. However, he appealed to the vicar general, who ruled in his favour: clearly establishing who really was a servant in early modern Bologna did not seem an easy task. Nor was it in other parts of Europe².

This paper aims exactly to analyse definitions of servants in different historical contexts, from the Renaissance up to the 21st century, mainly focusing on Italy and France but also providing the reader with

* The original title of the paper presented at the Oslo seminar was: “Who are servants? The answers given in different historical periods (16th - 20th century)”. I have also dealt with some of the themes analysed in this paper in SARTI R., *Conclusion. Domestic Service and European Identity*, in PASLEAU S., SARTI R. and SCHOPP I., *Final Report. The Socio-economic Role of Domestic Service as a Factor of European Identity*, forthcoming on the web-site of the European Commission (pre-print available online: http://www.uniurb.it/scipol/drs_servant_project_conclusion.pdf). See also the “Conclusion” of these *Proceedings* (vol. V). English revision by C. Boscolo and S. Harrison, University of Birmingham. I am very grateful to Patrizia Delpiano and Isabelle Schopp for their help and suggestions.

Abbreviations: AP = *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860: recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises. Première série, 1787 à 1799*, Paris, P. Dupont, 1867-; MAIC. DGS = MINISTERO DI AGRICOLTURA, INDUSTRIA E COMMERCIO, DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLA STATISTICA.

² On this case and on the history of this brotherhood see SARTI R., “L’Università dei Servitori di Bologna, secc. XVII-XIX”, in GUENZI A, MASSA P. and MOIOLI A. (eds), *Corporazioni e Gruppi Professionali nell’Italia Moderna*, Milano, Angeli, 1999, pp. 717-754; SARTI R., “Domestic Service as a ‘Bridging Occupation’. Past and Present”, in these *Proceedings*, vol. IV; SARTI R., “The True Servant. Self-definition of Male Domestics in an Italian City (Bologna, 17th-19th centuries)”, *The History of the Family*, X, 2005, no. 4, pp. 407-433.

information on several other Western European countries. Focusing on this issue is important not only because it represents a necessary methodological step within a project that aims to analyse domestic service and domestic workers, but also because the servant definitions employed in the past are sometimes unexpected and surprising if compared to the current ones. Moreover, even though very different kinds of people might be defined as servants, classifying someone as such might have far reaching consequences on his or her social and political status, and on the rights he or she enjoyed or was deprived of.

Who Were Servants in Early Modern Europe? A Difficult Question

During the *Ancien Régime*, there were many kinds of servants, ranging from farm hands to stewards, from maids to ladies-in-waiting, from coachmen to cooks... Servants also differed in their legal status: some were free, others were slaves or enjoyed only limited freedom³. Moreover, servants did not only originate from the lower social strata: some of them belonged to the middle and even the upper strata of society. Serving was not inevitably a humble and degrading activity⁴. On the contrary, it could be a source of honour in so far as it allowed servants to be in touch with people of a higher social rank. “Not all forms of servitude are unbecoming and calamitous”, wrote an Italian 17th century author. In his view, serving the prince, in particular, was sometimes “a great gift from Heaven”⁵. In a certain sense, domestic service mirrored a society in which the family played a very important political, social and economic role.

In addition to people who worked as servants and were paid (in kind and/or in cash) for their service, there were a lot of other people who were considered servants because they found themselves in an inferior position within an asymmetric relationship. For instance, this was the case with apprentices. Although they often paid for being instructed, they were ranked with servants because they too had a master, with whom they generally lived and whom they should obey⁶. Even children and wives could be

³ In this paper, I will not deal with this point. On the legal status of servants see SARTI R., “The Legal Status of Servants and Domestic Workers in a Comparative Perspective (16th-20th centuries)”, in these *Proceedings*, next volume.

⁴ Bibliography on this point is extremely wide. See for instance, on different European countries, ELIAS N., *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. I. Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1969 (1939¹), (It. trans. *La civiltà delle buone maniere. Il processo di civilizzazione. I*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982); ELIAS N., *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, Darmstadt - Neuwied, Luchterhand Verlag, 1975 (It. trans. *La società di corte*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1980); ARIÈS Ph., *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Plon, 1960 (It. trans. *Padri e figli nell'Europa medievale e moderna*, Roma - Bari, Laterza, 1989 (1968¹)); ARIÈS Ph., “Le service domestique: permanence et variations”, *XVII^e Siècle*, XXXII, 1980, pp. 415-420; GUTTON J.-P., *Domestiques et serviteurs dans la France de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Aubier Montaigne, 1981, pp. 11-50; MARSHALL D., *The English Domestic Servant in History*, London, Historical Association, 1968 (1949¹), p. 4; STEINFELD R. J., *The Invention of Free Labor. The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870*, Chapel Hill - London, The University of North Carolina Press, 1991, pp. 18-19; MELDRUM T., *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household*, Harlow, Pearson Education Limited, 2000, p. 25; SARTI R., “Obbedienti e fedeli. Note sull'istruzione morale e religiosa di servi e serve tra Cinque e Settecento”, *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, XVII, 1991, pp. 91-120. See also below.

⁵ ROSSI P., *Convito Morale per gli Etici, Economici, e Politici Ordinato et intrecciato si della Ragion di Stato, come delle principali materie militari*, 2 vols., Venetia, Guerigli, 1639-1657, vol. II, p. 381.

⁶ See for instance GEREMEK B., *Studium o średniowiecznym rynku siły roboczej w rzemiośle Paryża XIII-XV w. Studium o średniowiecznym rynku siły roboczej*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962 (It. trans. *Salariati e artigiani nella Parigi medievale*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1975); CASARINO G., “I giovani e l'apprendistato. Iniziazione e addestramento”, *Quaderni del Centro di studio sulla storia della tecnica del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche*, Genova, 1982; GRIBINGER A. and REITH R., “Lehrlinge im deutschen Handwerk des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts. Arbeitsorganisation, Sozialbeziehungen und alltägliche Konflikte”, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, XIII, 1986, pp. 149-199; REITH R., “Zur beruflichen Sozialisation im Handwerk vom 18. bis ins frühe 20. Jahrhundert”, *Vierteiljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, LXXVI, 1989, pp. 1-27; KAPLAN S., “L'apprentissage à Paris au XVIII^e siècle”, *Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XL, 1993, pp. 436-479; MARCELLO L., “Andare a bottega. Adolescenza e apprendistato nelle arti (sec. XVI-XVII)”, in NICCOLI O. (ed.), *Infanzie. Funzioni di un*

included among servants. The Italian 17th century jurist Giambattista de Luca, for example, analysing the different types of *servitù* (servitude), even dealt with the servitude of children towards their father⁷ while still in the 18th century the author of the entry *domestique* of the French *Encyclopédie* maintained that the term *domestique* did not define wage servants only: it could also be used with reference to wives and children⁸. Similarly, the Hungarian word *cséled* had four different meanings from the medieval period until the 19th century: member of a household, a house and/or a family; child; woman; servant⁹.

On the other hand, we cannot forget that the English word “family”, the Italian *famiglia*, the French *famille*, the German *Familie*, the Spanish and Portuguese *familia*, etc. all derive directly or indirectly from the Latin *familia*. Originally *familia* was used to refer to a group of servants (*famuli*) who worked for the same employer. As the number of slaves one possessed was a sign of wealth, the word also took on the meaning of “estate”. Its semantic field grew in other directions, too. It could mean all those who were under the authority of the head of the family (*paterfamilias*): slaves, children or others. But it also could mean everyone who descended from the same progenitor and was therefore actually or potentially subject to the same *paterfamilias*, albeit one who was now extinct. Dependency thus represented the common theme to the various meanings the term had in Latin. The etymological meaning of the word *familia* returned to the fore in the Middle Ages, when it mainly meant everyone working for the same master. Interestingly, this is the meaning with which the French term *famille* was first recorded in the 14th century. The English term “family”, which probably appeared just before the beginning of the 15th century, originally meant “the servants of a house or establishment”¹⁰. Later, less unfamiliar meanings became dominant and the meaning of a “group of servants” declined until it finally disappeared. Yet this process was quite slow and for a certain period the words “family”, *famille*, *famiglia*, *familia*, etc. had several different meanings, among which was that of “servants”¹¹. This clearly might create ambiguities. For instance, only by knowing the context would one correctly understand the will of the Bolognese

gruppo liminale dal mondo classico all'Età moderna, Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1993, pp. 231-251; MARCELLO L., “L'apprendistato nell'industria fiorentina. Una ricerca sull'Arte della Lana Fiorentina nel XVI secolo”, paper presented at the International Conference *Mutamenti della famiglia nei paesi occidentali*, Bologna, 6-8 October 1994; KRAUSMAN BEN-AMOS I., “Service and the coming of age in seventeenth-century England”, *Continuity and Change*, III, 1988, pp. 41-64; KRAUSMAN BEN-AMOS I., *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994; STEINFELD R. J., *op. cit.*, in part. pp. 25-27; DEGRASSI D., “Contratti di apprendistato nel Friuli tardo medievale (sec. XIV-prima metà XV)”, *Metodi e Ricerche*, n. s., XIII, 1994, pp. 31-46; MELDRUM T., *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28, etc. In relation to early modern France, FAIRCHILD C., *Domestic Enemies. Servants and their Masters in Old Regime France*, Baltimore - London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp. 4-5, maintained that “in the household of urban craftsmen, apprentices were usually not considered servants, but ‘hired hands’”.

⁷ DE LUCA G. B., *Dottor Volgare ovvero il compendio di tutta la legge Civile, Canonica, Feudale, e Municipale, nelle cose più ricevute in pratica; Moralizzato in Lingua Italiana*, vol. I, In Colonia, A spese di Modesto Fenzo Stampatore in Venezia, 1755 (1673¹), p. 471.

⁸ “Quelquefois le mot domestique s'étend jusqu'à la femme et aux enfants”, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Paris, chez Briasson, David l'Ainé, Le Breton, Durand, vol. V, 1755, p. 29, Article “Domestique”.

⁹ FARAGÓ T., “Servants and Farmhands in Historic Hungary before the First World War, in the Mirror of Figures”, in this volume. From the mid-19th century, the word slowly lost the meaning of “woman”, while an old form of the term – *család* – was reintroduced and replaced *cséled* in the sense of child and member of a household. The term *cséled* held the sole meaning of “servant”, though it referred to different kinds of workers at different times, i.e. domestic servants, farmhands in small farms, farmhands in large estates.

¹⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 20 vols., Clarendon, Oxford, 1989², *ad vocem*.

¹¹ According to French dictionaries, the last records of *famille* as a group of servants date back to the 17th century. In English the same sense for “family” disappeared in the 18th century. In literary Italian, perhaps the last use of the term as a synonym for “servants” was by the writer Giovanni Faldella (1846-1928). In the everyday spoken language, this use of the word probably became rare by the beginning of the 19th century, although one scholar found a few traces as late as the 1930s. Yet the expression *famiglia pontificia* still survives to describe the staff working for the pope. In Spanish, the term has retained this meaning to this day, at least according to authoritative dictionaries, see also SARTI R., *Europe at Home. Family and Material Culture 1500-1800*, New Haven - London, Yale University Press, 2002 (or. *Vita di casa. Abitare, mangiare, vestire nell'Europa moderna*, Roma - Bari, Laterza, 1999¹; 2004⁴), pp. 31-32, with further references.

Marquis Luigi Albergati (1747), according to which his wife Eleonora Bentivoglio, for as long as she remained a widow, was to have “the free use of the apartments in the *palazzo* that she currently has the benefit of, for her own private use and for the use of her family [i.e. her servants] both in summer and winter”¹². Besides, the Italian term *fami(g)liare* meant both a servant and a member of the family in the modern sense (the term is still used with this meaning)¹³. In fact, there is a certain discussion among historians, who try to understand whether early modern servants perceived themselves more as family members or as wage earners, and recent research has shown that as early as in the 16th century there was no lack of servants who behaved as “rational” wage-earners who tried to maximize their income changing master if they found someone offering better working conditions: in 16th century Nantes, for instance, according to Gayle Brunelle, “mistresses viewed their servants as dependents, not quite kin, but wholly under their authority at least for the period specified in the contract” while “servants perceived themselves as wage laborers with the right to renegotiate, or renege on, contracts when a more advantageous offer presented itself”¹⁴. In other words, these servants perceived themselves as wage earners rather than as subservient family members. This and other similar results are very interesting but we must also stress that in early modern times it was possible (or even normal) to be, at the same time, a wage earners and a family member: it is we, 20th-21st century people, who see these two identities as opposite; in the (self-)perception of most early-modern servants (and masters) they probably merged¹⁵.

Besides, it has to be added that in several European regions it was quite common for poor or destitute families to send their children and youngsters to live and work with relatives who were better off, if the latter were in need of help and were willing to keep them: these children and youngsters not uncommonly found themselves in a very ambiguous position, half relatives and half servants, and often were also linked to their kin and master by the powerful bond of gratitude; as a consequence, they were sometimes heavily exploited, particularly if they were orphans¹⁶. In summary, some servants were indeed relatives. Additionally, it was not only distant kin who were likely to serve in the house of relations. In some European regions where the impartible inheritance system prevailed, it was quite common for siblings excluded from inheritance to stay in their parental home as servants of the brother who inherited the farm. This was frequently the case in the Eastern Alps, for instance¹⁷. But we find examples of close kin-servants in several other countries. Samuel Pepys, as he wrote in his well-known *Diary*, told his sister Pall that his mind was “to have her come not as a sister in any respect, but as a servant”; she agreed and when she arrived Pepys did not even “let her sit down at table” with him¹⁸. Serrana Mercedes Rial García (to quote but another example) found the case of a 18th century Galician girl, Antonia de Lemos, who initiated a lawsuit because, she maintained, she had served her *abuela* (grandmother) for eleven years as a servant without being paid; her uncle, who lived with the grandmother

¹² Archivio di Stato di Bologna (State Archives, Bologna), *Famiglia Albergati, Strumenti e scritture*, busta 215, fascicolo 16 (23/12/1747).

¹³ Differently, the word *famiglio* only meant servant, see BATTAGLIA S., *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, Torino, Utet, 1961-2002, vol. V (1968).

¹⁴ BRUNELLE G. K., “Contractual Kin: Servants and their Mistresses in Sixteenth-Century Nantes”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, II, 1998, pp. 374-394; BENADUSI G., “Investing the Riches of the Poor: Servant Women and their Last Wills”, *American Historical Review*, CIX, 2004, pp. 805-826.

¹⁵ For instance, the late 16th and early 17th century servant women analysed by *Ibid.*, in their last wills “emphasized their own professional identity as wage earners”, but at the same time left their masters their possessions as inheritances, as is common among family members (though manipulating, in this way, the traditional master and servant hierarchy).

¹⁶ See for instance MISCALI M., “Servir au féminin, servir au masculin : maîtres et serviteurs dans une communauté de la Sardaigne au XIX^e siècle”, in this volume. On the use of hiring poor relatives as servants see for instance FAIRCHILD C., *op. cit.*, p. 5; HILL B., *Servants. English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 115-127.

¹⁷ MITTERAUER M., “Servi nelle Alpi”, *Quaderni storici*, XXIII, 1988, pp. 437-467; LANZINGER M., *Das gesicherte Erbe. Heirat in lokalen und familialen Kontexten, Innichen 1700-1900*, Vienne - Koln - Weimar, Böhlau, 2003. See also SARTI, *Europe at Home*, pp. 50-67; LANZINGER M. and SARTI R. (eds.), *Nubili e celibi tra scelta e costrizione*, Udine, Forum, forthcoming, both with further references.

¹⁸ PEPYS S., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys. A Selection*, selected and edited by R. Latham, London, Penguin, 2003 (1985¹), p. 93, 108.

(already dead at the time of the suit) replied that the old woman had made a gift to Antonia to compensate her for her work¹⁹.

Nor were kin-servants necessarily poor: bachelors, widowers, etc., in need of a housekeeper might have recourse to a niece, a sister, a sister-in-law, or a cousin and even daughters might be regarded by parents as such²⁰, and the list of similar cases could continue. It was not only in a metaphorical sense that some authors listed family members among servants or domestics.

Apart from real relatives, there were pretend or artificial kin. In Spain, as far as we know, there was also the tendency to establish a kind of artificial kinship between the master and the servant²¹. Furthermore, upper class families disguised servants as relatives to escape from a law that limited the extent of domestic staff. However, it has to be stressed that in Spanish the common term for servant was, and is, *criado*, i.e. brought up at home: ironically, as shown by Aurealia Martín Casares, the law established that the person who raised a child at home had no right over his/her properties, and did not have the right to enslave or to put him/her to service...²².

In fact, it was not rare in many European countries for orphans brought up by someone to be assimilated to and/or treated as servants. On the other hand, orphanages, charity institutions, or, in England, the overseers of the poor, placed children as servants and apprentices²³.

So, while today we have two distinct categories for servants and family members, for early modern Europeans these roles were generally much more overlapping and in any case types of servants could range from quasi modern wage-earners who changed their masters quite often in search for better wages to blood-related members of the household or artificial kin, with many intermediate possibilities. The quite frequent custom to leave a legacy to servants and the fact that sometimes servants themselves left a legacy to their masters reflected this reality (even though legacies might aim to keep domestics in service or to manipulate the master/servant hierarchy)²⁴. From this point of view we need

¹⁹ RIAL GARCÍA S. M., *Las Mujeres de las Comunidades Marítimas de la Galicia durante la época moderna: una biografía colectiva*, [Alcalá de Henares (Madrid)], Ayuntamiento de Alcalá de Henares, Centro Asesor Mujer, [2005], p. 148.

²⁰ HILL B., *op. cit.*, pp. 118-121, with further references.

²¹ DUBERT I., *Historia de la familia en Galicia durante la época moderna 1550-1830*, A Coruña, Ecidíós do Castro, 1992, p. 73; GARCÍA GONZÁLES F., *Las estrategias de la diferencia. Familia y reproducción social en la Sierra (Alcaraz, siglo XVIII)*, Madrid, Ministerio de Agricultura, pesca y alimentación, 2000, p. 219.

²² MARTÍN CASARES A., “Free and Slave Domestic Service: Legislation, Gender and Social Practice in Spain”, in FAUVE-CHAMOUX A. (ed.), *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity. Understanding the Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th - 21st centuries*, Bern - Berlin - etc., Peter Lang, 2004 (but 2005), pp. 189-209 (pp. 201-202), and MARTÍN CASARES A., “Domestic Service in Medieval and Early Modern Spain: Legislation and Social Practice”, in these *Proceedings*, next volume.

²³ See for instance PROCHASKA F. K., “Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service in Victorian England”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, no. 129, 1981, pp. 79-85; LOMBARDI D. and REGGIANI F., “Da assistita a serva. Circuiti di reclutamento delle serve attraverso le istituzioni assistenziali (Firenze-Milano, XVII-XVIII sec.)”, in ISTITUTO INTERNAZIONALE DI STORIA ECONOMICA ‘F. DATINI’, Prato, *La donna nell’economia secc. XIII-XVIII. Atti della ‘Ventunesima Settimana di Studi’, 10-15 aprile 1989*, edited by S. Cavaciocchi, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1990, pp. 301-319; GROPPA A., *I conservatori della virtù. Donne recluso nella Roma dei Papi*, Roma - Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 166-173; HILL B., *op. cit.*, pp. 128-149; HANTZAROULA P., “The Status of Servant’s Labour in State Policy (Greece, 1870-1960)”, in this volume; MISCALI M., *op. cit.*; MCISAAC-COOPER S., “Servants and the Law in Early-Modern England”, in these *Proceedings*, next volume.

²⁴ For instance VANN R. T., “Wills and the Family in an English Town: Banbury, 1550-1800”, *Journal of Family History*, 1979, pp. 346-367; FAIRCHILD C., *op. cit.*, in part. pp. 140-144; ARRU A., *Il servo. Storia di una carriera nel Settecento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995; SARTI R., “Servire al femminile, servire al maschile nella Bologna sette-ottocentesca”, in NAVA P. (ed.), *Operaie, serve, maestre, impiegate*, ed. by P. Nava, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1992, pp. 237-264; CAVALLO S., “Family obligations and inequalities in access to care in Northwestern Italy, seventeenth to eighteenth centuries”, in HORDEN P. and SMITH R. (eds.), *The Locus of Care. Families, communities, institutions and the provision of welfare since Antiquity*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 90-110; BENADUSI G., *op. cit.* In relation to servants’ legacies in favour of their masters, it has to be stressed that some early modern authors denounced masters who forced their domestics to leave them their possessions (see for instance FONTANA F., *Il Padrone Instruito overo Istruzione a chiunque tiene Persone al suo servizio, per conoscere le obbligazioni, che*

more comparative research in order to establish if in some regions this overlapping was more widespread than elsewhere and how exactly things changed over time.

However, there was not only confusion because of the fact that servants were family members (and family members might be servants). A further confusion derived from the fact that words used to define servants often also meant “young”, such as *maid* in English, *Magd* and *Knabe/Knecht* in German, *garçon* in French, *garzone* in Italian, *garzòn* in Spanish, etc.²⁵. The reason for this was not only that the young had to obey and be subject to the head of their families, but also (and mainly) that in most parts of Western Europe (though with important exceptions such as the rural areas of Southern Italy and of the Southern and Western regions of the Iberian Peninsula) it was very common for people to serve in another household before marrying (life-cycle service)²⁶.

In summary, in pre-industrial times the social identity of servants was quite ambiguous. Domestic service was at the same time an employment and a *type of relationship*. What distinguished people who were likely to be classified as servants was having a master, rather than performing a certain specific task. Moreover, domestic service was not an absolute condition: servants could be in turn masters, just like sons can also be fathers. Upper servants such as stewards, tutors, secretaries, quite often, indeed, employed some domestic staff²⁷. The notion of service was so extended, that even people in the highest social positions might present themselves as servants, because they too had a master (identified with the king or even with God). A hierarchal society such as that of early modern times could be easily perceived and represented as a network of master-servant relationships. Interestingly, people signed letters proclaiming themselves the “most humble” or the “most obedient servant”²⁸. In this society, stating that “all, in the world, serve, if they don’t live in idleness” when addressing domestic servants to give them moral instruction was far less rhetorical than doing the same thing in the 20th century²⁹.

Perceiving and representing society as a network of master-servant relationships often implied sharing the idea that the power of the king over his subjects was of the same nature as the power of a family head on the members of his family. This idea, increasingly contested from the late 17th century onwards³⁰, was generally based on the authority of Aristotle³¹ and/or that of the Bible³². The

hanno verso la propria Servitù, Milano - Bologna, Ferdinando Pisarri, 1710, p. 63), so we have to be careful in interpreting the real meaning of these bequests.

²⁵ MITTERAUER M., “Servants and Youth”, *Continuity and Change*, V, 1990, pp. 11-38.

²⁶ On geographical differences within Europe see below, section “Scholars and Servants”.

²⁷ For instance SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico in Italia. Il caso di Bologna (secc. XVIII-XIX)*, PhD Thesis, University of Turin, 1994, pp. 68, 232-235.

²⁸ Significantly, in monarchic states these phrases of civility are still in use today see, for instance, <http://www.bottin-mondain.com/savoir-vivre/svco/correspondant.htm>.

²⁹ FONTANA A., *La servitù instruita ovvero Istruzione A tutti gl'huomini, che servono, per vivere Christianamente, nella pratica del proprio Esercizio*, Milano - Bologna, Ferdinando Pisarri, 1710, p. 7. On this text see SARTI R., “Obbedienti e fedeli”. For a 20th century text affirming that “all serve in the world, masters too” while giving moral instruction to domestics see *L'aiuto della famiglia. Schemi di conversazioni da tenersi alle domestiche*, Roma, Unione donne di A.C.I., 1933, p. 5.

³⁰ On the refusal of this idea see, for instance LOCKE J., *First Treatise on Civil Government* (1689); SIDNEY A., *Discourses Concerning Government* (first published in 1698, but written by Sidney before being arrested in 1683 and executed in 1685). Both works are also available online, see for instance, respectively: http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/Locke0154/Works/PDFs/0128-04_2Treatises.pdf; www.constitution.org/as/dcg_000.htm.

³¹ Aristotle and the author of the treatise on economics attributed to him perceived the house as the natural unit in social organization. Relations between members of a domestic community reflected those that were typical of a state: a husband’s power over his wife was constitutional, his power over his children was royal or monarchical, and his power over his slaves was despotic or tyrannical (for Aristotle’s *Politics* see, for instance, <http://www.classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.mb.txt>, particularly book I). It is not possible to examine this argument further here, but for further analysis, see BRUNNER O., “Das ‘ganze Haus’ und die alteuropäische ‘Ökonomik’”, *Zeitschrift für Nationalökonomie*, XVIII, 1950 (It. trans. “La ‘casa come complesso’ e l’antica ‘economica’ europea”, in BRUNNER O., *Per una nuova storia costituzionale e sociale*, edited by P. Schiera, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1970, pp. 133-164); SCHWAB D., “Familie”, in BRUNNER O., CONZE W. and KOSELLECK R. (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 7 vols., Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972-1992, vol. II, pp. 253-301; CASALI E., “‘Economica’ e ‘creanza’ cristiana”, *Quaderni storici*, XIV, 1979, no. 41, pp. 555-583; FRIGO D., *Il padre di famiglia. Governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione*

commandment that imposes a duty to honour one's father and mother, for instance, was often quoted as a heading for a general rule to respect any authority. Indeed, the obligation to honour one's parents was extended to all metaphorical parents, that is to say masters, clergymen, tutors, preceptors, teachers, elders, state authorities. The respect due to them was thought to be addressed to God, because God governed society through those whom he had appointed as authorities. The exhortation by St Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians (6:5): "Servi, oboedite dominis carnalibus cum timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo", also had quite extensive interpretations³³.

The Christian religion, with its emphasis on humility, provided another pattern of service relationship: Christ came "not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). "Although in ancient times the title of 'servant' was disgraceful, once it had been assumed Christ himself it became very honoured", wrote Pio Rossi. Consequently, the Pope presented himself as *Servus Servorum Dei*³⁴. Finally, at least from the 17th century onward, the idea spread that "the good Prince", who was "entrusted with the well being of his people, must serve all of his subjects"³⁵.

Conflicting Definitions

Early modern authors were well aware of the difficulty of defining domestics, and sometimes tried to put order into such a complicated matter. Nicolò Vito di Gozze, author of a treaty on family care (1589), remarked for example that servants were of "varying and different kinds": "servants by nature", "servants by law", "servants by remuneration", servants "by virtue or pleasure". Among the "servants by nature" he included the "barbarous and uncouth people" living in the countryside. The "servants by law" were the slaves. The "servants by remuneration" were free people who placed themselves in the service of a master: among them, some served in exchange for board and clothing only; others received a salary besides that; others still worked "for remuneration only", seeing to all their needs by themselves. There were finally those who served not "for money or out of compulsion, but for mere and sincere pleasure,

dell' "economica" tra Cinque e Seicento, Roma, Bulzoni, 1985; SABEAN D. W., *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 91-93; DÜRR R., *Mägde in der Stadt. Das Beispiel Schwäbisch Hall der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a. M. - New York, Campus, 1995, pp. 11-23; DONI GARFAGNINI M., "Autorità maschili e ruoli femminili: le fonti classiche degli 'economici'", in ZARRI G. (ed.), *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996, pp. 237-267, etc.

³² See for instance FILMER R., *Patriarcha* (1680), also available online: <http://www.constitution.org/eng/patriarcha.htm>. Both Locke's and Sidney's work quoted above (note 30) were written to refute the *Patriarcha*.

³³ *Catechismus, Ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini, Ad Parochos, Pii V Pont. Max. Iussu Editu*, Romae, In aedibus Populi Romani, apud Paulum Manutium, 1566, pp. 250-258; BIONDI A., "Aspetti della cultura cattolica post-tridentina. Religione e controllo sociale", in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 4, Intellettuali e potere*, ed. by C. Vivanti, Torino, Einaudi, 1981, pp. 253-302 (pp. 260-268); PROSPERI A., "Intellettuali e Chiesa all'inizio dell'età moderna", in *Ibid.*, pp. 159-252 (p. 214); BOSSY J., *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985 (It. trans. *L'Occidente cristiano*, Torino, Einaudi, 1990), p. 137; SARTI R., "Obbedienti e fedeli"; SARTI R., "Zita, serva e santa. Un modello da imitare?", in BARONE G., CAFFIERO M. and SCORZA BARCELLONA F. (eds.), *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento. Contrasti, intersezioni, complementarità*, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994, pp. 307-359 (pp. 307-309); SARTI R., "Telling Zita's tale. Holy servants' stories and servants' history", in SCHULTE R. and HANTZAROULA P. (eds.), *Narratives of the Servant*, San Domenico (Florence), European University Institute, EUI Working Papers, 2001, pp. 1-30 (pp. 5-7).

³⁴ ROSSI P., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 433 ("Se bene anticamente questo nome di servo era infame, dopo nondimeno esser stato da Cristo ricevuto nella Persona sua e [sic] restato honoratissimo").

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 433-437; vol. II, pp. 380-381. Pio Rossi provides us with an early representation of the king as a servant, that is often seen as an 18th century elaboration (he also wrote that the ancient Greek Agamemnon thought that he was a servant and slave of his vassals). Indeed this representation has ancient roots (see for instance SENECA, *De clementia*, I, 8, 1: "ista [= the role of the emperor] servitus est, non imperium". On this representation see RASSEM M., "Riflessioni sul disciplinamento sociale nella prima Età moderna con esempi dalla storia della statistica", *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-germanico in Trento*, VIII, 1982 (but 1984), pp. 9-70 (pp. 40-48).

feeling great affection towards their master's virtue". The ones in this position were called servants, but they were "not truly so", they were, rather, "courtiers"³⁶.

Notwithstanding this effort and similar ones, the definition remained quite ambiguous, even when it was elaborated by jurists such as the Italian Giambattista de Luca³⁷ or lawyers such as the English William Blackstone, who, in the 18th century, having observed that "pure and proper slavery does not, nay cannot, subsist in England"³⁸, distinguished four "sorts of servants": "the first sort of servants (...) acknowledged by the laws of England" – he wrote – "are menial servants; so called from being *intra moenia*, or domestics", generally hired for a year; "another species of servants are called apprentices (from *apprendre*, to learn) and are usually bound for a term of years, by deed indented or indentures, to serve their masters, and be maintained and instructed by them (...) this is usually done to persons of trade, in order to learn their art and mystery; and sometimes very large sums are given with them, as a premium for such their instruction"; "a third species of servants are labourers, who are only hired by the day or the week, and do not live *intra moenia*, as part of the family"; "there is yet a fourth species of servants – he added –, if they may be so called being rather in a superior, a ministerial, capacity; such as stewards, factors, and bailiffs: whom however the law considers as servants *pro tempore*, with regard to such of their acts, as affect their master's or employer's property"³⁹.

Clearly, in everyday life people in the past were generally able to understand from the context the sense in which terms such as "servant", "domestic", etc. were used. Yet, there were occasional misunderstandings, as shown by the case of Serantoni I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. So, in some cases, it was necessary to define servants with precision, particularly if a law or an act involving them had to be applied.

For instance, in 1756 the authorities of Bologna, maintaining that one of the worst kinds of theft was that committed by servants from a master's property, explained that, in relation to this offence, "under the heading of servants, domestics, and members of the family shall also be included all the young, workers and porters who serve in the shops of merchants, goldsmiths, barbers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and any other type of craftsmen provided that they are rewarded by the owners of those shops"⁴⁰. In this case, the aim of the measure – fighting domestic theft – led to the use of quite a broad servant category.

Some forty years later, in May 1798, after the arrival of the French armies in Bologna (1796) and the end of the *Ancien Régime*, the new authorities introduced a luxury tax affecting male servants under the age of 50. They made clear that, "under the heading of domestics were not included tutors, secretaries, bookkeepers, shop or workshop assistants, agents and farm servants"⁴¹. In this case the list limited the

³⁶ GOZZE (di) N. V., *Governo della Famiglia (...) Nel quale brevemente, trattando la vera Economia, s'insegna, non meno con facilità, che dottamente, il Governo, non pure della casa tanto di Città, quanto di Contado; ma ancora il vero modo di accrescere, & conservare le ricchezze*, Venetia, Aldo, 1589, pp. 100-116.

³⁷ On his definitions see also SARTI R., "Freedom and Citizenship? The Legal Status of Servants and Domestic Workers in a Comparative Perspective (16th-21st Centuries)", in these *Proceedings*, next volume.

³⁸ Yet he added: "And now it is laid down, that a slave or negro, the instant he lands in England, becomes a freeman; that is, the law will protect him in the enjoyment of his person, his liberty, and his property. Yet, with regard to any right which the master may have acquired, by contract or the like, to the perpetual service of John or Thomas, this will remain exactly in the same state as before: for this is no more than the same state of subjection for life, which every apprentice submits to for the space of seven years, or sometimes for a longer term", BLACKSTONE W., *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769), book I, chap. 14, available online: <http://www.lonang.com/exlibris/blackstone/bla-114.htm>. On black slaves brought to England see SARTI R., "Freedom and Citizenship?"

³⁹ BLACKSTONE W., *op. cit.*, book I, chap. 14.

⁴⁰ *Bando Generale della Legazione di Bologna e suo Contado Fatto pubblicare li 12. Ottobre 1756. dall'Eminentiss., e Reverendiss. Sig. Cardinale Fabrizio Serbelloni Legato a Latere di detta Città*, Bologna, Clemente Maria Sassi per la Stamperia Camerale, 1756, p. 89: "sotto Titolo di Servitori, Domestici, e Familiari saranno anche compresi tutti li Giovani, Lavoranti, ò Facchini, d'altri, che servono nelle Botteghe de mercanti, Orefici, Barbieri, Falegnami, Ferrari, e di qualsivoglia altra sorte d'Artisti, purchè da padroni delle medesime venghino stipendiati".

⁴¹ *Raccolta de' bandi, notificazioni, editti, &c. pubblicati in Bologna dopo l'unione della Cispadana alla Repubblica Cisalpina*, Bologna, Sassi, [1797-1798], part XVIII, pp. 8-10; *ibid.*, part XIX, p. 36: "sotto nome di domestici non si comprendono i precettori, segretarij, ragionati, ajutanti di negozj, o di fondachi, fattori, agenti e famigli di campagna".

range of servants, because the aim of the measure was to fight luxury and conspicuous consumption, i.e. the employment of “superfluous” servants often destined only to be idle and wear expensive liveries in order to display the wealth of their masters.

Moving away from the Early Modern Notion of Domestic Service

Measures that aimed at reducing the number of servants were not a peculiar feature of the late 18th century: in Spain one of the laws included in the *Nueva Recopilacion de Leyes del Reino* (1566) regulated the size of staff, maintaining that employing a lot of servants merely testified to lavishness and extravagance. Yet the king introduced this law mainly because he was afraid of competition from aristocrats and tried to limit their power, even though the law expressed the idea that unprofitable servants would be more useful to the state if they were employed in a different job⁴².

Reducing the power of the aristocrats (while strengthening the state’s power) was possibly the main reason why Louis XIII, in 1636, established that masters should dismiss useless servants: around 20,000 were dismissed and then recruited into the army⁴³ (in 17th-and early 18th-century France the *domestiques* of certain *maisons* could still constitute small “private” armies that were a threat to public order and even to the monarchy⁴⁴). In the 17th century, however, the idea spread that a large share of domestics was made up of unproductive individuals, and that the state was impoverished by their employment in domestic service rather than in husbandry or in some useful craft⁴⁵. Some authors also discussed the opportunity to tax servant keeping⁴⁶ and such a tax was actually introduced in Holland in 1636⁴⁷.

Criticism of luxury strengthened in the 18th century, even though there were authors who also believed that consumption of luxury goods stimulated production and was beneficial to the economy⁴⁸.

⁴² MARTÍN CASARES A., “Free and Slave Domestic Service”, pp. 201-202, and MARTÍN CASARES A., “Domestic Service in Medieval and Early Modern Spain”.

⁴³ MITTRE M.-H.-C., *Des domestiques en France dans leurs rapports avec l'économie sociale*, Paris, M.-C.-H. Mittre, Delaunay & Dentu, Versailles, Angé, 1837, p. 6, 12.

⁴⁴ Note, for instance, that the term *domestiques* was also used for describing the supporters of the Duc d’Orléans (Louis XIII’s brother) during the several unsuccessful conspiracies and revolts he organised: *Ordonnance du Roy, portant tres-expres commandement aux domestiques et officiers de Monsieur le Duc d’Orleans de ce [sic] retirer dans cinq jours hors le royaume de France*, Versailles, 23 novembre 1632 (Paris, Mettayer, 1632). Significantly, several measures forbade the carrying of weapons by *domestiques*, as well as the use of liveries similar to those of the king’s *domestiques* (GUTTON J.-P., *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143). See for instance *Ordonnance du roy, donnée à Versailles le 10 février 1704 [portant défense à toutes personnes de faire porter à leurs domestiques la livrée de S.M.]*. In some of these cases too, it was held necessary to specify who was included in the measure: “tous les Domestiques compris sous le nom de Gens de Livrée, sçavoir, les Portiers, Laquais, Porteurs de Chaise, Cochers, Postillons & Palefreniers, même Froteurs dans les maisons où ils demeurent en qualité de Domestiques porteront (...) un Galon de Livrée d’une couleur apparente”, *Ordonnance de Sa Majesté Contre les Domestiques, compris sous le nom de Gens de Livrée, qui n’en ont aucune marque, Donnée [sic] à Paris le 8. Avril 1717*, Paris, Vve Saugarin & P. Prault, 1717.

⁴⁵ See for instance CORDIER J., *La Famiglia Santa*, 3 vols. (respectively: Macerata, Pannelli, 1674; Roma, Lazzari Varese, 1677 and 1686; ed. or. Paris, Sonnius & Bechet, 1644; the Italian translation was based on the revised French edition: Paris, Bechet, 1666), vol. II, p. 88; FLEURY C., *Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques*, Paris, P. Aubouin, P. Émery & C. Clouzier, 1688 (I am using the edition published in *Œuvres de l’Abbé Fleury*, Paris, Auguste Desrez Éditeur, 1837, pp. 574-612, in part. pp. 575-576).

⁴⁶ CORDIER J., *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 86; SPINOLA A., “Che si potrebbon trovar denari per servizio pubblico senza carico dell’universale”, in SPINOLA A., *Scritti scelti*, ed. by C. Bitossi, Genova, Sagep, 1981, pp. 253-254.

⁴⁷ ESQUIROU DE PARIEU M., *Traité des impôts considérés sous le rapport historique, économique et politique en France et à l’étranger*, 5 vols., Paris, Librairie de Guillaumin et C^{ie}, 1862-1864, vol. II, p. 130. In fact, there had been taxes on slave keeping previously, for instance in Venice during the war with Chioggia in 1379-1380 (*ibid.*) or in medieval France (*ibid.*, vol. I, p. 147).

⁴⁸ VENTURI F., *Settecento riformatore. I Da Muratori a Beccaria 1730-1764*, Torino, Einaudi, 1969, pp. 45, 93-98, 123-124, 134-135, 179, 185, 579; JONARD N., “Le problème du luxe en Italie au XVIII^e siècle”,

In 1777 a tax on male domestics, considered as luxury items, was introduced in England. A tax on servant employment was also introduced during the French Revolution and then “exported” by the French to several European countries⁴⁹. These measures aimed at fighting the aristocratic custom of employing a lot of servants simply for display; in the French case the sum to be paid for each *domestique* increased for each further servant employed. In a first phase this sum was higher for male servants, lower for female; later on, when the tax became extremely expensive, women servants were excluded from it⁵⁰. Significantly, the measure was also accompanied by a list of people who should not be included among domestics, but (at least when the tax was first introduced in 1791), those listed were not the same as those in the 1798 Italian case I have already mentioned, because in 1791 upper servants such as stewards, tutors, secretaries, book-keepers and so on were not mentioned among people for whom masters did not have to pay the tax⁵¹.

The tax on servants was not the sole measure taken during the French Revolution to fight the aristocratic way of thinking on domestic service and employing servants. On 19 June 1790, liveries were abolished together with hereditary nobility, titles and coats of arms: during the debate, Abbot Maury argued that by making liveries illegal they were striking at the very heart of the nobility⁵². In fact, not only aristocratic service but also the very notion of domestic service was reshaped by the French Revolution. Indeed, with its emphasis on freedom and equality, the Revolution led to an increasing discrimination and stigmatisation of domestics who voluntarily submitted themselves to a master: they were not considered worthy of being free and independent citizens and were excluded from the franchise in all the French Constitutions except that of 1793, never enforced⁵³.

While discussing this exclusion, the members of the *Assemblée Nationale* noticed that using the word *domestiques* would be misleading. On 27 October 1789, Pétion declared: “The committee proposed this requirement [not to be excluded]: ‘Not being in a servile condition’. In one of the previous meetings, it was proposed we should say: ‘Not having the status of domestics’. These two expressions need some interpretation. With *domestique* we mean table-companions, such as tutors, secretaries, librarians, etc., and with *serviteur* a person who carries out menial tasks. The latter cannot be elected; but this exclusion cannot be extended to table-companions”. Another deputy, Barrère, maintained that “the status of *serviteur à gages* (waged servant) includes (...) a class of individuals who have to be excluded from political representation, because they don’t have their own will, free and independent, such as is necessary to exercise the rights of citizenship. The name *domestique*, that is closer to the common expression, is a vague word, whose meaning is too large. *Domesticité* and *domestique* include, indeed, in the language of the law, a crowd of respectable citizens whom you do not intend to deprive of the exercise of their political rights. *Domestiques* are those who live in the same house and eat at the same table without being *serviteurs*”⁵⁴. Some decades earlier, J.-J. Rousseau, speaking about the period when he was a *domestique*

Revue des Études Italiennes, XV, 1969, pp. 295-321; BORGHERO C., *La polemica sul lusso nel Settecento francese*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974; BREWER J., “Luxury and Economic Development: David Hume and Adam Smith”, *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, XLV, 1998, pp. 78-98; SARTI R., “Comparir con ‘equipaggio in scena’. Servizio domestico e prestigio nobiliare (Bologna, fine XVII-inizio XX secolo)”, *Cheiron*, XVI, 1999, no. 31-32, pp. 133-169; SHOVLIN J., “The Cultural Politics of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France”, *French Historical Studies*, XXIII, 2000, pp. 577-606, etc.

⁴⁹ HECHT J. J., *The Domestic Servant in Eighteenth Century England*, London, Routledge - Boston, Kegan Paul, 1980 (1956¹), pp. 33-34; HORN P., *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan - New York, St Martin’s Press, 1975, pp. 8-10; SARTI R., “Comparir con ‘equipaggio in scena’”, p. 163; SCHWARZ L., “English servants and their employers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”, *Economic History Review*, LII, 1999, pp. 236-256, etc.

⁵⁰ See the following laws: 13 January 1791; 18 February 1791; 18-22 March 1793; 25 July 1795; 22 Thermidor year IV; 14 Thermidor year V; 2 Nivôse year VII, 26 Germinal year XI, see ESQUIROU DE PARIEU M., *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 147.

⁵¹ *AP*, vol. XXII, p. 170 (13/1/1791): “ne seront comptés les apprentis et compagnons d’arts et métiers, les domestiques de charrue et autres destinés uniquement à la culture ou à la garde et au soin des bestiaux, ni les domestiques au-dessus de l’âge de soixante ans”.

⁵² *AP*, vol. XVI, p. 375 (19/6/1790). See also SARTI R., *Europe at Home*, pp. 212-213.

⁵³ SARTI R., “Freedom and Citizenship?”.

⁵⁴ *AP*, vol. IX, pp. 589-590: Pétion: “Le comité propose cette qualité: ‘N’être pas dans une condition servile’. Dans une des séances précédentes, on a proposé de dire: ‘N’être pas dans un état de domesticité’. Ces deux expressions demandent quelque interprétation, Par *domestique*, on entend les commensaux, tels que les

of the French ambassador's in Venice, had expressed a similar opinion: "although we were his *domestiques*, this did not mean that we were his valets", he wrote⁵⁵. To avoid confusion, the Constitution, according to Barrère, had to use a different and more precise expression. The formulation adopted was the following: "Not having the status of domestics, that is of *serviteurs à gages*"⁵⁶.

Nevertheless, this precaution was not sufficient and a short time later the members of the *Assemblée Nationale* had to be more precise about who was meant by that definition⁵⁷. Collecting the explanations, given in previous months, about how to correctly interpret it (several difficulties had arisen on the application of the rules for enfranchising people), they made clear that "clerks or administrators, people who had been subject to feudal power, secretaries, carters or farm managers employed by owners, tenants or share croppers are not considered domestics or waged servants (...), and it is the same with librarians, tutors, craftsmen who have completed their apprenticeship, shop assistants and book-keepers"⁵⁸. Yet further problems arose in 1792. As is well known, after the uprising of 10 August, it was decided that a new representative body, the *Convention*, had to be elected in order to prepare a new constitution. Even though the election of the deputies of the *Convention* is often presented as an election by male universal suffrage, in fact the decree establishing who had the right to vote affirmed that it was necessary, among other things, not to be a servant ("n'étant pas en état de domesticité"⁵⁹). Yet in this case, too, problems arose. Thus a couple of weeks later a decree was approved limiting those who had to be considered *domestiques*. According to the decree, "no citizen" had "to be excluded from political assemblies because of his servile status", if he was "not usually employed in personal services". In other words, people working in "industry, trade and agriculture" could not be excluded⁶⁰.

The content of all these late 18th century lists, that – among others – established that upper servants such as clerks, secretaries, librarians, tutors, etc. did not belong to domestic staff, was in sharp contrast with several early modern definitions by jurists and other intellectuals as well as with that

instituteurs, secrétaires, bibliothécaires, etc., et par *serviteur*, celui qui vauque à des œuvres serviles. Celui-ci ne peut être élu ; mais cette exclusion ne doit pas s'étendre aux commensaux". Barrère: "l'état de *serviteur à gages* comprend (...) la classe des individus qui doivent être exclus de la représentation politique, parce que les *serviteurs à gage* n'ont pas une volonté propre libre et indépendante, telle qu'elle est nécessaire pour l'exercice du droit de cité. Le nom de *domestique*, plus rapproché de l'expression vulgaire, est un mot vague dont l'acception est trop étendue. *Domesticité* et *domestiques* comprennent, en effet, dans l'idiome des lois, une foule de citoyennes respectables que votre intention n'est pas de priver de l'exercice des droits politiques. Les *domestiques* sont ceux qui vivent dans la même maison et mangent à la même table sans être *serviteurs*".

⁵⁵ "Réponses aux questions faites par M. de Chauvel", in ROUSSEAU J.-J., *Œuvres complètes, Correspondance*, t. V, Paris, Dalibon, 1826, p. 72: "mais bien qu'eux et moi fussions ses domestiques, il ne s'ensuit point que nos fussions ses valets".

⁵⁶ *AP*, vol. IX, p. 590 (27/10/1790). "N'être pas dans un état de domesticité, c'est-à-dire de serviteur à gages" (*Constitution* of 3 September 1791, title III, chap. I, section II, article 2).

⁵⁷ Similarly, it was not clear who the Levellers had in mind when they excluded servants from the franchise during the English Revolution and this led to a lively debate between Macpherson and Laslett: MACPHERSON C. B., *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1964 (1962¹), pp. 107-159, 281-292; MACPHERSON C. B., "Servants and Labourers in Seventeenth-century England", in MACPHERSON C. B., *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 207-223; LASLETT P., "Market Society and Political Theory", *Historical Journal*, VII, 1964, pp. 150-154; LASLETT P., *The World We Have Lost*, London, Methuen, 1971 (1965¹), p. 191. On this debate see below, section "Scholars and Servants".

⁵⁸ *AP*, vol. XVIII, p. 41 (12/8/1790): "Les intendants ou régisseurs, les ci-devant féodistes, les secrétaires, les charretiers ou maîtres valets de labour employés par les propriétaires, fermiers ou métayers, ne sont pas réputés domestiques ou serviteurs à gages (...) Il en est de même des bibliothécaires, des instituteurs, des compagnons-ouvriers, des garçons marchands et des commis aux écritures". See also AULARD A., *Histoire politique de la Révolution Française. Origines et développement de la Démocratie et de la République (1789-1804)*, Paris, Colin, 1901, p. 64.

⁵⁹ *AP*, vol. XLVIII, p. 29 (11/8/1792).

⁶⁰ *AP*, vol. XLIX, p. 35 (27/8/1792): "L'Assemblée nationale (...) déclare qu'aucun citoyen ne doit être exclu des assemblées politiques pour cause de domesticité, s'il n'est attaché au service habituel des personnes; invite, en conséquence, les assemblées primaires à ne contester l'admission et le droit de suffrage d'aucun de ceux dont les travaux ordinaires s'appliquent à l'industrie, au commerce et à l'agriculture, si d'ailleurs ils réunissent les conditions exigées par les lois".

provided by an authoritative group of domestics, the leaders of the Bolognese Confraternity of San Vitale or *Università dei Servitori*, the representative body of the domestic staff of the city of Bologna. In 1753 – after the Serantoni’s case mentioned at the beginning of this paper – they established that only “actual servants of the following types and not others could be admitted to the brotherhood: ministers, *cappenere* (i.e. upper servants), grooms, lackeys, first coachmen, second coachmen, lead-horse riders, cooks, undercooks doing only this single service job, and butlers”. They also all had to satisfy the condition of not having to carry out “in public” “any base job” which would cause them to be considered as something other than “actual servants”. Therefore, “those commonly called kitchen boys, or scullery boys, stable boys, and porters” were absolutely excluded. Porters, in particular, were excluded even if they worked for a single master as sedan-chair carriers and were wage earners. The explanation was that once the work was finished, they would often carry out “vile jobs” “on the streets”, since their job was not widespread⁶¹. Interestingly, the members of the brotherhood repeated more or less the same definition in their 1821-22 statutes, and even in the 1855-56 ones⁶².

Yet at that time we also found workers, traditionally considered part of domestic staff, who maintained or tried to demonstrate that they were not. The Bolognese book-keeper activist Agostino Scandellari would most likely have taken exception to the inclusion of private book-keepers in the category of servants. His point was that book-keeping was not a craft but science⁶³. The Bolognese book-keepers were successful in moving from a servile to a professional condition⁶⁴. Even the cook Francesco Leonardi maintained that his work was a scientific activity: the kitchen – he maintained – is a “laboratory of eating chemistry”⁶⁵. In contrast to book-keepers, cooks did not succeed in escaping servitude.

People such as the book-keeper Scandellari or the cook Leonardi were aware of the increasing stigmatisation of the servant condition and tried to demonstrate that the tasks they performed were not menial. On the contrary, the members of the Bolognese Confraternity tried to reaffirm, and even to strengthen, servants’ prestige by way of maintaining or suggesting that the lower strata of domestic staff were not “true” servants and excluding them from the brotherhood. In the long run their strategy was clearly unsuccessful: the stigmatisation of the servant condition had become very strong, indeed.

It would be misleading to argue that during the *Ancien Régime* there was no stigmatisation of domestic servants. A few lines before maintaining that serving the prince was sometimes “a great gift from Heaven”, Pio Rossi wrote that “any servitude is miserable”, and that “a noble soul has to appreciate the face of death more than that of servitude”⁶⁶. When a poll tax (*capitation*) was introduced in France in 1695 and *domestiques* were excluded from paying it, many *gens de livrée*, feeling hurt by this exclusion, protested and asked to pay it: according to a witness they maintained that they “too cared for the good of the kingdom, and could pay public charges as well as soldiers and many peasants”⁶⁷.

⁶¹ *Riforma de' Capitoli, e Statuti della Congregazione di S. Vitale detta l'Università de' Servitori in Bologna Fatta l'Anno 1753*, Bologna, Longhi Stampatore Arcivescovile, [1753], pp. 6, 13-14.

⁶² On the history of this brotherhood see SARTI R., *L'Università dei Servitori*; SARTI R., “Domestic Service as a ‘Bridging Occupation’”; SARTI R., “The True Servant”. Quite surprisingly, the *Règlement* of a *caisse de secours* (welfare fund) for male and female servants to be established in Paris in 1790 did not give any particular instruction on how to define servants (“Nul ne pourra être admis à la contribution, qu’il ne soit dans l’état de domesticité”, see *Établissement sous la protection de la Municipalité d’une Caisse de secours d’un Bureau d’administration pour tous les domestiques de l’un & de l’autre sexe, employés dans la Ville de Paris*, à Paris, chez Joseph Carol, Imprimeur patriotique, [1790] p. 5).

⁶³ SCANDELLARI A., *Sull’importanza della professione di computista, ragionato o scritturale. Discorso di Agostino Scandellari dedicato alla Camera di Commercio della Comune di Bologna*, Bologna, Tipografia Marsigli ai Celestini, 1803.

⁶⁴ MARTINI M., “La regolamentazione dei servizi contabili. Tappe normative e associazionismo a Bologna nella prima metà del XIX secolo”, in BETRI M. L. and PASTORE A. (eds), *Alle origini delle professioni moderne (secc. XVI-XIX)*, Bologna, Clueb, 1997, pp. 391-415.

⁶⁵ LEONARDI F., *Apicio moderno ossia l’arte del credenziere*, 6 vols., Roma, Giunchi Mordacchini, 1807 (1790¹), vol. II, p. XLII.

⁶⁶ ROSSI P., *Convito Morale*, vol. II, p. 381: “All’animo nobile ha da piacere più il volto della morte, che della servitù”; “tutte le servitù sono misere”, *ibid.*, p. 380.

⁶⁷ COURCILLON DANGEAU Ph. (de), *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, 19 vols., Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1854-1860, vol. V (1694-1696), pp. 148-149 (1/2/1695). According to MITTRE M.-H.-C., *op. cit.*, p. 14, after this protest, domestics were included among people who had to pay this tax, yet there are records showing that

Countless sources confirm a certain stigmatisation of servants in early modern times. Yet at that time serving still had or might have, in the view of many people, positive aspects. Later, on the contrary, stigmatisation and contempt became, as far as we can evaluate, much harsher and generalised.

In France, in 1790, some months after the exclusion of domestics from the franchise was definitively approved, a group of servants made a gift to the *Patrie* (the Nation) of 3,000 silver *livres* and other things. Admitted to make a speech to the *Assemblée Nationale*, one of them timidly expressed their frustration, though respecting the deputies' decisions: "our hearts will always be able to overcome the barrier that your wisdom believed had to be erected between us and the citizen". To presume that "debasement and degradation of feelings" were always common to the *gens de maison* would be worse than to insult them: "do we not have parents, and a Fatherland? Are we not French?". At the same time, he expressed the hope that the new regime would eliminate the unfair conditions that pushed so many people to flee from the countryside to "exchange their misery" for a kind of service that humiliated them. "Could we not respect a Constitution that one day may protect us?", he asked⁶⁸. Yet only one Constitution, never enforced, eliminated for a little while the barrier between citizens and domestics, a barrier to be erected once again by the Constitution of 1795, abolished in 1806 for cantonal assemblies but still confirmed by the *Cour de Cassation* in 1837 (interestingly, the exclusion of servants was confirmed despite the fact that at that time the French electoral system was based on wealth, and most *domestiques* would have been excluded even if there had been no specific barriers against their participation)⁶⁹. On the contrary, in those years defining someone as *domestique* seemed an offence to the point that new terms were introduced (*familier, homme de peine* etc.)⁷⁰, even though this decision also gave rise to criticism: "Tell me, insane innovator (...) But who gave you permission to change language in this way, to distort it, to remove from it its most beautiful title!... Yes, my old friends, my old servants, (...) yes, you are like us, you are *of the family!*"⁷¹.

in the 18th century masters paid for their servants, and *capitation* rolls have been used by historians to analyse servant keeping (for instance GUTTON J.-P., *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47; FAIRCHILD C., *op. cit.*, pp. 6-16). According to ESQUIROU DE PARIEU M., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 153, in the early 1830s servants living with their masters did not have to pay the *contribution personnelle*.

⁶⁸ "Si des motifs que nous respectons, vous ont déterminés à séparer les Gens de Maison de la chose publique, nos coeurs sauront toujours franchir la barrière que votre sagesse a cru poser entre nous et les Citoyens. Nous le sentons, & notre patriotisme en est moins humilié : il est difficile de concilier l'exercice de la liberté avec le régime de la domesticité (...) Ce seroit (*sic*) du moins nous faire injure que de présumer que l'avilissement & la dégradation des sentiments fussent toujours le partage des Gens de Maison. N'avons-nous pas nos parens (*sic*), une Patrie? Ne sommes-nous pas François? Et quand vous préparez si glorieusement la régénération de l'Empire, pourrions-nous ne pas respecter une Constitution qui peut un jour nos protéger. Hélas! sous un régime moins désastreux (...) les Habitans (*sic*) des Campagnes, moins pressés par l'impôt, ne seroient (*sic*) pas venus dans la Capitale échanger leur misère contre un genre de service qui humilie l'homme beaucoup plus qu'il ne l'enrichit", *Adresse des gens de maison à l'Assemblée Nationale, dans la Séance du 12 Juin imprimé par ordre de l'Assemblée Nationale*, Paris, chez Baudouin, Imprimeur de l'Assemblée Nationale, w.d.; *AP*, vol. XVI (12/6/1790), p. 201. Note that, according to the 1791 Constitution, the *Garde Nationale* was formed only by active citizens: domestics were thus excluded. According to the law of 1831, they were not excluded but were exempted from ordinary service, see, for instance MITTRE M.-H.-C., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 17; ROSANVALLON P., *Le sacre du citoyen. Du suffrage universel en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992 (It. trans. *La Rivoluzione dell'uguaglianza. Storia del suffragio universale in Francia*, Milano, Anabasi, 1994), pp. 134-135, 426-428, 475.

⁷⁰ GRÉGOIRE B. H., *De la domesticité chez les peuples anciens et modernes*, Paris, Egron, 1814, p. 187.

⁷¹ GUIRAUDET T., *De la famille considérée comme l'élément des sociétés*, Paris, Desenne, 1797, pp. 190-191: Here with a longer quotation from this interesting text: "sans doute on a dû proscrire ces dénominations données par les caprices de la vanité, qui, en désignant l'inutilité de service auquel on condamnoit l'espèce d'hommes dont on dépeuploit les campagnes, désignoit aussi la classe d'individus qui les exigeoit ; et les noms bizarres, donnés par le luxe et la mode, devoient être proscrits avec l'emploi dont ils étoient l'expression. Mais falloit-il proscrire le nom le plus paternel, celui qui rappeloit un membre de la famille, *domus*? Celui de domestique est un mot... Dis-moi, novateur insensé, as-tu pensé que ton néologisme durerait plus que ta tyrannie et ton usurpation? (...) Tu voulus sans doute leur [aux domestiques] cacher tout ce qu'il y avoit d'avilissant à te rendre des soins, et tu crus les honorer davantage, en leur donnant le nom d'*hommes de confiance, d'officieux* ; que sais-je ! (...) Mais qui t'a permis de

In Italy in the 19th century some learned people even discussed whether to accept or refuse the new noun *domestico*, derived from the French term *domestique*, that probably had become quite common during the French domination. The new term had the disadvantage of being a Gallicism. Yet, paradoxically, according to some Italians, it had the advantage – if compared with the Italian terms *servo*, *servente*, *servitore* that it generally replaced – of stressing that the servant belonged to the *domus* (i.e. the house) thus making his/her condition less humiliating⁷².

Things went further in the USA. “The whole class of young women, whose bread depends upon their labour, are taught to believe that the most abject poverty is preferable to domestic service”, Miss Trollope wrote in the early 1830s⁷³. In spite of this, some entered domestic service. Yet they no longer accepted being defined as servants and claimed to be defined as *helps*. According to European criteria American domestics were extremely arrogant, even though (according to some sources) they did not refuse to perform menial offices. Only indentured servants, blacks and slaves were still defined as servants⁷⁴.

Clearly, all these discussions on definitions were in no way word-games. On the contrary, they expressed enormous tensions, negotiations and conflicts about human relationships, political rights, and work organisation while being, at the same time, weapons used in these conflicts. Defining as *domestico* someone who would traditionally have been called *servitore* or *servente* probably in most cases did not improve his life and his social standing. But establishing that “clerks or administrators, secretaries, carters or farm managers employed by owners, tenants or share croppers (...), librarians, tutors, craftsmen who [had] completed their apprenticeship, shop assistants and book-keepers”, as well as farm workers, wage-earners and odd-job men, did not belong to the *domestiques* might have far-reaching consequences for their lives, if it meant that they would enjoy citizenship rights. Significantly, the limitation of 27 August 1792 on the people to be considered *domestiques* was decided after a protest by two citizens who, admitted to speak to the Assembly, denounced that in their *commune* many citizens “had been deprived of their rights under the pretext that – being tied to business houses – they had to be considered domestics”⁷⁵.

Negotiations and conflicts about how to define domestics and whether they should be excluded or not were not only theoretical discussions among deputies who had never experienced being a servant but

changer ainsi, de dénaturer la langue, d'en effacer leur plus beau titre !... Oui, mes vieux amis, mes vieux serviteurs (...) oui, comme nous, vous êtes *de la famille* !” (*sic* verbs ; emphasis in the original).

⁷² Servants “are also defined *domestici* with a not ignoble gallicism, because it represents the man forced to serve us as a person who belongs to our house, not as a stranger, tool or enemy” ([I servi] “si dicono anche *domestici* con francesismo non ignobile, perché rappresenta l'uomo costretto a servirci come un appartenente alla nostra casa, non come estraneo, o come strumento, o come nemico”), TOMMASEO N., *Nuovo dizionario dei sinonimi della lingua italiana*, 2 vols., Milano, Reina, Tipi Bernardoni, 1851-1852 (1830-1831¹), vol. II, no. 3123, p. 867. Later Tommaseo considered *domestico* as a euphemism (TOMMASEO N., *Saggio di modi conformi all'uso vivente italiano che corrispondono ad altri d'uso meno comune e meno legittimo*, Firenze, Successori Le Monnier, 1874, p. 38). According to FANFANI P. and ARLIA C., *Lessico dell'infima e corrotta italianità*, Milano, Carrara, 1881², p. 147, there were real battles among the scholars who rejected the term *domestico* and those who welcomed it because of political or humanitarian reasons. In Bologna during the 19th century the term *domestico* remained quite rare, but it became more common towards the end of the century, SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico in Italia*, pp. 30-31, 76-77.

⁷³ TROLLOPE F., *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), also available online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10345>.

⁷⁴ GRÉGOIRE B. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61; TOCQUEVILLE A. (de), *Democracy in America*, (1835), III, 5 (http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch3_05.htm); SALMON L. M., *Domestic Service*, 2nd ed., New York - London, Macmillan, 1901 (1897¹); KATZMAN D., *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrialising America*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1978; STEINFELD R. J., *op. cit.*, pp. 123-128; WALL R., *The Quality of the Master-Servant Relationship in Britain and the United States: The Experience of a Radical British Visitor to the United States in the 1830s*, paper presented at the first seminar of the Servant Project, *Servants and Changes in Mentality, 16th - 20th Centuries*, Florence, 14-16 February 2002.

⁷⁵ AP, vol. XLIX, p. 25 (27/8/1792): “dans l'assemblée primaire de cette commune un grand nombre de citoyens ont été privés de leurs droits, sous prétexte qu'étant attachés à des maisons de commerce, on devait les considérer comme en état de domesticité”.

also involved people directly touched by these decisions. This was also the case when the deputies of the *Convention* eventually decided that, according to the new Constitution they were preparing, domestics should no longer be excluded. On 28 August 1792 (the day after the decision that confirmed the exclusion of servants, even though further curbs on those to be considered as servants were imposed), a group of *domestiques* were admitted to speak to the Assembly. Their speech was different from that given by the *domestiques* admitted in 1790, who had accepted being barred from citizenship, though expressing their frustration. In this case they explicitly asked to be enfranchised. “Alas! On account of which misfortune, legislators, while enfranchising people reaching the age of 21, are you formally excluding those who perform an extremely delicate task? (...) Aristocratic masters will never be sufficiently opulent to bribe the impressive majority of patriotic servants (...) J.-J. Rousseau never blushed because he had been a *domestique*”⁷⁶. In the following months speeches in favour of the enfranchising of servants multiplied⁷⁷. “The dependency upon a master which does not allow us to believe that an individual obeys his own will may certainly be a legitimate reason for exclusion: but we have never believed that it was possible to suppose the existence of such a dependency under a really free Constitution, and among a people where the love of equality is a distinctive feature of the *esprit public*”, Condorcet, for instance, maintained. “Social relations that would imply such a humiliation cannot exist among us”⁷⁸. As previously mentioned, in the 1793 Constitution the *domestiques* were not excluded, but that Constitution was never enforced. The Constitution of 22 August 1795 excluded them once again from the franchise⁷⁹.

“Domestic service will fall in the most shameful debasement, the masters’ pride will become unbearable, if a wrong law impresses upon us the stigma of universal reprobation”, Anacharsis Clootz had maintained in the *Pétition des domestiques* presented to the *Assemblée nationale législative* on 28 August 1792⁸⁰. Indeed, this is exactly what happened, as far as we can judge. Look, for instance, at the efforts by Mitre, in the 1830s, to demonstrate that the exclusion of servants was in no way stigmatising: they sound awkward and insincere; and yet his very insistence shows that prejudices against domestics were deeply rooted⁸¹.

⁷⁶ AP, vol. XLIX, p. 73 (28/8/1792); vol. L, pp. 671-672, *Pétition des domestiques rédigée par Anacharsis Clootz, présentée à l’Assemblée Nationale, le 28 août, l’an IV^e de la liberté, I^{er} de l’égalité, et réclamant la jouissance des droits de [sic] citoyens*: “Hélas! Par quelle fatalité, législateurs, en rendant actifs les citoyens qui ont atteint l’âge (*sic*) de 21 ans, excluez-vous formellement ceux qui exercent une industrie infiniment délicate? (...) Des maîtres aristocrates ne seront jamais assez opulents pour corrompre l’imposante majorité des domestiques patriotes (...) J.-J. Rousseau n’a jamais rougi d’avoir été domestique”.

⁷⁷ AP, vol. XLIX, p. 463 (8/9/1792), *Adresse du sieur Picho, au nom de tous les citoyens qui sont en état de domesticité*, “qui demande que l’égalité des hommes soit entière et que la classe nombreuse des gens de service puisse, comme tous les autres membres du Corps social, jouir de tous les droits inaliénables et imprescriptibles de l’homme”; vol. LIII, pp. 286-297 (7/11/1792, Letter to the *Convention* by J. Barlow); vol. LVIII, pp. 594-595 (15/2/1793, Condorcet); vol. LXII, pp. 275-276, 346-347 (speeches by Daunou and Harmand in April 1793, partially reproduced in SAITTA A., *Costituenti e Costituzioni della Francia rivoluzionaria e liberale*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1975, pp. 330-331, 350-352); vol. LXIII, p. 565 (29/4/1793, Lanjuinais); vol. LXV, pp. 579-580 (29/5/1793, Barère proposes the final version of the articles, already approved, of the *Déclaration des Droits de l’homme en société*).

⁷⁸ AP, vol. LVIII, pp. 594-595 (15/2/1793): “La dépendance qui ne permet pas de croire qu’un individu obéisse à la volonté propre, pourrait sans doute être un motif légitime d’exclusion; mais nous n’avons pas cru qu’il fût possible de supposer l’existence d’une telle dépendance sous une Constitution vraiment libre, et chez un peuple où l’amour de l’égalité est le caractère distinctif de l’esprit public. Les relations sociales qui supposeraient une telle humiliation ne peuvent subsister parmi nous”.

⁷⁹ Titre II, État politique des citoyens, Article 13 : “L’exercice des droits de citoyen est suspendu: (...) - 3° Par l’état de domestique à gage, attaché au service de la personne ou du ménage”. One author, suggesting that only the heads of families should be enfranchised, argued that – if each individual had to be considered a member of society –, women, *domestiques* and children should also be enfranchised, a logical but clearly absurd result, in his view, see GUIRAUDET T., *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197.

⁸⁰ AP, vol. L, pp. 671-672, *Pétition des domestiques*: “La domesticité tombera dans le plus honteux avilissement, l’orgueil des maîtres deviendra insupportable, si une loi erronée nous imprime les stigmates de la réprobation universelle”.

⁸¹ MITRE M.-H.-C., *op. cit.*, pp. 15-21 (see in particular this phrase, pp. 19-20, my emphasis: “les gens de service (...) n’ont qu’à réfléchir que la plénitude de leurs droits de citoyen n’est que suspendue à leur égard, et que une fois sortis du service, ils rentrent dans la loi commune, et sont aptes à jouir de tous les avantages de la position plus heureuse ou plus indépendante, dans laquelle ils peuvent se trouver”).

In France, male domestic servants were to be enfranchised in 1848, though suffering some limitations in their rights until 1930⁸². Yet at that point stigmatisation was well-established, and domestics continued to be stigmatised. After spending several pages listing all the advantages enjoyed by servants in comparison with peasants, fishers, workers, craftsmen and so on, *Mademoiselle Dufaux de la Jonchère* – the author of a book entitled *Ce que les maîtres et les domestiques doivent savoir* (1884) – had to acknowledge that the status of servants was “one of the least considered”, to quote but one example⁸³.

Obviously, electoral laws were not the sole reason for the stigmatisation of servants; on the contrary, in the late 18th century they contributed to crystallise, or possibly strengthen, increasing prejudices towards and contempt for domestics, due to the spreading values of freedom and equality. In unified Italy, indeed, servants were never excluded from suffrage as such, yet a member of parliament, Ercole Ricotti, affirmed: “I do not like democracy as a political institution, even though I have a democratic heart and I never allowed the lowest person to stand in front of me, in the street, without a hat, nor to stand when I was sitting, *except if he was a servant of mine*”⁸⁴. A century after the French Revolution, contempt against servants was well-rooted in Italy too, as well as elsewhere in Europe⁸⁵.

“Honest people will abandon a status henceforth infamous and domestic crimes will multiply because of the debasement of a banned class, of a despicable case of western *pariahs*”, Cloutz had written in the *Pétition des domestiques*⁸⁶, trying to foresee what would happen if the *domestiques* were not enfranchised and became the target of increasing discrimination. Thus, let us analyse how domestic personnel and the very notion of domestic service changed in the 19th century.

Domestic Service: a Female Job?⁸⁷

As I mentioned, the English, French and Italian taxes on servant keeping did not treat male and female domestics in the same way. Excluding female servants, or establishing that the sum to be paid was smaller for women than for men, contributed to reshaping who servants were and should be. Maintaining that the nation (“Patria”) “was entitled to an indemnity for the large number of men taken away from public service” and that because of domestic service “the useful trades lost strong arms and the army many soldiers”⁸⁸ suggested that – for men – there were better and more useful jobs. At the same time, excluding masters from paying taxes on female servants, or establishing that they had to pay only a little for them,

⁸² See SARTI R., “Freedom and Citizenship”, with further references.

⁸³ DUFAUX DE LA JONCHÈRE E., *Ce que les maîtres et les domestiques doivent savoir*, Paris, Garnier, 1884, p. 335 (“son état est l’un des plus déconsidérés qui existent maintenant”). Several other examples in PIETTE V., *Domestiques et servantes. Des vies sous condition. Essai sur le travail domestique en Belgique au 19^e siècle*, Bruxelles, Académie Royale de Belgique, 2000, in part. pp. 5-135; SARTI R., “Da serva a operaia? Trasformazioni di lungo periodo del servizio domestico in Europa”, *Polis. Ricerche e studi sulla società e politica in Italia*, XIX, 2005, pp. 91-120.

⁸⁴ MANNO A., *Ricordi di Ercole Ricotti*, Torino, Roux - Napoli, Favale, 1886, p. 160 (my emphasis): “la democrazia a me non piace come istituzione politica, benché io di cuore sia democratico, né abbia mai permesso alla minima persona di starmi a cappello basso in strada, né in piedi quando io fossi seduto, *eccettoché fosse un mio servo*”.

⁸⁵ It is not easy to compare stigmatisation in different areas, yet sources from many different European countries confirm that servants suffered from it, see SARTI R., “Da serva a operaia”, pp. 96-98.

⁸⁶ *AP*, vol. L (28/8/1792), p. 671 (“Les honnêtes gens renonceront à un état désormais infâme et les crimes domestiques se multiplieront en raison de l’avilissement d’une classe proscrite, d’une caste abjecte, de *parias occidentaux*”).

⁸⁷ I am asking here the same question used by Maria Casalini as the title for a paper: CASALINI M., *Le service: un métier féminin? Une recherche sur la Toscane au XIX^e siècle*, paper presented at the XIII Economic History Congress, Buenos Aires, 22-26 July 2002 (<http://www.eh.net/XIIICongress/cd/papers/29Casalini274.pdf>).

⁸⁸ “Ne’ domestici le utili arti perdono delle braccia robuste, e l’armata de’ soldati; (...) la Patria è in diritto di esigere un’indennizzazione pel danno, che soffre dalla sottrazione di tanti uomini al pubblico servizio”, *Raccolta de’ bandi, notificazioni, editti, &c. pubblicati in Bologna dopo l’unione della Cispadana alla Repubblica Cisalpina*, part XVIII, pp. 8-10; *ibid.*, part XIX, p. 36.

implied that – for women – domestic service was an appropriate employment and that, for them, there were no better alternatives, or only slightly better ones. This kind of taxes⁸⁹ therefore encouraged the dismissal of male servants and employment of female ones, even though their real consequences are not so easy to pinpoint⁹⁰.

We would expect that the exclusion of male *domestiques* from citizenship also stimulated the feminisation of domestic staff, since it gave men a new reason for avoiding or leaving domestic service. Obviously, it is not easy to follow the transformation over time of such an ambiguous and uncertain group as domestics. Yet scholars working on the subject generally stress that in the 19th century domestic service actually did become more feminised, although, during the century, there were also short term re-masculinisations ((but, in fact, domestic service in the strict sense of the definition was often highly feminised even in early modern times)⁹¹. In Bologna, for instance, among domestic staff (excluding apprentices) women were about 55 percent in 1796, almost 70 percent in 1841, around 80 percent at the beginning of the 20th century⁹². In Italy as a whole they were 66 percent in 1861, more than 80 percent some forty years later⁹³; in France, according to the original census data, they amounted to 68 percent in 1851, 82 percent in 1901⁹⁴; in England and Wales, according to my calculations on the census data, they were 89 percent in 1851, 96 percent in 1891 and so on⁹⁵. However, the measures I just described were not the sole reasons for this feminisation. Rather, the feminisation (which in some contexts had possibly started already in the late 17th – early 18th centuries) was the outcome of several different transformations, due to a wide range of factors, each affecting only some characteristics of a multi-faceted domestic staff⁹⁶.

In part, the relative importance of female servants within domestic personnel was the result of the disappearance of some kinds of male servants, such as sedan-chair carriers, whose use had been heavily stigmatised during the revolutionary years: “people who want to be carried in sedan-chair (...) generally insult equality, the fundamental principle of the Constitution”, an Italian had for instance written in 1798⁹⁷. Indeed, in the following years this custom died out. In my research on the Italian city of

⁸⁹ In some cases, employers were taxed for servant keeping during the whole of the 19th and many decades of the 20th century (in Italy, for instance, the tax was abolished as late as 1960, with the law of 16 September 1960, no. 1014, art. 15. The law became effective from 1st January 1961).

⁹⁰ SARTI R., “Servire al femminile”.

⁹¹ MCBRIDE T., *The Domestic Revolution: the Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920*, London, Croom Helm, 1976, p. 39; SARTI R., “Notes on the feminization of domestic service. Bologna as a case study (18th-19th centuries)”, in FAUVE-CHAMOUX A. and FIALOVÁ L. (eds.), *Le phénomène de la domesticité en Europe, XVI^e-XX^e siècles*, Praha, Česká Demografická Sociologický Ústav av CR, 1997, pp. 125-163 (Acta Demographica, XIII). “A study of the 1695 Marriage Duty’s assessments in two of the few City of London parishes whose records clearly distinguished between domestic and other servants in the household (...) showed that almost 81 percent of all servants employed within them were women”, see MELDRUM T., *op. cit.*, p. 25. According to Kuklo and Kamecka, in many early modern Polish cities a very high percentage of servants were female, even as many as 91 percent in Poznan in 1590, see KUKLO C. and KAMECKA M., “Être domestique dans une famille urbaine polonaise aux XVI^e - XX^e siècles. Évolution du statut social et matériel des domestiques”, in these *Proceedings*, vol I.

⁹² SARTI R., “Domestic Service as a ‘Bridging Occupation’” and SARTI R., “Notes on the feminization”, p. 145 (in this paper I provide the readers with data on the percentage of women among servants in several European contexts).

⁹³ See also SARTI R., *Quali diritti per “la donna”? Servizio domestico e identità di genere dalla rivoluzione francese ad oggi*, Bologna, S.I.P., 2000 (http://www.uniurb.it/scipol/drs_quali_diritti_per_la_donna.pdf); SARTI R., “La domesticité en Italie durant la période du fascisme (1922-1943)”, *Sextant*, XV-XVI, 2001, pp. 165-202 (pp. 181-182 for the description of the headings included in the servant category).

⁹⁴ According to my calculations on the data corrected by MARCHAND O. and THELOT C., *Deux siècles de travail en France. Population active et structure sociale, durée et productivité du travail*, Paris, Insee, 1991, pp. 182-187, they were 65 percent in 1851, 87 percent in 1901.

⁹⁵ For the headings included in the servant category see table 1 of the “Conclusion” of these *Proceedings*, vol. V. For other calculations of the percentage of women among domestic staff in England and Wales see SARTI R., “Notes on the feminization”, p. 163.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 146-147.

⁹⁷ SGARGI L., *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino Luca Sgargi nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale Proclamato di Stampa nella seduta delli 21 Germinal Anno VI. Repub.*, Bologna, Stampe del Genio Democratico, [1798], repr. in MARCELLI U. (ed.), *Il Gran Circolo Costituzionale e il “Genio Democratico” (Bologna, 1797-1798)*, Bologna, Analisi, 1986, vol. III, pp. 917-931. In France criticism of the use of sedan-chair

Bologna, I have found no mention of porters in the 19th century; Manuela Martini, studying upper class marriages, found that the use of sedan-chair carriers for the bride completely disappeared during the first half of the century. In the following decades the so-called *braccieri* – servants hired to accompany ladies when they went out – also disappeared⁹⁸.

Moreover, throughout the century there was a strong reduction in footmen, grooms, lackeys and all of the liveried servants whose presence had been so important in marking the status of a noble during the 17th and 18th centuries. As far as we can judge, this was a common trend in Europe. “Even the richest people have reduced the number of domestics” because they have become aware that employing an army of valets does not mean to be better served, a French author wrote in the 1830s⁹⁹.

In my research on Bologna, I also noticed that by the 1820s, live-in secretaries, book-keepers, “home priests” (*prete di casa*) had disappeared. Obviously, some may possibly have existed even later in families I have not analysed, but the trend was clear¹⁰⁰. In this case, the functions they performed did not become as obsolete as those carried out by sedan-chair carriers or *braccieri*. Simply, the people who performed them, most of whom were not live-in even in the 18th century¹⁰¹, were no longer considered “upper servants” (in fact, as we have seen, even in early modern times their inclusion among domestic staff was not always obvious). As several historians have stressed, many “jobs” moved outside the home during the 19th century¹⁰², and in any case book-keepers, secretaries, etc. were more and more often considered professionals rather than domestics¹⁰³. For example, the Bolognese book-keepers responsible for the administration of the property of the wealthiest families increasingly worked for more than one family and, from 1805 onwards (with the exception of the periods 1815-1828 and 1865-1906), needed a public licence in order to practise their profession¹⁰⁴.

Generally speaking, these changes were affected by the crisis of the “aristocratic” way of expressing and representing prestige and power and by the policies introduced to fight luxury, which convinced several masters to reduce the number of servants hired for display. They were also influenced by the increasing role of middle-class families as servant employers, because they were often less inclined than the traditional upper classes to hire large male staffs. Apart from these transformations in the demand for servants, there were also changes in the supply of domestics. Indeed, the stigmatisation of servants, the decreasing economic role of the household as a unit of production and the development of new job opportunities thanks to industrialisation, the expansion of the school system and the growth of bureaucracy reduced the supply of labour in the domestic service sector. Yet it is difficult to pinpoint the importance of each factor and to clearly distinguish the role played by changes in labour supply on the one hand, and in labour demand on the other. This is also due to the fact that, as far as we can judge, the

carriers arose as early as 1768, see MAZA S., *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France. The Uses of Loyalty*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 242.

⁹⁸ SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico in Italia*, pp. 55-91, 156-159; MARTINI M., “Doti e successioni a Bologna nell’Ottocento. I comportamenti patrimoniali del ceto nobiliare”, *Quaderni storici*, XXXI, 1996, pp. 269-304 (p. 291). The sole exception was represented by the marriage of the daughter of a ruling king, Federica Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, who in 1844 married a member of the Bolognese aristocracy, Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli (“Sparisce la portantina tra i mezzi di trasporto delle spose, con la eccezione della figlia di un sovrano regnante, la già citata Federica Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, sposa nel dicembre 1844 di Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli, e diminuiscono pure, oltre alle carrozze, i servi maschi a esclusiva disposizione delle mogli”).

⁹⁹ MITTRE M.-H.-C., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ As for the 19th century, my research mainly focused on three large parishes, two located in the city centre and inhabited by many upper-class families, and one mainly inhabited by lower class families. I have also analysed some private archives.

¹⁰¹ SARTI R., “The True Servant”.

¹⁰² For instance ENGELSING R., “Das häusliche Personal in der Epoche der Industrialisierung”, *Jahrbuch für Sozialwissenschaft*, XX, 1969, pp. 84-121, republished in a longer version in ENGELSING R., *Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Mittel- und Unterschichten*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978 (1973¹), pp. 224-261.

¹⁰³ An exception is represented by the members of the Bolognese Brotherhood of San Vitale: they still considered people traditionally included among upper servants as such. See above, notes 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ MARTINI M., “La regolamentazione dei servizi contabili”. More generally see FIORENTINI M. R., “Sviluppo capitalistico e professioni economiche: ragionieri e dottori commercialisti, consulenti del lavoro”, in TOUSIJN W. (ed.), *Le libere professioni in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987, pp. 263-301.

role of each factor was often different according to the context. Maria Casalini, for instance, found that in Florence, around 1850, there were many unemployed male servants: possibly, therefore, in that context the ongoing feminisation of domestic personnel – women represented 58.6 percent of domestic staff in 1841, 66.1 percent in 1881 – was due to an increasing preference for women by masters, rather than to a shrinking supply of male labour¹⁰⁵. Yet Ménétra, the French craftsman in glass by now well-known thanks to his journal published by Daniel Roche, maintained in his diary that he never would have accepted wearing a livery,¹⁰⁶ (this episode refers to the pre-revolutionary period; but, since Ménétra wrote his journal between 1764 and 1803, his assertion was possibly influenced by the increasing stigmatisation of the *domestiques* that took place later on)¹⁰⁷. “I left on my own account because, besides making me work as a cook they [= the masters] made me go to the theatre in livery”, maintained an Italian man after quitting his masters in Florence in 1876¹⁰⁸, to quote but a couple of examples that support the idea that men were increasingly unwilling to work as domestics.

Several authors, indeed, while analysing the feminisation of domestic service have emphasized the role of the shrinking (or increasingly rigid) male labour force: according to this interpretation women mainly took on places left free by men, or once occupied by them¹⁰⁹. Yet this was not always the case. As we have seen, certain functions typically performed by male servants simply died out, others moved outside the household and/or were performed by people who were no longer considered servants (it has to be stressed that, at least in Italy, even in the 18th century many male servants did not live in¹¹⁰). In other words, only in some cases did women servants replace male domestics: in Bologna, for instance, female cooks replaced male ones¹¹¹ and this was possibly a change common to other Italian cities and to France¹¹². Yet in many other cases there was simply an expansion of places for women servants. According to Casalini, in 19th century Florence changes affecting male and female service were two almost independent processes: the growing demand for women servants was due to the middle-classes’ development, while the (limited) diminution of male servants was mainly due to changing preferences by the aristocracy¹¹³. Possibly elsewhere these processes were not so well distinguished: in Bologna in the late 19th century the non-aristocratic upper classes employed many more male servants than the noble ones (in 1902, on a sample of 1075 families, the nobles, who made up 2 percent of the households, employed only 9 percent of live-in male servants; around a century earlier, in 1810, in the same area, noble families were 3 percent and employed 23 percent of live-in male servants)¹¹⁴. In fact,

¹⁰⁵ CASALINI M., *Servitù, nobili e borghesi nella Firenze dell'Ottocento*, Firenze, Olschki, 1997, pp. 201-205; CASALINI M., “Le service : un métier ‘féminin’?”.

¹⁰⁶ MÉNÉTRA J.-L., *Journal de ma vie. Jacques-Louis Ménétra Compagnon vitrier au 18^e siècle*, ed. by D. Roche, Paris, Montalba, 1982 (It. trans. *Così parlò Menetra. Diario di un vetraio del XVIII secolo*, Milano, Garzanti, 1992), p. 157.

¹⁰⁷ ROCHE D., “L’autobiographie d’un homme du peuple”, in MÉNÉTRA J.-L., *op. cit.* (It. trans. “L’autobiografia di un uomo del popolo”), p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ CASALINI M., *Servitù, nobili e borghesi*, p. 100, note 70 (“Venni via da me perché oltre a farmi fare da cuoco mi facevano andare in livrea al teatro”, words by Raffaello Minguzzi, reported in Archivio di Stato di Firenze (State Archive of Florence), *Tribunale di Firenze, Processi penali*, 1876, busta 785, fascicolo 2044). Casalini quotes (*ibid.*) other similar statements.

¹⁰⁹ MCBRIDE T., *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 39; ARRU A., *Il servo*, in part. pp. 207-211. According to Arru, the greater flexibility of women and their greater willingness to stay single had as a consequence an increasing preference for women by masters, who replaced male servants with female ones.

¹¹⁰ SARTI R., “The True Servant”. See also below, section “Scholars and Servants”.

¹¹¹ SARTI R., *Europe at Home*, p. 162.

¹¹² *Ibid.*; SARTI R., “Donne e uomini nella preparazione del cibo”, paper presented at the conference *La cucina di casa in Italia, dal medioevo ad oggi*, Forlimpopoli, 22 June 2002 (<http://www.pellegrinoartusi.it/Atti%20convegno%202002.rtf>); ARRU A., *op. cit.*, p. 211; FAIRCHILD C., *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16. Even though, as far as we know, in England cooking traditionally was a more feminised activity than in Italy and France (MENNELL S., *All Manners of Food, Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985), there possibly was a feminisation of cooks and other domestics working in the kitchen in England as well. HORN P., *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan - New York, St Martin’s Press, 1975, p. 6, mentions 17th century upper class families whose kitchen domestic staff was entirely male.

¹¹³ CASALINI M., “Le service : un métier ‘féminin’?”.

¹¹⁴ SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico*, p. 234.

in Bologna the role of noble families as employers of live-in servants (both male and female) had started to decline as far back as the 18th century: though extremely important, the role of the revolutionary years in re-shaping servant-keeping must not be exaggerated¹¹⁵.

Both Casalini and I do not list apprentices among servants. Scholars who do, stress that, at least in Italy, the custom by craftsmen to keep live-in apprentices started to decline as early as the second half of the 16th century¹¹⁶. This decline represents another long-term process that also affected those who might be listed among servants. In other words, while trying to answer the question, “who were servants?”, we have to consider both the transformation in the household organisation and function and the changes in the very notion of servant. “Dienstbothe is kein Tagelöhner”, a German *Dorf-Policey-Ordnung* made clear in 1804¹¹⁷: “a servant is not a day labourer” (some forty years earlier the English judge and professor William Blackstone had listed day labourers among servants as well).

To conclude on this point, the feminisation of domestic service has to do with the growing number of women among those people who were traditionally considered servants, with the disappearance of some traditionally male “jobs” within domestic staff, with the displacement outside the household of some others, with the replacement of certain male servants by women servants, with the new classification as “non-servants” of people (mainly men) who were or were likely to be considered a servant. In this sense, in the 19th century we have, as far as I can judge, a feminisation of the very notion of the servant (while people fighting for women’s rights increasingly described the female condition as similar to that of servants or even slaves, particularly that of married women¹¹⁸). Significantly, in the sources I had analysed in my PhD thesis, the Italian word *servo* (the most stigmatising among the several words that might be used to define servants), in the 19th century was found only in the feminine form *serva*¹¹⁹. In the 1830s, the important Italian scholar Niccolò Tommaseo wrote that the term *servo* had “a very unpleasant” meaning but that luckily it seemed to be disappearing¹²⁰. I cannot say whether the Bolognese case study I have focused on is representative of the whole of Italy. Yet possibly the masculine form *servo* and the feminine *serva* had a different evolution elsewhere as well.

In this context, the surviving male servants – whose political status was similar to that of women, where both male and female servants were still disenfranchised¹²¹ – were symbolically “feminised”, at least to a certain extent: in the 19th and even in the early 20th centuries, in several European countries male servants were forbidden to wear beards and/or moustaches, which, at that time, represented a sign of gender-belonging and virility: the “peculiar feature of a man”, as written by an author arguing in favour of

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197, 210. During the revolutionary years there even was a reversal of this trend, possibly because noble families dismissed fewer servants than the others.

¹¹⁶ BARBAGLI M., *Sotto lo stesso tetto. Mutamenti della famiglia in Italia dal XV al XX secolo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1996 (1984¹), pp. 211-212, 222.

¹¹⁷ DÜRR R., “‘Der Dienstbothe ist kein Tagelöhner...’ Zum Gesinderecht (16. bis 19. Jahrhundert)”, in GERHARD U. (ed.), *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, München, C. H. Beck, 1997, pp. 115-139 (p. 124).

¹¹⁸ SARTI R., “Spazi domestici e identità di genere tra età moderna e contemporanea”, in GAGLIANI D. and SALVATI M. (eds.), *Donne e spazio nel processo di modernizzazione*, Bologna, Clueb, 1995, pp. 13-41; NYM MAYHALL L. E., “The Rethorics of Slavery and Citizenship: Suffragist Discourse and Canonical Texts in Britain, 1880-1914”, *Gender and History*, XIII, 2001, pp. 481-497, both with further references. For a modern comparison between wives and maids see DAVIDOFF L. “Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England”, *The Journal of Social History*, VII, 1974, pp. 406-428, republished in DAVIDOFF L., *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.

¹¹⁹ SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico*, pp. 30, 76-77.

¹²⁰ TOMMASEO N., *Nuovo dizionario dei sinonimi della lingua italiana*, vol. II, no. 3123, p. 867. “Servo” “ha un senso spiacevolissimo”. “Questa voce pare che fosse più in uso anticamente, e si vada smettendo”. The declining use of the word *servo* is confirmed by MIGLIORINI B., *Storia della lingua italiana*, 9th ed., Milano, Bompiani, 2001 (1987¹), p. 580.

¹²¹ In Britain, male domestic servants were excluded from the franchise according to the “The Third Reform Act” (1884). They were enfranchised in 1918, see BLEWETT N., “The Franchises in the United Kingdom 1885-1918”, *Past and Present*, XXXII, 1965, pp. 27-56 (p. 33); <http://www.knowingbritishhistory.co.uk/franchise.htm>.

servants' freedom to wear moustaches¹²². Many male servants were aware of the drawbacks of this prohibition, and protested against it: "Domestics, coachmen, grooms ask to be free to grow moustaches", a group of Italian domestics wrote in a journal created precisely to support this request, in 1907. Indeed, this question "touches their dignity as men and citizens: they no longer want to bear on their faces a professional mark, a survival of servitude, a mark of inferiority". Because of their shaved faces – they denounced – they were always treated disdainfully, and when they entered a dance, women said "with a meaningful grimace: 'they are domestics'"¹²³.

Do we thus have to conclude that, at this point, there was no more ambiguity, and that the notion of servant was by now a clear-cut one, used only to define women (and a few men) employed in households to clean, care, cook and so on? This possibly was not the case, if, in Italy, as late as 1895, it was necessary to explain that the tax on servants was due for "servants, door-keepers, cooks and coachmen, never for those who work to carry out professional, industrial or commercial classes tasks"¹²⁴. However, to answer this question it is useful to analyse how servants were classified in 19th century censuses.

The Classification of Domestic Servants in 19th and early 20th Century Censuses

In France before 1896 many farm servants were included among domestic personnel "even though the instructions always prescribed classification of farm servants with workers", the French census authorities complained at the end of the 19th century¹²⁵. A few years later, their Italian colleagues made

¹²² MOLAJONI P., *I servi*, Roma, Società Nazionale di Cultura, 1904, pp. 20-21. According to Molajoni, upper class families followed the model represented by the court, where servants had to be shaved. However, this custom was also followed in the presidential palace of republican France, not only in the court of monarchical Italy and indeed, according to Cusenier, who wrote in 1912, in France "the prohibition of moustaches is kept even more than in past times, without any practical necessity, only because of the masters' whim" (CUSENIER M., *Les domestiques en France*, Paris, Arthur Rousseau, 1912, p. 193: "l'interdiction du port de la moustache (...) est maintenu plus que jamais, sans nécessité pratique, sans autre raison que le caprice des maîtres"). In England, according to MOLAJONI P., *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21, domestics vigorously protested against this custom but without success, while in Rome, where protests had taken place, too, most cardinals had allowed their servants to wear moustaches. See also SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico*, p. 270; CASALINI M., *Servitù, nobili e borghesi*, p. 100.

¹²³ *Il Domestico dell'Unione, miglioramento domestici – cocchieri – palafrenieri*, April-May 1907: "I domestici, cocchieri, i palafrenieri chiedono di poter lasciar crescere i baffi (...) mettono innanzi una questione morale, una questione che tocca da vicino la loro dignità di uomini e di cittadini: non vogliono più portar nel viso un marchio professionale, un avanzo di servitù, un'impronta di inferiorità (...) se si entra in una Società ove, per esempio, si balli, le signore e signorine presenti dicono subito con una smorfia significativa: 'son domestici'". After this protest, the mayor of Turin, Italy, allowed town council valets to grow moustaches, *ibid.* Some years earlier, in 1900, a jurist had maintained that, in his view, servants refusing to shave their beards and/or moustaches could not be considered "as not fulfilling their contractual duties", BRUNO T., "Domestici", in *Il Digesto italiano*, vol. IX, Torino, Unione Tipografica - Editrice, 1899-1902, pp. 652-654. Scholars are increasingly focusing on the importance attributed, at certain times, to beards and moustaches in terms of the social and cultural construction of masculinity (see for instance FISHER W., "The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England", *Renaissance Quarterly*, LIV, 2001, pp. 155-187). This is clearly a crucial point, yet beards and moustaches often also had a political meaning. In Italy, during the Risorgimento, wearing beards and moustaches was a sign of liberalism and in the Reign of the Two Sicilies some people were even imprisoned because they wore beards and moustaches (CECCHELLI C., "Barba", in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. VI, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1930, pp. 113-115; LEVI-PISETZKY R., *Il costume e la moda nella società italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 1995, 1978¹, p. 305). In this sense, the shaved faces of domestics might also have a political meaning, because they recalled the *Ancien Régime* and the late 18th century preference for shaved faces.

¹²⁴ SAREDO G., *La nuova legge sull'amministrazione comunale e provinciale*, vol. III, Torino, Unione Tipografica - Editrice, 1895, no. 5813, p. 585, cit. by BRUNO T., *op. cit.*, p. 652.

¹²⁵ RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE, MINISTÈRE DU COMMERCE, DE L'INDUSTRIE, DES POSTES ET DES TÉLÉGRAPHES, DIRECTION DU TRAVAIL, SERVICE DU RECENSEMENT DES INDUSTRIES

a similar complaint¹²⁶. Indeed, in many countries in the 19th century there were rules stating that farm servants should not be classified with domestic servants. Yet in practice it was often difficult, or even impossible, to neatly distinguish between farm and domestic servants, particularly in the case of women, who in rural households were likely to work both inside and outside the house¹²⁷. In spite of this, in this case, the concept was clear. Moreover, it was consistent with an idea frequently repeated since the late 18th century, as we have seen, i.e. that people engaged in production should not be considered as servants¹²⁸. However, reality was not so clear-cut, and while classifying actual people several problems arose.

This was not the sole problem arising in the classification of servants. In England the instructions to tabulators in 1861 made clear that “by a ‘Domestic Servant’ is meant a servant (whether in or out of place) who is employed in *some other family* than her own. Children or other members of a family living at home, who are *called* servants, but who may be presumed to be only engaged in their own household duties, must be treated as undescribed relatives, and referred to as ‘Daughter, Niece’, &c. as the case may be”¹²⁹. This precision was not casual. In the previous census, that took place in 1851, a large number of “housekeepers who were almost certainly working at home” had been abstracted as domestics in the published census, as discovered by Edward Higgs who carefully studied the case of Rochdale¹³⁰. Not only did British tabulators have to face this kind of problem: similar ones arose in Belgium with women defined as *ménagères*. According to the definition used in the censuses, this term described women looking after other people’s households in exchange for a salary, thus a type of domestic worker. On the contrary, in ordinary language *ménagères* meant “housewives”. As a consequence, census clerks often described as *ménagères*, i.e. domestic workers, women who were *ménagères*, i.e. housewives¹³¹.

It is possibly even more amazing to our 21st century eyes, that, in 1871, the instructions to clerks in charge of the census of England and Wales laid down that “when a sister, daughter, or other relative, is described as ‘Housekeeper’, ‘Servant’, ‘Governess’, etc. she must be referred to these occupations”. Not surprisingly, women classified as ‘housekeepers’ jumped from 66,000 in 1861 to 140,000 ten years later¹³². Things went even further in 1891: in that case, “all female relatives and daughters returned as

ET DES PROFESSIONS, *Dénombrement Général de la Population du 29 Mars 1896*, t. IV, *Résultats Généraux*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1901, p. XVII (“bien que les instructions aient toujours prescrit de classer les domestiques de ferme avec les ouvriers”).

¹²⁶ MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d’Italia al 10 febbraio 1901*, vol. V., *Relazione sul metodo e sui risultati del censimento, raffrontati con quelli dei censimenti italiani precedenti e dei censimenti esteri*, Roma, Tipografia Nazionale G. Bertero e C., 1904, p. XCVII.

¹²⁷ In England, Elizabethan legislation “gave the resolution of disputes between employers and their servants in husbandry to magistrates”, yet often, particularly in the case of female servants, it was impossible to distinguish between farm and domestic servants. Because of this and other reasons, in the 18th century there was a lot of discussion on the extent of the magistrates’ jurisdiction, see STEEDMAN C., “Lord Mansfield’s Women”, paper presented at the third seminar of the Servant Project, *Domestic Service and the Evolution of the Law*, Barcelona, 12-15 December 2002, and published in *Past and Present*, no. 176, 2002, pp. 105-143 (p. 121).

¹²⁸ Yet in France, where article 1781 of the Civil Code maintained that “the master is believed on his word in matters of the amount of wages, the payment for the year expired and the advances given for the current year”, some social groups tried to extend its application to factory workers, see SARTI R., “Freedom and Citizenship?”

¹²⁹ Quoted by WOOLLARD M., “The Classification of Domestic Servants in England and Wales, 1851-1951”, in this volume.

¹³⁰ HIGGS E., “Women’s Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Census”, *History Workshop*, XXIII, 1987, pp. 59-81 (p. 71).

¹³¹ PIETTE V., *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44 and GUBIN E., “La domesticité, une réalité mal adaptée au contexte de l’entre-deux-guerres en Belgique”, *Sextant*, XV-XVI, 2001, pp. 33-59.

¹³² HIGGS E., “Women’s Occupations and Work”, p. 71. On the classification of kin and relatives in the servant category see *ibid.*; HIGGS E., “The tabulation of servants in the nineteenth-century census, with special reference to domestic servants”, in MILLS D. R. and SCHÜRER K. (eds), *Local communities in the Victorian census enumerators’ books*, Oxford, Leopard’s Head Press, 1996, pp. 27-35; ANDERSON M., “Households, families and individuals: some preliminary results from the national sample from the 1851 census of Great Britain”, *Continuity and Change*, III, 1988, pp. 421-438; ANDERSON M., “Mis-specification of servant occupations in the 1851 census: a problem revisited”, *Local Population Studies*, LX,

‘helping at home’” were included with domestics¹³³. Significantly, in Spain, in the 1900 census the category called “Trabajo doméstico” (housework) had two sub-groups: a) “Miembros de la familia” (family members) and b) “Sirvientes domesticos” (domestic servants)¹³⁴. These cases confirm that the servant category was highly uncertain even in the 19th and early 20th centuries and show how difficult it was to distinguish people who carried out the same tasks in households. Analysing this jumbled reality, a historian concluded that domestic service was the occupation “which may be the most difficult to interpret” and suggested that “it is perhaps unwise (...) to look at domestic service as a distinct ‘occupation’. Rather it should be studied as a series of social relationships with a similar work content on a spectrum from close kinship to the cash nexus”¹³⁵. Indeed, some people “really” worked as servants in the house of a relative, while others were included in the servant category even though they simply carried out, at home, their duties as wives, daughters, children.

I obviously agree that domestic service is extremely difficult to interpret. Yet the classification of every kind of female activity created big problems to census officials all over Europe (and consequently to historians who rely on census data), because almost all women did the job of a housewife to a lesser or greater extent, and so were likely to be included among housewives in spite of the fact that they also worked as peasants, shopkeepers, servants, etc.¹³⁶.

The way in which the categories were formed already revealed the image of the worker that was held by those who drew up the categories themselves¹³⁷. Although women were often elusive figures who could not be easily placed, solving the problem of their classification in one way or another led to highly different results, as illustrated, for instance, by comparing the criteria adopted in the Italian 1881 and 1901 censuses¹³⁸. In 1881, the doubt relating to the classification of women carrying out multiple activities was resolved by including them among workers¹³⁹. In 1901 the solution was a different one. In this case individuals were classified “according to the profession practised, instead of according to their condition”. This meant, for example, that a property-owning priest had been classified among priests and not among land-owners; that lawyer capitalists were classified among lawyers and not among capitalists, and so on. So far, the decision was not innovative at all: the 1881 Census had followed the same pattern¹⁴⁰. “On the other hand”, added the reporters, “if a woman had declared that she was in charge of domestic tasks and was also engaged in secondary activities such as spinning or weaving linen or hemp or wool or doing some sewing for herself or others, it was her housekeeping charge that was considered as her main occupation”. “The profession of spinner or weaver”, they explained, “appears only in the classification as an accessory profession”¹⁴¹. In the same way, the women “who besides attending to their families [...] were temporary servants” had been classified not as workers but in the category of “people maintained by

1998, pp. 58-64; DRAKE M., “Aspects of domestic service in Great Britain and Ireland, 1841-1911”, *Family and Community History*, II, 1999, pp. 119-128.

133 EBERY M. and PRESTON B., *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914*, University of Reading, Reading Geographical Papers, 1976, p. 13. See also WOOLLARD M., *op. cit.*

134 *Censo de la población de España según el empadronamiento hecho en la Península é Islas adyacentes en 31 de diciembre de 1900*, t. IV, Madrid, Imprenta de la Dirección general del Instituto geográfico y estadístico, 1907, p. 216.

135 HIGGS E., “Women, Occupations and Work”, pp. 68-69.

136 SARTIR., “Work and Toil. Breadwinner Ideology and Women’s Work in 19th and 20th Century Italy”, paper presented at the conference *Women, Work and the Breadwinner Ideology*, Salzburg, 10-11 December 1999 (http://www.uniurb.it/scipol/drs_work_and_toil.pdf).

137 “Statistical reports exemplify the process by which visions of reality, models of social structure, were elaborated and revisited”, Joan Scott wrote some years ago, see SCOTT J. W., “A Statistical Representation of Work: *La Statistique de l’industrie à Paris, 1847-1848*”, in SCOTT J. W., *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988, pp. 113-138 (p. 115). For further references on the role of “ideology” in the construction of statistical reports, see SARTIR., “Work and Toil”.

138 Because of budget problems, in 1891 the planned census was not carried out.

139 MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d’Italia al 31 dicembre 1881. Relazione generale e confronti internazionali*, Roma, Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1885, p. LXVII; MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d’Italia al 10 febbraio 1901*, vol. V, *Relazione*, p. CVII.

140 MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d’Italia al 31 dicembre 1881. Relazione generale*, p. LXVII.

141 MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d’Italia al 10 febbraio 1901*, vol. V, *Relazione sul metodo*, p. LXXVIII.

the family". The occupations that they carried out had been put "in the classification of accessory professions" (not even analytically sorted in the Census)¹⁴². Obviously, this change in classification helped to explain the big fall in the female activity rate that, according to the census data, took place between 1881 and 1901: from 50.5 to 41.4 percent¹⁴³.

I have analysed in another paper the consequences of these choices on the statistical representation of women's work and female economic role, and, ultimately, on gender construction¹⁴⁴. Let me focus, here, on domestic servants. Paradoxically, live-in servants who were not kin of the masters were possibly a kind of female worker not very likely to be classified as housewives, since they did not go back home every day to carry out domestic chores for their own families. Nevertheless, their position was quite ambiguous: they were paid for carrying out the "natural" unpaid duties of wives and mothers. Although between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the interpretation of the family as an economic unit was for some time victoriously in competition with the interpretation of the family as a natural community, it was this latter conception that gained ground in later years (at least in France and Italy). Family tasks of men and women then appeared to be more than ever the result of an original vocation. Consequently, so many thought, they must not be modified. Female dependence itself, which was put forward as a major reason for excluding women from political participation, was largely regarded as natural¹⁴⁵. In such a context, domestic service (which at that time was increasingly similar to housewifery, because of the transformation I described in the previous section) was often not even considered true work¹⁴⁶. The analysis of female work published in the 1910 Belgian Census did not even include domestic servants among the active population¹⁴⁷!

This "naturalisation" of domestic work contributed to the debasement of domestic service. An important role in such a debasement was also played, however, by the distinction between productive and unproductive labour elaborated in classical political economy. According to Adam Smith, "there is one sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed: there is another which has no such effect. The former, as it produces a value, may be called productive; the latter, unproductive labour. Thus the labour of a manufacturer adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit. The labour of a menial servant, on the contrary, adds to the value of nothing. Though the manufacturer has his wages advanced to him by his master, he, in reality, costs him no expence [*sic*], the value of those wages being generally restored, together with a profit, in the improved value of the subject upon which his labour is bestowed. But the maintenance of a menial servant never is restored. A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers: he grows poor by maintaining a multitude of menial servants"¹⁴⁸. Domestic work appears to become increasingly debased so as to become a non-productive activity, that is, an activity which does not contribute directly to the wealth of a nation.

During the 19th century, the distinction between market and non-market labour gradually replaced the dichotomy between productive and unproductive work¹⁴⁹. In the long run, this allowed the recognition

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, p. CVII. According to the published data, only a limited number of people declared to have a secondary occupation (461,142 individuals, 268,955 of which were men, and 192,187 women). Possibly only one occupation was registered at the very moment of collecting the data in the first place, *ibid.*, p. CXII.

¹⁴³ SARTI R., *Quali diritti per "la donna"?*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ SARTI R., "Work and Toil".

¹⁴⁵ BONACCHI G. and GROPPI A. (eds.), *Il dilemma della cittadinanza. Diritti e doveri delle donne*, Roma - Bari, Laterza, 1993; ROSANVALLON P., *Le sacre du citoyen* (It. trans.), pp. 109-153; SARTI R., "Spazi domestici e identità"; SARTI R., "Work and Toil".

¹⁴⁶ SARTI R., *Quali diritti per "la donna"?*, with further references.

¹⁴⁷ PIETTE V., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ SMITH A., *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th ed., ed. by Edwin Cannan, London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1904. (1776¹), also available online: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>, book II, chap. 3, "Of the Accumulation of Capital, or of Productive and Unproductive Labour". On the importance, for domestic service, of the concept of unproductive work see SARASÚA C., *Were Servants paid according to their Productivity?*, in FAUVE-CHAMOUX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 517-541.

¹⁴⁹ FOLBRE N., "The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth-Century Economic Thought", *Signs*, XVI, 1991, pp. 463-484 (pp. 469-470); ADDIS E., *Economia e differenze di genere*, Bologna, Clueb, 1997, in part. pp. 40-42.

of the economic role of paid domestic work and its distinction from unpaid housewifery, even though it did not yield any better evaluation of the economic role of unpaid housework¹⁵⁰. Besides, as we have seen, late 19th and early 20th century censuses did not always apply this distinction.

I might go on for several other pages listing problems linked to the servant classification in population censuses. In Norway, for instance, domestic work at the end of the 19th century was not considered work performed by a real worker but as a “service” carried out by a member of the household (which included both relatives and people not related to each other). Thus paternalism still dominated the relationship between master and servant: as late as 1900 some individuals in the nominative census were classified as servants in the column “household position” of the Norwegian census, but not in the column “occupation”¹⁵¹.

Yet let me focus on a crucial problem, not surprisingly stressed by many scholars who have worked with censuses, i.e. the fact that categories changed from one census to the other, making comparisons over time very difficult¹⁵². This problem is magnified by the fact that sometimes changes in census categories reflected important changes in the social position of a certain group. In the 1871 Italian census, for instance, “private employees, stewards and butlers” were included in the sixth category under “domestic staff”¹⁵³. In 1881, the category in which they were classified, that is, the seventh, was called “private employees and service staff”: so in that Census, “private stewards and tax collectors”, “scribes and copyists” were still classified under the same category as domestic staff, but were separated from them at the same time¹⁵⁴. However, in the 1901 Census, private employees and service staff were listed under clearly separate categories: the former “rose” to the “Professions and liberal arts” group¹⁵⁵. Though at a very late date, Italian census categories were adapted to a reality where many of the former “upper

¹⁵⁰ As is well known, a seminal work stressing the economic importance of female unpaid work is BOSERUP E., *Women's Role in Economic Development*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1970.

¹⁵¹ THORVALDSEN G., “Norwegian Servants towards 1900. A Quantitative Overview”, in this volume and SCHRUMPF E., “Labour Organization of Domestic Servants in the 1880s and 1890s and the Opposition of the Employers”, paper presented at the second seminar of the Servant Project, *Domestic Service and the Emergence of a New Conception of Labour in Europe*, Oslo, 13-15 June 2002.

¹⁵² MARTIN-FUGIER A., *La place des bonnes. La domesticité féminine à Paris en 1900*, Paris, Grasset & Fasquelle, 1979, pp. 34-36; EBERY M. and PRESTON B., *op. cit.*; HIGGS E., “Per la storia dei servi domestici: un'analisi quantitativa”, *Quaderni storici*, XIV, 1979, pp. 284-301; HIGGS E., “Domestic servants and households in Victorian England”, *Social History*, VIII, 1983, pp. 201-210; HIGGS E., *Domestic Servants and Household in Rochdale 1851-1871*, New York - London, Garland, 1986; HIGGS E., “Women's Occupations and Work”, *History Workshop*, XXIII, 1987, pp. 59-81; SARTI R., “Work and Toil”; PIETTE V., *op. cit.*, pp. 44-53; GUBIN E., *op. cit.*; PASLEAU S. and SCHOPP I., “La domesticité en Belgique de 1947 à l'aube du 21^e siècle. Un essai de définition”, *Sextant*, XV-XVI, 2001, pp. 235-277; FIALOVÁ L., “Domestic Staff in the Czech Lands at the Turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in the Light of Statistical Figures”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 141-159 and “Domestic Service in the Czech Lands at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries. A Statistical Overview”, in these *Proceedings*, next volume; THORVALDSEN G., *op. cit.* and WOOLLARD M., *op. cit.*; DUBERT I., “Modernity without Modernisation: Key Factors in the Evolution of Domestic Service in the Northwest of Spain, 1752-1900”, *Gender and History*, forthcoming, etc.

¹⁵³ STATISTICA DEL REGNO D'ITALIA, *Popolazione classificata per professioni, culti e infermità principali. Censimento 31 dicembre 1871*, vol. III, Roma, Regia Tipografia, 1876, pp. 310-312, “Categoria 6a. Gruppo unico. - Personale di servizio”. In the 1861 Census (the first census of unified Italy) it is not explained which workers were included in the category “domesticità”.

¹⁵⁴ MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 31 dicembre 1881*, vol. III, *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni*, pp. 682-683, tav. III, *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni*, “Categoria VII. Impiegati privati e personale di servizio”.

¹⁵⁵ MAIC. DGS, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno al 10 febbraio 1901*, vol. III, *Popolazione presente classificata per professioni o condizioni*, pp. 28-29. In this Census “Impiegati a servizio di privati - Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali” are not classified together with domestics, see “Categoria D). - Persone addette a servizi domestici e di piazza. Classe XXI. - Persone addette al servizio domestico”, sottogruppo unico, “Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatter, portieri e altre persone addette a servizi domestici”. They are included in the “Categoria E). - Professioni ed arti liberali, Classe XXIV. - Amministrazioni private”. Obviously, it is misleading to exclude immediately these workers from domestic staff. Their “emancipation” from the menial condition was a slow, long-term process.

servants” were no longer considered as such. Another example of “emancipation” from the servant category that led, more or less quickly, to a change in census categories is represented by the Italian doorkeepers. In 1929, during Fascism, in fact, they were allowed to have a trade union (a “corporation”). In the 1931 and 1936 censuses they were no longer classified among domestic servants, who were not allowed to unionise¹⁵⁶.

On the contrary, in other cases, category changes seem simply to reflect the difficulty of clearly defining servants and possibly the presence of differing and competing opinions among the statistical officials responsible for working out the census categories. From 1901 onwards, for example, Italian butlers (*maestri di casa*) were no longer classified among domestic personnel but among professionals, together with many other people once quite unanimously considered upper servants. Yet in the 1930s the *maggiordomi* – a definition that could have the same meaning as *maestro di casa* – were again included among domestics¹⁵⁷.

One would expect all these problems to have been overcome in more recent times, and contemporary statistical data to be much more precise and reliable. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Today, there is a crucial lack of statistics, and often the situation is even worse than it was fifty or a hundred years ago, because in many cases domestic workers are listed in the same category as different kinds of workers, and this makes any analysis and comparison impossible¹⁵⁸. In Italy, for instance, the last two censuses (1991, 2001) don’t supply any analytical data on domestic workers. Possibly, the choice to merge domestics with other workers was due to the idea (quite common some decades ago) that domestic service was to disappear thanks to progress and modernisation¹⁵⁹. Yet paradoxically the choice not to supply analytical data on domestic workers was made exactly when, as far as we know, their decline stopped and the trend was reversed¹⁶⁰.

Changing Roles, Changing Words

In 1680, in the Bolognese Parish of Santa Cecilia, the vice-priest Angelo Spiga registered in the *Status animarum*¹⁶¹ 406 *anime da comunione* (i.e. 406 individuals who had already had their first Communion)¹⁶². Among them, there were 38 women defined with terms that identified them as members of domestic staff: 19 *serve* (servants, maids), nine *dongelle* and four *damigelle* (two more refined types of female servants), two *donne di governo* (governesses), a *donna da guardarobba* (linen maid), a *governatrice* (also a kind of *governess*), a *servente* (servant), and a woman in a group collectively defined as *servitori* (*servants*). Thirty years later, in 1710, there were 35 female servants living in the parish of Santa Cecilia. In this case, too, about half of them were defined as simple servants (*serve*), a dozen were defined as *donzelle* (the same as *dongelle*), a few as *donne di governo* and one as a *governatrice*. While there was no *damigella*, there were a *sottodonzella* (under-damsel), a *balia* (wet nurse) and a *cuciniera* (female cook).

In part these differences were due to the fact that certain definitions were (more or less) synonymous: a woman called Vittoria Monti, for instance, was registered in 1680 as *prima damigella*

¹⁵⁶ SARTI R., “La domesticité en Italie durant la période du fascisme”, pp. 170, 172, 174, 180-181; SARTI R., “Noi abbiamo visto tante città, abbiamo un’altra cultura”. Servizio domestico, migrazioni e identità di genere in Italia: uno sguardo di lungo periodo”, *Polis*, XVIII, 2004, pp. 17-46 (p. 37).

¹⁵⁷ SARTI R., “La domesticité en Italie durant la période du fascisme”, pp. 160-170, 180-181.

¹⁵⁸ See for instance the case of Belgium analysed by PASLEAU S. and SCHOPP I., “La domesticité en Belgique”; see also the Final Report of the Servant Project, chapter VI.

¹⁵⁹ SARTI R., “Da serva a operaia”. See also the “Conclusion” of these *Proceedings*.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; COLOMBO A., “Il mito del lavoro domestico. Struttura e cambiamenti del lavoro domestico salariato in Italia (1970-2003)”, *Polis*, XIX, 2005, pp. 427-457.

¹⁶¹ According to the directions of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the priest had to register every year all the inhabitants of his parish in a special register (called *Status animarum*) in order to verify whether they took communion on Easter Day.

¹⁶² ARCHIVIO ARCIVESCOVILE DI BOLOGNA (Archbishopric Archives, Bologna), *Parrocchia di Santa Cecilia, Status Animarum 1680*, page without number: “f: Ang.^o Spiga Agostin.^{no} da Bolog.^a V. Curato colsi le sud.^e Anime, e scrissi (...) Sommano t.^e le sud.^{te} an.^e: n.^o: 406”.

(head damsel) of a noble family, but in the following years she was defined sometimes as *dongella*, sometimes as *prima dongella*¹⁶³. Yet this was not the sole reason for the change, which was possibly also due to the fact that, in 1710, the *Status animarum* was no longer written by Angelo Spiga: obviously, different individuals may prefer one term to another very similar or synonymous one, though even the same individual is likely not to use the same definition all the time. This seems particularly true in the case of domestics servants, since they could (and still can) be defined by terms indicating quite precise roles (such as cook or coachman) or by very general ones (such as servant, domestic, domestic worker, etc.)¹⁶⁴. In this sense, it not easy to establish, from the simple definition, whether the role of Vittoria Monti really changed in 1691, when she was defined as *donna di governo* or simply the person who wrote the *Status animarum* made a mistake or used a different and more specific term with respect to *dongella* (or *damigella*) which also identified, however, a female member of the domestic staff employed in a better position than as a simple maid.

Yet changes in definition did not only mirror individual preferences (or registration errors). I mentioned that Vittoria in 1680 was defined as *damigella*, but later on she was defined with different terms: significantly, in the 18th century sources from Bologna I used in my PhD thesis, the term *damigella* was never used to describe a female upper servant, even though it could still be used with this meaning in the Italian language of that time. Indeed, while in these sources I found some thirty different words to define female members of domestic staff between the late 17th and the early 20th century, only a few of them were used throughout the whole period. Most were used only in a certain phase. Things were even more complicated with male servants: I found more than sixty terms to define them, and also in this case only a few definitions were to be found throughout the whole period I analysed¹⁶⁵.

In other words, the interchangeability of terms and individual preferences can play an important role in the definition of individuals in a certain context. Yet both language and society change over time, and the relationship between words and roles is neither obvious nor simple: in some cases new terms are introduced to define new roles or mirror new social realities, in other cases they are applied to traditional ones, while traditional terms may be used in relation to changing roles¹⁶⁶. Let me give some examples.

In early modern times many terms used to define servants also referred to young people, as I have previously mentioned¹⁶⁷. But there were also terms that originally had indicated a certain geographical origin: for instance, the English word *slave*, the Italian *schiaivo*, the French *esclave*, the Spanish *sclavo*, the German *Sklave*, etc., all directly or indirectly derived from the Latin *sclavus*, which originally defined the people from “Sclavonia”. Only in the Middle Ages did *sclavus* also assume the meaning of *servus* (slave in Latin) because of the high number of slaves “imported” into Italy and other countries from the areas that, at that time, were considered Slavonic¹⁶⁸. But let me mention another example. In 17th and 18th century Germany, the French *mademoiselles* employed as governesses were simply called *Französinnen*, i.e. French women¹⁶⁹: at that time being a French woman and being a governess was the same in the eyes of the Germans¹⁷⁰. However, similar cases became more common, as far as I can judge, in later times. In America, for instance, “the Irish Bridget or Biddy, the generic nickname given to all Irish domestics, was so closely associated with domestic service that (...) after 1850 domestic servants and the

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, *Status animarum* 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, 1691, no. 303.

¹⁶⁴ For instance, in the 1740 *Status animarum* of the Bolognese parish of San Giovanni in Monte, kept in the archives of the parish, only general terms as *servitori* and *serventi* were used.

¹⁶⁵ SARTI R., *Per una storia del personale domestico*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-91 for a detailed analysis of the changing definitions used in the city of Bologna between the late 17th and the early 20th century.

¹⁶⁷ See the first section of this paper (“Who Were Servants in Early Modern Europe? A Difficult Question”).

¹⁶⁸ VERLINDEN C., *L’esclavage dans l’Europe médiévale*, 2 vols., respectively, De Tempel, Brugge, 1955 and Drukkerij Universa Te Wetteren, op Houtvrij Velijn, Gent, 1977, vol. II, pp. 999-1010.

¹⁶⁹ HARDACH-PINKE I., *Die Gouvernante. Geschichte eines Frauenberufs*, Frankfurt a. M. - New York, Campus, 1993, pp. 106-115.

¹⁷⁰ In 18th century Paris the pejorative term *cambrousse* meant a woman who had migrated to the city from the countryside but in the 17th century it meant chamber-maid (*cambrousse* was a provincial form for *chambrière*): the evolution was probably due to the high percentage of immigrant female servants, see MÉNÉTRA J.-L., *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Irish became virtually synonymous¹⁷¹. In recent times, when a high percentage of domestic servants is made up of international migrants, this kind of phenomenon seems particularly frequent: in the 1970s in Paris the common Spanish personal name *Conchita* became a synonym for domestic worker¹⁷²; in the last twenty years, in Italy the word *Filippina/o*, i.e. person from the Philippines, has also assumed the meaning of domestic worker. The same has happened with the Greek term *Filipineza*. Similarly, in Hong Kong, the term *banmui* means both “Filipino girl” and “servant”, while today, in Poland, “the colloquial meaning of the word *Ukrainka*, the noun signifying a Ukrainian woman in Polish, is changing. It is becoming the equivalent of the word ‘domestic worker’¹⁷³. These new definitions for domestic workers mirror the globalisation of domestic work. In recent times the Italian language has experienced a new change, also linked in some way to globalisation. In Italy many migrant domestic workers are today employed as carers for the elderly: the spreading resort to private carers, mainly foreigners, has intermingled with the diffusion of a (relatively) new term – *badante* – that literally means the person who is “looking after” someone or something¹⁷⁴. This term undervalues the competence necessary to care for elderly or handicapped people. Consequently its use is criticised by part of the public opinion¹⁷⁵.

The words I have just described took on a new meaning and/or spread “unintentionally”, so as to say. Yet in other cases people have intentionally tried to change social reality (also) by way of introducing new words. I have already mentioned that during the French Revolution new terms were introduced to replace the word *domestique* as that seemed too stigmatising, while in the 19th century some Italian scholars suggested that the word *domestico* had to be preferred to other terms such as *servo* because in their view it was not so humiliating¹⁷⁶. After the First World War, the French writer Augusta Moll-Weiss suggested that working conditions of people in domestic service should be improved in order to encourage girls to go back to it. “To favour and accentuate this evolution, from the present days we could look for another name for those who support us in our domestic work. Germany (...) has found that of *Hilfe der Hausfrau*, England that of *lady’s help*, we would need a similar term”¹⁷⁷. Much more radically, in Soviet Russia (where domestic workers did not disappear) the word *servant* (*domashniaia prishluga*) was frowned upon from 1923-24 and was substituted by the word domestic worker (*domashniaia rabotnitsa*). This change took place in the framework of an ambitious project that aimed to improve the domestic workers’ working conditions. In other words, it was not only a nominalistic operation. But it is noteworthy

¹⁷¹ MCKINLEY B. E., “*The Stranger in the Gates*”: *Employer Reactions toward Domestic Servants in America, 1825-1875*, Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1969, quoted by LYNCH-BRENNAN M., “Was Bridget’s Experience unique? A comparative view of American Domestic Service over Time and Space”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 489-515 (p. 489) and in these *Proceedings*, vol. V.

¹⁷² COLECTIVO IOÉ, *Mujer, Inmigración y trabajo*, Madrid, Imserso, 2001 (<http://www.imsersomigracion.upco.es/nojava/default2.asp>), p. 155.

¹⁷³ EBRON G., “Not Just the Maid: Negotiating Filipina Identity in Italy”, *Intersections*, VIII, 2002 (<http://www.she.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue8/ebtron.html>); MAGAT M., “Women Breadwinners in the Margins: Filipina Domestic Workers in Rome, Italy”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 351-368 and in these *Proceedings*, vol. I; KINDLER M., “Risk in the livelihoods of migrant domestic workers: the case of Ukrainian domestic workers in Poland”, paper presented at the Conference *Migration and Domestic Work in a Global Perspective*, 26-29 May 2005, The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, Wassenaar (available online: http://www.nias.knaw.nl/en/news_forthcoming_activities/lutz/new_12/kindler.pdf).

¹⁷⁴ MINGOZZI A., “Il lavoro domestico nel distretto faentino. Effetti della regolarizzazione sulle lavoratrici provenienti dalla ex Unione Sovietica”, in CAPONIO T. and COLOMBO A. (eds.), *Migrazioni globali, integrazioni locali*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005, pp. 117-143. This term is not brand new but in the past was quite rare.

¹⁷⁵ ALEMANI C., “Colf e badanti: una medesima professione?”, forthcoming (I am grateful to Claudia Alemani for allowing me to refer to this still unpublished text).

¹⁷⁶ See above, section “Moving away from the Early Modern Notion of Domestic Service”.

¹⁷⁷ MOLL-WEISS A., *La vie domestique d’après-guerre*, Paris, Arthur Rousseau, 1921, p. 123 (“Pour favoriser et accentuer cette évolution on pourrait, dès à présent, chercher un autre nom à ceux qui nous secondent dans notre travail ménager. L’Allemagne (...) a trouvé celui de *Hilfe der Hausfrau*, l’Angleterre celui de *lady’s help*, c’est un terme analogue qu’il nous faudrait”). She also suggested that *Madame* or *Mademoiselle* should always be used before the personal name of the domestic workers while addressing to her.

that those who conceived the project, also decided to change the name of these workers¹⁷⁸. In much more recent times too, we find efforts to give domestic workers a new status (also) thanks to the introduction of a new name: about forty years ago (1964), for instance, an Italian Catholic association of domestic workers, the Acli-Colf, that campaigned to improve domestic workers' rights and increase their dignity, introduced the term *collaboratrice familiare* (abbreviated as *colf*, i.e. family collaborator) to highlight the importance of domestic workers for the family's welfare, and this term has widely entered the Italian language¹⁷⁹. At least in some cases new terms were simple euphemisms. In my view, these nominalistic changes had important consequences for the workers' status only if and when they were accompanied by a significant transformation in the rights they enjoyed and in their working conditions. Yet I agree that the simple search for new words possibly expressed a new sensibility.

As we have seen, the intentional introduction of new terms might imply struggles and negotiations and it might be the same with the inclusion of a certain worker among domestics. This is also true on a more individual level: in the 19th century Sardinian trials analysed by Monica Miscali, employers defined as "my servant" persons who did not describe themselves as servants but as shepherds, workers, etc. This discrepancy was perhaps due to the fact that the employers emphasised the asymmetric relationship with their employees, whereas the employees stressed the tasks they performed rather than their subordinate position¹⁸⁰. Obviously these and similar cases do not imply any change of language but rather who might be defined as a servant. In spite of this, probably in the long run this kind of conflict contributed to changing the very notion of the servant and this, for instance, had an obvious influence on who was classified in the census servant category.

Both people in charge of the censuses and historians interested in domestic service had and have to deal with many different definitions likely to be included under the servant heading: terms indicating different specialisations, general and specific definitions, words in use all around a country or only in certain regions....

Scholars and Servants

After the so-called "linguistic turn" historians are particularly conscious of the role of language in the way people perceive and organise reality. Some even think that language is the sole reality we can know; I don't absolutely think that's the case. Yet the case of domestic servants seems to me particularly indicative of the complex role of language in the construction of social and cultural reality.

Though only rarely discussing more theoretical issues, historians and scholars studying domestic service early faced the difficulty of dealing with such an elusive theme. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, even early modern scholars tested themselves against the problem of treating such an ambiguous issue. The quotations from Gozze, De Luca, Rossi, Blackstone, etc. I have reported in previous pages are an example of this difficulty. Later scholars, too, were conscious of the problem of defining servants: "there are not many terms that, applied to a concrete object, are vaguer than the term 'domestique'", Marcel Cusenier, for instance, maintained in 1912¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁸ ALPERN ENGEL B., *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 177; SPAGNOLO R., "When Private Home Meets Public Workplace: Service, Space and the Urban Domestic in 1920s Russia", in NAIMAN E. and KAIER C. (eds.), *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005 (forthcoming). I am very grateful to Rebecca Spagnolo for allowing me to refer to this still unpublished paper.

¹⁷⁹ ANDALL J., *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The Politics of Black Women in Italy*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000; ANDALL J., "La Acli-Colf di fronte all'immigrazione straniera: genere, classe ed etnia", *Polis*, XVIII, 2004, pp. 77-106; ALEMANI C., "Le Colf: ansie e desideri delle datrici di lavoro", *ibid.*, pp. 137-164 (p. 137).

¹⁸⁰ MISCALI M., *op. cit.* Besides, there were negotiations between masters and servants on the respective roles and powers, see for instance ARRU A., *Il servo*; BRUNELLE G. K., *op. cit.*; GOWING L., "The Haunting of Susan Lay: Servants and Mistresses in Seventeenth-Century England", *Gender and History*, XIV, pp. 183-201; BENADUSI G., *op. cit.*

¹⁸¹ CUSENIER M., *op. cit.*, p. 1 ("Il n'est guère de terme qui, appliqué à un objet concret, soit plus vague que le mot domestiques").

What about historians who wrote in more recent times, say after the Second World War? The difficulty of identifying servants and domestics has possibly become increasingly apparent, ever since J. J. Hecht and Philippe Ariès conducted their research, even though Hecht, in particular, spent several pages describing the complex servant hierarchy of upper class households¹⁸². The issue was openly debated by Macpherson and Laslett in the 1960s and 1970s while they discussed who the Levellers had in mind when they excluded servants from the franchise. Macpherson maintained that “the term servant in seventeenth-century England meant everyone who worked for an employer for wages, whether the wages were by piece-rates or time-rates, and whether hired by day or week or by the year”. Elaborating data from Gregory King’s *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England* (1696), he argued that adult male in-servants numbered around 130,000 while adult male out-servants (often married and with children) came to 379,000. Laslett did not agree: in his view “the word ‘servant’ in seventeenth century England simply did not cover all people receiving wages, as Macpherson insists it did. Ordinarily it meant residents, not always domestic servants but men and women ‘included in the persons of their masters’, included by virtue of patriarchalism. There are occasions when ‘outservants’ must have been referred to as well, and they were mostly shepherds or cowmen, people whose functions made it impossible for them to live in the household. In a few scattered contexts, it is true, journeymen out of their time and married are also referred to in this way. It would be surprising if a social description turned out to be quite free of ambiguity, and even the perspicuous Gregory King leaves the status of a certain proportion of wage earners uncertain. But it is completely unjustifiable to argue from these marginal vagaries that when the Levellers excluded ‘servants’ from the franchise they thereby took the vote away from a substantial body of householders and that they did so in virtue of the wage relationship”. Macpherson replied supplying further evidence in support to his conclusion¹⁸³. Along with Laslett, Keith Thomas, too, thought that the Levellers did not refer to all wage earners¹⁸⁴. Some years later, Ann Kussmaul underlined that in 17th century English “‘servant’ could have a general meaning, as Macpherson argued the Levellers intended, or a specific one, as Laslett contended”. Therefore, according to Kussmaul, the debate could “be continued only on the ground of political theory and not on those of semantics”, because “both readings [were] consistent with seventeenth-century usage”¹⁸⁵. Had the Levellers’ proposal been enforced, a clearer definition of whom they meant while excluding servants would probably have been introduced, as happened later during the French Revolution, and historians might have spent less time and energy trying to interpret their thought. According to Robert Steinfeld, “Macpherson’s definition parallels the way lawyers have used the term for centuries. In law, ‘master-servants relationship’ refers to all forms of wage labour”. Laslett and Thomas, instead, defined it in a narrower sense: “What neither party to this debate seemed seriously to consider was the possibility that contemporaries might have used the term ‘servant’ in several senses sometimes narrowly, sometimes broadly”, commented Steinfeld, also noting that “by the eighteenth century this broader usage of the term ‘servant’ as one who ‘serves another for wages’ had become more common, especially in the legal literature”¹⁸⁶.

Steinfeld went on to describe (as Kussmaul did) both the broad and the narrow meaning of the term “servant”. Both authors agreed that servants in the narrower sense were generally young people, still unmarried, who lived with the masters performing productive and/or domestic tasks, while servants in the broader sense included all those who served another or performed services for wages. Yet Steinfeld stressed that there were also higher servants “who did not perform manual labour but who were managerial, supervisory, or fiscal agents” and devoted several pages to analysing the differences and

¹⁸² HECHT J. J., *op. cit.*, in part. chapt. 2; ARIÈS Ph., *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien Régime*.

¹⁸³ MACPHERSON C. B., *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, p. 282; LASLETT P., “Market Society and Political Theory”, p. 152. See also LASLETT P., *The World We Have Lost*, in part. p. 191 and MACPHERSON C. B., “Servants and Labourers”, pp. 207-223.

¹⁸⁴ THOMAS K., “The Levellers and the Franchise”, in AYLMER G. E. (ed.), *The Interregnum: the Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660*, London, Basingstoke, 1972, pp. 57-78.

¹⁸⁵ KUSSMAUL A., *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 135.

¹⁸⁶ STEINFELD R. J., *op. cit.*, pp. 17-21. In fact both Macpherson and Laslett were conscious that the word servant was used with different meanings.

commonalities between service, slavery and indenture¹⁸⁷. The relationship between service and slavery was also dealt with, though more briefly, by Tim Meldrum (to quote but another example), who – after recalling that the notion of service included agricultural servants, apprentices, domestics and, sometimes, journeymen –, focused on the ambiguous position of relatives who also performed domestic tasks and on the fact that domestic services were also provided by live-out charwomen on a casual basis and/or as by-employments¹⁸⁸.

Both these last two points further complicate, indeed, the ambiguities of service: as for relatives, I have already mentioned the fact that some servants were kin of their masters and the case of censuses that included among servants all the members of a family who performed domestic chores¹⁸⁹. As for domestic service as by-employments or casual work, on the one hand recent research has shown that servants (or at least 16th century Scottish ones) often performed other activities, besides service, that probably contributed to limiting the master's power on their lives; on the other hand women's historians exposed very early on the sources which classified women (particularly married women) only as daughters and housewives even when they performed some kind of work, such as casual or live-out services¹⁹⁰. In addition to the historians I have just mentioned who worked on England, many others stressed the ambiguity of the servant concept in early modern times. Analysing the situation on the other side of the Channel, Jean-Pierre Gutton pointed out that *domestique* had a very wide meaning, indicating all the people living in the same house¹⁹¹; Cissie Fairchilds defined the terms *domestique* and *serviteur* as “umbrella terms” “that covered people from a wide variety of social backgrounds, incomes and occupations”¹⁹²; Jacqueline Sabattier posed the question: “la condition domestique: une ou multiple?”¹⁹³, to quote but some examples.

The issue has also been discussed by historians focusing on the 19th century: Valérie Piette, for instance, in her recent book on domestic service in Belgium, writes that “there almost does not exist a more imprecise term” than the word *domestique*. She supports this sentence by analysing several different 19th century Belgian sources confirming that a wide range of people were likely to be included among domestics, from brewer's or baker's boys living with their employers (*garçons brasseurs*, *garçons boulangers*) to the girls who worked in the cabarets. Yet Piette also shows that there were inconsistencies in the use of the term *domestique* and conflicts among authorities about its meaning: in 1866, according to Belgian jurisprudence, female shop assistants (*demoiselles de magasin*) were normally considered *domestiques*, while in 1886 the *Pandectes belges* made clear that they should not be included among them because they had to do some book-keeping and thus needed a certain education; in 1867 a Belgian court established that the architect of the king was one of his domestics and consequently could be dismissed, while twenty years later a justice of the peace (*juge of paix*) maintained that only people supplying their masters with material services could be defined *domestiques*.... In short, the word was ambiguous and, in addition, its meaning was changing over time (reflecting, at least in part, we can add, the process that Philippe Ariès would have defined as “degradation” of domestic service¹⁹⁴). Nevertheless, the concept of *domestique* remained quite ambiguous: even at the end of the 19th century the *Pandectes belges* considered hospital nurses as “true servants” (*véritables domestiques*); similarly people working in religious communities, orphanages and other public institutions were considered as such, as well as soldiers who

¹⁸⁷ STEINFELD R. J., *op. cit.*, *passim*. On the legal status of servants see SARTIR., “Freedom and Citizenship”.

¹⁸⁸ MELDRUM T., *op. cit.*, pp. 25-32.

¹⁸⁹ See above, sections “Who Were Servants in Early Modern Europe? A Difficult Question” and “The Classification of Domestic Servants in 19th and early 20th Century Censuses”.

¹⁹⁰ See EWAN E., “Mistresses of Themselves? Female Domestic Servants and By-Employments in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Towns”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 411-433 and in these *Proceedings*, vol. IV. As for historians exposing sources which hid female employment as charwomen or live-out servants see PELAJA M., “Mestieri femminili e luoghi comuni. Le domestiche a Roma a metà Ottocento”, *Quaderni storici*, XXIII, 1988, pp. 497-518; SARTIR., “Servire al femminile”, pp. 237-264.

¹⁹¹ GUTTON J.-P., *op. cit.*, pp. 11-15.

¹⁹² FAIRCHILDS C., *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹³ SABATTIER J., *Figaro et son maître. Les domestiques au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Perrin, 1984, pp. 17-20.

¹⁹⁴ ARIÈS Ph., “Le service domestique : permanence et variations”, pp. 415-420.

served army officers and their families¹⁹⁵. In these *Proceedings*, on the other hand, several authors focus on this issue: Lotta Vikström, for instance, shows that in late 19th century Sweden the meaning of the term *piga*, i.e. maidservant, was still highly ambiguous, while Tamás Farago explains that the Hungarian word *cséled* (I have mentioned this above) from the mid 19th century lost the meaning of “woman”, while an old form of the term – *család* – was reintroduced and replaced *cséled* in the sense of child and member of a household. The term *cséled* held the sole meaning of “servant”, though it referred to different kinds of workers at different times, i.e. domestic servants, farmhands in small farms and farmhands in large estates¹⁹⁶: in this last case language changes reflected the increasing separation of the family and the servants; a declining patriarchy; the growing specialisation of service as an occupation.

In spite of the increasing specialisation, however, ambiguity was not completely overcome even in more recent times, as revealed by scholars working on contemporary societies. According to Bridget Anderson¹⁹⁷, for example, the market for domestic service “is incredibly diverse”: “domestic workers today range from ‘life-style managers’/conciierge services, to butlers, nannies, daily cleaners, elder carers, specialised skills/tasks, pet carers, house/yacht, etc. minders, to those who simply are an adornment, or status symbol for their employers”. Moreover, “the social organisation of this employment is similarly diverse both between and within these various subsectors”: there are live-ins and live-outs, some of the latter work for one employer, others for more, some are employed full time and others part time, some are self-employed. Further confusion is due to the fact that, besides people who work in the formal economy, many are employed in the black economy or are “grey workers”¹⁹⁸. A final reason why domestic service is even today a poorly defined and ambiguous activity is that “the borders between paid and unpaid domestic labour are extremely nebulous”. Even today domestic labour may be performed without a salary in return for board and lodging. “There are many states where children are ‘adopted’ from relatives, often rural, to do unpaid domestic work”, while in many European countries one can observe an increasing number of “au pairs” who exchange work mainly for accommodation and food¹⁹⁹.

Though generally agreeing on the difficulty of defining the servant concept and/or terms such as servant, *domestique*, etc., scholars do not always agree on its/their extent in the societies they are analysing, as shown by the debate between Laslett and Macpherson. “Some domestic service scholars (...) wrongly include the *garzoni* (apprentices) among domestic servants, thus exaggerating the incidence of males in service”, wrote the Italian historian Angiolina Arru some years ago while Fairchilds, in her study on early modern France, argued that it was possible, at the time, to confuse servants and shop assistants, but not, in her view, servants and apprentices²⁰⁰.

Furthermore, quite frequently scholars were/are interested in focusing on a peculiar type of servant rather than in carefully reconstructing all the meanings of terms such as “servant” or *domestique*. In this sense Kussmaul, for instance, though spending several pages in explaining that “early modern England contained many varieties of service” and illustrating them, focused on servants in husbandry²⁰¹. John Hajnal, on the other hand, felt it necessary to make it clear that “purely domestic servants (often especially numerous in cities) or household heads whose occupation is ‘servant’ [were] clearly different

¹⁹⁵ PIETTE V., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-41. In Italy even today one of the categories employed in the censuses is “Servizi domestici presso famiglie e convivenze”, i.e. domestic services in families and places of communal living.

¹⁹⁶ VIKSTRÖM M.-C. (L.), “Quantitative and Qualitative Aspects on Female Domestic Servants in Sundsvall: a Swedish Sawmill Town, during Industrialization”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 87-112 and in these *Proceedings*, previous volume; FARAGÓ T., *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁷ ANDERSON B., “Migrants and Markets: the Case of Domestic Labour in Private Households”, in this volume.

¹⁹⁸ On grey workers see in particular PASLEAU S. and SCHOPP I., “Les trois couleurs du service domestique en Belgique au début du XXI^e siècle”, in this volume; English version in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 435-453. All the papers included in these *Proceedings* that deal with contemporary societies devote some attention to illegal work.

¹⁹⁹ ANDERSON B., *op. cit.* On au pairs see also, for instance, WIDDING ISAKSEN L., “Gender and Globalization: Care across Borders. New Patterns of Institutional Interaction: the Case of Norway”, in FAUVE-CHAMOIX A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 455-469 and in this volume.

²⁰⁰ ARRU A., “The Distinguishing Features of Domestic Service in Italy”, *Journal of Family History*, XV, 1990, pp. 547-566 (p. 564, fn. 5); FAIRCHILDS C., *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁰¹ KUSSMAUL A., *op. cit.*, pp. 3-10 (p. 3).

from North-West European rural servants”²⁰². This will not sound surprising if we consider that he and Laslett formulated the idea that the “institution of service” represented a fundamental element in the Western European family and marriage pattern (characterised by late marriage, high incidence of celibacy, neolocality and nuclearity) mainly analysing the case of rural servants. Yet this and other similar specifications were not enough to avoid any misunderstanding and confusion. Indeed, several historians interested in the history of domestic service have often also included “purely domestic servants (...) or household heads whose occupation is ‘servant’” in their analyses; some have focused only on domestic servants excluding apprentices and/or farm servants; others have included the latter and so on. According to Renate Dürr, it is possible to distinguish three main approaches: (1) that of the scholars who consider as servants people mainly belonging to the lower social classes (*Unterschicht*) because of their poverty and the rural origin of many of them; (2) the *life-cycle service* approach that analyses servants according to their age group; (3) the approach which considers servants as the lowest class in domestic society (*unterster Stand der häuslichen Gesellschaft*)²⁰³. We could schematise the existing studies in other ways as well, but what is important, here, is the fact that different scholars used (and use) different definitions of “the servant”. This has made comparison between different studies problematic.

As a consequence, it is not always clear what exactly is similar and what is not in different contexts. According to the data provided by Hajnal in his well-known 1983 article, for instance, live-in servants represented between 27 and 48 percent of the young between 15-19 and 20-24 in three Icelandic counties in 1729, in three Norwegian areas in 1801, in nine Flemish villages in 1814 and in six English parishes between 1599 and 1796, while in rural Denmark, in 1787-1801, they amounted to more than 50 percent²⁰⁴. Research by Giovanna Da Molin on forty-five early modern Southern Italian villages has shown, on the other hand, that there were only 2.4 percent of families with live-in servants. Servants were mainly represented by unmarried women and in most age cohorts represented less than 2.5 percent: they were a bit more numerous only among old women (4.5 percent in the cohort 65-69; 6.6 percent in the cohort 75-79): in other words, “being in service did not correspond to a particular period in their lives”, they were lifetime rather than life-cycle servants²⁰⁵. Does this mean that in Southern Italy servants were

²⁰² HAJNAL J., “Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System”, in WALL R., ROBIN J. and LASLETT P. (eds.), *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 65-104 (quotation p. 97).

²⁰³ DÜRR R., *Mägde in der Stadt*, pp. 23-37. See also SCHLUMBOHM J., “Gesinde als Lebensphase und als Klassenphänomen: Mägde und Knechte in einem ländlichen Kirchspiel Nordwestdeutschlands. 1650-1860”, in FAUVE-CHAMOUX A. and FIALOVÁ L. (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 23-39.

²⁰⁴ HAJNAL J., *op. cit.*, tables 12 and 13. Later research has revealed that life cycle servants were numerous in other contexts as well, see for instance LUNDH C., “Life Cycle Servants in Nineteenth Century Sweden - Norms and Practice”, in FAUVE-CHAMOUX, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-85 and in these *Proceedings*, next volume; PAPING R., *Demand and Supply for Live-in Farm Servants app. 1760-1920: the Case of Groningen (The Netherlands)*, paper presented at the fifth seminar of the Servant Project, *The Modelization of Domestic Service*, Munich, 11-13 September 2003 and published as “Oferta y demanda de criados rurales en Holanda, 1760-1920 El caso de Groningen”, *Historia Agraria*, XV, 2005, pp. 115-142 (special issue on *Criados y mozos en la organización histórica del trabajo agrario*, ed. by C. Sarasúa); KUKLO C., “Le modèle du *life cycle servant* a-t-il existé dans la Pologne préindustrielle?”, in BARDET J.-P., LUC J.-N., ROBIN-ROMERO I. and ROLLET C., *Lorsque l'enfant grandit. Entre dépendance et autonomie*, Paris, Presses de l'Université de Paris Sorbonne, 2003, pp. 717-732.

²⁰⁵ DA MOLIN G., “Family Forms and Domestic Service in Southern Italy from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries”, *Journal of Family History*, XV, 1990, pp. 503-527. In other Italian regions rural servants were more numerous, for instance in Central Italy. In the countryside of Pisa, for instance, between 29 and 44 percent of families employed rural servants (*garzoni*) in the 17th and 18th century and servants represented between 7.3 and 11.7 percent of the total population. They were particularly numerous in the age cohort 15-19 (27 percent in the early 1720s), see DOVERI A., “‘Padre che ha figliuoli grandi fuor li mandì’. Una prima valutazione sulla diffusione e sul ruolo dei ‘garzoni’ nelle campagne pisane dei secoli XVII e XVIII”, in SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI DEMOGRAFIA STORICA, *La popolazione delle campagne italiane in età moderna. Atti del Convegno della Società Italiana di Demografia Storica tenutosi a Torino il 3-5 dicembre 1987*, Bologna, Clueb, 1993, pp. 427-449. On rural servants in Northern Italy see also, for instance, MORETTI P., “‘Un uomo per famiglia’. Servi, contadini e famiglie nella diocesi di Reggio Emilia nel Settecento”, *Quaderni Storici*, XXV, 1989, pp. 405-442; ANGELI A., *Strutture familiari e nuzialità nel Bolognese a metà Ottocento*, in SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI DEMOGRAFIA STORICA, *Popolazione, società, ambiente. Temi di demografia storica italiana (secc. XVII-XIX). Relazioni e comunicazioni*

almost completely absent? Yes and no. In most Southern Italian rural areas servants of any kind were rare. Live-in servants were also rare in a city like as Bari: in 1636 only 1.1 percent of the families had live-in servants. On the contrary, according to several 18th century foreign travellers, in Naples there were armies of domestic servants, but they did not live with their masters²⁰⁶. Research on Central and Southern Spain, on the other hand, has shown that live-in servants were also very rare; yet in this society there was no lack of people considered as servants by contemporaries: in Alcaraz, for instance, in 1753 they made up around 10 percent of the total population, and very often they were young and celibate²⁰⁷. Therefore, adopting the definition used by contemporaries one would conclude in a different way than if using Hajnal's. Yet what would we conclude about England by using Blackstone's or Macpherson's definition of the English servants rather than Hajnal's (and Laslett's²⁰⁸)? They would appear to us far less young, unmarried and live-in, for instance.... In my view, even though there might also be clearly wrong definitions of servants, there are several *different* ones which are all equally right; the desire to analyse different aspects of servants' history, in particular, can justify the use of different servant categories. Yet it is necessary to be aware of the differences between one definition and another and of the difficulties that arise with their use while comparing different studies.

This paper may possibly discourage those who want to study servants and domestic workers, since the latter may have turned out from my analysis as a highly blurred and vague research subject. Yet in my view, it is rather the opposite. It seems to me, indeed, that the simple overview of the different words used to define servants, their (not always consistent) meaning, their evolution over time tell us a lot about the differences in different contexts and changes over time not only of servants themselves but also of a much wider set of cultural, political, social and economic variables. It also seems to me that if we become conscious of the meaning of service for our ancestors, of the vocabulary they used to define it and of the value they attributed to it, of the relationship between that vocabulary and the specific context where it was in use as well as of the relationships between our categories and theirs it will be possible for us to develop a clearer comparison over time and space.

In fact, the past I have described may seem often very far and distant from our present, and generally it is, indeed; yet even today certain ambiguities of the domestic workers' position within the family are unsolved. Live-in migrant domestic workers, for instance, quite often prefer to be considered as if they were one of the family rather than as wage-earners: this, it seems, makes it easier for them to live in a foreign family and gives them more power in negotiations with their employers, though also exposing them to a certain "gentle" exploitation²⁰⁹. In some case, at least, employers too (though possibly more

presentate da Autori italiani al I Congr s Hispano Luso Itali  de Demografia Hist rica, Barcellona, 22-25 aprile 1987, Clueb, Bologna, 1990, pp. 83-93. For further data and a discussion of previous research see VIAZZO P. P., AIME M. and ALLOVIO S., "Crossing the boundary: Peasants, shepherds, and servants in a western Alpine community", *The History of the Family*, X, 2005, no. 4, pp. 387-405.

²⁰⁶ DA MOLIN G., *Famiglia e matrimonio nell'Italia del Seicento*, Bari, Cacucci, 2002 (2000¹), p. 194; GR GOIRE B. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

²⁰⁷ GARC A GONZALES F., "Labradores, jornaleros y sirvientes en la Sierra. Organizaci n dom stica y ciclo de vida (Alcaraz, 1753-1787)", in GONZALES GARC A F. (ed.), *Tierra y familia en la Espa a meridional, siglos XIII-XIX. Formas de organizaci n dom stica y reproducci n social*, Murcia, Universidad de Murcia, 1998, pp. 152-192; GARC A GONZALES F., *Las estrategias de la diferencia*, pp. 217-222; GARC A GONZALES F., "Los sirvientes de los agregagos dom sticos de la Castilla rural a mediados des siglo XVIII", Paper presented at the XIII Economic History Congress, Buenos Aires, 22-26 July 2002. See also REHER D. S., "Family Ties in Western Europe: Persistent Contrasts", *Population and Development Review*, XXIV, 1998, pp. 203-235. In rural Galicia, too, *life cycle service* was practically unknown, DUBERT I., *Historia de la familia*, pp. 73-83, while it was quite common in some areas of Catalonia, see ROCA FABREGAT P., "Who worked at the *masias*? Male and female live-in servants in Catalan agriculture (1670-1870)", *Historia Agraria*, XV, 2005, pp. 49-92.

²⁰⁸ In his article "Family and Household as a Work Group and Kin Group: Areas of Traditional Europe compared", published in the early 1980s (in WALL R, ROBIN J. and LASLETT P. (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 513-563), Laslett appears very conscious of the existence of a high number of *out-servants* in some English contexts, see in part. sect. 4.

²⁰⁹ PARRE NAS R. S., *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and domestic Work*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 179-188, 195; SHINOZAKI K., "Making Sense of Contradictions: Examining Negotiation Strategies of 'Contradictory Class Mobility' in Filipina/Filipino Domestic Workers in Germany", paper presented at the fourth seminar of the Servant Project, *Domestic Service, a Factor of*

rarely) prefer to consider their domestic workers as if they were family members: the Italian scholars Franca Balsamo and Sandra Assandri even found the case of a North African carer who has been legally adopted by an Italian family²¹⁰. We can speculate whether these cases simply continue the long term ambiguity of the servant/domestic worker identity, simultaneously wage-earners and, at least in part, family members; or rather reflect a “restoration” of old characteristics that for a long time had declined to the point that they had almost disappeared; or whether this is a new phenomenon. I take my leave from you, my patient reader, with this question. *Ciao!* But if you think that the issue of continuities and discontinuities in the history of (domestic) service deserves a certain attention, please don’t forget that this very common greeting comes from the Venetian *sciao*, which literally means *slave* (your slave)²¹¹!

Social Revival in Europe, Essex, 8-10 May 2003 and published in GEISEN T. (ed), *Arbeitsmigration. Wanderarbeiter Innen auf dem Weltmarkt für Arbeitskraft*, Frankfurt am M., IKO – London, Verlag, 2004 (forthcoming); MAGAT M., *op. cit.* Interestingly, according to Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo the relationships between domestic workers and their employers are often broken as if they were love affairs rather than work relationships (HONDAGNEU-SOTELO P., “Blowups and Other Unhappy Endings”, in EHRENREICH B. and HOCHSCHILD A. R. (eds.), *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2003, pp. 55-69.

²¹⁰ ASSANDRI S. and BALSAMO F., video with interviews of domestic workers and their employers presented at the seminar *La catena globale della cura*, Turin, 4 June 2004 (producer: Cirsde).

²¹¹ BATTAGLIA S., *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. III. I am grateful to Clelia Boscolo for suggesting to me concluding the paper mentioning the etymology of *ciao*.

Résumé

Qui sont les domestiques ? Définir le service domestique en Europe occidentale (XVI^e - XXI^e siècles)

Dans son article, l'auteure examine les définitions du terme « domestique », de la Renaissance jusqu'au XXI^e siècle, en Italie et en France en particulier, tout en fournissant des informations sur d'autres pays européens.

Durant l'Ancien Régime, il y avait beaucoup de catégories de domestiques, comme l'indique l'analyse de plusieurs types de sources. De plus, les domestiques pouvaient appartenir aux classes moyennes, voire même élevées de la société. Servir n'était pas nécessairement une occupation humiliante et dégradante. Elle pouvait être une source d'honneur, car elle permettait aux domestiques d'être en relation avec des individus appartenant aux classes supérieures. En un sens, la diffusion de la notion de service reflétait une société au sein de laquelle la famille jouait un rôle politique, social et économique important et où les rapports sociaux étaient asymétriques et pouvaient, dès lors, être assimilés à la relation maître/domestique.

À partir de la fin du XVIII^e siècle, la domesticité fut davantage considérée comme une occupation opportune, mais presque toujours pour les individus pauvres. Les domestiques étaient de plus en plus stigmatisés. Durant la Révolution Française, ils furent exclus du droit de citoyenneté par toutes les Constitutions, à l'exception de celle de 1793, qui ne fut cependant jamais appliquée. Définir un individu comme domestique ou non n'était pas un simple « jeu de mots » mais avait des conséquences importantes sur ses droits. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que la définition du terme « domestique » fasse alors l'objet de nombreuses discussions.

À la même époque, parfois plus tôt, parfois plus tard, selon le contexte, la domesticité se féminisa davantage. Ce phénomène survint lorsqu'un nouvel accent sur l'égalité et la liberté fut mis aux niveaux culturel et politique, et que les relations entre travailleurs et employeurs reposèrent plus sur des contrats fixant non seulement le salaire mais aussi les heures de travail, les tâches précises, etc. Durant cette période, le service domestique fut souvent considéré comme une sorte de réminiscence du passé en raison de la pérennité du contrôle patriarcal exercé par le maître sur les domestiques. En effet, il avait encore des traits ambigus, comme l'auteure le démontre principalement au départ de l'analyse des catégories de domesticité utilisées dans les recensements de la population de plusieurs pays.

À l'heure actuelle, ces traits ambigus n'ont pas complètement disparu, notamment parce qu'une part importante des travailleurs domestiques est constituée par des migrantes internationales. Le vocabulaire de la vie quotidienne reflète ce dernier changement, dans la mesure où des mots comme *filippina* en Italie ou *banmui* à Hong Kong ne signifient pas uniquement « femme originaire de Philippines », mais également « travailleuse domestique ». Si la langue indique parfois des changements majeurs, il ne manque pas, pour la période analysée, des efforts pour améliorer la condition des travailleurs domestiques (aussi) à travers des changements du vocabulaire employé pour les définir. Ces efforts ne sont pas toujours couronnés de succès en raison de l'absence de modifications dans les législations et des conditions de travail réelles de ces travailleurs.

En dépit de profonds changements sociaux et culturels intervenus pendant cinq siècles, le concept de domesticité reste encore flou. Les historiens et les sociologues qui l'ont étudié ont été confrontés à un objet de recherche difficile à appréhender, au point que quelques malentendus s'en sont suivis en raison de l'usage de notions différentes de domesticité de la part des historiens, démographes, sociologues, etc.

L'auteure conclut son article par une analyse des caractéristiques du service domestique dans plusieurs régions européennes, tout en s'interrogeant sur les implications de l'usage de notions différentes de domesticité.