

LOWER CLASS WOMEN IN THE ROMAN ECONOMY

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The subject of this paper¹ is the female of the species *opifices* and *tabernarii*, "craftsmen and shopkeepers and all that scum of the cities," as Cicero once indiscreetly called them.² We need not believe him when he claims³ that they were always and everywhere ready for riot or revolution because they were so wretchedly poor, but for many of these workers it may have been hard to make ends meet, so that we should not be surprised to find wives or children gainfully employed. However, the range of jobs and the range of prosperity is wide, for we shall deal with a broad stratum of urban workers which includes importers of manufactured articles or raw materials, skilled craftsmen producing and selling luxury goods, humbler dealers, shopkeepers and pedlars of cheap objects, people who offered services.

Literary sources pay little attention to the lower classes, except when they become a "mob," or to urban workers except when they get in the way or make a noise disturbing to a person of refined tastes or scholarly habits.⁴ For the ideas of workers about themselves, we rely chiefly on tomb inscriptions. So it is not surprising that most of our information about women from this section of society comes from epigraphic sources. The material used here is almost entirely epigraphic. Greek material⁵ has been almost ignored, and the focus is on the Latin West. Since inscriptions are not often closely dated, there is no sharp

cut-off date, but only a few Christian inscriptions have been used. The aim is to give a fairly full, but not exhaustive, picture of the participation of women in various urban jobs from the late Republic down to about the time of Constantine, in Italy and the western provinces. Upper-class women with business interests in, for instance, the manufacture of bricks, terracotta lamps or lead pipes;⁶ small "professionals" such as doctors and midwives; entertainers, among whom were large numbers of women, such as singers and mime-actresses, and domestic slaves⁷ will all be omitted.

Our comparison group is of male urban workers, *opifices*, *tabernarii*, *mercenarii*.⁸ Despite the expense of a monument,⁹ a fraction of them put up inscriptions detailed enough to mention their job. Others are known because they belonged to a guild. There are over 225 names in western Latin inscriptions for such city jobs,¹⁰ ranging from silver-smiths, goldsmiths of various types, garland-makers, jewellers, fruit-sellers, butchers, bakers, cobblers, all of whom are relatively well attested, to dealers who specialised in cheese or honey, or *salumeria*, or honey-cakes, or heavy cloaks or silk; men who made nails, ivory furniture or the eyes for statues. Then there are porters, dockers, mule-teers, horsebreakers, bath attendants, warehousemen, undertakers, auctioneers, debt-collectors, itinerant salesmen.

When we come to the women, their range is more limited. There is just one tomb inscription to a woman who apparently ran a workshop, *officina* (9715), in Rome. But some were involved in crafts which we might expect to find labelled "masculine." The making of delicate work in gold-leaf -- particularly garlands and jewellery -- was a craft which reached a high level. The practitioners are, as far as I know, attested only on inscriptions from Rome itself, where there was a *collegium brattiariorum inauratorum* (95). Two *brattiarii* who dedicate to the *Concordia* of the guild are men, as is the worker in a relief labelled *aurifex brattiar* (9210), but the two other extant inscriptions each name a man and a woman. One runs "Gaius Fulcinus Hermeros, freedman of Gaius, *brattiarus*; Fulvia Melema, lived 48 years, *brattiarina*" (9211), and the other "Aulus Septicius Apollonius, freedman of Aulus, *brattiarus*; Septicia Rufa, freedwoman of Aulus, *brattiarina*, two *ollae*" (6939). It

seems to me probable that these two women did not merely sell gold-leaf work, as Le Gall (125-126) suggests for Melema, but also produced it, perhaps leaving the heavy hammering work for the men. I assume too that both couples are married; Rufa may have been freed by Apollonius, or be his *conliberta*.¹¹ In a similar luxury trade, there is a group of five jewellers, *gemmari*, from the Sacred Way. They are all ex-slaves, two freed by a woman called Babbia and three by a Quintus Plotius. The first of the group is Babbia Asia, and, if the grammar is correct, she is included in the masculine plural *gemari* (sic) *de sacra via* which comes at the end of the list (9435). We can back this up by pointing to a woman seller, and probably setter of pearls, also from Rome (5972). In all three crafts, in the precise arrangement of delicate gold leaf, in the cutting of cameos and incising of gemstones, and in pearl-setting, women might well have the advantage over men in designing and technical skill, as well as showing talent as saleswomen. Nimble fingers would also be needed in two other crafts: that of the *auri netrix* (9213), who spun gold thread, and of the *auri vestrix* (9214). We can only guess whether the latter embroidered in gold thread, as Le Gall thinks (p. 125), or made clothes in cloth of gold. The gold-spinner, who belongs to the fourth century, was, if the text is right, only a child of nine at the time of her death. She is commemorated by her parents, but unfortunately they do not tell us their own jobs.

These last two women bring us into a field which has always been connected with women's work, clothes-production. Presumably many garments were made up at home with material bought from the sellers of woollen or linen cloth. Rich people had *vestifici* and *vestificae* among their household staff.¹² But ordinary Romans could also buy ready-to-wear clothes, either from specialists like the cloak-sellers or -- at least in Gaul -- the *cucullarii*,¹³ and from *vestiarii*, for more ordinary garments. *Vestiarii* too might specialise: we hear in Rome of *vestiarii tenuiarii* (9977, 9978, 37826, 33923). Only one woman appears to be specifically mentioned as a *vestiaria*. She is in a group of five *libertini*, *vestiarii de Cermalò minusculo*, who commemorate their patron, also a freedman (33920). But other women may be involved in the trade, at least as links, if not as active workers. There is for example an

inscription which reads, "[Camer]ia Iarine, freedwoman of Lucius, set up this monument to [Lucius Cam]erius Thraso, freedman of Lucius, her patron; [and] to Lucius Camerius Alexander, freedman of Lucius, *his* patron; and to [Lucius C]amerius, her freedman and husband, and to all their descendants, all these [*vest*]iarii *tenuiarii* from the *vicus Tuscus*" (37826). Here the woman is an essential link in the chain which goes from Alexander through his freedman Thraso, through her, to her freedman and their unnamed children. Her importance is highlighted by the fact that she freed her husband, which is less commonly attested than husbands freeing their wives.

Then there are *sarcinatrices*. The root meaning is "mender," but presumably they also made up new clothes. Some support for this guess may be found in the fact that among domestics, *vestifici* (of either sex) and menders (almost invariably women) are not found in the same household, so that it seems likely that their spheres of duty overlapped or perhaps were identical. Unlike *vestiarii*, commercial *sarcinatrices* will have worked on the clients' own material, like the little modern dressmaker, whether they were doing the simple sewing which was all that was needed on Roman clothes, or performing repairs and alterations.¹⁴ We know this because they were liable for damages. Gaius, in a *Digest* section on *peculium* (15.1.27), says that an action may lie against the *peculium* of a slavewoman or of a *filiafamilias* if she is, for instance, a weaver or a *sarcinatrix*. This is also good evidence that these were obvious jobs for dependent women to do. But freeborn women who were *sui iuris* or women who had been freed from slavery would be just as likely to do such work professionally. It is not easy in the inscriptions to be sure when we have a commercial needlewoman rather than a domestic. There are six or seven from Rome and one or two from elsewhere in Italy which may attest professionals (9875-79, 9883; v. 2542, 2881), but only one indisputable case: "To Matia Prima, freedwoman of Gaia, needlewoman from the Six Altars, lived 46 years, from T. Thoranius Salvius, freedman of Titus . . ." (9884).

The great domestic occupation of women, whether *dominae* or servants, was of course *lanificium*, spinning wool. Domestics whose special job this was were called *quasillariae* (basket-women) in the inscriptions,

lanificae by the jurists. But spinning may also have been done part-time by other women servants whose specialised job was something else. This would account for the patchy attestation of *quasillariae*, but the comparatively regular appearance of wool-weighers, even in households where *quasillariae* do not occur. *Quasillariae* are oddly distributed, because of eleven known from Rome eight come from the *columbarium* of the Statilii. It seems likely that, although they belonged to a rich *familia*, part of their work went into commercial production. The same family also had weavers and fullers.¹⁵ Commercial work by slaves would of course have been quite normal on the country estates of great nobles; what is unusual here is that it seems to be taking place in Rome. But, apart from this one possibility, there is no other evidence of commercial spinners in the inscriptions. The reason, presumably, is that spinning was piece-work, the last resort of the poor but honest free woman, as sewing was in the 19th century.¹⁶ Women so poor could not afford monuments in any case. But Apuleius gives a pathetic speech to a woman who eked out the family income by these means. Her husband just kept going by working as a labourer on *fabriles operae*. An unexpected holiday forced on him by his boss (*officinator*) meant that he had to sell an old storage jar for five *drachmae* in order to pay for supper. His wife claims that she works night and day, wearing her fingers to the bone with spinning, in order to make enough money to keep them in lamp oil: "at ego misera pernox et per diem lanificio nervos meos contorqueo, ut intra cellulam nostram saltem lucerna luceat . . ." But, like most of the wives in Apuleius, she had some energy left over, although she did not ordinarily earn an income from it (*Met.* 9.5).

On a more organised commercial scale, there were some women weavers, as the passage from Gaius shows (*Dig.* 15.1.27). But they too would be poor or slaves, and the few who appear in inscriptions are in domestic service (6362, 33371). Despite the name, the great imperial *gynaecia* of the late empire were staffed by men. But women weavers were numerous in Egypt, and Pausanias says that because of the flourishing manufacture of cloth made from *byssos* at Patrae, the female population of the town was double the male (7.21.14). The only woman cloth-seller I have found in the inscriptions is a *lintearia*. She may have woven the linen

which she sold (ii. 4318a, Tarraco). The workers who *finished off* wool-
len cloth are better attested. One very prosperous family group, whose
involved inscription seems to indicate that the daughter bequeathed
three shops, had a mother who sheared the finished cloth to produce an
even nap -- *tonstrix* -- and a son who is styled simply *lanarius*. He had
a shop on the vicus of *Fors Fortuna*. The husband's job is not men-
tioned.¹⁷

More surprising among women who make things is a female shoemaker,
sutrix, from Ostia. The inscription itself is damaged, but the relief
which accompanies it is said to show a seated woman with a cobbler's
last (xiv. 4698).

I pass now to those who are primarily dealers. First a Christian
lady who sold bottles, *lagunaria*, very probably was not a glassblower
as well.¹⁸ On the whole, it seems likely that the *clavaria* who was
prosperous enough to set up a monument to her husband (who was also a
clavarius) and to a freedwoman and a little girl, managed the business-
side of the nail-making (v. 7023, Taurini). Women who sold perfumes,
unquentariae, may have made some of them too. This is a relatively well-
attested profession, and although philosophers objected to perfumes as
luxurious and deceptive and therefore down-graded perfume-selling, the
perfumers who record themselves seem to be of secure position (though
often freedmen). Despite Greek slurs on *myropolides*,¹⁹ Roman women per-
fumers are of the utmost respectability: the two on whom we have any
detail are a well-deserving mother from Puteoli, who died at 71, and a
lady from Rome, commemorated in verse by a husband of 30 years' stand-
ing.²⁰ Dealers in incense were just as substantial. Two Roman inscrip-
tions to *thurarii* include women: one, from the late Republic, attests
Hilara, freedwoman of Sextus, and Sextus Trebonius, freedman of Sextus.
These are perhaps husband and wife; they are both called *thurarii*, and
since their tomb measured 20 feet by 28 they were prosperous.²¹ A long-
er inscription commemorates as *liberti* and *thurarii* five men and two
women who were freed by three freeborn Trebonii, Gaius, Publius and
Publius, who are probably cousins.²² Despite the difference in the
praenomina of the *patroni* in the two inscriptions, it seems likely that
there is some link. If so, the interests of different branches of the

family in this trade must have been quite considerable. Even if we take the second inscription in isolation, we can speculate whether the freeborn Trebonii took an active part in the business, or whether they had set up their freedmen in it as managers or had financed them, or whether the freedmen had taken over the business, and whether there was just one shop or a chain of shops. A similar example from the same period concerns sellers of purple. In the late Republic, a freedwoman called Veturia Fedra (or possibly Flora) commemorates her patron, Decimus Veturius Diog(enes) and her husband and *collibertus*, D. Veturius Nicepor and their joint freedman Philargyr(us).²³ The old reading of the text has only Veturia named as engaged in the trade, *purpuraria Marianeis*, purple-seller in the district of the monuments of Marius, on the Esquiline. But a more recent reading of the inscription by G. Barbieri, adopted by Degrassi, has *purpurari a Marianeis*, which means that all four were engaged in the trade.²⁴ Then, in the early Empire, there was a D. Veturius D. l. Atticus in the purple trade on the *vicus Iugarius*; his wife was Veturia D. l. Tryphera (*NS* 1922, 144). Lastly, there is on the *vicus Tuscus* the shop of a *purpurarius* called L. Plutius Eros, commemorated by Plutia Auge, probably his *colliberta* or *liberta* and wife, who also dedicates the monument to a Veturia Attica, freed by two Gai Veturii (xiv. 2433). It is likely that there is a connection between this Attica and the D. Veturii, both because of the names and because of the trade, but we cannot tell precisely what it was. Original patrons must have had the *praenomina* Gaius and the much rarer Decimus, but there may be quite a number of sons or freedmen intervening in the series from which we fortuitously retrieve these three examples. Loane (76-77) takes account only of two possibilities: that freedmen of D. Veturius may be working branch shops of his "firm" as managers, and that they may have become independent after training as slaves and manumission. In reality, the possibilities are more complex: we have to allow for at least two Gai (cousins or *colliberti*?); we may note a possible relationship (father and daughter?) between Atticus and Attica, although they have different patrons;²⁵ so we do not know why Veturia Attica is commemorated with the Plutii (friendship and trade connection, or, more likely, some family relationship, such as, to risk a possible but

unprovable guess, that she is the daughter by a previous marriage of Plutia to a Veturius Atticus). Probably some freedmen in our postulated longer series were branch-managers, some had separated from the parent firm, some may have inherited businesses from their patrons. Sons as well as freedmen may also take over. Women appear to have taken part in the trade and probably to have made marriages which attest and cemented relationships between colleagues of different families in the same line of work.²⁶ In other family groups it is perfectly clear that women work in the purple-trade: we have at least two others from Rome.²⁷

Other women dealers may be listed more briefly: from Rome, a fruit seller with a male partner;²⁸ a freedwoman fishmonger from the *horrea Galbiana* (9801: *piscatrix*); a dealer in resin (9855: *resinaria*, aged 80); a *conditaria* whose husband was in the same trade;²⁹ a seller of barley;³⁰ a female poulterer shown on a relief;³¹ a *negotiatrice frumentaria et legumenaria* (dealer in wheat and pulse), commemorated by her husband and patron, who was a substantial citizen who had other *liberti* and *libertae*.³² Outside Rome, there is a seller of seeds from Praeneste (xiv. 2850: *seminaria*) and (outside our area) a seller of beans from Beirut (iii. 6672). There is a baker from Rieti and another from Carthage, both freedwomen.³³ A *vinaria* from Pompeii, whose thirst is mentioned in a graffito, could in theory be a winermerchant, but it is more likely that she is the hostess of a drinking shop, or a barmaid, a favourite topic on Pompeian walls.³⁴ Of all these dealers, only the wheat and pulse dealer certainly calls herself a *negotiatrice*.³⁵ The masculine equivalent (*negotiator*) is often used to enhance a dealer's status. The jurists, however, use the noun or the related verb without any snobbish motive. Ulpian has the verb to describe the business activity even of a slavewoman (*Dig.* 14.4.5.2), and Paulus in citation of an actual case put to Scaevola uses *negotiatrice*. A legacy of feminine accessories in gold and jewellery from a mother to her daughter ("filia mea dulcissima e medio sumito tibi que habeto ornamentum omne meum muliebri cum auro et si qua alia muliebria apparuerint") was made hard to interpret because the mother happened to be a *negotiatrice* and to have stocks of women's jewellery at her place of business (*Dig.* 34.2.32.4).

The employment of women as managers in shops and other businesses

also attracted the jurists' attention, but "it does not much matter," says Ulpian (*Dig.* 14.3.7), "who the manager is, male or female, free or the owner's slave or someone else's slave If a woman is put in charge, she will be liable to an agency action. And if a *filiafamilias* or a slavewoman is put in charge, an action lies." Gaius remarks that many people put boys or girls in as managers of *tabernae* (*Dig.* 14.3.8).

When we come to what would now be called service industries, women assume rather more importance than they did as producers or dealers. The women who are most often mentioned by the literary sources all belong to this branch -- the working woman *par excellence*, the *meretrix*; the brothel-keeper; the innkeeper or cookshop owner. It is natural that prostitutes do not mention their job on tombstones. The only epigraphic evidence on them is provided by the Pompeian graffiti, scrawled by themselves as advertisements or by their grateful or, perhaps, sometimes malicious clients. These were very cheap tarts, of the lowest position, and appear to have been slaves.³⁶ It is unlikely that such women would have achieved a respectable tombstone elsewhere. Nor, I think, do keepers of brothels mention the fact on their memorials. But their friends might do it for them. There is a monument from Beneventum, put up by a freedwoman, to her family and son and to her freedwoman, Caly-bene, the procuress. It appears that her earnings paid for the tomb, but they were won without cheating anyone else.³⁷

Women who worked in inns and cookshops were expected to be prostitutes as well. Ulpian defines as a prostitute not only a woman who works in a brothel, but one who prostitutes herself in a tavern, as commonly happens, or anywhere else: "Palam quaestum facere dicemus non tantum eam, quae in lupanario se prostituit, verum etiam si qua (ut adsolet) in taberna cauponia vel qua alia pudori suo non parcat" (*Dig.* 23.2.43. *pr.*). Women working in taverns, like prostitutes, were exempt from the *Lex Julia de adulteris*: "cum his, quae publice mercibus vel tabernis exercendis procurant, adulterium fieri non placuit" (Paul. *Sent.* 2.26.11). Constantine modified this rule so that the mistress of an inn (*domina tabernae* or *cauponae*) was liable under the adultery law, unless she was in the habit of serving the drinks in person. If she did come

into direct contact with the clients in this way, she, like the inn-servant, the *ministra*, retained her classical immunity.³⁸

The bad reputation of *copae* or *cauponiae* is also reflected in the literature, for instance in *The Golden Ass*.³⁹ But there is a strong element of folk tradition about bad hosts and hostesses, which lasts into modern times, and is often paralleled by a favourable tradition. In Latin literature it is hard not to enjoy the Virgilian *copa* from Syria. There is a similar coarse appreciativeness about the epigraphic evidence, whether on hostesses or their staff. A drinking cup from Paris has an inscription which probably reads, "Hostess, fill my cup with beer! Host, have you got spiced wine? Yes. Come on, fill it up!"⁴⁰ Then there is the famous inscription from Aesernia, with the dialogue between the traveller and the *copo* about his bill (ix. 2689; *IL5* 7478). Since the figures represented in the relief are the traveller and a girl, who counts on her fingers, it has been argued that the masculine *copo* can be used also of the *copa*.⁴¹ But the only corroborative evidence is the drinking cup from Paris, where it is quite likely that the drinker hedges his bets by addressing an innkeeper of each sex, just as he mentions both wine and beer. So it seems that in the Aesernia conversation, the traveller may be talking to an offstage male innkeeper, through his wife or maidservant: "innkeeper, let us reckon it up" (ix. 2689). Presumably the man who put up the memorial to himself and Fannia Voluptas, is the innkeeper himself, and Fannia may be his wife and the woman in the relief. Other women who kept taverns have been identified at Pompeii by the graffiti on the walls, but the identification falls short of certainty.⁴² The girls who worked in inns are occasionally named, for instance on the wall of a drinking club a certain Hedone, who says, "for one *as* you can get a drink here, for two you get a better drink and if you pay four you can have Falernian" (iv. 1679), or the inn servant, *coponiaes ancilla*, Iris, with whom the weaver Successus was in love (8259).

You could also drink in *popinae*, which offered food of a coarse and appetising type, but not accomodation. If the *taberna cauponia* is roughly the equivalent of the English pub, the *popina* can rank as the remote ancestor of the Italian *rosticceria*. It supplied the hot food

and drink which the poorer apartment-dweller would otherwise have been unable to enjoy. For the upper classes, who had their own kitchens and cooks, slumming in *popinae* was the first step on the road to ruin for young men, who were introduced there to dice and low companions. It is hard to imagine that the lower classes despised such a useful institution.⁴³ Kléberg (44) counts one hundred and eighteen cookshops in Pompeii. Of two inscriptions to female proprietors, one shows a freedwoman *popa* married to a sculptor, and the other is an effusion in hexameters on sweet Amemone "whose fame was known beyond the bounds of her native land, for whose sake many praised Tibur"44

While *tabernarius* originally meant the owner of any shop or booth, *tabernaria* is used only of the keeper of a tavern. This difference in usage may indicate how natural it was felt to be that women should run inns. Serving food and drink in *popinae* would also be a normal extension of a housewife's domestic functions.⁴⁵

My last example once more shows women doing commercially a job which others did in the households of the rich -- hairdressing. Female barbers existed, as we learn from an unpleasant epigram by Martial on a *tonstrix* who kept her booth on the Argiletum at the mouth of the Subura (2.17). In inscriptions, it is difficult to disentangle barbers from wool-shearers.⁴⁶ But hairdressers, *ornatrices*, certainly occur. They will have catered to those women who did not own maids. It is not always possible to distinguish domestic hairdressers from those who worked in shops, but from Rome there are at least three. Nostia Daphne, a freedwoman hairdresser in the Vicus Longus, is commemorated with a goldsmith from the same street, probably her husband. Another inscription names a Cleopatra who is a hairdresser in the same street, probably in conjunction with a Nostia freed by a Daphne, whom it is tempting and probably fair to identify with our Nostia Daphne. Lastly, there is Pollia Urbana, freed by a woman and C. Pollius, who works as a hairdresser in the Campus Martius, commemorated with a freedman of another *gens*, probably her husband, who works as a barber in the same place. It is probably not rash to suggest that they ran a uni-sex establishment together.⁴⁷

Women's hairdressers, I take it, had to be women, just as

obstetricians were. This helps account for representation in our sources by least three. The only other trades in which we find as many are those of *popinariae* (three), *purpurariae* (three) and *unguentariae* (five). The comparatively good documentation of *popinariae* may be held to reflect the importance of women in all types of catering, as cook-shop owners, bar-owners and hoteliers, or as helpmates of their husbands in the trade. Documentation of purple-sellers and *unguentariae*, while probably attesting a traditional skill at least in selling expensive cloth and perfumes, may also reflect the comparative prosperity of such luxury-dealers, which gave them a slightly better chance of putting up a monument than other female workers had.

It is unnecessary to suppose that any of these rarely-attested women was a unique female practitioner of her trade. None of the jobs is really surprising. The frequency with which a woman is paired with a man, usually a husband,⁴⁸ in the same trade suggests that many of them worked alongside husbands, either because they adopted the husband's trade after marriage, or because men looked for wives who were already in the same (or a related)⁴⁹ trade, which no doubt they generally derived from their fathers and perhaps mothers. Often it would seem reasonable that the wife specialised in selling, while her husband produced the goods in the back shop, although we have seen that many *opifices et tabernariae* produced *and* sold. A tradition still exists that in the sale of foodstuffs such as fish and vegetables women predominate -- fishwives and market-women. A visit to Rome's great modern open-air market, which functions during the morning in the large square of Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele, will make this sufficiently clear. Male talent is more in demand for heavy jobs such as bread-making and butchery, but women can sell their products too.

Women who appear on epitaphs alone may of course be in trade in their own right. But they may also be carrying on the business of a dead husband. This fairly obvious suggestion may be supported by the practice of mediaeval guilds. In thirteenth-century Paris, for example, as documented by the rules given in the *Livre des métiers*, the widow of a draper could continue her dead husband's business, unless she re-married "autre homme que dudit mestier." If her new husband was an

outsider, she could carry on "si elle . . . le savait faire de sa main," if she was herself a draper. Similarly the widow of a type of shoemaker, *gavetonnier de petiz souliers de basenne*, could carry on the business without paying a fee, but if she re-married must pay the fee before she worked or employed others to do the work. A similar rule applies to the widow of a poulterer. The widow of a fuller may continue, with the help of two apprentices, the children of her late husband and her (or his?) brothers, but if she re-marries must give up the business unless her new husband is also a fuller. Probably the same sort of practices applied in other lines of trade, for which they are not specifically mentioned. Exclusion of women apprentices from a trade is rarely laid down -- it appears for carpet-making, because the work was too heavy. Certain trades, conversely, were just for women: spinning (*filleresses de soye à grans fuiseaus* and *à petitz fuizeaux* -- the spelling varies from line to line), weaving silk or making head-dresses of gold (*fesserresses de chapeaux d'or*). Finally, there were trades in which a woman was allowed to operate independently just as a man was, such as that of retailer of poultry.⁵⁰

Since in Roman society, even among the bourgeoisie and slaves and, consequently, freedmen, the husband was usually older than the wife, if she survived the dangerous child-bearing years she stood a good chance of surviving her husband, and therefore, if there were no sons yet old enough to carry on the business, of controlling his shop or workshop. Such widows also ran a good chance of not being commemorated. Most of the women we have discussed are in fact commemorated with a man, presumably a husband; where there is no information who paid for the inscription, the plaque was clearly associated either with a *columbarium* (probably that of a burial society) or with a grander family tomb. Occasionally we find the husband clearly responsible for the inscription: for instance the dutiful Abudia Megiste, the wheat- and pulse-dealer, is commemorated by her husband and patron, who also dedicates the tomb to their freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants and to their freeborn eight-year-old son (9683). The *popinaria* of Tibur is praised by her husband in verse (xiv. 3709). Other women achieve commemoration by a child (9277, xii. 4514), *patrona* (ix. 2029), or

freedwoman (9855). Women who pay for monuments come probably to three. The *clavaria* (nail-maker or -seller) during her lifetime commemorates herself, her husband (who had presumably died) and a freedwoman and a *delicata* (v. 7023). The Carthaginian bakeress, very much alive, is commemorated together with her (? dead) baker-husband and another live male, more probably her son than a second husband (viii. 24678). But the clearest example of a prosperous lady carrying on a firm is Veturia the seller of purple, although unfortunately we cannot show that she inherited the business from her husband or had complete control of it. There is a correlation between the prosperity and the documentation of women who apparently controlled firms: only those rich enough to put up a fairly elaborate inscription give us enough information to indicate that they are, either as widows or in their own right, at the head of a business.

The women under consideration were not admitted as members to trade guilds,⁵¹ and not important enough to be patronesses of guilds. It is rare for them to leave votive inscriptions: xiv. 2850 is a dedication to the goddess Fortune at Praeneste by the dealer in seeds from the Porta Triumphalis in Rome. In passing it may be noted that one motive for naming a person's job and the location of the business, whether on a religious monument such as this, or on tombs lining the main roads leading into the city, was advertisement. It did no harm for the sons and heirs of M. Antonius Teres, a dignitary of Misenum, to remind passers-by that he was a very celebrated dealer in pigs and sheep (33887). The language is more elegant, the sentiment much the same, as in the notorious English epitaph, "Beneath this stone, in hopes of Zion,/doth lie the landlord of the Lion;/his son keeps on the business still,/resigned unto the heavenly will."

Despite these advantages, a very small proportion, not as much as one per cent, of Latin lower-class epitaphs mention a job of the sort we are considering. But the scarcity of women in such jobs is still striking. The attested range of women's jobs is much narrower than that of men, about 35 discussed here compared with my rough estimate of 225 for men in the Latin West. Women appear to be concentrated in "service" jobs (catering, prostitution); dealing, particularly in foodstuffs;

serving in shops; in certain crafts, particularly the production of cloth and clothes, "fiddly" jobs such as working in gold-leaf or hair-dressing; certain luxury trades such as perfumery. This is probably a fair reflection of at least part of reality. (If the Romans were using women to unload the Ostian grain ships or clean out the Cloaca Maxima we would not expect to hear of them, but the hypothesis is not compelling.)⁵² I would suggest that the opportunities open to the respectable woman whose family circumstances demanded that she work were limited: even more naturally than Lucian (*Somnium*) she would go into the family business. And, more often than not, her contribution would not be thought worth specifying either by her father or husband, or by herself. How often does the wife who serves behind the counter in a European butcher's or baker's have her name on the sign? Only once, on an antique shop in St. Giles' in Oxford, have I seen ". . . and Daughter," and once, at Webbwood in Ontario, ". . . and Wife" on a general store. Figures for the participation of the women of the family in Canadian small businesses are unavailable. In the *Livre des métiers*, the work of the woman will only need to be taken into account if she is widowed -- but we must assume that very many women, wives and daughters, were working alongside the men. The fact was no doubt so obvious to contemporaries that they only occasionally hint it to us. Nor, one may suspect, was it of as much interest to the women themselves when they ordered their tombs as were other details of their family lives. It is perverse of a modern to ask the question, "What did lower-class women *do*?" Productive work was just one of the things which many of them did and had to do.

NOTES

¹ This is a revised version, with fuller documentation, of a paper read at the annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians held at Stanford and Berkeley in May 1976. An account of the comments made by R. Sealey on that occasion will be found in the Women's Classical Caucus *Newsletter* 3 (Spring 1978) 4. My original intention had been to expand the list of inscriptions provided by J. Le Gall, "Métiers des femmes au Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum," *REL* 47 bis (1969) 123-130 (henceforth Le Gall). Le Gall's method had been to search the indexes of *CIL*, a method he could not follow for volume vi, which has no subject indices. (The new computer index, vi. 7, produced by E.J. Jory, is extremely useful for checking the incidence of a job-name, *once* one knows the name. It is still easy to miss examples, if one forgets to check all possible cases, abbreviations and variant spellings. There are no subject indices as in other volumes of *CIL*.) For vi, Le Gall appears to have read the sections on *artifices* and on certain *columbaria* in Part 2. For the *columbaria*, staff whose job is known are listed first, but it is still very easy to miss examples: one of the problems is that, when a couple is commemorated and both man and woman have a job, it is the man's job which determines where the inscription will appear in the collection. I have searched *CIL* vi, established from it a basic list of jobs performed by women, and followed Le Gall's method for the remaining volumes, checking the feminine nouns in the indices of *artes et officia privata* and any groups of male workers who seemed likely to have female colleagues not mentioned specifically in the index. This procedure produced twelve jobs not in Le Gall (? *aurifex*, ? *conditaria*, ? *gemmaria*, *lagunaria*, *linaria*, *margaritaria*, *ornatrices*, *purpuraria*, *seminaria*, ? *sutrix*, *thurariae*, ? *vestiaria*) which fall into my more tightly defined category of working women. (Le Gall, who says his list is not exhaustive, gives very little space or discussion to this category, includes domestics and emphasises medical workers -- doctors and midwives. A propos of the latter, it is perhaps worth noting in passing that in ii. 4314 *medicae manus* should not be translated "hands of the woman doctor:" *medicae* is surely an adjective

as in Vergil, *Aen.* 12.402). Arabic numbers alone will be used to refer to *CIL* vi; Roman numbers followed by Arabic to other volumes of *CIL*.

² *Flacc.* 18, on Greek cities.

³ *Dom.* 13. 89; *Cat.* 4.17.

⁴ E.g., Sen. *Ep.* 56.2: ". . . alipilum cogita tenuem et stridulam vocem, quo sit notabilior, subinde exprimentem nec umquam tacentem, nisi dum vellit alas et alium pro se clamare cogit. piget iam enumerare varias exclamaciones et botularium et crustularium et omnes popinarum institores mercem sua quadam et insignita modulatione vendentis." But Seneca refused to be distracted by these, or even by a *faber* in the same building and a neighbouring *ferrarius* (*ibid.* 4). Martial (e.g., 12.57) was less philosophic.

⁵ On this and an earlier period, see the delightful article of M. Tod, "Epigraphical Notes on Freedmen's Professions," *Epigraphica* 12 (1950) 3-36, who mentions seamstresses, wool-sellers, cloak-sellers, lyre- and flute-players, washerwomen, hucksters, a honey-seller, a salt-seller, nurses and a doctor-midwife.

⁶ On these, Le Gall 125 is unsatisfactory. See H.J. Loane, *Industry and Commerce of the City of Rome (50 B.C.-200 A.D.)* (Baltimore 1938) 109-111 (henceforth Loane); A.M. Duff, *Freedmen in the early Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1928) 111-113; Tapio Helen, *Organisation of Roman Brick Production in the first and second centuries A.D.* (Helsinki 1975) *passim*, but especially 89-113 on women landowners, and 113 on women *officinatores* (of lower status). For more recent work on the broader question of who is involved in industry see P.D.A. Garnsey's forthcoming paper "Trimalchio and the Independent Freedmen of Rome."

⁷ Cf. Treggiari, "Jobs for Women", *American Journal of Ancient History* (henceforward *AJAH*) 1 (1976) 76-104.

⁸ *Opifices*, strictly, work in a workshop, *officina*, making things. They overlap with *artifices* (artists and craftsmen). Some are wage-earners, *mercennarii*, some are masters. *Tabernarii* work in shops, booths and taverns. Some are both *opifices* and *tabernarii*, producing what they sell in the shop. The difficulty of distinguishing master from employee persists when we deal with individual job-names. *Mercennarii* also include people who offered services to the public, such as porters (Apul.

Met. 1.7; *Petr. Sat.* 38.7, 46.8) or the plucker of under-arm hair (*Sen. Ep.* 56.2, quoted in n. 4) who, surprisingly, could be a very prosperous citizen (9141).

⁹ R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge 1974) 79-80, 127-131.

¹⁰ It would be long and probably tedious to list them. I offer a select list of 162 jobs from Rome itself in "Rome: Urban Labour," *Seventh International Economic History Congress* (Edinburgh 1978), Theme B3, 162-165.

¹¹ Women goldsmiths occur. One, from the late empire, may be in trade (9206: *Locus Masumille aurificis cu[m] Sevarin[o]*).

¹² *AJAH* 1 (1976) 84-85.

¹³ *Sagarii*: e.g., 956, 7971, 9864-9872, 33906, 37378, 37402; v. 5918, 5926, 5928, 5929 (Milan); v. 6773; ix. 2399, 5752. *Cucullarii*: xiii. 2953.

¹⁴ *AJAH* 1 (1976) 85. Note that the Italian word for a dressmaker, *la sarta* (tailor: *il sarto*) derives from *sarcire*, etc.

¹⁵ 76360 (*tetor* = *textor* or *tector*), 6361, 6362, *fullones*: 6287-6290. Cf. *AJAH* 1 (1976) 82.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Mrs. Gaskell, *Ruth* (London 1906) 1-11. Patricia Branca, "A New Perspective on Women's Work: a Comparative Typology," *Journal of Social History* 9 (1976) 129-153 especially at 133-136, has some interesting remarks on dressmaking, work which occupied 730,000 women in England in 1871, while 580,000 worked in textiles and 1,700,000 as domestic servants.

¹⁷ 9941: *Galloniae O.l. Paschusae tostrici*; 9493. Another *tonstria* may be a barber (xii. 4514, Narbo).

¹⁸ 9488: *ad Porta Trigemina*. An inscription with the word *scap[h]iaria* has been conjectured by S. Panciera, "Nuovi documenti epigraphici per la topografia di Roma antica," *Rend. Pont. Acad. Arch.* (1970/1971) 121-125, to refer to a woman who made vessels called *scaphia* and/or sold them in the temple of Bellona.

¹⁹ *RE* 1.A.2 (1860) (Hug).

²⁰ x. 1965; vi. 10006. Others are 33928 (two) and xii. 1594 (*Dea Augusta Vocontiorum*).

²¹ 9934 = i².1399 = *ILLRP* 818.

²² They are C.P.P. Treb[oni]orum P.P.C. [f(iiii)]. (9933 = i².1398 = *ILLRP* 816).

²³ i².1413 = 37820 = *ILLRP* 809. Barbieri reads and Degrassi in *ILLRP* prints *Flora*. The expansion of Nicepor to Niceporus (*ibid.*) seems unnecessary.

²⁴ On either reading the grammar is loose. The complete text reads as follows:

V(ivit) D. Veturius D.l. Diog(enes), / θ D.(Veturius) D.l.
Nicepor / v(ivit) Veturia D.l. Fedra (*Flora*, *ILLRP*) / de sua
pecunia faciund(um) coir(avit) /sibi et patrono et conlibert(o)
/ et liberto. / Nicepor conlibertus / vixit mecum annos xx /
purpuraria Marianeis (purpurari a Marianeis, *ILLRP*) / viv(it)
D. Veturius D.l. Philarcus(us).

The inscription, according to Degrassi, was at the Nunziatura Apostolica d'Italia, Via Po 29, Rome.

²⁵ Names often run in slave/freed families. Cf., for instance, 7303: Spendusa, daughter of Spendo; 7379, 7370, 7374.

²⁶ A role which was institutionalised when membership of a trade guild was made hereditary, so that Honorius tried to make bakers marry bakers' daughters and compelled the husband of a baker's daughter to enrol in the *collegium pistorum* if he was an outsider. (*CTh* 14.3.21, A.D. 403; cf. J.-P. Waltzing, *Etude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les romains depuis les origines jusqu'à la chute de l'empire d'occident* [Louvain 1895-1900] II. 301-311, henceforth Waltzing.)

²⁷ 9846, with Loane 76 n. 58; 9848; conceivably also ii. 1743, where the restoration [pi]peraria is, however, more attractive than [pur]peraria (sic). Lydia (*Acts* 16.14) is firm evidence.

²⁸ 37819: *pomararii*; ?9686: the inscription, a useless fragment, is accompanied by a relief showing a basket of fruit, a man holding a fruit, and (perhaps) a woman.

²⁹ 9277: Mercuriane fecit paren[tibu]s subus (sic) AVL Maximus [con]ditarius de castris pra[etor]ibus, AVL Hilariias (Hilaritas)

conditaria eos in pace. AVL may stand for *annos vixit L.*

³⁰ 9684: . . . Pollecla que ordeu bendet de bia noba (sc. Pollecla quae hordeum vendit de Via Nova), from the Catacomb of Domitilla.

³¹ 9685. Cf. J.M.C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (London 1973) 56-57, pl. 14, for a relief of a woman selling fruit, poultry and game. ii. 4592 may attest a pigeon-dealer at Barcelona.

³² 9683, from the Scala Mediana. Cf. Loane 122-123. There is also a girl selling vegetables on a painting from the house of Julia Felix at Pompeii, for which see R. Etienne, *La vie quotidienne à Pompéi* (Paris 1966) 216.

³³ ix. 4721, viii. 24678 (pre-Flavian): *furnariae*. "Baker" seems the most likely sense of *furnaria*. *Furnarius* might, I conjecture, have a wider sense, still including "baker." It has been suggested that in the late empire, *furnarii* baked the bread the *pistores* made. This last possibility should not, in my opinion, be elevated into a general rule. Note that Italian has *formaio* for "baker." For discussion, see Mima Maxey, *Occupations of the Lower Classes in Roman Society* (Chicago 1938; reprinted in *Two Studies on the Roman Lower Classes* [New York 1975]) 22-23.

³⁴ iv. 1819. For barmaids cf. T. Kléberg, *Hôtels, restaurants et cabarets dans l'antiquité romaine* (Uppsala 1957) 87-91 (henceforth Kléberg).

³⁵ I am not convinced that we have *negotiatrices* in two damaged inscriptions, one from Narbo (xii. 4496; cf. Le Gall 126) and one from Rome (*AE* 1973 71, held by the editors to attest a lady importer of wine and oil from Baetica, which would be, as they say, very interesting).

³⁶ Cheap: 2 *asses* (iv. 1969, 4023, 4150, 4592, 5105, 5338, 5345, 5372, 7068); 3 *asses* (iv. 4439); 5 *asses* (iv. 2450, 5204); 8 *asses* (iv. 5203); 9 *asses* (iv. 5127); 1 *denarius* (iv. 2193). *Vernae* are specified in iv. 4023, 4025, 4593, 5105, 5204, 5206, 5345: this could mean "native" rather than "home-born slave," but in this context the two would come to the same thing. iv. 4592 gives a Greek. All the girls have a single name, of slave type, but, since this is not a context where one would expect *tria nomina*, the argument for slave status must not be pressed.

³⁷ ix. 2029: Vibia L.l. Chresta mon(umentum) fecit sibi et suis
et C. Rustio C.l. Thalasso filio e[t] Vibiae Q.l. Calybeni libertae
lenae ab asse quaesitum lucro suo sine fraude aliorum. H.M.H.N.S.

³⁸ *CTh* 9.7.1; *CJ* 9.9.28. Cf. Kléberg 81-82.

³⁹ *Met.* 1.7 ff., 9, 21. Cf. Kléberg 83-85.

⁴⁰ xiii. 10018.7: (h)ospita, reple lagona(m) cervesa. copo,
c[on]ditum habes? est. reple, da. I follow the reading of Kléberg 110.
For a laudatory inscription to an innkeeper see *IG* xiv. 24 (Syracuse):
"Hail, Dekomia, excellent Syrian hostess!"

⁴¹ *DE* ii. 2.1206-1207; Kléberg 124.

⁴² Kléberg 75-76.

⁴³ See further G. Hermansen, "The Roman Inns and the Law. The
Inns of Ostia" in J.A.S. Evans, ed., *Polis and Imperium. Studies . . .*
Salmon (Toronto 1974) 167-181.

⁴⁴ 9824; xiv. 3709; *CLE* 603, as conjecturally restored. There is
also a Christian *propin[aria]* (Kléberg 74).

⁴⁵ Kléberg 23. Similarly in Oxford in 1380-1381 there were twelve
tapsters, all women (C.E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*,
I [London 1924] 163).

⁴⁶ The *tostrix* (9941) cited by Le Gall (125 n. 6) as a *rôtisseuse*
is surely a *tonstrix* of one type or the other. (For omission of *n* see,
for example, n. 47).

⁴⁷ 37469: Nostia Q.l. Daphne ornatix de vico longo. M. Nerius
M. (l.) Quadratu(s) aurifex d(e) vico longo. 9736: --i Nostia / --is
Daphnidis l. --e Cleopatra ornatix de vico longo. Note that these
two inscriptions are linked, but because of the broken stone in the
second we cannot be sure that Cleopatra is a Nostia freed by a Daphne.
Supposing the last line to be complete and its sixteen spaces a rough
guide to the other lines, we have a lacuna of eight letters or
spaces in line 1, only two in line 2 (so that *Nostia --is Daphnidis l.*
probably refers to one person), five spaces in the penultimate line (so
that we cannot restore *Nostia* as part of Cleopatra's name). 37811 (from
a *columbarium* plaque): Pollia C.Q.l. Urbana ornat(rix) de Aemilianis
ollas II. M. Calidius M.l. tosor Apoloni(us) de Aemilianis. (See G.N.
Olcott, *AJA* 12 [1908] 42-43, for first publication). There is also a

group of nine *ornatrices*, seven of them slaves of different owners, on a late republican tomb inscription from Ostia (xiv. 5306). They may represent a shop or a school. Cf. R. Meiggs, *Ostia* (Oxford 1960) 226.

⁴⁸ *Brattiararia* and *brattiararius* (9211, 6939); *clavaria* and *clavarius* (v. 7023), *conditaria* and *conditarius* (9277), *furnaria* and *furnarius* (viii. 24678), two *pomararii* (?*pomarii*, 37819), a pair of *purpurarii* (9846).

⁴⁹ *Tonsor* and *ornatrix* (37811).

⁵⁰ René de Lespinasse and François Bonnardot, eds., *Histoire générale de Paris. Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris. xiii^e siècle. Le livre des métiers d'Etienne Boileau* (Paris 1879): draper 78; *çavettonier* 187; fullers 107, 148; carpet-making 102; *fileresses* 68-72; weaving 74-75, 83-84; *fesseresses* . . . 207-208. Poulterer: "Fame qui onques n'ot seigneur ou autre puet achater le mestier de polaillerie et estre Polaillere ausi franchement come un home en toutes choses" (148).

⁵¹ Stated as probable, at least up to the 4th century A.D. and with the exception of a few guilds in all-female professions, by Waltzing I 348-349. The *ornatrices* from Ostia (n. 47) might be a guild and would support Waltzing's exception. I have found no indication of women members in men's trade-*collegia*, though they might be *patronae* or beneficiaries of *collegia*. Women were members and indeed officers of funerary *collegia*.

⁵² Women and children unloaded ships at Antioch (Libanius *Or.* 11. 261).