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***Between Free and Unfree, Paid and Unpaid Labour: Workshop-Schools in Eighteenth-Century Madrid***

This paper focuses on the development of state-sponsored workshop-schools in eighteenth-century Madrid and its rural surroundings. These institutions, aimed at apprenticing poor children and youths in textile crafts, were a key part of the monarchy’s reformist plan to increase domestic commodity production in order to substitute imports. Yet, under the guise of poor relief, workshop-schools actually operated as sweatshops for which labour recruitment was not the result of a free agreement between the parties, but rather one of coercion exerted upon impoverished families. Children –mostly girls, for the sexual division of labour underpinned the governmental project- toiled there full-time, often under a harsh discipline, for remunerations which equated to virtually nothing. This paper explores the different types of workshop-schools according to their urban or rural nature, their kind of output, for whom it was produced, and whether they were established in the neighbourhoods or confined in orphanages, hospices and prisons. We contend that, whereas the latter involved non-free or forced labour, the former encompassed free and –predominantly- halfway between free and non-free labour relations. The primary sources we have consulted for this research work suggest that, in eighteenth-century Madrid and New Castile, workshop-schools provided a pool of underpaid, compulsory and often skilled labour force to Royal Factories and privileged entrepreneurs.