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One Time translated by Vinio Rossi and Stuart Friebert

Giovanni Raboni
ONE TIME

Of people become rich only
on silkworms and reeling-mills, I believe
there are no longer any: but once upon a time
in the Comasco or at Bergamo, where
my people come from,
many fortunes were counted in mulberries,
or how many girls would come to reel
the cocoons scorched to kill the moths
in the cold shops. If I think
who the rich are now, what
capital costs them, of the effort
they’ve made to arrive, believing
they’re way up high on the ladder,
I’m convinced everything’s complicated, even evil.
The faults of the owners
were so simple once: whoever exploits
his neighbor and pays him too little
can do no worse. But now, who will it be
who’s at fault? Who wants too much,
who profits from the poor?
Perhaps each thing must, precisely taken,
be done over and over again,
injustice is in the air, the boss
today, the board of directors
or the stock brokers are all sinners
and it bit too sui generis for me.

translated by
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