
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Hohti, Paula

"Monstrous Ruffs" and Elegant Trimmings: Lace and Lacemaking in Early Modern Italy

Published in:
Threads of Power: Lace from Textilmuseum of St. Gallen

Published: 29/11/2022

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please cite the original version:
Hohti, P. (2022). "Monstrous Ruffs" and Elegant Trimmings: Lace and Lacemaking in Early Modern Italy. In E. Cormack, & M. Majer (Eds.), *Threads of Power: Lace from Textilmuseum of St. Gallen* (pp. 69-87). Yale University Press.

This material is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorised user.



3 “Monstrous Ruffs” and Elegant Trimmings: Lace and Lacemaking in Early Modern Italy

Paula Hohti Erichsen

LACEMAKING BECAME AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRY in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. Historians assume that lacemaking was first practiced in the mid-fifteenth century by Venetian noblewomen working for pleasure at home. By the early sixteenth century, however, young women working in convents and charitable institutions were producing Italian lace commercially, and by the second half of the sixteenth century, the industry saw rapid growth in the production of both needle lace, created with a needle and single thread, and bobbin lace, made with multiple threads.¹ Surviving visual images and lace samples demonstrate the rich variety of fashionable lace that was produced by Italian lacemakers during the early modern period. These include a range of lace from narrow borders and edges of fine linen or silver and gold thread (FIGS. 3.1–4, LA-018, LA-057, LA-048, LA-015) to large and expertly worked pieces of lace that were translated into ruffs, collars, cuffs, and lace trimmings according to contemporary fashions (FIG. 3.5 LA-013).

The most essential feature of lace fashions between the years 1560 and 1620 was the large lace ruff, which developed in the second half of the sixteenth century from a tiny frill or a small lace edging into an elaborate wired lace collar or a full ruff tied around the neck (FIG. 3.6 LA-863). Round ruffs, embellished with many variations of beautiful points of Italian needle lace, became especially extravagant all over Europe and assumed at times such enormous proportions that some of them were called “millstones.”² The abundant use of lace and its purely decorative function were often disapproved by moralists who regarded the fashion for “great and monstrous Ruffes . . . clogged with gold, silver, or silke lace of stately prince” as frivolous and wasteful.³ The stunning quality and appearance of late Renaissance lace ruffs, worn by both men and women, and the skill of the contemporary lacemakers is evident in numerous Renaissance portraits. A painting from 1640, representing Cosimo II de’ Medici, Maria Maddalena d’Austria, and their son Ferdinando, provides an example of the types of elaborate collars and ruffs in fine needle lace worn by wealthy aristocratic men and women in the period (FIG. 3.7 LA-772). Some rare examples of these types of ruffs have survived in European museums, including one in the Textilmuseum St. Gallen’s collection (SEE FIG. 1.12 LA-024) and another conserved in the Livrustkammaren, Stockholm (FIG. 3.8 LA-773).

The increasing production and popularity of lace is visible not only in painted portraits but also in the large number of printed patterns books that laid out designs for needle and bobbin laces. According to Ann Rosalind Jones, over 110 of these books were printed for the first time between 1523 and 1600 in a number of towns that had achieved a level of expertise in book printing, including editions by Venetian and Roman printers, such as Cesare Vecellio, Matteo Pagano, Giacomo Franco, Isabella Catanea Parasole, and Gasparo Crivellari (SEE CHAP. 2 [SPEELBERG]).⁴ Surviving lace pieces suggest that the patterns were familiar to lacemakers. There are close resemblances, for example, between motifs in a *reticella* needle-lace border made around 1600 and designs in Cesare Vecellio’s *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne* (1591) (SEE FIG. 3.1, LA-018; SEE ALSO FIG. 2.21, LA-805).

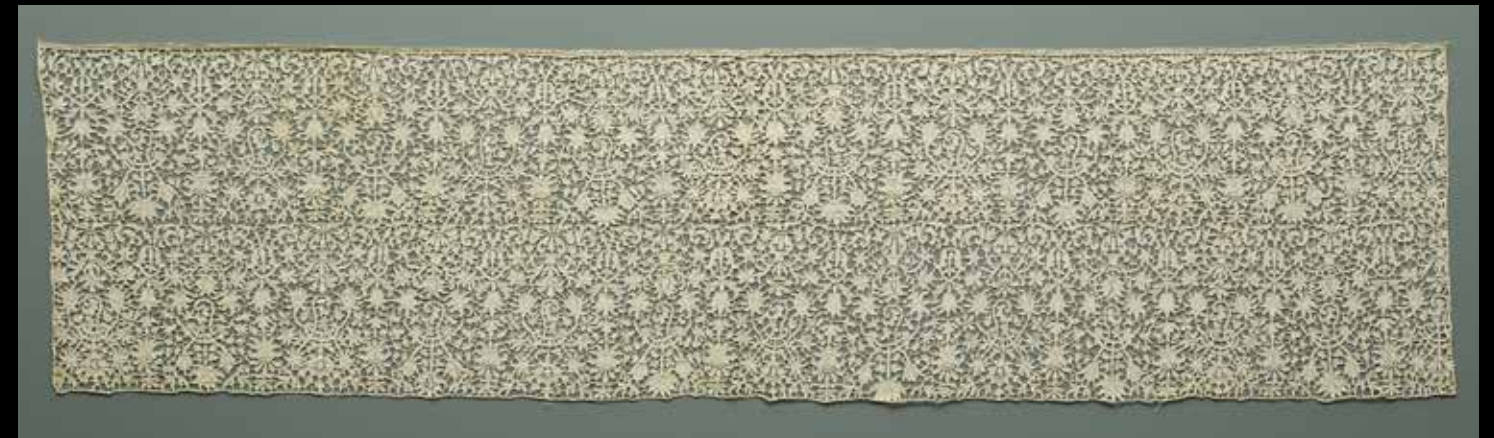
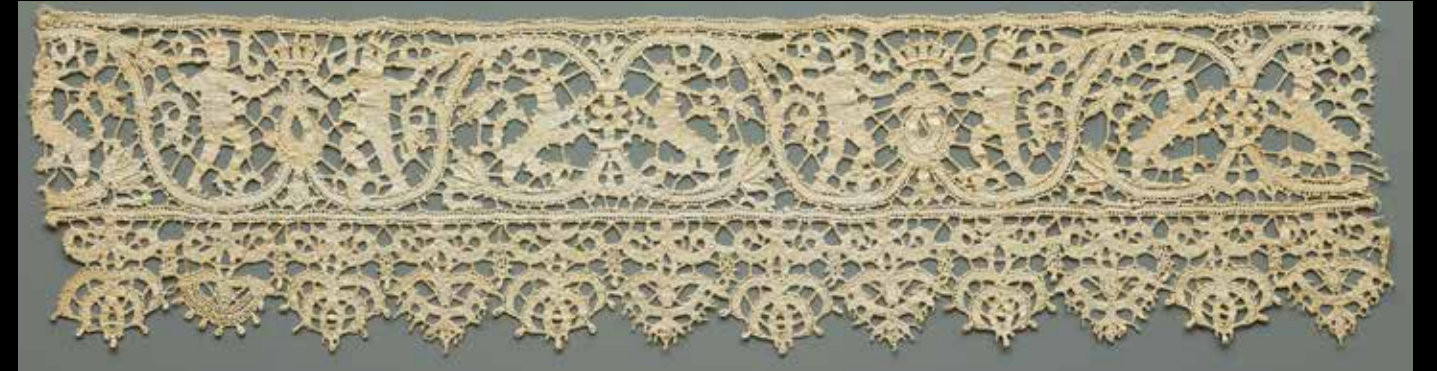
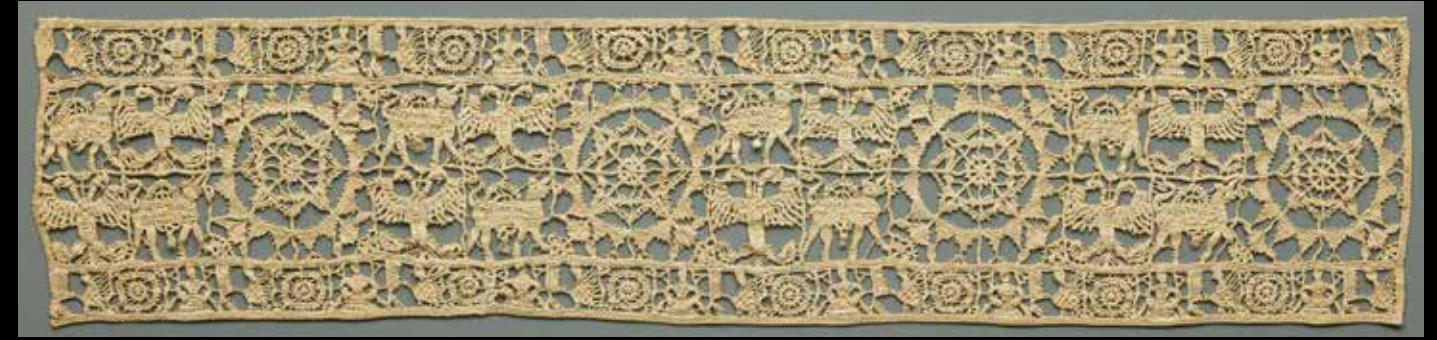
The cultural significance of lace, and the laborious and time-consuming process of making lace accessories and trims, meant that thousands of women in Italy, both in the city and in the countryside, produced lace for the European fashion market by the seventeenth century.⁵ These women played a key role in the development of lace in Europe,

FIG. 3.1 (LA-018)
Reticella needle-lace insert, Italy, ca. 1600. Linen. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Gift of Leopold Ikle, 1905, 00895. Cat. X.

FIG. 3.2 (LA-057)
Partially worked border, probably Venice, 1600–20. Linen. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Gift of Leopold Ikle, 1905, 01005. Cat. X.

FIG. 3.3 (LA-048)
Punto in aria needle-lace border, Venice, 1630–50, reworked in the 19th century. Linen. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Acquisition from the Sammlung John Jacoby, 1954, 00079. Cat. X.

FIG. 3.4 (LA-015)
Bobbin-lace trimming or edging, Milan or Northern Europe, 1580–1620. Gold thread with silk core and gold sequins. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Gift of Leopold Ikle, 1904, 00096.1–2. Cat. X.



silos all, black back-ground



FIG. 3.5 (LA-013)
Punto a fogliame needle-lace collar and cuffs, Italy, ca. 1600, reworked in the 19th century. Linen. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Gift of Leopold Ikle, 1904, 00402.a-c. Cat. X.



FIG. 3.6 (LA-863)
Ludovico Cardi detto il Cigoli, *Cosimo I de' Medici, grand duke*, 1602–03. Oil on canvas. Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Prefettura, Florence, M03-199.

both in terms of technique and design.

Contemporary travelers noted the skill and creativity of Italian lacemakers. On his visit to Italy in 1594 and 1595, the English traveler Fynes Moryson (1566–1630) wrote that “women of Italy are curious workers with the needle, of whom other nations have learned to make the laces commonly called cutworks.”⁶ But how did lace-making evolve, who were the makers and wearers of lace, and how was lace production organized in Renaissance Italy? This essay focuses on the development of lace and lacemaking in Italy, outlining how the lace industry grew from a home-based occupation into a highly commercialized activity, and investigating how and by whom lace was made and used and how fashion laces were regarded and regulated in society. The essay demonstrates that, although fine lace is often associated only with the wealthy high-ranking elites, making and wearing lace held economic and cultural importance at all levels of society.

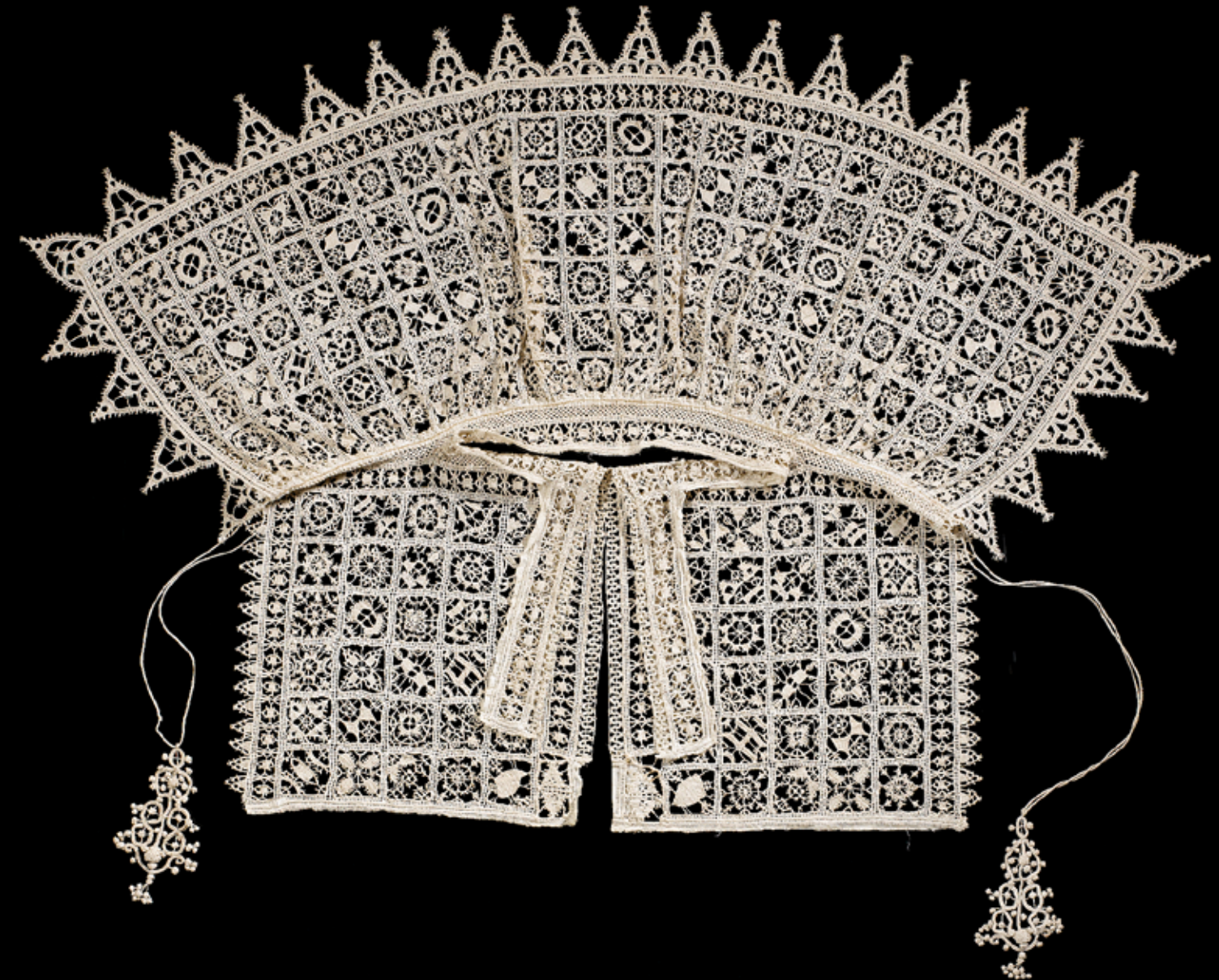
Lace Production in Italy

Italian Renaissance lacemakers made two types of lace: bobbin lace, made on a cushion by twisting and braiding a number of threads wound on separate bobbins; and needle lace, made with a needle and thread and constructed by means of tiny stitches built up on top of guiding threads pinned onto a pattern. The two techniques were often combined in a single object to achieve the desired decorative effect. A linen lace collar in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, for example, is made of reticella and *punto in aria* needle lace with a small interlaced bobbin border (FIG. 3.9, LA-775).⁷

Bobbin laces made in Venice, Genoa, and Milan enjoyed a high international reputation in Europe during the sixteenth century. The female author of a pattern book, known by her initials “RM,” published by Christoph Froschauer in Zurich around 1560, wrote that as far back as 1535 Venetian merchants had carried into Switzerland bobbin lace of “so lovely a quality” that Swiss women set out at once to copy it (SEE CHAP. 2 [SPEELBERG]).⁸ But Europeans admired above all Venetian needle lace, which became one of Italy’s most expensive



make sure
black back-
ground extends
to page



silhouette, black
background



FIG. 3.7 (LA-772) (TOP)
Justus Sustermans, *Cosimo II de' Medici, Maria Maddalena d'Austria and son Ferdinando*, ca. 1640. Oil on canvas. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 2402-1890.

FIG. 3.8 (LA-773) (BOTTOM)
Bobbin-lace ruff, 1620s. Linen. Livrustkammaren (The Royal Armoury), Stockholm, LRK 33076.

FIG. 3.9 (LA-775) (OPPOSITE)
Reticella, punto in aria, needle-lace, and bobbin-lace collar, Italy, ca. 1600-15 and/or ca. 1880-99. Linen. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Gift of the Vereniging Het Kantsalet, BK-14612.

and prestigious foreign products, purchased and worn by men and women of the highest rank all over Europe.⁹ Due to the level of technical sophistication, Venetian needle-lace production grew considerably during the sixteenth century and continued to dominate the markets during the seventeenth century. Praising the skills of Venetian needle-lace makers, one enthusiastic local commentator claimed that “there never was a nation which could dream of taking precedence to Venice in making needlepoint lace appreciated by the likes of emperors and princesses across the mountains.”¹⁰

Most lace, unlike other textile crafts such as embroidery and sewing, was created by women who operated outside the formal guild system.¹¹ The division of female and male spheres within the art of lacemaking seems to have been relatively clear. White laces worked with linen thread used for edgings on linen collars, cuffs, napkins, and other linen items that were frequently laundered, such as those seen on the laundry line in a sixteenth-century mural painted by Alessandro Allori (1535–1607), were closely associated with so-called “feminine works” (FIG. 3.10, LA-776). Men were involved with the production of bobbin-made borders of precious-metal thread, which were traditionally made by the “pasementiers” who belonged to the old professional guild.¹² The superb value and prestige of the glittering gold lace with which pasementiers worked can be seen in the detail of another painting by Allori, which shows an unfinished border of gold bobbin lace on a cushion (FIG. 3.11, LA-777).

The Makers of Lace

Lacemaking was associated originally with Venetian noblewomen who made needlework in their leisure time. Needle lace was regarded as a suitable pastime for elite women and a respected form of work because it could not be confused with “real” manual labor.¹³ Many Italian editions of printed lace pattern books were dedicated to “virtuous” noblewomen,



FIG. 3.10 (LA-776)
Alessandro Allori, *Women at work around a balcony*, 1587–90. Fresco. Palazzo Pitti, Florence, 1587090.



FIG. 3.11 (LA-777)
Alessandro Allori, *Annunciation*, 1603. Oil on canvas. Accademia, Florence.

underscoring the close connection between aristocratic women and lacemaking. For example, *Le pompe: Libro secondo*, published in 1560 in Venice, was addressed to “beautiful and virtuous women so that they can make all sorts of works, that is laces of diverse sort.”¹⁴

Skilled women could create their lace designs by cutting out a page of the book and pinning or stitching it onto a parchment or linen backing, which provided the ground for the lacework. The design was then transferred onto the ground by pricking the pattern with pins and rubbing fine powder over the small holes so as to make the lines of the pattern visible on the ground fabric below.¹⁵ Italian pattern books, such as the *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne* by Cesare Vecellio, also contain designs showing how to enlarge or reduce any pattern (FIG. 3.12, LA-778).¹⁶ A surviving unfinished lace work in the collection of the Museo del Merletto on the Venetian island of Burano shows an unfinished lace design prepared and begun on parchment (FIG. 3.13, LA-779).

Venetian noblewomen were important patrons of lace. As several lace historians have shown, some of the most powerful women even set up schools in Venice for needle lace. In 1595, Morosina Morosini, the wife of Doge Marino Grimani, opened a workshop in the parish of Santa Fosca where 130 lace workers were overseen by the *maestra* Catterina Gardin.¹⁷

Lace was made by elites as well as by women in more modest homes. Bobbin lace was seen as particularly suited for popular skill because it required simple, easily accessible tools that could either be purchased from the local market or made at home (pins, a cushion, a few bobbins, linen thread, and paper). The author of Froschauer’s 1560 pattern book was a lacemaker and teacher of lacemaking, and praised bobbin lace especially

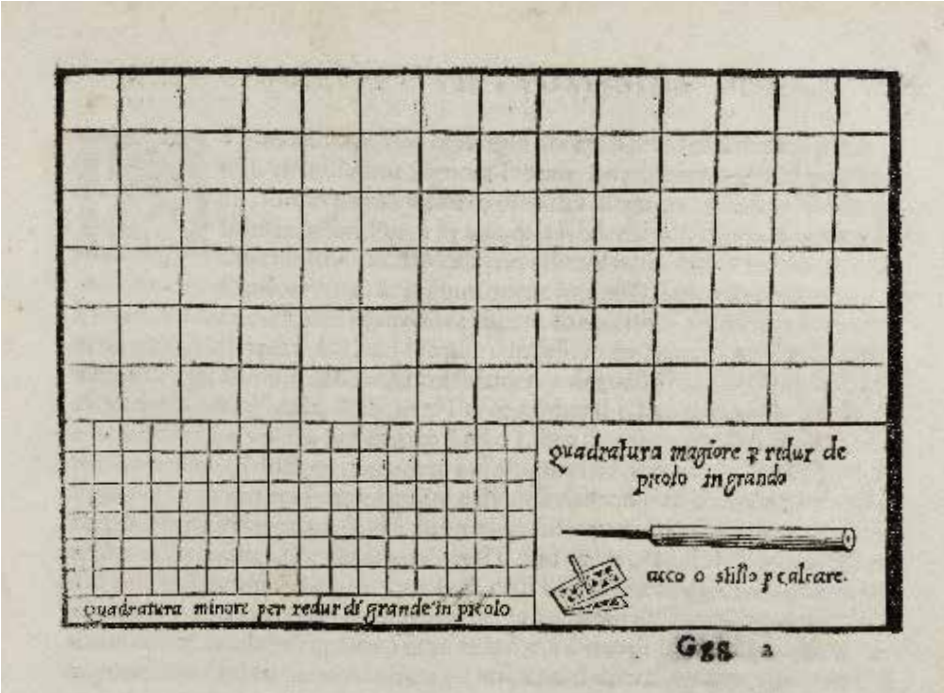


FIG. 3.12 (LA-778)
Cesare Vecellio, *Corona delle Nobili et Virtuose Donne: Libro I*. Published by the author, Venice 1595, plate Ggg 3. The Newberry Library, Chicago, Case W 927.942 Special Collections.

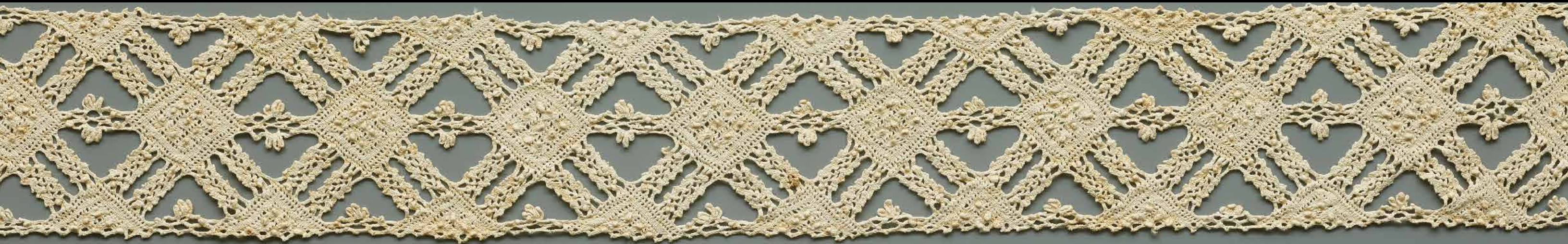


FIG. 3.13 (LA-779)
Incomplete punto Venezia needle-lace border, Venice, ca. 1670. Signed “PAB Pietro Cupilli San Cassan Inv.” Linen, ink, parchment, and linen canvas. Fondazione Musei Civici de Venezia.

for the reason that women had quickly learned how to make it and the costs of the materials were low: “Now you can buy a piece of lace at low-cost,” she writes, “quickly put it on, and thus save many of the prior expenses.”¹⁸ The Textilmuseum St. Gallen collection includes a linen bobbin-lace insert that is similar to some of the designs in Froschauer’s book and was probably intended for use on domestic textiles (FIG. 3.14, LA-002).

Household inventories drawn up for non-elite homes from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Italy testify to the presence of tools to make bobbin lace. A Florentine fishmonger’s wife, for example, had a cushion to make bobbin lace, while the rag dealer Antonio Rossati’s household goods, listed upon his death in 1555, included an unfinished small collar “worked with stitches and attached to a bobbin-lace cushion.”¹⁹ Many also listed bobbin-made lace works in the homes of Venetian artisans, such as collars and aprons with bobbin-made lace edgings. The wife of the Venetian mason Augustin Zorzi had two aprons made of cambric with “laces and trims of bobbin-lace”; the Venetian baker Maffio Truscardi had eleven *braccia* of bobbin-made lace trim for aprons as well as a woman’s shirt made of home-woven linen with a collar and cuffs of bobbin lace; and a Venetian lime maker named Carlo del Iseppo had three handkerchiefs, all made of home-woven linen with bobbin edgings.²⁰

Bobbin-made lace created in ordinary Italian homes could be produced for home use, but many women of the artisan classes and humble homes took up lacemaking as a means of earning their living. According to the sixteenth-century author Federico Luigini, “the poor found benefit and income from the work while the rich, noble, and beautiful women also achieved honour.”²¹



Lace in Convents and Charitable Institutions

As the demand for lace increased, lace works began to be produced for sale on a greater scale, especially in convents and charitable institutions which were set up to house young orphan girls until their future was decided. In the 1590s, Fynes Moryson recorded that in one of the institutions on Giudecca island in Venice, the Pia casa delle Cittelle (also known as Zitelle), the young girls “lived by the work of their hands.”²² By the second half of the seventeenth century, lace work in these Venetian institutions was often highly organized and commercialized. Noting the scale of lace production in Venetian religious and lay institutions, the French ambassador to Venice reported in 1671 to the French minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) that “all the convents of the religious and all the poor families live off this work [of lacemaking] here.”²³

Convents and charitable institutions provided an important source of labor for the Italian lace industry. There were as many as thirty monasteries in sixteenth-century Venice, along with several charitable institutions that were established between 1520 and 1577 as temporary homes or protective shelters for the terminally ill, repenting prostitutes, women in serious trouble, and young orphan girls. It has been calculated that seventeenth-century documents recorded as many as 2,500 nuns in Venetian convents alone.²⁴ Many of these women were engaged in lacemaking. Alessandro Magnasco’s late seventeenth-century painting *The Nun’s Workshop*, identified by the textile historian Isabella Campagnol, presents a rare scene from a Genoese convent where nuns, supervised by their mistress, are gathered to perform their daily tasks of reading devotional works, spinning, knitting, and doing needlework (FIG. 3.15 LA-780).

Lacemaking was seen as especially suitable for poor girls living in charitable institutions because it kept them busy and therefore reduced potentially dangerous idle time. Benedetto Palmi, the founder of the abovementioned Casa delle Cittelle, noted the social

silo, black
background

FIG. 3.14 (LA-002)
Bobbin-lace insert, Italy, second half of the 16th century. Linen. Textilmuseum St. Gallen, Gift of Leopold Ikle, 1904, 00668. Cat. X.

FIG. 3.15 (LA-780)
Follower of Alessandro Magnasco, *Nuns at Work*, first half of the 18th century. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Jack and Belle Linsky Collection, 1982, 1982.60.13.



and moral benefits of needlework for the poor girls in the organization’s house rules, stating that “the continuous and diligent practice of obedience and needlework at which they attend in order to provide for themselves makes them women of worth, and banishes from this House idleness, root of every Evil.”²⁵ Most institutions taught girls textile crafts, including lacemaking. A painting by Benedetto Caliari (1538–1598), *Madonna with the Child, Saint Mary Magdalene and the Soccorse* (before 1597), which once decorated the Venetian Soccorso hospital, shows how the girls’ supervisor has left her lace pillow for a moment and is showing a pupil how to make a stocking. Another girl is shown netting, a second is sewing, and a third is making bobbin lace (FIG. 3.16, LA-781).

Women in convents and charitable institutions also carried out lace commissions from private citizens. Isabella Campagnol’s research reveals how these commissions were often demanding and that some of the lace objects were so large and complex that work could take months or even years to complete. This fact is evident in a letter by the mid-seventeenth-century writer Arcangela Tarabotti (the author of the text *Inferno monacale*, or



“Monastic Hell”), who was forced into a convent against her will, in which she laments that she is working on a “*punt’in aria* needle lace” that is driving her “crazy.”²⁶

Some of the lace made in convents and charitable hospitals was also produced for sale directly to merchants who bought lace either by unit or on specific commission on behalf of their customers. Sketches for a handkerchief with needlepoint lace from between 1580 and 1590 probably illustrate some of the variations of lace designs that could be purchased through merchants (FIGS. 3.17, 3.18, LA-782, LA-783).

However, the women and girls making these lace pieces were not allowed to negotiate their commissions, sell their own work, or keep the profits of the sale. The daily work was assigned to each woman by the supervisors, or *maestre*, who were in full charge of the quality and the marketing of the resulting lace. It seems that, as a general rule, about two-thirds of the profit from the sale of lace was used to support the institutions themselves and one-third was set aside for the dowries of the young women who made the lace.²⁷

FIG. 3.16 (LA-781)
Carlo Caliari, *The Foundation of the Casa del Soccorso* (altarpiece from the church of Santa Maria del Soccorso), 1595. Oil on canvas. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, 400.

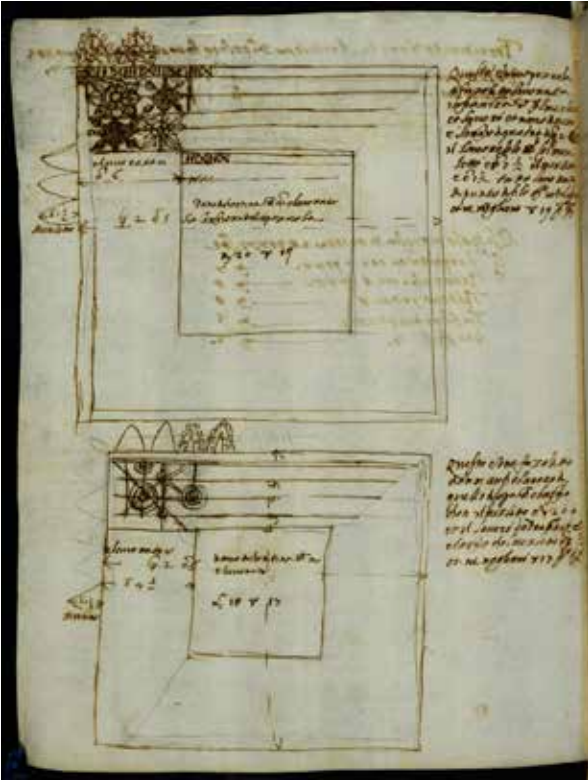


FIG. 3.17 (LA-782) (LEFT)
Designs for handkerchiefs, Florence, 1580–90. Pen and ink on paper. Courtesy of Ministero per la cultura/ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, GM 143, cc. 555–556.

FIG. 3.18 (LA-783) (RIGHT)
Bobbin-lace handkerchief, Italy, 17th century. Linen and silk. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1939, 39.123.1.



Consuming and Regulating Lace

Lace was a luxury product and prices for fine pieces were high. Tarabotti noted that the cost of the lace produced for a noble customer was “no less than sixty ducats per braccio.”²⁸ The convent of Sant’Anna also sold lace for very high prices, charging 360 ducats for a *braccio* of very fine three-dimensional lace border produced in the nunnery. Even the prices for secondhand lace works were high. In an auction organized in 1599 for the sale of the inheritance of Salutio Gnechi, a *cavaliere del doge*, seven ounces of “punto” (*in aria*) needle lace was priced at 1,115 lire, or 174 ducats.²⁹ This meant that a piece of fine lace of around twenty-four inches (60 centimeters) could be more valuable than the entire year’s salary of a master artisan, and five times higher than the value of a lacemaker’s yearly labor.³⁰

Because of the luxury and cost associated with fashionable lace, its use in Italy was regulated by sumptuary laws. This was certainly the case in Venice as well as in other smaller Italian cities. Sumptuary laws issued in the Tuscan city of Lucca in 1595, for example, justified the need for regulations, lamenting that “it was not long ago when a prohibition was issued for certain embroidered collars for the high expense; today, they make collars of network with stitches on top of stitches . . . the prices of these have become intolerable.”³¹

Such laws often gave specific guidelines regarding both the materials and the size of lace trims. Officials in Florence, where round lace ruffs had become popular in the early seventeenth century published a sumptuary law in 1638 that stated that “no man or woman in the city of whatever condition” was allowed to use any other kind of lace in ruffs and collars than linen, and that it was not to be wider than one and three-quarters inches (4.5 centimeters; one *soldo e mezzo di braccio*). Lace trims of silk, on the other hand, could be used for mantles and head coverings, as long as they did not exceed the width of eight *denari di braccio*, or a little less than seven-eighths of an inch (2 centimeters). The laws stipulated that none of these items could include lace made of gold thread.³²

As these sumptuary laws suggest, lace was not an exclusive product of the Italian elites. Lace was made in a variety of qualities and was widely available ready-made from the city’s street sellers as well as from local women who sold lace door to door at cheaper price points. Historian and curator Patricia Allerston’s work suggests that street sellers often closely followed the latest fashion trends. She quotes a popular carnival song from the period, which urges passersby to purchase lace collars from a street seller because “they are of the latest style.”³³ Some of the laces that were produced for broader consumption copied Genoese, Milanese, or Venetian laces (FIG. 3.19, LA-784) or replaced precious materials with cheaper ones. For example, the bobbin insert referenced above (SEE FIG. 3.14, LA-002) is similar in design to the gold lace worn by Eleonora of Toledo (1522–1562) in her portrait painted by Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572) around 1560, but it is executed in linen (FIG. 3.20, LA-864).

Documents that record offenses against sumptuary laws demonstrate that seventeenth-century Italian male artisans had a particular taste for lace ruffs and that men often broke these laws by wearing excessive amounts of lace.³⁴ For example, in March 1638, the specially appointed Florentine officials known as *birri*, who were stationed in front of city taverns, marketplaces, piazze, and church entrances to ensure that clothing regulations were respected, confiscated a collar worn by a butcher named Nicolò because it was trimmed with lace that was too wide. Documentation of the court case is preserved in the Florentine state archives (FIG. 3.21, LA-785).³⁵

Household inventories also confirm that lace was not only made for wealthy elites, but was also widely worn further down on the social scale. Data from Venice, Siena, and Florence between 1550 and 1650 shows that many men and women had their clothing and accessories trimmed with different types of bobbin-made

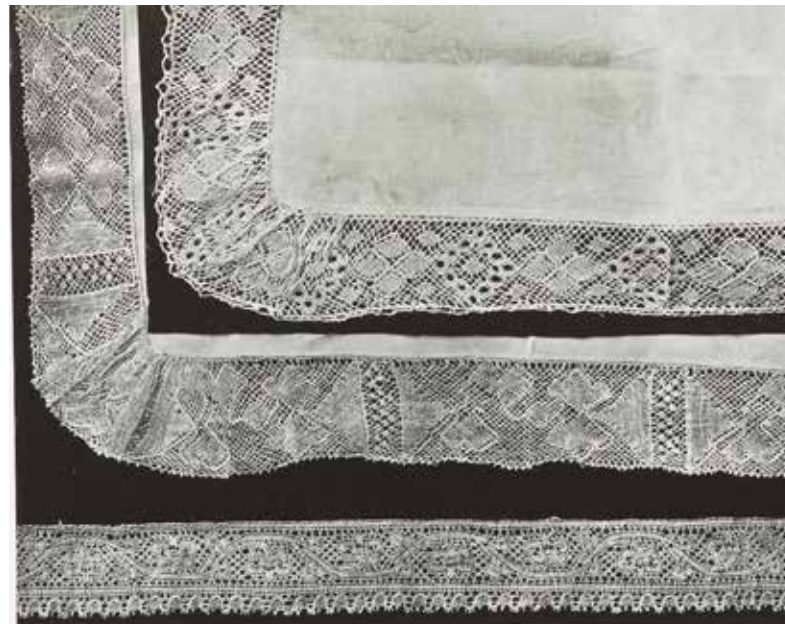


FIG. 3.19 (LA-784) (BELOW)
Lace from Abbruzzo, copied from Genoese laces, 17th century, from Elisa Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, vol. 2. London: W. Heinemann; Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1913. Archive.org, Getty Research Institute.

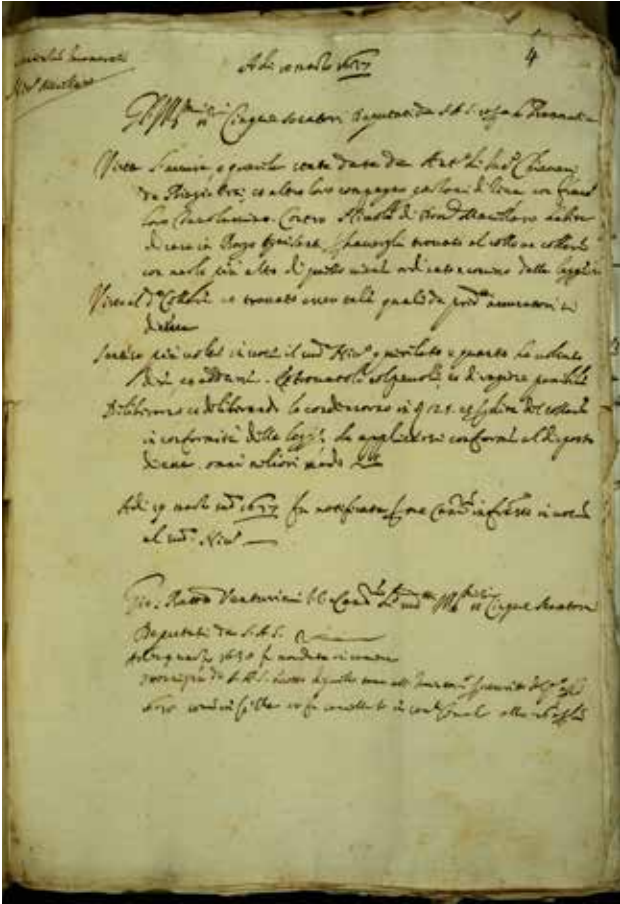
FIG. 3.20 (LA-864) (OPPOSITE)
Agnolo Bronzino, *Eleanora de Toledo*, ca. 1560. Oil on panel. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961.9.7.



lace borders; fine lace cuffs and edgings of reticella; punto in aria needle lace of fine Venetian or Flemish linen thread; and fine gold lace that was attached to handkerchiefs, muffs, sleeves, and gowns. Some of these items are described as being in line with contemporary fashion. For example, the relatively modest Venetian innkeeper Giovanni Suster had among his possessions a small delicate handkerchief edged with gold lace as well as three lace collars and cuffs, “all in current style.”³⁶

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, wearing and making lace in Italy was an economically, socially, and culturally significant activity that cut across the social layers of the entire population. Not only was lace produced for and worn by all, but numerous Italian women—both noble and poor—worked in homes, cloisters, and hospitals in order to supply lace to European consumers, creating some of the most expensive and most desired textiles produced for the fashion markets in the early modern period.

FIG. 3.21 (LA-785)
 Page from a sumptuary law case, concerning a Florentine butcher, 1683. Pen and ink on paper. Courtesy of Ministero per la cultura/Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Pratica segreta, b. 176 (March 10, 1638): fol. 4r.



1 This research has been carried out as part of the Refashioning the Renaissance project. It has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 726195). For the development of fashion in lace, see Ann Rosalind Jones, “Labor and Lace: The Crafts of Giacomo Franco’s *Habiti delle donne venetiane*,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17, no. 2 (2014): 412–15; and Anne Kraatz, *Lace: History and Fashion*, trans. Pat Earnshaw (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 42–46. For the origins of lace as fashion, see Lidia Sciamia, “Lacemaking in Venetian Culture,” in *Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning*, ed. Ruth Barnes and Joanne B. Eicher (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 127.
 2 Pat Earnshaw, *Lace in Fashion: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Guildford: Gorse, 1985), 15. For the fashion for ruffs and regional variations in styles, see Kraatz, *Lace*, 18; Santina M. Levey, *Lace: A History* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1983), 1; and Sciamia, “Lacemaking,” 128. The growing size of ruffs can be traced by comparing portraits by Palma il Vecchio, Rubens, and Titian for lace from about the late 15th century, where lace is always depicted bordering the necklines and cuffs of women’s dresses and men’s

shirts, with excessive lace designs of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.
 3 Quoted in Levey, *Lace*, 12.
 4 Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 404. These books can be used to reconstruct the development of lace from geometric cutwork with a gridlike structure to free-flowing patterns and *punto in aria* or true needle-lace technique. Levey, *Lace*, 21.
 5 Isabella Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses: Feminine Works in Venetian Convents from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles*, ed. Maureen D. Goggin and Beth F. Tobin (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 168; Kraatz, *Lace*, 7.
 6 Quoted in Levey, *Lace*, 9.
 7 For the basic lace techniques and terms, and for the origins and development of bobbin and needle lace, see Levey, *Lace*; Elisa Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1912–13); and for bobbin lace in particular, Lena Dahrén, “Printed Pattern Books for Early Modern Bobbin-Made Borders and Edgings,” *Konsthistorisk tidskrift* 18, no. 3 (2013): 169–90.
 8 Quoted in Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 1:24. For bobbin lace produced

in Genoa and Milan, see Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 1:90.
 9 See, for example, Kraatz, *Lace*, 12.
 10 Quoted in Patricia Allerston, “An Undisciplined Activity? Lace Production in Early Modern Venice,” in *Shadow Economies and Irregular Work in Urban Europe: 16th to Early 20th Centuries*, ed. Thomas Buchner and Philip R. Hoffmann-Rehnitz (Vienna: Lir Verlag, 2011), 64–65.
 11 Kraatz, *Lace*, 18; Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 179.
 12 Dahrén, “Printed Pattern Books,” 180. See the development from bold and colored silk to washable linen lace in Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 2:13.
 13 For the early connections between needle lace and noblewomen, see Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 403; Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 168–69; and Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 1:134. The question whether lacemaking was initially an aristocratic pastime or whether it was in origin a “popular skill” has been debated; see Sciamia, “Lacemaking,” 130.
 14 Dahrén, “Printed Pattern Books,” 176: “Dove le belle et virtuose donne potranno fare ogni sorte di lavoro, cioè merli de diverse sorte, cavezzi, colari, maneghetti, & tutte quelle cose che le piaceranno.” Many other pattern books had similar dedications, such as that of Cesare Vecellio. Levey, *Lace*, 9.
 15 Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 405.
 16 Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 1:255.
 17 Levey, *Lace*, 9. For noblewomen’s patronage of lace, see Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 403; and Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses.”
 18 Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 409. For the quotation, see RM, *New Pattern Book of All Kinds of Bobbin Laces* (1561), ed. and trans. Helen Hough (James G. Collins and Associates, 2018), 3, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/NewModelbook1561/mode/2up>. For the original edition, see RM, *Nüw Modelbuch von allerley gattungen Däntelschnür* (Zurich: Christoph Froschauer, 1561), available online from the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, <https://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-5463>.
 19 Inventory of the fishmonger Tommaso di Salvatore Mariti, 1620, 12r, Magistrato dei pupilli, no. 2717, Archivio di stato di Firenze (hereafter abbreviated ASF): “Un tombola da far trine”; Inventory of the rag dealer Antonio Rossati, 1555, 12r, Cancelleria inferiore, Miscellanea, no. 39, 44 (1555), Archivio di stato di Venezia (hereafter abbreviated ASV): “Uno bavaro strazado e lavorato a ponto in tombola usado.”
 20 Inventory of the mason Augustin Zorzi, 1650, 1v, Giudici e petizion, Inventari, no. 361, 107, ASV: “Dette (traverse) sottile una di musolo con cordelle e merli, e doi di cambra con merli e cordelle a mazzette in tutto n. 3”; Inventory of the baker Maffio Truscardi, 1645, 1r–1v, Giudici e petizion, Inventari, no. 359, 93, ASV: “Brazza de cordella a mazzette da traverse largo n. 11” and “Camise da donna de tella fatte in casa nove con suoi cavezzi, a mazzette et ago n. 35”; Inventory of the limemaker Carlo del q. Iseppo, 1620, 4v, Giudici e petizion, Inventari, no. 347, 89, ASV: “Tre facioli da man de tella fata in casa con merli a macete e gasi usati.”
 21 Quoted in Dahrén, “Printed Pattern Books,” 179n41.
 22 Quoted in Allerston, “An Undisciplined Activity?,” 67.
 23 Ibid., 65–66.
 24 Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 169–75; Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 407.

25 Quoted in Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 175. There was a deep concern for those segments of the population that were presumed to need protection from the point of view of honor. Sciamia, “Lacemaking,” 131.
 26 Quoted in Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 172–73.
 27 Sciamia, “Lacemaking,” 132; Allerston, “An Undisciplined Activity?,” 68; Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 172; Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 409.
 28 Quoted in Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 173.
 29 For these examples, see Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses,” 173; and Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 408–11. The history of vanity records such prices as 13,000 scudi for cravats, cuffs, and frills. Ricci, *Old Italian Lace*, 1:268–69.
 30 Based on lacemakers’ estimated daily pay of as low as between 10 and 13 soldi, and a little over 1 lira for an ordinary master artisan. For salaries of 16th-century artisans, see Paula Hohti, *Artisans, Objects and Everyday Life in Renaissance Italy: The Material Culture of the Middling Class* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 155–59; and for estimated lacemakers’ salaries, and Jones, “Labor and Lace,” 406.
 31 Quoted in Luigi Fumi, “La moda del vestire in Lucca dal secolo XIV al XIX,” *Bollettino dell’Istituto Storico Artistico Orvietano* 54, no. 60 (2002–4): 554: “Non e molto che si fece proibitione di certi collari lavorati, per la molta spesa che erano; hora si fanno collari di rete con punte e altri lavori sopra dette punte, che per quanto intendiamo, sono venuti a un prezzo in-tollerabile.”
 32 *Riforma, e Prammatica sopra l’uso delle perle, gioie, vestire, et altro per la Città & Contado di Firenze* (Firenza: Massi e Landi, 1638), B3, 48v, and A4, 49r. I thank Michele Robinson for the translation of these documents.
 33 Allerston, “An Undisciplined Activity?,” 70, referring to “Da Buranelle,” in *Mascarate piacevoli et ridicolose per il carnevale a 4, 5, 6, 7 et otto voci: Di Giovanni Croce chiozotto; Libro primo*, by Giovanni Croce (Venice: Giacomo Vincenzi, 1590).
 34 Paula Hohti, “Dress, Dissemination and Change: Artisan ‘Fashions’ in Renaissance Italy,” in *Fashioning the Early Modern: Creativity and Innovation in Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. Evelyn Welch (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Pasold, 2017), 163.
 35 “Un collare con merlo piu alto,” quoted and translated in Michele Robinson, “Dirty Laundry: Caring for Clothing in Early Modern Italy,” *Costume* 55, no. 1 (2021): 12. For the original, see Pratica segreta, b. 176 (March 10, 1638), fol. 4r, ASF. For the activities of Pratica segreta, see Giulia Calvi, “Abito, genere, cittadinanza nella Toscana moderna (secoli XVI–XVII),” *Quaderni storici* 110 (2002): 477–503.
 36 Inventory of the innkeeper Giovanni Suster, 1634, 9v, Giudice di Petizion, Inventari, no. 360, 25, ASV: “Tre collari di tella da baston con merli fiamenghi, et tre para de maneghetti compagni il tutto alla moda,” and 12v: “Un faciolo de seda con merlo d’oro vecchio.” For Venetian punto in aria, see the inventory of the clothes seller Isach, 1634, 1r, Giudice di Petizion, Inventari, no. 354, 37, ASV: “Traverssa mussolo con lavor d’aiera.” Further examples of lace among artisanal population can be found in the forthcoming online database, published online in 2022 by the Refashioning the Renaissance Project, <https://refashioningrenaissance.eu/database/>.