'Una persona dependente alla Serenissima Gran Duchessa': Female Embroiderers and Lacemakers between the courts of Florence and France*
Adelina Modesti

Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere (1622–1694) (fig. 6.1) [PLACE FIG. HERE] was an important patron of women artists and artisans at the Medici court during the Early Modern period, whose impact on humanist culture has only recently begun to be explored in depth.1 This essay examines the training and education she provided for two embroiderers and lace-makers, Caterina Angiola Pieroncini and another woman known to us only by the moniker ‘La Trottolina’, in the 1660s. Both ladies-in-waiting, the young women were sent to Paris to perfect their needlework skills in the new French styles. Having gained proficiency in France, both were repatriated to Florence. There they continued in service to the Grand Duchess alongside other dame (ladies-in-waiting), among them Maria Maddalena Caligari, who were trained by nuns at the city’s convents. All these women were dependent on the protection of the Grand Duchess, who did not fail to provide morally and materially for her young charges.

Lacemaking and embroidery had traditionally been the preserve of convents and female conservatories, and considered a creative activity believed to safeguard the girls’ virtue and honour.2 Moreover, the Italian product (especially Venetian gros point needle lace) (fig. 6.2) [PLACE FIG HERE] was considered of the highest quality and most prized by the elite of Europe. But in the middle of the seventeenth-century, with the political ascendancy of France, the Louis Quatorze style began to dominate European fashion, and new French styles, including bobbin and needle laces (point de France) (fig. 6.3) [PLACE FIG HERE], became more popular throughout the continent. Cultural exchange between the courts of France and Italy also intensified. The example of the two ladies-in-waiting studied here shows them moving away from the protected confines of Vittoria’s Florentine court, where other needle workers, women artists, and musicians were trained ‘in-house’ so to speak, to embrace a more cosmopolitan education.3 This study will focus our attention on Vittoria della Rovere’s patronage of material culture and on the mobility of luxury goods and people, especially women, between two important European courts in the second half of the seventeenth century. The central importance of the applied arts such as needlework, traditionally considered a minor art form, in the cultural formation and lives of court women will be highlighted, as this formed part of the Grand Duchess’s pedagogic agenda. It will further explore Vittoria’s international networks, especially her female confidants, whom she entrusted with the support and protection of her ladies-in-waiting whilst away.

* This essay develops further a section on ladies-in-waiting and the applied arts in my book, Women’s Patronage, pp. 171–72; see also pp. 27–28. I would like to thank Tanja Jones for her kind invitation to contribute to this volume, and the anonymous readers for their suggestions.


2 See Modesti, ‘Nun Artisans’; Rocco, ‘Maniera Devota’.

3 One need only cite the example of Giovanna Fratellini, also a lady-in-waiting to Vittoria della Rovere, who was taught painting and drawing within her court by various Medici (male) artists. See Dabbs, ‘Anecdotal Insights’, p. 32; Straussman-Pflanzer, ‘Court Culture’, pp. 300–09; Modesti, Women’s Patronage, pp. 174–75.
One aspect of the Grand Duchess’s cultural patronage was the importation and exchange of luxury goods, portraits, and books between the Florentine court and France, documented in a series of letters between Vittoria della Rovere’s agent, the Medici Resident at the French court, Abbot Giovanni Filippo Marucelli, and her secretary Cavalier Alessandro Cerchi (1663–1666) that I have examined elsewhere.\(^4\) It is to be noted that human resources/capital were also involved in this transnational cultural exchange, as is highlighted by the experiences of the lace-maker and embroiderer Signorina Caterina Angiola Pieroncini, who served as a lady-in-waiting at the Florentine court. Impressed with the quality of the luxury goods (clothes, laces, fabrics, carpets) she received from France on a regular basis, Vittoria sent the young Caterina Angiola to Paris in early 1664 to perfect her technical skills in the needle arts, for what the Grand Duchess initially thought would be a predetermined time. However, letters dating from January 1664 to June 1665 reveal the increasing frustration Vittoria felt as, time and again, the repatriation of her dama, the ‘Maestra’ Angiola, to Florence was delayed. Caterina Angiola, it seems, needed to finish her training and perfect her needle technique under her French ‘Matrona’, Mademoiselle Alée, to whom Vittoria delle Rovere paid a pension of 80–100 lire per trimester (i.e. 400 lire per year).\(^5\) The Grand Duchess further paid the ‘Maestra’ Caterina Angiola herself a 200 lire ‘pension’ every ‘two trimesters’, whilst she resided in Paris.

Caterina Angiola lived ‘in a small house on the third floor’ in Paris.\(^6\) There the young woman was placed under the protection and supervision of the Princess de Guise, Vittoria’s French cousin, close friend, and confidant. Marie de Lorraine, Duchesse de Guise (1615–1688), was the daughter of Charles, Duc de Guise and Henriette Catherine de Joyeuse. Known as Mademoiselle de Guise, Marie was a vibrant musical patron, who promoted the work of Marc-Antoine Charpentier amongst her family and friends. She was also a savvy businesswoman, acting as one of the donneur d’avis (tax advisors to increase court revenue) to King Louis XIV.\(^7\) As a young woman, Mme. de Guise lived alongside Vittoria delle Rovere in Florence, from 1634 to 1643, where her family had been exiled before returning to France. From Paris she maintained an intense epistolary relationship with the Medici, with whom she was imparentado (related) on a number of levels. It is reported that Mme. de Guise wrote her Florentine relations weekly for over 40 years, and was kept informed of the family’s wellbeing by the Medici residents in Paris.\(^8\)

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4 See Modesti, ‘Diplomatic and Cultural Partnerships’, pp. 165–76; Modesti, ‘“Mode le più novelle”’; Modesti, *Women’s Patronage*, Chapter 5. This correspondence is found in ASF, MdP 6186.

5 ASF, MdP 6186, unpaginated. Giovanni Filippo Marucelli to Alessandro Cerchi, Paris, 12 June 1665:

*Nota di spese diverse fatte per ordine o per servizio della Serenissima Gran Duchessa come appresso [...] Per tanti pagati a Madamigella Alée già Maestra della signora Caterin’ Angiola, per cinque mesi di pensione a tutto il 18 maggio a ragione di lire 400 l’anno lire 166.13.4 (‘166.13.4 lire paid to Mademoiselle Alée, former teacher of Caterina Angiola, being her pension for five months up until 18 May at 400 lire per year’).* See also ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 25 January 1664: ‘Havendo pagato 200 Lire somesi alla maestra della Sig[m]ora Caterina Angiola p[er] la pensione degli ultimi dui trimestri’ (‘Having paid 200 Lire given to the teacher of Lady Caterina Angiola being for her pension for the past two trimesters’).

6 ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 10 October 1664: ‘in una casuccia ad un terzo piano’.


8 This finds support in the number of muted letters I have come across in the ASF from Vittoria to the ‘Principessa di Guisa’, whom the Grand Duchess affectionately addresses as ‘mon cousine’ or ‘mia cugina’, especially in the 1660s and 1680s (for example, ASF, MdP 6174, unpaginated: letters dated Florence, 20 and 27 June 1664; ASF, MdP 6175, unpaginated: letter dated Florence, 12 September 1668). This correspondence ranges from family matters such as deaths to news on the good service of ladies-in-waiting. See also ASF, MdP 6186, letter from Marucelli to Cerchi, dated Paris, 23 April 1666, in which reference is made to the continual exchange of letters between the two women in French and in Tuscan ‘il nostro carattere’ (‘our language’). The period Marie de Lorraine
Holding such important posts at the French court, and having Vittoria's confidence, Mme. de Guise would have been in an excellent position to oversee the care of Caterina Angiola on behalf of the Grand Duchess.

It is significant that Caterina Angiola was referred to by Abbot Marucelli as ‘a person dependent on Her Most Serene Grand Duchess’. 9 This meant that the young woman was to be taken care of financially and morally by Vittoria della Rovere, her ‘padrona’ (‘mistress’), as was stipulated in the Medici Regolamenti della Guardaroba of 1637. 10 According to those regulations, each Grand Duke and Grand Duchess was personally responsible not only for the salary and pensions of their individual courtiers, but also for their marriage dowries; education and training; and other material, emotional, and spiritual needs such as funerals. 11 The Medici Guardaroba was to furnish the material requirements of all the people in the family’s service, from personal clothing to bed linens and household furnishings: ‘For all these [ladies and gentlemen of the bed chamber] and for the Pageboys and Masters [i.e. artisans and artists] must the Guardaroba provide’. 12 Thus, on top of her regular pension, Caterina Angiola received monies towards clothing and other ‘personal needs’ almost on a monthly basis. 13 On 19 December 1664, for example, 12 lire were paid to a tailor for his services in providing Caterina with some ‘robe’ (‘things/dresses’) with a further 44 lire allotted for ‘suoi bisogni’. 14 The most Vittoria allowed Caterina Angiola for her ‘vestiario’ (‘apparel’) appears to have been a substantial twelve scudi, provided on 23 January 1665; this sum included payment for the work

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11 See, for example, the documented ricordi of Giovanni Battista Ricci, ASF, Manoscritti 160, unpagedinated, Capitolo 264, entry dated 15 June 1669 regarding the funeral at San Lorenzo of:
Marchese Francesco Coppoli di Perugia, Maestro di Camera del Serenissimo Granduca Ferdinando
Secondo et detto mortorio fu fatto a spese della Corte che così è il solito che fanno i Maestri di Camera questi Serenissimi Principi (Marchese Francesco Coppoli of Perugia, Master of the Bedchamber to His Most Serene Grand Duke Ferdinand the Second, and said funeral was undertaken at the expense of the Court as is the usual practice of these Most Serene Princes for their Masters of the Bedchamber [my emphasis]).

12 Regolamenti della Guardaroba, 1637 in Barocchi and Gaeta Bertelà, Collezionismo Mediceo, p. 459: ‘A tutti questi [dame e cavalieri di camera] et a’ signori Paggi e Maestri deve provvedere la Guardaroba’. See, for example, ASF, MdP 6263, Quadernaccio D, ‘Guardaroba della Ser[enissi]ma Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere 1663-1667’, fol.13r entry dated 28 October 1664, for the sixteen items of bedroom furnishings, including a bed and two mattresses, that were sent to the Convento delle Stabilite:
à comando di Sua Altezza Serenissima [Vittoria…] per servizio alla fanciulla che l’Altezza Sua vi mettersi esserla figlia della Balia del Serenissimo Grand Principe Cosimo suo figlio (by command of Her Most Serene Highness [...] for service to the young girl that Her Highness placed there, being the daughter of the Wetnurse of His Most Serene Grand Prince Cosimo her son).

13 See ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Nota di spese, Paris, 12 June 1665: ‘Per tanti alla signora Caterin’Angiola per suoi bisogni in di 7 d’aprile lire 45’ (‘For the amount given to signora Caterina Angiola for her personal needs on the day of 7 April 45 lire’); ‘13 maggio 1665 lire 57. 8 datigli per i suoi bisogni’ (‘13 May 1665, 57.8 lire given her for her personal needs’), and so on.

produced for the Grand Duchess.\textsuperscript{15} And in the following months Vittoria presented the girl with ‘gallantries of small jewels [...] to the value of 40 doppie’\textsuperscript{16}

Abbot Marucelli, in a letter dated 10 July 1664, estimated that Caterina Angiola’s training in Paris was to take a further ‘seven or eight months’. Having been asked by Vittoria to inform her as to the young girl’s level of expertise, the Medici Resident reported in the same letter that her ‘skill’ was still only ‘mediocre’, but sufficient, nonetheless, to enable ‘her to refine it with practice’\textsuperscript{17}. On 14 August 1664, Marucelli again reported on Caterina’s increasing ‘competency’ in needlework for the Grand Duchess.\textsuperscript{18} Caterina Angiola indeed remained in France another eleven months, firstly in Paris and then at the court at Fontainbleau, after which she accepted the position of lady-in-waiting to the Mme. de Guise (Marie de Lorraine) for another three months. During her time with the Princess, Caterina Angiola was to specialize her skills in ‘dressing hair in the most up to date fashion’, before returning to Florence to begin working for Vittoria again in the middle of the following year.\textsuperscript{19} Though reluctant about Caterina Angiola’s longer stay, Vittoria still paid the girl’s new hairdressing Maestra a pension of 80 francs; Marucelli reported that this was ‘a sum this woman considers modest compared to what she usually is paid’.\textsuperscript{20}

Four letters from the Abbot Marucelli between August and October 1664, dated 22 August, 26 September, and 10 October, inform us that Caterina Angiola, in fact, remained in Paris against the wishes of the Grand Duchess, who was not pleased with this situation. But as Marucelli writes ‘her Maestra [Alée] is absolutely opposed to her return [to Florence...stating] that by next March Caterina Angiola will have achieved reasonable proficiency, to be able to render the most useful service to Her Most Serene Mistress’\textsuperscript{21}. Needless to say, Mme. de Guise agreed with this assessment by Mme. Alée, for as the Abbot writes, Marie de Lorraine ‘wanted Caterina Angiola to be her Chamber Maid, to do her hair for a while, after she had finished her lessons with her Maestra’, for such further hands-on experience would be in Vittoria’s interests too: ‘the Most Serene Grand Duchess will also be well served’\textsuperscript{22}. To placate Vittoria, Abbot

\textsuperscript{15} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 23 January 1665: ‘Alla med[essi]ma si sono somministrati 12- scudi si p[er] il servizio di S[uo] A[ltezza] come p[er] occorenze del suo vestiario’ (‘To the same [girl] was administered 12- scudi in service for Her Highness as well as for her clothing needs’).
\textsuperscript{16} ‘galanterie di piccole gioie [...] fino al valore di 40 doppie’; ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 3 April 1665, 15 May 1665, 22 May 1665.
\textsuperscript{17} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, 10 July 1664: Parla la 2: a [lettera] di V. S. Ill: dell ritorno della Sig[no]ra Caterina Angela, la q[u]ae trovandosi di pochi giorni in qua con la sua m[a]t[r]ona a Fontainbleau [...] Nell’ informarmi della sua abilità, trovo ch’ella è mediocre e che in 7 o otto mesi di continuazione potrebbe migliorar notabilmente ma con tutto ciò non si può dire, ch’ella non sia introdotta a sufficiente nelle regole fondamentali da poter poi con la pratica raffinarla (Your second [letter] discusses the return of Lady Caterina Angela, who has been a few days in Fontainbleau with her matron [Mme. de Guise... Informing myself as to her ability, I find that she is mediocre and that in seven or eight continuous months she could improve notably, but nonetheless it cannot be said that she hasn’t been introduced enough to the fundamental rules to be able to refine herself with practice).
\textsuperscript{18} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 14 August 1664.
\textsuperscript{19} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 22 August 1665: ‘per acconciar della testa [...] delle mode più in uso’.
\textsuperscript{20} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 26 September 1664: ‘modo a quel ch’ella piglia p[e]r il solito’. Cf. also Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 29 August 1664 (ASF, MdP 6168), for reference to a payment of a pension to Caterina Angiola’s ‘nuova Maestra d’acconciar la test’ (‘new hairdressing teacher’).
\textsuperscript{21} ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 26 September 1664.
\textsuperscript{22} ‘al quanto divorziata dalla sua Maestra’; ‘sara anche ben servita La Serenissima Grand duchessa’; ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 10 October 1664, 26 September 1664.
Marucelli indicates that he will send with the September envoy ‘two white lace collars’ that he has asked Caterina Angiola to ‘immediately consign’ to him ‘in the service of Her Highness [...] as well as another, upon which she is to likewise produce two collars promptly, that will remain here, as models’, these as evidence of the girl's skilled handiwork. The Abbot further reveals that Caterina Angiola’s *Maestra* (Alée) also wants to present a ‘gift to the Most Serene Grand Duchess of a lace bonnet in “punto di Venezia” [Venetian gros-point lace], with certain ribbon frills “alla moda”.’ Alongside these gifts, Marucelli also dispatches two jewelled monstrances which Vittoria had requested on behalf of the Cardinal Decano (Carlo de’ Medici, her uncle).23

Vittoria must have resigned herself to Caterina Angiola’s longer stay, for another letter, dated 31 October 1664, from Marucelli to Cerchi, refers to the Grand Duchess's ‘kindness’ and her ‘passionate desire’ that the young girl ‘gain full profit’ from her education in the ‘diverse works (i.e. embroidery, lacemaking, and hairdressing), that have been the reason for her coming to live in France’. The Grand Duchess then requests that Caterina Angiola produce a ‘pezzuola’ (lace handkerchief or head covering) and ‘ricci’ (curled hair extensions) as indications of her increasing ability.24 Those pieces were dispatched to Vittoria on 14 November.25 Numerous other requests by Vittoria for lacework (handkerchiefs, collars, headpieces, bonnets, cuffs, sleeves) and hairpieces (‘ricci’ and ‘code’) to be produced by Caterina Angiola followed.26 In the meantime, Abbot Marucelli paid Caterina Angiola’s *Maestra* Mme. Alée twelve *Louis d’or* ‘on behalf of the Ser[enissi]ma Gran Duchessa’, who wished to show her appreciation of the woman’s teaching.27 Vittoria further paid for the customary New Year’s tips for Caterina Angiola’s teachers and provided a French language tutor for the young girl so that she could learn to read.28

Caterina Angiola also acted as a consultant to the Grand Duchess when the latter wished to provide a suitable ‘gallantry’ (gift) of ‘pietre conmesse’ (stone inlay) in thanks for Mme. de Guise’s supervision of the girl, with Vittoria asking if the princess would prefer something for the ‘chapel or for her bedroom’. The reply from Marucelli was that Caterina Angiola understood that the princess would like some ‘small portraits’.29 Marucelli himself was requested to pass on to Mme. de Guise the Grand Duchess's ‘appreciation for all the kind courtesies that the said

23 The above information is provided in ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 26 September 1664.
24 ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 31 October 1664:

[L]a benigna passione con la quale brama la Ser[enissi]ma Gran Duchessa il pronto profitto della d[ett]a fanciulla, ne i diversi uniformi lavori, che sono stati l’oggetto della sua venuta, e dimora in Francia. Nell’istesso tempo gli si prescrive la fabbrica immediata della pezzuola, e de ricci da servir p[er] saggio della sua habilità. ([T]he kind passion with which Her Most Serene Grand Duchess desires the prompt profit of the said girl in diverse uniform works, that has been the reason for her coming to live in France. At the same time I prescribe to her the immediate manufacture of the lace handkerchief, and of the ringlets to serve as proof of her skills.)

25 ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 14 November 1664.
26 See for example, ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 2 January 1665, 13 February 1665, and 24 April 1665.
27 ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 7 November 1664.
29 See ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 28 November 1664 and 12 December 1664.
princess has shown to Signora Caterina Angiola’. When Angiola was finally to leave France in 1665, the princess showed the girl ‘tender kindness’ by presenting her ‘four small jewels’ and showering her with ‘expressions of deep affection’. Vittoria and Marie de Lorraine also exchanged gifts on that occasion, including the ‘box of gloves’ of perfumed suede the Grand Duchess sent to her French cousin.

Caterina Angiola did indeed profit from her French education, for as Marucelli reported in 1664: ‘the said girl I understand comports herself very well, as much in her application to her work, as in her manner of governing herself, and in making herself loved, and I am assured that by next September she will be most capable’. In a letter the following year he defended the girl’s extended stay in the French capital, concluding that:

[H]er residency in this city [Paris] from last August till now has been of great benefit to her, having now perfectly mastered those works, which then [in August] she only had begun to understand, that she would have remained always confused, and perhaps the Most Serene Grand Duchess would have been sorry to have her recalled [to Florence] so early.

Caterina Angiola Pieroncini finally returned to Florence in June 1665, chaperoned by Vittoria's agent in Milan, Giovanni Jaminet (or Giaminet) and the Signora Contessa della Trinità, whom Marucelli described as an ‘honourable elderly woman’. The young girl also wrote to her
mistress herself, expressing joy in returning home, thanking the Grand Duchess for her protection and patronage over the eighteen-month period of her French sojourn, and requesting farewell gifts for her French ‘maestra’, ‘sottomaestra’, and her friend Maddalena (Mme. de Guise's lady-in-waiting). Vittoria promptly provided these (in the form of monies and jewels), which were received ‘with total satisfaction by all those who were presented them’. Thus, despite some initial frustration, Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere fully supported the creative and personal needs of this young woman during her time away.

Vittoria must have been extremely satisfied with Caterina Angiola's French education, for in 1668 she sent another of her young ladies-in-waiting, identified in documents only as ‘La Trottolina’ – the daughter of her courier ‘Trottolino’ – to Paris to undertake the same training in the needle arts as had Caterina Angiola, also under the direction of Mme. Alée. Unlike Caterina, however, the sickly Trottolina did not enjoy her time in the French capital and was repatriated to Florence as soon as she had mastered her lessons. Vittoria's unpublished letters to Madame du Deffans, the girl's 'protectress' in France, reveal the Grand Duchess's sincere concern for her young dama's health, as well as her desire that she be taught the skills required at her own pace. In one of these, dated 30 October 1668, Vittoria writes:

> It pains me to hear that the air of this country [France] is not pleasing to La Trottolina. I also would hope that having this indisposition and from now till next May that she will have finished acquiring that which I have sent her there to learn [...] But if the girl's poor health will not have permitted her to learn enough, and if by then she will be better, and more able to attend to her lessons than she had been able to do before, I will not hesitate to allow more time for her stay to be longer. Thus could it please Your Ladyship to let me know your opinion [on the matter], since it is you who protects her, and to you I send my thoughts, and more so I confide in you, and in you I also freely trust.

36 ASF, MdP 6186, Caterina Angiola to Alessandro Cerchi and Vittoria della Rovere, Paris, 11 April 1665 (see Appendix for a full transcription and translation).
37 ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 22 May 1665: ‘con intero sodisfazione di chi ne è stato regalato’.
38 Il Trottolino was Domenico Nannini (d. April 1669) identified as ‘corriere’ in Del Piazzo, Gli Ambasciatori, p. 114.
39 Marie-Françoise de Mechinet, Marchioness of the Deffand (du Deffans) was the consort of the Marquis du Deffans (Defand or Defans), and held a number of important positions at the French court, including Dame d’Honneur to the Queen Mother of France (Anne of Austria), Ambassador to King Louis XIV, as well as childhood governess of Princess Marguerite Louise d’Orleans, Vittoria's daughter-in-law. Madame du Defans also acted as Vittoria’s agent in France for the transfer of luxury goods to the Florentine court, providing the Grand Duchess with new dresses from Paris every six months: ASF, MdP 6175, letter from Vittoria to Madame, Florence, 30 October 1668. And when Madame satisfied Vittoria’s request of gloves, linens, and laces from Paris in May 1668, the Grand Duchess was to repay in kind. See Vittoria’s letter of thanks to Madame du Deffans, dated Florence, 11 May 1668 (ASF, MdP 6175). For the Marchioness du Deffans see de La Chenay–Desbois, Dictionnaire, VIII, p. 405; and for her relationship with the Grand Duchess Vittoria, see Modesti, Women’s Patronage, pp. 62–63, 172.
40 ASF, MdP 6175, Vittoria to Madame du Deffans, Florence, 30 October 1668:

Mi duole di udire, che non compiaccia l’aria di coteste paese [Francia] alla Trottolina; pur voglio sperare che ella havesse questa difficoltà e che di qui avanti non sia à Maggio prossimo ella haverà finito d’apprendere quel che l’hò costà inviata per imparare [...] Mà se la poca salute della fanciulla non le havesse permesso allora d’instruirsi à bastanza, e sè allora pure ella stesse meglio, e potesse più attendere alle sue lezioni che non haverò potuto fare per lo passato, io non soffermi nel consentirle cotesto soggiorno più lungo spazio. Onde VS si contenti di dirmene il suo giudizio, poiche sicome à lei, che la protege, partecipo il mio concetto, così ancora confido in lei, e in lei pure mi rimetto liberamente.
Madame du Deffans herself was a loving and kind caretaker of the girl, as Vittoria gratefully acknowledged when she wrote ‘I thank you very affectionately for the caring gestures you continually make towards La Trottolina, and I await the response of the letter that I wrote you regarding this subject’.\(^\text{41}\)

In another letter from Vittoria, dated 26 April 1669, we learn that La Trottolina’s father has just died in Pisa. This is news that the Grand Duchess hopes that Madame can convey to the girl with the necessary care, requesting:

I am notifying you directly so that the sad news is not conveyed to the young girl by just anyone, but that you yourself inform her with charity, and with the usual gentle manner with which you will know how to comfort her, and trust her to the Blessed Divine.\(^\text{42}\)

Vittoria, who herself attached a letter of condolence to the girl, informs Madame du Deffans to console La Trottolina by letting her know of the ‘utmost protection’ she, as Grand Duchess, holds towards her (‘la protezione che più di mai terrò di lei’). She also asks to be informed of the progress the young girl has made in her virtuous handiwork, and when she thinks she may return to Florence so as to be served, writing: ‘Your Ladyship please advise me as you see fit, that she [La Trottolina] has profited in gaining the virtues, for which I sent her to Paris to learn, and when you believe she may return to Florence, so that I can avail myself of them.’\(^\text{43}\) Towards the end of the year, Vittoria again writes to Madame du Deffans to enquire after the young girl, hoping that she has become ‘habile’ (‘skilled’) in her work, and that she does not ‘want for anything’.\(^\text{44}\) It appears from this same letter that La Trottolina was to remain in Paris with the Grand Duchess’s ongoing support till the Spring of 1670, when Vittoria finally ‘reclaimed’ her, again a much longer period than initially anticipated.

Thus, in this transnational cultural exchange, to perfect their lace-making and embroidery skills (as well as hairdressing) under a French maestra, the Grand Duchess paid for the two girls’ accommodation, an ongoing pension, and their tuition fees, as well as appointing each a French language tutor. On top of this, Vittoria provided the girls with monthly payments to ensure they were kept in the appropriate sartorial attire and for all their personal needs. She also furnished gifts such as jewellery for themselves as well as those they were to present to the French court, and ensured that the girls were provided with emotional support by appointing elite court women in her international socio-cultural networks and kin as their protectors.

These are not isolated examples of Vittoria’s protection of her charges, her patronage of female cultural producers, and promotion of female creativity, which ranged from the applied arts and crafts to the liberal arts of painting, music, and poetry. Some of the women artists and artisans she had educated and personally subsidised were already ladies-in-waiting at the court, as was the case with Caterina Angiola Pieroncini and La Trottolina. Vittoria also often placed

\[^\text{41}\]& F, MdP 6175, Vittoria to ‘Madama la Marquise du Deffant’, Florence, 14 December 1668: ‘Je vous remerci bien affectionnement des carerions que vous faict continuellement a la Trottolinne, et en attendans la response del la lettre que ie vous escrivij à son subject il y a quelques sepmaines asseuré vous que ie serait toute ma vie.’
\[^\text{42}\]& F, MdP 6175, Vittoria to Madama du Deffans, Florence, 26 April 1669. See following note.
\[^\text{43}\]& F, MdP 6175, Vittoria to Madama du Deffans, Florence, 26 April 1669: ‘Con carità, e con la solita suave maniera con cui saprà confortarla, e rimetterla nel divino Benedetto […] la protezione che più di mai terrò di lei […] con tal occasione V[ostra] S[ignoria] di accenarmi come le para, che ella habbia fatto profitto nell'apprendere le virtù, le quali io l'ho rinvia per imparare a Parigi, e quando ella giudichi, ch’io me nè possa valere, e la possa far tornare a Firenze.
\[^\text{44}\]& F, MdP 6175, Vittoria to Madama du Deffans, Florence, 9 November 1669 (in French).
young girls in *serbo* (custodianship) in Florentine convents to undertake an education in the needle arts by local nuns before they entered into her service as court *dame*. This was the case with Maria Maddalena Caligari, often referred to simply as ‘la fanciulla Caligari/a’. The girl’s name appears throughout Vittoria’s documents, and she was boarded as an *educanda* (pupil), at the cost to the Grand Duchess of 10 *lire* a month, at the convent of the Mendicanti in Florence during the mid 1680s. Her education there focused on lace-making; she was to ‘learn to make lace’, especially ‘to learn Venetian point’, that is the raised needle lace of Venice known as gross-point (fig. 6.2) which continued to be the most highly prized.

Maria Maddalena Caligari, like all of Vittoria’s charges, received excellent treatment from the Grand Duchess, who extinguished her debts; paid for her convent board and tuition; provided her furnishings; and fed and clothed her. For example, on 17 July 1684, Grand Duchess Vittoria sent ‘la fanciulla Caligari’ a salon chair (‘seggioia da sala’); and on 14 August, a seal and key for her work case. An earlier payment to the merchant Alessandro Ulivi of 63.9 *scudi* for providing ‘linen needed for the young girl Caligara’ was made on 1 July 1684. Vittoria’s seamstress Maria Galeotti was paid 4 *lire* to sew up this linen into underwear and other apparel ‘needed by said Caligara’; these included four blouses and four aprons as well as two small collars, whilst another *lire* was paid to Galeotti to make up a pair of sheets, and 16 *lire* for eight towels for the young girl. Vittoria also had her comb maker, Jacopo Minchioni, produce ‘three combs and one small brush needed for the fanciulla’, for which he was paid 15 *soldi* on 11 July 1684. On 14 April 1685, *lire* 54.14.8 was reimbursed by Vittoria to Marchesa Artemisia

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45 On the Grand Duchess Vittoria’s patronage of lace-making and textile arts in Florentine convents see Modesti, ‘Nun artisans’.
46 ASF, Mdp 6251d, II, *Entrata e Uscita* A14, Doc. 171, insert dated 31 December 1684: ‘Pagati al Signore Giuseppe Conti sotto provveditore de Mendicanti per il vitto che dà S[ua] A[ltezza] per carità alle seguenti cioè […] Per Maria Maddalena Caligari da 12 luglio a tutto il di 31 dicembre a Lire 10 il mese, in tutto come per conto e ricevuta Lire 169’ (‘Paid to Mr Giuseppe Conti, vice overseer of the Mendicanti for the board that Her Highness provides as charity to the following (girls), that is […] For Maria Maddalena Caligari from 12 July to the end of 31 December at 10 *lire* a month. In total as per the account and receipt Lire 169.’ With receipt of the same date.
47 ASF, Mdp 6251d, II, *Entrata e Uscita* A14, Doc. 98, insert dated 17 July 1684: ‘porto nostro fare a Mendicanti per la fanciulla [Caligara] che impare a far le trine, per una seggiola da sala, Lire 1:6.8’ (‘taken on our behalf to the Mendicanti, a salon chair (valued at) Lire 1:6.8, for the girl who is learning to make lace’); Doc. 114, insert dated 14 August 1684: ‘per una Toppa, e Chiave messa alla Cassa della fanciulla de Caligari, che e ne Mendicanti per imparare il punto di Venezia, Lire 1:6.8’ (‘for a lock and key placed in the chest owned by the girl de Caligari, who is in the Mendicanti to learn Venetian point, Lire 1:6.8’).
48 ASF, Mdp 6251d, II, *Entrata e Uscita* A14, Doc. 79, insert dated 26 June 1684: *Scudi* 14:6.8 ‘per riscuotere due polize di prestito della fanciulla Caligari’ (‘to collect two loan policies of the girl Caligari’).
49 See note 47 above.
50 ASF, Mdp 6251d, *Entrata e Uscita* A14, Doc. 79, insert dated 1 July 1684: payment to Alessandro Ulivi of 63.9 *scudi* for ‘tele servite per la fanciulla Caligara […] e più pagati a Maria Galeotti per cucitura di biancherie servite per detta Caligara Lire 2.13.4 per 4 camice, Lire 6.4 per 4 Canavacci, Lire 1 per 4 grembiuli, due collarini de Collo, e 4 passuole. Lire 1 per un paio di Lenzuola, Lire 16 per otto tele in tutto come ricevuta Scudi 5.16’ (‘linen needed for the girl Caligara […] and also paid to Maria Galeotti for sewing up white linenwear for the said Caligara, Lire 2.13.4 for four blouses, Lire 6.4 for four hemp pieces, Lire 1 for four aprons, two small neck collars, and four passuole […] Lire 1 for a pair of bed sheets, Lire 16 for eight towels, in total as per receipt *Scudi* 5.16’) (with receipt of the same date).
51 ASF, Mdp 6251d, II, *Entrata e Uscita* A14, Doc. 98, mandate dated Florence 26 (August 1684?): costs incurred by Pandolfo Ricci between 8 July to 1 August: Ducati 496.15.4, including on 11 July ‘pagati a Jacopo Minchioni Pettinaguoio per valuta di tre pettini e uno spazzolino serviti per la fanciulla Caligara, come per ricevuta. 15 soldi’ (‘paid to the combmaker Jacopo Minchioni for the value of three combs and a small brush needed for the young girl Caligara, as per receipt. 15 soldi’). With receipt of the same date.
della Cornia Medici, identified as ‘monies paid by her to the young girl Caligari who as the Mendicanti’, including money for a pair of shoes valued at *lire* 3.6.8, as recorded in a separate receipt of the same date.\(^{52}\)

**Conclusion**

The above discussed ladies-in-waiting and female cultural producers were protected and supported intuitively by the Grand Duchess who recognized, understood, and wished to foster their emerging talent. Vittoria della Rovere saw to their general and religious as well as artistic education, identifying and nurturing, like a mother, the particular talents of each of the young girls, so that they could become not only ideal *donne di palazzo* (palace ladies) but also women with specialized skills that would enhance their positions at her court and in society. Being financially independent, the Grand Duchess spared no costs in ensuring that the needs of her ladies were met.\(^{53}\)

That such protection and education of her young charges was a serious moral imperative for Vittoria della Rovere is highlighted in a letter the Grand Duchess sent to the Roman widower Marchese Carlo Francesco Spada (dated Florence, 9 May 1684). Referencing the count’s daughter, who was seeking a position at her court, the Grand Duchess wrote that it was,

[...] with full satisfaction I have accepted your offer of Signora Contessa Ortensia your daughter as one of my Ladies. [...] I must conduct myself in this regard, and God be praised that I may be able to finish educating her more dearly than as if the Signora Marchesa your consort were alive.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{52}\) ASF, MdP 6251d, II, *Entrata e Uscita* B1, Inserto 32, entry dated 14 April 1685: *Lire* 54.14.8 to Marchese Artemisia Medici ‘per denari pagati da lei alla fanciulla Caligari che sta ne Mendicanti’ (*[reimbursement] for money paid by her to the young girl Caligari who is at the Mendicanti*).

\(^{53}\) Grand Duchess Vittoria was the last heir of the Della Rovere patrimony, inheriting monies, jewels, lands, and a vast art collection from her grandfather, Francesco Maria II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino in 1631. For the devolution of the Della Rovere patrimony from Urbino to Florence see Miretti, ‘Dal duca di Urbino’. Vittoria’s own personal finances included 550,000 *scudi*, annual rent of over 5,171 Ducats derived from properties in the State of Urbino, and income from her other territories in the Kingdom of Naples, as well as the patrimony she inherited from her paternal grandmother Duchess Livia della Rovere in September 1641, and the 65,000 *scudi* from her mother's death in 1648 (return of Claudia de’ Medici’s dowry). In addition, the Grand Duchess was allocated 14,200 Ducats each year from her consort Grand Duke Ferdinand’s treasury, paid in two installments. See ASF, *Depositaria Generale* 1600, fols.1 r–2r, entries dated 5 May, 1655, 1/17 and 30 March, 1658, 16/22. For Vittoria's inheritance from her grandmother see ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 674, fols. 248r–49v: ‘Nota dell'Oro coniato, e delle Gioie, e altro dell'Eredità della Ser.ma Signora Duchessa Livia di Urbino, che la Serenissima Padrona ricevette di Settembre 1641 al Poggio Imperiale per mano del S[ignor] Niccolò Cerretani che l’arrecò allora da Pesaro in Fiorenza.’ A full inventory of Livia's jewels inherited by Vittoria is also found in ASF, Miscellanea Medicea 12, Insert 11, Folder no. 8, fols. 207r–209r. And in Folder 9 of the same *filza* (fols. 219r–228r) is a copy of Duchess Livia della Rovere’s will, dated 29 May 1639, which names her granddaughter Vittoria as her universal heir. For Vittoria’s mother’s dowry inheritance, which took 10 years to execute, see ASF, Depositaria Generale, 1570, fol. 31v, as cited by Straussman-Pflanzer, *Court Culture*, p. 285, n. 603.

\(^{54}\) ASF, MdP 6180, unpaginated minutes, Vittoria to Marchese Carlo Francesco Spada in Rome dated Florence, 9 May 1684:

[...] la piena sodisfazione colla quale ho accettato l’offerta statami da lei fatta della Signora Contessa Ortensia sua figlia per una delle mie Dame. [...] basta che’lo mi conduca non pure a questo ma è gran Dio à poter finirgliela di educare come tanto più caro ciò mi sarebbe se vivesse la fù Signora Marchesa Consorte di V[ostra] S[ignoria] per dare ancora à essa una tal nuova caparra della mia speziale propensione verso la Casa Spada.
After their service, which usually lasted four years, Vittoria's principal *dame* were presented with a 2000 *scudi* dowry to either marry or profess as nuns.⁵⁵ This level of protection was to continue even after the Grand Duchess died, for Vittoria left instructions in her 1676 testament that Caterina Angiola Pieroncini, amongst others, be given a dowry to enter a convent.⁵⁶ Even in death Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere was to ensure that her loyal ladies-in-waiting were fully taken care of, as they most surely had been during her lifetime.

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⁵⁶ See Vittoria della Rovere’s Testament dated Florence, 10 December 1676: ‘Se parimente al tempo di nostra morte non fussero monacata la Caterin Angiola Pieroncini, e la Feliciana Portughese [...] deva darsi la dote per monacarsi’ (‘Likewise, if at the time of our death Caterina Angiola Pieroncini and the Portugese Feliceana have not yet taken the veil [...] a dowry for them to profess as nuns must be given them’); in ASF, Miscellanea Medicea 12, Insert 11, Folder 6, fol.125r. Caterina Angiola Pieroncini did in fact enter a nunnery in mid-1677, as Suor Maria Vittoria in homage to her patron, for a dowry of 300 *scudi* for the girl was paid by Vittoria della Rovere to the ‘Prioress and nuns’ of the Crocetta, Florence on July 17 (the same convent the Grand Duchess herself resided in before her marriage in 1637). Vittoria continued to provide Suor Maria Vittoria Pieroncini with various forms of subsistence for on 20 November 1677 she purchased a share valued at 112.3.10 *scudi* in the ‘luogo del Monte di Sale’ for the nun. For these two documents in ASF, MdP 6251B, see Straussman-Pflanzer, *Court Culture*, p. 192, n. 399.
APPENDIX

ASF, MdP 6186. Letter from Caterina Angiola Pieroncini to Alessandro Cerchi and Vittoria della Rovere, dated Paris, 11 April 1665

Molt’ Ill[ust]re Sig[no]re e Mia Sig[nor]a P[ad]rona Coll[endissi]ma


Parigi 11 Aprile 1665
D[i] V[ostra] S[ignori]a Molto Ill[ust]re

Dev[otissi]ma et obl[igat]a Serva

Cat[eri]na Angiola Pieroncini
Most Illustrious Lord and My Most Respected Mistress

It has been some days since the Signor Resident [Marucelli] informed me that Our Most Serene Mistress has kindly resolved that I return to the actual service of Her Most Serene Highness. I received this news with indescribable happiness, which renews itself every time I reflect on my return. And this occurs every time I fix my thoughts upon it. It seems to me, or rather I am sure that I am most obliged to the courteous and loving demonstration of my maestra, who with maternal affection taught me the Profession [of lace-making]. Being always most eager to make me learn quickly, I would like to leave her a token of my gratitude as is the custom of the other pupils on their departure, amongst whom I have been treated (not knowing why my good fortune) much more advantageously by her my Maestra. Furthermore Your Lordship, given the practice I have observed by those that are leaving, I would like to give a gift to the Sottomaestra, from whom I have gained even more in matters of learning than from the Maestra herself. It also seems indispensable that I leave some record of my obligations to a certain Madama Maddalena, Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess de Guise, who, in times of my illness and when I needed to buy or have clothing ordered, or in the many times she accompanied me from the Maestra's house to the palace of Mademoiselle de Guise or elsewhere, I can say showed me even more than a familial level of affection. For the above reasons I wish with all my heart to leave these three [women] some gift. I thus summarily request Your Lordship to deign favour me by making some approach toward Her Most Serene Mistress in any way Your Lordship deems most appropriate. Regarding the price (as I have seen already made by my companions) I estimate that it would be most appropriate a gift of ten doppie for the Maestra, and for the Sottomaestra one of 4 or 5 doppie; and for the lady of Mademoiselle de Guise another 5 or 6 doppie. So that with about 20 doppie the abovementioned people, to whom I am truly extremely obliged, can be pleased. Your Lordship please forgive the ardour with which I disturb you, praying once again to honour me with your office with Her Most Serene Grand Duchess. I have today consigned to the Royal Official of the Signore Resident a small box containing some curled hair extensions for the Signora Giovanna Guidi which Your Lordship ordered from me some weeks ago, and the said Official assured me tonight that he had consigned them to the courier that is leaving tomorrow morning. With which I respectively commend myself to Your Lordship.

Paris, 11 April 1665
For Your Most Illustrious Lordship

Most Devoted and Obliged Servant
Caterina Angiola Pieroncini
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MdP 6186

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MdP 6263
Mediceo del Principato 6263, Quaderni ed Inventari della Guardaroba della Ser[enissi]ma Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere

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