

# 1

## Literary visions of craft and cooperation in the European handmade lace revival, c. 1840–1914

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Why, in a collection dedicated to humanitarian handicrafts, does lace loom so large? Because the history of lace is bound to the history of efforts – private, municipal, state, ecclesiastical – to remedy poverty.<sup>1</sup> In the early modern period, the foundation of a lace manufacture was often a response to a local crisis in women’s employment. It was designed to save them morally as well as economically because material deprivation might force them into a life of vice. Such initiatives were introduced in Valenciennes in 1661, in Bailleul in 1664 and in Bayeux in 1676; these all became important centres of lacemaking.<sup>2</sup> Female religious orders and lay sisters were involved in all three of these initiatives, and the same orders or their descendants would continue to teach lace skills in their various establishments, both in Europe and in colonial empires. Private charity also played a part, and lace would remain the philanthropist’s textile of choice right through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. But precisely because lacemaking was connected to such endeavours, it never shook off its association with poverty.

None the less, because of its origins in these moralising and spiritual institutions, handmade lace, whether produced with needle or bobbin, was deemed a special textile. In the high-flown visions of the novelist Sarah Grand, ‘No fabric of art has been so intimately associated with every phase of human joy and sorrow as lace ... It is the most aristocratic of possessions, consecrated by religion, and at one time the monopoly of royalty.’<sup>3</sup> More plebeian consumers wore it on special occasions or as a marker of a particular status. Today its use is even more restricted to ritual episodes in the life cycle – baptism, first communion, marriage. Lace is preserved, passed on, collected and exhibited, whereas other more everyday fabrics are discarded. Lace is, in short, valued – not just for its intrinsic qualities but for the meanings it has come to embody. These associations also explain why lace holds a particular place in the history of humanitarian interventions in the marketplace.

One of its moral purposes was to bridge the chasm between the impoverished domestic lace producer and the fashionable lace consumer, divided by geography as well as status and class. Lace was almost always an export product. Itself an early modern invention, lace was a typical manufacture of that early modern form of capitalism, the putting-out system. In almost all lace-producing regions, the system worked in a similar way: a merchant supplied the pattern and the thread to thousands of dispersed female workers. To do so, the merchant relied on intermediaries, who may themselves have used subcontractors. The lacemaker, either working in an institution or at home and using her own tools, produced the lace and sold it back to the merchant, via the intermediary, at piece rates. In some regions, and in particular Flanders, convents which doubled as lace schools might take on the role of intermediary, in other regions lay sisters, such as the béates of the Haute-Loire, fulfilled this task; but most intermediaries were private, commercial agents. A personal relationship between the lacemaker and the merchant was not impossible, but it was atypical. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as various forms of social legislation were introduced to protect workers, and especially women workers, merchants strenuously denied that lacemakers were their employees at all, rather insisting that they were independent artisans. In practice, lacemakers were tied to particular merchants because the bulk of their wages were advances for work yet to be done. Merchants in turn might have close connections to fashion retailers, but often lace would pass through wholesalers before reaching the shops. Thus, there were many links in the chain that connected – or rather separated – lacemakers in the hinterland of Bruges or Caen, or the uplands of the Auvergne or Slovenia, to the fashionable consumers of Paris, London, New York or Chicago. Given the high cost of handmade lace on the one hand and the visible penury of lacemakers on the other, it was assumed by outside observers that these middlemen drew all the profit.

Humanitarianism has been defined as concern for ‘distant others’.<sup>4</sup> Lacemakers were distant from their consumers geographically, but more importantly they were distant socially. Lacemakers did not usually wear lace: they were recruited from among the poorest social strata while their product was a luxury, purchased by royalty, the aristocracy and the princes of the Church. Yet the associations with opulence were not intrinsic to the textile. The raw materials – historically, linen was the preferred thread, though cotton, wool, silk and others have been used – were cheap; so were the tools – the pillows and bobbins. Therefore, the price to the consumer was, in theory at least, driven by the cost of the labour: the skills acquired over years as an apprentice in a lace school; the hours, weeks, sometimes months and years of painstaking and debilitating work that were represented in a single piece of lace. ‘If each piece could tell its tale of torture, very

little lace would be worn', states one of Grand's characters, but her point, of course, was that, to the connoisseur, lace could speak.<sup>5</sup> The lacemaker was distant but simultaneously present through her craft. The aesthetic qualities of her product were enhanced by knowledge of the sacrifice made in its production:

A life perhaps was slighted, who can know?  
 A chance of happiness let slip – yet, spite  
 of all, there still emerged, however slow,  
 this thing, not easier than life, but quite  
 perfect, and, oh, so beautiful<sup>6</sup>

### Literature and the relationship between lacemakers and consumers

The poet responsible for these lines, the Austrian Rainer Maria Rilke, was a serious collector of lace. He valued it because the lacemaker's labour and art were a form of sacrifice: it made material the relationship between the consumer – titled, rich, leisured – and the producer – poor, ill, maltreated, exploited. This chapter will primarily examine the imaginative literature concerned with lace, not just as a phenomenon in itself but because it inspired interventions in the market designed to protect or nurture textile workers. As Lynn Hunt and others have shown, fiction played a vital role in the history of 'human rights'; in a similar manner, literature moulded the values and practices of humanitarianism.<sup>7</sup> The lacemaker, a recurrent figure in European literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, helped perform that task. One of her literary roles was to depict the right relationship between rich and poor and, in particular, between rich women and poor women (see Figure 1.1). The consumer and producer should not be distant; they should be brought together, or rather brought *back* together because these works presuppose that there had been, in the past, a virtuous connection between the two which had been perverted by the intrusions of capitalism in the shape of the merchant and the middleman.

As Elaine Freedgood has shown, this right relationship also depended on the assumption that women of the leisured classes were themselves textile workers of a kind, filling their idle hours with handicrafts.<sup>8</sup> Histories of lacemaking written in the nineteenth century maintained that lace was a *gesunkendes Kulturgut*, that the skills to make lace developed first among ladies-in-waiting at royal courts, and from there passed to the plebian classes as an act of charity. There is little evidence for this origin myth, but it underlay the belief that the rich and the titled should possess an innate appreciation for the lacemakers' skill and obviously know how to



**Figure 1.1** ‘Lace. The Maker. The Wearer.’ Engraving by Francis S. Walker to accompany the article ‘Lace and Lace-Making’ in *The Illustrated London News*, 29 April 1882, pp. 5–7. The article coincided with the wedding of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, to Princess Helena of Waldeck and Pyrmont. The article concluded ‘The wearers of lace ... must naturally feel some interest in this pretty manufacture, which employs the quick fingers of their hard-working sisters in many a rustic home.’

distinguish the high-quality handmade ‘true lace’ from machined ‘false’ or ‘imitation lace’ that, in the nineteenth century, was pouring out from the factories of Nottingham and Calais.

Early nineteenth-century imaginative literature contended that the domestic lacemaker and aristocrat should be brought together in the most literal of senses. In Caroline Barnard’s 1817 children’s book *The Prize: Or, The Lace-makers of Missenden*, the new squire’s wife resurrects the village lace school established by her ancestors, as a means to support the local poor. At its annual award-giving ceremony the prize for the best lace is won by the most modest and generous pupil, the support of her crippled grandmother and mother, and a moral guide to her wayward sister. Social harmony is restored to the village through a revived personal relationship between the great and the small, the lace consumer and the lace producer.<sup>9</sup> As in other English literature of the period, such as Henry Richmond’s

*Annals of the Poor*, the positive effects of this relationship were not just one way: the lacemaker reminded the wealthy and powerful of their duty to the indigent, while her Christian abnegation served as a model for those higher up the social order.

James Hollings' 1835 poem 'The Lace Maker' also made an idyll of domestic manufacture, under the benign protection of the squire's hall. Lacemaking, in this village of the conservative imagination, hardly counts as labour, for the young woman lacemaker passes her time with her family and neighbours, gossiping and singing, with no desire for social advancement or indulgence. Hollings contrasted her fate with that of the mill girl, imprisoned within factory walls, enslaved by the machine and a prey to vice. For Hollings, cottage industry was a healthy form of production, both physically and morally. The lacemaker remained under the eye of her mother and the authority of her father, not to mention the village parson and squire. The promiscuous mixing of sexes in the new factories, far from such paternal(ist) oversight, inevitably led to sexual predation and crime. New forms of capitalism undermined the family, the basis of the social order, and separated one rank from another.<sup>10</sup>

Writers would continue to invoke this domestic idyll: as late as 1906, a thesis on lace revival in France opened with the statement that 'It is accepted, and completely indisputable, that the best and most natural way of working for women is working at home.'<sup>11</sup> Domestic lace production *should* be a good thing: a distraction from idleness, a lesson in cleanliness, a contribution to the household budget, a stimulant to taste and, if not coquetry, then at least some feminine pride. (The virtues of cooperation and collective life, which were significant, as well as picturesque, elements of lacemakers' work culture, and which seem to have been so important in Russia, do not loom large in Western European literature.)<sup>12</sup> However, from the Hungry Forties onwards, the idyll was more often presented in ironic terms. The virtues of domestic industry, compared to the factory Moloch, were still advanced, but writers were only too aware that the reality of lacemakers' lives did not match the ideal. Lacemakers had to work twelve, fourteen, sixteen or more hours a day to earn a bare sufficiency; they had no time to care for their house, their children or their husband. Their homes were neglected, their health was destroyed, and their poverty made them prey for exploiters, economic and sexual. Consumers and producers had become distanced, and the consciousness of the rich needed to be awakened by presenting lacemakers again before their eyes.

For instance, in 1840 the German feminist writer Louise Otto-Peters, shocked by a tour through lacemaking regions of the Erzgebirge, confronted the lace consumer directly in her poem 'The Lacemakers':

See the women making lace,  
Pillow lace, a work of art;  
You rich and famous – do not scruples  
Linger in your inner heart?  
While they decline, you feast and spend,  
And savour life in luxury,  
Meanwhile these women starve and die,  
Released, at last from misery!<sup>13</sup>

Otto-Peters wrote from her own position as an outraged observer to advance her moral argument. Others adopted the voice of the lacemaker herself to make their plea to the ‘rich and famous’. In Frans Carrein’s 1859 Flemish play ‘Eliza the Lacemaker’, the eponymous heroine sings over her pillow that her lace:

... shines just like a diamond  
On her to whom fate was favourable:  
Whether duchess or baroness,  
She flaunts herself with it at balls and banquets;  
While I, poor martyr,  
Suffer in body and soul.<sup>14</sup>

The contrasting fates of the producer and consumer crystallised in *fin-de-siècle* literature around the theme of the bridal veil: the consumptive lacemaker works herself to death to complete the aristocratic commission. The lacemaker will not live to wear such a garment, except perhaps in a ‘wedding of the dead’, when she will be dressed as bride in her coffin.<sup>15</sup>

Not every writer advanced the claims of the poor on the rich in quite such Gothic terms. Often these discursive lacemakers declined the opportunity to make a political point, rather expressing contentment with their humble lot and wishing their royal and noble customers well. This tone runs through the poems of Carrein’s contemporaries in the mid-nineteenth-century revival of Flemish literature such as Marie Doolaege, Napoleon Destanberg and Pieter Frans van Kerckhoven. But even when not accusatory, the effect of these poems relies on the chasm created between producer and consumer by capitalistic production – ‘Our art is always for others’ as van Kerckhoven put it.<sup>16</sup> The poems are themselves an acknowledgement of that rupture, while the words in which these imagined lacemakers address queens and countesses are an appeal that it might be bridged.

By acting as patrons to lacemakers, the rich saved not only the poor but also themselves. The power of the lacemaker’s gratitude was made legible in Aimé Giron’s 1894 novel *Une lieue de dentelle*, which was often awarded as a prize in French Sunday schools. The setting is the department of the Haute-Loire,

the main centre of the French handmade lace industry, and the heroine is Cesette, a lacemaker, milk kin to Luc, the son of the baron de Chambran (her mother had been his wet nurse). The Chambran family continue to buy Cesette's lace in recognition of this relationship. Luc, however, is a prodigal son who gambles away his family's fortune. When ruined, he invokes the clause excluding from his losses all the land that can be encompassed by Cesette's lace. Cesette, anticipating this moment for six years, produces four kilometres of ribbon lace of a pattern described as a 'pater', in other words a paternalistic prayer replicated over and over in physical form. Her example of 'dedication, loyalty, and selflessness' recalls Luc to his own moral self, and thus saves his soul. For a moment the novel toys with a marriage between the pair, but such a *mésalliance* would not have suited the social vision of Giron's Catholic milieu, and Cesette weds a farmer of her own class instead.<sup>17</sup>

### Handmade lace revivals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

In literature the direct patronage of lacemakers by local grandees was commonplace; in reality such encounters were rare. The relationship between impoverished lacemaker and aristocratic lace-wearer had to be imagined on both sides because of the intermediaries who kept the producer and consumer separated. However, the influence of this literature is evidenced by the numerous attempts to overcome the divide. Nothing bespeaks the special status of handmade lace more clearly than the initiatives taken by the 'rich and famous', real baronesses and duchesses, to emulate their literary namesakes in their attempts to save the industry. Other forms of textile production that relied on the putting-out system gave way, sooner or later, to the factory, as capital was concentrated in spinning and weaving machines. Lace was more complicated to mechanise, but by the time Fanny Bury Palliser wrote her *History of Lace* in 1865 – the most important work on the subject published in the century – 'Almost every description of lace is now fabricated by machinery; and it is no easy task, even for the practised eye, to detect the difference.'<sup>18</sup> Lace too should have given way to its steam-driven rival.

Therefore, while it may have made sense in the seventeenth century to invest in handmade lace as a remedy to localised crises affecting women's employment, that was no longer true, even by the 1830s. And yet, across Europe and increasingly also in European colonies, we see the same pattern: in the face of women's poverty, patrons erected a lace school, brought in nuns or equivalents to teach lace skills, and (re-)established a lace industry. They were attempting to actualise the direct relationship between producer and consumer that had been imagined in literature, and to imbue the materiality of lace with moral qualities.

The most dramatic example of such a revival is provided by the Flemish linen crisis. Flax spinning employed hundreds of thousands of women and girls in Flanders, but the industry was effectively wiped out in the mid-1840s by the introduction of British machine-spun thread and woven cloth, a crisis made worse by its conjuncture with the European potato famine. In a relatively short period, many spinners had been converted into lacemakers: the Catholic clergy usually provided the impetus, cajoling local landowners into providing the land for a school. The exponentially expanding female religious orders supplied the teachers, while the newly founded Belgian state contributed much of the upfront capital. By 1851 more than seven hundred new schools had been opened in the provinces of East and West Flanders, providing training, work and occasionally some minimal education to tens of thousands of young women.<sup>19</sup> Even at the time, and especially given the concurrent collapse of handmade lace in nearby established centres such as Antwerp, Lille and Valenciennes, critics wondered at the economic wisdom of this policy: it effectively condemned entire generations to an occupation that would ensure their own poverty.<sup>20</sup> None the less, due to these initiatives the handmade lace industry survived in Belgium until after the First World War.

The Flemish lace revival was the largest example of its kind, but in the late nineteenth century it was not the best known: that accolade must go to the Burano Lace School, the 'bright star' of the handmade lace revival.<sup>21</sup> Lacemaking on this island of the Venetian lagoon had been moribund before the freezing winter of 1872 deprived its fishermen of their sole livelihood. In response, Countess Andriana Marcello, lady-in-waiting to the Crown Princess Margherita of Italy, set up a lace school. Burano's historic specialism had been a needle lace, but the secret of its manufacture was all but lost. The countess sought out an aged lacemaker, Cencia Scarpariola, who still recalled the techniques taught in her youth. She passed them on to the daughter-in-law of the island's mayor, who in turn was employed as a lace mistress in the new school. Under aristocratic and royal patronage – the new Queen of Italy (which since 1866 included Venice) sometimes oversaw the lacemakers herself – the school grew until by the turn of the century it provided work for eight hundred women and girls. But while the past was a source of inspiration, Marcello understood that lace was a fashion item which had to respond to modern tastes with new designs. She employed leading textile designers to renew the repertoire of Burano lacemakers. Burano lace was much sought after in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, worn by royalty such as Queen Emma of the Netherlands, as well as by the Pope.<sup>22</sup>

The progress of the Scuola Merletti di Burano was widely reported in the periodical press and in the institution's own promotional documents. Its

history mattered, in commercial terms, because the appeal of Burano lace lay not just in its quality but the support it gave to the deserving poor. Lace was credited with doubling the rate of marriages on the island, while the number of illegitimate births declined to one-sixth of its former number. For Cora Slocomb, Countess di Brazzà, Burano lace was ‘most beautiful, because it is consecrated to the redemption of humanity by the noblest means – by teaching the poor to become good and useful through the training which is given to their brains and hands’.<sup>23</sup> The example of Burano – and its success in commercial, moral and aesthetic terms – was a constant refrain among those who sought to protect and revive the domestic lace industries in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century: people like Alan Cole of the South Kensington Museum, Fernand Engerand, the conservative deputy for the main Normandy lace region, and Pierre Verhaegen, the most important spokesman for the Belgian lace industry.<sup>24</sup> Burano was where Emily Hobhouse sent her protégée to learn lace skills.<sup>25</sup>

Whether directly inspired by Burano or not, almost every region that could claim a lace heritage (and some that could not) would witness an attempted reintroduction in the decades preceding the First World War. In 1874 the Venetian lace merchant Michelangelo Jesurum set up a lace school on Pellestrina, another island in the Venetian lagoon, and this was followed by others, such as Cora Slocomb’s own lace schools in the Friuli region (1891) and the ‘Aemilia Ars’ school in Bologna (1898).<sup>26</sup> Also in 1874, the sub-prefect and mayor of Argentan in Normandy attempted to revive the needle-lace industry of that town, in response to the post-war Depression, even though no commercial lace had been made in the town for fifty years.<sup>27</sup> In the early twentieth century the journalist Johannès Plantadis led a semi-successful campaign to have lace skills taught in girls’ schools around Tulle in the Corrèze, even though lace production had ceased in that region with the French Revolution.<sup>28</sup> Lace schools returned, after an absence of decades or even longer, to Malmsbury (1907) and Downton (c. 1910) in Wiltshire and Winchelsea in Sussex (1894).<sup>29</sup> One could point to many more examples.

The French lawyer André Mabile de Poncheville, surveying these various initiatives in 1911 with the intention of saving the lace industry in his home region of French Flanders, argued that ‘lace has always been rescued through the patronage of the aristocracy and the upper classes, spurred on by their queen’. Even in Republican France he cited the efforts aristocratic women such as Sophie de Lonlay, who founded the *L’Œuvre des dentellières bretonnes* near Concarneau in 1904, Mlle de Marmier whose *L’Œuvre du travail au foyer dans les campagnes de France* (later named *l’Aiguille à la campagne*) was founded in 1895 in Ray-sur-Saône, and the *Association dentellière lozérienne*, founded in 1904 by Mme de Las Cases in Marvéjols.<sup>30</sup> While there are instances that counter Poncheville’s assertion (Plantadis was a committed Republican, for example), the pattern does largely hold true.

We have already encountered Countess Andriana Marcello in Italy; her imitator Cora Slocomb was an American who married into Italian aristocracy, a similar trajectory to Harriet Lathrop Dunham, Marchioness de Viti de Marco, who was active in promoting the lace industry in the Abruzzi.<sup>31</sup> The lace school in Malmsbury was under the patronage of Lady Suffolk, the lace school in Downton was under the patronage of the Countess of Radnor ...

There were many such rescues and resurrections of local lace industries in the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. Aristocratic ladies and women of fashion were the most visible activists on behalf of lacemakers, although their enterprises were often supported by the clergy and by the local authorities. The role each played in relation to the lace industry varied, but as they drew inspiration from each other either directly (the female connoisseur's tour of European lace districts is a sub-theme in the literature of lace) or through widely circulated accounts of Burano and other success stories, their activist repertoires overlapped.<sup>32</sup> In almost every case they sought the patronage of even greater ladies, queens and princesses. Some were keen to train up new, young lacemakers, while others aimed to provide work for the aged. Some focused on improving designs and the quality of production through exhibitions, prizes and drawing schools. Some aimed to educate consumers on the tiny points of difference that distinguished 'true' handmade lace from its mechanised 'false' rival. Most wanted to eliminate the middlemen who were roundly blamed for the appalling rates of pay in the handmade lace industry. A direct relationship would be instituted – or, as patrons imagined, reinstated – between lace producers and consumers, bridging the social chasm generated by capitalist production.<sup>33</sup>

A core element in this renewed connection was the show, the performance, that lacemakers put on for their patrons and customers. Lacemakers enacted their own labour for chic audiences in galleries and exhibitions. Even when such enterprises relied on mail order rather than personal introductions, they sent out portraits of their workers so customers could know the workers they were supporting. Articles on Burano were accompanied with pictures not only of Queen Margherita but also of Cencia Scarpariola (see Figure 1.2).<sup>34</sup> Lace merchants sent postcard images of lacemakers alongside gifts of the lace to European royals, in the expectation of their patronage (see Figure 1.3).<sup>35</sup>

It would be easy to caricature such initiatives as conservative, done to lacemakers rather than with them. They were, undoubtedly, an attempt to overcome antagonistic class relationships and reassert vertical bonds – of duty on the one side and obligation on the other – that were supposed to have characterised social relations in face-to-face communities before industrialisation. Landowners' interests were hardly disguised: if women could earn money in their village homes, their menfolk would be less likely to abandon the land, a point made repeatedly by Fernand Engerand and other

Ricordo della Scuola Merletti di Burano la sola sotto il Patronato di  
S. M. la REGINA MARGHERITA

Dis. A. D'Este direttore Burano (Venezia)



Cencia Scarpariola la sola che ricordasse  
l'antico punto famoso

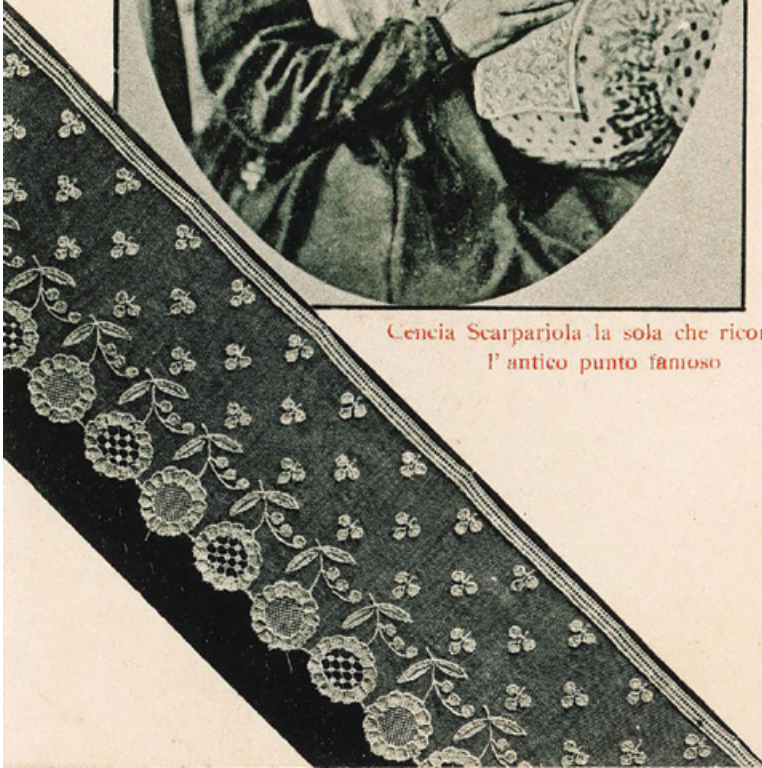


Figure 1.2 Italian postcard celebrating the Burano Lace School, 'the only one under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Marguerita'. The featured lacemaker is Cencia Scarpariola, 'the only person who could recall the famous old lace point'.



**Figure 1.3** Postcard ‘Twelve Bedfordshire Lacemakers. All over 80 years of age. Combined ages 1,007 years.’ In 1913 this picture was sent by the lace merchant A. A. Carnes to Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, Queen Maud of Norway and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna of Russia. According to a report in the *Bedfordshire Times* on 21 April 1916, Queen Alexandra hung the picture in her own room.

conservative politicians as they struggled against the rural exodus.<sup>36</sup> It is also true that attempts to corral lacemakers into associations were often resisted by the women themselves. Even on Burano there were constant conflicts between the school and lacemakers who declared themselves independent of its hegemony.<sup>37</sup> Lace merchants also resented the trespass of charities into their commercial sphere and denigrated the well-meaning but amateur attempts of grand ladies to organise their industry. Yet the lace associations were also influenced by more radical intellectual currents, including feminism and socialism. They opened up new possibilities for female entrepreneurship, while some were organised along cooperative lines. As part of the larger ‘arts and crafts’ revival, they were often at the forefront of design innovation.<sup>38</sup>

### Humanitarian interventions in the lace industry in fiction

The attempts to revive lace were accompanied by their own literature. Susanna Meredith had herself established a lace school in Cork in the famine year 1847, a period when, as she put it, ‘Ladies burst the bonds of conventionalisms, and

went regularly into business, to procure remunerative occupation for the destitute of their own sex.’ In 1865 she published a work that combined a history of philanthropic lace initiatives in Ireland with fictionalised stories about lace patrons and their relationship with the poor. Meredith had mixed views about the moral impact of the lace revival. While one of her stories celebrated the efforts of a clergyman’s niece to introduce crochet lace, another deplored a lacemaker lured into vicious ways by the easy money derived from lacemaking. Meredith was also uncertain about the long-term effects of this kind of intervention: her own school had closed its doors in 1859 because her pupils’ ‘[p]rejudice against business life, and the distinctions of social grades, stood mightily in their way’.<sup>39</sup>

Charlotte Yonge’s novel *The Clever Woman of the Family*, which likewise appeared in 1865, offered an even more sceptical portrayal of philanthropic interference in the lace industry. Rachel Curtis, the social activist daughter of a Devon gentry family, is appalled at the poverty and enervation of the local lace pupils, and so determines to rescue them. In tandem with the Reverend Mauleverer, she launches the Female Union for Lacemaker’s Employment, through whose offices lace apprentices were to be retrained in more remunerative work, specifically wood engraving. However, Mauleverer proves a con-man, F.U.L.E. is revealed to be an exploitative lace school in disguise, and at least one of the ‘rescued’ girls dies as a result of her treatment. Yonge, through the character of Rachel Curtis, advises against any systemic attempt to address poverty; the most that grand ladies should do is to relieve its symptoms.<sup>40</sup>

For some years Burano’s success tempered these apprehensions about the effectiveness of philanthropic action, but they were rekindled during the Europe-wide debates on homeworking in the 1890s and the 1900s.

### **Lacemakers and the European debate on homeworking**

The special status of handmade lace and the well-reported efforts made to preserve the industry explain the symbolic importance of lace in debates about homeworking more generally. While the topic of homeworking – at the intersection of two of the dominant ‘Questions’ of the nineteenth century, the Social Question and the Woman Question – was hardly new, it exploded in public discourse in the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. As industrial workers fell increasingly under the protection of the law – through factory inspection, limits on working hours, accident insurance and other measures – the misery of homeworkers became more apparent. In the garment trades in particular, hundreds of thousands of seamstresses, milliners, glovemakers and others were excluded from the benefits of reform because they worked from home, a location into

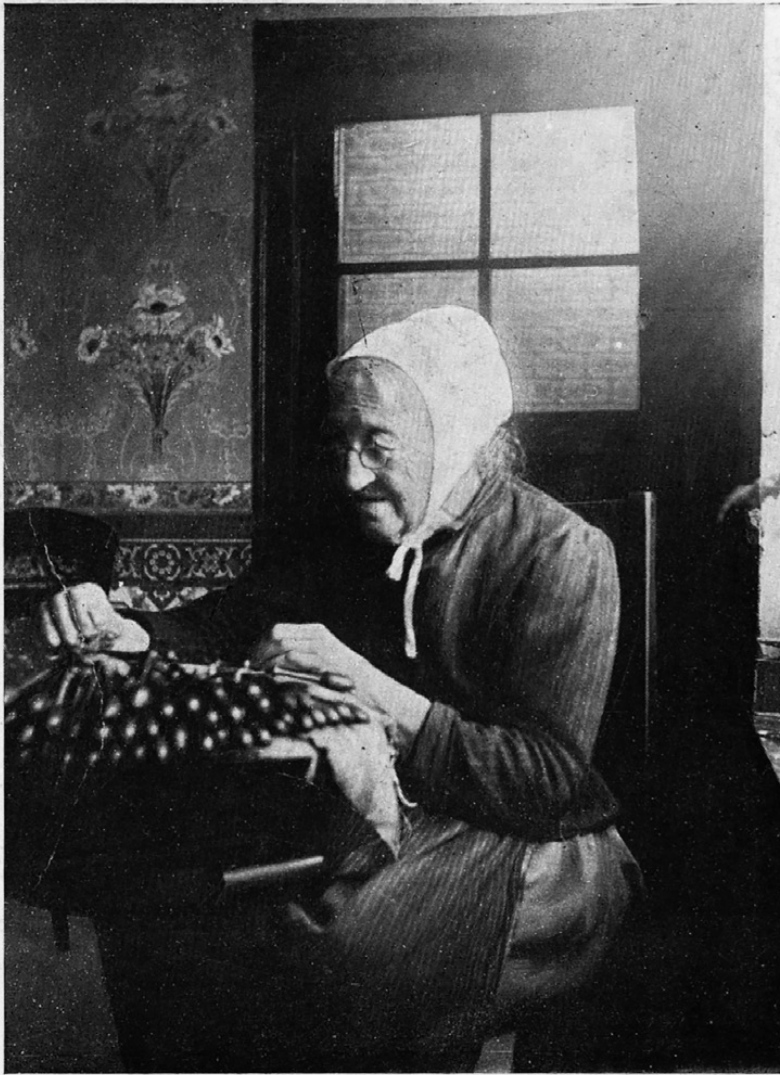
which no inspector could pry. They did not benefit from employee protection because it was not clear if they were employees. Dispersed and isolated, working at piece rates, such workers could not combine to improve their conditions: they were 'sweated', that is, forced into competition with each other, driving wages down and working hours up. One of the added stimulants in this debate was the question whether homeworking was a leftover from an older form of capitalism, which would in time give way to mechanisation, or whether industrialisation was creating new forms of homeworking that could threaten the social advances already secured.<sup>41</sup>

The 'homeworker', who was simultaneously almost always a woman worker, emerged as an international problem category in exhibitions and associated congresses, such as the *Sweated Industries* exhibition held in London in 1906, the *Heimarbeit* exhibitions held in Berlin and Frankfurt in 1906 and 1908, and in Zurich in 1909, the *Hausindustrie* exhibition in Amsterdam in 1909 and the *Travail à domicile* exhibitions held in Brussels in 1910 and in Zurich/Geneva in 1912. (Oddly, these events overlapped with others, such as the 1906 exhibition in Rome, *Le Industrie femminili italiane*, which continued to present the woman homeworker as a solution to social problems.) The Brussels Exhibition and Congress, which formed part of the larger Brussels Universal Exhibition, was the first to be conceived as 'international' in scope, and it was the launch pad for a short-lived international organisation dedicated to the problem.<sup>42</sup> The first aim of the exhibition, which opened in July 1910, was to bridge the gulf of ignorance that separated the producer from the consumer, by 'teaching the public the realities of the daily life of 118,000 workers in rich and free Belgium'.<sup>43</sup> It was inspired by Camille Huysmans, a Brussels councillor and the secretary of the Second Socialist International, while the most active member of the organising committee of the exhibition was Antony Neuckens, a glovemaker and trade unionist from Brussels. Despite this socialist impetus, the Congress that followed in September drew participants from across the political spectrum. Sitting alongside Huysmans and Neuckens were social Catholics, liberal professors of economics, industrialists and doctors. However, the women philanthropists who had taken the lead in actions to preserve the lace industry, 'les dames aisées' as they were termed by one delegate, were not well represented.<sup>44</sup> (Belgian ladies of fashion had been slower to follow the Burano model of patronage than those in other countries: their association *Les amies de la dentelle*, under the patronage of the Queen of Belgium, had only been formed earlier in 1910: see Figure 1.4.)

Lacemakers made up between a third and a half of all homeworkers in Belgium, so it is not surprising that their example loomed large both in the exhibition and the Congress. Indeed, the poster for the exhibition portrayed an aged lacemaker, based on one of Neuckens' photographs of homeworkers (see Figure 1.5). According to the accompanying information, this old



**Figure 1.4** Postcard issued by *Les amies de la dentelle*, an association set up by Belgian nobility and other ‘dames aisées’ in 1910 to support the lace industry. The illustration is based on a photo of a Mechelen lacemaker, Johanna Habrecht. Through the window can be seen the towers of Mechelen, Antwerp and Bruges cathedrals, referencing the strong connections between the Catholic Church and the lace industry. The spider’s web refers to one of many legends about the origins of lace.



DENTELLIÈRE DE CERFONTAINE  
 AGÉE DE 76 ANS, CONFÉCTIONNANT  
 UNE PIÈCE D'ENIREDEUX  
 DE SOIE NOIRE

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**Figure 1.5** Postcard produced for the 1910 Brussels *Exposition du Travail à Domicile*. The photo was taken by Antony Neuckens and features a lacemaker from Cerfontaine, aged seventy-six, who earned 25 centimes per day (paid in loaves) for eight hours work. This photo served as the basis for the exhibition poster and the accompanying postage stamp.

woman from Cerfontaine earned the pitiful sum of twenty-five centimes a day for eight hours' work, and was not even paid in money but in bread: the truck system was illegal in Belgium but it was a recurrent feature of lace production.<sup>45</sup> Their living quarters were recreated as part of the exhibition, where selected lacemakers demonstrated their craft to visitors. Their produce was on sale in the exhibition shop. Delegates at the Congress were taken on guided visits to the homes of lacemakers in the impoverished villages of Hamme and Zele, the region which, since the journalist Auguste de Winne's 1902 social investigations, had become known as 'the Flanders' hell'.<sup>46</sup>

In theory, the representation of each industry and the facts and figures that accompanied the exhibition were the work of committees representing both workers and employers; in practice, most of the information came from the existing, detailed studies completed for the Belgian *Office du Travail*. In the case of the lacemakers, the committee was dominated by its secretary, Pierre Verhaegen, who had prepared the *Office du Travail* report and authored several of the other submissions that were pre-circulated to Congress attendees.<sup>47</sup> It was Verhaegen who guided visitors to lacemakers' homes, and he was one of the principal proponents of the Congress's resolutions. Verhaegen's politics, inherited from his father Baron Arthur Verhaegen, were resolutely Catholic and Royalist: he was very far from sympathising with the socialists Huysmans and Neuckens, but none the less he joined them as a member of the permanent international commission on homeworking. After all, Catholics and socialists could share the conviction that capitalism was a social malaise, and that production and consumption should be made ethical.

The Congress was asked to deliberate on five questions, which can be summarised as follows:

1. What abuses were homeworkers subject to?
2. What dangers did their conditions of work pose to the consumer?
3. What legislative measures might protect and improve their lives?
4. How should they be organised?
5. Should homeworking be suppressed, in whole or in part?

The first two questions largely occupied the doctors and hygienists present. The last question was posed most strongly by the male trade unionists, especially the German representatives. They argued that homeworking was a bad thing in itself and disruptive of familial relations, but more importantly it undercut organised labour and the principle of the male breadwinner wage. However, even Neuckens, who had started from this position, ended up agreeing that suppression was impossible, and not entirely desirable.<sup>48</sup> Most of the other delegates were more supportive of homeworking in principle. Particularly vocal were the few representatives of the 'dames aisées': Mlle de

Marmier, director of *L'aiguille à la campagne*, which was one of the most visible of the lace revival initiatives in France, argued that 'homeworking is the most moral [form of labour] and the best of all, for woman is made to look after the house'. It ensured that young women were brought up under the supervision of their mothers, and it prevented them from leaving the countryside for the promiscuity of urban factories.<sup>49</sup> Although Verhaegen and other participants described this idyll in ironic terms, it was nonetheless present in their minds as an accurate description of a previous age if not of the present.

The questions posed suggest that the organisers had already given up on philanthropic interventions as a significant means to address homeworkers' miseries. Even the social Catholics, more enthusiastic about private action and the sacred intimacy of family life, recognised that in the homeworker such initiatives had reached their limit. 'The majority of such good works are hardly able to pay higher salaries than standard rates, unless they are made up by means of charity', declared Georges Mény, a priest from Épinal, and he was seconded by Verhaegen.<sup>50</sup> Philanthropy's role now was to prepare the way for legislation, they concluded. But while thinking in terms of state intervention, much of the delegates' language drew on earlier discourses surrounding homeworking, and lacemaking in particular. Victor Brants, the titular president of the event, lamented the decline of artisan production which had been overseen by a corporation with its own dignity, and whose members had a direct relationship with their customers. (Medieval guilds had a particular allure for the Flemish participants as they were associated with the glory days of Flemish creativity and independence in the late Middle Ages.)<sup>51</sup> It was the irruption of middlemen into this correspondence which reduced proud craftsmen and women to the status of impoverished workers. Again and again, participants attacked these intermediaries as the 'inescapable agent of wage depression'.<sup>52</sup>

The philanthropic impulse was most clearly demonstrated in the delegates' scepticism about homeworkers' ability to help themselves. They were

naturally recalcitrant. Isolated, they don't know each other, they have no consciousness of their common interests and cannot see what benefits might arise from a collective effort ... And as for the women, individualists by temperament and by education, they are even more resistant to the idea of association than the men.<sup>53</sup>

In reality, lacemakers often worked communally, either in schools or gatherings on the street and in the home. They had a strong craft identity, celebrated on patronal feast days, and they enjoyed a vibrant collective life. But at the conference, the lacemaker became the archetype for this 'timid and isolated' female homeworker.

Lost in the depths of their Flemish hamlets, uneducated, brutalised by centuries of misery, fearful and without support against exploitative intermediaries, how could one begin to awake in them an understanding of the essential necessity of coming together to defend their rights, and how could one give them the energy to do so?

Whatever was agreed and achieved at this Congress would be ‘for them, but without them’ argued Neuckens.<sup>54</sup>

The Congress reached a number of resolutions about the creation of craft associations, the inclusion of homeworkers within existing social legislation, and the setting up of wages boards to establish minimum tariffs (drawing on the example of Australia). In Belgium itself these led nowhere in terms of immediate legislative action, but in June 1914 West Flemish Catholic clergy did attempt to unionise lacemakers.<sup>55</sup> And, in a way, the wartime action of the lace committees – staffed by members of *Les amies de la dentelle* and coordinated by the Commission for Relief in Belgium – would effectively eliminate the middlemen.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, France introduced a new law in 1915, similar to the Australian model, in part under pressure to do something for women workers while their husbands were at the front.<sup>57</sup> But returning to the 1910 Congress, it is striking that lace was the only manufacture to receive its own resolution, with the declared intention to ‘constitute a vast cooperative for the lace industry’ in order to cut out the middlemen.<sup>58</sup>

### The homeworking debate in literature

Although international displays of lace feature in her fiction, I do not know whether Sarah Grand visited the Brussels Exhibition. Yet as the novelist who coined the term ‘New Woman’, and as a regular spokesperson on suffrage and other feminist issues, she was fully versed in the debate on homeworking. As with other British feminists of her generation, including Sylvia Pankhurst, her sympathy for the suffering of women in sweated industries went hand-in-hand with an arts and crafts enthusiasm for the handmade.<sup>59</sup> She tackled the future of domestic lace production in two huge novels (a third was projected but never published): *Adnam’s Orchard* (1912) and *The Winged Victory* (1916).<sup>60</sup> Her lacemaking heroine, Ella Banks, is a subsidiary character in the first, and the lacemaking plot takes second place to market gardening, but she becomes the lead in the second. Ella is both the upholder of tradition and a self-declared ‘Modern Woman’, someone who can see, think and plan for herself. We first meet her in an unnamed southern English county at the turn of the century, seated at the window of her father’s farmhouse, her head bent over her lace pillow, an image from the cottage idyll. Ella is the descendant of generations of lacemakers and first

learnt her skills from her grandmother. But the local lace industry has been in decline for two hundred years. Ella sets herself the task of reviving the regional tradition whose ‘art was quite lost and forgotten’. For a year she sought out aged lacemakers to question and examples of old lace to study. Then for two years she worked to recreate one design which she then offers to the local aristocrat. The Duchess of Castlefield Saye (whose family name of Brabant is one of several pointers towards Belgium) was ‘always on the look-out for fine specimens of lace’. The discussion between Ella and the Duchess, in which the latter first offers £10.00 and the former finally accepts £300.00, is a striking illustration of the potential gap between the price of lace and the wages earned by lacemakers. The Duchess thereafter remains suspicious of the assertive Ella, but the Duke, also a lace devotee, is more benevolent and supports her in her project of opening a lace showroom in London’s West End.<sup>61</sup>

The reasons for the Duke’s interest emerge in *The Winged Victory*: Ella is his natural daughter by a servant girl. But while the full impact of this heritage works itself into the latter half of the novel, the first sections are absorbed with lace. Ella’s Bond Street showroom is merely the start of a much larger scheme aimed at bringing lace back into fashion and thus helping its producers: ‘The interests of the poorly-paid lacemakers were her first consideration’. As the novel progresses it becomes clear that Ella intends for nothing less than a market monopoly, covering all the lacemaking regions of Europe.

She had perceived the possibility of capturing and commanding the whole trade in the most beautiful and valuable laces, the kind most coveted by women of wealth. Her project was to organise the workers into a corporation of which she herself meant to be sole head and directress. She would be middleman on a new system, the object being, not to add to her own income, but to secure to the workers ample return for their labour.<sup>62</sup>

In fiction Ella Banks realised the ambition of the Brussels Congress, to establish a ‘vast cooperative for the lace industry’ that would permanently exclude the ‘oppressive middlemen’.

However, to bring the project to fruition Ella requires the backing of fashionable society; she must mix among ‘people who live in luxurious idleness at the expense of toiling multitudes to whom they in their greed barely concede enough to keep body and soul together’. She launches her showroom with an exhibition opened by royalty, and she teaches lace skills to the daughters of the aristocracy. (Grand partook of the mythology that lace-making originated as a leisure activity among ladies of the court.) But she is not just venturing into the ‘enemy’s country’; she is now ‘living in luxury’ – she has become ‘Lady de Lace’, the ‘Duchesse de Dentelle’. In the opinion of her stepmother, by becoming a lacemaker in the first place she was already

a class traitor: 'It's jest an excuse to set in the parlour, and act the fine lady.' She overcomes the distance between producer and consumer, but at the risk of her own moral being. She resents her status as the object of aristocratic charity, a 'pauper living on alms!' And given the lack of detail about the economics of her corporation, one is forced to wonder, as the Duke's man of business puts it, whether the whole object has been to provide a 'congenial occupation for an extremely interesting young woman'. Ella feels the failure of philanthropy, but she is unable to find another solution, and the novel moves on to other themes.<sup>63</sup> I suspect that one reason why Grand was unable to complete her trilogy is that, as far as lacemakers were concerned, there would be no solution. The First World War and the change in fashions that accompanied it put an end to any substantial hope of a lace revival, whether commercial, aesthetic or philanthropic.

### **Conclusion: literature and humanitarian interventions in craft production**

Lace has always had some claim to be a humanitarian handicraft. In as much as anything authoritative can be said about its early history, it developed in the church-run orphanages and workshops of Venice, supported by municipal funds and charitable donations. These institutions mixed the philanthropic with the carceral, commercial and educative; one of their main goals was to ensure that poor young women would have a means to earn a living to protect them from sex work. The Venetians were a model for many similar interventions both in Catholic and Protestant countries.

The motivations at work in such market interferences are better documented in the period after the French Revolution and the succeeding wars, which had done so much damage to lace production. The multiple revivals of handmade lace, even as it competed with its machine-made rival, were now accompanied with histories of the textile and social studies of its producers, as well as by an extensive literary output. There were poems, songs, plays, novels and operettas which, in their different ways, explained why lace needed protection and lacemakers required support. This chapter has mentioned only a handful of the hundreds of texts concerning lacemakers. The point is that the histories and social studies were shot through with images and ideas that circulated in imaginative literature: the cottage idyll contrasted with the suffering of emaciated, consumptive girls in the lace school; the self-sacrifice of the producers contrasted with the indulgence of the consumers. To an extent, historians and social investigators had to rely on fiction: given the absence of much documentary

evidence of lacemaking prior to the nineteenth century, fiction supplied the missing narrative.

Literary representations in turn inspired more or less practical engagements with lace and lacemakers. This was a campaigning literature, intended to have an impact on the reading public who were also the consumers of lace. When philanthropists, politicians, trade unionists and doctors planned their interventions, their thoughts were, in part, shaped by these fictions. This is as obvious in Neuckens' inability to imagine lacemakers ever combining as it is in Cora Slocomb's invocation of Burano as 'one of the holiest, most glorious, and sacred shrines to women's work'.<sup>64</sup> Activists were motivated by the same impulses as their narrative counterparts, and indeed they mobilised these narratives in their appeal to others to support lacemakers and lacemaking. This is particularly apparent in the circulation of myths about the divine origins of lace which, originating in a short story by the Bruges newspaper editor Caroline Popp, were regularly repeated by lace historians, including Verhaegen, before reappearing in fiction, including Grand's.<sup>65</sup>

Crucial to this appeal was the hope that the ruptures of capitalism could be healed and harmony restored to the social order. Noble and commoner, rich and poor, could be brought together, no longer divided by economic forces but united through them. Both sides would learn from each other: lacemaking was 'so refining, so ennobling', thus the lacemaker acquired taste from her work;<sup>66</sup> with her head bent down over her pillow, avoiding the male gaze, she was naturally modest; and as lace needed to be kept spotless, she also learnt cleanliness. The consumer too was morally improved through their engagement with lace, taught to distinguish 'true' from 'false', and to value the lives of the producers who had laboured over such a work of art. Together they would again raise up the art of lacemaking, most clearly symbolised in the rediscovery of the 'lost stich', a powerful narrative element in the Burano and Argentan revivals, and the subject of a whole sub-genre of lace literature.<sup>67</sup>

Elaine Freedgood in her study of lace histories has already shown how lace appreciation was presented as 'a cure for class consciousness and identification, tracing a tradition of women's work that cuts across and unites needleworkers of all social classes' and which reunited 'the otherwise separate processes of production and consumption'.<sup>68</sup> One of my aims in this chapter has simply been to illustrate that this was not just a British but a European phenomenon, and British lace commentators were just as inspired by what they read about Burano and Bruges as they were about Bucks. and Beds. The other aim has been to show the closeness between literary engagements with lacemaking and their real-life counterparts. Cultural representation and social action overlapped in the history of the lace revivals, which

are among the earliest examples of humanitarian craft interventions. They provided a template for later developments, such as missionary sponsorship of lace production beyond Europe.<sup>69</sup>

The similarities between these lace initiatives and later humanitarian craft projects are striking. Lace associations were usually local, intent on rescuing a distinct regional tradition such as Burano, Tulle or Argentan lace. However, such enterprises relied on a cosmopolitan audience to sell their wares. They reached them through performances, particularly to wealthy tourists, as well as through exhibitions and literature. The repertoire of interventions applied in one region were transplanted to others, as accounts of lace successes circulated in the international press. These accounts provided few facts and figures but were filled with images and anecdotes proclaiming the benefits of women's craft work. Pictures of lacemakers, stories of their suffering and their redemption, reduced the distance between producer and consumer and helped eliminate the profit-seeking middleman. The ethics of consumption were learnt through narrative.

Absent from this chapter has been any consideration of lacemakers' own views about their relations with consumers and patrons. One of the consequences of lacemakers' collective occupational culture is that, unusually for illiterate women workers, we do have sources through which we can explore their sentiments. Much of what has been recounted here would have been entirely alien to that culture, but lacemakers did share a commitment to what Freedgood terms 'utopian consumption' – that the purpose of the rich was to make work for the poor, and that charity was the only means by which the wealthy could save their souls.<sup>70</sup> Hence some of the ideas presented in the literature of lace, such as the role of royal and saintly patrons, did make its way into lacemakers' folklore.

Some lace interventions survived the First World War; indeed, in some frontline regions such as Méteren and Saint-Jans-Cappel in French Flanders, lace was resurrected as a remedy for the affected populations.<sup>71</sup> However, few lace revivals would endure, and contemporaries' doubts about the economic viability of philanthropic lace were probably justified. Given that such initiatives relied on financial support from outside the business, they could not offer a long-term alternative to capitalist forms of production. While both the literature of lace and the patrons it inspired necessarily tended towards the boosterish, they also hint at the social tensions and economic uncertainties entwined in market interventions. Readers of Meredith and Yonge would certainly have encountered the limits of philanthropy. The fate of Ella Banks' 'vast cooperative' is likewise unclear. Visions remain unrealised, dreams unfulfilled; the social rupture of capitalist production, the ache of alienation and the threat of social conflict still haunt these works.

## Notes

- 1 The research for this chapter was supported by the Leverhulme Trust. The author is grateful for the feedback of the editors and the other participants at the *Humanitarian Handicrafts* conference.
- 2 Philippe Guignet, 'The Lacemakers of Valenciennes in the Eighteenth Century: An Economic and Social Study of a Group of Female Workers under the Ancien Régime', *Textile History*, 10:1 (1979), 96–113; *Bailleul en dentelles*, exhibition catalogue, 27 June–15 October 1992 (Bailleul: Musée Benoît de Puydt, 1992), p. 63; Ernest Lefébure, *Histoire de la dentelle à Bayeux de 1676 à 1900* (Bayeux: J. Tueboeuf, 1913), p. 2.
- 3 'Sarah Grand' [pseud. Frances Clarke], *The Winged Victory* (New York: D. Applegate & Co., 1916), pp. 42, 97.
- 4 Annette Jansen, 'We the People, or We Humanity? Bonding as a Global Community', *Etnofoor*, 29 (2017), 59–82.
- 5 Grand, *The Winged Victory*, p. 93.
- 6 Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Die Spitze', 1907, in *New Poems* trans. J. B. Leishman (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 99.
- 7 Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007); James Dawes, *The Novel of Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
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- 9 'Caroline Barnard' [pseud.], *The Prize: Or, The Lace-makers of Missenden* (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1817).
- 10 James Francis Hollings, 'The Lace Maker', *The Amulet*, 10 (1835), pp. 141–144.
- 11 Honoré Bayzelon, *L'Industrie de la dentelle à la main et les tentatives récentes de rénovation* (Lyon: Imprimeries réunies, 1906), p. 4.
- 12 See Elizaveta Berezina's chapter in this volume.
- 13 Louise-Otto-Peters, 'Klöpplerinnen' (1840), in Carol Diethe, *The Life and Work of Germany's Founding Feminist: Louise-Otto-Peters (1819–1895)* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), pp. 159–161.
- 14 Frans Carrein, *Elisa de kantwerkster* (Bruges: L. Noos, 1959), p. 12.
- 15 Perhaps the best-known use of this motif was in Charles Fuster's poem (and performance piece) *La Dentellière de Bruges* (Paris: Le Semeur, 1891); however, there are numerous other versions.
- 16 Marie Doolaeghe, 'De Kantwerkster', in *De avondlamp* (Ghent: De Busscher, 1850), pp. 118–120; Napoleon Destanberg, 'De Spellewerksters' (c. 1850), in Het Willems'-fonds, *De Vlaemsche Zanger* (Ghent: Van Doosselaere, 1856), pp. 10–12; Pieter Frans van Kerckhoven, 'Kantwerksters-Lied', in *Volkliedjes* (Ghent: Pieter Geiregat, 1854), pp. 12–14.
- 17 Aimé Giron, *Une lieue de dentelle* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1894).
- 18 Fanny Bury-Palliser, *A History of Lace*, 2nd edition (London: Sampson, Low, Son and Marston, 1865), p. 394.

- 19 Éliane Gubin and Peter Scholliers, 'La Crise linière des Flandres: ouvriers à domicile et prolétariat urbain (1840–1900)', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 74:2 (1996), 365–401.
- 20 See, for example, Caroline Popp's articles in the *Journal de Bruges* on 17 and 23 May 1843, 8 October and 27 November 1846, and 22 September 1850.
- 21 Cora A. Slocomb di Brazzà, *A Guide to Old and New Lace in Italy* (Chicago, IL: W.B. Conkey, 1893), p. 127.
- 22 *Origines de la dentelle de Venise et l'école du point de Burano* (Venice: Charles Ferrari, 1907). This frequently revised, translated and reprinted marketing pamphlet was originally authored in 1878 by Victor Ceresole.
- 23 Cora Slocomb di Brazzà, 'Italian Laces', *Harper's Bazaar*, 23 September 1893, pp. 784–786.
- 24 See Fernand Engerand, *La Dentelle aux fuseaux* (Paris: Bibliothèque du musée social, 1901), p. 68; Alan S. Cole, 'Cantor Lectures: The Art of Lacemaking', *The Journal of the Society of Arts*, 29:1506 (1881), 799–816; Pierre Verhaegen, *La Restauration de la dentelle à Venise et l'école de Burano* (Brussels: Goemaere, 1908).
- 25 See Helen Dampier and Rebecca Gill's chapter in this volume.
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- 28 'Pierre L'Escuroil' [pseud. Jean-Baptiste Chèze], 'Le Point de Tulle: ancien et nouveau', *Lemouzi*, 7 (1903), 17–20.
- 29 Thomas Wright, *The Romance of the Lace Pillow* (Olney: H. H. Armstrong, 1919), pp. 242–243.
- 30 André Mabillet de Poncheville, *L'Industrie dentelière française spécialement en Flandre: Enquête dans la région de Bailleul* (Valenciennes: Giard, 1911), pp. 24, 27–28.
- 31 Elena Laurenzi and Manuela Mosca, 'Etta Da Viti de Marco (1864–1939): An American Activist in Liberal Italy', *Storia del pensiero politico*, 8:2 (2019), 229–250.
- 32 For an example of a 'lace tour', see Florence G. Weber, 'The Lacemakers', *The Craftsman*, 4:6 (1903), 485–491.
- 33 On such initiatives in Britain and Ireland, see Geoff Spenceley, 'The Lace Associations: Philanthropic Movements to Preserve the Production of Hand-Made Lace in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', *Victorian Studies*, 16:4 (1973), 433–452; Janice Helland, 'Philanthropic Fashion: Ireland, 1887–1897', *Costume*, 48:2 (2014), 172–192.
- 34 'Catherine Cornaro' (pseud.), 'The Revival of Burano Lace', *The Century Illustrated and Monthly Magazine*, 23 (1882), 333–343.
- 35 'Royal Honours for Bedfordshire Lace', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 21 April 1916, p. 5.

- 36 Engerand, *La Dentelle aux fuseaux*, pp. 8–9.
- 37 According to the anthropologist Lidia Sciama, the school was remembered by women on the island as ‘exploitative and authoritarian’: *A Venetian Island: Environment, History and Change in Burano* (Berghahn: New York and Oxford, 2003), p. 158.
- 38 See, for example, Sandra Heffernan, ‘The Influence of Archduchess Isabella on Design: The Transformation of an Aesthetic’, *Textile* 12:2 (2014), 188–201; Hannah Chuchvaha, ‘Quiet Feminists: Women Collectors, Exhibitors, and Patrons of Embroidery, Lace, and Needle work in Late Imperial Russia (1860–1917)’, *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 27:1 (2020), 45–72; Barbro Klein, ‘Women and the Formation of Swedish Folklife Research’, *Journal of American Folklore*, 126:500 (2013), 120–151.
- 39 Susanna Meredith, *The Lacemakers: Sketches of Irish Character* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, 1865), pp. 6 and 14. See Melissa Fegan, ‘“This Most Humane Commerce”: Lace-making during the Famine’, in Marguerite Corporaal, Oona Frawley and Emily Mark-Fitzgerald (eds), *The Great Irish Famine: Visual and Material Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), pp. 110–127.
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- 41 On this debate see Marilyn J. Boxer, ‘Protective Legislation and Home Industry: The Marginalization of Women Workers in Late Nineteenth- Early Twentieth-Century France’, *Journal of Social History*, 20:1 (1986), 45–65; Judith Coffin, ‘Social Science Meets Sweated Labor: Reinterpreting Women’s Work in Late Nineteenth-Century France’, *Journal of Modern History*, 63:2 (1991), 230–270; and Colette Avrane, *Ouvrières à domicile: le combat pour un salaire minimum sous la Troisième République* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013).
- 42 The documents relating to or circulated within the Exhibition and the Congress were gathered and published as *L’exposition du travail à domicile: documents, monographies, statistiques* (Brussels: Misch & Thron, 1911). The items cited below can be found in this collection.
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- 44 Antoine Carlier, ‘De l’action pénale en matière de dentelle’, p. 1, in *ibid*.
- 45 Anne Askenasi-Neuckens and Hubert Galle, *Les Derniers Ouvriers libres: le travail à domicile en Belgique* (Brussels: L. Pire, 2000), p. 48.
- 46 August De Winne, *Door arm Vlaanderen* (Ghent: Samenwerkende Volksdrukkerij, 1904), p. 44. Most of its content had previously been published, in French, in the newspaper *Le Peuple* in 1902.
- 47 Pierre Verhaegen, ‘Monographies editées par l’exposition du travail à domicile: La dentelle’, in *L’exposition du travail à domicile*: see also his *La Dentelle et la broderie sur tulle*, *Industries à domicile en Belgique* 4 (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1902), 2 vols.

- 48 ‘Rapport sur les travaux de la quatrième section’, *1er congrès international du travail à domicile réuni à Bruxelles, en septembre 1910: compte-rendu des séances* (Louvain: Charles Peeters, 1911), p. 59.
- 49 ‘Communication de M. de Marmier, directrice de l’aiguille à la campagne’, in *L’exposition du travail à domicile*.
- 50 Georges Mény, ‘L’initiative privée considérée comme remède aux maux du travail à domicile’, in *Ibid.*
- 51 ‘Organisation de l’exposition du travail à domicile’, p. xxvi, in *Ibid.*
- 52 Pierre Verhaegen, ‘La législation sur le travail à domicile’, p. 4, in *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 54 Antony Neuckens, ‘Mesures législatives et syndicales en matière de travail à domicile’, p. 1, in *Ibid.*
- 55 Jan D’hondt, ‘Een kantwerkstervakbond in de Brugse regio: een kortstondige sociale omwenteling, 1919–1924’, in Jan D’hondt and Noël Geirnaert (eds), *Kant in Brugge, een technische en sociale omwenteling* (Bruges: VZW Brugge 2011), pp. 49–61.
- 56 See Wendy Wiertz’s chapter in this volume.
- 57 Colette Avrane, *Ouvrières à domicile*.
- 58 ‘Rapport sur les travaux de la quatrième section’, p. 60.
- 59 Sylvia Pankhurst, ‘Old Lace’, International Institute of Social History, Estella Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, box 164.
- 60 On Sarah Grand’s interest in lacemaking, see: Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), Chapter 6.
- 61 Sarah Grand, *Adnam’s Orchard* (London: William Heineman, 1912), pp. 108, 111.
- 62 Grand, *The Winged Victory*, p. 273.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 273, 254, 329, 345, 219, 283, 55, 260, 26.
- 64 Slocomb di Brazzà, ‘Italian Laces’, p. 786
- 65 On this origin myth, and its numerous rivals, see David Hopkin, ‘Legends of Lace: Commerce and Ideology in Narratives of Women’s Domestic Craft Production’, *Fabula*, 62:3–4 (2021), 232–258.
- 66 Weber, ‘The Lacemakers’, p. 489.
- 67 See, for example, Margaret Roberts, *Bride picotée* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1883); Ella Banks claimed to know this lost stitch and was willing to teach it to royalty: Grand, *The Winged Victory*, p. 77.
- 68 Elaine Freedgood, ‘“Fine Fingers”’, pp. 628, 637.
- 69 Extra-European lacemaking has been little studied, but one example of a missionary inspired lace industry is covered in Maria Mies, *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (London: Zed Press, 1982).
- 70 See David Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapter 6: ‘The Visionary World of the Vellave Lacemaker’.
- 71 *Bailleul en dentelles*, pp. 75–78.