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Polish or Work? Four Women Novelists and the Professionalization of Accomplishment, 1796-1814

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FOUR WOMEN NOVELISTS AND THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT, 1796-1814

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Abstract

Polish or Work? Four Women Novelists and the Professionalization of Accomplishment, 1796-1814 examines the ways in which cultural models of accomplished, industrious femininity find expression in four novels written by women during the Romantic period: Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796), and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814). This dissertation reads accomplishment as a pervasive and familiar cultural practice that writers use to interrogate domestic ideology and middle-class women's position in commercial society within the space of popular fiction. I focus, specifically, on instances in which the genteel heroine turns privately honed artistic skills to remunerative labour, what I refer to as the professionalization of accomplishment. I do so in order to complicate the critical assumption that domesticity occupies a fundamentally antithetical relationship to work in Romantic-era fiction by women. Accomplishment, in these novels, assumes import as a specialized realm of knowledge, application, and self-fulfillment, and offers the rhetorical framework through which these writers narrate the heroine's search for economic self-sufficiency, moral self-government, and social integration within but also *beyond* the confines of the private sphere and its ideology of domestic femininity. In doing so, this project challenges a critical heritage in literary studies, British women's history, and art history that has long dismissed female accomplishment and the decorative arts as the distraction of leisure hours and the polish of ornamental femininity in the private sphere. Linking accomplishment to the Protestant ethic of self-regulation and self-improvement through work, these novels

claim a place for their heroines in society as rational subjects, contributors to public, economic life, moral reformers, and creators of culture. Read collectively, these novels represent a broad feminist appeal for social justice in which individual merit and self-exertion supplant hierarchies of sexual difference in shaping the social, cultural, and economic relations of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain.

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This project is dedicated to the memory of the amiable and accomplished Bernice Wray Sharpe (nee Armstrong), 1917-2004.

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Introduction: Polish or work?

In mid-December 1796, needlework artist Mary Linwood (1755-1845), at that time giving instruction at a girls' boarding school in Leicester, wrote to the guardian of one of her young pupils, requesting that Miss Simms "defer her departure" for the Christmas holiday "at least a week." By then, Linwood hoped,

> she will nearly have completed her Work, w^{ch} she does much to her credit, [It] would be very mortifying, and be but of little use to her to take it home unfinish'd – she has not been idle I assure you, on the contrary, in my opinion, [she] has done a great deal for the time she has been at school –

The needlework assigned to Miss Simms as part of her boarding school curriculum, a staple in British girls' domestic and institutional programs of education into the late nineteenth century, is in Linwood's view a work of concentrated application not to be set aside "unfinish'd." This "Work" is no trifling boarding school accomplishment, that perennial target for attack in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debates surrounding women's education and morality, but is testament to this pupil's industry and development under the guidance of an accomplished needlewoman.[1]

Linwood's letter offers insight into the "army of women for whom craft skills furnished a livelihood, as teachers, tutors, educational authors, and occasionally exhibitors" in Romantic-era Britain (Vickery, "Theory and Practice" 96). A ubiquitous aspect of British cultural life and "an inescapable feature of the curricula of commercial schools for girls" between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, the "female accomplishments" and the related field of the decorative arts –

[1] Birmingham native Mary Linwood began experimenting with needle painting during her teenage years and developed a lifelong practice. Presently, scholarship and biographical material on Linwood remains very limited.

activities such as music-making, sketching and painting, embroidery, japanning (lacquering), and filigree and shell work – occupy a far "more central" place in British Romantic "culture than history and art history have so far allowed," Amanda Vickery argues ("Theory and Practice" 94-96). Described in period conduct books, personal correspondence, how-to manuals, magazines, and novels, these cultural practices also occupy a hitherto overlooked and integral role in defining and expressing middle-class women's relationship to the public, economic sphere and the world of work in a historical period in which both were increasingly coded as the realm of masculine endeavour in contradistinction to a private, feminized realm of leisure and consumption. Offering a glimpse into one young woman's education in the female accomplishments at the close of the eighteenth century, this brief epistolary account of Miss Simms's progress on her needlework also intimates the professional expectations of her teacher, one of the most celebrated needlework artists of the nineteenth century: here Mary Linwood – teacher, artist, working woman – articulates her wish to see the mutual investment of time and effort brought to fruition in the completed work.

The present study illuminates the ways in which cultural models of accomplished, industrious femininity, such as that epitomized by the historical Mary Linwood, find expression in four novels written by women during the Romantic period: Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter* (1801), Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811), Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796), and Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814). I read accomplishment as a pervasive and familiar cultural practice that these writers use to interrogate domestic ideology and middle-class women's

position in commercial society within the space of popular fiction. In doing so, I challenge a critical heritage in literary studies, British women's history, and art history that has long dismissed female accomplishment and the decorative arts as the distraction of leisure hours and the polish of ornamental femininity in the private sphere. Instead, I approach the decorative arts as "material strategies developed by women to appropriate" and address "concerns not usually associated with femininity or domesticity" (Fennetaux 93) and, namely, work, which I here broadly define as paid and unpaid, intellectual, affective, and manual self-exertion undertaken "on grounds of economic necessity and social duty," as well as for the sake of individual meaning and moral growth (Weeks 11). In the novels under study, work is represented as "the primary means by which individuals are integrated not only in the economic system, but also into the social, political, and familial modes of cooperation" under modern capitalism (8). Here work functions as what Kathi Weeks refers to as an "individualizing discourse," "understood and experienced as a field of individual agency and as a sign of and a path to self-reliance" (51-52). Depicted in these texts as the production of value in the market (in the form of waged labour), in the home (in the form of emotional labour), and in the interior life of the individual (in the form of moral development), work is the category of activity through which each of these heroines achieves and expresses adult subjectivity.[2]

[2] Throughout, I use the terms "work" and "labour" interchangeably. As Batchelor explains, there was a considerable degree of slippage between the key terms that were used to figure labour throughout the eighteenth century, the recognition of which was often used to great effect by women writers who sought to contest the gendered division of labour, the failure to value women's unremunerated domestic labour and the assumed unfitness of gentlewomen for productive, paid work. Broadly, 'labour' was used to describe work that demanded considerable bodily effort, hence its predominant associations both with manual work, particularly agricultural work, and with childbirth. (*Women's Work* 19)

Throughout this study, I focus on instances in which the genteel heroine turns privately honed artistic skills to remunerative labour, what I refer to as the professionalization of accomplishment. I do so in order to complicate the critical assumption that domesticity occupies a fundamentally antithetical relationship to work in Romantic-era fiction by women. Accomplishment, in these novels, assumes "vocational purport" as a specialized realm of knowledge, application, and self-fulfillment (Cohen 7), and offers the rhetorical framework through which these writers narrate the heroine's search for economic self-sufficiency, moral self-government, and social integration within but also *beyond* the confines of the private sphere and its ideology of domestic femininity. In Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's texts, accomplishment and scenes of decorative art-making mediate between the realm of private virtue, feeling, and psychological interiority and the public world of work and economic exchange, helping elaborate heroines who encounter work as a formative experience, "and not simply as a threat to be avoided or a hurdle to overcome" (Batchelor, *Women's Work* 11), in their narratives of development and transformation. Linking accomplishment to the Protestant ethic of self-regulation and self-improvement through work, these novels claim a place for their heroines in society as rational subjects, contributors to public, economic life, moral reformers, and creators of culture. Read collectively, these novels represent a broad feminist appeal for social justice in which individual merit and self-exertion supplant hierarchies of sexual difference in shaping the social, cultural, and economic

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"Work," by contrast, Batchelor states, "encompassed the physical 'Toil' undertaken by the labouring classes, but was also used commonly to describe the masculine and decidedly more genteel world of 'employment' – that is to say, of business," as well as serving as a shorthand for embroidery (*Women's Work* 20).

relations of Romantic Britain.

The accomplishments debates

Informed by the "accomplishments debates" which played out in British print during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, scholarship on accomplishment and the decorative arts maintains that such practices as music-making, sketching and painting, and embroidery constituted the preoccupations of middle- and upper-class women's increasingly private and leisured lives in this period. These practices, many argue, primarily functioned as signs of class status and commodities on the marriage market, and helped to consolidate an ideal of femininity defined by its exclusion from paid labour and public life. Mary Poovey's comment that accomplishments "were one legitimate vehicle" used by women "for the indirect indulgence of vanity" (29) is paradigmatic of a critical approach that reads accomplishment as, first and foremost, "an exhibitionary strategy in the polite marriage market, a subliminal form of advertising in the drawing room," that objectified women as the ornaments of private life (Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors* 232). "Piano-playing, singing, dancing, fine needlework, and painting were only thinly disguised opportunities for the display of personal charms," Poovey asserts (29). Yet in approaching these practices as the "gilding on the cage" of domesticity (Vickery, "Theory and Practice" 94), existing art history and literary criticism offers a limited and largely negative view of accomplishment and the decorative arts in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture.[3] As Vickery observes,

[3] Since the early 2000s, emerging scholarship on the role and representation of the decorative arts in British culture and literature has largely focused on the Victorian period: this includes Logan's *The Victorian Parlour* (2001), Elliott and Helland's edited collection *Women Artists and the Decorative*

"[scholarly] understanding of the function of women's decorative practices has been over-determined by the negative interpretation of handicraft that emerged in the bubbling debates on 'accomplishments' in Georgian print" (*Behind Closed Doors* 232).

The anxieties that animate the accomplishments debates reflect a matrix of issues emerging from the profound cultural and economic shifts of the Romantic period: the education and duties of women, the growth of middle-class affluence, consumerism, social mobility, the spread of Evangelical morality, and, most centrally to this project, the relation of women to work and the public, economic sphere. As many scholars have observed, the debates surrounding accomplishment, primarily articulated in conduct literature, educational tracts, periodicals, and novels, participated in the increased circumscription of sociocultural ideals of femininity during Britain's transition to consumer capitalism (Leppert 29; Bermingham 10-12; Sha 73). Influential writers on conduct and education, including John Gregory in *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774), Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Erasmus Darwin in his *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education* (1797), Thomas Gisborne in *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth in *Practical Education*

Arts 1880-1935: The Gender of Ornament (2002), Zakreski's *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848-1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman* (2006), Hagan and Wells's edited collection *The Brontës in the World of the Arts* (2008), Goggin and Tobin's edited collection *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* (2009), and Schaffer's *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2011). Contributions of the last twenty years which focus on the Romantic period are comparatively few, but include Sha's *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (1998), Bermingham's *Learning to Draw* (2000) and, more recently, Page and Smith's *Women, Literature, and the Domesticated Landscape: England's Disciples of Flora* (2011), in addition to Vickery's extensive work on the decorative arts in eighteenth-century Britain and Wells's multiple articles on representations of female accomplishment in Austen's fiction.

(1801), and Jane West in *Letters to a Young Lady* (1806),[4] take up the issue throughout the period, variously describing the role accomplishment should assume in women's education, courtship rituals, daily lives and, to a lesser extent, plans for employment. Accomplishment had both detractors and defenders, but common issues of concern addressed in this literature include the amount of time that a young woman should dedicate to her artistic practice, the extent of training she should receive in the arts, the contexts in which she should engage in display, and the appropriateness of artistic training for young women of the lower and labouring classes.

Indeed, as a growing middle class aspired to domestic leisure, consumption, and private entertainment, and increasing numbers of actual women pursued the amateur arts (a trend which had begun in the mid-eighteenth century), the accomplished woman as discursive trope came to signify a disciplinary order of femininity inseparable from socioeconomic status and, more specifically, membership in genteel society. Richard C. Sha argues that the discourses surrounding amateur art played an "integral role" in "imposing a fictive order" of middle-class femininity (74). As Ann Bermingham summarizes, accomplishment

> is directly tied to . . . [the] new construction of the domestic space as a space of authentic (and virtuous) subjectivity. In this sense, accomplishments should not simply be understood as ways for women with increasingly too much time on their hands to fill idle hours, but as

[4] Other relevant texts include Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), Mary Astell's *Letters on Education* (1790), Priscilla Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (1798), Mary Anne Radcliffe's *The Female Advocate, or, an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1799), and Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799).

> ways for women to perform their subjectivity through certain allotted modes of artistic expression. (*Learning to Draw* 184)

Bermingham, however, concedes little agency to the accomplished woman, and portrays her caught in a regime of self-fashioning dedicated "to the never-ending project of completing or 'finishing-off' femininity" with the goal of arousing masculine desire (184). Many twentieth-century scholars, echoing critics from Mary Wollstonecraft to Hannah More, aver that accomplishment and the decorative arts figure chiefly in the period's print and visual culture as commodities on the marriage market and testaments to familial affluence, assets to women's "matrimonial stock" (Leppert 29).

In this sense, accomplishment partly functioned in Romantic culture as what sociologist Catherine Hakim has termed "erotic capital." Working from the theorizations of Pierre Bourdieu, Hakim defines erotic capital as "a mixture of physical and social attractiveness" that represents a personal asset on the order of "economic, cultural, and social capital" in the context of "sexualized, individualized modern societies" (10-11). She identifies "beauty, sex appeal, liveliness, a talent for dressing well, charm and social skills, and sexual competence" as its key components (10). Hakim argues that women, highly valued for physical attractiveness in economies of heterosexual desire, tend to have more erotic capital than men "because they work harder at personal presentation" (26), and that they learn to "employ it more actively" as a means to socioeconomic advancement (15). Although I have reservations regarding Hakim's claims for erotic capital's empowering potential for women, her concept is useful in teasing out an organizing topos in the debates

surrounding accomplishment and the decorative arts: the repeatedly articulated anxiety surrounding women's public display of "shewy" acquirements, evidence, for many, of a debased and inauthentic form of femininity that placed sexual attractiveness and class-advancement over individual moral, spiritual, and intellectual development.[5]

This line of criticism throws into relief the longstanding analogy drawn in aesthetic history between "woman" and ornament. As Wendy Steiner writes,

> [women] wear ornaments (more consistently than men), and have been considered, for better or for worse, ornaments to society and the home. Ornaments epitomize the aesthetic; their primary function is to be beautiful in themselves and so to add beauty to the larger whole in which they figure. Thus, the aesthetic symbolism of ornament involves a gesture of 'pleasing,' an openness of appeal that is conventionally gendered feminine. It is part of the ideology of charm, the use of beauty to exercise power through pleasing. (57)

When, in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Darcy, Bingley, and his sisters enumerate the qualities of a "really" accomplished woman and compile a list of polite acquirements ("music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages"), Elizabeth Bennet

[5] Hakim suggests that erotic capital represents "an important asset for all groups who have less access" to other forms of capital in patriarchal societies, such as money, property, education, and professional and social connections (15). Erotic capital differs from other forms of capital, Hakim argues, in its contingency, its ability to traverse social, economic, and generational hierarchies, and to act as an asset to those traditionally marginalized within patriarchal ideology. That said, Hakim acknowledges that erotic capital is closely allied with economic privilege; the ability to invest in programs of "self-improvement" is often correlated with socioeconomic mobility. Hakim maintains that the overlooked personal asset of erotic capital is a fundamentally destabilizing force in patriarchal capitalist societies because of the power it confers on women. This accounts for the abiding "trivialization of women's erotic capital" in everyday life, its "suppression" in the social sciences and, in what Hakim reads as latent collusion with patriarchy, its vilification in Anglo-American feminist philosophy (6).

protests at the narrowness of their definition: "*I* never saw such a woman. *I* never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united" (Austen 76). The unattainable and, *Pride and Prejudice* suggests, undesirable ideal, a composite of practices proclaiming economic power and sexual appeal, offends the modest propriety and intellectual acuity of Austen's heroine. Elizabeth rejects an ideal that encourages women to pursue accomplishment as mere exhibition, a criticism Austen later distils in *Mansfield Park* (1814) in the "grievous mismanagement" of the education of Maria and Julia Bertram, young women "distinguished for elegance and accomplishments" and yet untutored in Christian morality (*Mansfield Park* 459). As Juliette Wells summarizes, writers of conduct literature and fiction alike suggested that "accomplishments directly imperiled virtue because performing music or displaying artwork placed a young woman at the center of attention, thereby inciting vanity and competitiveness, as well as focusing inappropriate attention on her body" (22). Display not only threatened a woman's modesty, however; it also "encouraged a perniciously foreign mode of relations between the sexes, one variously conceived as Continental or Eastern" and associated, in particular, with French culture (22). Austen was one of many critics and reformers to criticize fashionable accomplishments as the ill-defined polish ("a certain something") of an expensive and inadequate education, the degrading exhibition of women as sexual objects, the dangerous distraction from more important domestic duties and, most explicitly for women in the lower strata of the middle classes, the fuel for class pretention.

Discussing the criticisms launched against female accomplishment, Wells nevertheless underscores the nuance of these debates, and points to the many commentators, including Austen, who expressed anxiety while also stressing these "activities' capacity to enlarge girls' appreciation and understanding of other subjects considered important to feminine education, whether academic, aesthetic, or spiritual" (26). Thus in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Emma* (1815), and *Persuasion* (1818), Wells argues, Austen gives her heroines' art-making "personal significance that considerably exceeds prevailing notions of the meaning of accomplishments" (120). As a writer and a practiced musician, Austen, moreover, "was in a unique position to comment on the rewards" as well as the "risks of women's artistic practice" ("Jane Austen, Solitude, and the Artistic Woman" 99). Wells accordingly calls for balance in approaching the accomplishments debates and the relationship between conduct book ideology and literary representation in this period. She observes that "whatever their feelings about accomplishments' popularity, benefits, and dangers, . . . no authors argued that the pursuits should be eliminated altogether, merely undertaken with a proper attitude and granted a proper place in female lives" (32).

Her comment echoes Vickery's point that "denigration was only one theme" in this contradictory cultural discourse (*Behind Closed Doors* 232). As Vickery summarizes, for commentators, "[it] was the manner, not the matter, that was at issue when women sat down at their worktables," the motivation behind the practice rather than the practice itself (*Behind Closed Doors* 235). Vickery emphasizes that, despite warnings regarding accomplishment's potentially corrupting influence, craft was a traditional and "socially acceptable outlet for creative expression. The process itself

was constructive . . . Decorative projects offered women a sense of purpose and resulted in lasting achievement" ("Theory and Practice," 107). Jennifer Forest likewise identifies the plain and fancy needlework produced by women as "a valuable economic contribution, essential to clothe the family, keep a house warm and support the poor," that also supplied women with a creative outlet (15). In a parallel vein, Ariane Fennetaux points to the multiple meanings ascribed to women's crafts in late-Georgian Britain, explaining that

> feminine engagement with the world of things in the form of crafts was not only a way for women to transmit their personal histories, but was also a way in which women commented upon, made sense of, and appropriated that of their sex and more broadly that of their country. (104-05)

Pointing to the biblical associations between handicraft and female virtue,[6] the wealth of significations assigned to accomplishment (as a form of self-expression, as an aspect of sociability, as a demonstration of affection, as a source of income, as essential domestic work), and the vigour with which the topic was debated in this period, Vickery proposes that a reassessment of these cultural practices is long overdue.

The literary texts that supply the focus of this study provide my point of departure in undertaking such a reassessment. In their focus on the interiority and experiences of the artist heroine, Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's novels offer counterpoints to the prescriptions of the conduct books and educational tracts emerging from the accomplishments debates. They also complicate received critical

[6] Vickery comments that the "[repeated] recourse to biblical authority is the striking feature of most male examinations of appropriate domestic expression for women, especially in the description of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 13" (*Behind Closed Doors* 232).

assumptions regarding the denigration of female accomplishment and the decorative arts in Romantic culture, and the role of amateur art-making in the constitution of an ideal of leisured, ornamental femininity. In doing so, these novels call into question the theoretical divisions between the private, feminized sphere and the transactions of public life, offering portraits of autonomous and industrious creative femininity.

"How much may be accomplished by unremitting industry": Professionalism and amateurism, art and craft

Domestically and internationally celebrated during the early nineteenth century for her crewelwork "paintings," Mary Linwood stitched versions of old masters and works by major British artists of her day, exhibiting landscapes, still life, and historical and biblical pieces in London beginning in the late 1790s, at galleries in Hanover and Leicester Squares. She displayed embroidered versions of Raphael, Guido, John Robert Cozens, Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, and Maria Cosway, among others, as well as several original works, to great popular success. She had first exhibited under the auspices of the Society of Artists,[7] precursor and later rival to the Royal Academy, in 1776 (Graves 149). By the early nineteenth century her exhibition at Savile House in Leicester Square had become a London attraction, remaining open for over forty years (Campbell 45). The 1798 catalogue for the "Exhibitions of Miss Linwood's pictures in needle work, at the Hanover-Square Concert Rooms" lists thirty-nine works in total, two of which are described as "originals." By the 1820s, her oeuvre had grown to over fifty works. In 1825,

[7] The Society of Artists (1760-91) allowed women to exhibit work in several genres. Graves's historical survey of the society lists a number of women exhibiting between 1760 and the early 1780s in hair and shell work, needlework, watercolour, crayon, and oils.

Linwood completed an original portrait of Napoleon, now housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), based on sketches she had taken of him when they met in 1803 (Figure 1). Upon her death in 1845, Linwood was hailed in *The Illustrated London News* as "one of the most gifted and remarkable women of her time" ("The Late Miss Linwood").

Although she had exhibited with the Society of Artists, Linwood was never admitted to the ranks of artistic professionalism endorsed by the Royal Academy. While the history of Linwood's career and her reception by the Academy exemplifies the professionalization of art as a realm of masculine endeavour in Romantic culture, her career also exemplifies the way in which one woman artist earned money and praise as a model of virtuous, industrious femininity for her publicly exhibited work in the decorative arts. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Royal Academy, as Ann Bermingham, Rozsika Parker, and Griselda Pollock have demonstrated, helped define artistic professionalism along the entwined axes of gender and genre, distinguishing between masculine professionalism in fine art (namely painting and sculpture) and feminine amateurism in craft, variously referred to as the "'applied', 'decorative', or 'lesser' arts" (Parker and Pollock 50). This distinction created a gendered hierarchy in which painting and sculpture were elevated above the decorative arts, which came to occupy "a lesser cultural sphere" and were cast as requiring little intellectual effort, skill, training, and originality (50). Professionalism in the field of art, Bermingham argues,

Figure 1 Mary Linwood, *Napoleon Bonaparte* (1825) (woolen canvas embroidered in wool). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

> began with the founding of the Royal Academy and the line it drew between the liberal arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture and the mechanical arts of craftsmen and artificers. This distinction turned on education and was enforced in the admission and exhibition policies that banned engravers and copyists along with other mechanical and craft-oriented practices. (*Learning to Draw* 130)

Parker and Pollock regard the gendered separation of art and craft during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as "one of the most important aspects of the history of women and art" (58) because of the role it played in positioning women's artistic production, much of it created in the home and made for family, as the foil to fine art and the public, economic realm of the professional (male) artist (70). Associated with the decorative arts and assigned to the realm of amateur pursuit, women were denied membership and instruction at the Academy until 1860, and few women publicly exhibited under its purview during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Yeldham 11). Those who did were constrained in genre, form, and subject by the prevailing hierarchy of taste, which favoured formal portraiture, still life, and historical and biblical subjects in oils, a school of neo-classical aesthetics that had been largely defined by Joshua Reynolds in the *Discourses on Art* which he delivered to the Academy between 1769 and 1790, and which Naomi Schor describes as "one of the most considerable and representative bodies of Academic aesthetics produced in Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century" (11).

Yet, as Vickery and Fennetaux have demonstrated, the historical distinction between professional art and amateur craft is not simply the history of exclusion and

denigration of women's creative practices in British culture. Along these lines, the introduction to an 1811 exhibition guide, entitled *The Linwood Gallery of Pictures in Needle-work with a Biographical Sketch of the Painters*, defends Linwood's work as evidence of British national superiority in the arts, and portrays the Academy's decision to exclude her needle paintings from exhibition as not only a lapse in aesthetic judgment, but as a missed opportunity for the moral instruction of Romantic audiences:

> The circumstance to which the public are indebted for the admirable exhibition, whose rise and progressive increase to its present astonishing magnitude we purpose briefly to consider, was, a law of the Royal Academy, absolute as that of the Medes and Persians, which forbids the admission of any species of needlework: could the original institutors and makers of this law have foreseen how wonderful a collection of pictures in needlework was destined to grow beneath the touch of their inimitable and indefatigable country-woman, that her collection would become, as it richly deserves to be, the wonder of the age, and finest exhibition of which Europe can boast, we presume no such law had been made. Her works exhibit, also, in a moral point of view, how much may be accomplished by unremitting industry, and how satisfactory and laudable it is always to be usefully employed. (7-8)

Although gender and genre denied Linwood professional affiliation and reception as a practitioner of fine art in Romantic Britain, she was thus praised in her own day as a model of the middle-class values of self-exertion and ingenuity, and as a

representative of national progress and pride through commercial and artistic endeavour. Subsequent generations may have looked back to find Linwood's work bizarre and derivative, "lacking creative talent and invention," as one columnist in *The Times* judges in 1945 ("An Artist in Wool"). In August 1919, *The Times* had similarly referred to Linwood's work, along with the hair, shell, and seaweed artworks exhibited by many women during the latter half of the eighteenth century, as "'freak' pictures" and relics of an earlier, unrefined age in the history of British art: "it was probably such things as these," this columnist speculates, "which partly induced Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough and many others to recede from such company and to start, with the King's patronage and aid, the Royal Academy" in 1768 ("'Freak' Pictures"). Despite the retrospective deprecation, for the Romantics, Linwood represented a particular and praiseworthy model of female industry, creativity, and virtue in modern commercial life.

Linwood was not alone in pursuing and exhibiting female handicraft – that is, decorative objects made by hand – as a luxury commodity for the consumption of polite and increasingly affluent Romantic audiences, and the presence of such women in the economic sphere contributes to a growing body of historical evidence that "challenge[s] the view that middle-class women were creatures of domesticity and strangers to the marketplace" in nineteenth-century Europe (Craig, Beachy, and Owens 17). The interpretive plaque which accompanies Linwood's portrait at the V&A explains that "Linwood's enterprise was an example of how the luxury goods trades began to use similar techniques of display to those used for high art, attracting customers with public exhibitions." A growing number of women during this period

established their own businesses selling handicraft (in addition to food, clothing, and books), predominantly in urban centres such as London, Colchester, Bath, and Birmingham, procuring their own supplies and marketing their work directly to shops and the public at assembly rooms, concerts, and galleries. This entrepreneurial model importantly differed from that implemented in the cottage industries, where women undertook piecework at home (in lacework, embroidery, and china painting, for example) using material supplied and owned by the employer (Pinchbeck 290). The "ownership of the means of subsistence," Christine Wiskin notes, placed these working women "in a different economic and social category from the labouring poor" (99) and, in fact, opened up opportunities for economic prosperity and social connection outside of marriage (88).

Urban entrepreneurs such as Linwood made it their business "to educate and enlighten their visitors" at commercial exhibitions with the ingenuity of their skills in the decorative arts, shaping the tastes and venues of urban sociability (Wiskin 89-90). Their contributions to cultural life, in this regard, can be read as a form of public edification or "improvement" through popular art. In her scholarship on gender and civic identity in eighteenth-century Britain, Rosemary Sweet argues that concepts of "urban improvement" in this period should not "be narrowly conceived simply in terms of the physical fabric of the town" (39). Instead, Sweet maintains, "[eighteenth-century] citizens looked equally to the moral and social improvement of their fellow inhabitants and the growing range of urban charities, philanthropic organizations, and cultural associations through which improvement was achieved drew on female membership and support" (39). As a (celebrated) representative of a broader

socioeconomic strata of urban working women active in the cultural sphere, Linwood helps challenge a series of historical perceptions surrounding women's economic activity in Romantic Britain, and namely the influential thesis that the process of industrialization served to increasingly confine middle-class women to a private sphere of non-labour during the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Collapsing the consolidation of middle-class cultural identity with the ideology of domesticity, the "golden age to separate spheres" thesis contends that the emergence of domestic womanhood was intimately linked "to a shrinkage of political, professional and business opportunities for women" in this period, accompanied by "the social interment of middle-class women" in the private sphere (Vickery 384; 392-93). Yet Linwood's life and career support Wiskin's argument that no small number of middle-class women in this period actually found economic self-sufficiency as entrepreneurs, were influential and active members (and not necessarily pariahs) of polite society, and deployed intellectual acumen, creative drive, management skills, and interpersonal connections to make their businesses succeed. In her employment as a boarding school teacher, Linwood, moreover, helped equip young women of the middle classes "with opportunities for economic independence" by giving them valued skills in "a ready-made market ripe for development" (106). Linwood's work, in sum, supplied her with international fame and patronage, an outlet for creative self-expression, a source of economic independence and, as her surviving correspondence implies, a network of colleagues, associates, and pupils who regarded her as an expert in her chosen field, the quintessentially female accomplishment of embroidery.

The accomplished heroine and the working heroine in Romantic fiction

Unlike Austen's Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, who never turns her talents as a musician to profit, Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's heroines offer fictional counterparts to the actual historical middle-class women who found subsistence in Britain's urban centres by turning their skills in the decorative arts to profit. To date, however, few scholars have considered the intersection between accomplishment and paid work as something constitutive and formative for the heroine of Romantic fiction, as something other than a threat to her gentility and the logic of the domestic novel. In this regard, the four novels under study have been specifically chosen for their representations of genteel labouring femininity and their respective redefinitions of accomplishment and decorative art-making as a realm of skilled, personally significant, and remunerated activity.

Before moving into my discussion of the accomplished and the working heroine, however, it is important to clarify my terms surrounding gentility and class. Acknowledging the complexity and breadth of class distinctions in Britain in this period, I use the term "middle-class" to describe what Jennie Batchelor refers to as late eighteenth- an early nineteenth-century Britain's "sizeable and heterogeneous group of people who were neither of aristocratic stock nor born to labour" (*Women's Work* 6). The heroines in the novels I examine move across class lines, variously born to the professional, trading, and landed classes and yet commonly reduced to indigence through circumstance. In light of this, I also invoke William Stafford's definition of the middle classes as a socioeconomic group "constituted without sharp

boundaries between land, commerce, and the professions," but distinguished by a shared "gentry ideal," what Stafford identifies as "a mode of subjectivity, a fashion of being," associated with the middle classes but not delimited by class position (203-04). "Gentility," Stafford argues, represents "an ideal of subjectivity characterized by inwardness which acts as a status marker" (207). This ideal of subjectivity, which relies on conceptions of intrinsic worth and individual merit, should not, however, be collapsed under "an ideal of middle-class domesticity," Stafford cautions (207). Instead, "it is part of an ideal of refined and virtuous gentility which does not correlate precisely with economic class. The conception of gentility obviously has a status (perhaps status rather than class) component, but it is also about ethical and aesthetic ideals" (207). Hence it is possible for the impoverished and labouring heroines Agnes Fitzhenry, Ellena Rosalba, Laura Montreville, and Juliet Granville to preserve their gentility despite their respectively tenuous and fluid class positions and, indeed, engagements in paid work. Each heroine is distinguished by her "nobility of soul," her inherent worth, which is, in fact, partly expressed through her commitment to self-exertion and self-improvement. I therefore also apply the term "middle-class" to capture a particular set of attitudes toward work as "an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation" that serves the economic and social improvement of the whole (Weeks 11).

Literary scholarship has approached female accomplishment as a largely disempowering practice for female characters in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fiction, categorizing the accomplished heroine according to two polarized models of femininity. In many interpretations, accomplishment represents either the

immodest display of "a siren-like false or dangerous love-object" (a category to which Scott's "dark" heroines and Austen's Mary Crawford are often assigned) or the internalization and performance of virtuous domesticity (exemplified, for many, by Burney's Juliet Granville) (Bander 120). In the former model, the heroine's art-making is associated with her impropriety, self-absorption, and sexual display, and often serves as a vehicle for the critique of female characters' frivolous and expensive education, their ambitions for social advancement, and their moral and intellectual vacuity. In the latter model, accomplishment is read as a sign of the heroine's embodiment of ideal domestic womanhood. The virtuously accomplished heroine, in particular, is a stock figure in British fiction by the early nineteenth-century, to the extent that Scott, in his 1814 "Introductory" to *Waverley*, mockingly identifies the harp-playing heroine as a key generic feature of the "'Sentimental Tale'" (8). Many current interpretations of the accomplished heroine reproduce these binary oppositions between virtuous/immoral, private/public, leisured/labouring, and domestic/artistic femininity, limiting critical understanding of the diversity of representations of accomplishment and decorative art-making in the period's fiction.[8]

This is particularly true in the perceived antagonism between paid work and domesticity. Read in light of Nancy Armstrong's influential theorizations of the domestic woman, the virtuous heroine's accomplishment represents a form of "labour

[8] Scholarship has, moreover, focused on a remarkably narrow scope of literary texts, with Austen and Scott's accomplished female characters receiving the majority of the attention. Wells observes that "almost every scholar who has examined accomplishments" in relation to the nineteenth century "makes reference to the novels of Jane Austen." She explains that

> Austen's novels are such rich sources, in fact, that they can be, and have been, cited in support of nearly any theory about the cultural significance of accomplishments. They have often, misleadingly, been treated as straightforward social history, rather than understood as representations influenced by and commenting upon their cultural context. (3)

that is not labour." In *Desire and Domestic Fiction,* Armstrong argues that conduct books and fiction produced a "specifically female form of subjectivity" and an attendant "new mode of economic thinking" which divided labour along gendered lines, and relegated women to the private sphere where their work was "the cultural work of domesticity itself" (Batchelor, *Women's Work* 12). By the late eighteenth century, ideal womanhood, Armstrong argues, came to be equated with the cultivation of private virtue and women's exclusion from the realm of economic production. By contrast, any woman who was paid for her work was associated with the figure of the prostitute, for the working woman called into question the distinction between domestic duty and remunerated work, the very distinction upon which domestic femininity depended (Armstrong 79).

Armstrong's scholarship, as Batchelor demonstrates in *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750-1830*, has been central in shaping the presiding hermeneutic approach that assumes domesticity exists in an antithetical relation to women's labour in fiction: "The assumption that the subject of labour, manual as well as intellectual, lies beyond the purview" of the novel, and especially those written by women, "is widely held," Batchelor avers (9). Hence Edward Copeland, for one, claims that "the ideology of the genteel novel" is fundamentally resistant to the labour plot (*Women Writing About Money* 162), an assertion Batchelor sets out to challenge. Taking particular issue with Copeland's contention that the labour plot "presents a risk to the novel and its female author" by undermining both the heroine's pretentions to gentility and the writer's claim to moral authority, Batchelor highlights that this line of interpretation presupposes an antagonism between economic activity and

female propriety and, furthermore, implies "that the domestic ideal" of the "proper lady" "was widely internalized and disseminated" by women writers (*Women's Work* 11). Pointing to the centrality of the discourses of labour in women's fiction published in the period 1750-1830, Batchelor questions the view that the degrading associations of women's paid labour "forced female novelists largely to exclude the world of work from their writing, and to jettison the world of writing from their works" for the sake domestic ideology (*Women's Work* 10).

The overwhelming critical tendency is to read the genteel heroine's work in the eighteenth-century novel as an offshoot of the sentimental "labour-as-fall plot," which appears in the fiction of Sarah Fielding and Charlotte Lennox and, notably later in the century, in that of Elizabeth Inchbald and Mary Hays.[9] More nuanced treatments of work in novels by women, such as that offered in Burney's *The Wanderer*, Batcherlor observes, "have been viewed as intriguingly unrepresentative, even precociously ahead of their time in their treatment of themes that more conventionally belong to early Victorian fiction" (*Women's Work* 11). Admittedly, Austen, a touchstone in the criticism of women's writing of this period, does not represent instances of women's paid labour, and "we look in vain in her novels for heroines who manifest professional ambition," Wells observes ("Jane Austen, Solitude, and the Artistic Woman" 99). Austen's fiction, Wells elaborates,

> does not even admit the possibility that a well-trained, highly-talented woman – or a man, for that matter – might attempt a professional career in

[9] In *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), the eponymous heroine, for example, alone and impoverished, sneers at "the degradation of servitude" and refuses to "submit" to the corporeal labour performed by servants (163). In marked contrast to the selflessness and suffering of Brunton's Laura and Burney's Juliet, Emma's desire for work and "honest independence" is delimited by her concern over preserving social caste (163).

> the arts; governessing is the only profession that Austen acknowledges for ladies, and the clergy and military service the primary ones for men. (120)

Despite the impression that "income-earning work" was not "a major topic" for women writers of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries (Stafford 144), the working heroine is, in fact, a recurring figure in novels written by women in this period, and especially in the 1790s, although her labour almost always informs or illustrates a larger narrative of female education and development. This is the case in the fiction of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, Eliza Parsons, Mary Ann Hanway, and Anna Maria Bennett, all of whom depict working genteel heroines.[10] While scenes or descriptions of the heroine's paid employment (most often as governesses or teachers, companions, seamstresses, writers, and in the decorative arts and clothing trades) tend to occupy relatively limited narrative space in these novels, the fact that the labour plot appears across several genres of fiction, including the Gothic novel, the courtship novel, the Jacobin novel, and the Minerva novel, suggests an intensified preoccupation with the issue of female labour in this period. The four novels I examine all, in their own ways, engage with the fiction, as well as the non-fiction commentary, of the 1790s, and that decade's particular focus on the working woman.

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[10] Copeland, in *Women Writing About Money*, has referred to these "fictions of employment" as a "conjectural" discourse through which women writers can image forth "fantasies" of self-sufficiency while registering "social dissatisfaction" with the painful economic realities of navigating the market economy (159-61; 189-90). Copeland stratifies working heroines according to genre and class, suggesting that the heroine's employments must be "appropriate" to the type of novel in which she appears: the reluctant because genteel working heroine of the upmarket novel (aimed at a genteel readership), the improving working heroine of the didactic novel (for the pseudo-gentry), and the hardworking and pragmatic heroine of the Minerva novel (the lower orders of the middle class) (163-66). In this hierarchy, he identifies Amelia Opie, along with Mary Brunton, Anne Plumptre, and Jane West, as a didactic novelist invested in demonstrating "the respectability of female employment" (163).

Opie and Burney's texts offer the most direct responses to the debates of the 1790s, and Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Robinson's fiction specifically, a topic I address in my examinations of *The Father and Daughter* and *The Wanderer*.

In their common commitment to self-exertion and desire for self-expression, Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's exemplary heroines transcend the binary oppositions traditionally mapped onto models of accomplished femininity within literary criticism. In a remarkable departure from many of the working heroines of the 1790s, these heroines, moreover, do not experience labour as a "fall" but rather as a constitutive, and at times purifying experience in the midst of trial. The four novels accordingly invite reexamination of the ways in which popular didactic, sentimental, and Gothic fiction situates the genteel heroine's apparently private, polishing pursuits within the social relations of capital, giving economic as well as moral and intellectual weight to what are quintessentially private, feminized activities theoretically proscribed from the categories of productive labour and artistic vocation.

Accomplishment, work, value

In *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Talia Schaffer argues that the cultural practice of domestic handicraft gave middle-class Victorian "women a way to assert their own economic productivity and to comment on industrialization as they were being reassigned to a private domestic sphere" in the nineteenth century (36). While acknowledging the historical complexity of women's socioeconomic roles in the public sphere, Schaffer nonetheless asserts that "the dominant ideology of this period imagined middle-class

women's work as household management in a domestic space coded as a haven, while assuming middle-class men's work to be economic production in the public marketplace" (35). The rise of mechanized and factory-based industry throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created a world of work that largely excluded women from the site of production, so that, "[for] the first time, the economic life of the nation occurred in places middle-class women were not supposed to visit or understand" (35). Hence craft, Schaffer suggests, enabled growing numbers of women to express their "skills in management, thrift, and ornamental talent" through a socially sanctioned and definitively feminized realm (5). In a parallel vein, Steven M. Gelber posits that domestic pastimes "developed as a category of socially valued leisure activity in the nineteenth century because they bridged the worlds of work and home. They allowed women to practice, and therefore to understand, worklike activities" (2).

Building on Schaffer and Gelber's insights but attending to the particular historical and literary contexts of the period 1796-1814, I argue that Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's texts invoke accomplishment and the decorative arts as a way of addressing issues of work and economic productivity within heroine-centered popular fiction. Assuming a similar function to that which Schaffer and Gelber ascribe to Victorian handicraft, accomplishment allows these writers to represent and explore the constitutive aspects of work for their heroines, but within a distinctly genteel and "feminine" realm of activity. Accomplishment in these novels thus fulfills a mediating function, revealing the continuities between individual development, affect, and interiority, and public, economic life, between the theoretically polarized

and gendered private and public spheres. The novels code accomplishment as the language through which to elaborate a model of industrious, creative middle-class womanhood whose domestic virtues of fine feeling, self-regulation, and thrift inform her interactions with a broader world of capitalist exchange and, in turn, refine commercial society through her exemplary moral influence.

Redrawing the hierarchical oppositions between masculine and feminine, public and private, art and craft, and labour and leisure, these novels identify women of the middle classes as not only important members of the civic whole, educating and improving society through their virtuous influence, but also as participants in the formal operations of the market. In doing so, these novels acknowledge, incorporate, and reframe the influential economic discourses of the eighteenth century and, specifically, that of political economy, which, in Adam Smith's landmark treatise *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), had described work and economic production as predominantly male preserves (97). In her study of economics in the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility, Gillian Skinner challenges "the conventional division between the novel and economic discourse" and posits that "the languages of sensibility and economic theory, conventionally deemed to be separate and indeed antagonistic," in fact "overlap and coincide" (2). In the course of the eighteenth century, Skinner observes, it becomes "perfectly possible to address 'public' issues of contemporary economic or political debate within the framework of a sentimental exploration of a 'private' world of feeling," and she demonstrates that fiction increasingly undertakes the task of "[offering] an active critique of economic and political issues" in the course of the century (3). Approaching the novel as a site for

the exploration of economic theory, I consider the ways in which the texts under study specifically offer alternatives to the discourses of political economy, which, as Kathryn Sutherland has argued, "served to suppress the female contribution" to economic processes through the sexual division of labour, and assign women to a theoretical private sphere where their work was reproductive and "[visible] only in relation to the family which attaches to the male labourer" (97-98).

Non-fiction commentary written by women in the 1790s also contributes to this project of redefining productive female labour by specifically highlighting barriers to female employment in the immediate historical moment. In these texts, a range of paid and unpaid, affective, intellectual, and manual activities represent "useful" exertion "for the good of the whole," as Wakefield posits in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for its Improvement* (1798) (1). Wakefield's text and Radcliffe's *The Female Advocate, or, an Attempt to Recover the Rights of Women from Male Usurpation* (1799) make similar cases for the "useful exertions of female talents" through what the former explicitly terms "productive labour" (10). Wakefield and Radcliffe enumerate the occupations they consider most suited to help women "become virtuous and useful members of society" and, of signal importance to Radcliffe, avoid turning to prostitution and other "unlawful employments" out of want (vi). In Wakefield's case, occupations are organized according to class and include a wide range of paid and unpaid activities – philanthropy, domestic economy, teaching, retail, the decorative arts, farming, service – while Radcliffe specifically cites the clothing and service trades (millinery, mantua-making, stay-making, hairdressing) as offering "occupations . . . much more

calculated for women than men," who are, in fact, unjustly dominating these occupations (20). Wakefield, Radcliffe, as well as Mary Robinson, in *A Letter to the Women of England (*1799), all refer to skills in embroidery and the decorative arts as a possible source of income for women, while Wollstonecraft, in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), alludes to the aesthetic benefits of the decorative and ornamental arts in the context of a broader program of female education (*The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* 4: 18-19). Wollstonecraft also raises the issue of paid employment in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), as does Hays in her *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain* (1798), although these latter two texts do not supply the same prescriptive detail as do *Reflections* and *The Female Advocate*.

All these writers pursue two common strains of argument, complaining of the challenges women face in establishing economic independence outside of marriage, and advocating for women's enlarged roles as economically productive members of society: lack of proper education and skills, male domination in certain occupations, perceptions regarding women's innate mental and physical inferiority, and "social prejudice about loss of social caste," these authors charge, deny women the experience of meaningful and remunerative employment (Stafford 81). Batchelor notes that the arguments presented in the 1790s' commentary on female labour "foreshadow" the thesis of golden age to separate spheres by identifying a contraction in employment opportunities for women at the end of the eighteenth century. Despite recent scholarship which has persuasively demonstrated women's continued and increased employment across several occupational fields throughout the eighteenth century, these texts are "still commonly cited as corroborative evidence," Batchelor

observes, in historical and literary arguments for the eclipse of women from the scene of productive labour (*Women's Work* 116). I do not believe that these texts furnish documentary details to be extracted and isolated as evidence of actual employment opportunities for real historical women. Instead, I consider them as significant for the conviction and rigour of their arguments that women have a place as productive citizens within the discourses of political economy. Read against earlier eighteenth-century commentary, these polemics are remarkable, Batchelor observes, "for the directness and scope of their critiques," which identify women's economic marginalization as a product of the "structural inequalities in the division of labour as a whole" (*Women's Work* 115).

Akin to this body of non-fiction commentary, the novels I examine challenge the sexual division of labour by representing the heroine's work as participating in the production of value in a formal market, indicated by her engagement in waged labour. But these novels also identify the work of the heroine as productive of "value" at two other interrelated levels, situated in contiguity with formal market activities but unrecognized in the discourses of political economy. The heroine's work generates value through her performance of domestic virtue (manifested via her emotional labour), as well as through her cultivation and demonstration of individual moral worth, manifested primarily through her powers of self-control. In *Models of Value: Eighteenth-Century Political Economy and the Novel*, James Thompson argues that issues "related to the fundamental question of personal identity" and "true" character in eighteenth-century fiction reflect the contemporaneous "crisis in the notion of value" and, specifically, disputes over the location of individual value (2-3). This

"quarrel over valuation by name versus valuation by face," Thompson avers, interrogates whether individual value is to be found in the exterior surface of the body or in the interior life, in inherited rank and privilege or in individual merit (19). Thompson's argument recalls Gary Kelly and Diane Long Hoeveler's common point that the virtuous heroine of Romantic fiction manifests a sense of intrinsic value (her "nobility of soul") that she must conceal from others in order to protect (Kelly, *English Fiction* 52). For Hoeveler, the heroine's self-possession is a strategy of resistance against the claims of patriarchal and aristocratic authority (40). I argue that in each of the novels under study, the heroine's multiple forms of labour, including that done for a wage, generate value by at once establishing her intrinsic worth and securing her a degree of autonomy – moral, financial, creative, and sexual – from patriarchal control. This is the "screening" function that Patricia Zakreski assigns to women's artistic labour in Victorian women's writing: in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856), for example, Zakreski argues, the heroine's needlework "provides a practical aid" to her development "as a screen behind which she conceals" her inner life and creative desires (21).

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Armstrong argues that self-regulation is the central "work" of the domestic woman (her "labour that is not labour") and that domestic fiction represents the prosperity and cohesion of the social whole as contingent upon the individual regulation of desire.[11] Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's texts depict heroines similarly possessed of immense powers of self-

[11] In her work on early nineteenth-century Evangelical fiction, Beth Fowkes Tobin revises Armstrong's thesis by describing an "economy of self-regulation," which promotes "a new social order, one based on merit, self-discipline, and the management of time, space, and resources" and fuelled by a "middle class work ethic" (89-90).

regulation. This established formulation of the domestic woman, however, does not adequately acknowledge the way in which self-regulation at times sits in a contiguous relationship with forms of remunerated labour (epitomized, for instance, by Juliet Granville's ability to suppress her feelings in order to earn a wage as a paid companion), or that self-regulation can in fact require grueling physical and emotional self-exertion (as in, for example, Laura Montreville's self-privation of food as a way placating her father). Nor does Armstrong's formulation recognize self-control as a form of epistemological power that grants the heroine moral, creative, and economic agency in patriarchal society, which is the case in all of the four novels I examine. In his work on Evangelical novelist Barbara Hofland, Stephen C. Behrendt complicates Armstrong's thesis by demonstrating the ways in which the valorization of individual self-regulation can coexist with criticisms of patriarchal authority and the ideology of separate spheres in women's writing of the early nineteenth century. As Evangelical novels focusing on the plight of the single mother and her children, Hofland's works, Behrendt writes, "were eminently paradigmatic in their reiterated prescription of the subordination of individual desire to the welfare of the family unit." "At the same time," he continues,

> we glimpse in the novels a clear suggestion that the presence of the father – and the patriarchal establishment he represents – impedes the full development of independence and self-reliance on the parts of the wife and children, because it creates a sheltered environment in which none of those characters needs to explore his or her potential fully. His presence not only perpetuates their dependency upon him, in other words, but also stands in

> the way of their own individuation and consequently leaves them 'incomplete' as moral, spiritual, and – ultimately – economic entities. (507)

I demonstrate that in Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's novels, the heroine's labour, in all its forms (paid and unpaid, affective, artistic, intellectual), nurtures and channels her powers of self-regulation and shapes her identity, preparing her for participation in the social, cultural, and economic life of the nation as an autonomous subject, the individuated "entity" Behrendt describes. Her labour, in turn, underpins her improving influence in commercial society by establishing her as an exemplar of the Christian virtues of "industry, humility, self-awareness, and the ennobling generosity of self-sacrifice that marks the fully individuated persona" (Behrendt 508). In her examination of the history of work, Kathi Weeks observes that in modern capitalist societies, "working is part of what is supposed to transform subjects into . . . independent individuals" and, for that reason, "is treated as a basic obligation of citizenship" (8). In its function as an individualizing discourse, work in Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's fiction is therefore granted the power of enlisting women under the category of virtuous and productive citizenship, a category coded as masculine within the language of political economy.

This approach to work as a means to improving the position of women in British society forms an integral part of what I regard as the "feminism" that informs each of these novels. As Weeks summarizes, "[feminism] has its own tendencies toward the mystification and moralization of work" and has historically "reproduced its own version" of the Protestant work ethic with the organizing goal of remedying

"the gender divisions and hierarchies of waged and unwaged work" (12).[12] In this sense, these novels situate the issue of work within an Enlightenment tradition that assumes a "dialectical relationship between the improvement of society and the improvement of women's position in it" (Tomaselli 117-18). In Enlightenment commentary on the condition of women, such as that of Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Catherine Macaulay, and William Alexander, the health of society was characterized, Sylvana Tomaselli writes,

> in terms of the degree to which women were subjected to or free from the tyranny of men. But the degree to which they were recognised as enslaved or possessed of liberty was always measured by the extent to which they took part on the political, social and cultural life of their communities. (121)

These novels likewise link national economic prosperity to the position of women, specifically arguing that the anxieties surrounding "commercial advancement can be resolved . . . only through women's more active involvement in the production of value" in both the formal market and the domestic sphere (Sutherland 116). Incorporating women within a Protestant ethic of work as religious calling, the feminism I identify in these literary texts also underscores women and men's equality

[12] Weeks describes two dominant feminist approaches to addressing issues surrounding women's waged and unwaged labour:

> One strategy, popular with at least some feminists of both the first and second waves, is more or less to accept the lesser value accorded to unwaged domestic labor and seek to secure women's equal access to waged work. Waged work would be women's ticket out of culturally mandated domesticity. (12)

The second strategy Weeks identifies "concentrates on efforts to revalue unwaged forms of household-based labor, from housework to caring work" (13). I regard Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's texts as deploying both these approaches simultaneously: on the one hand, these novels appropriate the language of professionalism as a means of claiming subjectivity for their heroines and suggest the possibility of women entering the world of waged labour. But the novels also represent and revalue instances of emotional labour, most prominently in *Self-Control*.

before God. In *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*, Sarah Apetrei explores the religiously informed "theoretical feminism" espoused by early eighteenth-century British women writers. She defines this feminism as

> a call for women's equal moral, intellectual and spiritual status to be acknowledged; the critique of strategies employed by men to dominate women and keep them in subjection; and the claim that the sexual inequalities that existed in society were constructed by custom and convention and bore no relationship to a state of nature. Essentially, this becomes an argument for social justice, without being tied to a particular programme for reform. (32)

Although Apetrei's work refers to the contexts of the early eighteenth century, her definition nonetheless captures something of the ideologically broad feminist appeal for social justice that runs throughout Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's novels, and highlights the common concerns that characterize British feminism during the long eighteenth century. Demonstrating the connections between Christianity and feminism in Enlightenment writing by women, Apetrei argues that religion "was not just the envelope for an unconsciously secular or self-serving agenda," but "was the very origin and goal of feminism" in Britain (36). In her work on Wollstonecraft's engagements with Christianity, Barbara Taylor has likewise observed that the

> affirmation of women's capacity to apprehend and identify with the divine, expressed in nearly all female writings of the period, was so fundamental to women's sense of ethical worth, and so far-reaching in its egalitarian

> implications, that it can be properly described as one of the founding impulses of feminism. (102)

In the present study, I employ Apetrei's definition of theoretical feminism in order to help complicate the presumed antagonism between religion and feminist philosophy (which recurs prominently in the criticism on Opie and Brunton), to underscore the egalitarian rhetoric that transcends ideological lines in women's writing of the Romantic period, and to clarify my use of the term "feminism" in addressing what are often categorized as ideologically "conservative," "antirevolutionary," and even "antifeminist" texts.[13]

Professionalizing accomplishment

Batchelor contends that in the 1790s "the language of labour" assumes new force in fiction and non-fiction "as a response to the consolidation and professionalization of the middle ranks at the turn of the century and as a critique of this process's ramifications for women, whose claims to professionalism were commonly deemed tenuous at best" (*Women's Work* 110). "Professionalism" is here understood as a central form of modern disciplinary power in which specialized knowledge, training, and commitment to a specific sphere of activity is equated with the constitution of subjectivity; in Clifford Siskin's formulation, "[to] be a professional . . . is to become what you do" (105). The "cultural authority" of the emergent professional class, as Batchelor, Siskin, and Harriet Guest have explained,

[13] As Apetrei summarizes, historical narratives surrounding women's engagement with religion tend to present religion as a confining force against which women must struggle: "It is as if a woman and the religious ideology she not only inhabited, but also which stirred within her, possessed discrete and even antagonistic wills; and as if religion was a kind of implacable patriarchal intelligence. Women, it is implied, appropriated 'religion' with an agenda – however consciously" (27).

was predicated twofold, upon the concept of work as the defining activity of adult life and upon political economy's discourse of the division of labour. In this context, adult subjectivity finds expression in androcentric terms, "equated with the kind of moral discipline and intellectual training necessary to professional men who had to make their way in a hostile, competitive, seductive and uncongenial social world" (Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism* 11). In a market defined by the sexual division of labour, Guest summarizes, there is accordingly "no moral or professional language available to articulate feminine virtue" or women's sense of higher calling to intellectual and artistic pursuits (286). Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney respond to this discursive erasure by appropriating the language of labour in order to write women into the commercial nation, using "the language of professionalization," in particular, to emphasize their roles as contributing citizens and thus "reclaim respectability for the notion of virtuous femininity" within political economy and modern British society (Guest 287).

Eve Tavor Bannet has proposed that in their conduct books, tracts, and novels, women writers of the late eighteenth century extend the dictums of political economy in order to professionalize domesticity itself, teaching "ladies that by reconceiving their diverse *roles as women* as *professional work* – work requiring reason, ability, education, effort, persistence, virtues, and specialized knowledges," they can demonstrate their "usefulness" to the public good (145). In a related vein, Kelly argues that, in the Romantic period's emergent middle-class subjectivity, domestic woman came to represent "a female version of the male professional, requiring the same kind of self-discipline and method ('virtue' and 'reason'), but not the same

intellectual training, and working in a distinct, parallel sphere" (*Revolutionary Feminism* 16). Mary Poovey and Monica Cohen have made similar arguments regarding the professionalization of domesticity in nineteenth-century literature and culture, arguing that the novels of Austen, Dickens, and Eliot, for instance, elevate and confer power on women by "[unveiling] domesticity as an elected vocation" (Cohen 7).[14] Cohen, however, is critical of Kelly's relegation of middle-class femininity to a subordinate sphere of domestic expertise within professional culture, and instead argues that professional domesticity can be seen as "a radical means of non-revolutionary change" in which nineteenth-century feminism and professionalism overlap to promote the cause of women (14). In her influential essay "Reform or Ruin: 'A Revolution in Female Manners,'" Mitzi Myers likewise suggests that Romantic women writers across ideological lines "interpret domestic culture as proffering active roles, constructive channels through which women can aid in revitalizing the world to conform to the values of home, not the materialistic marketplace" (204). These women reformers, Myers maintains, desired "a more respectable and powerful status underscoring women's need for purposeful, nationally significant work (whether charitable or paid) and endowing them with weighty authority as mothers and educators," a concept that underpins the rhetoric of "usefulness" which is so prevalent in women's writing of this period (204).

Following in Myers and Cohen's lines of argument, I examine the ways in which the novels under study professionalize a range of female activities, and cite the domestic as an important site of administration and individual formation while also

[14] Poovey explores this in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*.

imagining constitutive and propitious space for women beyond the home, in the commercial and civic spheres. These novels deploy the discourses of female accomplishment, in particular, with a view to recasting models of passive, ornamental femininity into models premised upon women's social usefulness, self-improvement, and imaginative self-expression. In the process, these writers complicate sociocultural ideals surrounding women's essential passivity, domestic function, and exclusion from meaningful work and economic life.

From ornamental object to creative subject

Professionalism enables these writers, as Antonia Losano has written of Anne Brontë's painter heroine Helen Huntingdon in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), "to begin short-circuiting the erotic structure of the aesthetic experience, so that the woman-as-object can become the woman-as-subject" (38). Losano defines Helen's professionalism as the move from the creation of "overtly sentimental, symbolic art" for the sake of private accomplishment to the creation of "resolutely less self-expressive art" for sale, a move, she argues, that "dramatizes the transition from amateur accomplished woman to professional female artist" that Bermingham describes as taking place in the course of the nineteenth century (5). When *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* turns its heroine's training in drawing, portraiture, and painting, the testaments of accomplished domestic femininity, into the basis for her economic self-sufficiency as a single mother, the novel overturns "one of the seminal ideological constructions in art: the image of the woman as art object, an object of desire rather than a productive aesthetic subject" (15). Like Zakreski, Losano,

moreover, suggests that the heroine's art "provides a sort of screen behind which Helen can hide" from the unwanted sexual advances of male characters (23), and "maintain corporeal distance and aesthetic autonomy" from the appraisal of masculine desire (34).[15]

Losano categorizes *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as a female *Künstlerroman*, a subgenre of the female *Bildungsroman* that chronicles not only the "immense obstacles" to professional self-realization for the female artist, but also dramatizes "how the profession of art transforms an individual into that separate species, an artist" (17). Linda M. Lewis regards "the female *Künstlerroman* as developing parallel to but separate from its male counterpart" in its particular focus on the challenges to women's artistic self-expression, public recognition, and professional identity (4). Kari Lokke argues that, in its characteristic revision to the traditional courtship plot and focus on women's desire for self-expression, the female *Künstlerroman* implies "that women, and women artists in particular, must find their *own* ways out of imprisoning patriarchal strictures" (8). The novels I address likewise focus on the development of the genteel heroine as autonomous subject, mediated through her engagement in artistic labour and the world of work. In this sense, these texts can be regarded as part of the pan-European rise of the female *Künstlerroman* in the early nineteenth century, which formally began, for many critics, with the 1807 publication of Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy*.

[15] Losano notes, however, that despite its depiction of Helen's professional activity, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* does "show that painting is still a dangerously sexy activity and that Helen cannot entirely cloak herself in her professionalism. Brontë insists that the focus upon the artist-figure has inextricably troublesome effects upon women artists, who can never quite avoid being reabsorbed into the earlier historical paradigm of art-for-accomplishment's sake" (39).

Although *Corinne* first appeared in Britain in English translation as *Corinna, or Italy* in the autumn of 1807 and thus chronologically succeeds Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Opie's *The Father and Daughter*, Staël's novel nonetheless represents an important touchstone in this study's examinations of art and domesticity because of its paradigmatic representation of the female genius's struggle between creativity and love, artistic vocation and domestic duty. Staël's novel emblematizes the struggle faced by women aspiring to creative vocation under the ideologies of domesticity and the private sphere and, for many British women writing in the early nineteenth century, gave voice to the desire for creative self-expression within a public cultural arena. More specifically, *Corinne* offers a pointed indictment of what the novel portrays as definitively "British" domesticity and its stifling ideals of recessive femininity. The novel irritated Hannah More, inspired Felicia Hemans ("Corinne – 'c'est moi," she wrote in the margins), stirred Letitia Elizabeth Landon, and offered Harriet Martineau a recurring point of comparison in representing British models of female creativity. In the context of the present study, *Corinne* bears the most direct influence on Burney's *The Wanderer*, which several scholars have argued is a revision of Staël's novel. Numerous nineteenth-century British women writers acknowledged *Corinne's* influence, including Maria Jane Jewsbury, as well as Hemans, Landon, Martineau, and Eliot, as "the originary portrait of European female genius" (Lokke 4). Ellen Peel and Nanora Sweet explain that following its publication,

> Staël's novel quickly established itself as the book that would most influence British women poets in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Its

> heroine was half-English herself, after all, and her life and career brought her into conflict with an English culture that distrusted feminine sensibility and disapproved of feminine publicity. (204)

The influence of *Corinne* helps situate Opie, Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney's novels within the broader discourses of British and European Romanticism and, moreover, informs the ways in which these writers adapt and transform genre, reworking, for instance, the conventions of the female *Künstlerroman* and the Evangelical novel, in order to achieve particular didactic, aesthetic, and rhetorical ends within the contexts of popular Romantic fiction.

Wells notes that women and men writers of the nineteenth century likewise "treated the topic of accomplishments in their fiction and poetry" (3). In the period under study, however, sustained representations of the decorative arts in the novel are predominantly the domain of women writers. As we have seen, men certainly authored conduct books on female preoccupations, while the poetry of male writers of this period often invokes the fecund or creative female figure as muse. But it is women writers of fiction who represent the trials of the artist heroine, and who describe the rituals and props of decorative art-making in the quotidian detail that bespeaks the cultural ubiquity of these practices. In its focus on psychological interiority and individual experience, fiction offers these writers the unique representational space in which to explore the constitution of the artistically labouring heroine.

Chapter overview

Each chapter offers a case study in the ways in which these writers respectively yoke accomplishment to the individualizing discourse of work within the conventions of domestic, didactic, sentimental, and Gothic fiction. Each chapter, moreover, offers a critical reassessment of accomplishment as the sign of recessive femininity, and underscores the ways in which these novels link the heroine's art-making to her constitution as a morally and financially autonomous subject.

In chapter one, which examines *The Father and Daughter*, I argue that Opie conjoins the narrative of Christian self-improvement through work with the sentimental tale of seduction in order to rewrite the "fallen" heroine as an exemplar of both public and private virtue. Agnes Fitzhenry's redemptive labour, which she in part carries out in the textile and handicraft trades, is the means by which this heroine not only overcomes social prejudice and economic marginalization, but also earns the money required to care for her "injured" father, whose sanity has been "the victim . . . of her guilt" (Opie 93).

I argue that the tale's ideologies of individual improvement and the virtue of labour underpin its vision of feminist reform, which advocates for enlarged social, economic, and civic roles for women, and valorizes women's existing if, in the language of political economy, theoretically invisible contributions to the workings of commercial society. In emphasizing this text's strategies at accommodating seemingly divergent ideological positions regarding women's economic rights and familial duties, I enrich the scholarly debate on Opie's place in Romantic culture by complicating her categorization as either a "radical" or "conservative" writer.

Brunton's novel *Self-Control* is equally invested in the self-improving potential of work for the genteel heroine, and chapter two addresses the ways in which this bestselling work of didactic fiction links the heroine's creative labour to her development as a model self-governing subject. I argue that Laura Montreville's professionalized accomplishment condenses the novel's broader arguments regarding the importance of women's social, cultural, and economic contributions to the ongoing improvement of the civic whole, underpinning its Evangelical conviction in self-improvement and self-regulation as the bases for social reformation and cohesion. Combining romance and didacticism, *Self-Control* redefines the generic parameters of early nineteenth-century Evangelical fiction as a popular vehicle for representing the constitutive aspects of female creativity and labour across a range of activities (paid and unpaid) and settings (domestic and public). Throughout, I argue that Brunton's writing challenges the familiar categories of the private sphere and the domestic woman, and puts into question the abiding mythology that casts her life, works, and heroines as the exempla of domestic ideology.

Chapter three focuses on artist heroine Ellena Rosalba's creation of decorative art objects in Radcliffe's *The Italian*, and argues that this heroine's creative labour serves to disrupt the gendered aesthetic hierarchies of the sublime and the beautiful set out in Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Like the other heroines examined in this study, Ellena establishes her moral and financial autonomy through her engagement in remunerated labour. This chapter examines the ways in which this labour brings the heroine into contact with a continuity of transcendent experience that partakes equally of the

sublime and the beautiful, casting her as both the creator and proprietor of beauty, a virtuous labourer who also embodies a late eighteenth-century ideal of polished, genteel femininity. Depicting the heroine's concurrent formation as a working artist and an autonomous subject, *The Italian* imagines a society in which women contribute to the production of value in the market and find meaning as the subjects, and not merely the objects, of aesthetic experience. In the process, this novel proposes a theory of aesthetic experience in which sublimity and beauty exist in a non-hierarchical relation and transcendence is democratized.

My fourth chapter offers a reassessment of *The Wanderer*'s "conduct book" heroine Juliet Granville, a character read by many critics as an exemplar of recessive femininity and evidence of Burney's conservatism as a writer. I reframe Juliet's extraordinary accomplishment as a central component in the novel's broader valorization of female creativity and its role in forming subjectivity and narratives of nation in the post-French Revolutionary period, and argue that the heroine's art-making undergirds her public role as an agent of reconciliation and reform in the novel's stagnant, xenophobic social world. I focus, in particular, on the ways in which the novel draws connections between Juliet's wandering and accomplishment as contiguous creative activities that similarly enable the heroine to find a place for herself in Britain's social, economic, and physical landscape, and bring new perspective to bear from her position of exile. I demonstrate that the heroine's creative and imaginative energies imbue her with public influence that transcends the ideologies of the domestic sphere and ornamental femininity, exemplifying *The*

Wanderer's larger aim of acknowledging the importance of female labour in public, economic life.

Polish or Work? Four Women Novelists and the Professionalization of Accomplishment, 1796-1814 demonstrates the centrality of the issues of artistic labour, aesthetics, and economics in Romantic-era fiction by women. This study contributes to a growing body of literary and art historical criticism reassessing the place of female accomplishment and the decorative arts in British culture, and it specifically reevaluates the ideologies of domestic womanhood and separate spheres as hermeneutic approaches in studying women's cultural production of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. Throughout, I show that presiding critical approaches have limited our understanding of the role and representation of these gendered cultural practices and have helped reinforce the perception that the popular novel and the decorative arts, similarly feminized forms, occupy the margins of a dominant "masculine" Romantic culture.[16] In *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*, Anne K. Mellor avers that "women writers participated in the *same* discursive public sphere and in the *same* formation of public opinion as did their male peers" (3). At its broadest level, the present study reveals hitherto unconsidered ways in which women writers have historically defined and revised ideals of middle-class womanhood within mainstream social, economic, and aesthetic discourses, recasting the familiar tropes and props of femininity in their appeals for women's equality.

[16] As Fiona Price has demonstrated, "disputes over taste frequently took place" in the period's marginalized and feminized literary forms, "themselves regarded as being in bad taste: the Gothic, the sentimental novel, the romance, and the tale" (2).

Chapter 1

"Nothing henceforth but my industry shall relieve me":

Rewriting the "Fallen" Heroine Through the Narrative of Redemptive Labour in Amelia Opie's *The Father and Daughter*

> … I have often felt gratitude to the Most High for having given me a talent by which as I have reason to believe, I have been permitted to do some good, to those who *seek* for amusements & *probably wish* for *instruction* in tales like mine.
>
> - Amelia Opie to Joseph Gurney, 23 February 1844 ("Appendix A" 262)

Popular and prolific, Norwich-born Amelia Alderson Opie (1769-1853) authored five completed novels, multiple volumes of moral tales, dramatic pieces, and a substantial and diverse body of poetry, published and private, throughout her lifetime. Scholarship on Opie has, until recently, almost exclusively focused on her work as a novelist and, more specifically, her 1805 *Adeline Mowbray*, a novel contemporary and present-day critics have read as a commentary on "the problem of philosophical compromise" exemplified by the romantic relationship between Opie's friends and intellectual correspondents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (King and Pierce ix). Opie formed part of radical coteries in both Norwich and London during the 1790s, a period in which she published seventeen poems in Norwich's politically dissident periodical *The Cabinet* (1794-95).[17] She socialized not only with Godwin and Wollstonecraft but also with Thomas Holcroft, Elizabeth

[17] *The Cabinet,* first published in October 1794, was founded and run by a group of young radical intellectuals and members of Norwich's Dissenting community, including Charles Marsh, Thomas Starling Norgate, John Pitchford, and William Youngman. In his article "'The Athens of England': Norwich as a Literary Center in the Late Eighteenth Century," David Chandler writes that "[these] four young men themselves wrote about 60 percent of *The Cabinet*, which mainly consisted of argumentative essays, but also included a good deal of poetry, most of it by Amelia Alderson and John Taylor" (178-79).

Inchbald, and a broad network of shared acquaintances, including John Opie and Mary Hays, in what Claire Sheridan has described as an open, "accommodating" intellectual community premised upon the assumption that, "in the wake of the French Revolution, . . . the fabric of society was ripe for debate and revaluation" (174-75). Opie would later recall the 1790s and, in particular, the year 1794 – the year she attended the treason trials of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, and John Thelwall at the Old Bailey – as "the most interesting period of my long life" (qtd. in Brightwell 49).

Yet Opie's abiding commitment to writing didactic, "improving" fiction, paired with a public image critically and visually defined by soft feminine beauty and sentiment,[18] have favoured perception of Opie as a "properly feminine" and, if not conservative, then "quietist" writer (Ferris 56). Her conversion to Quakerism in 1825 and attendant renunciation of fiction writing in accordance with the prescripts of that faith complete a portrait of Opie as a religious moralist who increasingly distanced herself from the politics of her day. This Romantic-era construct lasted throughout the nineteenth century and found resonance in twentieth-century scholarly appraisals of Opie's oeuvre. In Cecilia Brightwell's 1854 *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie*, for example, Opie's biographer and friend qualifies her subject's involvement in

[18] Shelley King emphasizes the importance of Opie's public reputation as a beauty ("the Belle of Norwich") and argues for the role John Opie's portraits of his wife played in disseminating her image to the reading public, a point I address below ("Portrait of a Marriage" 30; 48). Biographical accounts and critical reviews alike regularly invoke the terms "soft," "tender," "feminine," and "simple" in describing Opie and her work: twentieth-century biographer Margaret Eliot Macgregor, for example, describes Opie's "soft, expressive eyes, her auburn hair, her plaintive singing" (9). Andrea Bradley explores the gendered language of the *Edinburgh Review*'s appraisals of Opie's poetry, arguing that, "[the] discussion of Opie offers a model of the periodical's practices of reading women's poetry . . . [In] demarcating the bounds of appropriate form, style, and sentiment" for the woman writer, the *Edinburgh Review* subjects a perceived "feminine aesthetic" to the discipline of the periodical's reviewers and readers, implicitly gendered male (41-42).

revolutionary intellectual circles in the 1790s by claiming that "there was too much of the pure womanly character in her, to suffer her ever to sympathize with the assertors of 'women's rights,' (so called;)" (41).[19] Marilyn Butler, in her groundbreaking monograph *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), portrays Opie as a lapsed revolutionary, citing her as "a striking example of the insidious spread of reaction" into previously liberal terrain (121).[20] Ina Ferris argues that reviewers in the period's major literary journals consistently praised Opie as "an exemplar of femininity" for what Ferris terms "feminine writing": affective, modest, corrective, and "unliterary," this critical category stands in opposition to the formal control and intellectual rigour of masculine literary achievement (52-57). Most recently, Roxanne Eberle adopts the view that Opie provides a "particularly apt example of Mary Poovey's 'proper lady' writer" in that she "successfully presented an appropriately feminine demeanor throughout the nineteenth century after participating enthusiastically in the revolutionary excitement of the 1790s" (93).

As Eberle's analysis intimates, the ideological nuance evident across Opie's biography and works poses a critical challenge, undercutting binary categorizations of her as either a conservative or radical writer. In this chapter, I focus on Opie's best-selling moral "tale" *The Father and Daughter* (1801)[21] in order to explore Opie's strategies at accommodating and, indeed, conciliating apparently divergent

[19] King and Pierce note the significance of Brightwell's *Memorials* as a source of biographical material on Opie: Brightwell's text "brings together an astonishing range of primary sources, some of which have disappeared and the rest of which have been widely dispersed, in a biography that from the moment of publication became the single source for all succeeding discussions of Opie's life" (*The Collected Poems* lviii).

[20] *Adeline Mowbray*, Butler argues, "demonstrates how fully liberals . . . came back into the conformist fold" in the early nineteenth century (121).

[21] The full title of the work is *The Father and Daughter, A Tale, in Prose*, but I will be using this abbreviated version throughout.

ideological positions regarding women's rights and duties. Opie recasts the literary conventions of the late eighteenth-century novel, including the heroine of sensibility and the seduction plot, to didactic and reformist ends, producing popular fiction that is also the site of critical and edifying debate. Stephen C. Behrendt has suggested that the popular success of *The Father and Daughter* is testament to "Opie's skill at accommodating the conventions of the sentimental narrative to the needs of social reformist fiction" ("Response Essay" 200). I build on this insight and argue that Opie conjoins the narrative of Christian self-improvement through work with the conventions of the sentimental tale of seduction, rewriting her "fallen" heroine, Agnes Fitzhenry, as a creative subject whose redemptive labour enables her to transcend social prejudice and economic marginalization. I demonstrate that *The Father and Daughter* is fundamentally reformist in outlook, and that its high sentiment and moralistic program are not inimical but rather central to Opie's vision of change regarding the social, economic, and civic roles available to women in the market economy. The tale joins the ideologies of individual improvement and the virtue of labour to a vision of feminist reform seeking to redress women's economic dispossession and sexual commodification in British society. By highlighting the ways in which "the private notions of morality, family, and love" give form to this polemic on the public roles of women (Comitini 9), I contribute to a growing body of scholarship that is enriching our view of Opie's influence on Romantic fiction and culture by foregrounding the challenges her life and work pose to the established categories of Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin, radical and conservative (Schierenbeck 84).

Critical approaches: Opie's strategies of accommodation

In attempting to situate Opie's works in relation to Britain's "war of ideas" of the 1790s,[22] many scholars of the Romantic novel have adopted a line of argument that identifies Opie's fiction as ideologically "split" or "doubled" on the vigorously debated cotemporary issues of women's roles in civic and familial life. Gary Kelly, Claudia Johnson, and Eleanor Ty established the parameters of this approach in their seminal scholarship on Opie, each arguing, in different ways, that Opie's fiction at once appears to endorse a patriarchal status quo through a surface of conservative moralizing and familiar narrative paradigms while invoking reformist polemic and "'unofficial' feminist ideology" via a range of subtle rhetorical maneuvers (Kelly, "Official and Unofficial Ideology" 24). For Kelly, Opie's novels and tales are characterized by ideological contradiction and asymmetry, catering to narrative convention and yet conveying "covert" feminist sympathies through representations of women's emotional suffering (23). Johnson reads Opie's fiction as playing polarized conservative and radical arguments against each other in order to reach middle ground (23), and points to the "parallel plots which vindicate liberty, private conscience, and the defiance of authority" even amidst the writer's apparent condemnation of "reformist zeal" (xxi). Ty finds fruitful "incongruity" between Opie's apparently simple didacticism and "the complex structuring" of her plots (183), emphasizing the ambiguity and dialogism of her work (9).

[22] In *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, Marilyn Butler posits that a "war of ideas" raged in Britain during the French Revolutionary period in response to the rise of intellectual and literary sentimentalism and its associated revolutionary ideas. Butler argues that Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin novelists, a binary she invokes in her study, participated in this debate, claiming political allegiance through fiction and signaling ideological stance through particular narrative and generic conventions. In this context, Butler concludes, Austen belongs "to a movement that defines itself by its opposition to revolution" (123).

These contributions have helped complicate established categorizations of Opie as a conservative sympathizer, politically disengaged after 1800, and have brought to the fore "the subversive instability and narrative inclusivity" of her fiction, generic qualities that Markman Ellis and others assign to the novel in the eighteenth century (21). Like Johnson, I read Opie's two major early works – *The Father and Daughter* and *Adeline Mowbray* – as *political* texts participating in "a polemical tradition" of women's fiction advocating for social reform (xi).[23] Recent contributions have built upon early Opie scholarship to elucidate the rhetorical strategies through which Opie's work disrupts and transforms literary convention in order to enter into the era's broader debates on abolition, gendered codes of conduct, the "function" of women in British society, and care for the insane. Excerpts from Opie's journals and letters, compiled by Brightwell in *Memorials,* reveal a woman fascinated by political debate, legal process, and civil rights throughout her life – and despite that biographer's claims otherwise. As King and Pierce observe in their introduction to the Oxford edition of *Adeline Mowbray*, "biographical and literary evidence suggest a strong endorsement of female involvement in political discussion. Beyond her [Opie's] association with Godwin and Wollstonecraft, she counted herself among the blue-stockings . . . Opie makes clear . . . that women should participate in intellectual pursuits" (xiv). Responding to King's scholarship on *Adeline Mowbray* and echoing Johnson's readings of Opie, Behrendt, in particular, proposes that we approach Opie's

[23] Refining the terms of her argument, Johnson clarifies that, "to invoke a polemic is not necessarily to accept completely the loaded terms on which it is conducted or to endorse the foregone conclusions to which it invariably tends. Under the pressure of intense reaction," many women writers, including Austen, "developed stylistic techniques which enabled them to use politically charged material in an exploratory and interrogative, rather than hortatory and prescriptive, manner" (xxi). I refer to "a polemical tradition" with this understanding in mind.

fiction as a "version of the skeptical debate, that rhetorical form that was so popular during the era, especially among reformist thinkers writing in all genres." Through comparison and synthesis of two rival positions, "the reader-auditor must construct a new, third position that accommodates the best of the two." The novel of skeptical debate, Behrendt argues, uses this dialectical model "to teach critical thinking, moral and intellectual discrimination and readerly self-sufficiency among its consumers" ("Response Essay" 201).

To date, most scholarly considerations of *The Father and Daughter* have interrogated its idealized representations of paternal-filial love, reading Opie's tale of a father ruined through his daughter's sexual fall as a parable of the vulnerability of patriarchal power in a time of rapid political, social, and cultural transition in Britain (Johnson; Staves; Kelly; Behrendt). Fewer scholars have noted the significance of Agnes's labour as a redemptive and reparative force in the context of the tale's imagined civic and affective communities and, moreover, recognized this labour as a positively constitutive aspect of the heroine's subjectivity. In fact, those who do mention Agnes's tireless industry tend to interpret it as a form of ascetic self-punishment and a manifestation of unquestioning filial devotion (Staves; Tong). I take a different approach, however, and argue that through the labour of its genteel and accomplished heroine, *The Father and Daughter* emphasizes the importance of women's moral, creative, and economic agency in enriching and sustaining public and private life, and imagines a context in which a "fallen" woman becomes an exemplar of Christian self-improvement. In her article on metaphors of contagion in Opie's fiction, Meghan Burke Hattaway argues that the "fallen" heroines Adeline

Mowbray and Agnes Fitzhenry do not act as "agents of corruption over the course of their suffering," but instead

> both act as instruments of moral and physical healing in their stories, often serving as literal nurses to the sick and dying. Their children survive untainted by their mothers' pasts, while "proper" men and women find their lots improved by having come into contact with these fallen peers. In place of disease and indecency, Opie's fallen women transmit health and morality to their communities. (558)

These heroines' acts of self-exertion, that is, fulfill the public function of moral reformation, "identifying and healing" the "physical and spiritual disorders" that afflict their families and communities (562). Opie depicts instances of female labour, including nursing, caretaking, and artistic pursuit in her later works, including *Adeline Mowbray* and *Madeline, A Tale* (1822), but *The Father and Daughter* presents a remarkable intensification of the intersecting issues of labour, morality, and subjectivity in the context of the feminist literary discourses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

It is important to clarify here that I understand Agnes's labour primarily as the textile and ornamental work she undertakes in her provincial hometown to support herself, her father, and her son in the wake of the family's economic ruin and her own "fall." Agnes hones skills from a repertoire of traditional female accomplishments, cultivated through an education on which her father previously "bestow[ed] every possible expense" (Opie 65), as a means to (tenuous) economic self-sufficiency, self-respect, and redemption in the eyes of the community. The heroine's resourceful

entrepreneurialism, I argue, sits in contiguity with her ability to self-consciously script her own narrative as a repentant and devoted daughter and a public exemplar of moral reformation, eliciting sympathy through the pathos of her storytelling and embodying penitence through her displays of sartorial modesty and "domestic heroism." In attributing constitutive power to a range of activities performed by her heroine (paid and unpaid, public and private, emotional and material), Opie generates a rhetorical continuum that marks multiple forms of labour as productive of value – whether economic, moral, or aesthetic – and hence throws into question eighteenth-century Britain's gendered discourses on political economy and art (King, "Maid of Corinth" 630).

In this sense, *The Father and Daughter* redraws the seduction plot as a narrative of female development, rallying its sentimental tropes not as a lament for patriarchal authority but in service of "a social lesson about the stifling and degrading nature of oppressive contemporary attitudes (and laws) concerning women, their circumstances, and the choices forced on them by the want of options and alternatives" (Behrendt, *British Women Poets* 52). Eberle has highlighted the fact that, unlike many of the seduction narratives penned by women novelists in the 1790s, including those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Inchbald, Opie's tale portrays a community that "embraces its 'fallen' daughter. Its social leaders allow her the opportunity to 'work' out her perceived guilt through properly recompensed labor" (101). Ty brings a similar insight to *The Father and Daughter*, observing that, "Opie expands the subjectivity of her heroine, and, implicitly, that of woman not just to include the customary roles of maiden, mistress or wife, but to

highlight and encompass roles of daughter, caregiver and provider, mother, worker, and nurse" (134).

I use both Eberle and Ty's contributions as points of departure to suggest that it is through her calling to work that Agnes is able to define herself beyond the narrative of sexual "fall": she becomes a resourceful entrepreneur, a useful member of her community, and an embodiment of domestic affection – that is, an autonomous moral, creative, and economic agent, no longer subordinated to patriarchal authority and its masculinist conceptions of value.[24] *The Father and Daughter* thus posits, as King has argued of Opie's poem "The Maid of Corinth" (1801), "that celebration of the domestic affections need not exclude" the heroine "from the political arena of public service" and "that private virtue and civic duty" are not irreconcilable ("Origins of Art" 630). In reading *The Father and Daughter* as a narrative of female development through redemptive labour, as a moral tale of socially reformist ambitions, I aim to demonstrate that Opie's tale accommodates divergent ideological positions with a view to evoking broad sympathy for the precarious, powerless position of women in British society. In its hybridization of literary conventions, *The Father and Daughter* seeks to suture political divisions and find common terrain in the debate on the place of women in commercial society.

[24] Although Agnes cares for her father following his fall into madness, tirelessly committing herself to her filial duties, she does so on her own terms and, moreover, finds individual meaning and agency, as well as a degree of financial stability, in the process. Eberle notes that, in contradistinction to the novelistic tradition of the reunited father and daughter, "Fitzhenry can neither reject nor reclaim Agnes because he fails to recognize her at all" (98) in "the violence of phrensy" (Opie 93). Thus whereas father and daughter had "once been linked by their mutual possession of superior qualities," Eberle notes, "they are now united by their status as outcasts," occupying equal positions of social marginality (98).

"Mrs. Opie's" first bestseller

The Father and Daughter, published by Longman and Rees in 1801 as a single volume with a collection of poems,[25] was Opie's first work to appear under the name "Mrs. Opie," following her marriage to painter and Royal Academician (as of 1787) John Opie in 1798. The text marks a watershed in Opie's professional development as one of the most respected writers of the early nineteenth century in terms of its generic innovation, its commercial and critical success, and its role in shaping Opie's public persona as an "authoress." In their introduction to the Broadview edition of *The Father and Daughter*, King and Pierce refer to Opie's tale as "a cultural phenomenon": immense commercial success in Britain, adaptation for the stage and opera at home and on the Continent,[26] and translation into French, German, and Spanish made *The Father and Daughter* "a familiar contour on the literary landscape" after 1801 (11). Situating *The Father and Daughter* in the contexts of the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility, King and Pierce attribute the tale's international popularity to its evocation of sentiment, its ability to arouse pathos and exert "transformative" emotional power over the reader, thus opening the "mind to some excellence beyond self-interest" (13). As Markman Ellis summarizes, the process of sympathetic identification enabled by the literature of sensibility "was to

[25] King and Pierce emphasize that, "[in] considering the success of *The Father and Daughter*, modern readers should keep in mind that the first edition included a miscellany of poetical pieces which in themselves proved to be extremely popular" – so much so that they were published in a separate volume entitled *Poems*, in 1802 (*The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry* 34). In reading the tale in light of its initial publication with these poetic pieces, it is intriguing to consider the parallels on the subject of female creativity between *The Father and Daughter* and one poem in particular, "The Maid of Corinth."

[26] In 1809, *The Father and Daughter* was adapted for the opera, in Italy, by Paër, as *Agnese di Fitz-Henry*; in 1817, the opera *L'Agnese* came to the London stage. In Britain, Marie Thérèse Kemble drew heavily on Opie's text in her 1815 melodramatic pastiche *Smiles and Tears; or, The Widow's Stratagem*, while W.T. Moncrieff adapted the tale as the stage play *The Lear of Private Life* in 1820 (King and Pierce, *The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry* 29-34).

be an improving experience, refining the manners by exercising the ability to feel for others" (17). This experience was not limited to private feeling, however. Instead, Ellis emphasizes, sensibility functioned as a method of "thorough-going and self-conscious analysis of the emergent consumer economy of British society and culture" and, in the course of the eighteenth century, helped shape debate on social and political issues and opened "spaces within public opinion for imagining and creating responses of individual and institutional reform" (17). Challenging critical assumptions regarding the "demise of sensibility" at the end of the eighteenth century, Ellis argues that sentimentalism in 1790s Britain represented a politicized discourse in which writers offered "competing constructions of sensibility" to different rhetorical ends in the Revolution controversy, "making distinctions between schools of thought and literary endeavour" in the process (190).[27]

Writing in the immediate wake of the 1790s, Opie intimates her own approach to literary sentiment in a prefatory address "To the Reader," printed in the first edition of *The Father and Daughter,* where she claims that the chief objective of her tale is to impart a "moral." Here, Opie makes a distinction between the ambitions of the novel as a genre and those of the present text: *The Father and Daughter*, she writes, "is

[27] Noting that the terms "sensibility," "sentiment," "sentimentality," and "sentimentalism" were often "used interchangeably" in eighteenth-century literature and philosophy, Janet Todd nevertheless distinguishes "sentimentalism" as a word denoting the historical "movement discerned in philosophy, politics and art, based on the belief in or hope of the natural goodness of humanity and manifested in a humanitarian concern for the unfortunate and helpless" (6-7). In *The Father and Daughter*, Opie warns against uncontrolled emotion and displays of feeling, typified by the scene in which Agnes, "overcome with despair," attempts suicide with "a knife" (Opie 97). Like Brunton, Radcliffe, and Burney, Opie associates excessive sensibility or feeling with lack of self-control, dangerous solipsism, and even madness, leading to a disregard for others and an inability to fulfill social and familial duties. This is exemplified by Agnes's momentary neglect of her child at the height of her emotional distress. Working within the broad cultural movement of sensibility, *The Father and Daughter* represents sentimentalism as a particular combination of moral reflection "on the rights and wrongs of human conduct" with heightened feeling, "a combining of heart with head or an emotional impulse leading to an opinion or principle" (Todd 7). Through sentimentalism, Opie thus links private feeling to social reform.

wholly devoid of those attempts at strong character, comic situation, bustle, and variety of incident, which constitute a NOVEL, . . . its highest pretentions are, to be a SIMPLE, MORAL TALE" (63). Just as Maria Edgeworth does in the "Advertisement" to *Belinda*, also published in 1801, Opie assigns her text to the category of "moral tale," asserting its didactic function as a work of fiction. Both Opie and Edgeworth are defining voices in the early nineteenth-century emergence of a large and popular body of moral and didactic fiction that sought to "improve" readers by providing exemplars of "decorous" conduct, defined by chastened sentiment, social responsibility, rationalism, and piety (Killick 74; Mandal 23). The Romantic period witnessed a particular interest in moral fiction as a venue for instruction, both in the form of short tales and longer prose works, such as *Belinda* and Brunton's *Self-Control.* Lisa Wood has demonstrated that during the period 1793-1815, some of the period's most prominent women writers, including Hannah More, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Jane West, claimed the novel as a legitimate and "expedient" form of instruction that could reach "readers who might not necessarily read a didactic tract" (15-16). Patricia Comitini invokes the term "vocational philanthropy" to describe late eighteenth-century women writers' efforts at producing literature "designed to 'teach' individuals how to improve their 'habits and behaviors,'" and encourage social cohesion through individual reformation (4).[28] Novels, tracts, and tales, she argues, mediate the process of "[interpellating] . . . individuals into subjects who desire

[28] Comitini argues that "vocational philanthropy" works to displace "the public problems of social and economic inequities onto a problematic of individual improvement" by focusing on the individual subject as the primary site of reform (4). But *The Father and Daughter*, I suggest, complicates Comitini's thesis in this regard: drawing on a polemical tradition of women's writing and commentary on female labour, the tale's narrative of self-improvement foregrounds, rather than displaces, the systemic causes of social and economic problems specifically faced by women, an argument I elaborate below.

improvement" and thus buoy up broader ideologies of social reformation and cohesion (12). Tim Killick explores the popularity of the short tale, in particular, for the Romantic period's female didactic writers, noting its concurrent rise with the moral-domestic novel[29] and subsequent assimilation into the growing field of children's literature in the later nineteenth century (74-76). Kelly, Garside, Raven, and Schöwerling observe that the generic descriptor of "tale/s," like those of "anecdote/s" and "sketch/s," appears in the early nineteenth century as a way for writers to demarcate the "modest" and "simple" aims of their didactic works in contradistinction to "the greater artistic pretentions, settings in high society or exotic places, and more obviously fictional character of the 'modern novel'" (Kelly, *English Fiction* 73).[30]

Opie's parsing of generic terms at the outset of *The Father and Daughter* signals her broader aesthetic vision of a simplified, accessible form of fiction with the ability "to foreground displays of feeling," evoke readerly sympathy, and hence establish the conditions for instruction through sympathetic identification between reader and heroine (Kelly, *English Fiction* 84). In Comitini's framing, the tale invites readers to occupy a philanthropic stance by fostering benevolent feeling for its heroine and thus tenders the possibility for personal and social improvement through the "individualized participation in philanthropy" facilitated by fiction (4). Opie's interest in defining the generic parameters of the moral tale in this early work also anticipates her extensive experimentation with short fiction in subsequent years. She

[29] In my chapter on Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*, I address the rise of moral-domestic fiction and its role in "correcting" the excesses of the popular novel in the early nineteenth century at greater length.
[30] According to Garside, Raven, and Schöwerling's survey of fiction titles published in Britain in the period 1800-1829, 27.9% bore the descriptor "Novel" while 24.4% bore that of "Tale/s" (50).

would go on to publish *Simple Tales* (1806), *Tales of Real Life* (1813), *New Tales* (1818), and *Tales of the Heart* (1820), in addition to some didactic non-fiction after her conversion to Quakerism. Yet despite Opie's attempts at generic differentiation at the outset of *The Father and Daughter*, this tale has a great deal in common with the novel in the eighteenth century: the plot of seduction, scenes of high sentiment and domestic crisis, and a focus on the moral development of the heroine make this tale a discursively fluid text. Killick identifies this as a hallmark of Opie's innovation in short fiction: throughout her oeuvre, Killick argues, Opie "lend[s] her tales the language of the novel" with a view to transforming "the moral story into a mode suitable for adult fiction-readers" (82). She adopts familiar plot lines and embeds "the discourses of sentiment and sensibility" within an organizing "moralistic framework" in order to appeal to mainstream taste and reach a broad reading public with her didactic aims (115).

I suggest that this deployment of popular literary convention for moralistic ends accounts for the tale's immense appeal for Romantic readers. Drawing on publishing records and personal correspondence between Opie and her publishers, Jan Fergus and Janice Farrar Thaddeus document the extent of *The Father and Daughter*'s commercial success, Opie's first work to be published with the house of Longman: between 1801 and 1825*, The Father and Daughter* went through nine editions (193).[31] Sales of the first edition were so strong that Longman printed 1000 copies each of the second through fifth editions (206). By 1813, sales had slowed and

[31] King and Pierce state that they have been unable to locate a copy of the ninth edition (*The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry* 57). Fergus and Thaddeus note that 750 copies were printed in the first run, the standard at Longman for new authors in the 1790s, but estimate that a total 9500 copies of *The Father and Daughter* were printed across the nine editions, reflecting the tale's enormous popularity (193; 206).

another edition was not published for six years (205). But Opie's stunning sales of *The Father and Daughter* established her as a successful Longman author in the early nineteenth century; during the years 1800-1810, "Opie was generally considered second only to Edgeworth among new fiction writers" (Kelly, *English Fiction* 83). Between 1804 and 1820, Opie's most popular and profitable period, Longman printed 2000 copies of every new work by Opie, a run on par with the novels of Jane West and Jane Porter (Fergus and Thaddeus 198).[32]

With *The Father and Daughter*, Opie broke new terrain in the literary market as a writer of popular moral fiction for adults. She also, King has persuasively argued, assumed a new "professional and personal identity" as "Mrs. Opie," enabled by her marriage to John Opie, who not only encouraged his wife to pursue "the idea of work and career" ("Portrait of a Marriage" 43) but who also, through his portraits of his wife and illustrations for her works, helped construct and disseminate "the image of 'Mrs. Opie' to a growing public eager for information about contemporary celebrities" (48). Theirs was a "marriage of talents" in which each enabled the other "to attain marked public professional success" from the union, Amelia creating a sociable space in which to entertain John's clients and promote his works, John producing the imagery that would define "Mrs. Opie" as the beautiful, visionary authoress of domestic sentiment (34). Amelia Alderson had anonymously published poetry and one Minerva novel, *The Dangers of Coquetry*, in the 1790s; in 1795, she

[32] Opie made her greatest earnings at Longman through profit-sharing, and over a thirty year period made approximately £4280 from her fiction and poetry published with the house, roughly as much as Frances Burney made from her four novels (Fergus and Thaddeus 198). Fergus and Thaddeus also observe Opie's maturing "professionalism" in her dealings with her publisher over a thirty year period, pointing to her negotiations to maximize profit and her "determination . . . to obtain the best terms possible" (199).

published two popular songs under the name "Miss Alderson" (30). But "it was as Mrs. Opie, not as Amelia Alderson," King writes, "the she attained celebrity" (45). Her marriage provided the social and cultural capital necessary for her to make the transition from an anonymous Minerva writer to a professional publishing with Longman and thus legitimate her identity as an "authoress" of popular, improving literature.

In her work on *The Father and Daughter*, Ty makes the point that although "literary merit does not necessarily come from sheer sales figures," a book's popularity does give insight into "prevailing ideological beliefs" and social anxieties at its time of publication (133). In this sense, Opie's tale and, I would add, her authorial persona as a woman writer, "can be read as a gauge of the values that were prized, tolerated, or deemed unacceptable" in this particular historical moment (134). Reviews of *The Father and Daughter* commonly praise Opie's skill at evoking feeling with a view to "correcting" readers, echoing broader cultural discourses on the improving influence of literature. "The moral inculcated by this tale is seriously impressive," *The Critical Review* praises in May 1802: "It exhibits the most affecting point of view consequent upon the illicit indulgence of the passions; and the effect of the awful lesson which it teaches is not impaired by an intermixture of levity of dialogue or pruriency of description" (114-15). A year earlier, *The Monthly Review* had likewise offered "commendation" of the tale's "moral tendencies" (163-64). A May 1803 article on "Mrs. Opie" in *The European Magazine* opines of *The Father and Daughter* that,

> never was a composition so admirably calculated to rouse the passions in the cause of virtue, and to correct that false sensibility, that degenerating excess of sentiment, which have proved incompatible with the real interests of humanity. The concluding sentences of this pathetic and deeply-affecting story cannot be too often impressed upon young minds: they breathe the purest spirit of philanthropy and good sense. (324)

In each response, praise stems from the tale's ability to improve individual conduct and morality ("correct that false sensibility") and nurture social responsibility ("philanthropy") while remaining aesthetically within the bounds of simplicity and modesty (without "levity of dialogue or pruriency of description"). The tale finds praise, that is, in what Comitini would identify as its philanthropic function, its ability to "point the way towards notions of progressive individualism, protestant ideology and humanitarian benevolence" as the bases for social reformation (36).

In identifying the principal "moral" of the tale, reviews and commentary focus on Opie's censure of "the illicit indulgence of the passions," reading her cautionary concluding paragraph on the dangers of seduction as a summary of the tale's overarching lesson. I contend, however, that the tale contains several didactic aims embedded within the narrative of Agnes Fitzhenry's sexual "fall" and that, despite Opie's opening claim, *The Father and Daughter* offers no "simple" moral (King and Pierce, *The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry* 16). The tale's concluding paragraph in fact distills the polyvalence of Opie's didacticism. While acknowledging the high value society places on female chastity, here the narrator

simultaneously intimates that this value is as tenuous as it is confining for women: "may she whose innocence is yet secure, and whose virtues still boast the stamp of chastity, which can alone make them current in the world, tremble with horror at the idea of listening to the voice of the seducer!" (156). Condensing what the tale does as a whole, the concluding paragraph imagines the recovery of a woman's "currency" after the loss of chastity:

> Peace to the memory of Agnes Fitzhenry! – And may the woman who, like her, has been the victim of artifice, self-confidence, and temptation, like her endeavour to regain the esteem of the world by patient suffering and virtuous exertion; and look forward to the attainment of it with confidence! (156)

Opie inserts the narrative of redemptive labour ("virtuous exertion") within the plot of seduction, positing work as a positively constitutive practice for the marginalized heroine and a tangible, rewarding alternative to the illusions of illicit love ("artifice, self-confidence, and temptation"). At the same time, the heroine's exertion and "patient suffering" through unmerited trial encourage the reader's sympathetic response, casting Agnes as a figure of martyrdom and moral autonomy rather than one of unchecked sexual desire or passive victimhood. Comitini explains that Protestant ideology pervades women's philanthropic writing in the late eighteenth century (36). In *The Father and Daughter*, the conviction in the possibility of self-improvement through work emerges in part from Opie's Christian upbringing as a member of Norwich's Dissenting community. The Dissenting tradition, with its emphasis on the individual connection with the divine and the practice of "spiritual

self-examination," gives Opie the language to imagine a female subject capable of transcending social prejudice and economic hardship through the power of private action (Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution* 80). Dissenting beliefs also underpin Opie's vision of social reform and, as Ty observes, "the way one good heart, one simple act of kindness can combat systemic prejudices or corruption" (183). This "one good heart" may indeed be that of the reader, positioned to witness and condemn the social and economic marginalization faced by the genteel and virtuous Agnes.

The narrative of redemptive labour

With its genteel working heroine, *The Father and Daughter* engages in direct dialogue with women's fiction and non-fiction writing of the late eighteenth century and, more widely, draws on that century's legacy of women's commentary on female labour, which encompasses, for example, the works of Sarah Scott and Sarah Fielding. In Opie's tale, work is the individualizing discourse that enables the heroine to transcend social and economic marginalization and create an identity for herself after the "fall." This is exemplified in Agnes's willingness to move across class lines and various spatial contexts in an effort to repair the familial and personal damage wrought by her illicit sexual relationship with Clifford, an officer of the Guards. Fleeing London and her seducer, Agnes seeks asylum with Fanny, the daughter of a former family servant, upon return to her hometown, and there adopts the identity of a working woman as her first step toward both private and public redemption. Agnes's self-transformation does not merely represent a bid for pecuniary independence; it is

also an act to take charge of her history as a "fallen" woman. Eberle makes the point that "[the] sexually transgressive Romantic heroine may be socially outcast but she is a powerful and persuasive storyteller, intent upon finding sympathetic auditors to listen to her tale" (78). Part of Agnes's "work" in reentering the community thus entails the narration and performance of the repentant self. The "fallen" heroine cites maternal and filial duty as motivation for her entry into not only commercial and civic life, but also into proscribed spaces of masculine dominion, such as the Seymour home and the all-male boardroom of the town's public asylum for the insane. Convinced that she "[deserves] humiliation" for her "crime" (Opie 104-05), Agnes publicly narrates her commitment to labour as an act of repentance and reparation for her "sins": to restore her father to sanity, to support her young son, but also to find some form of psychological palliation and sense of purpose after the "fall." "[From] the wretchedness into which my guilt has plunged me, nothing henceforth but my industry shall relieve me," she declares (112).

These private reasons precipitate the "romantic yet in her eyes feasible plan" of working as a "servant" at the asylum where her father is housed,[33] and lend Agnes the courage to approach both Mr. Seymour, a former acquaintance of the Fitzhenry family and the father of Agnes's girlhood friend, and the asylum board with her plan (104-05). At Agnes's appearance at the Seymour's door, however, the prejudiced patriarch turns her away despite the protests of his more charitable daughter,

[33] In a cruel twist of fate, the asylum where Fitzhenry is incarcerated after his descent into madness is also the asylum he founded in an earlier act of local philanthropy. As King and Pierce clarify, there were two types of institutions for the insane during this period: "the public asylum," funded through charitable subscription, and "the private madhouse," run for profit by physicians (*The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry*, n. 1, 92). King and Pierce suggest that in its positive depictions of "rational domestic" (as opposed to institutional) treatment the tale "advocates" for alternative and more humane care of the insane than that provided through incarceration (25-29).

proclaiming that his house "should be no harbour for abandoned women and unnatural children" (106). Regardless, Agnes appeals to the Seymour's servant, William, a man "kinder than the master," to convey her message. Agnes's insistence to be heard creates affinity between her marginalized position as a "poor and wretched" "fallen" woman and that of the serving class, likewise denied a voice of influence (107). In this and other parallel scenes, Ty argues, the tale distinguishes "between the instinctively sympathetic and charitable actions of simple folk and the questionable or dubious reactions of the people of high social standing" (140). In a similar vein but in relation to the Victorian period, Deborah Ann Logan explains that mid-nineteenth-century women writers of "fallen-woman fiction . . . [recast] the idea that one's class provides the clearest indicator of one's moral standards" by representing morally "good" working-class women (31). *The Father and Daughter* prefigures this strategy when it demonstrates that the inherent virtue of the individual transcends class lines and "cannot be tainted by corporeal concerns" (31). This is true in regards to the "fallen" heroine as well as the working class characters. Embodying the identity of a working woman, Agnes, like Burney's Juliet Granville, therefore comes to occupy a liminal place in the class hierarchy, genteel, polished, and possessing of a "cultivated sensibility" and yet aligned through her labour and demonstrations of "true" Christian feeling with the working bodies of Fanny, William, and the labouring poor of her community (Opie 96).

Agnes publicly performs this liminality in a display of sartorial modesty when she addresses the governors of the asylum board, seeking paid employment as answer to her private "purpose." Wearing "the dress of a respectable maid servant"

borrowed from Fanny and carrying herself "with modest but dignified composure," Agnes strategically elicits the governors' "recollections" of her former "prosperity" in an effort to gain their sympathy for her proposal (109-10): "were I constantly with him [her father]," she states,

> I might in time be able to restore him that reason my guilt has deprived him of. To effect this purpose, it is my wish to become a servant in this house: if I should not succeed in my endeavours, I am sure he will have pleasure in seeing me, that I feel it my duty to be with him, even on that account; and, if there be any balm for a heart and conscience so wounded as mine, I must find it in devoting all my future days to alleviate, though I cannot cure, the misery I have occasioned. (111)

Here filial duty and domestic affection find expression through the language of labour, articulated through speech as well as dress in a performance of service and humility. Her strategic costuming evidences the penitent self, while her motivations to labour confer moral stature on her working body. Much like Burney's Juliet, Agnes makes several calculated choices in clothing in the course of the tale, changing on the journey home, for example, from her London "pelisse" and "shawl" into simple rustic garb, to "prevent her being recognised by any one," although the dress of a "country woman" cannot divest her "of a certain delicacy of appearance and gracefulness of manner, the yet uninjured beauties of former days" (87). The inherent gentility of Opie's heroine – her "nobility of soul," as Radcliffe's impoverished but exemplary heroine Ellena Rosalba terms it in *The Italian* (34) – cannot be tainted by the manual and sartorial degradation that the labouring body signifies. Rather, these external

transformations indicate Agnes's agency and creativity as the narrator of her own history and, moreover, materially and visually challenge the presumed equations between class position and morality.

Although the asylum board denies Agnes's request for employment, these men are softened by her appeal, offer her monetary support and, in a departure from the institution's rules, permit the daughter to spend time with the father during his incarceration. Agnes, however, explicitly rejects the board's offer of charity and uses biblical allusion to express the force of her resolution to establish herself independently:

> I will not eat the bread of idleness, as well as of shame and affliction, and shall even rejoice in being obliged to labour for my support, and that of my child – happy if, in fulfilling well the duties of a mother, I may make some atonement for having violated those of a daughter. (112)

Agnes publicly defines herself in this moment through her determination to work for financial and moral autonomy. This determination sees her engage in paid and unpaid employment across several settings. In the course of the tale, she supports herself, her father, and son by taking up "shawl-work" in "a small back room in Fanny's little dwelling" (115) and, subsequently, starting her own trade in ornamental "fancy-works" (136). She, moreover, offers charity to the poor "by expressing sympathy" with their "sufferings," substituting the pecuniary aid she cannot supply with "tender offices" and "delicate attentions" (130). Although her philanthropy is affective rather than monetary, it nevertheless gives her "the satisfaction" of "consoling the

distressed" and serving the public good, even in her own poverty (130). *The Father and Daughter* thus frames Agnes's "usefulness" along a continuum of commercial activity and emotional labour: her remunerative labour helps answer "considerable" local middle-class demand for hand-worked textiles and ornamental objects (115), while her displays of modesty, philanthropy, and domestic affection serve to soften "even the most rigid hearts" out of admiration for her (Christian) virtues – charity, industry, humility, and kindness (149). Agnes's "exemplary industry," in all its forms, "engage[s] the attention and admiration of the candid and liberal in the town" with the effect of affirming her virtue as a productive member of the civic whole (136).

Suffering, injustice, and embodiment: Female labour and the legacies of the 1790s

Through the narrative of fall and redemption, Opie's tale takes part in the broader appropriation of the language of labour taking place in women's writing of the late eighteenth century, which I outline in the introduction. The tale does so in order to elaborate a model of virtuous and economically productive femininity within the contexts of market capitalism, participating in the redefinition of work through a two-pronged rhetorical approach. The plot of the heroine's seduction and "fall" foregrounds the obstacles women specifically face in securing financial independence outside of male custody, namely economic dispossession through marriage and property laws, sexual double standards, and class prejudice against working women, whose economic independence and labouring bodies cast them in a dubious moral light under the codes of genteel propriety (D. A. Logan 18). But through the

subsequent process of redemption, the tale overturns the associations between work and moral, social, and sexual degradation and imagines the positively constitutive potential of labour for one "fallen" woman. The tale thus responds to social injustice and sexual discrimination through a narrative of redemptive labour, depicting the heroine's reintegration into the community, domestic reconciliation, and individual development as products of her own enterprise. *The Father and Daughter*, in this sense, anticipates the "vocational philanthropy" as theorized by Comitini, giving primacy to the individual and the ideology of self-improvement as the bases for social reform. But the tale does so, I argue, while incurring considerable debt to radical women writers of the 1790s, drawing Agnes in the model of their suffering heroines only to recast her as an example of independence realized.

The challenges Agnes faces are common to many heroines of 1790s fiction: namely, social prejudice regarding loss of chastity and the sexual availability of "unprotected" women, especially those attempting to support themselves through paid employment, lack of sufficient education, and the attendant struggle for financial and psychological self-sufficiency. Many novels of the 1790s – *The Old Manor House*, *The Victim of Prejudice*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney, Mary, A Fiction*, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Natural Daughter* – emphasize the impoverishment and marginalization of the suffering heroine and her inability to establish economic independence outside of some form of sexual contract.[34] In *The Father and Daughter*, the seduction plot throws Agnes's position as a sexual commodity into relief. The competing claims made on the heroine's body by her father, lover, and other men,

[34] Vivien Jones has demonstrated that Hays and Wollstonecraft, akin to Wakefield and Radcliffe in their respective polemics, sentimentalize the prostitution narrative, in particular, in order to politicize the "gendered division of labour" and argue for increased employment opportunities for women (206).

demonstrate the ways in which networks of patriarchal exchange seek to possess and control female sexuality and subjectivity. As in the fiction of the earlier decade, Opie's tale represents the ways in which embodied sexual difference excludes the heroine from "full subjectivity," defined as propertied, European, and male, thus denying her equal legal rights, access to formal education, and opportunities for economic self-determination (M. Wallace 14; 26-27).

Much like the novels of the 1790s and, indeed, Opie's later *Adeline Mowbray*, *The Father and Daughter* identifies the importance of "education and experience" in shaping the female subject and emphasizes the roles of self-reassessment and self-examination as means to the heroine's personal growth (M. Wallace 24-25). Agnes's limited horizons, the product of an informal education in a provincial town, underpin her vulnerability as a victim of seduction. To a large extent, Agnes's vanity, inexperience, and lack of self-knowledge secure her fall: believing "herself endowed with great power to read the characters of those with whom she associated, when she had even not discrimination enough to understand her own," she is easily deceived and manipulated by Clifford, who is "not slow to avail himself" of her weaknesses for his own predatory ends (Opie 67). Clifford appeals to Agnes's vanity and class aspirations by making her, "the humble toast of an obscure country town," the exclusive object of his attentions; he supplies her with a fantasy of romantic futurity beyond the familiar limits of paternal authority and parochial life (68). Clifford, in effect, so perverts Agnes's inexperienced judgment that he succeeds in molding her to his desires, turns her against her father, and claims her as "the greatest of all . . . [his] worldly treasures" (85).

Agnes, however, shortly after the elopement, begins to realize the significance of her new financial and psychological dependence on Clifford when she asks him "[under] what name and title" she is to be introduced to his acquaintance in London (73). Clifford answers that she will be known "[as] my intended wife" and, providing continued excuses to delay their marriage, ultimately "triumph[s] over the virtue of Agnes" shortly after their arrival in the city (74). For Agnes, the inability to be publicly known or named, the seemingly irrevocable break with her father, and the subsequent departure of Clifford for military duty precipitate an episode of extreme psychological distress and, indeed, a sense of loss of self: "What, then, am I?" she asks, "A wretch forlorn, an outcast from society – no one to love, no one to protect and cherish me! Great God! wilt thou not pardon me if I seek refuge from my sufferings in the grave?" (76). Without the affective bonds and protection of filial or romantic love, Agnes cannot imagine herself as a virtuous subject in this moment of crisis. Her speech recalls that made by Mary Raymond at the conclusion of her narrative in *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799), when, exhausted by the pursuit of her rapist, the heroine vainly appeals for the restoration of "my fame, my honour, . . . my unbroken mind, and unsullied youth" and "yield[s]" to her destiny, hoping to die (Hays 165). Each of these heroines struggles to define her subjectivity in positive terms after the "fall" and beyond the realm of heterosexual relations, intimating the extent to which the objectification of the female body has eroded other aspects of the self. Yet Agnes ends up answering her own existential query by invoking her maternal duties: "What am I? did I ask? I am a mother, and earth still holds me by a tie too sacred to be broken!" (Opie 76). Her sense of self after the "fall" thus in part

emerges from her identity as a mother and the affective virtues of family, "'virtues' which characterized her before the elopement with Clifford" and provide a link to her former self (Eberle 95-96).

Eberle notes that in the fiction of Hays and Opie, as well as in that of Wollstonecraft, "acts of sexual transgression irrevocably mark each heroine's subjectivity" (10). For Agnes, I would add that while sexual transgression initially augurs a loss of self, it also, unlike the "fallen" woman fiction of 1790s, facilitates a subsequent reclamation of identity and a re-creation of the self on new terms. The emphasis upon reclamation plays out formally in the fact that, as Eberle observes, most of the tale details Agnes's "return to respectability and reintegration into the community," rather than, as in the fiction of Wollstonecraft, Hays, and Inchbald, for instance, the "fallen" woman's relentless social persecution, poverty, and eventual imprisonment (77-78). In a departure from the narrative structure that traces the "fallen" woman's irreversible descent into desperation (77), the seduction plot in this instance accommodates the "narrative trajectory of education and reform" (M. Wallace 25). Agnes's development, that is, is a direct outcome of her experience as "an outcast from society," her education a process of defining and knowing herself through individual thought, feeling, and action as a marginalized woman (Opie 78). When Agnes finally perceives the extent of Clifford's "hypocrisy" and "unprincipled daring," she immediately resolves "to think, to decide, and to act" to escape his power (85-86). Like the heroines of *The Victim of Prejudice*, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, *Mary, A Fiction*, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, and *The Natural Daughter*, Agnes

is driven to establish financial and psychological independence as a means to claiming some sense of self (85): "think not," she tells Clifford,

> fallen as I am, that I will ever condescend to receive protection and support, either for myself or child, from a man I know to be a consummate villain. You have made me a criminal, but you have not obliterated my horror for crime, and my veneration for virtue – and, in the fullness of my contempt, I inform you, sir, that we shall meet no more. (85)

Rational judgment and moral autonomy ("veneration for virtue") give Agnes the confidence to reject Clifford's "protection," venture into the world as a "poor wanderer," and seek a new existence for herself, "fallen" as she is (89). This commitment to act for herself initiates and sustains the process of social reintegration and, in a departure from the pessimism of 1790s fiction, buoys the tale's ideology of self-improvement as a viable means to restoring the "fallen" to virtue.

Caroline Seymour, a model of middle-class female philanthropy and domestic virtue, provides the tale's clearest articulation of this vision of reform when, in a letter to Agnes, she "inveighs bitterly against society for excluding from its circle, with unrelenting rigour, the woman who has once transgressed the laws of chastity": the "fallen," Caroline argues, can indeed be "restored by perseverance in a life of expiatory amendment, to that rank in society which they had forfeited by one false step" so that "their fault" can be "forgotten in their exemplary conduct, as wives and mothers" (140). She, however, rejects the view of

> some brilliant and persuasive, but, in my opinion, mistaken writers, of both sexes, [who] have endeavoured to prove that many an amiable woman has been for ever lost to virtue and the world, and become the victim of prostitution, merely because her first fault was treated with ill-judging and criminal severity. (139)

As Eberle points out, here Caroline takes issue with the narratives of irreparable "fall" and hopeless exclusion depicted in contemporary novels such as Hays's *The Victim of Prejudice* and Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman*. Instead, Caroline imagines the possibility for the "fallen" woman's "return to respectability" (Eberle 93-94). This passage in *The Father and Daughter* provides a remarkably direct statement on the issue of female chastity, forging "a middle opinion," as Thomas Robinson wrote to his brother Henry Crabb Robinson in 1801 after reading the tale, "betwixt the free notion of Godwin, on female chastity on the one hand, and the puritanical prudish doctrine of Miss Hannah More on the other" (269). Robinson refers to the polarized philosophies on chastity and marriage expounded in the writings of Godwin and More, the former criticizing the institution of marriage and supporting extra-marital co-habitation, the latter condemning the "unchaste" woman to social exile for her sexual "crimes" so that she will serve as a cautionary example to others (King and Pierce, *The Father and Daughter with Dangers of Coquetry* 20). Through Caroline Seymour, *The Father and Daughter* holds up both positions for consideration and critique and, rejecting these extremes, creates middle ground by pairing humanity and optimism with traditional notions of female virtue (typified by marriage, maternity, and philanthropy) (20). Caroline's letter, moreover, invites readerly sympathy with

her "middle opinion" because of the humane and Christian values she embodies as Agnes's friend. Caroline, the privileged and "unsullied" woman Agnes might have been, endorses the reparative and constitutive possibilities of labour that the heroine embodies.

Although Agnes's days exemplify the "life of expiatory amendment" Caroline imagines, her initial attempts at reintegration are punctuated by constant reminders of her status as a social outcast. Upon her return home, she endures treatment in the vein More prescribes, realizing "how hateful her guilt [has] made her in a place that used to echo with her praises" (Opie 106). From her place on the margins, the town of her birth appears the "dread reverse" of the familiar, loving community that has come to acquire such nostalgic force in Agnes's mind during her absence:

> after a *long* absence, an absence of years, she was returning to the same place, inhabited by the same friends: but the voices that used to be loud in pronouncing her welcome, would now be loud in proclaiming indignation at her sight; the eyes that used to beam with gladness at her presence, would now be turned from her with disgust. (101)

In a reversal of subject positions, from social belle to "fallen" woman, Agnes's body now represents a polluting influence. When the prejudiced Mrs. Macfiendy, a figure who anticipates Burney's "three Furies" in *The Wanderer*, speculates that Agnes "will be on the town soon," working as a prostitute, she represents Agnes's body as an itinerant, labouring body that deserves no acknowledged place in the community: "I wonder you could condescend to *look* at such trash," she proclaims to Mr. Seymour

(122). Agnes's presence in Fanny's house ultimately puts the latter's day school at risk when parents begin to withdraw their children, warning them against Agnes's "wicked" influence. Agnes's friendship imperils the hardworking Fanny's reputable source of income, threatening to sully her reputation by association, so that the heroine realizes she must physically remove herself from the scene of their shared labour. In a bid to protect Fanny from "the consequence[s] of her guilt," Agnes moves to the spatial periphery of the community, out of view, in "a little cottage on the heath above the town" and, in creative solitude, applies "[all] the energies of her mind and body" in her entrepreneurial efforts to earn the money required to care for her father at home (126).

Physically distanced from the town, Agnes does not, however, lack sympathetic representation in public discourse. The Seymours, like Fanny, are integral in promoting her rehabilitation in the eyes of the community, publicly relaying Agnes's account of her own history, condemning her exclusion, and describing her tireless industry so that "her penitence [becomes] town talk" and "every one, except the ferociously chaste," is soon "eager to prevent Agnes from feeling pecuniary distress, by procuring her employment" (124). Collective philanthropic sentiment sees Agnes's "business and profits [increase]" and spirits lighten, while her exemplary conduct grants her renewed value as a member of the community. The act of economic exchange thus enables both the exercise of middle-class charity as well as the restoration of the "fallen" woman to social usefulness. When the town's "opulent and humane" purchase the "artificial flowers, painted needle-books, [and] work bags" that Agnes has made, she experiences "more pleasure

than she had for some time experienced" because she reads the exchange as a sign of renewed respect: "They do not despise me then . . . they even respect me too much to offer me pecuniary aid, or presents of any kind but in a way that cannot wound my feelings" (137). Charity, expressed as the money and food exchanged for Agnes's hand-worked goods, rewards and affirms her individual efforts at self-sufficiency and self-improvement, and draws Agnes into common ideological terrain with the virtuous members of the community.

In this sense, her experiences strikingly differ from those of Hays and Robinson's respective heroines Mary Raymond, in *The Victim of Prejudice*, and Martha Morley, in *The Natural Daughter* (1799). These two single women encounter relentless sexual harassment and social prejudice in their disappointing quests for employment. Failing to translate "the recreations" of her "youth" into remunerative work colouring botanical prints, engraving, or taking up "embroidery, child-bed linen, useful or fancy-work," Mary concludes that "a general prejudice seemed to be entertained against my sex and my dejected appearance" and ultimately relents in her search for work in London (Hays 142). Despite her many talents and thirst for independence, Martha endures the "petty scorn of upstart insignificance" when she finds employment as an actress and later works herself to the point of physical exhaustion as a writer (M. Robinson 178). For both these heroines, the search for meaningful paid employment is a Sisyphean, dispiriting struggle against multiple social and economic barriers. Agnes, however, transcends these same barriers through persistent application, equipped with the faith that her efforts will effectually restore her father's sanity and her own reputation. The strength of Agnes's conviction in the

face of suffering and seemingly insuperable obstacles suggests Christ-like passion, while the repetitive, almost trance-like nature of her labour lends a fable-like quality to Opie's tale as a whole. Domestic melodrama and biblical allusion transform the labour plot, figured in Hays and Robinson's novels through the Gothic tropes of persecution and entrapment, into the narrative of redemption and continuing self-improvement.

In this way, the tale challenges critical approaches that interpret representations of female labour as a "fall" or loss of social caste. Critical attention to the negative aspects of female labour is understandable in scholarly treatments of 1790s fiction because of the focus on female suffering and exclusion evident in so many novels of that decade. But *The Father and Daughter* presents an opportunity to reframe this critical narrative in its focus on the redemptive power of work, and clarify that Romantic fiction by women does not sound a uniform tone on the topic of female labour, as Jennie Batchelor's scholarship has begun to document. Focusing on the subjectivity of one young woman, Opie's tale combines narrative paradigms from feminist Jacobin fiction with the improving ideology of the moral tale, offering a rich and nuanced counterpoint to contemporary commentary as well as to literary and historical scholarship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *The Father and Daughter* looks to the fiction of Hays, Wollstonecraft, Robinson, and Inchbald, as well as to that of Smith and Burney, in depicting the ways in which education and experience shape the heroine, constructing and disciplining her as a sexual commodity in a patriarchal economy. Like the polemical feminist commentary of the 1790s, the tale finds fault in the economic systems that exclude women by denying

them meaningful education, occupations, and rational individuality, limiting their socioeconomic roles to reproductive function.

But the tale goes on to situate women's remunerative employment in rhetorical contiguity with other forms of constitutive activity, and represents the influence of female labour – affective, creative, and manual, paid and unpaid – in effecting individual and social reformation, sustaining domestic affection, and strengthening civic and economic relations. As Hattaway argues, Agnes "transmits only beneficial influences to others" through her exemplary life of self-control and self-exertion, and in fact remains "immune to [the] corruption" that her "falleness" implies (564). In contradistinction to the novels of the earlier decade, Opie's tale invokes a matrix of interrelated duties in which even the "fallen" woman has an important role to play in sustaining the integrity of the social whole: for "it is certain," the narrator declares, "that our duties are so closely linked together, that, as the breaking one pearl from a string hazards the loss of all, so the violation of one duty endangers the safety of every other" (129). In its associations with feminine beauty, ornament, and desire, the metaphoric string of pearls intimates a theory of social inclusion and sympathy that inducts women into the project of collective improvement through individual action. Imbuing a range of activities performed by women with productive value, this theory redraws the sexual division of labour and, in the process, imagines work as a constitutive aspect of virtuous femininity in the early nineteenth century.

Repossessing accomplishment

Agnes's professionalization of her skills in needle and textile work and the decorative arts represents an integral component of her self-determination after the "fall." In rewriting the seduction plot as the narrative of female development, Opie translates traditionally feminine, domestic, and seemingly unproductive creative activity into the site of economic and creative agency, intimating the ways in which her heroine redeploys accomplishment as the means to autonomy and self-definition outside the bounds of patriarchal control. Heather Paristash, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood explore the empowering potential of the needle as a discursive tool for women, examining "how . . . needlework has served needlewomen" as "a vehicle for women's own construction of alternative discourses" (13). In doing so, these authors challenge the prevailing notion that needlework simply represents and reinforces women's domestic constraint and conformity to traditional femininity (13-14). Rather, they read historical instances of women's "engagement with needlework as a form of rhetoric with the potential to shape identity, build community, and prompt engagement with social action" (14). In Opie's fictional world, Agnes professionalizes accomplishment as a way of similarly wresting power over her own skills and claiming creative activity as an aspect and an expression of her identity. Agnes, that is, translates the erotic and cultural capital accrued through a costly education – paid for by her father as an investment in her as a marriageable commodity – into the economic and moral capital required to restore her to respectability and maintain her family. "Like the heroines of Wollstonecraft and Hays," Eberle points out, "Agnes uses her talents to battle the stereotyped social

position in which she finds herself" (95-96). I would add that, in the process, she redefines these talents as aspects of the virtuous self and refutes patriarchal ownership and objectification of the female body through what I term the repossession of accomplishment.

In a remarkable parallel to Opie's early years, Agnes, the only child of a man of the merchant class, receives an informal education in the polishing arts. In addition to a wide-ranging program of reading, Opie, as King and Pierce enumerate, was tutored in "the accomplishments expected of young women of her class, studying French with the Rev. John Bruckner, minister of the Dutch church in Norwich, music with Michael Sharp, who had once played principal oboe at Covent Garden, and dancing with Mr. Christian; later, she studied drawing with Mrs. Edward Beetham in London" (*Collected Poems* xxxvii-xxxviii). We can infer a similar course of education for Opie's heroine when the narrator recounts that "Agnes united to extreme beauty of face and person every accomplishment that belongs to her own sex" (65).[35] This education is paid for by Fitzhenry's profits in trade as "a respectable merchant in a country town," a capital investment in his only child (65). Agnes's talents represent the economic power of her father and the assets of her future husband – the erotic capital of an object of exchange. In the tale's initial scenes of seduction, patriarchal interests seemingly dictate Agnes's "worth" and, indeed, sense of self-worth: as Eberle suggests, Fitzhenry and Clifford may "wage battle over Agnes's 'heart', but it is motivated partly by masculine delight in ownership and class pride" over Agnes as an object of ornamental femininity (95). Moreover, the narrator

[35] Brightwell draws a remarkably similar portrait of Opie in her youth: "High spirits, uninterrupted health, a lively fancy, and poetic talent, were hers; and she fully enjoyed and exercised these natural advantages" (36).

of Opie's tale intimates that Agnes's "polish" has fuelled her "vanity and self-confidence," making her all the more susceptible to Clifford's flattering advances (74). Complaining of Agnes's former reputation as the local belle, Mrs. Macfiendy harbours a particular dislike for the "beautiful, graceful, and engaging" heroine because of the "powerful rival" she once posed to her "plain, awkward, uninteresting daughters" on the provincial marriage market (121). She, too, reads Agnes's accomplishments first and foremost as the erotic capital of a marriageable young woman.

In their landmark study of the consolidation of the English provincial middle class in the period 1780-1850, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall assert that "since women were regarded as central to the image of family status, their training was directed to that end" (289). Rehearsing the familiar reading of the accomplishments as signifiers of middle-class leisure and affluence, they write that "[the] arts, drawing, piano playing, knowledge of French which became the staple, and much derided, fare of female accomplishment, were deliberately paraded as being the opposite of business duties" (289-90). Such a program of female education, Davidoff and Hall aver, "had no aims and no end, either in its own terms or in recognition from external bodies or in leading to an occupation" and parents and guardians, "making a realistic expectation of economic returns from their children's education," accordingly "invested more heavily for boys" (291). Ruth Perry has made a similar point in the course of her argument that British fiction discloses a redefinition of "family" in the eighteenth century, witnessing the movement from "consanguineal ties or blood lineage" to "conjugal and affinal ties" as the basis of definition for "the primary kin

group" (2). The new precedence given to the conjugal unit over the consanguineal family, Perry suggests, was particularly devastating for daughters, who were disinherited and displaced through the rise of a "lineage system defined predominantly through the marriage of first-born sons" (40). Daughters' status as transient "strangers" in the paternal home brought about "the abridgment of . . . rights to family resources" while "father-daughter relations socialized girls to their heterosexual identifications" by romanticizing submission to patriarchal authority as an expression of affective attachment (78-79). "The emotional power of the father-daughter relationship," writes Perry, "thus coexisted with the more absolute termination of fathers' responsibility for daughters when those daughters married, and with the fathers' growing sense of daughters as property to be deployed in the family interest rather than as lifetime kin" (79). Davidoff, Hall, and Perry commonly identify the highly limited economic function ascribed to women within the family defined as the male-headed conjugal unit, a function conceived in primarily reproductive terms.

Opie's tale opens by positioning its heroine as an object "ready for exogamous exchange" between men, underscoring her beauty and accomplishments as value-laden signifiers in a patriarchal economy (Perry 89). But after her loss of chastity and hence "currency" as a marriageable commodity, Agnes is forced to see her worth in other terms. In doing so, she redeploys the skills acquired though her polishing education as the means to her subsistence and self-expression. Agnes's visit to the theatre in London provides a turning point in her self-conception for, in overhearing the conversation of two men, she sees her "fallen" self through the eyes of others for the first time: as Clifford's "favourite mistress," a sexualized object "worthy of a

better fate" (Opie 81). Although the men know her "by name only," it is a name they "have often heard toasted" for "her beauty and accomplishments" (81-82). "[She] sings well, does she not?" asks one man; "She does everything well," replies the other (82). The overheard conversation fills Agnes with "anguish" at the sense of her own error, anxiety for her father's fate, and horror at Clifford's plans to marry another woman for monetary gain, a circumstance casually divulged by the two men. Her loss of "all self-command" in this scene augurs the subsequent resolution "to act" in order to define herself as someone other than a kept woman and precipitates her decision to return home in order to find redemption (83).

In the father-daughter relationship at the core of Opie's sentimental tale, Eberle writes, "Fitzhenry proves to be the weaker of the two" (98). Agnes's strength, I would argue, stems from her appropriation of power as the primary provider and the affective centre of the family unit, literalized through her transformation of what were originally ornamental talents into the means of domestic subsistence and moral redemption. It is fitting, then, that among the few things Agnes chooses to tell her dying father, restored to sanity on his deathbed, she declares, "I have worked to maintain you!" (151). While her words bring the inversion of paternal-filial roles into focus, they also point to the agency Agnes has assumed during her father's insanity. Her willingness and, indeed, physical and emotional strength to labour at once express the extent of her filial repentance and love, and epitomize her self-redefinition as a virtuous and productive female subject after the "fall" and outside the limits of patriarchal authority.

The accomplished heroine, the accomplished authoress: Social reform and female creativity

"Perhaps," Opie's narrator speculates, "Agnes was not sorry to have a tale of hardship to narrate on her arrival" home; like Opie, the heroine aims to evoke sentiment through the power of her narrative for the sake of creating sympathy and thus reforming the heart in favour of the marginalized (88). Throughout, *The Father and Daughter* grants female labour and, specifically, creative activity the facility to both cultivate the self and contribute to the moral health of the civic whole. Agnes's tireless labour, in all its forms, models the middle-class virtues of self-sufficiency and self-improvement, simultaneously inducting the "fallen" heroine into the discourses of productive labour and evoking the sympathy and admiration of those around her. The tale thus redeploys the humanitarian traditions of the literature of sensibility by conjoining the sentimental tale of seduction with the labour plot in order to rewrite the "fallen" heroine and bring sympathetic focus to the issue of women's economic dispossession and sexual commodification in the immediate historical moment. In this moral tale, Opie contributes to a growing body of popular didactic fiction by bridging the polemical legacies of women's writing of the late eighteenth century with the corrective imperatives of "improving" fiction in the early nineteenth century, intimating a vision of moderate social reform through generic hybridization. In doing so, as Shelley King has argued in several contexts, Opie ascribes "both public and private value" to the practices and products of female creativity by underscoring the moral function of art and, moreover, grants civic worth to genres denigrated within

"dominant aesthetic discourse" – namely, "feminine writing" and the accomplishments ("Representation, Memory, and Mourning" 122).

Evidence suggests that Opie approached her own creative work – her published and private writing, social performance of song, her handicraft, and visual artwork of family and friends – as both a means of self-expression and the basis for affective and intellectual community.[36] She exerted her creative energies to forge and maintain connections across her immediate familial and social circles, as well as across the Romantic reading public. King and Pierce note, for instance, that "unpublished verses [played] an important role in her social interactions throughout her life . . . Opie regarded her poetic skills as a personal gift to offer family and friends" (*Collected Poems* xxxix-xl). Mrs. John Taylor, Opie's lifelong friend, recalls watching Opie in poetic and musical performance and describes her affective power as "unrivalled":

> Those only who have heard her can conceive the effect she produced in the performance of her own ballads . . . She may fairly be said to have created a style of singing of her own, which, though polished and improved by art and cultivation, was founded in that power, which she appears so pre-eminently to possess, of awakening the tender sympathies and pathetic feelings of the mind. (qtd. in Brightwell 33)

[36] At the holdings of the Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle at New York Public Library, the Amelia Opie manuscript material includes artwork consisting "of over one hundred thirty pencil portraits of friends and relatives, most of whom remain unidentified" ("Amelia Opie manuscript material"). Additionally, the *Memorials* excerpts an entry from Opie's journal for 1830 in which she records that in meeting General Lafayette (on one of several occasions) and appealing to him to advocate for "the abolition of slavery and the slavetrade," she gives him a "purse, [which] I had felt such pleasure in netting for him" (258).

In *The Father and Daughter*, Opie applies her literary talents to "awaken the tender sympathies and pathetic feelings of the mind" in order to create reformist fiction that is also popular fiction. Her moral tale, like her poetry and song, instantiates the power of female creativity to foster collective sentiment, supporting the project of social improvement through the creation of sympathetic community. Across her creative output, Opie gestures toward the necessity of recasting the language of labour in order to capture women's fundamental and varied contributions to civic as much as private life and, in the process, acknowledges the positively constitutive potential of work in the development of the virtuous female subject.

Chapter 2

The "blessed art" of *Self-Control*:

Mary Brunton, Moral-Domestic Fiction, and the Professionalization of Accomplishment

> To tell the truth, I believe nobody was ever better formed for enjoying life than I, saving and excepting in the construction of an abominable stomach; for I delight in travelling, yet can be happy at home. I enjoy company, yet prefer retirement. I can look with rapture on the glorious features of nature – the dark lake – the rugged mountains – the roaring cataract – yet can gaze with no small pleasure on the contents of a haberdasher's window.
>
> - Mary Brunton to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Balfour, 21 March 1812 (*Memoir* lii)

Following her death in childbed in 1818 and her husband's publication of the *Memoir of her Life*[37] the subsequent year, best-selling Scottish novelist Mary Brunton (1778-1818) assumed her slight place in British literary history as a model woman writer, pious, retiring, taken to literary pursuits "for the employment of accidental intervals of leisure" (*Memoir* xvii). Describing the moral rectitude and religious principle with which she lived her life, Alexander Brunton's *Memoir* collapses his wife's intellectual character and literary career with the qualities most celebrated by contemporary reviewers of her two novels, *Self-Control* (1811) and *Discipline* (1814), and posthumous domestic tale, *Emmeline* (1819). *The British Review* elaborates on this portrait of Brunton as model authoress in its 1819 review of the *Memoir*, casting the writer as a paragon of "female excellence" who helped precipitate the novel's

[37] Alexander Brunton's 1819 *Memoir* was published by Mary Brunton's Edinburgh publishers, Manners and Miller, in a single volume with the unfinished *Emmeline*, excerpts from Brunton's journals during 1812 and 1815, and her "Helps to Devotion," extracts from scripture compiled for "young friends" with the intention to aid in Christian prayer (174). The *Memoir* is also reprinted in the 1832 Bentley edition of *Discipline*.

reformation in the new century: "it must be infinitely refreshing," opines the *Review*'s critic, for readers "to contrast the character of Mrs. *Brunton* with that of the *Wolstonecrofts* and the *Morgans* of these philosophizing times" (493). Although *Self-Control* and *Discipline* had "quickly sunk away" from the mass popularity they had enjoyed during Mary Brunton's lifetime, a meteoric celebrity Alexander Brunton mourns in the *Memoir* (cv), both novels continued to be printed into the mid-nineteenth century and, as late as 1876, praised in a brief entry on Brunton in *Chambers Cyclopædia of English Literature* as "two novels of superior merit and moral tendency" (275).

In recent decades, scholars in the fields of Romantic literature and Scottish women's writing have increasingly acknowledged Mary Brunton's formative contributions to the flourishing of what Anthony Mandal terms "moral-domestic fiction" at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Brunton is now recognized alongside Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, Barbara Hofland, Amelia Opie, and Lætitia Matilda-Hawkins as among a vanguard of women writers responsible for the rise of "Evangelically informed" corrective fiction in Britain during the early 1800s (Mandal 95). Women writers produced the great majority of moral narratives, mostly novels and short fiction tales,[38] published during the Romantic period and, scholars have argued, claimed this segment of the literary market as a distinctly "feminine" space in which to construct gendered subjectivities and authorial identities as women

[38] Brunton had planned *Emmeline* to be one in "a collection of short narratives, under the title of Domestic Tales," indicating in her correspondence her recognition of the market's changing literary tastes in the late 1810s and her creative ambition to experiment with different genres and forms (*Memoir* lxxxii-lxxxiii). In the present chapter, I focus on the novel but include the tale in my understanding of the period's "moral-domestic fiction," although my discussion of the latter is comparatively limited. I discuss the rise of the tale at greater length in my chapter on Amelia Opie.

writers participating in Romantic Britain's broader discursive fields (Killick 74; Wood 23). In the current critical narrative, Brunton is a key figure in a second generation of popular conservative or, for Lisa Wood in her study of British didactic fiction in the period 1793-1815, "antirevolutionary"[39] novelists who helped legitimize the genre by claiming pietistic domesticity and moral didacticism as the purview of fiction (135). As I explore in relation to Opie's *The Father and Daughter*, Patricia Comitini has likewise argued that the influential "work" of women's didactic writing in this period "becomes disciplining readers into desiring self-improvement" as the basis for social reformation, cohesion, and "the continued development of capitalist social relations" (1-5).

Yet despite such recognition of the significance of this body of writing, scholarship on Brunton's contributions to the novel in the early nineteenth century remains limited in both volume and scope when compared to that published on fellow Evangelical writer Hannah More, who made the religious novel a popular phenomenon with *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), and Jane Austen, whose *Mansfield Park* is cited in criticism as a response to *Self-Control*.[40] Brunton has also been overshadowed in studies of her more famous and prolific Scottish contemporaries Elizabeth Hamilton, Joanna Baillie and, of course, Walter Scott. During the 1970s and 80s, Brunton garnered attention from feminist literary critics

[39] Wood uses this term to refer to a broad "form of opposition to revolutionary theory, across a range of genres and discourses," espoused by British women writers "opposed to the revolution in France, and to manifestations of revolutionary sentiment or activity in Britain, which they believed threatened existing institutions" (29).

[40] Mandal explores the ideological and narrative connections between the two novels at some length in his chapter, "Making the Popular Polite: *Mansfield Park* and the Moral-Domestic Novel," but Austen is referenced most frequently in relation to Brunton regarding a letter the former wrote to her sister Cassandra in October 1813, while in the early stages of writing of *Mansfield Park*, in which she at once praises and mocks *Self-Control* as "an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it" (*Jane Austen's Letters* 234).

seeking to recuperate her in a history of British women's writing,[41] but today she remains something of a marginal figure in the institutional canon of Romantic literature, the topic of a few chapters and articles. Cause and symptom of Brunton's relative obscurity, edited critical editions of her works have yet to be undertaken and the only full-length biography, Mary McKerrow's 2001 *Mary Brunton: The Forgotten Scottish Novelist,* is not widely available.

The result is that literary history affords us with a remarkably narrow view of Brunton as an innovator of nineteenth-century fiction. Present-day scholarship, and namely that published in the last two decades by Caroline Gonda, Sharon Alker, and Martha Musgrove, has only begun to complicate the abiding nineteenth-century mythology that casts Brunton's life, works, and heroines as the exempla of domestic ideology. Looking to assign Brunton a place in the canon, scholars have often reached for hermeneutic approaches dominated by the figures of the domestic woman and the "self-effacing Proper Lady" as theorized in the seminal feminist literary criticism of Armstrong and Poovey. This has meant that Brunton has largely been received as a sort of Scottish Hannah More – and a disciple to More's Evangelical ideology – while not yet benefitting from sustained critical reconsideration on her own terms, something More has certainly received in recent years.

The objective of this chapter is to broaden our understanding of Brunton and her contributions to moral-domestic fiction at early century by focusing on her representations of female creativity and labour and, specifically, professionalized

[41] Early examples include Bruce's "Mary Brunton (1778-1815): An Assessment" (1979), Ann Jones's *Ideas and Innovations: Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age* (1986), chapters by Burlin and Smith in the edited compilation *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (1986) and, in the context of larger examinations of the novel in the Romantic period, Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1987) and Kelly's *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (1989).

accomplishment. In Brunton's best-selling narrative of assailed virtue, *Self-Control*, artist heroine Laura Montreville's ability to turn informally-acquired, ornamental, and distinctly feminine skills into profit in a public sphere of economic exchange forms an integral aspect of her education in ethical self-management, political economy, and social responsibility. I examine the ways in which Brunton embeds the intersecting discourses of gender, civic identity, commerce, and art within the generic parameters of moral-domestic fiction in order elaborate a model of virtuous femininity in the post-Revolutionary period. Focusing on the heroine's pursuit of self-improvement, Brunton's first novel draws continuities between creativity, individual psychology, and economic participation in tracing the development of its exemplary heroine and model self-governing citizen. Generically and spatially, this novel casts a wide net in delineating its heroine's arenas of tuition, encompassing the female *Bildungsroman*, the domestic romance, the plot of seduction, and the religious novel under the aegis of moral didacticism. But Laura's professionalized accomplishment, materialized in her painting and sketching, condense the novel's broader arguments regarding the importance of women's social, cultural, and economic contributions to the ongoing improvement of commercial society. Tying female creativity to the ideology of self-improvement through work, much like Opie's *The Father and Daughter*, the novel intimates the interconnections between private desire and discipline and the broader moral reformation of commercial society. *Self-Control* thus provides the foundation for this chapter's larger argument that Brunton's work deploys and, in the process, redefines moral-domestic fiction as a popular vehicle for representing the constitutive aspects of female labour across a range of activities (paid and unpaid) and settings

(domestic and public). Encompassing female accomplishment within the realm of cultural and commercial exchange, Brunton's writing transcends the familiar hermeneutic categories of the private sphere and the domestic woman, I argue, and invites reconsideration of the generic transformations and literary models initiated by this popular woman writer in the age of the novel's reformation.

Moral-domestic fiction

Reacting in part to the early century popularity of scandal fiction, which recounted scurrilous narratives of the British Royalty and le beau monde, and in part building from the social and ideological consolidation of the middle classes in the post-Revolutionary period, the moral-domestic novels and tales of the early nineteenth century share an interest in recuperating Christian morality as the basis for social interaction, national prosperity, and individual conduct (Mandal 23). In her influential thesis outlined in *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825*, Nicola J. Watson argues that the move toward polite or morally corrective fiction generically and ideologically contained the revolutionary sensibilities of 1790s fiction by disciplining the excesses of first-person epistolary narratives of feeling with the "novel of social consensus" (68). These third-person narratives identify paternalism, domesticity, and nationalism as the bases for individual and social regulation and are typified, for Watson, by the novels of Austen and Scott. Scholars have varied in their nomenclature for organizing this corpus – the terms moral-evangelical, didactic-domestic, and Evangelical novel all appear in the literature – but there is consensus that the period between (roughly) 1808 and 1817 marks a

consolidation of the novel as a legitimate form of religious instruction, precipitated by More's groundbreaking Evangelical novel and massive commercial success, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*. A "phenomena" and something of a "surprising curiosity" at the time of publication, Patricia Demers notes, More's novel of ideal Evangelical domestic life and companionate marriage went through twelve London editions in its first year and became an essential item in family libraries in the nineteenth century (8). Garside considers *Cœlebs* "the most influential single work in this period" and cites it as the first in "a chain . . . of morally charged domestic fictions" that met with remarkable market success into the 1820s, the antecedents of Victorian domestic realism (59).

In attempting to bring some order to this large body of fiction, Anthony Mandal suggests the flexible and capacious generic category of the "moral-domestic." These are fiction works of domestic life informed by the overt religious aims and didactic elements modeled by More's *Cœlebs* "but in a muted way, representing a more diffuse shift towards a polite moral tone" (95). While Mandal remarks that moral-domestic fiction was penned by many different writers and published over several decades, he includes Brunton in an overview of the genre's formative contributors. I favour this term in addressing Brunton in light of the generic hybridity that distinguishes her approach. Although early nineteenth-century and present-day scholars alike have often conflated More and Brunton – *Chambers Cyclopædia* refers to *Self-Control* "as a sort of Scotch *Cœlebs*" (276) – the Scottish novelist in fact modified More's unadorned didactic project, tempering the former's religiosity with romance and Gothic peril. Wood, following Watson, argues that Brunton's innovative

experimentations with genre, evident in *Self-Control*, *Discipline*, and *Emmeline*, enlivened More's didacticism by pairing heterosexual romance and psychological realism with the religious imperatives expounded by the earlier *Cœlebs* to produce the hybrid "Evangelical romance" (135).

Useful here then is Mandal's definition of the moral-domestic as a class of novels along a generic continuum, produced by authors of divergent religious and political convictions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and at different stages in their literary careers,[42] but united in depicting the quest for Christian duty as the organizing topos of the fictional heroine-centred world. These novels level common criticism against class decadence and excessive sensibility while valorizing self-regulation, good works, and affective sensitivity as prerequisites for moral autonomy and, ultimately, social and national cohesion (provided by the closure of the moral-domestic romance plot). In a departure from the elaborate titles of the 1790s,[43] many are notable for their single-word titles reflecting "mental or moral abstractions" (Kelly, *English Fiction* 123). Brunton's *Self-Control* and *Discipline* are paradigmatic of this, but other titles include Opie's *Temper, or, Domestic Scenes: a Tale* (1812), *Duty: A Novel* (1814), and Hofland's series of novels titled after virtues (*Integrity*, *Patience*, *Self-Denial*) published between 1823 and 1828. Moreover, many, as Garside observes, employ the term "Novel" in the subtitle, suggesting "a measure of

[42] For instance, the established Opie converted to Quakerism the same year that Brunton, an Evangelical Presbyterian and wife of a Church of Scotland minister, published her second novel.
[43] James Raven notes that because most new novels were published anonymously and pseudonymously during this period, titles were very important "in signaling the specific generic character of individual works" and helped to advertise to circulating library patrons the sort of novel they could expect (49). The popularity of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novels, for instance, precipitated a trend of heavily-imitative, often elaborate titles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which "display Gothic credentials" via a repertoire of generic terms, such as Edward Mortimer's *Montoni; or, the Confessions of the Monk of Saint Benedict* and Eliza Ratcliffe's *The Mysterious Baron, or the Castle in the Forest, A Gothic Story*, both published 1808.

the rehabilitation of the form itself at this time" (59). Only a few years earlier, Burney and Edgeworth had been at pains to respectively describe *Camilla* (1796) and *Belinda* (1801) as works of moral fiction, "not wishing to acknowledge a Novel," as Edgeworth explains in the advertisement to her work (3).

Critical assumptions: The domestic, the popular, the amateur

Despite the popularity and proliferation of didactic novels and tales during this period, feminist literary scholarship continues to situate didactic writing at the margins of a Romantic canon that has been redrawn in recent decades to include many women writers active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Lisa Wood observes, explicitly religious and moralizing texts have largely been read as influence and gloss on the feminist revolutionary writing of the period but have received little recognition in their own right. This is primarily because of their perceived "antifeminist" agendas. In the scholarship, Hannah More, Jane West, Lætitia Matilda-Hawkins, and Mary Brunton, among others, Wood writes, often "seem to fulfill the purely negative function of obstructing progress, and to epitomize an antifeminist acceptance of repressive patriarchal ideologies" (21). Mandal concurs with Wood on this point in his study of the popular novel in Austen's lifetime when he writes that, "the literary models pioneered by Evangelical novelists have received scant attention" (94). The result is that the routes and modes of exchange between early Evangelical fiction and concurrent popular literary forms, such as the Gothic and the novel of sensibility, remain unclear. I suggest that our nascent appreciation of the generic characteristics and literary models of Romantic moral-domestic fiction,

paired with critical assumptions regarding the inherent conservatism and non-literary status of women's didactic writing,[44] have been chiefly responsible in limiting the depth of critical response to Brunton's work.

With few exceptions, scholarly discourse cites Brunton's generic deployment of the moral-domestic, with its focus on courtship, familial life, and proper roles for women, as indicative of the writer's broader investments in the patriarchal status quo, typified by Evangelical Christianity, marriage and landed interests. A series of assumed oppositions underlies this critical narrative, between public and private spheres, between intellectual discourse and popular fiction, between Christianity and feminist philosophy. Lynne Vallone demonstrates this approach in *Disciplines of Virtue* when she argues that "the Christian girl heroines of Hannah More, Mary Brunton, and Jane Austen are 'blind' to any desires beyond ideologically conservative values of domestic happiness" (69). In such an account, the moral-domestic offers a rigid and stifling fictional world in which women's intellectualism, accomplishment, and desire are collapsed with a critique of showy, immodest, and dangerous femininity, and passivity, domesticity, and self-denial are celebrated in unequivocal terms.

Brunton's experimentations with the moral-domestic have also earned her a good deal of derision on point of literary ability. In a move that ascribes Brunton's aesthetic "flaws" to her formal investments in didacticism, scholars have often described her as an unselfconscious, derivative writer whose approach is without

[44] In the introduction to *Modes of Discipline*, Wood addresses the devalorization of didactic fiction throughout the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as aesthetic merit surpassed moral purpose as the basis for critical valuation and the didactic was relegated, due in large part to the influences of New Criticism and poststructuralism, to the category of the non-literary (17-18).

"unifying artistic principle" (Bruce 6-13; Bour 25). She shows her "lack of skill" in subordinating plot and dialogue to her didactic aim, for instance, and in her propensity to improbable plot developments and generic pastiche (A. H. Jones 83). These complaints of artistic immaturity and inexperience, gently mocking as most are, mean that ideological tensions have been overlooked, inconsistences and nuances explained away as the blemishes of poor fiction. Alleged patriarchal sympathies and lack of skill are, for many scholars, corroborated by Brunton's biographical efforts to distance herself from literary professionalism. Most interpret her (not unusual) choice to publish anonymously, as well as correspondence in the *Memoir* describing her aversion to public notice, as evidence of her internalization of gender norms made manifest in everyday practice (Wood 135). It is telling in this light that the most oft-cited passage from Brunton's correspondence is an August 1810 letter to her close friend Mrs. Izett in which she expresses her anxieties prior to the publication of *Self-Control*, writing that she "would sooner exhibit as a rope-dancer" than attract literary celebrity (*Memoir* xxxvi).[45]

Admittedly, Brunton did not write to support herself financially. In her study *Women Writers and the Edinburgh Enlightenment*, Pam Perkins cites financial gain as a criterion of differentiation between "professional" writers Elizabeth Hamilton and Anne Grant and their popular contemporaries (and fellow Edinburgh residents) Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier. For Perkins, Hamilton and Grant's literary professionalism is also indicated by their choice "to position themselves as

[45] Gonda describes Brunton's "resolute anti-professionalism" (197), citing the familiar "rope dancer" quotation from Brunton's correspondence. Ultimately, though, Gonda acknowledges that Brunton's apparent fears of professional success "did not, however, prevent her from grappling sympathetically with the problem of women's work" (197).

contributors to the intellectual debates of their day, rather than as modestly ladylike entertainers, amusing themselves by dabbling in circulating library fiction" (20). While I concur with Perkins that Brunton cannot be considered a professional writer in the sense that she did not financially support herself as a novelist, the *Memoir* provides evidence that Brunton was a driven, thoughtful writer, as much as a "modestly ladylike entertainer." Moreover, I maintain that in their intermixing of genres, her popular novels do in fact contribute to concurrent philosophical and aesthetic debates; the intellectual threads of political economy and aesthetic valuation are woven throughout *Self-Control*, at times aligning with, at other times complicating the novel's organizing didacticism.

My goal here, then, is to avoid simply relegating Brunton to the long-derided triad of the domestic, the popular, and the necessarily amateur and unintellectual, replicating the gendered bifurcation between domesticity and professionalism. The generalizations attending critical approaches that cleave domesticity from women's labour, professional authorship, and participation in political discourse have met criticism since the early 1990s and, of particular relevance to my purposes here, in the work of Janice Farrar Thaddeus, Harriet Guest, and Jennie Batchelor. Their scholarship lays the foundation to reevaluate Mary Brunton's contributions to early nineteenth-century moral-domestic fiction and, as I argue here, an emergent model of female subjectivity in which accomplishment, ethical self-management, and economic productivity are linked under the rhetoric of "usefulness" (Myers, "Tracts" 277). My aim is to draw attention to the nuanced and polyvalent discourses that cut across *Self-Control* and, to use Betty Schellenberg's terms in her work on women

writers in the eighteenth century, to demonstrate that Brunton herself was a "professionalized [subject]" writing moral-domestic fiction "in a public sphere of letters" (181).

I also challenge the assumption that Brunton's religious didacticism exists in an antithetical relation with what I regard as the feminist sentiment of *Self-Control*. Following an argument made by Christine L. Krueger on religion and British women's writing in the nineteenth century, I suggest that the discourses of Evangelicalism provide the foundation from which Brunton elaborates a model of virtuously self-sufficient female subjectivity while offering a "rebuke of patriarchal sins" (95) and criticizing the limited education and employment opportunities available to women across socioeconomic strata (Gonda 197). Writing about the works and career of popular Evangelical novelist Barbara Holfand, Behrendt makes a similar point when he argues that, akin to "the tradition of anti-Jacobin fiction, which has long endured a comparably reductive mischaracterization, Evangelical literary culture has historically been neglected, in part because it has so often been mischaracterized as simplistic and doctrinaire and therefore the worst sort of union of dogma and didacticism." Behrendt counters this approach and cites Hofland as one writer in a "diverse and often richly nuanced" tradition of Evangelical fiction that "[resists] easy and reductive categorization" (483). Brunton takes part in this tradition, and her work and reception similarly raise questions regarding the generic and ideological stability of the didactic project that ostensibly underpins the objectives of moral-domestic fiction. In *Self-Control,* Brunton's moral-domestic vision engages with the intersecting discourses of political economy and moral and

aesthetic philosophy in order represent a heroine who defines her subjectivity through her relation to and roles within the commercial nation (Guest 14).

Nourishing the passions or correcting the heart?: Publication and reception

The history of *Self-Control*'s publication and reception sheds light on Romantic readers' literary tastes and the market for fiction during this period of the novel's rehabilitation and reform. Equally, it offers perspective on Mary Brunton's creative process and self-representation as a published writer of fiction and, far from affirming Brunton's image as an unselfconscious amateur, reveals something of her formation as a self-aware, authoritative literary voice. Manners and Miller of Edinburgh published 750 copies of the first edition of *Self-Control* in two volumes in February 1811. The novel had been incomplete at the time it went to print in late September or early October 1810, but Brunton had agreed to the timing so that *Self-Control* could be released during the publishers' lucrative winter season. Despite the haste with which she completed the novel, her first copy was clean enough to serve as the printing copy. The consolidation of the Romantic reading public, the rise of Edinburgh as Britain's northern literary centre, and the shifts in market demand toward corrective fiction combined in Brunton's favour to make *Self-Control* a runaway success.[46] "Mr. Miller states the sale to be unexampled" in Edinburgh,

[46] Ian Duncan describes Edinburgh's ascension to "a cultural and aesthetic" capital in the first three decades of the nineteenth century (48), attributing the city's redefinition and promotion as a distinct centre of Scottish national culture to the intersecting influence of "professional-class male public intellectuals, the entrepreneurial publishers, the critical quarterly and monthly magazine (*The Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood*'s), and the national historical novel," made famous by Scott (53). For Duncan, literary culture and "the social, consensual medium of a national reading public" invented and sustained Edinburgh's status "as capital city of a newly minted ancient nation" within Britain (62). I would add, as Pam Perkins argues, that influential women writers also played a major role in Edinburgh's flourishing as a literary and cultural metropolis.

Brunton reports to her friend Mrs. Izett on February 20, 1811: "In five days 240 [copies] went out of the hands of the publishers" (*Memoir* xlvi). Longman in London picked up *Self-Control* shortly thereafter, and oversaw the publication of a three-volume revised edition in May 1811, run at 1000 copies. The first edition had sold at 21s – it was the most expensive two-volume imprint of 1811, Mandal notes – while the longer second edition sold at 24s (97-98). July 1811 saw the run of a third edition of 1250 copies; by February 1812, sales had slowed on a fourth edition and copies of that 1250 run remained unsold. Mandal estimates that Brunton earned over £700 from sales of her first work (98). The novel's commercial success is indeed remarkable when we consider that during this period the average copy run for "all but exceptional works" was between 500 and 750 copies, that in many instances not all copies were sold, and that most titles never reached a second edition (Garside 37-38).

Despite sales, critical reception was mixed. While several reviewers praised the novel's piety and moral intentions, there was common complaint over its lack of originality and technical faults at the level of narrative (Mandal 98-99). Critical of her own work, Brunton discusses some of these criticisms in a letter to Mrs. Izett in April 1811, referring to her novel as "defective – it is disjointed – it wants unity" (*Memoir* xlviii). In the Advertisement to the second edition, Brunton publicly acknowledges that praise for *Self-Control* was "by no means unqualified" and specifically addresses the "objections stated against the probability of some of the incidents." In March 1811, she also received critical advice from Joanna Baillie in a letter forwarded to *Self-Control*'s anonymous author via the publishers. Inferring from Brunton's warm reply, it appears that Baillie raised objections to (among other things) several "faulty

passages," Laura's unflappable temper and her abilities as a painter, and Lady Pelham's "tedious" villainy (*Memoir* xl-xli). As Mandal summarizes, some argued "Christianity recuperated its failings, technical or moral; for others, its pietism was too intrusive, rendering it too obnoxious" (99). A number of reviewers took specific aim at the novel's attempts to introduce pietism into romance. *The British Review*, for one, complains that the novel, despite its "sincere intention of inculcating moral principles," would "inadvertently administer nourishment to the passions": such "poison soon circulates with the juices of the system, and speedily penetrates too far to be overtaken by halting advice" (450-51). The reviewer ultimately deems it "a sort of profanation to introduce religion among the tumults and agitations of love adventures" (453). I would venture that these titillating generic tensions between romance and didacticism in part account for the novel's extraordinary popularity with Romantic readers and reviewers: the exemplary Laura may work hard to find purpose and discipline her feelings, but she certainly feels fleshly desire (Bour 28-29). Brunton's heroine supplies an unprecedented model of assailed virtue, her trials and desires rendered all the more extreme in the language of Christian self-denial and suffering.

I would also venture that Brunton was aware of the appeal of her work, and recognized that romance made the novel all the more potent as a vehicle for moral instruction. This is evidenced in Brunton's response to her critics. Regardless of the censure leveled against her first work and her own sense of its limitations, Brunton was remarkably steadfast in defending *Self-Control* and, what is more, maintaining the integrity of the novel as it had first appeared to the public. She tells Mrs. Izett of

the surprising composure with which she has received "both praise and censure": "If I could believe myself to be so conceited, I might call it a saucy feeling of superiority to my critics; but it would not be pleasant to think myself so destitute of decent humility" (*Memoir* xlvii). In whatever terms Brunton ultimately chose to describe her obstinacy, she found no reason to make significant alterations to *Self-Control* in its second edition. In her letter to Baillie, she thanks the established writer for her advice but finds it "impracticable" to heed (xl). To the public, she explains in the Advertisement to the second edition that because the shortfalls of her work do not impede "the lessons which the tale was intended to convey" and that, moreover, her novel is a work of the imagination, she sees no reason for modification: "where no higher interest is at stake than the credit of her own powers of invention, she feels herself at greater liberty . . . She is not even sure of her right to make any material alteration upon a work of fiction." Here Brunton buoys her moral authority and creative autonomy as a writer by appealing to the imperatives of her didactic project and the imaginative pith of her craft. This same strategy of self-representation is at work three years later in the Preface to *Discipline*, where Brunton defends her second novel by deploying the language reviewers had used to criticize the first. She echoes *The British Review* in order to differentiate between that fiction which "has unfortunately been made the occasion of conveying poison of every description into the youthful mind" and *her* approach to the novel as "the vehicle of important, even solemn truth" (59).

The Labours of *Self-Control*

In the March 1811 letter to Baillie to which I refer above, Brunton describes the motivation and process of writing *Self-Control*:

> I merely intended to show the power of the religious principle in bestowing self-command; and to bear testimony against a maxim as immoral as indelicate, that a reformed rake makes the best husband. For the rest, I was guided by the fancy of the hour . . . (*Memoir* xlii)

In this letter and others, Brunton relates her hope that her novel "may be useful" to readers (xxxvi), an aspiration that the more experienced Brunton would later describe as the core of her creative philosophy and the linchpin of her "duty" as a novelist: "A moral therefore is necessary to me . . . ," she tells her brother in 1815 while planning what would become *Emmeline*, "A *lofty* moral, too, is necessary to my style of thinking and writing; and really it is not easy to make such as one the ground-work of any story which novel readers will endure" (lxxxii). By 1815, the author of *Self-Control* is representing herself as a self-aware and mature writer of moral-domestic fiction and, indeed, an innovator in the genre: "the path which I have chosen is almost exclusively my own. The few moral lessons which our English fictions profess to teach, are of the humblest class," she asserts (lxxxii).

The matrix of the morally useful affords Brunton room to experiment with the generic parameters of the novel in the early nineteenth century and rewrite several literary conventions in the process. Isabelle Bour has argued that the generic "instability" of *Self-Control* subverts Brunton's overarching didactic intentions in the text (26-27), but I am inclined to regard this instability as a fruitful polyvalence that

retains while exceeding the moral messages Brunton ascribes to her novel above. In its narrative of Laura Montreville's development as a psychological subject, the novel generates registers of discourse athwart those of the merely didactic. *Self-Control* intermixes the female *Bildungsroman* and its subgenre, the female *Künstlerroman*, the domestic romance, the plot of seduction, and the religious novel in order to make the argument that women must cultivate both practical skills and psychological resources if they are to navigate the sexual double standards and exclusionary practices of a patriarchal society and contribute to the broader moral improvement of commercial society. The heroine's interlocking quests for moral autonomy and material subsistence provide the foundation for the novel's narrative of female development.[47] Laura's *Bildung*, I argue, maps on to her engagement in labour; physical, intellectual, and affective, paid and unpaid, this labour is an embodiment of the ideology of self-improvement.

From the very first pages of *Self-Control*, in a preface dedicated to Joanna Baillie, Brunton entwines personal development and labour when she defends what "some of [her] fair countrywomen" might perceive as her improbably perfect heroine: "It might be enough to reply," Brunton writes,

> that I do not ascribe any of the virtues of Laura to nature, and, least of all, the one whose office is to regulate and control nature. But if my principal figure want the air, and vivacity of life, the blame lies in the painter, not in the subject. Laura is indebted to fancy for her drapery

[47] Wood asserts that Brunton's *Self-Control* is one of the first "antirevolutionary" novels to show "spiritual and moral progress" in a protagonist. This is unusual, Wood observes, because the exemplary protagonists of earlier antirevolutionary novels tend toward perfection, "established in early childhood in the home," and interact with the world in order to "resist corruption, rather than to gain experience" (75).

> and attitudes alone. I have had the happiness of witnessing, in real life, a self-command operating with as much force, permanence, and uniformity, as that which is depicted in the following volumes . . . for the generality of my readers, I breathe a fervent wish, that these pages may assist in enabling their own hearts to furnish proof that the character of Laura, however unnatural, is yet not unattainable. (*SC* ix-x)

This statement cuts several ways, at once admonishing readers for moral laxity, acknowledging the faults of human nature, and yet extending the possibility for individual improvement through the process of reading about and working to reform the self according to Laura's "model" (x). Baillie's implied perfections as a writer and moral agent (she is "one whose writings force every unvitiated heart to glow with a warmer love of virtue" [vi]), as well as Brunton's own self-deferential account of her efforts to paint virtue as a novelist, shadow this defence of Laura. Here Christian self-improvement, in the form of intellectual application (reading, writing) and religious practice, is imagined as an individual project pursued in the interest of collective moral and social health. Published women writers Baillie and Brunton and the fictional Laura, along with the invoked "fair countrywomen," work toward a common model of moral self-government as the basis for social improvement, mediated in this instance through fiction. The preface of *Self-Control* amplifies the argument that undergirds Brunton's later fiction and the *Memoir*: active and self-directed, women are fundamentally "useful" members of the commercially and morally flourishing civic whole. Laura, moreover, finds singular joy and meaning in feeling "that she [is]

USEFUL" (1.156). In *Self-Control*, usefulness condenses an Evangelically based belief in the importance of individual judgment and self-examination with a recognition of the invisible position of women within the free market economy and the division of labour.

In this sense, Brunton's novel joins the work of contemporary women writers from across the ideological spectrum, including Wollstonecraft and Wakefield, as well as More, three women Kathryn Sutherland names as interlocutors to Adam Smith, in disputing gendered definitions of work as the "exclusively masculine" production of value within the formal structures of the market (98). *Self-Control* reframes Smithian accounts of the economy as the purview of male action and the limited definition of productive labour as the creation of material value in a public, economic sphere.[48] Contra political economy's discursive "concealment of society's reliance upon women's active contribution to the production of value" (Sutherland 105), *Self-Control* portrays the heroine's labour as time-consuming physical and mental exertion motivated by material and psychological compensation, and carried out within the home as well as in places of public exchange. For Laura, work includes painting and sketching as well as acts of self-privation (of food) and endurance (of physical and psychological abuse), as well as the production of "socially demanded feelings" across a variety interpersonal contexts and social settings (Blauvelt 5). I argue, however, that it is Laura's art, and her attempts to professionalize her skills at

[48] In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith makes the distinction between productive and unproductive labour, the former defined as work that produces value in the form of material commodities for circulation and consumption on the market. Here Smith uses the example of factory work. Unproductive labour, on the other hand, "adds to the value of nothing" but helps circulate revenue via the consumption of services; in this category, Smith includes the work of "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc." (430-31).

painting and sketching, that condense the novel's explorations of subjectivity, creativity, and labour.

Rethinking Laura's art

Laura's skill at painting and her attempts to sell her artwork out of financial need have proven a locus for critical exploration of the perceived ideological tensions that characterize Brunton's first novel and have figured as a point of return in assessments of the feminist qualities of her fiction more generally. The chief point at issue has been how to reconcile the conservative Evangelical beliefs expounded in *Self-Control* and *Discipline* with the actions of their self-directed and exemplary heroines Laura and Ellen, unmarried young women likewise unashamed of seeking paid work in order to survive in, respectively, London and Edinburgh. Laura sells her accomplishments in painting and sketching and also finds (unremunerated) employment as a companion, while Ellen works as a governesses and profits from her skills in handicraft.

Two critical camps emerge across the interpretations of Brunton's working heroines. The majority of readings see Laura and Ellen's work enclosed by a governing conservative ideology that prescriptively narrates women's labour as respectable only when yoked to domestic function. These arguments rely on a fairly stable separation between public and private, conceived in terms of physical location (the spaces of the home vs. a public world) and certain social and class values. Here I include the work of Lisa Wood, Edward Copeland, and Katherine Sobba Green, who each acknowledge the value Brunton assigns to women's work in the public sphere,

but maintain that her heroines' efforts at economic self-sufficiency remain safely domesticated. In a second camp, scholars have focused on working women, money, and the spaces of commercial exchange in order to bring into relief the reformist and, for Sarah W.R. Smith, decidedly feminist aspects of Brunton's novels. Gonda, Alker, and Musgrove are skeptical of the ideological stability of separate spheres in Brunton's fiction, noting that critical emphasis on the domestic has eclipsed tangent discourses, such as those of urban modernity and national economic improvement.

The work of these latter three scholars provides my point of departure for reevaluating earlier critical delimitations of Laura's work as an expression of her feminine delicacy and proper domesticity. I argue that *Self-Control* distances Laura's art from the discursive field of accomplishment as a signifier of socioeconomic status and ornamental femininity and, instead, situates her creative abilities within a broader range of useful skills. The product of "native invention, and habitual industry" rather than expensive education (*SC* 1.54), Laura's work as an artist sits along a continuum of physical, intellectual, and affective labour represented as positively constitutive and self-empowering. This move from the heroine's art as polish (a feature of woman as marriageable commodity) to art as useful skill (here an expression of individual creativity and economic agency) points to the generic innovations at work in *Self-Control*. In particular, this move instantiates the novel's efforts to reconstitute romance and its excess of feeling under commercial modernity's codes of self-restraint and usefulness, qualities of signal importance to the virtuous heroine in the new century (Ahern 39). Working from Watson's thesis in *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel*, I argue that *Self-Control*'s negotiations of domestic romance and

the plot of sensibility translate the psychological duress of patriarchal obligation and the intensity of heterosexual desire into the individualizing discourses of work. *Self-Control* rewrites the seduction narrative for the sake of public virtue by redirecting the heroine's quick feelings and creative energies into the world of labour, where usefulness (tenuously) shields Laura from material want and sustains her psychologically by giving her a sense of purpose and an affective outlet amidst everyday trial.

Wishing to "have been loved for my self": The interior world of the artist heroine

In *Cœlebs,* as Hannah More's bachelor protagonist sets out on his quest to "select a deserving companion for life" (51), his father counsels that,

> The exhibiting, the displaying wife may entertain your company, but it is only the informed, the refined, the cultivated woman who can entertain yourself; and I presume whenever you marry you will marry primarily for yourself, and not for your friends: you will want a COMPANION: an ARTIST you may hire. (50)

More raises the same argument in her *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, where she expresses her disdain for "the absurdity of that system which is erecting the whole sex into artists," and she outlines a program of female education to prepare women to effectively carry out their primary duties as "daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families" (1.110; 84-85). Like Wollstonecraft in the second *Vindication*, More portrays usefulness, not accomplishment, as the worthy and

prudent end of women's education.[49] These educational reformers of an earlier generation are on common ground with Brunton in deploying the rhetoric of usefulness in discriminating principled, cohered femininity from its corrupted counterpart, the latter a showy surface "lacking the detachment, the critical distance necessary to the production of a continuous consciousness or integrity of identity capable of deferring its gratifications" (Guest 277). Mandal observes that many works of moral-domestic fiction, including Austen's *Mansfield Park*, "establish the opposition between 'accomplishments' and 'serious' moral education that improves the *internal principles* of the mind, rather than embellishing one's *external value* as a marriageable commodity" (107). As I note in the introduction, the criticism of superficial accomplishments is a central topos in the accomplishments debates; it relies on contrast between two divergent models of femininity, the virtuously domestic and recessive as opposed to the affected, commodified, and debased (Sturrock 24; Bermingham 3-4).

In *Self-Control*, however, this rhetorical opposition undergoes modification. Accomplishment, expressed as the work of genuine talent and steady application, does not simply function as the shorthand for either domestic or corrupted femininity. Brunton's heroine is accomplished, and in a number of the so-called external arts, and yet her skillset embodies a model of cultivated femininity clearly distinguished from the showy and superficial. Unable to play the piano and "doomed . . . to ignorance in the art of dancing" (*SC* 2.11), Laura feels "her deficiency" in the "fashionable arts, on seeing them exhibited by young ladies, who, to use their own expression, had

[49] In a footnote to the *Strictures*, More clarifies her position by excluding "the exertions of real genius" from her "censure": *it* "is as valuable as it is rare" and artistic pursuits should be encouraged in those women who show remarkable talent (1.86).

returned from *finishing themselves* at a boarding school" (2.12). Her accomplishments have been "attained with great accuracy" through private instruction, although they are "few in number, and unobtrusive in kind" (2.10). She can read aloud, knows French and Latin and arithmetic, is "expert in every description of plain needle-work," sings with "inimitable sweetness and expression" and has a particular "proficiency in painting" (2.10-11). Situated in propinquity with other forms of useful activity, these creative pursuits enable the heroine to develop and occupy an interior world of self-examination in which she hones her moral principles and powers of self-control. Laura's artistic practice is therefore linked to the development of internal principle and the pursuit of usefulness, designated in terms of service to others, economic self-sufficiency and, most importantly, autonomous rational action. A similar dynamic is at work in *Discipline*, when Brunton represents the independent pursuit of paid labour as an aspect of the heroine's moral reform. But in *Self-Control*, creative activity specifically facilitates the elaboration of a psychic space distanced from the imperatives of the romance narrative and its paradigms of patriarchal ownership, intimating and at times literalizing the heroine's desires and motivations.

In the early scenes of volume 1, Laura's proposal to travel with her father to London and sell her artwork in the metropolis is precipitated by the desire to serve Captain Montreville in a time of financial need. She is first and foremost motivated by filial duty and the awareness that the melancholy, indolent Captain has few resources of his own (monetary, psychological, and physical) to sustain their vulnerable family unit. On the surface, their relationship appears to be one of idealized domestic affection – Laura is "the passion of his soul" (1.183), he the object

of her every attention – and it is the paternal-filial bond which supplies the foundation of the novel's sentimentalism. Her idea to market her artistic skills appears to be the resourceful response of a young woman accustomed to performing the "labour of duty" and "overcoming adverse circumstances" (1.3-4). I suggest, however, that Laura's love for her father is in fact characterized by profound ambivalence. Her creative pursuits and willingness to labour for pay manifest her desire for independence from patriarchal control, supplying repeated and largely unspoken points of contention between father and daughter. Her development as a creative subject thus at once animates and undercuts the novel's sentimental domestic narrative.

Laura's filial ambivalence stems from the fact that the Captain assumes absolute paternal authority over his daughter even while she performs the emotional and material labour that knits their family together. The novel, in fact, consistently represents the management of familial relationships and filial duties as work – and hard work, at that. Laura's relationships with her parents and her aunt Pelham are figured as Sisyphean trials of endurance in face of the dictates of misguided (if, at times, well-meaning) authority. Each of these guardian figures is afflicted with excessive sensibility and lack of self-command that impair the capacity for thoughtful, rational action, figured in the text as a fatal "contagion" that risks spreading to Laura. A display of sensibility is, to the heroine's mind, "an occasion of shame" and, in her self-possession, the teenaged Laura is the reverse of these dangerously over-feeling adults who fail to act as model guardians (1.154). She has learned as a child to self-differentiate from her parents' examples of excessive feeling

so that Laura's ability to control her own feelings is already bound up with her sense of self at the novel's opening. (This acute self-awareness provides only one example of the ways in which Laura overturns generic expectations of the heroine of sensibility. On more than one occasion, Laura manifests her capacity for rational action as a heroine by rescuing herself from abduction, reasonably planning her escape and taking charge of her safety.) Echoing eighteenth-century associations between excessive feeling and material extravagance, *Self-Control* represents affective control as directly linked to economic prudence. Gillian Skinner attributes this association to the discourses of civic humanism and the espousal of civic virtue or ethical principle (encompassing prudence, valour, self-command etc.) as the basis for social, economic, and political life (7). Hence Laura's self-starvation, while her sickly father picks over "dainties of which he could neither bear the want nor feel the enjoyment" (*SC* 1.275), literalizes a dual exertion of economic and individual restraint, for it both saves precious financial resources and sees the heroine endure harrowing physical trial. To further summon and hone these internal resources of self-regulation, as extreme as Laura's actions may sometimes be, represents a positively constitutive exercise throughout the heroine's encounters with the social world.

Her Sisyphean efforts to please and protect the Captain, in particular, instantiate a reversal of roles in which the daughter parents the father, managing the household budget and dealing with servants while limited by "the humble establishment of a half-pay officer" (1.3-4), concealing the extent of her suitor's villainy for fear of provoking a duel, and providing the Captain with constant companionship and distraction. In his inability to exercise effective authority or offer

sagacious counsel, Captain Montreville emerges as both the mediator and antagonist to Laura's autonomous moral development. Laura learns to act for herself, but at the cost of genuine trust and open communication between father and daughter. Caroline Gonda has written that in the novels of Brunton and Austen, the "sins of the fathers" are those of omission: while the fathers of Ellen Percy, Emma Woodhouse, and Maria and Julia Bertram "lack the necessary energy for tyranny" (203), these men prove similarly inattentive or unwise in their parental roles. Captain Montreville is likewise no tyrant. His villainy is subtle and banal, taking the shape of what Lisa Tessman calls "the ordinary vices of domination" or those vices arising from the "active or passive acceptance of the benefits that come from occupying" positions of socially sanctioned privilege, including male privilege (4). More often than not, the Captain is oblivious to the oppression and suffering Laura faces as a disadvantaged member of the social collective, a young and beautiful woman without an effective guardian.

The Captain's ordinary vices come into relief in his apparently natural and prudent wish to see his daughter married before his death. When the Captain promotes the interests of Laura's aggressively persistent suitor despite her fervent objections, he becomes complicit in subjecting her to a regime of physical and psychological intimidation. Fearing Laura's destitution and, in his own pride, wishing to see "her brow graced by a coronet" in a socially and financially advantageous marriage, the Captain is Colonel Hargrave's keenest advocate. Laura is initially enamoured of Hargrave; he is "of good family, of an elegant figure, and furnished by nature with one of the finest countenances she had formed" (*SC* 1.80). Even after she awakens to his immorality early in the novel (Hargrave suggests she become his

mistress), Laura feels strong physical desire for her lover. Ignorant of Hargrave's character, however, and shielded by Laura from the insult she has received, the Captain cannot understand "[that] any woman should have refused the hand of the handsome – the insinuating – the gallant Colonel Hargrave." The father believes that the daughter does not know her own heart and "that in all cases of feminine obduracy, perseverance is an infallible recipé" (1.300). He regards her as above all else the potential wife of another man, as an object of sexual exchange, taking it "for granted, that no mortal could withstand her attractions" (1.194). Here and elsewhere "the exercise of power mutes and conceals itself" as the dictates of paternal affection, and the Captain shows himself unable to consider his daughter a rational subject capable of independent judgment (François 232).

Laura spends most of the first volume struggling against not only her own feelings, but also against the vehement appeals of father and lover. The heroine's task is to protect herself from an onslaught of influence without her interests at heart, all the while answering to the emotional and material needs of her father in her role as a "good" daughter. Thus while Laura's initiative to professionalize her accomplishments supplies another example of her Christian duty, it also fulfills two related functions: it marks an assertion of individual will and desire and a strategy of self-management under misguided authority. Laura thanks her father for her parents' "kind foresight, which, in teaching me this blessed art, secured me the only real independence, by making me independent of all but my own exertions" (*SC* 1.197). Her thanks are genuine, and so is her desire to be "independent of all." Again assuming the name of usefulness, "her warm heart glowing" with its "joys" in this

scene, the pursuit of autonomy admits another register of discourse in which Laura claims the capacity for action beyond patriarchal jurisdiction by means of her "blessed art" (1.196).

Naïve though she may be, Laura is aroused with quasi-religious, quasi-erotic fervor at the opportunity to broaden her spatial, economic, and artistic prospects. Going out to London shops and galleries to sell her art, Laura engages in "the most interesting business she had ever undertaken. Her heart fluttered with expectation – her step was buoyant with hope . . . Laura changed colour, and her breath came quick" (1.128). Although her efforts are initially met with disappointment and the unwanted advances of several licentious art dealers, Laura persists and with monetary results. Her first sale elicits feelings of unprecedented pleasure so that "she could not controul its emotions" and is "unable to contain herself" in her father's presence (1.154). An unusual and quickly contained release of tears simultaneously manifests the heroine's "thanksgiving" for her small commercial success, but also affords her some relief after weeks of silent pining after Hargrave (1.154). These tears of deferred desire redirect Laura's erotic energy into creative and commercial activity.

Laura's quick move to conceal her feelings in this scene, "hiding herself in her chamber" to avoid her father's gaze (1.154), materializes a recurring dynamic in *Self-Control*. Presenting a face of "frozen serenity," the heroine inhabits a psychic space beyond the penetration of the world (2.164). Her creative practice and commercial ventures facilitate her attempts to protect and, indeed, conceal an inner world of desires, fears, and aspirations from the purview of patriarchal knowledge and jurisdiction. This process of self-enclosure is the precondition for moral, physical, and

financial autonomy, and it plays out psychologically, in the rigid control of emotion, as well as spatially, in the rooms and locations Laura occupies as creative space, a point to which I return below. The novel draws on the Gothic trope of the silent, self-possessed heroine in order to lend Laura agency in this regard. Hidden tears, "half of sorrow, half of vexation" (1.57-58) and concealed truths act as effective strategies at obviating the Captain's control. Diane Long Hoeveler contends that the "intense self-possession" and silence of the Gothic/sentimental heroine is a gesture of resistance against patriarchal and aristocratic authority. It signifies a world of the self beyond the reach of patriarchal ownership. Hoeveler observes that the heroine's

> extreme sense of her own worth . . . puzzles bystanders . . . her inwardness, her silence, her extreme control of her emotions in public, her sexual inviolability and purity – puzzles a social system that wants to believe that only it possesses the power to confer value. (40)

This strategy of self-enclosure, mediated by the third-person omniscient narrator's focalization on Laura's internal responses to her father, comes into focus when the Captain commands her to stop selling her art for profit. Laura simply receives the prohibition in pitying silence, accounting for his command as "only one of the transient caprices of illness" (*SC* 1.198). Whereas he sees his daughter "degraded into an artist" and engaged in "traffic" (the word indicating the Captain's prejudices against working women), Laura regards her profit as the "well-earned treasure" that will help pay the rent on their London lodgings (1.197-98). She continues her work in secret until the Captain's death at the close of volume 1, taking increasing charge of their small domestic unit as the Captain's power proportionally weakens.

At the opening of the second volume, when the heroine faces poverty and homelessness in London, Laura's accomplishments and, more specifically, her labouring body supply a means of entry into the relative safety and protection of her aunt Pelham's household. Too proud to approach her aunt as "a petitioner for charity," Laura presents herself at Lady Pelham's Grosvenor Square address as "a candidate for honourable employment" and offers her skills at painting, conversation, and needlework as the basis for her employment (2.21). Lady Pelham, however, takes advantage of Laura's vulnerable position and, like Mrs. Ireton in *The Wanderer*, seizes the opportunity to "secure a humble companion at a rate lower that the usual price for such conveniences" knowing "that she could at any time get rid of her charge" (2.28-29). Lady Pelham meanwhile reasons that she cannot "possibly offer wages to so near a relation" and, in the course of Laura's residence under her roof, never financially compensates her niece for her work (2.29). While Laura's willingness to earn her way "by the labour of her hands" affords her some relief from immediate indigence (2.17), it therefore also exposes her to economic exploitation and psychological and physical abuse as the dependent of a domestic tyrant, an experience she shares with Burney's Juliet. Laura's tenuous socioeconomic position and the limited commercial viability of her skillset make her a prisoner of the claustrophobic spaces of Lady Pelham's rarefied world for most of the novel's second half.

But in this relationship, Laura resorts to her creative skills as both a palliative for her aunt's volatile temper and as a mode of self-protection against her opportunistic attempts at penetrating Laura's interior world. After Lady Pelham's first

serious emotional outburst following Laura's arrival, the heroine makes a peace offering by "[proposing], with a grace which seemed rather to petition a favour than to offer a service, to attempt a portrait of her aunt." The offer is "accepted with pleasure" and after Laura produces a "favourable" portrait, "Lady Pelham was kinder than ever" (2.38). Laura employs her art as a distraction, for herself and her aunt, from the tension at hand. The portrait moreover functions as a mode of mediation, a token of affection, Laura hopes, to smooth fissures in what is quickly devolving into a toxic relationship.

Much of the tension in their relationship arises from Lady Pelham's baffled attempts at knowing Laura's feelings for Hargrave. Her suspicious are first raised on this front when Laura collapses while overhearing a salacious account of Hargrave's affair with a married woman. The incident happens while Laura is applying "the finishing touches to her aunt's portrait" (2.48). Although Laura attempts to dissolve into her work in this scene, her alarm becomes visible; she fumbles with her pencils and faints to the floor. This moment of weakness augurs a regime of "innuendo" and "hints and insinuations" from her aunt in a bid to extract information. But, much like in her relationship with her father, Laura uses strategies of silence and evasion in response and, anticipating the cool composure of Juliet Granville, manages to remain, quite simply, "impenetrable" to the assaults (2.60-61). Interactions between aunt and niece are increasingly figured in such militaristic terms after this point: the volley of coded verbal shots is "sharpshooting warfare" (2.61) waged across parlour, dining room, and garden, so that Laura is even "stormed in her citadel" by the unrelenting Lady Pelham (2.11). The ever-resourceful heroine, however, turns to tried and true

strategies in subsequent confrontations, preoccupying her aunt with her accomplishments and, at one point, even using "her genius for millinery" as the basis for domestic diplomacy. She makes Lady Pelham a cap that quickly melts her "ill humour" into "a gracious compliment" (2.79). At these moments, Laura endeavours to divert the friction and, indeed, abuse of their interpersonal interactions into the world of useful labour. By considering her relationship with her aunt as, in part, a job requiring creative effort, Laura is able to shield herself from the worst of the exploitation and endure a situation that guarantees her survival during this period.

Laura's creative activity expresses aspects of her subjectivity that transcend and, indeed, rupture the lexical parameters of idealized familial affection and the generic matrix of the domestic/sentimental. Her art equally serves to defuse or at least somewhat contain the novel's erotic energy and its narrative of seduction by refiguring the heroine's sexual desire as creative desire and religious enthusiasm. At the broadest level, accomplishment, as a quotidian practice and a paid vocation, equips Laura with strategies of evasion and palliation in the face of misguided and abused authority. Professionalized accomplishment helps Laura nurture and protect an interior world where she is able to "[hold] onto something so intimate as 'mine' . . . [when] vast territories of the self have been relinquished as 'not mine'" (Hochschild 183). When Laura imagines what it would mean to be "loved for my self" rather than objectified as a sexual commodity and servile body (*SC* 1.186), she locates her self-worth in her capacity for moral agency as a self-governing subject. Laura accordingly diverges from the polarized models of the domestic vs. the debased accomplished heroine. Instead, the development and exercise of private virtue through creative

activity gives this heroine the language to conceive of herself in terms other than the strictly filial, romantic, and domestic.

Creative spaces: Brunton's Edinburgh, Laura's London

Critics in Brunton's day complained about the improbability of Laura's artistic skill and (albeit very minor) success as a commercial artist, given the heroine's lack of formal training, inexperience, and formative years spent in the remote Glenalbert (*Memoir* xlix). Yet for Brunton, a woman raised in the isolated Orkneys, "nurtured by her mother in the rudiments of music and dancing," French and Italian, and practiced in drawing and sketching in her own right, such skill would not have seemed unreasonable in Laura Montreville (McKerrow 42-43). Moreover, Laura's practical application of her skills for economic subsistence would not have seemed unusual or improbable in the eyes of her creator. Brunton's own informal education and her experiences of living in Edinburgh during its era of cultural ascension in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries undergird her depictions of private female creativity in the contexts of urban commercial life.

During seven years at an Edinburgh boarding school, Mary received a standard program of education delivered to young Scottish women of the professional classes, taking a range of practical subjects, including mathematics and cookery (52). Elizabeth C. Sanderson, in her study *Women and Work in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh*, concludes that while many young women of Brunton's social class were educated "in the assumption that learning a skill might enhance marriage prospects, at the same time evidence . . . suggests that subsistence was the *first* and most important

reason for education and the learning of a skill of some kind" (85). Edinburgh girls' boarding schools, Sanderson observes, implemented curricula to prepare pupils "to obtain employment and consequently subsistence and independence" as single women (94). She argues that this educational approach emerged from the specific socioeconomic contexts of Edinburgh in the eighteenth century: women from a variety of backgrounds participated in the world of work at this time and required adequate training to sell an independent skill or "learn on the job by working for someone else" (103-04). As Brunton writes to her sister-in-law regarding the education of her niece in January 1818,

> These hard times compel so many women to celibacy, that I should think it no bad speculation to educate a few for respectable old maids; especially such as have minds strong enough to stand alone, and *romantic* enough, not to chuse to marry, merely for the sake of being married. (*Memoir* xcvii)

She hopes her niece "will grow up with a mind vigorous and happy in its own resources," much like Laura (xcvii). Brunton does not grant the heroine a boarding school education in *Self-Control*, as she does in *Discipline*. But when she has Laura remark that she has been educated with "kind foresight" in mind (*SC* 1.197), Brunton writes her heroine into a familiar world in which single women have the opportunity and preparation to provide for themselves outside of marriage, as respectable members of a working community.

In this sense, Laura emerges from the specific geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland and,

more precisely, Edinburgh. Brunton's exemplary artist heroine is in many ways a product of this time and place, despite the geographic scope of Laura's adventures. The novelist explicitly defends Laura's art as an "important hinge of my very ill jointed machine" in a letter to Joanna Baillie in March 1811, where she cites "our Scotch proficiency in painting" as support for her heroine's skill: "The Fourth Edinburgh Exhibition will open in a few days, for the conviction of all sceptics" (*Memoir* xli), she writes, referring to a series of annual public exhibitions which showcased Scottish art in Edinburgh during the early years of Mary and Alexander Brunton's residence in that city. Between 1808 and 1813, these exhibitions displayed "an eclectic mix of genre scenes, portraits and Scottish landscapes" at celebrated portraitist Henry Raeburn's York Place studio each spring (Prior 141). Brunton's suggestion to Baillie that Laura's painting represents a particularly "Scotch proficiency" in the fine arts echoes broader cultural discourses emerging from Scottish Enlightenment thinking regarding the place of the arts in Scottish civil society.

Edinburgh, hub of the Scottish Enlightenment and Brunton's home for most of her adult life, became a "self-proclaimed" cultural and intellectual centre in Great Britain during the Romantic period (Perkins, *Women Writers* 17). The city's transformation was marked by the construction of New Town, a feat of modern sanitation and neoclassical architecture, the concentration of Enlightenment scholars at the University of Edinburgh and, on the literary front, the founding of *The Edinburgh Review* (1802) and *Blackwood's* (1817) and the emergence of Walter Scott. The city also witnessed an unprecedented burgeoning in the market for fine art

in the early years of the nineteenth century, fueled by middle- and upper-class consumer demand for portraits, landscape paintings, and engravings destined for domestic collection and display in New Town homes. Newly founded professional associations of artists and a growing body of art history and criticism established aesthetic standards and asserted the quality of a distinctly Scottish tradition in the arts, responding to perceptions of Scotland's primitive and paltry achievements in this area (Forbes 87). Edinburgh nurtured the fine arts in its Enlightenment period "in a sphere increasingly bounded by the values of professionalism, civic virtue, distinction, and refinement – the values of civil society" (Prior 114).

This was a world in which Brunton moved even as a young unmarried woman, during her time at school and on visits spent with her parents in the city. Writing to her Aunt Craigie at the close of February 1795 during a stay with her parents, Mary recounts,

> I am afraid Mama confines herself too much to the house, for she had hardly cross'd the threshold above once or twice since she came to Edinburgh. Papa is getting his picture done by the same hand that painted Uncle David. I have seen it and the likeness is striking. (qtd. in McKerrow 54)

The "same hand" is that of Raeburn, who painted Thomas Balfour at 32 York Place in the winter of 1795. Mary's allusion to the fact that she has seen the portrait in progress suggests that she accompanied her father to Raeburn's studio to see the artist at work, and she intimates that, unlike her mother, she is interested and engaged in Edinburgh's social and cultural scene beyond the threshold of their town house.

As a married couple in Edinburgh, the Bruntons first lived in a spacious house on St. John Street, a veritable enclave, McKerrow writes, for the city's fashionable, commercial, and intellectual elite and their friends (76-77). Walter Scott paid visits to his friend Alexander Cowan at No. 5, for example, and his lifelong friend and publisher James Ballantyne, at No. 10 (77-78). Mary had a very good friend and longtime correspondent in Mrs. Izett, a Yorkshirewoman, who lived at No. 6 with her husband, Chalmers Izett, proprietor of a hatter's business in North Bridge Street (79). The two women spent a good deal of time together, McKerrow recounts, "reading and working, exchanging opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, as neighbours do, and discussing literature" (79). Mary spent her days fulfilling her duties and social work as the wife of a Church of Scotland minister, but it was during the time on St. John Street, and in her exchanges with Mrs. Izett, that she began to draft what would become *Self-Control* (83). Following Mary's success with *Self-Control* and Alexander's appointment as a minister at the Tron Parish Church, the couple moved to 35 Albany Row in the New Town (114). Their relocation to the elegant New Town address at this time reflects Mary's increased social popularity in the wake of her literary debut, as well as her husband's promotion to an important role in the city's religious community. Mary writes to her Aunt Craigie in May 1814 that,

> Since Self-Control was fixed upon me, my circle of acquaintance has widened so unmercifully, that my time, in Edinburgh, is very little at my command. But, upon the whole, I am a gainer. I have gained associates among persons eminent for talents and respectability . . . (*Memoir* lxxii)

In her study of women writers living in Edinburgh during the Enlightenment years, Perkins observes that many women circulated in and contributed to the city's literary and intellectual circles, noting the body of historical evidence "that presents Edinburgh women as engaging in a form of sociable exchange that lies somewhere between the worlds of public entertainment and of strict domesticity" (*Women Writers* 26). The city fostered a cultural milieu that challenged late eighteenth-century depictions of Scottish women as paragons of domestic femininity afflicted with an "instinctive dislike" of public life (27). Although Mary Brunton was no Edinburgh salonnière, she was a prominent supporter of local social welfare efforts and, as her correspondence corroborates, became a celebrated literary figure during her brief lifetime.

In the epigraph to this chapter, an excerpt from Brunton's correspondence with her sister-in-law, the writer moves with ease between the sublime and the quotidian, the panoramic and the minute, the social and the private, her coordinating conjunctions ("yet") suggesting receptivity to the world around her. This image of Brunton is reinforced by her travel journals, composed during two separate trips to England in 1812 and 1815, when the Bruntons toured extensively for leisure. As Alexander Brunton writes in the *Memoir*, his wife's journals "exhibit . . . a patient investigation of subjects which might not have been supposed very likely to attract her" (liii). Here we see Mary Brunton describe in great detail the operation of the steam engine at Meux's Brewery in London, "the whole process of making ball-cartridges" at Woolwich (110), the structure of the fortifications at Portsmouth, the production and glazing of fine porcelain at a factory in Worcester, the process "by

which button eyes are made" at Thomason's Manufactory in Birmingham (157) and, as McKerrow puts it, "the experience of sitting with her minister husband in the pit at Covent Garden to listen to an oratorio amongst a crowd of drunken sailors" (xiv-xv). In the travel journals, the technological innovation of industrializing England and the cosmopolitan culture of Romantic London merge into accounts of the pedestrian business of travel: "Walked home through woods and fields" around Southampton, Mary records, "clambering over stiles indescribable" (*Memoir* 134).

In the London segment of *Self-Control*, Laura creates her lived space with similar fluidity, transforming the private spaces of the home into sites of commercial production, and infusing private feeling into the sites and objects of commercial exchange. Laura, in Michel de Certeau's terms, acts out space through her quotidian creative practices, so that the places of artistic creation and exchange become coextensive with the self and the constitution of private virtue. Musgrove has argued along similar lines in an article on the role of the city in Brunton's fiction. She argues that,

> Brunton rewrites the domestic heroine by immersing her in an urban environment, but the experience is less that of the much-discussed female consumer of commercial culture than that of the 'practitioner' of the city, [de] Certeau's influential figure of individual urban presence. (220)

I concur with Musgrove on this point, and suggest that the rewriting of the domestic heroine also takes place in the spaces of the home when Laura transforms domestic space into professional creative space via the everyday exercise of her

accomplishments, producing what Alexandra K. Wettlaufer refers to as "surrogate studio" space in the home. Through the private practices of professionalized accomplishment, the heroine's domestic and public spheres of operation are mutually reimagined along a continuum of affective relations and economic imperatives.

Wettlaufer, in her interdisciplinary work on women painters and the French and British novel in the period 1800-1860, addresses the different conditions and contexts in which actual women artists worked in the two nations. While women participated in post-Revolutionary France's atelier culture as pupils and independent artists, an analogous studio culture was not open to women in Britain during the early nineteenth century. British women artists responded to this exclusion, Wettlaufer contends, by representing themselves in their own art at work in a variety lived spaces; in so doing, these artists "transformed domestic and public settings into surrogate studios, self-consciously constructing the image of the female painter as a professional" (33-34). Wettlaufer focuses on the careers of professional visual artists in her study and, in fact, asserts that "the accomplished woman necessarily remained outside of the circuits of real artistic accomplishment or genius" because her skill was practiced "within the domestic sphere for personal or familial entertainment or decoration" (32). Laura, however, challenges this division between "true" accomplishment and private ornament. Not only does she work across artistic genres, from the high genres of portraiture and history painting to the minor sketch, as well as across media, adept with oils as well as with chalks, but her creative practice also collapses spatial boundaries between domestic and public. *Self-Control* represents Laura at work in surrogate studios akin to those Wettlaufer describes, liminal zones

where commercial activity and useful application intersect with self-expression and private desire. Representing domestic as well as public space as the site of productive, constitutive labour, *Self-Control* combines aspects of the domestic romance, the plot of seduction, and the female *Künstlerroman* in order to elaborate a heroine who attempts to regulate the romance plot through her creative labour.

In volume 1, after the Captain and Laura move into their lodgings in Holborn, Laura "immediately appropriate[s]" the closet "as her painting room" and there busies herself "in arranging the materials of her art" (*SC* 1.94). While the Captain ventures into London's streets and conducts his business of recovering their lost finances, Laura spends many concentrated hours working "with care unspeakable" on her first painting intended for sale. In her "sickening impatience" for intelligence of Hargrave, Laura distracts herself and studies her composition of Leonidas "till her head ached with thought" (1.111). Leonidas, appropriately, bears a striking resemblance to Hargrave, the artist's "only standard of manly beauty" and Laura vainly hopes the resemblance will "be apparent to no eye but her own" (1.112). In this instance, studio space and painting function as palimpsests of several intersecting discourses: the heroine's romantic desire, her attempts at affective self-regulation and self-enclosure, her corporeal and intellectual work, and the basis for her presence in London. In the image of Leonidas, as well as later, in the painting she gifts to the De Courcy family as a "token of remembrance and gratitude" (1.247) and the portrait she uses to placate her aunt Pelham, Laura's art acts out or spatializes that liminal zone between useful employment and self-expression.

Laura governs the particularly disruptive potential of Hargrave's image and her own feelings for its model by diverting romantic and heroic fantasies into the activity of urban commercial exchange. On the night before Laura attempts her first sale in London, the heroine's initiation into commerce is narratively expressed in metaphoric terms as an act of sexual initiation or exchange:

> Never did youthful bridegroom look forward to his nuptial hour with more ardour, than did Laura to that which was to begin the realization of her prospects of wealth and independence. The next day was to be devoted to the sale of her picture. (1.120)

As the prospect of marriage is translated into that of independence, the desire of the domestic romance is defused across a capacious social and commercial world. As I have suggested, there is something deeply arousing about the pursuit of self-reliance for Brunton's heroine, and this pursuit is intimately bound to the appropriation and redefinition of space. As Musgrove argues, "Laura's confident use of the social practices necessary for sustaining her independence in the city" – here venturing out to print sellers' shops and art galleries to sell her work – "illustrates the extent of her transformation beyond the meek and self-effacing notion of femininity to a new, assertive and self-reliant model of womanhood" (225). Risking exposure to sexual harassment and assault, Laura appropriates these public (masculine) spaces within her sphere of daily operation so that the streets of London

> are no longer necessarily places of female transgression but possible conduits to self reliance; art galleries are not just commercial markets

> denied to women but also spaces of feminine self-determination. (224-25)

At home, Laura's studio space supplies a parallel site of self-determination as well as a much-needed place of refuge, for here Laura exerts some control over her time and activity within the spaces of the home. When the Captain admits Hargrave to the house against her wishes, for example, Laura confines herself to her room and "[spends] the time of his visits in drawing" (*SC* 1.331). During these hours alone, Laura completes the secret work that financially sustains their household while finding some relief from the combined pressure of father and seducer.

This refuge, however, is subject to incursion. On one occasion, Captain Montreville violates Laura's privacy in the hope of furnishing De Courcy, Laura's most virtuous suitor and future husband, with an opportunity to declare himself: the Captain has the "idea, that the picture [Laura is working on] might be made to assist the denouement which he so ardently desire[s]" and so directs De Courcy "into the painting-room" when Laura is absent (1.248). The Captain, De Courcy, and Hargrave each interpret Laura's surrogate studio as the site of romantic intrigue, a feminized space "supplied with many little luxuries" and fetishized traces of her presence, including implements of accomplishment (books, pencils, portfolio) and items of clothing (1.248). Hargrave and De Courcy similarly attempt to read these objects, and Laura's art, as keys to her innermost feelings, typified by the scene in which De Courcy unveils Laura's work in progress and incorrectly interprets the image of Hercules as a declaration of love. Hargrave and De Courcy are unable to see Laura's art as anything but a product of her romantic life, her labour as anything but corporeal

and therefore degrading. Thus while the benevolent De Courcy is eager to "patronize [her] genius and industry" (1.147), he nevertheless feels ashamed to display her work at home: De Courcy, like the Captain, can "not help acting as if [Laura] had shared the opinion of the world, and been herself ashamed of her labour. But this was a shame Laura knew not" (1.260). Rather, Laura, like Opie's Agnes and Radcliffe's Ellena, regards her art and the spaces of her labour, public and private, as sites of positive self-constitution where usefulness and self-reliance divert the workings of desire into the workings of commerce. In the professionalization of her accomplishment, the artist heroine rewrites those patriarchal paradigms that associate female delicacy with passivity and accomplishment with sexual display. Pointing to *Corinne* as the paradigmatic example, Judith E. Martin asserts that the female *Künstlerroman* differs from the male *Künstlerroman* in that,

> The focus on a female protagonist shifts the emphasis from the tension between the creative individual and society to an intra-psychic struggle between emotional/sexual fulfillment and artistic expression – in other words, either the emotional or creative needs must remain unfulfilled. (126)

I maintain, however, that *Self-Control* departs from this model when it reroutes the heroine's emotional needs through her modes of creative expression: Laura does not experience the described internal split between romantic desire and artistic pursuit because the latter helps regulate the former. Artistic practice affords the psychological and physical space necessary for this young woman to develop as a self-managing moral agent.

Generic transformations

As Burlin has argued, *Self-Control* complicates the traditional courtship plot by narratively privileging the heroine's individual development over heterosexual desire (53). In combining the didactic interests of the religious novel with the generic conventions of domestic romance and the plot of seduction, *Self-Control* demonstrates the ways in which the heroine acts and grows as a morally and intellectually autonomous agent (as opposed to simply a romantic heroine) thanks to her Evangelically-guided rational self-possession and commitment to a vision of collective moral improvement (as opposed to conjugal commitment to one man). These are the hallmarks of the hybrid Evangelical romance Watson and Wood credit to Brunton's invention. The dialectic between romance and didacticism evidences a larger shift in the British novel in the later eighteenth century when, Stephen Ahern argues, the romance narrative became increasingly characterized by tempered feeling, intense struggles between duty and desire, and "an insistence that actions be regulated by the dictates of virtue" (39). Brunton contributes to the novel's reform in the early nineteenth century by developing a model of principled, rational femininity while retaining the intrigue of romance and seduction, a titillating combination that proved immensely popular with Romantic readers, if discomforting for some reviewers.

Building on these insights, I have argued that *Self*-Control forges positive links between women's labour and the assertion of autonomous subjectivity by representing usefulness, the byword of the novel's didacticism, as the means to the heroine's survival and development. The novel draws on tropes borrowed from

several popular fiction genres, including the female *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*, the religious and the Gothic novel, and the novels of sensibility and seduction, in order to translate the generic and ideological imperatives of heterosexual romance and patriarchal obligation into the discourses of female self-management. In Brunton's hands, the moral-domestic novel retains while it redirects the courtship plot into the *Bildung* of the creative and fiercely self-reliant heroine, anticipating Jane Eyre, Margaret Hale, and Maggie Tulliver, among other nineteenth-century heroines. In *Self-Control*, this literary model professionalizes accomplishment as a means of rhetorically and spatially bridging the world of public, economic life with that of domestic relations and, looking back to the feminist reformers of the late eighteenth century, of aligning women's moral development and economic participation with collective improvement.

This reconstitution of genre and the attendant rewriting of the domestic heroine involve a rethinking of both labour and virtue as expressed in the economic, aesthetic, and philosophical discourses of British Romanticism and the Scottish Enlightenment. Chief here are the novel's inclusion of many forms of gendered labour within (and not distinct from) the operations of the market economy, and the professionalization of a range of women's activities and practices within commercial society. Laura reaps the rewards of labour through her own moral improvement, strengthened religious conviction, and material security: in managing herself – and, specifically, her desires and feelings – this heroine manages not only to survive but to exemplify virtuous femininity by embodying the ideologies of civic and commercial humanism. Neither passive nor overwrought with sensibility, Laura incarnates Adam

Smith and Edmund Burke's aweful if not sublime, implicitly masculine and, for Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, master virtue of self-command (284). As an exemplary heroine, her determined pursuit of self-improvement thus challenges hierarchically gendered categorizations of the virtues, while the liminal quality of creative labour unsettles aesthetic and spatial demarcations between high/amateur, professional/ornamental, creative/commercial, and public/private. With the heroine's concluding marriage to De Courcy and her establishment to domestic authority, the novel formally enacts the realized union between the affective, moral, and familial and "the public needs of good citizens, industrious laborers and class consolidation" (Comitini 9). But it is *Self-Control*'s sustained and focused depiction of the heroine's creative activity that champions women's self-reliance as the basis for civic health and domestic happiness, laying the foundation for Brunton's later fiction. Laura Montreville's suffering and growth as a moral agent and creative subject epitomize Brunton's vision as a novelist for, in the end, as the narrator of *Self-Control* concludes, "the tranquil current of domestic happiness affords no materials for narrative" (*SC* 2.467-68).

Chapter 3

Orphan, Embroiderer, Insect, Queen:

The "Elegant and Ingenious" Art of Being Ellena in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*[50]

> Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty.
> - Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry* (1757)

Across *The Italian'*s vast Gothic panoramas of monasteries and cliff tops, battlements and ravines, emerge several points at which the text's enchanting and dreamy[51] canvas tears, ruptured by the narrator's allusions to a few small and remarkably domestic objects: handiwork on a robe, a painted miniature, a lute, a book. At first glance, these objects appear incongruous alongside the "dreadful pleasure[s]" and "extensive prospects" of Ann Radcliffe's (1764-1823) romance (Radcliffe 106; 78). Delicate, small, tangential, these are the trifles and keepsakes of the sensitive and sheltered heroine, Ellena Rosalba, objects as likely as herself to be overcome and lost amidst the "confusing relativities, mysterious conspiracies, and hidden dangers" of the novel's masculinist world (Kelly, *English Fiction* 51).[52] Although *The Italian's* domestic objects certainly do not exhibit the "coarse realism" Rictor Norton attributes to the Gothic novels of Radcliffe's contemporary Clara

[50] The following chapter revises and elaborates upon my article, "Orphan, Embroiderer, Insect, Queen: The 'Elegant and Ingenious' Art of Being Ellena in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1796)," which first appeared in *European Romantic Review*, 23.2 (2012): 123-40.

[51] I paraphrase published reviews of Radcliffe's work and biographical retrospectives on her life emerging in Britain between the 1790s and 1820s: Walter Scott, for example, refers to Radcliffe as a "mighty enchantress" (qtd. in Norton 7); Thomas De Quincey uses similar terms and describes Radcliffe as "the great enchantress" of her generation (8). Mary Wollstonecraft, meanwhile, advises in her review of *The Italian* that readers must "recollect, with a sigh, that it is but a dream" (*The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7: 485).

[52] Intriguingly, Deidre Lynch notes that the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first use of "keepsake" to the 1790s, when it appeared in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) ("Personal Effects" 73).

Reeve (58), their presence here does establish a dissonance between the broad aesthetic canvas which rhetorically and thematically dominates *The Italian* – a text characterized by its sublime visions and picturesque views – and the novel's engagement with material minutiae.[53] The present chapter considers the ways in which Ellena's relation to and creation of material culture and, particularly, decorative art objects disrupt the gendered hierarchies implied by Edmund Burke's aesthetic categorizations of the sublime and the beautiful outlined in his influential 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and, moreover, help constitute a model working heroine who is at once a cultivated artist and a virtuous labourer.

Working in part from Barbara Claire Freeman's writings on "the feminine sublime" and Markus Poetzsch's theorizations of a "quotidian sublime,"[54] I suggest that it is at those points where the prosaic canvas tears that *The Italian* brings into focus, with "microscopic and telescopic perspective" (Poetzsch 15), something of the psychic and material content of Ellena's daily life as a young, unmarried Neapolitan woman and a financially independent working artist. Unlike any of Radcliffe's earlier

[53] Norton cites Reeve's indelicate descriptions of "new-laid eggs and rashers of bacon" alongside the woes of childbirth, breastfeeding, and "smallpox" (58; 10).

[54] Barbara Claire Freeman defines "the feminine sublime" as "a domain of experience that resists categorization, in which the subject enters into a relation with an otherness – social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic – that is excessive and unrepresentable"; for the subject, this experience is productive of "a crisis in relation to language and representation" (2). Freeman is careful to note that "the feminine" in her theorization signals an attempt to think of sublimity *outside* the "patriarchal" paradigm which "[subordinates] difference" and "[appropriates]" otherness (4). She appeals "not to a specifically feminine subjectivity or mode of expression, but rather to that which calls such categories into question" (9). Meanwhile, in his monograph *'Visionary Dreariness': Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime*, Markus Poetzsch reads the works of several Romantic writers, including Dorothy Wordsworth, John Clare, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in order to explore a "quotidian sublime" experienced in "the everyday, the ordinary, the familiar" – this "sublime of small familiar spaces and common natural objects" (3) is "productive of a sense of consolation, comfort, even community" and bears the potential "to nourish and repair the mind" via its "sensitivity to the wonders of everyday life" (15-16).

fiction, *The Italian* features a heroine who literalizes the Enlightenment philosophical tradition that aligns art and commerce with the cultivation of the modern civilized state. Like Agnes Fitzhenry, Laura Montreville, and Juliet Granville, Ellena Rosalba establishes her moral and financial autonomy through her engagement in remunerated labour, situating Radcliffe's last Gothic novel in dialogue with contemporary popular texts by women writers seeking to professionalize accomplishment as a means to forging a model of accomplished, industrious femininity in the Romantic period. Morally virtuous and gainfully skilled in her art, Ellena is an exemplary British citizen of the urban middle classes transplanted to mid-eighteenth-century Italy. In its treatment of Burkean aesthetics, *The Italian* thus reformulates generic conventions established throughout Radcliffe's Gothic oeuvre and represents a heroine who incarnates the ontological and lived interdependencies between aesthetic experience and commercial production – that is, between affect and object. Ellena, in fact, incarnates a continuity of transcendent experience[55] that partakes equally of the sublime and the beautiful via the affective, symbolic, and material economies of daily life. Tom Furniss has argued that Burke's categorizations of the sublime and beautiful rely not only on the opposition of masculine and feminine, but equally on those of labour and leisure, virtue and luxury, so that the sublime comes to function as "an

[55] I work from the understanding that "transcendent experience" refers to that subjective, psychic experience which "cannot be properly contained or reconciled" within human understanding (Poetzsch 2). However, the mode of transcendence I have in mind here does not solely ascribe to Burke's connections to the divine and "Almighty" God (Burke 48), but draws upon a "Coleridgean" reconciliation between the psychic and the sensual (Kant's *noumena* – the realm of ideas, the ideal – and *phenomena* – the realm of nature, the intelligible) through the powers of the imagination and artistic creation. Hence Ellena's encounters (pleasurable, threatening, and both) with the ineffable – the crises Freeman describes – emerge during those subjective moments at which "the seemingly external" world becomes an "aspect of [her] self-consciousness" via the creative, emotional, and intellectual powers exercised through her domestic arts and her broader aesthetic sensibilities. See also Vallins on Coleridge 2; 161-62.

indispensable trope" in constructing middle-class ideology and its virtuous (male) labouring subject in eighteenth-century Britain (30-31). In the *Enquiry*, Furniss postulates, "Burke seeks to create an image of the upwardly mobile man of ability (the 'self-made man') as an heroic and virtuous labourer whose sublime aspirations are quite different from the beautiful by debilitating luxury of the aristocracy (and of women)" (2). *The Italian* reframes this equation between sublimity and labour by redrawing Burke's aesthetic categories to imagine a virtuous female working subject who creates beauty.[56] Indeed, Ellena has no shame in her "poverty, or of the industry which [overcomes] it," and regards the latter as a form of morally improving self-exertion that does "honor to her character" and compensates for her low social caste (Radcliffe 13).

Various and personal (pencils, needles, the rooms of home), the creative, material instantiations of *The Italian*'s domestic economies afford the female subject psychic access to the otherwise ineffable – the divine, intellectual exultation, sexual tyranny, social abjection, profound human connection – above and beyond that which is delineated by the "powerful hegemonic sexual politics" of Burkean aesthetics (Mellor 108). This is what I call Ellena's *art vivant*: those moments and products of lived and sensuous subjective encounter or creation, practiced or improvised, at which "ethics and aesthetics, risk and art" converge and offer the conduit to a decidedly inclusive form of transcendence (Freeman 67).[57] Hinging upon what Anne

[56] Mascha Gemmeke suggests that, in *The Wanderer*, Frances Burney offers an alternative to Burke's self-made man with her working heroine, "who prefers sympathy to ambition but is an industrious labourer nevertheless" (244). I argue that the same can be said of Radcliffe's Ellena.

[57] My neologism adapts the term *objet d'art* (translated literally from the French as "art object") to capture the sense of "living art" – that is, those applications and representations of the human body (its physicality, dress, modes of expressions) that constitute works of lived art. Both Freeman and Hoeveler use the term *tableau vivant* in their literary criticism, Freeman to refer to the positioning of

Mellor, borrowing from Carol Gilligan, has termed an "ethic of care," this paradigm recognizes alterity, in contradistinction to the Burkean (and later Kantian and Wordsworthian) model which sees the mastery and eradication of difference. For Mellor, an ethic of care privileges cooperation and reciprocity over possession and self-empowerment, and advocates that "the values of domesticity" extend "into the public realm" as a means to social welfare (3). In this context, "an intensified emotional and moral participation in a human community" at once facilitates the psychosocial maturation of the individual and proves productive of sublime experience, what Mellor terms a "domesticated sublime" (105).

On this point, however, I wish to extend Mellor's observations and note that my conception of *art vivant* relies not only on an ethic of care, but incorporates core late-Enlightenment values of industry, independence, and democratic governance (Mellor 95; Kelly, *English Fiction* 43). This paradigm specifically emerges from the socio-historical contexts of late eighteenth-century Britain and the period in the 1780s and 90s that witnessed the concomitant expansion of the domestic market, the rise of popular interest in and consumption of the arts, and the peak of Radcliffe's publishing career (Brewer xxiv). John Barrell credits the democratization of "polite" interest in art and art theory during this period to discourses of civic humanism and an attendant ethos which celebrated public participation, urban sociability, and diversified industry as the core principles of civilized society (21-25). In a similar vein, *art vivant* centrally acknowledges the inherent value and necessity of the sexual, emotional,

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the adorned female body as public spectacle in the fiction of Edith Wharton (58), Hoeveler to describe Ellena in *The Italian*, and those "very revealing" moments when the heroine "enacts her feelings while she is being observed, seemingly . . . unaware of the fact that she is the spectacle of the text" (103). My conception of *art vivant* also elaborates upon these theorizations of spectacle.

intellectual, and physical labour of each individual within the operations of the market. Art and commerce, in this context, are not so much domesticated by the private realm, as Mellor would suggest, as they are embedded within the moral and psychosocial development of the modern gendered subject. Thus "beauty is something [Ellena] both has and makes" as *The Italian*'s Gothic heroine, preeminent artist, and nascent intellectual (Freeman 58). Her role as proprietor and creator of beauty brings her into a paradoxical position in which she "is always on the verge of producing the excess, speculation, and confusion that characterize Burke's sublime" – she is always at once the aesthetic object and the creative subject negotiating the transcendent (58).

Agency and aesthetics

In Radcliffe's novels, as Gary Kelly has observed, "the heroine's subjectivity is the central signifying and structural principle" and this "subjectivity is often stimulated by moral and aesthetic rather than moral and social causes" (*English Fiction* 51). Ellena's fine work as an embroiderer and illustrator, her skill as a lute player, her discerning eye for landscape and colour, and her own "touchingly beautiful" countenance and silent endurance (Radcliffe 10), all establish her as a young woman of polished aesthetic sensibilities, cultivated propriety, and appropriately feminine accomplishments. As Betty Rizzo summarizes, Ellena "has perfect taste, is an artist, and understands how to look at the landscape, abilities that may not seem all that unusual to us, but that in fact enlightenment ideology accredited only to traveled gentleman of education and leisure" ("Renegotiating the Gothic"

100). Ellena exemplifies the polished, modest feminine ideal and the civic humanist ideal of late eighteenth-century British middle-class culture in one social subject (Shapira 457). But she is also a working heroine who, like Opie's Agnes, Brunton's Laura, and Burney's Juliet, seeks moral and financial autonomy through self-exertion.

Critical reception, and most notably the work of Mellor, Miles, Norton, and Shapira, has certainly paid attention to the Burkean implications of Ellena's appreciation of the natural landscape, as well as her evident fluency in contemporary aesthetic theories. Scholarly precedent, however, has overlooked the place and function, both seemingly small and marginal, of Ellena's artistry in *The Italian*. So too, then, has Ellena's unique economic position as a Radcliffean heroine been largely overlooked: unlike Emilia and Julia in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), or Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ellena not only earns an income but understands herself as a woman of "industry," a lowly socioeconomic position which she deliberately conceals from "the world around her" (Radcliffe 13). Despite the exceptional presence of an artist heroine here in Radcliffe's oeuvre, reception of *The Italian* tends to read Ellena as a re-figuration of the stock Radcliffean heroine, favouring those hermeneutic approaches which deal in what Naomi Schor has termed "normative aesthetics," or that "anti-particularist" and, Schor asserts, misogynist aesthetic tradition emerging from the seminal philosophical writings of Joshua Reynolds, Kant, and Hegel (4-5).

In her foundational 1987 monograph *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine,* Schor argues that the Western philosophical tradition has long been wary of "the feminine detail," the minute, the particular, the hand-worked, across cultural

forms. For Schor, the idealist and empiricist philosophical traditions have jointly participated in the production and circulation of a cultural discourse that has variously and negatively coded the feminine detail as ornamental (excessive, effeminate) and prosy (domestic, banal). Although Burke's account of sublimity does encompass the wonders of the minute, the *Enquiry* identifies "difference" and variation (of colour or figure, for example) in the object of perception as fundamentally disruptive and "prejudicial to the idea of infinity" and uniformity (qtd. in Schor 18-19). What Burkean sublimity discounts, Schor concludes, is the detail's "uncanny tendency to introduce eye-catching differences within the mind-expanding spectacle of perfect uniformity and proportion" (19). Burke's rhetorical emphasis on the workings of the sublime therefore occludes the ontological interdependencies of what are, foundationally, sexually differentiated aesthetic categories, elevating the sublime as the preferred category of experience and analysis (Ferguson 44-45).

Since the early 1980s, scholarly discourse has relied upon the organizing dualisms of normative and, specifically, Burkean aesthetics in order to establish a fairly cohesive generic conception of the Radcliffean heroine. The dichotomous relationship between the sublime and the beautiful has, in fact, come to dominate scholarship on Radcliffe's work at the cost of the detail, that which transcends or vexes normative aesthetic experience. Many feminist and non-feminist readings of *The Italian*, even as they acknowledge Ellena's subjectivity, maintain Burkean categorizations, collapsing beauty and passivity when considering the heroine's aesthetic experiences and psychosocial development. Critics consistently arrive at the conclusion that Ellena's subjectivity is, above all else, defined by her self-effacement

and submission to patriarchal authority. The effect is to re-inscribe Ellena as a figure of Burkean "[beauty] in distress" (100). Thus Gary Kelly describes Ellena, as he does all Radcliffean heroines, as "a patient, not an agent" (*English Fiction* 52); Patricia Meyer Spacks considers her "compliant" and "docile" ("Female Orders of Narrative" 166); Robert Miles calls her "proudly submissive" "to the established social order" (159); and Diane Long Hoeveler regards her "[like] a child, . . . truly expected to be seen and not heard" (103). In *Equivocal Beings*, Claudia L. Johnson continues in this interpretive vein and considers Ellena "the most classically feminine of Radcliffe's heroines" and "a model of passive fortitude" (134). Johnson suggestively argues that,

> insofar as *The Italian* recuperates male authority, it cannot tell Ellena's story. Her behaviour, her subjectivity, and her suffering are peripheral. Cast as the object rather than the subject of *their* [fellow characters'] plots of harm and rescue, Ellena bears significance only for how other characters respond to her rather than for how or what she does herself. (134)

A suffering cipher, Ellena here functions as "a kind of passive receptacle for a certain unworking of the [male] self" (Hoem 53). For Johnson, Ellena's frustrating passivity repeatedly brings her to "ethical impasse" in the course of the novel (that is, again and again, Ellena is forced to chart her own ethical conduct in a fundamentally hostile social world). This impasse, Johnson notes, is only resolved upon Ellena's marriage to Vivaldi (134). April London revises Johnson's critical approach and argues that the experiences of Radcliffe's heroines, akin to those shared by many heroines in the eighteenth-century novel, serve time and again as the "vehicle[s] for testing the

possibilities of an individualist ethic" (25). But the agency tendered by this individualist ethic does not ultimately carry much weight, for London concludes that the "purposiveness and verity" of the Radcliffean heroine "are finally made subordinate" to the novel's "narrative function" (25).

Each of these interpretations relies upon two central, and I believe misguided assumptions: firstly, that Ellena's position as *The Italian*'s assailed heroine wholly aligns her with Burkean definitions of the beautiful; and, further, that Ellena's beauty situates her as the tractable object of masculine desire, limiting if not denying her subjectivity. That the aesthetic categories set out in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* rely upon a gendered hierarchy of judgement and experience, and that these categories model Burke's broader ideological investments in Britain's class-based values of political "conformity," "family love and loyalty, and family attachment to heritable property" (Zaw 128) are points made manifest in his treatise and have, moreover, been well-explicated in current scholarship, as well as during Burke's lifetime and most famously by Mary Wollstonecraft. Thus when Burke defines the beautiful as that "quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it" (83), he clearly aligns this aesthetic category with procreation and the feminine. The tender counterpart to the exalting terrors of the sublime, the beautiful is what Robert Jones describes as "an aesthetic of heterosexual excitement" (57), defined by the "smoothness," "softness," "smallness," and "appearance of *delicacy*, and even of fragility" of the object (Burke 105). For Jones, "[what] is most striking" in Burke's account of the beautiful "is the way in which the male observer's virility" and objectification of the female body "[become] central to

Burke's account of taste" (58). Yet to date, few scholars have questioned Ellena's objectification as something other than evidence of her vulnerability and victimhood. In *The Feminine Sublime,* Freeman identifies the limitations of this critical approach:

> Quite simply, critics often view the female protagonist as exclusively passive, as society's victims, or as an accomplice of the economy that excludes her . . . [A] too exclusive focus on women's victimization may lead us to misread the orders of discourse through which women exert agency, even as they confront its limits. (6)

Positioning her as the object acted upon by the tyrannies of a patriarchal class system, much recent scholarship overlooks the fact that, for Ellena, economic independence, personal agency, and self-expression come through an active engagement with art and, in particular, domestic arts such as needlework, sketching, painting, and music. Positioned within the established generic bounds of the passive Radcliffean heroine, Ellena's artistry and its feminine stitched details and elegant sketched lines easily read as mere amusement or distraction, the "gilding on the cage" of this heroine's domestic seclusion. In this line of argument, her artistry would simply seal her association with Burkean beauty and further testify to her fundamental passivity.

Making beauty: The art of female accomplishment

In a departure from critical tradition, I wish to draw attention to the specific, subtle, and material strategies that Ellena deploys in participating in the market and defining her subjectivity, despite her social marginality as an unmarried, (apparently)

orphaned, and friendless young woman of only moderate economic means.[58] Required here is a renovated understanding of transcendence that encompasses many forms of women's creative labour, paid and unpaid, "minor" (such as needlework and flower painting) and "major" (such as portrait painting), within the sphere of aesthetic experience. Marcia Pointon and Amanda Vickery have modelled such an approach in their scholarship examining the socio-historical trends and everyday material conditions which simultaneously positioned women as the producers, subjects, and objects of artistic representation in eighteenth-century Britain (Pointon 6). Pointon and Vickery note the intimate relationship between female accomplishment and the cultural and commercial milieux that sustained the demand for women's hand-worked goods (such as embroidered clothing) and for the arts and crafts supplies (textiles, needles, instruction books) that women used in their work. As I explore in my introduction, no mere distraction for idle hours, female accomplishment carried an "array of meanings" during this period, as Vickery emphasizes, signifying the cultivation of "submissive femininity" as much as the assertion of economic and artistic autonomy or the expression of affective bonds (99-102).

When Radcliffe's text pauses to inspect the material minutiae of Ellena's daily life, *The Italian* suggests that the formation and expression of the heroine's creative subjectivity take place within the operations of the modern free market. At the same time, Ellena's subjective interrelation with the world of art and commerce consistently facilitates her access to transcendent experience. To elaborate this claim,

[58] In his biography of Radcliffe, *Mistress of Udolpho,* Norton does speculate as to sources of *The Italian*'s "teasing autobiographical markers" and suggests that Radcliffe's experiences as "the daughter of a tradesman" might account for her sympathetic portrayal of Ellena and Bianchi's "strained" financial circumstances (44).

I offer an alternative to Anne Mellor's readings of a bifurcated negative/positive "Radcliffean sublime," which, Mellor proposes, "subverts the bourgeois domestic ideology of the late eighteenth century" via sublime representations of frightening patriarchal oppression (as, in *The Italian*, when Ellena's father/uncle Schedoni also becomes her would-be murderer); by contrast, the "alternative, more positive representation of the sublime" arises, for Mellor, from community, "individual integrity, self-esteem, and mutual respect" (such as that which Ellena finds among the benevolent nuns at Santa della Pietà) (94-96). My goal here is to demonstrate that, in Ellena, *The Italian* constructs a female subject who not only possesses the capacity to understand aesthetic categories, but who also struggles to reconcile the hegemonic sexual and socially normative politics of taste with her own lived experience, private desires, and gendered subjectivity.[59] Ellena's everyday material possession and creation of beauty is, in fact, productive of transcendent experience; her engagement with "the constituent elements" (Poetzsch 28) of life is something of a sentient and "dazzling" art in and of itself.[60] Thus Ellena's "adherence to the material" does not merely signal her ideological enactment of domesticated femininity, but rather facilitates her meaningful interaction with her psychic and social worlds. The Burkean dynamic between affect and object is thus modified, and aesthetic pleasure now appears as something arising as much from the perception of nature as from the satisfaction of creating and admiring the most familiar of objects. The result is that,

[59] I work from Burke's definition outlined in his "Introduction" to the 1759 edition of *A Philosophical Enquiry*: "I mean by the word Taste no more than that faculty, or those faculties of the mind which are affected with, or which form a judgment of the works of imagination and the elegant arts" (13).
[60] Cf. Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry*: "There are also many descriptions in the poets and orators which owe their sublimity to a richness and profusion of images, in which the mind is so dazzled as to make it impossible to attend to the exact coherence and agreement of the allusions, which we should require on every other occasion" (72).

contra those dominant late-century attitudes that "regarded women as unthinking and economically unproductive" (Pointon 5), *The Italian* represents a heroine who creates and occupies a vibrant and autonomous psychic world through her practices of decorative art-making.

This is an individuated world to which her fellow characters can claim limited access. Take, for example, Ellena's introduction in the opening lines of *The Italian*: "It was in the church of San Lorenzo at Naples, in the year 1758, that Vicentio di Vivaldi first saw Ellena Rosalba" (Radcliffe 9). Her "sweet" and "fine" voice and veiled figure immediately excite the "most painful curiosity" in Vivaldi and, with "his eyes" transfixed to "her person," Ellena enters the text as the "exquisite" object of Vivaldi's "rapt attention" and, soon, his "anxious" desire (9-11). But with the assistance of the novel's "authoritative and omniscient" narrator (Kelly, *English Fiction* 53), Ellena moves from object to subject, a young woman possessing her own worries and pleasures, within the space of a few paragraphs. Although the narrator sympathizes with Vivaldi's interest and lists all the "intelligence" he is able to learn of Ellena from various sources across Naples, the description is perfunctory: Ellena is "an orphan, living under the care of her aunt Signora Bianchi; . . . her family, which had never been illustrious, was decayed in fortune, and . . . her only dependence was upon this aunt" (Radcliffe 13). At this point, the narrator intervenes with the conjunctive "but" and demarcates the horizon of Vivaldi's knowledge:

> But he was ignorant of what was very true, though very secret, that she [Ellena] assisted to support this aged relative, whose sole property was the small estate on which they lived, and that she passed whole days in

> embroidering silks, which were disposed of to the nuns of a neighbouring convent, who sold them to the Neapolitan ladies, that visited their grate, at a very high advantage. (13)

Here the narrative voice demonstrates access to the inside knowledge and unique perspective required to locate Ellena within Neapolitan society in terms of the geographic ("the small estate," "neighbouring convent"); the economic ("assisted to support," "sole property," "sold . . . at a very high advantage"); and the material ("embroidering silks"). In this instance, Radcliffe's narrator shows herself to be, as Kelly has noted, "a model of the woman of the professional middle classes, a lady from the inside, not the outside" (*English Fiction* 54). She is the voice of accomplished British middle-class womanhood, familiar with the practicalities of financing household operations, the market value of decorative goods, and the centrality of amateur artistry within contemporaneous women's lives.

The Gothic heroine as professional artist

Ellena's practiced accomplishments and refined taste certainly make her a woman at home within the socioeconomic and material conditions of Radcliffe's own historical contexts in late-century Britain. When *The Italian* represents its heroine as both creator and paragon of beauty, this popular literary text joins contemporary discourses concerning material production, aesthetic valuation, and the economic enfranchisement of women. In this context, Ellena serves as *The Italian's* medium of generic innovation, extending the bounds of the Radcliffean Gothic in order to enter

social, civic, and commercial discourses. Radcliffe's text takes part in what Barrell, in his survey of eighteenth-century British literature, regards as "a progressive relaxation of the embarrassment at writing or reading about objects, occupations and people regarded at the start of the century as too 'low', 'minute' or mean to be worthy of literary attention" (21). He attributes this to the corresponding emergence of specialized and distinct "professional and occupational groups" in Britain (23-25). Working women do not appear in Barrell's account, but Griselda Pollock would surely add here that this same period also saw the construction of sexually differentiated professional "identities for the artist who was a man – the artist, and the artist who was a woman – the woman artist" (64). As I have outlined in the introduction, this period also saw the rise of the amateur arts among women of the middle- and upper-classes, projects that could, and for some women did, turn a small profit and supplement family income (Fennetaux 91-92). *The Italian*'s professionalization of Ellena's art thus effectively loosens the rigid discursive constructions that sought to delimit women as merely consumers of culture and muses to male creativity. In Radcliffe's novel, professionalization inflects virtuous femininity with creative autonomy and originality, and the Gothic heroine enters the field of art and commerce as mistress of her own work.

Admittedly, professional women artists were few in number during this period, limited in their opportunities to produce and exhibit: the challenge of "[balancing] artistic production with domestic duties" has, for example, "resulted in smaller bodies of works by women artists," notes Richard Sha; lack of available time meant that some women chose to work at their art during the

small hours so as to avoid accusations of domestic negligence (89). At home and at public exhibition, then, their work as *women* carried social, cultural, and economic significance, especially in regards to the "masculine" or "feminine" genres in which they chose to work (i.e., painting and sculpture as opposed to the decorative arts), and the "lofty" or "domestic" subjects they chose to paint ("common people," nobility, nature, family). Despite these constraints, Gen Doy argues, the late century augured an unprecedented "opening up of the free market" to women artists who, at least theoretically, had "an equal chance of selling their work and furthering their economic prospects" (187-88). But whether or not the possibility of commercial success became reality, practices of decorative art-making also dovetailed with domestic ideologies of female passivity and women's self-display on the marriage market. Bermingham identifies "harps and drawing paper" as key signifiers in the late-century construction of middle-class femininity, props in a "pantomime" of self-fashioning (3-7). From this perspective, Ellena's professional success on the urban Neapolitan market is remarkable, suggesting not the performance of self-commodification but the cultivation of economic and creative independence: not only does Ellena sell her fine work at high cost, but she also earns her living while working in the most feminine and minor of genres – embroidery and ornamental design.

Throughout, *The Italian*'s narrative investment in domestic virtue is counterpoised by such engagements with pecuniary necessity. The narrator's pointed observations regarding Ellena's honourable "indigence" as a working

woman, in particular, gesture toward the very real and very limited field of socially sanctioned employment options available to unmarried women in 1790s Britain. The text thus works to draw attention to the aesthetic and commercial value of women's artistic pursuits, positing the viability of the decorative arts as a field ripe for market expansion. Pointon has noted the growing "interface" which emerged between literary and visual representation and the world of art and commerce during the late eighteenth century. She cites the example of visual artist Mary Moser, whose flower paintings and interior design projects at Frogmore House offer a counterpart to the eighteenth-century fashion for floral prints and patterns in professionally and domestically produced textiles (133). Kim Sloan also discerns formal cross-pollination between Moser's work and contemporary amateur art forms: just as Moser found inspiration in the decorative patterns (flowers in baskets, vases, bouquets) and visual effects (such as *tromp l'oeil*) of embroidery work, Sloan observes, so did women sketch their own embroidery designs and paint their "undecorated china-in-the-white" after Moser's watercolours and canvasses (75). *The Italian* establishes a similar interface between Ellena's (and Radcliffe's) artistry and the "textile production, interior decoration, [and] ornament" of actual material culture (Pointon 133).

Radcliffe's decorated world

Although Radcliffe earned fame as a best-selling novelist, she was no stranger to female handicraft and the fashionable trends of her day: in fact, her rise to authorial fame in the last decades of the eighteenth century parallels the

ever-growing popularization and commercialization of the visual, literary, dramatic, and decorative arts in British culture (Brewer xxiii). Radcliffe received a broad (but not classical) education, most likely at home or at a girls' school in Bath, and was keeping a comfortable house for husband William Radcliffe by 1787 (Miles 22-23).[61] Nor did her birth as the daughter of a merchant remove her from the opulent material culture emerging in Britain during her lifetime. Her father, William Ward, worked as a London haberdasher during the 1760s and, after 1772, managed the Wedgwood and Bentley pottery showroom at Bath (Miles, "Radcliffe"). Business partner to Joseph Wedgwood and uncle to Ann Radcliffe, Thomas Bentley was an "expert in Greek and Etruscan art" (Miles 22), a Dissenter, and a shrewd merchant for "Wedgwood's china and famous vases" (Norton 24). Bentley helped care for his young niece at his home in Turnham Green, Chiswick, after Ward's haberdashery business went bankrupt in the early 1770s. It was at Bath and Turnham Green that Ann would have seen inside the operations of the Wedgwood and Bentley trade: Rictor Norton surmises that "during Ann Ward's first visits to her uncle . . . she would have been more aware of 'Vase madness' than most of her contemporaries" and "would have seen the originals" of their elegant pottery work "even before" public sale (35). Norton also describes Radcliffe's avid antiquarian pursuits during her adulthood, when, for example, she travelled with her husband around the Lake District and Yorkshire in 1796 and "took with her,

[61] Both Norton and Miles emphasize that there exists little biographical information on Radcliffe, and therefore the extent of her formal education can only be surmised from her correspondence to family and friends and, as Miles observes, an obituary from the *Annual Register* of 1824, which claims that Radcliffe attended Bath's Lee school for "young ladies" in the early 1780s (22-23).

or acquired" en route "a copy of Thomas West's *Antiquities of Furness* (1774)." Later, Radcliffe would acknowledge West's book as a source for some of the picturesque details of her fiction (119). In what must assuredly indicate a conflation of Radcliffe's mature love for late eighteenth-century aesthetics and childhood memories of her uncle's finely-worked pottery, Ann Radcliffe was particularly drawn to West's "historical details about Furness Abbey, near Lancaster, an archetype of romantic beauty" that featured as a destination for many travellers in search of the picturesque and a view of the Abbey's "ivy-clad walls" which also "graced a piece in Wedgwood & Bentley's Imperial Russian dinner service" (119).

These biographical details evince something of Radcliffe's personal and formative encounters with the world of art and commerce. Her connections with the Wedgwood family, in particular, situate her within a rising middle class well-attuned to the fiduciary, social, and aesthetic value ascribed to the creation and consumption of the decorative arts. Distinct among Radcliffe's novels, *The Italian* intimates the extent to which discourses of material design and production had saturated the popular literary imagination by 1796. Goethe may have dismissed Wedgwood china and "gaudy" British wares as testimony to the "burgeoning" bourgeoisification of taste and "perversion" of neoclassical design (Brewer xxiii), but Radcliffe's career invites a reconsideration of contemporaneous discourses concerning aesthetics and popular culture. Akin to Mary Moser's sought-after flower studies and Mary Linwood's publicly exhibited needle paintings, Radcliffe's oeuvre registers the intermediations

between artistic and commercial production through the most particular and ornamental of details.

The work of the heroine's hands

It comes as no surprise, then, that the narrator of *The Italian* shows herself fluent in "feminine" knowledge and domestic material culture, as well as familiar with the "masculine" domains of trade, skilled labour, and, Fennetaux would add, imperial expansion (103-04). Indeed, by invoking Ellena's "very secret" fancywork and small-scale business, *The Italian*'s narrator gestures towards a predominantly invisible community of domestic artists on behalf of whom she can speak (Radcliffe 13). With a subtle reference to embroidered silk, the narrator throws into relief the hidden economies and exploitative labour which sustain the excessive and, as the Marchesa di Vivaldi exemplifies, corrupt and idle material appetites of wealthy consumers – that is, those "Neapolitan ladies" and their households (13). Despite Vivaldi's immediacy to the fruits of Ellena's labour, which daily circulate on the Neapolitan market, he has

> little thought, that a beautiful robe, which he had often seen his mother wear, was worked by Ellena; nor that some copies from the antique, which ornamented the cabinet of the Vivaldi palace, were drawn by her hand. If he had known these circumstances, they would have only served to increase the tenderness, which, since they were proofs of a disparity of fortune, that would certainly render his family repugnant to a connection with hers, it would have been prudent to overcome. (13)

Disparity and repugnance: in the eyes of Naples's landed gentry, Ellena's material and genetic inheritances are similarly base and threatening to the entrenched power and pure blood of the aristocracy. The work of Ellena's hand secures her otherness.

Refigured on the Neapolitan market in this instance is the concurrent demand in Britain for professionally hand-worked garments. Clare Browne examines the socio-historical contexts which gave rise to this cottage industry in Britain, peopling her examination with the example of the affluent, educated, and accomplished Mary Delany, who stitched and most probably wore her own spectacularly embroidered floral silks to court in the 1740s. Citing evidence that Delany's finished court dress was likely pieced together by a professional seamstress, Browne draws attention to the proliferation of services offered by craftswomen to well-to-do clients at this time. For a fee, skilled seamstresses hemmed, embroidered, and constructed domestically crafted work in order to produce finished garments and garment pieces, such as formal dresses, waist coasts, stomachers, and cuffs. Browne challenges the perception that such labour was done anonymously, noting the intimate connections and "long associations" established between craftswomen and their clients, such as the friendship Delany maintained with her seamstress Phoebe Wright for more than forty years (74).

In light of Browne's research, Ellena's representation as a patently anonymous labourer does not merely present a foil to the decadence and moral corruption of the Marchesa, a woman who eschews the virtues of handiwork and a female-centred creative community. Ellena's anonymity within the market also helps maintain the integrity of her interior world and distance her from Vivaldi's over-determining gaze.

In a rhetorical technique which recurs throughout *The Italian*, the narrator pivots in the paragraphs following Vivaldi's initial observations of the heroine, and retells Ellena's young history while according her the subjectivity and humanity which the previous "intelligence" has occluded. The narrator reveals that Ellena "could have endured poverty, but not contempt: and it was to protect herself from this effect of the narrow prejudices of the world around her, that she had so cautiously concealed from it a knowledge of the industry, which did honor to her character" (Radcliffe 13). She is the ever-patient, affectionate, and "sole supporter of her aunt's declining years" by means of her domestic industry and conscious thrift but, unlike Opie's Agnes or Brunton's Laura, she cannot yet find "glory in the dignity of virtuous independence" (13-14). These are aspects of Ellena's subjectivity and experience that lie beyond Vivaldi's ken, and "[remain] hidden to all but the reader" for Ellena "must conceal from others her real feelings and her real self, in order to preserve them" (Kelly, *English Fiction* 52). By carefully examining the daily life behind Ellena's art – the physical discomfort, for example, of passing whole days at delicate needlework, or the psychological anxiety of caring for an aged relative on a minimal income, or the minute splendour that surely must earn her embroidery such high value – we witness the heroine become an agent in this narrative and not simply the object of masculine desire.

Moreover, Ellena herself now wields the gaze, occupying the position as bearer and creator of beauty: in a striking parallel to the first line of the novel, the narrator summarizes that, "in the silent performance of her duties and in the veil of retirement, lived Ellena Rosalba, when she first saw Vicentio di Vivaldi. He was not of a figure

to pass unobserved when seen, and Ellena had been struck by . . . his countenance" (Radcliffe 14). Despite her interest in Vivaldi, Ellena ensures that she remains "cautious of admitting a sentiment more tender than admiration" and so "[endeavours] to dismiss his image from her mind by engaging in her usual occupations, to recover the state of tranquility, which his appearance had somewhat interrupted" (14). At this point, however, nose to her needlework, in the silence of her duties, Ellena's mind entertains thoughts formerly forbidden and confronts anxieties formerly repressed. The narrator informs us that Ellena has so far succeeded in evading the advances of men, and has "uniformly rejected every admirer who had hitherto discovered her within the shade of her retirement" (45). But following the lovers' first exchange of desiring looks, Ellena must now contemplate that which is entailed by her object/subject position: she must entertain the prospect of marriage and the possibility of erotic desire. She must consider her future economic viability as an unmarried woman and, further, the socioeconomic value of her labour as well as of her person. When the psychological weight of these reflections leads her to distraction, Ellena turns to that occupation which she knows will restore her sense of self-sufficiency and autonomous self-expression. Her art enables her not only to dismiss the image of Vivaldi, but to also dismiss the pleasurably apprehensive speculations about what Vivaldi might signify: is he her potential lover, husband, and provider? In this instance, her relation to beauty is as much disconcerting as it is tranquilizing; these domestic occupations afford a moment of transcendence in which Ellena is at once able to encounter profound psychological fears and yet entertain

desire, to speculate upon her own gendered otherness and yet return to the refuge afforded by her labour.

Several similar encounters between Vivaldi and Ellena's material absent presence intimate a fundamental break between Vivaldi's romantic, chivalric ideal of his beloved and the socioeconomic realities and psychic content of Ellena's existence. I think particularly of Vivaldi's uninvited visit to Villa Altieri in chapter 2, when he is "conducted into the very apartment where he had formerly seen Ellena" on a recent visit (30). While he awaits the arrival of Signora Bianchi, his eyes roam over the room, and he becomes "agitated at one moment with quick impatience, and at another with enthusiastic pleasure, while he gazed at the altar where he had seen Ellena rise, and where, to his fancy, she still appeared, and on every object, on which he knew her eyes had lately dwelt" (30). His unchecked sensibilities work upon "[these] objects so familiar to [Ellena]" and, with his "imagination," Vivaldi imbues them with "the sacred character she had impressed upon his heart" so that he is affected "as her presence would have done" (30-31). In something of a procedural fetishization of Ellena's body, Vivaldi goes through her intimate effects, figuratively intruding upon her autonomy and rendering the woman and her powers of creativity into a "fascinat[ing]" and "embellished" catalogue of objects: he "trembles" as he takes "up the lute" she is "accustomed to touch" and "[awakens] the chords" to hear "her own voice"; he studies one of Ellena's "drawings, half-finished, of a dancing nymph" and believes it "touched with the spirit of original genius"; the lines of Ellena's pencil "[appear] almost to move" before him, an eerie, vivid trace of the artist. In short, the narrator concludes, "Every object on which his eyes rested, seemed to announce the

presence of Ellena" (31), despite her deliberate absence and the efforts made by her aunt to shield Ellena from Vivaldi's suit, recalling Hargrave and De Courcy's intrusions upon Laura's studio space in *Self-Control*. The heroine occupies this scene as the diffuse and spectral figuration of Vivaldi's "senses" and "imagination" (31), and the substitutional equivalent of the art objects adorning her domestic space.

Whereas Vivaldi, like Hargrave and De Courcy, overdetermines these objects with erotic significance, Ellena again comes to occupy that liminal position between viewed and viewer: when Ellena's lute rests on her lap, its practice requiring but not necessarily retaining her attention, the instrument acts as the material mediator to an imaginative space of mental refuge and reflection in which Ellena can encounter the chatter of her own thoughts, dissociated from the intrusion, if not the figurative violation, of Vivaldi's look. The narrator establishes this dynamic in paired tableaux in chapters 1 and 2. Twice is the unaware Ellena observed through her window by Vivaldi: on the first occasion, he "[wanders] over the garden" at Villa Altieri to gaze at Ellena while she "[holds her] lute, but no longer [awakens] it, and [seems] lost for a moment, to every surrounding object" (16). Her figure is "not even partially concealed by a veil" and Vivaldi delights in the access he has gained to this most private moment of devotion and reverie, for she is "performing the midnight hymn to the Virgin" and preparing for sleep (16). On the second occasion, Vivaldi again waits in the garden "orange tree" to see Ellena "alone, sitting in a thoughtful attitude and holding her lute, which she did not play. She appeared lost to a consciousness of surrounding objects, and a tenderness was on her countenance, which seemed to tell him that her thoughts were engaged by some interesting subject" (34). Complete

access to these "interesting subjects" is denied to the hero, although Ellena's subsequent speech does intimate at least some of what she has been thinking: "Why this unreasonable pride of birth!" she privately exclaims, decrying the "prejudice" of the Vivaldi household, "a family averse to receive" her as their son's bride. But Ellena resolves at the end of her speech that, "they shall learn, at least, that I inherit nobility of soul" (34). Juxtaposing the silent, objectifying gaze of the hero with the suggestive signifiers of the heroine's interiority, these tableaux signal that there are aspects of Ellena's consciousness to which Vivaldi cannot, and perhaps should not, have access, for these moments of suspended consciousness permit Ellena the mental refuge and formative introspection required in order to protect her "nobility of soul."

Anne Chandler, considering Ellena's manifest powers of perception, describes Radcliffe's heroine as embodying an "attitude somewhere between that of an artist surveying her own work, and that of a tasteful viewer savouring the illusion of ownership" of that work. This is a dynamic of "creation and perception," an "exchange" for Chandler (149). I would emphasize the centrality of Ellena's creative subjectivity – the particularity of her artistic vision – within this exchange. By regulating narrative access to the heroine's interior world, *The Italian* accords Ellena a degree of subjective autonomy denied to the heroines of Radcliffe's preceding novels. This autonomy directly emerges from Ellena's self-erudition and self-discipline as a working artist. Radcliffe's earlier *A Sicilian Romance*, *The Romance of the Forest*, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* each presents a heroine educated by a benign parental figure in the tradition of Rousseau's Sophie: pious, submissive, chaste, and accomplished, these young women are tutored from childhood to nurture

the domestic virtues required of them as the model wives, mothers, and citizens of free, civilized society. *Udolpho*'s Emily St Aubert, for example, is educated by her father

> with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets . . . 'A well-informed mind,' [her father] would say, 'is the best security against the contagion of folly and of vice.' (9)

As the orphaned caretaker of Bianchi, Ellena, however, is charged in her youth with financial and emotional responsibilities unknown to her Radcliffean precursors; her marginal social position necessitates the cultivation of a high degree of self-awareness, at times strategic social detachment, less to avoid "folly and vice" than to secure creative and fiduciary independence. In this sense, Ellena's dual position as both autonomous creative subject and beautiful Gothic heroine can be compared to the woman artist speculating upon her own dual position as the subject and object of her own self-portrait. Doy points to the high prevalence of self-portraiture among professional women painters active during the 1790s, and argues that this medium of self-representation worked "to demonstrate the validity of being a woman and an artist" within commercial society (192-93). The late eighteenth-century self-portraits of painters Adélaïde Labille-Guiard's (for example, her *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils*, 1785) and Angelica Kauffman (for instance, her *Self Portrait: The Artist Hesitating Between the Arts of Music and Painting*, 1791) provide salient examples. In both Labille-Guiard and Kauffman's work, the image of the woman artist is offered not

simply as a beautiful testament to the skill of her own brush; like Ellena, she is also "the person selling her skills to make money" (Doy 199). Parallels exist here, too, with Delany's masterly creation and public exhibition of her own court dress, a material testament to the beauty and taste of the wearer as much as to her skill as its creator (Browne 74). In a description befitting Radcliffe's heroine, Jacqueline Labbe writes that Delany's expressions of "extreme femininity" (such as her court dress) paired with her assertions of "self-government" make her at once typical and anomalous for her times, an argument I examine further in my chapter on *The Wanderer* (169). These examples function as visual, material, and biographical intertexts to Radcliffe's novel, each foregrounding the woman artist as both the representer and the represented object of beauty. As a cultural palimpsest, *The Italian* affirms that women artists – novelists, painters, embroiderers, or seamstresses – not only have the skill and creative vision to contribute to civil society, but that they also stand to become enriched – financially, socially, psychically, experientially – in the process. This is the *art vivant* that *The Italian* incarnates through Ellena: the art that breathes the life of its marginalized subject, the art that turns the objectified other into the subject of transcendent experience.

The last extended treatment of Ellena's honourable "industry" and her "many elegant and ingenious arts" comes near the conclusion of Radcliffe's text, after the heroine has been kidnapped from her home, faced imprisonment and death, and been plunged, alone, into a threatening, destabilizing world of patriarchal control in which she has had no promise of monetary security nor any claim to independence (Radcliffe 442). Interestingly, the narrator reflects upon the history of Ellena's

"independence" only once she has been safely restored to her parent, Olivia, and all but reunited with Vivaldi; only then, when the heroine's happiness and security again seem plausible, are the full extent and profitability of Ellena's artistic skills with "pencil and needle" disclosed. The narrator recounts that, in her later years, Bianchi had

> resigned much of the employment and profit to her niece, whose genius having unfolded itself, the beauty of her designs and the elegance of her execution, both in drawings and embroidery, were so highly valued by the purchasers at the grate of the convent, that Bianchi committed to Ellena altogether the exercise of her art. (442)

The idealized female communities represented by Bianchi at Villa Altieri, by the nuns at Santa della Pietà, and, briefly, by Olivia, feature examples of virtuous, creative, single women after whom Ellena can model herself. But in the Radcliffean Gothic tradition, the heroine's social and personal maturation depend upon wisdom gained during her induction into a patriarchal regime, and its rituals and institutions. During the course of the narrative, from courtship to abduction to marriage, Ellena has observed the masculinist ethic of the market at work, and has learned the value of obligation to benevolent patriarchal authority, or what Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace terms "new-style patriarchy." For Kowaleski-Wallace, this form of "enlightened" patriarchal rule "appeal[s] to reason, cooperation between the sexes, and noncoercive exercise of authority" and does not "[operate] according to the fear of punishment or injury but according to the more psychologically compelling themes of guilt and obligation" (110). Terms of "obligation" and "gratitude," Gillian Skinner writes, are

"bound up with society's unequal distribution of wealth," and, as Ellena "acquire[s] a knowledge of [herself]" (Radcliffe 80) so too does she acquire a requisite knowledge of the fundamental gendered inequalities of her society.

When Ellena is displaced from home and the transcendent respite afforded by her material labour, she is effectively segregated from the domestic economy in which she previously earned her livelihood and sought emotional sustenance. Anxious and alone, facing the emotional demands of her lover and the physical intimidation of her "father"/uncle, Ellena addresses patriarchs Vivaldi and Schedoni using the language of the familial economy: her parallel professions of "gratitude" to these two men signal an appeal to a broader ethic of care and affective reciprocity. But to Vivaldi, "gratitude"' means only "unnecessary reservation" (178), and to Schedoni, Ellena's "thanks" are, appropriately, "daggers" (286-87). From the latter in particular, Ellena learns the petty value of her life: "who is there that would think it worth taking?", mocks Schedoni as he prepares to murder her. "Poor insect!" he adds, "who would crush thee?" (257). That Schdeoni rhetorically reduces Ellena to an insect speaks to the capital invisibility and triviality of her art in a society looking to exploit the anonymity of her labour. The fine stitches of her embroidery, delicate lines of her drawings, and sweet songs of her lute have no tangible value to Schedoni and the blind self-interest and institutionally sanctioned corruption which he represents; and for the Marchesa di Vivaldi, ownership of Ellena's ornamental work merely signifies the privilege of conspicuous consumption. Like Arachne, a common mortal celebrated for her weaving "so light, so swift, so all at ease" (*The Metamorphoses* 6.27), Ellena threatens the supremacy of a hierarchical and

predominantly villainous order by the work of her hand; like Arachne, so too is her punishment the curse of transformation. Ellena's experience demonstrates that in order to negotiate the transformative and often coercive forces of patriarchy, the female-gendered subject must maintain several coextensive subjectivities. She must adhere to a socially and ideologically constituted self (as wife, mother, daughter) while always working to maintain the integrity and autonomy of her creative self.

The Italian's final chapter illustrates this dynamic in a parallel albeit rather more propitious scene of transformation for the heroine. In marriage to Vivaldi, *The Italian*'s exemplar "new-style" patriarch, Ellena finds herself restored to a realm of artistic expression and aesthetic pleasure. At their "chief residence," Ellena and Vivaldi preside over "a scene of fairy-land" as elegant as it is inclusive; here the enlightened and socially-egalitarian couple welcomes "all the tenants of the domain" to share in their material abundance (475-76):

> The villa itself, where each airy hall and arcade was resplendent with lights, and lavishly decorated with flowers and the most beautiful shrubs, whose buds seemed to pour all Arabia's perfumes on the air – this villa resembled a fabric called up by enchantment, rather than a structure of human art. (476)

Of this scenery, Ellena is, "in every respect, the queen" (476). She is at once the reigning beauty and the queen of taste, for she wields both the aesthetic sensibility and, now, the economic privilege to decorate lavishly, her home a self-styled palace. True, this romantic union does not furnish the idealized female-centric creative space to which Ellena had recourse as a working artist within the confines of her own home

or in the sanctuary of Santa della Pietà. Rather, the novel's summative tableau tenders the marital home as the site of economic and aesthetic union, the seat of late-Enlightenment liberalism *par excellence*. The "enchantment" of this scene affirms Ellena's uneasy but necessary social induction in a system of benevolent patriarchal rule, the word in this instance carrying the double valence of "bewitchment" (as in the effect of a delusive charm) and "magical transformation" (from indigent to queen).

As the narrator pulls away from the minutiae of Ellena's daily existence, the intimacy of her domestic labour takes its place as one constitutive element within the external operations of market and state. The heroine ultimately dwells, then, in contiguous but distinct worlds – that of the socially and ideologically cohered self and that of the individuated creative self. Set against the socioeconomic realities lived by real women in 1790s Britain, Ellena's fantastic ability to ultimately transcend class boundaries and dwell in a world of lavish artifice might simply be read as an endorsement of (earned and inherited) privilege and a "false claim to individual distinction" (Ferguson 5). But we need only look to the particulars of Ellena's everyday life to perceive an alternative signifying space come into focus: here, *The Italian* envisions a market in which women occupy various, productive, and morally virtuous socioeconomic roles exceeding the strictly domestic and procreative. In the process, Radcliffe's novel establishes a theory of aesthetic experience in which sublimity and beauty present as mutually embedded and non-hierarchical categories; transcendence, in turn, is democratized. *The Italian* offers Ellena as a model young woman negotiating the pleasures and anxieties of daily life through the powers of her own (commercialized) creativity: her *art vivant* affords the signifying space through

which *The Italian* frames its disruptive engagements with ethics and aesthetics, gender and capital, Burke and beauty.

Chapter 4

"Endowed with every power to set prejudice at defiance":

The Wanderer's Accomplished Sentimental Heroine in the Post-Revolutionary Period

> I think the public has its full right to criticise –& never have had the folly & vanity to set my heart upon escaping its late severity, while reminiscence keeps alive its early indulgence. But if, when all the effect of false expectation is over, in about 5 years, the work has ONLY criticism, – then, indeed, I shall be lessened in my own fallen fallen fallen hopes – fed, now, not by any general conceit, but an opinion That – if the others were worthy of good opinion, THIS, when read fresh, & free from local circumstances of a mischievous tendency, will by no means be found lowest in the scale.
>
> - Frances Burney to Charles Burney, 25 October 1814, reflecting on the reception of *The Wanderer* (*Journals and Letters* 7: 484).

Frances Burney's (1752-1840) fourth and final novel, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814) has long been received by critics as Burney's most disappointing work: commonly deemed "belated" (Johnson 167), "a failure" (Copeland 34), and overly long,[62] the novel has most often been cited as "evidence of literary decline" in Burney's later years, as Rose Marie Cutting observes (58). Two centuries of such reception, punctuated by unflattering comparisons to the celebrated novelist's *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782), and *Camilla* (1796), and compounded by the fact that *The Wanderer* remained out of print until the 1988 Pandora Press reissue, has produced what Margaret Anne Doody identifies as the "rather hazy impression that *The Wanderer* was a failure from the outset" (332). In fact, as Doody emphasizes, the first edition of *The Wanderer* sold out in advance of publication and

[62] *The Wanderer* was published in five volumes by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown in March 1814.

a second edition shortly followed, resulting in the sale of 3,500 copies by mid-1814, a reflection of Burney's momentous reputation and enduring popularity with British readers in the early nineteenth century (332).[63] In the span of only a few months, however, a series of excoriating periodical reviews killed sales of *The Wanderer*, launching a campaign of complaint over the novel's Gallicisms and perceived sympathies for the Bonaparte regime, its substantial length, its ambiguous revolutionary feminist character Elinor Joddrel and, in particular, what many considered the trivial, tedious sufferings of its heroine, Juliet Granville[64]: "The difficulties in which she [Burney] involves her heroines are indeed 'Female Difficulties,'" William Hazlitt opines in February 1815 in his notorious attack on *The Wanderer* in *The Edinburgh Review*, "– they are difficulties created out of nothing" (337).

Burney's extraordinarily accomplished and virtuous heroine has remained a key point of contention for more recent critics who have set out to recuperate Burney's oeuvre in the last thirty years. Juliet's "conduct-book perfection," suggested by her unassailable comportment and ever-unfolding repertoire of female

[63] Investing in Burney's reputation as a novelist and trusting in the author's conviction in the quality of her own work, both Burney and her publishers at Longman were moreover confident that demand for the novel would be high (Thaddeus, *Frances Burney* 153). Burney negotiated with Longman for earnings of £3000 from *The Wanderer*, to be paid out in various amounts over an anticipated six editions of the novel. Thaddeus notes that according to the terms of agreement with Longman, Burney "believed that it [*The Wanderer*] would sell 8000 copies, a huge and unusual number" (*Frances Burney* n. 7, 248).

[64] Burney's heroine is, of course, referred to by several different names by both the narrator and her fellow characters in the course of the narrative: in the initial sections of the novel, the narrator introduces her as "the Incognita" and "the stranger" while other characters tend to refer to her using a series of degrading epithets ("adventurer," "swindler," "body" etc.). In the middle sections of the novel, she is named "Ellis" and "Miss Ellis" by those around her, and in the latter sections, the narrator calls her "Juliet" while her fellow characters, still ignorant of her birth name, continue to employ "Ellis" and "Miss Ellis." For the sake of clarity in the present chapter, I refer to the heroine throughout as Juliet Granville, what is ultimately revealed to be her rightful given name and what the narrator, at the midway point of the novel, formally adopts as her heroine's "true" name when she clarifies for readers that "the borrowed name of Ellis will now be dropt" (Burney 389).

accomplishments, combined with her multiple disguises and unyielding silence, make her an unsympathetic and illegible heroine for many readers, "a composition," in the words of her fellow character and ostensible double Elinor Joddrel, "of ice, of snow, of marble" (Burney 475).[65] Literary critics seeking, in particular, to situate *The Wanderer* in the context of feminist assessments of Burney's novels have tended to read Juliet as the domestic woman incarnate, a heroine whose modesty, gentility, and perceived desire for patriarchal protection embody *The Wanderer*'s ideological project as a work of domestic fiction and, more broadly, affirm Burney's conservative politics as a novelist. Comparing four canonical novels of 1814 – *Waverley*, *Mansfield Park*, *Patronage*, and *The Wanderer* – Elaine Bander, for example, observes that each features variations on the convention of the accomplished heroine whose "musical performance" can "transfix the hero, and . . . [whose] modest refusal to participate in a theatrical performance" can "enflame his respect" (117).[66] Bander argues that whereas Scott and Edgeworth "slightly undermine" this convention and Austen "challenges" it outright, Burney "employs the convention uncritically" in *The Wanderer*, creating "an old-fashioned heroine" whose talents and modesty demonstrate "her sensibility and virtue" and affirm her position as an exemplar of recessive femininity (117-20).

Bander typifies a critical approach in Burney scholarship that reads Juliet as a largely uncritical transcription of conduct-book femininity within the generic

[65] Even early in their acquaintance, Elinor describes Juliet as "a compound of cold caution, and selfish prudence" (181). Later, Ireton similarly concedes that while Juliet is "Devilish handsome" she is "too – too – grave, – grim," for his taste (510).

[66] This is the convention that Scott parodies and ascribes to the generic category of "a 'Sentimental Tale'" in his "Introductory" to *Waverley* (1814) (8). Bander avers that Scott's "description of a harp-strumming heroine" in the preface to *Waverley* "could be read uncharitably as a burlesque of *The Wanderer*" (117).

conventions of the domestic romance. While almost all readers of *The Wanderer* acknowledge Juliet's complexity as a heroine, the prevailing tendency is to interpret her accomplishments as signifiers of ideal domestic womanhood as theorized by Armstrong and Poovey. In this line of interpretation, the heroine's creative talents supply evidence of Burney's ideological investment in domestic fiction and its narrative enclosure of the heroine from public, economic life through the courtship and marriage plot. As Darryl Jones summarizes, Juliet, like all of Burney's heroines, is "invariably passive, static, silent – the very type of the 'proper lady' identified by Mary Poovey" (7). Assuming polarity between the "leisured" private sphere and the economically productive public sphere, many scholars, moreover, describe *The Wanderer* as the narrative of the genteel heroine's "fall" into labour. In this vein, Juliet's aristocratic cultivation is perceived as fundamentally inimical to her pursuit of "self-dependence," the novel's byword for moral and financial autonomy, through remunerated work. James Thompson, for instance, refers to the novel as "a kind of aristocratic nightmare" in which "the protagonist is forced to earn a living by her own labor" (169). Only through marriage, Thompson argues, can Juliet be restored to the private sphere, her proper domain as domestic ornament (179).

This chapter offers a reassessment of *The Wanderer*'s cosmopolitan, creative heroine by reframing her accomplishment as a central component in the novel's broader valorization of female creativity and its role in constituting subjectivity and redefining narratives of nation. In *The Wanderer*, the heroine's practices of art-making are linked to her public role as a creative visionary who wields both the influence and perspective to scrutinize and reimagine the British nation in face of the

enduring divisions emerging from the French Revolutionary period. Reflecting on what Burney, in the preface, describes as "the stupendous inequity and cruelty" of that period (6), *The Wanderer* repurposes the convention of the accomplished sentimental heroine in order to imagine an exemplary cross-cultural agent whose creative energies exert the power to reveal the moral and economic failings of the British nation, to regenerate its values of liberty and self-dependence, and to nurture Anglo-French sympathies in the early nineteenth century.

Adriana Craciun includes Burney in a group of predominantly middle-class Romantic-era women writers, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, and Amelia Opie, who "cultivated a radicalized cosmopolitanism through their engagement with French revolutionary politics" in the 1790s, as well as throughout the Napoleonic period (1-2). For Craciun, these writers' specifically "Francophilic cosmopolitanism" represents a gendered response to revolutionary politics, and a "deliberately oppositional strategy" to national "prejudice" through a call to transnational sympathy (3-6).[67] When I read Burney's heroine as the novel's agent of cross-cultural reconciliation, I see her as embodying the Francophilic cosmopolitanism that Craciun describes. Although *The Wanderer* concludes with Juliet's repatriation on British shores, Burney's exiled heroine nonetheless incarnates an appeal to cross-cultural understanding through universal benevolence. In Juliet, Burney revises the ideal of recessive conduct-book femininity by fashioning a female subject who asserts her own moral and financial autonomy while cultivating public

[67] Craciun, moreover, suggests that cosmopolitanism "can serve as a productive axis around which to reconsider the ideological and aesthetic innovations that these writers introduced" in Romantic literature, and she proposes reading their work along "a continuum of cosmopolitan through loyalist allegiances" in order "to reassess women writers' participation in debates that transcended national borders" (6).

sympathy through quintessentially feminized forms of creative self-exertion. The "most active of all Burney's heroines, the most energetic and self-sustaining, and the most lonely" (Doody 323), Juliet Granville is the agent of change who underpins *The Wanderer*'s broader aims to reconcile British and French and to affirm the importance of women's participation in both artistic and economic life.

My reassessment of Burney's heroine specifically focuses on the connections between Juliet's itinerancy and her talents as an accomplished heroine. Homeless and cultivated, British and French, genteel and impoverished, married and alone, the heroine embodies a series of contradictions that disrupt characters' entrenched assumptions surrounding culture, gender, and class, and challenge received definitions of domestic, leisured femininity and its locality in the home. I argue that *The Wanderer* represents the seemingly antithetical activities of art-making and exilic wandering as, in fact, contiguous creative and constitutive activities that provide the heroine with fleeting (if powerful) outlets for self-expression and agency amidst great trial, much of which is "determined by historical events and conditions to which she may respond, even energetically, but over which she has no control" (Doody 319). Juliet's itinerancy and art-making similarly offer a degree of agency and influence in the face of social and economic exclusion and sexual persecution. Both, moreover, grant her the physical and (downward) social mobility required to see the injustice and inequity that others cannot, or will not, recognize in British society: xenophobia, social pettiness, the exploitation of the labouring classes, and the limited education and economic opportunities available to women across class lines.

When Juliet turns her accomplishments to economic gain as a solitary, displaced woman, *The Wanderer* transposes private, ornamental activity into public, economic life, thus demanding a redefinition of ideal femininity by detaching it from the separate sphere and the stasis of home. In this vein, Pam Perkins has argued that *The Wanderer*'s exiled heroine reveals "the unworkable fiction" of the domestic woman and her hypothetical relegation to an economically unproductive, apolitical separate sphere (74). I would add that the novel interlaces the heroine's art-making and itinerancy in order to elaborate an exemplary female subject whose actions and identity transcend the categories of public and private, foreign and home, and "whose precarious and even tragic wanderings evoke her creative powers" while serving to expose the prejudices of the community she enters (Anderson 424). I argue that Juliet's wandering, creative labour represents the means through which she begins not only to define herself in relation to the British nation, but also to create physical as well as psychic space for herself in its landscape, introducing alternative perspectives on its stagnant social world. Burney's heroine, that is, redraws the social, economic, and physical cartographies of the British nation through her itinerant creativity, represented as a regenerative, disruptive process that embodies and spatializes her roles as an outsider and a reforming voice. In this way, *The Wanderer* repurposes the convention of the accomplished sentimental heroine as the lynchpin in its dual project of social criticism and cultural reconciliation and, in turn, reframes the narrative trajectory of the domestic romance as the exiled artist heroine's search for self-dependence and public influence on British shores.

Patterns for reconciliation: Genre and the work of the artist heroine

In the lengthy preface to *The Wanderer*, dedicated "To Doctor Burney," Frances Burney reflects upon the writing of her fourth novel, entwining the history of its composition with her biography as an Englishwoman and the wife of a French citizen living in Napoleonic France in the first decade of the nineteenth century.[68] She presents her novel as specifically emerging from her experience of exile in France, an existence that she suggests has been both disruptive and informative for her craft: "I had planned and begun it before the end of the last century!" Burney writes in 1814, referring to the plans for the novel that she began to draft in the 1790s (4). The death of her beloved sister Susannah in January 1800, however, "cast it [the manuscript] from my thoughts, and even from my powers, for many years," and only after moving to France in 1802 with her husband and their son did Burney "ultimately, though only at odd intervals, . . . [sketch] the whole work; which, in the year 1812, accompanied me back to my native land" (4).[69] In the preface, Burney repeatedly invokes her

[68] Many critics of *The Wanderer* argue that the preface demonstrates "how intimately" Burney linked the novel's composition to "her own history" (Doody 313), variously reading the text as a statement of creative self-justification (Doody, "Missing *Les Muses*" 116), "a tribute of filial love" (Lynch 59), and an appeal for "reconciliation with her readers, including chief among these her father" (Cook 209). Janice Farrar Thaddeus, for one, provocatively argues that Burney "abases herself before her father" in the preface and "defines the novel in terms that would please him as well as herself" (*Frances Burney* 157). While a good deal of criticism has explored Charles Burney's immense influence on his daughter and, specifically, her self-conception as a writer (see especially Doody in *Frances Burney*, Spacks, and Gonda), I am interested in the way in which Burney's preface ascribes generic characteristics to the novel as a device of cross-cultural mediation and moral didacticism.

[69] Burney and her husband, Alexandre D'Arblay (1754-1818), as well as their son, Alex (1794-1837), lived in France for ten years, between 1802 and 1812. Burney followed her husband to France in 1802, during a brief period of peace, when he began trying to recover his confiscated estates and his commission in the French military. D'Arblay subsequently secured employment in the civil service and the family remained abroad until 1812, when Burney and Alex gained permission to depart France, apparently bound for the United States. In fact, they returned to Britain in a blockade-running ship, arriving at Deal on 15 August 1812 (Doody 313-17; Thaddeus, *Frances Burney* 151-57). In September 1811, while still living abroad, Burney had undergone a mastectomy without anesthetic, an event she famously describes in an 1812 letter to her sister Esther. Thaddeus emphasizes the chronic pain in which Burney wrote *The Wanderer*, plagued by discomfort in her right arm and breast (*Frances*

positionality as a novelist with affinities to two nations, an observer who has been privileged with particular cross-cultural perspective and insight from a "long residence abroad" which has inevitably "tinted . . . [her] pen" (10). Indeed, the reviewer in *The British Critic,* echoing a strain in the critical reception of *The Wanderer*, suggests that Burney's "long residence" abroad has influenced her abilities as a writer, corrupting "the common elegancies of her native tongue" (376) with a form of "tasteless diglossia" (Salih, "Altering Alterity" 309): "throughout her preface," this reviewer continues, Burney appears "to have indulged her impartiality between the rival nations, by adopting a phraseology which is neither French or English, but uniting the bombast of one with the awkwardness of the other" (376).[70]

Doody attributes Burney's French sympathies in *The Wanderer* in part to the novelist's dual heritage through her French-speaking Catholic maternal grandmother, Esther Sleepe: her "affection for her grandmother," Doody posits, was Burney's "first unconscious lesson against bigotry, intolerance, and snobbishness," and *Evelina* and *The Wanderer*, in particular, "exhibit her interest in exploring multiple heritages" (23). Burney's "eventual marriage to a Roman Catholic Frenchman," Doody continues, "was not an anomaly" because she was affirming "one aspect of her own identity, collecting one part of her inheritance. She had learned from her childhood to associate dignity, virtue, and the power of loving with a French Roman Catholic" and in the face of British Francophobia (23). Consciously speaking from this position "on the cusp" of two cultural identities (Doody, "Missing *Les Muses*" 84), Burney seeks

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Burney 149-51), and Doody notes that this "terrible episode reminded her of mortality, not only her own but of those she loved. In the shadow of mortality *The Wanderer* was completed" (315).

[70] Salih discusses similar reviews of *The Wanderer* that cite the novel's Gallicisms as testament to Burney's divided national sympathies ("Altering Alterity" 308-09).

to rhetorically unite the two nations when she recounts *The Wanderer*'s journey back to Britain, situating the manuscript in contiguity with her own itinerant body:

> to the honour and liberality of both nations, let me mention, that, at the Custom-house on either – alas! – hostile shore, upon my given word that the papers contained neither letters, nor political writings; but simply a work of invention and observation; the voluminous manuscript was suffered to pass, without demur, comment, or the smallest examination. (4)

Here Burney obfuscates her actual experience of transporting *The Wanderer* across the Channel in 1812, when an enraged customhouse officer at Dunkirk searched the manuscript and questioned Burney as to its contents, accusing her "of traiterous designs" and leading the novelist to believe that this "Fourth Child of my Brain" would "undoubtedly [be] destroyed" (*Journals and Letters* 6: 716-18). She was ultimately allowed to travel and the drafts of *The Wanderer* were unharmed, but the incident was "truly memorable" for Burney who describes in her journals her incredulity and frustration at "such unexampled strictness of Police Discipline with respect to Letters or Papers, between the two Nations" (*Journals and Letters* 6: 717). Burney's prefatorial retelling of the events surrounding *The Wanderer*'s repatriation to Britain, as well as her emphasis on her ties to France and her "adopted friends" there (Burney 10), encapsulates her efforts to position the novel as an instrument of reconciliation between Britain and France in a time of great hostility and to ally the two nations "in generosity to herself, in candor, in unwillingness to engage in censorship" of her text (Doody 317-18).

Burney also uses the preface to justify her allusions to the French Revolution in *The Wanderer* and explain the novel's engagement with the recent and contentious historical past. She avers that the Revolution remains central to "any picture of human life" in the present age, so "blended . . . with every intellectual survey of the present times" as to be impossible to overlook (5-6). While Burney locates "all discussions of national rights, and modes, or acts of government" beyond her purview as a novelist, she addresses the objection that the "very serious subject" of the Revolution is unsuited to fiction by yoking historical circumstance and situation to the didactic function of the novel as a genre (5-6). The novel's primary business, she argues in the neoclassical tradition, is "conveying useful precepts" through

> a picture of supposed, but natural and probable human existence. It holds, therefore, in its hands our best affections; it exercises our imaginations; it points out the path of honour; and gives to juvenile credulity knowledge of the world, without ruin, or repentance; and the lessons of experience, without its tears. (7)

In response to the "degradation" so often ascribed "to this class of composition" (8), Burney maintains that the novel can "make pleasant the path of propriety" and exert "the power of interesting the affections," specifically through the representation of the "natural" and the "probable" (9). This familiar appeal to fiction's corrective influence helps Burney frame *The Wanderer*'s politically sensitive subject matter and, moreover, intimates her "recognition that her novel might offend some patriotic Englishmen and that misplaced expectations might affect the way her public read her book" (Thaddeus, *Frances Burney* 157). As Doody summarizes, Burney must have

known that *The Wanderer* was her "most political novel" (318), and the preface witnesses her attempting to guide her readers to receive it as a work of moral instruction rather than as a political polemic.

Despite reservations regarding Burney's French sympathies, the reviewer in *The British Critic* deems that the "morality" of the work "is of the purest nature; and the example of patience and resignation, under the most unmerited insults which the conduct of the 'Wanderer' displays, cannot be read without improvement and advantage" (386). Throughout its narrative, *The Wanderer*'s conciliatory and didactic aims are incarnated in its heroine, an Englishwoman raised in France and sympathetic to that nation but also a victim of the violence and dispossession of the Revolution. In her cultivated, accomplished femininity and ability to evoke interest and sympathy from the novel's British characters, Juliet sets a pattern for Anglo-French relations in the nineteenth century. Her conduct and influence, as Debra Ellen Channick has demonstrated, specifically suggest ways of healing the divisions emerging from the French Revolutionary period through selfless benevolence and the transmission of culture, the foundations of transnational civility, the novel implies. Like Burney and her manuscript, the cosmopolitan Juliet moves across national borders and inspires sympathy from audiences with her creative talents, the manifestation of her learning as much as of her capacity for "natural" feeling and self-expression (Channick 187-88). When Albert Harleigh, Juliet's fervent admirer and the novel's ostensible hero,[71] delivers a spirited defence of the heroine to her uncharitable uncle, Lord Denmeath,

[71] Harleigh, the novel's man of feeling and the love object of both Elinor and Juliet, has been repeatedly described by critics as Burney's most unimpressive hero, more concerned with propriety than romance and largely absent from the scene during the novel's major events. Doody refers to him as "the character who stands in stead of a 'hero'" ("Introduction" xxiii).

who regards his niece as an unwelcome alien who would "do well to return . . . to the spot whence . . . [she] came" (Burney 616), Harleigh specifically invokes this ideal of Juliet as a model of elegant cultivation and Christian selflessness:

> Her conduct has rather been exemplary than irreproachable from the moment that she has been cast upon our knowledge; though she has suffered, during that interval, distress of almost every description. Her language is always that of polished life; her manners, even when her occupations are nearly servile, are invariably of distinguished elegance; yet, with all their softness, all their gentleness, she has a courage that, upon the most trying occasions, is superiour to difficulty; and a soul that, even in the midst of injury and misfortune, depends upon itself, and is above complaint. (613)

In repeated instances such as this and in direct response to characters' open prejudice against the heroine's foreignness and perceived sexual impropriety as a lone woman, *The Wanderer* endorses a portrait of Juliet as an exemplar of virtuous femininity who is (most often silently) vindicated by the ever-increasing evidence of her refinement, selflessness, and courage, epitomized by her creative labour.

Juliet's range of remarkable accomplishments unfolds early in the text. She is most often discovered or covertly observed at work by other characters, and in each instance her skill surprises and transfixes her audience. Mrs. Maple and her family come home, for instance, to find Juliet playing the harp "with uncommon ability," and are "struck" motionless "with the sound of music" (73). When Juliet's fellow players decide to conclude their domestic production of *The Provok'd Husband* "with

a cotillon," a French dance comprised of complex figures, only Juliet, a dancer of "modesty" and "elegance," is familiar with the steps, having "so lately come from abroad" (83-84). She also sketches, embroiders, and writes beautifully, prompting Harleigh to marvel, "Accomplished creature! who . . . . and what are you?" (88). Harleigh is, indeed, the keenest observer of these manifestations of remarkable talent and, with a penetration unparalleled by any other character, he reads them as proof of both her class status and her creative genius, finding in her "all the delicately acquired skill, joined to the happy natural talents, which constitute a refined artist" (75).

Although only a small inner circle of characters appreciate Juliet's creative genius in this way, her talents more broadly permit her to integrate within British middle- and upper-class society, and chiefly at Brighthelmstone, [72] where she remains for the longest period of time in the narrative. There, her accomplishment functions as a form of capital that "enables her 'to pass' as an aristocrat without revealing her history" and build social connections in a foreign land (Channick 192). Thus she quickly learns to use her talents to secure some degree of protection, taking on embroidery in order to remain at Mrs. Maple's,[73] for example, and subsequently offering music instruction to the daughters of Brighthelmstone's social elite. She also uses her talents to create a network of acquaintances sympathetic to her circumstances. Her relationships with Harleigh, Lady Aurora, Lord Melbury, and Lady Barbara Frankland, in particular, offer a template for the ways in which art can

[72] Burney refers to Brighton by its archaic name throughout *The Wanderer*.
[73] In his review of *The Wanderer*, John Wilson Croker is particularly incredulous that Juliet's accomplishment could secure her social protection in a family of rank. Overlooking Juliet's broad range of artistic talents and dismissing her proficiency in embroidery and needlework, Croker complains that the heroine remains "an inmate of Mrs. Maple's house, the chief guest at her dining table, the main attraction of her drawing-room, *because* the old lady, a woman of rank, fortune, and fashion, thinks the occasional needle-work of this accomplished and admired person, in hemming a few napkins, made it worth her while to endure the most serious and mortifying perplexities" (127).

inspire transnational civility and benevolence.[74] Juliet's combination of "quick intelligence," "graceful manners," "touching sense of kindness," and "rare accomplishments" instantly awakens these characters' "interest" and charitable feeling, rendering them the heroine's most sympathetic and steadfast allies in the novel (Burney 118). Channick argues that Juliet's example of selflessness and cultural refinement demonstrates to those around her that "benevolence, like art, is an end unto itself" (180). Her conduct, in turn, establishes "a new standard of civility" in her adopted community (187). In yoking creative talent to the cultivation of sociability and feeling, Channick resolves, "the novel resituates the non-instrumentality of an aristocratic education; it shows that such artistic accomplishments are not useless and self-serving, but can inspire charitable feeling" (180). Incarnating Burney's prefatorial hope that her novel would point out "the path of propriety" and "[interest] the affections," Juliet thus fulfills the conciliatory and corrective function of uniting British and French through her creative labour.

For some critics, Juliet's exceeding talent and virtue create distance between the reader and the heroine's inner world: Claudia Johnson ascribes "stupendously self-sacrificing virtue" to Burney's heroine (168), whose "distress seems as inauthentic as everything else about her" (172), while Catherine Craft-Fairchild describes Juliet as simply "too decorous, too gifted" (126), a deliberately overstated and overplayed model of domestic womanhood that Burney employs in order to reveal "the structures of patriarchy that cause the oppression suffered by her

[74] Salih draws attention to the fact that Juliet's greatest sympathizers all belong to the upper-class: Burney's heroine, she argues, is "rescued from the margins of cultural and national identity and relocated at the heart of domestic imperialist culture by Harleigh, Lady Aurora, and Lord Melbury" ("Altering Alterity" 314).

characters" (162). Mascha Gemmeke understands Juliet's creativity as a requisite surface performance of genteel femininity that proclaims the heroine's domesticity to suitors and readers alike but masks her "true" self: Juliet's "character has been glossed with a thick varnish of feminine accomplishments," Gemmeke writes, which denote her conduct-book perfection and rather serve "to obscure than to emphasize" her personality (75-76).

Yet in establishing its heroine as a versatile artist, the novel represents accomplishment as only one facet of Juliet's creative subjectivity, identifying her talents in drawing, music-making, theatrical performance, needlework, and conversation as manifestations of her greater powers of self-representation, imagination, perception, and performance. Like Radcliffe's Ellena Rosalba, Juliet is a Romantic female wanderer whose trials, paired with her aesthetic education and her "naturally philosophical turn of mind" (Burney 490), enable her to perceive and assess the world around her as both an outsider and morally sensitive observer: "from an early experience of the vicissitudes of fortune," the narrator recounts, Juliet "was become meditative," studious of "every new scene of life, that was presented to her view; and every new class of society, that came within her knowledge" (700). As a marginal, peripatetic figure, Juliet has the unique perspective to witness the inequities of British society first-hand. More than simply a spectator, however, Juliet represents a "catalytic force" in the stifling, stagnant social world that she enters (Doody, "Introduction" xx-xxi). Her striking combination of accomplished femininity and enigmatic itinerancy unsettles the established categories and narratives upon which *The Wanderer*'s characters – and readers – define the British nation and its values. As

Deidre Lynch has argued, *The Wanderer*, akin to Sydney Morgan's *Woman, or, Ida of Athens* (1809) and Germaine de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), employs the figure of the displaced heroine to challenge "fixed viewpoint[s]" that distinguish between alien and domestic, home and away, self and other, encouraging readers to interrogate their "nation's home truths" and especially those surrounding domesticity and women's essential debility and dependence (58).

While seemingly cast from the mold of conduct book femininity, Juliet is therefore also an unconventional and at times destabilizing agent for the novel's purported didactic aims: she is a definitively public figure, recognizably foreign (she speaks with a French accent), itinerant, poor, unprotected, and apparently nameless. Approaching the didactic novel as a fundamentally conservative or antirevolutionary genre, Lisa Wood has argued that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century didactic fiction by women is characterized by its narrative and ideological cohesion, and "concerned less with literary effect" than with achieving "a single meaning and complete closure" (11-16). Several scholars, including Doody, Epstein, Craft-Fairchild, and Salih, identify *The Wanderer* as a work of didactic fiction but emphasize the ways in which its moral project and, more specifically, its conventional conclusion, which sees the heroine married and elevated to rank and riches, are complicated by the ambivalence and contradiction introduced by Juliet's itinerancy and otherness. As Salih summarizes, "although *The Wanderer*'s conspicuous didactic components include an all-but-perfect conduct-book heroine, and a chapter of Evangelical Christian doctrine in volume V (ch. 85), the novel's engagements with nationality, culture, race and religion convey a sense of radical ambiguity and

confusion" (39). The ontological instability of Juliet's identity, for which her exilic wandering and namelessness stand as metaphors, work to undermine the novel's didacticism and to disrupt the novel's narrative trajectory as a domestic romance.

"Nothing is seen but what is meant to be shewn": Self-representation and epistemological control

From the outset, Juliet is introduced as a figure of "unexpected metamorphosis" and profound obscurity: she enters the text in disguise, emerging from the night in blackface and bandages, only to transform within the span of a few days into a beauty of "the brightest, whitest, and most dazzling fairness" (Burney 43).[75] As she will steadfastly do throughout the novel, Juliet refuses in these early scenes to reveal her name to the companions with whom she has crossed the Channel. An accomplished actress, as her performance of Lady Townly will subsequently prove, Juliet possesses an acute awareness of the ways in which surface performances shape and, indeed, distort perception: "How superficially," she later remarks to herself, "can we judge of dispositions, where nothing is seen but what is meant to be shewn!" (538). Throughout *The Wanderer*, the heroine uses her "creative powers of self-representation" to control her image through a series of performed identities

[75] In her provocative reading of *The Wanderer* in "'Her Blacks, Her Whites and Her Double Face!': Altering Alterity in *The Wanderer*," Sarah Salih argues that Juliet's seemingly radical difference, epitomized by the novel's use of the metaphor of race, is in fact undone during the course of the narrative, so that "the unfathomable 'other'" the heroine represents is in fact "converted into a reassuringly 'native' subject" who can "assume her rightful place in the upper echelons of English society without disturbing existing social and racial structures" (301-02). While I agree with Salih's assertion that Burney uses "blackness as a screen from behind the safety of which she may introduce a vindication of the French" and figuratively reveal the subordination of women (310), I question whether "otherness remains on the outside" at the novel's conclusion (315). Juliet's protracted itinerancy, I suggest, indelibly marks her as a liminal subject whose exilic condition "sits awkwardly" with the novel's attempts to ultimately repatriate and integrate her within the British aristocracy (Lynch 62).

(Anderson 424). In the process, she secures a degree of moral, financial, and sexual autonomy in face of the exploitative labour practices and patriarchal proprietorship that equally aim to master her corporeal and psychological self.

As Epstein and Craft-Fairchild have observed, Juliet's namelessness presents a particular threat to British society because it positions her "outside the patriarchal system of exchange" for the greater part of the novel (Craft-Fairchild 130). The heroine's namelessness at once ensures her social ostracism and her autonomy, Epstein argues, for "[to] lack a name is to belong to no one, that is, to belong to oneself" and hence "[nobody] knows what to do with Juliet; a woman so self-assured, so poised, so able to speak for, defend, and support herself, must have a name" (178).[76] In the novel's initial scenes, Juliet's strategic silence and costuming indicate her performance of the role of the Incognita, a woman who cannot and does not wish to be known. Juliet will subsequently assume several different roles throughout the novel, each also entailing its own sartorial transformation: a music-teacher, a local musical celebrity, a milliner and a mantua-maker, a paid companion, a haberdasher, and, in the New Forest segment of the novel, a homeless rural wanderer.

In each instance, the heroine's silence, evasion, and costuming produce what Patricia Zakreski metaphorically describes as a "screen," a private creative space, imaginative as much as physical, in which the woman artist can work and find self-expression "outside patriarchal control," even within the confines of the domestic sphere and, in Juliet's case, in the face of social persecution (16). Along similar lines, Kathleen Anderson, Kristina Straub, and Andrea Austin argue that "Juliet's self-

[76] Epstein goes on to claim that "[making] her last heroine nameless was Burney's boldest stroke as a feminist novelist" (178).

disguising . . . emblematizes" her control over her own identity and its production (Anderson 439). Juliet is "the maker of her own identity," Straub asserts, manifesting a creative power that encapsulates her role "as artist" (190). When Juliet reluctantly agrees to perform publicly as a harpist at a subscription concert in Brighthelmstone, for example, she rejects the showy pink gown purchased for her by her patroness, Miss Arbe, and instead assumes a simple costume in order to signify her feminine modesty to the crowd:

> Even her attire, which, from the bright pink sarsenet, purchased by Miss Arbe, she had changed into plain white satin, with ornaments of which the simplicity shewed as much taste as modesty, contributed to the interest which she inspired. It was suited to the style of her beauty, which was Grecian; and it seemed equally to assimilate with the character of her mind, to those who, judging it from the fine expression of her countenance, conceived it to be pure and noble. (Burney 358)

Akin to Opie's Agnes Fitzhenry, Juliet's determination to control her own image is represented as a facet of her creative labour, a constitutive practice situated in contiguity with her work as a musical performer: both represent forms of self-expression which Juliet employs to mold her image, externalizing her moral and intellectual qualities ("the character of her mind") through sartorial display and public performance in order to exert influence over her spectators.[77]

[77] In the scene at the benefit concert, Juliet is in fact spared performing when Elinor interrupts the event with a dramatic albeit unsuccessful suicide attempt, at which point Juliet faints "motionless on the floor" with "terrour" (358-59). Regardless, Juliet is on display before a large crowd during the lead-up to Elinor's entrance, admired as "an object of tumultuous delight" (358). As her costume choice indicates, the heroine takes advantage of this public attention, even if "unused" to it, to mold her image as a woman of propriety and taste (358).

For Straub and Austin, Juliet's carefully crafted self-representation functions as a form of "epistemological control" which works to intrigue audiences through an array of changing appearances only to defy their penetration and knowledge (Austin 259). Recalling Brunton's Laura Montreville, the heroine's work to control her own image in *The Wanderer*, Austin argues, "parallels, specifically with regard to the male characters in the novel, both her stern moral control and her acquisition of economic control" (259). This plays out most clearly in the way Juliet maintains her distance from Harleigh, who is almost immediately "bewitched" by the mysterious heroine and tentatively courts her throughout the novel (Burney 33). As Henderson suggests, Harleigh desires Juliet as if she were a fixed price commodity "in a shop":

> he knows nothing of its origin, and its virtues can be guessed at (at least initially), but he feels that it may be the most precious thing in the world. Harleigh thus enjoys not only the ultimate pleasure of obtaining Juliet, but also the suspenseful, intermediate pleasures of scrutinizing her, contemplating her, and learning to want her. (20)

In face of this appraising desire, Juliet repulses Harleigh's advances by entwining her moral, financial, and sexual autonomy. Like Laura, she remains in control of her feelings and asserts her independence from male obligation through her commitment to self-exertion: refusing Harleigh's charity even in the face of great need, she describes her commitment to undergo "the most laborious personal exertions, rather than" enlarge "any further the list of my pecuniary creditors" (Burney 108). When she does unwillingly accept his gift of £100, Juliet swears that "by work, by toil, by labour, – nothing will be too severe" to repay the obligation (594). Again, Juliet

constructs a screen through the efforts of her labouring body, protecting her own autonomy rather than encouraging romantic connection, so that the courtship "dance of approach and withdrawal between Harleigh and Juliet is curiously muted and deflected" by the heroine's search for self-dependence (Austin 255).

Even in her virtuous excess, then, Burney's heroine poses a challenge to the prescriptive model of recessive, domestic femininity explicated in late eighteenth-century British conduct literature, underpinned by the ideology of separate spheres and the "intergenerational transmission of patronym and property" which sustains the socioeconomic relations of the patriarchal nation (Lynch 58). Juliet's conduct book perfection is consistently undercut by her complexity, ambiguity, and determined independence, complicating her role as a prototypical sentimental heroine. Her acts of strategic self-representation, in particular, introduce uncertainty in the context of the novel's self-proclaimed didacticism, while her namelessness and evasion unsettle the familiar trajectory of the courtship plot. Identifying the limitations of a critical approach that equates Juliet's accomplished femininity with her passivity and oppression under patriarchy, Anderson avers that such "analyses emphasize the protagonist's struggle as an image of women's victimization much more than her ingenuity as an active agent amid challenges" (426). A representative of difference and regeneration, Juliet's corrective influence specifically emerges from the agency and perspective she wields as an itinerant artist.

A British *Corinne*: *The Wanderer*'s model of creative female subjectivity

In his 1814 review of *The Wanderer* in *The Quarterly Review*, John Wilson Croker offers a caustic summary of the novel's "ridiculous and unnatural" plot, sneering that a "long residence in France has given Madame D'Arblay a very novel and surprising view of the state of religion, manners, and society in England" (128). Throughout the review, Croker intimates that Burney's loss of "early talent" as a novelist can in part be attributed to her marriage to a French citizen and subsequent residence in Napoleonic France, both of which, Croker suggests, represent a form of cultural betrayal that has debased Burney's "vigour, vivacity, and originality" as a writer of English fiction (124). Croker relegates Burney's authorial persona as a celebrated young novelist to the past and specifically cites her change of name as a married woman as proof of her altered national sympathies: "None of our female novelists (not even Miss Edgeworth) ever attained so early and so high a reputation as Miss Burney, or, as we must now call her, Madame D'Arblay" (123).

Croker's xenophobic and misogynist review condenses and reproduces the very prejudice that Burney confronts in her last novel when she represents British society from her heroine's perspective as a cultural outsider, "on the other side of the barriers" (Doody 360). *The Wanderer*'s cosmopolitan, itinerant heroine enables Burney to adopt the "novel and surprising view" Croker belittles, and bring into focus Britain's insular narratives of home and nation. While Juliet's combination of accomplishment and exilic wandering throws into question women's theoretical delimitation to the private sphere, her foreignness and, specifically, her Frenchness further destabilize British constructions of national identity and ideal womanhood. In

particular, Burney's heroine challenges Britain's endemic Francophobia in the post-Revolutionary period by presenting an exemplar of virtuous femininity born to British parents but raised and educated in France.[78] A core facet in defining ideal British womanhood in the late eighteenth century, Linda Colley has demonstrated, was to contrast British models of female conduct against the perceived "masculine" autonomy and excesses of Frenchwomen: "even before 1789, it had been common for writers on proper female conduct, whatever their politics, to invoke the supposed behaviour of Frenchwomen as exemplifying what must at all cost be avoided in Britain" (256).[79] Juliet challenges this legacy of prejudice against the French by supplying a model of accomplished, genteel femininity whose corrective moral influence largely stems from her perspective as a cultural outsider.

In her article "Rewriting Radicalism: Wollstonecraft in Burney's *The Wanderer*," Tara Ghoshal Wallace examines Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist revolutionary influence on *The Wanderer* and argues that Burney's novel "enacts a strategy for domesticating and assimilating into genteel society the progressive ideology of this difficult and polarizing icon" by creating a parodic double for the long-suffering heroine in the figure of Elinor Joddrel (488-89). While Elinor embodies the "scandalous" side of Wollstonecraft's life and philosophy, it is Juliet who suffers the "wrongs of woman" depicted in Wollstonecraft's writings and, more specifically, in her posthumous novel *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798). In

[78] Juliet, however, declares that she is "firmly a Protestant!" when Lord Denmeath presumes that she is "a Papist" (615). In this same scene, she goes on to explain that, "as such, I am a Christian," and that she feels both sympathy and friendship for French Catholics, namely her "first, best, and nearly only friend," the Bishop, Juliet's guardian since childhood (615-16).

[79] More broadly, David Simpson argues in *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* that, "[since] at least the Restoration of 1660, . . . the British national character had been defined chiefly in terms of its difference from the French" (64).

Burney's revision of Wollstonecraft's feminism, Wallace argues, "the wrongs inflicted upon the problematic Maria re-emerge as the difficulties endured by the estimable Juliet" (493). With her modesty and patient suffering, Juliet invites a political spectrum of readers to sympathize with the "female difficulties" she endures under the oppression of patriarchy, Wallace avers, so that "Burney strategically offers social conservatism a way to sympathize with the wrongs of woman" (499).

I observe a similar operation at work in the way in which *The Wanderer* assimilates Frenchness as an aspect of its reformist vision. The novel recasts the convention of the accomplished sentimental heroine in order to link its criticism of British xenophobia to its condemnation of the subordination of women, identifying both as manifestations of a "masculine" national culture "caught up in an eternal rivalry with an essentially 'effeminate' France" (Colley 257-58). Much as *The Wanderer* uses Juliet's modesty and virtue to moderate the novel's revolutionary feminism, as Wallace has suggested, the novel also employs Juliet's accomplishment, the most legible signifier of her genteel femininity, to simultaneously diffuse the threat of the her cultural difference and to legitimate her engagement in public life as a performing artist and a working woman. Burney thus deploys the figure of the accomplished heroine to condemn and revise the entwined discourses that simultaneously denigrate femininity and Frenchness, and inscribe gender difference as the definitive category of otherness in British constructions of national identity.

Burney undertakes this project by developing an exemplary heroine who manifests qualities of both cultures, embodying British ideals of female virtue – namely, modesty and self-control – alongside the intellectual autonomy and creative

enthusiasm attributed to "French" womanhood.[80] Accomplishment, I argue, serves the dual purpose of domesticating a Continental model of creative female subjectivity, characterized by the life and works of Germaine de Staël and associated with the dangerous excesses of French culture Colley describes, while recuperating Juliet's role as a working artist by counterpoising her instances of public self-display and engagement in remunerated labour with her innate modesty and talents in the domestic and ornamental arts, such as harp-playing and embroidery. In this way, *The Wanderer* specifically responds to the influential model of female genius inaugurated in Staël's *Corinne*.

As I outline in the introduction, the influence of *Corinne* is evident in fiction written by British women during the early nineteenth century. In *The Wanderer*, Burney sets out to rewrite *Corinne* by "Anglicizing" the figure of the female genius, mapping the artist heroine's public role as an educator and reformer of society onto a familiar prototype of conduct-book femininity and, in the process, reframing *Corinne*'s model of the conflicted woman of fame. Linda H. Peterson argues that, in *Corinne*, Staël introduced the woman of genius whose creative vocation cannot be reconciled with her affective, private self. This model, which came to exert immense influence on women writers well into the nineteenth century, Peterson summarizes, focused on "two female protagonists, one artistic, the other domestic, neither role compatible with the other and the former often producing the woman artist's death" (32). *The Wanderer* refutes this paradigm of irreconcilability and instead forges an

[80] I use "enthusiasm" here in light of Madame de Staël's particular definition of that term in relation to the figure of the artist, who, as Linda M. Lewis explains, is "transported by the passion and 'enthusiasm' that come from within," stimulated by "divine inspiration" (26). In her non-fiction and fiction works, Lewis continues, Staël describes "enthusiasm as the love of the beautiful, the elevation of the soul, the enjoyment of pure devotion, and universal harmony" (26).

alternate model of creative female subjectivity characterized by the union of artistic genius and domestic virtue. The novel accordingly shifts focuses from the narrative of the artist heroine's romantic disappointment and creative demise to her search for self-dependence and cultural and familial belonging, replacing Corinne's high feeling, delight in self-display, and tragic death with Juliet's tempered, patient struggle for survival and reconciliation.

As Kari Lokke points out, critics of Staël, even those sympathetic with her representations of female genius and her emphasis on the position of women more generally, have long charged her "with a lack of self-control and fortitude in creating a heroine who dies as a consequence of her sorrow over betrayal in love" (23-24). For many readers of *Corinne*, Lokke notes, the eponymous heroine's descent into melancholy following her romantic abandonment by her Scottish lover Oswald suggests "that Corinne is no genius after all but only a self-indulgent, vengeful, and excessively emotional woman, little more that a stereotype" (24). Staël was, moreover, a controversial figure in her own lifetime, praised for her literary contributions to European Romanticism and yet condemned for her extramarital affairs and her "masculine" interest in political life. Burney had befriended Staël in January 1793, after the latter had arrived in Britain as part of a group of émigrés fleeing the violence of the Revolution. Along with the comte de Narbonne (Staël's lover), Talleyrand, and Alexandre D'Arblay, Staël found refuge during this period at the home of Burney's friends William and Frederica Locke, in Surrey. Burney and Staël immediately admired each other and found a great deal in common; their early acquaintance was promising. Yet as Doody recounts, the friendship had cooled by the

spring of 1793 due, in large part, to the intervention of Charles Burney. Wary of Staël's reputation for sexual impropriety and her avowed support of democratic principles, Dr. Burney discouraged his unmarried daughter from pursuing the connection. After receiving an exhortatory letter from her father on the subject, Burney complied with his wishes and withdrew her affection without offering an explanation to Staël, a move that generated lasting discomfort for both women (Doody, "Missing *Les Muses*" 88-89). Doody asserts that, nonetheless, the "shipwrecked friendship was an important experience for both Burney and de Staël" and subsequently emerged as a point of inspiration for various representations of female creativity and female friendship in their respective literary works ("Missing *Les Muses*" 94).

In *The Wanderer*, Burney acknowledges her debt to Staël in her focus on exceptional female creativity. Burney, however, specifically redresses complaints over Corinne's perceived emotional excess and moral license by creating an artist heroine who is supremely self-controlled and withdrawn, and especially in her relationships with men. Several scholars, including Doody, Channick, Lynch, and Gemmeke, have noted the many parallels between the two novels, arguing that *The Wanderer* represents a direct response and revision to *Corinne* (Doody, "Missing *Les Muses*" 113; Channick 168). Both Corinne and Juliet are figures of artistic genius, performers who inspire admiration and emotion in their audiences; both are multinational figures who face social exclusion in Britain; both live and work as artists, independent of male protection; and both serve as public "legislator[s] of morality and taste" who offer coded criticisms regarding the position of women and

international politics (Vincent 8). The action of each novel is, moreover, set during the Reign of Terror, and draws veiled parallels between the arbitrary violence of Revolutionary period and the present Napoleonic moment (Lewis 39). The similarities between the two heroines also extend to physical appearance. Juliet, like Corinne, is a brunette, possessed of "soft, glossy, luxuriant brown hair" (Burney 93), who rivets her audience with her Grecian beauty. The heroine's hair colour is no minor detail in *The Wanderer*, but instead serves to create a symbolic connection between Staël's Corinne and Burney's Juliet. As Ellen Moers remarks in her landmark study *Literary Women*,

> In *Corinne*, hair color is momentous: Corinne represents the passionate exuberance of dark-haired Latin culture, and Lucile, her blond rival [and English half-sister], stands for the subdued and inhibited sensibility of Nordic culture, along with all that is implied by the home, the wife, and the private virtues of English society. (175)

Juliet's dark hair marks her as an inheritor to the "passionate exuberance" of Corinne's female genius and, more broadly, signals her role as a mediator between cultures as well as between seemingly antithetical models of womanhood, the exuberant and public as opposed to the recessive and private.[81] Lokke has argued that, before her death, Corinne "passes on the legacy of her own female genius" to her niece, Juliette, the daughter of the English Lucile,

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[81] The tension between these two models of femininity lies at the heart of Maggie Tulliver's objections to *Corinne* in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). As she tells Philip Wakem,

> "I didn't finish the book . . . As soon as I came to the blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up, and determined to read no further. I foresaw that that light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness." (Eliot 348)

> suggesting the possibility of unifying her sister and herself, the light and the dark, the domestic and the artistic, the private and the public, the spiritual and the passionate, in one woman, as well as revealing Staël's own recognition of her vital role in a tradition of Western female artists. (8)

No simple ideal of "subdued" femininity, Juliet embodies this series of seeming polarities. As Jennifer Golightly comments, although Juliet has often "been described by scholars as passive and docile, a portrait of proper, delicate femininity," the heroine's bravery and conviction suggest otherwise: "the two words most frequently used by Burney to describe Juliet – 'courage' and 'resistance' – indicate that Juliet is more than a conventionally feminine woman" (136). *The Wanderer* responds to the possibility of reconciliation raised at the conclusion of *Corinne* by unifying "the light and the dark" in one figure, a conduct-book heroine who is also a woman of genius.

Juliet's equivocal attitude toward public display exemplifies the way in which *The Wanderer* revises Staël's artist heroine and, more specifically, vindicates the labour and influence of the female artist by emphasizing the heroine's exercise of moral agency. Although Juliet's performance of Lady Townly garners loud praise and her abilities as a harpist make her a sought-after entertainer in Brighthelmstone, she avoids public performance at all costs, not only fearing for her discovery by an agent of the French government but also seeking to preserve her appearance of modesty. Yet when she refuses Elinor's proposal that she "wear the buskins" as a professional actress, her explanation is remarkably qualified:

> Much as I am enchanted with the art, I am not going to profess it! On the contrary, I think it so replete with dangers and improprieties, however happily they may sometimes be combatted by fortitude and integrity, that, when a young female, not forced by peculiar circumstances, or impelled by resistless genius, exhibits herself a willing candidate for public applause; – she must have, I own, other notions, or other nerves, than mine! (Burney 398-99)

Here Juliet moves from a brisk condemnation of the "dangers and improprieties" of female performance to a defence of those women who, "forced by peculiar circumstances" or "impelled by resistless genius" (that is, a young woman like herself), do engage in public display. Such women might certainly perform, Juliet implies, absolved as they are by need and creative calling. Elinor responds to Juliet by offering further feminist gloss on the issue, criticizing Juliet's professed modesty only to praise her as an artist who wields the ability to improve and reform society through her creative powers:

> "And you, Ellis, you!" she cried, "endowed with every power to set prejudice at defiance, and to shew and teach the world, that woman and man are fellow-creatures, you, too, are coward enough to bow down, unresisting, to this thraldom?" (399)

Elinor articulates the vindication of female creative genius that Juliet implies in her indirection, and the two characters work together in this scene to diffuse the novel's revolutionary defence of women's public display and the remunerated labour of actresses. Juliet's conduct-book reticence and "natural" talent are repeatedly affirmed

in such instances of contrast with Elinor's avowed love of creating "Effect, public Effect" through her melodramatic and solipsistic performances, and most notably in her demonstrations of passion for Harleigh (358). Both Elinor and Juliet are performers, driven in their respective acts of self-representation; both assume disguises in the course of the narrative, featuring front and centre in the novel's domestic and public theatricals; and both "possess an extraordinary ability to disrupt the apparent fixity of male/female, white, English, middle- and upper-class identity" in their "transvestic" performances (Salih 50). Yet the two women diverge, Channick argues, in their disparate abilities to control their feelings and transcend the self. Hence while Elinor "remains ineffective and even disengaged" as a performer because of "her self-absorbed perspective, her obsession with how to express her feeling in a manner that creates the greatest dramatic effect," Juliet's "undesigning accomplishments" generate sympathy and admiration from her audience (187-88). In these doubled characters, Burney assigns Corinne's reputation for emotional excess and narcissism to Elinor, while attributing female genius and genuine enthusiasm to Juliet. The unaffected and self-controlled Juliet, Anderson argues, thus recuperates "the potential virtue" of female performance:

> A woman who skillfully crafts an ideal feminine self obtains, ironically, an outlet for her unconventionality. Her appearance of strict adherence to a morally charged code of female conduct endows her with a protective privacy and aura of mystery that transform her restraint into a powerfully seductive virtue. (425)

Juliet's "seductive virtue" is the counterpoint to the reputed solipsism and dangerous over-feeling of Staël's paradigmatic woman of genius, for her carefully regulated self-representation at once testifies to her creative powers and affirms her moral agency.

Aristocratic cultivation, middle-class values: *The Wanderer*'s attitude toward work

While Juliet shapes her identity through acts of self-exertion, using costume and performance, much as Opie's Agnes does, in order to secure a degree of agency in a largely hostile social world, she also espouses a keen desire to work for pay, what the narrator describes as, in fact, Juliet's "most earnest desire" (Burney 146). Identifying *The Wanderer* as a female *Bildungsroman*, Gemmeke suggests that work "is part of Juliet's quest for identity" for it is the means by which she "discovers society from various view points, and a self independent of name and status" (172). Juliet's downward social mobility as a working woman – as a music teacher, a milliner and a mantua-maker, a paid companion, and a shopkeeper – lets her see a cross-section of British society, and subjects her to a degree of workplace exploitation and suffering unknown to most genteel heroines of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novel. Juliet's experience on the labour market tests her moral strength as well as physical endurance, helping constitute her identity as an enlightened voice of social reform speaking from the margins. Through Juliet's perspective, the novel throws into contrast divergent models of female conduct and benevolence, employing the heroine's resilience, talent, and determination as a

respectable working woman as foils to the narrow-minded prejudice and artistic pretentions of the novel's affluent and class-climbing Britons.

This is epitomized by the exploitation the heroine endures at the hands of the community of wealthy women in Brighthelmstone, including the "three Furies" (872), Mrs. Maple, Mrs. Ireton, and Mrs. Howel, as well as her self-interested patroness, Miss Arbe, and an assortment of minor and painfully close-minded characters, such as Miss Bydel. These characters regard Juliet's situation as a lone and remarkably talented young woman as an opportunity for their own self-advancement within Brighthelmstone's insular social world, variously tendering support for the wanderer in order to appear charitable and fashionable, to satisfy idle curiosity, and to ensnare a victim for sadistic diversion. Miss Arbe, for one, "a self-conceived paragon in all the fine arts," is the novel's cautionary example of the shallow, self-serving accomplished woman, convinced of her own false merit and more interested in social applause than the studied cultivation of talent:

> Miss Arbe, who aspired at passing for an adept in every accomplishment, seized with great quickness whatever she began to learn; but her ambition was so universal, and her pursuits were so numerous, that one of them marred another; and while everything was grasped at, nothing was attained. Yet the general aim passed with herself for general success; and because she had taken lessons in almost all the arts, she concluded that of all the arts she was completely mistress. (225)

She becomes Juliet's patroness chiefly out of "a strong desire to profit" from the heroine's "striking talents" (208), helping Juliet establish herself as a music instructor

in Brighthelmstone with a view to receiving free music lessons, what the narrator refers to as a form of "stolen improvement" (284).

Juliet, by contrast, offers an exemplar of studied ingenuity and self-sufficiency. She sees the possibility of benefitting from "the high influence of Miss Arbe in what is called the polite world" by professionalizing her accomplishments, and "exchanging her helpless dependency, for an honourable, however fatiguing exertion of the talents and acquirements with which she had been endowed by her education" (212). Hence she attempts to mitigate the impositions of her patroness by adopting a new attitude to her work as an artist; she resolves to practice music-making "as a business, which might lead her to the self-dependence at which she so earnestly languished to arrive" (225). When she realizes that "pride must give way to prudence; and nicer feelings must submit to necessity" if she is to accept the conditions of her employment, Juliet is forced to reconcile her gentility with her engagement in paid labour (224). She responds by projecting an exterior of patient resolve, repressing her sense of delicacy for the sake of securing financial autonomy. She acts, for instance, as her own advocate and attempts to collect unpaid fees from her employers, only to endure their contempt for "modestly [soliciting] her right" to remuneration (405). Akin to the sufferings of Brunton's Laura Montreville, Juliet's trials bring to the fore her personal fortitude and moral superiority, and elaborate a portrait of a working woman who is able, however painfully, to preserve her innate gentility even when dealing with issues of money. Juliet thus experiences "something indefinable" standing "between spirit and delicacy, that makes the first reception of

money in detail, by those not brought up to gain it, embarrassing and painful," even if she knows that she has "honourably earned" her wages (454).

Many critics have objected to Juliet's labouring gentility, reading her conduct-book delicacy and ultimate integration into the British aristocracy as fundamentally at odds with her difficulties as a working woman. In *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, Jennie Batchelor argues that *The Wanderer* demonstrates both "the desirability and difficulty of assimilating" dress and female labourers of the clothing trades within "sentimental concepts of virtuous femininity" (72). In *The Wanderer*, Batchelor avers, Burney aims to "recast the labouring woman through a rewriting of the literary tradition which had condemned her" throughout the eighteenth century (72). Confronting a discourse that had long equated all forms of female labour with prostitution and loss of social caste (57), Burney represents a sentimental heroine who is also a "respectable labouring woman" (70). Yet for Batchelor, this rewriting remains problematic because "Burney cannot make Juliet a successful or even an exemplary working woman without impugning the gentility the novel will ultimately reward" (79). Hence Juliet functions "as the virtuous exception that proves the rule of widespread self-interest and dissipation among female labourers" and, Batchelor concludes, undercuts the novel's broader critique of the social devaluation of female labour (79). Johnson argues in a similar vein when she asserts that the novel sets out to criticize Britain's class hierarchy, but so insistently lauds Juliet's refinement and cultivation that the heroine's problems appear more important than those of the working-class characters (169).

While *The Wanderer* derides the dissipation of the milliners at Miss Matson's shop and grieves the ignorance of the New Forest's farmwomen, these previous interpretations have overlooked the way in which the novel uses cultural difference and, in particular, the figure of the French émigré, as metaphors for specifically exploring the "superior" woman's theoretical exclusion from paid employment and public life. *The Wanderer* uses the figure of the French émigré, embodied by Juliet and her lifelong friend, Gabriella, to equate the exilic existence of the female wanderer with the economic and social invisibility of the accomplished, genteel woman within the realm of productive labour. "How few," the heroine reflects,

> how circumscribed, are the attainments of women! And how much fewer and more circumscribed still, are those which may, in their consequences, be useful as well as ornamental, to the higher, educated class! Those through which, in the reverses of fortune, a female may reap benefit without abasement! (289)

In face of the devaluation of women's ornamental attainments in public, economic life, *The Wanderer* professionalizes accomplishment, and valorizes Juliet and Gabriella's paid labour as genteel women by emphasizing their courage, ingenuity, and self-sacrifice as displaced victims of the French Revolution. The novel's two French émigrées, with their combination of aristocratic cultivation and unremitting work ethic, thus encapsulate an ideal of female "usefulness" in which privately nurtured virtues and disinterested accomplishments are put in service of the moral and economic improvement of the social collective, imagined here as the family, the nation and, at the broadest level, a transnational community united by universal

benevolence. Although the novel struggles to wholly assimilate female labour under the rubric of virtuous femininity, as Batchelor suggests, *The Wanderer* nevertheless poses a challenge to the gendered division of labour by yoking the heroine's constitution as a morally autonomous subject to her engagement in remunerated labour in a definitively public sphere.

As in *The Father and Daughter*, *Self-Control*, and *The Italian,* the heroine's "nobility of soul" – her moral excellence, personal fortitude, and self-restraint, virtues that transcend rank, class, culture, and inherited privilege – is at once demonstrated and enlarged through self-exertion. Gabriella, a woman of noble French lineage, summarizes the novel's meritocratic views on work when she responds to Sir Jaspar's amazement that these two refined women can "[league] together high birth with low life . . . superiour rank and vulgar employment . . . grace, taste, and politeness with common drudgery" (638). "Alas!", Gabriella explains, "whence I come, all that are greatest, most ancient, and most noble, have learnt, that self-exertion alone can mark nobility of soul; and that self-dependence can only sustain honour in adversity" (639). A transnational subject and the child of an interclass marriage, Juliet at once incarnates and endorses this meritocratic philosophy, and her pursuit of remunerated labour is valorized throughout *The Wanderer* as a demonstration of individual merit above and beyond received categories of difference. Juliet's praise for Gabriella in this same scene further buttresses the novel's aim of uniting aristocratic cultivation with a middle-class work ethic in order to acknowledged the genteel woman's contributions to the public, economic sphere. Although Gabriella "has lost her country" and "wastes in exile," separated from her family, she "nevertheless . . .

works, she sustains herself by her industry and ingenuity . . . Offspring of a race the most dignified, she toils manually, not to degrade it mentally" (636-37). The antithesis of aristocratic leisure and self-display, Gabriella's manual labour assumes transnational importance in this context, recuperating her cultural otherness as a Frenchwoman in Britain through her exemplary work ethic.

Some scholars hypothesize that Burney drew on the model of Enlightenment womanhood epitomized by her extraordinarily accomplished friend, Mary Delany, nee Granville (1700-1788), when she created Juliet Granville. Doody was the first to conjecture that Burney adopted "the maiden name of Mary Granville, later Mrs. Delany" in naming her heroine as a way of symbolically acknowledging Delany's maternal influence on the writer (330). Liberally educated, Delany studied history, French, music, and the classics, and demonstrated an early aptitude for needlework, paper cutwork, and drawing, talents which she pursued throughout her adult life in a diverse range of amateur art projects. But Delany's "skill, her knowledge, her experience, and her artistry," Ruth Hayden avers, "reached their fulfillment" in the form of the famous "paper mosaics" which she began in 1772, producing almost 1000 by 1784, when her eyesight failed (131). These finely cut and pasted botanical collages, made of coloured paper and set on a black background, were an entirely original art form that paired botanical accuracy with what Lisa L. Moore refers to as "vividness and frank sensual appeal . . . unprecedented in eighteenth-century visual culture" (64). In the "Biographical Sketch" which prefaces an 1820 compilation of Delany's correspondence, the anonymous editor explains Delany's artistic process:

> Being perfectly mistress of her scissars, the plant or flower which she purposed to imitate she cut out; that is, she cut out its various leaves and parts, in such coloured Chinese paper as suited her subject; and, when she could not meet with a colour to correspond with the one she wanted, she dyed her own paper to answer her wishes. She used a black ground, as best calculated to throw out her flower. (xv)

Reflecting on Delany's plethora of amateur artistic achievements and, in particular, her paper mosaics, Moore describes her as "an aristocratic lady of leisure nonetheless possessed of a punishing work ethic and a truly fearsome ambition" (49), a description that certainly also applies to Burney's heroine. Janice Farrar Thaddeus refers to Delany as a "model to the age" because of the way in which she defined her femininity in relation to a public world of sociability and artistic exchange, joining "her public to her private self" and judging "her public self by her private morality," and hence repudiating the recessive femininity of the private sphere increasingly prescribed in eighteenth-century conduct literature ("Mary Delany" 118).[82] As Hayden recounts, Delany frequently gifted and dedicated her paper mosaics to friends; many of her acquaintances, in turn, sent her unusual botanical samples from across Britain and around the world for her to represent in cutwork (152-55). Delany's work, moreover, caught not only the interest and admiration of the royal family, but also some of the leading artists, botanists, and natural scientists of the day, including Joshua Reynolds, Joseph Banks, and Erasmus Darwin (Moore 64; Hayden

[82] Drawing parallels between Delany and Juliet, Gemmeke builds on Thaddeus's insights when she explains that, "Delany's contemporaries praised her mainly for her femininity – because of her firmness, that is, not in spite of it: the female virtues of delicacy and propriety, after all, were by no means incompatible with mental strength," as Juliet also affirms (Gemmeke 127).

158). Delany, that is, offered Burney a model of an accomplished woman who used her creative talents and private virtues to form and maintain a broad social network reaching far beyond the spatial and ideological confines of the domestic sphere.

Critical insights into Delany's influence on *The Wanderer* help elucidate the novel's revisions to the accomplished sentimental heroine by bringing into focus an example of an actual historical woman who joined sociability and public influence with ideals of virtuous, cultivated femininity. *The Wanderer* specifically invokes Delany's example when it points to the importance of creative, intellectual, and social enrichment for the genteel working woman, implying that middle-class values of industry and self-dependence must be reconciled with a liberal education and cultivated taste in order to nurture and preserve moral sensitivity. Through Juliet's trials, the novel demonstrates that the monotony of manual labour poses a threat to creativity and the imagination, the wellsprings of social sympathy. As Gemmeke summarizes, the workers in Burney's novel "are threatened by mental impoverishment since they do not have, or do not take, time off to pursue intellectual tasks" (196-97). Unlike Opie, Brunton, and Radcliffe, Burney is not wholly convinced of the self-improving potential of work for women; instead, she brings into focus the drudgery and discomfort of manual labour, and emphasizes what little sense of fulfillment Juliet actually gets from waged labour. In fact, as Doody maintains, "[more] fully than any other writer of her time, even a radical like Wollstonecraft, Burney examines the sheer *drudgery* involved" in work (355). The world of manual labour which Juliet encounters in her work as a needlewoman, a milliner, and a mantua maker, characterized by leering customers, long hours, petty squabbles, and

variable demand, dampens Juliet's enthusiasm for self-dependence, so that she reflects, "[imagination] may paint enjoyments; but labours and hardships can be judged only from experience!" (404).

The novel underscores the heroine's alienation and mental impoverishment as a working woman across its representations of lived space, which encompass a range of domestic interiors, places of commercial exchange, public social venues, urban streets, and rural landscapes. But within *The Wanderer*'s geographically varied and populated landscape, Juliet's spatial world, as Epstein observes, is characterized by enclosure: small rooms, locked doors, and blocked exits function as metaphors for the exclusion and vulnerability that the heroine experiences in British society, suggesting her imprisonment, Epstein argues, as a nameless woman in a foreign land (181). I would add that Burney uses metaphors of enclosure to simultaneously explore the particular social and economic limitations faced by the genteel working woman who dares to claim independence beyond the purview of male protection, much as Mary Hays does, for example, in *The Victim of Prejudice*, when she represents her heroine's successive flights from the sexual advances of employers and alleged male protectors. *The Wanderer* shows the Gothic influences of Hays, Radcliffe, Wollstonecraft, and Smith in the social as well as physical topography it charts, portraying an enclosed, labyrinthine, and largely hostile world in which the heroine is forced to navigate innumerable obstacles, finding few places of mental or physical refuge. As Karen R. Lawrence contends, Burney "takes the topoi of exile, vulnerability, and social uprooting and rewrites them with a female protagonist whose wandering occurs in the midst of a society in which she has no 'place'" (54).

The placelessness and persecution of the working woman are typified during the extended scene at Arundel Castle, in which Juliet accompanies Mrs. Ireton on a day trip in her capacity as "toad eater" or paid companion.[83] Charged with caring for Mrs. Ireton's equally fearsome lapdog and young nephew, Juliet is relentlessly tormented by the "three Furies" throughout the trip, so that she attempts, without success, to find "an immediate hiding-place" from their persecution (Burney 551). Mrs. Howel ultimately locks Juliet in the "vacant apartment" (563) in which she has sought refuge, hoping to coerce the heroine's consent to cut off all communication with Lady Aurora and Lord Melbury, and accusing Juliet of the "ultimate design" to "seduce" Lord Melbury and ingratiate herself with this noble family (564). In this scene, the transformation of a seemingly safe hiding-place into a prison cell functions as a metaphor for the broader social and sexual prejudice Juliet endures as an unprotected and exiled woman on British shores. The scene, moreover, invites comparison between this instance of collective social exclusion, committed in the name of propriety and class privilege, and the arbitrary and collective violence of Revolutionary France: the innocent Juliet, that is, finds herself metaphorically "bastilled" for the threat she poses to late eighteenth-century Britain's hierarchal socioeconomic order.[84]

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[83] During the eighteenth century, "toad eater" (or "toadeater") and "toady" emerged as common derogatory terms to refer to the humble companion. Betty Rizzo points to the political origins of the word "toadeater" in the early eighteenth century, citing Horace Walpole's use of the term in a 1742 attack on "political lackey" Harry Vane (41). The sudden rise of these terms, Rizzo hypothesizes, "used first in a political application, then almost immediately in a domestic one, must coincide with an increased consciousness of tyranny, or tyrannical power structures, in political and domestic contexts" in this period (42).

[84] In *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman*, the eponymous heroine equates her legal entrapment in an abusive marriage with the injustices of the Revolutionary period, declaring that "[marriage] had bastilled me for life" (115).

Enclosure and entrapment also characterize Juliet's solitary labour. When she takes on numerous needlework orders, for instance, and devotes herself to "incessant work" while living alone in a small room above Miss Matson's shop (403), the heroine's social, emotional, and intellectual worlds contract in accordance with the physical enclosure of her workspace. Deprived of social, aesthetic, and intellectual pleasures, Juliet grieves that "not all her activity in business" can "conquer" her loneliness and hopelessness:

> With an ardent love of social intercourse, she was doomed to pass her lonely days in a room that no sound of kindness ever cheered; with enthusiastic admiration of the beauties of Nature, she was denied all prospect, but of the coarse red tilings of opposite attics: with an innate taste for the fine arts, she was forced to exist as completely out of their view or knowledge, as if she had been an inhabitant of some uncivilized country: and fellow-feeling, that most powerful master of philanthropy! now taught her to pity the lamentations of seclusion from the world, that she had hitherto often contemned as weak and frivolous; since now, though with time always occupied, and a mind fully stored, she had the bitter self-experience of the weight of solitude without books, and of the gloom of retirement without a friend. (406-07)

Juliet's "prospects" are literally and figuratively limited to a bleak, unvaried, and restricted view, creating a sense of dislocation and dissociation from the immediate surroundings; void of culture, natural beauty, and sympathy, Juliet's psychosocial

world assumes the aspect of an "uncivilized country," an unfamiliar and inhospitable place that she cannot call her own.[85]

The Wanderer also links the heroine's poverty and social marginalization to her delimited mobility as a working woman, contrasting Elinor and Juliet's divergent understandings of freedom. Whereas Elinor declares that she is "never so happy as in ranging without a guide" and enjoys a degree of financial autonomy that enables her to travel freely (68), Juliet's itinerancy is defined by distress and chronic penury, due in large part to the fact that she is robbed of her purse when she first lands at Dover. When Juliet complains to Elinor of her difficulties in procuring stable work in the clothing trades, Elinor mocks Juliet's search for self-dependence as an ascetic act of self-abnegation, retorting that "'twas your own choice, you know, to live in a garret, and hem pocket-handkerchiefs" (473). Juliet's response effectively exposes Elinor's privilege as a woman of independent means:

> Choice, Madam! . . . I was not then aware how imaginary is the independence, that hangs for support upon the uncertain fruits of daily exertions! . . . – ah! What is freedom but a name, for those who have not an hour at command from the subjection of fearful penury and distress? (473-74)

Wallace makes the point that Elinor demonstrates a "narcissistic appropriation of feminist ideology" wherein she "interprets liberty" as authorization "for unbridled

[85] In its representations of the working needlewoman, *The Wanderer* anticipates the rise of the figure of the distressed seamstress in Victorian culture. As Zakreski recounts, the distressed seamstress emerged in Victorian literary and visual culture in the 1840s "[as] a symbol of the exploitation of the vulnerable working class" and an object for middle-class protection: "The public interest in this pitiable figure was fed throughout the decade by a succession of remarkably similar narratives that presented the story of the needlewoman's life as a sensational tale of a working-class woman's degradation from respectable poverty into penury, illness, and sometimes even prostitution" (26-27).

desire and self-gratifying behaviour" (491-92). Juliet, by contrast, identifies "freedom" as a marker of socioeconomic privilege denied to those women caught in the Sisyphean struggle for independence through remunerated labour. As Doody argues, even though Elinor espouses revolutionary feminist philosophies, she is more concerned "with the liberation of her emotional and sexual sensibility" than with the challenges faced by working women, including Juliet, and overlooks the fact "that her own financial security is part of the picture" (348-49). Perkins elaborates in this vein when she suggests that Elinor's insensitivity "to Juliet's very real difficulties suggests not the wrongness but the inadequacy of her radicalism" which cannot adequately redress the "FEMALE DIFFICULTIES" of the working poor (79). In her resilience and determination, Juliet appears by contrast "more morally virtuous, and, thus, more powerful" than Elinor, whose revolutionary rhetoric proves ineffectual and unsympathetic to the trials of the working woman (Austin 262). Doody contends that while contemporary women writers "had shown their young lady workers as pitiable" for their "fall" into labour, Burney underscores the strength and virtue of her working heroine, "asking not if her *heroine* is to be pitied for having so to descend, but whether the *work* as at present organized is something which it is right to ask of other human beings" (355).

Burney's Romantic female wanderer

While emphasizing the connections between travel and travail, the novel also explores the possibilities of agency for the female wanderer. Like Staël's Corinne, Juliet is an itinerant figure whose wandering feeds her creativity. In considering

Corinne's influence as a figure of female autonomy, Yael Schlick makes the point that Staël's *improvisatrice* is "defined not only by her talent but by her enormous spatial freedom" (62). Corinne's autonomy and influence as a woman of genius are affirmed through her mobility, a metaphor for her role as a mediator across categories of linguistic and cultural difference (Peel and Sweet 206). But while Corinne's travel is voluntary, often pleasurable, and recounted through extended and lush descriptions of landscape and place, Juliet's itinerancy is compelled by historical circumstance and characterized by loneliness, entrapment, penury, and threats of sexual violence. Burney's wanderer does not enjoy the voluntary pedestrian travel that Robin Jarvis identifies as so central "to the emergence of a new form of masculine, middle-class self-fashioning" in 1780s and 90s Britain (155). While men of the middle and professional classes used walking as "a radical assertion of autonomy" against entrenched socioeconomic hierarchies in the Romantic period, Jarvis argues, women and members of the lower classes were excluded from this form of self-empowering pedestrianism (28). For these marginalized sectors of society, "travel in general was not a natural prerogative, . . . [and] geographical mobility was not the ready expression of their personal freedom" (155). Hinting at the associations between prostitution and female itinerancy, Croker echoes the social prejudice and moral anxiety surrounding women's mobility when he derides Juliet as "a most moveable person" (128).

In its portrait of exile, *The Wanderer* emphasizes the particular economic and physical vulnerability of the lone and penurious woman traveller, so that, as Lawrence remarks, "some of the pleasures we expect from genres with the journey as

their central trope – adventure, romance, epic – are withheld in this novel" (68). At the same time, however, Lawrence argues, "[the] topos of exile" in women's travel narratives "provides fictional opportunity to explore new forms of women's agency and power" (29). In this vein, *The Wanderer* elaborates its heroine's agency through her ability to create personally meaningful space in the British landscape, and to exert her creative and imaginative powers in claiming physical and psychic space for herself in an otherwise hostile environment. Schlick makes the case that Corinne "appealed to subsequent generations of feminists" because her "genius was revealed to be linked through and through to women's freedom of mobility" (62). *The Wanderer* bears out Schlick's assertion in this regard, demonstrating time and again that Juliet's creativity is nurtured and shaped by her exilic condition, despite and perhaps because of the obstacles she encounters as a female wanderer. Thus while her pedestrianism does not represent the assertion of freedom "from a culturally defined and circumscribed self," the freedom Jarvis ascribes to the middle-class male pedestrian (28), Juliet's itinerancy does create rare but powerful opportunities for palliative reflection, moral growth, and transcendence.

"Into the mazes of this intricate forest": Learning from the New Forest

The remarkable New Forest segment of *The Wanderer*, which occupies all of book 8 in the fourth volume, offers a concentrated instance of the way in which the novel establishes the heroine's agency as a female wanderer. In this section of the novel, Juliet wanders the New Forest's historically and nationally significant Crown land as an outsider, ignorant of its geography and people and determined first and

foremost to escape the pursuit of the French commissioner, who has crossed the Channel and traced Juliet as far as London at this point in the novel.[86] In contrast to the relative stasis of her life in Brighthelmstone and London, here Juliet walks unprotected across rural and sparsely populated land, covering an extended area of Hampshire over the course of several weeks in July and August 1794 (Figure 2).[87] The pastoral New Forest episode spatially and narratively bridges the action of the first three volumes, which largely focus on Juliet's trials as a working woman in the middle- and upper-class urban worlds of Brighthelmstone and London, with the climax and subsequent resolution of Juliet's story as an exile of the Revolution. This episode also metaphorically heals the novel's national and personal histories of violence and persecution, helping to restore Juliet to her identity as a Briton. As Doody observes, Juliet's passage through the New Forest temporally parallels the execution of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror in the summer of 1794, implying the climax of not only the violence of the Revolution but of the violence and

[86] In June 1789, Burney visited the New Forest, stopping at Lyndhurst, as part of the royal entourage on a journey to Weymouth to celebrate George III's "recovery" following an intense bout of insanity. Burney records the journey in her diaries, praising "the tranquillity of the life, and the beauty of the country" but complaining of "the fatigue of having no maid, yet being always in readiness to play the part of an attendant myself" in her capacity as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, a position she held from 1786 to 1791 (*Diary and Letters* 312).

[87] Without a map or any local knowledge, Juliet enters the New Forest on foot, walking seven miles on the high road from Romsey, until she finds refuge at the cottage of "a good old dame" and her adult children and small grandchildren at the edge of the New Forest (669). This would place her in the northeast corner of the New Forest, in the area of Cadnam. After leaving the cottage, she walks further into the Forest, but the novel offers no place names or directions to help map the heroine's route. The narrator next provides some detail when Juliet arrives at the Zimmers's "considerable farm, upon the borders of the New Forest" (689-90), which could possibly be on the northwest perimeter of the Forest, near Woodgreen. When she departs the Zimmers's by twilight, she wanders "once again" into "the midst of the New Forest" and comes across Dame Fairfield's cottage after dark, attracted by a light (704-05). That would place Juliet to the south or southwest, and no further south than Fritham given the relatively short duration of her walk (i.e. no more than three hours). When she leaves Dame Fairfield's, she attempts to walk on the high road in the direction away from Salisbury (723) so as to evade her pursuers, who have traced her as far as Romsey (721), but she ends up at the "capital inn" where she is nevertheless found by the pilot and the commissioner (724-26). I speculate that Juliet is discovered at an inn located somewhere between Fritham and Lyndhurst, right in the heart of the New Forest.

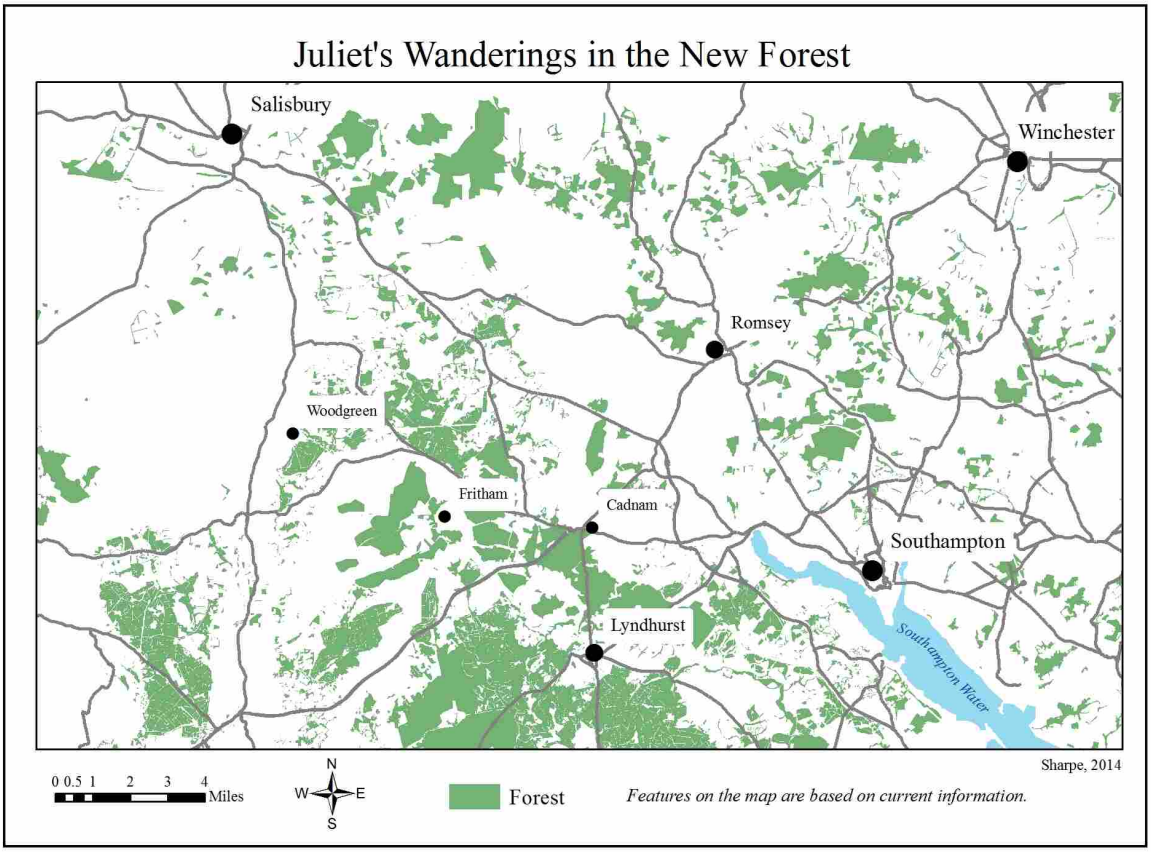

Figure 2 Map of Juliet's Wanderings in the New Forest

sexual coercion that haunt Juliet's existence (318). Juliet's discovery and near capture by her commissioner husband at a New Forest inn mark the climax of her persecution, and precipitate the denouement of the novel in the fifth volume. Only after gaining an intimate knowledge of this social and natural landscape does Juliet begin to reconcile herself with the British nation, what she comes to describe by the novel's conclusion as "the country of my birth, my heart, and my pride!" (Burney 749).

The New Forest provides the canvas on which this process of national reconciliation takes place. In a compelling article on *The Wanderer*'s New Forest episode, Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook argues that the Crown forest functions "as a screen" on which Burney projects "images of a new society, dramas of reconciliation and transformation, and fantasies of personal, professional, and political identity" in the post-Revolutionary period (210). Cook reads the New Forest as a space in which Burney revises and domesticates the violent "royal history traditionally associated with this terrain" and, in turn, constructs a "unified 'British' identity" defined by respect for property rights, monarchical rule, and patriarchal ownership (208). The dark history of the New Forest originates in the time of William the Conqueror, who claimed the New Forest as royal land in 1079 and imposed monarchical prerogative over hunting rights through a violent and oppressive legal code. In his 1819 travel guide to Hampshire, John Bullar describes in vivid detail the feudal system that regulated common access to Forest game and land:

> The forest laws, in ancient times, may be said, like those of Draco, to have been "written in blood." So tenaecious [sic] were our royal Nimrods of the

> exclusive privilege of worrying to death the devoted objects of their pastime, that, by the laws of Canute, it was ordained that if any freeman should "course or hunt a beast or the forest, either casually or willfully, so that, by the swiftness of the course, the beast should pant, and be put out of breath, he should forfeit ten shillings to the king; but if any bondman should be guilty of the same offence, he should *lose his skin*" . . . These rigid and tyrannical laws continued in full force during many reigns. (25-26)

Throughout the early modern period, Forest commoners, labourers, and landholders continued to be "subject to a highly elaborated body of law specific to the forests that governed property and hunting rights" and that defined the Forest as "symbolic terrain shaped by a feudal understanding of kingship" (Cook 200). In *The Wanderer*, Cook argues, Burney sets out to revise this past through the figure of George III, a monarch who cultivated his public image as "a royal gentleman-proprietor" and a man of domestic virtue, so much so that satirists dubbed him "Farmer George" due to his interest in agricultural improvement (197). By demarcating the New Forest as the rightful property of the paternal George III, Cook argues, Burney claims a place for her aristocratic heroine within a benevolent patriarchal order, a "new narrative landscape . . . everywhere signposted by a paternalist authority that alone guarantees genealogical and national identity" (209). In Cook's assessment, *The Wanderer* is accordingly "not a story about, or one that calls for, women's emancipation from patriarchy through equal access to the means of economic self-determination," but instead a narrative of the heroine's "return to patriarchal protection" on British soil

(204-05). The New Forest episode, Cook concludes, creates a fantasy of virtuous industry and benign patriarchal rule that "works to make plausible the denouement of Burney's plot: Juliet's enlightened reconstruction of her own social identity as the daughter of an aristocratic British family" (208).

While I agree with Cook's assessment that the New Forest episode aims to revise a national history of violence and that it, moreover, lays the foundation for the novel's narrative resolution, I question her assertion that *The Wanderer* depicts the heroine's journey into the New Forest as a return to patriarchal protection. Instead, I read the Forest as a liminal and fluid space, distanced from the urban working world and its commodification of creative talent, in which the heroine is able to exercise her imaginative powers, find spiritual renovation, and position herself as a woman of culture and learning in relation to a "georgic world" of labour (208). While initially entering the Forest "with no guide but fear" (Burney 674) and facing repeated instances of sexual harassment from "countrymen" (668), Juliet nevertheless learns to correct her perspective in the course of her wanderings and interactions with local residents, transforming fear into a rational appreciation of the natural environment and rural life. Her labyrinthine journey "into the mazes of this intricate forest" (675) augurs a period of self-reflection, learning, and imaginative renovation, in which the novel represents Juliet as a Gothic heroine whose aimless and solitary itinerancy demands that she see the British landscape and her place in it with new perspective. Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that the aimless wanderings of Radcliffe's Emily St. Aubert and Ellena Rosalba are central to those heroines' respective moral, intellectual, and emotional development: wandering helps each young woman escape

submission to patriarchal forces and, moreover, lets Providence intervene to guide her to her "true" path, leading to love and family (105). In a similar manner, Juliet charts her own cartography of the New Forest through her ingenuity and sympathy and, in the process, asserts her agency and creates a sense of personal attachment to this important region in the British national imaginary. Juliet learns, in particular, to critically examine the Forest's seemingly Edenic landscape, counterbalancing its transcendent natural beauty with the rural poverty, violence, and injustice that she witnesses in the lives of the locals. Cook suggests that, for Juliet, the Forest's "natural pedagogy is soon challenged" by what this place "actually teaches about British society" (205). Through a series of Gothic encounters, Juliet turns moments of cultural alienation into insight and understanding regarding Britain's larger social and economic landscape. With an imagination equal to that of Radcliffe's Emily St. Aubert or Austen's Catherine Morland, Juliet, in one instance, mistakes poachers for murderous thieves, escaping their "den," where she had sought shelter for the night, after finding smeared (deer) blood (Burney 679). Only later does she come to understand from Dame Fairfield, a poacher's wife, that poaching and smuggling provide a subsistence income for some of the Forest's poorest families, reflecting an illegal economy that has emerged in a bid to circumvent Forest law.[88] While Juliet is horrified at this clandestine activity, she is "full of compassion" for Dame Fairfield

[88] Darryl Jones draws connections between Juliet's blackface at the opening of *The Wanderer* and her subsequent encounter with the deer poachers in the New Forest, arguing that the novel creates parallels between the heroine's disguises and the poachers' criminality as a metaphor for the subordination of women in British society. Juliet's blackface, Jones suggests, functions as a subtle reference to *Caleb Williams* and the Black Act, which Godwin invokes in that novel. The Black Act was a law "passed against deer-poachers on royal land" but more widely applied to anyone caught committing a criminal act in disguise (16). An unwelcome alien in disguise, "Juliet opens the novel as the symbolic victim of the same law as that broken by the cottagers near its close," Jones suggests: "Burney's implication here, then, is that the condition of women in 1790s England . . . is that of the (literally) disinherited and dispossessed, of the enslaved, and also of the criminalised" (16-17).

(713), whose "genuine and virtuous simplicity" (715), maternal affection, and defence of monarchical prerogative over Forest game position her as a model of virtuous rural industry.

Juliet also escapes sexual assault by two young labourers by using her quick thinking and bravery to face her assailants with "assumed firmness," pretending to have business with a local farmer and recruiting her would-be attackers as guides (689). In this scene, Gemmeke notes, the heroine "proves that she has learned how to overcome obstacles" and can fend for herself in utterly unfamiliar terrain (244). This fearful encounter, moreover, quickly turns into an occasion for Juliet's education in the daily lives of the Forest's agricultural labourers. After the two young men lead her to refuge at the Zimmers's farm and Juliet begins to observe the monotony and mental impoverishment of rural labour, she realizes the "fallacy" of pastoral poetry: "'tis the writer who has never tried" the lot of the peasant, she concludes, who glorifies pastoral life (700). The farmer's children, "[accustomed] from their infancy to beautiful scenery, . . . looked at it as a thing of course, without pleasure or admiration," and without the leisure and aesthetic education to objectify or appreciate the landscape, while the "laborious" adults have no time or care to make a study of nature (698). Juliet, by contrast, applies her knowledge of literature and art to reframe her perspective, trying to see "what the peasant, what the figure *in* the landscape, can see," as Doody suggests (360). Thus although Juliet finds the farmer's daughters uneducated and "indifferent" (Burney 696), she seeks "their good will" and admires their industry, "not sorry to learn what were their occupations; conscious that a dearth of useful resources, was a principal cause, in adversity, of FEMALE DIFFICULTIES"

(693). When Juliet chats with them between their tasks, she "received them with an urbanity that gave such a zest to their little visits, that it served to quicken their work, that they might quicken their return" (693). Although Juliet comes to understand that her "sex" is "here wholly against her; and youth and beauty, those powerful combatants of misanthropy! were necessarily without influence" in this world of rural labour (696), she nevertheless combines her liberal education, cultivated manners, and experience as a working woman to enter into sympathy with these farmwomen.

Like Radcliffe's wandering heroines, Juliet thus adopts a position of disinterested spectatorship in relation to the social and natural landscape. Fiona Price suggests that, in Radcliffe's novels, "[viewing] landscape is connected both with sympathy and self-control," helping to inform the heroine's "increasingly complex experiences of mankind" (86). Although "landscape in Radcliffe is often intimately linked with psychological distress" for the heroine, Price concludes that it "ultimately has a cathartic influence that encourages disinterestedness" and rational distance, promoting the heroine's moral and intellectual autonomy (87). *The Wanderer* explores the cathartic influence of the rural landscape in a key scene in the New Forest, in which Juliet begins to recover from her fear of immediate pursuit and study her surroundings:

> No sooner were her spirits, in some degree, calmed, than . . . her eyes began to recover their functions; and the moment that she cast them around with abated anxiety, she was so irresistibly struck with the prospect, and invigorated by the purity of the ambient air, which exhaled odoriferous salubrity, that, rising fresh as from the balmy restoration of undisturbed

> repose, she mounted a hillock to take a general survey of the spot, and thought all paradise was opened to her view. (675-76)

As Juliet stands on this prospect "in soul-expanding contemplation," marveling at "the noble aspect of the richly variegated woods" in the sun, she communes with the Divine and "[composes] her spirits and [recruits] her strength," preparing herself to recommence her trek (676-77). In this scene, Gemmeke summarizes, "Juliet's suffering is rewarded and her faith confirmed by a moment of epiphany" in which she is struck by her own mortality (273). Even as Juliet is disabused of some of her fantasies of georgic life during her journey through the New Forest, she also experiences necessary spiritual and imaginative renovation in this place, an outlet for emotional release hitherto denied to Burney's long-suffering heroine.

Lawrence helps elucidate the agential aspects of wandering for Burney's heroine when she observes that in male-centred travel narratives, "the female is mapped as a place on the itinerary of the male journey," as a place of stability associated with home and domestic virtue (2). Anything but a "mapped place," the exiled Juliet, akin to Radcliffe's heroines, is continuously displaced, faced with a series of unfamiliar prospects and potential hazards in a foreign land. Yet Burney's accomplished heroine applies her creative and imaginative powers in order to find a place for herself in the British nation, a place of influence that transcends the confines of the domestic sphere and underscores the importance of female creative labour within the realm of public, economic life. Her art-making and wandering supply the contiguous and constitutive activities that reconcile Juliet to the land of her birth and, moreover, challenge the cultural and sexual prejudices that would deny this

exemplary working heroine a place in British society. Juliet's itinerant creativity thus introduces new perspectives on Britain's social, economic, and physical landscape in the post-Revolutionary period, positioning the artist heroine at the heart of *The Wanderer*'s vision of national reform and transnational reconciliation in the early nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Jane Campion's 2009 period film *Bright Star* fictionalizes the fervent and brief romance that bloomed between Romantic poet John Keats (Ben Winshaw) and his eighteen year-old Hampstead neighbour, Fanny Brawne (Abbie Cornish), during the final years of Keats's life. While the film's narrative trajectory charts the maturation of John and Fanny's romantic attachment, Campion's film also brings a parallel narrative into focus: that of the artist heroine's development. A skilled embroiderer and seamstress, gifted in textile work, Fanny not only carries the film in terms of its narrative perspective – it is through her eyes that we observe Keats, the poet and man, in daily life – but she is also the film's central creative subject. Fanny, her embroidery work, and her hand-stitched clothes dominate *Bright Star*'s *mise-en-scene,* externalizing on screen the heroine's subjectivity, growth, and desire. Interlacing John and Fanny's romance with their common search for creative self-realization, *Bright Star* weaves two interdependent narratives and, in the process, draws visual and aesthetic connections between John's poetic craft and Fanny's domestic craft. As Sonya Mladenova remarks of Campion's film, "Keats's poetry, which would usually represent historical value related to a male-dominated sphere of expression, is juxtaposed to Fanny's stitched creations. The two coexist and cross-pollinate, defying both the historical and patriarchal order by escaping hierarchical relations" (18).[89] Margarida Esteves Pereira likewise argues that *Bright Star* makes a point of "opposing traditional dichotomies" through Fanny's pride in her skills in sewing and design, thus challenging "the established hierarchies of value that

[89] In a comment that recalls the wandering artist heroine of Burney's novel, Mladenova also argues that "Fanny's stitching and wandering about" Hampstead Heath "become an aesthetic expression of her desire, a potent force of creation and sensation" (18).

stereotypical gender roles call forth" (163). Fanny's love of fashion may make her a subject of derision for Keats's friend and fellow poet Charles Brown (Paul Schneider), who mockingly greets her as "the very well-stitched Miss Brawne, in all her detail." But she possesses and, indeed, articulates confidence in her art: "My stitching has more merit and admirers than your two scribblings put together," she tells Keats and Brown, "*and* I can make money from it." In her commitment to industry, her creative vision, and her spirited independence, Campion's Fanny Brawne incarnates the professionally accomplished heroine in contemporary British culture.

Today, visitors to Keats House in Hampstead can view reproductions of the nineteenth-century fashion plates that the historical Fanny Brawne collected from British and European magazines and scrapbooked between 1812 and 1863. Displayed throughout the house, Brawne's personal effects, including the almandine engagement ring she received from Keats, clearly offer an attraction for visitors to the museum. Since the release of Campion's film and the concurrent publication of the collected poems and letters in *So Bright and Delicate: Love Letters and Poems of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* (which includes an introduction by Campion), Brawne and her connection to Keats have received increased critical and popular attention, and contributed to what Toby R. Benis identifies as a growing body of "recent film engagements with the history and figures of the Romantic period" (183).[90] Campion's *Bright Star* and its reception, I suggest, also speak to the broader and continued interest in the role that female accomplishment and decorative art-making have

[90] Alongside *Bright Star*, Benis also includes *Amazing Grace* (2006) and *The Duchess* (2008) in this body of recent films.

historically played in shaping sociocultural ideals of femininity. Representations of female accomplishment, Juliette Wells observes, have featured prominently in several screen adaptations of Austen's fiction produced over the last twenty years, including the 1995 miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* (Dir. Simon Langton), the feature films *Pride and Prejudice* (Dir. Joe Wright, 2005) and *Bride and Prejudice* (Dir. Gurinder Chadha, 2004) and, I would add, the 2008 BBC production of *Sense and Sensibility* (Dir. John Alexander).

Wells argues that this emphasis on female accomplishment and performance "indicate[s] an effort on the part of screenwriters, filmmakers, and actors to call into question present-day ideals of femininity by means of Austen" ("Performance and Gender" 302). As Wells summarizes, "[the] appeal of Austen films to contemporary audiences has been variously explained in terms of viewers' desire for old-fashioned romance, their attraction to witty heroines, the eye candy of 'heritage' backdrops and elaborate costumes, and simple escapism." But these films also appeal to audiences, and especially to women, for a very different reason: "the impulse to resist the version of 'perfect' femininity promoted in our own culture" ("Performance and Gender" 316). Wells notes that in the twenty-first century, "female accomplishment" is assessed according to women's academic and professional achievement, thinness, personal appearance, and proficiency in a range of artistic, athletic, and philanthropic pursuits ("Performance and Gender" 317). Her observation recalls the thesis of Courtney E. Martin's 2007 feminist polemic *Perfect Girls, Starving Daughters: How the Quest for Perfection is Harming Young Women*, in which Martin argues that the "insatiable hunger" for perfection expressed by contemporary young American

women reflects "a fundamental distrust that we deserve to be on this earth in the shape we are in" (6). The Sisyphean quest to be effortlessly "accomplished, brilliant, beautiful, witty," Martin contends, manifests the desire to embody the cultural paragon of femininity in the present moment, and often at the cost of deep physical and psychological suffering (6).

Popular interest in the materiality and mores of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture, typified by the vogue for period films and historical literature inspired by Austen's oeuvre, intersects with the twenty-first century feminist project of interrogating historical models of femininity and the gender-specific practices (such as handicraft) that have been traditionally marginalized within art history, normative aesthetics, and, indeed, feminist thought itself. Published in 2009, for example, Jennifer Forest's richly illustrated craft manual *Jane Austen's Sewing Box* gives fans of Regency-period fiction detailed instructions on producing the crafts and decorative art objects represented in Austen's novels, including a muff and tippet, a workbag, transparencies, and netted purses. While drawing on Austen's novels as an important point of cultural reference, Forest's book also includes an historical introduction that situates decorative art-making within the social and economic contexts of the early nineteenth century, and dispels the view that these practices represented the mere "gilding on the cage" of leisured, provincial life. In her 2003 third-wave feminist manifesta and craft manual *Stitch 'n Bitch: The Knitter's Handbook*, Debbie Stoller, in a similar vein, specifically responds to those second-wave feminists of the 1960s and 70s who vilified handicraft, housework, and housewives as evidence of female oppression, and who "seemed to think that only

those things that men did, or had done, were worthwhile" (7). "Betty Friedan and other likeminded feminists had overlooked an important aspect of knitting when they viewed it simply as part of women's societal obligation to serve everyone around them," Stoller writes, "they had forgotten that knitting served the knitter as well" (9). Exploring the meaning of handicraft for the practitioner, Stoller recalls watching her grand-mother and great-aunts knit at family gatherings:

> their purposeful motions gave them a focused air of self-containment, an earthy solidity. They were, after all, women who had learned their crafts as children, and who had practiced these skills throughout their lives – before and after the birth of children, the loss of husbands, and through two world wars. (3)

Attention to handicraft and do-it-yourself projects in present-day feminist thought and politics speaks to the continued centrality of these practices in the constitution and performance of gender identities, and underscores the significance of domestic, seemingly banal activities in the negotiation of broader social relations and hierarchies. In *Novel Craft*, Schaffer argues that, with the advent of mass production, domestic handicraft came to occupy "a defensive, reactionary posture" by the late nineteenth century, supplanted in consumer culture by cheaply produced goods (24). Since then, she suggests, domestic handicrafts have "continued to provide an alternative for those disaffected from contemporary aesthetic and economic norms, making it, perhaps, inevitable that" these practices "would acquire a countercultural following in the twenty-first century" (57). Along these lines, a 2013 article by Marianne Kirby in the popular feminist magazine *Bitch* examines the current

"renaissance of interest in craft and traditional homemaking skills," such as urban farming, knitting, and gardening (29). In face of what Kirby identifies as homesteading's cooptation within mainstream culture (e.g., by celebrity "homemakers" such as Martha Stewart), Kirby points to the historical importance of these skills in helping socially marginalized people, including women, create and maintain spaces of economic self-sufficiency and personal agency.

Polish or Work? Four Women Novelists and the Professionalization of Accomplishment, 1796-1814 brings fresh critical methodologies to bear in reassessing Romantic Britain's pervasive debates surrounding women's socioeconomic roles in the private and public spheres, their cultural roles as the consumers of art, and their creative, moral, and intellectual agency as the makers of it. This study gives historical perspective to these persistent debates by recognizing traditionally feminized, denigrated artistic practices as the means by which four popular women novelists interrogate the ideologies of domestic womanhood and separate spheres and, more specifically, reposition middle-class women in relation to public, economic life and the world of work. The ideas for this project began to crystallize after I saw *Bright Star* in theatres in 2009. At the time, I was re-reading *The Italian*, one of my favourite novels of the 1790s, and I noticed, for the first time, that Radcliffe's heroine was a gifted embroiderer. As images of Campion's Fanny Brawne and her stitched pleats filled my mind, this detail in Radcliffe's Gothic world came into clear focus, demanding consideration.

The research conducted in the course of this study has subsequently brought me into contact with a splendidly rich body of evidence, in the form of material

cultural objects housed at museums and galleries (shell work vases, work boxes, embroidered pictures, paper collages), previously unfamiliar literary texts, such as Brunton's *Self-Control* (which remains the most pleasant surprise of my doctoral work) and Wakefield's *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, and personal correspondence, including Mary Linwood's letters, archived at the National Art Library, in London. Collectively, this material impressed me with the ubiquity and popularity which domestic art-making enjoyed in Romantic culture, and I came to increasingly appreciate its centrality in women's literary production of this same period, and especially in the context of the contemporaneous debates over female accomplishment. I quickly realized that presiding critical approaches in literary studies, and namely the figure of the domestic woman, proved woefully limiting in helping me understand the complex social, economic, and personal significations of these practices in women's cultural production of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This has led me to reframe what have long been read as the polishing, ornamental pursuits of leisured life as, in fact, constitutive activities demanding skill, industry, application, and emotional investment. In the process, I have challenged a number of deep-rooted assumptions in literary studies, art history, and women's history, not least of which are the beliefs that domesticity is antithetical to work and that the history of handicraft has been one of unequivocal denigration. My concept of professionalized accomplishment has let me approach the texts under study from a unique perspective, and read Brunton's *Self-Control*, for example, a text so often derided as merely conservative and didactic, as a landmark feminist appeal for women's self-realization through work in early nineteenth-century fiction.

This study has been personally meaningful on a number of levels, but perhaps, above all else, for the reason that it has given me the opportunity to reflect upon the way in which historical ideals of accomplished, industrious femininity, underpinned by the moralizing ideologies of work and self-improvement, inform present-day models of womanhood in Western culture and, indeed, my own Sisyphean struggles for perfection. I hope that my research contributes to ongoing reassessments, across the disciplines, of the complex and interdependent role that artistic labour, economics, and aesthetics play in constituting gender identities, and in shaping women's actual experiences and cultural representations of the lived world.

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