

## The Sister Arts: Textile Crafts between Paint, Print, and Practice

In the last few decades of the eighteenth century, a very specific kind of familial portraiture emerged. Portraits such as Sir Joshua Reynolds's *The Ladies Waldegrave* (fig. 1, 1781) were typical of a genre of images in which young women, specifically sisters, were shown to practice an interrelated set of polite accomplishments including drawing, needlework, reading, and playing music.<sup>1</sup> Yet the cultural intersections implied by these works goes beyond a witty play upon sister arts undertaken by sister sitters. In fact, a far more complex notion of sister arts is simultaneously present in such portraits: an intimate and implicit relationship between paint, print, and practice.

Accomplishments featured consistently within genre prints, painted portraiture, and conduct literature throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. John Burton's didactic text *Lectures on female education and manners* (1793), for example, expounded the acquisition of accomplishments 'that will contribute to render you serviceable in domestic, and agreeable in social life', and would transform their practitioners into 'obedient Daughters, faithful Wives and prudent Mothers', three related feminine identities whose construction this article will seek to interrogate.<sup>2</sup> Chief amongst such pursuits was a set of related yet distinctive textile-based practices that included both traditionally defined forms of needlework such as sewing, working on a tambour, and embroidery, as well as textile practices such as lace-making and spinning, which often appear simultaneously within such representations. In eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain all girls learned plain sewing; basic stitches that would allow them to make and repair textiles. Beyond this, the complexity and variation of stitches learnt was dependant on the student's social and economic status: girls of lower classes were expected to possess a basic knowledge of sewing for housewifery and even paid work; while those from middling and upper class backgrounds also learned a variety of ornamental stitches, known as fancy work.<sup>3</sup>

Focusing on the second half of the eighteenth century and the earliest decades of the nineteenth, this article examines a particular moment in the history of women's education, characterised by the so-called 'accomplishment debates', on the one hand, and the emergence of newly diverse range of women's creative practices, on the other. These debates were articulated in some of the period's most significant publications on the topic of women's instruction, wherein radical and conservative commentators alike argued for and against their acquisition.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, this was a time which saw the publication of Rousseau's *Emile* in English in 1763 and Dr John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* in 1761, both of which offered

influential models for women's education in which needlework was foregrounded. As the eighteenth century progressed however, textile crafts were subject to increasingly vigorous critique. As Carol Shiner Wilson affirms, by the 1790s accomplishments 'became a code word for dangerous, idle, upper-class pastimes of women who were self-absorbed and neglectful of their families'.<sup>5</sup> This argument was perhaps most vociferously rehearsed in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), in which she uncompromisingly criticised needlework as contracting women's 'faculties more than any other [employment] that could have been chosen for them'.<sup>6</sup> By 1815, Mary Lamb would write in the *British Lady's Magazine* that 'needle-work and intellectual improvement are naturally in a state of warfare', yet this was also a period in which didactic tracts by reformers such as Anna Letitia Barbauld once again expounded the virtues of textile-based craft production, in part through comparison with the newer craft practices that were in vogue by the latter decades of the century.<sup>7</sup>

As Ann Bermingham has charted, the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries heralded a period of unprecedented variety in women's accomplishments, with craft emporiums like Rudolf Ackermann's Temple of Fancy (est. 1795) providing women with both the materials and instructions for practicing such art forms.<sup>8</sup> As various kinds of needlework had been a central part of women's education since at least the seventeenth century, this new range of creative pursuits sharply contrasted with this more established educative mode, resulting in educational tracts that were, as we will see, increasingly concerned with the utility of the crafts in which women invested their time, and how this related to the class and status of their practitioners.<sup>9</sup>

Needlework may accordingly be characterised as a site of debate, a discursive locus wherein the qualities of appropriate and inappropriate femininity were sketched out and redefined. While much of the extant literature on the debates has focused upon mapping the intricacies of these arguments, this article focuses on representations of needlework between print and paint, the very mechanisms by which this discourse operated.<sup>10</sup> Yet as Amanda Vickery and Claire Hivet have shown, this discourse was anything but consistent. Vickery rightly calls the debate on accomplishments 'contradictory and often incoherent', noting that there was 'no unanimity even on what counted as an accomplishment, let alone whether they should be promoted, tolerated or banned'.<sup>11</sup> The complexities of these debates are only echoed by the multifarious forms of textile production undertaken during this period, whose diversity has resulted in a uniquely inconsistent historiography that might variously position such pursuits as 'a tool of oppression' or an 'instrument of liberation'; 'a prison sentence' or

‘an escape’.<sup>12</sup> For example, in her germinal text *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984), Rozsika Parker presented the classic formulation of an ideal femininity as inculcated by, and indivisible from needlework.<sup>13</sup> In so doing she argued that in the eighteenth-century needlework not only essential to the establishment of standard feminine roles such as mother and wife, but that it could also function as a vital creative output for women.

Following Parker, scholars have emphasised both the centrality and mutability of needlework and textile practices for women during this period. Recent work by Serena Dyer, Chloe Wigston Smith, Jennie Batchelor, and Amanda Vickery, amongst others has sought to complicate the histories of women’s work and accomplishments. Dyer’s models of material life-writing and literacy have established textile production and manipulation as potent sites of female agency and self-fashioning, while Batchelor and Wigston Smith have analysed intersections between women’s identities, dress, and labour between text and textile on both a British and a global stage.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Vickery has offered an important reassessment of women’s craft practices during this period, arguing that ‘scholarly understanding of women’s domestic practices has been over-determined by the negative interpretations of handicrafts’ that were a direct result of the fierce discourse on women’s education.<sup>15</sup> Together these texts have offered a nuanced history of textile crafts during this period, taking into account both women’s personal and material lives, as well as the broader intellectual discourses that arose around these pursuits, both positive and negative.

Yet despite this notable body of work dealing with both material examples of needlework as well as its literary representations, its appearance within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century visual culture has received comparatively scant attention. Whilst art historians such as Marcia Pointon have convincingly argued for the semantic potential of various forms of sartorial accessory included within eighteenth-century British portraiture—including wigs, seals, buttons, and stockings—objects that suggest learning or accomplishment are more often than not taken as a form of visual signposting that straightforwardly depicts the portrayed as proficient in the area represented.<sup>16</sup> In her discussion of Reynolds’s portrait of the Waldegrave sisters, for example, Gill Perry refers to sewing merely as one aspect of the artist’s generic ‘repertoire of intimate domestic activities’, thereby neglecting to explore the deeper significance of their portrayed enactment of these skills.<sup>17</sup> This article accordingly seeks to add to the complex historiography around textile crafts outlined above through an examination of these overlooked depictions, establishing their reciprocal centrality within an

intermedial and representational model of women's creative production that related to a culturally and deliberately constructed form of femininity.

The lack of critical attention given to such images is perhaps indicative of a broader discomfort surrounding the prescriptive and potentially duplicitous model of femininity advocated within the conduct literature of the period. Indeed, concerns that such texts provide only highly mediated constructions of femininity can be seen in Kate Retford's warning to view the relationship between conduct literature and portraiture with 'due circumspection'.<sup>18</sup> However, as the literary historian Nancy Armstrong has contended, it is perhaps the very 'lack of what we today consider "real" information about the female subject' found in conduct literature that makes such works essential to an understanding of how prescribed gender roles and identities were disseminated and inculcated within eighteenth-century society.<sup>19</sup>

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), Armstrong argues for the emergence of 'a figure of female subjectivity', that characterises conduct and advice literature.<sup>20</sup> Although this 'restrictive model of domesticity' has rightly been criticized by scholars such as Harriet Guest and Batchelor for presenting only one version of eighteenth-century femininity, Armstrong's conception of conduct literature as an often formally unvarying mode that presented 'a specific configuration of sexual features' remains a useful framework for thinking about exactly how this very particular typology of femininity was constructed.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, for the purposes of the present article it is Armstrong who most usefully figures these texts as inherently repetitive, arguing that they are typified by an unvarying 'grammar' arising 'under the sheer force of repetition' within such works.<sup>22</sup> In her suggestive use of the term 'grammar', Armstrong invites reconsideration of the monotonous language of conduct literature, presenting its repetitive nature—and therefore, the constancy with which activities such as needlework were cited within that literature—as central to its cultivation of the ideal, domestic woman. While the consistent quality of conduct literature has been much maligned, the recurrent patterns that characterise the genre can in fact be viewed as indicative of their cultural currency, evoking literary historian Allan H. Pasco's arguments regarding representational repetition, which he suggests can reveal the 'social realities of [a given] period'.<sup>23</sup>

The fashion historian Patrik Steorn has also emphasised the importance of such 'migrating motifs'—consistently repeated tropes that appear across various genres—within eighteenth-century print culture.<sup>24</sup> Steorn argues that 'images were not static', but in fact stimulated 'a number of creative responses' as they migrated across genres.<sup>25</sup> Following

historians of print culture who have promoted the notion of ‘textual fluidity’, Steorn suggests that instability was also a central characteristic of eighteenth-century visual culture, as defined by ‘productive acts of reception and appropriation’.<sup>26</sup> The fluidity that characterises images of needlework may therefore be seen as a manifestation of this open character of eighteenth-century representation, a context of reuse and repetition that can be productively situated alongside the arguments for the importance of such repeated elements put forward by Pasco. Relating Pasco’s and Steorn’s complementary models to Armstrong’s notion of a repetitive, idealising ‘grammar’ of femininity then, helps us both to conceptualise the frequency with which textile crafts were cited in both text and image during this period, as well as to recognise their cultural significance as a forum for the discussion of respectable feminine behaviour.

Focusing on representations of textile crafts also encourages consideration of the ramifications of intervisuality and intertextuality upon our understanding of portraiture as a discrete genre of artistic practice. As we will see, portraiture’s reciprocal engagement with the moralising language employed by conduct literature and genre imagery, as well as its public display at institutions like the Royal Academy and subsequent dissemination in printed formats, encouraged an association between the visual demonstration of manual skills and that of respectable female behaviour, implicating it within the repetitive grammar of femininity identified above. Portraiture that employed representations of needlework and its accessories therefore conflated the identity of its sitters with these narrative characterisations of virtuous femininity, exploiting the new means of public display, the proliferation of didactic literature, and the flourishing print culture that characterised the eighteenth century to do so. When conceptualised in this way, textile crafts and their representations become a crucial locus in the formation of a late-century ideal femininity in which women’s accomplishments took centre stage.

This article accordingly explores this ‘grammar of female subjectivity’, following the migration of its images between print and paint, which emerge as co-dependent mediums subscribed to a repetitive language of domestic femininity. Examining critically neglected portraits, genre prints, and examples of conduct literature from the critical timeframe identified above, it uncovers the role of textile-work in the construction of three respectable femininities grounded within instruction, industry, and eligibility. Paying attention to the interrelationships of text, image, and object, it contends that a focus on the existence of textile crafts between these cultural forms is central to understanding their part in the creation of a shared language that validated and promoted specific figurations of the eighteenth-century woman.

### *I. Instruction*

As Elizabeth Helme's assertion that 'an informed mother [was] the most proper and attractive of all teachers' in her 1804 text *Maternal Instruction* suggests, the education of one's daughters was viewed as a central maternal task.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, numerous conduct books were aimed at pedagogically engaged mothers. John Moir's *Female Tuition; or, an Address to Mothers, in the Education of Daughters* (1786) asked its readers 'what daughter [would] not regard her maternal accomplishments with a mixture of emulation and gratitude?', while Charles Allen's epistolary tract *The polite lady; or, a course of female education* (1779), similarly claimed to have been 'originally written for the private instruction of a daughter'.<sup>28</sup> Physical examples of needlework also affirm the enduring importance of a mother's role in the education of her daughters throughout this period. In 1789, the nine year-old Mary Ann Body completed a sampler in silk cross-stitch on a simple woollen backing cloth, now housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Its embroidered text constitutes a poignant statement of commitment to her mother's tutelage, reading:

Dear Mother I am young and cannot show,  
Such work as I to your goodness owe,  
Be pleased to smile on this my endeavour,  
I'll strive to learn and be obedient ever.<sup>29</sup>

A later sampler, this time from 1820 and also in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, features a variation of the very same lines of prose stitched by Body thirty years earlier.<sup>30</sup> Like Body, the sampler's maker implores the mother-viewer to 'Cast but a smile on this my first endeavour', before asserting her lasting deference, avowing that she too will 'strive to mend and be obedient ever'.<sup>31</sup> Relating women's work to a girl's obedience in later life, the phrase is derived from William Markham's *An Introduction to Spelling and Reading English* (which by 1738 was already in its fifth edition), and consistently appeared in spelling and conduct manuals and on samplers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>32</sup> By literally sampling verses from popular educational texts, the samplers' verses reflect the interrelationship between the forms of didacticism adopted by conduct literature and the language found in the objects that it suggested that women produce; a highly circular dialogue of shared terminology and characterisation in which maternal tutelage was central.

This intermedial rhetoric was reinforced visually within genre prints such as John Raphael Smith's engraving *A Wife/Une Femme Mariée*, published in 1791.<sup>33</sup> The print, which is typical of images produced as part of what scholars have termed the 'cult of maternity', depicts a young wife and mother absorbed in her needlework while watching her two young children.<sup>34</sup> As she sews, her daughter plays with a fashionably attired doll and her son is engrossed in the pages of a book; each captivated by an activity wholly befitting their gender and role within the family. Though the titular wife of the print is not directly teaching her daughter the skills requisite for needlework, her careful housewifery sets an exemplary precedent for her child to follow. Typifying the idea that a mother's own conduct would influence that of her children, the print functions as a visual equivalent to the kind of generalised and suggestively didactic images of the maternal pedagogue that appeared throughout contemporary conduct literature and portraiture, and which similarly employed stock formulations of instructive and exemplary mothers.<sup>35</sup>

Henry Kingsbury's mezzotint *Maternal Amusement* (fig. 2), which reproduces James Northcote's now lost double portrait of Elizabeth and Mary Smith, is testament to the migration of the narrative of maternal instruction between cultural forms. Produced around 1783, Kingsbury's print depicts a seated mother, Elizabeth Smith, who turns from her domestic employment to entertain her young daughter Mary. Like Raphael Smith's print, *Maternal Amusement* plays upon the associations between the instructive and exemplary mother, with the print's caption, 'By gentle arts the mind incline / And Pleasure with Instruction Join' reinforcing the close association between enjoyment, the 'maternal amusement' of the print's title, and education, the 'maternal instruction' advocated by writers such as Helme. Further to this epigram, Elizabeth Smith's position as maternal pedagogue is also signalled through the presence of a number of textile-work implements and accoutrements within the scene, which include a tambour set on the table, scissors, and a workbasket hanging from Elizabeth's chair. Significantly, these are the same tools that appear in John Aikin and Anna Letitia Barbauld's didactic series of moralising tales *Evenings at Home; or, the Juvenile Budget opened* (1792-6), whose personification of female domestic virtue was a maternal figure accompanied by the trappings of virtuous needlework. Aikin and Barbauld's narrative, titled 'The Female Choice, A Tale', presents a feminized choice of Hercules in which the young protagonist, Melissa, is invited to choose between an indulgent, trivial existence and a virtuous life of hard work and simplicity. In the story, Aikin and Barbauld describe how 'two female figures presented themselves' to Melissa while she slept, each of whom attempt to attract her to their respective modes of life.<sup>36</sup> The first figure, who is

diaphanously attired and named 'Dissipation', tempts Melissa with the promise of balls, visiting, and 'ever-varying amusements', providing stark contrast with her second visitor, who appears clothed in 'a close habit of brown stuff'.<sup>37</sup> Tellingly named 'Housewifery', Aikin and Barbauld's vision of homely rectitude is equipped with a distaff in one hand and a work-basket in the other, as well as a girdle 'garnished with scissars, knitting needles, reels, and other implements of female labour', introducing herself to Melissa as 'the genius who have ever been the friend and companion of your mother'.<sup>38</sup>

That Kingsbury's print was not reproduced with Elizabeth Smith's name as its title confirms that it was its relationship with the generic figurations of femininity found in tracts such as *Evenings at Home*, and not the portraitive function of the image, that was the impetus for its reproduction. In the print, Smith is presented as the personification of 'Maternal Amusement', with her individual identity as a sitter conflated with her ideological function as emblem. Accordingly, *Maternal Amusement* represents the culmination of a number of complex cultural transactions. Employing characterisations of exemplary and instructive motherhood drawn from conduct literature and genre prints, Northcote's original painting presented these within the portrait format to denote Smith's domestic felicity. Reciprocally, Kingsbury's print emphasised these generic qualities, transforming the portrait into a didactic genre print in its own right. Both print and portrait must therefore be understood within the context of an ideal of femininity that Smith herself was presented as embodying; a femininity perpetuated through a mutually constitutive literary and visual rhetoric found in needlework, genre prints, conduct literature, and portraiture.

This emphasis upon women's subscription to general ideals of femininity instead of the specific aspects of their individual characters was typified by figurations of Queen Charlotte (1744-1818), whose reputation as a paradigm of feminine virtue was ensured by the careful propagation of an accordant literary and visual imagery rooted in the apparent exemplarity of her conduct. The frontispieces to the yearly 1780-1799 editions of Charles Hutton's *The Ladies' diary: or, woman's Almanack*, featured a portrait of the Queen in profile, accompanied by the following poem:

VIRTUE and SENSE, with FEMALE-SOFTNESS join'd,  
ALL that subdues and captivates Mankind!  
In BRITAIN's Matchless FAIR resplendent shine;  
THEY rule LOVE's Empire by a Right Divine,  
Justly their Charms the astonish'd World admires,



Whom *Royal* CHARLOTTE's bright Example fires.<sup>39</sup>

Underlining her admirable qualities, Hutton's poem identifies the Queen's centrality in the creation of a nation populated by the 'Matchless FAIR'. Used in this way, Queen Charlotte's image became synonymous not only with her own exemplary conduct, but also with its emulation in eighteenth-century society, a process simultaneously encouraged through the dissemination of visual representations of the Queen.

In 1776, the artist Benjamin West exhibited a portrait of Queen Charlotte and her eldest daughter at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition (fig. 3). Depicting the Queen in the role of maternal pedagogue, the portrait captures an intimate moment between mother and daughter, with the young Princess Royal proudly presenting her mother with a piece of finely embroidered fabric, whose decoration we can assume is of her own making, and which was likely intended for some type of garment. Like her daughter, the Queen is also depicted as engaged in textile production, and holds a piece of knot-work in one hand, gesturing towards a bust of Minerva with the other.

Queen Charlotte's instruction of her daughters was often lauded within educational literature. John Bennett's tract *Letters to a Young Lady on a variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects calculated to improve the heart, to form the manners, and enlighten the understanding* (1789), was careful to cite her exemplary tutelage in its dedication, which is addressed to the Queen. On female education, a subject 'so closely interwoven with the most essential interests of society', Bennett writes that Queen Charlotte's 'royal daughters are a daily living comment on the excellence of [her] instructions and are infinitely more celebrated for the graces of their hearts, the elegance of their manners, and the improvement of their understanding than the magnificence of their birth'.<sup>40</sup> Crucially, Queen Charlotte's relationship with needlework was also conceptualised by writers as one of legitimisation. In his *Lectures on female education and manners* (1793), John Burton enlisted the Queen to illustrate his argument that needlework was 'neither mean nor degrading', but an 'ornament to Women, even of the highest rank'.<sup>41</sup> In defence of sewing, Burton suggested that readers would surely 'not think it an humiliating employment, when I inform you, that the first Lady in this Kingdom, not only amuses herself with this art, but has also instituted a kind of Academy for it's [sic] further progress and improvement', utilising the Queen's example to endorse others' participation in such activities.<sup>42</sup>

At a time when the utility of an education in needlework was under intense scrutiny, Queen Charlotte's public endorsement of the craft was highly significant. Charlotte was

herself deeply concerned that her daughters received a varied and complete education, and was careful to ensure that they received training in both ornamental and intellectual pursuits. A letter written by the Queen in 1785 confirms her belief that women should follow an educational programme of subjects such as geography, history, and mathematics in addition to the arts. Addressed to her cousin Louisa, Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, she praised her daughters' latest governess, noting that 'she knows history and geography to perfection, she draws very well and paints in different genres, can speak several languages and is religious in nature'.<sup>43</sup> Queen Charlotte's enthusiasm for a governess whose skills were both ornamental and academic highlights her familiarity with the issues raised by the accomplishment debates, thereby actively implicating West's portrait within contemporary discussions on female education.<sup>44</sup>

By presenting the Queen gesturing towards a bust of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, tating device in hand, West is making a clear point about the status of needlework as existing somewhere between a useful activity and a decorative diversion. Drawing her daughter's attention from her embroidery to the bronze bust, Queen Charlotte's actions encourage a conceptual and visual connection not only between herself and Minerva, but between these two objects, and in so doing, link the ornamental accomplishment of needlework with the intellectual accomplishments emblemized by the bust of Minerva. Like the Queen herself, Minerva figured prominently in the accomplishment debates, in which she was repeatedly invoked as a mythological touchstone for women's creativity and intelligence.<sup>45</sup> Employing this shared vocabulary of female accomplishment, West's portrait exploited Minerva's traditional associations with knowledge as well as Queen Charlotte's own exemplary status in order to promote the intellectualised qualities of needlework, thereby validating its continued relevance within contemporary educative practices. West's portrait then, shows Queen Charlotte not only instructing her own child, but utilising the metaphorical potential of the monarch as mother of the nation in order to encourage Britain's mothers *en masse* to likewise educate their daughters in the arts of the needle.

## *II. Industry*

As West's portrait of Queen Charlotte suggests, the instructive mother was far from a passive totem of generalised female respectability. Instead, she was actively recruited to endorse the continued role of needlework in education, a position that needed particular support during the latter decades of the eighteenth century. As exemplified by the encounter

between 'Mamma and Kitty' in a 'Dialogue on Things to be Learned' in Aikin and Barbauld's *Evenings at Home*, arguments for the value of needlework were often voiced by a discordant mother and a school-aged daughter, whose difference of opinion set the stage for its discussion.

In this instance, a jovial argument shared between mother and daughter allowed the authors to set out at length their thoughts on female education. Known only by the universalizing 'Mamma', Kitty's mother assumes the role of maternal pedagogue whose concern is her daughter's devotion to the needle. Kitty, conversely, asks why she might not write, read, or practice French grammar instead of 'working', protesting that she 'can work very well already, and [has] a great many other things to learn'.<sup>46</sup> What follows is a meditation upon the propriety of needlework within girls' schooling, with Kitty's protestations against practicing needlework in lieu of learning French or English grammar resonating loudly with the arguments posed by the accomplishment debates. Crucially, while the text ultimately argues for the legitimacy of needlework within female education, it advocates this only within certain contexts, as predicated by the birth and fortune of its practitioner. Ventriloquizing Aikin and Barbauld's position, Mamma cautions her daughter that 'all things are not equally necessary to every one; but some that are very fit for one, are scarcely proper at all for others'.<sup>47</sup> Elaborating upon this, she explains that it is the 'purpose of all education to fit persons for the station in which they are hereafter to live'.<sup>48</sup> Here, Kitty's mother articulates one of the most important points of discussion within the accomplishment debates: the idea that ornamental accomplishments were acceptable, only so far as your social and financial situation could support your pursuit of them, a position that has previously been identified by Vickery, Bermingham, and Marie-Claire Rouyer-Dancy.<sup>49</sup> As Batchelor has argued, concepts of labour and work during this period were 'hierarchically understood, not only in terms of gender and social station but also in line with assumptions of comparative usefulness, and therefore, worthiness'.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the approbation of needlework was not universal, but firmly rooted in issues surrounding class and status, resulting from needlework's unique position between labour and leisure, being both an ornamental and a useful art in its various forms.

This advocacy of specifically ornamental or useful varieties of needlework as dependent upon its practitioner's social position is found throughout contemporary conduct literature. In *Evenings at Home*, Kitty's mother tells her daughter that the practical forms of needlework that she herself practises do 'not belong to Lady Wealthy, or Mrs. Rich', for whom it was proper 'to pay more attention to music, drawing [and] ornamental work'.<sup>51</sup> Such

constructions of appropriate educational labour are also explored in Priscilla Wakefield's text *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), which sections its advice into individual chapters, as appropriate for women of four distinct classes.<sup>52</sup> Wakefield utilises these divisions as a means to improve girls' education, which she argued encompassed 'scarcely any discrimination between the daughters of noblemen and those of tradesmen', both of whom were 'educated upon nearly the same system, without any reference to their future destination in life'.<sup>53</sup> Like Kitty's mother, Wakefield believed that 'no system of education can properly be denominated good, which is not appropriate to those who receive it', and accordingly encouraged the attainment of a variety of accomplishments specific to women of each of her classes.<sup>54</sup> For women of the middling classes, who were 'dependant upon their fathers and husbands for support', Wakefield suggested 'an education of energy and useful attainments', in order to procure 'an independence for themselves' in the case of the 'loss of those relations'.<sup>55</sup> For women of this class, she argued that 'useful needlework in every branch, with complete skill in cutting out and making every article of female dress, should be a principal object in their instruction, and ought to employ a considerable part of the day in childhood'.<sup>56</sup>

An emphasis upon the explicitly useful nature of needlework also appears within an anecdote in Allen's conduct manual, wherein a mother tells her daughter that 'though there are many other female accomplishments more showy and specious, yet there is not any one more useful, nay, I may venture to say, there is none equally so' than needlework.<sup>57</sup> In such accounts, a balanced engagement with accomplishments was key to their appropriacy. Bennett's *Letters to a Young Lady* discussed the ideal woman as someone who could 'convince every beholder, that she knows the proper medium betwixt a ridiculous profusion, and a total want, of ornament'.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, in Joseph Towers' fanciful dialogue between members of the Wyndham family, when its patriarch expresses concern that his daughter might have her 'time almost wholly occupied in the acquisition of ornamental accomplishments', his wife reassures him that she has ensured that their daughter has 'some knowledge of literature', before noting that so 'she might not be destitute of any of those ornamental accomplishments that might become a woman of fashion', she had 'also endeavoured to qualify her for the duties of a wife'.<sup>59</sup>

As the above conversation suggests, a lack of education in the arts of the needle could be as troubling as one too rooted in their acquisition. Burton's *Lectures* expressed his concern over what he deemed 'a defect in female education', being the 'instructing of Girls in those trifling arts, where the needle is not employed [...] because they are, in general, the whim of

a moment, soon become unfashionable and are laid aside, so that, when they leave School, it is but seldom that they employ themselves in those works, which they have spent much time to learn'.<sup>60</sup> Though a supporter of needlework, Burton cautioned against time spent on the parade of new forms of accomplishment, which included artistic practices such as the production of rolled paper or filigree-work, japanning, and decoupage. Instead of an engagement with these practices, Burton suggested that 'it must surely be more prudent to have them taught useful arts, such as may qualify them for those household employments, which they will hereafter be engaged in'.<sup>61</sup>

Here, sewing is cast as the *de facto* hero of women's education, a useful way of spending time, through its comparison with more evidently ornamental, and thereby useless, forms of employment. The 1790s may therefore be seen as a period in which needlework gained new cultural currency as an accomplishment that, as Burton himself noted, could be 'divided into the useful and the ornamental'.<sup>62</sup> Thanks to this duality, needlework was uniquely placed to figure in the debates surrounding women's education and accomplishments. With this interpretation in mind then, it is telling that West's portrait of Queen Charlotte and her daughter depicts both women as engaged in explicitly useful forms of textile crafts: knotting and embroidering fabric, practices whose results could beautify furnishings and the body respectively. West's portrayal of the young Princess Royal in particular is reminiscent of broader contemporary debates around what kinds of textile-work were preferable, which often advocated the making of dress, as a task both 'necessary and ornamental'.<sup>63</sup> Unifying industrious and decorative pursuits, in certain texts and images needlework came to function as shorthand for acceptable female labour, which, thanks to the variety of its forms, could be appropriately practiced by women of varying social rank or status. Although notions of utility and ornament were far from consistent—with certain commentators praising embroidery but critiquing knotting—by extolling the values of various forms of textile craft, commentators such as Wakefield, Burton, and Bennett were able to promote what they deemed to be appropriately regulated forms of women's employment, articulated through highly particularised forms of literary and visual rhetoric.

This lexicon of usefulness was also shared by a retinue of contemporary genre prints that similarly promoted the virtues of such accomplishments by employing a vocabulary situated within utility and industry. An early example is James McArdell's mezzotint *Employment* (c.1744-65), which utilises spinning as a visual metaphor for commendable female industry.<sup>64</sup> The image, adapted from a painting by the Venetian artist Pietro Longhi, depicts a seated woman whose task is interrupted by the entrance of an elegantly dressed gentleman,

whose statement of intent forms the print's inscription: 'The Intrusion pardon & suspend your Task / A short suspension is the whole I ask / More Charms attract me than a shape or Face / For Industry to Beauty adds new Grace'.<sup>65</sup> Here, the approbation of industrious female leisure transcends the routine endorsement of women's accomplishments to instead function as a synecdoche for their marriageability, with the industrious 'employment' of the spinner attracting the attentions of her admirer, who commends her diligence as more seductive than her countenance.

Carington Bowles's print *Industry* (fig. 4, c.1780-1790) also demonstrates the interrelationship between the language of conduct literature and visual forms of didacticism that privileged the marriageable qualities of its subject. Featuring a young woman seated at her needlework within a domestic setting, Bowles's print presents the industrious figure as undistracted by the daily round of visiting. The first two lines of the print's inscription, 'See the Well instructed Fair / Train'd by fond maternal Care', recall the influence of the instructive mother in a girl's training in needlework, while the following couplet, 'Cultivate a useful art / And to Beauty grace impart', is rooted in the language of becoming utility and industriousness. The third couplet, which describes industry as 'the source of wealth / Guide to happiness and health', evokes assertions made by moralists such as Wakefield that useful skills such as needlework were essential in supporting oneself in the face of potential financial adversity. Finally, the concluding couplet describes how needlework 'Forms her for domestic life / Pleasing omen of a Wife', echoing the close relationship between housewifery, marriageability, and the cultivation of such material skills. In their conflation of the accomplishment and eligibility of their subjects, images such as *Employment* and *Industry* recall Wakefield's contention that 'in the education of females, the same view actuates every rank: an advantageous settlement in marriage is the universal prize'.<sup>66</sup> To Wakefield and her contemporaries, marital eligibility was the ultimate function of an intellectual, material, and moralising set of practices that comprised women's education at this time.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, any discussion of women's accomplishments must be rooted in the related concept of marriageability, the cultivation of which was intimately tied to the public demonstration of accomplishments such as needlework.

### *III. Eligibility*

Though implicitly associated with the domestic and the home, the public presentation of 'private' accomplishments within portraiture was a crucial means by which women displayed

their marital eligibility.<sup>68</sup> Recent scholarship has firmly established the social credentials of portraiture, highlighting the role played by institutions such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the formation of public reputation. Art historians such as Mark Hallett, Kate Retford, and Michael Rosenthal have identified an audience capable of ‘reading the walls’, a viewing public for portraiture that possessed a sophisticated understanding of the social gestures of the exhibition space.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, both portraiture’s public display at institutions like the Royal Academy, as well as its dissemination in printed formats, had the potential to iconise sitters within the public consciousness as exemplars of feminine virtue. Portraiture featuring textile crafts could thereby encourage an association between the visual demonstration of manual skills and that of respectable female behaviour; a connection exemplified by the exhibition and reception of Reynolds’s portrait *The Ladies Waldegrave*.

The painting depicts the three Waldegrave sisters, Lady Charlotte Maria (1761-1808), Lady Elizabeth Laura (1760-1816), and Lady Anna Horatia (1762-1801), absorbed in needlework. Elegantly dressed and seated around a small worktable, each of the sisters is shown to be engaged in a form of textile-work: Lady Charlotte winds a skein of silk on to which Lady Elizabeth holds; and Lady Anna makes lace on a tambour frame. Although the painting has been previously discussed in terms of its startling whiteness, the amiable qualities of its sitters, and its classicising references, its relationship with the contemporary status of needlework has not received sufficient attention.<sup>70</sup> Yet the depiction of the siblings as engaged in needlework situates the image in relation to a powerful discourse that advocated such accomplishments as a form of artistic and practical education that promoted the marriageable qualities of its sitters. As Bermingham has suggested, the public display of accomplishments—whether in person or in a portrait—‘provided women with a chance to display themselves’.<sup>71</sup> With the sisters’ unmarried at the time of the painting’s exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1781, this narrative is central to understanding the image’s broader function.<sup>72</sup>

In an often-quoted letter dated 28 May 1780, the portrait’s patron and the Waldegraves’ great uncle Horace Walpole described how he had originally ‘wished to have [the sisters] drawn like the Graces adorning a bust of the Duchess as the Magna Mater’, though he complained that his ‘ideas [were] not adopted’.<sup>73</sup> Although perhaps an ironic commentary, Walpole’s identification of the three Graces as an appropriate allegorical format for a portrait of his three unmarried nieces is significant as it locates the painting within a specific rhetoric of becoming virtuousness in which the Graces consistently featured. Reviews of the painting written during its exhibition at the Royal Academy consistently described the Waldegrave

sisters in the classicising terms of Walpole. The *Public Advertiser* of 1 May 1781 lauded them as ‘three lovely Graces! Who have deign’d to visit the Earth, in order to set an amiable Example of domestic Employment, to an idle, frivolous, dissipated Age’, utilising the familiar constructions of exemplary and industrious femininity as outlined above in order to praise the sisters.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, a review of the portrait from the *Morning Chronicle* suggested that the Waldegraves were ‘styled Graces, on account of their own personal perfection, as well as the skill of the Master’, highlighting both the classical allusion of Reynolds’s painting, as well as the various levels upon which this analogy functioned.<sup>75</sup> Graces in beauty and accomplishment alike, the sisters’ ‘personal perfection’ was two-fold: signalling both their external delicacy and their inherent gentility, the latter of which was suggested by their portrayal as engaged in needlework. Coupled with the symbolic association of whiteness with sexual purity, Reynolds’s allusion to the Graces’ multitude of virtues firmly implicates the painting’s use of textile crafts within a symbolic programme that was utilised to infer the women’s inherent marriageability.<sup>76</sup>

Crucially, Reynolds’s painting was not the only portrait that presented the sisters as Graces. On 29 April 1785, a London newspaper carried an advertisement for ‘Mr. Carter’s Exhibition of Pictures’, a small display of paintings held by the artist George Carter (c.1737-1794), which featured a mixture of portraiture and scenes picturing the Siege of Gibraltar.<sup>77</sup> Amongst the ‘principal subjects’ of the exhibition’s paintings was a group portrait featuring ‘her Royal Highness the Princess Royal’ pictured with the then ‘*unmarried* young Nobility, sacrificing to the Graces’, including two of the Waldegrave sisters, ‘Lady Anna Maria’ and ‘Lady Horatia’.<sup>78</sup>

By the second half of the eighteenth century, to ‘sacrifice to the Graces’ had become a popular adage denoting personal improvement. In 1763, an anonymous conduct manual recommended to those ‘who are unpolite in behaviour, that they sacrifice to the graces’.<sup>79</sup> The maxim was also specifically used in relation to female education. In the letters of Mrs. Williams, published in 1770, the author recalls that although the tuition of her brothers was the sole responsibility of their father, the subject of her own education ‘occasioned violent debates between [her] parents’.<sup>80</sup> She recollected that:

My father asserted, that women were rendered foolish and ridiculous by their education, and that, if their minds were properly cultivated, they might be made rational beings as well as men. My mother, on the contrary, insisted that they were, without education, more rational than



their masters, and that learning (as she termed it) only served to render a girl ridiculous in the eyes of her own sex, and contemptible in those of men. She affirmed that a girl ought to Sacrifice to the Graces, rather than to Minerva.<sup>81</sup>

Recalling West's provocative use of Minerva in his portrait of Queen Charlotte and the Princess Royal, in Williams's account, to 'sacrifice to Minerva' designated an education defined by intellectual pursuits, while to 'sacrifice to the Graces' referred to those ornamental pursuits, such as needlework, with which women's education was more traditionally associated.

The phrase was also tellingly employed in relation to marriage, with authors imploring that even 'after the marriage rites are performed' women 'ought not to suffer their powers of pleasing to languish away, but should still remember to sacrifice to the Graces'.<sup>82</sup> The impetus placed on the Waldegraves' unmarried statuses in Carter's advertising, which heralded the subjects of his portrait as the '*unmarried* young Nobility', thereby highlights the appropriacy of a 'sacrifice to the Graces' as a mode of representation for unmarried women.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, scholars such as Maiken Umbach and Sabrina Norlander Eliasson have compellingly argued that such classical allusion had an inherently social function, which transformed classical narratives 'into a fiction or a modern myth perfectly comprehensible to its audience'.<sup>84</sup>

The evocative combination of classical references and depicted accomplishments in *The Ladies Waldegrave* may therefore be understood as creating a 'modern myth' of respectability, readily accessible to contemporary viewers conversant in visual and literary representations of textile crafts. Reynolds's implicit evocation of the Graces, as ratified by the portrait's numerous eighteenth-century commentators, is not only a reference to the Waldegraves' capacity to embody the trio's virtues, but functions on another level, signalling their 'sacrifice to the Graces', which identified the sisters as adherents to a predicated form of feminine gentility. To 'sacrifice to the Graces' then, was a hymenical ritual in more ways than one. The phrase functioned at once in its literal sense, as a sacrifice upon the hymenical altar, and simultaneously, it denoted a socially performed ritual, referring to the imbue ment of a young girl with the attributes and virtues needed to attract a husband. Despite the evident comparability between the three Graces and the Ladies Waldegrave, perhaps the idea of the 'sacrifice to the Graces' is in fact a more pertinent idea for the purposes of discussing the portrait, due to the concept's emphasis on polite accomplishments, education, and the establishment of respectability, traits encapsulated by the Waldegraves' quiet dedication to

their textile-work. By recalling such tropes, Reynolds harnessed the visual language of the Graces in order to create a metaphor for how contemporaries understood the acquisition of accomplishments in late eighteenth-century Britain, where they were deemed essential to a young woman's marital eligibility.

#### *IV. Conclusion*

Typifying what Joel Weinsheimer has described as 'the synchronic gap between the real and ideal, particular and universal, or the actual and essential', late eighteenth-century portraits like *The Ladies Waldegrave* carefully adhered to the generic female roles provided by both printed genre pieces and contemporary conduct literature.<sup>85</sup> In each of these forms, it was textile-work that came to function as a signifier of the exemplary, from the instructive mother who cultivated a nourishing domestic environment for the tutelage of her young daughter, to the eligible young woman, whose accomplishments functioned as a visual demonstration of her becoming marriageability. In their generalising and anonymising forms, the subjects of these portraits became indivisible from, and were even subsumed by, their calling as idealised mothers, wives, and daughters, a conflation signalled visually by their engagement with textile crafts.

Despite the often repetitive nature of representations of such pursuits, the relationship between printed images, conduct literature, and portraiture was not one of simple replication. As the retitling of images such as Kingsbury's *Maternal Amusement* suggests, the boundaries between the genre piece and the portrait were characterised by their fluidity, with portraiture directly referencing contemporary conduct literature and aping generic modes of representation in order to promote the respectability of its subject, resulting in its own, highly circular appropriation within the guise of genre. Crucially, these intermedial representations were anything but consistent, and depended on notably specific conceptualisations of a variety of textile crafts. These could be cast as appropriately ornamental or useful depending on both the status of the practitioner or the perceptions of the writer or artist employing them, but they were nevertheless central to how such texts and images figured femininity throughout this period.

A concentration on representations of needlework therefore provides a model for understanding how cultural forms intersected in late eighteenth-century Britain, revealing dialogues between making, viewing, and reading. Furthermore, focusing upon images and texts that replicate and perpetuate long-established and stereotypical conceptualisations reinforces the significance of repetition within the cultural canon. More than simply aping or

imitating their precedents, the movement of representations of textile crafts between cultural forms actively engaged with and contributed to the ideological formation of a number of intersecting feminine identities, as articulated through a shared yet highly particular visual and literary language of industrious, instructive, or marriageable women. Examining images of textile-work therefore provides a means by which to value and understand iteration as a complex and dynamic cultural process that not only typified late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century forms of representation, but which functioned to construct gender itself.

While neither visual nor literary representations of textile crafts provide us with consummate reflections of how accomplishments were understood during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, attention to their appearance within the illustrative wealth of conduct literature, genre images, and portraiture discussed within this article shows that they became an essential site for the creation and perpetuation of a range of female identities. Rooted in a complex, shifting, yet repetitive grammar of domestic femininity understood throughout the eighteenth century and well into the next, the movement of these ideas between paint, print, and practice during this period represents an important conceptual thread within the broader history of women's textile-based craft production.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Other examples include the anonymous *Lady Jane Mathew and Her Daughters* (c.1780, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection), and George Romney's *Lady Caroline Spencer, later Viscountess Clifden, and her sister, Lady Elizabeth Spencer* (1786-92, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens).

<sup>2</sup> John Burton, *Lectures on female education and manners* (London: Samuel Campbell, 1794), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Maureen Daly Goggin 'Stitching (in) Death: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American and English Mourning Samplers', in Maureen Daly Goggin & Beth Fowkes Tobin (eds.), *Women and the Material Culture of Death* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 233.

<sup>5</sup> Carol Shiner Wilson, 'Lost Needles, Tangled Threads: Stitchery, Domesticity, and Artistic Enterprise in Barbault, Edgeworth, Taylor and Lamb', in Carol Shiner Wilson & Joel Haefner (eds.), *Re-visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792), p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> M. Lamb, 'On Needlework,' in E. Verall Lucas, ed. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb: Miscellaneous prose, 1798-1834* (London: Meuthen, 1903), p. 176; John Aikin & Anna Laetitia Barbault, *Evenings at home; or, the Juvenile Budget opened*, 6 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1792-6).

<sup>8</sup> Anne Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> See: Shiner Wilson, 'Lost Needles, Tangled Threads'; Christine Hivet, 'Needlework and the Rights of Women in England at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré, & Cécile Révauger (eds.), *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Burlington & Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 37-46; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, Chapter 9.

<sup>11</sup> Hivet, 'Needlework and the Rights of Women', p. 38; Amanda Vickery, 'The Theory and Practice of Female Accomplishment', in Mark Laird & Alicia Weisberg-Roberts (eds.), *Mrs Delany and Her Circle* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press), pp. 106-107.

<sup>12</sup> Maureen Daly Goggin, 'Introduction', in Maureen Daly Goggin & Beth Fowkes Tobin, (eds.) *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> Serena Dyer, 'Barbara Johnson's Album: Material Literacy and Consumer Practice, 1746-1823', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42:3 (2019), pp. 263-282; Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress & Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jennie Batchelor, *Work: Labour, Gender and Authorship, 1750-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Chloe Wigston Smith, *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Chloe Wigston Smith, 'The Empire of Home: Global Domestic Objects and The Female American (1767)', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40:1 (2015), pp. 67– 87; Chloe Wigston Smith, 'Fast Fashion: Style, Text, and Image in Late-Eighteenth Century Women's Periodicals', in Jennie Batchelor & Manushag Powell (eds.), *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain: 1690-1820s: The Long Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), Vol. 1., pp. 440-457.

<sup>15</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup> Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 107-140; Marcia Pointon *Portrayal and the Search for Identity* (London: Reaktion, 2013), pp. 121-180; Elisabeth Gerner 'Pulled Tight and Gleaming: The Stocking's Position within Eighteenth-Century Masculinity', *Textile History*, 46:1 (2015), pp. 3-27.

<sup>17</sup> Gill Perry, 'Women in disguise: likeness, the Grand Style and the conventions of 'feminine' portraiture in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds', in Gill Perry & Michael Rossington (eds.), *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Batchelor, *Women's Work*, pp. 18 & 60-66; Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning and Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 76-86.

<sup>22</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> A. H. Pasco, 'Literature as Historical Archive', *New Literary History*, 35:3 (Summer 2004), p. 387.

<sup>24</sup> P. Steorn, 'Migrating Motifs and Productive Instabilities: Images of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century Swedish Print Culture', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 82:3 (2013), pp. 219-234.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Helme, *Maternal Instruction, or Family Conversations* (New York: James Oram, 1804), p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> John Moir *Female Tuition; or, An Address to Mothers, on the Education of Daughters* (London: J. Murray, 1786), p. 47; Charles Allen, *The polite lady; or, a course of female education. In a series of letters, From a Mother to her Daughter* (Dublin: John Exshaw, 1779), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Mary Ann Body, sampler (wool and silk). Museum no. T.292-1916, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, sampler, c.1820 (wool and silk). Museum no. T.868-1919, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

<sup>31</sup> On affective mother-daughter relationships and sampler making, see Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> William Markham, *An Introduction to Spelling and Reading English* (London: W. Meadows & J. Hodges, 1738), p. 151. Markham's text was reprinted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—see William Markham, *An Introduction to Spelling and Reading English* (Carlisle: George Coward, 1866).

<sup>33</sup> John Raphael Smith, *A Wife/Une Femme Mariée*, 1791 (stipple engraving). Museum no. 1877,0512.618, British Museum, London.

<sup>34</sup> On motherhood in the eighteenth century see: Ruth Perry 'Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2:2 (1991), p. 205; Julie Kipp *Romanticism, Maternity and the Body Politic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> On exemplary mothers, see Joanne Begiato (Bailey), *Parenting in England 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 74-5.

<sup>36</sup> Aikin & Barbauld, *Evenings at Home*, Vol. 3, p. 156.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157-8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Hutton, *The Ladies' Diary: or Woman's Almanack, For the Year of our Lord 1780* (London: The Company of Stationers, 1780), p. 1. An identical frontispiece appears on the 1784, 1793, 1795, 1796 and 1799 editions of *The Ladies' Diary*.

<sup>40</sup> John Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady on a variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects calculated to improve the heart, to form the manners, and enlighten the understanding*, 2 Vols. (Warrington: W. Eyres, 1789), Vol. 1, pp. viii & viii-ix.

<sup>41</sup> Burton, *Lectures on female education and manners*, p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Charlotte was a patron of Mrs Pawsey's school for 'embroidering females'. Jane Roberts (ed.), *George III & Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2004), p. 71.

<sup>43</sup> Queen Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, to Louisa, Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 23 April 1785, Queen Charlotte Papers, Mecklenburg Landeshauparchiv, Schwerin; cited in Heidi Strobel, *The Artistic Matronage of Queen Charlotte (1744-1818): How a Queen promoted both Art and Female Artists in English Society* (Lewiston, Queenston, & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011), p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion of Charlotte's interest in education see Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation's Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain 1750-1850* (Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> See Mrs. Williams, *Letters between an English Lady and her friend in Paris. In which are contained the memoirs of Mrs. Williams* (Dublin: J. Williams, 1770), p. 30, discussed below.

<sup>46</sup> Aikin & Barbauld, *Evenings at home*, Vol. 1, p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>49</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 234-235; Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, p. 191; Marie-Claire Rouyer-Dancy, 'The Representation of Housework in the Eighteenth-Century Women's Press', in Baudino, Carré, & Révauger, *The Invisible Woman*, p. 41.
- <sup>50</sup> Batchelor, *Women's Work*, p. 20.
- <sup>51</sup> Aikin & Barbauld, *Evenings at home*, Vol. 1, p. 88.
- <sup>52</sup> Priscilla Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 67. Wakefield described these classes as follows: the first, comprising the 'nobility, and all those who, either by the influence of high offices, or extensive hereditary possessions, rival them in power'; the second, 'who by the application of their talents to learning, commerce, manufactures or agriculture, procure a respectable subsistence approaching to opulence'; the third 'whose honest and useful industry raises them above want, without procuring for them the means of splendid or luxurious gratification', and finally; the fourth class, composed of 'the labouring poor'.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65-66.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144-5.
- <sup>57</sup> Allen, *The polite lady*, p. 27.
- <sup>58</sup> Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady*, p. 2.
- <sup>59</sup> Joseph Towers, *Dialogues concerning the Ladies* (London: T. Cadell, 1785), p. 16.
- <sup>60</sup> Burton, *Lectures on female education and manners*, p. 134.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup> *The Lady's Magazine* (February, 1778), cited in Rouyer-Dancy, 'The Representation of Housework', pp. 33-34.
- <sup>64</sup> The association between needlework and spinning is affirmed in contemporary conduct literature, as in Aikin & Barbauld's evocation of the figure of 'Housewifery', who presents herself equipped with the 'implements of female labour', or the accoutrements of needlework, one of which includes a distaff. Aikin & Barbauld, *Evenings at home*, Vol. 3, p. 158.
- <sup>65</sup> James McArdell, after Pietro Longhi, *Employment, 1744-1765* (mezzotint on paper). Museum no. B1970.3.1069, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.
- <sup>66</sup> Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, p. 29.
- <sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Wakefield was careful to suggest that whilst every 'effort that can be exerted to secure' marriage should be undertaken, perhaps the 'means used to accomplish it' are inadequate to a woman's consequent state of a wife or mother'. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>68</sup> See Ann Bermingham 'Elegant females and gentleman connoisseurs: the commerce in culture and self-image in eighteenth-century England', in Ann Bermingham & John Brewer (eds.), *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 492, 493.
- <sup>69</sup> Mark Hallett, 'Reading the Walls: Pictorial Dialogue at the Eighteenth at the Eighteenth-Century Royal Academy', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37:4 (2004), pp. 581-604; Retford *The Art of Domestic Life*; Michael Rosenthal, 'Public Reputation and Image Control in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 7:2 (2006), pp. 69-91.
- <sup>70</sup> See: Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 218; Perry, *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, p. 30; Mark Hallett, *Reynolds: Portraiture in Action* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 389-390; David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his paintings* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 456; Kate Retford, "'The Crown and Glory of a Woman": Female Chastity in Eighteenth-Century British Art', in Dana Arnold & David Peters Corbett (eds.), *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, pp. 473-501.

<sup>71</sup> Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, p. 184.

<sup>72</sup> The press of the 1780s was dominated by speculation surrounding the Waldegrave sisters' marital developments, and published both real and fabricated reports of their engagements. Eventually, Lady Charlotte married George Fitzroy, the 4th Duke of Grafton (1760-1844), with whom she had eleven children, in 1782, while Lady Elizabeth married her first cousin George Waldegrave (1751-89), in 1784. Finally, Lady Anna married the British naval officer Lord Hugh Seymour (1759-1801) in 1786. For the Waldegraves' biography, see Violet Biddulph, *The Three Ladies Waldegrave (and their Mother)* (London: Peter Davis Press, 1938).

<sup>73</sup> W. S. Lewis (ed.), *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1983), Vol. 29, p. 138.

<sup>74</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 1 May 1781.

<sup>75</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 5 May 1780.

<sup>76</sup> On whiteness, see Angela Rosenthal, 'Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture', *Art History*, 27:4 (2004), pp. 563-592.

<sup>77</sup> *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 29 April 1785.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Anon. *Essays and letters on the following various and important subjects* (London: Thomas Hope, 1763), p. 152.

<sup>80</sup> Williams, *Letters between an English Lady and her friend in Paris*, p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas Rowe, *Bell's British theatre. Consisting of the most esteemed English plays* (London: George Cawthorn, 1797), Vol. 3, p. 120.

<sup>83</sup> *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 29 April 1785.

<sup>84</sup> Maiken Umbach, 'Classicism, Enlightenment and the "Other": Thoughts on Decoding Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture', *Art History*, 25:3 (2002), pp. 319-340; Sabrina Norlander Eliasson, *Portraiture and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 21.

<sup>85</sup> Joel Weinsheimer 'Mrs. Siddons, the Tragic Muse and the Problem of As', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 36:3 (1978), p. 317.