

Crafting the Woman Professional in the Long Nineteenth Century

Artistry and Industry in Britain

Edited by
Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakresk

CRAFTING THE WOMAN PROFESSIONAL IN THE
LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

Over the course of the nineteenth century, women in Britain participated in diverse and prolific forms of artistic labour. As they created objects and commodities that blurred the boundaries between domestic and fine art production, they crafted subjectivities for themselves as creative workers. By bringing together work by scholars of literature, painting, music, craft and the plastic arts, this collection argues that the constructed and contested nature of the female artistic professional was a notable aspect of debates about aesthetic value and the impact of industrial technologies. All the essays in this volume set up a productive inter-art dialogue that complicates conventional binary divisions such as amateur and professional, public and private, artistry and industry in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between gender, artistic labour and creativity in the period. Tracing how women engaged with the pragmatics of the work they did in vocations, trades and professions in the literary market-place and related art industries, this volume reveals the ideological positions surrounding the transition from industrious amateurism to professional artistry.

*Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi is Senior Lecturer at Bath Spa University, UK,
and Patricia Zakreski is Lecturer at the University of Exeter, UK.*

*For my dad
whose τέχνη has helped make
artistry and industry a principle in my life*

(Κυριακή Χριστάκη Χατζηαυξέντη)

*For Joe
whose patience and support
has helped this professional woman thrive*

(Patricia Zakreski)

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ASHGATE

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Foreword

Linda H. Peterson

The scholarly narrative of nineteenth-century women artists and authors has tended to emphasise their struggle for professional status and their increasing success in the fields of art, music, literature, journalism and publishing. *Crafting the Woman Professional* complicates this narrative by exploring the boundary between the amateur and the professional, revealing how fluid it often was and how it shifted during the course of the century. Contributors highlight the cultural values associated with amateurism in the arts, the desires of some (though not all) women to assert their professionalism and the strategies of self-education and self-presentation that they enacted to succeed. What emerges is a more nuanced account of the rise of the woman artist from 1790 to 1910, and a challenge to future scholars to consider the choices that individual women made in relation to professionalisation in their fields.

Two decades ago, when art historian Susan Casteras and I mounted an exhibition of the work of Victorian women artists and authors, our emphasis fell on the obstacles they confronted. As the catalogue title, *A Struggle for Fame*, attests, we highlighted women who ‘against considerable odds, created many cultural levels and varieties of art – high, medium, and low’ and whose work ‘clearly affirms the existence of an important female tradition of making art that flourished in England, despite formidable obstacles’ (9).¹ Today, this broad narrative requires more historical specification with attention to opportunities as well as obstacles. As several contributors suggest, especially Pamela Nunn in ‘Dorothy’s Career and Other Cautionary Tales’, social resistance to women artists continued throughout the century, despite the known facts of their achievement in commercial and high art. Even so, the opportunities for women artists varied significantly from field to field, as did their artistic self-conceptions and career choices. In Chapter 4, ‘Dresses and Drapery: Female Self-Fashioning in Muslin, 1800–1850’, Alice Barnaby shows, for example, that in interior decoration, the amateur artist was

highly valued in the early decades of the century and was indistinguishable from the professional – given that professional design emerged as a female (or male) activity only in the 1870s: ‘amateurism had not yet come to denote a lack of quality, but rather a plenitude of it in the possession and expression of personal, polite accomplishments’. In arts such as china painting, the line between amateur and professional continued to be fluid throughout the century – as Anne Anderson documents in Chapter 6, ‘The China Painter: Amateur Celebrities and Professional Stars at Howell and James’s “Royal Academy of China Painting”’.

This collection reminds us, then, of the continuing need to situate research on women artists and authors historically, and of the original insights that emerge in so doing. Betty Schellenberg’s study, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, emphasised the various approaches that women of the prior century took in their literary careers, arguing that women constructed their authorial identities self-consciously and diversely (76–7, 97). This collection affirms similar principles and practices for the nineteenth century. In the heyday of ‘separate spheres’, women often justified their movement into professional territory as an extension of their work within the domestic sphere.² Later, with the rise of the middle-class professions and the proliferation of professional institutions, women turned to other status markers, including formal education and elite training, financial reward and commercial success, and membership in professional groups such as the Society of Authors or the Royal Academy. As Catherine Flood demonstrates in Chapter 5, ‘Contrary to the Habits of Their Sex? Women Drawing on Wood and the Careers of Florence and Adelaide Claxton’, women artists could establish their professionalism as illustrators by perfecting the skill of drawing and cutting on woodblocks. Women designers learned not only the principles of industrial design in newly established schools of practical art, but also gained essential experience in the commercial workplace. Reflecting trends in the workaday world, mid-century fiction writers, as Patricia Zakreski suggests in Chapter 7, ‘Creative Industry: Design, Art Education and the Woman Professional’, celebrated women artists’ professional progress (perhaps over-optimistically) and projected ‘a parable of female development that place[d] design and paid labour at the centre of woman’s moral and social progression’.

As the markers of professionalism changed, so too did women’s public self-presentations in print and in society. In the 1830s, *Fraser’s Magazine* ran a series of portraits, visual and verbal, of prominent women authors, showing them in domestic settings, praising their feminine virtues and chastising those who deviated from the norm. By the mid to late century, women had learned the importance of controlling their public portraits – a key insight of Part III, ‘The Craft of Self-Fashioning’. In Chapter 12, ‘Living Art: Michael Field, Aestheticism and Dress’, Ana Parejo Vadillo shows how the poets

'Michael Field' (Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper) used 'aesthetic' dress to express their oppositional stance to mass culture and crass professionalism and, more broadly, to enact their belief that dress 'was essential to achieve the aesthetes' aim of bringing art to every aspect of life'. Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi demonstrates in Chapter 9, 'Negotiating Fame: Mid-Victorian Women Writers and the Romantic Myth of the Gentlemanly Reviewer' that George Eliot and Mary Elizabeth Braddon invoked the 'gentlemanly' reviewers of the 1820s and 1830s to shape their authorial practice and to deploy an affective discourse that helped them negotiate distasteful aspects of literary celebrity. Yet these two women authors did so for quite different purposes: Eliot to encourage sympathy with characters rather than intimacy with herself, Braddon to perform a 'gentlemanliness' lacking in the male reviewers who criticised her sensation fiction. Eliot thus presented herself as a highbrow author resistant to a publicity-hungry culture, whereas Braddon used nostalgia to protest a gendered literary field that devalued her work. Interestingly, by invoking the 'gentlemanly' values of the past, Eliot and Braddon were de facto praising the pre- or semi-professional writers who wrote from intellectual interest more than for financial gain, even as they crafted models of modern, professional authorship that they wished to embody.

This collection reminds us, finally, that women's professionalism in the arts emerged alongside that of men's – as a broad trend within the nineteenth century that professionalised the fields of art and literature. As Julie Codell has argued in *The Victorian Artist*, male artists used a wide range of auto/biographical genres – including celebrity interviews, mini-biographies in periodicals, and entries in biographical dictionaries and histories of art – to distinguish themselves from less desirable artistic stereotypes (the failed Romantic genius, the bohemian, the degenerate) and to achieve parity with other middle-class professions like law and medicine. If, unfortunately, some men expressed their desire for professional status by denigrating women artists as amateurs, this aspect of the cultural field was only that – one small aspect of a much larger picture. *Crafting the Woman Professional* reveals that women artists were equally savvy in their use of interviews, mini-biographies and other auto/biographical genres for professional ends. The collection underscores the various ways in which the discourses of amateurism and professionalism were engaged by nineteenth-century women to conceptualise their work and to achieve the recognition that they individually and collectively desired.

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Notes

- 1 We took the title of the catalogue from Charlotte Riddell's novel, *A Struggle for Fame* (Richard Bentley & Son 1883).
- 2 For a discussion of this rationale in the literary realm, see Peterson 13–49.

Introduction: Artistry and Industry – The Process of Female Professionalisation

Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and Patricia Zakreski

Here are women demanding of us employment whereby they may earn their livelihood: what shall we give them to do? ... Art is the profession in which, more than all others, women may be expected to excel. (Purnell 107–8)

According to Thomas Purnell, artistic professions were the answer to one of the most pressing problems of the Woman Question. What kind of paid work could be done by middle-class women who needed to, or wanted to earn a living? The essays in this volume analyse the range of art work taken up by women in the long nineteenth century. Middle-class women continued in large numbers to populate traditionally feminine occupations such as teaching and nursing, yet they became increasingly aware of the opportunities for remunerative work with the expansion of the literary market-place and related 'art industries' (a specific term coined for a variety of manufactories such as textiles, pottery, engraving and metalwork, which combined artistic principles with the creation of consumer goods). *Crafting the Woman Professional* details the ways in which the aesthetics, practices and economics of creative labour shaped women's employment and self-expression and, in so doing, their subjectivities. The various types of art work undertaken are an index to the changing perception of what constituted women's proper activity; moreover, this collection argues that the constructed and contested nature of the female artistic professional was a notable aspect of debates about aesthetic value and the impact of industrial technologies.

Traditionally, the professions were limited to the masculine preserves of medicine, the church and the law which, according to Jennifer Ruth, 'drew on both the gentry and the upper middle classes but did not produce men

who clearly identified themselves as a distinct class' (3). As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the number, type and perceived importance of professionals increased markedly and, thanks to the campaign for women's rights, became more inclusive to women who were no longer satisfied with pursuing their artistic occupations as enthusiastic amateurs. In 1857, Dinah Mulock Craik defined the art professions accessible to women as literature, painting, art or 'the vocation of public entertainment – including actresses, singers, musicians, and the like' (42). Craik's distinction was far from neutral in that it typified the way in which female artistic professions distinguished themselves from the rich tradition of domestic handicrafts, even as they emerged out of it. Indeed, the relationship between amateur and professional became something of an over-determined proxy for a range of debates concerning not only women's role but also the relationship between aesthetics and economics, artistry and industry.

Crafting the Woman Professional focuses on female employment in the creative arts rather than professionalism per se. Fields of labour connected to the arts were offered as a means of resolving the tension between domesticity, work and respectability, which challenged the middle-class feminine ideal within a commercial society increasingly organised around market relations. However, the extent to which women could be considered professionals remained a contested issue up until the end of the century. As Louisa Starr told the International Council of Women in 1899, 'when a woman has a profession, it means in most cases that she has two professions' (quoted in Cherry 33). This volume seeks to build on this insight so as to fashion a more nuanced picture of women's professional development in the creative arts than that current in Victorian scholarship. Amateur and professional; art, handicraft and industry; creativity and mass production; aesthetic and remunerative value – all existed in overlapping yet dialectical relationships, and this collection explores the interconnectedness of these paradigms. Its chronological scope is 1790–1910, beginning with the way a nascent leisure industry promoted creative accomplishments for genteel women and ending with the formalisation of women's professional engagement in a variety of artistic occupations.

W.J. Reader has claimed that 'The professions as we know them are very much a Victorian creation' (2). However, the volume's extended view across the long nineteenth century is key to our attempt to develop an understanding of how debates about female creativity and professionalisation were defined by the changing relationship between artistry and industry. Drawing on recent work on the literary professional (see Fergus; Prescott; Schellenberg; Siskin), this collection aims to nudge the discussion of the 'rise' of female professionalism from the 1830s back to the late eighteenth century, when industrious amateurs did not regard their artistic work merely as genteel accomplishments but as productions through which they could achieve a status akin to professional recognition. Of particular relevance here is

Betty Schellenberg's sociological study of female authorship, which charts how eighteenth-century female writers achieved not only respectable incomes but also professional authorial identities. In addition to their remuneration, commitment to their work and literary associations, their professionalism also involved 'structural and institutional aspects' such as 'critical reviews and the Royal Literary Fund', as well as the professional's claims to offer a specialized set of skills to meet a defined need of society at large, and to be deserving of certain status and economic rewards as a result' (13).

Whereas there is extensive scholarly work on women's involvement in authorship (see Batchelor; Labbe; Peterson; Turner), painting (see Bermingham; Nunn), music (see Hall-Witt; Weliver) or performance (see Davis; Gale; Marshall; Powell), as well as other working- or lower middle-class identified occupations such as needlework and shopkeeping (see Boos; Cluckie; Harris; Sanders; Young), it is only recently that the growth of the art industries and their prominent role in the professional advancement of middle-class women has received significant critical attention (see Elliott and Helland; Zakreski). *Crafting the Woman Professional* responds to Linda Peterson's call for a more comprehensive examination of the changing discourses of professionalism in regards to authorship by extending it to these related art industries. It is the contention of this volume that the process of 'becoming', which, according to Peterson, highlights the indeterminate and insecure professional status of women of letters, is more widely applicable. What it meant to be professional was a slippery and tantalising rhetoric and the subject of much debate in the nineteenth-century periodical press. Examining women's specific engagements with material culture and the strategies and techniques they used, this collection as a whole maps how they crafted artefacts, themselves and the world around them. We have chosen the term 'crafting' for two reasons. Firstly, this collection emphasises professionalism's historical debts to handicraft and amateurism. While the figure of the female amateur is often posited as the precursor to the woman professional, this volume offers up a series of essays that detail the intertwined development of these two categories. Secondly, the term crafting avoids implying that a stable notion of the professional woman artist ever appeared fully formed. Instead, what this volume traces is the state of being in process, 'of always seeking yet never quite achieving secure professional status' (Peterson 9).

Crafting is a constructive activity, one which involves the skilled organisation of varied components into an ordered, expressive whole. In part, this notion of crafting therefore depended strongly upon notions of female management, drawn largely from models of middle-class domestic arrangement in which women were routinely regarded, according to Elizabeth Langland, as the organising power that introduced harmony to a scattered assemblage of financial and household components. Also, crafting suggests something in excess of such organisational skills, which meant that the assembly of these

various components could also become an act of transformation, elevating them from the status of the mundane or the patchwork to become more than the sum of their parts. Women's creative faculty, expressed through crafting, therefore took hold of the very material of the everyday to create objects without the immediate invocation of spirit or genius and thereby granted women a unique ability to combine art and commonplace life.

The originality of this collection is, we hope, two-fold; firstly, its essays demonstrate the range of women's engagement with the creative industries, ranging from different forms of craftwork, handicraft practices and music making to engraving, pattern design and literary production. What this range reveals are both the specificities and similarities in the way that female artistry was conceptualised and executed, and the role that it played in the overall emergence of female professionalism as it was increasingly taken up and pursued as an industry. Moreover, even where female industriousness went into handicrafts or other suitable genteel accomplishments – often in ways that marked an implicit rejection or appropriation of commodity culture and delineated a sphere outside that of paid labour – the artistry involved often required replicating professional techniques or using artefacts produced by an embryonic leisure industry devoted to filling women's spare time.

Art and industry had been constructed as opposing terms within eighteenth-century aesthetics, and the faultline between them continued to run deep in nineteenth-century culture. At one level, the dominance exerted by the industrial revolution continued to make them divisive rather than complementary. As Gustave Planche put it in 'La journée d'un journaliste' (1832), 'par une singulière application de la théorie d'Adam Smith sur la division du travail, il y a aujourd'hui deux parts bien distinctes dans la littérature, l'art et l'industrie' (149).¹ Many other examples could be given of how this antagonism fed into broader oppositions and debates about the impact of industrialisation. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), for example, Margaret and Thornton embody not only work versus leisure, aesthetics versus industry, past versus present but also the conflict between genders and regions, as exemplified by the comments of Thornton's mother in Chapter 15:

'I have no doubt the classics are very desirable for people who have leisure. But, I confess, it was against my judgment that my son renewed his study of them. The time and place in which he lives, seem to me to require all his energy and attention. Classics may do very well for men who loiter away their lives in the country or in colleges; but Milton men ought to have their thoughts and powers absorbed in the work of to-day. ...' (113)

Although artistry and industry were often seen as opposing discourses, attempts to overcome this opposition and unite them are nonetheless evident throughout the nineteenth century. Perhaps paradoxically, concerns about

the place of Britain's manufacturers in the growing global trade market were one of the reasons why such a separation was questioned. As early as 1836, the Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacturers argued for a greater linking of art and industry:

[For] a peculiarly manufacturing nation [like Britain], the connexion between art and manufactures is most important ... since it is admitted that the cultivation of the more exalted branches of design tends to advance the humblest pursuits of industry, while the connexion of art with manufacture has often developed the genius of the greatest masters in design. (iii)

By applying artistic principles to the design and ornamentation of industrially manufactured goods, the desirability of the items produced could be improved. The Select Committee Report was keen to stress how industry could aid the development of genius through the increased opportunities for training in connoisseurship and craft production that would be afforded by governmental investment in a system of art schools throughout the country. In the light of these debates, *Crafting the Woman Professional* asks: what were the specific opportunities and constraints that the convergence of art and industry offered to women?

This volume joins a number of key studies that have recently begun to uncover the variety of contexts in which the convergence between artistry and industry was promoted rather than denied over the course of the century (see Kriegel; Pergam). Of course, women were not alone in working in the creative art industries, and a comparable analysis that concentrates on masculinity can be found in Tim Barringer's *Men at Work*. Nonetheless, what marks out the essays in this volume is the way female creative labour, which occupied a 'paradoxical position inside and outside the market – at once complicit and transcendent' (Ruth 22), interacted in a distinct way with the similarly liminal discourses of artistry and industry. Whether this was work in translation (see Scholl), print media and journalism (see Demoor; Easley; Gray; Liddle; Waters), or interior design (see Ferry; Lees-Maffei), it was participation in the public economic world that empowered women to claim for themselves a professional identity.

As Clare Pettitt has shown, claims for the superiority of work created through the combination of artistry and industry were drawn into debates about the purpose and value of literature in order to aver a professional status for authorship. In his seminal article on literature as a profession, 'The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France' (1847), George Henry Lewes declared that 'Talent commands a price; industry is not unrewarded' (292). Building on this maxim, Charles Dickens, alongside others such as Augustus Egg and Edward Bulwer Lytton, further stressed this connection between artistry and industry by their creation of the Guild of Literature and Art, which sought to provide pensions and annuities to writers and artists no

longer able to support themselves. The broader growth of institutions, societies and guilds was key to the creation of professional identities and status; women benefited from bodies such as the Society of Women Artists (founded 1855) and the Society of Women Writers and Journalists (founded 1894). According to Harold Perkin, such structures are organised 'around career hierarchies rather than classes; a professional society is one in which people find their place according to trained expertise and the service they provide rather than the possession or lack of inherited wealth or acquired capital' (359). As well as societies, these structures included the Schools of Design, the Department of Science and Art, and the South Kensington Museum, the creation of which was funded by the proceeds of the Great Exhibition; all of which contributed to the professional recognition of their members by affirming their status, controlling their fees and protecting their labour.

The question of how art could be aided by industry, however, was contested throughout the century because of the vexed focus on the corrupting influence of the market-place on artistic beauty and taste. While the status of the relationship of use value to beauty fluctuated over the course of the century, the long-running, cultural project to reconcile artistry and industry continued even when aesthetic discourses began to reject mid-Victorian conceptions of art's moral and social purpose. In his 1878 chapter on 'Industrial Art' for *Great Industries of Great Britain*, the writer, painter and actor John Forbes-Robertson argued that the greatest achievements for the artist were to be found in the art industries: 'A thing of beauty may have no immediate practical use, a thing of use no appreciable beauty; but in their union the creative genius of man finds its highest and divinest expression' (21).

The connection between artistry and industry, as Pettitt claims, was ultimately a thorny one for the male author, one which 'risked dismantling the construction of "transcendent" literary value' associated with notions of genius and the Romantic image of the writer (158). However, for female authors the story was different: 'While it was difficult for women to appropriate androcentric Romantic male models of creativity, ... some women writers [were] less anxious about participation in the marketplace than their male counterparts' (Pettitt 28). Pettitt draws specifically on the legal principle of coverture, in which a married woman and all her possessions were legally defined as the property of her husband, as one of the reasons why women artists were less affected by their participation in the market-place (28). For male authors, the relationship between artistry and industry threatened to alienate them from their creative work as they sold the product of their genius for profit. But within the legal and ideological structures of mid-Victorian gender politics, women were already alienated from the products of their labour and therefore did not experience the alienating effects of capitalism in the same way as their male counterparts (a situation brought to the fore in the case of Caroline Norton, who, after separating from her abusive husband

in 1836, found that he also claimed her earnings from her writings as his own). In fact, as the essays in this collection make evident, arguments for the compatibility of artistry and industry, though sometimes made in somewhat oblique ways, were particularly profitable for the professional advancement of women in the long nineteenth century. Discussing the problems of the older systems of art tuition for the female artist which limited training in art to a small number of those who could afford private tuition, John Cordy Jeaffreson elaborated on how women benefited from the opening of the schools of art, which, subsidised by public monies, offered affordable education from the 1830s onwards. As Jeaffreson argues:

[W]oman's position in art may have been less favourable than some of her less generous censors imagine. Is it clear that the studios and best art teachers have been no less accessible to her than her masculine competitors? ... it cannot be maintained that the girls of past generations had the same facilities as young men for procuring artistic instruction (30).

By the 1860s suitable employment for women acquired new meanings in that it was extended to involve not only profitability and usefulness but also the possibility of professional development. Many periodical articles such as 'Lithographic Employment for Women' (1864) or 'Photography as an Employment for Women' (1867) argued for the importance of proper training so that feminine accomplishments could be developed into professions. 'If she had been properly taught', as the *Englishwoman's Review* claims, 'she might have established a business for herself, and so have supported her children, but during that long time she had learned only to "touch" and mount, for which but little remuneration is given' ('Photography' 220).

Such training would not only convince women of their powers and familiarise them with all the branches of the profession, but, more importantly, it would rescue them from the drudgery of unskilled labour. According to an article 'What Is There I Can Do?' in the *Woman's Gazette*, 'The best definition of skilled labour is, perhaps, that it is work which either requires some education and intelligence in the worker, or is the result of long and careful training' (99). Women's transformation into skilled labourers defined the value of their work which was both monetary and symbolic. While skilled women earned less than most unskilled male labourers (Alexander 20), the symbolic capital that their work carried was maintained

by the aesthetic knowledge attached to art and to the institutions developed to train artists and educate the public about art. ... Industrial or commercial art was, therefore, a way for women to enter the marketplace as autonomous laborers and still have socially meaningful, well-paid work. (Masten 5-6)

Repeated arguments for the compatibility of artistry and industry encouraged a shift in the character of the debates around the Woman Question: the focus

turned towards the opportunities that the expansion of the literary marketplace and the development of the art industries offered; their impact was not limited to the benefits they conferred on those women who became creative practitioners. As Antonia Losano has noted, while a number of studies explore how female artists' subjectivities were influenced by discourses of aesthetics, fewer 'consider the impact of gender on the changing aesthetic theories of the period' (19).

The construction of a specific type of female artistry could be a means of mediating between the competing demands of genius and the market. In his article describing the importance and good work of the Female School of Design, for instance, Thomas Purnell attempted to mitigate the conflict between the differing values of artistry and industry by appealing to the concomitant discourses of femininity and sympathy. For Purnell, art was a profession in which women could be expected to excel because of 'their quick perception of the laws of harmony and contrast of colour, their fineness of hand, their powers of arrangement, and their natural good taste' (108). Purnell describes a genteel conception of artistic production, one that usefully combines the remunerative with the respectable. Such a conception works very well to promote the art industries as suitable employment for women, but it also works to reorient the popular perception of what art is and how it should be produced. Purnell's general conception of art encompasses a feminised notion of creative activity, as it substitutes industry for inspiration and cultivation for a redefined notion of genius inclusive to women. The qualities that are seen to make the good artist are synonymous with the supposedly 'natural' feminine capabilities of harmony, delicacy, taste and management. In demanding sympathy for the woman forced by necessity to earn a livelihood through art work, Purnell extends this protection to all artistry which is also industry:

We shall be suspected of no disrespect to Art by confessing ourselves to be not of those who are disposed to consider it as something sacred – as a holy of holies, to be approached only by the sanctified, and those who come with fear and trembling. In Art, no less than in Music and Poetry, the most successful cultivators have not been ashamed to make a purveyor of their profession ... Surely we have advanced argument sufficient to arouse sympathy with the object we desire to promote: it is in this case, less the advancement of Art, – though we would advocate it also on specific grounds, – than the useful and honourable employment of those who are unhappily compelled to labour in order that they may live ... (108)

For male artists, who in theory could do any kind of work in order to earn money, the choice to use their creative ability to earn money rather than to advance art could be seen as more suspect. But for women, whose choices for respectable employment were limited, there was also more freedom. Within the discourse of female creativity there was room for both ideas of

genius and the market. Rather than being in opposition to female artistry, money was often seen as the spur, the motive that could overcome women's natural resistance to public and remunerative work and bring to light hidden or undeveloped talents. What could have languished in the obscurity of accomplishment, amateurism or handicraft could, through necessity, be made into the professional.

Crafting the Woman Professional is divided into three parts that reflect key conceptual issues while providing a genealogy of the process of female professionalisation in the literary market-place and related art industries. Part I focuses on different types of industrious amateurism – varying from window transparencies and music making to practices of interior design – in the period 1790–1850 in an attempt to recover the submerged role of amateurism in the history of female professionalism. Part II focuses on the development of the artistic career which emerged from the growing distinction between professional craft and amateur handicraft in the second half of the nineteenth century. Part III examines the self-fashioning strategies of individual Victorian women as they negotiated the complex relationship between art, professional recognition, respectability, fame and notoriety.

Part I: Industrious Amateurism

The tradition of female education in the accomplishments constructed for feminine artistry a model of industrious amateurism. While women were encouraged to engage in a number of genteel and superficial pursuits ranging from sketching, singing and playing the piano to conversing, drawing and doing needlework, they were not expected to occupy themselves with these artistic activities on a professional basis. For a woman to be well-accomplished suggested that she would be a good wife, and through the exhibition of her accomplishments she could advertise herself as an eligible and desirable match. In the early part of the century, the list of what comprised these accomplishments is neatly summarised by Caroline Bingley in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), when she argues that:

'... A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.' (39)

Although Caroline's definition of the accomplishments is an advance on her brother's ideas that to be accomplished means to 'paint tables, cover skreens, and net purses', her notion of 'thorough knowledge' still signifies a form of superficial learning, a point Austen drives home through Darcy's suggestion

that 'she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading' (Austen 38–9).

As Charles Bingley's list suggests, the accomplishments were often considered to be frivolous and decorative pursuits, the kinds of activities women engaged in so as to embellish their domestic spaces and occupy copious amounts of free time. With such a reputation, the accomplishments were often criticised as a waste of time and, more seriously, as instruments of female oppression. Sarah Lewis, in her moderate conduct manual, *Woman's Mission* (1839), condemned the accomplishments as a 'risible' and 'painful subject' (58) because, she argued, they train women's hands rather than their minds:

Into the cultivation of the arts, disguised under the hackneyed name of accomplishments, does one particle of intellectuality creep? Would not many of their ablest professors and most intelligent practitioners stare, with unfeigned wonder, at the supposition, that the five hours per diem devoted to the piano and the easel, had any other object than to accomplish the fingers? The idea of their influencing the head would be ridiculous! of their improving the heart, preposterous! (59)

While masculine creative production, associated with the mind and the imagination, constructed the notion of artistic genius, the feminine came to be associated with the artisanal hand, the decorative, and the imitative arts.

The four essays in this part present a nuanced picture of education in the accomplishments by mapping the ways it brought together the fine arts with the burgeoning commerce of leisure, enabling, as Talia Schaffer argues, 'women to practise the same skills that the British economy was built on'. It seeks to deconstruct and challenge some of the critiques that were used by the mid-Victorians, whose own agenda led them to dismiss previous modes of amateurism, obscuring aspects of their richness. Perhaps the most famous of these critiques is by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who mocks the pedagogical demands of industrious amateurism in the list of accomplishments that Aurora Leigh learns under the direction of her aunt:

I learnt much music – ...
 ... – fine sleights of hand
 And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
 The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
 To a noisy Tophet; and I drew...costumes
 From French engravings, nereids neatly draped
 (With smirks of simmering godship) – I washed in
 Landscapes from nature (rather say, washed out). (I.415, 417–23)

Aurora suggests that her accomplishments, along with the rest of her feminine education, are frivolous and superficial – painting, drawing and music making join embroidered footstools and stuffed birds as the irritating and