

WOMEN AND WORK IN THE PLATES
OF DIDEROT'S *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the International Studies Program
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 1991

APPROVED:



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An Abstract of the Thesis of
Kimberly Gael Hiatt for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the International Studies Program to be taken
June, 1991

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Little attention has been paid to the manner in which working women are depicted in the plates of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, one of the most characteristic and best-selling works of the Enlightenment. In this study, 12 plates are selected from the total 75 and are then linked with the text, described, analysed, and pressed for meaning. What is revealed is a visual notion of women's work which emphasizes a sexual division of labor, but is nonetheless dignified.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Raymond Birn for inspiring my interest in the *Encyclopédie* and encouraging me throughout the course of this project. I would also like to thank Professor Barbara Pope for helping me to clarify my points from a woman's perspective, and Professor Henry Alley for his close attention to detail.

This project would be incomplete without the mention of James Fox of the University of Oregon Special Collections, who has always gone out of his way and made special trips to meet my research needs.

To my roommate, JoLyn, who was there for me each day with friendship and moral support, I give many hugs.

To Jason, whose friendship and zest for life came at a time when I needed it most, I will always be grateful.

Many thanks also go out to Mike for always asking questions and being concerned, and to Lori and the gang of the IMC for lending an ear and covering for me when deadlines approached. And though you may be far away, Stewart, Roxanna, Akiko and Greg, thank you for sending your encouragement from across the ocean.

Finally, I'd like to thank my parents and sister, Kristi. They are the most beautiful people I know.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With over 72,000 entries of text and 2,900 engravings of the mechanical arts, the *Encyclopédie*, published between 1751-1772, is a vast repository of information about all facets of human existence.¹ To discuss women in this Enlightenment masterpiece is a topic of no little research, as one would have to assemble, organize, analyze and synthesize all references to women in the 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of engravings, or plates. Attempting such a feat would put one face-to-face with a divergence of views, as each contributor to the *Encyclopédie* was given license to choose what he (for all but two contributors were men²)

¹ The title *Encyclopédie* used throughout this paper refers to the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres*, edited by Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, 17 vols. (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton and Durand, 1751-1765) and the *Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts liberaux et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explication*, edited by Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, 11 vols. (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton and Durand, 1762-1772).

For this paper, I consulted the University of Oregon compact reprint edition of the *Encyclopédie*, a facsimile of the original by Readex Microprint Corporation, New York, NY 1969, 5 vols.

² There are only two recognized female contributors of the 140 or so who came to write for the *Encyclopédie*. Approximately 50 different engravers worked on the plates and none were women.

would say. In other words, there was no editorial policy set for the subject of women. Each contributor approached his topic according to his background or interest.

Scholars too have conflicting views as to what ideas about women are represented in the *Encyclopédie*. Some, like P. Charbonnel, generalize that the encyclopedists did not have a master plan to improve the lot of women.³ However, others like Terry S. Dock feel that some of the encyclopedists threw out traditional notions of women and extended dignity to them. By so doing, Dock feels these encyclopedists may unwittingly have brought about subsequent changes in women's conditions, changes which none of them could have imagined.⁴

The question of how the encyclopedists extend dignity to women, whether deliberately or not, arises. Certainly there are favorable remarks scattered throughout the 17 volumes of text. For example, while several contributors emphasize the traditional notion of woman's weakness and inferiority to man within the context of France's eighteenth-century patriarchal society, others promote enlightened concepts of women. In her compendium, Dock

³ P. Charbonnel, "Repères pour une étude du statut de la femme dans quelques écrits théoriques des 'philosophes'," *Etudes sur le XVIIIe siècle*, 3(1976): 93-110.

⁴ Terry Smiley Dock, *Woman in the Encyclopédie: A Compendium* (Potomac: Studia Humanitatis, 1983) pp. 4-5, 170-171.

cites *Encyclopédie* contributor Dumarsais, who writes in his article "CONJONCTION" that "women have as much intelligence as men."⁵ Dock also lists several articles that describe specific women distinguished by their knowledge.⁶ The chevalier de Jaucourt, a major contributor to the *Encyclopédie* and one of the most radical male critics of women's subordination, stated that under natural law, where people are created equally, "nothing prevents...a woman from having authority within marriage by virtue of agreement between persons of equal position."⁷ Also in his article "ENFANTEMENT," Jaucourt believes that women risk their lives through childbirth to ensure the continuation of the species, while Diderot suggests in his articles "IMPASSIBLE" and "IMPASSIBILITÉ" that mothers possess a sort of natural courage: "A mother who saw her child in danger would run to his aid barefoot through burning coals without feeling any pain."⁸

Along with these texts, dignity is likewise extended to women in the 11 volumes of plates of the mechanical arts, or

⁵ Ibid, p. 89.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Article "Femme". *L'Encyclopédie...*(Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1761), VI, 471 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, II, 1376).

⁸ Dock, p. 71 and 79.

manual labor, where their labors and instruments of labor are visually recorded alongside those of men.

This topic of women in the illustrations brings up an interesting point, for as Sara Malueg has pointed out, little attention has been paid to women as they are represented in the plates.⁹ Unfortunately, the few references that are made to working women in the plates are usually brief, leaving the reader with little idea of the diversity of occupations in which women participated.

For example, Jacques Proust says of the engravings, "...il y a peu à dire sur le travail féminin" (there is little to say about women's work).¹⁰ In two short paragraphs Proust summarizes women's work in the plates with references to agriculture, fishing, shopkeeping and a few jobs that men and women share in common. His quick overview leaves one with the impression that the work that women did was insignificant.

In another work, the historian William H. Sewell, Jr. says, "the work that women are doing is not very important in these images; it is hardly more than a pretext for

⁹ Sara E.P. Malueg, "Women in the *Encyclopédie*," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia I. Spencer. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 266.

¹⁰ Jacques Proust, "L'Image du Peuple au Travail dans les Planches de l'*Encyclopédie*," in *Images du Peuple au Dix-huitième Siècle*. Colloque d'Aix-en-Provence, 25 et 26 octobre 1969, Centre aixois d'études et de recherches sur le XVIIIe siècle. (Paris: A. Colin, 1973), p. 76.

depicting a pretty girl."¹¹ Consequently, Sewell focuses his study of the plates essentially on images of men's work.

Malueg, however, believes the plates give recognition to women's important role in the rural and urban labor force, saying that, "without the plates, an important facet of the lives of eighteenth-century women would have remained largely unrepresented to the readers of the *Encyclopédie*."¹²

In her compendium citing all references to women in the 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of plates, Dock identifies every plate in the *Encyclopédie* in which women are engaged in occupations, or work. Dock feels the plates reinforce the notion that women were involved in a great variety of occupations in the eighteenth century.¹³

This paper will support Malueg's and Dock's views, asserting their belief that the attention granted to women in the plates reveals the importance of their labor. For although the ideal of the bourgeois woman staying home to care for her husband and children emerged during the age of Enlightenment, this was not the reality for most working

¹¹ William H. Sewell, Jr., "Visions of Labor: Illustrations of the Mechanical Arts before, in, and after Diderot's *Encyclopédie*," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, eds. Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 260.

¹² Malueg, p. 269.

¹³ Dock, p. 159.

women. Lower and middle-class women were needed in the work force. In the engravings of the *Encyclopédie*, these women worked alongside men in shops, factories and fields.

Of the more than 2,900 plates in the *Encyclopédie* (with a large number of these plates depicting simply the tools and equipment employed in various manual labor), there are approximately 550 plates illustrating men at work while only 75 plates picture working women.¹⁴ Most of the plates portray men, but women are depicted in a variety of occupations in the illustrations. The following occupations illustrate women at work:

Agriculture	Making Lace
Farming/Tilling	Making Stockings
Making Hay	Cutting/Embossing Fabrics
Preparing Hemp	Clipping Musket balls
Churning Butter	Writing Calligraphy
Making Needles	Gilding
Silver Plating	Working with Glass
Weaving Turkish Carpets	Enameling
Gold-beating	Making Fans
Corkmaker	Making Playing Cards
Making Buttons	Tinsmith
Ornamenting Buttons	Spinning
Gold Wire-drawing	Embroidery
Making Artificial Flowers	Making Belts
Printing	Making Sealing Wax
Fur Merchant	Making Pins
Instrument, etc. Casemaker	Cutler
Tinning	Dressmaker/Seamstress
Fashion Merchant	Jeweler
Making Paper	Making Passementerie
Fishing	Wigmaker/Barber

¹⁴ Many plates have no scenes or figures containing people at all. Subject entries such as "Architecture" and "Histoire Naturelle" simply contain engravings of buildings and animals and insects, respectively, but no people.

Stitching Snuff boxes
 Bookbinding/Gilding
 Working with Silk
 Making Bed Draperies/Curtains
 Pastry Making

Feather Merchant
 Saddler/Carriage Maker
 Tapestry
 Preparing Horn

The 75 vignettes where women are engaged in the occupations listed above will be the focus of this study. Because my goal is to analyse how women are depicted in work in the plates, I will limit the scope of my study to plates which depict women, whether they are working with men or working alone. In other words, I will not examine plates of working men where women are not present.

All of women's work in the rural and urban sectors listed above involve different levels of physical and mental labor. In order to differentiate between these levels and see the variety of labor in which women were engaged, I divided their work into three general categories: hard physical labor, less rigorous labor and skilled labor.

Hard physical labor is labor which is physically taxing on the body (i.e. carrying, lifting, bending, scrubbing, etc.). Not surprisingly, the majority of hard physical labor falls under rural industry, in agriculture and fishing. Sixteen plates fall into this category. These jobs include pushing a seeder to plant seed in the field; cutting, raking and gathering hay; churning butter; fishing with handnets; seining an inlet; salting, washing, smoking and packing sardines; and pulling large fishing nets to

shore. Women performed physically taxing work in other sectors as well. They worked in urban glass industries, where they hammered scrap glass from old melting pots; sorted, washed and carried scrap glass to the warehouse; and swept up large pieces of glass inside the factory near the hot furnaces. The illustrations depict a woman in the silver plating industry rigorously scraping copperplate so that the silver will have a rough surface to which to cling; a woman in the cardmaking industry carrying large stacks of cards to the cutter, a woman in the bookbinding industry carrying stacks of books to the gilder; and finally, women scrubbing sheets of iron to be tinned.

Because all of the work in this category seems to involve little talent, training or practice, I have labeled it as unskilled labor. It should be noted, however, that the dividing line between skilled and unskilled labor is not an easy one to draw. In the industry of fishing, for example, seining an inlet or smoking sardines are not mindless jobs that are learned at the drop of a hat. They require some practice and adaptation to the techniques involved. However, because these trades, like all those in the hard physical labor category, seem to require less talent, training and skill when juxtaposed with trades/crafts like enameling or making needles (work also

represented in the *Encyclopédie*), I have considered them as unskilled labor.

Women also worked in less rigorous jobs that were unskilled: stripping softened bark from a hemp plant; winding thread on bobbins for a stocking frame; making molds for buttons by using a bowstring to turn a bit; sewing gut strings; breaking metal burrs off cast printing characters and filing them; turning a cylinder that stirs melted wax; stirring melted wax in a pot and weighing small amounts of it; gilding picture frames; spinning; cutting fabric for men to line musical and other instrument cases and small ornamental chests; clipping musket balls (for hunting guns) from a metal stick; sorting rags to be made into paper; hanging paper to dry; inspecting, folding, counting and assembling sheets of paper; handing a man curling irons (for frizzing wigs) to be heated in a fireplace; attaching floats to a fishing net; heating horn over a fire; flattening and winding gold wire thread; turning a crank to seal and wind silk ribbon and putting the finished product in a basket; reeling silk from cocoons; winding/doubling silk; preparing warp thread for the loom; and drawing warped yarn onto a spool.

Women performed skilled labor as well. They were shopkeepers (cutler, corkcutter, tin smith, fur merchant, jeweler, pastry-maker, feather merchant and fashion

merchant). They made needles; prepared layers of gold in laminated packets with buffer strips of vellum for gold-beating; made ornamental buttons; embroidered; arranged printing characters on a composite; wrote calligraphy; sewed belts; made sealing wax sticks; made pins; cut and embossed fabrics; made false pearls; assembled and painted fans; made artificial flowers; braided wigs, stitched signatures on books, applied gold leaf to book spines; sewed harnesses; stitched decorative boxes/cases for personal belongings; weaved Turkish carpets; sewed bed drapings and curtains; made lace fringes for women's dresses; made combs for textile weaving looms; weaved textiles; and made metallic/brass thread and assembled it on lace.

Who are the women in the illustrations of the *Encyclopédie*? They are women of the working or popular classes, including peasants, artisans, small shopkeepers, skilled and unskilled laborers. They participated in a family economy where each individual, parents and children alike, contributed to its physical subsistence. Women's work entailed productive activity for the household or for exchange and did not always nor necessarily bring in money. For example, growing vegetables, raising animals, preparing food, making clothing, and helping with farm or craft work

served household needs and often merged with women's household or domestic chores.

Within the preindustrial household, whether on the farm or in the craftshop, among property holders and wage earners, there was a division of labor by sex and by age. Children usually performed the simplest and crudest chores, with their expected level of skill advancing with age. While certain kinds of heavy work were reserved for men, women also did many heavy tasks, such as hauling and carrying, which today are considered too arduous for females. Rural and urban wives sometimes had their own occupations, such as spinning or making lace, or they shared their husband's occupations on the farm and in the craftshop performing specific tasks. However, the sexual division of labor tended to give men jobs away from the household requiring uninterrupted time and travel commitments, while women were given work at home which permitted flexible time arrangements.¹⁵

Women who were single usually lived with families, either as daughters in their own home or as servants in another household, and were regarded as dependents of the household in which they lived and worked. Those employed in other areas, such as textiles, usually lived with another

¹⁵ Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 44.

family or with women like themselves.¹⁶ Economically, it was extremely difficult to be single and independent, for even in the best of jobs female wages were low, one-third to one-half of what men's were for a working day of fifteen to sixteen hours. This same ratio also holds true for the relationship between the earning power of, for example, a seamstress and a tailor.¹⁷

One of the most prominent characteristics of the plates is that they reveal a preindustrial, utopian vision of work. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century representations of the mechanical arts depicted cluttered workshops, figures full of personality and stylistic art of the age. Engravings and prints of the eighteenth century also reiterate these themes. However, the *Encyclopédie* is an exception. Most of the engravings from the *Encyclopédie* contain small, impersonal figures with anonymous faces in vast, bare, and clean workshops, where each worker is intent on his or her own work.

The organization and flow of production of these workers is difficult to follow because each is divided into

¹⁶ Some joined religious orders, worked in hospitals or became prostitutes.

¹⁷ Olwen Hufton, "Women and the Family Economy in Eighteenth-Century France" in *French Historical Studies* 9(Spring 1975): 13.

his or her own step in the process of production. Difficulty in following the flow of production is intensified by the engravers' frequent practice of using more than one plate to illustrate a trade. In most cases, one must link the image of the illustration to the accompanying "explication" provided on the adjacent pages in order to understand what is going on in the pictures.¹⁸

In most cases also, the picture surface is dominated not by human figures working within their workshops or on their land, but by large-scale representations of tools and equipment, emphasizing technology over human labor. Nevertheless, Diderot dignifies the workers by depicting a utopian vision of their labor. In this vision, the working figures are independent, yet pre-industrial. They are a part of an ideal world of labor where they are independent of the guild's restrictions and yet not submerged by the factory.¹⁹ Each worker is divided into his or her own separate step in the process of production.

¹⁸ Sewell, p.270.

¹⁹ Raymond Birn, "Words and Pictures: Diderot's Vision and Publishers' Perceptions of Popular and Learned Culture in the *Encyclopédie*" in *Popular Traditions and Learned Culture in France from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Stanford French and Italian Studies, v. 35, ed. Marc Bertrand (Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1985), pp. 78-79.

With a general understanding of women's work in eighteenth-century France and the preindustrial vision of labor in the *Encyclopédie*, it is important to look again at the plates themselves. What notion does Diderot convey about working women as they are represented in the plates? How are they depicted in relation to men? To themselves? Is there sociability? Isolation? What kind of work are the women doing in comparison to the men? Does it involve mental labor/intelligence? Is it artistic? What unusual working conditions are revealed? Are they unpleasant? Dangerous?

For my analysis, I have selected plates representing the three different kinds of labor in which women were involved (i.e. harsh physical labor, less rigorous labor, and skilled labor). These plates also represent three sexual divisions of labor, i.e. where men and women are working together doing different work, where men and women are working together doing the same work, or where women are working alone. I have used these two sets of criteria as a framework for analysis in order to survey women's work in the illustrations.

CHAPTER 2

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PLATES

Before examining several *Encyclopédie* plates depicting women in work, it is important to first understand what notion of women's work the contributors convey when they refer to a woman and the occupations of her sex. Taking what I believed to be the most obvious source that would provide insight into this question, I used the article "FEMME" (Woman) exclusively as a focus of reference and found the views of two contributors. The first contributor, Barthez, writes that,

Un proverbe hébreu borne presque toute l'habileté des femmes à leur quenouille...Par un excès opposé, Platon veut qu'elles ayent les mêmes occupations des hommes.²⁰

A Hebrew proverb limits almost all of women's skill to their needles...At the opposite extreme, Plato would have women practice the same professions as men.

Barthez goes on to say that women should not hold the same positions as men. However, the second contributor, Boucher d'Argis, asserts that women cannot hold the same positions as men because,

²⁰ Article "Femme". *L'Encyclopédie*...(Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1761), VI, 469 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, II, 1376).

Les hommes, par la prérogative de leur sexe & par la force de leur tempérament, sont naturellement capables de toutes sortes d'emplois & d'engagemens; au lieu que les femmes, soit à cause de la fragilité de leur sexe & de leur délicatesse naturelle, sont exclues de plusieurs fonctions, & incapables de certains engagemens.²¹

Men, by the prerogative of their sex and by the force of their temperament, are naturally capable of all sorts of occupations and engagements; whereas women, either because of the fragility of their sex or because of their natural delicacy, are excluded from several professions, and [are] incapable of certain engagements.

In summary, the contributors are quick to emphasize a separation of male and female labor, for their contentions are based on, and basically reiterations of, the status quo; in other words, that woman is the weaker sex, "la femelle de l'homme" (the female of man) or "un homme manqué" (an imperfect man).²²

But what about the visual notion of women's work as depicted in the plates? Do they convey this same notion?

When I first began my research, I anticipated finding in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* a clearly-defined notion that would correspond to the views of Barthez and Boucher d'Argis. What I found, however, was more complex. Women participated in such a wide variety of labor that many of them failed to match the contentions of Barthez and Boucher

²¹ Ibid (1761), p. 475 (reprint ed.; 1969, p. 1377).

²² Ibid (1761), pp. 469, 471 (reprint ed.; 1969, p. 1376).

d'Argis. Several of these *Encyclopédie* plates revealed that despite a sexual division of labor, women, like men, participated in work that involved mental labor and artistic skill as well as work that was physically demanding, unpleasant and dangerous.

The various forms of labor in which women are engaged in the plates are characterized by a sense of collectivity or companionship. In other words, where women are working, they are usually working together, engaged in some sort of interaction, or sociability, such as sharing work or engaging in conversation. While the men are frequently working independently at their tasks, the women are working collectively among themselves or under the visually-implied supervision of men. Women are frequently isolated from their male co-workers in the plates as well.

What is the message conveyed by this cooperative sense of labor? Because most of the women work together in groups, their labor is more of a collective, joint effort than the men's, who work independently of each other. In some cases, the men are so self-governed that they almost seem unaware of the women's presence. The men seem to be lonely figures in their independence, while the women (most of them, anyway) interact and seem more content in their sociability.

I will argue that Diderot dignified working women in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* through the labor in which they were engaged and through the methods by which they worked. In other words, women held positions that entailed a variety of aptitudes such as skill, creativity, concentration, physical strength, and patience. They worked cooperatively with other women alone, as well as among men in subordinate roles, and they worked alongside men in equally skilled jobs.

While the manner in which women are depicted in the the engravings sets the tone for the depiction of their labor, I will also show that in some cases the "explications" (explanations, or caption descriptions), and articles that correspond with the illustrations, add some insight into women's work and say what is female labor.

This chapter will offer some analysis of the selected plates, but its primary purpose is to briefly describe all of the *Encyclopédie* illustrations where women are engaged in work. A more complete description of the plates I have selected will follow. They will be analysed for meaning in the concluding chapter.

Obviously, an ideal thesis would determine a notion of women's work in the engravings based on an individual analysis of each of the 75 plates. However, my thesis will be more tentative and will assert a position based on a less

exhaustive analysis of the illustrations. I have selected 12 engravings because I feel that they are representative of this complex notion of women's work in the entire 75 plates.

Several of the *Encyclopédie* illustrations reveal that where men and women worked together, men usually filled leading or controlling roles that were physically demanding or skilled, while women usually filled unskilled, subordinate roles. A list of these illustrations are:

(AGRICULTURE)

A man guides a large and heavy plough to open furrows, along which a woman (fig.4) pushes a small seeder (Pl.I. Agriculture, Labourage (IV, p.13)).

(HARVESTING HAY)

In the top half of the plate, two men use scythes to cut crop, which two women rake up (Agriculture. Façon des Foins, et Moisson (IV, p. 15)).

(PREPARING HEMP)

A woman (fig.3) tends the fire that heats the hemp and another woman (fig.4) strips softened hemp fibers from bark while the men are occupied with more physically demanding tasks such as threshing (Pl.I. 1er et 2me Division. OEconomie Rustique, Culture et Travail du Chanvre (IV, p.21)).

(SILVER PLATING)

A woman (fig.1) scratches and cross-hatches copperplate with a knife while men chisel designs and apply silver leaf to it (Pl.I. Argenteur (IV, p.81)).

(STOCKING FRAME)

A woman (fig.1) winds silk thread onto bobbins for the stocking frame that the man is operating (for knitting stockings) (Pl.I. Metier à faire des Bas (IV, p.107)).

(GUT SPINNING)

Male worker (fig.2) scrapes grease, fat and strings from gut, while a woman (fig.3) uses these strings to sew strips of gut together to eventually make long cords. A man (fig.4) turns a wheel to tighten the cord and another man (fig.5) smoothes and glossens it. The cords are used as strings for musical instruments (Boyaudier (IV, p. 141)).

(PRINTING)

Men prepare the metal and cast the printing characters, while women (figs.1 and 2) break metal burrs from those cast and smoothe the edges by filing them (Pl.I. Fonderie en Caracteres (IV, p.146)).

(MAKING PLAYING CARDS)

Men assemble, paint, press, cut and separate playing cards, while a woman carries large stacks of sheets of cards to the cutter (Pl.I. Cartier (IV, p.169)).

(WHITENING WAX)

A girl (fig.1) turns a crank that stirs wax into a trough where it is washed, while men dip wax out and carry it outside to be whitened (Pl.II. Blanchissage, des Cires (IV, p.240)).

(MAKING SEALING WAX)

Women (figs.1 and 2) stir heated wax and weigh equal amounts that is rolled into wax sticks by men (Pl.I. Cirier, en Cire à Cacheter (IV, p.243)).

(MAKING ARTIFICIAL PEARLS)

Men cut glass into small tubes and blow pearls, while a woman (fig.3) smoothes the edges where pearls were broken from the tubes. Another man spins glass thread, while a woman (fig.5) winds it onto a reel (Pl.II. Emailleur, à la Lampe Perles Fausses (IV, p.287)).

(SPINNING)

Man winds thread from bobbins onto a modern warping reel, while a woman (fig.2) spins thread on an old-fashioned flyer wheel (Pl.II. Fil, Rouet (IV, p.314)).

(CASEMAKER)

Men cut and assemble cases for musical instruments, telescopes, swords and pistols, personal belongings, etc., while a woman (fig.3) simply cuts the fabric that will line the cases (Pl.I. Gainier (IV, p.354)).

(PAPER)

Women (figs.1-4) inspect, fold, count and assemble sheets of paper while a man operates the heavy press (Pl.XIII. Papetterie, La Salle (IV, p.489)).

(TINNING)

Women (fig.G) scrub sheet iron to be tinned while men light the furnace, process the tinning solution and tin the sheet iron (Pl.II. Métallurgie, Fer Blanc (IV, p.567)).

(WIGMAKER/BARBER)

A woman (fig.e) hands curling irons (for frizzing wigs) to a man to heat, and another woman (fig c) braids a wig. The men arrange, comb, adjust and mount the wigs and also do barbering (Pl.I. Perruquier Barbier (IV, p.743)).

(FISHING)

One man makes a fishing net, another man finishes the border of the net, and a woman (fig.12) attaches floats to the net (Pl.I. Pesches de Mer. Fabrique des Filets (IV, p.750)).

(PREPARING HORN)

A woman (fig.1b) heats horn over a fire place, while the men heat horn on a grill, cut the horn, split it, press it, and carve it to its desired form (Pl.I. Tabletier Cornetier, Préparation de la Corne (IV, p.835)).

(GOBELIN TAPESTRY)

A woman (fig.n) works her spinning wheel, winding bundles of yarn or thread on spindles, while the men weave the tapestries (Pl.I. Tapisserie de Haute Lisse des Gobelins, Plan et Perspective de l'Atelier, des Metiers, et différentes Opérations (IV, p.871)).

(GLASS)

Men break down burnt-out melting pots in which glass is heated, while women (fig.3) hammer the pieces of glass out of the broken pot (Pl.VII. Verrerie en bois, l'Opération de briser les vieux pots; de les piler et tamiser pour les mêler avec la terre glaise et Outils (IV, p.971)).

(GLASS)

A woman (fig.2a) drags/sweeps glass across a factory floor, while men elevate heavy melting pots of glass into hot furnaces (Pl.XVIII. Verrerie en bois, Vue Interieure du Four d'une grande Verrerie en Plats, et l'Opération de mettre le Pot sur le Siege etc. (IV, p.981)).

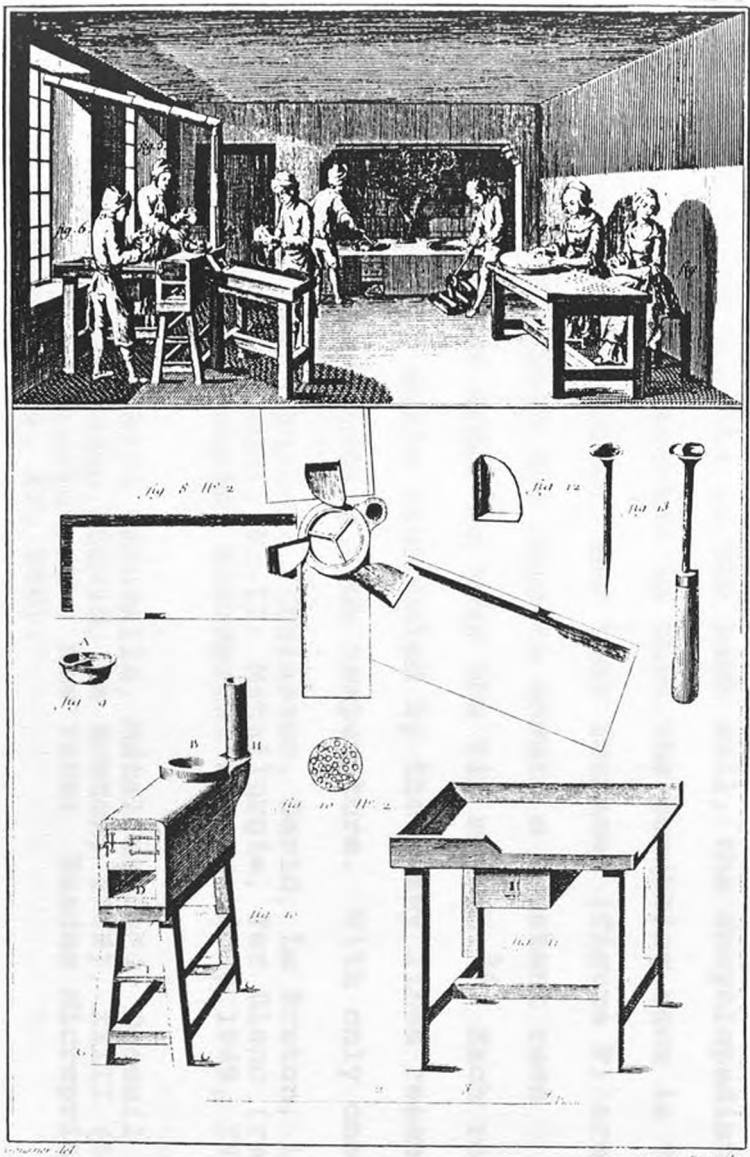
(PASSEMENTERIE)

Men assemble silk ribbon, while one woman (fig.b) turns a crank which winds it and seals it, and another woman (fig.e) puts the finished product in a basket (Pl.XXI. Passementerie, Façon de la Nonpareille (IV, p.1002)).

(SILK)

A man uses a warp to guide yarn from the reel onto several spools using oscillating motion. The woman (fig.2) slows the movement of the warp by pushing on the uprights to achieve the right tension (Pl.XXVIII. Soierie, l'Opération de Relever (IV, p.1036)).

What is revealed in these engravings is that filling these unskilled subordinate roles did not always imply performing light tasks. Several of these plates show women engaged in labor under dangerous, unpleasant and physically demanding conditions. Take the plate (also known as a vignette) "Métallurgie, Fer Blanc" (Tinning, Fig. 2.1) for



Ponderie en caracteres

Fig. 2.2 Printing, from the *Encyclopédie*.
Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Oregon Library.

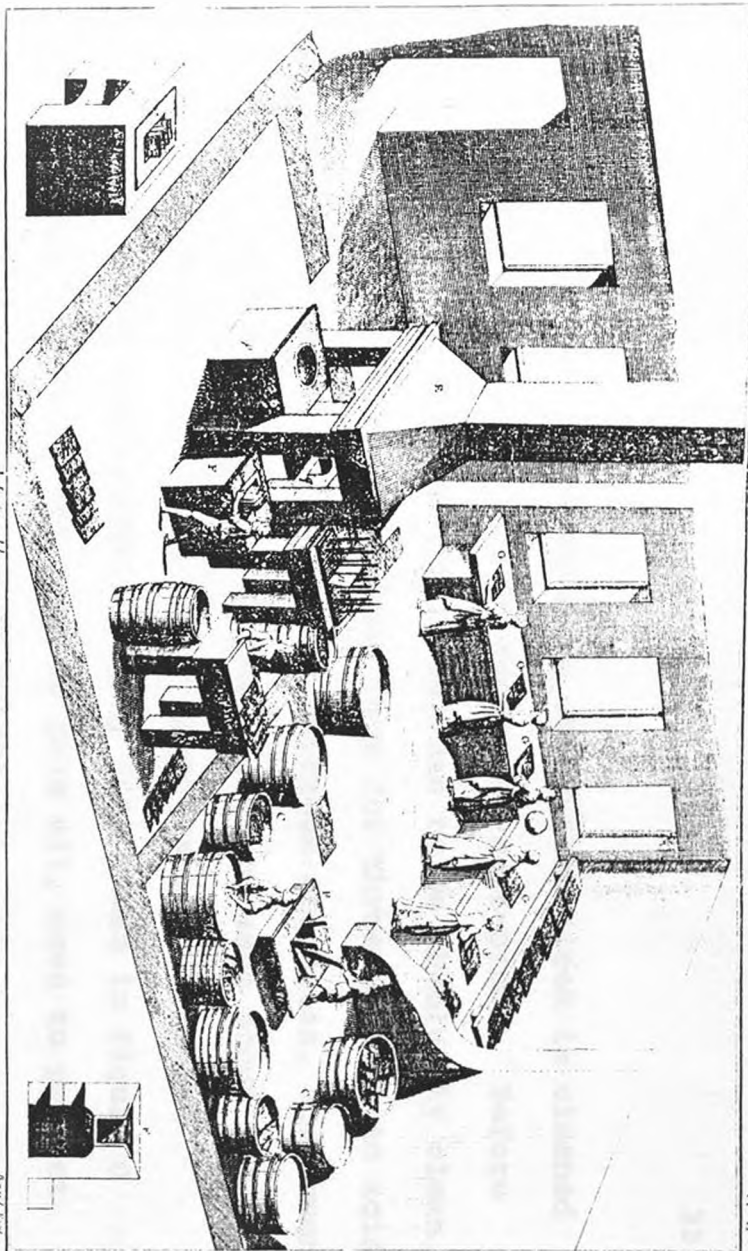


Fig. 2.1 Tinning, from the *Encyclopédie*. Courtesy of Special
Collections, University of Oregon Library.

example.²³ This is a workshop where sheet iron is cleaned and dipped in molten tin to render it rust-proof. Before the sheets could be tinned, they had to be absolutely clean, which was achieved by soaking them for three days in an acid solution (figure C). Once the surfaces are clean, the women in figure G use sand and tattered rags to sand scour the sheets and then put them under fresh water to prevent rusting until the tinner is ready (One woman in figure O wipes the tinned sheets free of palm oil, used to protect the surface of the tin as it dries).

Women's conditions of labor are no less harsh than those of the men. The women are subjected to unpleasant heat conditions within the workshop, for despite the door and windows visible on the back wall, the encyclopedist who writes the text assures us that the scrubbing room is "bien fermée" (well-closed), and that furnaces (figure F) are placed throughout the room to ensure a constant room temperature in order to keep the tin molten.²⁴ Each room is enclosed with walls (indicated by the heavy lines resembling sidewalks) to maintain room temperature. With only one door

²³ *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1768), XXIII (5e Livraison), Pl.II. Métallurgie, Fer Blanc (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 567).

²⁴ Article "Histoire Naturelle, Métallurgie". *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1768), XXIII (5e Livraison), 1 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 566).

located at the back left corner of the shop, there is thus no possibility for a cross-channel flow of cool air to circulate. Under this constant heat, the women stand at their stationary positions and scrub the sheet iron during the course of their workday, a workday that typically ranged from 13-15 hours (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.), with three hours off for meals.

The engraving also conveys a visual distinction between male and female labor. Notice how the women are placed in the illustration in relation to the men. The artist seems to give importance to the men's work by placing them in the foreground, whereas he deemphasizes the women's work by placing the women in the rear right corner with their backs to the reader. The "explication"/article²⁵ reinforces the importance of the men's labor by explaining that the men begin and finish the tinning process; they light the furnace (figure E), soak the tin in an acid solution (figure C) for three days, melt the tin and tin the sheets (figure F). The men's leading and controlling roles are evident as each man works independently at his own task.

However, the women (with the exception of the woman in figure O who is barely noticeable) are isolated, working in

²⁵ Incidentally, this "explication" was written by Diderot himself. Like many "explications" in the *Encyclopédie*, this one became, in fact, an article itself and was left beside its corresponding plate, rather than placed alphabetically in the volumes of text as the other articles were.

the corner room of the shop in a lined-up and orderly fashion. By offsetting the women in their own working space, the artist seems to be dividing up a notion of men's and women's work as well. While the men are busy independently working at various steps in the tinning process, the women are engaged in their "womanly work" together. The text also makes a distinction of woman's labor. She is "une bonne ouvrière qui peut récurer cinq ou six cens feuilles par jour" (a good female worker who can scrub five or six hundred sheets each day) and "une frotteuse qui dégraisse les feuilles" (a wiper who degreases the sheets).²⁶

Another curious portrayal of women in work is the plate "Fonderie en Caractères" (Printing, Fig. 2.2).²⁷ This is a workshop where printing letters are cast by hand. Molten antimony (figure 3) is added to lead containing a little tin (figure 4) which is then poured into ingot molds in front of the furnace. It is remelted at the founder's stove at the left (figure 7) where three typefounders work. One man (figure 5) dips a spoonful of molten type metal into his

²⁶ Article "Histoire Naturelle, Métallurgie". *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1768), XXIII (5e Livraison), 1 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 566).

²⁷ *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1762), XIX (1ere Livraison), Pl.I. Fonderie en Caractères (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 146).

hand-mold; the second man (figure 6) sets the metal into his hand-mold by shaking it; and the third man (figure 8) is about to take out the letter.

When the letter is taken out of the mold, it carries a stem which has to be broken off. According to the encyclopedist, the addition of antimony to the metal composition renders the separation easy. This is the job of the woman in figure 1. Her co-worker (figure 2) files away any other imperfections the letter may carry.

The women's work seems easy enough from the illustration, but who is to judge that perfecting 400 letters an hour was easy work? Not to mention the potentially dangerous conditions the women worked under. In the article "CARACTERES D'IMPRIMERIE," the encyclopedist writes that the vapors emitted from the molten antimony are regarded as a dangerous poison...but only for cats, who have been known to throw themselves outside windows upon exposure.²⁸ Realistically, though, these compounds have a high toxicity rating for human inhalation and ingestion, causing severe pulmonary and gastrointestinal problems. But because it was believed that the elements to which workers such as these were exposed caused no illness particular to

²⁸ Article "Caractères d'Imprimerie". *L'Encyclopédie...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751), II, 655 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, I, 422).

humans, workers continued to work under these potentially harmful conditions.²⁹

Like the women in the Tinning illustration, the women in this Printing plate work under harsh conditions. But also like them, the engraver visually separates women's work from men's. The women are physically separated from the men, not only by distance but also by the barrier of the table. Because they are sitting at the table, their work appears less rigorous than the men's, who must stand. The women, though, seem more real than the men. The woman breaking the stem from the letter makes eye contact with the reader as she leisurely gazes away from her work. Even her co-worker looks lifelike with her hands resting delicately on the sandstone where she files imperfections from the letters. Each man, by contrast, works independently at his respective task, almost with a disregard for each other and the women, who seem more content and animate in their work.

Work that women did alongside men, but did not share with them, was not limited to unskilled labor. Even though there existed a sexual division of labor both in rural and urban industry where men and women had different jobs, women also performed tasks alongside men's tasks that were skilled and central to the production within the shop. For example, women were artisans and shopkeepers, taking a more active

²⁹ Ibid.

role in the craft/trade at hand. This role is evident in the following plates:

(MAKING NEEDLES)

Women flatten the neck of the needle (fig.6), file the point sharp (fig.2), wash them in a rotating drum (fig.5) and polish the finished ones (fig.4). A man (fig.3) uses a new technology vise to pierce the eye in the needles (Aiguillier-Bonnetier (IV, p. 36)).

(GOLD-BEATING)

The men melt gold (fig.1), beat it (fig.2) and press it (fig.3, no.2). The women (fig.3) cut strips of beaten gold to arrange them in parchment for three additional beatings (Pl.I. Batteur d'Or (IV, p. 113)).

(THE CORKMAKER)

A woman merchant (fig.3) tends the counter and assortments and matches different corks the male workers (fig.1 and 2) have cut (Bouchonnier (IV, p. 133)).

(PRINTING)

A woman (fig.1) arranges the letters on a compositor, a man (fig.2) spreads the words out to obtain a justified line, and another man (fig.3) cleans and smoothes the tops of the letters (Pl.III. Fonderie en Caracteres (IV, p. 146)).

(MAKING SEALING WAX)

A woman (fig.2) heats wax sticks between the grills of a cinder furnace, applies powder to them, and then heats them again to melt the powder covering into the wax. A man (fig.5) rolls, polishes, and cuts the wax into a specific size and weight (Pl.II. Cirier, en Cire à Cacheter (IV, p. 243)).

(PIN MAKING)

One man (fig.1) cuts the wire after it has been sharpened, another man (fig.2) flattens one end where the head will be, a woman (fig.3) stamps out the head, and a man (fig.4) works on a wire grillage (Pl.I. Cloutier d'Epingles (IV, p. 246)).

(THE CUTLER)

A woman shopkeeper (fig.6) arranges her wares, while the male workers in the shop forge and fabricate various metal and edged instruments (Pl.I. Coutelier (IV, p. 254)).

(THE TINSMITH'S)

A woman shopkeeper attempts to make a sale to a customer while the men in the workshop are making coffeepots (Pl.I. Ferblantier (IV, p. 313)).

(SWORD MERCHANT)

Although she is not pictured, the description to this plate says that a woman behind the counter (supposedly in fig. b) sells the wares of the shop. The men in the plate are journeymen making the swords and customers inspecting them for their quality (Pl.I. Fourbisseur, Armes anciennes (IV, p. 349)).

(FUR MERCHANT)

Two women shopkeepers (fig.a) make a sale to a couple, while a male apprentice or journeyman beats the furs to fluff them (Pl.V. Fourreur, Outils (IV, p. 353)).

(JEWELER)

A woman shopkeeper (fig.f) handles the sales and quotes a price to a customer, while the men in her shop make jewelery, scissors, fancy sword handles, cane handles and metal jewelry boxes (Pl.I. Orfèvre Bijoutier (IV, p. 728)).

(MAKING PASTRIES)

A woman shopkeeper/merchant at the far right of the plate deals with two customers, while the men in the shop prepare pastries and game pies (Pl.Iere. Patissier, Tour à Pâte, Bassines, Mortier, etc. (IV, p. 739)).

(BOOKBINDING/GILDING)

A man (fig.1a) pounds a volume-to-be-bound, a woman (fig.1b) stitches signatures on the book, a man (fig.1c) trims the pages after binding, and another man (fig.1d) operates the press which prevents the books from warping (Pl.I. Relieur (VI, p. 786)).

(BOOKBINDING/GILDING)

A man (fig.a) applies gilding to the edges of the paper, another man (fig.b) presses a design into the calfskin cover which he will fill with gold leaf, and a woman (fig.c) applies gilding to the spine of the books, carried to her by her female co-worker (Pl.V. Relieur Doreur (IV, p. 787)).

(SADDLER/CARRIAGE MAKER)

A woman sews a harness for a carriage horse, the man beside her fits upholstery for a carriage, and a journeyman receives instructions from the master saddler/carriage maker (Pl.I. Sellier-Carossier, Selles (IV, p. 807)).

(TAPISTRY/UPHOLSTERY)

Several women (fig.1) gathered around a table sew bed coverings/drapings and curtains, while a male street-porter (fig.i) is in charge of the mattress/pads/cushions leaving the store. The master (fig.m) examines an upholstered chair (fig.a) (Pl.I. Tapissier, Intérieur d'une Boutique et différents Ouvrages (IV, p. 865)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

Women (fig.b,c) braid lace fringes for women's dresses by hand, while a man (fig.a) uses a stocking frame to make them (Pl.XV. Passementerie, Mètier à Franges (IV, p. 1001)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

A man and two women (figs.b,c,d) prepare the reeds for the loom combs, while another woman (fig.a) assembles the loom combs (Pl.XXIII. Passementerie, Façon des Peignes et Développemens (IV, p. 1003)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

A man (fig.a) cuts the brass, a woman (fig.b) prepares the brass, and another woman (fig.c) assembles it on lace (Pl.XXIV. Passementerie, Façon des afferons de Lassets (IV, p. 1004)).

The most favored female occupation illustrated in the plates appears to be shopkeeping. A woman shopkeeper was the wife of the master of the shop, since the state required that masters be married³⁰, and she was quite active in the success and flow of production within the shop. She was responsible for running the shop behind the counter and selling the products her husband made while he worked with the apprentices and journeymen. Sometimes, she sold them from a stand at the city marketplace. But her duties extended beyond helping customers at the counter or marketplace. She was often responsible for keeping records and collecting debts and for purchasing raw materials. Overall, her presence was important because it was she who saw that things ran smoothly in the shop, whether her

³⁰ Merry E. Wiesner, "Women's Work in the Changing City Economy, 1500-1650" in *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present*, eds. Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 66.

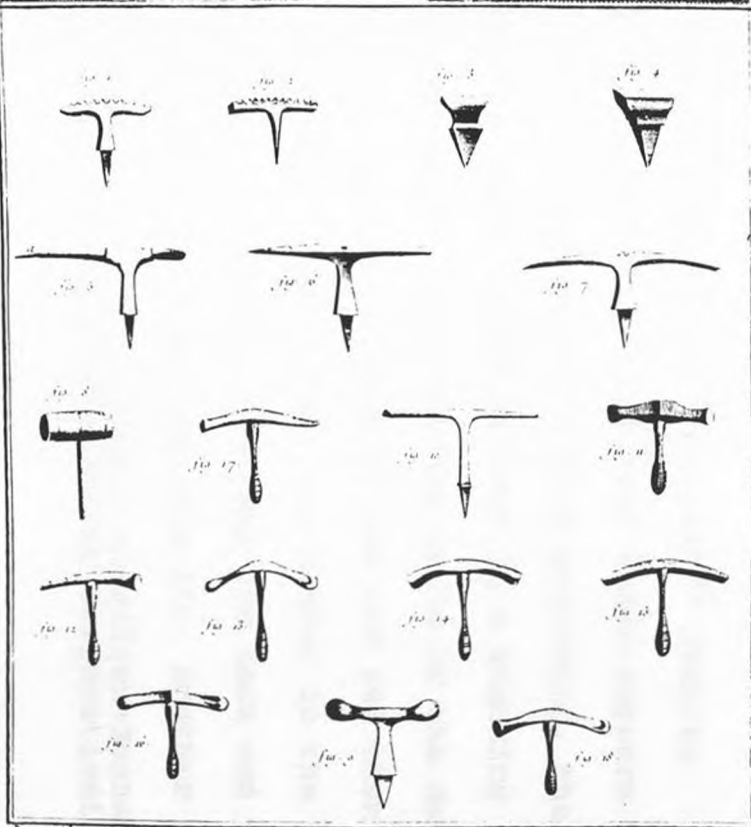
husband was busy working with his workers or away from the shop. A widow of a master could even continue her husband's commerce until she remarried, or, if it was an art that a woman could not exercise, such as surgery, she could rent out the license.³¹

The vignette "Ferblantier"³² (Tinsmith's, Fig. 2.3) is a fine example of the importance of the role of the female shopkeeper. One of eight engravings illustrating women in shopkeeping roles, this vignette illustrates a shop where kitchen utensils are manufactured, including oil lamps of various designs. The shop is open to the street with displays of tinware on the counter and hanging from the ceiling, inviting customers to come in and take a closer look at these and the wares neatly organized in the display case behind the counter.

This is where the shopkeeper's role is put to play. While her husband and his apprentices and journeymen work, she handles the customers' needs. Amidst the noises of pounding, filing and smoldering, the shopkeeper wife attempts to make a sale to another female customer. Her

³¹ Article "Femme". *L'Encyclopédie*... (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1761), VI, 476 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, II, 1377).

³² *Recueil de Planches*... (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1765), XXIII (3e Livraison), Pl.II. Métallurgie, Fer Blanc (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 567).

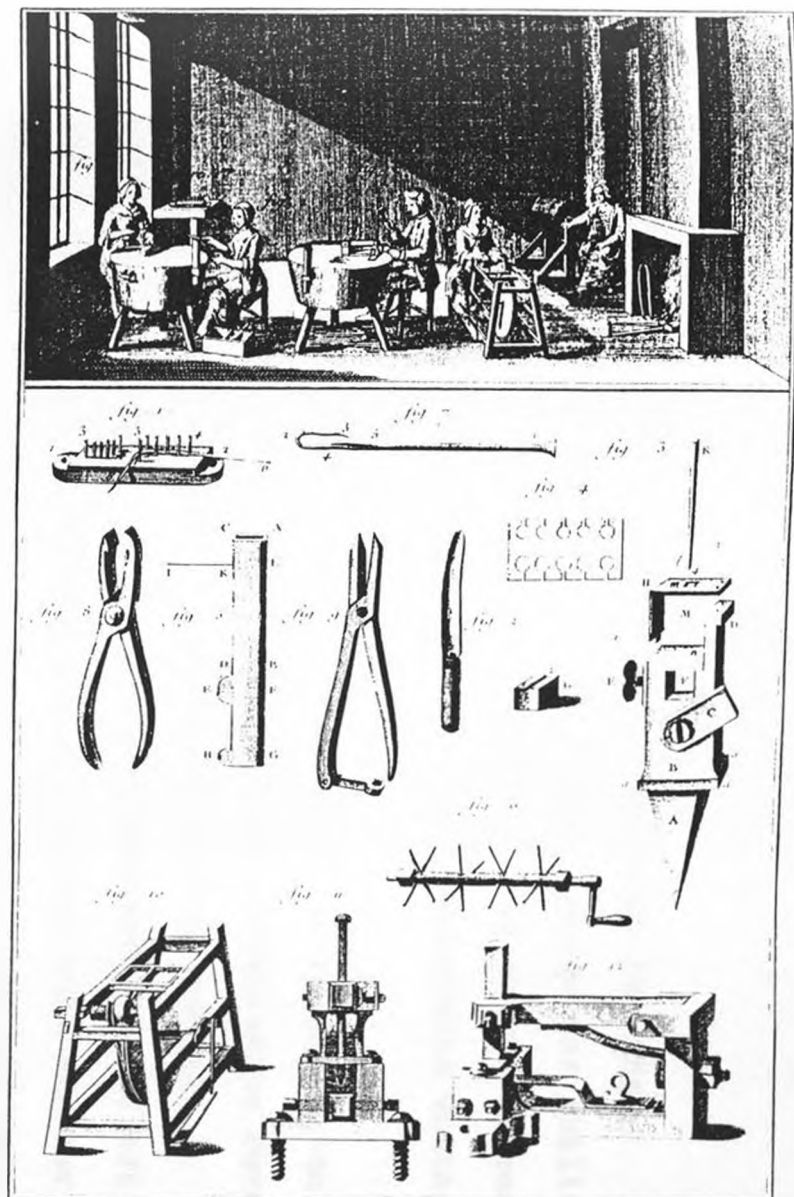


Toussaint del.

Ferblantier

Deffroy sculp.

Fig. 2.3 Tinsmith's, from the Encyclopédie. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Oregon Library.



Aiguiller Bonnetier

Fig. 2.4 Making Needles, from the Encyclopédie.
 Courtesy of Special Collections, University
 of Oregon Library.

well-rounded knowledge of, and commitment to, the manufacture and quality of her goods ensures her ability to bring success to her shop. After all, it is the impression that she gives her customers that will determine whether they come back.

Although it is true that her work is important to the success of the shop, the image of the illustration reveals that it is labor which is characterized by social interaction as well. The female shopkeeper is set off to the side of the plate in a social setting with another female customer. The women are isolated from the men, who, each seemingly unaware of the others' presence and of the women, work feverishly and independently at their respective tasks.

In the vignette "Aiguillier-Bonnetier"³³ (Making Needles, Fig. 2.4) the labor of the four women appears to be set apart from that of the man. In this engraving, the workers are making knitting needles used in a stocking frame. The wire is twisted through the nails of the device shown in figure 1 to achieve a hook at one end and then cut into appropriate lengths. After they are heated in the fire at the right, a woman (figure 6) flattens the neck and the man (figure 3) punches a concave eye into it. Another woman

³³ Ibid (1762), XVIII (1ere Livraison), Aiguillier-Bonnetier (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 36).

(figure 2) files the points sharp. The production is completed by a woman (figure 4) who polishes the needles and her female co-worker (figure 5) who washes them in a rotating drum.

The placement and size of the man in this plate shows that he is the guiding or controlling worker. The women in this illustration appear to be under his close supervision. They are grouped around him as if they are his subordinate workers, and are almost isolated from each other as well, as each is facing off into a different direction. The overriding tone of this illustration is a controlled work setting, with the controlling force (the man) set in the center.

Even the article "AIGUILLES" emphasizes the importance of the man's role in this engraving. A large portion of the article is used to describe "l'etau" (the vise) that the man is using to punch the eyes in the needles. The encyclopedist elaborates extensively on the vise, calling it a "very ingenious machine."³⁴ By giving so much emphasis to the piece of technology that the man is using, it is evident that he has the most important job in this picture, for his job is technologically advanced over what the women do. In fact, women were frequently not allowed to use new tools or

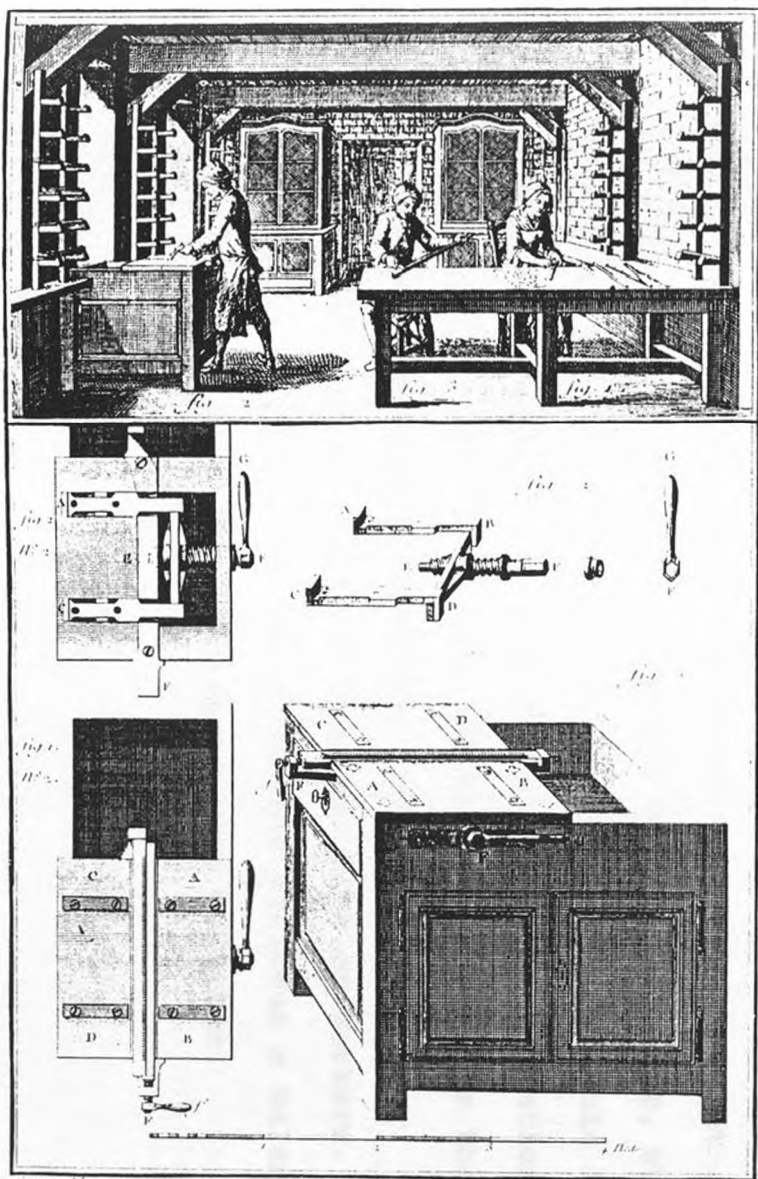
³⁴ Article "Aiguilles". *L'Encyclopédie...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751), I, 208 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, I, 76).

machinery in industry.³⁵ That is not to say that their labor was any less worthy. Producing thousands of needles at a time by hand required concentration and skill in each step.

By now, it seems natural then that where men and women work together doing different jobs, that their labor would be visually separated somehow in the illustrations. However, in some instances where men and women worked together doing different jobs, women also worked alongside men on a more equal level rather than in an isolated, socialized setting with other women. However, unlike men, their labor is not set apart to show them in a leading or controlling role. The vignette "Fonderie en Caractères" (Printing, Fig. 2.5) illustrating a composing room, shows a woman in such a position.³⁶ This woman (figure 1) is one of a small percentage of artisanal women who learned to read well enough to help with typesetting and proofreading in printing shops. The vast amount of work that she and her male co-workers complete in one day is evident by the large number of racks garnishing the walls, where the composing

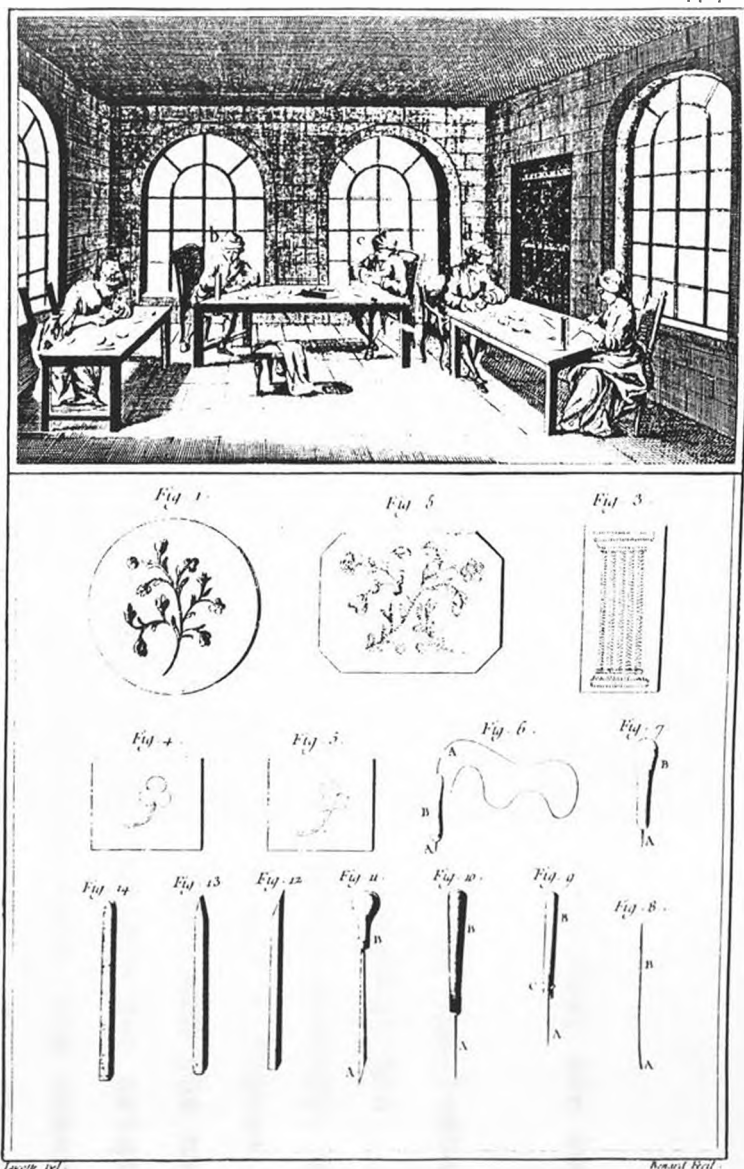
³⁵ Wiesner, p. 67.

³⁶ *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1762), XIX (1ere Livraison), Pl.III. Fonderie en Caracteres (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 146).



Fonderie en Caracteres,

Fig. 2.5 Printing, from the Encyclopédie.
 Courtesy of Special Collections, University
 of Oregon Library.



Piqueur et Incrusteur de Tabatière, ouvrages et outils.

Fig. 2.6 Stitching Snuff Boxes, from the Encyclopédie. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Oregon Library.

sticks lined with letters are placed until they are sent away to be printed on page.

The woman in this vignette is arranging the letters in a frame called the "composing stick," for until the invention of the linotype in the nineteenth century, type was set, as well as cast, by hand. The man in figure 2 spaces out the letters to justify the line, and the man in figure 3 smoothes the surface of the letters for printing. Of the three workers in this composing room, the woman's role is the cornerstone of the work at hand, for she must be literate in order to arrange the letters on the composing stick correctly and accurately. The men simply touch them up according to how she has set them. At first glance, one might think that the man justifying the line of print (figure 2) would be the figurehead for the workshop, while the woman and her co-worker at the table would be his assistants. However, her depiction in the illustration does not distinguish her work from the men's, for unlike the previous illustrations examined, the woman in this illustration is not isolated from her male co-workers. Her placement in relation to her co-worker achieves a balance, depicting them rather as a team working together.

Women also worked alongside men doing the same jobs. Plates that illustrate women and men together in this category are:

(HARVESTING HAY)

The bottom half of this plate shows one man and five women together cutting hay with sickles (Agriculture. Façon des Foins, et Moisson (IV, p. 15)).

(MAKING BUTTONS)

A man and a woman (fig. 3,4) drill into a block of wood the outline of a mold (for casting metal buttons) using a bow to turn a bit (Pl.I. Boutonnier, Faiseur de Moules (IV, p. 139)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

In the first half of the plate, a man (fig. 1) and a woman (fig. 2) ornament buttons with silk and passementerie. In the second half, the woman (fig. 3) and the man (fig. 4) make lace-like ornaments for bodices (Pl.IV. Boutonnier Passementier (IV, p. 140)).

(MAKING BELTS)

A man (fig. 4) and a woman (fig. 5) sew belts (Pl.I. Ceinturier. (IV, p. 172)).

(GILDING)

A man and a woman prime the surfaces of picture frames before gilt is applied. The man (fig. 5) whitens his frame and the woman (fig. 2) uses vermillon on her's (Pl.IV. Doreur, Sur Bois (IV, p. 273)).

(PAPER)

A man (fig. 1) and two women (fig. 2,3) hang sheets of paper to dry in a drying room (Pl.XII. Papetterie, Etendage (IV, p. 488)).

(FISHING)

Men and women brine-soak sardines in combination warehouses and habitations (fig. 1) and encase them (fig. 3) (Pl.XII. Pesches de Mer. Manière de Saler les Sardines. Lavage des Sardines. Encagage des Sardines (IV, p. 753)).

(FISHING)

A woman participates with several men in a fishing technique called "Vas-tu-viens-tu" ("Come-and-go"). She is helping the men pull in a large offshore fishing net, which is alternatively emerged in and lifted out of the water to drag in the fish (Pl.XVII. Pesches de Mer. Vas-tu-viens-tu. Combustion du Varcch. Divers Ains et Instruments de Pesches (IV, p. 754)).

(STITCHING SNUFF BOXES)

Women (fig. a,e) and men inlay gold and silver strands on snuff boxes and various other small cases used for carrying jewelery, coins, candy, etc. (Pl.I. Piqueur et Incrusteur de Tabatière, Ouvrages et Outils (IV, p. 842)). (GLASS)

A man and a woman (fig. 1-3) wash, pick over and carry scrap glass to the warehouse, where it will be mixed with frit (Pl.XVI. Verrerie en bois, Ouvriers occupés à choisir le Groisil ou Verre cassé, à le porter à la casse le mêler avec la Fritte (IV, p. 973)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

Two men (fig. b,d) and a woman (fig. c) prepare the reeds which will be used for the teeth of the combs used in weaving looms (Pl.XXIII. Passementerie, Façon des Peignes et Développemens (IV, p. 1003)).

(PASSEMENTERIE)

A man (fig. a) and a woman (fig. b) thread their weaving looms with strands of metallic thread (Pl.XXVII. Passementerie, Façon des Lisses (IV, p. 1004)).

It is difficult to generalize about the plates of jobs that men and women performed in common because they are so diverse. However, it seems only natural in tasks that men and women shared in common that they would be illustrated working on an equal level together instead of being isolated from one another.

Such is the case in the plate where women and men shared creative and artistic labor in the production of ornamental cases, or snuff boxes, in the plate "Piqueur et Incrusteur..."³⁷ (Stitching Snuff Boxes, Fig. 2.6). These cases, or boxes, were very fashionable in eighteenth-century France. They were made from different materials such as

³⁷ Ibid (1771), XXVI (8e Livraison), Pl.I. Piqueur et Incrusteur de Tabatière, Ouvrages et Outils (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, IV, 842).

wood, gold, silver, ivory, shells, crystal and porcelain, and decorated in varied manners to be square, flat, rounded, chiseled, sewn, stitched, inlayed with precious stones, etc. Men and women used them to carry chains or jewelry, coins, lozenges or candy and other diverse personal objects.

The cases are ornamented through a process in which the artisan traces his or her own design on the case (figure c), inlays gold or silver strands on the design through a heating process (figure a), and seals the strands through a cooling process and/or incrusts the case with precious stones (figure d). The man and woman (figure b and e) are engaged in all three processes--designing, inlaying and incrusting--according to the "genius of the artist."³⁸ The encyclopedist's reference to women's creativity reveals that their work was not just limited to mentally light tasks, or "womanly work." Their role could be artistically instrumental as well.

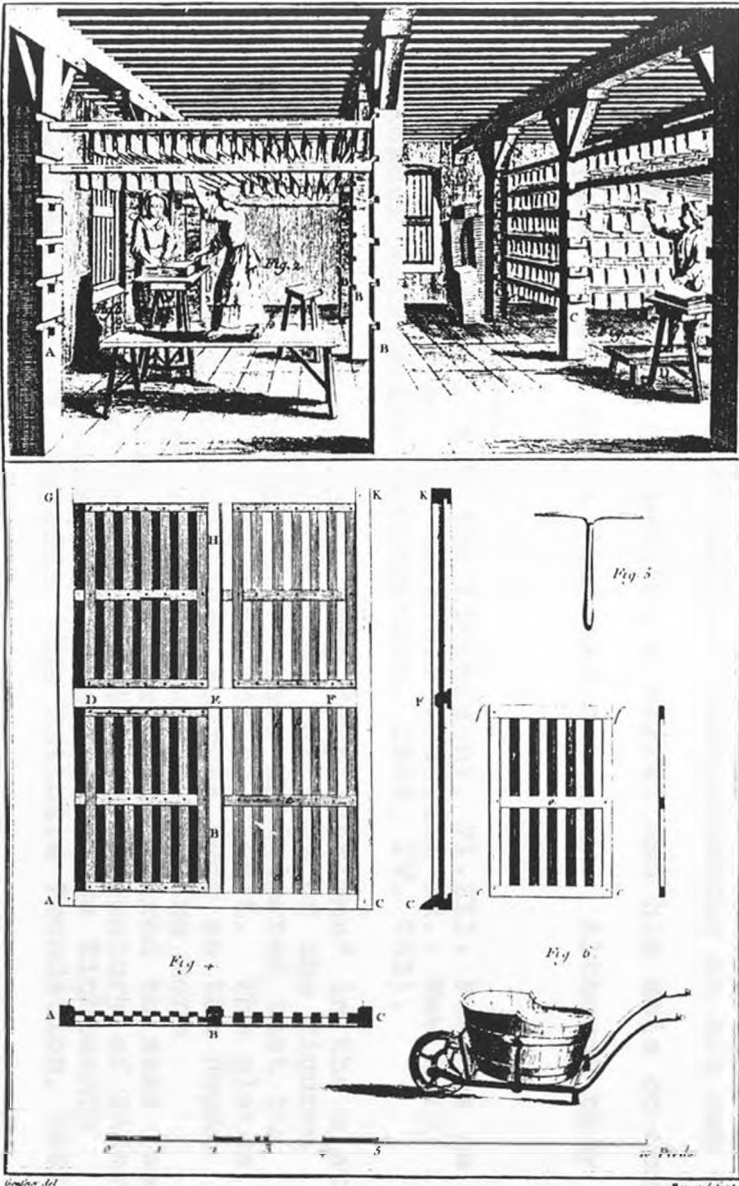
The image in the illustration conveys the same message. Equally spread out from one another, no one worker appears to be in a leading nor in a subordinate role. Each of the workers is intent upon his and her own work. One could even speculate that the engraver was extending dignity to the women and their creative role by placing them in the foreground of the plate.

³⁸ Ibid.

Despite the fact that women shared the same jobs as men, in other plates the *Encyclopédie* once again sets their labors apart through collective labor and isolation. Take the plate "Papetterie, Etendage"³⁹ (Paper Hanging, Fig. 2.7), for example. In an age where books were made by hand and when sheets of paper were manufactured individually through months of careful handling in remote mills, the importance of these unskilled laborers is evident. Although their labor represents only a small fraction of the entire printing process, it illustrates the complexity of producing a book on a mass scale by hand before the advent of mass production.

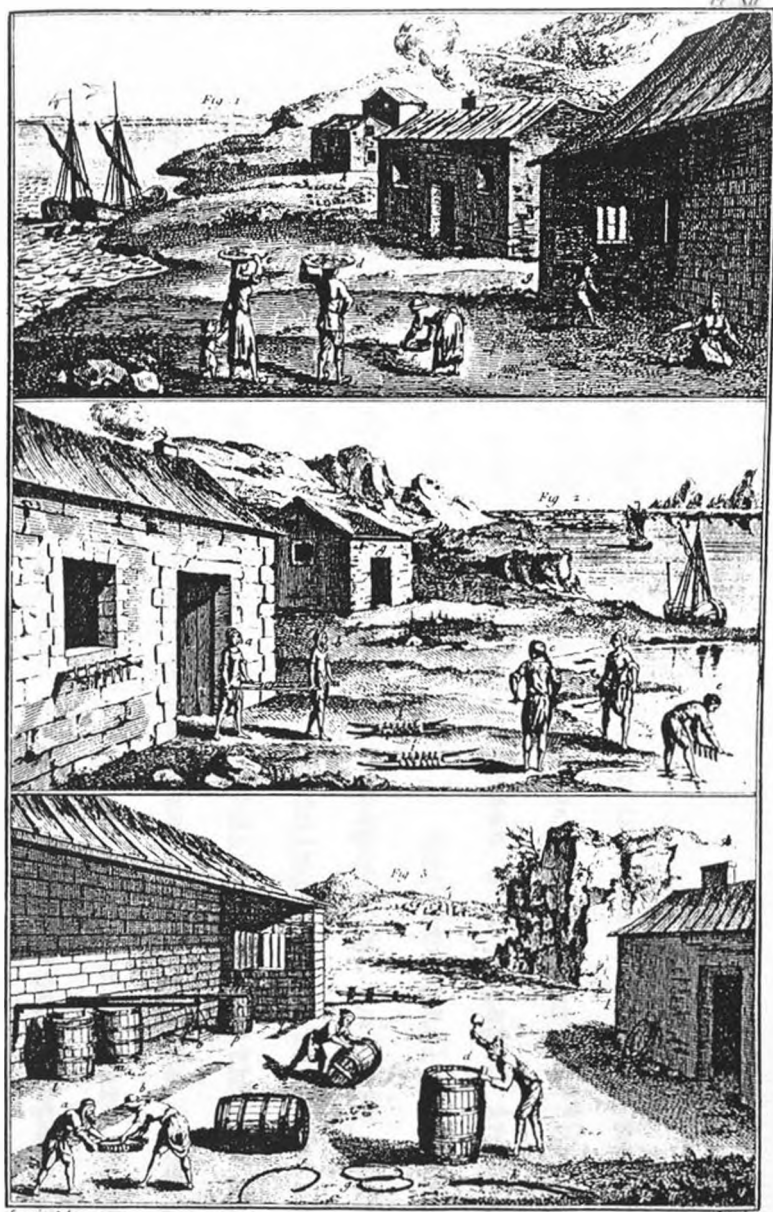
The two women and man in this engraving are doing the same work, but there is once again a division and distinction between their labor. The man in figure 1 uses a "ferlet", or T-shaped instrument, on which to fold the paper, lift it, and hang it on the drying cord. The women do the same work, but they are working together. The woman in figure 3 separates and folds the paper over the "ferlet" that her female co-worker (figure 2) uses to mount the paper on the the drying cord. Their labor is coordinated and characterized by collectivity and isolation from their male co-worker, who works alone.

³⁹ Ibid (1767), XXII (4e Livraison), Pl.XII. Papetterie, Etendage (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 488).



Papetterie, Etendage.

Fig. 2.7 Hanging Paper, from the Encyclopédie.
Courtesy of Special Collections, University of
Oregon Library.



Pesches de Mer. Maniere de Saler les Sardines. Lavage des Sardines. Essuyage des Sardines.

Fig. 2.8 Fishing, from the Encyclopédie.
 Courtesy of Special Collections, University
 of Oregon Library.

Packing sardines was another occupation that men and women shared. In the vignette "Pesches de Mer..."⁴⁰ (Sea Fish, Fig. 2.8) two men and two women are engaged in this labor in the bottom (third) frame. Unfortunately, both the "explication" and the article corresponding to this vignette do not detail what each person is doing, but state rather generally that all are encasing sardines.⁴¹ Although the text does not distinguish between male and female labor, the illustration does. The women (figures a and b) are together isolated from the men in the front left corner, apparently preparing the sardines that they will encase in the barrel beside them (figure e). They are in their own working world, as unaware of the men as the men are of them. However, each man is working independently on his own task, one man (figure d) sealing a barrel and his male co-worker (figure c) rolling a finished one away. Although they share

⁴⁰ Ibid (1768), XXV (5e Livraison), Pl.XII. Pesches de Mer. Manière de Saler les Sardines (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 753).

⁴¹ For reasons unknown, some "explications" in the plates ignored numbered and lettered portions of the figures represented. Perhaps the author anticipated that the engraver would fill them in and he didn't. The plates may have been plagiarized (from sources such as the Royal Library or Academy of Sciences) containing more "explications" than the collaborators cared to make (see Richard N. Schwab and Walter E. Rex, *Inventory of Diderot's Encyclopédie*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, V. 223 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1984), p. 12.

the same tasks, the women work together, isolated from the men, to complete their task while the men work individually.

If one is to ascertain what is truly women's work, one must examine plates where women are pictured alone. The following plates show women working alone:

(CHURNING BUTTER)

A woman (fig. 1) is churning butter on a dairy belonging to a Royal Estate (OEconomie Rustique, Laiterie (IV, p. 33)).

(EMBROIDERY)

A woman (fig. 1) sews a thick ribbon border around the edges of a fabric to be embroidered, while her co-worker (fig. 2) embroiders (Pl.I. Brodeur (IV, p. 144)).

(WRITING)

An upper-class woman practices the art of writing, where beautiful manuscript is used in invitations, announcements, letters, etc. (Pl.III. Art d'Ecrire (IV, p. 163)).

(CUTTING UP AND EMBOSSED FABRICS)

A woman is stamping an ornamental design on a piece of fabric and also cutting the fabric to make small ornamental trimmings (Pl.I. Découper et Gouffeur (IV, p. 255)).

(MAKING LACE)

One woman (fig. 1) creates lace using her own imagination for the pattern, while her co-worker (fig. 2) uses a stretch piece of green cloth on a cushion carrying the pattern of the lace she will copy (Pl.I. Dentelle (IV, p. 256)).

(MAKING FALSE PEARLS)

A woman (fig. 1) remove the scales, which are used to color the pearls, from a fish. Another woman (fig. 2) sucks the pearly coloring matter into her pipette which is blown into each pearl, as demonstrated by her co-worker (fig. 3). Another woman (fig. 4) fills the pearls with wax by plunging them in a bowl of melted wax, and the woman to her right (fig. 5) sticks a rolled piece of paper through the pearl to form a hole for the string. Finally, a woman (fig. 6) cuts the paper off the edges (Pl.III. Emailleur, à la Lampe, Perles Fausses (IV, p. 287)).

(MAKING FANS--PREPARATION OF THE PAPER)

A woman (fig. 1) glues two sheets of paper together while her co-worker (fig. 2) attaches them on a wooden frame to dry. A woman (fig. 3) hangs them to dry. Another woman (fig. 4) detaches the paper from the frames, her co-worker (fig. 5) cuts the paper to the correct shape and another co-worker (fig. 6) pounds the paper to make sure that it is glued well (Pl.I. Eventailliste, Colage et Preparation des Papiers (IV, p. 306)).

(MAKING FANS--PAINTING)

A woman mixes several different colored paints to paint a fan according to a model in front of her (Pl.II. Eventailliste, Peinture des Feuilles (IV, p. 306)).

(MAKING FANS--ASSEMBLING)

A woman (fig. 1) makes 20 even creases in the doubled paper for the fan, including the separate sheet with the painting. Her co-worker (fig. 2) assembles the painting to the doubled paper and finally the entire unit to the wood frame (Pl.III. Eventailliste, Monture des Eventails (IV, p. 307)).

(SPINNING)

A girl (fig. 1) spins using a spindle and distaff while her co-worker (fig. 2) spins using a spinning wheel. The girl in fig. 3 winds a skein and the woman in fig. 4 winds a ball of yarn (Pl.I. Fil, Rouet Dévidoirs (IV, p. 314)).

(PAPER)

Two women (fig. 1) unrumples and sort rags which will be used to make paper (Pl.I. Bis. Papetterie, Délissage (IV, p. 486)).

(FISHING)

A group of women (fig. 1) fish offshore on small platforms using handnets (Pl.II. Pesches de Mer. Salicots, Manche ou Guideau, Acon, Haveneau (IV, p. 750)).

(FISHING)

Two pairs of women (fig. 4) emerge themselves naked in water up to their shoulders to sein a river/inlet for oysters (Pl.III. Pesches de Mer. Pesch des Huitres au Rateau à la Drague. Claires ou Parcs à Verdir les Huitres. Petite Seine dormante (IV, p. 750)).

(FISHING)

A group of women (fig. 2) washes sardines in the sea (Pl.XII. Pesches de Mer. Manière de Saler les Sardines. Lavage des Sardines. Encagage des Sardines (IV, p. 753)).

(FEATHER MERCHANT)

A woman shopkeeper (fig. 1a) prepares the plumed hat that a duke will wear in a ceremonial reception. Her co-worker beside her (fig. 1b) sews the ostrich feathers together to form "plumets." Another woman (fig. 1c) mounts an elaborate construction of plumed ostrich feathers that will be worn on the head of a horse for the entrance of ambassadors at ceremonies. Finally, a woman (fig. 1d) ornaments a woman's dress with ostrich feathers (Pl.I. Plumassier-Panachier, Différens Ouvrages et Outils (IV, p. 773)).

(WEAVING TURKISH CARPETS)

Using peculiar carpet stitches, a woman (fig. 4) working by light faces the front of her work and follows the pattern painted on a piece of paper fastened before her eyes. Her co-worker (fig. 5) winds a ball of yarn (Pl.V. Tapis de Turquie, Division des Fils et autres Opérations (IV, p. 864)).

(SILK)

A woman (fig. 1) reels the silk from cocoons by winding together four or five filaments to make a strand. Her co-worker (fig. 2) turns a crank that winds the silk onto a skein (Pl.I. Soierie, Tirage de la Soie et Plan du Tour de Piémont (IV, p. 1028)).

(SILK)

A woman (fig. 1) winds silk onto a skein using the "Tour d'Espagne", and her co-worker (fig. 2) doubles several shoots of silk together using the "escaladou" (Pl.V. Soierie, Dévidage de la Soie sur le Tour d'Espagne, Doublage et développement de l'Escaladou (IV, p. 1029)).

(SILK)

After silk is strengthened through twisting and doubling, it is wound by this woman worker (fig. 1) in preparation for the loom (Pl.XXIII. Soierie, l'Opération d'Ourdir la Chaine des Etoffes (IV, p. 1035)).

(SILK)

Two women (figs. 1,2) demonstrate crochet stitches on a loom (Pl.CXXIII. Soierie, Fabrication des Lisses et le Lissier en Perspective (IV, p. 1065)).

(FASHION MERCHANT)

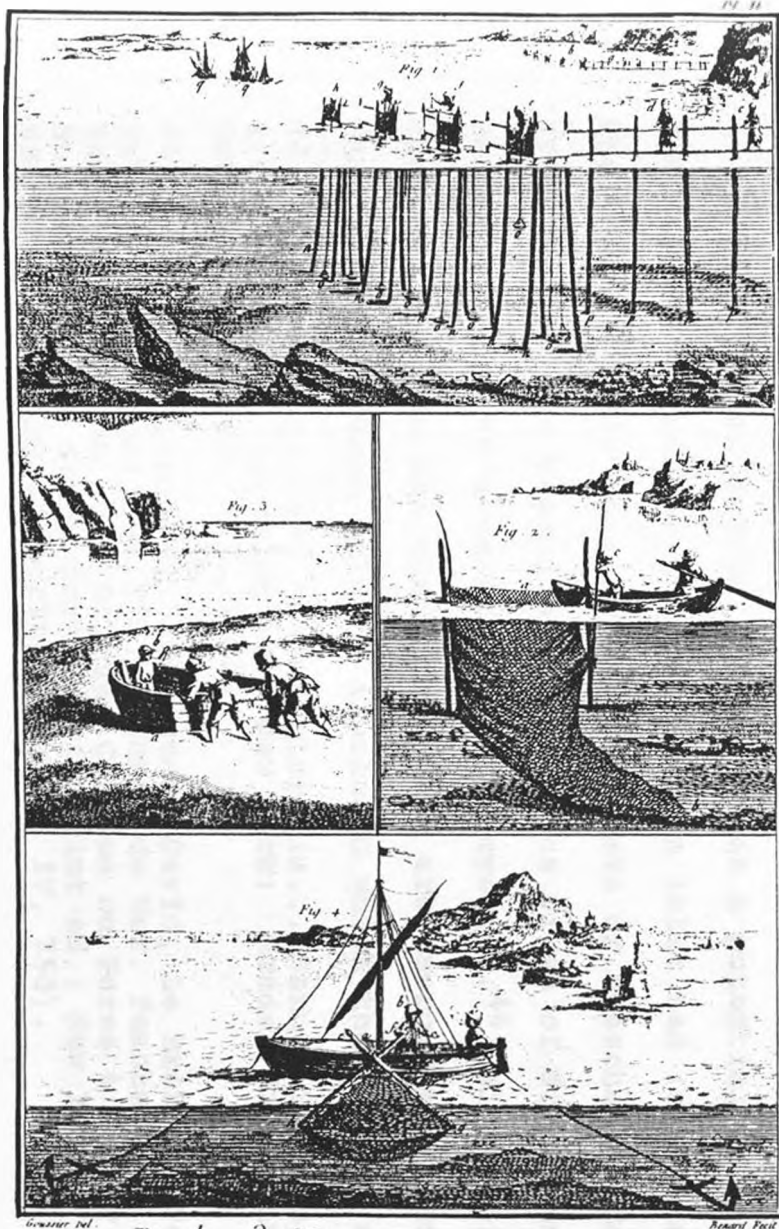
Female customers, aided by the female merchants, try out several women's fashions in a Paris fashion boutique (Suplement. Marchande de Modes (IV, p. 1124)).

In the *Encyclopédie* illustrations, women's work is generally concentrated in the textile and fashion industries and fishing. In no sector is women's harsh physical labor

more evident in the plates than in rural labor. Women's work in the rural sector was often onerous, involving a lot of bending, lifting, carrying and other physical exertions. Their labors on the land often merged with their household and domestic chores as well, contributing to a rigorous daily working schedule.

Although both men and women participated in fishing, the sexual division of labor put men fishing at sea, while women fished from the shore. Fishing from the shore was no less harsh than fishing at sea, however, as seen in the plate where women fish from platforms in "Pesches de Mer..."⁴² (Fig. 2.9). Here again, we see women working collectively where, over deep water, they had to awkwardly make their way out over a fence to the small, improbable platforms (figures i,k,l, and m) from which they lower and raise their handnets (each woman using four or five) to catch crabs. One can imagine how difficult and awkward it must have been to fish from platforms so small and flimsy, and the illustration indicates that evidently more than one woman fished from a platform, as we see two women making their way out to the four already occupied. In addition, the illustration gives no idea how difficult--not to mention

⁴² *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1768), XXV (5e Livraison), Pesches de Mer. Salicots, Manche ou Guideau, Acon, Haveneau (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 750).

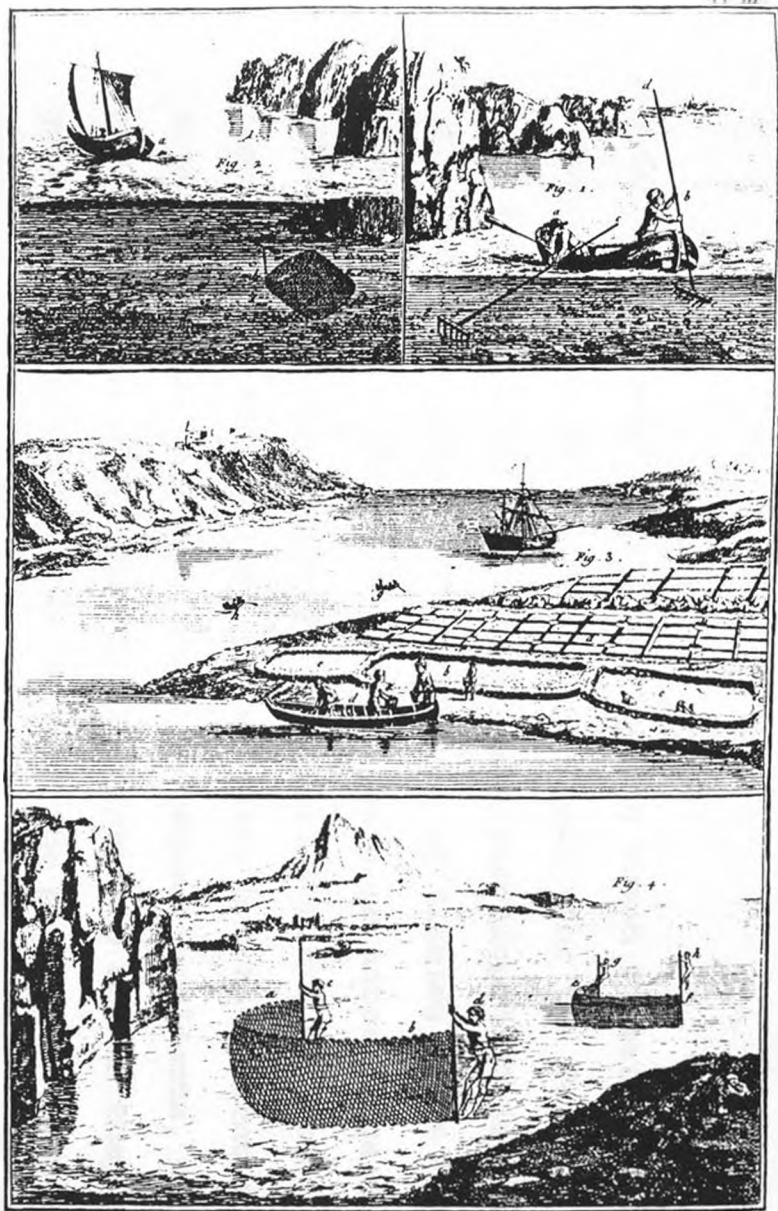


Goussier del.

Pesches de Mer. Salicots Manche ou Gaudou Acon. Haveneau.

Benard fecit.

Fig. 2.9 Fishing, from the *Encyclopédie*.
 Courtesy of Special Collections, University
 of Oregon Library.



Pesches de Mer. Poche des Huîtres au Raton et à la Drague. Chaire ou Pares à Verdier les Huîtres. Petite Seine dormante.

Fig. 2.10 Fishing, from the Encyclopédie.
Courtesy of Special Collections, University
of Oregon Library.

dangerous--it must have been for the women to maintain their balance as they carry their catch back over the fence.

In the article "SALICOTS," the encyclopedist says that only women are engaged in this type of fishing (from the months of March through July).⁴³ He also notes large gusts of wind frequently destroy these flimsy platforms and fences. They are replaced every year, but as he mentions, this precaution fails to prevent frequent accidents, whether the winds cause the women to fall into the sea as they are going to the platforms, or whether the platforms themselves break while the women are fishing. Nevertheless, the women are depicted in a utopian vision of their labor where they work gracefully and collectively under harsh conditions.

But if fishing from platforms was a potentially dangerous and arduous job, seining an inlet had its costs in the way of female charms. In the plate of "Pesches de Mer" (Fig. 2.10) four women, presumably the wives of fishermen, sein the mouth to a small inlet for oysters.⁴⁴ With their clothes piled on the bank, the women are emerged shoulder-high in water, each holding a pole to which the fishing net

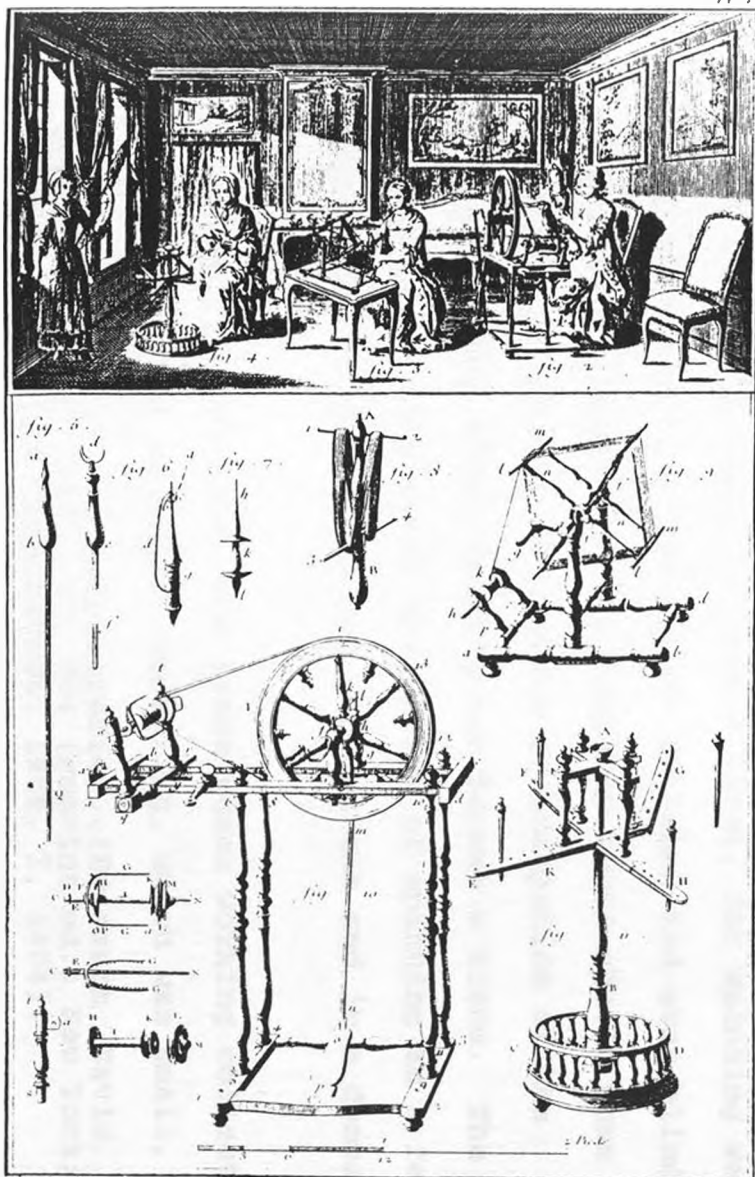
⁴³ Article "Salicots". *L'Encyclopédie...* (Samuel Faulche, 1765), XIV, 543 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, III, 382).

⁴⁴ *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, 1768), XXV (5e Livraison), Pl.III. Pesches de Mer. Pesche des Huitres au Rateau à la Drague. Claires ou Pares à Verdir les Huitres. Petite Seine dormante (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 750).

is attached. Ironically, the women are depicted in a graceful pose holding their poles, as if to portray that women could even be graceful fishing in this fashion. Maintaining one's grace against the flow of a current while plunged in the cold waters off of the coast of Brittany (the primary fishing coast of France) was most likely the last thought on these womens' minds. Although one could read the plate as such, one might also see the vision of their labor as utopian in that female grace is not destroyed by the harsh realities of fishing in this fashion. Women could be dignified in the harshest of jobs as well.

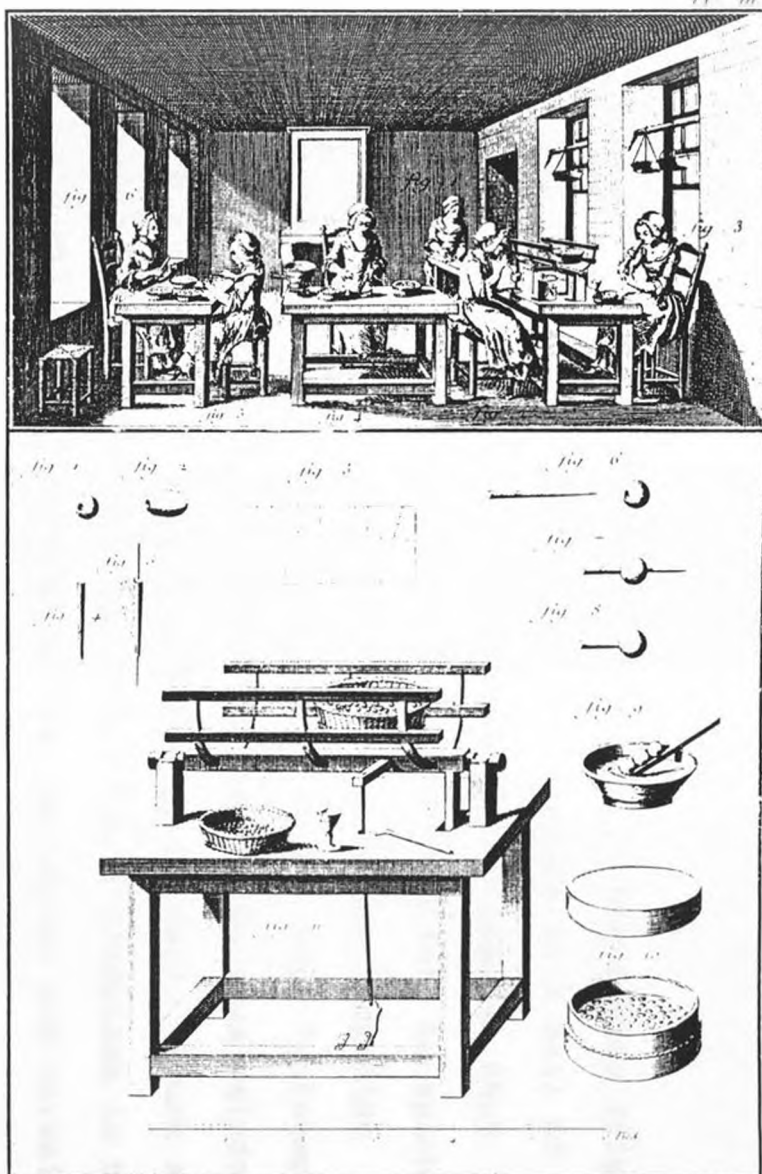
Leaving the rigorous physical labors in which women worked alone, we find in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* that women are also depicted working alone in occupations that were closer to home. Spinning, for example, was an occupation taken on in the home that was considered "woman's work" and was a widespread form of employment among the female population in France during the eighteenth century. In the plate "Fil, Roüet Dévidoirs"⁴⁵ (Spinning, Fig. 2.11) four bourgeois women spin in the comfort of their home. The woman in figure 1 spins with a spindle and distaff, while the woman at the far right in figure 2 spins on a more

⁴⁵ Ibid (1763), XXI (2e Livraison), Pl.I. Fil, Roüet Dévidoirs (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 314).



fil, Rouet, Dévidoir.

Fig. 2.11 Spinning, from the Encyclopédie.
 Courtesy of Special Collections, University
 of Oregon Library.



Émailleur à la Lampe, Perle Faussée

Fig. 2.12 Artificial Pearls, from the Encyclopédie. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Oregon Library.

familiar spinning wheel. The woman in the center (figure 3) winds a skein, and her companion (figure 4) a ball of yarn. In the article "FIL", the encyclopedist implies that spinning is a female trade.⁴⁶ When he refers to spinning and the spinning trade in general, the encyclopedist repeatedly uses the female gender of the word "spinner" ("la fileuse"). The domestic attributes of the room reinforce this notion of a feminine occupation as well. Plush and elegant eighteenth-century furniture, a fireplace in the background, pictures ornamenting the walls, and curtains at the windows all give the impression of being a home setting. The women also take their afternoon tea or coffee, as one can see from the teacups back on the fireplace mantle. Obviously, this scene is rather ideal, for spinning was a trade that required long hours of labor and even blinded some women. However, this domestic scene should come as no surprise, as spinning remained an occupation of the housewife long after weaving had become a trade. The *Encyclopédie* reinforces the notion of spinning as a female occupation by depicting the women alone and in a domestic setting.

Leaving the home, one finds women working collectively in the workshop as well. Enameling, which was small,

⁴⁶ Article "Fil". *L'Encyclopédie...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1756), VI, 784 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, I, 1454).

refined glass working, produced works of art in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. Though in the article "EMAIL", these works of art (beautifully glossed and painted medallions and locket) were made by men.⁴⁷ Related to enameling was the manufacture of false pearls, which women are making in the vignette "Emailleur, à la lampe, Perles Fausses"⁴⁸ (Lamp Enameling, False Pearls, Fig. 2.12). As stated in the article, women do not actually make the pearls, for this is done by men, who then pass them on to the women to be colored.⁴⁹

Artificial pearls were colored by an extract drawn from the scales of a small, fresh-water fish called the "ablette" (bleak), one of which the woman in figure 1 is cleaning. After soaking in hot water for half a day, the scales yield a pearly coloring matter which is used to color the pearls. The woman in figure 2 sucks the coloring matter into her pipette and gets ready to blow a single drop into her pearl as her co-worker (figure 3) is doing. The pearl is then graded for size. The woman in the center (figure 4) fills

⁴⁷ Ibid (1755), Article "Email", V, 533-536 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, I, 1130).

⁴⁸ *Recueil de Planches...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1756), VI, Pl.III. Emailleur, à la lampe, Perles Fausses (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, IV, 287).

⁴⁹ Article "Email". *L'Encyclopédie...* (Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1755), V, 544-545 (reprint ed.; New York: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1969, I, 1132-1133).

the pearls by plunging them in a bowl of melted wax. Finally, the women in figures 5 and 6 pass a tight roll of strong paper through each pearl to open a hole for the string.

The faces of the women are etched in concentration, but there is an distinct cooperative nature in their work. For example, the woman in figure 6 appears to be striking up conversation with her female co-worker in figure 5. In addition, by being paired up and working so closely together, there is no image of independence in the womens' labors. They remain in close contact as they work, rather than being distinctly set apart and working individually as the men do.

To sum up, the variety of women's labor illustrated in the plates reveals that women were active workers in eighteenth-century France. The *Encyclopédie* illustrates the necessity of their labor by depicting them alongside men, as well as alone, in shops, factories, and fields.

Women worked in various divisions of labor. In rural and urban industry where men and women worked together but were engaged in different jobs, men usually filled leading or controlling roles, whereas women filled unskilled, subordinate positions. However, not all of these jobs involved light tasks, as several women in subordinate

positions fill their role under dangerous, unpleasant and physically demanding conditions. This was evident in the plates of Tinning (Fig. 2.1) and Printing (making print letters) (Fig. 2.2).

Also where men and women worked together but were engaged in different jobs, women filled skilled artisan and shopkeeper roles that were central to the production at hand, requiring excellence in literacy, salesmanship, dexterity, and concentration. The plates of the Tinsmith's (Fig. 2.3), Making Needles (Fig. 2.4) and Printing (composing room) (Fig. 2.5) illustrate these kinds of jobs.

Men and women shared identical jobs as well that were diverse. They were engaged in hard physical labor in agriculture and fishing and in the glass and paper industries. The plates illustrating packing sardines (Fig. 2.8) and hanging paper (Fig. 2.7) indicate these kinds of jobs. Likewise, men and women were equally creative in workshops as skilled artisans, as seen in the plate where snuff boxes are stitched (Fig. 2.6).

The sexual division of labor is most evident in the illustrations of women working alone. Concentrated mostly in fishing and textiles, exclusive female labor entailed tasks that were physically harsh as well as skilled, as seen in the two plates of Fishing (Figs. 2.9 and 2.10) and Making Artificial Pearls (Fig. 2.12), respectively. Female labor

also centered around the home and this is evident in the illustration of Spinning (Fig. 2.11).

Clearly, women worked in a variety of jobs within a sexual division of labor and occupied roles requiring all different faculties of strength, from hard physical labor to mental and skilled labor. In many of the plates, women's labor is cooperative but they are frequently isolated from their male co-workers, emphasizing a sexual division of labor where women usually filled subordinate roles rather than leading or controlling ones. In rare instances however, their proficiency in skilled crafts puts them on a more equal level with men.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLATES

What connections can be made between the variety of work in which women are engaged in the plates? It is evident from the plates examined that harsh physical labor bears with it female subordination. While men usually fill the leading and controlling roles, women are subordinated under harsh working conditions, as seen in the plates of Tinning (Fig. 2.1) and in the various plates of Fishing (Figs. 2.8, 2.9, 2.10). Female subordination, in turn, bears with it isolation, where women's work is set apart as a cooperative unit, isolated from the independence of men's work.

By contrast, women appear to be more "equal" to men in skilled crafts. Working alongside men rather than isolated from them effaces the implied sexual division of labor and renders both their combined labor more balanced. Stitching Snuff Boxes (Fig. 2.6) and Printing (composing letters) (Fig. 2.2) are examples where women appear to be more "equal" to men. Even the role of the Tinsmith shopkeeper (Fig. 2.3), although isolated from her male co-workers, is isolated in a position that is nonetheless as equally

instrumental in the success of her shop as the position of the male artisans who produce the goods.

Taking a more analytical approach, what is the place of women in the plates of the manual arts in the encyclopedic scheme? In order to answer this question, one must first examine the place of the plates themselves in the encyclopedic scheme. One of Diderot's most frequently expressed aims in the *Encyclopédie* was to make the reader realize, despite long-standing prejudices, that the manual arts were a category of knowledge just as noble, valuable, and intellectually respectable as the liberal arts and sciences.⁵⁰ Diderot's compilation of the plates was an attempt to explain and to dignify the labor of the artisan and worker, whom he held in high respect. Diderot attempted to explain artisan culture in the engravings through large-scale representations of the tools and equipment in the lower portion of each plate, and through depictions of the artisans and workers engaged in the operation of these tools in the top portion.

His vision of labor was utopian. Diderot depicts his workers in an ideal world where they are independent, yet pre-industrial.⁵¹ In other words, the workers are free from the restrictions of the guilds, yet not submerged by the

⁵⁰ Schwab, p. 3.

⁵¹ Birn, pp. 78-79.

factory. For Diderot, this was a world that never was, nor ever would be (namely for the craftsman). Diderot dignifies the workers in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* by depicting them working freely, independently and creatively.

Diderot despised the corporate mentality and monopolistic practices of the guilds, for they jealously and secretly guarded the work methods of their trade. He believed such knowledge should be openly exchanged to encourage creativity among workers. By mid-eighteenth century, few trades remained that were not governed by guilds. As a result, Diderot saw the world of the creative artisan as a world that was disappearing. Hence, he depicts the workers in a utopian vision of labor that was independent, yet pre-industrial, to dignify them in an ideal working world.

The dignity that Diderot extends to female labor is evident in the plates. One cannot overlook, for example, the dignity of labor in plates such as the needlemaker's shop (Fig. 2.4), where stocking frame knitting needles were individually hand-made. Though the craft itself was at the edge of mass production, as Raymond Birn notes, it is impossible to mistake the procedure of manufacturing fifteen thousand needles at a time for anything resembling a factory operation.⁵² Each woman works independently at her

⁵² Birn, p. 80.

respective task, with every movement representing an act of concentration and skill.

Such is the case also in the plate previously examined where women are stitching snuff boxes (Fig. 2.6). Each woman works individually according to her own genius and creativity to engrave fashionable cases varied in both material and design. Even in the paper industry, where hanging paper (Fig. 2.7) was an operation requiring not much skill, the women's work is no less dignified. Their labor illustrates the complexity of producing a book (as the *Encyclopédie* itself was produced) on a mass scale before the advent of mass production. For in this age, books were made by hand and sheets of paper were manufactured individually through months of careful handling. The women hang the paper sheet by sheet with space, care, and patience. Equally dignified is the female who composes by hand thousands of individual lines of type for the production of one book (Fig. 2.5).

If female labor could be dignified in industry, it could be equally so in labor that was closer to the home. Before the arrival of the factory, women's labor was most often centered in or around the home. By depicting women in work closer to home, Diderot holds on to this pre-industrial notion of labor where workers are yet free from the constraints of the factory. An example of such labor is in,

the plate where female spinners are spinning in the comfort of their own home (Fig. 2.11). Diderot also dignified women's work in harsh rural labor, where women sein the mouth to an inlet (Fig. 2.10). In this engraving, female charms are not destroyed by the harsh physical labor of fishing.

Diderot likewise extends dignity to women through facts of human contact. While the men seem impersonal and removed from human contact as they work, the women seem more animate. The woman who glances up from her work in her printing job (Fig. 2.2) to look toward the reader seems more real than the men who work with disregard for any of the other workers in the shop.

In the plates, women are also more social than men and are found frequently engaging in some sort of interaction with others, such as in shopkeeping, a female occupation. For example, the female shopkeeper in the Tinsmith's shop (Fig. 2.3) exchanges information at the counter with a female customer to whom she tries to make a sale.

Women's labor is also cooperative. They work together collectively rather than individually as the men do. In the plates where women are packing sardines (Fig. 2.8) and fishing from platforms (Fig. 2.9) they are engaged in the same work collectively while the men are removed, working independently at their side. The women who make artificial

pearls (Fig. 2.12) even seem content in their cooperative interaction. Their faces are suffused with concentration, yet their depiction in the plate almost seems like a social setting where each woman appears to be enjoying her work.

It goes without saying, however, that allusions of a factory era seeped into Diderot's plates, the most obvious being the large-scale representations of technology emphasized over the small-scale depictions of workers. Taking the plate Tinning (Fig. 2.1) as a specific example, there are no large-scale representations of technology, yet the women, with their backs to us, have lost all individually and are anonymously lined up working as if they are in a factory.

Nevertheless, in Diderot's utopian vision of labor, where workers can labor freely in a world without these constraints from corporate or factory restrictions, dignity is extended to female labor. The dignity of women's labor is two-fold. First, their labor is dignified by the originality, creativity, concentration and skill that it entailed before an age of mass production. It is likewise dignified through facts of human contact such as women's connection to the home, their sociability, and their cooperative labor, through which women's work is rendered more lifelike than men's work.

In dignifying female labor, Diderot also separates male and female labor. For example, in most of the plates women are isolated from their male co-workers. While women tend to work collectively, men work independently. However, the men's work is more impersonal than the women's. The men seem to be lonely figures in their independence. In most cases they do not interact with their fellow co-workers. Rather, each works independently almost with a disregard for the others' presence. As a result, the tone of their labor seems eerie in comparison to that of the women, most of whom work cooperatively and contentedly.

After reading select articles that correspond with the plates that I examined, as well as a few additional ones, it is my contention that the images of women in work speak louder in the plates than they do in the text. Most of the text is devoted to the history of the occupation as well as to the technology that is employed. I found that dignity was not extended to women in the text as it is in the plates. In fact, the text simply mentions female workers in passing, usually with a brief description of what they are doing in the engravings. Of the texts that I read (not all plates--Tinsmith's (Fig. 2.3), Stitching Snuff Boxes (Fig. 2.6) and Fishing/Seining an Inlet (Fig. 2.10)--had corresponding articles), female labor was distinguished from male labor in articles about occupations that were

considered women's work; in other words, in articles corresponding to the plates of women working alone. For example, in the articles corresponding to Fishing from platforms (Fig. 2.9), Spinning (Fig. 2.11), and Artificial Pearls (Fig. 2.12) references to people fishing from platforms, spinners, and makers of artificial pearls are all described by virtue of the female gender. One exception to these articles of exclusive female labor was the article about Tinning (Fig. 2.1), where scrubbing was also noted as female labor. In the articles corresponding to the remaining occupations that men and women shared, references to working women in the plates are made anonymous by virtue of the pronoun "on" (one), as if to imply that these jobs were not truly women's work, or work that was considered exclusively female.

Although the articles mention female workers in passing and occasionally add insight into their labor, the plates have a language of their own. In the plates, women are not anonymous faces or mere descriptions, they are active participants in the economy of eighteenth-century France. The engravings dignify female labor by depicting it as cooperative, social, skilled and creative. The animate, lifelike quality of women's work in the plates renders the utopian vision of labor of which Diderot so dreamed that more imaginable. Labor did not have to be constraining or

impersonal. There were no limits on its creativity. It could be close to the home. It could even be fun. Maybe women weren't granted as much independence as men in work, but they were lifelike, creative, cooperative and they seemed content to be this way.

An examination and analysis of these 12 plates is but scraping the surface of a potentially vast research topic. I have tentatively drawn a complex conclusion about women's work in the plates of the *Encyclopédie* based on these 12 plates. A more thorough research project would be to examine and analyze each individual plate as well as its corresponding article(s). Perhaps attempting such a feat would reveal a simpler and more focused notion of working women than what I have reached. Or perhaps it would become even more complex. Also interesting would be to determine what, if any, female occupations are left out of the pictures, since they could alter, or even add to, the conclusions reached about female labor as well. Like the points of view expressed in the entire *Encyclopédie* itself, the possibilities of researching working women in the plates are numerous and well worth a more comprehensive study.

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