

Eleanor Coade and Horace Walpole's Gothic Gateway: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Business Practice

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Abstract: Artificial stone manufacturer Eleanor Coade (1733–1821) was the outstanding female entrepreneur of the eighteenth century, running her own successful business for some fifty years. Her name became a nationally recognized brand, and her firm's architectural and sculptural stoneware products are still ubiquitous. However, she remains almost entirely overlooked in any but architectural accounts. This paper contextualizes Coade's business practice against wider scholarship, taking Horace Walpole's 1769 commission for a pair of Gothic gate piers as a case study. Sir William Chambers's account of his subsequent visit to Coade's manufactory for Walpole provides a rare eye-witness account of business practice involving a woman in the Georgian period — an encounter that is strikingly ungendered.

Keywords: commodification, Daniel Pincot, Eleanor Coade, gender, Gothic revival, Horace Walpole, Kemble Whatley, medievalism, Strawberry Hill, William Chambers, women's business

This article began as a study in Eleanor's Coade's business practice. However, the figure of Horace Walpole now towers above any discussion of Gothic form in the eighteenth century, and any incidence of his taste is drawn ineluctably into current debates on the role of Strawberry Hill as a homoerotic habitus, which this current topic also illuminates. The involvement of Horace Walpole, and the very nature of the Coade stone Gothic gateway at Strawberry Hill that forms the case study at the core of this paper, therefore renders this account of Eleanor Coade additionally informative as an example of process in Walpole's assimilation of the Gothic. This prompts reflection on the wider existence of objects like Walpole's Gothic gate piers as examples of the signifiers of the historical and 'modern' freedoms in Walpole's circle as identified by current scholarship and also on where the agency lies in their onward dissemination.¹ In seeking nonetheless to foreground our central protagonist, Eleanor Coade, this paper will fall into two parts, the first introducing Coade and placing her in context. The second half will examine Horace Walpole's commission of a pair of Gothic gate piers from the Coade manufactory for insight into how Coade operated as a businesswoman. This case study provides a unique record of a business meeting between Eleanor Coade, whose business the meeting concerned, and architect Sir William Chambers, who was acting on Walpole's behalf. The existence of an eye-witness account of a business meeting involving a woman in the 1770s is extremely rare in the historical record. Chambers's letter sheds light on Coade's own trading abilities and has wider relevance for considering Georgian women in business. The account acts both as a test against current paradigms and as a means to reflect on Coade's experience and the extent to which, as a single life, her career can inform broader themes.²

1. *Mistress Eleanor Coade and Her Artificial Stone Manufactory*

Mrs Eleanor Coade³ (1733–1821) has been well known to architectural historians of the late Georgian period since the publication of Alison Kelly's book *Mrs Coade's Stone* in 1990.⁴ Her reputation has grown since then in popular culture, but she has received surprisingly little attention from scholars in fields other than architectural history. For more than fifty years, Coade ran the most successful, and most famous, architectural supply firm of her day, with a proven and durable track record of excellence in business. Statuary and architectural wares in her eponymous artificial stone were exported all over the world from her manufactory in Lambeth, London, most of them stamped with Coade's own name. For contemporaries, the complete identification of Coade's name with her products was akin to that of Josiah Wedgwood's, and Coade dominated her sector in much the same way that Wedgwood did his own.⁵ Coade's career and the architectural stoneware she marketed so successfully therefore have much to reveal about aspects of the long eighteenth century beyond the architectural. Coade stone⁶ played an enabling role in other themes that generate their own literature, yet Coade herself is given at best a passing mention in these spheres. She is not mentioned in Nicola Phillips' otherwise seminal *Women in Business, 1700–1850* (2006), even though she will lurk anonymously in Phillips' sample years for London's fire insurance records as one of the 3% of female policy holders who insured for more than £1000 in 1780 (and Coade insured for considerably more).⁷ The phenomenon of Coade stone played its part in commodifying the taste for antiquity; the collecting habits of the elite; the development of London; the commodification of art, the emulation of the middle classes, and the Georgian period's passion for sculptural representation. It is a lacuna in existing scholarship on these themes that Coade stone's undoubted contribution has not yet been explicitly addressed.⁸ Otherwise highly authoritative works on taste, collecting and women's experience in the eighteenth century, all areas where Coade has clear relevance, neglect to mention her contribution to their own topic or to examine the remarkable 'otherness' of the fact that a woman was responsible for this product's success. This is despite the fact that Coade's products continue to hold fascination and monetary value⁹ and inspire ongoing art-historical accounts of individual pieces.¹⁰ The Coade firm's contribution to the appearance and character of late-Georgian London through public sculpture and architectural ornamentation, and the value of Coade's own life and career as a successful businesswoman, make her omission in these other fields puzzling, explicable only by lack of interdisciplinary contact.

As a never-married, self-made businesswoman, Coade was a statistical aberration, outside the conventional tropes of wives and widows operating in business that typically preoccupy historians of women in the period. Yet her single status was less unusual than might be assumed, shared with an estimated 10–18% of her sex in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹¹ A further contributory factor to Coade's obscurity may be that her documentary record is relatively scant. No records survive from the manufactory itself until 1813, at the very end of Coade's long tenure when she had stepped back from day-to-day involvement.¹² The only records that remain of her own career are two catalogues, some loose sheets of promotional engravings, and numerous invoices scattered through record offices and private collections.¹³ Coade's considerable legacy is therefore a physical one, in the durable products of her manufactory that survive in buildings, parks, and churchyards across Britain and beyond.

As for Coade's gender, historians of women's history still struggle to emerge from the long shadow of a received belief that women existed only on the margins of business in the past, restricted to their own feminized spheres or to subsidiary roles by the rigidity

of the social and legal restrictions placed upon them. Economists and economic historians consider the market ungendered; for literary and cultural historians, the question of gender is increasingly central.¹⁴ Prior expectation that business activity *will* be gendered can lead to selective analysis. Equally dangerous, as Nicola Phillips pointed out, is the omission of women from histories of business development, which creates a false impression of absence.¹⁵ Until the 1990s, there was a marked tendency for historians to see women in business in the eighteenth century in much the same light as Dr Johnson saw female preachers: 'like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.' Margaret Hunt expressed the perception succinctly in 1996: 'It is easy to see the eighteenth century as something of a feminist wasteland — not least for women of the middling sort. There is absolutely no doubt that the dominant expectation within the trading class, one shared to a greater or lesser degree by women as well as men, was that women would place their labor power and the bulk of their capital, as well as their reproductive capacity, in the hands of men.'¹⁶ Hunt gave Coade a brief paragraph, but Coade's life and career are at odds with such a thesis.¹⁷ While Hunt did challenge this interpretation of the eighteenth century as 'something of a feminist wasteland' where women lacked virtually all agency, she is also representative of a tendency to frame women's experience in the period as a perpetual struggle against a patriarchy, observing that 'when one looks at women who were self-possessed enough to write about themselves or to attempt to defend their interests in court, resistance to male abuse of power, ambivalence about male monopolizing of resources, and interest on the part of women in favouring other women at the expense of men all begin to surface'.¹⁸ Eleanor Coade's life demonstrates no such gendered friction. Indeed, Hunt's brief analysis of Coade's life, imputing a sort of proto-feminism in her bequests to women in her will, is inaccurate, and nor can anything be deduced about Coade's own sexuality from the evidence. The impression of a lack of female agency in business was reinforced by other narratives describing an apparent marginalization of women from the public business sphere in the past, a marginalization ascribed to women's exclusion from men's formal trade organizations and a consequent inability to benefit from the business information, finance and connections of such institutions.¹⁹ Eleanor Coade showed no such inhibitions, managing her own investments, speculative building projects and business with complete confidence, and on equal terms with the men around her.²⁰

Other recent studies in material culture have emphasized women's commercial making practice in the eighteenth century in spaces unoccupied by men, with a concomitant tendency towards emphasizing female activities in feminine sectors.²¹ These studies typically highlight categories, like millinery and mantua making,²² and lace, linen, and china dealing.²³ Such focus makes it easy to assume that few self-employed women practised in manufacturing sectors beyond these traditionally feminine sectors; the exceptions are perceived as only those women continuing their husband's existing business.²⁴ This focus risks understating the presence of highly competent female businesswomen operating in the period in spheres well beyond those traditionally reserved for their sex, with all the ruthlessness and occasional recklessness such acumen typically requires. Female publishers ran several of the most influential newsheet publishing houses and were periodically troublesome to the authorities.²⁵ Women routinely owned property in their own right and participated as knowledgeable investors in stocks and in speculative housing projects, Eleanor Coade among them.²⁶

The ungendered business efficacy displayed by Coade to be demonstrated here contributes to accumulating case studies that support the proposition that such skills were shared by other women in the period, operating in very different fields. This is the case

both in London, like lace dealer Hester Pinney a generation earlier, who ran her aristocratic lover George Booth's financial affairs,²⁷ and in the rest of the country. Sarah Clayton, a Liverpool collier in the 1750s and 1760s, was one of the main figures in Liverpool's mid-century development, adept at converting capital to property.²⁸ Judith Baker of Durham, already an adept business operator when in 1774 she was widowed and left with her husband's debts of £6000, became the only female master in England's alum industry as well as managing the family's other mining interests.²⁹ Coade's own maternal grandmother, Sarah Enchmarch of Tiverton, Devon, was a matriarch of the wool cloth industry, and Coade's extended family included other assertive provincial women among the Tozers of Exeter and Seelys of Tiverton, suggesting that she was far from unique in her qualities.³⁰ Within Coade's own manufacturing sector, there was the accomplished mould- and cast-maker, Mary Landré, who struck terror even into Josiah Wedgwood. Faced with an accusation of plagiarism, Wedgwood worried that '[Mrs Landré] is the D[evi]l at finding out *Pirates*, and if she once finds me out, I shall never be able to get a cast from her'.³¹

Coade's career, then, supports the repositioning of businesswomen in the eighteenth century from insignificant oddities, mere footnotes to the main narrative, to central characters in the story of Britain's unprecedented social and economic transformation, 'an Age distinguished by producing extraordinary women' as Edmund Burke observed.³²

Coade's chosen sphere of operation, architecture, was indeed a sector dominated by men in Georgian England, notwithstanding cases of elite female patronage (usually in partnership with their husbands).³³ The Coade manufactory was the first large-scale concern run by a woman to achieve such commercial pre-eminence across an entire, mainstream sector. Coade outperformed all her (male) competitors in artificial stone during her lifetime, driving them out of business through her product's superiority and her own entrepreneurial singlemindedness. Her market platform was broad: her trade card boasted of an inventory of '800 Articles & upwards'.³⁴ She was possibly the first woman in history to turn her own name into a well-known brand, ahead of all her contemporaries except the farsighted Josiah Wedgwood. In 2020, Amanda Vickery made a case for artist Angelica Kauffman as a female brand pioneer using strongly gendered criteria, in which Coade was dismissed inaccurately in a footnote as a supplier of luxury goods.³⁵ The 'brand' Vickery described for Kauffman rested upon 'Angelica's' personal qualities and artistic talent, and her ability to navigate the patronizing gender inequality assumed for the period. It is an account more akin to current day celebrity culture than commercial branding theory. By contrast, Coade's use of her own name fulfilled the more prosaic brand values typically associated with the manufacturing sectors. The Coade brand had brand capital and product advantages that survived its owner and involved the production of goods by the hands, and to the designs, of others, beyond the single individual concerned. The use of such an unambiguous logo — COADE — was innovative in all sectors (not least compared with the arcane porcelain and pottery marks of the time) and was implemented long before such identification was made compulsory for the replication of casts in the Models and Busts Act of 1798.³⁶ Like 'Wedgwood', 'Coade' was a true brand in the modern sense, with none of the sentimentally gendered categorization Vickery attributes to Kauffman. Coade's professional reputation depended entirely on the success of her products and her entrepreneurship, not on her personality, looks or personal creativity. Hers was a trade presence of a more durable, undemonstrative kind that inspired confidence in her products and a desire to possess them, among the middling as well as the elite. To adopt Vickery's overarching analysis, 'A person's credit depended on their perceived moral worth as well as apparent economic standing and was fundamental to trust in countless daily transactions'.³⁷ The case study below demonstrates how Coade achieved this personal credit.

Her enterprise began in 1769, when she and her newly widowed mother (also called Eleanor) took over an existing artificial stone manufactory in Lambeth owned by Daniel Pincot that was already making works in fired stoneware of the highest quality. Coade's claim that the manufactory was 'failing' has been much repeated, but if the manufactory was failing in 1769, it was failing financially rather than technically or artistically. There is no evidence that the Coade women had any prior experience in ceramics or building supply; Coade junior had traded as a linen draper since the family moved to London from Exeter in 1760.³⁸ Their involvement was therefore as investors, making their achievement all the greater. From at least 1771, the manufactory was renamed 'Coade's Lithodipyra, Terra Cotta or Artificial Stone Manufactory'.³⁹ Within a couple of years, Eleanor Coade junior had taken charge of the business.⁴⁰

Coade's competence as a businesswoman was as key to the composition's market success as its well-proven formula. Others (all men) had tried to stay in business in this new sector, but had failed in product performance or financial resilience, or both.⁴¹ To achieve her pre-eminence in the sector, Coade was required to interact effectively with the very male world of architecture and the building trades. She established lasting business relationships with her workforce and modellers and equally with the Court, aristocracy, and luminaries of the architectural profession — and with the jobbing builders and bricklayers who built London's streets.⁴² All this requires scrutiny and explanation if we are to understand Coade's careful stewardship of her brand's profile and probity and to gain a sense of how Coade navigated the increasingly sophisticated consumer world of the late-eighteenth century with such success.

To some extent, Coade's business practice can be placed within the context of her exploitation of wider developments in the period. First are the newspapers. Especially in the years immediately after her takeover of the manufactory in 1769, Coade relied on advertisements in the newspapers to bring to notice its changes and progress.⁴³ She was far from unusual in this as an entrepreneur, and women in general frequently resorted to print advertisements, albeit more often for seeking or offering a lodging or position.⁴⁴ Within a few years, Coade published product lists of the items available from the manufactory, at first as loose sheets.⁴⁵ It was still relatively novel in the mid-eighteenth century to reproduce illustrations of sculptural works for sale: such reproduction required etchings and implies a marketing budget. Fifty years earlier in November 1724, Sir John Clerk's experience of trying to acquire statuary from London for his seat at Mavisbank near Edinburgh must have been typical; he commissioned his cousin William Aikman to buy statues for him, who wrote back:

I went with a friend of mine through all the statuary shows in Piccadilly and Hyde Park Corner but found nothing for your purpose but a Triton or two so very wretched I could not look upon them ... it would be proper you should give me a hint what kind of figure would please you best. And I should send you a copy of the design and the price before they went about it.⁴⁶

Once Coade printed sheets of her firm's designs, potential customers could browse them in the tranquillity of their own libraries, accompanied by the price list. By 1784, those loose sheets were supplemented by a self-declared *Descriptive Catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory*. While unillustrated, this price list itemizes an astonishing 778 items and runs to almost 30 pages, cross-referencing the etching sheets.⁴⁷ While impressive, this sophistication was, however, not unusual and Coade was once more adopting mainstream promotional techniques. For example, Conor Lucey has drawn attention to a valuable compilation of composition catalogues, also likely dating from the 1770s.⁴⁸ The compilation is another treasure trove of individualized consumerism in

architectural ornamentation, although none of these manufacturers refer to aristocratic or royal patronage in the way that Coade does in, for example, the catalogue for Coade's Gallery.

This gallery opened in 1799 on Westminster Bridge Road, as part of Coade's Row, a row of houses she had developed herself (she was by now 63 years old).⁴⁹ By then, she was in partnership with her cousin John Sealy (or Seely). While visitors had always been welcomed to the Coade manufactory a few hundred yards away near the river access at King's Arms Stairs in Lambeth, an obvious comparison may be drawn between Coade's Gallery and Josiah Wedgwood's display room on Greek Street, opened in 1774 and soon one of the most fashionable meeting places in London.⁵⁰ Coade's acquisition of the Lambeth manufactory, so close to the newly completed Westminster Bridge, showed an understanding of the importance of location to marketing a successful business, as well as one enabling easy supply by water of the business's heavy raw materials. However, Coade clearly now felt that more business could be generated by a more accessible showroom, dignified by its designation as a 'gallery' and demonstrating confidence that the artistic and educational quality of her wares was sufficiently high to draw in a wider (and paying) audience. The opening of the gallery was an astute marketing ploy, indicative of the continued growth of her enterprise and signalling a willingness to participate in the fashionable London consumer and artistic *milieux*. Coade's Gallery acknowledged and fed upon the public appetite for viewing works of art, even if replicated ones, and for fashionable places to gather.⁵¹ A commercial exhibition culture had developed slowly in London since the 1760s through the arts and manufacturing societies,⁵² a trend that enabled retailers of products commodifying cultural references, like Coade, Wedgwood, and print seller Rudolph Ackermann, to combine their salesmanship with a veneer of cultural viewing.

Coade's Gallery had its own exhibition catalogue ('Admittance to the Gallery, one shilling').⁵³ Both this and the 1784 *Descriptive Catalogue* include introductions which must at least have been approved by Coade, if not indeed written by her, and so provide a direct expression of Coade's entrepreneurship in skilfully positioning her product. The exhibition included replications from designs by some of the best sculptors and architects of the day. The educational content of the gallery catalogue in decoding the classical provenance of many of the exhibits reflects this growing public interest in the arts and their commodification for the middling, as well as elite, classes, which makes *Coade's Gallery* an interesting primary source for the period as well as an example of late-Georgian marketing material. Coade's self-confidence in entering the exhibition culture with her Gallery speaks to the level of public interest in viewing art, to the excellence of the firm's range, and to fine art's development beyond elite patronage to embrace replication and commodification in the second half of the eighteenth century. Never before had a public London gallery opened under a woman's name.⁵⁴

2. Horace Walpole's Gothic Gate Piers

In contrast to the later success exemplified by Coade's Gallery, the encounter that forms the central case study of this paper occurred right at the start of Coade's tenure of the Lambeth manufactory, in the spring of 1772. Three years previously, the connoisseur and cultural commentator Horace Walpole had commissioned from the manufactory a pair of Gothic gate piers for his house at Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, a vital nexus for Gothic design at the time.⁵⁵ Walpole had been working on Strawberry Hill since 1749 and had made successive land acquisitions to add to its wider landscape. Initially,

he dismissed the idea of extending his Gothic taste to the garden.⁵⁶ Twenty years later, he had changed his mind and the setting of his house came to include this gateway and a chapel, both in the Gothic style. As with the cultural references in the main house, chapel and gateway were both treated as objects for curated display; however, the need for durability in an external setting required a more rigorous approach to the choice of materials than for his interiors.⁵⁷ A chief advantage of fired architectural stoneware was its durability, but it was still an innovative material in architecture. By replicating stone-built medieval Gothic in a modern stoneware for his gateway rather than having it carved of natural stone, Walpole showed himself as willing to transgress the material properties of an original source externally as he was internally.⁵⁸

At the beginning of July 1769, Walpole had paid ten guineas for a pair of iron gates for the garden. He now needed suitable gate piers to support them, which he commissioned in fired artificial stone.⁵⁹ The commission for the gate piers began happily but turned sour; though pleased with the result, Walpole felt he had been overcharged by the manufactory and sent in George III's architect, Sir William Chambers, to examine the case. Chambers's letter reporting back to Walpole was cited in Rupert Gunnis's *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1650–1851* and noted by Havill and Kelly.⁶⁰ However, Kelly took Gunnis's citation at face value and did not examine the wider personalities and context involved. Analysed in more detail, the story of Walpole's commission and Chambers's letter provides a revealing illustration of how wealthy clientele might commission bespoke Coade pieces; of the firm's flexibility in being able to produce intricate reproductions; of Coade's ability to keep and produce detailed and convincing financial records; and of her professionalism in countering a claim against her fledgling enterprise even when it originated from a figure as famous and notoriously acerbic as Walpole. Finally, while Eleanor Coade, not Horace Walpole, forms the central protagonist of this paper, the commissioning process described here illustrates multiple aspects of recent work on the adoption of the Gothic style by Walpole's circle, notably the case made by Matthew Reeve and others for an alternative aesthetic and a re-gendered order, reversing the dominant Palladian style of the period through a new queer aesthetic.⁶¹

The story of the gateway's commission began with a visit by Walpole in early July 1769 to his Eton school friend, William Cole, in Cambridge. Cole was a clergyman and antiquary, who spent 18 years at King's College. Walpole considered Gothic the 'true' style of English architecture, rich with associative and imaginative associations. Cole shared his passion for the Gothic and they corresponded for twenty years but rarely met. Walpole's interest was likely to be, in the words of W. S. Lewis, editor of Walpole's correspondence, 'pictorial, romantic, snobbish'.⁶² By contrast, Cole approached medieval antiquities as a scholar, and Walpole declared himself Cole's 'disciple in antiquities'.⁶³ Having bought his iron gates a few days earlier, Walpole went to Cambridge alert for inspiration for appropriate gate piers. A few days into his visit in the first week of July 1769, he and Cole went to Ely, where they were entertained by Joseph Bentham, Mayor of Cambridge and printer to the university, whose brother James was writing *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual & Cathedral Church of Ely*.⁶⁴ They visited the cathedral, where Walpole offered his advice to Bishop Mawson on the removal of the east window and the removal of the organ to a side door.⁶⁵ While there, Walpole saw and admired the tomb of Bishop William de Luda (d. 1298).⁶⁶ Luda's successor as bishop in 1299 was called Ralph Walpole, and Horace Walpole was fond of such familial associations.⁶⁷ Both literally and (as here) imaginatively, such choice of sources contributed to the assemblage of selfhood that Walpole sought at Strawberry Hill. Later, Cole paid for an engraving of this tomb at his own expense for the second edition of James Bentham's book (1771). Perhaps, it was in part a souvenir of the day's visit: Cole greatly valued Walpole's friendship,



1. The engraving of the de Luda tomb in Ely Cathedral paid for by William Cole, from *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual & Cathedral Church of Ely* (1771 edition), Plate XVII. (Photo: © The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford)

who no doubt welcomed the gesture for his own purposes. Walpole's intention to adapt the tomb's pinnacles as his gate piers was perhaps additional motivation for Cole's patronage (Fig. 1), the engraving a literal example of how Walpole's circle 'imprinted' (Walpole's own verb as at note 56) their Gothic aesthetic upon wider sensibilities.

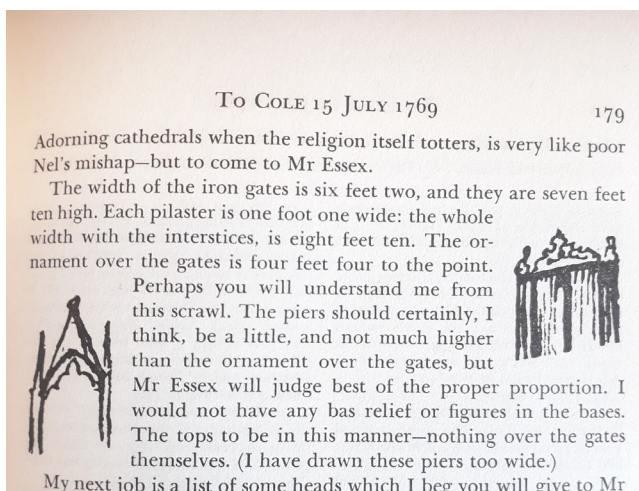
After the visit, on 15 July 1769, Walpole wrote to Cole, including a couple of ill-formed thumbnail sketches (Fig. 2) with the text:

Imprimis, then here are the directions for Mr Essex for the piers of my gates. Bishop Luda must not be offended at my converting his tomb into a gateway. Many a saint and confessor, I doubt, will be glad soon to be passed through, as it will at least secure his being passed over...

The width of the iron gates is six feet two, and they are seven feet ten high. Each pilaster is one foot wide: the whole width with interstices is eight feet ten. The ornament over the gates is four feet ten to the point. Perhaps you will understand me from this scrawl. The piers should certainly, I think, be a little, and not much higher than the ornament over the gates, but Mr Essex will judge best of the proper proportion. I would not have any bas relief or figures in the bases. The tops to be in this manner – nothing over the gates themselves. (I have drawn these piers too wide.)⁶⁸

'Mr Essex' was James Essex, one of the most prolific architects of eighteenth-century Cambridge and its county. Essex was well established by 1769; in 1757, he had been appointed to oversee the repair and restoration of Ely Cathedral, working closely with James Bentham as historical adviser.⁶⁹

In choosing artificial rather than natural stone for his elaborate new Gothic gate piers, Walpole set the manufactory a considerable technical challenge. At the time of the Ely visit (July 1769), the Coades may not yet have taken on the artificial stone manufactory.⁷⁰ The pre-existing manufactory was still being managed by Daniel Pincot, who had been producing fired artificial stone goods since at least the early 1760s.⁷¹ Eleanor the



2. Horace Walpole's sketch of his desired effect from his letter to Cole on 15th July 1769, from H. Walpole and others, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence With the Rev. William Cole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Yale University Press, 1837), p. 179

daughter was 36 years old; her mother was around 60, and initially, the Coades and Pincot seem to have been in partnership.⁷² However, Pincot was still trading under his own name as late as March 1770.⁷³ The same year, Pincot published *An Essay on the Origins, Nature, Use and Properties of Artificial Stone*, promoting its use. This work gives a comprehensive account of the material, clearly written by an experienced practitioner, and it is listed in the catalogue of Horace Walpole's library.⁷⁴ So when, on 8 June 1771, Walpole wrote to Mann, that 'I have made a Gothic gateway to the garden, the piers of which are artificial stone and very respectable', he was almost certainly referring to a work commissioned from and produced under Pincot, executed from the drawings done by James Essex (Fig. 3).⁷⁵ The gateway was duly installed in the southeast corner of the grounds at



3. Watercolour of the finished gateway by Edward Edwards, as pasted into Walpole's personal copy of H. Walpole (1784). *A description of the villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, ... at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex. With an inventory of the furniture, pictures, curiosities &c.* (Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Folio 49 3582.)

Strawberry Hill, marked at 'F' as 'iron gate with gothic Piers' on the survey of the grounds done by John Carter in the 1790s (Fig. 4), marking a liminal threshold between the outside world and the 'otherness' of Strawberry Hill and its grounds.⁷⁶

The gate piers appear in various illustrations by Rowlandson and others (Fig. 5) and appear, by any standard, to have been a triumph of the artificial stone process, recreating four crocketed pinnacles covered in Gothic tracery. However, Walpole was not as content with his commission as his letter to Mann makes him appear. It was a question of cost rather than quality. Coade had charged Walpole £175 12s 10d for the gate piers and Walpole considered this too much. By May 1772, they were in dispute, and Walpole requested the investigation by Sir William Chambers. On 26 May 1772, Chambers wrote brusquely to Coade, 'Mr Walpole insists upon your choosing a person to meet me in order to settle the dispute between you. Appoint therefore whoever you think proper and I will Meet them at your house any evening about five the beginning of next week.'⁷⁷

So far, this account appears to bear little specific relationship to Eleanor Coade's practice as a businesswoman. However, eight months earlier, on 11 September 1771, Mrs Coade had placed a terse advertisement in the *Daily Advertiser* stating that:

WHEREAS Mr Daniel Pincot has been represented as a Partner in the Manufactory which has been conducted by him. Eleanor Coade, the real Proprietor, finds it proper to inform the Publick that the said Mr Pincot has no Propriety [sic] in this Affair; and no Contracts or Agreements, Purchases or Receipts, will be allowed by her unless signed or assented to by herself.⁷⁸

It seems Coade had been angered by Pincot conducting certain business transactions under his own name, including an agreement to provide copies of the Borghese vase he had exhibited at the Royal Academy the same year, for Stourhead and Kedleston.⁷⁹ The unambivalent and very public nature of Pincot's dismissal meant Coade was potentially on her own a year later, in dealing with Walpole's objection about an order almost certainly placed with Pincot rather than herself. In appointing Chambers as his go-between, Walpole had chosen one of the best regarded — and best connected — architects of the day, summed up by his biographer as 'a worthy person of rigid principles' and 'a most able, thorough, and humane administrator'.⁸⁰ Appointed architectural tutor to the future George III in 1757, from 1766, Chambers held the unofficial title of Architect to the King jointly with his great rival, Robert Adam. In 1759, Chambers had published his *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, declared by Walpole to be the 'most sensible book and the most exempt from prejudices that ever was written on that science'.⁸¹ Chambers's involvement was thus a serious challenge to the new Coade concern.

Chambers's prompt report on Monday, 8 June 1772, of his visit to the Coade manufactory the previous Friday is the only known eye-witness account of the manufactory's working practice under Coade. It provides another professional's detailed commentary of Coade's business practice and is worth quoting in full.

Sir,

I spent a good part of the afternoon last Friday at the stone manufactory in examining Mrs Coade's claim upon you for the piers at Strawberry Hill. I saw the model and she produced a letter from the maker [meaning the modeller, unidentified], who I know and believe to be a man of character, by which it appeared, as nearly as she could collect the time etc from his books, it had cost £25, but as neither Mr Whatley, her friend, nor I thought it worth any



4. John Carter, *Slight Sketch of the Ground Plan of Strawberry Hill*. The Gothic gateway appears as 'F', on the southwest boundary, centre top — the plan's orientation is unconventional, North being to the right (Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Folio 49 3582 fol. 2. From Horace Walpole's extra-illustrated copy of *A description of the Villa...at Strawberry Hill* (Strawberry Hill, 1782, fol. 2)



5. *Temple at Strawberry Hill*. Thomas Rowlandson. 1822. In this capriccio, the gateway is shown in false proximity to the Chapel. This later print also reverses their orientation as correctly shown in Rowlandson's original 1809 watercolour held by the Courtauld Institute

such sum, we put it down at £16, which we thought the full value of it and supposed that the remainder of the time etc might have been spent on other things and charged by mistake to this article, or in making alterations of which we could take no account. We then saw the moulds, which are very formidable things, and we believed not overcharged in the account any more than the quantity of the composition used: of the price we are no judges, but supposed from the nature of the materials of which it is composed and the method of preparing it that it must be worth as much as plaster; she has charged something less for it. We then saw an account of the expenses of burning a kiln of goods, as they call it, and it amounted to five guineas according to her book, but as there were some items there we thought over-rated, we reduced it to four guineas, and upon inspection of the kiln, or rather oven, we believed that the piers could not be burnt in less than four times' firing.

The wages for modelling ornaments, moulding, and repairing seemed to us incredible, but she produced a book, wherein a regular account of time was kept which had all the marks of authenticity, from which we collected, I think, £52 of the sum charged. The remainder was for work done before the commencement of the book, for which there appeared no proofs, but we examined one of the men who had been employed, and he said he began to work on the piers as soon as he came into the manufactory, which was two months, we found, before the book was begun. We then examined some of the manufacture just taken out of the moulds and compared it with what was finished, and saw the method and difficulty of repairing it, which convinced us that the reparation was a very tedious and expensive work, much more so than could be imagined by any who had not seen it done. To conclude, we were mutually of the opinion that it had cost Mrs Co[a]de upwards of £150 exclusive of profit etc. – as you will see by the enclosed state of the account, but as she had offered to accept £100 rather than incur your displeasure, we both declined fixing any sum and advised her to leave it entirely to your goodness to settle it as you should judge reasonable. With regard to the repair, she is willing to put up the one pinnacle that is wanting and the eight flowers without any expense to you, but if more should be wanting she hopes you will consider it.

I am, Sir, etc.⁸²

Chambers also enclosed an account of the costs, both as declared by Coade (left) and as assessed by himself and Whatley after their visit (right):

[Enclosure]

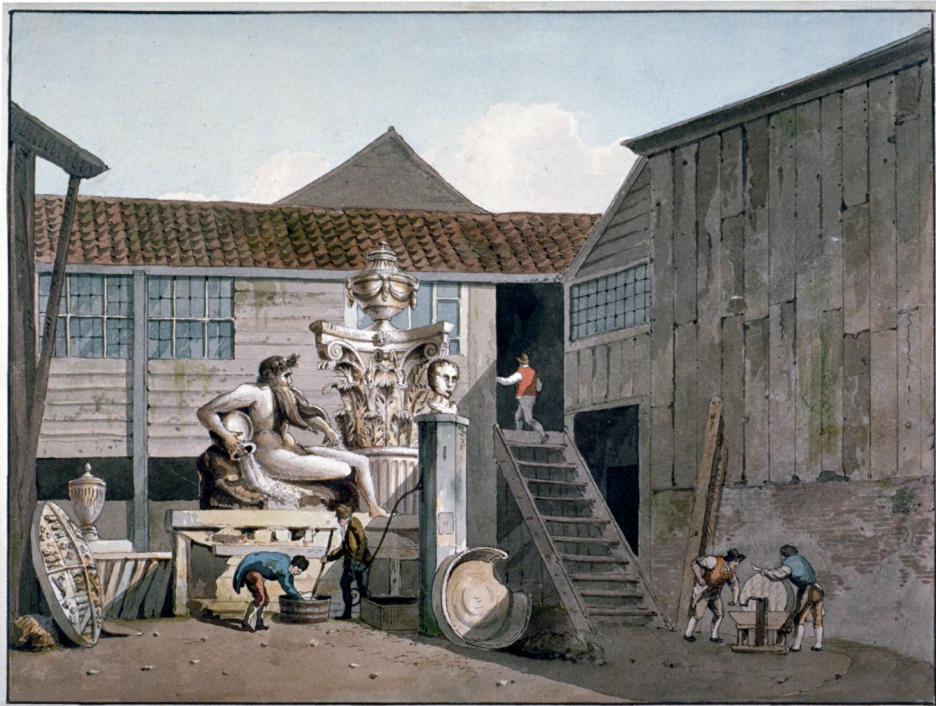
Mrs Co[a]de's charge

£ s d		£ s d
25 -	Model etc	16 - -
10 -	30 l[bs] plaster	10 - -
5 5 -	Moulds, cases, oil and lard	5 5 -
21 - -	3 1/2 ton composition	21 - -
64 6 4	Wages	64 6 4
5 15 6	Putting up the piers	5 15 6
23 6 -	Pincot's attendance	12 12 -
<hr/>		<hr/>
175 12 10		151 14 10

Various observations can be made about Eleanor Coade's business practice as revealed here. First, for all Walpole's insistence via Chambers 'upon your choosing a person to meet me in order to settle the dispute',⁸³ Coade herself was present at the meeting ('she produced a book'⁸⁴) and was engaging as an equal ('if more should be wanting, she hopes you will consider it'⁸⁵). The 'Mr Whatley' she engaged as 'her friend' in the dispute was

Kemble Whatley (sometimes given as Whateley), who also lived in Lambeth. Whatley had a timber yard directly across the Thames from Coade's manufactory and was a well-established carpenter and timber merchant.⁸⁶ He was a wealthy man, supplier to the Office of Works, with a history of government employment stretching back decades.⁸⁷ There is evidence that, like Coade, Whatley may have been a Dissenter and that their respective wider coteries overlapped.⁸⁸ He served as Sheriff of Sussex in 1773.⁸⁹ As someone well-versed in architectural supply contracts and practice, and likely already known to Chambers, Whatley was an ideal mediator for Coade. The fact that she was able at short notice to introduce such an ally is an interesting illustration of her existing network of contacts.

Coade was able to open up fully not just the manufactory itself (Fig. 6) but also its detailed financial records. Good record keeping is essential in running a business; then as now, business failure was often due to poor book-keeping. Inadequate records led to failure to call in debts and to crises of credit. It is not possible to say how or when Coade had learnt to keep accounts, but it is evident she did and that she did so well.⁹⁰ She had grown up in her father's woollen cloth finishing business in Exeter, and the women in such family businesses often kept the accounts, as they were expected to for their own households. Printed bookkeeping manuals taught good practice, some specifically targeted at women.⁹¹ There is evidence that Pincot was perhaps less rigorous, or else took his day books with him when he left ('the remainder was for work done before the commencement of the book'⁹²). The detailed records that survive for the period 1813–21 when



6. The yard at the Coade manufactory in Lambeth, c. 1804, where the meeting between Coade, Chambers, and Whatley took place (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London)

the Coade manufactory was run for the then elderly Coade by William Croggon include a Day Book that records rough but detailed tallies of the time spent on each commission by which employee.⁹³ This almost certainly represents a long-standing procedure, perhaps introduced by Coade to improve on Pincot's record-keeping.

The accounts also reveal the many stages of production and the meticulous craft process involved, beyond even what Chambers, a cosmopolitan and well-travelled man with a good eye for art, expected: 'The wages for modelling ornaments, moulding and repairing seemed to us incredible, but she produced a book, wherein a regular account of time was kept which had all the marks of authenticity.'⁹⁴ There is also a degree of negotiation in the encounter: Coade was beaten down on her subcontracting modeller's costs but was judged to have charged fairly for the moulds; Chambers and Whatley deferred to her judgement on the cost of raw materials, with implied surprise that she charged less for her composition than the cost of plaster. They were also impressed with the degree of finishing needed after the firing, 'very tedious and expensive work, much more so than could be imagined by any who had not seen it done.'⁹⁵ On this basis, they did not dispute the wage bill, which accounted for over a third of the total costs.

There is one more fascinating, if cryptic, element in their cost comparison. One of the mysteries about Coade is the absence of any evidence of her involvement with artificial stone before she took over the manufactory in summer 1771. Previous Coade research has assumed a complete break between Pincot and the manufactory after his dismissal in September 1771. However, Chambers's cost comparison included 'Pincot's attendance'. At some £23, this is a relatively large item and suggests that Pincot had indeed overseen the production and, perhaps, the installation process. Chambers slashed Pincot's fee in half, using him as a scapegoat when Whatley and he failed to find other significant faults with the costing. Yet as his *Essay* had shown, Pincot had considerable experience in the artificial stone manufacturing process, further proved by the quality of his Borghese vase.⁹⁶ Either Coade was using the now departed Pincot as a scapegoat, or she had not so completely burnt bridges to preclude his continued involvement as a consultant. Either way, she was demonstrating an astute ability to juggle and use working relationships, just two years into her new enterprise.

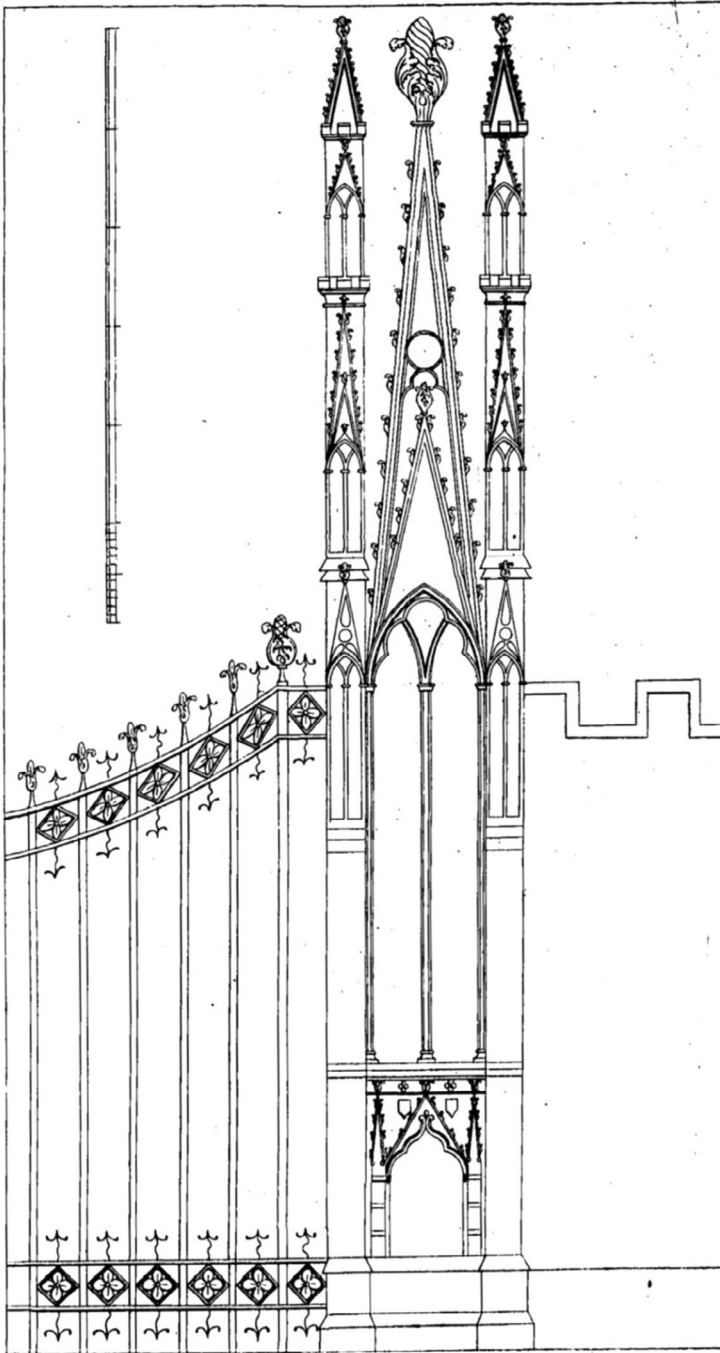
Overall, Chambers and Whatley judged that the gate piers had cost Coade a little over £151 to make, rather than the £175 or so she had charged Walpole. The difference between the sums implies a declared (and not unreasonable) profit margin of around 14% for the manufactory. Consistent with other evidence of her ability to charm otherwise objective observers, one can sense Coade taking Chambers aback by her offer to accept just £100 for the gate piers 'rather than incur [Walpole's] displeasure'.⁹⁷ Declining to pursue the negotiation further, even the experienced Chambers preferred to leave the final judgement on worth to Walpole's own conscience.

Coade had one last gesture to offer. It seems that there were some defects in the gate piers; whether caused during manufacture or installation is unclear. With keen understanding of the power of an influential arbiter of taste like Walpole over a brand's success, she offered 'to put up the one pinnacle that is wanting and the eight flowers' at her own expense, adding that 'if more should be wanting she hopes you will consider it'.⁹⁸ It is finely judged psychologically, walking the line between the due obsequiousness of a supplier and the credibility of a self-respecting manufacturer, and a remarkably self-assured performance in ensuring quality control of the end product. Equally confident was her transparency in opening up all aspects of the manufacturing procedure, both its records and the physical process, an approach in marked contrast to the obsessive secrecy of earlier failed manufacturers.⁹⁹ Coade correctly judges that such transparency would serve to

impress her interlocutors with the skill in the process and with her own probity, and thereby to enhance her reputation. A 1773 entry in Walpole's Account Book shows that he did eventually make a payment for '[the] Gothic gateway to the garden in artificial stone', for the sum of £151-14s-10d — exactly that advised by Chambers and Whatley.¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that Chambers's letter expresses no hint of patronizing Coade as a member of a frailer sex, a trait so often apparent in eighteenth-century male discourse. She is presented entirely neutrally and respectfully in the interaction, an equal in the business in hand. This may be a reflection of Chambers's own character, but the respect has also been earned by Coade herself. Chambers was sufficiently impressed to continue commissioning his own Coade stone pieces in the future.¹⁰¹

		Fet In.		£. s. d.		
(22)						
XXI. BALLS and FEET.						
496	_____	diameter		1	6	1 5 0
497	_____			1	2	0 15 0
498	_____			1	0	0 12 0
XXII. CHIMNEY-TOPS.						
499	A Vase and Foot	height	3 9	dia.	3 2	5 5 0
500	Ditto		3 1		2 10	4 4 0
501	A Dome, gadroon'd		1 3		2 0	1 1 0
502	A circular Pedestal		2 4		1 10	3 13 6
XXIII. PIERS.						
503	Gothic	height	13 6	square	2 0	52 10 0
504	Rustic		6 5		2 6	13 13 0
505	Ditto		5 2		2 0	10 10 0
XXIV. CONSOLES.						
506	_____	height	2 6	breadth	0 7	1 11 6
507	_____		1 8		0 4	0 16 0
508	_____		4 7		1 0 1/2	1 5 0
XXV. SEPULCHRAL Ornaments.						
509	An elegant Tomb for a Church-Yard					63 0 0
510	A Ditto					52 10 0
511	A monumental Vase and Pedestal, seven feet high					26 5 0
512	A Monument, consisting of a Sarcophagus, Figures, &c. to be placed against a Wall, 9 feet high					31 10 0
513	A Ditto 5 ditto					10 10 0
XXVI.						

7. Page from E. Coade, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory. ...: With Prices Affixed* (1784), showing Walpole's gate pier, by now anonymized as 'No. 503, Gothic' under 'Piers'

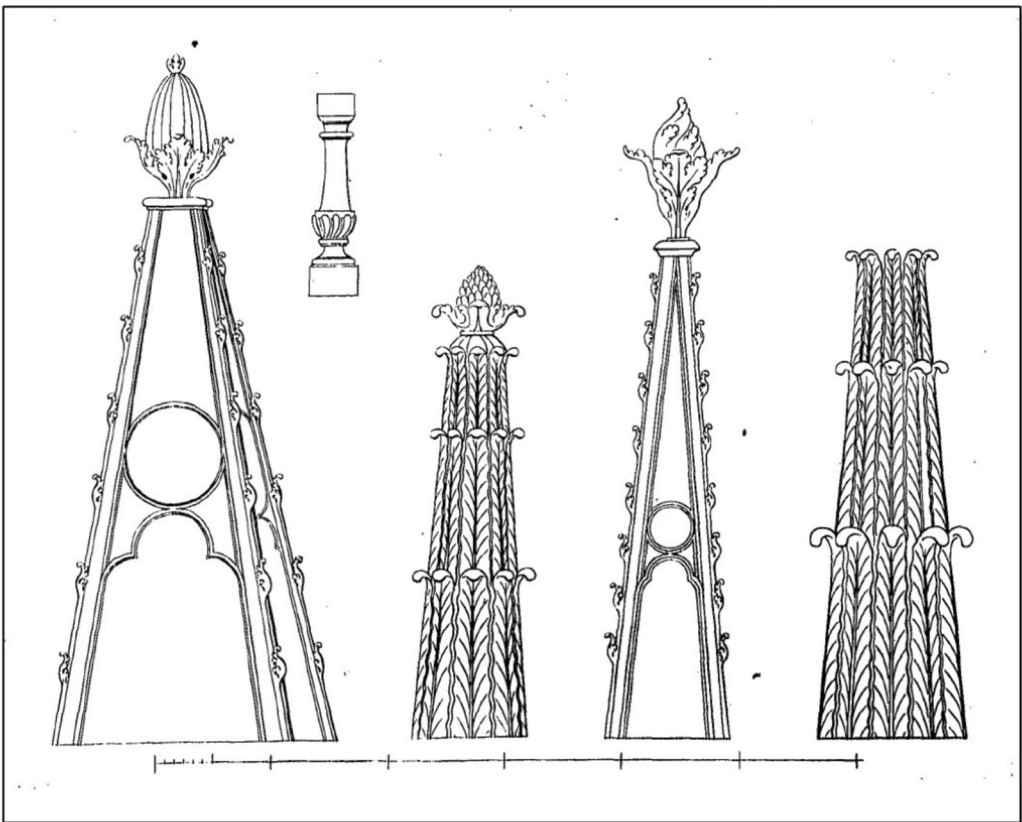


Published by the act directe. March 4, 1778

8. Illustration of Walpole's Gothic gate pier based on the Luda tomb in Eleanor Coade, [Etchings of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufacture, Narrow Wall, Lambeth, Published for Private Circulation Under the Superintendence of John Bacon?] (London, 1777-79)

Moreover, Coade herself continued to derive benefit from Walpole's commission by offering copies of the gate piers to other customers, which appear as No. 503 in the 1784 *Descriptive Catalogue* price list (Fig. 7). This gives their height as 13 ft 6 in. tall on narrow bases 2 ft square. The price was now £52 10s for each pair, considerably less than the price settled upon for Walpole's pair. This reduction in cost is accounted for by the fact that the mould of the original model only had to be made once, from which multiple copies could then be made. The original model could also be scaled up or down without great difficulty through use of a pointing machine. While no other examples of the gate piers have come to light, it was a perfect business model: the commissioning customer paid the initial sunk costs, and then the manufacturer continued to benefit unless the customer asked specifically for the mould, which Walpole did not.

Earlier documentary evidence of the pier's afterlife is found in the scaled etching of a complete Gothic gate pier among the Coade etchings dated 1778 (Fig. 8).¹⁰² The pier shown is clearly based on the Luda tomb, plausibly shown as standing some 14 ft high, although the indicative neoclassical gates suggest that the etching had been redrawn by an unknown draughtsman for the manufactory, rather than taken directly from Edwards' version of the full gateway in the *Description of the villa* (Fig. 3). In the light of



9. Variations of the pinnacles for piers offered by the Coade manufactory in Eleanor Coade, [Etchings of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory, Narrow Wall, Lambeth, Published for Private Circulation under the Superintendence of John Bacon?] (London, 1777-79)

the dispute over the cost of the Strawberry Hill piers, the Coade publicity material shows sensible discretion in not mentioning the provenance of these particular pieces, which she often otherwise did. An included scale shows that the upper pinnacles were 6 ft tall, standing on pedestals of a similar height. Walpole writes that his iron gates were 7 ft 10 in. tall and that the piers should be 'not much higher than the ornament over the gates',¹⁰³ this elaborate cresting being shown in Edwards' version. Walpole's letter of instruction to Essex tells us that this ornament stood 4 ft 10 in. high, and the sum of these two measurements confirms the scale of the Coade etching. The print of Rowlandson's watercolour depicts the same cresting but shows the piers as much squatter affairs and probably under-scales them. Either way, it is clear that in 1778, the Coade manufactory was supplying a version of the Luda gate pier that stood 13 ft 6 in. high.

Such was the flexibility of the making process that another sheet shows variations of proportion and finial for the central pinnacle, as elements that could be used in other contexts (Fig. 9). Pedestals too were interchangeable. As one-offs, the gate piers' original price might have withstood scrutiny but their subsequent reproduction could clearly happen more cheaply. Walpole did not seek to claim the moulds for himself and no reference was made to their ownership at the meeting. Given that Coade now owned the moulds and could continue to profit from the design, Walpole's scepticism about the price he was charged perhaps seems less unreasonable.¹⁰⁴

3. Conclusion

As well as a case study in female business practice, this account has offered an illustration of how commodification in the eighteenth century uprooted objects from the past and enabled their transposition into other contexts, where their value and signification could be altered.¹⁰⁵ Horace Walpole's gate piers transitioned from original object, to imprinted engraving, to bespoke object, to made-to-order catalogue item. Walpole and customers like him played their part in this process, but, as the example of his Gothic gate piers reveals, the real onward agency lay with the likes of Eleanor Coade and her catalogue, progressively widening the distance between model and copy in form and material. In the case of Coade, gender played no part in her success in manufacture or marketing: it was for the consumer to find such distinction or symbolism in her products, including the differentiation for the 'third sex' postulated by Reeve and others for Walpole's circle. The Coade stone phenomenon emerges here as a disinterested enabler of these 'alternative subjectivities'.¹⁰⁶ The Gothic example cited here played such a role for Walpole and his circle, but at the same time as fulfilling the Luda tomb commission, the Coade manufactory was supplying sophisticated copies of the Borghese and Medici vases, whose 'unrestrained licentiousness'¹⁰⁷ in classical ornamentation and associative powers were just as rich for others as were Gothic forms for Walpole.¹⁰⁸ It is important to remember that Coade stone had no inherent style: it was simply a medium, an enabler of 'otherness' and differentiation in any style. Thomas Hope, who arguably superseded Walpole as an arbiter of 'other' taste, bought prolifically from the Coade manufactory for his house at Duchess Street, a house that projected its own influential aesthetic of 'otherness' through orientalism and the Egyptian.¹⁰⁹ Historians of ideas should not forget the role and *neutrality* of the manufacturers, busy supplying to everyone's taste and enabling the shared forms of aesthetic preferences and codes that were such a defining characteristic of the multivarious 'interested' communities in the eighteenth century.

To return finally to Eleanor Coade as the central protagonist here, Chambers's letter emerges as one of the richest surviving documentary sources for her as a businesswoman, providing valuable insight into her business practice and capabilities. Notably, Coade's interaction with William Chambers and Kemble Whatley is shown to be essentially ungendered, adding to an accumulating body of evidence that a more nuanced account of women's experience in the eighteenth century is still needed. Coade is revealed as offering her customers the highest personal probity in her willingness to share her competent accounting practice and manufacturing process. Coade achieved the sort of personal reputation for honour, probity and orderliness essential for the creditworthiness needed for any early modern business to thrive (and the fact that she was a devout Baptist may not be coincidental). On the evidence of the Coade manufactory's track record and of the Chambers letter, we may conclude that Coade engaged in effective business and financial practices in exactly the same way as her male peers and superiors, meeting them on equal terms when contention arose. She made no concession to, or reference towards, her gender, and she emerges as an astute judge of personal relationships. Coade arrived at the Lambeth manufactory around 1770 already trained in all the business and financial practices she would need, and turned what could have been an awkward encounter with Horace Walpole into an endorsement of her scrupulous honesty and quality control from one of the most eminent architects of the day. Her 'infant manufactory'¹¹⁰ would now go from strength to strength.

Eleanor Coade therefore embodies what a successful businesswoman could achieve in Georgian England. In a business context, it seems there were no necessary limits to this. Coade ran a business employing a team of craftsmen, established her name as a credible brand in the modern sense, saw off public challenges to her business, and headed up a successful supply company in a male sector for some fifty years. She carried out speculative building projects and managed her own investments. She inspired and enabled the designs and interiors of great architects and provincial contractors alike, and supplied customers from George III to bricklayers and the trustees of charity schools. Mistress Eleanor Coade deserves her fuller place not just in the history of women in the Georgian period, but also in its canon of taste-enablers and taste-makers.

NOTES

This article has gestated over several years. Versions of it were presented at seminars for the Georgian Group in London (2019) and in Oxford (British History Seminar 1650–1850 and the BSECS Conference 2024). I received invaluable advice and help on Strawberry Hill from Michael Snodin and Carole Tucker, and from Richard Hewlings on Kemble Whatley. Like all Walpole scholars, I have much reason to be grateful to the archivists at the Lewis Walpole Library in Yale for their friendly efficiency and knowledge. Particular thanks are due to my anonymous peer reviewers, at whose prompting the content on Horace Walpole and his circle has been enlarged. As ever, any remaining errors are entirely my own.

1. The most recent encapsulation of this scholarship on Walpole and the 'third sex' is Matthew M. Reeve, *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole* (University Park Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020).

2. J. Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *The Journal of American History*, 88.1 (2001), 129–144.

3. 'Mistress' was a courtesy title, since Eleanor Coade never married.

4. Alison Kelly, *Mrs Coade's Stone* (Upton-upon-Severn: Self Publishing Association, 1990). Other introductory works are Caroline Stanford, 'Revisiting the Origins of Coade Stone', *Georgian*

Group Journal, XXIV (2016), 95–116; Hans van Lemmen, *Coade Stone* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 2006).

5. Indeed, Coade saw off Wedgwood and Bentley's challenge in the manufacture of plaques for chimneypieces, Wedgwood complaining that 'we could not prevail upon the architects to be godfathers to our child'. Kelly, p. 73.

6. 'Coade stone' is an anachronistic term: in the eighteenth century, it was known primarily as 'artificial stone' or, colloquially in print, as 'Coade's stone'.

7. Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), p. 154. Even in 1771, right at the very beginning of her career at the manufactory, Coade was insuring her utensils and stock for £1400 with the Sun Assurance Company. Vol 206, policy 299458, cit. John Havill, 'Eleanor Coade: Artificial Stone Manufacturer Born Exeter 1733 and Died London 1821' (unpublished PhD thesis, Exeter, 1986), p. 44.

8. Other examples (in addition to Nicola Phillips) of otherwise admirable works on congruent or overlaying topics published since Alison Kelly's 1990 book that omit the contribution of Coade and her stone include the following: Vicky Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, 2006); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013). A single passing mention is to be found in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, ed. by John Styles and Amanda Vickery, *Studies in British Art*, xvii (New Haven, CT: Yale Center for British Art, 2006); the same is true of Barrett Kalter, *Modern Antiques: The Material Past in England, 1660–1780* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2012).

9. This theme of the shifting values attributed to Coade stone objects is explored in Caroline Stanford, "'Peculiarly Fit for Statues": The Contribution of Coade's Fired Artificial Stone to Sculpture in the Eighteenth Century', *Sculpture Journal*, 32.4 (2023), 433–50.

10. Recent examples of this art-historical approach are Nicole Cochrane, 'Eleanor Coade, John Soane and the Coade Caryatid', in *Women and the Art and Science of Collecting in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Arlene Leis and Kacie L. Wills (Routledge, 2020), pp. 145–47, and 'Ancient Sculpture, Modern Production: Coade Stone's Britannia and River God', *Sculpture Journal*, 32.3 (2023), 321–33; Susan Bennett and Miriam Al Jamil, 'Recent Discoveries at Moor Park, Hertfordshire: Attics, Tunnels and a Coade Stone River God', *Georgian Group Journal* (2024, forthcoming).

11. See Olwen Hufton, 'Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Family History*, 9.4 (1984), 355–76; E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 262–65.

12. A daybook survives covering the years from 1813 to 1821; by then, Coade was still lending her name to the wares, but she was in her 80s and control of the business had passed to her cousin William Croggon. See Croggon Day Book, TNA C-111-106; also John E. Ruch, 'Regency Coade: A Study of the Coade Record Books, 1813–21', *Architectural History*, 11 (1968), 34. All other records from the manufactory have been lost other than a scattering of issued invoices and receipts.

13. Cited individually below as they arise in the main text.

14. Anne Laurence, 'Women and Finance in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Women and Their Money 1700–1950: Essays on Women and Finance*, ed. by Anne Laurence, Josephine Maltby, and Janette Rutterford, *Routledge International Studies in Business History*, xv (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 1. Amy Louise Eriksson similarly identified a preoccupation with 'women and ideology' among late-20th century historians, in *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 5.

15. See Phillips, p. 95.

16. Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 144–45.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Phillips, p. 95.
20. For Coade's speculative development of Coade's Row, see *Survey of London: Volume 23, Lambeth: South Bank and Vauxhall*, ed. by Howard Roberts and Walter H. Godfrey (London, 1951), p. 61, *British History Online* <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol23>> [accessed 13 October 2024]. Coade's will refers to her involvement with The Paragon in Blackheath (National Archives, PROB-11-1651-97). The author's current research into Coade's involvement in Chancery cases also reveals her strong and independent financial agency (forthcoming).
21. See, for example, Serena Dyer and Chloe Wingston Smith, *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).
22. Serena Dyer, *Material Lives: Women Makers and Consumer Culture in the 18th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).
23. Coade herself was initially active as a linen dealer when she first came to London in the 1760s. Kelly, p. 23; Havill, p. 14.
24. Ambrose Heal's collection of references to those active in the London furniture market in the long eighteenth century includes female cabinet makers, upholsterers, and frame makers. But of some 1700 names in total, only twenty are female. Ambrose Heal, *The London Furniture Makers: From the Restoration to the Victorian Era, 1660–1840* (London: Portman, 1988). Amy Louise Erickson's work on Women in Luxury Trades in Eighteenth Century London (outdoor exhibition in Cheapside, 2019 <<https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/project/city-women-18th-century-exhibition-luxury-businesses-run-women-london>>) found a female clockmaker, metal worker/button maker, and goldsmith among the traders.
25. See Margaret Hunt, 'Hawkers, Bawlers and Mercuries: Women and the London Press in the Early Enlightenment', in *Women and the Enlightenment*, ed. by M. R. Hunt (New York, NY: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1984); Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678–1730* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Phillips (2006).
26. Phillips, chapter 7; Christine Wiskin, 'Businesswomen and Financial Management: Three Eighteenth-Century Case Studies', *Accounting, Business & Financial History*, 16 (2006), 143–61.
27. Pamela Sharpe, 'Dealing With Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England', *Gender and History*, 11.2 (1999), 209–32.
28. Conor Lucey, 'Women and the Construction Industry in Georgian Britain and Ireland'. *Architectural History*, 66 (2023), 127–54.
29. Susan Laura Beaumont, "Female Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in North East England, 1778–1801" (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2019), chapter 7 <<https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/10443/4515/1/Beaumont%20S%20L%202019.pdf>> [accessed 30 December 2024]. Phillips, chapter 5, 'Female Business Networks in Eighteenth-Century Durham – Mrs Judith Baker, Gentlewoman'.
30. See Havill as at note 7.
31. Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 31 October 1768. Cit. Timothy Clifford, 'The Plaster Shops of the Rococo and Neo-Classical Era in Britain', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 4 (1992), 39–65.
32. Edmund Burke, letter to Fanny Burney, 29 July 1782, reproduced in Fanny Burney, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* (London: J.M. Dent, 1893), 1.
33. There are numerous individual case studies of elite female patronage in architecture. A recent synthesis is provided by Amy Boyington, *Hidden Patrons: Women and Architectural Patronage in Georgian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2023).

34. The date 1769 appears repeatedly in Coade's promotional material, for example, the trade card for her Gallery. British Museum, Banks, 106.9.
35. Amanda Vickery, 'Branding Angelica: Reputation Management in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43.1 (2020), 3–24. Vickery's identification of Coade as a supplier of luxury goods like silk and gold comes in her note 21. This is misleading; in 1784, for example, a typical Coade keystone sold for as little as 12 shillings, and simpler ones for just 2s. Her products were well within reach of the middle classes.
36. The Coade stamp is also a useful aid today in identifying larger Coade pieces.
37. Vickery, p. 3.
38. Stanford, 2016, p. 96.
39. Lithodipyra was a concocted word from the Greek, meaning 'twice-fired stone'. E. Coade, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory. ...: With Prices Affixed (1784)* <<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=78dcOAAACA>> [accessed 13 October 2024] opens with the statement 'The period of fifteen years, since which this artificial stone manufactory was erected', yet Pincot's manufactory clearly pre-existed Coade's arrival.
40. Widow Coade pays the poor rates for the first two years; thereafter, it is 'Miss Coade' who does so and who signs invoices and so forth. Kelly, p. 22 and passim.
41. Kelly, pp. 31–35; Stanford, 2016, pp. 97–101.
42. Croggon's Day Books demonstrate this full range of the firm's clientele, quite apart from surviving Coade works. TNA C-111-106; also Ruch (1968).
43. See, for example, Nancy Valpy, 'Advertisements for Artificial Stone in the Daily Advertiser', *English Ceramic Circle Transactions*, 12.3 (1985).
44. For examples of women advertising, see Phillips, chapter 9: 'This Publick Trade: Women, Trade and Advertising in London'; Jeremy Black, *The English Press 1621–1861* (Sutton: Stroud, 2001).
45. *Etchings of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufacture Narrow Wall Lambeth Near Westminster Bridge* (London, 1779). Selections of these illustrated products' sheets survive in various archives including Sir John Soane's Museum, London, item 6861. Digitized versions are also available via Gale Eighteenth Century Collections Online.
46. Cit. John Fleming, *Robert Adam and His Circle in Edinburgh & Rome* (London: John Murray, 1962), p. 38.
47. Coade, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1784).
48. Conor Lucey, 'Architectural Ornament by Jee, Eginton and Co', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* (date unstated) <<https://www.burlington.org.uk/archive/search-archive/search/result>> [accessed 11 March 2024]. These similarly include multiple illustrations and price lists from Jee and Eginton of Birmingham, succeeded by George Wyon, Jacques and Son of Holborn, and James Thorp of London. Many of their stock items are identical to Coade's albeit made in less durable and less labour-intensive 'composition' (a mixture of powdered chalk, animal glue, resin, and linseed oil. Such mixes were not fired and so were suitable only for interior use).
49. Kelly, chapter 5, gives an overview of Coade's Gallery.
50. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Hutchinson: London, 1983), p. 119.
51. Until now, the fashionable had been encouraged to visit the Coade showroom at the manufactory itself, off Narrow Walk near King's Arms Stairs. See McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, p. 119.
52. For an account of the rivalries of the arts societies, see Matthew Hargraves, *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760–1791* (London: Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005). Examples of the Coade firm's output were regularly exhibited in the annual exhibition of the Society for the Encouragement for the Arts, Manufacture & Commerce but were also

shown under the auspices of the Royal Academy and the Free Society of Artists. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain ... The Free Society of Artists. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work to 1791* (London, 1907). By the late 1790s, the Royal Academy had achieved a near monopoly on exhibiting the work of professional artists and sculptors, prompting many to seek alternative ways of ensuring their work reached the public. Coade's Gallery can be seen as part of this general trend for non-institutional exhibition spaces and tactics.

53. *Coade's Gallery, or, Exhibition in Artificial Stone, Westminster-Bridge-Road, ... Being Specimens From the Manufactory, at King's Arms Stairs, Narrow Wall, Lambeth* (Lambeth: printed by S. Tibson, 1799). <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Q1ppAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=coade%27s+gallery&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=coade's%20gallery&f=false> [accessed 13 October 2024].

54. Marie Tussaud (née Grosholtz) did not begin to exhibit in London until 1802.

55. Walpole's adoption of Gothic has been called the 'dominant historical myth of modernity' (Reeve, p. xii) with his willingness to experiment in materiality another aspect of his exploration of modernity. As a not altogether convincing extension of this theme of modernity and artificial stone, Kyle Stover has sought to make the case that Coade stone represented a 'transnational history of modern architecture predicated upon replication, cheapness, and abstraction', constructing from Coade stone 'a history of modern architecture'. Stover, Kyle. 'Intangible Property: Architecture, Artificial Stone Ornament, and Insurance from 1769–1821', (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2022).

56. In 1753, Walpole wrote, 'Gothic is merely architecture; and as one has a satisfaction in imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house, so one's garden on the contrary is to be nothing but riant, and the gaiety of nature.' *HW Corr*, xx, 372 (HW to Horace Mann, 27 April 1753).

57. 'The Chapel in the Wood' was erected after the gateway in 1772–74, and its front is conventionally made of Portland stone. It survives today in the grounds of St Mary's University on Waldegrave Road.

58. Reeve, p. 73.

59. Horace Walpole and P. Toynbee, *Strawberry Hill Accounts: A Record of Expenditure in Building, Furnishing, &c., Kept by Mr Horace Walpole, From 1747 to 1795, Now First Printed From the Original MS* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 11. My thanks to Michael Snodin for this reference.

60. Kelly, p. 124, n. 4, cites Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660–1851* (London: Abbey Library, 1964). Gunnis's work is now subsumed into the online database, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Sculptors (BDBS)* <<https://gunnis.henry-moore.org/henrymoore/>> [accessed 13 October 2024].

61. This scholarship reaches coherent synthesis in Reeve (2020). The Gothic gate piers discussed here are mentioned only in passing by Reeve, p. 21.

62. Horace Walpole and others, *Horace Walpole's correspondence With the Rev. William Cole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Yale University Press, 1937), p. xxx.

63. Lewis and others (1980), *HW Misc Corr*, II, xxv–xxvi; *HW Corr*, I, 340–41 (HW to Cole, 15 August 1774); T. Cocke, *ONDB* entry.

64. *HW Corr*, XLII, p. 178, n. 3. Poet Thomas Gray, another friend from Eton days, was also a subscriber to the book.

65. *HW Misc Corr*, II, p. xxx, n. 2.

66. *Ibid.*

67. See Whitney Davis, 'Queer Family Romance in Collecting Visual Culture', *GLQ* 17.2–3 (2011), 309–29; Reeve, pp. 12–15.

68. *H W Corr*, I, pp. 178–79 (HW to Cole, 15 July 1769).

69. T. H. Cocke, 'James Essex, Cathedral Restorer', *Architectural History*, 18 (1975), 12–102.

70. It is always assumed on the basis of the introductory sentence of the 1784 *Descriptive Catalogue* that Coade's takeover was sometime in 1769. However, Coade's first newspaper advert did not appear until 15 August 1771, in the *Daily Advertiser*.

71. Sculptor John Bacon's undated earliest trade card (stating that he was working as 'Stone Carver & Modeller at Mr Pincot's Paternoster Row, Spitalfields') can be dated to around 1764 when he was released from his apprenticeship to porcelain maker Nicholas Crispe. Timothy Clifford, 'John Bacon and the Manufacturers', *Apollo*, CXXII.284 (October 1985), 288–304.

72. *BDSB*; Kelly, p. 33.

73. *Public Advertiser*, 6 March 1770, cit. *BDSB*.

74. Daniel Pincot, *An Essay on the Origin, Nature, Uses, and Properties, of Artificial Stone ...* (London: Richard Hett, 1770); Horace Walpole, T. Hazen, and W. S. Lewis, *A Catalogue of Horace Walpole's Library* (London: New Haven, 1969), p. 228, n. 9. I am grateful to Michael Snodin for pointing out this inclusion. There is no mention of the Coades in Pincot's essay.

75. *HW Corr*, II, p. 157 (HW to Horace Mann, 8 June 1771).

76. While the plan is pasted into Walpole's own copy of *A Description of the Villa...at Strawberry-Hill* (1784), Carter drew this plan in the 1790s since it shows the New Offices, paid for in 1790 (*pers. comm.* Michael Snodin).

77. *HW Misc Corr*, p. 227, n. 3: photocopy of original MS in Chambers's Letter Book, BM Add. MS 41133 (now lost). While there is a degree of ambiguity here over whether Chambers is writing to Widow or Miss Coade, Kelly (1990) is clear that Coade the younger was in charge almost from the beginning, with bills made out to her from 1770.

78. Valpy, pp. 215–16.

79. *BD SB* entry for Pincot.

80. John Harris, 'Chambers, Sir William', *ODNB* entry.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *HW Corr*, XLI, p. 228 (Chambers to HW, 8 June 1772).

83. As at note 76.

84. *HW Corr*, XLI, p. 228 (Chambers to HW, 8 June 1772).

85. *Ibid.*

86. It is possible Chambers already knew Whatley (or Watley) from Kew, where Chambers had designed the Pagoda in 1762. In 1774, Kemble Whatley succeeded George Warren as carpenter at Kew. Whatley built up a substantial carpentry and timber-trading business based in Millbank. In 1756, he was appointed Deputy Surveyor of Forests (for example, *Journals of the House of Commons*, 45, p. 153). Described as 'of Lambeth', Whatley died in 1780 and was buried in Wimbledon Churchyard, Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London* (London: Lond, 1795), p. 534. A timber yard is marked on Millbank on John Roque's *Map of London* (1746).

87. Whatley was the carpenter of the Horse Guards building between 1750 and 1759 (R. A. Brown and others, *The History of the King's Works* (London: H.M.S.O., 1963), v, 458); also at White Lodge, New Richmond Park in 1752 (Richard Hewlings, 'White Lodge, New Richmond Park', *Georgian Group Journal* (2009), n. 108: Galway Coll., GA 12873/4, 10–11); also of Queen Charlotte's Cottage, Richmond 1758–1762 (TNA, WORK 5/62), and again in 1778 (WORK 5/66). My thanks to Richard Hewlings for these references. Whether there is any family relationship between Kemble Whatley and Thomas Whatley, author of *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770) and Surveyor of the King's Private Roads 1771–72, is unproven.

88. Rev. George Kemble Whateley [*sic*] is listed as a 'Governor for life and Benefactor' for a New Academical Institution among Protestant Dissenters for the Education of their Ministers and Youth, in a list dated 24 June 1788. A. Rees, 'The Advantages of Knowledge Illustrated and Recommended in a Sermon [on Prov. Xix. 2] ...' (1788) <https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Advantages_of_Knowledge_Illustrated/_Lq_xba-J8oC?q=Kemble%2BWhateley%26gbpv=

[1#f=false](#)> [accessed 18:23, 18/04/21]. A clergyman by the same name matriculated from Trinity College Cambridge in 1771, described as the son 'of Kemble of Westminster'. J. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, From the Earliest Times to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 421. The subscribers also include 'Mrs Whateley, Parliament Street' (probably George's mother and Kemble's wife) and also 'S. Coade, Esq. of Exeter'. This is likely to be Samuel, Mrs Coade's uncle and mentor, who in 1784 gave her the leasehold of a seaside villa, Belmont in Lyme Regis, and forgave her debts to him in his will. TNA, PROB-11-1479-244.

89. W. Berry, *County Genealogies: Pedigrees of the Families in the County of Sussex* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, printed by W. Marchant, 1830) <<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=OeFEAQAAAJ>> [accessed 18 April 2019].

90. Wiskin (2006). Wiskin also cites Coade's management of credit flow in support of her financial competence: for example, ornaments for Audley End were supplied at intervals over twenty years from 1772 but the firm had to wait six or seven months for payment of each order (Essex RO, D/DBY). Similarly, Coade waited over a year for payment from Viscount Grimston (Kelly, p. 76). These costs were presumably met by accumulated reserves or managing cash flow, suggesting that Coade successfully achieved and maintained the equilibrium of credit implicit in best financial practice to ensure business resilience.

91. See, for example, *Advice to the Women & Maidens of London* (1707) written under the pseudonym of a 'Maiden Scholar' but probably by Stephen Monteage, author of the popular *Debtor & Creditor Made Easie* (1690); Mathew Quin, *Rudiments of Book-Keeping* (1777). Also Rebecca Connor, *Women, Accounting, and Narrative: Keeping Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2004),

92. *HW Corr*, XLI, p. 228 (Chambers to HW, 8 June 1772).

93. TNA, C111/106 Croggon Day Books.

94. *HW Corr*, XLI, p. 228 (Chambers to HW, 8 June 1772).

95. *Ibid.*

96. Clifford (1985). An example of an early Borghese urn in fired artificial stone, commissioned from Pincot by Henry Hoare and produced around 1770, survives at Stourhead in Wiltshire. Davis, J., *Antique Garden Ornament: 300 years of creativity* (Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge, 1991), p. 167.

97. As a further example of her effectiveness (and possibly charm), Coade's manufactory is the only contemporary business concern mentioned in the otherwise scholarly work, A. C. Ducarel and J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Lambeth* (Printed by and for J. Nichols, printer to the Society of Antiquaries, London, 1786), p. 82. Uniquely in this otherwise antiquarian text, the account of the firm repeats Coade's own sales pitch verbatim and reproduces both her trade card and an engraving of a Coade River God. It concludes that 'This infant manufactory certainly deserves some distinguishing encouragement'.

98. *HW Corr*, XLI, p. 228 (Chambers to HW, 8 June 1772).

99. See Richard Holt, *A Short Treatise of Artificial Stone* (printed for Stephen Austen and John Brindley, London, 1730), p. 41; Christine McAleavy, 'Batty Langley's Early Years in London: Langley, Hans Sloane and Artificial Stone, 1729–35', *Garden History*, 44 (2016), 191–208.

100. Walpole and Toynbee, p. 13.

101. Kelly, pp. 107, 321.

102. Coade, *Etchings*, 1779.

103. *H W Corr*, I, pp. 178–79 (HW to Cole, 15 July 1769).

104. Walpole's Gothic gateway was dismantled when part of the grounds of Strawberry Hill was sold off in the twentieth century for housing development. The current whereabouts of the remains of the piers are not in the public domain.

105. Kalter, Barrett, *Modern Antiques: The Material Past in England, 1660–1780*, p. 152.

106. Reeve, p. 88.

107. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England ... Collected by the Late Mr. George Vertue; and Now Digested and Published from His Original Mss.* (Twickenham: Printed by Thomas Farmer at Strawberry-Hill, 1762), I, p. 108.

108. Kelly, p. 38.

109. For example, Coade supplied Hope with an Antinous in Egyptian dress for Hope's Egyptian Room at Duchess Street (Antinous was the Emperor Hadrian's lover who drowned in Egypt aged 19 and was declared a god by Hadrian). Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture* (1807) did much to popularize the Egyptian style in the Regency period. Coade was producing copies of the Egyptian lions that stand at the base of the Cordonata ramp on the Capitoline Hill in Rome from at least 1784.

110. Ducarel and Nicols, p. 82.

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