WOMEN AND ENLIGHTENMENT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

During the long eighteenth century, ideas of society and of social progress were first fully investigated. These investigations took place in the contexts of economic, theological, historical and literary writings which paid unprecedented attention to the place of women. Combining intellectual history with literary criticism, Karen O’Brien examines the central importance to the British Enlightenment both of women writers and of women as a subject of enquiry. She examines the work of a range of authors, including John Locke, Mary Astell, David Hume, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon, T. R. Malthus, the Bluestockings, Catharine Macaulay, Mary Wollstonecraft and the first female historians of the early nineteenth century. She explores the way in which Enlightenment ideas created a language and a framework for understanding the moral agency and changing social roles of women, without which the development of nineteenth-century feminism would not have been possible.

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For Peter
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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Warwick University and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a period of research leave that enabled me to complete this book. Most of the research was carried out at the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the National Library of Scotland, and I would like to thank the librarians there for their assistance. My warmest thanks to Isabel Rivers, Clarissa Campbell Orr, John Hines, Barbara Taylor and John Christie for excellent advice and careful reading of parts or all of the book. This book owes a great deal to the pioneering work of Jane Rendall, and to conversations with her during our time at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Edinburgh University. It benefited enormously from Barbara Taylor’s Leverhulme-funded project ‘Feminism and Enlightenment 1650–1850: A Comparative History’ in which I was very fortunate to participate in 1998–2001, and which opened out a whole new world of scholarship and ideas to me. An earlier version of chapter 4 appeared in the book that came out of this project, Women, Gender and Enlightenment, 1650–1850, ed. Barbara Taylor and Sarah Knott (Basingstoke, 2005). Particular thanks to Linda Bree at Cambridge University Press for her patience and support. I have been lucky to have an editor who cares and knows so much about the eighteenth century. My thanks to Rochelle Sibley for expert note checking. The book started out as an MA course, and I learned a great deal from my postgraduate students at both Cardiff and Warwick Universities. Warwick University has been an intellectually rewarding, as well as a sociable and enlightened place to work. On a personal note, I would like to thank Helen Calcraft, Josie Dixon and Jackie Labbe for their support and friendship, and, above all, Cassy and Patrick O’Brien, devoted parents and superlative grandparents. My greatest debt is to Peter McDonald, a great cook, a great father to our children Louisa and Samuel, and a wonderful husband.