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0521650135 - Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel

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WOMEN AND PROPERTY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL

This book investigates the critical importance of women to the eighteenth-century debate on property as conducted in the fiction of the period. April London argues that contemporary novels advanced several, often conflicting, interpretations of the relation of women to property, ranging from straightforward assertions of equivalence between women and things to subtle explorations of the self-possession open to those denied a full civic identity. Two contemporary models for the defining of selfhood through reference to property structure the book, one historical (classical republicanism and bourgeois individualism), and the other literary (pastoral and georgic). These paradigms offer a cultural context for the analysis of both canonical and less well-known writers, from Samuel Richardson and Henry Mackenzie to Clara Reeve and Jane West. While this study focuses on fiction from 1740 to 1800, it also draws on the historiography, literary criticism, and philosophy of the period, and on recent feminist and cultural studies.

APRIL LONDON is Associate Professor of English at the University of Ottawa. She has written widely on eighteenth-century fiction in journals and in essay collections. This is her first full-length book.

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To my parents

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