

## MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Why was Wollstonecraft's landmark feminist work, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, categorised as a work of political economy when it was first published?

Taking this question as a starting point, *Mary Wollstonecraft and Political Economy* gives a compelling new account of Wollstonecraft as critic of the material, moral, social, and psychological conditions of commercial modernity. Offering thorough analysis of Wollstonecraft's major writings – including her two *Vindications*, her novels, her history of the French Revolution, and her travel writing – this is the only book-length study to situate Wollstonecraft in the context of the political economic thought of her time. It shows Wollstonecraft as an economic as much as a political radical, whose critique of the emerging economic orthodoxies of her time anticipates later Romantic thinkers. *This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.*

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# MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

*The Feminist Critique of Commercial Modernity*

CATHERINE PACKHAM

*University of Sussex*



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Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-39581-6 — Mary Wollstonecraft and Political Economy  
Catherine Packham  
Frontmatter  
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CAMBRIDGE  
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

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477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009395816](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009395816)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009395823

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DOI 10.1017/9781009395823

First published 2024

First paperback edition 2025

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN	978-1-009-39584-7	Hardback
ISBN	978-1-009-39581-6	Paperback

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## *Acknowledgements*

This book has its origins in a question I asked myself back at the start of my career, when first teaching Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* having recently completed a PhD on Adam Smith: namely, why was Wollstonecraft reading and quoting Smith in the early 1790s, and how might that alter how we think about her? My attempt to answer that question has taken me many years, and been much delayed, not least by other research projects and three years of administrative service as Head of English at the University of Sussex. Much support has also helped me along the way. A much-appreciated twelve-month Leverhulme Research Fellowship enabled me to lay the groundwork for the project and initiated a series of journal articles as I began to work out various arguments for the book. Some use is made of this earlier work in what follows, including in Chapter 2, which draws on parts of my article, 'Mediating Political Economy in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*', published in *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* in 2019; a longer exert from "'The common grievance of the revolution': bread, the grain trade, and political economy in Wollstonecraft's *View of the French Revolution*", published in the *European Romantic Review* in 2014, appears in Chapter 4. I am grateful to the editors and publishers for permission to reprint it here. I gratefully acknowledge further support too, in the form of research leave from the School of English, which enabled me to bring the book to a conclusion. I have been able to present early versions of material at conferences and seminars at Oxford, Edinburgh, Southampton, Kings College London, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam, as well as here at Sussex; I am grateful for the invitations that enabled this and thank the audiences at each of these for the questions and responses that have helped to shape what follows. I also thank the sculptor Jenny Littlewood for the invitation to speak at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, to mark the display of her new bust of Wollstonecraft.

As I have been labouring on this project, it has been wonderful to witness and participate in the current new wave of work on Wollstonecraft, from across the academic disciplines. I am grateful to have spoken on panels about Wollstonecraft alongside such experts as Eileen Hunt Botting and Julie Murray, and at Wollstonecraft events at which I learned much from Sandrine Bergès, Alan Coffee, Mary Fairclough, Daisy Hay, Laura Kirkley, Bee Rowlatt, Janet Todd, and others. I am sorry that Laura's new book on Wollstonecraft appeared in print too late for me to benefit from its insights and scholarship in this work. Emma Clery has done a vast amount to create a community of Wollstonecraft scholars and enthusiasts and to bring us together at memorable events at the Unitarian Chapel in Stoke Newington and St. Pancras Old Church: for this intellectual leadership and comradeship, and for her support of and interest in my work, I am immensely grateful. Amongst much else, these events have shown me the huge knowledge and appreciation of Wollstonecraft's work that exists beyond the boundaries of the academic world, and how much she is still looked to for insights and answers to the many pressing problems we face in today's world.

At the University of Sussex, I have benefited from being part of a community of outstandingly smart and dedicated colleagues. For support of many kinds as this research project developed, I would especially like to thank Peter Boxall, Mat Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield, Tom Healy, Lindsay Smith, and Pam Thurschwell. It has been a particular pleasure to debate Smith and political economy in many extended conversations with Richard Adelman; I thank him especially for his careful reading of most of the following chapters (and look forward to his own forthcoming new book). I am lucky at Sussex to work alongside two gifted eighteenth-century scholars, Andrea Haslanger and Emma Newport, and with a series of skilled doctoral students, past and present: Mike Rowland, Leah Edens, Matthew McConkey, Holly Weston, and Beth Watson. I also thank the wonderful students on my final-year undergraduate course, 'Special Author: Mary Wollstonecraft' and its successor, 'Wollstonecraft and After': your questioning intelligence and engagement continue to be one of the best parts of my job. Special thanks to the brilliant Kristi Hickie, Erika Mancini, Anna Stavrianakis, and Suzanne Tatham, for sharing (and allowing me to share) so much over the years: thoughtfulness, insight, and laughter, huge doses of unwavering solidarity, and (it has to be said) occasional leading questions. Beyond Sussex, John Whale and Peter de Bolla have both been important mentors, for whose early support I remain grateful. I thank Pete, as well as Mary Poovey, for attending as keynote



*Acknowledgements*

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speakers a conference at Sussex in 2016 on ‘Writing Political Economy, 1750-1850’ organised by Richard Adelman and myself.

At Cambridge University Press, my thanks are due to Bethany Thomas and George Laver, for overseeing the book from proposal to print, and to series editor James Chandler. I also thank the Press’s two anonymous readers for their insightful comments on the full manuscript, responding to which has helped me to make this a better book than it would otherwise have been. Remaining shortcomings and errors are of course my own.

Last but in no way least, thanks and huge love to my family, including my parents and siblings, and Kathleen Hebden, for so much support. I ended the acknowledgements of my first book by thanking Ed Hebden for his love, sanity, patience, and reassurance, and our daughters Miranda and Anna for showing me what there is to know about love, joy, and pride. The same is still true, but more so, so many years later. This book is for you.

## Abbreviations

Frequently cited texts are referenced with the abbreviations below:

### Works of Mary Wollstonecraft

All references are to *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols (London: William Pickering, 1989).

<i>HMV</i>	<i>An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has Produced in Europe</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 6.
<i>Mary</i>	<i>Mary: A Fiction</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 1.
<i>SND</i>	<i>Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 6.
<i>VRM</i>	<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Man</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 5.
<i>VRW</i>	<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 5.
<i>Works</i>	<i>The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft</i> , ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols (London: William Pickering, 1989).
<i>WW</i>	<i>The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 1.

### Other

<i>AR</i>	<i>Analytical Review: or, History of Literature</i> (London, May 1788–Dec 1798).
<i>EPS</i>	Adam Smith, <i>Essays on Philosophical Subjects</i> , ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce (Oxford University Press, 1980).
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">www.oxforddnb.com</a> .
<i>Reflections</i>	Edmund Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , ed. Connor Cruise O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1986).

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<i>TMS</i>	Adam Smith, <i>The Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> , ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford University Press, 1976).
<i>WN</i>	Adam Smith, <i>An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i> , ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford University Press, 1979), 2 vols.