

## 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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## *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.

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## 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).

HMV	<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.
Mary	<i>Mary: A Fiction</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 1.
SND	<i>Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 6.
VRM	<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Man</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 5.
VRW	<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 5.
Works	<i>The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft</i> , ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols (London: William Pickering, 1989).
WW	<i>The Wrongs of Woman: Or, Maria</i> , in <i>Works</i> , vol 1.

### Other

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