

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

An Annotated Bibliography

Janet M. Todd

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
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Janet M. Todd

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Preface

In spite of the two centuries of interest in Wollstonecraft, this is the first comprehensive annotated bibliography of her works and criticism. It is designed both as a research tool for scholars and students and as a revelation of the quantity and variety of comment. It suggests the vagaries of Wollstonecraft's posthumous reputation and indicates the peaks and troughs of interest.

The bibliography includes works by Wollstonecraft, as well as most of the critical and biographical comment on her in English written between 1788 and 1975. Most book reviews are listed, except in cases where they evaluate studies of Wollstonecraft while making little reference to her. Editions and collections of Wollstonecraft's works are included only when they have original prefatory material. There are several foreign-language items, but the bibliography is by no means intended as inclusive in this area.

Books are listed under their authors' names; where the author is unknown, the book is listed under its title. If the comment on Wollstonecraft occurs in an essay within a longer work, the item is listed under the name of the author of the comment, not the name of the editor or compiler of the work. Where an edition of Wollstonecraft is published with an introduction, it is listed under the name of the introducer.

The bibliography is divided into three main sections. The first lists items from 1788 to 1799; the second those from 1800 to 1899, and the third those from 1900 to the present time. The choice of section depends on the publication date of the work used for annotation. A short section of addenda includes a few items either recently obtained or recently published.

In the eighteenth-century section, reviews and articles occur under the title of the journal in which they appear, since most of such items are anonymous. In the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sections, anonymous reviews continue to be

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listed under the titles of the journals, but signed items are placed under their authors' names.

The bibliography was compiled primarily at the Douglass and Alexander Libraries of Rutgers University and at the New York Public Library. Several outstanding items were discovered at the British Museum Library in London. Still others were obtained from various American libraries through the interlibrary loan services of Douglass College. I am indebted to Anne Brugh for her help in tracing many of these items.

The preparation of this bibliography has been advanced in many ways by the assistance and interest of others. First of all, I am very much indebted to Burton R. Pollin whose *Godwin Criticism: A Synoptic Bibliography* has been an example both daunting and encouraging. Many items in this bibliography refer to Wollstonecraft and in several cases, where I have not been able to trace the reference, I have listed the item with attribution to Pollin's work. The number following his name is the number of the item in *Godwin Criticism*. The critical introduction to Wollstonecraft first appeared in *British Studies Monitor*; I am grateful to Roger Howell, Jr. for his permission to reprint it here.

I owe thanks to Takako Shirai for the Japanese items; these are useful in suggesting the widespread interest in Wollstonecraft in recent years. I am grateful, also, to Gloria Cohn for typing the manuscript and to Catherine Dammeyer for proofreading much of it.

My main debt of gratitude is to Susan Riccio. She has contributed several items to the bibliography and found many more. She has actively participated in all stages of the compilation and has been a constant source of support in days of bibliographical dejection.

Critical Introduction

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.¹ Several eighteenth-century women before her, such as Mary Astell, "Sophia," and Catherine Macaulay, had written on women, their rights and their education, but Wollstonecraft fired a generation of women with her ideas in a way her predecessors had not. This was partly due to the time when she wrote, during the early part of the French Revolution, when many radical writers in England were discussing human rights and education, and so were preparing the public for Wollstonecraft's feminist ideas. It was also due to her welding of personal experience with theory, which gives conviction and passion to her work. It is not surprising, then, that her work and her life should both have attracted attention; indeed the life has exerted such a powerful compulsion that the majority of comments on Wollstonecraft, both in her own time and later, have been biographical.

LETTERS

The torrential quality of Wollstonecraft's life is most apparent in her letters. The life revealed in the letters is remarkably full, for the long agony of the Imlay relationship is recorded, often created, on paper, and even the satisfactory and finally marital relationship with Godwin proceeded largely in this way. We thus have a record that strikes us with an impact rarely made by a biography, an impact so great that undoubtedly Wollstonecraft's letters are among her greatest creative works.

The letters occur in many modern collections that frequently overlap. William Godwin first published Wollstonecraft's personal letters to Imlay in his *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman."*² These letters were reprinted a century later by C. Kegan Paul and, later still, by Roger Ingpen.³ In 1937, Benjamin P. Kurtz and Carrie C.

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Autrey printed letters from Wollstonecraft in *Four New Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams*.⁴ The letters of Wollstonecraft to Godwin occur in Godwin's work, in Ralph Wardle's biography, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography*, and in Wardle's *Godwin and Mary: Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft*, which prints some new letters and some previously published inaccurately by C. Kegan Paul in his *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*.⁵

Two other works have substantial numbers of Wollstonecraft letters. The first is W. Clark Durant's Supplement to his edition of Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft*; in this the letters are given in full and placed within the context of Wollstonecraft's life.⁶ The other is Kenneth Neill Cameron's *Shelley and His Circle*, an edition of manuscripts of the Shelley and Godwin-Wollstonecraft circles.⁷ The introductions and placings of the documents in this work are excellent, and indeed certain episodes of Wollstonecraft's life emerge more fully and more strikingly here than in the biographies, where they are treated summarily or submerged in the general welter of the life. An example is the friendship of Wollstonecraft with Henry Gabell recorded in the letters of Volume IV.

Other letters from Wollstonecraft are scattered over various volumes. Several of the most important collections have not yet been found, or, as in the case of the Fuseli letters, have presumably been destroyed. Most of the discovered letters are now easily available, but the number of works over which they range is a hindrance to their study. All students of Mary Wollstonecraft must therefore welcome Ralph Wardle's decision to edit a complete set of the letters.

WORKS

Wollstonecraft's first major polemical work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, has been reproduced in facsimile, with an introduction by Eleanor Louise Nicholes.⁸ The facsimile edition is of great importance since it copies a very scarce work, interesting for its own sake and for an understanding of its more famous successor, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In her introduction, Nicholes stresses the conceptual

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relationship of the two *Vindications*, and she briefly provides an historical framework useful for both works. She finds in Wollstonecraft's life an intellectual movement toward the Dissenting philosophy of Dr. Price with its emphasis on justice, democracy, and popular liberty. More specifically for the *Rights of Men*, she relates the controversy between Edmund Burke and Dr. Price, and emphasizes the relationship of Price's sermon to English rather than French revolutionary events, a relationship that Burke's rhetoric did much to obscure.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman is at present readily available in Norton library and Penguin editions.⁹ The Norton edition follows the text of 1891 by Mrs. Fawcett, although it has been corrected in places to agree with Wollstonecraft's revised text of 1792. There is a short introduction by Charles W. Hagelman, Jr., which chooses to concentrate mainly on *The Rights of Men*. What is most appealing for Hagelman in *The Rights of Woman* is not the originality of Wollstonecraft's ideas or the felicity of their expression, but the devotion to humanity and the concern for its well being. The Penguin introduction by Miriam Brody Kramnick sketches Wollstonecraft's life and briefly discusses her minor works. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is set in its political context of the 1790s and in its historical feminist context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main argument of the book is summarized, and Kramnick concludes that it is so comprehensive that one may say that all feminists, radical and conservative, who followed Wollstonecraft are her philosophic descendants. Several facsimile editions also exist of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and excerpts from it usually occur in feminist anthologies, for example, *Women's Liberation and Literature*, edited by Elaine Showalter, and *The Feminist Papers*, edited by Alice S. Rossi.¹⁰

Some useful facsimile editions of Wollstonecraft's less famous works have been issued by Garland Publishing, Inc.: *Mary, A Fiction, Posthumous Works*, edited by William Godwin, and *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*.¹¹ The introductions, which summarize Wollstonecraft's life and quote some modern critical opinions of the works, are by Gina Luria. Wollstonecraft's last work published in her lifetime,

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Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, has been reproduced by Centaur Press.¹² The introduction by Sylva Norman describes the *Letters* as the most objective and mature of Wollstonecraft's works. Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints has recently brought out *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*; the introduction by Janet M. Todd relates the history to other contemporary accounts of France and traces the influence on Wollstonecraft's thinking of the cataclysmic events of the later Revolution.¹³

Wollstonecraft's novels are now available in several editions. The most accessible one of *The Wrongs of Woman* is by Norton; its introduction by Moira Ferguson relates the work to Wollstonecraft's life and to the earlier *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, whose sequel it in many ways appears to be.¹⁴

The Emigrants, a novel usually attributed to Gilbert Imlay, Wollstonecraft's American lover, is given to Wollstonecraft by Robert R. Hare in his introduction to the facsimile reprint of the work.¹⁵ Hare bases much of his case on the similarity between *The Emigrants* and Wollstonecraft's autobiographical novel, *The Wrongs of Woman*, and he supports it by pointing out several stylistic habits and attitudes common in Wollstonecraft's other works. Hare further considers Wollstonecraft to be the author of *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, another work usually attributed to Imlay. This book, which shows little first-hand knowledge of America, is aimed at encouraging immigration and was written at a time when Wollstonecraft's brother, Charles, was planning to emigrate from England. P.M. Pénigault-Duhet, in her article "Du nouveau sur Mary Wollstonecraft; l'oeuvre littéraire de George Imlay," throws some doubt on Hare's thesis.¹⁶ In particular, she questions why Godwin in his *Memoirs* should not have alluded to his wife's authorship of the two books.

Both Hare and Pénigault-Duhet have some merit in their arguments, and the question of the authorship of the "Imlay" books must therefore remain open. Certainly it points to the need for much more investigation of the shifting literary,

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political, and amorous relationships of the expatriate circle in revolutionary France.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL COMMENT

The main known facts of Wollstonecraft's life are her wandering youth dominated by a weak, tyrannical father, her later care for her family and that of her friend, Fanny Blood, her struggle to earn an independent living, her association with the circle of Dr. Price, her period as governess to the nobility, authorship and the association with the radical thinkers of her publisher's circle, the episode with Fuseli, the period in revolutionary France, the relationship with the American, Imlay, by whom she had a child, the Scandinavian escape as Imlay's business representative, the suicide attempts after proofs of his infidelity, the marriage with Godwin, and the death in childbirth. Although Wollstonecraft's family situation in youth and her early attempts to earn an independent living are probably most formative for her feminist philosophy, it is the associations with Imlay and Godwin that have received most biographical comment. One reason is the visibility of these associations from her letters; another is the contemporary and later obsession with irregular liaisons, together with the desire to prove through their existence the rightness or wrongness of Wollstonecraft's unconventional philosophy.

The notoriety of Wollstonecraft and Godwin after their marriage resulted in several satires and diatribes, some of which have been studied by Burton R. Pollin and Robert E. Loomis. In "The Godwin's [sic] in *The Letters of Shahcoolen*," Loomis discusses an American work satirizing Wollstonecraft and Godwin.¹⁷ Written as a series of letters to discredit radical ideas and expose their harmful effects in America, this work aims primarily at Wollstonecraft, who is seen waging war against everything feminine. The attack is on Wollstonecraft's character more than her literary works, and it is noteworthy that the facts used must have come from Godwin's *Memoirs*, the earliest biography of Wollstonecraft and notorious in its time for its frankness concerning her unconventional relationships. *The Letters of Shahcoolen* (1802) has been reissued in

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facsimile with an introduction by Ben Harris McClary.¹⁸ In "A Federalist Farrago," Pollin includes federalist satire on Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and reveals how widespread was the hostility toward their views and public characters.¹⁹

An English opponent of Wollstonecraft is discussed in another article by Loomis: "The Turning Point in Pope's Reputation: A Dispute Which Preceded the Bowles-Byron Controversy."²⁰ This concerns J. Mathias, who in *The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Banks of the Thames* makes a resuscitated Pope praise the current government and attack its opponents, among whom is Mary Wollstonecraft. As in *The Letters of Shahcoolen*, there is proof in this work of the hostile reception of Godwin's *Memoirs*, called in a footnote "The Philosopher's unblushing account of his own Wife's amours, life, and conduct."

Inspired by Mathias, the Reverend Polwhele provided his own blast against Wollstonecraft in *The Unsex'd Females*, where he sees her death in childbirth almost as a judgment against her perverted femininity and against the philosophy of her life.²¹ Polwhele's work and the anti-Wollstonecraft tradition it inspired are the subjects of Janet M. Todd's article, "The Polwhelean Tradition and Richard Cobb."²² The article identifies a tradition stemming from Polwhele and having as its main twentieth-century exponents Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham (1947), who accuse Wollstonecraft of perverted sexuality, and Richard Cobb (1974), who accuses her of malevolence and social destructiveness.²³ Like Polwhele, these modern detractors seem to suggest Wollstonecraft's early death as a culmination of a perverted attempt to turn people from the decencies of life.

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there have been occasional essays on Wollstonecraft that have testified less to her notoriety than to her appeal. These have usually illuminated more through emotional insight than through factual research. George Eliot, whose reputed relationship with Chapman resembled Wollstonecraft's with Fuseli, chooses to discuss the work rather than the life in an article on Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller, written in 1855 and recently reprinted in *Essays of George Eliot*.²⁴ Eliot finds *The*

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Rights of Woman an eminently serious and moral work, and she emphasizes Wollstonecraft's understanding and her rather heavy rationalism. She quotes approvingly Wollstonecraft's opinion that men, horrified at the idea of an intelligence in women that would make them equal to men, are yet frequently subjected to the silly and ignorant women they approve. In addition, Eliot grasps and emphasizes Wollstonecraft's reiterated point, that the subjection of women is also the subjection of men. Unfortunately, Eliot does not continue her study, breaking off with a shrug about her "desultory material."

At the beginning of this century, another famous woman, the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, recorded her reaction to the life and works of Wollstonecraft.²⁵ Although her short article, reprinted in Margaret Mead's edition of her work, is marred by the restatement of clichéd opinions about Wollstonecraft's life, Benedict does communicate an enthusiasm for her subject. She sees Wollstonecraft as a crusader against privilege of all kinds, and she makes the common analogy between Wollstonecraft's hostile feelings toward her father and her later ones toward the unjustly privileged. The essay is of interest primarily for its revelation of the inspiration Wollstonecraft can be to other exceptional women.

The best of the short sketches by famous women testifying to Wollstonecraft's appeal is that by Virginia Woolf in *The Second Common Reader*.²⁶ In a few pages of assertions, she conveys the feeling rather than the facts of Wollstonecraft's experimental and thrusting life, and in the process she reveals her own enthusiasm for her subject. She transfixes her insights in memorable images, such as the much quoted one for the Imlay-Wollstonecraft relationship: "Tickling minnows he had hooked a dolphin," an image that conveys both the impression given by Wollstonecraft's letters and the ironic sympathy of Virginia Woolf.

Several recent articles treat in a more scholarly, less impressionistic way various aspects and events of Wollstonecraft's life. George Mills Harper aims to correct a careless observation of W. Clark Durant, an editor of Godwin's *Memoirs*, concerning the date of Wollstonecraft's residence

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with Thomas Taylor, the Platonist.²⁷ Harper quotes a favorable opinion of Taylor about Wollstonecraft, and in view of it wonders why Taylor should have parodied *The Rights of Woman* in his *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*. Elizabeth Nitchie concerns herself with identifying an early suitor of Wollstonecraft. She suggests Joshua Waterhouse, a fashionable clergyman, later turned recluse and miser.²⁸ In the obituaries after his murder in 1827, there is a mention of several letters of Wollstonecraft, now presumably lost. Nitchie suggests Waterhouse as the original of the unnamed gentleman, whom the heroine of *Mary* meets at a friend's house, a "man, past the meridian of life, of polished manners, and dazzling wit." Waterhouse may also have inspired the passages in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* concerning the misery of a woman in love with a man of whom her reason disapproves.

Wollstonecraft's association with Godwin is the subject of an article by Jean Detre in *Ms.*²⁹ This makes the point that Godwin held essentially sexist views, while admiring his wife's liberated character and ideas. For example, he distinguishes women from men by their lack of reasoning powers. At the same time, the article stresses the courage that both Wollstonecraft and Godwin showed in fighting prejudice against the unconventional in morals and manners. Detre's interest in Wollstonecraft and Godwin has led her to write a part-fictional and part-historical account of their relationship in *A Most Extraordinary Pair*.³⁰ Detre places beside the letters which Wollstonecraft and Godwin wrote to each other a journal which she imagines Wollstonecraft could have written during the same period.

Several books and articles treat Wollstonecraft within the context of a wider study and so usually retell the life to suit a thesis. D. L. Hobman in *Go Spin, You Jade: Studies in the Emancipation of Woman* (1957) adds to the usual simplified résumé of Wollstonecraft's life a brief discussion of *The Rights of Woman*, whose tone is seen as "curiously modern."³¹ Doris Mary Stenton in *The English Woman in History*, written in the same year as Hobman's book, aims to display the place women held and the influence they exerted within the changing pattern

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of English society.³² She gives an even more inaccurate account of Wollstonecraft's life than Hobman, and she concludes it by finding Wollstonecraft's work overrated, because she was not the first to draw attention to women's lack of political rights. She indirectly suggests Wollstonecraft's importance, however, when she criticizes the force of her writing, which Stenton considers antagonized those who would have been reached through moderation. Stenton seems to find distasteful the irregularity of Wollstonecraft's life, and indeed her treatment is a good example of the critic, who, responding with hostility to the life, is therefore hostile to the work, seen as either wrong or inadequate.

A very different attitude toward Wollstonecraft emerges from William Gaunt's book on Blake.³³ In this, Gaunt summarizes Wollstonecraft's life so that she can become the "Romantic Woman," the ideal of the Fuseli-Blake group. He speculates whether Blake might have had Wollstonecraft in mind when writing his poem "Mary," about a woman born "different" and so scorned and envied. Whether or not the inspiration of "Mary," Wollstonecraft is, according to Gaunt, the type of woman toward whom Blake's ideas pointed, "free, passionate, romantic, embracing experience."

Constance Rover discusses Wollstonecraft's life with reference to the lives of other feminist women; through her discussion, she intends to reveal the way in which the feminists were affected by their personal attachments and disappointments.³⁴ In the section on Wollstonecraft, she suggests that her associations with Godwin and Imlay augmented the connection in the public mind between feminism and immorality.

A study touching on Wollstonecraft's life but not primarily concerned with it is Burton R. Pollin's "Mary Hays on Women's Rights in the *Monthly Magazine*."³⁵ This treats Mary Hays, a friend and admirer of Wollstonecraft and, like her, a magazine reviewer. In 1796 she discussed Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written . . . in Sweden*. In this review she seems to have moved from her initial attitude of unqualified admiration so far as to criticize some phrases of Wollstonecraft, although she does describe her as a writer of considerable eminence. Mary Hays followed Wollstonecraft in arguing for