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Economy, And The European Future

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MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S COTTAGE ECONOMICS: PROPERTY, POLITICAL ECONOMY, AND THE EUROPEAN FUTURE

BY CATHERINE PACKHAM

A few pages from the end of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Mary Wollstonecraft recalls her return to England from an extended visit to Lisbon some years back. “[W]ith what delight,” she says,

did I not observe the poor man’s garden!—The homely palings and twining woodbine, with all the rustic contrivances of simple, unlettered taste, was a sight which relieved the eye that had wandered indignant from the stately palace to the pestiferous hovel, and turned from the awful contrast into itself to mourn the fate of man, and curse the arts of civilisation!¹

Homing in on the cottage garden, at one level Wollstonecraft’s image here is entirely conventional, as well as thoroughly political—despite (or perhaps because of) its celebration of a rustic aesthetic. As Sarah Lloyd has shown, the cottage was a favorite object of attention for a “heterogeneous mix” of “traditionalists, reformers, improvers and political radicals” in the last third of the eighteenth century, a focal point in debates about poverty and poor relief, enclosure, agricultural reforms, and social and economic change more generally.² An emblem to debate Britain’s national health, it was also used, as John Barrell has shown, by both sides in the post-French Revolution debates of the 1790s, whether to show (by critics of the wars with France) the deleterious effects of war, or (by loyalists) to contrast the supposedly flourishing state of the British working-classes with the poverty of the lower orders in France.³ The importance of the cottage for the late eighteenth-century picturesque has also been well-documented, but, locating her cottage in “a part of England well cultivated, but not very picturesque,” Wollstonecraft distinctly casts her object as of more than mere aesthetic interest (*VRM*, 56).⁴ Wollstonecraft’s cottage garden, with its simple contrivances and homey feel, suggests not the rundown and ramshackle cottage so favored by picturesque artists, but rather might appear to have much in common with the neat,

tidy, and well-regulated cottage celebrated by social reformers across the political spectrum. For these reformers—as Lloyd argues—such an image, combining virtuous independence with social submission, dignity with humility, and economic productivity with deference, apparently contained and resolved the seemingly escalating problems of poverty and political restlessness which marked the century’s end.⁵

But Wollstonecraft’s cottage scene—one of many which recur throughout her writings—is not a point of resolution; rather, it is a visual fragment briefly offered in the hurried, heated, and dense pages with which she reaches toward the *Vindication*’s conclusions, and in which she takes conventional discourses around the cottage and poverty in a different direction: specifically, to an engagement with the political economy defended by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, to which she is responding. The briefly glimpsed cottage scene provides an opening onto a very different kind of landscape, followed as it is by an excoriating account of the conditions of the unemployed working poor in a London which “boasts of its . . . commerce” while “Hell stalks abroad” (*VRM*, 58). For Wollstonecraft, the “misery” (*VRM*, 57) lurking in “pestilential corners” (*VRM*, 57) of the capital—the mechanics laid off by a “flux in trade” (*VRM*, 57), the “sick wretch” (*VRM*, 58), no longer able to “earn the sour bread of unremitting labour” (*VRM*, 58)—is a direct consequence of established regimes of political economy which Burke has justified on, for Wollstonecraft, entirely objectionable terms.⁶ As J. G. A. Pocock has shown, one of Burke’s central aims in his *Reflections* is to defend a political economy founded on labor, property, and the circulation of goods: a political economy whose “great wheel” is kept turning through, as Burke himself admits, the “servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestiferous occupations, to which by the social œconomy so many wretches are inevitably doomed.”⁷ Against Burke’s at best regretful acknowledgement of the impossibility of disturbing the “natural course of things,” Wollstonecraft’s brief glimpse of cottage life suggests a possible alternative, though whether that alternative is located in the future or in a pre-commercial past is unclear.⁸ Wollstonecraft’s cottage scene thus intervenes in a crucial moment in the reception of political economy, although it may itself be transitory, as she soon turns from the cottage to a different kind of property.⁹ “Why cannot large estates be divided into small farms?” she asks immediately after her recollection of the trailing woodbine of the cottage garden (*VRM*, 57). “Why might not the industrious peasant be allowed to steal a farm from the heath? This sight I have

seen;—the cow that supported the children grazed near the hut, and the cheerful poultry were fed by the chubby babes, who breathed a bracing air, far from the diseases and the vices of cities” (VRM, 57).

In this paper, I want to use Wollstonecraft’s persistent return, throughout her writings, to the cottage and the farm (an image to which the cottage is closely linked), to consider her complex relation to a particular line of mid- to late eighteenth-century economic thinking, a tradition in which the image of the rural cottage, homestead, or farm sheltering virtuous, independent citizens in a society characterized by moderate wealth and relative equality recurs. Wollstonecraft’s invocation of the small farm as an alternative to a society where—as the *Vindication* consistently argues—hereditary property and primogeniture enshrine inequality and suffocate liberty, might recall Commonwealth or republican traditions of political thought, but it can also be read within the context of debates about the future of commercial society, and the competing claims of an agricultural system, which ran throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Eighteenth-century critics have long been familiar with the dispute over luxury during this period as one means through which moral anxiety about emergent commercial society was expressed, but historians have recently placed the pro- and anti-commerce arguments associated with luxury in a broader and starker context, as part of nothing less than a century-long debate over “the political and economic feasibility” of the property system theorized in the seventeenth century by such figures as John Locke and Samuel von Pufendorf.¹¹ What was at stake reached beyond a moral critique of eighteenth-century Europe’s emergent consumerist society. Whilst modern economic growth founded on trade and manufacture produced wealth and luxury, that growth clearly entailed dramatic social and economic change, including rural depopulation and worrying levels of social inequality, and “the search was on” for a means of reconciling the new economic system with “positive answer[s] to questions of social stability, population growth, and the misery of the working classes.”¹² At the same time, and relatedly, others were preoccupied with the question of how to control economic growth and avoid social and economic catastrophe. Phrased at its most extreme, this was an insoluble problem: the sense that the modern world was “hurtling towards disaster” was not an eccentric or unusual viewpoint, and was held in some form by figures as varied as David Hume, the Physiocrat François Quesnay and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.¹³ The fear was that modern funding systems founded on credit would lead inexorably to state bankruptcies and political revolution, and there

was a widely-shared sense across Europe that political and economic stability could only be secured through a rebalancing of trade, industry, and agriculture; French Physiocracy was one expression of this view.¹⁴ The opposing claims of trade and agriculture as generators of wealth and economic growth, meanwhile, were considered at length in book 4 of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which can be understood as addressing, and attempting to resolve, this century-long debate, as a prelude to proposing Smith's new system of "natural liberty."¹⁵

In *The Wealth of Nations*'s fourth book, Smith carefully weighs the competing benefits of Colbert-esque mercantilism on the one hand, and a "system . . . of agriculture" on the other, an opposition stemming from François Fénelon's critique of Jean-Baptiste Colbert's economic policies in his immensely popular *Telemachus* (1699).¹⁶ For Fénelon, state support for trade and manufacture had led to the depopulation of the rural community, undermined the nation's tax base, and led to war and conquest in an effort to replenish state funds; however, luxury society could be reformed by boosting agriculture and restricting manufacture.¹⁷ As Pocock has shown, Smith took the established opposition between mercantilism and agriculture as alternative foundations for prosperity, and recast them in historical form, in a stadial account of "the natural progress of opulence" as progressing from the hunter-gatherer, through pastoralism and arable farming, to commercial society.¹⁸ Agriculture and its commercial development would thus lead on to a more fully developed manufacturing and trading society. For Smith, however, although this "natural progress" could be reconstructed as a matter of historical conjecture, European history had not followed precisely this course, but instead had bypassed the fully developed commercialization of agriculture to arrive prematurely at the current state of commercial modernity.

For Smith, although the "solid improvements of agriculture" could provide a valuable base for the more precarious benefits of commercialism, there could be no turning back the clock to an earlier stage of economic development.¹⁹ But, for a loosely connected group of figures in the last third of the century, Smith's analysis offered an alternative route for European economic and social development to that of competitive mercantilism, which was seen to set nations against each other in a race to acquire land and wealth, and locked them into a vicious circle of predatory trade practices, colonial expansion, war, and taxes.²⁰ Against what was seen as a wrong and destructive turn in European development, a range of thinkers, speaking from a variety of viewpoints, suggested that the economic development of agriculture,

used to establish a commercial society defined by moderate wealth and relative economic and social equality, held out the possibility of an alternative economic and political future for Europe.²¹ Associated in France with the Physiocrats, and with Anne Robert Jacques Turgot's attempt to encourage the commercial development of agriculture through bureaucratic reform during his ministry of 1774 to 1776, in Britain with Lord Shelburne and his circle (to which Richard Price, an important influence on Wollstonecraft, belonged), and also with the *représentant* group of reformers in Geneva, the most prominent practical, though short-lived, policy achievement informed by this thinking was the Eden Treaty of 1786, which sought to establish trade between Britain and France on the basis of mutual co-operation and interest. Through the Genevans Jacques Pierre Brissot and Étienne Clavière, who was French finance minister from March to June 1792, this thinking informed the pro-commerce economic position of the Girondists of the early French Revolution, the circle with which Wollstonecraft mixed during her stay in Paris in 1792–93. With its understanding of land and the natural resources of a nation as the proper foundation of wealth, writers in this tradition persistently linked agriculture with productivity, virtue, and independence, in contrast to (in an echo of Fénelon) an association of cities and seaports with luxury, commerce and vice. Situation, manners, and virtue were thus repeatedly linked, in thinking which yoked economic, social, and moral thought to envision a future society where enterprise, self-reliance, and virtue gave rise to moderate wealth and social equality. For thinkers in this tradition, the cottage or farm offered an iconic image of such a desirable future.

Such a society might, of course, be found in America as much as (or instead of) Europe: indeed, it was precisely in these terms that Wollstonecraft's early mentor, Price, hailed the outcome of the American Revolution. His *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* warned the new country against the dangers of foreign trade and luxury goods, and praised a social equality manifested in the lifestyle of the independent farmer or yeoman:

The happiest state of man is the middle state between the savage and the refined, or between the wild and the luxurious state. Such is the state of society in Connecticut and some others of the American provinces where the inhabitants consist, if I am rightly informed, of an independent and hardy yeomanry, all nearly on a level, trained to arms, instructed in their rights, cloathed in homespun, of simple manners, strangers to luxury, drawing plenty from the ground, and that plenty,

gathered easily by the hand of industry and giving rise to early marriages, a numerous progeny, length of days, and a rapid increase—the rich and the poor, the haughty grandee and the creeping sycophant, equally unknown—protected by laws which (being their own will) cannot oppress, and by an equal government which, wanting lucrative places, cannot create corrupt canvassings and ambitious intrigue.²²

Price's praise for an America defined by an industrious, independent, and frugal farmer class is strikingly similar to the picture offered in J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, published, to great popularity, only three years before Paine's *Observations*, at a time when there were few other published works describing life in the new American states.²³ Crèvecoeur celebrated America as "the most perfect society now existing in the world" where "man is free as he ought to be"; and as a "continent for men of middle stations" where his own situation, that of the "good substantial independent American farmer," represented an enviable "system of felicity," a freedom of action and thought founded specifically on the farmer's ownership of land, and the farm which expresses his dominion over it:

The instant I enter on my own land, the bright idea of property, of exclusive right, of independence, exalt my mind. Precious soil. . . [constitutes] the riches of the freeholder. . . . What should we American farmers be without the distinct possession of that soil? It feeds, it clothes, us: from it we draw even a great exuberancy, our best meat, our richest drink; the very honey of our bees comes from this privileged spot. No wonder we should thus cherish its possession: no wonder that so many Europeans, who have never been able to say that such portion of land was theirs, cross the Atlantic to realize that happiness! This formerly rude soil has been converted by my father into a pleasant farm, and, in return, it has established all our rights. On it is founded our rank, our freedom, our power, as citizens; our importance, as inhabitants of such a district . . . this is what may be called the true and the only philosophy of an American farmer.²⁴

The soil is the basis of what Crèvecoeur presents as a new and "better sort of wealth": not "gold and silver" but "cleared lands, cattle, good houses, good clothes, and an increase of people to enjoy them" (*L*, 55). This idealized picture of a prospering and equal society founded on cultivation of the land is repeatedly contrasted with a Europe defined by increasing "war, taxation, oppression and misery" (*L*, 64):

[I]s it not better to be possessed of . . . a few sheep-pastures; to live free and independent under the mildest government, in a healthy climate,

in a land of charity and benevolence; than to be wretched, as so many are in Europe, possessing nothing but their industry; tossed from one rough wave to another; engaged either in the most servile labours for the smallest pittance, or fettered with the links of the most irksome dependence, even without the hopes of rising? (*L*, 126)

“Charles-Town” (where the immoral pursuit of wealth through slave labor has produced idleness and luxuriousness) aside, Crèvecoeur is able to envisage an America where “the bright idea of property” is combined with self-interested labour to produce, in harmony with nature, plenty and prosperity, and a moderate, equal, free society (*L*, 27). Bemoaning the “extended ramifications of a commerce which ought to unite, but now convulses the world” (*L*, 7), Crèvecoeur offers his America as precisely an alternative to the “universal monarchy of trade, of industry, of riches, of power” (*L*, 197) or a Europe defined by “luxury, riches, and pleasures” (*L*, 63), by subordination and servility. As a land where the “spirit of commerce” is merely the “simple art of a reciprocal supply of wants,” Crèvecoeur’s America offers itself as precisely the alternative to a Europe enmired in war, trade, and luxury, which those who opposed European mercantilism sought (*L*, 112).

Crèvecoeur’s vision of an agrarian society of “easy subsistence and political felicity” is expressed through the genre of fictionalized letters and the literary aesthetic of the agricultural picturesque, in which the image of the settler house, or log cabin, figures strongly as an emblematic expression of the life and manners of the American farmer (*L*, 14). The self-built log house, constructed quickly using wood cleared from future farmland, later rebuilt and extended into a “convenient habitation” (*L*, 47), “neat and light” (*L*, 62), expresses at once ease of settlement, independence and sufficiency, improvement and comfort; it is the American equivalent of the cottage on a continent where that term was rarely used.²⁵ As in the tale of Andrew the Hebredian, whose story culminates in the building of a log cabin, the acquisition of property is a key moment in the narrative of the European immigrant; the house is the material symbol of having achieved settlement—the realization of the promise of “nature’s bounty” in material form—as well as of arriving at the “manly confidence which property confers” (*L*, 71). Equally, the abandonment of the “large framed house” in the chaos of the Revolutionary wars at the end of the text symbolizes the dissolution of the family and the American farmer’s way of life (*L*, 211). The log house is a prominent feature of the American landscape, a sign of a country

animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained. . . . If [a visitor] travels through our rural districts, he views not the hostile castle and the haughty mansion contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin. . . . a pleasing uniformity of decent competence appears throughout our habitations. The meanest of our log-houses is a dry and comfortable habitation. (*L*, 41)

Its very ubiquity is thus a sign of relative equality, of the absence of extremes of poverty and wealth, and of agricultural industry itself. Freightened with economic and social significance, the house also plays an important sentimental role in the text, staging scenes of hospitality and neighbourliness as well as family feeling. Indeed, as the letters themselves are a continuation of Farmer James's hospitality to the guest who has requested the correspondence, they re-enact the social feeling associated with and originating in the farmhouse to extend it, in textual form, beyond the material constraints of the house itself, both as a vehicle for the "simple citizen's self-representation" (*L*, 23), and as the means for a larger articulation of "the true and only philosophy of an American farmer" (*L*, 27).

Social feeling in and beyond the house is a constant preoccupation too in Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, a work, like Crèvecoeur's, of semi-fictionalized letters, in which, again as with Crèvecoeur, the nature of, and prospects for, European commercial society are addressed. Indeed, Wollstonecraft's text stages more than a thematic meeting with Crèvecoeur, for, visiting Hamburg on the home leg of her journey, she relates how she "generally dine[s] in company" with the "author of the American Farmer's Letters," with whom she exchanges "declamations against commerce"; Crèvecoeur, an acquaintance of Wollstonecraft's addressee, Gilbert Imlay, also recommended accommodation to Wollstonecraft in Altona, just outside Hamburg, rather than in Hamburg itself, which was "swarming" with merchants making vast profits from running the English naval blockade of France, which had been in place from mid-1793.²⁶ Indeed, Wollstonecraft's preoccupation, in her letters from Hamburg, with the ill-effects of commerce—to which "every thing must give way" (*SR*, 343)—is second only to her observations on the various accommodations of residents there, from the country houses of the "sordid accumulators" (*SR*, 340), to the domestic arrangements of the many emigrants from revolutionary

France, including Madame Lafayette, living uncomplainingly “up two pair of stairs” (SR, 341), on a second floor normally occupied by servants. Wollstonecraft’s attention to these domestic arrangements is a function of her self-presentation as an Enlightenment traveller on the “straight road of observation” (SR, 326), recording the smallest details of life and manners in the countries through which she passes, but it also operates at another, more symbolic level, in a text in which the manners of homes, the nature and extent of hospitality, and the presence, or lack, of domestic comfort is repeatedly linked to “my favourite subject of contemplation, the future improvement of the world” (SR, 338). From her first letter, thoughts “attached to the idea of home” (SR, 248), are “mingled with reflections respecting the state of society I had been contemplating” (SR, 248), and throughout her travels her attention is often taken by variants of the home, because these are amongst the signs of “the increasing . . . happiness of the kingdoms” through which she passes (SR, 346). These include the “wretched hut” (SR, 244) and the comfortable farmhouse; the merchant’s house near Gothenburg which, despite its “abortions of vanity” (SR, 257), will nevertheless have been useful in employing workers and improving their skill; or, less positively, the empty palaces and mansions which symbolize a hoped-for decline of aristocratic and courtly power (see SR, 328–29); and the “stupid kind of sadness” of the empty house of the Danish ambassador to London (SR, 285). Thus, when, in Christiana, Wollstonecraft exclaims against the ugly houses which have the “emphatical stamp of meanness, of poverty of conception, which only a commercial spirit could give,” it is to assert a tyranny of wealth and self-interest materialized in domestic form, which Crèvecoeur or his readers might understand (SR, 307).

But domestic arrangements and comforts carried social and economic significance not only for Wollstonecraft and Crèvecoeur. Wollstonecraft’s linking of Christiana’s ugly houses with the “spirit” of commerce in fact continues the well-established preoccupation of political economy with homes and what they might contain, traceable back to the first chapter of Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* and its examination of the contents of the cottage and domestic comforts of an ordinary “day-labourer.”²⁷ As John Crowley notes, political economists used the improvement of standards of living as “a measure of the progress of civilization”; more ambivalently, the tendency of trade to turn “Cottages into Palaces,” mooted in *Cato’s Letters* (1720–24) by the Commonwealth men John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, was one measure of a civic humanist opposition to the growth of

commerce in the debates of the early eighteenth century.²⁸ For Smith, the fundamental motor of economic activity is the pursuit of conveniences which are repeatedly identified as domestic: whether the household accoutrements of the laborer in *The Wealth of Nation's* opening chapter, or the dazzling contrivances viewed in the houses of the rich in the earlier *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.²⁹ Wollstonecraft's use of the evidence of the ugliness of the Christiana houses to reject as "absurd" the Smithian "argument from convenience" ("[w]ho would labour for wealth, if it were to procure nothing but conveniences?") is thus especially pointed (SR, 307). Wollstonecraft's account of the ugly houses as manifestations of a "mea[n] . . . commercial spirit," although at one level a critique of political economy by taste, is thus also, by taking the house as an interpretable sign, a continuation of political economy's own identification of the domestic as a site for gauging the extent of a measurable economic and social progress.

In Smith, the pursuit of "convenience" (also phrased as a desire for self-betterment) is a universal principle which propels economic activity across the classes. The laborer's cottage and the houses of the rich differ only, in this respect, in the degree to which convenience is attained, "convenience" thereby eclipsing the older attempt, in the luxury debate, to sustain an increasingly vexed distinction between necessities and luxuries. In this context, the cottage, for Wollstonecraft and others, emerges as an emblem of moderation in the "progress of civilization," situated between the primitivist fantasy of a return to a state of nature on the one hand, and the excesses of commercial culture on the other. But importantly it is also a site of removal from the demands of improvement and the continual pursuit of convenience as described by Smith, because the cottage has already achieved convenience and comfort at a perceivedly adequate level. The cottage certainly figures as such a statement of the possibility of sufficiency in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*:

[A]fter having been fatigued with the sight of insipid grandeur and the slavish ceremonies that with cumbrous pomp supplied the place of domestic affections, I have turned to some other scene to relieve my eye by resting it on the refreshing green every where scattered by nature. I have then viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station with, perhaps, merely a servant maid to take off her hands the servile part of the household business. I have seen her prepare herself and children, with only the luxury of cleanliness to receive her husband, who returning weary home in the evening found smiling babes and a clean hearth. My

heart has loitered in the midst of the group, and has even throbbed with sympathetic emotion, when the scraping of the well known foot has raised a pleasing tumult.

Whilst my benevolence has been gratified by contemplating this artless picture, I have thought that a couple of this description, equally necessary and independent of each other, because each fulfilled the respective duties of their station, possessed all that life could give.— Raised sufficiently above abject poverty not to be obliged to weigh the consequence of every farthing they spend, and having sufficient to prevent their attending to a frigid system of œconomy. . . . I declare, so vulgar are my conceptions, that I know not what is wanted to render this the happiest as well as the most respectable situation in the world. (*VRM*, 213)³⁰

Economic necessities are both acknowledged and transcended in this homely scene, where “having sufficient” releases the inhabitants from the obligation to “weigh . . . every farthing.” But, more than the site of economic sufficiency, of a middle state “above abject poverty” yet where the only luxury is cleanliness, this cottage scene stages the reversal of political economy’s colonization of the house as economic signifier, to discover alternative values there. Wollstonecraft here turns against a Smithian account of convenience as a principle of desire—a constant and internalized economic imperative—to refigure comfort as an affective state, offered through the emotional resources provided by each member of the couple for the other; thus, although the real assets in this scene are affective, rather than economic, it is attainment, rather than desire, which is the keynote. Here is a vision, an “artless picture,” capable of resisting a Smithian account of human nature impelled by constant pursuit of betterment, which finds in the image of moderate frugal life, and the mutual fulfillment of duty, sufficient resources for ease and provision themselves newly figured not as the rewards of labor, but as social comforts.

Wollstonecraft’s reconfiguration in this passage of a political economic discourse ultimately founded on possession and property can be seen as part of an engagement with the problem of property present in all her major works. Her assertion, in the *Short Residence*, her last published work, that the “adoration of property is the root of all evil” (*SR*, 325) parallels her attack on the “[s]ecurity of property” (*VRM*, 14) which her first *Vindication* identifies as the “selfish principle” (*VRM*, 15) on

which English liberty is founded; however, despite a critical attention to property throughout her career, and her admiration for the French radical Gracchus Babeuf, she never attacked property rights, as Babeuf and other contemporaries did.³¹ But, as Price had noted in his *Observations*, to link “dominion” with “property” is “trite,” and Wollstonecraft’s consideration of property arguably becomes more nuanced between her first *Vindication* and the *Short Residence*.³² The unequal distribution of property, identified as an originary cause of widely observable social inequalities, is certainly a prominent theme in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. Established cultures and practices around property, the text argues, suffocate the “fairest virtues” (*VRM*, 23) of benevolence, friendship, generosity, and charity, and the text as a whole offers a sustained opposition between property on the one hand and liberty and the rights of man on the other, attacking hereditary property and primogeniture, and identifying Burke as “the champion of property, the adorer of the golden image which power has set up” (*VRM*, 13). By “property,” Wollstonecraft admits, she must properly be understood as referring to the property of the rich, for the property of the poor man takes a different shape, in “the sweat of his brow” or his “nervous arms” (*VRM*, 15). The property of the poor, their labor, is thus of quite a different order from the castles of the rich—it does not, as with the rich, take material domestic form—and Wollstonecraft further argues that the freedom to benefit from the profits of such work is constantly compromised by and sacrificed to the impositions of the rich. Her example of the destruction of the poor farmer’s crops by the game-hunting lord exemplifies her account of a Britain unequally divided between a luxurious, propertied, and rapacious wealthy class and the industrious, suffering poor, an arrangement which Burke, who seems “to consider the poor only as the livestock of an estate,” naturalizes by precisely the figure of property itself: the social hierarchies entrenched in and represented by the landed estate (*VRM*, 17).

Wollstonecraft’s first *Vindication* thus locates in a foundational division of property the origins of society’s split between the rich and the exploited poor, whose consequences are played out in a myriad observable ways. If the cottage scene in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* envisages an escape from the oppressions of property culture, the earlier *Vindication* remains largely caught in a gothic-feudal landscape inherited from Burke, which is defined by the division of property. But Burke’s *Reflections*, in its eventual and belated acknowledgement (its regretful acceptance) of the costs to the poor of maintaining commercial society’s “great wheel of circulation,” in

fact promulgates—even if almost covertly—a quite different analysis of the founding differences between rich and poor, which belies the prominent Gothicism of much of its imagery and rhetoric: a difference founded not on property but, as in political economic discourse, on divisions of capital and labor.³³ Against this, as we have seen, Wollstonecraft offers a fleeting glimpse of the cottage garden, a sign of the possibility of the poor man's dignified, self-sufficient and independent working life, and a critique of the "Hell" of London's commercial landscape (*VRM*, 58). This incipient engagement with political economy in the final pages of her first major work is continued in her last, the *Short Residence*, where a more complex relation to commercial society is explored. That complex relation isn't simply theoretical or intellectual, but practical also: for all their "declamations against commerce" when they meet in Hamburg, both Wollstonecraft and Crèvecoeur had commercial motivations for being there (*SR*, 342). Wollstonecraft was in pursuit of a lost so-called treasure ship, connected to Imlay's importation of goods into revolutionary France; Crèvecoeur was overseeing his son's business activities which, centered on Hamburg, also highly likely involved the very war trade which Wollstonecraft so fiercely denounced.³⁴

Whilst her indictment of the war trade is unequivocal, elsewhere in *Short Residence* Wollstonecraft's accommodation with commerce is more nuanced. If she attacks war for sapping the "vitals" (*SR*, 254) of even neutral countries and is a fierce critic of the exploitation of national interests for mercantile profits (see *SR*, 344), she also repeatedly observes labor's capacity to embellish and improve existence, and notes the "advantages obtained by human industry" (*SR*, 288), about which she has "never . . . thought so deeply" (*SR*, 288). Her praise for the "enterprising spirit of commerce" (*SR*, 330), linked to the advances of knowledge, improvement and refinement, is an argument she might have learned from Hume or Smith, and her recognition that a nation's wealth is derived not from an influx of money or specie but from its labor or industry (see *SR*, 255) (an axiom which she uses to critique the war trade) is equally Smithian. This position leads her to take issue with Thomas Cooper's praise of America for allowing Europe to make its luxury goods (see *SR*, 255–56): in fact, she notes, the "reflection" (*SR*, 257) necessary to make such goods augments knowledge in a community, just as those working on the merchant's house near Gothenburg will have improved their skills even whilst working on a monument to vanity. A comparison with book production in this argument makes explicit an understanding of her own writing as a

contribution to knowledge, and folds herself into a narrative of the mental progress central to commercial advance. But there is another side to this narrative of progress in commercial society: her faith in the “future improvement” delivered by enterprise and labor is tested on her travels by the unappealing sights of the effects of industry: alum works near Christiana leave “an image of human industry in the shape of destruction” (SR, 303), and more broadly, she makes numerous observations against “the manner [commerce] is at present carried on” (SR, 304) and the “tricks of trade” (SR, 304), asserting that “little can be advanced in favour of a pursuit that wears out the most sacred principles of humanity and rectitude” (SR, 304). As in her observations of the “baleful effect of extensive speculations on the moral character,” the pursuit of self-interest, sanctioned by political economy and achieved through commerce, threatens to undermine “moral character” even whilst delivering material improvement (SR, 342).

The ambivalences of Wollstonecraft’s feelings about commerce are played out in *A Short Residence* through her attitude to the cottage and farm, which, as we have seen, are markers of an alternative to the least desirable forms of commercial society in her writings from the first *Vindication* onwards. In *A Short Residence*, their presence in the Scandinavian landscape transforms emblems already familiar to her readers from discourses on British poverty and rural distress through the text’s larger questioning of the economic and moral fate of European commercial society. In his *Letters*, Crèvecoeur had briefly addressed how a very different American landscape was viewed by a European arrival: a prospect not of the “hostile castle and the haughty mansion contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin” but of “a pleasing uniformity of decent competence” which “appears throughout our habitations” (L, 41). Although Crèvecoeur suggests the “difficulty” (L, 40) which “consists in the manner of viewing so extensive a scene” (L, 40), the landscape’s “pleasing uniformity” (L, 41) evidently contributes to the resolution of that difficulty. In *A Short Residence*, Wollstonecraft also negotiates the aesthetic question of finding a proper relation to her object in the text—of placing herself in relation to prospects of and for commercial society; and she resolves this problem not by excluding herself from the scene but by conveying it precisely as through her eyes and sentiments. In her prefatory remarks to the text, Wollstonecraft apologises for the frequent intrusion of the “little hero of each tale” into her travel narrative (SR, 241). But, she says, by excluding the “little hero,” her style becomes stiff: “I could not give a just description of what I saw, but by relating the effect different objects

had produced on my mind and feelings" (*SR*, 241). This assertion of the presence of herself as "the little hero" gives a subjective turn to the Enlightenment traveller's "straight road of observation," to assert a form of judgment founded in personal taste as a means to measure the attractions of civilization in less or more advanced states (*SR*, 326). Thus what might appear as mere aesthetic objections, in line with her self-presentation as a writer of "desultory letters" (*SR*, 241) responsive merely to the aesthetic surfaces of the countries through which she travels, in fact constitute assertions of a more appealing alternative for human civilization than one in which "every thing must give way" (*SR*, 343) to commerce and the pursuit of wealth, the "tyranny" of which she elsewhere warns America and England (*SR*, 309). It is this which lies behind her rejection of political economy's argument from convenience, which sidelines morality and taste by seeing human nature as motivated by nothing other than self-interest, rather than being "moral from principle" (*SR*, 307). Correspondingly, her initial disappointment that the canal works at Trollhättan have not immediately "warmed the fancy" with a sublime prospect doesn't manifest a desire that economic progress simply provides objects for aesthetic consumption, but rather that human industry appeals to and corresponds with moralized taste (*SR*, 316). And it is this form of judgment, informed by the possibilities for human improvement offered by commercial society, but alert to its shortcomings, which Wollstonecraft brings to the objects of her observation, including the cottage, on her travels.

The various homes, cottages, farms, and otherwise which Wollstonecraft encounters on the road in Scandinavia are caught up in a narrative of economic improvement to which Wollstonecraft herself has unresolved and conflicting feelings; more precisely, the cottage and farm as observed objects on her travels enable that narrative of economic improvement to be submitted to the test of moral feeling. On the one hand, the primitive, even primeval, dwellings seen in northern Sweden—the "scattered huts . . . [which] stand shivering on the naked rocks" (*SR*, 253); the "farm houses, in which only poverty resided" (*SR*, 262), which seemed like the "first dwelling of man" (*SR*, 263)—are unproblematically read as signs of the need for cultivation and progress in a place where the "current of life seemed congealed at the source" (*SR*, 262). The independent and virtuous farmers of northern Norway, on the other hand, might exemplify what such progress might achieve: relative social equality and political freedom founded on agricultural prosperity, as an alternative to mercantile capitalism. Their distance from Danish rule means they enjoy, if not

formal freedom, the liberty of a loosely enforced law, where there is no viceroy to “fatten his dependants with the fruit of their labour” (SR, 272); equally, the division of most of the land into small farms (a point which recalls her call for precisely that in her first *Vindication*), and the customary division of inherited property amongst all children, also prevents the accumulation of property which would “destroy the balance of liberty” (SR, 273). These northern farmers thus represent the apparent embodiment of what Wollstonecraft sought in her own calls to divide estates “into small farms”—but at the same time, as Wollstonecraft herself admits, they hover on the mythical (VRM, 57). Unlike much in the narrative, Wollstonecraft relies on the reports of others in her account of them, prevented by the advancing season from visiting them herself; the description she received of them, she notes, “carried me back to the fables of the golden age: independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of mind, without depravity of heart; with ‘ever smiling liberty” (SR, 308). This account “seems to have been sketched by a fairy pencil” (SR, 309) which, whilst welcomed by her imagination, her reason questions—as indeed, a recent revolt by the farmers over taxes would suggest (see SR, 305). Here the descriptive reportage of the Enlightenment traveller wavers at a vision of a possible future state to come, a desirable destination on the road to improvement, in which she wants to believe, but which also appears locked in a past golden age which she suspects never was. At once hurried forward by fancy, and dragged back by reason, this is a vision which both immobilizes the traveller and ruptures a narrative previously defined by a double forward projectory: both the geographical progress of the traveller and her optimism in the prospects of future human improvement.

However fleetingly, the farmers of northern Norway sketched the possibility of political liberty and economic prosperity without moral compromise or loss of independence. Such questions are also given a personal turn—brought home to herself—as Wollstonecraft reflects more than once on where she herself might prefer to live: whether in country, town or both (see SR, 256); or in the small towns near Hamburg (see SR, 335). Reflecting on the likely similarity of the “wilds of Norway” to America, Wollstonecraft finds herself drawn by their “romantic views” and “simplicity of manners,” but reflects that

nothing so soon wearies out the feelings as unmarked simplicity. I am, therefore, half convinced, that I could not live very comfortably exiled from the countries where mankind are so much further advanced in knowledge. . . . Even now I begin to long to hear what you are doing

in England and France. My thoughts fly from this wilderness to the polished circles of the world, till recollecting its vices and follies, I bury myself in the woods, but find it necessary to emerge again, that I may not lose sight of the wisdom and virtue which exalts my nature. (SR, 289)

The question of how Wollstonecraft might accommodate herself in and with commercial society resists final settlement, leaving a restless “little hero” undecided between the competing attractions of “woods” and “polished circles.” The cottage offers a seductive midpoint between these two extremes, and again, as with the “returning footsteps” passage in the second *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft more than once attempts imaginative participation in cottage life:

I passed by a little car loaded with rye, that presented, for the pencil and heart, the sweetest picture of a harvest home I had ever beheld! A little girl was mounted a straddle on a shaggy horse, brandishing a stick over its head; the father was walking at the side of the car with a child in his arms, who must have come to meet him with tottering steps . . . and a boy, just above petticoats, was labouring hard, with a fork, behind, to keep the sheaves from falling.

My eyes followed them to the cottage, and an involuntary sigh whispered to my heart, that I envied the mother, much as I dislike cooking, who was preparing their pottage. I was returning to my babe, who may never experience a father’s care or tenderness. The bosom that nurtured her, heaved with a pang at the thought which only an unhappy mother could feel. (SR, 315)

As in the second *Vindication*, the cottage provides a stage for a happy family group’s enactment of social roles which, defined by the activities of bringing home the harvest or cooking, are seemingly in harmony with nature.³⁵ Such cottage harmonies are also encountered in an earlier letter, when “rambling through a forest near Tønsberg,” Wollstonecraft encounters a woodman’s cottage “sheltered by the forest, noble pines spreading their branches over the roof, and before the door a cow, goat, nag and children . . . equally content with their lot” (SR, 308). In both of these passages, the attractions of cottage life lie at least partially in their image of a social unit, the possibility they offer of rectifying the alienation from the social body which the *Short Residence* often articulates. The affective pull of the cottage, which persists even against Wollstonecraft’s knowledge of the weary nature of simplicity, or of her dislike of cooking, is a reminder that any solution it offers to the dilemmas of “improvement” must address not only economic improvement but personal happiness also: the cottage must meet and pass the test of feeling.

But such sentimental cottage scenes, reminiscent as they are of swathes of popular visual images of rural life produced at the end of the eighteenth century, in fact work to suggest Wollstonecraft's distance from the rural contentment that they signify. In the woodman's cottage, the figures of children and animals remain at a remove from Wollstonecraft, their role as distanced objects of vision emphasized by the suggestion of their aesthetic arrangement within the forest, with foreground figures grouped against the forest backdrop, and the whole unified by the tone of contentment; indeed, the scene as a whole might recall one of Thomas Gainsborough's popular cottage door scenes painted in the 1770s and 1780s, in which the family group viewed outside the woodland cottage was repeatedly depicted.³⁶ The "sweetest picture of the harvest home," on the other hand, refocuses the aesthetic distancing of the woodman's cottage to "bring the scene home" to its viewer, now seen through the lens of the "[p]rivate business and cares" which, as she will admit in the appendix, "have frequently absorbed me" to make her insensible "to present objects" (SR, 346). If the reports of the northern farmers, sketched by a fairy pencil, offered a beguiling but ultimately unbelievable vision of the political happiness of independent, virtuous, modest existence capable of opposing a rising mercantile culture of wealth accumulation, these cottage scenes test the possibility of personal happiness in the apparent idyll of cottage life. But if the cottage for Gainsborough operates as, according to Barrell, a fantasy of retreat from participation in commercial society, or enables, for conservative social commentators like Hannah More, the reproduction of traditional gender roles and division of labor within the family unit, the cottage for Wollstonecraft ultimately acquires a negative significance as a blueprint of what is no longer possible. And it is the desire for self-betterment, familiar from Smithian political economy, though appearing here in somewhat different shape, which makes it so. The apparent contentment of the woodcutter's cottage, Wollstonecraft reflects, is in fact secured by an ignorance at odds with the imperative towards improvement innate in human nature itself. Picturing herself in such rural settings, she realizes that her "fancy" all too readily joins the "advantages of cultivation with the interesting sincerity of innocence, forgetting the lassitude that ignorance will produce" (SR, 259). In fact, the "inertia of reason" (SR, 284) such scenes suggest is more akin to "Rousseau's golden age of stupidity" (SR, 288), a state in which the natural process of the "unfolding" (SR, 288) of man's faculties ensures he cannot remain. The contentment of cottage life is only obtainable through an ignorance which the capacities of human nature itself are constituted to counter. However compelling

a prospect the cottage scene offers, then, it emerges as a contradiction: an emblem of the possibility of withdrawal from the pursuit of progress and improvement on which human nature itself insists. It is thus a scene from which the informed viewer, and especially one committed to human improvement, is always exiled.

Wollstonecraft's stylistic decision to address the problems of the economic future—the “future improvement of the world” (SR, 294)—through the “effect different objects had produced on my mind and feelings” (SR, 241) insists that prospects for advancing civilization are not separable from questions of personal happiness. But this overwriting of the problems of the “little hero” (SR, 241) with the “present state” (SR, 346) of European improvement places pressure on the emblem of the cottage which, for other writers, exemplifies the happy state of independence, moderate wealth and social equality. If for them the cottage or farm are emblems of domestic comfort and virtuous independence from commercial society, for Wollstonecraft the cottage, with its “unconscious ignorance” (SR, 288) finally represents an impediment to the development of mind ultimately necessary to counter the mean “commercial spirit” (SR, 307) of the Christiana houses and the fungal growth of commercial self-interest all too evident on Wollstonecraft's travels. It is the cultivation of mind and taste, finally, which offers the possibility of countering mercantile culture; that same mind and taste also offer the only way of sustaining the social relations and friendship which provide personal happiness, Wollstonecraft concludes, in a parallel meditation informed by the slow collapse of her relations with Imlay (see SR, 299). If the cultivated mind finally prohibits the cottage as a destination for the “little hero,” even while it is being pointed out as an object of taste, this only demonstrates taste's potential for flexible self-critique: the taste which is capable of critiquing political economy can also critique its own preferred objects.

This insistence on mind and taste as a solution on both these fronts—a solution which unites personal improvement and the future improvement of the world—marks Wollstonecraft's difference from the tradition of economic thinking which, I have argued, nevertheless informs her writing. Her commitment to the development of mind, which ensures that for Wollstonecraft the cottage represents a discursive cul-de-sac in one working out of the cottage as an economic ideal, marks a rupture from a tradition of economic thinking where the cottage or farmstead symbolizes an alternative to a European future of mercantile capitalism. Anticipating the position of later anti-economist Romantic writers, her insistence on mind and taste promises, at best, to unite personal improvement with the future improvement of the

world, as well as to unleash the subjective resources of the “little hero” as the foundation for a critique of commercial society, albeit from a subject radically dislocated from it.³⁷ But if the development of mind means a turn away from the cottage, it also risks withdrawing from the possibility of imagining the specific shape of the economic future of Europe, and the world, for which the cottage had been an emblem. If the cottage finally fails the test of improved moral feeling, Wollstonecraft’s “little hero” remains unhoused.

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NOTES

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vol., ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1989), 5:56–57. Hereafter abbreviated VRM and cited parenthetically by page number.

² Sarah Lloyd, “Cottage Conversations: Poverty and Manly Independence in Eighteenth-Century England”, *Past and Present* 184.1 (2004): 69. The term “cottage” appeared in the title of a publication less than once a year pre-1780; however, between 1780 and 1800 more than 100 publications included the word. See John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001), 216.

³ See John Barrell, “Cottage Politics,” in *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 210–46.

⁴ For work on the cottage and the picturesque, see Barrell, *The Dark Side of The Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980); Barrell, “Cottage Politics”; Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1860* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986); “The Simple Life: Cottages and Gainsborough’s Cottage Doors,” in *Land, Nation and Culture, 1740–1840*, ed. Peter de Bolla, Nigel Leask, and David Simpson (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 37–62.

⁵ The cottage is a key site for the promulgation of such values in such works as Hannah More’s cheap repository tracts, including, for instance, her *The Cottage Cook* (J. Marshall: London, 1796). William Cobbett’s *Cottage Economy* (1821) suggests that the cottage retained an attraction for social reformers and commentators well into the nineteenth century.

⁶ Wollstonecraft’s objections to the established “commercial system” are evident in her reviews too (*Analytical Review* 13, in *Works*, 7:442). For example: “Mistaken, indeed . . . must be principles of that commercial system, whose wheels are oiled by infant sweat, and supine the government that allows any body of men to enrich themselves by preying on the vitals, physical and moral, of the rising generation!—These things ought to be considered” (*Analytical Review* 13, in *Works*, 7:442). Or: “A spirit is abroad to break the chains that have hitherto eaten into the human soul, which bids fair to mould the body-politic of Europe in a more proportional form . . . than has yet been seen on earth” (*Analytical Review* 13, in *Works*, 7:441).

⁷ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O’Brien (London: Penguin, 1986), 271. See J. G. A. Pocock, “The Political Economy of Burke’s analysis of the French Revolution,” in *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985).

⁸ Burke, 271.

⁹ On the highly politicized debates over political economy in the 1790s, see Emma Rothschild, "Adam Smith and Conservative Economics," *Economic History Review* 45.1 (1992): 74–96.

¹⁰ For Wollstonecraft's relationship to the Commonwealth tradition, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, "Mary Wollstonecraft: Eighteenth-Century Commonwealth Woman," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989): 95–115. For the republican critique of luxury as sacrificing the countryside for the city, see Istvan Hont, "The early Enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), 377–418.

¹¹ Hont, "Commerce and luxury," 381. On the luxury debate, see John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977); compare Pocock's account of a debate between the ancients (who held an agrarian ideal of economically independent, virtuous freeholders) and the moderns (pro-commerce), in *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), 462–67.

¹² Hont, "Commerce and luxury," 381.

¹³ Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 192. On the debate in France between commercial and agricultural systems in the wake of the Seven Years War defeat, see Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 46–50.

¹⁴ See Sonenscher, *Deluge*, 196–97 and 254–55.

¹⁵ Adam Smith, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vol., ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 2:687.

¹⁶ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 2:428. Smith also presents Physiocracy as an over-reaction to Colbertism. See Hont, "Commerce and luxury," 418.

¹⁷ See Hont, "Commerce and luxury," 384–85.

¹⁸ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 499.

¹⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 2:427.

²⁰ For Smith's weighing of the strengths and weaknesses of agriculture and manufacture, see Hont, "The rich country-poor country' debate in Scottish classical political economy," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 271–315, esp. 304–5.

²¹ For a full elaboration of this thesis, see Whatmore, *Against War and Empire: Geneva, Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012); see also Sonenscher, *Deluge*, 196–98.

²² Richard Price, "Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution" in *Richard Price: Political Writings*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 145. For Price's links to Ann-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Lord Shelburne, and the Comte de Mirabeau, see Whatmore, 195–97. For the context of "Observations," see Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 260–83.

²³ Although there is no evidence that Price knew J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's work (there is no mention of Crèvecoeur in Price's correspondence), the *Letters* were immensely popular, were reviewed in the periodical press, and constituted a rare source of information about life in America: all factors which make it likely that Price was familiar with them.

²⁴Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 41, 57, 39, 25, 27. Hereafter abbreviated *L* and cited parenthetically by page number.

²⁵As Crowley writes in *The Invention of Comfort*, “[T]he term cottage nearly passed out of usage in colonial America, although most American households lived in houses that looked like cottages” (79). For the building of log-houses, which could be constructed by two people in less than a week, see Crowley, 107.

²⁶Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, in *Works*, 6:341–42. Hereafter abbreviated *SR* and cited parenthetically by page number. Richard Holmes’s edition of *A Short Residence* (London: Penguin, 1987) misidentifies this figure as John Dickinson, author of *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767–68) but there is no mention in Dickinson’s biography of any visit to Europe at this time. By contrast, Crèvecoeur is in Altona from May 1795 to spring 1796. See Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur: The Life of An American Farmer* (New York: Viking, 1987), 188–89.

²⁷Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 1:22. On political economy and domesticity, see Catherine Packham, “Domesticity, Objects and Idleness: Mary Wollstonecraft and Political Economy,” *Women’s Writing* 19.4 (2012): 544–62. Smith’s account of the laborer’s possessions in fact derives from John Locke.

²⁸Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, 160. On *Cato’s Letters* and the civic humanist and republican opposition to commerce, see Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 467–77.

²⁹See Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 181–83.

³⁰The hearth, as well as the man’s homecoming to the wife and children, including in cottage door scenes, are both frequent tropes in cottage literature and its sexual politics. See Lloyd, “Cottage Conversations,” 78, 10.

³¹On radicalism and property rights, see Iain Hampsher-Monk, “British Radicalism and the anti-Jacobins,” in *Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, 660–687; on Gracchus Babeuf and property, see Sonenscher, “Property, Community and Citizenship,” in *Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, 465–94. On Wollstonecraft and Babeuf, see Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 173, 289.

³²Price, “Observations,” 144.

³³Burke, 271.

³⁴According to Crèvecoeur’s biographers, his eldest son Ally worked for an American importer at Le Havre (the main port for receiving goods via Hamburg) in September and October 1793, before going to Hamburg, where he was soon thriving sufficiently to both support himself and send money back to his family in France. See Allen and Asselineau, 178. For Gilbert Imlay’s role in the French import/export business centred on Le Havre (where he was based from early November 1793), for the lost ship, and for Wollstonecraft’s active involvement in Imlay’s business plans, see Wil Verhoeven, *Gilbert Imlay: Citizen of the World* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 159–201.

³⁵Lloyd discusses the cottage’s association with conservative gender roles within the family, for writers such as More, in “Cottage Conversations,” 78–79.

³⁶On Gainsborough’s cottage homecoming scenes, see Barrell, “Cottage Politics,” 210–14; and Bermingham, “The Simple Life,” 53–56.

³⁷For critiques of political economy by later Romantic writers, see Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of “Culture”* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).