The Women's Print History Project

Wollstonecraft, Revisited, *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*

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Moffatt, Kate, and Kandice Sharren, hosts. "Wollstonecraft, Revisited." *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, Season 3, Episode 2, 3 August 2022, https://womensprinthistoryproject.com/blog/post/110.

PDF Edited: 22 April 2024

This podcast draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Digital Humanities Innovation Lab at Simon Fraser University.

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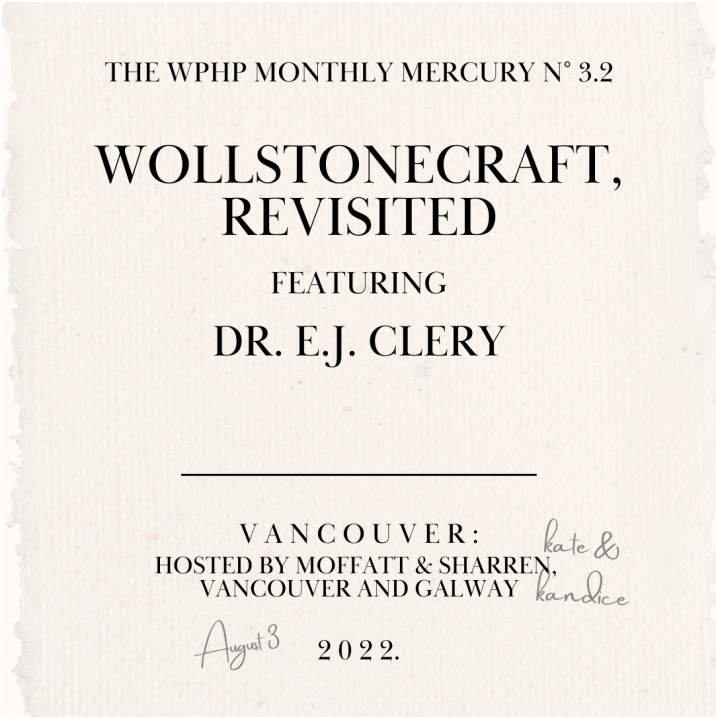
Wollstonecraft, Revisited

Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren



If you've ever taken an undergraduate English class on the Romantic period, you have probably encountered Mary Wollstonecraft, best known as the author of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)*. A widely read and controversial writer of political treatises, fiction, travel writing, and other works during her lifetime, she has been variously vilified and mythologized since her death in childbirth in 1797, and has long been a staple in the literary canon. But can we ever *really* know Wollstonecraft?

In the newest episode of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, hosts Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren are joined by Professor E.J. Clery, General Editor of a new edition of *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press. We consider not only her canonical works and her reputation as a philosophical "powerhouse," as she is so often thought of, but also how myth can write historical figures larger than life—and as a result, sometimes obscure their lived reality. We delve into her life, both the highs and the lows, and how thinking about the ways in which many of the issues that afflicted Wollstonecraft, like precarious employment, labour, and challenges to women's rights, are present in her writing. We think about how considering these challenges both for their own sake, and within the framework of her philosophy, can serve to humanize this massively influential Romantic figure.

Guest

E.J. Clery is Chair Professor of English Literature at Uppsala University. Recent publications include *Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister*, (Biteback Press, 2017), and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest and Economic Crisis* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), winner of the British Academy's Rose Mary Crawshay Prize. Research for these publications was supported by a Leverhulme Trust major fellowship. She is currently working on *A Very Short Introduction to Mary Wollstonecraf*t, a new paperback edition of Wollstonecraft's fictions, and, as General Editor, the new *Collected Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

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Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft (person)
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Imlay, Gilbert (person)
Godwin, William (person)
A Vindication of the Rights of Men (title)
An historical and moral view of the origin and progress of the French revolution (title)
Joseph Johnson (firm)
Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (title)
Maria: or, the Wrongs of Woman (title)
Barbauld, Anna Letitia (person)
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00:00:00	♫	[music playing]
00:00:09	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Hello and welcome to the third season of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*. This is the podcast for *The Women's Print History Project*, a bibliographic database that collects information about women and book production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My name is Kate Moffatt—
00:00:25	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	and I'm Kandice Sharren—
00:00:26	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And we are long-time editors of the WPHP and the hosts of this podcast. Join us the last Wednesday of every month this season as we interview more brilliant scholars, take a trip across the Atlantic for our first-ever live and in-person episode, and, as always, dive into the ins-and-outs—and sideways-and-upside-downs!—of working on women in print.
00:00:49	♫	[music playing]
00:00:57	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Mary Wollstonecraft is often remembered as a proto-feminist philosopher, most well-known for her 1792 *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. But she also wrote in a wide range of other genres, including fiction, travel writing, and education, and in them, took up the ideas that were central to her philosophical and political work. "How often have I heard," said Jemima, interrupting her narrative, "in conversation, and read in books, that every person willing to work may find employment?"
00:01:27	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	"It is the vague assertion, I believe, of insensible indolence, when it relates to men; but, with respect to women, I am sure of its fallacy, unless they will submit to the most menial bodily labour; and even to be employed at hard labour is out of the reach of many, whose reputation misfortune or folly has tainted. How writers, professing to be friends to freedom, and the improvement of morals, can assert that poverty is no evil, I cannot imagine."
00:01:59	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	This passage comes from Mary Wollstonecraft's incomplete fragment, *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria*, and ties very neatly into what we get into in our episode today, where we think not only about Wollstonecraft's work but also about her life and her struggles—including the ways that the two are connected when you think about issues of precarious employment and labour, and challenges to women's rights. Born in Spitalfields in 1759, Wollstonecraft was the second of seven children in a household that exposed her to the gendered violence she would later rail against in her writing.

00:02:32	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	In addition to his physical abuse of her mother, Wollstonecraft's father squandered the family fortune. At the age of nineteen, Wollstonecraft left home to work as a lady's companion; but, as a single woman, she struggled to earn a living. The girls' school she established at Newington Green failed within a few years, leading her to pursue work as a governess before finally turning to writing with the support of publisher Joseph Johnson.
00:02:58	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And this is where the WPHP comes in: including American reprints of Wollstonecraft's work, the WPHP includes 45 editions that list Wollstonecraft as an author, in genres ranging from Education and Juvenile Literature to Fiction to Political Writing to Travel Memoirs, all of which were first published in the final decade of her life. What the WPHP does not capture is Wollstonecraft's work as a periodical writer; she was also a regular contributor to Johnson's monthly periodical, *The Analytical Review*.
00:03:30	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	The first full edition of Wollstonecraft's works is Marilyn Butler and Janet Todd's *Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* published by Routledge in 1989, which, as our interview today will elucidate, was a crucial work for establishing Wollstonecraft as the pillar she is in so many undergraduate Romanticism courses, and in scholarship more generally. The kinds of work and research made possible by this prior edition means Wollstonecraft studies, and how we read and understand her works, has shifted—a new edition that re-situates, reimagines, and restructures her works can build upon those original efforts.
00:04:06	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	This month, we sat down to talk to the General Editor for just such a new edition, Professor Emma Clery, to talk about Wollstonecraft's life and career, as well as why both still resonate today. The longer we talked, the more the resonances became clear; so just to include a quick content warning for this episode, the conversation took place in the days after Roe v. Wade was overturned, and in it, we touch on domestic, physical and sexual harrassment and abuse as well as suicide and self-induced abortion.
00:04:42	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	E.J. Clery is Chair Professor of English Literature at Uppsala University. Recent publications include *Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister* (from Biteback Press, 2017), and *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest and Economic Crisis* (from Cambridge University Press, 2017), winner of the British Academy's Rose Mary Crawshay Prize.

00:05:05	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Research for these publications was supported by a Leverhulme Trust major fellowship. She is currently working on *A Very Short Introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft*, a new paperback edition of Wollstonecraft's fictions, and, as General Editor, the new *Collected Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press.
00:05:24	🎵	[music playing]
00:05:36	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Ok, cool. Are we ready to get going? Are we good to start?
00:05:37	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	I think we're ready to get going.
00:05:39	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	All right, perfect. So thank you so much, Emma, for joining us today. We are so excited to talk to you. And I'm going to start us off with the basics. Can you tell us who was Mary Wollstonecraft? What did her life and her literary career look like?
00:05:55	Emma Clery (guest)	Well, going back to the very basics, she was born in 1759. She died in 1797, at the age of 38, after giving birth to her second daughter, Mary, who survived and went on to Mary, the poet, Shelly, and to write the novel *Frankenstein*. This is the way a lot of people first hear about Mary Wollstonecraft. Everyone with an interest in feminist ideas or the politics of the period of the French Revolution, though, has probably heard of her in other contexts.
00:06:25	Emma Clery (guest)	She's often referred to as the founder of modern feminism. The work that made her famous, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, is known globally. It's taught on university and school curriculums, in a variety of disciplines. That's one of the interesting things about her: she's studied within women's studies, gender studies, political science, philosophy, history, and of course English literature.
00:06:53	Emma Clery (guest)	Popular biographies appear every few years. Readers are always fascinated by her dramatic life story, which includes an unhappy childhood in a home shadowed by domestic abuse, struggling for financial independence by trying pretty much every option available to poor middle class women; needle work, working as a paid companion, and governess starting her own school, and finally becoming an author.

00:07:27	Emma Clery (guest)	First of educational works, translations, and anonymous reviews, then of groundbreaking works of political controversy, history and travel and fiction. Her first important relationship, it's often said, was with her friend Fanny Blood, who tragically died of tuberculosis. When Wollstonecraft moved to France in 1792, she began an affair with an American businessman, Gilbert Imlay and they had an illegitimate daughter together, Fanny. She toured Scandinavia as his legal envoy, seeking a stolen ship and its cargo. [all laugh]
00:08:04	Emma Clery (guest)	And back in London, he abandoned her, and for a time she was suicidal, but eventually she found love again with the political philosopher William Godwin, marrying him when she became pregnant. So that's a quick rundown of some of the highlights of her [Kate and Kandice laugh], light and lowlights, you could say. Back in the 1970s, she was really still quite obscure.
00:08:30	Emma Clery (guest)	But now there are, as you know, loads of affordable paperback editions of her writings available, and she's one of those writers really about whom you could say, more genuinely than usual, that they need no introduction. But having said that, actually, I am now writing an introduction to her [Kate and Kandice laugh]. A brief study of her life and work for the OUP *Very Short Introduction* series. And it takes inspiration. If you don't mind me carrying on a little bit.
00:09:04	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	No!
00:09:04	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	No, please continue!
00:09:14	Emma Clery (guest)	From a fantastic quote from Virginia Woolf, which I'm sure you are familiar with, but I can't resist reading it again. She really did seem to capture the essence of Mary Wollstonecraft and her career, the sort of career you could say, lived on the edge, really courageously conducted in defiance of existing prejudices and customs.
00:09:30	Emma Clery (guest)	So here's the quote: "Many millions have died and been forgotten in the 130 years that have passed since she was buried. (She was writing this in 1929). And yet, as we read her letters and listen to her arguments and consider her experiments and realize the high-handed and hot-blooded manner in which she cut her way to the quick of life, one form of immortality is hers undoubtedly. She's alive and active. She argues in experiments, we hear her voice and trace her influence, even now among the living."
00:10:07	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh, beautiful!

00:10:08	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Oh, wow. That, that 'cut to the quick of life' line really captures something that's really complicated and hard to articulate about Mary Wollstonecraft I think because—
00:10:19	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah, yeah, there's something unendingly poignant about her life. I mean, partly she died young and with lots of unfinished business. But just the way that her ideas, her writings, even hastily written notes continue to resonate is quite extraordinary. I was recently in a research seminar where the speaker mentioned another female icon, actually it was Marilyn Monroe. In the context of endless, endless books and documentaries focused on her and said, it's as if we can't let her die. And I think that that applies perfectly to Wollstonecraft as well.
00:11:00	Emma Clery (guest)	We can't let her die. So, though she's relatively well-known as far as eighteenth-century women writers go, it still seems worth reemphasizing the sheer range of her achievement as a thinker and writer. She's best known for *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but, but there's so much else to her. And to that text indeed, I mean, it's revisited endlessly. It's also worth examining the way the outlines of her life have often been obscured by mythmaking and slander. I mean, people still seem to get as agitated about her now; anti-feminists, as they did, you know, back in the 1790s or when she died. It's quite remarkable.
00:11:50	Emma Clery (guest)	So, I'm quite interested in a Wollstonecraft that measures her achievement in relation to her vulnerability. You know, just how exposed she was. And, I suppose it's about the way a woman who lived as she theorized, for a woman of that kind, the stakes were really high, and the risks were enormous. And I think it's good to be able to capture that. And I think any reading of her works will be enhanced by an understanding of the odds stacked against these works even existing. I suppose when it comes to thinking about the shape of her publishing career, one essential thing to note is that it only lasts ten years.
00:12:35	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh, wow!
00:12:36	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Oh, wow!

00:12:37	Emma Clery (guest)	And it's very neat in a way, three years longer than that of Jane Austen, but still painfully short. And for the first few years, she was serving a kind of apprenticeship. She was writing educational works for girls and for their teachers or parents. She was studying French and German in order to undertake translations. And in the process of doing that, she was exposed to all sorts of, you know, fascinating developments within the Continental Enlightenment.
00:13:10	Emma Clery (guest)	And she was also writing loads of book reviews for this newly founded journal. Founded by her publisher, Joseph Johnson, the *Analytical Review.* So her breakthrough text was the first *Vindication*, not of women, but of men, in 1790, which was a reply to criticisms of the French Revolution, and more specifically to one of its British supporters, her friend, the Reverend, Dr. Richard Price.
00:13:42	Emma Clery (guest)	Two years later came *Rights of Woman*, and her major works were then the first volume of a planned multi-volume history of the Revolution, an account of her travels in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. And a novel, a sort of sequel to *Rights of Woman*, titled *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*. Left unfinished at her death and published in an edition of *Posthumous Works* by her widower, William Godwin.
00:14:12	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	She really packed a lot into ten years—diverse types of writing.
00:14:17	Emma Clery (guest)	Well, especially in view of the fact that a lot of the time she was going through practical or emotional or psychological crises, which really put her out of action for a while. So I think it's all the more inspiring in view of those things and something we can really empathize with, having been through, all of us, some difficult times over the last couple of years at least.
00:14:44	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. No, that's, that's a really humanizing point. I think it can be really easy, what I really like about that is, how you're humanizing her and you're thinking about her as a vulnerable person in the world, rather than this kind of—
00:15:00	Emma Clery (guest)	Powerhouse!
00:15:01	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah! This major thinker who gets taught in undergraduate classes, who we read all the time, who's very much shaped, at least how we understand the romantic period from a late twentieth, early twenty-first century perspective. But also to have that humanizing element, I think is really important.

00:15:25	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Which I think leads nicely into the next question, which is that you have worked on a very wide range of writers, from gothic authors like Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole to sort of mid eighteenth-century writers like Catherine Talbot and Samuel Richardson, and most recently, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Jane Austen. So what brought you to Mary Wollstonecraft, and why now, I guess?
00:15:55	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah. Oh, that's a really nice question. In a way I've never left her, I suppose. And the question is really what brought me back to her because when I was an undergraduate, I did a course on feminist writing with Cora Kaplan, who's the author of a really interesting text on Wollstonecraft and sexuality. Very much thinking of it in the context of second-wave feminism of the 1980s or late seventies.
00:16:30	Emma Clery (guest)	And this was a really formative experience. It was my introduction to *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. I wrote a dissertation on Wollstonecraft's very sharp disagreement with Jean-Jacques Rousseau on female education and sexual difference in her *Vindication*. And this was back in the mid 1980s. And I'm still writing on the same subject now [Kate and Kandice laugh]. I'm actually still obsessed by this dialogue between Wollstonecraft and Rousseau. So that's nearly forty years. So thinking about Wollstonecraft's formation has, I would say right from the start, served as part of my formation as a feminist.
00:17:22	Emma Clery (guest)	And it's really an ongoing process. But a more short term and direct answer to your question [Kate laughs] is that I came to Wollstonecraft again more recently as part of a project on women's involvement in economic debate in the romantic era. That might make me sound a little less human [all laugh], but economic history and the economics of book history is, for me, the real thread running through all my research work. And all the writers I've explored are in connection with this in one way or another.
00:18:05	Emma Clery (guest)	And this interest was also a product of the time I was growing up, the time I was studying at university initially in the 1980s when the significance of economic ideologies and their political consequences became really starkly prominent with the neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and the Marxist literary critic, Raymond Williams, was sort of my guide here. He has nothing to say about Wollstonecraft [all laugh] but he was really influential at an early stage.

00:18:44	Emma Clery (guest)	He's not a feminist, but he did show the way that economic ideas could be disseminated and questioned through cultural forms such as poetry and fiction. And, my supervisor, John Barrow, took a similar approach. And that was very influential on my thinking. Later on as a postgraduate, I became more interested in the role of economic models and systems in the literary marketplace, and the commercialization of print in the eighteenth century.
00:19:22	Emma Clery (guest)	So, that's my link with book history. It sort of seemed like a natural evolution, actually, from thinking about economics more broadly as a discipline. So, yes, my plan originally was to investigate some aspects of Wollstonecraft's writings with a bearing on economics. I got a grant from the Leverhulme Trust for a three-year project to look at a number of women writers. So I was looking at Anna Laetitia Barbauld, I was looking at Jane Austen, and Wollstonecraft was the third of the trio. And I was interested in a few different aspects.
00:20:05	Emma Clery (guest)	Her problematic use of the trope of slavery in a feminist context; her active involvement in the wartime economy, obliquely indicated in her travel log, that journey around Scandinavian 1995; but also, more elusively, and I don't think many people have really picked up on this, this suggestion that she has an interest in the proto-communist thinker Gracchus Babeuf, whom she met during her time in Paris. Robert Southey reports that he was the man she most admired. So, that's sort of intriguing and I wanted to try and follow that thread. I haven't quite yet [Kate and Kandice laugh], but I'm making a bit of progress on it.
00:20:56	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Exciting plans!
00:20:57	Emma Clery (guest)	Anyway! Yeah, that's right. Coming to the archive with these interests, I was struck by the need for a rethink of various aspects of her career. I feel like there's a bit of a tendency for circulation of myths when it comes to Wollstonecraft. And a foundation for this kind of reassessment is a scholarly edition of the works. I think that's the sort of level we need to get to. The existing collected edition of *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* was published by the editors Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, real luminaries.

00:21:40	Emma Clery (guest)	And it really has been vital for the development of scholarship on Wollstonecraft. It made a large number of her writings, such as the early works and the reviews widely available for the first time. However, it doesn't have the full dress scholarly apparatus, and the sort of depth of bibliographical research that I think a writer of Wollstonecraft's stature really requires. So I'm going back to brass tacks [Kandice laughs] as General Editor of a new six-volume edition of her collective works, including the correspondence.
00:22:16	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Okay. Exciting. So, tell us more about this edition. What is included in it? How's it organized? What kinds of additional information are you planning to provide to contextualize Wollstonecraft?
00:22:36	Emma Clery (guest)	I think probably the biggest change is that the new collected works is going to be organized chronologically. So the Todd-Butler edition was organized according to genre categories. And this was actually the idea of the chronological format, was the suggestion of the Oxford University Press editor, Jacqueline Norton.
00:23:03	Emma Clery (guest)	I first came to her with a proposal for sticking to genre again because it makes practical sense for scholars who might be coming from different disciplinary directions—they might be more interested in the educational works or the philosophical works, or the translations or the reviews. But that earlier collected works is still available to serve that purpose. And, I got over that initial hesitation [Kate and Kandice laugh] and began to think, 'wow, what a great opportunity to rethink her career.'
00:23:46	Emma Clery (guest)	Really holistically just actually looking at what texts were coming out, what kinds of concerns she was thinking, and across the genres, at any given moment. And so each volume covers a year or two. The reviews, for example, are going to be spread across four volumes, and it really makes you aware of how she was churning them out. So many of them [all laugh]. Often they're very short, but she was processing all this stuff and it's bound to make it easier to spot the influences in the works that she was producing herself. So there's new insights into the books she was reading and how they might have informed her own writings produced at the same time. And, reciprocally, how her own projects might inform her views of other contemporary publications.

00:24:50	Emma Clery (guest)	So it certainly does bring the reviews, a very neglected body of work, into much greater prominence. And similarly the translations and other lesser known writings. The exception to this chronological arrangement and another big feature of this edition that's not there in the Todd-Butler collected works, is volume six, the correspondence. Wollstonecraft's letters, as I said, weren't included in this previous edition. Instead, Janet Todd produced a new edition of the *Collected Letters* in 2003 to replace Ralph Wardle's 1979 *Collected Letters.*
00:25:31	Emma Clery (guest)	And our new edition will differ from these previous ones in a couple of essential ways. First, we are going to proceed with the utmost caution when it comes to undated letters and notes. We're not going to speculate on the dating, except perhaps in very broad ways. Occasionally, if these are manuscript letters, we might be able to work on the paper, to come up with a more accurate dating. But I do think that speculative dating has had the effect of establishing quite problematic biographical narratives.
00:26:09	Emma Clery (guest)	And an example of this might be some undated material, clearly from the time when she was working for Joseph Johnson in London, in the first phase of her career. These are scribbled notes, which are hasty notes, which are the product of some kind of acute psychological crisis. And these have been speculatively dated really to support the story, which I think is very doubtful, of Wollstonecraft's unrequited love for the artist, Henry Fuesli.
00:26:48	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Interesting!
00:26:49	Emma Clery (guest)	So, another feature which we're hoping to include would be as much contextual correspondence as we can get from people who received letters from her, sent letters to her, and wrote letters about her. And so in this category we might include, for example, her sisters because a certain amount of their correspondence is held in the Abinger [Papers] at the Bodleian Library, and also letters with direct reference to Wollstonecraft during her lifetime and immediately after her death.

00:27:26	Emma Clery (guest)	So this would sort of fill out the chronology a bit. Maybe bring out different facets of the events and maybe help us to a clearer review of them. Up until now, these contextual letters have really been the exclusive preserve of biographers who quote from them quite selectively. You know, no doubt they're picking out the bits which are most relevant, but I nevertheless think it would be really valuable to get as much of this material as possible out into the public domain to fill out the facts and the chronology of Wollstonecraft's career.
00:28:08	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	It's so frustrating. I also have a hard time when I'm reading someone's collected letters. I hate how you only get one side of the conversation. I always feel so lost [Kate laughs], I have such a hard time following what's going on. I'm like, 'who is this person? why are you writing back this way?' And I mean, obviously getting both sides of the correspondence all the time is difficult and impossible. But I think bringing in those other voices helps make sense of the tone of letters to—this person versus this person, or, I don't know. It brings so much more to it.
00:28:50	Emma Clery (guest)	It really does. And, and actually, that's been a feature of the correspondence between Wollstonecraft and Godwin. There has been a separate standalone publication showing both sides of that correspondence. And usually some, if not all, of, Godwin's replies or his notes to Wollstonecraft are included in the notes in the sort of footnotes or endnotes. But still, bringing it more fully into the main body of the text would be so interesting. And there's not so much material that I think that would be overwhelming.
00:29:29	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	It's so, so wonderful to hear about your edition and what it's going to include and how it's going to work. Conversations like this make us very aware of—we talk constantly about the limitations of the WPHP and what it captures, but conversations like this really do remind us that we're capturing a very small subset of certain authors' lives. For example, WPHP only collects information about Wollstonecraft's *books*.
00:29:52	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Why would taking into account her periodical publication be important for this edition and for understanding Wollstonecraft's career? What kinds of challenges does including periodical writing pose for you? Because we saw so many challenges with trying to include them in the WPHP that we've decided not to do it at all. We don't include periodicals [Kandice laughs]. What challenges do they pose for you?

00:30:15	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah. No, thanks for raising that. I've said that they're a neglected part of her writing, so actually there's more and more interest in the reviews. And I think that makes it all the more pressing, really, to try and stabilize the text as far as possible. So that's partly why we're really going to put a lot of energy into making the reviews a core part of the edition. So these days, the reviews are getting cited to demonstrate her views on fellow novelists, for example, a very interesting aspect.
00:30:52	Emma Clery (guest)	Or on travel writing, a genre that she also wrote on. But as you suggest, there are problems with this material, mainly because they're anonymous. And although very occasionally you get periodicals where keys have survived, to codes which show who wrote what. I think that happens a bit with the monthly review and one or two of the later ones. It's not really there with the analytical review. And, therefore, attribution has been and continues to be a problem [Kate and Kandice laugh]. Just occasionally we can be sure that she wrote a particular review because of external evidence.
00:31:36	Emma Clery (guest)	And then based on that, previous scholars, previous editors of the *Letters* such as Wardle and Todd have used the initials at the end of the review, the ones that we know were by her, as an indication of her authorship of other reviews. So there's attributions based either on extension from firm attributions or alternatively speculative attributions on the basis of content or style. So, there are certain assumptions, for example, I think, it's Mitzi Myers or possibly, Mary Waters, is that right? I think I might be misremembering the second scholar who's written on her as a critic.
00:32:26	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. Mary Waters. That's Mary Waters.
00:32:26	Emma Clery (guest)	But, ideas that, first of all, she was given novels to work with, and this was to see if she could make the cut. And then later on as she became better established in the Johnson staple and produced more ambitious works, she was let loose on other stuff. We don't know that for sure. It seems like a valid assumption, but we can't really say that with certainty.
00:32:56	Emma Clery (guest)	And so for that reason, we are hoping to apply computational stylistics to firm up the attributions as has been done in the case of a very successful Aphra Behn attribution project, which was funded by the AHRC, the Arts and Humanities Research Council. That's just come to an end, I think, and the results are available online. But a further complicating factor with reviews as opposed to plays, might be the existence of a house style dictated by the editor.

00:33:40	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah.
00:33:42	Emma Clery (guest)	So this is something we need to look into further—there are ways of testing that. We've already conducted a couple of small pilot studies, but it's definitely a complicated undertaking. There's no standard methodology as yet for this kind of digital survey, or digital analysis. Every project seems to require a bespoke method. But the technology is evolving and the expertise is growing, so I think we'll have a bash at it.
00:34:16	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And it could bring out some interesting things about periodicals and as you say, house styles, and that kind of issue too.
00:34:23	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah. And I think sort of stylistic fingerprints as well, we might be able to identify—there is that notion that Wollstonecraft had a particular style, obviously at the time, some of the more savage critics took her to task for her grammar or her vocabulary, as they did standardly with women writers. But there is something, you can spot Wollstonecraft sentence [Kate and Kandice laugh], I think, normally, but it would be good to be able to test that scientifically.
00:34:59	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	To confirm it!
00:35:00	Emma Clery (guest)	[unintelligible] something that we could describe.
00:35:02	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. Is it possible to drill down into what it is? So shifting from print, to talk about the manuscript material you're planning to work on, there aren't very many surviving Wollstonecraft manuscripts, I don't think. Is that right?
00:35:19	Emma Clery (guest)	I think that would be true to say, yes.
00:35:21	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So, a lot of the writing that hadn't been published at her death has mostly come to us by way of William Godwin's 1798 publication of the *Posthumous Works of the author of The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which poses obviously some editorial quandaries. So, I was wondering if you could speak to some of those and what the problems of print mediation are for your project in attempting to bring these manuscript materials to us, to order them, to date them, etc.

00:35:58	Emma Clery (guest)	Yes. Well, there are a small number of surviving manuscripts. There are some fragments of published works. For example, there's a working draft of one short review, which is one of the things that we use for our little pilot studies. And there's also a small fragment, we think of her handwriting *Vindication for Rights of Woman*.
00:36:21	Emma Clery (guest)	However, as you say, most of the manuscript material was printed by Godwin and it hasn't survived in its original form, presumably destroyed. There's a lot of very interesting scholarly work on Godwin's mediation of Wollstonecraft. To some extent, it makes life easier for the editors of the collected edition. The fact that we have to rely on print editions, often onesold lifetime edition, certainly simplifies things, but we do need to be upfront about sources, specifically this 1798 posthumous works, as you say.
00:37:08	Emma Clery (guest)	And flag up cases where texts have passed through his hands, and when they haven't, noting the way editorial changes introduce interpretive biases. And in fact, your question makes me think about introducing some kind of traffic light system [Kate and Kandice laugh], green light for surviving manuscripts perhaps, and amber to proceed with caution. So, yes, we have to be aware that there's an element of co-authorship, with, for example, the unfinished work, the *Wrongs of Woman*, and other materials that he brought forward at that late stage.
00:37:54	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	All right. So, I wanna take a step back away from the Wollstonecraft edition you're working on now to just talk about some of the bigger things that I think are interesting about your work on Wollstonecraft, and specifically the article that you published in the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, was that last year that it finally came out?
00:38:13	Emma Clery (guest)	Yes, it was.
00:38:15	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. So, one thing that I find very fascinating in your scholarship overall, is your ability to read between the gaps in the archival record and at the same time read against the grain. So you do this in *The Banker's Sister*, where you think about how Austen's relationship with her banker brother, Henry, calls into question long standing assumptions about her Tory politics.

00:38:41	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And it's also a really strong thread in this *Huntington Library Quarterly* article on Wollstonecraft's relationship with Joseph Johnson. And in that you use Guy Standing's concept of the precariat to explore how Johnson benefited from Wollstonecraft's low-paid and precarious labor. So I'm really curious to hear more about how you approached this topic, given the limits of the archival record. And I'm especially interested in what role you see speculation and imaginative play having in grappling with those archival gaps.
00:39:17	Emma Clery (guest)	Thanks. Yes. Well, first of all, it was a great pleasure working with you, collaborating with you on that *Huntington Library Quarterly*—
00:39:25	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Oh, I'm so glad!
00:39:25	Emma Clery (guest)	It's a terrific volume.
00:39:31	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	It really came together nicely, I think.
00:39:33	Emma Clery (guest)	It was really fun. It was very collaborative, the process and, good to have dialogue in the revision stages. And of course, the event it was based on was fantastic as well. Getting together to think about women's book history. But I'm going to resist the idea that my speculations are against the grain of the evidence, or that filling in archival gaps requires imaginative play, if that's alright. [all laugh]
00:40:04	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah, absolutely!
00:40:04	Emma Clery (guest)	My view is I think that interpretation of literary careers hardens into doctrine quite often. And scholars can feel they're above going back to reinvestigate the facts. So I think that if my work does have a USP, a unique selling point [Kate and Kandice laugh], is that I have a lot of questions about the facts. I do think this is increasing the case, a huge amount of archival and contextual research fueled by these questions about the facts. Digging and digging and digging [Kate and Kandice laugh].

00:40:43	Emma Clery (guest)	I spent around six years doing this, in the case of Anna Laetitia Barbauld and the reception of her anti-war poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Everyone seemed to accept the story generated by her niece, that she was victimized by the hostile and personally denigrating reviews [Kandice laughs]. For many years it was simply accepted as fact that she was silenced by them as a writer. Now, Michelle Levy, of your very own *Women's Print History Project*, was one of the first to point out that this was not actually the case, and that she had continued to write after the publication and reception of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and quite often to publish as well.
00:41:30	Emma Clery (guest)	Although I think rightly, Michelle sees her as a primarily scribal author. So the story of her victimization never really made sense to me. She was a seasoned political writer by all accounts. She was very tough and very canny as a controversialist [Kate and Kandice laugh]. And I wanted to rethink the evidence for her motivations, and also to look very closely for the first time at who was writing the reviews to understand better what the poem was really about and what people felt at the time was at stake in it.
00:42:11	Emma Clery (guest)	And this helped me to uncover the existence of a massive campaign to shift government policy on the war. Making use of fears created by an economic crisis in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* to influence public opinion. So the book I wrote, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven: Poetry, Protest and Economic Crisis*, is the product of a lot of detective work piecing together previously neglected facts. That other book you mentioned, *Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister*, is similarly based on understanding of banking and economic crises in the 1810s.
00:42:57	Emma Clery (guest)	And the way these macro histories touch the life of one rather-celebrated woman writer, in this case, through her banker brother Henry, whom she was very close to, it's often said that he was the favorite of her six brothers. And he acted as her literary agent. So there's a sort of interesting book history story here as well. Now, some imagination has to go into asking new questions of the evidence and reconstructing historical context, but you don't need any imagination to see that money is central to the plots and thematic concerns of Austen's novels. [Kate and Kandice laugh]

00:43:44	Emma Clery (guest)	People have recognized that for a long time. I just don't think that previous scholars had gone deeply enough into why this might be. And it did bring up unexpected findings like the importance of the Whig patronage network for the Austen family, which does trouble the idea that she was straightforwardly a Tory. I mean, other critics like Margaret Kirkham and Claudia Johnson had always already raised doubts on the basis of the novels themselves, on internal evidence. But I think this new external evidence really does lend credence to an alternative view of her politics.
00:44:05	Emma Clery (guest)	Another thing I just want to add in here on this point is that I feel that what's going on today is absolutely crucial to coming up with new insights about writers from earlier periods. We're not doing scholarship in a vacuum, none of us. And you know, what the theorist Hans Robert Jauss calls the 'horizon of expectation' is always changing and revealing previously hidden aspects of historical texts. We simply can't see that sometimes blinkered by our own perspective. So when I have a new research project in mind, I can't help myself really [Kate and Kandice laugh]—
00:45:11	Emma Clery (guest)	I just start squirreling away newspaper articles on present day issues as inspiration. And that used to mean bulging files of clippings, newspaper clippings, which I still have [Kate and Kandice laugh]. I can't bear to throw them away in most cases, [Kate and Kandice laugh]. Now I have computer files with lots and lots and lots of links. And I think, yes, the new attention to economic precariousness as a sociopolitical phenomenon, which this particular social scientist Guy Standing claims is producing a class of workers that he calls the 'precariat.'
00:45:50	Emma Clery (guest)	It's a case in point. There are many ways in which the experience of low and uncertain income and inescapable debt, which especially afflicted women writers like Wollstonecraft in her period, has become newly visible due to changes in our own historical context. So, no interpretations are fixed. Future Wollstonecraft scholars are going to be able to go further in new directions and see features that are still invisible to us.
00:46:24	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. That is a fantastic answer to that question. And just to go back to—I think earlier you said something about how talking about the economics might seem less human, as you've been talking, I've been thinking about how—actually I think money is maybe the most human invention.

00:46:43	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And I think the way that you brought kind of current conversations about economic precarity, at least for me, as someone who has held precarious work for quite a long time since finishing my Ph.D., it's one of the most humanizing things to think about people in the past as precarious, as economically precarious and responding to that, and how that comes out in their writing. So thanks for that.
00:47:13	Emma Clery (guest)	Well, thank you. I think you summed it up very beautifully. I mean, it is, as you say, a human invention. It's like a language and a set of rules that we live by. And obviously it's the stuff of life you can't [laughs], we have for a long time, we haven't been able to live without it.
00:47:32	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Much as we might like to. [laughs]
00:47:32	Emma Clery (guest)	Much as we might like to. And I think oddly enough, sometimes, when you see a portrait of Wollstonecraft looking like the stern philosopher in her study, you can forget, yes, exactly, what the struggle was about, this sweat of her labour [Kandice laughs], to earn a living and also to assist those around her. That was part of it, it's all part of her human connections.
00:48:04	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh, and that's a beautiful turn I think into the next question, which I think is going to just kind of touch on a couple of things that we've already started bringing up. Things like the humanness and thinking about her as this human individual, not just this, philosophical powerhouse, thinking about speculation, thinking about the myths that have kind of been formed around her a bit. So in scholarship on Wollstonecraft's writing, her biography looms very large and for good reason.
00:48:29	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	She, in addition to flouting societal norms, she had close relationships with a number of other major thinkers like Godwin. But at the same time, which I think we've already kind of started gesturing towards, focusing on her biography can run the risk of creating blind spots or overdetermined readings of her writing that obscure their nuances, even as I think we've kind of started to think about the ways in which it is also vital to reading her works. But anyways, we'd love to hear how do you negotiate that relationship between Wollstonecraft's biography and her writing in your own writing and work?

00:49:04	Emma Clery (guest)	Yes, thanks. I, as an undergraduate, I was studying in a time when there was deep suspicion of biography. This was the moment of Jacques Derrida, and there is no outside text, and the death of the author. So, all of these things were in the air, and it was thought to be yes, the intentional fallacy. I mean, who would fall for that? Biography had nothing to do with the reading of texts. [all laugh]
00:49:36	Emma Clery (guest)	But I have come around pretty much full circle on that, I'm so into biography these days that I can't even see the blind spots anymore. So I'd be quite interested to hear what you had in mind when formulating that question. I mean, another one of my Wollstonecraft projects, this is actually I think the last one I'm going to mention [Kate and Kandice laugh], is doing a revised edition of the fiction for Oxford World's Classics.
00:50:07	Emma Clery (guest)	And I see these works now, you know, not as abolitions of the cult of sensibility as they were often framed in the past, but as autofiction, you know, this brand new genre that it was only defined I think in the 1980s or 90s, and has only really started to be discussed more recently and become better known as a label. I think she was ahead of the game [Kate and Kandice laugh], and we know these are very autobiographical.
00:50:40	Emma Clery (guest)	She does bring in aspects of her life, but I want to absolutely make the most of that dimension of these texts. I'm not going to shy away from them. I mean, this was a great age of innovation in life writing, the late romantic period. She was obviously inspired by Rousseau's *Confessions*, and she encouraged other writers like Mary Hayes with her really innovative *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, you know, utilizing her own private letters.
00:51:14	Emma Clery (guest)	So, again, very risky enterprise. So yes, the status of biography is certainly very pertinent to her work. She is an autobiographical writer. It's really difficult to block that out. And I think, again, people in the past maybe were a little embarrassed by that. I think it's the right moment to embrace it. We shouldn't be afraid of it.
00:51:40	Emma Clery (guest)	We can't avoid it. So, always though, if we're thinking about her feminist ideas, part of what she's about is the breaking down of the distinction between the personal and the political. So something that second-wave feminism arrived at in the seventies again. And so I think that's why they were so interested in recuperating her work partly, that she'd foreshadowed this development.

00:52:12	Emma Clery (guest)	There's a wonderful essay by Sylvana Tomaselli who edited the *Vindications* called the *Family: the Most Public Sphere of All*. It's from a collection that Elizabeth Eger and a number of others edited that came out in the nineties. And I feel like we're ready to recognize as more central her autobiographical reflections on things like domestic abuse, trauma, illness, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and reproductive politics in *The Wrongs of Woman*, where one of the characters endures a self-induced abortion.
00:53:04	Emma Clery (guest)	So, these are all very sort of personal intimate things that she was seeing as political and as things that should be discussed publicly. And she was drawing on her own experience always in doing this. So that's my feeling about biography, but tell me more about the blind spots, where the blind spots come in. [laughs]
00:53:28	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Well, it's so funny because in our episode that just came out a couple of days ago at the time of us doing this interview—maybe I shouldn't say that because we're not sure when this episode's coming out. [laughs]
00:53:43	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	No, I think we can, it's the first episode of Season 3.
00:53:45	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	In the first episode of Season 3—
00:53:46	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	We talked about an anonymous or unknown writer.
00:53:48	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	We talked about an anonymous author for *The Woman of Colour*. And one of the things that we didn't really dig into as we were writing and recording it, we started thinking about it more, was the fact that we were thinking around what slash should you take from a text, like a work of fiction that you think can tell you about the author.
00:54:10	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I think there's this interesting maybe directional thing that I'm thinking about, Emma, because we do have information about her biography. And so that is something that then colours and informs how we read Wollstonecraft's work. And when I think of biography, I think immediately of a first year student so eager to take what comes up and works as fact about the author themselves and what they maybe experienced or what they think.

00:54:37	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And how we always try to ask them to trouble that and think about how complex that might be. So that's kind of where my brain like originally went, and it maybe is, I think what you're saying too is that it's just something that needs to, it's something so central to thinking about Wollstonecraft, but it is something that needs to be done with great care because these are such intimate and personal things that are being talked about and brought into her work. But Kandice, I'm sure you also have thoughts. [laughs]
00:55:06	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. And I think I was thinking about it in terms of some of the problems that Wollstonecraft's biography has maybe caused for her reception. So Godwin publishes all these intimate personal details of her life that people then take and look at her works and go, oh, she's just—as you I think so clearly articulated, it produced profound discomfort. It gave people ammunition to use against her posthumously.
00:55:31	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So really, I think caused a lot of pushback. I like that word directional that you used Kate, there's a kind of a tendency to maybe say, 'well, there are autobiographical elements in the *Wrongs of Woman*.' And then to kind of take what she is representing in a literary way, and say, 'well, this must be exactly how she felt about her situations.'
00:45:12	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And I think it can be more complicated than that. Autofiction isn't necessarily literal fact. It can be thought experiment, it can be playing through scenarios with different outcomes. Thinking about coming to a scenario you experienced in your life retroactively and thinking, well, 'if I had known then what I know now, how might it have gone differently?' So here is a very strong relationship between biography and text. But it's not a straightforward one. And it can be complicated. I was just interested in hearing your thoughts on that.
00:56:54	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah, no, it is undoubtedly a very complex question. And I take your point about the way biography was used as ammunition, as a weapon against her reputation and did mediate her reception, continues to do so, but very detrimentally through the nineteenth century. And I do think, yes, there are lots of problems with the way that Godwin frames her. However, I do sometimes want to kind of come back to people and say, 'well, actually, how do you think they would've received *The Wrongs of Woman*, these critics, if she'd been able to publish it in her lifetime?'

00:57:44	Emma Clery (guest)	It is a really radical work, and it even anticipates the torrent of disapproval that would greet its contents. You know, reflexively at the end of the fragment, doesn't it? Where Maria, the heroine, is pleading her case for leaving her husband, going into a relationship with another man, and feels it's entirely morally justified. She rejects the idea that the lover should be prosecuted for adultery. And the judge just sits back and says, 'well, we're not having any of these French ideas.
00:58:28	Emma Clery (guest)	This is utter nonsense [Kate and Kandice laugh], when it just proves the fallacy of letting a woman plead her feelings.' And so this was going to be included in the text along with all this extraordinary, explosive material about the life of a working class woman who is by turns a sex worker, and she's raped, and it's horrific. And her story is framed in a completely sympathetic way. It's received with no hint of disapproval by her listeners within the story itself.
00:59:13	Emma Clery (guest)	I think that is so important, and it just shows how risk-taking Wollstonecraft was. That she herself was going even further probably than Godwin did. She wasn't afraid, in other words, of her reputation, for her reputation, and for the way in which it might affect reception of her other works as well. So yeah, I do think it's important, but I totally see Kate, you're so right, that biography, if it's used as the only measure, can lead to very reductive readings of literary texts.
00:59:54	Emma Clery (guest)	And she did change many facets of her own life. That's quite true. I like that idea of thought experiments too. They are. I mean, it's a curious thing that the two heroines, Mary, the heroine of the first novel and Maria, second, explicitly linking them to her by the naming. That she decides to make them both heiresses.
01:00:21	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Right.
01:00:23	Emma Clery (guest)	Why? It's curious. Both of them run into money troubles at some point. But they were not like her struggling from destitute.
01:00:33	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	They're starting in a very different position.
01:00:35	Emma Clery (guest)	Yeah. Position. And of course, they weren't writers either, so she doesn't explore that possibility. Although, having said that, Mary is sort of a writer [unintelligible] comes up with these wonderful rhapsodies through that first text.

01:00:54	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh, marvelous.
01:00:55	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. I mean, I wonder too, if that's just something that almost, it solves one narrative problem so that you can deal in a more focused way with other narrative problems. Right? Yeah, I like that.
01:01:09	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I'm absolutely loving how much this conversation focusing on this humanness. I will admit that I haven't worked on Wollstonecraft myself, and although I am obviously familiar with her, so having these conversations about, you know, her biography and her humanness has been so very, very enlightening, personally it's just been such a wonderful way to think about this.
01:01:35	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	In April of this year, 2022, Kandice had the pleasure of participating in a celebration that you were involved in organizing at the Newington Green meeting house, very close to the controversial Mary Wollstonecraft sculpture by Maggi Hambling. And this sculpture has been criticized for not being a conventional statue depicting Wollstonecraft, but instead, a nude female form emerging out of a silver cloud of sorts. I think Hambling has talked about it as representing an every woman, which I find is that connection that I'm making of thinking of Mary Wollstonecraft is very human, that somehow that ties very strongly for me into this idea of the every woman.
01:02:08	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	But that reading of the sculpture is interesting for us as a project that is seeking to capture the every woman in addition to the women of the cannon, like Wollstonecraft. And we have to grapple with that relationship between them with capturing canonical authors and capturing those women outside of the cannon. So, how do you see that relationship between canonical and non-canonical writers? Are some writers like Wollstonecraft potentially canonized at the expense of others, or is it more complicated than that? We'd love to hear your thoughts.
01:02:43	Emma Clery (guest)	Well, am I allowed to say something about the sculpture as well?
01:02:46	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Absolutely. [all laugh]
01:02:46	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Absolutely. That's why we invoked it.

01:02:47	Emma Clery (guest)	[all laugh]. Well, I like the fact it's silver somehow. I think it works very well in that particular setting on Newington Green with the sort of silvery bark of the trees. There's something rather beautiful about it. And the pedestal I kind of like as well. I think a monument should have a pedestal. [Kate and Kandice laugh]
01:03:09	Emma Clery (guest)	And it's great to have a landmark on Newington Green where she ran a school. It was a very important point of departure in her life and career. And I think the people who fundraised for this, campaigned for this sculpture, they're pleased with controversy over it [Kate and Kandice laugh]. But to them—and I think I can see this—it's in keeping with Wollstonecraft's own life and career.
01:03:43	Emma Clery (guest)	And definitely the fundraising campaign has inspired a lot more interest in Wollstonecraft, and helped to raise her profile. So, that's all very much to the good. But I'm not sure about certain aspects of it. I kind of disagree with the triumphalism of the every woman figure rising out of the cloud as you call it. The iconography of it. I think Maggi Hambling probably has her own agenda about feminism, perhaps. I don't think she knows that much about Mary Wollstonecraft judging from some of the interviews I've seen.
01:04:12	Emma Clery (guest)	So, frankly, I think I could have done without the naked figure on top. This 'every woman,' I think, suggests that somehow a sort of linear idea of progress, which does not speak to this moment specifically, of Roe v. Wade being repealed, for example. I think it's a reminder that we're still in the cloud, but the struggle endures. I like the amorphous mass, sort of suggestive of female struggle. But I don't know about that—
01:05:20	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	The triumphant figure on top—
01:05:21	Emma Clery (guest)	resolution of it. Yeah, yeah. So in spite of the extraordinary achievements of feminist activism, it can still go into reverse in so many ways. I feel like we're actually still in Wollstonecraft's era. Still struggling over the same issues.
01:05:41	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So we've reached our final question, and I just wanted to close on the Wollstonecraft celebration itself. So the event in April was focused around Wollstonecraft's connection to the Dissenting circle at Newington Green, which included a number of important eighteenth-century writers and thinkers.

01:06:05	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So having brought this number of, or having been involved in bringing this number of Wollstonecraft scholars together, so recently, we've really feel like it must have provided a very up-to-date glimpse of Wollstonecraft studies, which I was very pleased to be able to see as well [Kate laughs]. So we were wondering if you can speak to that a bit. Where do you think Wollstonecraft studies are at today? Where do you think they're going? What are you most excited to see coming into the world?
01:06:33	Emma Clery (guest)	Yes. Well, it was a lovely event and it was so great to have it after two years of cancellation. And I'm so pleased you were able to be there, Kandice. It was an opportunity, I guess, it was conceived quite specifically about the place, this specific place, Newington Green and the meeting house, which is I think one of maybe two buildings we know she would've entered, even though it was, it's been restored since her time.
01:07:06	Emma Clery (guest)	Or changed in various ways. So it seemed like a great opportunity to explore the influence of religious Dissenters who have enjoyed a real renaissance, I think, within romantic studies in recent years. And particularly this group of Unitarians who lived around Newington Green, like Price, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, the Burghs, Mrs. Burgh was a great mentor of Wollstonecraft, and her husband who had died previous to that, his works certainly influenced hers. To look at the influence of religious Dissent on her, and also at wider meanings of Dissent, so to invite, invite broader interpretations, what do we mean by it today?
01:08:02	Emma Clery (guest)	And that opened things up a bit and allowed people to talk about present day resonances. It was very diverse and that was part of the beauty of it. There wasn't a very restrictive gender—I'd be interested to actually hear a bit more Kandice about whether you saw something emerging. Some kind of trend within Wollstonecraft studies.
01:08:35	Emma Clery (guest)	But I do think that we're in the process of rethinking Wollstonecraft within third-wave feminism. I do believe that's a thing. So that's a very interesting transition from the earlier recovery project around her from the seventies, even into the nineties and then the turn of the century. And I think a new prominence of some of her other works, perhaps notably the travel writing, the short residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark coming to the fore, bringing with it different kinds of emphases.

01:09:13	Emma Clery (guest)	I think the event itself that we've held for four years now on the anniversary of her birth, two years were sort of minimalist and online. But there was a great event back in 2019 in St. Pancras Church, that's another building associated with her, where she married Godwin and in the church yard, She was originally buried there. I'm very pleased to have these interlocutors involved in these events and involved in the edition, trying to figure out what we feel about her place within this newly evolving moment in feminism.
01:10:04	Emma Clery (guest)	And, I'm happy to say that I've just found out that I've received a bit of funding, which can go towards a new event. And it's going to be called Mary Wollstonecraft Goes to University. It's about the way that she was first introduced into the university curriculum from the 1970s. And the very earliest sort of scholarly work on her and trying to build a kind of archive around this as a case study in really a very contested story.
01:09:41	Emma Clery (guest)	So, I'm very pleased, always, to have the involvement of Wollstonecraft veterans like Janet Todd and Barbara Taylor, who were in on these sort of earlier moments in Wollstonecraft studies to help us to measure, you know, where we've got to and look back to where we've come from. I keep on thinking of this wonderful revelation that Janet Todd brought into the 2019 celebration that when she was a post-graduate, she was told 'you cannot do a Ph.D. on Mary Wollstonecraft. She's simply not significant enough.'
01:11:30	Emma Clery (guest)	So we're in a very different place.
01:11:33	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I'm horrified! [laughs]
01:11:33	Emma Clery (guest)	[all laugh]. I just want to look at that distance and the histories around it and bring people in to talk about their experience of teaching and researching Wollstonecraft from that time to now.
01:11:52	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	That sounds very exciting.
01:11:54	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	That sounds incredible.

01:11:54	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And to just kind of speak to your question as well about my experience of the event. I think the thing I found really striking about it, and I think it was partly a piece of the format and the theme, which was Wollstonecraft and Dissent, was how much it was focused on conversation and community and intellectual community, but also a very grounded sense of community. Which I think maybe speaks to the last question that we weren't sure how to answer about what the relationship between canonical figures is and less well-known figures.
01:12:36	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	And I think there was really a sense of using this kind of central major figure to branch out, to think about who else is there, how intellectual achievement and intellectual labour often has kind of like a single author attached to it, but really it's the product of conversation. It's the product of who's around you. As we were, I think saying kind of casually at the beginning before we really started recording, how interesting it is to think about who you would've just run into in the street if you were living or working in a specific space.
01:13:15	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So I think that was something that really struck me about it. And after the event, I picked up Daisy Hayes's new Joseph Johnson book at the event and read it kind of in the days following. And it really reinforced for me that, you know, there's, there's this wider community going on, not just in Newington Green, but also through publishing networks, through correspondence networks. And then I guess one thing that I'm interested in my own work too is how the movement of books produces sort of networks of ideas as well as different people encounter books, like the actual books in different places. So it's not just people, but it's also the way objects move and people encounter objects.
01:14:02	Emma Clery (guest)	And create communities.
01:14:04	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah. So that's really what I've been thinking about since the event was how that idea that it's Wollstonecraft, but it's Wollstonecraft and all of these other people who aren't secondary necessarily, they're just as important in their own right.

01:14:22	Emma Clery (guest)	Yes. I think that's so interesting and so, right. I think community is an underestimated aspect of her life, her writings, her career. She's so often seen as singular and exceptional and 'the first of a new genus.' And, that's a quote from one of her letters. And personally, I actually read that as a fearful statement, 'first of a new genus.' She felt alone, but I think she did find a number of communities to support her. And I think she stresses the importance of sharing stories as a mode of democratic interaction as well. As equality. So I absolutely second that. I very much hope that is the future of Wollstonecraft studies.
01:15:18	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I think that is a beautiful, beautiful spot to stop, actually. That was wonderful, Emma. Thank you so much!
01:15:24	Emma Clery (guest)	It's a privilege to be invited to talk with you. Thank you!
01:15:27	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Thank you!
01:15:27	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh, it was absolutely wonderful.
01:15:27	🎵	[music playing]
01:15:37	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Our conversation with Emma served as a striking reminder of the humanity of historical subjects who can sometimes be writ large by what Emma refers to as the myth that can surround them and obscure the reality. Wollstonecraft, as this conversation pointed out, was, and sometimes still is subject to just such a myth that inflex how readers over the last 200 plus years have engaged with her work and her life. This means we need to think not only about her professional stature and her canonical works, but also about her struggles with mental health and her vulnerability to economic and social pressures.
01:16:14	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Taking these personal details into account enriches how we understand Wollstonecraft's explorations, whether that means reading her novels as late eighteenth-century examples of autofiction or blending the personal encounter with a new culture as a mother with political analysis in her travel memoir.

01:16:31	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	They also serve as a reminder that no matter how well documented a historical figure's life is, our shifting contexts can allow us to unearth new stories about them. The attention afforded to recovering Wollstonecraft's story by Emma is also, as these interviews so often are, a reminder that there is always more to learn than what is captured in the WPHP, that there are so very many ways to go about exploring that context—and that we should do so with care.
01:17:02	🎵	[music playing]
01:17:11	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	This has been the second episode of Season 3 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*! If you're interested in learning more about what we discussed today, we've compiled a list of suggestions for further reading and links to some relevant entries in the WPHP in a blog post that you can find at womensprinthistoryproject.com. You can also find us at @TheWPHP on twitter and on Instagram @womensprinthistoryproject.
01:17:40	🎵	[music playing]