

# William Godwin

## Philosopher, Novelist, Revolutionary

**Peter Marshall**

**Foreword: John P. Clark**

William Godwin has long been known for his literary connections as the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, the father of Mary Shelley, the friend of Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt, the mentor of the young Wordsworth, Southey, and Shelley, and the opponent of Malthus. Godwin has been recently recognized, however, as the most capable exponent of philosophical anarchism, an original moral thinker, a pioneer in socialist economics and progressive education, and a novelist of great skill.

His long life straddled two centuries. Not only did he live at the center of radical and intellectual London during the French Revolution, he also commented on some of the most significant changes in British history. Shaped by the Enlightenment, he became a key figure in English Romanticism.

Basing his work on extensive published and unpublished materials, Peter Marshall has written a comprehensive study of this flamboyant and fascinating figure. Marshall places Godwin firmly in his social, political, and historical context; he traces chronologically the origin and development of Godwin's ideas and themes; and he offers a critical estimate of his works, recognizing the equal value of his philosophy and literature and their mutual illumination.

The picture of Godwin that emerges is one of a complex man and a subtle and revolutionary thinker, one whose influence was far greater than is usually assumed. In the final analysis, Godwin stands forth not only as a rare example of a man who excelled in both philosophy and literature but as one of the great humanists in the Western tradition.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

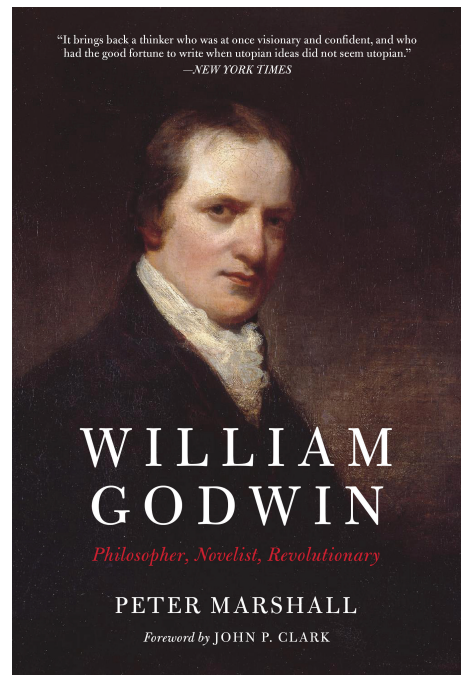
**Peter Marshall** is a historian, philosopher, travel writer, and poet. He has written or edited sixteen books, which have been translated into as many different languages, including *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* and *Romantic Rationalist: A William Godwin Reader*, both published by PM Press. His other works include *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place on Earth*, *Riding the Wind: Liberation Ecology for a New Era*, and *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*.

**John P. Clark** is an eco-communitarian anarchist theorist and activist. He lives and works in New Orleans, where his family has been for twelve generations. He is Director of La Terre Institute for Community and Ecology, which is located on Bayou La Terre, in the forest of coastal Mississippi. He is the author or editor of fourteen books, most recently *The Tragedy of Common Sense* (Changing Suns Press). He writes a column, "Imagined Ecologies," for the journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, and edits the cyberjournal *Psychic Swamp: The Surregional Review*. He was formerly Curtin Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University. Over three-hundred of his texts can be found at <https://loyno.academia.edu/JohnClark>.

### ACCOLADES

"It brings back a thinker who was at once visionary and confident, and who had the good fortune to write when utopian ideas did not seem utopian."

—David Bromwich, *New York Times*



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