

Mary Wollstonecraft

Introduction and Background

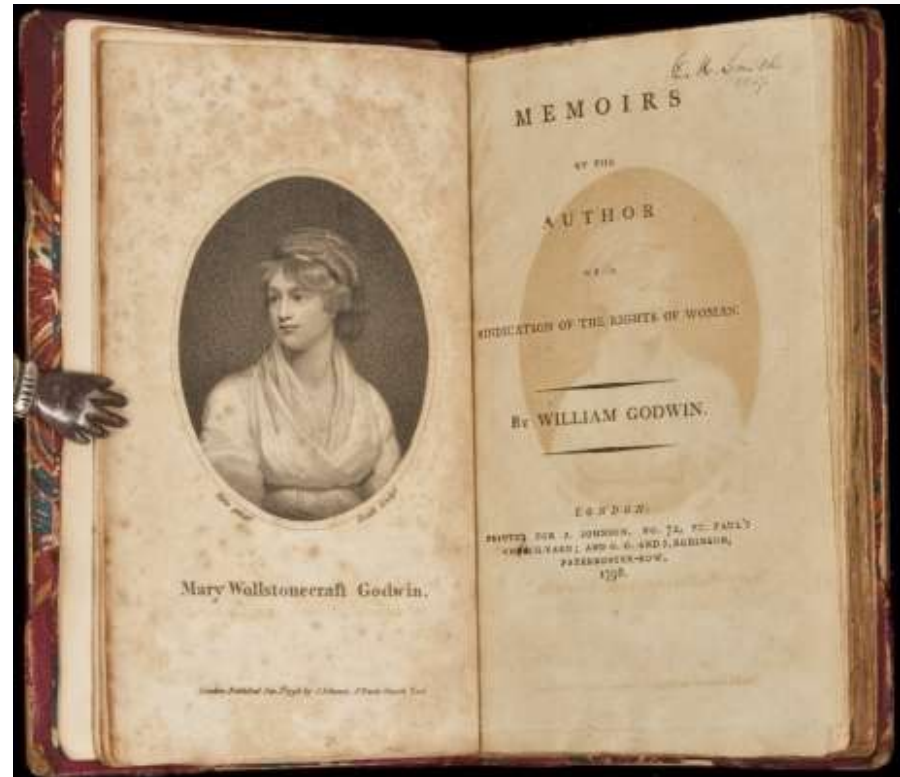
Brief Biography



- Born in 1759
- Began her career as a teacher and writer
- Became involved in radical thinking and politics
- Traveled to France to witness the French Revolution
- Later married radical philosopher and novelist, William Godwin
- Gave birth to Mary Shelley in 1797
- Died 11 days later

Key Works

- *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Reacted against Edmund Burke's conservative attack on the French Revolution in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)
- *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1794). Argued for intellectual and educational equality between the sexes



To Think About ...

- How does Wollstonecraft's work address the course theme—the individual and the public good?
- Lots of talk about marriage and family—how does the family affect the individual? Why is the family unit important in the public realm?

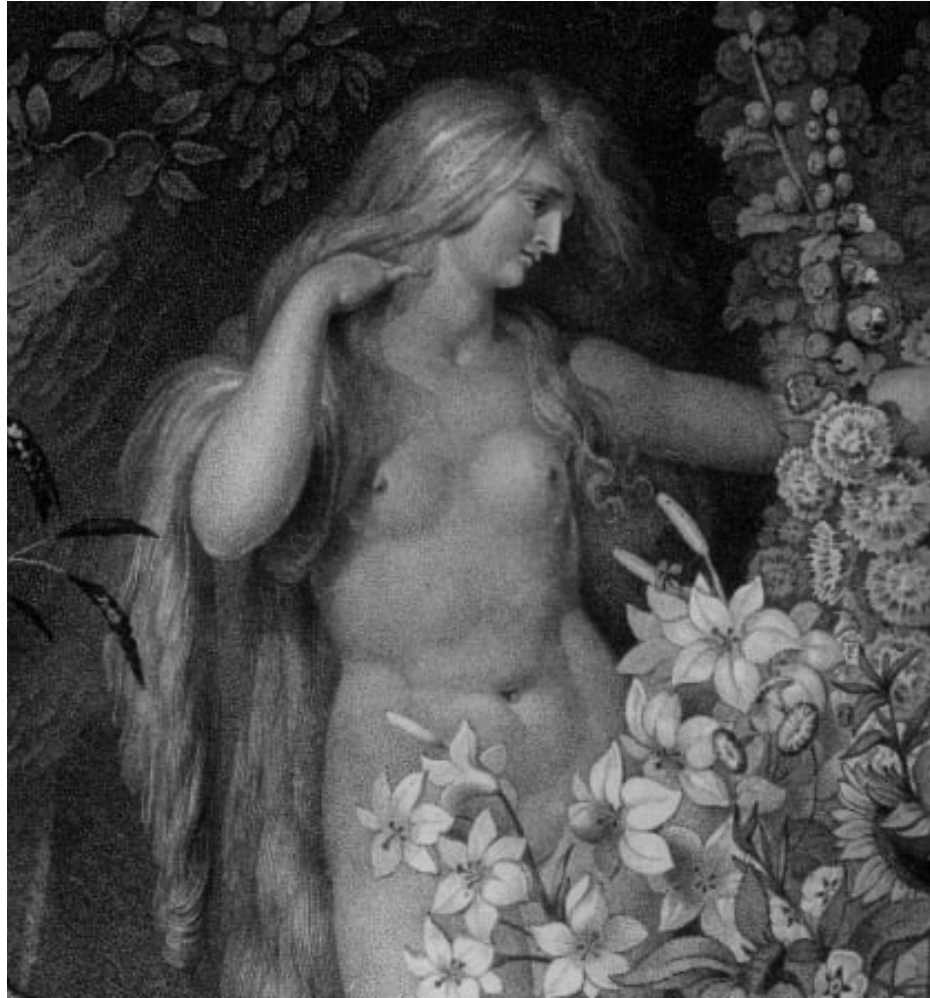


Milton's Eve

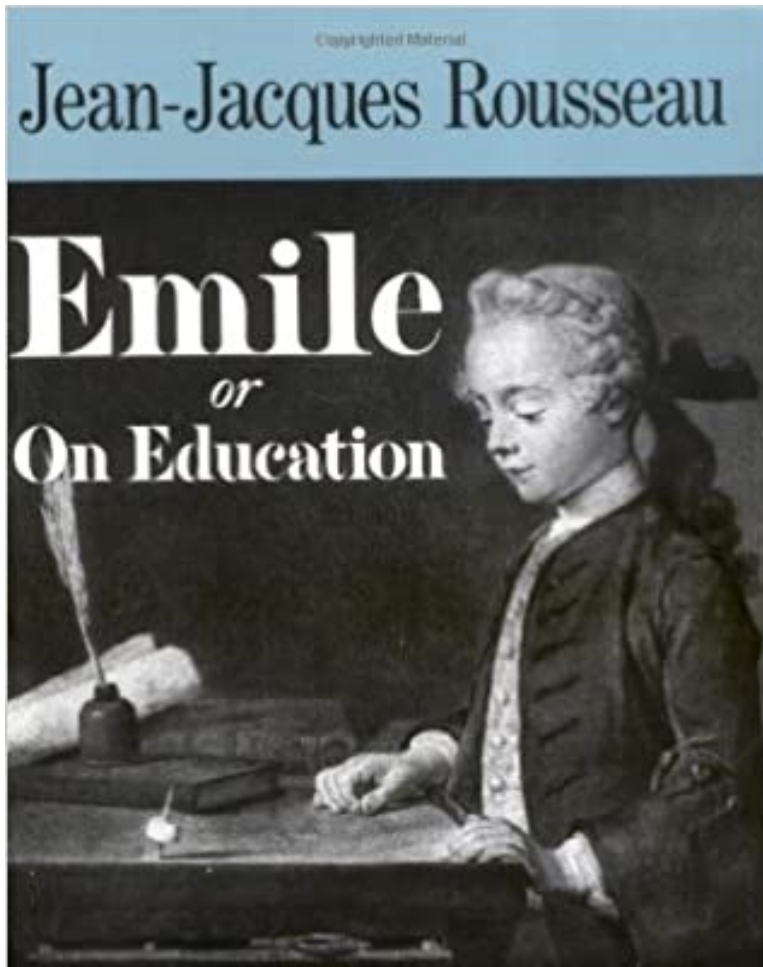
From *Paradise Lost* (1674)

Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
God-like erect, with native honor clad
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure
(Severe but in true filial freedom placed);
When true authority in men; though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
For contemplation he and valor formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace,
He for God only, she for God in him
His fair large front and eye sublime declared
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
She as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Disheveled, but in wanton ringlets waved
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best received,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay . . .

To whom thus Eve with perfect beauty adorned:--
"My author and disposer, what thou bidd'st
Unargued I obey; so God ordains,
God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.



Jean Jacques Rousseau (from *Emile*, published in 1762)



“The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them—these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them from their infancy.”