



Revolution in Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797)

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Wollstonecraft's pronouncement that "[i]t is time to effect a revolution in female manners – time to restore to them their lost dignity – and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world" encapsulates what she sought for women and humanity as a whole. Whilst she defended the revolution in France in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) against Edmund Burke's critique of its means and aims, she believed that a political revolution would not achieve either the goals of the French Revolutionaries or her own aspirations for society. Only a change in the conception of happiness and understanding of the end of life away from competition and material consumption could accomplish a genuine social revolution, one that would make men and women realize their potential as rational and emotional beings. This required that human rights be extended to women. The Declaration of the Rights of Man had to be a Declaration of the Rights of Woman as well. Like Olympe de Gouges (1748–93), she insisted that only granting women the education necessary for full civil participation together with their political representation would make for the equitable society desired by the revolutionaries. As things stood, she decried the evils revolutions unleashed and reluctantly concluded that France's new rulers were usurping liberty for their own ends.

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