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VIRTUE: A LIFE OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

by

JESSICA MCGIVNEY

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

VIRTUE: A LIFE OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

by

Jessica McGivney

Advisor: Rachel Brownstein

This thesis is a screenplay for an imagined "biopic" of Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft has already been the subject of many biographies, each presenting their authors' own understanding of her life. Here, I present my view, guided -- to varying and sometimes conflicting degrees -- by my understanding of her own fictionalized autobiographical efforts; by my understanding of Godwin's attempted work in his *Memoir of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; by the idea that her beliefs about virtue and freedom drove her forward through her own life; by the needs of narrative structure and the challenges and opportunities of the film form; by her works, her letters, and Godwin's *Memoir*; and by my own admitted desire to portray her life as bold, adventurous, and ultimately a triumph rather than a tragedy. This last consideration was the foremost in my selection of the format of an imagined film as the medium of this biography.

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Kathy, the stream of thanks from grateful MALS students must be as constant as it is sincere. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in librarianship and in library work, who always inspire me with their love of knowledge and their passion for helping scholars. At Mina Rees, special thanks to Beth Posner, Polly Thistlethwaite, and Silvia Cho for their encouragement and support as I undertook this endeavor. At Bobst, to Kristina Rose, for encouraging me professionally *and* for professionally encouraging me to finish this project, my grateful thanks; and to Amanda Watson and Diana Greene, for your interest and their encouragement, thank you.

At various points in this endeavor I have had to call upon remembered words of encouragement from people and times past, teachers and librarians all: Thank you to Michelle Barale and Barry O'Connell for a few words that have meant a lot to me for over fifteen years. And to Kathy Harrington, Judy Taylor and Doc D'Angelo, my grateful thanks.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, for encouraging and supporting me as only family can. To my parents, for believing I could do it; to John and Roxy, for your sincere support; to Dorothy, for encouraging me to find a job that I love; and to Sarah, for many things... but especially for never being afraid to ask when I was going to finish. Thank you.

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NOTES ON SOURCES TO THE SCREENPLAY

I have attempted to use the written words of Mary Wollstonecraft and her contemporaries within the work. They appear in the script sometimes as dialogue, and sometimes more obviously as written words read aloud.

Where this dialogue quotes or closely follows the source material, asterisks appear on the right hand side of the page. (This format is usually used to mark revisions between screenplay drafts, and was chosen over quotes and footnotes so that the experience of reading the final work would mimic more closely the experience of reading a professional screenplay. This is also why the thesis appears in Courier.) I have abridged, rearranged, paraphrased and generally adapted these words where I felt it necessary for the purpose of the screenplay or the creative format of the work.

In a small number of cases where the screenplay is utilizing information I found only in one secondary source, asterisks also appear.

Notes to the text follow immediately after the screenplay pointing to the relevant citation.

"Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of
life, the basis of every virtue."

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

VIRTUE

FADE IN:

EXT. AN INN BETWEEN LONDON AND BARKING - DAY

A busy inn on a road leading out of London. Titles tell us it is SEPTEMBER, 1796. A carriage waits in the courtyard as the horses are changed. The house, the horses and the carriage are plain -- respectable, but nothing more. A hackney coach pulls into the yard, triggering a moderate amount of routine chaos.

An employee of the yard opens the coach door and a woman emerges, carrying her own traveling case. Mid-thirties, beautiful, attired nicely but not glamorously. She's MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, and she's used to traveling alone. As the man waits for someone else to emerge from the coach:

MARY

I am Mary Wollstonecraft. I engaged
a post chaise to Ilford to leave
this morning.

The YARDMAN looks somewhat surprised, but recovers.

YARDMAN

Yes, ma'am, it's that chaise there.

Mary goes to pay the first coachman, leaving the yard's man at the door. He looks in just to be sure there's no one else, then closes it, and goes to take her bag. It's a shabby traveling case. They walk over and he opens the door to the new chaise. For the first time she looks slightly uncertain.

MARY

Another traveler will join me here
before we leave.

He nods and she enters the chaise. He packs her bag on the back of the carriage and there's nothing for the postilion to do but wait: bored. Not the usual in a place and profession where quickness is everything. Another coach races past: the horses' hooves, and the surrounding activity, are loud. The POSTILION looks skeptically at the yardman.

POSTILION

Waiting for her maid?

YARDMAN

No.

Inside the coach Mary is now reading in the light from a veiled window. We see mostly her hands, and the book. Her finger is on the page, but unmoving.

We see her face: she isn't reading. She's pensive, maybe a little nervous.

Another hackney coach pulls up outside the courtyard -- this time, not inside it -- and a man exits carrying his own case. He's late-thirties, his hair is cropped short, and his clothes deliberately simple. It's odd dress given the Georgian fashions we've already seen: he's a radical. This is WILLIAM GODWIN.

William pays the driver and carries his own bag into the yard. After an unheard discussion with an employee of the house, he's directed toward the coach. The employee and the postilion exchange another glance: mystery solved.

As William approaches the coach, the yard's man is approaching him to take his bag, but William is too focused on his destination to see it. Inside the coach, the lighting grows brighter, as the door opens and William enters, somewhat sheepish. Mary smiles: she's glad to see him. He smiles back, and tries to enter the coach, but he's holding his bag, now also being held by someone outside the coach.

YARDMAN (CONT'D)

Your bag, sir.

WILLIAM

(awkwardly)

Of course.

It may be old hat to the amused employees of the yard, but it's a new experience for our two travelers. As an unseen hand closes them into the coach, and William sits across from Mary, they're both a little embarrassed -- but a little amused too.

Outside the coach, a hand throws William's equally shabby traveling case next to Mary's and straps it in. The postilion starts the horses and the coach pulls out into the road.

Over a MONTAGE of their travel in the coach from the busy outskirts of London to the town of Barking, in Essex, we see the title of the film: VIRTUE.

As the coach pulls out of the outskirts of London and into the country, we experience a brief series of FLASHBACKS.

FLASHBACK: We see MARY in a coach, with a manuscript beside her. She's pregnant and traveling with a maid. The coach is called to a stop by soldiers and over the clattering of hooves and wheels we can hear that the soldiers are speaking French. It is almost night.

PRESENT DAY: the travel montage resumes. Mary is watching Godwin, viewing the scenery; when she turns her attention to

it, he studies her. As the coach passes into the shade, traveling under a bridge crossing a river or canal, we experience:

FLASHBACK: MARY, younger, in a coach, at night, in the rain, with a terrified ELIZA beside her, biting her own clenched fist to keep from screaming as Mary holds her other hand.

PRESENT DAY: In the coach, Mary takes William's hand, impulsively, and they exchange a smile. But a carriage coming from another direction is about to pass them very close and fast, the postilion swearing audibly. Mary looks out and sees, on a passing curricule, a young woman looking terrified and grabbing on to the arm of the gleeful man driving. They pull safely past but the crack of the whip takes us back to:

EXT. ROAD -

Another pair of horses, being lashed hard. We stay with these longer and titles tell us we are now in NOVEMBER, 1783. NED WOLLSTONECRAFT is driving a curricule through crowded streets, beating the horses cruelly as he careens through crowded streets expertly but recklessly and with complete disregard for the people, livestock and goods around him. A younger MARY sits beside him: the same age as the Mary we saw in the flashback with Eliza, and similarly attired in her traveling clothes. Like the young woman on the earlier curricule terrified, but unlike her, keeping it contained with an iron control (though visible effort.)

NED

Here's a taste of home for you, Mary!

They turn into a row of slums -- not one carriages often turn down -- and ride through.

NED (CONT'D)

I suppose if you had a choice, you'd rather stay here and play milkmaid then come to stay with your own family!

Mary can't or won't respond: instead she regards a clutch of children and a woman working over a washing trough, her hands twisting in the folds of her dress.

NED (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Oh, it's washing next is it?

Growing angry at her lack of response, he elbows her then takes the horses out the end of the alley, back into a busy street, at high speeds.

NED (CONT'D)

Will you and your friend Fanny be
taking in washing next, I said?

Mary is resolute and firm in all her points.

MARY

Fanny makes a living with her paints,
Edward.

Ned laughs -- crudely.

NED

I heard *that* was her sister.

MARY

Fanny makes a living through her
painting. Mrs. Blood does needlework.
They are artisans.

Ned scoffs.

MARY (CONT'D)

They--

Ned wanted a response, but only to allow him to grow more
enraged.

NED

At least, when you first abandoned
your family and disgraced yourself
in the estimation of your friends,
you were in a respectable situation
in Bath.

MARY

Our friends--

NED

But I could barely stop this carriage
in front of the lodgings of your
friends the Bloods.

MARY

The Bloods--

The angrier Ned grows the more he lashes out at the horses.

NED

I am speaking. Since it seems that
once again, grievous illness in your
family is the only thing that will
recall you to your sense of duty--

This strikes home -- and wounds.

NED (CONT'D)

I can almost be glad that Eliza has chosen to draw out her missish suffering.

MARY

Bishop and Everina both feel that my sister--

NED

Everina! Everina is useless. She does nothing but sulk around my house, eating my food and being under the foot of my wife. Now Bishop...

The carriage arrives in front of BISHOP'S RESIDENCE, a prosperous merchant's house by the water in the town.

NED (CONT'D)

(re: the evident wealth of the house)

Eliza may have your flair for dramatics, but at least she has done what is proper.

Mary is visibly angry but does not speak. A servant approaches to help her down from the carriage but Ned imperiously waves him off.

NED (CONT'D)

Now you mind me carefully. While you are here, you can take your insistence on being useful and make yourself useful to Bishop.

MARY

I have come to nurse Eliza--

NED

The best way to do it. But you remember what you owe Bishop, and (over a protest) you remind Eliza what duty she owes to Bishop, and what I owe Bishop, and get her out of her doldrums and back at his dinner table, charming his guests.

MARY

(a rebuke: perhaps you had forgotten...?)
And the child?

NED

Your namesake? For Bishop's sake I hope she's not a tenth of the trouble you are.

He throws a servant the reins, but turns to impart his most important advice.

NED (CONT'D)

Look after Eliza, and do NOT anger Bishop.

Ned leaps down, but it's a more cumbersome process for Mary, of course. He's bounding in the front door while she's still straightening her skirts resentfully at the bottom of the long steps. We see the servants unloading the trunks, but we follow Mary into the front hall.

BISHOP, a formidable man about Ned's age, is pouring Ned a drink in a room off the front hall. Mary lingers in the doorway, unsure where to go.

NED (CONT'D)

(loudly, pointedly)

And here she is! Mary, I was just telling Ned how happy you are to be able to come and assist him by nursing my dear sister in her hour of need.

MARY

(also pointedly)

I am greatly concerned for my sister's welfare--

Ned knows her well enough to hear a contradiction of his meaning, and we see him start to grow outraged. Mary notices and makes her tone more agreeable.

MARY (CONT'D)

(more to Bishop)

And I am thankful that you have welcomed me, and happy to be useful.

Bishop is a congenial man, or willing to appear to be, and notices no undercurrents in any scene. Thus:

BISHOP

(genially)

Yes, welcome indeed. Eliza will be glad to see you -- if she knows you, of course.

Mary is taken aback -- both by this information and his casual acceptance of the fact.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 (to Ned, mostly)
 It comes and goes.
 (to Mary)
 Well, Jennie is waiting to take you
 to her, of course.

Mary realizes that a servant is waiting behind her - she was never meant to go in and meet Bishop.

MARY
 (embarrassed)
 Thank you.

We hear Bishop and Ned faintly, already discussing business, as Mary follows JENNIE into the back of the house - the halls are closer, the lighting darker. Finally, the woman stands aside at the door to a richly furnished room. ELIZA, a pretty young woman of about 20, is lying in bed, staring out the window. She doesn't respond when Mary enters.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Eliza?

Nothing.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Bess...?

Still nothing.

Mary turns to the servant at the door, but she is gone. Uncertainly, she proceeds to a chair by the window and looks out at the quay to see what Eliza may be looking at. Deciding that the scene is unremarkable, she turns to Eliza who is now staring at her.

ELIZA
 You are here.

MARY
 Yes...

Eliza continues to stare, but when Mary has nothing to say Eliza turns back to the window.

MARY (CONT'D)
 The town is certainly grown busy
 since I saw it last.

A tear is falling down Eliza's cheek.

MARY (CONT'D)
 (somewhat desperately)
 Our brother is here.

ELIZA
Charles?

MARY
Ned.

ELIZA
Ned...

Something there she does not like.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
He is a great friend to Bishop. You
saw him, I suppose.

MARY
Yes, he says he is glad to have me
here as company for you and hopes
you will be better for it.

ELIZA
(fiercely, suddenly)
He is a beast.

Mary does not know what to say.

MARY
Is... Should...

ELIZA
I don't wish to speak about him!

There is a silence. Eliza still staring out the window,
determined not to look at Mary; Mary openly studying her
face.

MARY
How is the child?

ELIZA
Ask them to show her to you. No--
(softer)
Ask them to bring her here.

Mary proceeds into the hallway and uncertainly walks until
she finds the servant from before, standing at a row of books
reading a novel.

MARY
Mrs. Bishop would like to see the
child.

Jennie puts her book away, amiable enough.

JENNIE
Would she? I'll fetch it.

Mary follows her; Jennie clearly thinks this odd, but can't stop her.

MARY
Does she often send the child away?

JENNIE
The nurse takes it, I expect, when
it's hungry.

They arrive at the top of a stair which another servant woman has just finished descending. Jennie shouts down:

JENNIE (CONT'D)
Sarah! Bring the babe to Mrs. Bishop.

MARY
(startled)
Is Bess too ill even to nurse the
child?

Jennie laughs.

JENNIE
Not ill enough, more like. Once she
was churched, you know, and up and
about, Mr. Bishop...

She trails off meaningfully, but sees Mary doesn't comprehend.

JENNIE (CONT'D)
It isn't good for the babe, you know,
with them being, you know...

She's not quite sure how to put it to a Miss Wollstonecraft, especially since Sarah is coming up the stairs with a crying baby.

JENNIE (CONT'D)
(awkwardly)
Acting married. You know what I
mean, don't you? Everyone knows
that.

Still nothing. Jennie can only laugh -- this time it is a little mean.

JENNIE (CONT'D)
Well I guess you don't! But then
you wouldn't, would you?

Sarah is watching curiously; Mary takes the baby from her arms.

MARY
(with dignity)
Thank you.

She walks with increasingly hasty steps back to Eliza's room. With new comprehension, she hands the child to her sister, and Eliza takes her, gratefully, staring down at the baby's face with interest.

ELIZA
Oh, Mary, she is a wonder.

Mary smiles.

ELIZA (CONT'D)
I wish my Mother could see her.
Will she come?

Mary's smile fades.

MARY
Our mother...?

ELIZA
(with more intensity)
Our mother, will she come to see the child?

Mary takes her hand, gently, quietly horrified.

MARY
Bess, our mother is dead. Our mother is dead two years.

She is overwhelmed as Eliza bursts into tears.

INT. BISHOP'S HOUSE - LATER

Mary walks through Bishop's house. It's afternoon and the house is beginning to be lit by candles. Voices come from one of the rooms, and she's moving toward it with purpose -- she's been summoned.

Bishop, very jovial, is entertaining HUGH SKEYS, a middle aged, good looking merchant, always charming, always noncommittal.

BISHOP
Mary! Look who it is. I know I need make no introduction.

Mary is pleased to see him, though with reservations.

MARY

Mr. Skeys.

SKEYS

Miss Wollstonecraft.

BISHOP

I was just telling Skeys how much Mrs. Bishop has improved since you've come to stay with us.

Mary has mixed feeling about this, but turns to Skeys to confide,

MARY

Eliza is still greatly unwell. I am sure if she were well enough to know it, she would be grieved that she cannot see you.

Bishop is affronted, but Skeys handles everything smoothly.

SKEYS

I am sure the opportunity to spend so many weeks with as experienced a nurse as Miss Wollstonecraft has been an advantageous one. But your concern for your sister is a praiseworthy sentiment.

BISHOP

Yes, yes, sentiment.

MARY

Fanny's health is also not what it could be and I am greatly concerned about her.

Bishop seems to know what this means and Skeys is somewhat embarrassed.

SKEYS

Yes, Miss Blood! You are an excellent friend.

MARY

The doctor have all said that a more southern climate would--

Bishop interrupts her with a laugh.

BISHOP

A warmer climate! Just as you predicted!

Now Skeys is embarrassed. He ignores Bishop:

SKEYS

I am sure Fanny will be brightened considerably when you've returned to her home and hearth. And to Mrs. Blood, you have been such a comfort to her family as well.

BISHOP

Well I am sure my health will be much improved when my wife has returned to my hearth -- and we'll be warmer too.

Skeys smiles at Mary at this proper expression of marital harmony. Humiliated, she gives him a brittle smile in return. She has nothing more to say.

INT. ELIZA'S ROOM - DAY

Mary sits by Eliza's bedside, holding the baby gingerly, but as a duty. Eliza seems more alert -- but more persistent than is polite, or reasoned.

ELIZA

I cannot bear it. I shall go mad.

MARY

(distressed)
Patience, Eliza, you are not well.

ELIZA

I cannot stay here, Mary. I cannot.

INT. BISHOP'S HOUSE -- LATER

Mary, troubled, walks the house. She observes BISHOP with his man-of-business, who has brought letters and papers. The subject of one so enrages Bishop that he throws a vase across the room; his yelling does not seem to faze his secretary in the slightest.

Night, by the light of a candle. Mary writes.

INT. EVERINA'S ROOM, NED'S HOUSE - INTERCUT WITH MARY'S ROOM, BISHOP'S HOUSE

For the first time, we see EVERINA, about 17 and the youngest of the three sisters, packing a bag of clothes, while FANNY, a pale and slender woman Mary's age is standing in front of the closed door, in such a way that it would prevent anyone coming in suddenly. While Fanny stands she is reading a letter, visibly upset.

MARY (V.O.)

You must be secret. Nothing can be
done until she leaves the house...
His friends justly say that he is
either a spaniel or a lion.

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MARY hears a noise by her door and places a paper above her letter, then shields her candle light and looks out into the hallway. Bishop, in his nightclothes, with a candle, is entering Eliza's room. Mary is disapproving - but not outraged, nor does she seem surprised.

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

B cannot behave properly and those
who would attempt to reason with him
must be mad or
(growing more
determined)
have very little observation. Those
who would save Bess must act and not
talk.

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EXT. BISHOP'S HOUSE - DEAD OF NIGHT

MARY and ELIZA, covered in cloaks, steal secretly into a waiting coach, and then, after it has entered a more populated area, change into another. Eliza is so agitated she is forcing herself to bite down on her wedding ring.

MARY

Bess, Bess, it is almost finished.

ELIZA

Oh, Mary, I cannot, I cannot bear
it, he has seen us, he has followed
us.

Trying to calm her--

MARY

No, Bess, we are away. A little
patience and all will be over.

Eliza moans and twists her wedding ring, looking away. The coach pulls up to a desolate looking rooming house where their knocks are answered by a forbidding looking woman who surveys them critically, opens to the door to them, and slams it behind them.

INT. A BOARDING HOUSE - AFTERNOON

MARY is somewhat tired and pale; her visitor, MRS. CLARE, is both better dressed and in better humor - although concerned.

MRS. CLARE

I see that the curtains are open today.

MARY

Yes, it is pleasant to have the light, and I am glad to be able to receive you in...

(she hesitates; the room is awful)

slightly more comfort.

(rallying)

I thank you for the pie... and the wine... and for your visit. Eliza and I are so much obliged to you for your kindness.

MRS. CLARE

My dear, my dear, it is no less than my duty, and I have been so concerned for you and...

(lowering her voice, leaning in)

for dear Eliza. How is your sister?

MARY

She seems to be in her right senses, although she is in a melancholy way.

MRS. CLARE

Have you word of the child?

MARY

No, they will send none; though she knew that she would likely never see it, it is cruel of Bishop and of Ned to send no word.

MRS. CLARE

None--

But she draws back on the entrance of ELIZA, now up and walking but still unanimated and wan.

MRS. CLARE (CONT'D)

(with forced cheer)

Eliza, how glad I am to see you, how well you look in the light.

ELIZA

Yes, we may open the curtains now, for Bishop will not come.

This is, in fact, the information Mrs. Clare has come to ascertain, and she shoots a quick glance at Mary, whose

attention now seems to be, to an extent that in other circumstances would be very rude, on her sister.

MRS. CLARE

You have heard from Mr. Bishop?

MARY

We have heard from our brother, Ned. He has finally undertaken the only duty he is willing to discharge toward Eliza and he has spoken to Bishop.

ELIZA

I shall never go back.

MARY

(Reassuring)

No.

ELIZA

I shall teach if I must but I will never go back.

This means something to Mrs. Clare.

MRS. CLARE

So Bishop...?

MARY

No, of course he will not send a penny, but nor did Ned--

ELIZA

(her grief beginning to show)

I shall never see my child.

Mary's hand clutches over hers but Eliza tears herself away and rushes out.

MRS. CLARE

My dear, I am so sorry.

MARY

Her tears are reasonable. I am still too glad that her reason has been restored, I cannot try to reason her out of her all too reasonable grief.

MRS. CLARE

You have truly heard nothing of the child?

MARY

They will say nothing, and it is out of malice; I could feel some pity for Bishop, if I could only think him a stupid and unfeeling brute, who is as much a victim of his own passions and temper as his intimates, but now that he has crossed into cold and calculating cruelty, I at least can rejoice that I may hate him as much as I wish.

They are both somewhat taken aback by this.

MARY (CONT'D)

Forgive me, I have my own temper to master, I know.

MRS. CLARE

(gently)

You have much improved, Mary, with effort, it is true. Eliza mentioned teaching, and I believe, when I was here last, you mentioned that she seemed to have formed the intention of doing so.

MARY

Yes, even in her...

("madness" can't quite
be said aloud)

Even when her spirits were most disordered, in her determination to leave that house, she spoke of teaching as preferable to remaining there; and indeed, I cannot think of how else she is to live, for Ned will not take her into the house, and there is nowhere else.

She flinches back from a movement outside the window, and laughs.

MARY (CONT'D)

(as an aside)

I believe I am more afraid that Bishop will appear than she is. She is fixed on the idea that *she will* not return, and I cannot rid my mind of the knowledge that he can force her to whether *she will* or no.

MRS. CLARE

Has he not granted her a separation? When you said that Ned...

MARY

Oh, he will do it, but until it is done... until her papers of manumission have been signed and she has been given back something like her freedom...

Her hands are clenched, and she is forcing herself to look out of the window.

MRS. CLARE

My dear Mary, I know your optimistic heart, but you must have reflected on the difficulty of procuring a place as a teacher for Eliza, with no experience and...

(delicately, but maybe,
just slightly, a
hint reproachfully...?)

Only lately flown from her husband's house in the dead of night.

MARY

I have thought of it. Everina and Eliza and I and Fanny shall all live together, and support ourselves by painting and taking in needlework.

Off Mrs. Clare's skeptical look:

MARY (CONT'D)

(less convincingly)

A woman gave Fanny 5 pounds for one of her paintings, and when I stayed with their family I have often helped her mother with the sewing.

INT. FANNY'S HOME - MORNING

FANNY is writing a note on a cramped table, by one of the few windows with light, already covered with illustrations and painting work: work, not hobby, painting.

FANNY (V.O.)

I was greatly to blame for mentioning such a plan before I had considered it. At needlework it is utterly impossible that they could earn a half guinea a week -- supposing they had constant employment, which is of all things the most uncertain. As for painting, we would be ruined before they could arrive at any proficiency in the art.

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INT. NED'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Everina, the youngest sister, is sitting at home, in a corner of the room, out of the way. NED'S WIFE, much more richly dressed, walks through as Everina reads a letter, casting Everina a scornful glance. Everina is too engrossed to notice:

FANNY (V.O.)

The situation of our two poor girls grows ever more and more desperate. I am convinced that your brother Ned will be displeased at his sisters being connected with me, and they cannot afford to forfeit his goodwill. I cannot see any possible resource they have.

*
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A young boy, well dressed, the heir to the house, runs by Everina and grabs at the letter with a shout. She barely notices as she lifts it out of reach, and he runs on; she folds it and tucks it into her pocket with a sullen expression.

INT. A BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

MARY is speaking to MRS. CLARE, but she is half-distracted by her own thoughts, speaking them as they come.

MARY

I wish Everina would speak to Ned. Something must be done if Bess can get no allowance and soon too. We have been racking our brains and cannot fix on any feasible plan... Four women to support themselves... (discouraged) It will have to be a school.

*
*
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MRS. CLARE

Four women?

MARY

Yes, Fanny will join us, and Everina can no longer stay with Ned. He knows that she assisted us, that she knew where we were hidden.

MRS. CLARE

Fanny seemed quite unwell when I saw her last.

MARY

The doctors are sure more southern
air would aid her health, I do not
understand why Skeys...

("does not help her")

But it is all of a piece.

Mrs. Clare has no words of consolation, but offers her the
book. We see the title when she opens to the front page:
THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION, BY DR. BURGH.

MARY (CONT'D)

(genuinely touched)

Thank you, Mrs. Clare. I am sure it
shall be useful... as indeed I hope
the four of us will be.

MRS. CLARE

I hope to be able to offer you better
than a book - I offer you an
introduction. Dr. Burgh's widow is
a woman of my acquaintance, and very
knowledgeable about the running of a
school - her husband is the author
of this book and ran one for many
years. She could surely advise you
on the proper place to settle and go
about getting students.

INT. AN OPEN COACH - OUTSIDE OF LONDON

MARY, MRS CLARE, MRS. BURGH, and ELIZA are in a coach. Mrs.
Burgh and Eliza face forward, but Eliza seems not to notice
any of it, and Mrs. Clare is busy watching Eliza.

Mary watches an older gentleman (RICHARD PRICE) walking in a
field next to the road, some distance off. He comes across
what he can see is a net filled with trapped birds. He
reaches down. Mary watches as he works, then sees a the
freed birds flying upward. She looks back in some
satisfaction at Eliza, suddenly hopeful.

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When the town comes into view, she is enraptured.

MARY

It's beautiful.

INT./EXT. MONTAGE

A land agent shows Mary and Mrs. Burgh a house. It's small
and dark.

The three view a second house. Better, but they emerge and
are nearly truck down by passing traffic -- too close to the
street.

A third house -- it's perfect, but immense.

Mary looks down from a window into a yard -- room enough for children to play.

MARY

It is perfect.

INT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - DAY

EVERINA greets MARY in a hallway of the house.

EVERINA

It is impossible!

Mary pulls her into an empty room.

MARY

What is impossible?

EVERINA

Mrs. Campbell. Mrs. Disney. Every despicable widowed Mrs. from here to Hackney who decided that lodging *in their child's school*--

MARY

Lower your voice!

EVERINA

To make them *and especially the school matrons* wretched and miserable--

MARY

Everina, we have much to be grateful for--

EVERINA

Ugh! The abominable younger Disney--

MARY

And you must not refer to our students in such a way!

FANNY enters, and sees what she is about to get into, but proceeds. She is serene, and charming, but also more tired and pale than when we saw her last.

FANNY

My dearest girls.

EVERINA

You could not hear us from the hallway, Fanny, I am sure.

FANNY

Perhaps I heard two scholars, engaged
in a very heated debate, with a
passion for learning which does credit
to our school.

MARY

(pointedly)

I hope all our scholars will learn
to regulate their passions.

Everina is disgusted.

MARY (CONT'D)

(giving ground)

But I admit, that mine, over dinner,
has sometimes sorely been tried.

EVERINA

Because they are unbearable!

Fanny begins to gather some books.

MARY

They are paying for their bread and
board, and their children's education.

EVERINA

We have over twenty scholars.

MARY

And we are four women, who must eat,
and we have a servant, and this house.
Everina, it is no different than
needing to be on good terms with
Ned's wife when you are staying in
his house. You can...

She makes eye contact with Fanny, who is trying to warn her--
that is a sore subject.

MARY (CONT'D)

... really consider this a blessing,
an opportunity to practice tolerance.
Not at the cost of your own dignity,
Everina, I would never ask that of
you...

Everina's dignity is ruffled.

MARY (CONT'D)

But try.

She looks out the window, where the last straggling scholars
are just leaving across the yard.

She can see ELIZA in a room diagonally across, straightening the desks.

MARY (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Things could be worse.

Fanny begins to cough.

INT. HOUSE OF MRS. BURGH - EVENING

A house party is in full swing -- but this is a religious community, so it's not drinking and cards. It's conversation. Mrs. Burgh is in full conversation with MARY and some prospective parents, MR. JAMESON and MRS. JAMESON.

MRS. BURGH
 Oh, very well respected. And the school is run on the soundest educational principles.

Across the room, a rival, to some prospective parents:

MRS. COCKBURN
 Very well meaning. But so young.

Mrs. Burgh catches Mary's attention.

MRS. BURGH
 Miss Wollstonecraft. I was just speaking to the Jameson's about your admirable school.

MARY
 How do you do?

Across the room:

MRS. COCKBURN
 Charming girls, of course.
 (emphatically)
 Charming.

JOHN HEWLETT and his wife MRS. HEWLETT have noticed Mrs. Cockburn's conversation. They are young, almost Mary and Everina's ages: 23, 20. John Hewlett tries to exchange a discreet yet knowing smile with his wife, but she looks displeased: not a fan of the Miss W's.

JOHN HEWLETT
 Pardon me.

He moves across the room, to where Mary and Mrs. Jameson are in conversation.

MARY

(as though she's been
contradicted)

Fresh air and exercise are considered
absolutely essential and are taken
daily at the school.

MRS. JAMESON

How innovative.

JOHN HEWLETT

Mens sana in corpore sano.

(to Mrs. Jameson and
Mary)

A sound mind in a sound body, as we
say.

Mr. Jameson laughs.

MR. JAMESON

But you say it in English at your
school, I dare say, Miss
Wollstonecraft? No Latin there!

Mary is taken aback.

MRS. BURGH

Miss Wollstonecraft is fluent in the
best French. You know the Reverend
Hewlett of course?

MRS. JAMESON

Oh yes, very well. How is Mrs.
Hewlett?

John looks over: she's now making a display of her friendly
conversation with Mrs. Cockburn and the other couple. He
hesitates: he can hardly divert Mrs. Burgh's prospects over
to Mrs. Cockburn. But Mrs. Hewlett is signaling that he
should.

JOHN HEWLETT

She is speaking with Mrs. Cockburn.

MRS. JAMESON

Oh, I must say hello.

She moves off, Mr. Jameson also excusing himself. Mrs. Burgh
barely shows she is annoyed.

MRS. BURGH

(quietly, re: Mrs.
Cockburn)

And in my own house!

JOHN HEWLETT

Dr. Price was telling me how much he enjoyed your conversations, Mary.

MRS. BURGH

(to Mary)

He will be here for tea after he preaches this Sunday, and he particularly wished me to invite you.

Mary has been watching Mrs. Jameson being roped into conversation with Mrs. Cockburn by Mrs. Hewlett, but is diverted by the news.

MARY

I will be so happy to attend.

She casts another glance at Mrs. Jameson, who is accepting a cup of tea -- determining on something.

INT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - DAY

MRS. JAMESON puts down her tea in the front parlor of the Newington School. It is the end of a business meeting with MARY and FANNY.

MRS. JAMESON

I am sure Thomas will improve admirably under your care. Mr. Jameson is not pleased with his progress in grammar, which I cannot help him with at all. Naturally.

She smiles, confessing to this deficiency quite prettily. In the yard, unseen by Mary, a visiting THOMAS shoves a scholar; ELIZA rushes over.

MRS. JAMESON (CONT'D)

He is a clever child, but... somewhat wild... in his way.

Mary is all business.

MARY

The forming of a child's temper should be the first task of a teacher. After all, governing our temper is the business of our whole lives.

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From Thomas's face as he stares down Eliza, we can see that grammar will not be their biggest challenge.

Fanny begins to cough again, weakly. Mary moves to escort Mrs. Jameson out.

MRS. JAMESON
 (concerned)
 Mrs. Cockburn mentioned that your
 friend was not quite well.

INT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - LATER

ELIZA is the nurse now, sitting by a coughing FANNY. She looks up at MARY who is entering -- both are concerned.

EXT. THE BLOODS' HOUSE - LATER

MARY walks to the Blood home, followed by a woman who assists at the school, MISS MASON, as an escort. She enters and exchanges a look with MRS. BLOOD. By the fire, a half dressed MR. BLOOD is drinking. Miss Mason takes a seat at a discreet distance.

MR. BLOOD
 Miss Wollstonecraft! Come back to
 stay, have you? Where is my dear
 Fanny?

MARY
 (grim)
 Fanny is too ill to come.

MR. BLOOD
 Pity, pity.

He resumes drinking. Mary sits next to Mrs. Blood.

MARY
 Something must be done.

Mrs. Blood writes a letter, with Mary hovering nearby -- and reading the letter over when Mrs. Blood is through.

She looks over at Mr. Blood, reaches a decision, and gives the letter back to Mrs. Blood to sign and seal. Mary delivers the letter to the post herself.

INT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - DAY

Another letter arrives and is handed off through the house until it arrives to FANNY. EVERINA dashes off to alert her sisters.

Fanny is seated, and with enough blankets and things at hand to make clear that she is often seated now. She opens the letters with trembling hands.

Everina arrives, gasping, and MARY follows at a more proper pace -- but clearly also there to hear the news.

FANNY

Oh, my dear girls. Oh, my dear girls.

She can't continue. Mary can't quite ask the real question.

MARY

Is it from Mr. Skeys?

Fanny nods.

EVERINA

But why did he write to you?

Mary bestows a quelling look on Everina, but when Fanny doesn't answer, Everina continues.

EVERINA (CONT'D)

Why doesn't he write to your mama?

FANNY

He has sent for me -- he has asked that I marry him -- he has sent for me to come to Portugal.

MARY

Oh, Fanny!

She moves to Fanny's side, to comfort and congratulate her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Portugal! Marriage!

She doesn't know which to choose or how to act. But Everina is quickly and completely outraged.

EVERINA

Marry Skeys! Go to Portugal! You are *leaving!*

Everina runs from the room. Mary reaches out and takes Fanny's hand.

FANNY

It is what I have wished for for so long.

MARY

We have all desired it for you, Fanny.

Eliza has arrived at the door. After hesitating, she comes in.

MARY (CONT'D)

Even your doctors have desired it for you.

FANNY

I shall miss you all so much.

She begins to tear up.

ELIZA

(sincerely)

We will all wish you both very happy.

FANNY

I could be so happy, but that I shall never see my three dear girls again...!

She is happy, but also realizing what her marriage will mean -- she very well may never see them again. Mary, impulsively:

MARY

Fanny! Our friendship is too dear for you to believe that, for us to allow that. You shall see us again. I promise.

Now Eliza shoots Mary a quelling look -- there is no way Mary can make that promise. But Mary is completely sincere.

EXT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL

Mary, Eliza, and Everina are seeing Fanny off into a coach. She embraces them all and gets in. Her parents are already in the coach, her mother already grieving, her father enjoying the airing. As Fanny is just out of earshot:

EVERINA

(with finality)

We shall never see her again.

MARY

Everina!

Mr. Blood hangs out of the coach.

MR. BLOOD

(boisterously)

Your servant, ladies!

And they are off.

EXT. PORTUGAL

We see Fanny being married in Portugal. It is a discreet affair, in a home, not in a church. Perhaps we see the prominence of the Catholic cathedrals in Portugal to contrast with this wedding as a more hidden affair, among expatriates.

EXT. HOUSE OF RICHARD PRICE - MORNING

Mary and Dr. Price are walking by the side of the road - not to get to any particular place, just walking.

INT. HOUSE OF MR. & MRS HEWLETT - AFTERNOON

JOHN HEWLETT and MRS. HEWLETT and entertaining ELIZA and EVERINA.

EVERINA

And she is forever out of doors walking with Dr. Price.

MRS. HEWLETT

(meanly)
Talking philosophy, I am sure.

ELIZA

Really, though, they do - I tried to walk out with them one day, and all their discussion of reason and freedom and virtue left me as far behind as all their walking.

MRS. HEWLETT

(any target will do)
Dr. Price is a prodigious walker, I wonder he has any time for all his sermons. John labors over his sermons with true diligence.

JOHN HEWLETT

Dr. Price can walk and work out a sermon at the same time. He has often recommended it to me, but perhaps it is a gift one is granted with experience.

MRS. HEWLETT

And with his poor wife always so ill, it is no wonder he wishes to be out of the house.

ELIZA

He is so attentive to her, I find it quite touching.

EVERINA

Mary is so diligent in attending a sickbed, I wonder that she can reason away bringing Dr. Price away from his duty. And there is more than enough work to do at the school.

HEWLETT

Perhaps today they are discussing
Luke Chapter 10.

That flies over Everina and Eliza's head but Mrs. Hewlett
actually catches that reference -- and she's not amused.

EXT. LANE - MORNING

A boy with a letter is coming toward a walking MARY and DR.
PRICE. He recognizes her, hands her the letter -- it's
addressed to her -- and Dr. Price gives him a coin. Mary
holds the letter, torn.

DR. PRICE

Please.

She opens it.

INT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - MORNING

ELIZA

Ill!

EVERINA

Still?

ELIZA

(dismayed)

Portugal was supposed to help her
constitution.

MARY

The journey certainly did not. And
now she is pregnant.

EVERINA

You cannot leave.

ELIZA

(the idea is ridiculous)

Everina!

But Mary is thinking about it.

EXT. LANE - AFTERNOON

MARY is walking again with DR. PRICE.

MARY

I shall endeavor to so attend matters
that they may not feel any distress
during my absence.

(MORE)

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MARY (CONT'D)

Everina is grown indefatigable in her efforts to improve herself and altogether she assists me very much in the school and house...

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INT. HOUSE OF MRS. BURGH - AFTERNOON

MARY is speaking with MRS. BURGH.

MARY

I have been teased to death this morning. Even Mrs. Cockburn has taken it in her head to oppose my going to Lisbon!

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INT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - EVENING

EVERINA

The school will fail.

ELIZA

No one is as capable as you.

EVERINA

We will be destitute.

MARY

The school is doing well and you are capable teachers.

ELIZA

No one is as able to speak to the parents than you.

EVERINA

We will beg for our daily bread.

MARY

I am not to be governed in this way.
Fanny is ill, Fanny is dying, and
and I am going.

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EXT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - MORNING

Early morning; only ELIZA and EVERINA are there to see MARY off. She travels, first by chaise and then by stagecoach, down to the sea and boards a ship to Portugal. The ship is a completely different world: sailors everywhere, miserable passengers crammed in cabins below deck. Mary stands alone among a few other passengers above decks, staring out at the sea. It is a quiet, reflective crossing, already melancholy. Then, the bustle of landing in Portugal, the strange (to the English) costumes, women in head-coverings and voluminous skirts, the loud voices of crowds.

Mary is escorted to the SKEYS HOME but is met at the door by a servant woman with a worried face -- and Mary knows the news is not good.

She holds FANNY's hand during her labor, but when Fanny is too weak to take the child, get up and leaves, clearly to take a task in hand. She returns with a woman who takes the child to nurse. Mary sits by Fanny's bed as SKEYS closes her eyes -- Fanny is dead.

EXT. SHIP - RETURN TO ENGLAND

The sea on the return trip is more dangerous -- with waves and gusting wind. MARY is still above decks, watching a rescue effort as sailors from a ship are helped aboard. The ship is battered, foundering, and the sailors are thin, and thirsty -- drinking the water offered them gratefully.

EXT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL - MORNING

MARY returns at an hour where the school seems deserted. She walks through the house, and we see that some of the rooms are empty. In the school, EVERINA and ELIZA are working to teach a group of scholars, but they are restless and distracted. They are also much fewer in number than when Mary left. Mary is surprised.

INT. AN EMPTY CLASSROOM - LATER

ELIZA

We didn't wish to worry you.

EVERINA

And what difference could it make?
You were in Portugal.

ELIZA

Everina did not set out to quarrel
with Mrs. Disney --

EVERINA

No one means to quarrel with Mrs.
Disney, but everyone does.

ELIZA

No one but you has your way with
Mrs. Disney or with any of the
parents, Mary. And once Mrs. Disney
had decided she would no longer be a
boarder here--

This is a surprise to Mary, and a financial disaster.

MARY

She will no longer be a boarder here?

EVERINA

She is a petty and vindictive woman.

ELIZA

And since she is going, she decided that it would make better sense for her sons to be whole boarders at Mrs. Cockburn's.

INT. THE BLOODS' HOME - NEWINGTON GREEN - EVENING

MARY and MRS. BLOOD are sitting together. MR. BLOOD, respectably dressed, is sitting quietly by the fire, apart from them.

MARY

I cannot think of remaining any longer in that house, the rent is so enormous. And I have so many debts... But if our present plan should fail, I cannot even guess what the girls will do. My brother I am sure will not receive them, and they are not calculated to struggle with the world. Eliza in particular is very helpless.

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MRS. BLOOD

You could start another school with the girls. Abroad, your creditors could not touch you. Think of Dublin! Our cousins are there and could certainly advise you.

MARY

No, my creditors have the right to do what they please with me, should I not satisfy their demands. And indeed some of them cannot well afford to wait for their money. But I know your family and friends would be very kind.

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MRS. BLOOD

Mr. Blood's friends may get him employment in Dublin, and if he could only get there, his debts here would be nothing.

MARY

Dublin!

MRS. BLOOD

And when Skeys has sent us aid, as he promised, we will be able to take
(MORE)

MRS. BLOOD (CONT'D)
 ourselves there, and we will not be
 such a burden to you as we are at
 present, I hope.

MARY
 (hesitating)
 I have received a short letter from
 Skeys... it was written to apologize
 for not sending the money. He says
 he is sorry he cannot assist you.

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This has Mr. Blood's attention.

MRS. BLOOD
 Oh.

MARY
 I believe he has been very ill used,
 yet I am certain a few pounds would
 not make any difference in his
 affairs.

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Mr. Blood gets up angrily and leaves. Overlapping:

MARY (CONT'D)
 Yet why should I be surprised? Did
 he not neglect Fanny?

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MRS. BLOOD
 Oh, Mary, you know how difficult it
 has been for Mr. Blood to find a
 situation that will answer in his
 situation. And with all our debts,
 and this quarter's rent unpaid, Dublin
 is the only place for us now. Is
 there nothing that can be done?

EXT. THE NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL

The Miss Wollstonecrafts' watch a class depart. There are
 only twelve scholars.

EVERINA
 And now there are only twelve.

ELIZA
 I believe the Jameson boys may be
 the next to find their education
 elsewhere.

They look to MARY to see how she takes this news.

MARY

With fewer than twelve, the school must close.

EVERINA

Mary!

MARY

We must prepare ourselves for what is to come.

Everina and Eliza look aghast.

MARY (CONT'D)

I have already begin inquires for a school which will take Everina as a boarder. And for you, too, Eliza, we will find a similar situation.

EVERINA

A school! Attend a school! No!

MARY

You must attend to your education, Everina. Better references, connections, better French...

ELIZA

What connections can Everina make at a school?

EVERINA

Why would I need them?

MARY

To prepare you to be a governess.

Everina rushes into the house.

MARY (CONT'D)

And you and I, Eliza, will face a similar fate.

Eliza reaches out to support herself.

MARY (CONT'D)

It is something of an independence, Eliza. I will support you and Everina and you will achieve an education which will allow you to work in the most comfortable situations.

ELIZA

Comfortable!

MARY
As comfortable as possible.

EXT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL

MARY sees first EVERINA off in a chaise, attended by a servant. Then ELIZA -- her clothes now more frayed, no servant in sight. She returns to the classroom, now mostly empty, and unheated -- clearly cold, she writes.

MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Over excerpts from *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, we see EVERINA learning a series of useless decorative tasks at a school, with a bunch of older teenage girls. ELIZA is sitting in a parlor with a group of young teachers, who are giggling among themselves, and looking at ladies' magazines. Eliza is clearly excluded; Everina, perhaps too aware of the pointlessness of what she is doing. In the schoolyard of Everina's school, a group of younger girls are boisterously making washing motions around a horse trough, laughing hysterically, the effect should attempt to be unbearably vulgar. In Eliza's school, older girls with ramrod straight backs are practicing ascending and descending from a mock coach in the middle of the yard, drilled by a teacher with utter seriousness. At the end we see MARY, still alone and cold in the empty classroom, still writing.

MARY
It is my opinion that manners are
too much attended too in all the
schools, and in the nature of things
it cannot be otherwise, as the
reputation of the house depends on
it. The temper is neglected, the
same lessons are taught to all, few
things are learnt thoroughly, but
many follies contracted. Gratitude
and tenderness are not called forth
in the way they might be by maternal
affection. I shall not contend about
the graces, but the virtues are best
learned at home.

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EXT. NEWINGTON GREEN SCHOOL

JOHN HEWLETT rides up on horseback, clutching a letter.
MARY comes out to greet him.

JOHN HEWLETT
Ten pounds!

MARY
Ten pounds!

JOHN HEWLETT

I told you Johnson was a capital fellow and an excellent judge of saleable writing. He will publish your manuscript when it is finished, and he has sent the ten pounds in advance!

Mary accepts the package, dazed.

MARY

He shall publish it?

JOHN HEWLETT

Yes, and he has paid you in advance.

MARY

People will read it.

JOHN HEWLETT

Yes, and you shall be paid for it. So now you must finish.

MARY

Oh, I hope it shall do some good.

JOHN HEWLETT

I am sure it is very well timed.

It takes her a moment to realize he means the money. She looks at the packet.

MARY

Oh, yes.

EXT. THE DOCK

Mary is there to see off Mr. and Mrs. Blood, who are traveling with all their meager worldly goods. Mr. Blood is looking around nervously, anticipating that someone will try to stop them from leaving.

MR. BLOOD

The sooner we are on that ship, the better.

MRS. BLOOD

Oh, Mary, you dear child, how I shall miss you.

MARY

I shall never forget you.

MR. BLOOD

Quick aboard with those packages
now!

MRS. BLOOD

You dear, dear child, dearer to me
than any but my dearest child --

MR. BLOOD

Much obliged, now on to the ship we
go.

They set off, Mrs. Blood still talking at a trailing Mary.

MRS. BLOOD

(figuratively)

I am sure we shall never be able to
repay you...

MR. BLOOD

(literally)

No, never.

They head up the gangplank leaving Mary behind.

MRS. BLOOD

Ten pounds! Such a generous child.

MR. BLOOD

Aye, with her brother's money, or
Skeys again, I am sure.

The fade into the distance. Mary is left alone in the crowd.
She turns back and disappears into the street.

EXT. NEWINGTON GREEN - MONTAGE

MARY walks through the streets of Newington Green, a free woman. She is walking thoughtfully, observing daily life: a fine carriage plowing through a busy street; meat in the front of the butcher's; impoverished children; a man emerging from a sedan chair and entering a shop. Mary has no interest in the shop and is about to pass it, but when she sees a musician with a violin case, walking in her direction, she ducks in before he can see her.

Mary avoids the shopman's eye and moves immediately to look at rolls of cloth, which make up the bulk of the wares in the store. She keeps a wary eye on the windows and watches THE VIOLIN MASTER walk past the windows. He's dressed shabbily and seems miserable.

Mary runs her hands across one of the cloths, it's finer than anything she could afford.

She looks up, sees the shopman looking at her -- he knows it too -- but she holds her head high as she exits the shop. It's only when she opens the door and surveys the street outside that she ducks her head, and heads off in the opposite direction of the Master.

INT. HOUSE OF MRS. BURGH

MRS. BURGH

You are maintaining your school while writing a book - I have every faith in your industry and your intentions.

MARY

Thank you, Mrs. Burgh.

MRS. BURGH

John Hewlett is also a very industrious, and ambitious planner. But Mr. Burgh was an author also, and you must allow me to say, Mary, since you have raised the issue of money, that it did not answer for him as much as you or John Hewlett hope.

MARY

I understand.

Although she doesn't -- Mrs. Burgh has always been a supporter, and an encourager of hers.

MRS. BURGH

And I understand another pupil has left the school.

MARY

Yes.

Mrs. Burgh hesitates over her tea. Mary decides to meet the question head on.

MARY (CONT'D)

There are now only four. And, with no masters, no art, no violin, and only each other and I in such a small space, perhaps it is foolish to imagine that I will have four much longer. But what I am teaching them is useful. It is meaningful. And when I observe other schools, other masters at their work, I can reflect with pride that also, I am kind.

Unexpectedly, this provides Mrs. Burgh with an opening.

MRS. BURGH

It is worthy work; the number of pupils whom you teach cannot make it small.

She smiles encouragingly at Mary, who can barely muster one in response. It does feel small.

MRS. BURGH (CONT'D)

But, the expenses of running a school, will not allow for teaching such a small number indefinitely.

Mary can barely hope.

MARY

Have you heard of other interested parents?

MRS. BURGH

I know of a mother interested in obtaining the finest quality instruction for three of her daughters. In Ireland.

MARY

In Ireland.

MRS. BURGH

The sons, of course, are at Eton; the girls parents, Mary, are peers. Lord and Lady Kingsborough! And Reverend Prior tells me they are prepared to pay quite properly for a woman of your education and experience as a governess.

MARY

(angrily)

And how much do they propose to buy me for?

Mrs. Burgh is taken aback.

MARY (CONT'D)

Forgive me -- I know -- I owe so many people money -- and the school costs more and more--

(she calms herself a bit)

To be able to repay Mr. Hinksley -- and you -- would be no small thing --

MRS. BURGH

They would make you very comfortable --
Rev. Prior assures me they would
respect you -- you wouldn't be a
servant in the house, you would be
quite looked after.

MARY

No, I wouldn't be a servant; I would
be a nothing, neither one thing nor
another, a spy to the servants and a
servant to the family.

MRS. BURGH

Of course, Mary, if you feel you
cannot--

MARY

I can. I have asked Eliza and Everina
to do it -- I can do it -- many have
done worse -- and I will be free to
quit at any time.

She doesn't see Mrs. Burgh's reaction to that.

MARY (CONT'D)

It is not for life.

(beat)

It is not Portugal.

(beat)

And I shall earn enough to repay all
my debts -- enough to give me room
to write -- I shall earn my freedom.

INT. AN EMPTY CLASSROOM

MISS MASON is watching as MARY tries on an overcoat, and
it's apparent from the state of the room that they have both
been sewing clothes, and packing traveling cases even as
they sew. Mary approves of the fit, but the mood in the
room is subdued. Mason tried to lighten it with:

MISS MASON

Try it with the hat.

MARY

That hat!

Mason laughs.

MISS MASON

What a gift!

Mary picks an extravagant blue hat out of a nearby hatbox
and puts it on.

MARY

Imagine a governess with such a hat.

MISS MASON

Perhaps it is an Irish fashion.

MARY

No, my imagination is not up to it.

A noise outside the window -- she looks down, it is a hired chaise. She takes off the hat -- begins to take off the coat -- realizes she is leaving -- fastens it.

MISS MASON

That coach cannot be for you!

MARY

Just a quick trip.

MISS MASON

You leave for Ireland tomorrow!

Mary grabs a more practical hat out of her luggage and jams it on her head.

MARY

Before I leave London, there is one thing I must do.

Off Miss Mason's speechlessness:

MARY (CONT'D)

My freedom may depend on it.

EXT. OUTSIDE JOSEPH JOHNSON'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

Mary descends from a hackney coach with a manuscript, wrapped up and tied in protective oilskin, clutched in her hands.

MARY

(to a bystander)

This is Joseph Johnson's place of business?

BYSTANDER

Yes, Ma'am.

MARY

Thank you.

She fumbles with her manuscript a little as she pays the coachman from a pocket book, then resolutely marches in via the front door.

INT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE

Joseph JOHNSON is a slight, shorter man -- Wollstonecraft later referred to him as "little Johnson" -- in his sixties, always calm, gracious, and unfazed by the behavior of his authors, many of them radical in politics and in their personal lives. He ushers MARY into his office showing nothing more than polite curiosity.

MARY

Perhaps it is more conventional for your authors to trust their manuscripts to messengers.

JOHNSON

Few of my authors are conventional, Miss Wollstonecraft.

They exchange smiles.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And of course the neighborhood is a popular one, for authors of such a stripe as mine tend to be.

MARY

They must find it very convenient to live so near to their publishers.

JOHNSON

They find it very congenial to sharpen the swords of their wit on each other, over dinner. But perhaps we publishers offer some society of our own, in our way.

For a few seconds he leafs through the pages of her manuscript while she struggles to put into words what she came to say. Johnson speaks first.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I have something of a standing dinner, Miss Wollstonecraft, to which Mr. Hewlett has been a not infrequent guest. Newington Green is not so far as to make it impracticable, if you would consent to be my guest, on some occasion.

Crushing -- she would have loved to, but:

MARY

It would be an honor, but I am afraid that I cannot.

JOHNSON

Mrs. Barbould is a frequent visitor!
And she has just begin to embark on
a new educational work, I am sure
such must interest you.

Salt in the wound.

MARY

I admire her a great deal. And it
would be an honor to attend in any
company, but I am moving to Ireland.

JOHNSON

Oh.

MARY

I have taken a position as a governess
with Lord and Lady Kingsborough.

JOHNSON

Well, I congratulate you. I am sure
it is a very advantageous situation.

MARY

Very, I am told. But nothing could
be more distressing or less congenial
to me. I assure you, I enter into
it with extreme regret.

JOHNSON

Oh.

MARY

There is only one thought, one course
of action I can dream of, that makes
it bearable.

MONTAGE: The slamming of type into print spells out "SITUATION OF FEMALES FASHIONABLY EDUCATED AND LEFT WITHOUT A FORTUNE" -- intercut with travel scenes: sailors laboring on the packet while Mary sits properly next to a well-dressed lord on the passenger's deck -- Mary next to a parson in a post chaise traveling at a fast pace, and finally approaching the KINGSBOROUGH RESIDENCE -- immense, imposing, and isolated.

INT. MITCHELSTOWN - KINGSBOROUGH RESIDENCE

In a glittering ballroom, very rich and very richly attired men and women circulate, equally assiduous to show off their fashions and their persons. It's an age where goods were expensive and servants were cheap to hire, and everyone in this room is desperate to show off how much they have of each.

UPSTAIRS, LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID leaves LADY KINGSBOROUGH more elaborately attired than we have seen anyone thus far -- a male hairdresser is putting the finishing touches on her elaborate style -- and enters the room where MARY, much more modestly attired, waits. Although Mary's dress is much more modest than Lady Kingsborough's, it's more elaborate than anything we've seen her in before. Her hair, however, is shockingly ridiculous -- wrapped around pieces of paper.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID
Lady Kingsborough is almost finished.

Mary bows her head as the maid looses one of the curls from around the paper.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH descends the stairs to the feigned rapture of nearby guests.

Mary sits still as her hair is let down into ringlets.

LORD KINGSBOROUGH flirts with a young lady as LADY KINGSBOROUGH watches.

Mary looks in the mirror as her hair is done up more elaborately.

OGLE is pontificating to a group of men, who look bored.

Mary sits through a thick dusting of powder for her hair and her face.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH snags the attention of Mr. Ogle, getting her husband's attention, but he only looks amused.

Mary rises, elaborately made up, enough to pass as an equal downstairs. She reaches into an almost empty purse and pays the maid, who looks as though she knows how much Mary hates to part with it -- and she's happy to take it.

Mary makes a less marked entrance down the stairs and disappears into the crowd.

INT. LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S CHAMBERS - LATER

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
A smashing success. You look quite
fatigued, Miss Wollstonecraft. I
count that a success.

Mary is exhausted but sitting, as she always does in Lady K's presence, as upright as if she were at a job interview. Lady K is relaxed and surrounded by servant women and her pugs.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

And you were something of a success yourself! Mr. Ogle was quite taken by your grasp of the poets.

She looks Mary over severely, as though a grasp of the poets might be something dangerous.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

And Lady B spoke with you for hours! Did you know she asked me who you were as she was leaving. She was furious when I told her you were the girl's new governess!

Mary can't tell quite how she should react. It's no matter: Lady K's attention has moved on to several pugs sleeping on her bed.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

Quite fatiguing. And you have such an early morning, too. I believe it is so important for the girls to rise early. Sleeping in will quite rot their little minds.

She shakes a pug fondly.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

You really can't be too severe upon them when they are at that age.

EXT. THE WOODS NEAR MITCHELSTOWN

Mary is walking along a lane in the company of three girls, MARGARET, age 14, CAROLINE, Age 11, and MK (also a Mary), age 8, all of them returning to the house. They are nicely attired and each of the three is carrying an empty basket, while Mary holds a small book. Caroline is in the middle of a litany of facts:

CAROLINE

... And it was so dark inside, and it smelled, and it was damp.

MARGARET

We were there.

CAROLINE

Miss Wollstonecraft asked me what I had observed, and that's what I observed!

MARY

What did you observe, Mary?

MK

I saw a mouse.

Mary looks up the lane and sees a party of fashionably dressed women, including LADY K, between their group and the house.

CAROLINE

And what did YOU observe, Margaret?

Mary is interested, Margaret thoughtful. Finally:

MARGARET

We are very fortunate.

But even as she's finishing, Caroline realizes:

CAROLINE

Our mother!

Lady Kingsborough smiles, but frostily. MRS. FITZGERALD and her THREE DAUGHTERS, young women, are with her and they walk languidly, as opposed to with purpose like the younger girls. Lady K directs a pointed look at Mary.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

Young ladies do not run.

Mary checks her stride, and the girls almost stop, and fall meekly into a sedate pace behind her. Mary is prepared to pass and move on to the house but:

MRS. FITZGERALD

The girls look very nice today.

Lady K is thus forced to take an interest.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

I hope the girls behaved in a way that we can be proud of.

MARY

We were visiting the curate's widow, and I am happy to say that they did.

Mrs. Fitzgerald looks skeptical.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

Those are hardly appropriate clothes for visiting the poor!

Mary looks conflicted: not sure what to say. Margaret steps into the breach.

MARGARET

We always attend to ceremony when
visiting people suffering misfortune,
so we are sure not to show them
disrespect.

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Caroline and MK are amazed by this really dangerous show of spirit: MK even moves slightly to stand behind Mary and clutch her skirts, and is clearly terrified when Lady K's gaze falls on her.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

Since you have disrespected me, you
may return to the house in disgrace.
Miss Wollstonecraft, I trust you
will set her some task which will
encourage her to ponder on humility.

It's an order. Mary nods.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

(to Margaret)

After dinner you may offer me your
apology. Miss Wollstonecraft.

She sweeps off. Unseen, Margaret sweeps defiantly back to the house, followed by a smiling Caroline. MK takes Mary's hand as they follow the girls back to the house.

MRS. FITZGERALD

Well, the curate's widow is a worthy
woman, and Miss Wollstonecraft does
seem to have very interesting ideas
about benevolence and the girl's
improvement.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

There is very little that is improving
about Margaret of late.

She looks at her three vapid stepsisters with dissatisfaction.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

Your daughters had perfectly stupid
governesses and they have turned out
admirably well.

EXT. ROAD - A GROUPING OF COACHES, WITH OUTRIDERS

MARY is riding in a coach with MARGARET, CAROLINE, MK and two maids squished in. The three girls share one side of the coach while Mary and the two adults are in another. Mary and the two maids are each holding a pug in their laps.

The three girls are clearly bored: Caroline pokes MK, and is quelled by a look from Mary, but it's clear that this has gone on endlessly.

Outside, several other coaches are in train, and there are also several outriders - men on horseback surrounding the coaches. At a scenic outcropping, and in response to an order from the head coach, coachmen call out to one another signaling a halt. As the travelers pour out of the coaches:

MARGARET
(under her breath)
Finally.

Mary looks around at the view -- gorgeous, even sublime views. She goes to take a deep breath:

LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID
The dog, madam?

Mary hands it to her and the maid looks at it, takes it, but pointedly puts it on the ground. It runs off to join the others frolicking around LADY KINGSBOROUGH. The three girls are there, sitting as their mother gestures them to the blankets on the ground.

Mary walks over:

MARY
If I may, I thought it might benefit
the girls to take a short walk--

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
Oh, no, the trip has been so
fatiguing.

But Mary really cares about this:

MARY
The views...

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
Oh, no, I worry there is far too
much danger that they might one day
say something about "the sublime".

It's a rebuke. Mary sits on the edge of the blanket -- much of which is covered by dogs.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)
(cooing)
I knew my precious babies would need
an airing being shut up in that stuffy
old coach.

She doesn't mean the children.

EXT. - HOUSE IN DUBLIN

Servants, family, pugs disembark from the coaches.

INT. HOUSE AT DUBLIN - MORNING

Lady Kingsborough is speaking to her housekeeper and Mary - who never knows what social tier she is supposed to occupy on such occasions.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

And I am certain Lord Kingsborough will have his usual number of visitors as well. Oh! The Ogles are in town, Mary, I am sure that must interest you particularly.

She turns to Mary, waiting for a response: the housekeeper waits too.

MARY

A very amiable family.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

And we will all be attending a ball in two weeks time where Irish Linen must be worn, such little time I know, but as I will need the girls to help me with some fancy work you will have time of your own to work on your dress.

MARY

The girls...

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

And there will be so many masters coming in. I dare say they can neglect their geography for a fortnight with little harm. Irish Linen parties are so fashionable now.

MARY

And I am to buy a new gown!

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

It is to aid the Irish weavers, Mary. It is giving to the poor.

INT. DRAPER'S SHOP - DUBLIN

Mary hands over coins to pay for a long swath of Irish linen. She's not happy about it.

INT. A BALLROOM - NIGHT

LADY KINGSBOROUGH, MRS. FITZGERALD, the three grown FITZGERALD DAUGHTERS walk through a ballroom, Mary of the party but trailing behind.

MARY

I begged to be excused in a civil way but she would not allow me to absent myself. The expense of hairdressing and millinery would have exceeded the sum I choose to spend on these things.

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INT. MARY'S ROOM DUBLIN - LATER

MARY

Till my debts are paid I cannot take any active steps to make myself useful to those I am most interested about. Write to me immediately and let me know the expense of your journey to Eliza.

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INT. EVERINA'S ROOM, NED'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

EVERINA reads, unimpressed:

MARY

Four guineas I imagine will be sufficient and I will enclose it. Your presence will be of the most essential service to Bess.

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EXT. HOUSE AT DUBLIN - MORNING

A reversal of the earlier unpacking. Everyone into the coach, dogs in their accustomed laps, LORD KINGSBOROUGH and LADY KINGSBOROUGH in their own, looking bored with the proceedings and one another.

The group departs and arrives at a dock in the rain, and straggle onto a ship. Now they are penned inside a leaky cabin with the pugs, now departing the ship in Bristol Hot-Wells, coaches arriving to pick them up at the docks, straggling into the house at Bristol Hot-Wells. Throughout, the traveling looks gritty, exhausting and uncomfortable.

INT. HOUSE AT BRISTOL HOT-WELLS - LATER

LADY KINGSBOROUGH is doting on her dogs; MARY is sitting as formally as ever.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
 Poor little dears, you did not ask
 to go on a cold and drafty ship!
 You did not ask to go out in the
 rain! You are very brave for your
 mama. Oh, you are still damp!

She gently hands one over to a maid, who takes it with a towel. Mary is also looking a little damp.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)
 Well, despite this weather, you will
 see, this is the most diverting town.
 And the society will be everything
 that could suit you.

It's a statement of fact, not a discussion. Mary shows nothing.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - BRISTOL HOT WELLS

MARY puts down her pen -- she has been writing, but is now in the midst of a heated discussion with LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID
 I am sure her ladyship said that she
 required you in the parlor.

MARY
 She cannot mean now.

She can.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID
 I've already asked the hairdresser
 up. Her ladyship was very clear.

The maid throws open an armoire and pulls out a few hatboxes.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH'S MAID (CONT'D)
 Shall I help you dress?

We're back to a closeup of the hair curling papers, although now there's a male hairdresser and Mary is looking much less patient. She's almost trembling as she pays him and he leaves, and tips the maid unable to look her in the eyes.

She descends the stairs but takes a deep breath to steady herself before she enters the room.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH is surrounded by a sea of extremely fashionable people. Mary is attired as their equal, but as she enters the room they regard her as though she's a schoolgirl who has been summoned.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
This is Miss Wollstonecraft, the
girls' governess.

Mary makes her curtsey.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)
I was just telling our guests that
you are an authoress. Lady Dickson
has four daughters and will certainly
look into your book.

MARY
I hope--

LADY KINGSBOROUGH
Thank you, Miss Wollstonecraft.

She's been dismissed. It takes Mary a second to realize that is what happened, but she doesn't lose her composure and exits the room gracefully.

In the hallway she takes a moment to come back to herself: she is angry.

INT. MARY'S ROOM, BRISTOL - LATER

MARY is dressed for bed, and writing furiously away. As we hear her writing in voice over, we also see:

LADY KINGSBOROUGH, also dressed for bed, with her maid brushing out her hair.

ELIZA, tidying a girl's schoolroom where screens of landscapes are in various stages of assembly.

EVERINA, sitting with two younger girls and helping them shape scraps of paper into basic ornaments.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT, a la Austen's Lady Bertram, asleep reclining on a sofa with a novel drooping in her hand. This is a FLASHBACK. We will see Mrs. Wollstonecraft, in this attire and in this place, again later. In the present, Mary is writing.

MARY
(V.O.)
Mary was the daughter of Eliza, a
gentle, fashionable girl, who was
(MORE)

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MARY (CONT'D)

educated with the expectation of a large fortune, and of course became a mere machine, the years of youth spent in acquiring a few superficial accomplishments, without having any taste. Her voice was but the shadow of a sound, and she had so relaxed her nerves that she became a mere nothing. Many such naughts are there in the female world! Yet she had a good opinion of her own merit.

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INT. GIRLS SCHOOLROOM - BRISTOL HOT WELLS

MARY

(V.O.)

Truly, she said long prayers.

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MARY is writing as MARGARET, CAROLINE, and MK enter.

MARGARET, CAROLINE, MK

(in chorus)

Good morning, Miss Wollstonecraft.

It's clearly their routine. Mary sets aside her book, addresses the girls as she walks to a globe.

MARY

Good morning, girls.

She gives the globe a spin, about to say more, when LADY KINGSBOROUGH appears at the door.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

I shall want the girls today, Miss Wollstonecraft.

She disappears. The girls stare after her, stunned.

LADY KINGSBOROUGH (CONT'D)

Now, girls!

Mary watches them go, Margaret sending a sympathetic look back. She is left with the globe. She picks up her writing again.

MARY

(V.O.)

She had two beautiful pugs, who she lisped at in the prettiest French...

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We see, but don't hear, Lady Kingsborough and Margaret quarreling in the front yard before they get into the carriage.

MARY (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

She felt very few sentiments of
maternal tenderness. The children
were given to nurses, and she played
with the pugs.

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Lady Kingsborough's coach departs with a furious Lady
Kingsborough in it.

INT. LORD KINGSBOROUGH'S ROOMS - LATER

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

Her own mother! How sharper than a
serpent's tooth! And I know where
it is coming from, it is coming from
THAT WOMAN.

LORD KINGSBOROUGH doesn't really care one way or another.

LORD KINGSBOROUGH

Perhaps her age?

LADY KINGSBOROUGH

Her age? It's because of her age
she has a governess! To learn
obedience, not to argue with me!
She spoke to me as though we were
equals! Me! Equal to a girl of
fifteen!

Lord Kingsborough sighs: fine.

MONTAGE

We see MARY handing a (manuscript sized) parcel to a servant
for the post when a male servant approaches.

We see LORD KINGSBOROUGH handing a grim-faced Mary her wages,
and a letter.

We see MARY packing her trunks.

We see MARY on a coach.

We see MARY transfer to a cab, and once again, the cab pulls
into the yard at St. Paul's Square:

EXT. OUTSIDE JOSEPH JOHNSON'S PUBLISHING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MARY moves to walk toward the bookshop, but by the time her
trunk is off the cab, JOHNSON is walking out with pages in
his hand. He smiles and hands her some proofs of a
manuscript.

A servant walks with them, carrying Mary's trunk, as they walk to Johnson's house. She is clutching the pages.

MARY

I am so sensible of your kindness to me.

JOHNSON

Well, I find a great deal of sense in your manuscript.

He smiles, but Mary is nervous.

MARY

To make a living by my own writing! For me and my sisters. I should never have been able to attempt it without your encouragement. And Eliza--

They enter Johnson's house: loud, full of children, and MRS. JOHNSON, an amiable woman.

JOHNSON

This is Mary Wollstonecraft!

MRS. JOHNSON

Welcome!

Mary is still clutching her proofs.

MARY

Thank you!

Johnson leaves and Mrs. Johnson points the servant toward a room where Mary will be staying. Mary follows, tips the servant, closes the door and is left blessedly alone.

MARY (CONT'D)

How much writing will it take to earn three women an independence?

INT. MARY'S ROOM AT JOHNSON'S HOUSE - LATER

A servant places a stack -- a large stack -- of books on the desk. Mary's daunted, but resolutely picks up the first.

She reads in the common rooms of the house as children trample by, not noticing the noise -- but not because she is engrossed. She is incredulous. She casts a novel aside and we see a fashionable circulating library as she writes:

MARY

Fancy does not make amends for the
absence of sense, probability is
lost sight of in a ridiculous display
of sensibility, for the gentleman as
well as the ladies faint, lose their
senses, are dying one hour, and
dancing with joy the next.

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She tosses another novel aside.

MARY (CONT'D)

The style of this novel has still
more affectation in it than the above,
however, as tender embraces do not
occur in every page, the reader has
time to breathe between each fond
scene.

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She tosses a second one aside, grabs a third. Mary's
voiceover fades out as one gentleman at a club reads aloud
to a second:

INT. A LONDON CLUB - CONTINUOUS

CLUB GOER

We do not think the characters natural
nor the incidents interesting, and
if we forbear to censure, we cannot
praise.

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CLUB GOER #2

That is all?

CLUB GOER

Every damn word.

INT. AN AUTHORESS'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

A lady with a manuscript on her table is reading a copy of
the magazine brought by an avidly watching visitor. She
gasps, indignant.

INDIGNANT AUTHORESS

Unbelievable!

INT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - LATER

EVERINA

Unbelievable.

She's standing in Mary's spartan apartment.

EVERINA (CONT'D)

When you wrote to tell me that you
were living by yourself, I guess
that I just could not believe it.

Mary's not even defensive.

MARY

I need space and quiet for my work.

EVERINA

For your writing.

MARY

(firmly)
For my writing.

EVERINA

And yet, this apartment cannot come
without a cost.

MARY

I am earning it.

Everina looks at her sharply: is that a criticism of her?
It isn't.

EVERINA

And it is truly for your peace and
quiet I am to stay at your Mr.
Johnson's these two weeks, I suspect.

Here Mary is a little embarrassed.

MARY

I don't have a bed.
(beat)
Mrs. Johnson is an excellent hostess,
I lived there some time myself.
(beat)
And I shall see you every day.

Everina: really? You'll visit?

MARY (CONT'D)

And Johnson has invited you to his
standing dinner, it is just the kind
of society you will like.

INT. 2ND FLOOR OF JOHNSON'S SHOP - AFTERNOON

A group of people, mostly men, are eating dinner at Johnson's
table. Among them are JOHNSON, MRS. BARBAULD, HOLCROFT,
FUSELI, BONNYCASTLE, and MARY and EVERINA. Everyone is
speaking to the person beside them, more or less.

The atmosphere is informal.

Everina looks as though she has nothing to say to anyone.
But Mrs. Barbauld will try it.

MRS. BARBAULD

So, Mary has told me that you are a
governess!

Everina would like to be anything else.

EVERINA

Yes.

MRS. BARBAULD

I share your interest in the subject
of education.

Everina is embarrassed.

EVERINA

Yes, of course. I've read your books.
And I admire your poetry greatly.

MRS. BARBAULD

A reader! Excellent. An educator
should be a reader, truly. And what
do you propose to write?

Mary is interested; Everina is taken aback.

EVERINA

Oh, I have no such ambitions. I am
sure I have nothing to say.

MRS. BARBAULD

(confiding)

My dear, just look around this table.
Everyone has something to say.

Everina feels rebuked. Mary turns back to Bonnycastle.

MARY

But I feel sure my brother could
advance further in his profession if
he had a better grasp of mathematics.

BONNYCASTLE

Nothing more important for a sailor,
certainly.

MARY

And Johnson speaks of you as an
excellent tutor.

Bonnycastle looks to Johnson but he can't deny it.

EXT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Everina and Mary are seeing JAMES, a boy of about fifteen, off into a waiting coach. He hugs them both, affectionately, and both women are openly moved. As they watch the coach depart, Everina grows sour, Mary wistful.

EVERINA

That may be James provided for, but Charles will still need money if he is going to live.

INT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - LATER

Mary writes, industriously, but with little joy. Passersby on the street merge into crowds gathering around the

EXT. PRESBYTERIAN MEETING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Crowds of people enter the meeting house for a commemorative speech.

INT. PRESBYTERIAN MEETING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A vast crowd of spectators is listening to Dr. Price, reading from a bible.

DR. PRICE

Our feet shall stand within thy gates,
oh Jerusalem... to give thanks to
the name of the Lord, for there sit
the thrones of judgment, the throne
of the house of David. Pray for the
peace of Jerusalem. They shall
prosper that love thee. Peace be
within thy walls, and prosperity
within thy palaces. For my brethren
and companions sake, I shall now
say, peace within thee.

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Under the invocation of peace, we see some milita men stroll by mixed in among the civilians passing by on the street outside. They don't react to the meeting -- they are just a reminder of things to come. Under the call for prosperity, we see some reminders of current poverty.

Dr. Price closes the bible.

DR. PRICE (CONT'D)

The love of our country is certainly
a noble passion, but like all
passions, it requires regulation and
direction, lest we be misled.

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Among the shots of the crowd reacting, one young man becomes the clear object of the camera's gaze. He is listening, less demonstrably than some of his neighbors, but intently. This is GODWIN.

DR. PRICE (CONT'D)

What has the love of country hitherto
 been among mankind? What has it
 been but a love of dominion, a desire
 of conquest, and a thirst for grandeur
 and glory, by enslaving surrounding
 countries? What has it been but a
 blind and narrow principle, forming
 men into combinations and factions
 against their common rights and
 liberties?

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An INFORMER in the back row is scribbling madly as the crowd murmurs approval.

DR. PRICE (CONT'D)

It is very remarkable that the founder
 of our religion has not once mentioned
 this duty... Instead, our Lord and
 his apostles have done better. They
 have laid such stress on loving all
 men, even our enemies, and made an
 ardent charity so essential a part
 of virtue that the religion they
 have preached may be called the
 Religion of Benevolence.

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(bringing it home)

Nothing can be more friendly to the
 general rights of mankind!

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The crowd reacts with applause; GODWIN, though more restrained, applauds, impressed. Dr. Price surveys the crowd with benevolence. A forceful speaker, he is now clearly greatly touched by the acceptance of the crowd.

EXT. LONDON STREET - A PRINT SHOP

Crowds are gathered to look at prints in the window of a shop. Mary stops, her eye caught by a landscape picture of sublime mountains. Her attention is caught by a rude jeer at her elbow,

PRINT VIEWER

Oh, more of Dr. Price!

There's a rude caricature of Dr. Price plotting the overthrow of the entire English government.

PRINT VIEWER (CONT'D)

That traitor. Well, Fox will hunt him out!

The crowd laugh. Mary, suddenly alienated, moves on.

MONTAGE:

We see the publication of another book, REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE, by Edmund Burke.

INT. HOLCROFT AND GODWIN'S ROOMS

HOLCROFT and GODWIN are reading. Godwin has his own work but Holcroft is reading "Reflections on the Revolution in France" aloud.

HOLCROFT

"Before I read that sermon, I really thought I had lived in a free country; and it was an error I cherished, because it gave me a greater liking to the country I lived in."

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As Holcroft reads, we see all of London appearing to read Burke's Reflections -- Mrs. Barbauld, Johnson, Fuseli, a copy snatched up at the circulating library, both gentlemen reading it at their club.

HOLCROFT (CONT'D)

"Plots, massacres, assassinations, seem to some people a trivial price for obtaining a revolution. A cheap, bloodless reformation, a guiltless liberty, appear flat and vapid to their taste. There must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect; there must be a grand spectacle to rouse the imagination... "

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An aside to Godwin:

HOLCROFT (CONT'D)

It should be on the stage.

He continues:

HOLCROFT (CONT'D)

"The preacher found them all in the French Revolution. This inspires a juvenile warmth through his whole frame. His enthusiasm kindles as he advances; and when he arrives at his peroration, it is in a full blaze."

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We see MARY reading, not disgusted as she had been by the novels: but outraged. Holcroft's voice gains in incredulity and is replaced by Mary's voiceover, her tone growing in fury:

HOLCROFT/MARY

(V.O.)

"For my part, I looked on that sermon as the public declaration of a man much connected with literary caballers and intriguing philosophers, with political theologians and theological politicians, both at home and abroad." "Why do I feel so differently from the Reverend Dr. Price, and those of his lay flock who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse?— For this plain reason: Because it is *natural* I should"

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His voice is cut off as Mary, finally, throws down the book, then resolutely picks up her pen.

MARY

(V.O.)

Sir, it is not necessary to apologize to you for intruding on your precious time, nor to profess I think it an honor to discuss an important subject with a man of notice in the state. In reprobating Dr. Price's opinions you might have spared the man -- and would have if you had half the reverence for the grey hairs of virtue as you do for the accidental distinctions of rank.

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MONTAGE: PUBLICATION OF VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN

We see the book by title page, rolling off the press. It is in circulating libraries, in clubs, in the hands of Holcroft, Fuseli (who looks annoyed), Bonnycastle, and Barbauld.

MARY (CONT'D)

Reverencing the rights of humanity, I shall dare to assert them. The birthright of man, is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a social compact.

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INT. HOUSE OF RICHARD PRICE - CONTINUOUS

JOHN HEWLETT reads to MRS. BURGH, MRS. HEWLETT, and an older and infirm DR. PRICE.

HEWLETT

That it results from the eternal
foundation of right, who will presume
to deny, if reason has led them to
build their morality and religion on
an everlasting foundation -- the
attributes of God?

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INT. HOLCROFT AND GODWIN'S ROOMS - CONTINUOUS

Holcroft reads to Godwin:

HOLCROFT

On what principle Mr. Burke could
defend American independence, I cannot
conceive, for the whole tenor of his
argument settles slavery on an
everlasting foundation. Security of
property! Behold, in a few words,
the definition of English liberty.
And to this selfish principle every
nobler one is sacrificed.

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INT. MARY HAYS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MARY HAYS reads aloud to her sister.

HAYS

There is no end to this implicit
submission to authority -- somewhere
it must stop, or we return to
barbarism, and the capacity of
improvement is a cheat.

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INT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MARY

I fear that sublime power, whose
reason for creating me must have
been wise and good; and I submit to
the moral laws which my reason deduces
from this view of my dependence on
him -- not to an arbitrary will.

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INT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - LATER

MARY and JOHNSON consider one final copy of the Vindication.

JOHNSON

We will be printing a second edition tomorrow.

She's surprised -- it's unexpected. Johnson turns the cover, shows her the anonymous title page to the first edition.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

If you wish... I can certainly place your name on the title page.

MARY

Use my name?

JOHNSON

Everyone is talking about the book, soon everyone will be asking. If you wish, I can keep silent...

MARY

Use it.

We see the second edition come off the press, her name on the title page.

At the circulating library, the person who grabbed the new copy is perplexed.

One of the men reading in the club asks the other:

CLUB GOER

A woman wrote that?

The indignant authoress's husband comes in with the book:

AUTHORESS' HUSBAND

A woman wrote that!

She looks at it -- politics -- she doesn't care.

In a tavern:

TAVERN GOER #1

A radical wrote that.

TAVERN GOER #2

I heard it was treason.

At the club:

CLUB GOER #2

It's... ungrammatical.

In Johnson's shop, an employee looks up, pleased to see who has come in:

JOHNSON'S EMPLOYEE:
It's still selling.

But the person walking past is not Johnson, but Wollstonecraft. As she sweeps up the stairs to the second floor, we've never seen her look more confident.

INT. 2ND FLOOR OF JOHNSON'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS

A crowd -- not pushing the limits of the table, but more people than we've seen before -- toast her as she comes in. She takes a seat, thanking everyone whose eyes she meets.

FUSELI
What's next?

It's a challenge.

FUSELI (CONT'D)
How will you follow the celebrated
(just barely maybe
mockingly)
"Vindication of the Rights of Man"?

Mary looks at Johnson -- they've discussed it.

JOHNSON
I have commissioned another work
from the author of that piece.

The table looks back to Mary.

MARY
The Vindication of the Rights of
Woman, of course.

Some people are stunned. Barbauld laughs in honest enjoyment.

MARY (CONT'D)
And I expect it to come quickly. I
have been thinking about it for some
time.

MONTAGE: Vindication of the Rights of Woman rolls off the press.

We see: Copies being snatched up at the circulating library, some patrons (men and women) shoving them in their pockets before they leave the shop, with something of an air of subterfuge; others just walking out with them.

MRS. BARBAULD reads it -- looking almost proud. But her own writing is in front of her on the desk as well -- she has work to do.

MARY (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

In every age there has been a stream
of popular opinion that has carried
all before it, and given a family
character, as it were, to the century.
Until society changes, much cannot
be expected from education alone.

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MRS. BURGH is reading to herself. MRS. HEWLETT is also
reading - JOHN HEWLETT watching her with a frown.

MARY (CONT'D)

I may be accused of arrogance, still
I must declare what I firmly believe,
that all the writers who have written
on the subject of female education
and manners, from Rousseau to Dr
Gregory, have contributed to render
women more artificial, weak characters
than they would otherwise have been.

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MARGARET, now dressed as an adult, is hiding in the corner
of a room, behind a chair, with needlework, reading the
Vindication. When someone comes in she shoves it under a
pile of cloth and resumes her work.

MARY (CONT'D)

It is a farce to call any being
virtuous, whose virtues do not result
from the exercise of its own reason.
This was Rousseau's opinion respecting
men: I extend it to women.

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The INDIGNANT AUTHORESS is glued to the page, her face frozen
in something like a perpetual silent squeak. She is riveted.

MARY (CONT'D)

How grossly do they insult us who
advise us only to render ourselves
gentle, domestic brutes! The winning
softness so warmly and frequently
recommended, that governs by obeying.
What childish expression.

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EVERINA is reading it -- sourly.

MARY (CONT'D)

If woman has an immortal soul, then
she must have an understanding to
improve. Ignorance is a frail base
for virtue!

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ELIZA is reading it -- we can't really tell her judgment
from her face.

MARY (CONT'D)

Unless virtue be nursed by liberty,
it will never attain due strength.
Let women share the rights and she
will emulate the virtues of man.

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MRS. FITZGERALD has brought the news to LADY KINGSBOROUGH, who is so overcome by what Mrs. Fitzgerald is telling her that when she sits down she almost sits down on a dog.

EXT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

It's a much more prosperous MARY -- not dressed to the outrageous lengths we saw with the Kingsboroughs, but prosperous and not un-fashionable -- who passes through the office and climbs the stairs this time, but she has the same confidence.

JOHNSON is sitting with WILLIAM GODWIN.

JOHNSON

Miss Wollstonecraft, may I introduce William Godwin, a friend of Holcroft's.

They shake hands.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Mr. Godwin writes sketches of English history for the New Annual Register. Miss Wollstonecraft's work you know.

They acknowledge one another.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Mr. Godwin is particularly looking forward to meeting Mr. Paine this evening.

MARY

For a history?

GODWIN

Actually, I am working on a treatise concerning political justice.

Wollstonecraft's work also covers that but, to be fair, Paine is famous. She smiles generously.

PAINE enters.

JOHNSON

Mr. Paine, may I introduce you to Mr. Godwin, writes for the New Annual
(MORE)

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Register. You know Miss
Wollstonecraft.

Paine nods at Mary, shakes Godwin's hand. Godwin stares,
somewhat awed, as he sits -- it's a bit awkward.

We cut to further along in the evening. There's a silent
fourth guest, SHOVET, and he, Johnson and Paine have loosened
their neck-cloths, everyone's been drinking.

GODWIN

I am only saying, that where we see
obvious merit in a man, it is only
natural to see a generous virtue as
well.

MARY

And I say, that such praise, lavished
in such a way for such a reason, can
do no credit to the commended or the
commender.

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Johnson and Paine exchange a look.

As the dinner party breaks up, Mary watches Godwin and Paine
leave.

JOHNSON

(amused)

You were rather harsh on poor Voltaire
tonight.

MARY

And your Mr. Godwin was harsh to
nobody.

JOHNSON

And yet he can be -- I'm told he is
an advocate of perfect sincerity,
and adheres to speaking perfect truth
with shocking frankness at some very
awkward times.

Mary laughs.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

And it's no bad quality in a writer,
even one who doesn't write for me.

MARY

But what sort of histories must he
write for the New Annual, if he will
PRESUME virtue where-ever he finds

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
 merit! When you receive the next
 one I will read it.

Johnson smiles.

JOHNSON
 Well, he is turning his hand to a
 great work. I think we may expect
 no more sketches from him at present.
 (speaking of)
 Mr. Fuseli is finishing a great
 painting which he particularly wishes
 you to see.

MARY
 (flattered)
 Do you know the subject?

INT. FUSELI'S STUDIO - LATER

MARY looks at the painting -- now one of Fuseli's most famous
 works -- a naked woman, face up, but half sprawled out of
 bed, with a gargoyle crouching on her chest. The woman
 looks... a lot like Mary, actually. Mary tries to remain
 unaffected but is visibly a little creeped out. After a
 moment she realizes FUSELI and beside him MRS. FUSELI are
 watching her. He seems satisfied, amused. Fuseli's wife
 seems reserved.

INT. MARY'S ROOMS - LATER

MARY and JOHNSON are drinking tea.

JOHNSON
 Fuseli has proposed a trip to France.

MARY
 France!

JOHNSON
 He expects to see many suitable
 subjects for his paintings, and I
 would be eager to see the Revolution
 in France, not just publish it.

MARY
 You are participating in a great
 revolution in principles here in
 London. But to go to France!

JOHNSON
 Would it interest you?

MARY

How could it not? I have sent both Everina and Eliza there, just to improve their ability to teach it. But to witness the revolution! Liberty, Fraternity...! A new constitution!

JOHNSON

I am glad to hear you say it, for Fuseli has proposed you join our party.

Mary is shocked.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Will you consider it?

MARY

(what's to consider?)

I will come.

JOHNSON

It will mean a great deal of time in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Fuseli.

Mary hears what he's saying and doesn't hesitate to address it.

MARY

I always find something in the conversation of Mr. Fuseli to improve my understanding. His quickness of comprehension, his liveliness, make his company worth treasuring.

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She considers Johnson: does this need saying?

MARY (CONT'D)

But if I thought there was something criminal about my passion I would conquer it or die in the attempt.

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EXT. LONDON

Mary walks purposefully, maybe a little angrily, on the streets. London too has grown angry -- or to seem angrier. Wollstonecraft walks through the streets, the crowds are shouting, and the caricatures of Price and against the revolution in France remain, now with caricatures against Paine and his book THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

The season changes: it's Autumn. The newspaper print reads about massacres in France.

INT. MARY'S ROOMS - LATER

MARY is writing, but can't focus; her bags are packed. She winds up pacing instead, excited. From the window she sees MRS. FUSELI in the street. Door opens: Fuseli's wife is there, and she's angry.

INT. JOHNSON'S HOUSE - LATER

MARY is sitting on a coach opposite JOHNSON. MRS. JOHNSON brings her a cup of tea, discreetly leaves. Mary looks sad.

JOHNSON

After the events of this summer in France, the trip seems inadvisable in any case.

MARY

I will go.

JOHNSON

Without Fuseli or I -- even with our company -- the danger...

MARY

London is no longer a congenial place for me. I have not written, my mood is low, and by writing on the events in France, I will be able to bring profit to you and me. And hopefully be of some use to the reform here.

JOHNSON

To live in Paris, by yourself...

MARY

(firmly)

You can provide me with letters of introduction to many English expatriates living in Paris. And I am not afraid to travel alone.

MONTAGE: TRAVEL TO FRANCE

We see Mary in a ship, looking pensively forward toward France. But the scenes in France, as she travels, are much the same as those she left -- angry crowds, but with the tricolor of the revolutionaries everywhere. In the dark, she knocks on a door and a servant opens it. She enters and the door closes her into the dark.

In the morning, she is still unpacking. There are crowds gathered in the street, which she checks on occasionally from a window of her room.

Noise draws her attention and she moves in time to see a procession come by past her window: the French king, on his way to his trial.

INT. HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS' HOUSE, FRANCE - AFTERNOON

A party of sorts is in full swing -- not a ball, or a dance, but a crowd of drinkers and talkers. Here are Helen Maria WILLIAMS, MR. CHRISTIE, MRS. CHRISTIE, IMLAY, and MR. BARLOW and MRS. BARLOW.

WILLIAMS

I admire your coming at such a time,
I truly do.

MARY

Your letters were so inspiring. And
London had grown so unpleasant to
me.

WILLIAMS

I heard the crowds in London were
burning Paine in effigy. Dear man!
How could they? But events here are
so feared by those at home. I hope
my letters can diffuse some truth
where it is needed most. Mr. Barlow!

BARLOW is a jovial, middle aged man accompanied by his young and adoring wife.

MR. BARLOW

Miss Williams. Miss Wollstonecraft,
welcome to Paris.

MARY

Johnson asked me to bring you his
regards.

MR. BARLOW

Are you here to write your own letters
on the revolution?

This is similar to the truth -- and Miss Williams' project.
Mary nods.

MARY

And I have been invited to share my
thoughts on women's right to
education, as it may be written into
the new constitution.

MRS. BARLOW

Will they go so far?

MARY

Any constitution founded on reason
and liberty must include it.

An American, IMLAY, has sidled over.

IMLAY

A constitution founded on reason and
liberty! I wish I could be so
confident.

MR. BARLOW

Miss Wollstonecraft is bold, as the
constitution must be.

MARY

As the French people have been.

IMLAY

Had you been here this past summer,
you might use a different word than
bold.

Mrs. Christie gives Barlow a look, which he conveys to Imlay.

MRS. CHRISTIE

(the politic thing:)

The conventioners have followed the
dictates of reason and right, and
take seriously their responsibility
to the people.

(honestly:)

Besides, everyone knows the massacres
were the work of the Montagnards.
Miss Wollstonecraft, Mr. Imlay,
another of our American guests.

Mary nods.

EXT. MARY'S LODGINGS - LATER

We see Mary leaving her lodgings and entering a coach,
traveling to the palace of the Tuileries, which tourists can
visit. There are mobs of revolutionaries in the streets,
but the palace is less thronged with people: it's a day trip.
She walks in the abandoned halls: not that abandoned, as the
soldiers of the revolutionaries are there. She looks pensive.

INT. HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS HOUSE, FRANCE - EVENING

Mary is speaking with Imlay. Imlay's no longer out to get
her attention by provoking her: rather he is flirty, charming.

MARY

Really, I was struck with the
 profoundest melancholy.

IMLAY

Citoyenne Wollstonecraft!

Mary laughs, at ease.

MARY

Do not accuse me of not supporting
 the revolution, I pray.

IMLAY

I would not dare.

That's serious: they take a second to acknowledge it.

MARY

It already seemed so far in the past.
 It was a ruin. It had something of
 the grandeur and the sorrow of a
 ruin.

IMLAY

Miss Wollstonecraft, appreciator of
 the sublime.

Across the room, Mr. Barlow and Mrs. Barlow, cozying up to
 one another.

MRS. BARLOW

Do you think?

He does.

But the evening is interrupted by shouts in the street. Mr.
 Christie goes outside, grabs a boy running by, asks him in
 French what is going on. He brings back the news:

MR. CHRISTIE

They have voted to execute the King.

Utter silence at the gathering.

MR. CHRISTIE (CONT'D)

The king shall be executed for his
 crimes against the people of France.

INT. HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS' HOUSE, FRANCE - LATER

The crowd has thinned: the remaining guests, somber, though
 not outraged or grieving. Mary is speaking with Paine, Imlay,
 and a group of others, mostly men, but not all, and including
 Mrs. Christie.

PAINÉ

And in the end, since they would listen to no nobler arguments, I was reduced to pleading that, as the King had supported the American Revolution, execution would offend the United States.

Imlay nods.

PAINÉ (CONT'D)

I thought I saw the crowd turning toward a sentence of exile, but they chose execution in the end.

BARLOW

(to comfort him)

It was a certain event once they voted to try him for his crimes.

PAINÉ

No, it was a close thing, but Marat has carried the day.

At the edge of the crowd, Mr Christie says discreetly to a companion,

MR. CHRISTIE

A dangerous enemy for Mr. Paine.

EXT. A BARRIER GATE IN PARIS' CITY WALL - LATER

MARY is approaching one side of the barrier gate; IMLAY is approaching the other. Lines have formed for people to go through, with soldiers inspecting everyone's papers, but neither Mary nor Imlay get in line: they're just there to talk, so they can speak through the grating.

IMLAY

Paine has been expelled from the assembly.

MARY

Expelled!

IMLAY

The resolution was to expel all foreigners: but everyone knows who it was aimed at.

MARY

Well, they can keep him from the convention, but reasonable men and women will still ask for his opinion. He has many friends here.

Imlay approves.

IMLAY

Are you still working on your history of the Revolution?

MARY

Of course! Lately, my spirit is so heightened, the writing is coming along very well.

That's a compliment for him: but Imlay means to say:

IMLAY

It might be better not to leave your notes... lying out.

MARY

My work is in English, my maid only speaks French. How is your English work? Have you finished your novel?

IMLAY

Almost...

INT. MARY'S HOUSE OUTSIDE PARIS - EVENING

MARY and IMLAY are sitting side by side. He is reading aloud from a handwritten manuscript of *The Emigrants*, getting closer and closer.

IMLAY

"Permit me to assure you how much I was charmed during your kind visit in the elucidation of those important subjects on which the happiness and misery of society depend. You have dispelled the mist which had darkened my understanding, and I behold the fetters that have been so ingeniously contrived to subjugate the human mind."

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They regard each other -- playfully -- it's his book, but he knows she knows who the words were written for. They are so close -- but he continues:

IMLAY (CONT'D)

"And clearly perceive the difference between principles which have for their basis our unalienable rights, and those which are grounded upon the opinion of the world. Respecting women and matrimony --"

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Finally, inevitably, he kisses her. She pulls back: he pulls back, and waits -- patiently, with a smile. She smiles too -- then kisses him.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE OUTSIDE PARIS - MORNING

MARY and IMLAY are in bed, Mary asleep, Imlay getting up and getting dressed. A printed copy of *The Emigrants* is on the table. A coach approaches -- Imlay draws back, discreetly, as Mary gets up and throws on a gown.

She meets Mr. Christie in the front of the house -- Imlay is never seen.

MR. CHRISTIE

Miss Wollstonecraft.

MARY

Mr. Christie.

MR. CHRISTIE

I apologize for visiting unannounced. But I have a place on the stage to Calais today, and a place in the packet there back to Dover, and I urge you to join Mrs. Christie and I. Mrs. Christie urges you to join us.

MARY

What has happened?

MR. CHRISTIE

It is what will happen that concerns us. I have received word that the English should leave France before it is too late for us to go.

MARY

I cannot leave.

MR. CHRISTIE

Our American friends can be more sanguine. But we are English, and I urge you to reconsider. Travel back to England in the company of your friends. The arrangements have been made.

Mary hesitates.

MARY

I thank you, for your offer and your friendship. But I will stay.

Mr. Christie leaves. When Mary re-enters the bedroom, Imlay is taking his boots back off.

IMLAY
 (casually, in
 explanation)
 I won't meet him on the road.

Mary sits on the bed -- it was a momentous decision.

IMLAY (CONT'D)
 If the English can't be in Paris,
 we'll just say that you're my wife.

EXT. A BARRIER GATE IN PARIS' CITY WALL - DAY

MARY again approaches IMLAY, but he looks grave, not flirtatious.

IMLAY
 Paine has been arrested. The order
 is all the English are to be placed
 under arrest. Don't act startled.

Mary hadn't been planning on it.

IMLAY (CONT'D)
 The ambassador can give us a paper
 certifying you as my wife. These
 revolutionaries and their papers.

He casts a baleful gaze at the soldiers still working a much longer line at the checkpoint.

MARY
 I cannot be your wife, Imlay, our
 freedom and my debts...

Imlay's cheerful as he says:

IMLAY
 Oh, you won't be my wife. It's just
 a paper that says we said you were
 my wife.
 (beat)
 Papers.

INT. THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

We see a hand signing a paper with an elaborate flourish. A CLERK hands Imlay the paper. It's clear he knows what Imlay's doing: in fact they both look rather proud of themselves, and Imlay slides over what might be a legitimate fee. Mary is looking at the paper: unsettled.

MONTAGE:

SERVANTS are bringing in Mary's things. There are a LOT of books, enough that Imlay looks taken aback.

MARY WRITES more of her history of the Revolution.

IMLAY is working with Barlow in an office.

MARY visits PAINE in prison.

IMLAY is looking at bills of lading in a commerce office.

MARY is pregnant. She looks overjoyed, Imlay, also: but not so much so when she looks away.

IMLAY leaves Paris in a coach.

INT. IMLAY AND MARY'S PARIS APARTMENT: - MORNING

MARY writes a series of letters as we see:

MONTAGE:

The revolution in France growing more violent.

IMLAY growing more and involved in business.

MARY writing and getting more and more books - and more and more pregnant.

MARY

A man called here yesterday asking
for payment of a draft, and seemed
disappointed you were not at home.
So much for business! How are you?
I have been following you all along
the road in this comfortless weather.

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A new letter:

MARY (CONT'D)

Write to me, my best love, and tell
me to be patient, kindly. I am going
to rest very happy and you have made
me so.

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A new letter:

MARY (CONT'D)

Recollection makes my heart bound it
thee, but it is not to thy money-
getting face.

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(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

I have thy honest countenance before
me, relaxed by tenderness, a little
wounded by my whims, and I rest my
cheek on thine, forgetting all the
world.

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Another letter:

MARY (CONT'D)

When do you think of coming home?
When will business permit you? The
books sent to me are such as we may
read together, so I will not look
into them till you return.

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Her apartment is packed up:

MARY (CONT'D)

I send this to you as an avant-
coureur, to tell you I am again on
the wing, and hope to be with you a
few hours after you receive it.
Farewell for a moment! Do not forget
that I am driving toward you in
person. My mind, unfettered, never
left you.

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She is serene, under this last voiceover, as she travels in a coach, but her expression grows nervous when the coach is stopped. Soldiers are speaking to the coachman in French, then lean in and speak with the maid. This is the event that we saw in the first flashback from the first scene. Mary extends their papers with a trembling hand. The soldiers open a trunk or two, then close them up. Beside her, the parcel with her manuscripts lays on the seat.

EXT. HOUSE AT LA HAVRE - AFTERNOON

Mary's coach arrives. Imlay is out -- and when he returns, it is late and she is asleep.

INT. HOUSE LA HAVRE - MORNING

Mary wakes up -- and wakes the baby, who is sleeping in a crib near her and Imlay in bed. He wakes, sees the baby nursing, gives Mary a smile -- he's happily domesticated, here in her presence. He leaves the house.

We see Mary waking up a much older Fanny -- maybe one. Fanny follows her in the road, with her maid walking behind. Mary is watching her walk, and pointing out things that Fanny sees. A boy comes with a written letter -- she opens it while the maid watches Fanny -- it's bad news. But she goes back to speaking with Fanny.

Mary supervises the packing up of their house alone.

She and her maid and Fanny travel to the sea and board a ship.

She meets Imlay in London and attempts to kiss him -- he disentangles himself awkwardly. He's happy to hold Fanny and then happy to give her back.

INT. FURNISHED HOUSE, LONDON

MONTAGE:

Mary getting ready for bed, Imlay leaving.

Mary playing with Fanny, Imlay working at his desk.

Mary sits down to eat with him, Imlay gets up.

MARY

Have I committed some offense?

IMLAY

Of course not.

MARY

If you do not tell me, I cannot correct it.

IMLAY

Correct what?

MARY

I feel such tenderness for you--

She doesn't know how to go on.

IMLAY

(blithely)

And I for you.

He leaves.

We see Mary write:

MARY

My friend, my dear friend, examine
yourself well. What will render you
most comfortable? Or to be more
explicit -- do you desire to live
with me? Or to part forever?

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She really needs to know.

MARY (CONT'D)

When you have ascertained it, tell
me VERY FRANKLY.

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INT. FURNISHED HOUSE, LONDON - LATER

IMLAY

Money matters have concerned me
greatly.

Mary nods.

IMLAY (CONT'D)

I have a small fortune, which I could
use to provide for Fanny, but it is
tied up in some business in the legal
courts of Norway.

MARY

Norway?

IMLAY

It is a long and arduous journey,
and needs someone who can truly take
the matter in hand and see my
interests and my business partner's
interest through.

MARY

You called Fanny and me to London
seven weeks ago. Now you propose to
leave for Norway?

IMLAY

No.

This is awkward but he's going to ask.

IMLAY (CONT'D)

I was hoping you would travel to
Norway and represent my interest.
For Fanny's sake.

She seems stunned, so he adds, charming for the first time
since we've seen him in London:

IMLAY (CONT'D)

And for my sake, for the regard I
know you hold for me.

EXT. TRAVEL MONTAGE - NORWAY

A travel montage of Norway -- it's desolate, cold, and
sublime. In nature, MARY and Fanny seem small. In the towns,
they are foreign.

But Fanny's presence does prompt some exchanges between her and the local woman. On the whole, though, she is quiet, and sad. We see her posting letters, but we never hear them. Hamburg is a bustling city, but though she enters merchants' offices, the law courts, and clerks offices, she leaves them all visibly frustrated.

She receives a letter, and reading it, takes Fanny and returns to London.

EXT. FURNISHED HOUSE, LONDON - AFTERNOON

MARY and Fanny arrive. There are a few servants, but no sign of Imlay. His closet is empty. Mary corners the COOK.

COOK

With a young person! An Actress!
From a strolling company! He's living
with her, don't tell him I told you,
I beg you!

MARY

Where are they living?

COOK

A few blocks from here! It's not
far!

Mary writes a letter we don't hear, and IMLAY arrives.

IMLAY

You know the strength of strong
passions. Having formed an attachment
to this young woman, can I simply
cause those feelings to not exist?
That is not in my power, any more
than it is in yours.

MARY

Formed an attachment! What of your
attachment to your child? The
tenderness you professed toward me?

IMLAY

I feel a new connection. To disavow
it would be as heartless as it would
be false. Mary, I love you, and of
course, I love the child. But how
can I be worthy if I am false?

MARY

You will maintain this connection
because of your desire to do what is
right.

IMLAY

Precisely.

(softly)

Mary. I knew that someday I would need to do what was right by you all.

(beat)

That is why I have been making arrangements for a new house. I will move as soon as it is ready.

EXT. PUTNEY BRIDGE

It's evening, and raining, and from far away we can barely make her out in the dim light. MARY paces for a time by the bridge, resolute. Then she jumps in: not upset, but resigned. But she's been spotted and is dragged out, unconscious, by a group of men in a boat. They bring her to an inn where she is violently dried off and rubbed back to warmth by an efficient INNKEEPER'S WIFE and FEMALE SERVANTS.

They send out a messenger, and Mrs. Christie arrives to see her.

INT. MRS. CHRISTIE'S HOUSE IN LONDON - LATER

MARY is recuperating -- she's in a room with Fanny. MRS. CHRISTIE is sitting with her while she watches Fanny, Mary's eyes almost tearing up.

MARY

They had no right to do it. It was not a frantic attempt. It was an act of reason.

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Mrs. Christie says nothing.

MARY (CONT'D)

It was inhumane.

(beat)

But for Fanny's sake, I will not repeat it.

MRS. CHRISTIE

Will you write to Imlay?

MARY

Of course. For Fanny's sake.

INT. MRS. CHRISTIE'S HOUSE IN LONDON - LATER

Mary is alone. She writes:

MARY

I think it important that you should
learn to feel for your child the
affection of a father. I consent,
then, to live with you and the woman
to whom you have associated yourself.
But if you reject this proposal,
here we end. You are free.

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A response comes: whatever is in it, it's not a yes. Mary is disgusted -- she burns it. She picks up a new page and we see her write the title: LETTERS FROM SWEDEN.

It's printed and in the circulating libraries, being snatched up. It's being sold in the bookshop. We see the two CLUB GOERS in their club. Each is reading silently, one might even be on the verge of tears. We see the INDIGNANT AUTHORESS, her chair is empty. She's on a sofa crying her eyes out. The AUTHORESS'S HUSBAND is reading her copy.

We see HOLCROFT and GODWIN in their rooms. Godwin is writing (as usual), surrounded by piles of books on his desk. Holcroft is reading.

HOLCROFT

(with emphasis)

Sublime.

Godwin writes on, unmoved.

INT. MARY'S LONDON 1796 APARTMENT

We see Mary in a new apartment, writing a new manuscript -- if we look closely, we can see it is a play. A knock on the door: her maid, also watching Fanny, answers it.

MARY HAYS enters -- Mary's age, short, less glamorous, but with a charismatic air, though a somewhat gloomy disposition.

HAYS

The whole town loves your book. I hear Holcroft is the latest to give it his commendation, but you probably heard that from him at Johnson's.

MARY

You've met Holcroft?

HAYS

Oh, yes, this once. He is a particular friend of my friend Mr. Godwin. You know Mr. Godwin a little, I think.

MARY

We've met.

HAYS

Well, he has been very kind to me. The author of Political Justice! He writes me such letters, so constructively severe upon my plan for a novel. You are not my only severe friend, you see.

MARY

I hope I am not always severe.

HAYS

Oh, no. And he is the kindest confident of my troubles with my... friend. You know my agonies.

Mary does.

HAYS (CONT'D)

Well, I am having him and his friend Holcroft to tea, and I really beg you to come.

MARY

I am not the most sociable creature, of late, as you know.

HAYS

Oh, you must come. You know Holcroft. (confiding)
And Holcroft frightens me a little.

*

INT. MARY HAY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

MARY, GODWIN, HOLCROFT and HAYS are drinking tea. There's nothing frightening about Holcroft. Godwin is speaking to Hays; Holcroft and Wollstonecraft are left to watch, although Mary looks politely detached:

GODWIN

You have Miss Emma write, that her opponent might argue that the subject of love is too subtle for reasoning, and that the heart is not to be compelled, but that you think that there is no subject that may not be subjected to the laws of investigation and reasoning. I completely agree. And I must express, that if I studied for years I could not invent a comment more clearly beneficial for

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(MORE)

GODWIN (CONT'D)
 application to your own sorrows.
 Those, you may analyze, and cure.

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Hays shakes her head - it's painful to speak about, but no.

GODWIN (CONT'D)
 You nursed in yourself a passion
 which taken in the degree in which
 you experienced it is unnatural and
 generates an immense overbalance of
 excruciating misery.

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Mary's interest is caught.

GODWIN (CONT'D)
 Your story
 (he raises the
 manuscript - he means
 the written story)
 can scarcely be described as anything
 but moonstruck madness hunting after
 torture. The smallest glimpse of
 sober reflection and common sense
 would teach you to give up the
 pursuit.

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HAYS
 But, once the habit of such sentiments
 has been ingrained by early
 associations and long practice, don't
 we follow them by necessity?

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GODWIN
 I grant, the state of a human mind
 cannot be changed at once, and you
 would be in an enviable position had
 you cherished reason rather than
 illusions. But I answer still that
 happiness can be analyzed.

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HAYS
 Disappointed love...

She looks at Mary -- prompting her to join in? Or afraid to
 continue?

GODWIN
 I should have been ashamed to place
 disappointed love in my enumeration
 of real evils when I catalogued them
 in my chapter on good and evil.

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HAYS

Can you truly be insensible to the mischief it has worked on human history?

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GODWIN

The fountain of heroism and virtue is independence. Use every power to defend yourself from leaning on another for support! The system of nature has made us dependent on our fellow men taken collectively, but nothing but our own folly can make us dependent on individuals.

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Now Godwin has Mary's attention.

Godwin leaves, conscious of her regard -- they exchange a look. After he is gone, Mary is still considering his words.

HAYS

He can be very blunt.

MARY

I liked the way he spoke to you. He was very sensitive to your sorrows.

*
*

Hays watches her leave, Mary still quiet, Hays smiling.

INT. GODWIN'S APARTMENTS - LATER

GODWIN is no longer residing in Holcroft's apartment. For the first time we see him not at desk in his home but reading Letters from Sweden and Norway in a chair. HOLCROFT is admitted by the landlady but Godwin takes no notice. That's not unusual -- though to see him reading one book at a time is.

Godwin finishes. He looks at Holcroft, who holds up his watch. Godwin grabs his coat, hurries out the door.

HOLCROFT

(teasing:)
Were you moved?

GODWIN

If there was ever a book calculated to make a man fall in love with it's author...!

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Holcroft laughs. Godwin looks nonplussed.

EXT. A ROAD NEAR GODWIN'S HOUSE

MARY is walking, resolute.

She walks up to the front door.

She knocks on it.

The LANDLADY answers it.

MARY

I am Mrs. Wollstonecraft. I am here
to call on Mr. Godwin.

The landlady looks scandalized, but Mary stands her ground.

INT. GODWIN'S APARTMENTS - MOMENTS LATER

GODWIN'S LANDLADY

Miss Wollstonecraft to see you.

GODWIN stands, uncertain.

GODWIN

Of course.

MARY enters. They exchange a smile.

EXT. A ROAD NEAR GODWIN'S HOUSE

GODWIN is walking in the reverse direction of Mary -- for the same purpose.

He walks to her front door, knocks, encounters an even less friendly landlady. She shows him in: MARY smiles.

EXT. A ROAD NEAR GODWIN'S HOUSE

Mary is walking with a package: she delivers it to Godwin's landlady. He opens it: it contains a book and a note.

MARY (V.O.)

I send you the last volume of Heloise,
because you may wish for it, and
because I wanted to remind you, when
you write to me in verse, not to
choose the easiest task -- my
perfections -- but to dwell on your
own feelings. Give me a birds-eye
view of your heart.

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EXT. A COACH

Godwin is inside, traveling, and re-reading her letter.

EXT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - LATER

A message boy hands a note to Mary's Landlady.

INT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - MORNING

Mary reads, and we also see Godwin, in the country, writing while he looks at a landscape:

GODWIN (V.O.)

By way of discharging a debt, I take up my pen. Oh no! Exclaimeth Mary, it is a mere task then, is it? Now, I take all my Gods to witness, that your company infinitely delights me, that I love your imagination, everything that constitutes the bewitching tout ensemble. But to write! Invent me a subject and next time I go into the country I will write you such a letter! I expect to return in a sennight, at seven in the morning, to depart no more.

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EXT. GODWIN'S APARTMENTS

Godwin arrives; shortly after, so does a note.

We see a MONTAGE of messages going back and forth, sometimes by messenger, sometimes by themselves, and the two reading: the landladies grow even more disapproving, but the messages continue.

EXT. COACHYARD - AFTERNOON

It's the inn's courtyard -- and the scene -- that opened the movie.

We see an abridged version of the scene -- Mary in the coach, Godwin entering, their blushing confusion. This time they aren't interrupted by a flashback -- they reach the small wharf town of Beverly.

EXT. BEVERLY - LATER

She and Godwin walk the wharf, she clearly nostalgic.

MARY

There is less here to interest you than I remember. My memory mistakes me, or it is much diminished.

GODWIN

It's the forming of your mind which interests me. To see it as it is and was will benefit my understanding you.

It's the right thing to say. But when they arrive at her old house, an abandoned, but large, edifice, her mood turns bleaker.

MARY

This is just as I remember.

But there's no nostalgia here. They approach -- no one is there -- the doors are locked. They walk around the back of the house.

SHE FLASHES BACK:

A room in an elegant, but on closer inspection somewhat shabby, home. The furniture shows signs of wear and the housekeeping, shoddy. A sweaty MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT is reclining stiffly on a sofa, reading a novel. Reclining stiffly would be a difficult task were it not for the shoulder-to-hip stays Mrs. Wollstonecraft clearly must be wearing underneath her clothes. From outside, the sound of children playing, shrieks that might be from fun but might be from pain. Mrs. Wollstonecraft slowly and elaborately turns a page, as though she is performing. ELIZA, here a girl of about six, approaches with needlework on a circle, and stands silently until she is noticed. Only then does she speak.

YOUNG ELIZA

The thread has come out of my needle,
mama, and I cannot fix it.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT

If you had kept your movements more
careful and delicate, you would not
need to fix it.

Eliza has nothing to say to this; after a moment of confusion, she attempts to explain:

YOUNG ELIZA

Mama, I cannot thread my needle by
myself.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT

You are a very pretty girl, Eliza,
but constantly putting oneself forward
for attention is a very ugly habit,
and ugly habits make even very pretty
young girls grow up to be very ugly.

A spider is crawling across the floor, and Eliza'S feet enter the frame as she approaches. She stops.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No, Eliza, Mary cannot help you.
(MORE)

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Mary is learning to control her
 temper, and her tongue.

We see YOUNG MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, age ten. She is sitting rigidly and perfectly still, on a chair, her eyes downcast to the floor where the spider is making its way near her foot.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)
 If Mary had not such a spiteful
 temper, and did not speak out of
 turn, she could help you. But she
 would rather say impertinent things
 than be a help to you or Everina or
 her mother.

This brings Mary near tears, but she says nothing. Eliza sits back down. At her feet, younger EVERINA has taken a basket of turning paper and is strewing it all over the floor. The door bangs open and three BOYS come hurtling in, one eleven, YOUNG NED, CHARLES, and the smallest, YOUNG JAMES. They are about to pass out through the door but Ned notices Mary, and stops.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)
 Ned, come give your mama a kiss.

He obeys, politely but without much interest.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)
 Where is your papa this morning?

YOUNG NED
 (unconcerned)
 He has gone to the kennels. He says
 he has a thunder of a headache from
 last night.

Ned approaches Mary.

YOUNG NED (CONT'D)
 What has she done?

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT
 Mary is learning to govern her tongue.
 (without conviction)
 James, let Mama's book alone.

Mary is determined not to meet Ned's eyes, although he puts his face very near hers. He notices the spider and moves his foot closer. Mary twitches.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)
 Mary, you are LEARNING NOT TO FIDGET.

Ned smiles and as James wrests the book from his mother's hand, Ned slowly moves his foot closer and grinds the spider underfoot, with relish. Mary's face works with outrage but she controls herself and does not move. She clenches her jaw and stares at the floor. James runs by with his mother's novel.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)

James. James!

But she makes no move to get up off of the couch. James exits, and Ned turns to his mother with an ingratiating smile.

YOUNG NED

I will get it.

He and Charles leave, and Mrs. Wollstonecraft sighs - elaborately. She turns her attention to Everina and Eliza for the first time, and lets out a delicate gasp.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT

Eliza! What did you let your sister do?

YOUNG ELIZA

I was learning my fancywork, mama.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT

Oh, Eliza, look at the mess. Those papers are ruined and Mary will need to cut them all out again.

A blow and a howl of pain are heard from offscreen; no-one reacts, except Mary who is free to move her eyes slightly to the side. But her attention is recalled by:

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)

That is more trouble for you, Mary, that you would not have had if only you could sit still and consider whether anyone wishes to hear you before you speak.

Ned comes in with the book.

MRS. WOLLSTONECRAFT (CONT'D)

Thank you, Ned. Oh, I shall miss you when you go to school. You are such a comfort to your poor mama.

They continue to speak while Eliza tries to clean up the mess Everina has made. Mary is still sitting rigidly still, now staring at a few loose turning papers being blown by a draft across the floor.

THE PRESENT

Mary is still outside -- she's upset. Godwin doesn't notice, he's writing some observations in a notebook.

In the coach on the way back, she's brooding. He chooses not to say anything.

EXT. GODWIN'S APARTMENTS - AFTERNOON

A messenger arrives. He reads:

MARY (V.O.)

I am not quite satisfied with myself
for acting like a mere girl yesterday.
Yet I am better. What did you do to
me? Say only that we are friends,
and the hour when I may expect to
see you.

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Godwin writes:

GODWIN (V.O.)

Friends? If I thought otherwise, I
should be miserable.

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He thinks about it, brings the note himself.

The landlady lets him in with her usual suspicion.

And with good reason: when they are alone, Godwin and Mary embrace.

INT. MARY'S LONDON APARTMENT - MORNING

She's writing to him, still half-dressed from the night before.

MARY (V.O.)

Was not yesterday a very pleasant
evening? There are other pleasures
in the world, you perceive, besides
those known to your philosophy.

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INT. GODWIN'S APARTMENTS - LATER

He reads the note, smiles, picks up his pen.

EXT. ROAD

Mary is walking, with a parcel. Imlay approaches, on horseback. He sees her and she sees him. Mary continues walking without acknowledging him, which prompts Imlay to turn toward her. He gains on her, then drops down from his horse and walks beside her.

We don't hear them speak: Mary is cordial, but reserved. He re-mounts his horse and turns away.

Mary keeps walking, pensive until she regains the sight of her street, where Fanny is outside, with a hoop and her nurse. Godwin is ahead of her on the road, now, walking while reading a book. At his own door, he stops, distracted, and looking around him, sees Fanny on the street. He crosses and greets Fanny, then walks past her to knock on her door. The nurse sees Mary, and points her out to Godwin, who turns toward her, with welcome on his face.

She is smiling.

INT. NO 29 THE POLYGON - EVENING

GODWIN and MARY and FANNY are present -- MARY not obviously in a state of pregnancy -- though if you know to look for it, perhaps you can see it. MARY is writing at a table as Godwin reads and Fanny plays on the floor.

GODWIN

Hmph.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Have I trammelled upon some obscure point of grammar? I meant it no harm.

GODWIN

(reading aloud)

Your heroine's imagination has "combined all the qualities of a heroes mind, and fate presented a statue in which she might enshrine them."

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MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Darnford.

GODWIN

I have distrusted his character since this advocate of *frankness* confessed that his captivity was the natural result of a week spent without his reason and with the women of the town.

MARY

I believe Maria found his confiding in her to be flattering.

GODWIN

Indeed, I see a tendency in him to flattery, to overconfidence, and to disingenuity. And now, this tendency of your heroine's, to imbue him with the best of virtues, and to indulge these reveries because they bring her pleasure, seems imprudent, at best, and perverse, at worst.

That's what she was hoping the reader would realize.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Does it strike you so?

FANNY

(coming over to interrupt)

Mama, I want to go outside.

MARY

You cannot, because it is dark. Come to the window and see how dark it is.

They go to the window.

MARY (CONT'D)

If you went outside, you could not play, because you could not see your hoop or your plants.

Fanny looks outside at the dark, with Wollstonecraft watching her.

GODWIN

Ha!

(reading aloud)

"Could he ever change, could he be a villain?" I am sure he shall be a villain, although I am not so sure that this will require a change in his character.

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Wollstonecraft turns to him and smiles.

MARY

You have found me out. But you are no common reader. They must be brought along more patiently, I think. My uncertainty is, whether to have Maria realize the error her imagination has led her to, or let the reader discover it themselves, after reflection.

GODWIN

I have often been disappointed to discover, that men whose conduct and understanding could be so improved by reflection, are rarely moved to do it.

MARY

Indeed. Yet I hope to move them toward it with an appeal of my own toward imagination... to fire the sentiments of pity and terror such that they cannot help but turn to reflection to discover the causes of Maria's tragedy.

GODWIN

And is her end unhappy?

MARY

It needs to be I fear... if I intend to enflame the hearts of men and women against the laws and even manners of this age. But still...

She closes the distance between them.

MARY (CONT'D)

I wish her ending could be as happy as mine.

She kisses him; somewhat chastely, as Fanny is there, and takes the papers from his hands.

GODWIN

(with meaning)

I could wish her ending would be as happy as mine.

MARY

(playfully)

Oh, a hero's end is always happy, struggle as he may, he shall end virtuous and respectable.

MARY (CONT'D)

And I do believe you love me better than you imagined you would. As for me...

(she smiles)

judge for yourself.

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She kisses him again.

EXT. NO 29 THE POLYGON - EVENING

There is not much activity but a carriage rides by. VARIOUS NIGHT EXTERIORS of the places in London we've seen. Life in London is continuing... and Godwin and Wollstonecraft are a part of it.

Notes on the Text

Page 13, Mary writes: From a letter written by Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 40-41).

Pages 17-18, Fanny speaks: From a letter written from Fanny Blood (Todd, *Revolutionary Life*, 52).

Page 18, Mary speaks: From multiple letters written by Mary Wollstonecraft, chiefly numbers 21 through 23 (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 43-48).

Page 19, Dr. Price frees bird from a net: For this anecdote, I am indebted to D.O. Thomas' *The Honest Mind* (17).

Page 24, Mary speaks: From *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (Wollstonecraft, 23).

Pages 29-30, Mary speaks: From a letter written by Mary Wollstonecraft to George Blood (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 61-62).

Pages 32-33, Mary speaks: From multiple letters written by Mary Wollstonecraft to George Blood (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 64-70).

Page 35, Mary speaks: From *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (Wollstonecraft, 22).

Page 50, Mary speaks: From a letter written by Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 108).

Page 52-54, Mary writes: From the first chapter of *Mary, A Fiction* (Wollstonecraft, 7-9).

Page 56, Mary writes, others read: From some of Wollstonecraft's first reviews for the *Analytical Review* (119).

Page 59-60, Price speaks: From Price, the *Discourse on the Love of our Country*. Page 59, first section, (1). Second section, (2). Page 60, first section, (5). Second section, (7-8).

Page 61, Holcroft reads: Excerpts from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Burke 79, 96).

Page 62, Holcroft reads: Excerpts from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Burke 13, 119).

Page 62, Mary writes: Excerpts from *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (Wollstonecraft, 7, 9).

Page 63, Excerpts from Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Man*. Hewlett reads: (9), Holcroft reads: (14-15), Hays reads: (14), Mary writes: (78).

Page 66-7, Mary reads: excerpts from Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. (90, 91, 90, 88-89, 132, 266).

Page 70, Mary speaks: adapted from a reconstruction of a letter from Wollstonecraft to Fuseli (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 205).

Page 76, Imlay reads: excerpt from *The Emigrants*, (192-3).

Pages 79-80, Mary writes: From multiple letters written by Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 230-237, 246).

Page 81-2, Mary writes: From a letter written by Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 293).

Page 84, Mary speaks: From a letter written by Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 327).

Page 85, Mary writes: As paraphrased by Godwin in the *Memoir* (98) and included in the *Letters* (Wollstonecraft, 327).

Page 86-88, Godwin's conversation with Mary Hays: This conversation is based extensively on one letter from Godwin to Hays, found in the *Letters of William Godwin Volume 1*, (153-156). Pamela Clemit's extensive footnotes, referencing prior and future letters, already give this artifact a conversational aspect.

Page 86, Hays speaks to Wollstonecraft: This detail from Walker, (125).

Page 88, Wollstonecraft speaks to Hays: This detail also from Walker, (125).

Page 89, Mary writes: Letter from Wollstonecraft to Godwin (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 342).

Page 90, Godwin writes: Letter from Godwin to Wollstonecraft (Godwin, *Letters*, 171).

Page 94, Mary writes: Letter from Wollstonecraft to Godwin (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 367).

Page 94, Godwin writes: Letter from Godwin to Wollstonecraft (Godwin, *Letters*, 182).

Page 94, Mary writes: Letter from Wollstonecraft to Godwin (Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, 386).

Page 95, Godwin reads: Quote from *Maria* (Wollstonecraft, 105).

Page 96, Godwin writes: Quote from *Maria* (Wollstonecraft, 106).

Page 97, Mary speaks: from a letter from Wollstonecraft to Godwin (379).

REFLECTIONS ON WRITING A SCREENPLAY LIFE OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote and rewrote her life in fiction. Her first novel, *Mary*, was written at the beginning of her writing career. Her last, *Maria*, was in progress at her death. In between, at the end of her relationship with Imlay, Godwin tells us that she "she finished the sketch of a [play], which turns, in the serious scenes, upon the incidents of her own story" (101). Sadly (and somewhat incredibly), he also tells us that "it appeared to me to be in so crude and imperfect a state, that I judged it most respectful to her memory to commit it to the flames" (102). Although her own autobiographical works were clearly marked as fiction, a "biopic", or a fictionalized film biography, seemed to me in some ways to be in keeping with this tradition.

As a biography of Wollstonecraft, it is also in the tradition of Godwin's *Memoir*. Godwin begins that work by reflecting on the "duty incumbent on survivors" of a person of "eminent merit" to memorialize them and allow the public, who did not know the deceased, to "be the observer of those virtues which discover themselves principally in personal intercourse". He argues that the "justice which is thus done to the illustrious dead, converts into the fairest source of animation and encouragement to those who would follow them in the same career" (43).

When I first conceived of this project, in my first semester in this program, I was taking one of the introductory courses offered for the Liberal Studies' biography concentration. I wrote a brief sketch of a possible biopic and explained my choices in a paper. I was certain that the end of the film I wanted for Wollstonecraft ended, not with her death, but with her alive.

At that time I wrote:

Here we see a version of Mary Wollstonecraft [....] which is almost irresistible [....] : a woman who advocated for women's rights, then died in childbirth. Her death in childbirth is somehow proof of failure, either the failure of her own ideas or the failure of woman's body. That she had a child out of wedlock, causing a scandal, is sometimes added in a cautionary overtone.

[....]

These interpretations of Wollstonecraft work against the purpose of her life [....] her "end" was not the logical or even freak result of her ideas; her life, though difficult, was not a tragedy; her accomplishments, though she died with much left that she wanted to do, were not a succession of failures.

Godwin's *Memoir* does include a painful and detailed account of Wollstonecraft's death. The notes for the end of *Maria* strongly suggest that Wollstonecraft was considering, if she had not already chosen, an unhappy ending for the novel. But in choosing a happy ending for my imagined film, I was able to look back to the *Memoir* and see that Wollstonecraft, too, had considered something similar. Godwin refers to her sketched play as a "comedy" (101), suggesting to me that she also envisioned a happy ending for the protagonist whose scenes, when serious,

"turn[ed]... upon the incidents of her own story" (101). And viewing the work of Godwin's *Memoir* as one of "encouragement to those who would follow them" (43), I can arguably place my dedication to a happy ending somewhat in the tradition of that intention.

From the outset, I chose not to consider the practicalities of film-making, in the sense of what is marketable or what might be affordable to film. This means that the screenplay includes a lot of scenery, travels, crowds -- elements which would probably be expensive and which might therefore be omitted by a screenwriter who was writing with an eye toward the movie actually being made. Instead, I wanted the screenplay to be an imagined film true to my understanding of the life.

In imagining Wollstonecraft's life portrayed on screen, I needed to consider the restrictions of the format I had chosen. Although a screenplay is read, the story consists only of what can be shown on screen (or, to be literal, seen on screen or heard in the accompanying sound.) The life needed to be shown -- not told. It is also a drama, and the implications of that only became clear to me during the process of writing it.

My initial sketch and outlines now read to me like a chronology of important events: they read like a list. I had always known that in telling Wollstonecraft's story I would need to make decisions about what to keep in and what to leave out.

But to imagine a dramatic film I would need to shape the events I had chosen into a story, not a portrait. I needed to find a way to view her life not as an episodic history of sequential events but as a quest. What was the "need" which would be either met or not met during the course of the film? What was the "goal" which Wollstonecraft would attempt to accomplish? In short, what was the great question of her life, and how could I show that on screen in a moving way?

Re-reading the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* I was struck by the quotation I have since included as the epigraph to this work: "Independence I have long considered as the grand blessing of life, the basis of every virtue" (65).

Godwin writes in the *Memoir* that Wollstonecraft's "spirit of independence was unalterable" (51), and her "project" for independence was one that I had traced through much of her life. By viewing her quest for independence as an offshoot of an underlying quest for virtue, I was better able to understand, at least for myself, how her quest for independence had led to Imlay and to Godwin.

Like the philosopher Richard Price, Wollstonecraft believed that she and others had the right to decide what virtue was for themselves, according to their own use of their ability to reason. Further, she believed not only in the right to change

ones understanding of what is virtuous, but that people had a duty to do so according to their growing understanding.

To craft the screenplay, therefore, I tried to look at the changing goals of her life through a lens of her changing beliefs about virtue and freedom. In the screenplay, I tried to make those beliefs consistently drive her forward through her own life. And in keeping with my ideas about the purposes behind her work in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (and Godwin's in the *Memoir*), I tried to do so in a way which would give audiences themselves something to reflect on.

Although I kept these goals in mind throughout the process, the finished screenplay is very different from the one I had in mind when I sat down to write.

I originally intended to begin with a scene of Wollstonecraft at her mother's deathbed, and then actually began with the scene that ultimately appears in flashback, her childhood. But the fact that she and Godwin actually had visited her childhood home at the beginning of their relationship offered too many opportunities. It allowed me to introduce Godwin at the beginning of the narrative -- hopefully priming the audience to pay attention to him when he appears at Price's sermon and then his first meeting with Wollstonecraft. It allowed me to introduce visually a possible obstacle to her romance with Godwin. And finally, by placing the title over a

scene of two people sneaking out of London on a trip, it hopefully allowed me to challenge the imaginary audience's understanding of "virtue".

I also left out a lot of what I had, at points, proposed or outlined. I considered giving Godwin even more prominence through the introduction of the "treason trials", which I envisioned as a counterpoint to Wollstonecraft's time in France. I would have like to have been able to show more of the literary radical scene in London, especially once Wollstonecraft was established within it. Although an actual biography might be able to leave the people its subject interacts with behind, possibly even at the moment the subject does, this screenplay may need endings for more characters than just the ones I have shown -- at least for Wollstonecraft's sisters and Richard Price.

The screenplay does not show Wollstonecraft's marriage to William Godwin, although I included it in every outline. I questioned at first whether I considered it too difficult to address or had really felt that showing it was unnecessary. But looking back at Godwin's *Memoir*, I find that actually he does the same, writing, "I have nothing further that I find it necessary to record, till the commencement of April 1797. We then judged it proper to declare our marriage, which had taken

place a little before." (108). This is a literary equivalent of having the marriage occur "off screen".

As I read the *Memoir*, for Godwin the point of interest about the marriage itself was the reaction others had to their legal ceremony. When he writes later that "no two persons ever found in each other's society, a satisfaction more pure and refined. What it was in itself, can now only be known, in its full extent, to the survivor" (109) he is speaking not about the institution of marriage or any change that the ceremony brought to their relationship but of the relationship itself: the society they found in each other.

"Ours was not an idle happiness", he wrote, "... we probably derived real advantage from it [their way of living together], as to the constancy and uninterruptedness of our literary pursuits" (110). This, I think, to Godwin, was the more important piece. This is the picture I hoped to show of their union. This was the note on which I hope her story ends.

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