

HYENA IN PETTICOATS

The Story of Mary Wollstonecraft

by Grace Cavalieri

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Based on the life of MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759-1797)

Mary Wollstonecraft was the mother of modern feminism. She embodied a new sense of what was possible for women of her era. The conflict in the play is derived from the fact that Mary longed to stand shoulder to shoulder to men and yet she sought their love and approval. Here is where I got my impetus for the drama. Punch and Judy came into fashion in the 1800's as live performers rather than puppets. Also, the circus came into being in London in the 18th century. The characters Punch and Judy serve as narrators and tricksters, both.

Synopsis

The play follows Mary Wollstonecraft's life as a girl longing to read and write and to teach her sisters. We see, early on, her manipulation and aggression to "get out of the house" as soon as possible. The play follows her to her first employment as Governess to Ireland's Lady Kingsborough, where Mary indoctrinated the Kingsborough girls to think for themselves. She was promptly discharged. But there she met the American writer Gilbert Imlay. Their relationship was a power struggle, and Gilbert was a womanizer. Mary bore his child, Fanny, out of wedlock. Mary was a journalist and was publishing articles on the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the events of the day. This was unheard of for women who, if they wrote anything, penned fluffy romanticized "novels." Mary's masterpiece was her 1792 book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She asked that women take responsibility for themselves and reform the world by reforming their own lives. The publisher Joseph Johnson is the one who published Mary and to whom we owe her permanence today. He factors into the play with a surprising twist. She has lovers after Imlay, with calamitous results especially regarding the married painter Henry Fuseli. Mary argues with the leading male conservatives of the day and has verbal battles that are minor victories but do not win her the affection she so longs for. It is as if she is saying "If men will not love me, at least they will admire me."

The play shows a major crisis in Mary Wollstonecraft's life. She was not prepared for the women to turn against her and to say she made their lot worse. This broke her heart. She attempted suicide by jumping off the Thames bridge and was saved by fisherman. Her "skirts" floated her to the top. This is a powerful scene in the play Mary meets the philosopher William Godwin who is against the strictures of marriage, as Mary herself is. Yet they move toward a union when Mary finds she is pregnant for the second time. This is the childbirth that will take her life for often physicians were careless, causing blood poisoning during the birth process. The play ends

with her death scene and reconciliation with her sisters, Everina and Liza. A subplot is the formation of a school for girls that Mary abandoned into their hands. Mary had found some few months of felicity with William Godwin, fulfilling a wish that had pervaded her life.

Grace Cavalieri

Characters

Time: 18th century England (Play begins 1776. Play ends 1797.)

Place: Play Begins in Epping, Moves to London.

Mary Wollstonecraft age 17 (ages up to 30's during play)
(Strong manipulative, aggressive, argumentative, moves to vulnerable. She is at time
brash... at times resolute, at times fragile... complicated.... vastly human)

Everina (Mary's younger sister)
(Stoic, dry, sensible, angry, moves to compassion.)

Liza (Mary's youngest sister)
(Elflike, vacant, capricious, nervous, silly, moves to strength and resolve)

Clergyman Clare Middle aged

Gilbert Imlay AMERICAN 30ish

Joseph Johnson Middle aged

William Godwin 30ish

Punch Played by Man

Judy Played by Woman

Lady Kingsborough (voice over)

Prologue

Page 1 Punch and Judy emerge from two opposite sides of the stage. They sometimes

do tricks, and *mime their words*. They sometimes address each other as characters, and sometimes the audience as narrators.

(Punch and Judy cartwheel on and do a bow to the audience)

Punch

I am Punch.

Judy

And I am Judy.

Punch

History is our role and duty.

Judy

Today we have a story to mend.

Mary Wollstonecraft, seeks equality with men.

Punch

We show the foolishness of women again. *(Judy steps on his foot)*

Judy

She was born 1759, one of 7, second in line.

Punch

Mary is the baby's name.

Judy

Mary wanted power and fame.

Punch

Her father, a farmer who beat her mother..

Judy

And cruel to his daughter above all other.
She wrote books both brave and true.

Punch

She muddled women's minds like stew.

Judy

If you met her you wouldn't stay true! (bop)

Punch

The American Revolution.

The French Revolution.

Judy

(jumps up and down)

The Vindication of Women! Evolution!

Punch

Ha! Books do not change anything

Judy

Then neither does man, church or sin!

Punch

What do women hope to do?

Judy

Change your minds, your ideas too!

Punch

No woman was ever minister.

Judy

Too busy serving and saying SIR.

Punch

No woman was a first rate fighter.

Judy

Now they'll fight as first rate writers.

Punch

I am going back inside (drops out of sight)

Judy

There is nowhere you can hide

Punch

The Circus comes to London town.

Judy

Mary Wollstonecraft seeks renown.

Scene 1

(On stage, Liza peeking out of corner, Mary on chair, Everina standing with hands on

hips. Frozen tableau. (all come to life)

Mary

(fumbling for words) Women of the village, contending for the rights of women of the present century, you who are only anxious to inspire love, ought to cherish a noble ambition to exact respect!

Liza

(Enters) Mary, get down, I'm afraid.

Everina

Mary, what are you doing on that chair. Father will have your head.

Mary

(Continues) If women are not prepared by education to become equal to men *(Aside)* Tell Father to go eat pig slop *(Continues)* they will stop progress of knowledge and virtue.

Everina

Mary

Mary

(Jumps down) Unless she is free to strengthen her reason. Are you, Everina? Are YOU?

Everina

Am I what?

Mary

Ready to strengthen your reason? Get away from here? With me? Open a school for girls?

Liza

I'm ready. Mary. I'll start a school with you.

Everina

Before we do that, Reverend Clare is here. You asked him to come?

Mary

Oh.

Everina

He's right outside in the foyer. Do you want to have him see the madwoman we live with?

Mary

Oh bring him in *(Scurries around arranging chairs.) (She grabs an apron. Puts it back*

on ... pulls her hair down on sides of face to look pathetic.) (Assumes a humble look.)

Liza

I will bring the tea. *(Runs off.)*

Scene 2
Clergyman Clare and Mary

Mary

Clergyman Clare. Come in. Sit down. Please. Come in.

Clare

(He sits) Your sister brought a message that you wished to speak.

Mary

Thank you, yes. Yes.

Clare

Well. Here I am.

Mary

Yes. Yes indeed, sit down.

Clare

I am seated, Mary.

Mary *(Liza enters with tea, exits)*

Would the Clergyman care for a cup of tea with Mary. Mary has it steeping here nice and hot.

Clare

Yes? Yes. Of course.

Mary

Mary has seen some of your writings and can figure the letters, some match. It would be a hope to read your work and, teach Everina and Lisa as well.

Clare

OH! You wish to write! And to read, do you?

Mary

(Goes to "cupboard", climbs on chair to top shelf. Brings down a cup with a pencil in it.)
See here. It is quite ready to do its work.

Clare

And you. Are you ready to do its work?

Mary

It is a lovely object. It is kept on the highest shelf, in this broken cup, behind the cream jar.

Clare

Why. Mary, why?

Mary

So it cannot be thrown away! By father or dear brother Ned.

Clare

It is hope that gets you up in the morning, Mary?

Mary

It exists not in this house, Sir. Perhaps it is in yours. Mary will teach her sisters all you teach me. It will not be wasted effort. Sir. This I promise.

Clare

So the top latch takes the weight of the door, does it. You the eldest.

Mary

Perhaps. So the door will open. Surely, it can. Mary will get up before dawn, before chores to do her learning.

Clare

It is done. Tomorrow we start. And there is lesson number one. That we can do today.

Mary

(Flustered) Today. No preparations have been made. *(She hastily straightens objects on the table.)*

Clare

No. Mary. Rest your hands. Today. This will be enough for one day... today, Mary. You must say – listen closely. You must say, “I.”

Mary

Mary must say “I?”

Clare

A simple word. A simple enough word to say. Your life will follow its trail. Your name is your guide.

Mary

Of course. More tea?

Clare

*(Stops her.)*What do you want, Mary? What do you want?

Mary

Someday, Mary... Someday ... I ... I want to write a book. Someday.

Clare

Do you have ideas you want to say? As men of letters do?

Mary

I do. Oh yes I do! I do. I do.

Clare

*(Rises to leave.)*A child's wonder and a grown person's grief. I believe, Mary. I believe you do. And if you could, what is it you would like to speak about on the page?

Mary

To help others. To write a book to overcome my fears, perhaps. To seem myself. To help Liza and Everina, and the other village girls.

Clare

Stranger things can happen. I once saw a horse with five legs. *(Beat)* But of course, he could not walk. Until tomorrow, my girl.

(She sees him to the door and closes it behind him.)

Mary

Dear Friend. If you really believed I could not speak my name in front of men? *Your* child's wonder with *your* grown person's grief, indeed! A horse with five legs *(Throws pencil up in the air)* can run. This horse can run.

(Everina enters with papers in hand.)

Mary

Everina, you found my work. Give those over.

Everina

Should the Reverend know that our Mary has already the gifts she seeks?

Mary

Do not scold, Everina. I need him to get me out of this house. He is a rung on the ladder, Everina, the bottom rung.

Everina

You have been teaching yourself to read and write sister.

Mary

(Grandly)“Give instruction to the wise and they will become wiser.” Book of, proverbs...
(Stands on chair to continue rhetoric)...Do our dreams affect our days or do our days
affect our dreams. We are like little cucumbers, row upon row, ready to be cut, sugared
and baked. *(Jumps down)* *(Addresses different area of the stage.)*

The moral life is to see the harvest! The peeling! Girls, teach yourselves how to think,
for no one will do it for you. Be the knife!

Scene 3

Clare and Everina

(Reverend Clare enters-. Enter Everina)

Clare

Everina Wollstonecraft, This is most unusual. I am to meet your sister.

Everina

I am on my way to bring milk to the house. I must speak quickly. Father may come
from the yard.

Clare

Over here, my child. You're shaking.

Everina

It's Mary.

Clare

A clever child!

Everina

That's just it, Reverend. The Church of England says we must not lie.

Clare

Of course, of course.

Everina

It is for that reason, Reverend, I wanted to talk to you.

Clare

What is it, Everina? What have you done?

Everina

It is not I. It is Mary.

Clare

Extraordinary girl.

Everina

Reverend Clare, God help me, she is not what you think.

Clare

And?

Everina

(Blurts) She taught herself how to read and write. She fooled you. *(Drops to her knees.)* God help me for telling you that.

Clare

(Helps her up)

But God already did help you! For unburdening yourself in his name. I've always known that about Mary.

Everina

Then what – why do you meet daily. Why help her? Why be part of her scheme?

Clare

Everina, she knows the phonetics of words, but not the abstract thinking that comes of it. We talk of more than sounds on paper, Everina. Reading and writing is about thinking, and that dear Mary does best with someone her equal. You've done no wrong. Now, quickly, to your home. *(He exits.)*

(Mary emerges from out of sight. She has been listening all along. Everina gasps, and starts to weep.)

Scene 4 Mary and Everina

Mary

You heard the good Reverend. You've done no wrong, Everina.

Everina

Mary, I was struggling... I struggled. "Thou shalt not tell a lie." It was my fear, choosing between you and God.

Mary

Let us say, once again you've made the wrong choice, Everina. That is your problem. Lack of judgement.

Everina

(Currying Favor) I have not told Father on you.

Mary

And I will not tell father on you. Go before your milk sours to offset an abundance of saintliness.

Everina

You are not angry?

Mary

The Church of England tells you how to think and what God thinks? It makes the laws. And you obey them? Is that why you love God?

Everina

Of course Mary, and so should you.

Mary

If I could make one wish, Everina, it is that you would see that God is within us. Not in the law. Inside us in our hearts. It is called a conscience. We have our own minds and our own ways of knowing him, and we know right from wrong from His teaching, not England's. England does not own God. Not that building made of stones down the road.

Everina

God help you and help us all. *(She runs away.)*

Mary

(Calling after) Run straight Everina. The shortest line between God and yourself is the direct way, not from the King of England. From God to the heart. Reverend Clare taught me that.

Mary

(Looks skyward, scared) Dear God, I hope we are right about this!

Scene 5

(Mary and Clare are seated at the table.) **Mary and Clare**

Mary

And, why do you continue to help me Clergyman Clare? I can never repay you.

Clare

Nothing gives a man more pleasure than to save a young lady who could not otherwise be saved.

Mary

(Unbelieving) Save a young lady?

Clare

You, my dear, you were but a tiny worm in a cocoon and now look at you. You are

learning to fly.

Mary

Oh, yes. Fly.

Clare

A man gets great pleasure in breaking open that cocoon for a young woman, a beautiful one at that.

Mary

Excuse me Reverend Clare, I owe you much and love you more than a little, but – does not a cocoon open on its own?

Clare

With much more difficulty, my dear, much much more difficulty.

Mary

Only the butterfly knows how it feels to be free. You cannot do that for me.

Clare

True, true. But I can teach freedom.

Mary

But you cannot know freedom.

Clare

Whatever do you mean?

Mary

Only that you cannot know freedom unless you have known what it is *not* to be free.

Clare

We will save that for a logic lesson at a later time.

Mary

I think about the way I started to read, a sweet code broken, hieroglyphics curling upward. I saw them as letters shaped like petals rising upward. I remember when I was very small wondering when words upon the page would bloom. I thought they were living things.

Clare

Writing was just the next step after thinking, Mary, and you did that well. Yet I must admonish you.

Mary

But I have always honored all you said.

Clare

It is difficult for you to give me the credit due for creating you. Without my help, you would still be content polishing kettles and sweeping floors.

Mary

I would not! The door I opened with all my might, my *own* might, you wish to close for me?

Clare

I gave you the key to the door, Mary. The next lesson learned for you, Mary Wollstonecraft, will be modesty and humility.

Mary

And what of dignity, Reverend Clare?

Clare

We shall save that for a discussion on deductive reasoning, our next meeting. *(He exits.)*

Mary

(Reads what she wrote.) (Begins reverently.) Dear Reverend Clare, Son, husband, teacher, what shall I call you then teaching me clarity, a growing understanding of how words are made, why we wish to be heard, how we bridge to other people's minds. *(Suddenly she changes her mood, throws her writing board down, and stands upon it.)* But what we are worth? And in whose eyes? You cannot do that for me.

Bridge

Liza

(To audience) I asked Mary how she learned so much, She said she did it by herself while the Reverend was speaking. In the months that followed, Mary taught us all she knew and will continue our learning when she returns. But now she leaves us. I am frightened without her. I bought her a gift with my savings... it is used, but it is clean.

Scene 6

Everina, Mary, Liza

(Everina is working at the table.) (Mary enters.)

Mary

Everina! Where is it?

Ev

Mary, my hands are filled with flour.

Mary

My package.

Ev

What now, Queen Mary. What distress do we have now?

Mary

My papers. They were right there. I left them here. You saw them, I know.

Ev

Mary, I had to clear this table to make the bread.

Mary

This is more my table than yours!! Did I not make legs when father broke down the door? Isn't this what I made of a broken door? My table more than anyone's. Where are my writings?

Ev

What is it this family needs? Bread or scribblings.

Mary

Tell me or I swear I'll *(Grabs the dough and threatens her with it.)*

Ev

In the fire, Mary. You lack humility. You are not the only one living in this house.

(Mary runs to the fireplace.) (Liza enters with arm full of papers.)

Liza

I reached in, Mary. I think you have them all. But a little ruined on the edge.

Mary *(exasperation near collapse)*

Three years in the making, Everina. Three years in this madhouse, at night lying in front of Mother's door to save her! Father's drunken rages. Ned's ridicule. Everina. Are you crazy? Ruining my work.

Liza

I found them for you Mary.

Mary

I leave for Bath. This is a fine goodbye.

Ev

You are getting out of this house, Mary. More than we can hope for.

Mary

To one just like it. Companion to the Widow Dawson.

Liza

I found them for you Mary. If you leave, I am afraid.

Mary

(softening) Listen sisters. When we three were small, we were like one. Come. *(They hold their right hands together.)*

Mary

(Reluctantly) Who hurts one, hurts all. Together we stand, apart we fall.

Ev/Liza

We three are one.

Mary

(Pulls her hand away) Liza, Everina, if it is true, we are one, are you the part of me that hates myself? Why is it when I tell you my fears, you beg me to do what others want?

Ev

Why do you take your poor disposition and sour life out on the ones who love you, your own sisters. You will always get what you wish, Mary. So leave us then.

Liza

Let us not argue, please. I found the papers.

(Mary puts papers in her carryall)

Mary

I will write you soon.

Liza

No, save your beautiful handwriting for your stories.

Ev

Don't forget your promise. After this. Our school, Mary. Don't forget.

Mary

As soon as I save twelve guineas, we begin.

Liza

The empty house at Newington Green. A school for girls. I'll help you Mary.

Ev

I'll believe it when the cock lays eggs. Mary lives in the land of possibilities and broken

promises.

Liza

Be nice Everina. Mary leaves us.

Ev

I want to, but Mary acts such the perfect ass.

Mary

No one is perfect. Tend to your logic, Everina.

Liza

Wait Mary. *(Runs for package.)* I have a gift. *(Unwraps paper. It is a preposterous, ridiculous plumed hat.)* This is such a fine hat, in this you will think fine things.

Mary

(Puts on hat.) (Hugs Liza.) (EXITS)

Liza

Mary would not be mad if she thought you threw the papers in the fire to hide them from Father. She wouldn't be mad, Everina. We could tell her that.

Ev

Why not tell Mary, Liza, that you sneak out to see Thomas every chance you get, and you are the one threw the papers in the fire by accident because he makes you dizzy.

Liza

I took them out again though. *(Freeze. Lights or out.)*

Scene 7

Punch

Mary becomes a governess in Ireland.

Judy

Lady and Lord Kingsborough have something in common.

Punch

Their children! They both hate them

Judy

Mary tries her best to abate them

Punch(sourly)

She writes "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters"

Judy

She is bossed around and follows orders.

Punch

Lady Kingsborough is a witch

Judy

Lady Kingsborough is a bitch. (covers her mouth)

Punch

But there are special moments of pleasure for Mary

Judy

Where she is well engaged and sometimes quite merry.

Scene 8

(Lights up. Mary is in disarray lying in the arms of Gilbert Imlay.)

Lady K (VO)

Mary Wollstonecraft. You open that door this moment. I have words for you. You are not going to make me the wicked stepmother in Cinderella. Turning my daughters against me, you steal their minds. My dogs give me more love than my children. I thank God I didn't pay you to take care of my kennel!

Mary

Yes, Lady Kingsborough. I'm hurrying. *(Kisses Gilbert.)* Lady Kingsborough I'm quite undressed. Please forgive the delay.

LK

I won't have it, I tell you. Your ideas of womanhood! Really now. A masculine mind, Mary? A governess with a masculine mind? What is keeping you!? If you want things too much you won't get them, Miss. Mind here. If your ambitions make you hate men, you'll get nothing. Get out here.

Mary

As soon as possible, Lady Kingsborough. *(Mary and Gilbert kiss.)*

LK

(Knocking) If you do not open that door, it is goodbye, Mary. You write to help teachers teach children? How kind of you. You write to have parents raise their own children without servants? How good of you. We will put it into effect. Today. As soon as you leave. Get upstairs at once. *(Bangs door.)* Mary! You are needed in the drawing room to meet our houseguest Mr. Gilbert Imlay. Do you hear me?

Mary

Yes Ma'am. I've already met Mr. Imlay, Lady Kingsborough, but I'll join you shortly

when I am dressed properly for the important occasion.

Mary

How do you do, Mr. Imlay. (*Gives hand while holding bodice together*)

Gilbert

It's been a *great* pleasure, Miss Wollstonecraft. (*Kisses her hand.*)

(Black out.)

Scene 9

Liza, Everina, Mary

(Enter Liza and Everina on either side speaking from their letters.)

Liza

Dear Mary, I tremble to write you this, for surely you'll say I should not have married. Please come home. You asked if Thomas had struck me. The answer is no, he has not. But he does many strange and hideous things upon my person, I dare not describe and I am frightened.

Everina

Dear Mary, It is months now since we solicited the women for our school. The property waits at Newington Green. Eight mothers have sent us letters of willingness for their young ladies...

Liza

Can you take me from Thomas? The baby will not suck. Thomas whispers in her ear. He tells lies about me. He says my breast milk is poison. I am sure this is why she screams all day and night. I want to hurl her to the courtyard, but instead I write you this.

EV

A school for girls, Mary. We have dreamed of nothing but this. Surely you do not forget. Please write soon.

Liza

I know you will help me. Come soon. Everina waits to carry my letters. Your loving sister, Liza.

Everina

I scarcely know what to speak when confronted with hopes of these agreeable young women. I say you are tending to a dying friend. What else can I say? What shall I do? Yours, Everina.

Mary

(Speaking from her letter) Sisters, do you not remember the way Father grabbed me by

the back of my neck, grabbed my hair when I least expected it, the anger in his eyes and the way he said, *Look in my eyes*. I dared not look away with him holding my neck. Oh my god. He was a monster. Every woman has been so touched. But what is worse is the way he said my name. I could no longer bear the sound of the word MARY. No, I cannot come back.

Ev

Mary our sisters need you. The young scholars are waiting.

Liza

Mary, I am afraid without you.

Mary

Dear Sisters, I have other work to do. If you spite fear, it will soon become courage. I promise that. *(Turns to audience.)*

Ev

(insistant) Mary.

Mary

(Overrides the cries of her sisters throughout) I dreamed all women were daughters of the same blood. Our words would seep through walls; that there was a light on the hill we could walk through. I dreamed that Women of England were not afraid, that we could write the seeds of history, leave our footprints in the snow, bring our broken pieces together...

Liza

(Demanding) Mary

Scene 10

Punch

Oh Mary Wollstonecraft, you think we have unfair education because men have written books.

Judy

It is inconsistent to subjugate women. That's how it looks.

Punch

You say we want mistresses and affectionate wives to woo.

Judy

(Machine gun speech) Let us not conclude to invert collectively the virtue so strenuously maintained so contradicted various motives of action. *(Slowly and pronounced)* And that means you!

Punch

What? My ears are full of hay.

Judy

Men don't listen to a thing I say.

Punch

Ask your questions. Ask away.

Judy

(Machine gun speech) Why does preeminence of the acquirement cultivate the virtues that produce the opposite?

Punch

Kiss me Judy.

Judy

(Bops him)

Punch

OW

Judy

Men inherit love at birth. Why not me? What do I lack?

Punch

You smell bad, talk loud and wear stockings of black.

Judy

I am dazzled only by grand language, now, what do you think?

Punch

O then let me put it prettily. You stink!

Judy

Kiss me.

Punch

Are you sure?

Judy

Here.

Punch

Where?

Judy

(Sticks up backside) Here in this place.

Punch

I cannot stare your brains in the face.

Judy

Unmeaning civilities, and lack of depth! Go find a wench with less education than me.

Punch

I dispatch your wishes, happily. And thank the Good God who gave them to thee.

Scene 11

Mary and Gilbert at home

(Gilbert sitting, Mary walking. Gilbert reacts but every time he attempts to speak she overrides He remains stunned.)

Mary (*coquettish*)

If you want me to marry you I refuse. I see by your ways that you would like me to be Mrs. Imlay. It is true I am not beautiful. One eyelid droops a little but I have not had the pox. I shall not make you beg for I have already said that Mary Wollstonecraft does not believe in the archaic state of matrimony, no matter how enlightened a partner. So I am making it plain. And it is not that you are an American, so do not think that. Ask all you want Gilbert, The answer remains, no. I see you trembling on my account. I want nothing connected to matrimony. You want me and I do not accept your advances. I pity you our differences. I do not wish to leave you with the circumstance of a shattered soul...I will not marry, Gilbert Imlay. I recall all you've ever said. I am like the chickadee who has keen memory. If it does not remember where the seeds are, it will die. So it is with me. I remember all the love you have not yet spoken and all the words you have not yet said. It is in your eyes. I think you will love me a lot.(slowly) or a little? (looks coyly at him)

Scene 12

(Liza and Everina)

Liza

Everina, our sister writes that romantic encounters with men are much overstated. All that fussing and moving about.

Ev

Is that why she continually goes back to recreate the experience? So that she is quite sure of her opinion?

Liza

Everina, for shame! She also adds that no matter how much bad luck you have, you still cannot make people love you. Whatever does she mean?

Scene 13

Mary and Gilbert in Gilbert's home

(Gilbert seated at table.)

Gilbert

And my dear Mary, listen to this editorial in The Observer. I believe we know to whom it refers. "Can you answer this riddle," *(Read aloud)* "I have heard some ladies, pretending to have bookish knowledge, use the following words with prompt spontaneity: *literature, hilarity, stipulate, excruciating, temerity*. Twenty years ago, scarce one of those words would have been understood by women, much less used by a private gentle woman.

Mary

Is that supposed to be an insult? I care not for a group of reviewers. And is there more?

Gilbert

No, but in the square I heard them speak of you again tonight.

Mary

With passion?

Gilbert

With spite. Even the women are against you, Mary.

Mary

Yet they need me.

Gilbert

They need more trouble in their houses? Then they need you.

Mary

They need me because I am free. And they are not.

Gilbert

What is this obsession of yours Mary? A woman should not lose her soul to paper.

Mary

I shape the book and it shapes me.

Gilbert

So you write to tell us who you are? Therefore what women should be? The arrogance, Mary!

Mary

I write to know who I am. Who we are.

Gilbert

Other females know more how to be womanly than you do.

Mary

Writing summons my heart which is broken every day, my dear Gilbert.

Gilbert

They'd have eaten an Englishwoman alive in France. I saved your life.

Mary

I thought someday you'd be somebody. I should have been more specific as to whom.

Gilbert

Goodbye, Mary.
(*Exiting*)

Mary

(*Frightened*)
Gilbert, do not leave. All is well with me.

Gilbert

But not me. (*Gilbert exits. Mary runs after him.*)

Mary

Gilbert Imlay. Don't leave. Your name will go on my travel book.

Gilbert

(*He returns*)
You lack humility Mary, a bad thing in a woman.

Mary

I have been selfish.

Gilbert

It would do you well to be more modest. I read your letter to Liza saying you may settle advantageously in the matrimonial line.

Mary

I spoke too quickly. I was boasting. I admit.

Gilbert

And more that you were offered such and refused my hand? You spoke to Liza about my being a feather? A fine feather in your cap?

Mary

I foolishly said these things to Liza. But I did say we were working on my new book

together.

Gilbert

Our book, Mary. Remember if there is no cap, there is no feather. Remember that. Always. (**Black out.**)

Scene 14

Liza and Everina

(Liza and Ev narrate from side.)

Liza

(To Ev) She writes that we all see the same sight and looking does not change that sight. Listen *(Reads)* "but it is with my own eyes I look out and see. And that looking survives the heart. And lets me write." Isn't that beautiful, Everina. What does it mean?

Everina

I care not. All of London is talking against her. They even speak of her in the countryside.

Scene 15

PUNCH AND JUDY. CIRCUS MUSIC.

Punch

Good morning, Mary.

Judy

Good morning Gilbert Imlay. By the bye, our relationship is not to my liking.

Punch

And what would you like your liking to like. Please feel free to be blunt.

Judy

I am a famous lady and will go where I want, write what I want and sleep with whomever I want. I will read what I want, stay the night where I want and preach to the masses. Breakfast will be each morning at 8. That is the way it will be while you wait.

Punch

Good. Good famous author, go lead your flock. There will be sex in my bed nights at 7 o'clock. Whether you are home or whether you're not.

Judy

(Bops him) Cad, swine, faithless beneath the cover...

Punch

And besides Mary, you are quite the dreadful lover. Where are you going? And to what ends?

Judy

I'm going to get opinions from my other male friends. (*applause*) Oh, Mr. Imlay, Mr. Imlay. Let us go back to the place we once loved.

Punch

Where is that Miss Wollstonecraft?

Judy

In felicitous bliss once more we will stay.

Punch

Yes, you are the mother of our Fanny Imlay.

Judy

Yes and you could be the father of our Fanny Imlay.

(*Punch hits Judy*)

Punch

I hope you die.

Judy

I hope *you* die.

Punch

I'll get you a headstone.

Judy

How loving a try.

Punch

It will say: *Here Lies Mary Wollstonecraft, Cold As She Was In The Past.*

Judy

And your headstone will say: *Here Lies Gilbert Imlay. Stiff At Last.*

Scene 16

Mary, Joseph Johnson, William Godwin

(*A desk with inkwell, behind which sits publisher Joseph Johnson. William Godwin in a chair. Mary enters*)

Mary

(*To JJ*) You sent a message.

J Johnson

Miss Wollstonecraft, I have special news for you.

Mary

Sir.

JJ

We are publishing this book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Extraordinary work. Sharp thinking and beautiful prose.

Mary

It is equal to all that I read. And what will your male friends say of this?

JJ

May I present the philosopher William Godwin.

Mary

Oh, well I know his philosophical treatises. Mr. Goodwin. (*He rises. They shake hands.*) And what do you think of it, Mr. Godwin?

W Godwin

Equal to all I read.

Mary

Your work is, as well... equal to mine, I mean.

JJ

Let me say we think you are the first of a new species.

Mary

Oh, like the flatbug.

JJ

Not at all, a new genus. The first of your kind. I think even the gentlemen of the Salon will recognize you.

W Godwin

Even if they do not agree with all you say.

Mary

What does the famed philosopher think. You, Mr. Godwin. Do you agree?

W Godwin

For the most part, Miss Wollstonecraft. For the most part.

Mary

(She whips out paper) This is dedicated to the Mr. Tallyrand, his work in France, as he so understands the rights of others. *(She begins reading.)* Having read with pleasure your pamphlet, I am better off for the reading. Sir, I dedicate *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* to you. I have advanced the rights of woman and national education. I call for a firm tone of humanity, so that justice prevails for half the human race...

JJ

(Interrupts) Thank you Miss Wollstonecraft. We have read the introduction with pleasure.

Mary

I am only through by half.

JJ

This we can discuss in my Salon, this evening.

Mary

Am I being invited to partake of discussion in your own home, Mr. Johnson?

JJ

We gather nightly. Discussion of the French Revolution will give you no reason to be bored or restless. Please come.

Mary

In the meantime, women are waiting for this book, Mr. Johnson, as am I.

JJ

Well, they might accept your ideas someday, if we act now.

Mary

(To WG) Mr. Godwin, tell your writer friends that a book is to read the mind of God. You may not care about me, but you may care about what I say. My speech retrieves what could otherwise be lost.

(Godwin is aghast)

Mary

(Continues) Hold this page in your hand, Mr. Godwin. It is meant to lift your humanity from the dead. *(Hands him the paper.)* I leave you gentlemen to discuss the new species among you, then. Goodbye. *(Exiting)*

JJ

(Calling after) Oh Miss Wollstonecraft. This is one book you will not want to sign Mr. Cresswick. I think we can kill the mysterious author Mr. Cresswick now. Do you agree?

Mary

(Embarrassed, but she smiles.) Mr. Cresswick is dead. Mary Wollstonecraft is very

much alive.

(They rise and bow.) (Mary exits.)

JJ

What do you think, now that you've met her in person, William?

W Godwin

I think she has strident ways for a woman. And I daresay she will select the red velvet chair nearest the fire tonight. Humility is not her strongest virtue.

JJ

Would you say that of Sheridan? Or Thomas Payne? Or Rousseau? Then let us not of her. Think of their minds without their bodies. And she compares favorably. Even brilliantly.

W Godwin

She is fair of face, and it is difficult to think of a woman without at least noticing the shapeliness. Even a philosopher is a man, Joseph.

Mary

(Reenters) Oh, I re enter without invitation to compliment my hosts – for men who do not discuss a woman after she leaves their presence is a sign they engage her with true equality, as I am sure is true of you... I returned to say thank you for that. *(She exits.)*

(Mary has trumped the men)

Mary

(Arms outstretched toward the audience) Look! Gentlemen! Who has arrived!

Scene 17

Punch (salacious)

Although Mary is not rabbiting around.

Judy

She becomes the talk of London town.

Punch (sarcastic)

Mary has conquered her reserve to trade words with men.

Judy

Until her lover Gilbert, stands in her light again

Scene 18

Mary, Gilbert, in their home.

(Mary at table writing) (Gilbert is pacing impatiently)

Mary

Gilbert, stop pacing and listen for a moment. My writing on the French Revolution begins, "Death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy. Once the Revolution started, it was once a just and proper cause, but now..."

Gilbert

(corrects her) A proper and just cause but now...

Mary

Now a bloodbath. I must find the exact word that has not been written before. *(Thinks)*... It now becomes a phenomenon. Phenomenon. This has not yet been said in print. *(Writes)*

Gilbert

Mary. Joseph is waiting for the daily pressing. For the Review. You've been sitting in wait all night to write one phrase? Surely you do not want the review to go to print without featuring a woman's mind.

Mary

You mean to show a woman has a mind?

Gilbert

(Grabs her paper into satchel) I will be looking into business, and home by supper.

Mary

Take care with it, Gilbert. It has the sounds of footsteps in it, all who walk to the guillotine. The Revolution has made my bones cold and I cannot put out the candle for fear of the dark.

(Gilbert exits) (Enter Everina carrying ledger as secretary)

Mary

What now, Everina?

Ev

I know you may not answer, but Father and Ned keep sending me messages. For you.

Mary

(Disdainful)

Mother is dying. They wish to see me. Of course, who else can sit by her side and put her hand up mother's bowel and wipe the spittle, and wash the basin, and rinse the blood.

Ev

Will you go back?

Mary

Now is not the right time.

Ev

What do I tell them, then? I cannot leave the school. Bad enough that you have abandoned the girls. Liza and I fight to keep the doors open every day. The students...

Mary

Newington Green is not my matter anymore. I give you what I can for the boarders...

Ev

We cannot all be missing from mother's household at one time.

Mary

She never spoke well of me or touched me or held me or kissed me as the others. Why should I be the one to hold the bowl now?

Ev

Death, Mary, is a special circumstance.

Mary

When Father gave the supper instructions, he let the boys eat the meat, did he not? Everina? And we were given root vegetables from the garden.

Ev

And so, Mary?

Mary

Let us go back to the table and see. I say the ones given the meat should be the ones to carry the casket. They are stronger, are they not? My mother never touched me. When she spoke, her breath was made of snow.

Ev

And your feelings of love?

Mary

They are in the root cellar let us say. In the cold, dark root cellar.

Ev

The coach to Epping goes at 8. (*Jots note on ledger*)

Mary

It goes without Mary Wollstonecraft. What more, Everina?

Ev

Just these letters about your book *A Vindication of Woman*.

Mary

A loving one among them?

Ev

Well... it will take a while for the women to appreciate.

Mary

Next? I have work to do.

Ev

Liza.

Mary

What of her?

Ev

We must fetch her from Thomas. And save the baby. She forgets to feed the baby... she is...

Mary

She will come here with me. We leave tomorrow. Next?

Ev

And finally, the dealer who wanted to buy your book, its original pressing.

Mary

Yes. How much?

Ev

He asked 100 guineas. Less than you wanted, so naturally I shall tell him no.

Mary

No, wait a moment... Life is a learned lesson, is it not? He shall have it. And you will take it to him with a note. Mind you get the payment first, before you hand it over. *(Mary goes to shelf, tears out the center pages from the book.)* There. He is getting what he paid for, now. *(Hands Ev the book.)*

Ev

(Aghast) Mary, one third of the book is missing.

Mary

Oh no, dear Everina, you perceive it from his point of view. One third of the payment is missing. Now, hurry and let me know of any others in the future who will short my purse... I think not...

(Enter Gilbert)

Gilbert

Mary.

Mary

And what is this look about you, Gilbert? What now? What did Joseph say about my writing on the Revolution?

Gilbert

In the crowd...

Mary

In what crowd?

Gilbert

There was a man calling for the head of King George and he gathered 100 around him.

Mary

What does that have to do with your errand?

Gilbert

The excitement...

Mary

Where is your satchel?

Gilbert

Somewhere in the crowd, by some foul hand I suppose.

Mary

My editorial!

Gilbert

I will go out one more time to search for it.

Mary

Gilbert, what are you trying to teach me?

Gilbert

Mary, trust. It is the one thing you lack.

Mary

How can I trust when my important work is lost in a crowd on the street? Did you see Joseph? Did you explain why he has no article?

Gilbert

I did see him. I am leaving to make amends.

Mary

Gilbert, you cannot steal my cloak.

Gilbert

What in hell's fire are you speaking about? A daily editorial...

Mary

Words are what we wear to show who we are. That is myself you lost, not a crush of papers.

Gilbert

What is this talk of stealing? The leather case is gone, and of value to me as well. You need to learn trust, Mary. Think on it while you're alone... (*Sees Ev standing in door*) of course, alone conspiring with Everina. (*Gilbert exits.*)

Everina

It must be truly lost, sister. Do not believe Gilbert is so vile as to ruin your writings.

Mary

Not on his surface. But underneath, he does not wish me well. I would have gripped the handles raw. It would never have lost my sight. I renew my writing, Everina, if you'll leave me now.

(Black out.)

Scene 19

Mary and Joseph Johnson

(*Knock.*) (*Ev opens the "door" to Joseph Johnson*)

Joseph

Mary, Gilbert told me the awful consequence. The crowd, being rough, and losing the case. I can wait the day til dark, if you'll start once more. A woman's thoughts on the revolution in France are needed at this time. And yours always inspire women to think about matters.

Mary

What else did Gilbert tell you?

Joseph

Nothing more he could say, so distraught by losing your script. And so in a hurry, he would not even sit. We need to feature that man more in print. Gilbert Imlay always sweeps the cobwebs from the mind... he called the Revolution a phenomenon. What a fresh use of language. We have worn out all known phrases on the images of destruction. Gilbert Imlay has the clear view. Imagine using such a word. Phenomenon.

Mary

Yes, imagine, Joseph, but that was my word! He cannot steal my words.

Joseph

Mary, Mary, are you fevered? No one loves you more than I do - or Gilbert - but words belong to everyone...

Mary

I thought you would understand, but if not, then only God knows how I feel. That was *my word!*

Joseph

If God understands, you could not have a better ally.

Mary

Yes, let us say it is a phenomenon. That is the word Gilbert used, yes?

Joseph

(Exiting) Mary, Mary. Taking Gilbert's thoughts and words is beneath you.

Mary

I always loved the way you said my name.

Joseph

(Shakes his head) Mary, Mary, Mary. I am the one person who believes in you in all of England. *(Exiting)* But do not allow that Gilbert has not been clothed in the gift of language. *(He exits.)*

Mary

But he is naked without mine.
(Black out.)

Scene 20

Punch

Judy, you are my lawful wife.

Judy

Yes, I pledged my love for life.

Punch

A wife I can beat with this legal stick.

Judy

But it is so big, so heavy, so thick.

Punch

But English law says I can beat you.

Judy

English law says I cannot leave you?

Punch

You can try to run but you will fall.

Judy

A woman who lives outside the law?

Punch

Dear Judy, you may not divorce.

Judy

Dear Punch, I then have no recourse. Your plum pudding will be poisoned of course.

Scene 21 in Liza and Thomas's house

Mary, Liza, Everina

(black stage, baby crying)

Liza

He says I am to blame. He is the judge and the critic.

(Lights) (Everina and Mary and Liza around the table. as if pursuing each other)

Mary

It is not a matter of perception! It is a matter of facts!

Ev

If Liza leaves her husband, he keeps the child. It is not even hers. She owns nothing,

not a guinea, not a chair.

Mary

She is so terrified she forgets to feed the baby. So let us save one, at least. Our sister.

Liza

I cannot leave him now, Mary. He'll murder me, and there's the child. The others will not let me go. She and I. I am the only one who insists I love her or me. I say my name, you see.

Mary

Liza. You are not making any sense. She, I, He, Me! These people are all you. And you must save yourself!

Liza

I am scared. He'll kill me, my husband will. And no one will punish him. A man can kill a wife who leaves. That man - that man is furious and I shake in my bed.

Mary

Be not afraid.

Liza

I have a morbid fear... I can't bear him to touch me. And there's the child who hates me.

Ev

Thomas never beat you.

(Thomas knocking- continues throughout)

Liza

I don't know what to do. I fear, he tells the baby not to suck. Some days if she moves too near me, I'll throw her out the window. I start screaming and screaming about throwing her from the window, and I wake screaming, and then I wasn't even asleep, just standing in the room screaming, and then she starts crying. I want to talk to the baby, but I don't know what to say.

Mary

You will leave them both tonight.

Ev

Mary, she cannot leave husband and child.

Mary

Should she stay for your reasons? Or his? (*to Liza*) You'll leave tonight. I'll help carry you if I need. I am strong, Liza.

Ev

Mary, what are you doing? A marriage by the Anglican Church?
(*Knocking becomes loud and insistant*)

Mary

Come this way, Liza. (*She pulls Liza.*) (*Everina stands between them.*)

Ev

Mary, neither law nor church will save you now.

Liza

I say goodbye to the child first.

Mary

Liza, leave the baby there. Come. My heart beats with every knock. Liza, before Thomas discovers we're gone. I'd sooner face a lion. (*Liza howls and struggles.*)
Everina, help us now! This other door (*Everina runs after, grabs LIZA and holds her still.*)
(*Mary stops, returns, and hurriedly takes paper from her purse*)

EV

Mary, now is not time to leave a calling card. The door is coming off the hinge.

Mary

A note which wishes Thomas well. (*Reads sarcastically*) "May God bless you with an obedient wife." (*Drops it on the table and runs.*)(*All exit.*) (*Knocking continues.*)(**Black.**)

Scene 21

Judy

Oh Dear Liza, Love is stronger than loss.

Punch

And now your sister will be your boss.

Judy

Mary says "be in your own skin."

Punch

Liza, bring forth what strength you find within.

Judy

You will have another baby someday

Punch

And it will not be poor Fanny Imlay.

Judy

You will hold a baby in your arms.

Punch

A little Mary with Mary's charms.

(black out)

Scene 22
Mary and Gilbert in their home

(Enter Gilbert)

Mary

I have waited late for you.

Gilbert

No one asked you to keep all the candles in the house burning.

Mary

Fanny missed her father's touch before bed.

Gilbert

A mother's task, you do so well.

Mary

(Produces glove) I have been saving a memento. I had not planned to return...
Something left on our bed for you. Found, when I returned from travel. Perhaps the
owner misses it.

Gilbert

Were you to come a week before, you could have found the hand holding this glove,
because we are not married, Mary, do not pretend we are.

Mary

You pledged...

Gilbert

To save your life in France. That is all. An Englishwoman during the Revolution,
needed an American's name, Mary. That is all.

Mary

I gave you my work. I gave you little Fanny. And you speak of a name?

Gilbert

You women want to own what you cannot have.

Mary

(Screaming) I am not you women. I am Mary. *(composes herself)*
(Mary brings out a fan)

Gilbert

What in hell are you holding?

Mary

It is a feminine woman you want. Who can handle her fan, and look between the blades and peek and flirt. Well, here I am.

Gilbert

Put that damn thing down.

Mary

Oh, not so fast. There is an art to it, you know.

Gilbert

Now I know you've lost your mind.

Mary

Watch me unfurl in anger.

Gilbert

Have you given up writing to become a mime, then?

Mary

If I saw you admiring the good lady's ring last night, it was but to hold her hand. *(Snaps fan open.)*

Gilbert

I cannot make a social note with someone of your sex without...

Mary

Without women discharging their fans at you. *(Opens, closes)*

Gilbert

Are you making a satire of our relationship, Mary? Is that what you do?

Mary

But I love you. Surely you can see if you watch me recover my fan. (*Opens and lays it across her breast*) My fan says it for me... which was said that way last night... to you... in full view...

Gilbert

I visit another for a moment and...

Mary

You were laughing together. You made her happy. (*resuming ridicule*)
And women flutter their fans... (*flutter*)

Gilbert

Go ahead, mock me more.

Mary

Women of England, education is not what is needed. Those of us with education lose the prince. Get yourself a fan! Hand your fan (*Makes military moves like a sword*) Show your fan (*Pokes him in his genitalia*) Ground your fan (*Peeks behind*). To keep your man to one's self (*Flutter, flutter, flutter*) (*Whips it in his face*) by all means, throw away your pens, Daughters of Education, and use your fan.

Gilbert

You should be ashamed of yourself, Mary Wollstonecraft.

Mary

Oh I am, Gilbert. I am ashamed of myself every day of my life, but nevermore.
Goodbye, Gilbert. (*Fan held over her left ear*) I would never marry you Gilbert Imlay.

Gilbert (Cruelly)

How can you refuse an invitation never given

Mary

Goodbye, Gilbert.

Gilbert

I will try harder, Mary.

Mary

Good. Try being gone, Gilbert. (*Draws fan through hand*)

(Black out.)

(*Mary resumes downstage*)

Mary

Once you asked why I was studying botany. It came from visiting Eton. They were discussing the need for gentlemen to know the subjects as the theory of whales. So then. You are gone. You didn't like the way I walked. "Too determined." You hated my arms swinging. "Tense," you said. Oh, I would have bribed you, Gilbert, with more than a baby and a book if I could. I would have locked you away in my heart forever. You said I talked too much. Did you know, Gilbert, that whales move more by hearing than sight? Or dare I not say what you do not know.

Scene 23

Punch and Judy (*Addressing each other*)

Punch

What is it now, Mary
Why are you moaning.

Judy

I will be equal to men
That's why I'm groaning.

Punch

Well, you have to spend your days
Toward changing your ways.

Judy

Do you know my smart books?
Can't you see my good looks?

Punch

You cannot stand shoulder to shoulder with men
At the same time you are lying underneath of them!

Judy

Now! Don't you see?
Men never seem to understand me!

Punch (*to audience*)

Mary still had her haughty looks.

Judy

She held out hope in all her books.

Punch

She wanted women to know her work.

Judy

Wollstonecraft would never shirk.

Punch

There is no truth that she would hide.

Judy

For that, many lesser men have died!

Scene 24

Liza

I do not wish to bring sad tidings. But Little Fanny is calling for her mother. No one else will do.

Mary (*disoriented*)

I dreamed Fanny was a baby in my arms but old with white hair, asking why I was never home to hold her.

Everina

I am sorry to report that Imlay has written of you. Saying you drank Laudanum to stay your hand. That you attempted suicide by poison. He makes you look like a hero no woman would wish to follow.

Mary

I am riding a runaway carriage and my arms are filled with books and they are flying out the side and I cannot catch them I cannot hold them. They are dropping by the roadside.

Clare

Mary, the country says you are self-serving and not of service to God. That you flout the Church of England.

Mary

I cannot seek honesty by dishonest methods .

EV

Your readers, Mary ...well let us say their hatred is better than indifference,

Mary (*struggling*)

Unflattering yes but...

Joseph (*encouraging*)

The book is

Mary

Mary, surely the villain inside you will speak without mumbling so you can see what you did wrong!

JJ (*enthusiastic*)

Mary I am writing to say you are receiving praise in France as well as England. Sweden wants you to visit It is said that you remember the future ! Instead of the past.....that your ideas will be everyone's ideas, and are fast becoming....

M

If there is no one on this green earth who can love me, Who am I? I seek not the dark. (softy) So much light beneath me it looks like water.

JJ

I hope this letter reaches you soon. I am told you suffer a depressed spirit. Mary you are now receiving favor. Come to my office tomorrow. The news is good.

M (*unhearing*)

How does one know when to be done with it?

Scene 25

Mary, Women's voices, Punch and Judy sing all lyrics

Judy

London Bridge is Falling down
Falling down, Falling down

(*Crowd noises. Voices chanting "MARY, MARY, MARY, Burn her"*)

Judy (continues tune)

London Bridge is falling down
My Fair Mary.

Mary

I can not hear all they say.

(*Woman's Voice:" My husband beat me with a stick because of you. Says' that'll teach me'*)

Mary

These women make a vicious sound.

Punch

Mary's hair goes down, not up
Down, not up, down, not up
She isn't dainty with a cup,
My Fair Mary.

Mary

(Women's Voices: "Mary Wollstonecraft")

Judy

She spared the rod and spoiled the child
Spoiled the child, spoiled the child
She wants our girls to turn quite wild
My Fair Mary.

(Woman's Voice: "She makes our lot worse")

Mary

They speak of me.

Judy (sings)

London Bridge is falling down

Mary

Were it men speaking, I would not crumble this way. But the women!

(Voice: "Famous lady telling us how to act.")

Punch

Ladies want to read of love
Read of love, read of love,
Ladies live in clouds above
My Fair Mary.

Mary

Ladies of London, why not grant me....

(Voice: "why'd you come here")

Mary (voice rising)

...grant me the courtesy given men authors...

Judy

Buttons, bows and satin and lace
Satin and lace, satin and lace
Marriage is what little girls should chase.
My Fair Mary

Mary

Why not say my book is “controversial” as with a man’s book. I have profited not.

Punch and Judy

Gold and Silver I have none, I have none, I have none...

(*Woman: “the vulgarity of her speaking of money”*)

Mary

Dear Sisters of Blood, My plea was for all of you, not just myself.

Judy

Mary runs outside like men.
More the cock than the hen
She’s growing muscles on her pen
My Fair Mary

Mary

. Dear Women, Can we never throw a ball? Can we never run through fields? Do these belong only to men?

(*Women voices: “ How many ways does she think us ridiculous. “
“I have as much liberty as I can use, more than is good for me”
“Animals are rewarded well for subordination. And so are women.”
“All that jargon. The very title of her book is absurd”)*

Punch

Women put her on a stick, on a stick, on a stick.
They burned her like a wicked witch.
My Fair Mary.

(*Woman: “The Vindication of the Rights of Woman. What does that mean?*)

Mary

Does my book give me a masculine mind? Or just a mind?

Judy

Build the bridge with wood and clay

Mary thought she'd have her say
But other women held their sway
Our Fair Mary.

Mary (*defeated*)

Should we just, then, curl up on our mothers' graves? And die?

Punch and Judy (*plus all voices to a crescendo*)

Wood and clay will wash away,
Wash away, Wash away
Wood and clay will wash away,
My Fair Mary.

(Sudden silence of the din) (Lights down. All sound out. Then the sound of water rushing and lapping. Pin spot on pile of blankets on stage.) (Crowd circling blankets) (Mary stands to the side, watching)

2

By Jesus she jumped, she did! Off the bloody bridge.

1

That lady committed suicide. Did you see her jump?

3

I mean, she tried to kill herself; actually kill herself.

2

I know someone who knew her.

1

She had someone else's lover.

3

Why couldn't she be content. Does she think any of us has life easy?

(On stage, Women 1, 2 and 3 examining the heap)

2

Adopted one poor baby, dropped little Fanny, she did. Did she have another bastard?

(Enter Liza)

Liza

That is not true. She has one baby, Fanny. Fanny Imlay. She loves her...

Mary

(At side, under spotlight) I was a writer first, and a mother next. Dear God, I regret it.

1

They say she's almost dead. Fishermen under London Bridge saved her.

3

Look. It was her skirts what saved her. Filled up, they did. Floated her up to the top.

2

Now she'll think twice of wearing men's pants.

(Liza and Everina move to either side of Mary, take her, walk her off slowly) (Black out.)

Mary

As I slept in the water, I dreamed of little Fanny. That she was grown and I did not know how old she was, and if she got a schooling, herself. I did not know if she could read and write, and I put my hand on hers and she said, "You are in the world and not in me." and when I grabbed hold, there was only water, and I could not hold on.

Everina

Does writing books really change anyone, Mary?

Mary

I don't know. The Bible invented God. *(Ev slaps Mary)*

Liza

(Liza hugs Mary) It is alright Mary. There is something besides being a daughter or a wife.

Everina

How would you know, Liza? Mary, really! What is the cost of being a writer?

Mary

You mean, Everina, what is the cost of my beliefs? I do not know. Sisters, it seems even death does not want me.

(Black out.)

Scene 26

Punch

Whatever happened to Mary's school?

Judy

Her sisters keep it up, you fool.

Punch

That hardly seems quite fair to me.

Judy

Just shut your mouth and wait and see.

Scene 27
Everina and Liza
(lights up)

Ev

Twenty students and twelve guineas a week. Our school at Newington Green is flourishing, and where's Mary gone?

Liza

She's a writer, Everina. She's in her studio.

Ev

I know where's she's gone. I mean why.

Liza

Oh, that I do not know.

Ev

I mean, why does she have to go. Just when the school's thriving and more boarders coming in.

Liza

We'll take care of the school for her, Everina.

Ev

She's caring only for herself.

Liza

She is to be published. Her book will change women more than a school. We teach through her page now.

Ev

We have worked for 12 years for this.

Liza

She had a speech for the first new meeting, and then we will see what could be managed.

Ev

A promise broken.

Liza

When birds fly in a line, the first one takes the wind. Sometimes it must fall behind and let another take the lead.

Ev

Birds now, what does that mean?

Liza

I don't know. Mary said it. And I have this note from Mary, (*Reads.*) I've taught you sisters. You've listened and learned. To this you must add more. Now begin the work and the Lord be with you.

Ev

Liza! You are not going to address the group! With Mary's speech?

Liza

(*Standing on platform*) Students, New Scholars, Welcome to Newington Green. (*Grows stronger throughout*) Welcome to Newington Green. You are gray as newborn mice. Unsure and afraid of humankind. But not for long, my young scholars. Worry no more how you should appear or what you should say. Knowledge made pleasant will cure your ailments. Adorn your inner self, no matter how you pile high your hair. Forget that artifice and I will give you good luck. No one can teach you happiness, it is true. But I will teach you to influence God as others do. Study well.

Ev

How can we do this without Mary? We need her. Oh Mary, I miss you so much.

Liza

Learn to influence God as others do. Didn't you hear my speech, sister? And teach them from Mary's book, *Vindication*. It will be the bible for women.

Ev

Oh, it is *your* speech now, is it?

Liza

Follow me. Our class is waiting.

Scene 28 (in Mary's studio)

Mary and Joseph Johnson

Mary

(Mary is reading a note to JJ. about ultra conservative Edmund Burke))

Dear Right Honorable Mr. Burke,

Why indeed should you wish something changed for the poor. Why indeed should you know of justice or poverty when you have tasted neither. You call men effeminate and sentimental if they care for the welfare of others. Well, I will draw a map of principles attacking you with logic better than your own. Through my debate, Edmund Burke, it will be seen that men made of marble and stone are not living things, and therefore their ideas shall not live as well.

JJ

Mary, you know I applaud all you do, but...

Mary

I hate it when you begin like that.

JJ

You cannot send that to Edmund Burke.

Mary

Once in a public meeting, he asked a question and then he said I could not know the answer. I fumbled and became unsure of what I did know. Never again.

JJ

Mary, you are now a public intellectual, and cannot call a verbal duel with Edmund Burke. He will ruin you just when you are gaining respect. He will find something about you and burn you in effigy. He, *(Shouts)* Mary! Listen!

Mary

Say my name as if it is someone you love.

JJ

(Softly) Mary, your letters are printed for all to read.

Mary

As well they should be.

JJ

Not always to your favor.

Mary

What, Joseph.

JJ

Edmund Burke writes that you bleed from the heart and have relieved your brains of that necessary substance. He goes on with ridicule.

Mary

Joseph, I will not be silent on this subject. Burke cares not that 1 percent of the people own 99 percent of the land. In France, people are killing each other for a loaf of bread. Here, children eat mud in the streets to fill their stomachs.

JJ

This is one fight you will not win. The poor have been always with us.

Mary

Do not quote scripture to me, please. The Church of England does not own Christ, yet. In fact, if Mr. Burke lived in Christ's time, he would assign my crucifixion. That is the morality of Mr. Burke!

JJ

They called you...

Mary

Spit it out, Joseph.

JJ

A hyena in petticoats.

Mary

Not true. Hyenas run in packs. I am very much alone.

JJ

How many enemies do you want at one time?

Mary

As many as can read my books. What is one woman against an army of men.

JJ

He can pay people to burn you in effigy, Mary. Do not...

Mary

Joseph, Joseph, do you think I defy you? It is not you I fight. Well I know that if there were not a Joseph Johnson in this world, there would be no Mary Wollstonecrafts in print at all.

JJ

He has more influence than you do.

Mary

Everyone has more influence than I do. If that would stop me, I should have tripped over my “petticoats” long before this.

JJ

Mary, sheer oxen power will not win the day.

Mary

Let me apologize to you, and promise you I will not mention the affairs of church and state. Carry this letter I’ve penned. It is purely personal. That is my prerogative, is it not? A personal note to a great public figure? Sores left to fester are seeds of disaster, we do not want disaster, do we Joseph? Men court disaster. Women are allowed civilized discourse. On fragrant paper.

Dear Mr. Burke, (*Reads*) You are an ugly, horrible man. You have a bad influence upon female readers. You have convinced them that littleness and weakness are the essence of beauty – smooth delicate creatures who totter in their walk. I do not care about being big of bone. I dedicate my writing of THE VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN to the Right Reverend Honorable Edmund Burke. (*Triumphantly*) One half the human species does have a soul. It is I, Mr. Burke, your enemy.

JJ

Fragrant paper, indeed.

Scene 29

Liza and Everina in the school

Liza

There are more women than books. More young girls than paper. Where do we go now for money? Mary’s name is everywhere.

Ev

We will continue meeting. And the older ones are teaching the younger.

Liza

It is not enough, Everina. We have not enough of any supply.

Ev

Must we turn them away yet?

Liza

Not by my counting. But soon. Something must come to us. (*black out.*)

Scene 30

Judy

Even brilliant women weep.

Punch

If there are men they cannot keep.

Judy

Fuseli was the painter of the day.

Punch

A bon vivant who had his way.

Judy

Henry belongs to someone for life.

Punch

Henry Fuseli has a wife.

Judy

Mary's left outside. That is true.

Punch

Let us count his lovers: One, two and two and two and two...

Scene 31

Mary in Henry's studio

(*Mary is on stool.*) (*Enter Everina*)

Everina

You will wait a long time for Henry Fuseli, Mary.

Mary

You are not invited to this sitting, Everina.

Everina

I bring a message from the great artist.

Mary

A message? From Henry?

Everina

By way of Henry's wife.

Mary

What impertinence.

Everina

She had your letter sent back to your home.

Mary

And you, of course, took the liberty to read it. *(Mary attempts to grab the paper)*

Ev

(Reads) Dear Mrs. Fuseli. Henry is the only one I can come to life for...

Mary

Give it here.

Ev

(Runs away from reach and reads) His love for me is pure as is mine for him. This letter requests the softening of your heart, so the three of us can enjoy the domesticity... Mary! "The three of us?" ... the domesticity of friendship without pain. I throw myself upon your open heart, that we three may live in the same house as one.

Mary

Come here.

Ev

Oh no. Here is Mrs. Fuseli's answer. "Miss Wollstonecraft: You write you do not wish to marry my husband. How pleasant that you honor English law, as he is already married!" And oh, by the way, Mary, I think that Mr. Fuseli will be late.

Mary

He has a business appointment. Some woman, an art patron, at my home.

Ev

Yes, in your bed. His patron left in haste. I gathered the belongings.

Mary

Leave me now.

Ev

Yes, the patron was in quite a hurry. (*Produces a top hat, cape and cane*) Mary, come back to Newington Green. It is not you he cares for. Really Mary, it is not you he loves. If he and Joseph Johnson were lying on that table, you'd cover them with a tablecloth, serve tea and write on top of them.

Mary

Joseph Johnson!

Ev

Do not pretend you do not recognize this cape. You try to see everything at once, and therefore you see nothing. What is it about you that makes the world the way you *think* it should be rather than the way it *is*.

Mary

Henry loves me, and I love him. Love knows no gender.

Ev

I am sure Mr. Johnson would agree.

Mary

It is his essence I love.

Ev

And what of Mrs. Fuseli?

Mary

There is a special place in hell for women who do not help other women.

Ev

Hell must be crowded then with women who do not want to help other women get their husbands. Henry Fuseli is a pretender. That is not even his real name. He is now fashionably Italian.

(Exit Everina)

JJ

(JJ Knocks) Mary? Are you still here?

(Mary sweeps the table cloth over cape and hat on floor) (Enter JJ, sans cape and hat)

JJ

Mary. I quite by chance saw Henry. He is on his way. We will be printing some texts

about his work. A genius, that man. He sends his apologies for keeping you waiting. My fault. Entirely. All mine. Forgive my hurried appearance, he said to run to you before you left the studio.

Mary

(Dryly) I am sure, Joseph, that genius knows no timetable. His paintings are immortal, and therefore time is expanded for him.

JJ

(Gestures walls) Ah, look at these paintings. I can feel his presence, his essence. *(Walks to her to take her hand.)*

Mary

Oh yes, his essence. I can smell it from here.
(Black out)

Scene 32

Punch and Judy

Judy

Knock, knock. I have something to say.

Punch

(Pops up with scarf on head, impersonating woman) Who is at my door this time of day?

Judy

Oh Mrs. Fuseli, Mrs. Fuseli, it is I, your husband's lover. *(Sound of door slamming)*

Punch

Leave my door, I will hear of no other. *(Punch disappears)*

Judy

Please listen, please listen, Mrs. Fuseli.

Punch

(Reappears) Who is this sloven Mary calling for me.

Judy

I wish for us all sweet felicity.

Punch

You? In my bed with Henry and me?

Judy

Women have much to give one another *(Clown whistle)* I can wash the sheets and the bed cover *(Clown whistle)*, I can write of Henry's arts...

Punch

Our bed already has too many parts. (*Lists*) Joseph Johnson, William, Nathaniel and Edgar.....

Judy

Then may I borrow a cup of sugar? Or have I come at the wrong time!

Punch

(*Dumps sugar on Judy's head*) Would you like some tea with that? And do you take lemon or lime!?

(*Punch and Judy assume different positions on stage, now addressing each other as Punch and Judy*)

Punch

Judy! look over here. Mary soon finds another.

Judy

A man she loved first like a brother
(*Both exit*)

Scene 33

Mary and William at home

(*Mary enters. William puts down his newspaper. Mary is seated.*)

William

I read where Mr. Imlay has returned to America.

Mary

To my great relief.

William

I also read in the papers that your neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Fuseli died a foul death by carriage.

Mary

Well, now that they're dead, at least they'll have something in common.

William

I wish I understood, my dear Mary, why a lovely woman has such a sharp tongue.

Mary

I'm sorry I give you the impression that is all that is sharp about me.

William

I try and try to understand how your mind works. Truly I do.

Mary

Men cannot and do not understand our thoughts. They hear sound, but cannot imagine how the mind formulates. Even, dear William, even you.

William

But I support your work, don't I? Don't I Mary? You always say that of me.

Mary

And why shouldn't you? *(Hands him her book)* My books are equal to Jacques Rousseau's books. As much a work of art as his.

William

(Joking) Art? Art is it? I see no paintings here.

Mary

I call upon you because I believe you read a woman's work without prejudice of thought.

William

I read ideas, and they have no gender.

Mary and William Freeze

(Punch and Judy intercut here.)

Scene 34

Judy

Oh William Godwin, William Godwin. Help! This water is not for the drinking

Punch

Do not bother a philosopher when he is thinking

Judy

But the house is burning, raging with fire.

Punch

And who is at home, may I inquire?

Judy

Your mother's asleep, and the archbishop's there too.

Punch

The archbishop is trapped? What can we do?

Judy

The archbishop is writing philosophic morality.

Punch

Ah! Our only hope for man's immortality.

Judy

Only one can be saved. The fire has risen.

Punch

Save the archbishop, you fool. That's my decision.

Judy

Save the archbishop instead of your own mother?

Punch

Truth and wisdom must rule above all other.

Judy

Help, help.

Punch

He speaks for private judgement and discussion made public.

Judy

This judgement's from your mother, and it was made quick. *(Dumps a bucket of water on his head) (Circus water made of silver streamers)* And this present's from me, a nice thick stick. *(Beats him on head) (Punch retreats holding head)*

Scene 35

(Mary and William continue)

Mary

Here is my latest work, and I will not trouble you until you ask for me.

William

You are well known. You have much to hope for.

Mary

Even the praise of men like yourself?

William

Mary, you know why dogs are so loved?

Mary

A philosopher like you must have a good understanding.

William

Dogs are loved because they wag their tails instead of their tongues.

Mary

Then I suppose I shall never find a good owner.

Scene 36

Punch and Judy

Judy

I have made you a fine dinner. Can't you see?

Punch

I cannot eat your dinner. Please leave me be.

Judy

I have cooked it with my own hands, without even trying.

Punch

But I am sick to death and very near dying.

Judy

What has made you so sick? Please let me know.

Punch

Something I ate a few weeks ago.

Judy

Weeks ago? What could it be that you ate?

Punch

I remember now. Our wedding cake!!!

Scene 37

Mary and William

(Mary and William at dinner)

Mary

Is it Mary Wollstonecraft that you do not love or my Fanny Imlay. Is it another man's child you do not wish to raise.

William

Moral obligations are partners to any relationship.

Mary

(Sarcastically) Our marriage plans somewhat delayed I would think, until our matters of moral integrity are settled? I talk not of marriage by church but of commitment through the heart.

William

Logic and reason will prevail.

Mary

Oh those two. Mr. Logic and Mrs. Prevail. Yes. While I wait for them, should I cook with berry juice until our clothes are red? Walk backwards until you marry me? Wash my hair with cider? What William shall I do while I wait?

William

I am talking about the rational mind, Mary, that boggles at your ideas of love.

Mary

I could not roast lamb in the fire to cook for my husband. Climb the tree outside with my skirts pulled up. Oh! I will wear his garters! Shine his keys! I will learn to sew! Yes! Even embroider! And I will perch on the windowsill for all the world to see. William Godwin's crazy woman, who twisted and turned his mind's reason.

William

There are differences between men and women... your mind of course is good as any man's. I simply don't believe in marriage.

Mary

So you love me for my mind, William? Or is it my stories.

William

I do not know. You are always confusing.

Mary

If that were so, you might as well have a man in marriage.

William

I did not say that.

Mary

And therefore, I prepared for that. *(She unbuttons her skirt, it falls to the ground, where underneath, she is wearing a pair of men's trousers, tight in the style of the century.)*

William

Mary! Must you charade constantly to torment.

Mary

We talk of integrity of thought and moral predicaments. If it is a man you want, it is a

man you have.

William

I love your gender, as sullied as you are by romantic love.

Mary

I dreamed of someone who would take my breasts as well as my thoughts, dear William.

William

Who is that someone?

Mary

This someone is the man I will take, for he is a rationalist with a heart I'd devote myself to for the whole of my days.

William

Well then, give this rationalist half your life, Mary, and let him breathe a little.

Mary

(Stands up) (Grabs William's dinner napkin and stuffs it in her crotch) Friends or lovers, William, I am equipped for either you choose.

William

I was not quite finished eating, Mary.

Mary

It is keeping our new creature's feet warm. You would deny our baby a comfort?

William

Baby?

Mary

Baby.

William

With child?

Mary

With a son, perhaps, a son who will not have to beg for William Godwin's love.

Scene 38

Mary and 3 Male Voices *(in Mary's mind)*

Voice

Is it courage or hysteria, Mary?

Mary

I agree the world does not vindicate me.

Voice

Fear disguised as intelligence, Mary?

Mary

I do not promise to defend women. I DO defend women. (*Stronger*)

Voice

Attaching solutions where there are no problems.

Mary (*Stronger*)

Whatever I did for women was given back to me. It is inside myself, inside of me.

Voice

I could never love anyone named whatever you are named.

Voice

If she can't gentle a man, she'll scare him to death!

Voice

(Slowly, menacingly)

The world does not vindicate Mary Wollstonecraft.

Mary (*Victoriously*)

I vindicate myself. No one else can do this for me! The stone that the stone mason threw away, I used as a cornerstone. Instead of saying "Oh God I cannot do this" -- I say, "I will do this and I'll tell God later!" You see, I am free. I am free of shame and the dreams of shame. I am proud of my life and my name. If this is not vindication, then there is no book we can write about it. Do not you perceive it? **(black out)**

Scene 39

Judy

Mary finally knows her name.

Punch

Well isn't she the fancy dame.

Judy

All she needs from Heaven above...

Punch

Is a grown up man to love.

Mary

How on earth can she do that?

Punch

Like I pull a rabbit from a hat.

William and Mary Love Scene 40

Mary

Are you awake?

William

Yes.

Mary

Your eyes are closed.

William

Yes.

Mary

Are you truly awake?

William

I said I was.

Mary

Oh it is not a good day outside.

William

What is the matter with it?

Mary

Are you sure you're awake, even though your eyes are closed?

William

I'm sure.

Mary

I think I'll just get up and see for myself. Not that I don't believe you, Not that I don't trust you. (*William stands up angrily*) Oh. You're awake.

William

Yes I am awake.

Mary

Oh jolly. Let's give a party.

William

A party. It is morning. Besides, You hate getting dressed up to have a good time.

Mary

I just feel like an occasion

William

Can't we be alone? Can't we be quiet and at peace together. Must you need a festivity? A crowd around you?

Mary

Whatever do you mean, That is unfair. I am bored of thinking. Let us play Hide and seek. You count.

William

I swear to you Mary. I would have no idea, in this whole world, where to hide.

Mary

All right then I'll count , 1-2-3-4

William

Mary, we have work to do.

Mary

I'll help you hide William. (*Leads him by the hand*)

William.

I don't want to play.

Mary

Just as soon as I've thought of a good place to hide! It is just like you.

William

Oh I see what you are up to...You want to get my goat, do you? That is the game you want to play?

Mary

No, It feels like a spring snow and I am cold, and it is damp outside and I do not want to grow old, William. That is why I play. And I do not love you.

William

Mary! You do not?

Mary

No, I adore you! But if you'd rather curl up with your books and your speeches, William...*(Puts her scarf around his neck)*

William

It was rare in the extreme to find the kind of writing person I wanted to live with.

Mary

The kind of person for whom loving was ill advised.

William

And here we are in our abode.

Mary

I am the Mary whose prayers are answered.

William

Debate could not stop the beating of our hearts.

Mary

I wanted to polish my boots and comb the tassels before putting them on to die. Only you saw this, William.

William

The world had forgot that women had thoughts worth hearing, and so the thoughts they had, forgot to be heard!

Mary

Until now..

William

Until now.

Mary

Here I am, sagging with breasts that ask nothing more than your pleasure.

William

I am obliged to tell you how we will love this child.

Mary

As ungrateful as my body was for the last one birthed.

William

I have never been so happy. Is it affection, or is it sexuality?

Mary

I did not know they could not be combined.
When your wrist lies crossed against my own, I care not for Education.

William

When we lie together, I'd rather listen to you talk than any other.

Mary

Even Thomas Paine?

William

I am chastened in the teeth of that evidence.

Mary

William, William Godwin, I kiss you on top of your big nose.

William

Lady writer, this meeting. What shall we call it? A dream we are having together?

Mary

Sir writer, no, I say your genius matches my genius.

(They turn toward each other... walk toward each other, light down on them)

Scene 41

Punch

It is said when all the truth is unfurled .This is marriage of the two greatest men in the world. Judy, where are you, fool?

Judy

I am gathering papers to go to school.

Punch

No no. Don't go. I want you here.

Judy

Tell me, husband, what you fear.

Punch

I will read for you, write for you. All the news I will bring for you.

Judy

I want to learn to read and write. Goodbye. I will return before the night.

Punch

Now she'll think as she wants to do. Vindication of the shrew!

Scene 42

In Mary's death chamber

(Baby crying) (Liza and Everina huddled to the side of Mary's bed)

Liza

I feel so low, Everina.

Ev

Two days with childbirth fever. Perhaps soon she'll hold her baby.

Liza

Time escapes her!

Mary

Liza, is that you?

Liza

Mary.

Mary

Do you see that spider across the room? The spider waits on the chair, do you see it?

Liza

Why spiders, Mary? Your baby is crying.

Mary

Do you know how his silk gets to the other side?

Liza

I am no naturalist Mary.

Mary

He waits for a breeze to blow, and then he grabs ahold.

Liza

Very interesting, Mary.

Mary

The silk floats across the space. Then he starts his ride.

Liza

I see. I see.

Mary

Liza. I cannot get across.

Ev

What's this about spiders Mary? Dreaming are you?

Mary

Everina, I wish I could save you from drying into a stick, but I know I cannot.

Ev

Mary! What a thing to say. Scorning me on your sickbed?

Mary

Pretend you are someone else Everina. It will help you be a person.

Ev

Are you afraid, Mary, to leave the baby?

Mary

Afraid that where I go, there will be nothing to think about. Take this scarf off my neck, I am choking.

Ev

There is no scarf, Mary.

Mary

The first day I met William, I spoke passionately about France's King, but he did not reply. Instead he touched my scarf. It is too hot.

Ev

You are wearing nothing at your throat, Mary.

Mary

He kissed my scarf. Soulmaking, he called it. He loves me well.

Ev

I'll get you a cold cloth. Stay still.
(Baby crying)

Mary

(Screams)
Father. It is me. Mary. It is me. Say my name. Mary.

(Enter William Godwin)

William

You who were so alive have me. I who was almost dead have you. *(William lay forehead on Mary's form) (Lights down on Mary)*

Scene 43

Punch

You who were alive have me.

Judy

I who am now dead have thee *(They curl up on floor)*

Scene 44

Liza and Everina

(Ev carries baby..Each want to hold the baby.)

Liza

Look at those beautiful cheeks. Thank God she does not have her father's nose.

Ev

Does she look like little Fanny did at birth? I think so!

Liza

She looks like our Mary. Let me hold her.

Ev

Those long eyelashes.

Liza

Give the baby here. Give me little Mary.

Ev (*gives baby to liza*)

This is the baby who will never lack for a mother's love.

Liza

This is the baby with an open road her mother made for her.

Ev

This is the baby who makes the icicles inside my heart melt.

Liza

She will grow useful and strong . I want to keep her in my arms.

Ev

(*To baby Mary*) You will never be afraid. Ever. I want her now, Liza. (*Gives baby to Ev.*)

Liza

Mary said by reforming ourselves, we reform the world

Ev

She will make her mother sing in the Heavens.

Liza

She will be independent like her mother.

Ev

We will tell her that. She will live by the light of her mother.

Liza

We will tell her we shared her. She will not be afraid. Give her back to me.

Ev

She will not be afraid.

Scene 45
Mary VO

(*Mary's voice*) (*Voice over*)

Would men remove our chains, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives.

(Baby cries, and cries, and cries)

Scene 46

Punch

And what of Baby Mary. Will she find fame and glory?

Judy

She will marry a poet. She will tell the story.

Punch

She will write the book *Frankenstein*.

Judy

While Fanny Imlay is in decline?

Punch

Fanny, poisoned by her own hand

Judy

Like Mary tried once, we understand..

Punch

And what of grieving William Godwin,

Judy

Not believing in marriage, he married again.

Punch

(bows) And that is our story of women and men.

The End

Grace Cavalieri
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Grace Cavalieri is the author of fifteen books and chapbooks of poetry; her most recent books are bilingual, *The Poet's Cookbook* (Bordighera, 2009,) and *Water on the Sun* (Bordighera Press, 2006.)

What I Would Do For Love, (Jacaranda Press) is in the voice of 18th century author Mary Wollstonecraft, the first woman to write a serious book in English. This book was finalist for a 2005 Paterson Prize for Poetry. "Hyena in Petticoats" (A play about Mary Wollstonecraft) received a premiere reading at Manhattan's NYC Public Library. It was presented by Ft. Lewis College, Durango, CO, and is slated for staging in Washington DC.

Grace was awarded the Bordighera Poetry Publication Prize for her book of poems, *Water on the Sun*. It was listed on Pen Center's "Best Books" list. Her new poetry publication is *Anna Nicole: Poems* (2008, Goss183: Casa Menendez.) *Anna Nicole: Poems* received the 2009 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence. Her recent children's book is *Little Line* (with American illustrator/artist Mary Ellen Long.) Her new play is "Anna Nicole." Premiere readings have opened in NYC and Washington DC (2009.)

Cavalieri has had 21 plays on American stages and four produced in New York City. "Jennie and the JuJuman," was commissioned and premiered in NYC's Theater Festival, 2005. Her current drama, "Quilting the Sun," enjoyed a reading by its NYC cast at the Smithsonian Institution. It had a world premiere at Centre Stage, S.C. in Feb. 2007. For bringing diverse cultures together with this play, Feb 16 was proclaimed "Grace Cavalieri Day" and she was awarded a key to the city of Greenville. She has written operas with composer Vivian Adelberg Rudow produced for American stages. Her children's play, "Benji's Quilt" Premieres in NYC libraries in Feb. 2010.

Grace has produced and hosted "The Poet and the Poem" on public radio, now celebrating its 33rd year; she broadcasts the series from the Library of Congress via NPR content depot distribution to public radio. In 33 years, she has interviewed more than 2000 poets. The collection is archived at the Library of Congress .GWU's Melvin Gelman Library and the Pacifica Archives. (See Gelman Special Collections) She is the Book Review editor for *The Montserrat Review* on-line and reviews theater in her column, "America's Stage."

Her awards include the Pen-Fiction Award for short story, the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award, Playwriting Fellowships, WV Arts Commission on the Arts, and the Maryland Commission on the Arts, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting Silver Medal, and awards from the National Commission on Working Women, The American Association of University Women. She received the inaugural Columbia Award from the Folger Shakespeare Library for "significant contribution to poetry." Her poetry commentaries are podcast on miPORadio and on **iTunes** www.MiPoRadio.com.

Grace was Assoc. Director for children's programming, in charge of the daytime schedule, PBS, then Directed Children's funding for The National Endowment for the Humanities, serving as well as Media Program Officer. She was visiting poet at St. Mary's College for 28 years and now reads and lectures widely on American campuses. She is on the staff of *Oranges&Sardines* (Goss183: Casa Menendez) and a poetry columnist for MiPORadio.