

TIMELINE of the life of MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT



Apr 27, 1759

The Birth of Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft is born in the Spitalfields neighbourhood of London. She is the second of seven children of Edward John Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Dixon.

1774

Mary moves to Hoxton

Her early years were spent, with her family, in following her feckless and violent father across England and Wales. He had given up his training as a weaver and made several hopeless attempts to be a gentleman farmer. The Wollstonecraft's move to Hoxton, a London suburb. Mary befriends Reverend Mr. Clare, who introduces Mary to poetry and takes her under his wing as a private pupil.

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1775

Mary Meets Fanny Blood

Mary meets Fanny Blood with whom she quickly conceives a passionate friendship.

Fanny was a young woman of extraordinary accomplishments. She sang and played with taste. She drew with exquisite fidelity and neatness and she read and wrote with considerable application.



A plate from Flora Londinensis by Fanny Blood

Mary contracted a friendship so fervent, as for years to have constituted the ruling passion of her mind.

1776

Mary moves to Wales

The Wollstonecraft family all move to Wales.

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1777

Back to London

The Wollstonecrafts leave Wales and move to the Walworth, then a suburb of London.



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1778

Mary Gets Her First Job

Mary, now 19 years of age moved to Bath to work as a companion with a Mrs. Dawson, a widow lady, with one son already an adult but Mary and her elderly employer do not get along well.



1781

Mary Moves Back to London

Mary moves back to London to care for her ailing mother.

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Apr 19, 1782

Mary`s Mother Dies

Mary`s mother Elizabeth dies. Her father remarries immediately. Mary abandons her father`s home and moves in with the family of Fanny Blood. Mary`s sister Eliza also manages to escape her father by marrying a Mr Bishop.

Mary wanted to live in a female utopia with Fanny Blood; they made plans to rent rooms together and support each other emotionally and financially, but this dream collapsed for Eliza became ill.

1783

Mary Moves in With Eliza

In the winter, Mary moves in with her sister Eliza, who has just given birth to a baby. Mary notices that her sister is depressed and believes she is suffering at the hands of her husband, Meredith Bishop.

Jan 1784

Mary Helps Eliza Flee

Mary takes her sister away from her unhappy marriage, leaving the baby behind. The baby dies in August. Because of the damage to her reputation, Eliza is unable to re-marry and spends the rest of her life impoverished.

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1784

Mary Opens her School

Fanny Blood, Eliza and Mary Wollstonecraft start a school for girls first in Islington then in the northern suburb of Newington Green. Everina Wollstonecraft joins them soon after.



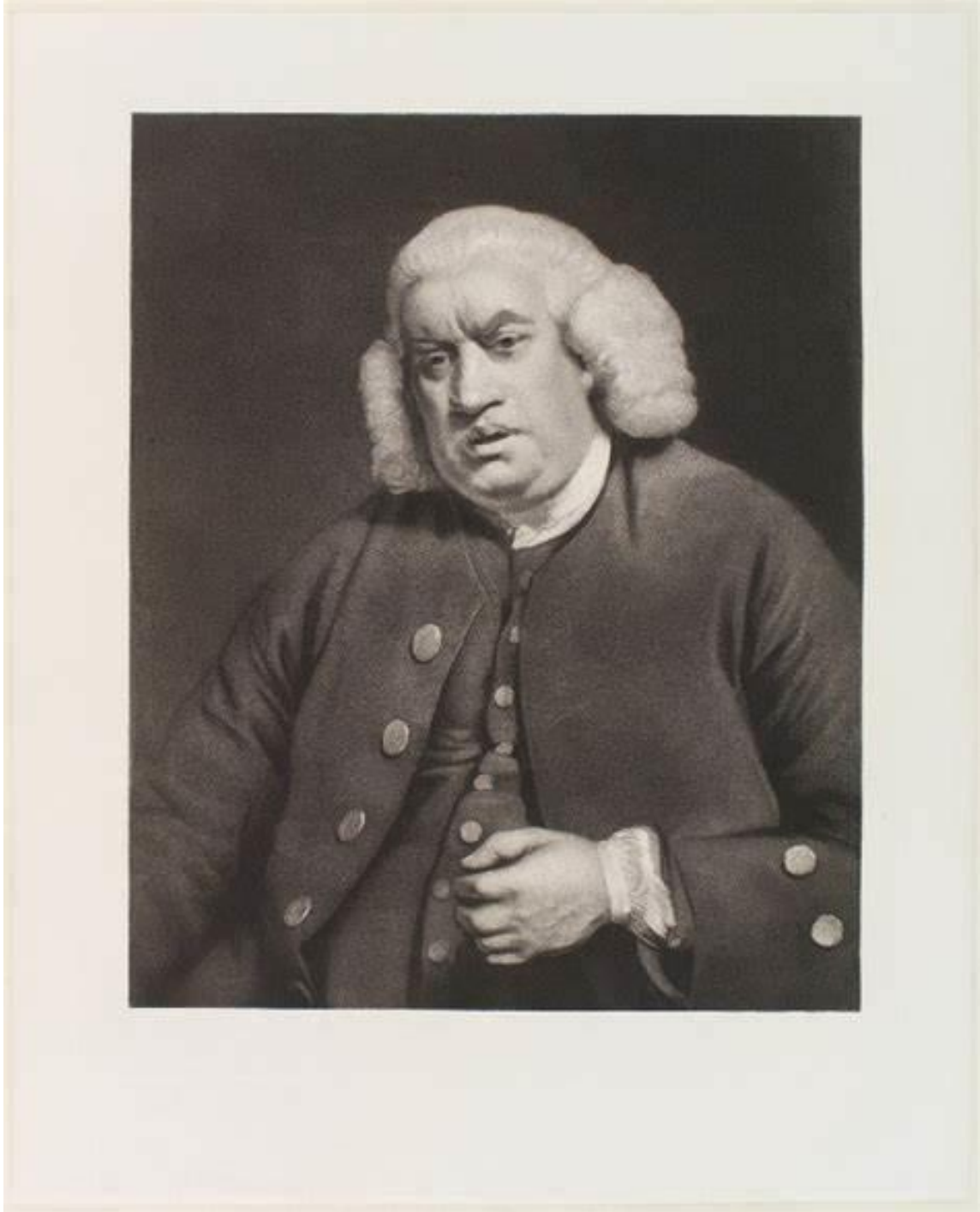
Newington Green, London

In this idyllic location Mary made the acquaintance of political dissenters and radical thinkers, one such dissenter was the minister Dr. Richard Price who preached political and social equality, supported the American Revolution, and became a mentor for Mary.

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She also met the esteemed Dr Samuel Johnson who treated her with kindness and attention, had a long conversation with her, and desired her to repeat her visit often. This she firmly purposed to do; but he died before they could meet again.



Dr Samuel Johnson

However, Mary was soon to leave Newington Green.

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Nov 29, 1785

Fanny Blood Dies

Fanny had married Mr Hugh Skeys, was pregnant and in the advanced stages of tuberculosis. She had been advised to seek a warmer climate and had left London to live in Lisbon. Mary made the journey to Portugal to nurse her dear friend but her residence in Lisbon was not long. She arrived but a short time before her friend was prematurely delivered, and the event was fatal to both mother and child. Fanny and her baby died on the 29th of November 1785.

Dec 1785

Mary Closes the School

Mary returns to London and finds that her school has encountered financial problems in her absence. She is forced to close it the following year.

1786

Thoughts on the Education of Daughters

Inspired by her experiences with her school, Mary pens the feminist tract *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, a polemic about women's education. This piece was published in 1787 by Joseph Johnson a radical bookseller who became a devoted friend.

Mary takes a job as governess to the Kingsborough family in Ireland to support herself.

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1788

Mary Publishes Her Novel

Mary did not see eye to eye with Lady Kingsborough and decided to pursue her writing and left her position as Governess to return to London to reside with her publisher.

Mary publishes her first and only novel, *Mary, A Fiction*. She also publishes a children's book entitled *Original Stories from Real Life*.



Frontispiece by William Blake of *Original Stories from Real Life*

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It was at this time she met many notable friends of Joseph Johnson. Mr. Bonnycastle, the mathematician, Mr. George Anderson, accountant to the board of control, Dr. George Fordyce, and Mr. Fuseli, the celebrated painter, for whom she developed an unconsummated passion.



Henry Fuseli by James Northcote 1778

Mary became a prolific literary critic, she also improved in French and learnt Italian and German so she could work in translation which gave her an income.

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1789

The French Revolution

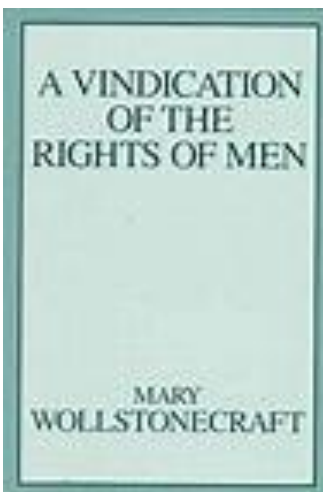


The French Revolution begins, inspiring Mary and other English intellectuals.

She publishes *The Female Reader* under a male pseudonym.

Dec 18, 1790

A Vindication of the Rights of Men



Mary pens a scathing rebuttal to the conservative Edmund Burke's anti-revolution treatise *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

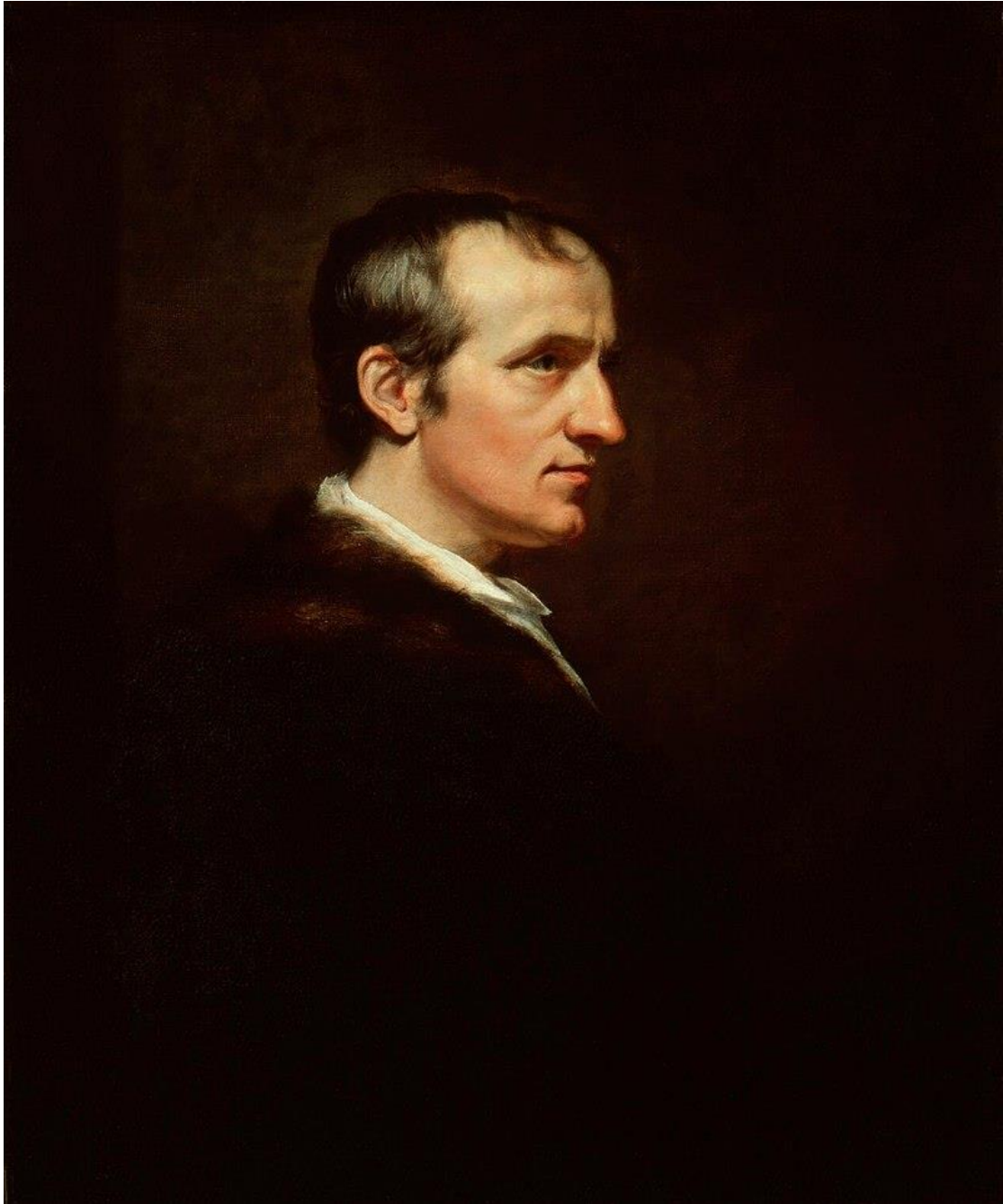
A Vindication of the Rights of Men brings Wollstonecraft her first real attention as a writer.

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1791

Mary Meets William Godwin

Mary meets political philosopher William Godwin at a dinner party. The fiercely intelligent, opinionated pair get into an argument and leave irritated with each other. "The interview was not fortunate," Godwin recalls later.



William Godwin by James Northcote

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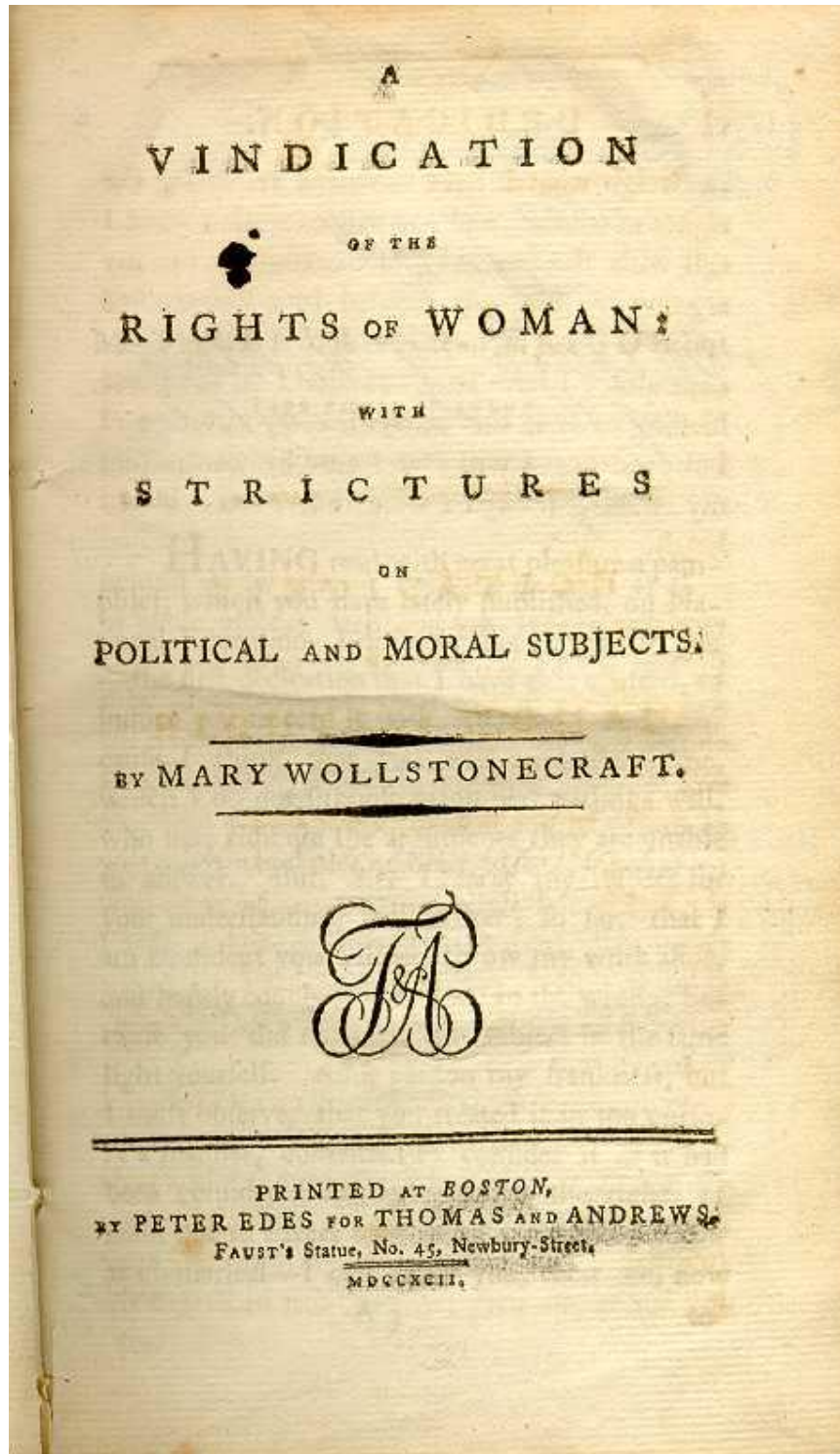
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1792

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Mary publishes her most famous work, a manifesto arguing for greater equality between men and women. It is met with positive reviews, though some male readers are shocked.



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Dec 1792

Mary Settles in Paris

Inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, Mary moves to Paris.

Apr 1793

Mary Begins a Relationship

Mary begins an affair with the American adventurer and entrepreneur Gilbert Imlay. They keep the relationship secret for the first four months, then go public.

The couple move in together in Paris and plan a move to America. Though they do not marry, Imlay registers Mary as his wife to protect her from anti-English sentiment in France.

May 1794

Mary Gives Birth to Her Daughter

Mary gives birth to Fanny Imlay, her daughter with Gilbert.

Imlay soon begins withdrawing from their relationship and moves back to London.

Mary publishes a political tract, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*.

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May 1795

Mary`s First Suicide Attempt

Distraught over Imlay's rejection of her, Mary follows him to London. There it becomes clear that he was involved in an affair with an actress and Mary, heartbroken takes an overdose of laudanum.

Oct 1795

Second Suicide Attempt

Determined to free herself from being the fallen woman Mary agrees to make a journey through Sweden, Norway, and Denmark to trace valuable cargo on Imlay`s behalf.

She writes *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* which were inspired and informed by her travels.

She returns to London only to find that Imlay once again was with another woman.



Old Putney Bridge

Mary attempts suicide a second time by throwing herself in the Thames River. She leaps from London's Putney Bridge, but does not sink.

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Mar 1796

Mary Finally Separates from Imlay

Mary cuts off contact with Gilbert Imlay for good. She publishes *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*.

Apr 1796

Mary Re-Meets Godwin

Mary and William Godwin meet once again, this time with happier results. They begin a romantic relationship that summer. The pair move in together and live as a couple.

Mar 29, 1797

Marriage

A pregnant Mary Wollstonecraft marries William Godwin at London's St. Pancras Church.



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Aug 30, 1797

Mary Shelley is Born

Mary gives birth to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the couple's only child.

Sep 10, 1797

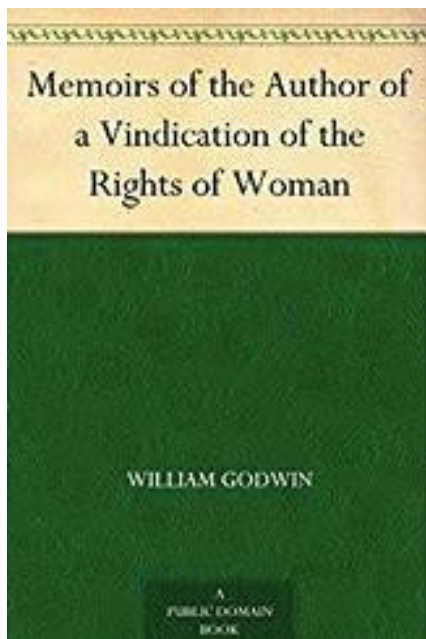
Mary Wollstonecraft Dies

Mary Wollstonecraft dies as a result of complications from childbirth.

Mary's remains were deposited, on the fifteenth of September 1797, at ten o'clock in the morning, in the church-yard at St. Pancras Old Church.

1798

Memoir Published



William Godwin publishes several posthumous pieces of his wife's writing. He also publishes her biography, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

His frank portrayal of Wollstonecraft's unconventional lifestyle posthumously destroys her reputation.

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30 August 1797 - 1 February 1851

Mary Godwin went on to marry Percy Shelley



Mary Shelley by Richard Rothwell



Percy Bysshe Shelley by Alfred Clint

FRANKENSTEIN ;
OR,
THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?—
PARADISE LOST.

VOL. I.

London :
PRINTED FOR
LACKINGTON, HUGHES, HAIRDING, MAVOR, & JONES,
FINSBURY SQUARE.

1818.

Mary Godwin wrote the famous gothic novel *Frankenstein* under her married name, **Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley**.

Mary Shelley died in 1851, following her wishes the remains of her mother and father were removed from St. Pancras churchyard to the Shelley family tomb at the church of St. Peter in Bournemouth.

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