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## Portrait Of Lady Mary Godwin, Writer And Mother Of Mary Shelley, Late 18th Century



1 900 EUR

Signature : Richard Wilson

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 88

Width : 72

### Description

Presumed Portrait of Mary Godwin (born Mary Wollstonecraft) English School, late 18th century Oil on canvas, in very good condition Louis XVI giltwood frame Overall dimensions including frame: 88 × 72 cm This portrait represents a young woman shown half-length, in three-quarter view turned to the left, set against a dark, neutral background which enhances the delicacy of her features and the softness of her complexion. The sitter wears a high-waisted white muslin dress, characteristic of late eighteenth-century neoclassical fashion, inspired by Antiquity and widely adopted in cultivated English circles of the period. The neckline is gently ruffled, the sleeves long and supple, and the fabric falls with a fluidity that suggests an interior or private garment rather than

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formal or public attire. Her expression is calm, introspective, and almost meditative. The gaze appears absorbed in inward reflection, giving the portrait a distinctly pre-Romantic sensibility. The silhouette reveals a slightly rounded waist, suggesting that the sitter may be represented during pregnancy -- a hypothesis reinforced by the fact that the form is not concealed, which is rare in female portraiture of the period and generally indicates a private, familial purpose rather than a public or official one. An old plaque affixed to the frame reads: "Richard Wilson (1714-1782) -- Lady Mary Godwin." This inscription is later than the painting itself and does not constitute a signature. It reflects an earlier tradition of attribution, but one which is undocumented. The attribution to Richard Wilson, who is primarily known as a landscape painter, appears stylistically and chronologically fragile, as the present work corresponds more closely to the type of English portraiture produced around the turn of the nineteenth century than to British painting of the 1760s-1780s. The identification of the sitter as "Lady Mary Godwin" is likewise uncertain. However, it is possible to consider that the portrait may represent Mary Wollstonecraft after her marriage to the philosopher William Godwin in 1797, at which time she bore the name Mary Godwin and was pregnant with her daughter, the future Mary Shelley. This remains an informed hypothesis rather than a documented fact. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was one of the major intellectual figures of the English Enlightenment. A writer, philosopher, and pioneer of modern feminism, she is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a foundational text arguing for the intellectual and moral equality of women. She married William Godwin in 1797 and died shortly after the birth of their daughter. Mary Godwin, later Mary Shelley (1797-1851), the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, became one of the central figures of English Romantic

literature. She is the author of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), a seminal work in the history of Gothic fiction and modern science fiction. Her life and work embody the transition from Enlightenment rationalism to nineteenth-century Romanticism. Note: The portraits of Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelley are shown below for visual comparison only, allowing the reader to observe possible similarities between the traditionally known likeness of Mary Godwin and the portrait presented here.