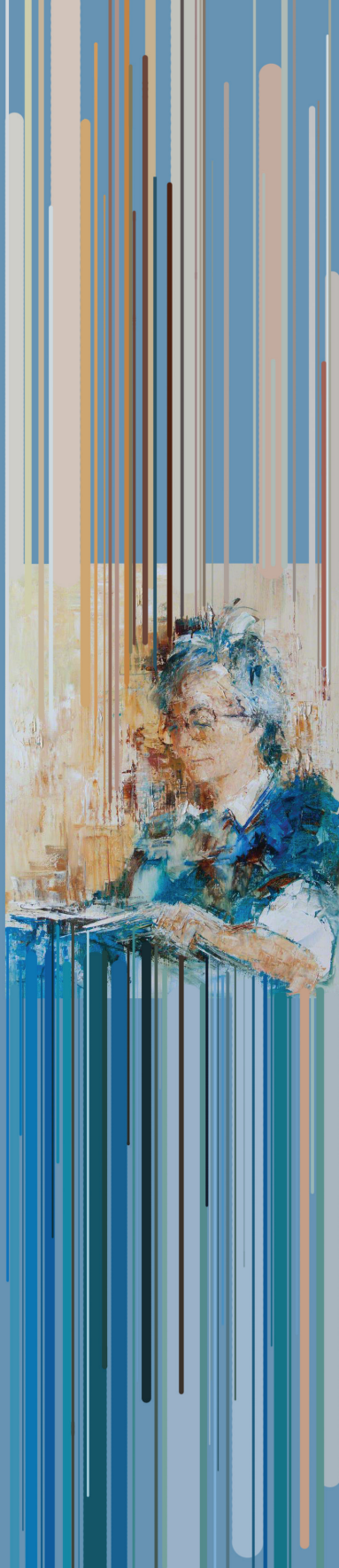


MARY WARNOCK

Ethics, Education
and Public Policy
in Post-War
Britain

PHILIP GRAHAM





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3. Emerging

The physical conditions of Oxford undergraduate life on which Mary was embarking in October 1942 were bleak indeed. Food rationing was severe (one egg per week and tiny quantities of luxuries such as butter) and shortages of everything needed for basic comforts, especially fuel: for example, undergraduates received a single scuttle of coal per week to heat their rooms. Such privations applied across the whole university, of course, and in some respects the women's colleges fared better than the men's. Nearly all the younger male dons had been recruited either into one of the armed forces or into the intelligence services, and the greatly reduced number of male undergraduates comprised only those who had, for one reason or another, secured exemption from war service. The women's colleges were relatively unaffected by conscription, so Lady Margaret Hall (LMH), Mary's new college, maintained a much higher undergraduate intake than any of its male counterparts. Indeed, the predominantly male demographic of pre-war Oxford had been changed for ever; not only was the proportion of women undergraduates higher, but many more women were now working in the re-located government offices which had moved into the vacant spaces in the men's colleges.

LMH, one of the five women's colleges in the University of Oxford at the time, had been founded in 1879. Jointly with Somerville, it was the first woman's college in Oxford. At the time Mary went there about sixty women undergraduates entered each year. Men were admitted as undergraduates in 1979, a hundred years after its foundation. The college is situated in spacious grounds, backing onto the River Cherwell, about a mile from the centre of the city. At Oxford, the college rather than the university is responsible for undergraduate teaching. It also provides a home. 'A college is more than a hostel; it is more than just a private

society; it is a household, a very large one, of course, but a household all the same.¹

When it came to their studies, all undergraduates had a main tutor in their college whose responsibility was to ensure that their pupils had at least one and sometimes two weekly individual or very small group tutorials appropriate to their subject. The tutor would usually conduct these tutorials herself or sometimes, depending on the subject, would share her duties with tutors from other colleges. Mary was largely taught in her college by women and elderly male dons. In addition, the main tutor had a pastoral function, and was available for support if there were any problems.

Another consequence of war was that university degree courses had been reduced, so that undergraduates could only stay for five terms. They were then awarded a 'war degree' and given the right to return to complete a full degree after the war. This shortened degree did not, at first, have much impact on Mary's course: she was reading Classics, a course which was divided into Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 was, conveniently, arranged over five terms and known as 'Honour Moderations' or 'Mods' and was primarily concerned with knowing the languages of Latin and Greek, with exercises in translations and 'proses,' and knowledge of some of the core texts such as Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cicero, Tacitus, Plato and Aristophanes. Mary's first goal was to pass the Mods examination successfully. At that point she would need to make a choice: the second part of the course, known as 'Greats,' would, in normal times, consist of seven terms preparing for 'Finals,' which consisted of eight papers ranging more widely across the ancient world, but essentially covering Greek and Roman history and philosophy. The Greats course had been pared down to a single year and Mary's choice, on completing Mods, would be whether to do the much-reduced version of Greats or to leave Oxford for the duration of the war, exercising her right to a post-war return to resume her studies on a full-length course.

Mary's diary gives a sometimes painfully clear picture of her undergraduate life and pre-occupations, many of which revolved around her work: she found translating prose passages from English into Latin or Greek frustratingly difficult, often spending one or two days a week on this exercise, sometimes being reduced to tears at her inability to achieve the expected standard. She claimed that even her

best efforts contained gross grammatical errors. Nevertheless, she found her tutor, Martha Kneale, 'kind and encouraging.' She also had tutorials from a Somerville don, Mildred Hartley, whom she described as 'young, attractive and sarcastic.'² When Mildred temporarily left to join the Civil Service, her place was taken by a retired Balliol don, Cyril Bailey, who, from Mary's point of view, was a discomfiting presence as he had supervised her brilliant brother, Duncan, who had been a scholar at Balliol thirteen years earlier. Bailey couldn't believe, according to Mary, that Duncan's sister could perform so poorly in comparison.³ Mary felt this comparison was unfair as she had not had the pre-university experience in classics that most public schoolboys like Duncan took for granted. Such boys had often been studying both Greek and Latin from the age of seven and, before arriving at the university, had already had vastly more practice in translation from original texts.

As well as the individual tutorials, Mary attended numerous university lectures, as many as fourteen in some weeks. Many of these lectures were eye-opening for her. Historically, classical studies were at the heart of Oxford activities. As the Oxford historian, José Harris, wrote:

Oxford (in 1939) was dominated, both intellectually and numerically, by the traditional humanities disciplines [...] between the different arts faculties, however, there was a distinct hierarchy of academic esteem, and a number of very different academic traditions. At the apex of the hierarchy was the faculty of *Literae Humaniores* or Classics. The truth is, though, that high esteem accorded to those reading Mods and Greats was not based exactly on an admiration for scholarship, as such, but on a kind of societal knowledge that the cleverest boys at school were always those who did Classics, and graduates who had read Greats were therefore likely to be the best generalists in the country, equipped to become lawyers, civil servants, politicians or indeed any other profession to which society attached special value. The classicist would have, in today's language, the best transferable skills. The traditional Oxford belief was that education of the kind provided in the Classics, placing a high value on attention to detail, accuracy of expression, even pedantry, was a good in itself. It taught very particular skills which had the widest possible general application.⁴

Most pre-war Oxford dons had by now left either for active service or to work in various government departments dealing with war work.

Lectures were almost entirely given by Jewish refugees from central or eastern Europe, mainly Germany and Austria, who brought new insights to classical studies in Oxford.⁵ Traditionally, such studies had been largely a matter of uncritical transmission of accepted knowledge of the texts. The refugees brought a much more questioning approach to the subject. They were primarily interested in exploring more critical readings of the texts. It was only after the war that the sort of postgraduate study in which such research could be conducted was introduced into the Oxford syllabus. Further, the refugees were more widely cultured than their predecessors and made many more connections with contemporary continental European writers and thinkers. Mary found this inter-disciplinary approach exciting and stimulating. She attended lectures by Rudi Pfeiffer, who taught from *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, edited badly, according to him, by the eminent Oxford don, Maurice Bowra, and Karl Oskar Levy, known as Charles Brink, lectured on textual criticism.⁶ But the most stimulating lectures were given by Eduard Fraenkel, Professor of Latin in the university, but lecturing predominantly on Greek subjects. Mary straightaway identified him as an exotic, indeed inspiring presence in Oxford, bringing a wholly new approach to classical scholarship.

Born in 1888 into a wealthy Jewish family in Berlin, by his thirties Fraenkel had become a distinguished classical scholar in Germany. He obtained senior academic positions in classical studies first in Göttingen and then in Freiburg. After the election of a Nazi government in 1933, he was sacked from his Freiburg post and immediately began negotiating for a move to England. Mary would not have known it at the time, but Fraenkel's election to the professorship in 1935 had been bitterly opposed. This opposition was nothing to do with antisemitism, from which academic life was relatively free, but rather the consciousness that an entirely new approach to classical studies would be unleashed and legitimised if he held the chair. Opponents of Fraenkel's appointment were proved right to the extent that he and his refugee colleagues did bring a radically new approach. For example, he delivered a series of lectures on the *Oresteia* twice a week over the course of three terms. Fraenkel also lectured once a week on either Horace or Catullus and gave a class on Aristophanes' *Birds* to which undergraduates were admitted only by invitation. Mary wrote later

of his astonishing breadth of scholarship, his ability to link one thing with another across a vast range of time and geography, to start with a detail and expand it to general insights, and his genuine passion to hand down to the next generation the same tradition of scholarship of which he was an exemplar:

From Fraenkel, I learned about things that were miles from the Mods syllabus. I learned about prosody, both in Greek and Latin and much more about the transmission, not only of texts, but of styles, dramatic and poetic. There was nothing we read that was not given a literary and historical context, and this, one of the essentials of enjoying literature, had never been taught at school, whether about English or Classical literature [...] for the first time I started to think about what happened between, as it were, the end of Greek and the beginning of Latin. Even more exciting, he showed me how these conventions continued to have echoes in the operas of Monteverdi and even Mozart. Fraenkel was a true polymath.⁷

It was a shock for her to discover what real scholarship was about. Fraenkel, wide-ranging as were the connections he made, was no speculator, and no dealer in generalities. It was one small thing at a time. But the following of these sorts of clues ended, far more often than not, with a sense of astonished enlightenment.

Mary was not the only undergraduate to find Fraenkel's teaching outstanding. One undergraduate who attended a decade later noted that lectures were not compulsory but 'if you didn't go to Fraenkel on Aeschylus when you were doing Mods, you might as well not have been at Oxford.'⁸ The best-known attendee was Iris Murdoch, the novelist, who attended three years before Mary. Twenty-five years afterwards she wrote a poem 'The Agamemnon Class, 1939' in which she conflated the dread of war with Germany with the Trojan War. It began:

Do you remember Professor
Eduard Fraenkel's endless
Class on the *Agamemnon*?
Between line eighty-three and line a thousand
It seemed to us our innocence
Was lost, our youth laid waste,
In that pellucid, unforgiving air,
The aftermath experienced before⁹

When this poem appeared, Mary wrote an appreciative letter to Iris, commenting 'that atmosphere of dread and apprehension brought it all back to me. One dread merging into another. How amazing.'¹⁰

Fraenkel was never officially one of Mary's tutors, but he was in the habit of selecting individual undergraduates, always female, for one-to-one teaching in his room in Corpus Christi, between eight o'clock and ten thirty in the evening (undergraduates had to be back in their own colleges by eleven o'clock). One of the earliest of 'Fraenkel's girls' was Iris Murdoch, whose Somerville tutor, Isobel Henderson, warned her that Fraenkel would probably 'paw her about a bit,' which indeed he did. Murdoch seems to have taken this in her stride, going on to have an affectionate relationship with him and writing about him in her novels. In 1942 Mary became another pupil-cum-victim.

Mary's grooming as a Fraenkel girl began as early as her first term. While he was talking to her, for example, about the ancient Greek poets and dramatists such as Pindar or Menander, Fraenkel would begin to fondle her thighs and breasts. Naturally, Mary found this sexual behaviour deeply upsetting. Her diary entry for 10 November 1942, when she had been at Oxford for just over a month and went to his room accompanied by another girl, reads: 'Went up to Fr.'s room afterwards. He was just nicer than one could believe possible. We had lots of lovely sherry and cigarettes to pluck us up [...] I really ceased to be frightened of him at all [...] He was v. funny and nice with me, always with his hand on my shoulder and calling us "dear children".' These sessions rapidly became individual and more intimate. On 17 November, after she had been to his lecture, she recorded: 'Then utter hell in his room till five to one. God, it was awful [...] He was in charming mood [...] I thought I was going to die or to weep he was very nice and comforting but God, it was hell. Had sherry but didn't appreciate it.' On 14 December, apparently *à propos* of nothing, there is a diary entry: 'Oh God, what a nightmare. I cld murder Fraenkel.'

The abuse continued over three terms, often including during the vacations, until the summer of 1943 at the end of her first undergraduate year. In order, as she hoped to continue to receive such wonderful teaching but without having to withstand Fraenkel's sexual advances, Mary decided to introduce him in the 1943 Easter vacation to her best friend from St. Swithun's, Imogen Wrong. Imogen was studying Classics at Newnham College, Cambridge but lived in Oxford and so was there

during the vacations. Fraenkel, she predicted, would not be able to continue his behaviour if he was teaching the two of them. Fraenkel was delighted to meet Imogen, whom Mary described as 'scholarly, well-read, full of boundless curiosity,'¹¹ and 'extraordinarily attractive, with genuinely corn-coloured hair, brown eyes and a preference for wearing bright clear colours.'¹² The plan badly misfired. 'After one or perhaps two mornings of our being taught together, Fraenkel found it would be infinitely more satisfactory to teach us separately, our interests and knowledge being so different.'¹³ Eventually, after a further term's abuse, these goings-on were revealed. This may have happened because Mary made no attempt to cover them up. In her diary entry for 26 August, she wrote: 'I seemed to be entertaining the whole of LMH with stories about Fr.' Mary's friends, Stephana, her sister, and her former Prior's Field headteacher, in all of whom she confided, told her she must report the matter to her Somerville tutor, Mildred Hartley. Hartley, in turn, asked Cyril Bailey, Mary's supervisor, to warn Fraenkel that his behaviour was now public knowledge and must stop. Mary herself in her memoir published decades later, had a different version derived from her diary. She reported:

Fraenkel picked up another girl from Lady Margaret Hall, who was extremely pretty and wore a scholar's gown (a necessary condition for his interest), but who was neither particularly interested in classical studies nor anything like as naïve as I was. She briskly said 'no thanks' to his advances and that anyway her fiancé would not like it; and then revealed what had happened to her tutor.¹⁴

In her diary she wrote that 'Fraenkel was confronted. He implied this had never happened before. "This was a madness that overcame me, it shall never happen again." Mildred pointed out "I happen to know you have done it before." Fraenkel was "dumbfounded" and asked who had told her?' Hartley replied that she didn't think that made any difference. There was some discussion about how he was to conquer his behaviour. Mary noted in her diary that Fraenkel must be livid with her. At any rate, his sexualised behaviour stopped, and she completed the last two terms before the Honour Mods examinations in April 1944, unmolested by him, but also deprived of his individual teaching.

Mary's diary entries made after the abuse finished make distressing reading. For months afterwards, she was deeply disturbed and

guilt-ridden by what had happened. In a diary entry dated 21 September 1943, a month after Fraenkel had been exposed and her visits to him had stopped, she wrote:

I am still haunted by my sin, my particular sin with Fraenkel: not so much but the memory of it haunts me, but that even to think of it I was filled only with desire to have it back, admit it and so I can't repent of it (even I grant myself that take away all the associations, even Fraenkel's noxious personality, and I am glad to be rid of my own part in it. But what is that? I can't repent of conniving in Fraenkel's particular lechery). Also, by the fear that somehow I am different because of it and shan't be prepared to be so shocked by it in the future. (Im [Imogen] feels this too, I know). I know that by the end of the time I was waiting for it to happen and if it didn't, I was disappointed. Oh Lord, what a confusion, but what is the good of going back over the whole thing? I can't satisfy myself that I am forgiven, that is all. But I know that if I had a chance, I should still be behaving in just the same way. [...] I have been alone so much...

It is notable that she sees herself as a sinner colluding in what had happened. Yet there is ample evidence that she was in Fraenkel's power and made several attempts to stop him abusing her.

In her memoir, written in the late 1990s, some fifty-five years later, she reports that, for some years after the abuse stopped, when they met, she and Imogen, the friend she introduced to Fraenkel as a protection, but who became another victim, would 'spend hours, in Oxford and in Winchester, devising more protective clothing, re-enacting especially absurd scenes, where the furniture was knocked over, or books scattered to the ground in our fruitless efforts to escape. Together we found it immensely comic, a never-failing source of those "hysterics" of which my diary is so full.'¹⁵ Elsewhere, Mary recorded that Imogen did 'not altogether share my feelings about Fraenkel. She found his behaviour, though comic, genuinely disgusting, and she told me recently [just prior to 2000] that she thought it had had a lasting and bad effect on her attitude to sex.'¹⁶ Mary expresses a hope this was not true, although it is not clear why she thought Imogen might have made it up.

Writing about ten years later, around 2010, in her unpublished autobiography, Mary again made light of the whole episode, treating it as if it were an unfortunate event with its funny side but with massive benefits. In fact, at this time, she recorded accurately: 'What went on would today count as gross sexual harassment,' but 'the good side was

that I had literally hours of teaching, mostly after dinner in the evenings in term and during the vacations almost every day I was in Oxford.¹⁷

A few years later, about six months before she died, Mary was asked for her view on a protest that had been made by the undergraduates of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The Junior Common Room had requested that, in the light of his now notorious sexual behaviour, a room named after Fraenkel should no longer bear his name. While the Governing Body was considering the matter, a number of people connected with the college and the relevant events were asked for their views. Mary was among them. On 23 January 2018, she wrote to the President of the College:¹⁸

I was horrified to see last week that undergraduates at Corpus were agitating to have the Fraenkel Room dismantled, and memorials of him removed, on the grounds of sexism. I feel extremely guilty to think that it was partly my pages about Eduard Fraenkel that have been responsible for this nonsense. I have never in my life gained so much as I gained from being 'picked up' by Fraenkel from his Agamemnon lectures and taught especially about early Latin, and other things as well. It was my introduction to scholarship and learning and represented what was the most exciting and amazingly eye-opening experience I could ever have had. Of course, I complained about his mild mauling, but I need not have gone on going to him if I thought it worse than mildly awful (and a subject for a lot of jokes). I do very much hope that you can get some sense of proportion into the undergraduates—who seem to me to have no sense of history apart from anything else.

Please forgive my terrible handwriting.

Yours very sincerely,

Mary Warnock.

This letter confirmed the fact that she had no recollection of the deep sense of shame and guilt she had experienced after her experiences with Fraenkel. In the event, the room was renamed The Refugee Scholars Room and now commemorates not only Fraenkel but a number of other eminent scholars who had been welcomed into Corpus over the years.¹⁹

A few weeks before she died, Mary was asked in an interview conducted in January 2019, what she thought of the #MeToo movement.²⁰ 'Oh God,' she replied,

I hate it [...] People are now prepared to think that they are always victims... Why don't they just go away or hit the person [...] It does seem to me that women, on the whole see themselves as potential victims and not as being in charge of what happens. But why not? There's no reason it seems to me why they cannot object to someone who paws them around or whatever they do. Why don't they just go away or tell them to stop?

For Mary, the intellectual excitement she had experienced from Fraenkel's teaching far outweighed the emotional distress that accompanied and followed her sessions with him. She wrote of the time after she stopped seeing Fraenkel: 'I deeply missed Fraenkel's teaching [...] but what appalled me was that I had never, after the beginning, minded his advances.'²¹

It is worth noting, as we leave this episode in Mary's life, that there is no evidence that Mary's own subsequent life was in any way, sexually or otherwise, significantly affected by this traumatic experience. There is a vast psychological literature on why, in the face of seriously distressing events, some people show resilience while others suffer throughout their lives. It is likely that Mary's optimistic personality and the open way she was able to talk about her experiences contributed to her emerging unscathed.

Returning now to her academic studies in her first year as an undergraduate, Mary found keeping up with the requirements of the Honour Mods syllabus highly demanding, but she nevertheless found time to read widely outside the curriculum. At the end of her 1942 diary there is an impressively wide-ranging list of books she had read that year including novels by Thomas Hardy and E. M. Forster, plays by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Racine and Molière, religious or semi-religious texts by Sir Thomas Browne and C. S. Lewis. She records no reading that might be regarded as light or frivolous.

Her social life, such as it was at this time, revolved around a few close women friends among the other undergraduates of her college. She recorded in later life that these friends were few in number because of an early social disaster. As senior scholar of the year she was expected to put on a play for the entertainment of fellow undergraduates in her first term. Mary had, with difficulty, written a musical play called *Soldier, Soldier*, for which her talented older sister, Stephana, had written the music. This was performed on 31 October, about three weeks into the term. Many years later, Mary recorded that it had been a terrible flop

and that no one would talk to her after it.²² She may have known it was not really very good but her diary tells a somewhat different story: '... it really went rather well. Music not so bad. People acted well.' Nowhere does she report criticism or ostracism as a result of its performance.

One close friend was Nancy Pym, who went on to become headmistress of two Girls Day School Trust schools,²³ and with whom she remained friends until Nancy's death in 1998. Nancy was the only other contemporary at LMH reading Classics and Mary bonded with her especially because they shared the serious disadvantage of having suffered from inadequate classics teaching at school before arriving in Oxford. Mary got to know Nancy's parents. Her father was an ex-chaplain of Balliol College who had taken early retirement as he suffered from multiple sclerosis. Her mother, known as Mrs. Pym even to her own children, was, according to Mary, 'a hugely tall, bony figure, also a classicist and a great teller of fantastic sagas.' She used to send and occasionally bring great parcels of food from which Mary benefited. Uninhibited, when she, her daughter and Mary got together, their loud voices and uncontrollable laughter would bring complaints from the fellow who had rooms next to Nancy. Mary often visited the Pym family at their home during the vacations.²⁴

Her other close friend was Elisabeth de Gaulle, the daughter of Charles de Gaulle, then leader of the French resistance army in London, and later President of France. They met at their first breakfast in Hall (the college dining hall) and remained friends until, around 1949, they lost contact after Elisabeth's and her own marriage. Elisabeth felt neglected by her parents who gave greater attention to their severely mentally handicapped younger daughter.²⁵ When this girl died several years later, her father commented 'enfin, elle est comme les autres.' Her favourite book in English, above all others, was the children's book *Winnie the Pooh* by AA Milne and she named her friends after characters in the Pooh stories. Mary was Roo on account of her 'tendency to show off.' Mary wrote that 'she was the only outspokenly morally critical friend I ever had.'²⁶

They generally got on well together (at least in part because Elisabeth was a reliable source of cigarettes, which were used to ward off hunger) but had occasional violent arguments when Elisabeth made comparisons, to the advantage of her own country, between political institutions in France and Britain. Mary thought that the fact that, since

1940, France had been occupied by an enemy power, made it ludicrous for Elisabeth to be dismissive of British political life. She tried to hold back from delivering the obvious riposte by pointing to the predicament in which France now found itself. One suspects she was not always successful as Elisabeth was frequently deeply offended by her, but they seem to have made up their differences pretty rapidly. Sometimes Mary found herself in the role of Elisabeth's protector. As part of the air raid precautions, students were made to undergo all sorts of exercises, including crawling through a gas-filled tent wearing their gas masks. Elisabeth's father had forbidden her to do this when he had heard about it. Mary found herself explaining her friend's predicament to the intimidating officer in charge of the exercise. The ARP examination was particularly difficult for Elisabeth as, 'although her English was excellent, it tended to be in the language of Macauley or Gibbon, and she was not strong on the names of gases or words like "musty hay" which you were supposed to smell, nor was she adept at understanding instructions relating to dragging people downstairs when their legs appeared to be broken.'²⁷

In the 1944 winter term of the Mods examinations, Mary later recorded that she tried to brush Elisabeth off so that she could concentrate entirely on her work, determined to achieve a first-class degree. Later, she felt guilty about this, thinking she had been rude to her friend, but the relationship seems to have continued by correspondence in an entirely friendly manner. Mary, although she could not go, was invited to Elisabeth's marriage. Although she saw little of her fellow undergraduates, apart from Nancy Pym and Elisabeth, Mary saw rather more of her tutor, Cyril Bailey who pressed her to join the University Bach Choir. Once she agreed, he insisted on practicing with her. She was an alto and he a bass, and they had difficulty in keeping time in passages in which the soprano and tenor parts predominate. On one occasion, Cyril invited her and the other LMH Classics undergraduate, Nancy Pym, for lunch and a walk in the country near his home. Mary had great difficulty communicating with his very deaf wife, an embarrassing experience for her.²⁸ As well as seeing her two friends, Mary frequently saw Stephana, who came up from London where she was now working and corresponded with another sister, Jean. A few of her teachers from her school days had become friends, and she was in regular contact with

Bice at Prior's Field and Tim at Rosehill. Over this period, Tim seems to have been her only male friend.

The war meant that the college was unable to find sufficient domestic staff to keep the place clean. The undergraduates were expected to do a certain number of hours a week domestic work and Mary took part in this. One of the earliest of these undergraduate 'war tasks' had been to dig up the college tennis courts so that the college could grow most of its own fruit and vegetables. She was supposed to help preparing meals and gardening. Peeling and chopping up onions 'under the eye of a terrible old woman called Emily' (who was in fact the college bursar), was no pleasure,²⁹ although it might have been preferable to peeling beetroots which left your hands indelibly stained. At the end of one term, she was told that she was twenty-four hours behind her quota of gardening and that she must make it up before she went down. There seemed nothing to do and she was revising for her Mods examinations, so she 'spent two or three days out of doors, inscribing broad iris leaves with as many of the poems of Horace, Catullus and the Greek lyric poets as I could remember using the point of a knife, and then floating the leaves down the river.'³⁰ Much of the rest of the time in the vegetable garden seems to have been spent gossiping and smoking.

The privations brought about by the war were lasting memories. When she was asked, about fifty years after leaving, what would most have improved her time at LMH, she wrote 'MORE FOOD AND MORE HEAT IN WINTER' (her use of capitals). 'My chief, overwhelming recollections are of hunger and cold.'³¹ There was just not sufficient fuel to heat the rooms adequately and inefficient coal fires in student's rooms gave off little heat. When students arrived at the beginning of each term, they handed in their ration books. In return, they were given unappetising meals in Hall, a meagre ration of milk and a single pot of marmalade that had to last a whole term. Those who had the means could buy food outside in cafes and restaurants, but all the same, most, like Mary, felt hungry most of the time. The city itself was a bleak place. By day, the streets were filled not with undergraduates but with evacuees and refugees. In the evening and by night, the total blackout meant it was eerily dark and, to some, frightening to venture out.³²

In her last term at Oxford, the term in which she was to sit the Mods exam, Mary attempted to describe her life goals. Her diary entry for 4 February 1944 records them as:

- a) (To complete) my work here as much and as well as may be (NB it is of the nature of the service always to be dissatisfied with what you have done)
- b) To work at German intelligently with all my energy and application
- c) My goal is Oxford and as much success as possible there—from there to be prepared for anything
- d) My life to be balanced with riding and poetry and the utmost energy and generosity towards my friends

All this in God's will

Her idea of a balanced life involving riding, poetry and friends seems to have no room for boyfriends or marriage. When she does mention marriage, elsewhere in her diary, as in the entry for 11 April 1943, it is in negative terms. She writes: 'And yet my theories about the disadvantages of marriage still hold. I should hate to get married.'

During the lengthy vacations (university terms occupied less than half the year), Mary continued to do some studying each day. But she also spent time talking to her mother and sisters, playing music with Stephana, listening to classical music and reading more widely. She went riding most days on her horse, Dan, but sometimes also went for walks in the countryside, alone or with friends. She wrote and received letters most days. Occasionally she would go on day trips lasting three or four days to visit her sister, Grizel, and her new baby, Alison. Overall, the vacations were a relaxed time, enabling Mary to recharge her batteries before facing the intensity of a new term at Oxford. In mid-March 1944 she sat for the Mods examinations, finding them of varying difficulty. Her own assessment, recorded in her diary entry for 17 March, was that she did the general paper 'damn badly,' the Pindar was 'grim,' but the Logic paper 'quite nice. I'd done all the questions before.'

When the results arrived at the end of that month, she learned that she had achieved the first class she had so much wanted, but only just. For this class of degree, one had to achieve a first-class mark in seven out of the fifteen papers. She had just scraped this number. Her reaction

to the results was typical. On receiving the marks from Cyril Bailey, her supervisor, she noted in her diary entry of 31 March 'Appallingly bad. Only just managing a First.' 'But' she goes on, 'I'm rather glad the moderators picked on my great fault, being unable to translate anything at all.' Self-deprecation accompanying impressive achievement was always the hallmark of Mary's reactions to the tests she faced in life and this was no exception.

Mary now opted to leave Oxford in April 1944 to take up a so-called 'reserved' occupation. She did not want to do the compressed wartime version of Greats, so chose to complete her degree when the war ended, whenever that might be.³³ Many female undergraduates who were reading Classics, especially if they were high-fliers such as Mary, were recruited for work at Bletchley Park, the famous centre for Allied code-breaking. This was where some Oxford philosophy dons, such as Gilbert Ryle and Stuart Hampshire, also spent their war years. But there was a rumour that, if you went to Bletchley, you would only be able to leave when the war with Japan was ended and, in 1944, when the atom bomb was not yet envisaged, it was assumed that the war with Japan could last for years, with every Pacific island occupied by the Japanese having to be recaptured in hand-to-hand combat at enormous cost in lives. Other reserved occupation would probably end when the war in Europe ended. Mary wanted to return to Oxford as soon as possible, so, although she went to look at Bletchley, she decided to try to find a reserved occupation elsewhere. She also made a trip to the Careers Office in Southampton where, she recorded in her diary, she was told not to be choosy and asked why she wasn't trying to get married as soon as possible.

Mary's sister-in-law, Betty Fleming, whom Mary's older brother, Duncan, had married in 1937, had taught for a time at Sherborne Girls' School and had got on well with its charismatic head, Helen Stuart. A contact was made and, after a brief interview with the head in London, Mary was offered a job at the school. The main duties involved coaching sixth-formers in Latin which was at that time a compulsory subject for all applicants to Oxbridge. The girls she taught were all upper middle-class and, in her view, rather full of themselves. Mary described them as 'confident, sometimes arrogant goddesses.'³⁴ As a group, they had little interest in Latin, so Mary devised comic English sentences for them to translate, encouraging them to think up such sentences themselves.

The first essential of teaching, she learned at Sherborne, was not to bore one's pupils.³⁵

Sherborne's location in north-west Dorset was sufficiently remote to be safe from bombing (though there had been several fatalities when a bomb had dropped on the nearby village of Sherborne in 1940, four years earlier),³⁶ but there were certainly other challenges in everyday life. Mary had a room in a rather primitive house across the road from the school which at least boasted a bathroom, although the bath was filled with coal when not in use. Food was rationed. One girl remembered later how the butter for one week consisted of 'little pieces of butter you could blow on two slices of bread or eke it out.'³⁷

In her diary entries written during her two years at Sherborne, Mary begins to reflect, almost for the first time, on her views on love, friendship and marriage. She values friendship with women above everything else but does not want such friendship to result in loss of autonomy. She writes in her entry of 1 August 1944:

I have a great desire to share but not to make myself into what I'm not that is I want very badly to entertain people to give to them, to make them happy but not to communicate with anyone so that we are one person instead of two. [...] Perhaps because with Virginia Woolf, in mockery, I say are not all women are nicer than any man and one is taught not to feel like a lover towards women. There are lots of women I love very much indeed, more than anything on earth probably but the essence of the joy of my relationship with them is twoness, not oneness.

As Mary moved through life, in each of the situations she found herself, she nearly always found a soul mate, someone with whom she could share confidences, gossip about mutual acquaintances, and, very importantly, laugh and have fun. Before going to school, this role had been filled by her sister, Stephana; at St. Swithun's, Imogen Wrong; at Prior's Field, Bice, her headmistress; at Lady Margaret Hall, Nancy Pym and, to a lesser extent, Elisabeth de Gaulle; and now, at Sherborne, she made another lifelong friend, Rachel Drever Smith. Rachel had a beautiful living room in the school building where Mary spent some of her evenings. She played duets with her and this led to her teaching the flute to some of the girls.³⁸ Rachel later became headmistress of St. Bride's Girls' School in Helensburgh, Scotland. She and Mary continued to see each other until her death in the 1990s, and indeed she was godmother

to Kitty, Mary's oldest child. When she wasn't teaching, Mary read and went for long walks or bicycle rides in the surrounding country.

Her diary entries begin to look forward to possible post-war futures. For example, on 25 September 1944 she wrote: 'I would put aside anything to promote peace by working for the understanding of the outlook and desires of one other country (and, of course, before all countries, I would choose France) and second, that in the same way I would abandon anything for the sake of doing away with some of the present social abuses in England.' It is interesting that she has become so attached to France. Perhaps, she writes in the same entry '[...] it is because of having seen, in my last two terms at Oxford, so much in Elisabeth that is beyond praise [...] An incredibly human and sensitive intelligence [...] A most marvellous control. Europe is not itself without a safe, active, creative France.'

She considers where she stands on the political spectrum and, in the same entry, on 25 September 1944, reflects: 'There is no political party to which I would attach myself [...] no choice except between capitalism and socialism [...] iniquitous capitalist system [...] and socialism seems to be a very poor alternative.' She is attracted to the political ideal of G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc which she calls the 'ChesterBelloc service state' but dismisses this as 'pure idealism.' Her criterion for political choice is compatibility with Christianity, but 'I don't even see which of the possible parties is most Christian.'

Her religious faith also raises issues for her possible future career. During the school holidays, at home in Winchester, Mary confided in Canon Lloyd, the member of the Winchester Cathedral clergy she knew best, that her intention to teach philosophy might not be compatible with her Christian faith, giving little opportunity to help and love other people. Lloyd appears to have successfully reassured her.

Following the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, Mary records that her jubilation is almost immediately superseded by fears of another war with Russia. She also writes about the discovery of the truth about the concentration camps, particularly Belsen which had been liberated by the British Army. She and Rachel speculated about whether they could have behaved as the Germans did and concluded they certainly could not. Mary was lucky in having no relatives killed in the war. There is only one reference to the involvement of a member of her own family.

This is to Duncan, her older brother, who is in Germany at the time she wrote. She had no idea what he was doing each day, but he survived unscathed.

A few months later, she is thinking of her own future, about the pleasures of teaching and of reading in order to improve her teaching. The only disadvantage of a scholarly life, she wrote, is that

everyone (ie Jean and Mither) will expect me to get engaged this time or never, I feel sure, and will consider me a disappointed spinster when I come down without doing so. And if, for a moment, I let myself accept their standards, I shall begin to feel I am the one disappointed. I admit that I should get married if I met anyone who wished to marry me (almost impossible) and, in return, I wished to marry (very unlikely).

She goes on, in the same entry, to relate these thoughts about marriage to her Christian beliefs about the purpose of life. 'Otherwise,' she writes, 'I feel there are so many things to do and so many people to teach that there is no need to feel frustrated in the least. And in any case, for a Christian to feel frustrated simply from that would be ridiculous.' Both she and Stephana were coming under increasing pressure from their older sister Jean as well as their mother to find themselves boyfriends with a view to getting married. Jean, who herself had married early, separated and by now was divorced, 'was constantly trying to civilise us and make us grow up, both by urging make-up and hairdressers on us, and by trying to talk to us about her life, in what we thought was her "all men" style of conversation.' As Mary saw it, Jean's view was that what ought to rule their lives was to make themselves attractive.³⁹

She left Sherborne at Easter 1946 and returned immediately to LMH to resume her studies. The Oxford to which Mary returned was very different from the one she had left two years earlier. During the war years, the university had lost its dominance in the city, but now it reasserted its position. Undergraduates were everywhere and they were much more diverse than they had been pre-war. Some were typically callow, inexperienced youths straight up from public school, but they were now joined by men coming back from the war, some in their early, but many in their mid- or even late, twenties. These men had mostly been on active service and seen friends killed or wounded. Many were now sexually experienced; some were married and some undoubtedly found the adjustment to civilian life difficult. This led to some division.

'Ex-majors with MCs, wives and moustaches had little in common with 17-year old boys who carried green ration books entitling them to extra bananas.'⁴⁰ There were also differences in the predominant political and religious value systems. During Mary's first stay in Oxford, young liberal and left-wing intellectual leaders tended to be away in the services, leaving an older and more conservative generation, such as C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams as guiding spirits for the Oxford young. As the younger dons returned, more politically radical and secular voices were increasingly heard.

More women came straight from school. A few had been in one of the armed forces, but even these were unlikely to have seen active service. The women who came up to Oxford would mostly have lived sheltered lives in single-sex schools, with little contact with the opposite sex and Mary, even though she was now twenty-two, fell into this inexperienced category. Apart from her brother, Duncan, and the headmaster's son, Tim, whom she had met at Rosehill and with whom she had had a platonic relationship, she had seldom had even as much as a conversation with a man her own age. As a consequence, she had little confidence in her ability to do so. Later in life she described how she felt 'ugly, clumsy and without any powers of conversation, being frequently overcome with horror at not being able to think of anything to say.' This resulted in her being 'intensely grateful to any man who seemed to like me. This made me prone to decide I was in love with him.'⁴¹

As we have seen, Jean would constantly try to advise her on how to make herself attractive, but Mary had very little interest in make-up or in having her hair done. She wrote: '[...] on the whole my appearance was something I preferred to draw a veil over.'⁴² On the other hand, she was developing a love of clothes which was to last throughout her life but there were few opportunities immediately after the war to branch out in this respect. Jean gave her a hand-knitted purple jumper and a pink and white striped blouse. She also had a plain dark-green kilt which she greatly liked. Clothes rationing meant new clothes were largely impossible to buy. In her last year as an undergraduate, she bought a scarlet suede jacket from a friend, paying her in coupons for it. She continued to love this jacket even when it got old and shiny.

One essential difference between post- and pre-war Oxford was the great differences in the opportunities for women undergraduates to find partners, even if college rules did little to encourage this. All

undergraduates had to be back in College by ten p.m. and any student found with a man in her room after seven p.m. was automatically 'sent down,' that is expelled. But the fact remained that there were now five or six times more male than female undergraduates.

Times were also very different politically. During Mary's first five terms in Oxford between 1942 and 1944, all the talk had been about the progress of the war. In 1945 a Labour government had been elected with a mandate to carry out sweeping social reforms. Mary, like most of her contemporaries, had no hesitation in voting Labour at this election. Women were becoming active in political clubs whose meetings were often addressed by prominent politicians. They could not be members of the Oxford Union, often the pathway to a political career, but they could be and often were active members of the Labour, Liberal and Conservative Clubs. Amateur dramatics flourished once again and OUDS (Oxford University Dramatic Society) which had closed during the war, opened again in 1947, giving opportunities for budding young actresses. More relevantly for Mary, the Jowett Society, the philosophy discussion group, now had many more men attending.

Soon after her arrival back in Oxford, Mary made a new LMH friend, Sheila Westbrook, who was also reading Greats. She had digs in a house owned by a don, Hilda Lorimer, a Homeric scholar. Mary spent a great deal of her time in Sheila's room which was lined with books, as it also served as Miss Lorimer's library. The two played tennis most mornings before breakfast and then, after breakfast, studied there until lunchtime. For many weeks, Mary studied Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in this room. From time to time, a maid would come in with cups of coffee, biscuits and fruit cake. This was great luxury⁴³ for at this point food rationing was at its most severe, with even bread and potatoes on the ration. Using Sheila's room also saved fuel; there was no central heating at LMH, and Mary only had one scuttle of coal each week for the fire in her college room. This made the particularly hard winter of 1947 extremely difficult. Dinners were meagre; at LMH the undergraduates often only had soup and bread for their supper.

Sheila was attached to an undergraduate at New College, whom she later married. She and Mary often had tea with this young man, whom Mary remembered as making 'the most delicious cucumber sandwiches.'⁴⁴ It was probably through him that she began to strike up friendships with New College undergraduates. At this point, Mary's

views on her marriage prospects had not changed. At the beginning of her second term back, on 10 October 1946, she wrote in her diary:

I see clearly that I shall be alone all my life [...] solitude has been my greatest satisfaction. It is only in the midst of people who can't bear the thought of a solitary life that non-marriage seems terrible and to be ashamed of. If I can only overcome my body, my mind will be all right [...] the greatest satisfaction that I shall ever have is to make other people feel that it is worth living.

She was, in any case, extremely busy. Her daily diary entry for 12 October begins 'The hecticness of this term is going to pass belief.' Perhaps not quite as hectic as this sounds, though, for the entry goes on, 'Woke late-ish and a long nice breakfast.' All the same, the schedule of work she set herself with the very explicit determination to achieve a first-class degree was highly demanding.

Despite the reservations expressed in her diary, it was not long before Mary began to forge romantic relationships with men. She describes the men with whom she had her first two romantic relationships as 'suitors' but it is clear from her diary that, at the start of both these relationships, she was more the pursuer than the pursued. In her unpublished biography, she writes of this phase of her life:

I felt I was learning new things, seeing and understanding things I had missed before. [...] I always worked better if my emotional life was in ferment and now I was torn between two men who wanted to marry me. I had pursued each of them in turn relentlessly when I had first known them but when they began to show interest in me though I enjoyed the sense of power this gave me, my ardour cooled.⁴⁵

Thus, by the end of her second term back at Oxford, she was in love with a man called Charles, whom she had known since the end of the previous term.⁴⁶ In her memoir, she describes Charles, both in appearance and manner, in ambivalent terms.

He was an extremely good-looking man, in a melancholy way, his almost shaven short hair, brown eyes and bony face, with its remarkably short upper lip, merging into a kind of spiky unity. He treated me with unbending scorn, mixed with a kind of mocking affection, as if I were a slightly tiresome dog. (Later [...] he became the dog, his eyes fitting him well for the part).⁴⁷

The relationship, which had many ups and downs, lasted about a year.

During the 1947 Easter holiday, while she was still in a relationship with Charles, Mary and her friend, Sheila Westbrook, crossed the English Channel with their bicycles, took the train to Paris, cycled across Paris and then took another train to Biarritz, in south-west France. When they got out of the train, they were met by dazzling sunshine, a marked contrast to the snowy weather they had left behind in England. They cycled across the Pyrenees into Spain 'where hoopoes were all around us' and pushed their bicycles up mountainous roads through villages where there had hardly been any English visitors since the war. They felt flattered because their accents made the Spaniards think they were Normans from the North of France.⁴⁸ This was Mary's first visit to continental Europe. A fortnight after her return, she wrote in her diary entry dated 18 April: 'I am full of the feeling of health and inexhaustible energy which I associate with home, especially here in the Spring and in September, and spring has started in England only now though I, of course, have cheated, and had some spring in France. [...] superb climbing up Mt. Louis [...]'

This diary entry includes some thoughts on her relationship with Charles:

I want to get married [...] But I want to marry Charles and that is the second important thing [...] He, of course, is entirely indifferent to me. I dare say in four years-time I shall tell myself that I wasn't really in love with him at all and wouldn't have married him [...] If I give him up now I doubt if he would notice [...] I've no doubt that next term will bring more misery and a further realisation of how futile to hope for anything, even the continuation of what I've had.

Charles continued to make her miserable. By the end of that summer term, it is clear there are problems in the relationship. On 13 July 1947, she wrote: 'Life is certainly extraordinarily different from what it was. I don't think that I shall ever deny that I loved Charles [...] the self-absorbed recipient of unreciprocated love [...] a kind of self-consciousness which Elizabeth Anscombe [a Somerville don who had tutored her] calls priggishness [...]' Mary's mother had had high hopes of this relationship. Mary records: 'Mither [her mother] has considered him mine...'

The 1947 Long (Summer) Vacation was spent in her mother's house on the banks of the River Test in Romsey, Hampshire, where her mother had moved a year previously, having sold the family home in Winchester. The Romsey house had a large garden, an orchard where there were nightingales in the bushes and a lake nearby in which one could swim. During this holiday she spent a great deal of time with Stephana, riding and playing music, Stephana now having switched from a Chemistry to a Music degree at Oxford.⁴⁹ She also spent part of the vacation in Oxford, where she continued to see Charles.

On 21 August 1947, she records just after Charles has left her room:

What shall I do? I could never have believed that one person could so utterly occupy me [...] And paralyse all my mental activity [...] He has left only 20 minutes ago and I feel hysterical. I love him too much to pester him. [...] the last three weeks have been important but only in showing me what I knew already, that is to do things for other people is the only way to do them and to do things for Charles is all I ask. It is entirely reprehensible to give myself up to this passionate outburst of Unrequited love.

But there was a problem. By 11 November, she had worked out what this was. Her diary entry for that date notes: 'I know intellectually that the real answer is his sexual ἀπαθεια [It is not clear why Mary translated apathy into Greek]. He simply doesn't want to marry me and that is that. There is nothing I can do but go on loving him.' Whether Charles was under-sexed or homosexual or just did not find Mary physically attractive, is unclear but, whatever the reason for his lack of sexual interest in Mary, it gradually spelled the end of her relationship with him.

Four months later in the early months of 1948, she is deep into another relationship, this time a more physically intense one, with another undergraduate. She describes this second suitor, whom I shall call 'Ian,' as 'a dim and endearing man, easily amused and, contrary to his most deeply held principles, extremely emotional.' He had got a first in Classical Mods at the beginning of the war, served in the Army and then returned to the university from war service.⁵⁰ By 28 April 1948 she tells herself she must exercise more restraint in her behaviour with him. She writes in her diary of 'Resolutions that must be kept,' but then adds rather charmingly, 'Till June.' They are:

No more self-pity: no more wallowing in misery with Ian
 Work
 I. only on Saturdays.
 No more talk of marriage
 The minimum of kissing and dallying
 No more forcing I. to consider the future
 Keep stimulated about philosophy somehow
 The obligation to be cheerful.

Initially Ian is reluctant to form a serious relationship with her, but gradually he too succumbs. By early July he is deeply in love with her and wants to marry her, but at this point Mary has fallen in love with another.

To understand Mary's change of heart regarding Ian, one needs to go back to the beginning of the 1947 Michaelmas (October to December) term when Mary was elected Secretary of the Jowett Society. This Society, which held weekly meetings on philosophical topics when the audience was addressed by eminent philosophers, was open to all members of the faculty and was attended both by dons and by undergraduates. By tradition, the Secretary of the Society was an outstanding undergraduate. It is a measure of Mary's academic status as an undergraduate that she was elected Secretary. Another tradition was that, after one term, the Secretary became President and had the duty to find a successor as Secretary. In Mary's words:

I consulted Tim Miles, now President, whom he thought I should invite to be secretary. He said unhesitatingly 'Geoffrey Warnock. He is far the best philosopher around' [...] I knew Geoffrey Warnock by sight and had decided he was formidable. I had seen other undergraduates consulting him, for example, at Austin's Things class, and I thought he looked pleased with himself. However, I obediently wrote to him, asking him to serve. We were extremely formal in those days about how we addressed people we did not know. If I had been a man, I would have written 'Dear Warnock'. Most senior members addressed each other in this way, but women did not have this useful halfway between full title and Christian name. [...] In the end, I compromised. I wrote 'Dear Mr. Warnock (may I call you, Geoffrey?)'. He, disobligingly, I thought, wrote back 'Dear Mary (may I call you Miss Wilson?)'. It was a bad start. But at least he was willing to take on the job; and as soon as we started to meet in his room at the top of New College tower, in order to make lists of potential speakers and members and, increasingly, to go over the events of the previous meeting, I realized I had encountered someone who made me laugh and

with whom I got on as well as with my women friends, without self-consciousness and without anxiety.⁵¹

At the time she met Geoffrey for the first time, she had been in a romantic relationship with Charles for nearly a year. As we have seen, during the autumn of 1947, her relationship with Charles gradually cooled and was over by the end of the year. She and Geoffrey were often in touch over matters concerning the Jowett Society, but there was no romantic element to their relationship. Indeed, as we have seen, shortly after the beginning of 1948, she met Ian, with whom she had another, more purely physical relationship lasting six months until the middle of that year. But gradually over this period while she was seeing Ian, her relationship with Geoffrey developed romantically, so that by June 1948, she acknowledged to herself she was in love with him and would have to drop Ian. Mary's falling in love for the third time, on this occasion, was definitive, and so intense she did not care whether her love was reciprocated.

When they first met Geoffrey Warnock was twenty-four, just a year older than Mary but with considerably greater experience of life. Born in Leeds, the son of a successful general practitioner, himself raised in Ulster, Geoffrey won a scholarship to Winchester College. Then in 1940 he had won an Open Scholarship to read Politics, Philosophy and Economics at New College, Oxford. Instead of taking up his scholarship he volunteered to join the Irish Guards and, in December 1942, was commissioned as a second lieutenant. As a signals officer, after active service in Italy, he landed with his regiment on the Normandy beaches in June 1944. The regiment went on to fight at Caen, before joining the advance into Belgium and Holland. After joining other units to relieve the airborne troops at Arnhem, it then fought its way into Germany.⁵² Later in life Geoffrey spoke of his experience as a signals officer. He had been appalled by the quality of military leadership and was especially unforgiving of an outbreak of squabbling amongst senior officers over who should take command when the general in charge of the campaign was captured. He described how on occasions when he thought transmitting a signal would lead to disaster, he just would not pass it on.⁵³ If he was inclined to insubordination in respect of his senior officers he was regarded as a leader by the other ranks in the regiment. Those who found themselves up before a court martial would often ask for him to be their advocate. His last posting, after the war with Germany

ended, was in Hamburg where he spent some time educating his men and fellow officers in current affairs.⁵⁴ It was reported that under his tuition, even some of the most incorrigibly conservative officers in his very conservative Guards regiment emerged as committed socialists.

Mary's relationship with Geoffrey gradually deepened during the spring of 1948 while she was still in a relationship with Ian. Before they both took their final examinations, Geoffrey invited her to be his partner at the New College Commemoration Ball to be held in June. But before that Mary had to face the ordeal of the final examinations. Further, her Roman History tutor at Somerville had recommended that she put in for a one-year fellowship in Ancient History that she could take up the following year. She was successful in obtaining this fellowship and decided to use it to study for a newly devised postgraduate degree, the B.Phil. This degree was the brainchild of Gilbert Ryle, the *éminence grise* of the Philosophy Faculty, to enable Oxford to attract philosophy graduates from elsewhere to pursue postgraduate research in the subject after graduation. The degree, in contrast to similar degrees elsewhere, would only require a short dissertation, the main teaching taking place in small group seminars with marked written papers. This suited Mary extremely well, except for the fact that it was designed as a two-year course and she wanted to do it in one year. She persuaded Ryle she could do this.

Although she found the final examinations in Greats extremely stressful, she had some useful counselling beforehand about how to cope with the lack of sleep while the examinations were in progress. Lucy Sutherland, the Principal of LMH, gave a talk to all the candidates beforehand to suggest to them that lack of sleep was no barrier to a good performance. One should not worry about not sleeping.⁵⁵ Mary found this helpful advice that she subsequently passed on. In the event, she did well and obtained the first-class degree everyone expected of her. Geoffrey did equally well, so they had much to celebrate. During the ball, Geoffrey told her he had decided not to marry another LMH undergraduate to whom he had been attached. As is traditional, the couple stayed up the whole night of the ball, at the end of which Geoffrey took Mary to Oxford station so that she could catch the 6.25 train to Stockport to attend Sheila Westbrook's wedding.⁵⁶

It did not take her long to realise that she found Geoffrey infinitely more attractive than either of the two men with whom she had previously had relationships. Her diary entry for 3 July 1948 reads:

And now time has come and gone, and all that I made resolutions for is cracked and crumbled away, because I have forced Ian to love me, and now given him up, at least said I will not marry him [...] All that is wicked, I am wicked. I have used him bodily and still could, if it were not that I love Geoffrey [...] I feel as if I have fallen in love finally and for all time. But I have felt that before [...] I feel that though he won't marry me, I shall survive that. I shall be content in some way to say, when I am old [...] I did love Geoffrey [...] there are aspects of what I feel about Geoffrey that are totally unlike love of Charles or love of Ian [...] If he wanted to marry me, I should say yes and worry no more. [...] our most heavenly evening at the New College Ball [...]. I really think, except that I should not be good enough and too dull for him [...] thus although I am right to say I feel adolescent because of Geoffrey (romantic irresponsibility), I also feel non-hysterical and this must be more grown-up than last year or even before.

She goes on castigating herself about the way she has treated Ian: 'I have undoubtedly behaved shockingly badly towards Ian, even after I knew I was not going to marry him [...] it was so much easier to give in, physically [...] that I was horrible to him and let him practically possess me physically [...] now I look back on July with distaste' and finally, she admits to herself: 'I admit unashamedly that I want to marry Geoffrey.' So, while in her published memoir she gives no reason for the breakdown of her relationship with Charles, it is clear from her diary that it stopped because he was 'sexually apathetic.' Further, while in her unpublished autobiography, she claims that the relationship with Ian broke down because she realised he was intellectually inferior to her,⁵⁷ it is apparent from her diary that as soon as she met Geoffrey, she realised she would most definitely prefer to marry him. Thus her diary reveals her to be, even as an undergraduate, what she was to remain all her life, a woman with enormous energy, drive and determination accompanied very occasionally by a certain ruthless streak.

The first half of the 1948 summer vacation was, to put it mildly, emotionally complicated for Mary. By early August, she had more or less detached herself from Ian and cemented her relationship with

Geoffrey who had then gone back home to Leeds. Her diary entry for 11 August reads:

The more immediate problem is how to wait until October when I can see him again. [...] lying looking at the view into Salisbury in a pool of blue mist while he talked, brilliantly, about France and the Dreyfus affair and then read *To the Lighthouse*, that was perfect [...] and half slept and talked foolishly and laughed a good deal and removed insects and leaves and bits of things from each other's bodies. He looked beautiful and very small and thin, but exquisitely made and shaped and very strong. [...] I admit unashamedly that I want to marry Geoffrey. It's no longer true that I could see him marry someone else with equanimity.'

Her abiding memory of the long summer she spent with her mother in Romsey is of 'sitting in Mither's garden, wondering whether the second post would bring a letter from Leeds, reading Proust, and listening to Verdi opera on the gramophone, a new passion to which Geoffrey had introduced me. It was an absurdly happy and carefree time.'⁵⁸ As an example of their common views, they shared their absorption in Proust. Unlike most readers of Proust who fail to get past the first of the twelve volumes of his *chef d'oeuvre*, Geoffrey notes that they both loved volume eleven.

Geoffrey's letters reveal it was not quite as uncomplicated a time as Mary suggests. She had not altogether disentangled herself from Ian who was still pining for her and Charles, her first suitor, actually stayed with her at her mother's home for a short time. When Geoffrey whom she had also invited to stay, heard of this, he had wise advice to offer her about how to end these relationships.⁵⁹ In the meantime, he described to her how he had ended his own relationship with the LMH girl to whom he himself had been attached. Clearly Mary had been anxious about how this fellow undergraduate would react to being told her relationship with Geoffrey must end for Geoffrey writes '[...] X is far too sensible and sane to do anything silly,' but clearly 'X' had been very upset and tearful. Mary must also have expressed some concern that she might become too reliant on Geoffrey. He tried to reassure her.⁶⁰ As their relationship deepened, he became more open in his affection for her. 'I do love you a ridiculous lot [...],' he writes in the restrained language of the time. After a misunderstanding between them, he writes: 'I am fantastically glad that nothing is wrong and I don't see how you could

be Nicer, either in yourself or to me. Therefore (and also because) Love, Geoffrey.'⁶¹

During the following year, Mary left her college room and shared a flat with Anne Wakefield, her friend from school. Geoffrey arranged to stay on at New College to study Ancient History with a view to taking the Greats examination. Mary was able to help him by lending him her essays and, according to her, he virtually wrote her dissertation for the B.Phil degree.⁶² They had an agreeable year planning their future, having decided to marry even if neither of them had a job. However, after Christmas 1948, Geoffrey took the Prize Fellowship examination at Magdalen, was successful and was duly appointed a fellow there. He was advised not to pursue his idea of taking the Greats examination as it would be embarrassing for a fellow of Magdalen not to achieve a first-class degree. Later in the year, Mary was appointed to a lectureship in philosophy at St. Hugh's College so, in the event, they not only both had jobs, but had avoided any difficulty over whose career would take precedence. They were now both in academic employment with virtually lifelong tenure.⁶³

The couple were married in Winchester College Chapel with music arranged by Stephana and played by her and her friends. Mary claimed that all she could remember of the ceremony was the music and the fact that, as she was proceeding up the aisle, Geoffrey trod on the back of her dress (borrowed from Sheila Westbrook, who had been married in it the year before). Mary had shouted at him 'Get off, you clown!' to prevent further damage.⁶⁴ After the wedding and the party that followed, they honeymooned in Edinburgh, attending the Festival (described in the next chapter) and then went straight back to Oxford, because Geoffrey was teaching at an American summer school.

During the three years from her arrival back in Oxford in April 1946 to her marriage in August 1949, both Mary's personality and her most fundamental beliefs had drastically changed. Although she saw her academic ability as inferior to Geoffrey, she was not in any doubt that she could teach philosophy at an undergraduate level and contribute to the subject. Now confident in her relationships with men, she was accepting of her own physical desires and no longer saw them as best suppressed. Her political views had crystallised, so that she was a strong supporter of the Labour government and socially liberal in her opinions

on the issues of the day. There had also been a significant change in her religious views. While still seeing herself as a Christian and a member of the Anglican Church, she was no longer imbued with a sense of her own sinfulness. When she felt she had behaved badly, as was not infrequently the case, she did not hesitate to admit the fact, but she no longer looked to Christian beliefs to justify her self-castigation. She was now taking full responsibility for her actions. So, she began what she called her 'real life,' having indeed emerged her own woman.

Notes

- 1 Thomas, p. 179.
- 2 Unpublished autobiography (UA), 3, p. 20.
- 3 UA, 3, p. 21.
- 4 José Harris, 1994.
- 5 UA, 3, p. 23.
- 6 Ibid., 3, pp. 23–27.
- 7 Ibid., 3, p. 30.
- 8 Robert Cassen, personal communication, September 2020.
- 9 Conradi, pp. 121–122.
- 10 Ibid., p. 122.
- 11 UA, 3, p. 32.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 UA, 3, p. 33.
- 14 Warnock, 2000, p. 82.
- 15 Ibid., 3, p. 33.
- 16 Warnock, 2000, p. 84.
- 17 UA, 3, p. 30.
- 18 Jas Elsner, 2021, pp. 328–329.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Interview with Giles Fraser, *Confessions*, 10 February 2019.
- 21 Ibid.

- 22 UA, 3, p. 6.
- 23 Ibid., p. 7.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 7–12.
- 26 Ibid., p. 9.
- 27 Ibid., p. 14.
- 28 Ibid., p. 21.
- 29 Ibid., p. 5.
- 30 Ibid., p. 16.
- 31 Archive, LMH, *Your memories of Lady Margaret Hall*, 2015.
- 32 Addison, p. 177.
- 33 Ibid., p. 172.
- 34 UA, 3, p. 2.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Williams, 1998, p. 69.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid., 3, p. 4.
- 39 UA 5, p. 4.
- 40 Thomas, p. 208.
- 41 UA, 5, p. 3.
- 42 Ibid., p. 6.
- 43 Ibid., pp. 7–9.
- 44 Ibid., p. 20.
- 45 Ibid., p. 18.
- 46 Charles Salter was a brilliant undergraduate, who won many prizes. His career did not prosper after he left Oxford. He died in 2008 following retirement as Lecturer in Humanities in the University of Glasgow.
- 47 Warnock, 2000, p. 76.
- 48 UA, 5, p. 9.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 15–16.

- 50 Ibid., pp. 18–19.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 10–11.
- 52 Strawson, 2004.
- 53 Felix Warnock, personal communication.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 UA, 5, pp. 20–21.
- 56 Ibid., p. 23.
- 57 Ibid., p. 19.
- 58 Warnock, 2000, p. 16.
- 59 Letter, GW to MW, 5 July 1948.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., 9 September 1948.
- 62 UA, 5, p. 24.
- 63 Warnock, 2000, p. 16.
- 64 UA, 5, p. 25.