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Notes: Madame Roland

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Talking with J.S.P. about Madam Roland and the old scheme for a play - he feels quite sure that I ought to go at it. He suggests that Katherine Cornell might be a possible figure. I do not quite see it, but think that possibly Nazimova might do it.

As I see it now there should be a first act in which Manon, eighteen, full of ideals and reforming zeal becomes acquainted with Roland with his vigorous formula for improving things. Particularly his revolt against the ways of the aristocracy - his shoe buckles, etc.

These things should be brought in contact with characters of the new regime - elegant/indifference to everything but themselves and their pleasures and ways. Under this influence she becomes a severe little reformer strengthening her Revolutionary notions there could be managed a scene in which she goes after the title for R. Here one gets a chance to picture R.'s weakness. Pedantry, etc., all of which had not been realized and in fact never were realized by Madam Roland.

The last scene perhaps in this Act should be them settled at Salon - charming life there.

The second Act - the beginning of the Revolution and the way they accept it, working hand in hand. There
coming to Paris - her salon and the deliberate plotting
that went on to get the stick out of the wheel.

Third Act - Madam R's. tendency - her work
against
the King and the Queen. Their supposed success -
a new government. R. in it - a power. The clouds in
the offing - not everybody satisfied. Here Buzot
comes into the scene at the end of this Act.

Commune

Act IV

The rise of the Danton - D's. effect to
win Madam R.

In previous acts, their coming to Paris,
Buzot must be seen about the salon - the growing sympathy
must be manifest. The time that the government is installed
she is plainly under his influence. The contrast to the
intellectual
severity and the vanity of Madam Roland.

younger. Gradually she has come completely under his sway.

When Danton appears an essential factor in
order to save the government and down the Commune
which now you hear rising in the street as well as reported
by visitors. she is unable to unite with him. Here the
physical contrast, the violence and power antagonize her.
If there had been no Buzot in the picture Danton would
have had Madam Roland. This somehow must be made clear.
She does not throw her efforts with his - Buzot
and their party are too weak. It is a Karinsky
Revolution.

Now comes the Communards
Act with
must be the Communards in power.

Madam Roland in prison. Beautiful scene when she writes
her memoirs. Her last interview with Buzot - with
her daughter. The command of herself, even gait, her
thoughtfulness for others. Her transfer to the Conciergie
which is the last stop on the way to the guillotines/
Pathetic relations there with those who are going.

The final picture should be the ride passed
the house of her childhood, across the Seine to the
guillotine. There must be her cringing companions go first
The misery of seeing her die. There must be a final

tableau. Do not know how the guillotine should be seen
have and yet not a head that must not happen. But there
I must be enough of it and get in as a last word how
they
her address as she looks at the Statue of
Liberty. Some indication to show that it is over -
probably the crowd on the outside.
The theme is the making of a Revolution. The disillusionment when violence comes, the inevitable fate of the one who cannot go the final path. In her case a revolutionist is made through her girlish admiration for this severe man who has come her way — her love and service for him for years. Then the coming of a more suitable chevalier in Buzot which softens her revolutionary ardor, makes her incapable of joining forces with the only man, Danton, which could have saved the revolution, brought order to France, and saved her soul. It is not necessary, I think, to sacrifice what I believe to be a historical fact that Danton never tried to become her lover in order to influence her. He probably was too intelligent to attempt it being the way that Buzot exercised over her.

That is the play should have the revolutionary theme, the woman being the Revolution’s incarnate until love proved the stronger force.

As to the interior. The house should certainly be the scene, outside and inside, of the first act. Chardin’s interiors, costumes, etc., should be consulted.