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Cover illustration: closing and signature from letter to Amelia Alderson (MW 0007).

Identification
Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), English writer and proto-feminist philosopher.

Associated NYPL catalog record
Mary Wollstonecraft manuscript material

Size
49 items

Date range
1773-1797

Preferred citation

Access
Access is granted by Pforzheimer Collection staff.
Pforzheimer Collection and Shelley and his Circle

The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle is one of the world's leading repositories for the study of British Romanticism. Comprised of over 20,000 items, the collection is conceptually centered on the life and works of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and his friends, relatives, and contemporaries. Formerly a part of the much larger and now dispersed Pforzheimer Library, the Pforzheimer Collection came to The New York Public Library in 1986.

Many of the manuscripts listed in this guide have been included in *Shelley and his Circle*, 1773-1822, a multi-volume publication that presents selected manuscripts from the Pforzheimer Collection. *Shelley and his Circle* provides extensive descriptions of the manuscripts, along with commentary, textual analysis, and some facsimile reproductions.

Some items in this guide not yet published in *Shelley and his Circle* will be included in future volumes of that publication.

Holdings and provenance

This guide lists and describes the manuscript materials held by the Pforzheimer Collection that were created by Mary Wollstonecraft. These items have been acquired throughout the history of the Collection, and are kept at the New York Public Library.

The first Mary Wollstonecraft manuscripts added to the Collection were letters acquired by the first Carl Pforzheimer in the 1920's: the letter to Joseph Johnson regarding money owed her; the letter to Mary Hays accompanying a lent book; and the letter to Maria Reveley, inviting her for dinner. Further acquisitions led to an accumulation of nine items in Wollstonecraft's hand by the time of Carl H. Pforzheimer's death in 1957. In the following years, under the auspices of the Pforzheimer Library, the Collection acquired over 35 more Mary Wollstonecraft manuscripts, including a number of letters to Mary Hays, fellow writer and friend. Since the Collection's move to The New York Public Library in 1986, four Mary Wollstonecraft manuscripts have been accessioned.
Related materials

In addition to manuscripts by Mary Wollstonecraft, the Pforzheimer Collection holds hundreds of manuscripts by her husband, William Godwin; her daughter, Mary Shelley; and many friends and colleagues. Also held are early editions of her published works, including a first edition copy of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* with the ownership signature of Mary Hays. Wollstonecraft-related visual materials held include an oil portrait by John Keenan, commissioned by Aaron Burr, copied after John Opie's original, as well as several early engraved portraits.

Additional Mary Wollstonecraft manuscript material is held by the Library's Berg Collection. See the appendix of this guide for an account of the Berg's holdings.

Arrangement

This guide considers the Mary Wollstonecraft manuscript material in two series: Series I, Writings; Series II, Correspondence. Items treated in *Shelley and his Circle* or in Janet Todd’s *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* are noted with reference.

Scope and content

The Mary Wollstonecraft manuscript material in the Pforzheimer Collection consists of writings and correspondence. The writings include a holograph fragment of her essay, “On Poetry,” and a holograph review of Karl Gottlieb Cramer’s gothic novel, *Albert de Nordenshild*. The bulk of the correspondence is dated between 1787 and 1797 and discusses her personal life and her published works during the last decade of her life. Correspondents include: William Godwin, philosopher and novelist (her husband); Mary Hays, novelist; Joseph Johnson, her publisher; and over a half dozen others.
Series I: Writings

LOCATION ITEM REFERENCES

SC File · Holograph review of Albert de Nordenshild: Aug-Sep 1796: (MW 0005): a working draft of the piece published in the October 1796 issue of The Analytical Review; begins, “A an interesting warmth of imagination, and truth and passion, appears in this translation from the German …”

SC 15 : v. 1, p. 152

SC File · Holograph essay (fragment), “On Poetry”: Apr 1797: (MW 0004): title and some punctuation in the hand of William Godwin; begins, “A taste for rural scenes, in the present state of society, appears to be very often an artificial sentiment, rather inspired by poetry and romances …”

SC 19 : v. 1, p. 175
### Series II: Correspondence

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- **To Amelia Alderson** (later Opie), novelist and poet:
  
  “Oversized bound mss.”
  
  1 autograph letter signed: “Tuesday night” [ca. 11 Apr 1797] : (MW 0007) : [from London] : begins, “Endeavouring, through embarrassment, to turn the conversation from myself last night, I insensibly became too severe in my strictures on the vanity of a certain lady ...”

  Todd no. 321

- **To Jane Arden** (later Gardiner), governess and teacher:
  
  “SC File”
  

  Todd no. 1

  SC 178 : v. 2, p. 944

  SC 179 : v. 2, p. 948

- **SC File**


  Todd no. 2

  SC 180 : v. 2, p. 951

- **SC File**

  1 letter (copy): [ca. ?4 Jun-31 Jul 1773] : (MW 0014) : [from Beverley] : including a copy of poem by “M’ Rudd”; letter begins, “I have just read your account of the oddest mortal ...”

  Todd no. 3

  SC 181 : v. 2, p. 954

- **SC File**

  1 letter (copy): [ca. ?4 Jun 1773-16 Nov 1774] : (MW 0015) : [from Beverley] : begins, “Miss A.— Your behavior at Miss J—’s hurt me extremely ...”

  Todd no. 4

  SC 182 : v. 2, p. 955

- **SC File**


  Todd no. 5

  SC 183 : v. 2, p. 956

- **SC File**


  Todd no. 6

  SC 184 : v. 2, p. 957

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1 All letters to Jane Arden are copied into a single copybook.
where that vulgar minds will never own …"
1 letter (copy) : [ca. 20 Oct 1782-6 Jan 1783] : (MW 0026) : [from Walham Green] : begins, “I congratulate you, my dear Jane, on account of your Sister's wedding …”

1 autograph letter signed : [ca. 1-14 Feb 1793] : (MW 0028) : from Rue Meslée, Paris : begins, “I can scarcely tell you how much I was gratified by your kind letter …”

1 autograph letter signed : [28 Apr 1797] : (MW 0029) : Polygon No 29 [Somers Town] : begins, “Mr. Godwin, my dear Sir, would fain persuade me that I was rude …”

1 autograph letter unsigned : “Monday Morning” [ca. 15 May 1797] : (MW 0030) : No 29 Polygon, Somers Town : begins, “I have been reading your remarks and I find them a little discouraging.…”

1 autograph letter signed : “Friday morning, two O'clock” [ca. 9 Feb - 15 Apr 1787] : (MW 0031) : [from Dublin] : begins, "I thought it would be uncivil to send the promised little book without a line …"

1 autograph letter signed : 16 Apr [1787] : (MW 0034) : from Dublin : begins, "The evening I received your letter I intended answering it; but was prevented …"

1 autograph letter signed : 13 Sep [1787] : (MW 0032) : from Henley : begins, "It is a long time since I wrote to you; but I think you would excuse me did you guess how many cares harass my mind …"

1 autograph letter signed : [9-19 Oct 1787] : (MW 0033) : from London : begins, "I have received both your letters,
and would wish to write many things in answer to them; but an ugly giddiness in my head ..."

- To William Godwin, philosopher and novelist:

  SC File - 1 autograph letter unsigned: [ca. ?15 May 1797]: (MW 0049): [from London]: begins, "Unwilling to suffer the original which I have transcribed on the opposite side of the sheet to quit my own custody from a fear that if superfluous I am not inclined to consider as culpable ..."

- To Mary Hays, novelist:

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: 11 Aug [1792]: (MW 0037): from Store Street, Bedford Square [London]: begins, "Intending to call upon you I put off answering your letter from time to time ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: 25 Nov 1792: (MW 0035): from Store Street, [postscript from] S' Paul's [London]: begins, "I yesterday mentioned to M' Johnson your request and he assented ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: "Saturday morning" [ca. late 1792]: (MW 0046): from Stone Street [London]: begins, "I have just cast my eye over your sensible little pamphlet ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: "Saturday evening" [ca. late 1795]: (MW 0036): [from London]: begins, "I have promised to dine with M'. Johnson to morrow, and he requested me to invite you. ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: "Sunday morning" [1796]: (MW 0044): [from London]: begins, "Pray do not make any more allusion to painful feelings ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: [15 Sep 1796]: (MW 0002): [from London]: begins, "I send you the fourth volume of T-S. there are but six ..."

  SC File - 1 autograph letter signed: [20 Sep 1796]: (MW 0042): [from London]: begins, "If this letter should not be
forwarded, pray request ...

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: “Wednesday morning” [ca. 26 Oct 1796]: (MW 0045): [from London]: begins, “I have not received a letter from Mrs. Cotton ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: “Monday morning” [ca. Nov 1796]: (MW 0040): [from London]: begins, “My Good friend, not receiving a line with the book ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: [14 Dec 1796]: (MW 0038): [from London]: begins, “Mary telling me that you could not decide ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph note signed: [ca. Jan 1797]: (MW 0043): [from London]: begins, “I have sent you the Gossips Story to review, as you wish to read it ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: [15 Dec 1797]: (MW 0039): [from London]: begins, “My Sister’s cold has been so troublesome ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: “Friday morning” [ca. early 1797]: (MW 0041): [from London]: begins, “I have now to request you, as a particular favour, to thank ...”

· To **Joseph Johnson**, radical publisher:

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: 5 Dec [1786]: (MW 0009): from Mitchelstown [Ireland]: begins, “When I had the pleasure of seeing you, if I mistake not, you mentioned to me that Mrs. Barbauld intended undertaking a new plan of education ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph letter signed: 2 May 1793: (MW 0001): from Paris: begins, “On demand pay to Messrs. Turnbull, Forbes and Co. Thirty pounds Sterling for value which I have received here of Mr. Christie ...”

**SC File** - 1 autograph note signed: 13 Jul 1793: (MW 0003): from Paris: begins, “Please pay to Mr. Thomas Christie, or order, twenty pounds for value received by me ...”

· To **Catherine Macaulay**, historian and political polemicist:
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· To **James Marshall**, copy editor, indexer, and translator (friend of Godwin):

1 autograph letter signed: “Thursday Morning” [ca. Dec 1790]: (MW 0047): [from London]: including Macaulay’s response copied on third page of the double sheet; begins, “Now I venture to send you [words excised] with a name utterly unknown to you in the title page…” Macaulay’s reply is copied in a different hand on the second sheet.

· To **Maria Reveley** (later Gisborne), of the Godwin circle:

1 autograph letter signed: “Monday Morning” [ca. 21 Aug 1797]: (MW 0048): [from London]: begins, “I thank you for your kind enquiries; I am very well, only a little impatient to regain my activity…”

· To **Mary Robinson**, author and actress:

1 autograph letter signed: [26 Jun 1797]: (MW 0008): [from London]: begins, “Will you, my dear Mrs Reveley, dine with us next Wednesday, to meet the same party…”

· To **Everina Wollstonecraft** (her sister):

1 autograph letter signed: 11-12 May 1787: (MW 0006): Dublin: begins, “Your silence, and George's long absence makes me very uneasy…”
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Call number index</th>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0001) ALS to Joseph Johnson : 2 May 1793</td>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0002) ALS to Mary Hays : 15 Sep 1796</td>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0003) ANS to Joseph Johnson : 13 Jul 1793</td>
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<td>(MW 0005) Review of Albert de Nordenshild : Aug-Sep 1796</td>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0006) ALS to Everina Wollstonecraft : 11-12 May 1787</td>
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<td>(MW 0007) ALS to Amelia Alderson : ca. 11 Apr 1797</td>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0008) ALS to Maria Reveley : 26 Jun 1797</td>
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<td>(MW 0009) ALS to Joseph Johnson : 5 Dec 1786</td>
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<td>(MW 0010) ------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>(MW 0011) ALS to George Dyson : ca. ?Dec 1795 - 29 Mar 1797</td>
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<td>(MW 0012-0026) 15 L (copies) to Jane Arden : 1773-1783</td>
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<td>(MW 0027) ALS to Mary Robinson : ca. 15 Apr 1796 - 29 Mar 1797</td>
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<td>(MW 0028) ALS to Ruth Barlow : ca. 1-14 Feb 1793</td>
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<td>(MW 0029) ALS to George Dyson : 28 Apr 1797</td>
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<td>(MW 0030) AL to George Dyson : ca. ?15 May 1797</td>
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<td>(MW 0031) ALS to Henry Dyson Gabell : ca. ?9 Feb - 15 Apr 1787</td>
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<td>(MW 0035) ALS to Mary Hays : 25 Nov 1792</td>
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<td>(MW 0036) ALS to Mary Hays : [ca. late 1795]</td>
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<td>(MW 0037) ALS to Mary Hays : 11 Aug [1792]</td>
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<td>(MW 0048) ALS to James Marshall : [ca. ?21 Aug 1797]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(MW 0049) AL to William Godwin : [ca. ?15 May 1797]</td>
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Appendix

Mary Wollstonecraft Manuscript Material in the Berg Collection

The Henry A. and Albert W. Berg Collection of English and American Literature is in room 320 of the Library’s Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, just across the hall from the Pforzheimer Collection. For admission, contact Berg staff at brgref@nypl.org. The following Mary Wollstonecraft manuscript is held by the Berg Collection:

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<th>LOCATION</th>
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<td></td>
<td>To Hamilton Rowan, Irish politician</td>
<td>Todd no. 216</td>
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- 1 autograph letter signed : 26 Jan [1796] : from London : begins, “Thought I have not heard from you I should have written to you, convinced of your friendship could I have told you any thing of myself that would have afforded you pleasure …”
English writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) and her most famous work, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, both achieved immense notoriety in Georgian England of the 1790s. The book is considered the first written document of the modern feminist movement, and in it Wollstonecraft argued in favor of full legal, social, and economic rights for women. Her achievements and renown, however, could not save her from the most dangerous of all social ills for women in her day—that of childbirth and its attendant medical risks.