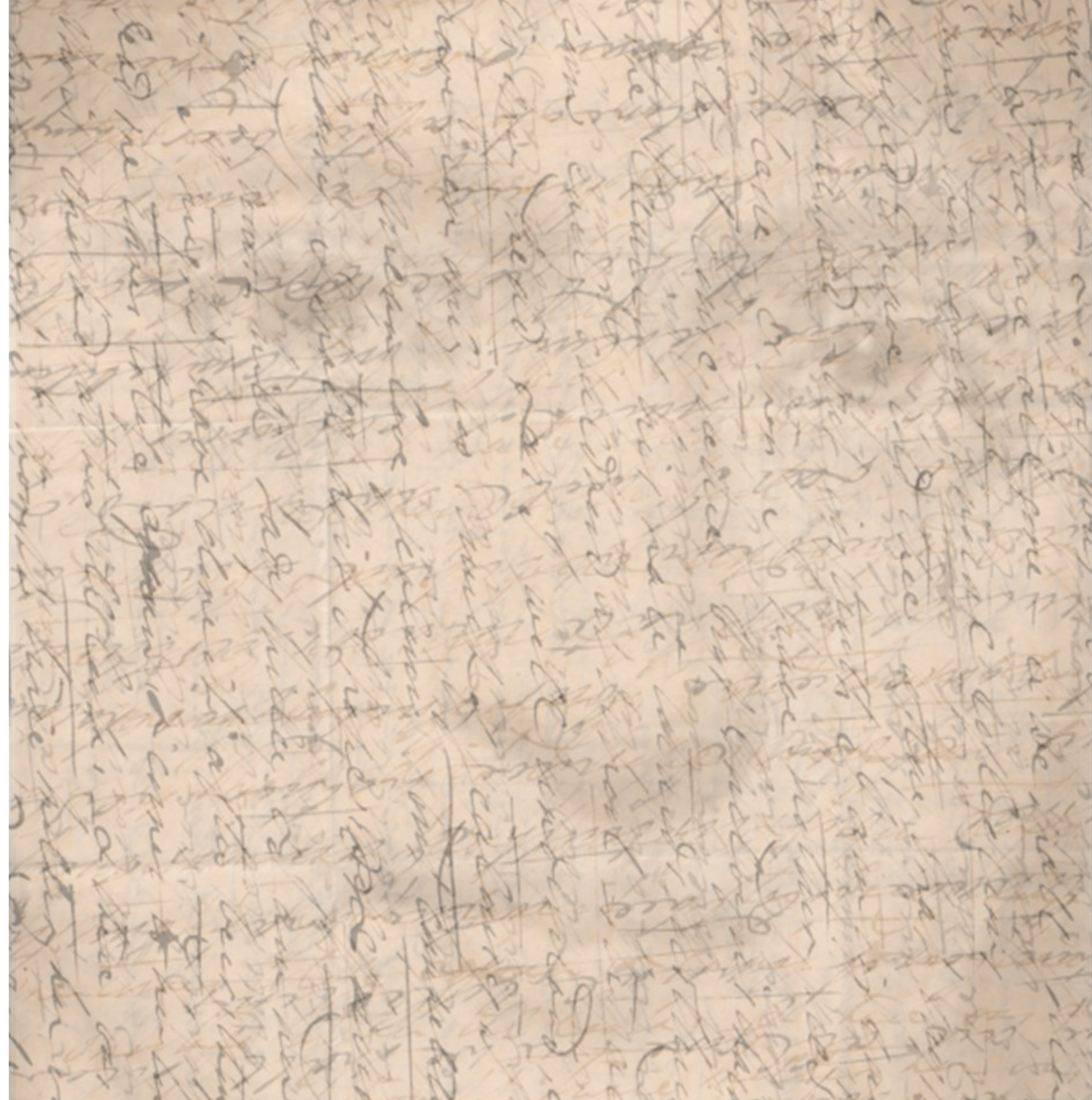


An AMELIA OPIE
ARCHIVE:

*A Collection of
Previously Unrecorded
Manuscripts, Letters, & Poems*

Dean Cooke Rare Books Ltd



A previously unrecorded archive of
**MANUSCRIPT POEMS & LETTERS OF
AMELIA OPIE**

with

**TWO UNRECORDED MANUSCRIPT DRAFTS OF
HER TRAVELS TO BELGIUM**

Amelia Opie (1769-1853) was one of the most remarkable women of her time. Playwright, artist, singer, poet, letter-writer, novelist, social activist and radical, she was equally famous for her sparkling conversation and her later turning away from fiction writing to become a committed Quaker.

ARCHIVE CONTENTS

**2 autograph manuscript drafts of Amelia Opie's journey to
Brussels, with her corrections and alterations.**

**29 letters and poems in Amelia Opie's hand (including at
least 2 fair copies of poems or songs)**

1 letter from the author James Smith

2 letters from Eliza Briggs

5 from Henry Briggs

8 from Elizabeth Amelia Briggs

**Together with circa 50 letters, poems and other pieces
dating from the second half of the 19th Century.**

This archive contains a wealth of manuscript material, including 2 previously unrecorded prose manuscripts and 29 letters and poems in Amelia Opie's hand. Most of these letters and poems date from circa 1815-1820, that period after her husband's death when she was beginning to actively embrace Quakerism. Her main correspondent is her cousin, Thomas John Alderson, to whom she was very close. During her gradual transition to Quakerism, she has frequent thoughts about the literary career that she eventually was to leave behind her. As Thomas is not religious at all, both sides of her life are drawn out through their interaction. She consults him about her secular affairs whilst at the same time hoping that he will reform and describing her meetings with the Friends. She frequently moves from prose to verse: in these verses, many of which show a quite extraordinary talent, we gain glimpses of loneliness, and yearnings for physical love.

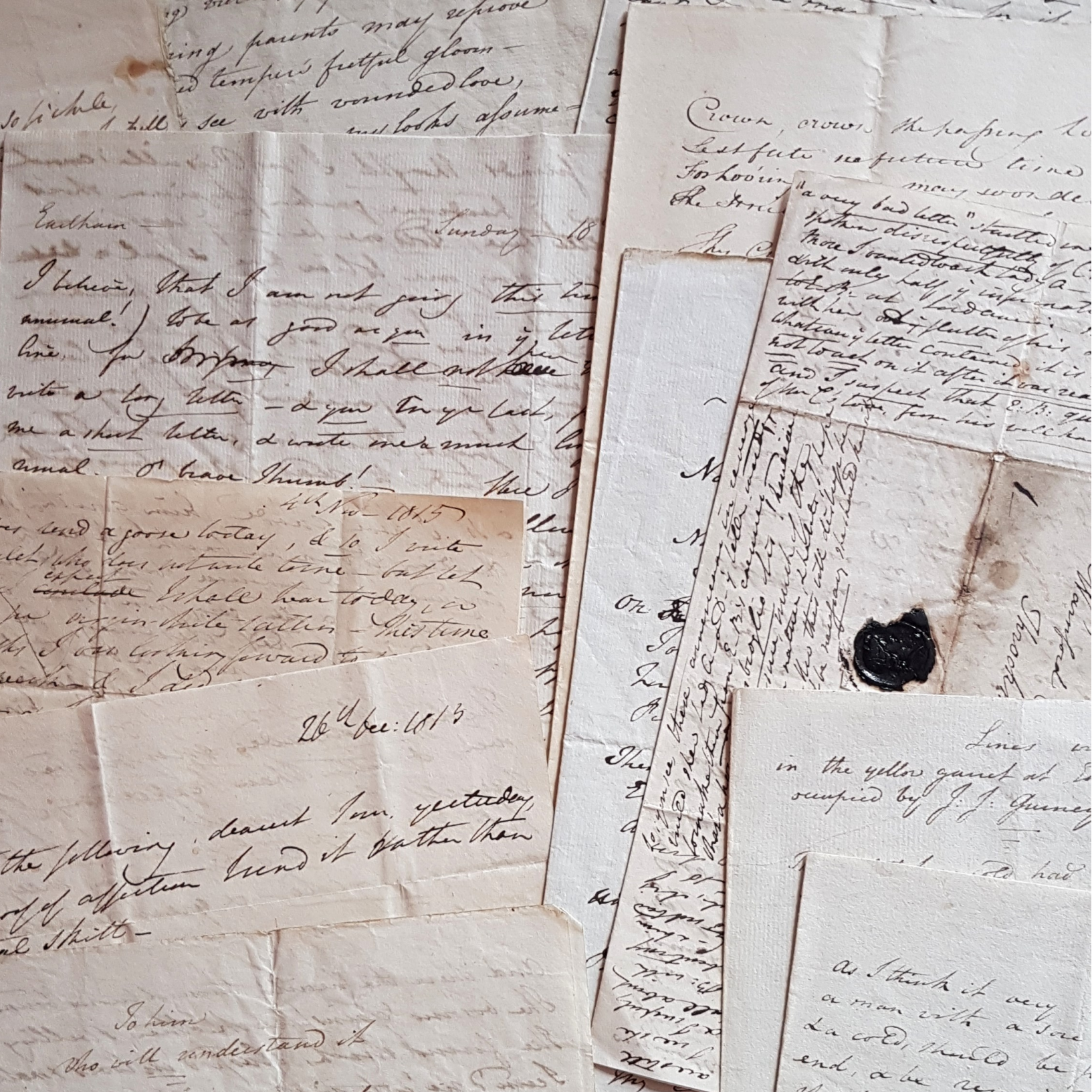
The two prose drafts date from some twenty years later, when she was no longer writing fiction. She does, however, write and publish about her travels. The manuscripts offered here were composed circa 1839, and cover her trip to Brussels, taken three years earlier. They are part description, part diary, and full of her perceptive observations. The first leg of Opie's travels in Belgium, which covered the period before her arrival in Brussels was published in *Tait's Magazine*. These manuscript draft publications would have formed the second instalment in her published travels. But, in the event this section remained unpublished, and apparently undiscovered for over a century and a half.

Opie's hand is known to be sometimes difficult to decipher. She wrote quickly and fluently, often correcting as she went. However, most of the contents of this archive are legible with careful study. In order to be clear about its contents and compile the catalogue, we have transcribed the letters and poems almost entirely, with occasionally a difficult word open to interpretation, including indication of most corrections and where possible deletions. Summaries are provided in Appendix II.

The two manuscript prose drafts are approximately 29 pages and 39 pages long respectively. We have transcribed the first manuscript almost entirely (again, except for a few difficult words), and approximately 75 per cent of the second volume.

Our transcriptions of the letters, poems, and prose pieces (approximately 20,000 words) will be included as part of the sale, for any purchaser to use them for the basis of further research or publication of the archive.

my own !!!



EXTANT ARCHIVE MATERIAL RELATING TO AMELIA OPIE

Amelia Opie died on 2nd December 1853. She bequeathed her manuscripts to her friend Thomas Brightwell. Although she left no instructions, he perceived her wish to be that he prepare a biography. He entrusted the task of writing to his daughter, Cecilia Lucy Brightwell. These papers formed the basis of Cecilia's Brightwell's biography, as well as the doctoral thesis of Margaret Macgregor (1933), and the biography by Menzies-Wilson and Lloyd (1937).

The manuscripts later came into the possession of Ethel I. Carr of Canterbury, who was related to Opie via the Briggs family. Eliza Alderson Briggs and her husband, Henry Perronet Briggs, the painter, were cousins of Amelia Opie. It was through their daughter Eliza, who had married the Rev. J. H. Carr of Adisham Rectory in Kent, that the papers came into the Carr family, and thus to Ethel Carr herself.

In 1953, Ethel Carr died, and the papers passed to her nephew who put them up for sale at Sotheby's. The auctioneers split the archive into 5 lots, and on 22nd June 1953 they were auctioned. Maggs bought one lot on commission for the Huntington Library, and Francis Edwards bought four lots; at least two items from these four lots are now in the New York Public Library (see Appendix I for details of the auction and library locations). Our group of manuscripts includes letters to Henry Perronet Briggs and Eliza Carr, so it was probably also part of the Carr Collection. However, whether it was buried within the Sotheby's lots or was material held back by the family, it is not now possible to say.

Significant collections of Amelia Opie's letters are recorded in the UK and the USA.
UK: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Norfolk Record Office; Society of Friends, London.
USA: Huntington Library, California; Knox College Archives; New York Public Library, Swarthmore College Library, Pennsylvania.

There are also many individual letters and smaller collections noted in Sutton's 'Location Register', including: British Library; Bodleian, Oxford; Trinity College, Cambridge; University College London, and others.

As Shelley King and John Pierce (Amelia Opie Archive website) remark, "[o]ne of the intriguing aspects of working on Opie is the quest for materials that were known in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but which have since fallen from view." Even allowing for the uncertainty surrounding the history of the Carr Collection, it remains something of a conundrum that despite Amelia Opie's prolific output, very few prose works in manuscript are extant.

King and Pierce have located the following prose works which they list on the Amelia Opie Archive website: *The Painter and his Wife*. Draft of the opening of Opie's final, unfinished novel and *Souvenirs d'une visite a Paris en 1802*. 104 pages both in the Berg Collection, NYPL.
Account of the first day of the Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840. 29 pages (some written on both recto and verso) uncatalogued; Chapin Library, Williams College, Massachusetts.
The only recorded volume of poetry is the Cromer Notebook, also in the Berg Collection, NYPL.

See Appendix I for a more detailed account of Opie's extant manuscripts.

To the above we are now able to add the two autograph prose manuscripts and the significant group of letters and poems offered here.

LETTERS AND POEMS IN THIS COLLECTION IN OPIE'S HAND

In our archive, the poetry and the letters are intertwined. Indeed, Opie appears to have been able to express herself as easily in poetry as in prose, and she frequently turns to poetry when she wishes to express a particular thought or emotion. Most of the letters and poems are to her cousin, Thomas John Alderson (often referred to as Tom). She chaffs him for not writing, exchanges news of her life, sends him birthday or Christmas poems, asks for his help and advice, and exhorts him to reform. Often, she is cheerful, sending him a glee; occasionally, too, she reflects on love or religion. Although most letters are to Tom, there are a few to other correspondents, including two describing the loss of two of her closest friends: her cousin Eliza Alderson Briggs and her husband Henry Perronet Briggs, both of whom died of consumption.

Her poetry is very fine, with echoes of English 17th century metaphysical poets, and perhaps too of Shakespeare's sonnets. In total, the collection includes some 30 poems and songs either as singles or contained within the letters. They vary greatly in length from a few verses, to more than seventy lines. We have checked for these poems and songs in King, Shelley and John B. Pierce, eds. *The Collected Poems of Amelia Alderson Opie*. Oxford; New York: OUP, 2009. The great proportion of those offered here are unpublished and do not feature in that work.



In her poetry, Opie is sometimes simply playful, but it is always suggestive and capable of multiple interpretations. There is, for example, a long humorous poem on a sleepless night:

Lines written after sleeping in the yellow garret at Earlbam now usually occupied by J. J. Gurney –

*The night's keen cold had banish'd sleep
 So vigils I resolv'd to keep;
 And by the watch-lights did, explore
 Of things around the various store
 And number duly one by one,
 Thy toilet's treasures Joseph John –*

This cheerful side comes out strongly too in glees, and songs:

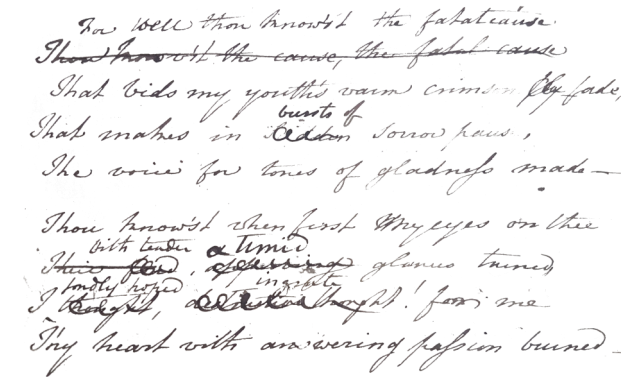
*Let others toast beauties from morning till night
 Or toast them from midnight till morn
 One toast, & one only affords me delight,
 That which swims in the juice of the brown barley corn*

*(I wonder why ale is called his John Brackley corn! but
 so tis.)*
another glee
*He says may make all the knights that he please
 In one their promotion nor tickles, nor teases,
 One thought, & one only to love I was born
 That power of good fellows, the John Brackley corn*

Or sometimes too when she writes to congratulate him on his birthday:

*Say who can love November's gloom
 Its falling flowers of sickly bloom
 Its paths with faded leaves bewtow'd
 Its fatal fogs, its chillwinds rude
 Its heavy rains, its leafless groves
 Where winter's frowning genius roves
 And onward, as his footsteps bend
 Bids fresh beds snow hid course attend?*

*Who that delights in summer's bliss
 Can love a dreary month like this?
 I. - for this month so little worth*



*For well thou know'st the fatal cause.
 Thou know'st the cause, the fatal cause
 That bids my youth's warm crimson fly fade,
 That makes in sudden burst of sorrow pause,
 The voice for tomes of gladness made –*

*Thou know'st when first My eyes on thee
 With tender & timid glances turned,
 Their fond appearing thought! fondly hoped ingrate for me
 I thought, destruction thought! for me
 Thy heart with answering passion burned –*

*Below'd cousin! Gave the birth!
 And I with joy the month must see
 That bade thee live for love & me
 And lo! To thee a votive lay*

However, frequently, the poetry turns to thoughts of love. Often this is directed at her cousin, but sometimes expressed more generally. This, undated poem, has an 1805 watermark, rather earlier than the others:

*^For well thou know'st the fatal cause^
 Thou know'st the cause, the fatal cause
 Thou bids my youth's warm crimson fly fade,
 That makes in sudden burst of sorrow pause,
 The voice for tomes of gladness made -*

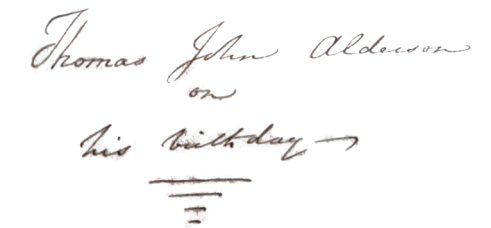
*Thou know'st when first My eyes on thee
 Their fond appearing thought! With tender & timid glances turned,
 I thought, destruction thought! fondly hoped ingrate for me
 This heart with answering passion burned*

Another example, this time in a poem written circa 1815

*But wit may lure & beauty smile,
 And thou, their influence feeling,
 May let their power thy heart beguile,
 That heart Thy love from Laura(?) stealing -*

*For ^Then may ^kind Heaven indulgent prove!
 And should thy heart forget me,
 O may'st thou be so blest in love,
 As never to regret me –*

Very frequently, however Thomas Alderson is the clear recipient. In a poem addressed to



She cries

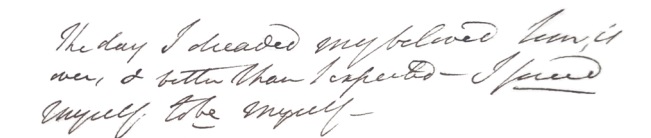
*Away dark thoughts glooms! & lo! They flee
 Dispell'd by one bright thought of thee!*

Again

*I wrote the following dearest Tom, yesterday & as a proof of
 affection I sent it rather than of skill*

...

*Yet tears may mingle with the bowl I quaff,
 And choicest viands fall upon my taste -*



*The day I deaded my beloved Tom, it
 was, & better than I expected - I spend
 myself to be myself -*

For he who could --ne the lo feast-~~alone~~ endear
To my fond heart, Alas! he comes not Here

The romantic love so deeply expressed is also couched more specifically; particularly in one beautiful poem where she appears to be balancing unfulfilled desire against Platonic love:

Nay - do not scorn this craving lip,
Tho' there it far too freely seek,
Nor frown altho' it loves to sip,
The mantling crimson of thy cheek

On ~~It~~ me alas! of joys like this,
Too niggard fate small share bestows –
For me no house of equal bliss

...

But chaste tho' fond ~~the~~ each warm desire
With which my throbbing bosom swells -

And tho' to meet thy fervid kiss
My eager lip so fondly springs,
Adieu, sweeter, truer bliss
Thy calmer, tenderer fondness brings

This yearning becomes explicit in another poem, which appears to be in her hand, but without date, signature or place.

Is there a joy I must not know
Beyond the sweet the thrilling bliss
I feel when on thy neck of snow
I plant my long, & lingring kiss?
Or when between my honniied lips
Thy eager tongue or steals or darts,
While as my mouth its moisture sips
My tongue a mutual joy imparts

Of the later religious poetry, there are early signs, in that she exhorts her cousin (with whom she was later to fall out as his inability to lead an honest life became public), to lead a more Christian life. Nevertheless, her deep affection for him means that it is usually phrased in the most tactful of ways, assuring him of her love for him.

The following is dated 1829:

Oh! if I could thy second birthday see,
Oh! if the Contrite Sinner's birth were thine,
Then my faint verse triumphant song would be
And heartfelt praises fill the ^{each} glowing line -
Dead to the world, but, "born again" to God,
And all thy errors through thy Lord forgiven,
Then thy meek lip would humbly kiss the rod,
And tread that a thine would be the path that leads to Heaven

Approximately two thirds of the poetry is set within the letters to Tom, intertwined with news of their mutual acquaintances, descriptions of everyday scenes, and also requests for advice or his thoughts about her work. The following is from 1813:

There are reasons friend Thomas John, why I write to thee today - tho' I do not mean to send my letters till Tues: probably - but ye strongest is, my wish to prove my penetration - for it has occured to me, knowing the man, that it is very likely, Lord H, wanting perhaps, to get rid of y pictures, but not knowing how, may take buff at my having told you he has them, & may write to me saying "Madam, as you have thought proper to tell Mr A: I have your pictures, I had better transfer them to his care..."

...3 o'clock. – A good meeting - Pris: and her uncle both spoke well. How absurd Joseph is! He is fretting already at my going to London -Yes, he shall not know how to bear it – I shall be in



such danger of being --dawn(?) & to many people after me - but at last he owned that selfishness was one cause of his regret – because he did not like to lose ye comfort of seeing , & hearing me - I am quite surprised to find how very lately it is that he has felt in his own mind that he was a confirmed Quaker - So recently I had(?) I feel afraid of urging objections to ye system lest he be not steady enough to bear it –

Her growing Quaker interests are frequently also mentioned in passing:

O brave Thomas! - Here I have been ever since Monday, & am not allowed to depart till Wednesday morning - I conceive it to be my last enjoyment of Earlham as it now is & therefore I am well contented to be happy while I may - & I am happy, quite happy here - ye only thing that consoles me for leaving this abode of ye blessing, & the blessed is ye expectation of seeing you on Saturday...Joseph & I walked to meeting (quaker's meeting) & back just now...

She also asks Tom (she refers affectionately to him as 'varlet') his advice on her work and talks of her projects. The extract below is from 1815:

Aunt does send a goose today, and so I write to the varlet who does not write to me – but let that pass. I conclude expect I shall hear today or tomorrow re virgin white sattin – This time twelve months. I am looking forward to seeing thee next week – and I did see thee – well – time was - & Troy was - & Paris was, &



Helen was, & they are all gone - & we shall follow I know thou lovest moral reflections.

I hoped to have told thee today that my MS was finished - but in truth I am in my last scene - & then I have nothing new to write of consequence, but Meloyne's character & the cause of his hate towards Lord Shirley from early childhood at school - This all in my head & as I well understand, & have seen only too much of jealousy, do not mean love jealousy, but competition jealousy, I shall do it I hope well forcibly - but I must kill Lady Shirley - & I am now doing it -...

Again:

I have to set thy brains at work for me - under the seal of eternal secrecy - "Art thou not terrified?" Some years ago you have heard me say that I wrote a comedy which Wroughton presented for me (he was acting manager) & which, as he liked ^it he took much trouble about - I altered it according to his judgement when they returned it for alteration, but when re-read at dr-[ury] lane, it was returned ^{again} - & the objection still remained to one particular character ... Tragedy is now so much the rage that Comedy at the great theatres, stands little chance of success –

In 1818, she asks his advice on a legal question:

I am ye most suspicious of human beings - the issue, unless I can conquer this feeling, I must draw up ye case, & consult you - Nay I may as well do it now I suppose. A: is a candidate for a place - but B: tells ye appointees to it that he knows on the evidence of ye most respectable authority that A: is unworthy of it - A: brings his action therefore against B: for defamation & damages - B: defends himself -....

The close complexity of the relationship comes out repeatedly. The extract below is written in 1816.

This rather curious that ye second name of both ye men I love ye best in ye world should be John - I forgot to tell thee dear that I think thy accident of ye toe, retributive justice on you - It was clear as you were going to be gay that week. You had leisure, & could have come hither had you had the inclination - but I can make allowances for you - still - it has xxx(?) weakened thy hold on me to feel that you could to easily make up your mind to give up seeing me for so many months.

TWO SUBSTANTIAL MANUSCRIPT DRAFTS OF A JOURNEY TO BRUSSELS IN AMELIA OPIE'S HAND

In 1835 Amelia Opie set off on a journey to Belgium. She had arranged to meet her friend, Elizabeth Marley (referred to as Madame M in the manuscript) in Brussels. The first portion of her trip entitled, *Recollections of my days in Belgium* was published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1840). We learn from Clive Jones' (2001) useful precis of many of Opie's letters, that she proposed further instalments. In a letter to the publisher Tait, dated 21/8/1839, Opie "Tries to interest him in non-fiction articles instead, esp. account of days in Ghent". Tait appears to have accepted the proposal as she writes on 17/11/1839, promising to send her Ghent article very soon (E Ms 10279). On the 18/5/1840 she again wrote to Tait, "I have the organ of impatience very strongly pronounced, or bad when my head was felt." Awaiting his reply re Belgian essays. May she send article on Punctuality?" (EMs10279). Unfortunately, we do not learn from the letters whether Tait had delayed for some reason or had decided against publication entirely. Either way, our two manuscripts appear to be her original drafts for the promised article, and judging from these letters, they were written between August and December 1839. The earlier portion was published in 1840, but this section, taking her travels up to and including Brussels were never published and save for the brief mentions in her letters, they appear to have been hitherto unrecorded. From the letter recorded above by Jones, our two drafts probably date from the period 21st August 1839 when she first tried to interest Tait in a second instalment, and 17th November 1839, when she promises to send Tait the article soon.

Opie's early writings, especially her novels, were critically successful and financially rewarding. At her peak of her financial success, 1816-1820 her average annual income from Longmans was £1331. However, on becoming a Quaker, Opie ceased publishing novels, and this decision seems to have significantly decreased her income from writing. She continued to write poetry and published moral tales, but these do not appear to have been very remunerative. In the period shortly before these manuscripts were written (1831- 1838), her income from the publishing Longmans had fallen to just £113. Enough to live on perhaps, but not in the manner she might wish.

Although she no longer wrote novels, she never lost her novelist's eye. This is abundant throughout these manuscript journals. In the earliest section of the narrative she vividly describes her surroundings, only to dismiss the entire section in her rewrite. She explores other people's inner lives, their motivations and personalities. In a truly fascinating section, we experience her inner thoughts in her candid reflections on what it was like to be a single woman travelling alone in a foreign country. At one point she seems surprised by the loss of her usual confidence and self-reliance.

Aside from these considerations, these two drafts offer important and rare insight into Amelia Opie's writing practice. She carefully crafts her sentences, adding, subtracting, rewording, and reordering the text, not to expurgate anything but to give precision and shape the flow of her narrative. Through the remarkable survival of these two drafts we see how she writes and rewrites, recreating her memories anew each time.

The two autograph manuscripts are entitled *Arrival at Brussels* and *Journey to Brussels*. The former appears quite hastily written and is likely an earlier draft. The latter is also clearly a draft but is longer and more developed. She initially sketches out her thoughts in *Arrival at Brussels* (hereafter, Manuscript [A]) up to the arrival of her friend "Madame M--" (i.e. Elizabeth Marley) who has just arrived from Paris and relates recent attempted assassination of Louis Philippe. Opie rewrites her recollections in *Journey to Brussels* (Manuscript [B]), adding much more material. Manuscript [A] contains some sections that are omitted from Manuscript [B], but equally, in the latter she often expands or even adds large sections as she writes.



The opening sentence is the same in both manuscripts, but they quickly depart. Manuscript [A] provides a vivid description of her initial journey. We see her beautifully conjure a scene in her first draft, only to drop it entirely in the second. Manuscript [A] begins on the road from Ghent to Aalst (Alost in the manuscript):

The weather as so fine, that as I and my mind so full of the scenes I had so recently been engaged in, that I needed was alive as I proceeded on my journey ^I was alive to nothing but the delight of enjoying feeling the genial summer air & of being able to indulge my reveries without interruption - so that I was scarcely conscious ^at first how uninteresting the in itself ye road to Brussels was, & not aware how entirely its attractions must depend on historical association for attraction But I well remember that a few miles from ghet g^ent I was induced noticed a very large, & thick fine wood, a forest of considerable extent, from the trees & their the large branches were judiciously H--d(?) cut away & ch--d(?) that one could see to the end of the under there to the very end of the p--dy(?) path & beneath them. Little however did I then think that this green forest would, when I next saw it on my return to Ghent in the early at the appr--l water Autumn it would have acquired a beauty such as I had never seen before, nor ever seen since - but so it was -

As I approached it there during even during a constant rain, I was struck by the splendid joyous hues with which the season had unveiled it great must be the variety of the trees that flourished there, few, save the blue

[end of page 1]

colour of the prismatic arch, it exhibited all its hues save the blue gradation of the blue colour - The red was fine, as the turning leaves of the virginia creeper the glowing hues of the beech, beautifully mingled with the pale & dark green & the yellow leaves. And while the hanging branches waved in their varied loveliness the ground below was covered by a thick carpet the colours of which might see with their from Paris's(?) looms(?)- Had it been possible for the rain drops to have been changed into icicles when the moon the while the Sun beamed gloriously forth, this forest would have resembled the given a better idea of the garden of Aladdin in the Arabian tales, than could have been where fruits were precious, stems of every hue a ----- treat h--- thro' life was perfectly fascinated by this beautiful object, which, like the consumptive patient had acquired beauty from decay & I rejoiced that for some reason or other the Coach stopped some moments on the spot...

This lively description of the countryside which covers almost three pages, is reduced in draft [B] to just a few lines. She seems to have decided after all that any sense of excitement felt on her journey was not in any way a result of her surroundings, but entirely the product of her own reveries.

my curiosity of not my interest was strongly excited

The weather was so fine, and my head so full of the scenes that which I had been recently engaged in that as I proceeded on my journey I was alive to nothing but the delight of feeling the Summer sun(?) air & being able to indulge my reveries without interruption - so that I was scarcely conscious how uninteresting, except from historical associations the road to Brussels must be to travellers.

The road from Aalst to Brussels is equally unexciting and entirely without subjective excitements in both accounts.

[A] "The road from Alost to Brussels did not appear to me more fully more interesting than that from Ghent to Alost" (page 7); [B]

"The road to the capital was not more interesting than that from Ghent to Alost (page 2).



Her arrival in the city of Brussels induces in her a sense of melancholia. She notes her absence of a plan, and her feeling of loneliness in a crowd. These form only brief notes in Manuscript [A], but she explores them more deeply in Manuscript [B], and spends time shaping her reflections upon unfamiliar feelings of loneliness:

And here I am at Brussels! I said to to myself when I awoke the next morning, & alone there! conscious that the last words were uttered in no triumphant tone - conscious that the pride which I had hitherto felt in my own independence & in power my^{to} enjoying of my solitary way faring, was a little abated - & that I experienced the painful consciousness of being alone in a---d(?)! There I had now reached my intended resting place for a while - but there, where the streets were full of life, & the busy hum of men was heard, I had a sense of loneliness - but for there was no one to being there ^among them who cared whether I lived, or died!

There was no tongue to welcome me, & if sickness assailed me there was no one - My position was the same at Bruges, & Ghent but I did not feel it there - Here, I saw crowds, & greetings in the street and carriages passed, & repassed leaving no one to enquire how it fared with me & I could exclaim with Lord Byron, this, this is solitude!" adding, "Oh! that my friend Madame M - were arrived!

At dinner she encounters a snobbish Baron. In [A], we are given his name (it is difficult to decipher), "Baron, de Bas--(?)", in [B] he becomes instead, a "French Baron (whose name is a very ancient one, I shall not give)". Either way, she is deeply displeased with the "nasty man" [A] and his "incessant spitting" [A] and in both drafts she compares him to the more friendly Belgian women with whom she converses: "In rank, & descent this man no doubt was superior to the two Belgians - but in manners how inferior" [B].

A revealing section on social mores is included in Manuscript [A], but not in [B]: "The next morning when I met ["Lord St--d"] ... he asked me where my friend was? What friend said I, I have no friend here. "No! not the young man I saw you walking with arm in arm?" "I answered with al---(?) indignant surprise that I had only accepted his kind offer to go & see the Palace, but that I have of him only his name" -



The next morning when I met ["Lord St--d"] ... he asked me where my friend was? What friend said I, I have no friend here. "No! not the young man I saw you walking with arm in arm?" "I answered with al---(?) indignant surprise that I had only accepted his kind offer to go & see the Palace, but that I have of him only his name" - Indeed said he - are you not to meet exact s----ing(?) Rhine?" & he said this with such an air of ina-dalel(?) that my assertion in so manner --(?) ---action(?) of -able---(?) that I was which which was wholly unable to account till I recollected that, contrary to y custom & ye idea of propriety in

Great Britain it is injurious both to a woman's character be she old, a young man to walk arm in arm with a young man in ye street unless he is known to be her Son - a consequence of an innocent familiarity which the young Englishman would have been as surprised alas I was myself" (page 20)

These thoughts are continued a couple of pages later:

"I think --there at Paris surprized me so much at this difference in ideas of propriety - for I have always understood in England that if a lady's character is suspected when a gentleman walks by her side without giving her his arm -"

Eventually, her companion does join her. Her enjoyment of her surroundings now she has a close companion has palpably changed:

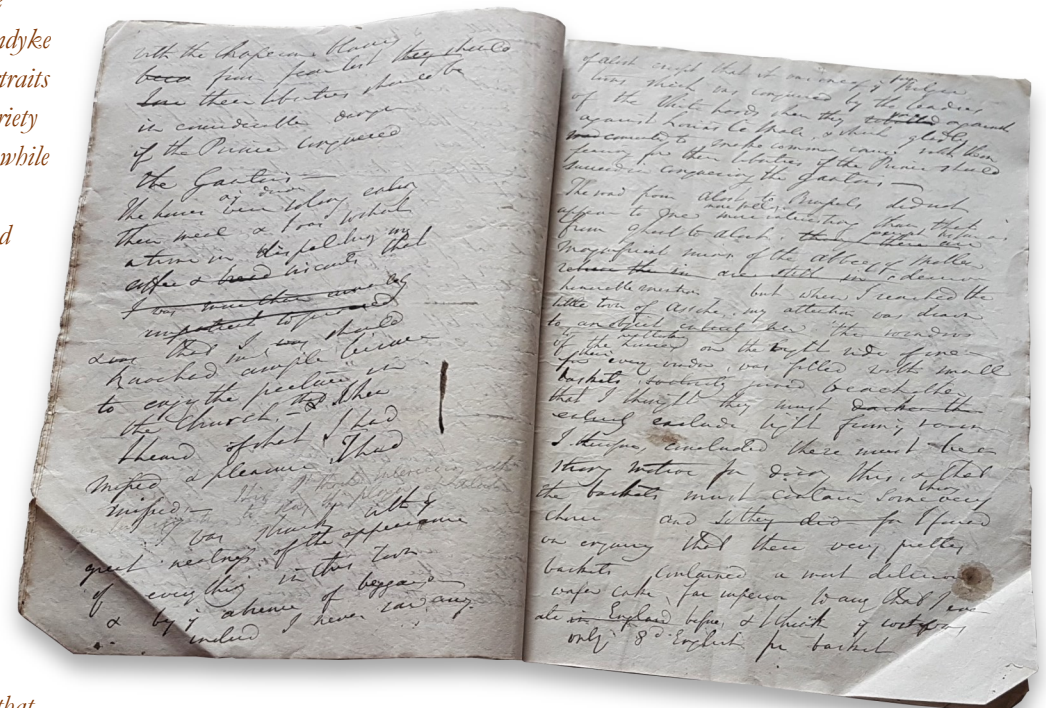
"That evening my friend & I had a delightful walk by moonlight in the park which then appeared to great advantage in an improved point of view - The burnt up grass shone in the moonbeams with a beauty bit its own, & the dusty trees acquired a charm(?) unknown to them by daylight - from as the deepened shadows of Evening were relieved by the dance shimmer of lights emanating from the great luminary"

She requests and gains what seems to be a private viewing of the pictures at the palace,

"I soon found myself standing, without being desired to pass on, before those treasures of art which I had only glanced at before, having ^without being desired to passed them on as quickly, almost, as those who are presented at Court, ate obliged ^{bidden} to pass on ^{remove} from the presence of the Sovereign - I had another, & unexpected advantage - My guide had, evidently, a thorough real knowledge of pictures, & I soon learnt that he had pictures in his possession which he had thought of conveying to England to offer them for sale.

Long, long, did I linger before the paintings by Velasquez, & Vandyke one by the fr---(?) "There are portraits which may without much impropriety be called a sort of biography [...] while I gazed intently on the face of Olivarez as portrayed by the hand of genius, methought I read there the a record of the bold & domineering ministry of that shrewd, & daring statesman, whose pride is said to have hurried him to his fall, & who unable to bear the ruin, which he had brought on himself, died of a broken heart -

[...] There is a remarkable look of lively satisfaction probably, perhaps by the ^{flattering} consciousness that the artist was painting him for his sovereign".





CONCLUSION

This archive is immensely important for the breadth and depth of material it provides. The letters contain within them a valuable cache of original poetry (mostly to her cousin Tom) which is exceptional in its imagery and fluency, and strays to thoughts of love (see Appendix II for a summary). Opie discusses her literary ideas, her religious beliefs, and we witness the changing relationship between Amelia and Tom, a relationship that has long been the subject of speculation. And while these letters do not settle the matter, they certainly help us to understand how rumours of an intimate relationship between them originally arose.

The two drafts of her journey to Brussels have many beautiful and perceptive passages. Opie's numerous corrections and amendments are found throughout the two volumes, and these richly textured documents offer a rare insight into her working practices. They are important too for her reflections upon the strains of solitary travel; indeed, this must be one of the earliest accounts of a woman travelling through Europe alone. Even individual prose works by Opie are extremely rare, but prose works together with their reworked and revised counterparts seem to be completely unheard of.

The majority of the poetry, the letters, and also the travel manuscript, are unpublished and previously unrecorded. This is accompanied by approximately fifty letters, poems, and other items by relations of Opie. We have transcribed all of Opie's letters and poems, the entire first draft, and most of the second draft of her trip to Brussels. These transcriptions will be included with the archive.

This significant archive helps us to piece together some of the ways this highly intelligent and independent-minded author led her life and how she herself felt about it. It is true she married, and suffered greatly from the loss of her partner. But she clearly does not see her life as being dominated by her loss, and her extraordinary personality comes across powerfully throughout.

£40,000 (GBP) for the entire archive.

Amelia Opie

APPENDIX I

Amelia Opie died on 2nd December 1853. She bequeathed her manuscripts to her friend Thomas Brightwell. Although she left no instructions, he perceived her wish to be that he prepare a biography. He entrusted the task of writing to his daughter, Cecilia Lucy Brightwell. The preface to her biography *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie, selected and arranged from her letters, diaries, and other manuscripts* (1854) mentions “Papers, Letters, and Diaries, of Mrs. Opie's own writing”. These formed the basis of Cecilia's Brightwell's biography, as well as the doctoral thesis of Margaret Macgregor *Amelia Alder son Opie, Worldling and Friend* (1933), and the biography by Jacobine Menzies-Wilson and Helen Lloyd *Amelia, the Tale of a Plain Friend* (1937).

The manuscripts later came into the possession Ethel I. Carr of Canterbury, who was related to Opie via the Briggs family. Henry Perronet Briggs, the painter, and his wife Eliza Alderson Briggs, were cousins of Amelia Opie. It was through their daughter Eliza, who had married the Rev. J. H. Carr of Adisham Rectory in Kent, that the papers came into the Carr family, and thus to Ethel Carr herself.

In 1953, Ethel Carr died, and the papers passed to her nephew who put them up for sale at Sotheby's. The auctioneers split the archive into 5 lots, and on 22nd June 1953 they were auctioned as follows:

Swan-100. OPIE (Mrs. Amelia, 1769-1853, Novelist and Poet) A series of seven very interesting A. Ls. s., 24 pp., folio and 4to, 1794, to Mrs. John Taylor; letters full of gossip written before Mrs. Opie's marriage; one long letter relates to her engagement to Opie and gives a candid description of the artist; other letters refer to William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Holcroft, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Inchbald and others. Several of these letters contain unpublished passages; also an Holograph Love Poem of William Godwin (signed " St. John Priest ") 22nd February, 1776, to Miss Alderson (afterwards Mrs. Opie), 2 pp., 4to.
Buyer: Edwards.

Swan-101. OPIE (Mrs. Amelia) A series of about 104 original Portraits in Pencil of her Friends and Relatives, head and shoulders, (on cards 6 x 4in.), mounted in two 4to albums, morocco and half morocco, with clasps, also a copy of John Opie's Lectures on Painting, 1809, with Amelia Opie's signature on title. 4to, calf, gilt.
*** Only 2 of these portraits are endorsed with the name of the sitter-Lydia Harris and Lucy Pinchback, but an excellent portrait of John Opie is included.
Buyer: Edwards.

Swan-102. OPIE (Mrs. Amelia) A remarkable series of over 300 A. Ls. s., 1794-1842, to her father, her cousin Henry Briggs, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry and others; vivacious and amusing letters discussing art, literature, politics, etc.; also 27 A. Ls. s. of David D'Angers to Mrs. Opie, and A. Ls. s. of Elizabeth Inchbald,

William Godwin and others to the same.

*** Among other matters discussed in this large correspondence Mrs. Opie seeks her correspondents' opinion as to whether a play on second marriage would succeed. She visits Elizabeth Fry and discusses Mrs. Siddons; other letters describe her feelings before the publication of a book, a visit to Mr. Whitbread, and amusing literary criticism.
Buyer: Maggs.

Swan-103. OPIE (Mrs. Amelia) Account of a visit to Abbotsford and Dryburgh in the year 1834, Holograph MS., 4 pp., 4to; also an account of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, in Mrs. Opie's handwriting (1839), 29 pp., 4to (2).
Buyer: Edwards.

Swan-104. OPIE (Mrs. Amelia) Verses written at Cromer, 1791, a large collection of Holograph Poems, covering 330 pp., 4to, sewn; also a long essay entitled Souvenir d'une visite à Paris en 1802; and about 30 Holograph Poems on Scraps of Paper, including At Sight of the Tricolour, On the portraits of deceased relatives and friends which hang around one, To David, To Rachel Fry, etc. (a parcel).
Buyer: Edwards.

What became of the various items after that presents a mixed picture. It is not known what happened to many of Opie's journals, or whether they even still exist. They formed the basis of the Brightwell biography, and seem to have been in the Carr Collection (as mentioned above, they were accessed by MacGregor, and by Menzies-Wilson and Lloyd) but they are not recorded in the Sotheby's lots.

We know that the Huntington Library acquired some of the material via Maggs.

Lot 102 is recorded in auction records as selling to Maggs. The Huntington Library catalogue entry records these items as “mssOP 1-364. Source of Acquisition: Purchased from Sotheby's, lot 102, 6/22/1953.” So, we assume that Maggs bought the lot on behalf of the Huntington.

As to the other four lots, they were all bought by the London bookseller, Francis Edwards. Of these,

Lot 101 (part or all) is now at the New York Public Library. SASB - Pforzheimer Collection Rm 319. Pforz BND-MSS (Opie). 2 v. ([42] leaves, [93] leaves); 27 x 21 cm. 125 pencil portraits of various people: [ca. 1820's]: (AO 0065).

Lot 104 included ‘Verses written at Cromer, 1791’ and ‘Souvenirs d'une visite a Paris en 1802’. Both these items are now in the Berg Collection at NYPL.

There remain several unanswered (and possibly unanswerable) questions about the Ethel Carr Collection sold at Sotheby's in 1953. It is not known whether some material remained in the possession of the family or whether beneath the auctioneer's brief descriptions there lay multiple treasures. We do not have a record of what Francis Edwards did with their purchases (all we know is what has since been discovered). Sotheby's gave fairly brief descriptions, but they do mention two prose pieces in lot 103, so it seems reasonable to assume they would have mentioned other similar items.

Our group of manuscripts contains letters to Henry Perronet Briggs, and Eliza Carr so certainly appears to have originated from the Carr Collection, but whether it was buried within the Sotheby's lots or was material held back by the family, it is not now possible to say.

Institutional holdings not mentioned above

Significant collections of Amelia Opie's letters are recorded in the UK and the USA.

UK: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Norfolk Record Office; Society of Friends, London.

USA: NYPL, Huntington Library, California; Swarthmore College Library, Pennsylvania; Knox College Archives.

There are also many individual letters and smaller collections noted in Sutton's 'Location Register', including: BL, Bodleian, Trinity College Cambridge, UCL, and others.

As Shelley King and John Pierce (Amelia Opie Archive website) remark, "[o]ne of the intriguing aspects of working on Opie is the quest for materials that were known in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but which have since fallen from view." Even allowing for the uncertainty surrounding the history of the Carr Collection, it remains something of a conundrum that despite Amelia Opie's prolific output, very few prose works in manuscript are extant.

King and Pierce have located the following prose works (some of which we have already mentioned above) which they list on the Amelia Opie Archive website:

Fiction.

The Painter and his Wife. Draft of the opening of Opie's final, unfinished novel.

Located at: Berg Collection, NYPL.

Non-fiction

Souvenirs d'une visite a Paris en 1802. 104 pages (written on recto and verso) in French, which appear to be a draft of her travel memoir "Recollections of a Visit to Paris in 1802," which was published in eight installments in The Lady's Magazine, or Mirror of Belles-Lettres from July 1831 to February 1832.

Located at: Berg Collection, NYPL.

Recollections of Days in Belgium. Single leaf. Being the opening page of Opie's travel memoir, which appeared as "Recollections of Days in Belgium" in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine (1840).

Shelley King and John B. Pierce Collection.

Account of the first day of the Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840. 29 pages (some written on both recto and verso) uncatalogued.

Chapin Library, Williams College, Massachusetts.

Letters and poems

The only recorded volume of poetry is the Cromer Notebook. 165 leaves (text to recto and verso). Berg Collection, NYPL.

Significant holdings of letters and poems are located at: Berg Collection, NYPL.

References.

Amelia Alderson Opie Archive. Edited by Shelley King and John B. Pierce: <https://ameliaopiearchive.com/>
Brightwell, Cecilia Lucy. 'Memorials of the life of Amelia Opie'. (Norwich. 1854).

Dupuis, Richard. 'Where are the Amelia Opie Papers?' (1973).

Jones, Clive. The life and prose works of Amelia Opie. (2001).

Rare Book Hub (for details of Sotheby's lots).

Sutton, David C. (editor). 'Location Register of English Literary Manuscripts and Letters'. (London. 1995).

APPENDIX II

DETAILS OF PROSE, POEMS. LETTERS INCLUDED IN THIS ARCHIVE

PROSE DRAFTS IN OPIE'S HAND

Two autograph manuscripts entitled "*Arrival at Brussels*" and "*Journey to Brussels*". The former appears quite hastily written and is likely an earlier draft. The latter is also clearly a draft but is longer and more developed with sections either expanded or excised completely.

Manuscript [A] *Autograph draft manuscript entitled "Arrival at Brussels".*

Circa 1839. Quarto (255 mm x 205 mm). Stitched sheets. Unpaginated. 29 pages of text, plus 11 blanks. Written in dark brown ink throughout. Numerous corrections in the same ink throughout.

Manuscript [B] *Autograph draft manuscript entitled "Journey to Brussels".*

Circa 1839. Quarto (255 mm x 205 mm). Stitched sheets. Blank cover sheet with notes to rear sheet. Paginated 1-17, 21-41. Some blanks (not included in pagination). Two leaves excised with stubs remaining, to the left of which is a note which reads "Pray leave three sheets of blank paper between where thou hast left off - and the following."

The text is written in black ink. There are numerous corrections throughout; some in the same ink, but mostly in blue ink, indicating that she had returned to the manuscript to correct it after the first draft.

LETTERS AND POEMS IN OPIE'S HAND

The following have been numbered and arranged in chronological order. Undated letters and poems have been dated by comparing the paper or hand to other items in the collection.

[1] [Unsigned] Paper watermarked 1805. Folio, bifolium. Two poems: *The Remonstrance*, (48 lines); *The Warning*, (40 lines). Ends with her characteristic three underscore lines.

Place and date: [n.p. No date, circa 1805]

Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

The remonstrance

Yes - I am changed - but ~~say should'st~~ ^{dare not} thou
The sad, the mournful change upraid
[...]

My lips may seem, to smile again -
And smile destroyer! smile on thee!

The warning

Beware! for I see on a now blooming cheek
The sound of thy name conscious blushes can raise -
[...]

Destroyer! to read in another's torn heart,
Reflect, I but needed to study my own

[2] Quarto, bifolium. Sealed (but since eroded) and stamped, folded for posting. Letter to addressed to Thomas John Alderson at Gray's Inn, London.
Place and date: Norwich. Sunday 28th of Jan 1813.
Unsigned.

This letter contains three songs. Shelley King has identified the first two glees as being from "Twelve Hindoo Airs with English Words Adapted to Them by Mrs. Opie, and Harmonized for One, Two, Three, and Four Voices, with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp," by Mr. Biggs. London: R. Birchall, 1800.

I will give you the glees – (By ye bye & pray learn "How Nature smiles" & "Dream of soft Delight" in ye music I send - they are both pretty - & you, and I can sing them

Glee

Let others toast beauties from morning till night
[...]

And no love can I feel but for brown barley corn

Another glee

The regent may make all the Knights that he pleases
[...]

Unless he bring with him Sir John Barleycorn -

There follow some verses of a different description – addressed to Him who will understand them - I wonder who that can be! Don't you?

Song

And may I trust to words so sweet?

Am I indeed tho' absent, near?

[...]

For where's the pary for lovers known,
That love's fond kiss can fail to cure?

I wish (leaving out the third verse) that you could put these lines to a tune & sing them ...

[3] Quarto, bifolium. Sealed and stamped, folded for posting. Letter to addressed to Thomas John Alderson at Gray's Inn, London.

Place and date: Earlham Sunday 18th of Dec: 1814
Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

Writes of Earlham coming to an end and going to a Friend's meeting. Mentions some verse sent to the publisher.

I forgot to tell you, I sent some lines to thee for W Barker to set - I believe they are as follows
Crown, crown the passing ~~bed~~ with joy
Lest fate no future ~~have~~ time allow –
[...]

To me that bliss is only this

In musick, friendship, love to live! Bell rings for tea!

[4] Quarto sheet, folded. Text to one side only.

Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

Crown, crown the passing hour with joy
Lest fate no future time allow –
[...]

In music, friendship, love to live!

[5] Octavo, bifolium. Text to one side only.

Place and date: [n.p.] Jan^{ry}- 1814-

Signed. "Tabitha Jay"

Not in King and Pierce.

O! Parry! if you be so fickle,

~~And tease me~~ And leave me for that Betty Tickell,

[...]

You'll cleanly cut like any sickle

My hated rival Betty Tickell

[6] [Unsigned] Quarto, bifolium. Sealed and stamped, folded for posting. Letter addressed to "T: J: Alderson Esq^r". 2½ pages.

Place and date: [n.p.] 4th Nov – 1815

Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

Text: exchanges news and talks of her story featuring Lady Shirley.

I have written two small stanzas -

But wit may lure & beauty smile,

And thou, their influence feeling,

[...]

O may'st thou be so blest in love,

As never to regret me -

[7] Quarto bifolium. Poem of 28 lines. Watermarked 1815. The hand is very similar to that of 1816-7.

Characteristic three short underscore lines at end.

Place and date: [n.d. no date but circa 1815].

Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

Fine poem seemingly expressing desire, before reconciliation in platonic love and affection.

Nay - do not scorn this craving lip,

Tho' there it far too freely seek,

[...]

In me each ~~fa~~(?) throb of ~~pass~~ passion dies,

And all I seek in Love - is mine -"

[8] Quarto bifolium. Sealed and stamped, folded for posting. Poem and letter addressed to Thomas John Alderson, at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Place and date: Norwich 26th De: 1815

Signed. "From so & so & Mrs O"

Sonnet on Xtmas day 1815 -

[...]

For he who could ~~ne~~ the ~~to~~ feast ~~alone~~ endear

To my fond heart, Alas! he comes not Here -

The day I dreaded my beloved Tom, is over, & better than I expected - I forced myself to be myself – but it lasted till past one [...]

Fare the well – once more & pray write – and tell me how Mr B is

Ever & Ever thine -"

[9] Quarto bifolium. Watermarked 1815. Poem 24 lines.

Place and date: [n.p. Circa 1815].

Unsigned.

Not in King and Pierce.

To him who will understand it

Yes - we shall meet, & meet again

In festive scene, & crowded way

[...]

~~Affection's~~ must with quiv'ring life repeat

"O! this to meet is to be parted."

[10] Quarto bifolium, folded and torn along one fold. Folded. 74 lines of verse over three pages, with a few lines on fourth page.

Place and date: [n.p] Feb^{ry} 1816

Signed: A: Opie

Not in King and Pierce.

Lines written after sleeping in the yellow garret at Earlham now usually occupied by J: J: Gurney -

The night's keen cold had banish'd sleep

So vigils I resolv'd to keep;

[...]

I saw a hand to me well-known

And found that letter was my own!!!

[11] Quarto bifolium. Folded for posting, seal intact.

Addressed to "T J Alderson Esq^r". No further address, sealed but not stamped, presumably delivered by hand.

Text to three pages and slightly onto address panel.

Place and date: [n.p.] 13th March 1816

Signed. AO-

Letter begins to "young Restless", includes a stanza.

Scorn not the gift dear friend, altho' to thee

The life it teaches is already known-

But read, & read with humble joy to see

How much that Christian life is like thy own.

No bad quatrain tho' I say it that should not.

[12] Quarto. Poem. 24 lines.
Place and date: [n.p. undated].
Signed: Unsigned.
Not in King and Pierce.

With a bible
Go, book of books! to him I love unfold,
Thy spotless silver & thy radiant gold –
[...]
Then, though on Earth to different harbours driven
No power can part us in the port of Heaven -

[13] Quarto bifolium. Folded for posting, seal intact, stamped. Address to “Thomas John Alderson / Warnford Court / Throckmorton Street / London”.
Place and date: Norwich - 28th Nov: 1817
Signed: Amelia Opie
Not in King and Pierce.

Say who can love November’s gloom
Its falling flowers of sickly bloom
[...]
That thought has hush’d my vocal shell -
I can no more - farewell! farewell! –
Gossipy letter, squeezed into the panels on the address leaf sheet.
Ever thy own affect Varletta –

[14]. Octavo. Folded sheet. 32 lines.
Place and date: No place, no date.
Unsigned.
Not in King and Pierce.

Is there a joy I must not know
Beyond the sweet the thrilling bliss

[...]
Till clasp’d in loves ecstatic twine
We heave part we sob we die

[15] Quarto. Bifolium. Text to four sides (including panels around address). Folded for posting, seal intact, stamped Norwich 1817. Address to “Thomas John Alderson / Warnford Court / Throckmorton Street / London”.
Place and date: Norwich 10th Dec: 1817
Unsigned.

Long letter: Asks for his assistance in getting her play to an agent. Also discusses theatres, actors, and companies (Wroughton, Henry Johnson, Charles Kemble).

[16] Quarto. Poem of 12 lines and part of a letter. Part letter only (lacking first leaf).
Place and date: [n.p. Circa 1818]
Signed: Unsigned.
King and Pierce: Song. 183. (Dated 1818).

They told me I was born for love
[...]
And while I my heart with passion strove
~~Forlorn~~ I thence I this mournful ~~truth I know~~ lesson drew-
The tender bosom born for Love
Is ~~at~~ born alas! for sorrow too –
Opie remarks,
... I really have set it so as I think, I can sing it with effect & teach you darling ...

King and Pierce 183.
Published version:

‘They told me I was born to love,
But while I with my fondness strove,
This mournful truth too soon I knew;—
The tender heart that’s form’d to love,
Is form’d, alas! to sorrow too.’

[17] Long letter addressed to “Thomas John Alderson / Warnford Court / Throckmorton Street / London”.
Quarto bifolium. Folded, sealed, stamped 1818. Text to three sides and address panel.
Place and date: Norwich Wed: 14th of Jan. 1818.
Signed “A: O:”
Not in King and Pierce.

Opie asks advice on a legal question: if a person who sues for defamation ends up being let down by their witness, who confesses to having not told the truth in protecting him. With a poem: To Mrs Blackwell with a present of apples.

Lady profane, & sacred writ agree
That you, in mine a dangerous present see
[...]
Then you’ll be safe to whom that fault’s unknown
Not thro’ the apples merit, but your own -

[18] Quarto. Bifolium. Folded, blind stamp to upper left margin. Poem (40 lines) on two and ¼ pages. To Thomas John Alderson on his birthday -
Place and date: [n.p.] 28th of Nov: 1820.
Signed: A: O:
Not in King and Pierce.

Unheeded pass’d my natal morn away

Nor hail’d by friend, nor lover’s votive lay
No lip of love long life for me desired
Or breathed one strain by heartfelt zeal inspired-
[...]
On me alas! a different prospect waits -
How like our tastes! but how unlike our fates!
Yet, while I mourn a doom so dark is mine.
~~I joy that white Hope bestows shed, brilliant hues on thine~~
I joy to think a happier doom is thine.

[19] Quarto. Bifolium. Folded. Poem (8 lines) and letter to “T: J: Alderson Esquire”, not addressed, sealed.
Date and place: Norwich 28th of Nov: 1821
Signed: Amelia Opie
Not in King and Pierce.

The heartfelt wishes which this day inspires
[...]
May this I send dear Tom, through endless days
Be full of gold as is my heart of Thee.

[20] Quarto. Single sheet. Folded. Poem and brief note to her cousin John Thomas Alderson.
Place and date: [n.p.] “27 Nov. / To T. J. Alderson / on his birthday - 28th Nov 1822.
Signed: Amelia Opie.
Not in King and Pierce.

Forgive, although upon thy natal day
This year, my eye with sorrows tears o’erflow,
[...]
For if this bosom were not true to him
If never, never could be true to thee –

[21] Quarto. Single sheet. Poem. 8 lines.
Place and date: Norwich 11/27th 1825.
Signed: Amelia Opie -
Not in King and Pierce.

How ill alas! beloved one!
[...]
I joy that thou art left me still -

[22] Octavo. Bifolium. Folded. To: “T. J. Alderson”, no address.
Place and date: Norwich 27th of the 11th Mo 1826
Signed: A. Opie
Not in King and Pierce.

Dear Coz, what e'er thy claims, or merits,
For birthday verse I have no spirits -
[...]
And if it yields to toothache balm,
Thou'lt own it has indeed a claim

[23] Single sheet, folded to octavo. Folded for posting.
No address.
Place and date: [n.p.] 11/28-1829
Signed: Amelia Opie –
Not in King and Pierce.

I've not forgotten thee, and once again,
Child of the world, thy natal morn I hail!
[...]
Then thy meek lip would humbly kiss the rod,
And ~~tread that~~ a thine would be the path that leads to
Heaven

[24] Quarto. Bifolium. Folded, stamped. Addressed to
“Mrs Carr, South Shields, Northumberland”. Text to
four sides (including panels surrounding address).
Place and date: 33 Bruton Street [London] 6th Mo 25th
1839
Signed: Amelia Opie

Long letter: illness of Eliza Briggs. “I can no longer bear
to delay writing to thee, as the fate of our tenderly
beloved cousin Eliza Briggs is apparently decided – and
she is in the very last stage of consumption!

[25] Quarto. Single sheet, folded, stamped. Addressed
to “Miss Brigs / Mr Budde's (?) / Close / Chichester”.
Place and date: Bruton Street 9th Mo 5th 1839
Signed: Amelia Opie

Single page letter on the death of Eliza Briggs.

[26] 4 ½ sheets (180 mm x 137 mm), folded to make a
total of 18 pages. Envelope stamped and addressed to:
“Mrs Carr - / Darlington”.
Place and date: Norwich 3rd Mo. 12th 44.
Signed: Amelia Opie.

Text: Long letter on the death of Henry Briggs, her visit
to his house, and the implications for his two young
children.

[27]. Single sheet (225 mm x 182 mm), folded. 3¼
pages. Envelope stamped and addressed to: “Mrs Briggs
- / Darlington.”

Place and date: Norwich 8th Mo 19th 1844
Signed: A. Opie.

Letter discussing family and friends.

[28]. The following song is undated and unsigned.
Published version: The Port Folio. Jan 1821. Editor and
Asbury Dickens. (Philadelphia. 1821). By J. Smith ,
Esq. (Presumably James Smith.)
The hand is similar to Opie's. The text is very close to
the published version ‘Alexander in London. By J.
Smith, Esq.’ To be sung to the tune: “Charley over the
water.”. Our version has some small differences to the
published version. Aside from minor variations in the
text, most notable difference is that the order of the
verses differs.

I have seem lucky me, what you all want to see,
(Good People give ear to my Sonnet)
[...]
Since his stay wasn't long why
I'll shorten my song
With huzza for the great Alexander!

[29]. Quarto, bifolium. Fair copy by Amelia Opie of the
satirical poem, *Doctor Gall* by James Smith (1775-1839).
There are occasional slight differences in wording:

Place and date: [n.p.] Watermarked 1810.
Unsigned.

I sing of the organs, & fibres
That ramble about in the brains,
[...]

By exposing yr heads to each other,
And setting you all by the ears.
Oh, I am &c &c

Smith, James (1775-1839), writer and humourist.
Together with his brother Horatio Smith (1779–1849),
wrote imitations of Horace, published as *Horace in
London* (1813). Contributed to the *Rejected Addresses*
(1812). “James Smith's contributions to these clever
parodies were considered the best” (ODNB)

[30]. Letter from James Smith (1775-1839) to Amelia
Opie. Quarto, bifolium. Small tear from broken seal.
Stamped. Addressed to: Mrs Opie / Norwich.

My Dear Madam, / 27th October 1815 / I cannot
refuse a Lady's Request or that generating in my
cranium what Spurzheim would call the organ of Non-
pretty-behavedness. You are at Liberty to give the Copy
to the Lady in Question. I am not sure that the
following Stanza is inserted in the original Edition... “As
if you were going to swing” / Yet some happy mortals,
all Virtue, [...] And throw both their wigs in his fire.

[31] Quarto. Folded. 44 lines of text “To Mrs Opie”.
Place and date: [n.p.] August 18. 1820.
Signed: Edward Denny (presumably the hymnist).
Yes! Lady, the chaplet of pleasure tho' sweet
Was woven of transient, not Amaranth flowers
[...]
Still live to embellish in fanciful dress
The beauties of Virtue, Religion, and Truth.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

There are approximately 50 further manuscript items including letters, copies of prose pieces, poems, fair copies of two pieces from published journals: “[Chapter on Pockets](#)” and “[Irish Providence](#)”, excerpts from Jane Austen, etc. Some of the letters date from when Amelia Opie was still alive, and a few make brief mention of her, but many date from after her death. The additional letters include:

Briggs, Elizabeth née Alderson (1791-1839): Often alias “Eliza,” “Bettina” and “Lady Pontibus” in her correspondence with Amelia Opie, Elizabeth was the first cousin of Amelia Opie, on her father’s side. A frequent correspondent for many years the two shared a close and affectionate relationship. Eliza married the painter Henry Briggs, another cousin of Amelia Opie in the summer of 1830, and had two children by him, Henry Alderson Briggs and Elizabeth Amelia Briggs, the namesake of her cousin (Wroth). Elizabeth died of tuberculosis in September of 1839.

Letters signed: “E Briggs” or “EB”

[1]. Quarto. Single sheet folded for posted.
My Dear Catherine
This is the first day I have ventured to hold a pen - I fear that Henry does not write to inform you that on the 6th of this month you had a little Nephew born - both baby and myself are (thank God) going on as well as possible ... Saturday July 25th

[2]. Quarto. Folded for posting. To: Miss Briggs.
May 2nd 1839
My Dear Sister,
I am sorry I have not been able to write to you ere, this owing to being so very unwell...

Henry Perronet Briggs (1791-1844): Second cousin to Amelia Opie, He was an antiquary and subject painter. Elected as RA in 1832. He painted historical scenes and portraits. Amelia Opie encouraged him in his career and secured many of his sittings through her connections.

Letters signed: “H P Briggs” or “H Perronet Briggs”.

[1]. Quarto. Single sheet, folded for posting.
33 Bruton Street / Nov 10. 1837.
My Dear Sister,
I am happy to tell you that Eliza is safely over her troubles & the consequence is a very nice little girl [...] Mrs Opie is just come to us & will I hope stay some time. She intended to have had her visit over before E’s confinement, but we were taken so by surprise, & as we have now plenty of room I suppose she will stay, notwithstanding The Thompson’s are returned & are very well I saw Mr Bell this morning...

[2]. Octavo, bifolium. Black border. 33 Bruton Street / May 11. 1837.
My Dear Mrs Carr,
The ring I enclose is that which my dear wife desired me to give to you as a small remembrance of her...

[3]. Quarto, bifolium. Black border. Addressed to: Rev. James Carr 33 Bruton St / Sept 22. 1839.
My Dear Sir,
I Thought that the long illness of my beloved wife & the slow approach of its termination would have made it easier to bear. But I do not find it so....

[4]. Octavo, bifolium.
Shobrook Park / Crediton. Devon / Oct. 18 1842
My Dear Sir [i.e. Mr Carr]

[5]. Quarto, bifolium. Folded, stamped. Addressed to: Miss Briggs / The Close / Chichester / Sussex England
Valetta, Isle of Malta / Sept 14 1843.
My Dear Sister,
I am here after what, if I had been in health, would have been a most delightful voyage.

Briggs, Elizabeth Amelia (1837-1915): the only daughter of Henry Perronet Briggs and Eliza Briggs, married Revd James Haslewood Carr MA (1831-1915) in 1864 (Wroth). She is often referred to as “Missy” or “Princess” in Opie’s letters.

Letters to: “My Dear Aunt”
Signed “E A Briggs”

[1]. Hotel du Rhine Amiens August 6th /59.

[2]. Hotel d’Angleterre. August 18th /59.

[3]. Marienberg W. Boppart on the Rhine. Germany
Aug. 20th /59.

[4]. Marienberg W. Boppart on the Rhine. Germany
September 8th /59.

[5]. Marienberg W. Boppart on the Rhine. Germany
September 16th /59.

[6]. Marienberg W. Boppart on the Rhine. Germany
September 8th /59.

[7]. Miss Allen / 11 Rue Balzac / Champs Elysees. ~~Sept~~
October 1st

[8]. 11 Rue Balzac / Champs Elysees. Oct 4th”

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I can't write nor can I do justice!



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