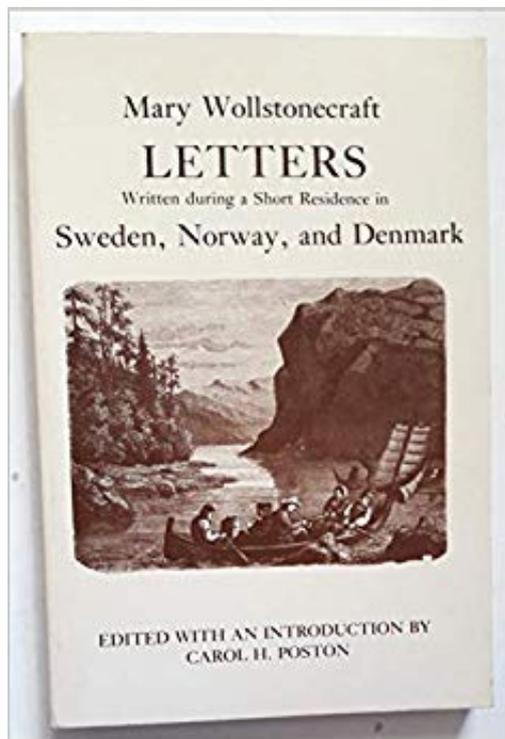


# Letters Written during a Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (Bison Book) by Carol H. Poston, Mary Wollstonecraft



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Long regarded as Mary Wollstonecraft's most delightful work, this series of twenty-five letters is quite possibly the perfect fusion of their famous author's personal and intellectual selves. The letters were written to her lover, Gilbert Imlay, who had sent her to the Scandinavian countries as his business envoy during the summer of 1795. She was accompanied by her year-old daughter and a nursemaid on part of the journey, but frequently took side trips on her own. Informed by a wealth of ideas and years of wide reading, the letters combine landscape description, sociological observation, poetic reverie, and personal apostrophe. Never ceasing to observe the members of her own sex, Wollstonecraft is concerned with the plight of Scandinavian women, and expresses her views on child care. The modern reader will be struck by the contemporaneity of her comments on prison reform, capital punishment, property, and government. This first modern edition of the Letters has been lightly edited, increasing its readability while preserving the flavor of the original. It includes the author's original notes, editorial notes, an introduction, and a selected bibliography, as well as a map of the journey.



## **Reviews of the [Letters Written during a Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark \(Bison Book\)](#) by Carol H. Poston, Mary Wollstonecraft**

Qwert

These letters show a completely different side of Wollstonecraft. Rather than her usual composed, piercing arguments, these letters show vulnerability and uncertainty that shows the struggle Wollstonecraft highlights in a way that's much less academic and more poignant

Azago

This is an interesting and enlightening publication about scandinavians at that time, You have to adjust your mind to her dated grammar. English was much different when she wrote this.

Xcorn

Her name is misprinted on the cover. This is one of many misprints and errors

Sti

A great book, it puts you in Scandinavia in the late 1800's and you can feel the life.

An excellent company that reproduces out of print books for the public.

Highly recommended for the brain un-dead.

watching to future

It has a rather narrow viewpoint and the judgements weigh on the reader but it reveals a time and era both in terms of the subject and the writing.

Fonceiah

I admit I am biased since I am reading this in an Email group called "18th Century Worlds", which perhaps give me more insight and perception into the world of Mary Wollstonecraft. But my Penguin edition of the book is very good, including as it does both Mary's "Short Residence" and the biography of her by her widowed husband William Godwin. Richard Holmes' introduction is a delight, situating the book in its context and also making the life of Mary accessible, and the relationships between Mary and the people of her day and age very interesting.

So back to the text of Mary's letters. If you have ever wondered what it was like to be an active, passionate, capable and brave woman at the latter end of the 18th century, when the French Revolution and the tides of Romanticism were sweeping over Europe, and challenging Enlightenment thought-- or even if you've never given a damn-- this is an attention-grabbing and engrossing account. Provided you can get over its prose, or approach it open-mindedly (which many easily bored illiterati might not be able to), you will be struck by its poetic qualities, and by Wollstonecraft's candid emotional intensity.

In the early 1790s, a politically radical Englishwoman woman took a business trip to Scandinavia on behalf of her common-law husband, an American businessman involved in smuggling. She took with her only her young daughter, still a child, and her French maid. "Residence in Sweden" is an account of her journey written in the form of letters to the man she left behind (though this doesn't show up in the text itself, the informative introduction gives the background). Partway into her trip, she leaves her child and the nurse behind and continues on her own to regions remote and picturesque, and foreign not only to most English women of the period, but to the majority of English men as well.

Wollstonecraft goes on philosophical rambles, as the images of social life and the landscape around her remind her of her experiences in revolutionary France. The text raise many questions important to the Enlightenment philosophes, about the role of women, man's place in nature, human habits and manners. Never are we allowed to forget that we are reading the words of a flesh and blood woman who feels deeply. Many of her recollections are painful, and sometimes she is depressed. But there is always something arrestingly beautiful in what she describes, some touch of the author's vivacity and the newness and intensity of her travels, to steer one away from the melancholy, or at least to make it something more sublime.

I'm taking this one with me to college, and I foresee many re-readings. Holmes calls it Mary's best literary work: it has none of the bombast of her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" but instead is something even more thoughtful and readable.

For companion reading I highly recommend Claire Tomalin's "Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft".

JoJoshura

Mary Wollstonecraft's Scandinavian journey lasted from June to October 1795. This book consists of letters to Gilbert Imlay.

He was the father of her daughter.

The descriptions of Sweden, Norway and Denmark she saw during this time are exceedingly conclusive and puts the reader there.

Intrigued?

A charming use of the English language {although at times genteel}; nevertheless, poignantly stimulating to a fault telling what she experienced.

Truly a classic!

Dag Stomberg  
St. Andrews, Scotland

I can't say much about this book as I don't remember buying it. It had to have been a book that my daughter needed for a college class.

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