

**U DX41**

**Manuscripts of Peter Pindar  
and collection of autograph letters**

**c.1794-1931**

**Biographical Background:**

Peter Pindar, the pseudonym of John Wolcott, was born in 1738 and lived with his uncle in Devon from the age of nine, after the death of his father. In 1760 he was sent to France for a year to learn the language, on his return he followed his father and grandfather's footsteps by training to be a physician. In 1767 he went to Jamaica to be physician to the governor Sir William Trelawny. Whilst there he was offered the lucrative living of St Anne's where the current parson was thought to be seriously ill. Wolcott returned to England and took holy orders returning to Jamaica in March 1770 only to find the parson was still alive, and he was offered a less lucrative post instead. When the governor died Wolcott was escorted his widow back to England, and it is on this trip that it is believed he visited a deserted island – the inspiration for his 'Isle of Innocence' manuscript (see U DX41/2/4).

In England, Wolcott took up practice as a physician and travelled extensively around Cornwall and it was here that he met artist John Opie. Wolcott was so impressed by Opie's talent that he bought-out his carpentry apprenticeship. In 1780 Wolcott brought Opie to London and they set-up business together though the venture lasted less than a year.

Wolcott self-published his early work under the name of Peter Pindar and his satirical work included *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* (published in 1782) attacked members of the Royal Academy. King George III was one of Pindar's most colourful caricatures, in one verse he compared the King to a magpie, and Pindar's popularity often mirrored that of the King. His narratives were popular, often taking the form of allegories but not all of his work was humorous, *Ode to Death* (see U DX41/2/2) is a dark poem about the overwhelming nature of death and presents a doctor being in partnership with death.

*Ode upon Ode* was published in 1787 and *The Lousiad* was published, in 5 volumes, in 1795. Wolcott's eyesight failed him and by May 1811 was completely blind, with pages being torn into four and verse was dictated to a servant and a number of items in the collection including *Tristia: an Elegy* (see U DX41/2/3) which refers to the scandal of the Duke of York's mistress appearing to fit with this pattern. Wolcott died in London on 14 January 1819 and is buried in St Paul's church in Covent Garden.

The manuscripts have been attributed to Wolcott/Pindar but have not been officially authenticated. They certainly *could be by him*, they are written in the same style and with the same concerns as the poems we know to be by him.

**Custodial history:** Donated by Prof. W.S. Vines, July 1954 and July 1955

**Description:**

The collection features nineteen manuscript poems (probably dating from 1794-1810) with typed transcripts of 'The Island of Innocence', 'Ode to Ridicule' and 'Ode to Fancy', and a letter from the Reverend Cornelius Cardew to J.T. Smith (The British Museum) containing details of Wolcott's life in Cornwall (17 Nov 1819). There is also a bundle of miscellaneous unfinished manuscripts which have been jotted down in ink on various sizes of paper.

**Extent:** 38 items & 1 bundle

**Related Material:**

Other repositories:

Peter Pindar material at Durham University Archives [Ref Add. Mss. 420-429]

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DX41/1	<b>Collection of autograph letters, in reply to request by Prof. W.S. Vines to be allowed to include work in an 'Anthology of English Verse Satire, 1914-1931' From W.H. Auden; Julian Bell; Roy Campbell; John Collier; T.S. Eliot; Aldous Huxley; F.R. Leavis; Robert Nichols; Herbert E. Palmer; Ezra Pound; Vita Sackville-West; Siegfried Sassoon; Osbert Sitwell; W.J. Turner 14 items</b>	<b>1931</b>
U DX41/1/1	Letter from T.S.Eliot, Faber & Faber Ltd Publishers, 24 Russell Square, London, to W.S.Vines, University College, Hull Expresses regret that he has no unpublished work to offer for Vines's anthology and doubt that any of his writing could be termed 'verse satire' 1 item	22 Dec 1931
U DX41/1/2	Letter from Aldous Huxley, The Athenaeum, Pall Mall, London, to W.S.Vines States that he has no new work to offer for the anthology but that Vines is welcome to use any of his previously published work if it is considered suitable 1 item	n.d.
U DX41/1/3	Letter from F.R.Leavis, 6 Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge, to W.S.Vines Discusses the subject of his forthcoming paper, deliberating between lecturing on representative poetic texts or on modern literary criticism. Asks for some information concerning the probable size and interests of his audience. 1 item	30 Oct 1933

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U DX41/1/4	Letter from Robert Nichols, Yew Tree House, Winchelsea, Sussex to W.S.Vines Discusses an ongoing composition, to be entitled 'The Fisbiad', stating his willingness to contribute around 300 lines of this to the anthology if the conditions of publication are acceptable 1 item	11 Nov 1931
U DX41/1/5	Letter from Herbert E.Palmer, 22 Batchwood View, St Albans, Herts, to W.S.Vines Asks for details regarding a lecture he has agreed to give on Francois Villon. Discusses a lecture he has recently given on the development of poetry and his view that modern poets compare unfavourably to their predecessors. States that his forthcoming 'Collected Poems' contains criticisms of T.S.Eliot and Edith Sitwell among others. Also mentions his book, 'The Roving Angler'. 1 item	29 Nov 1932
U DX41/1/6	Letter from Ezra Pound, Rapallo, Via Marsala, to W.S.Vines Mentions his agent and an anthology fee; also brief reference to some unpublished satirical works, to James Joyce's 'Ulysses' and to Basil Bunting 1 item	4 Dec 1931
U DX41/1/7	Letter from Vita Sackville-West, Long Barn, Weald, Sevenoaks, to W.S.Vines Remarks that satire is not a genre she writes in and refers to a poem she has enclosed, intended as a joke 1 item	9 Dec 19 [ ]
U DX41/1/8	Letter from Siegfried Sassoon, 23 Campden Hill Square, London, to W.S.Vines Gives permission for Vines to use any of his work in the anthology and specifically mentions his poem 'On Reading the War Diary of a Defunct Ambassador' 1 item	25 Nov 1931
U DX41/1/9	Letter from Osbert Sitwell, 2 Carlyle Square, Chelsea, to W.S.Vines States that Vines is welcome to use any of his work in the anthology and expresses a wish to renew their acquaintance 1 item	11 Nov 1931
U DX41/1/10	Letter from W.J.Turner, 29 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, to W.S.Vines. Expresses pleasure that an anthology of English verse satire is to be produced and that he is to be represented in it 1 item	14 Nov 1931

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U DX41/1/11	Letter from W.H.Auden, Laichfield Academy, Helensburgh, Scotland, to W.S.Vines Discusses an ode he has written of c.200 lines which is to appear in a forthcoming publication, 'The Modern Scot', and says that he will send Vines a copy of this 1 item	27 Nov 1931
U DX41/1/12	Letter from Julian Bell, Charleston, Firle, Sussex, to W.S.Vines Asks for the satires not wanted for the anthology to be sent back, as John Lehmann wishes to look at them. Asks whether, if his Wittgenstein poem is used, he might be allowed to preface it with a note making clear his regard for the philosopher. 1 item	n.d.
U DX41/1/13	Letter from Roy Campbell, 'Aux Arenes de 'La Joyeuse Lance', Martigues, France, to W.S.Vines Gives permission for Vines to use extracts from 'the Georgiad' and 'the Wayzgoose' in the anthology. Mentions the new writing by a mutual acquaintance, John Collier, and recommends Christopher Smart's poem, 'Hilliad'. 1 item	n.d.
U DX41/1/14	Letter from John Collier, Ashmansworth, near Newbury, Berkshire, to W.S.Vines Discusses the writing he has enclosed for inclusion in the anthology, possible titles for extracted passages and his low opinion of his own work. Praises Vines's own writing and expresses a wish to meet. 1 item	n.d.
<b>U DX41/2</b>	<b>Manuscripts of John Wolcot ('Peter Pindar') 24 items &amp; 1 bundle</b>	<b>[1794]-1819</b>
U DX41/2/1	Ms. poem. 'Edward & Ellen' (1 sheet) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/2	Ms. poem. 'Ode to Death' (7 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/3	Ms. poem. 'Tristia an Elegy' (13 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/4	Ms. poem. 'The Island of Innocence' (24 sheets) With pp. 2-9 of prose narrative (undated) and typed transcript 3 items	[1794-1810]

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U DX41/2/5	Ms. poems. 'Ode to Ridicule' and 'Ode to Fancy' (1 sheet). With ms. transcript 2 items	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/6	Ms. poem. 'Elegy' ('No quite so puritanically chaste' (8 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/7	Ms. poem. 'Pitt, Freedom's friend, the Champion of Reform' (2 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/8	Ms. poem. 'Celadon an elegiac pastoral' (5 sheets) 1 item	3 Jan 1812
U DX41/2/9	Ms. poem. 'Elegy' ('With cautious dread I venture forth in song'), (7 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/10	Ms. poem. 'There was a time the Muse's voice was heard' (2 sheets) 1 item	11 Jan 1802
U DX/41/2/11	Ms. poem. 'Ode to old women' (1 sheet) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/12	Ms. poem. 'Imitations of Horace Satires - Lib 2 (12 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/13	Ms. fragment of poem (first line indecipherable) (3 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/14	Ms. poem. 'Elegy' ('I mark the Empire of the gloomy throng') (21 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/15	Ms. poem. 'Ode to Fortune' (4 sheets) 1 item	23 Jul [1797]
U DX41/2/16	Ms. poem. 'Ode' ('Who would go to court to grin and fawn &') (1 sheet) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/17	Ms. poem. 'The butterflies for Watts' (4 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/18	Ms. poem. 'Ode to Time' (1 sheet) 1 item	[1794-1810]

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U DX41/2/19	Ms. poem. 'To the Poets' (8 sheets) 1 item	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/20	Bundle of miscellaneous pages 1 bundle	[1794-1810]
U DX41/2/21	Letter from (Rev.) Cornelius Cardew, St. Erme Parsonage, near Truro, to J.T. Smith Esq., British Museum, London. Contains details of Wolcot's life in Cornwall 1 item	17 Nov 1819