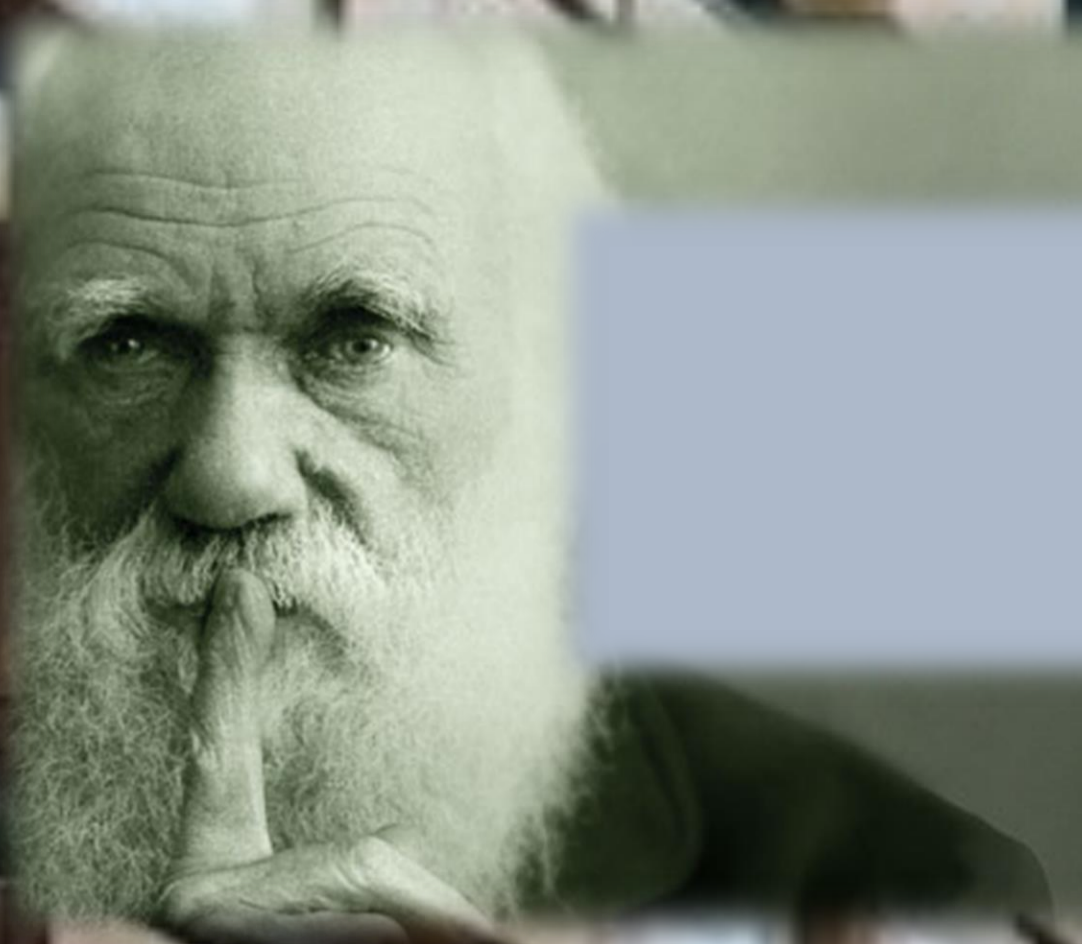


The Silencing of Susannah Darwin, née Wedgwood (1765 – 1817)



Susannah Darwin, née Wedgwood, is the daughter of the master potter, Josiah Wedgwood, and is the mother of the well-known scientist Charles Darwin. In critical writing that discusses the young Darwin, she is often silenced, anonymized, and referred to only as 'Darwin's mother'.

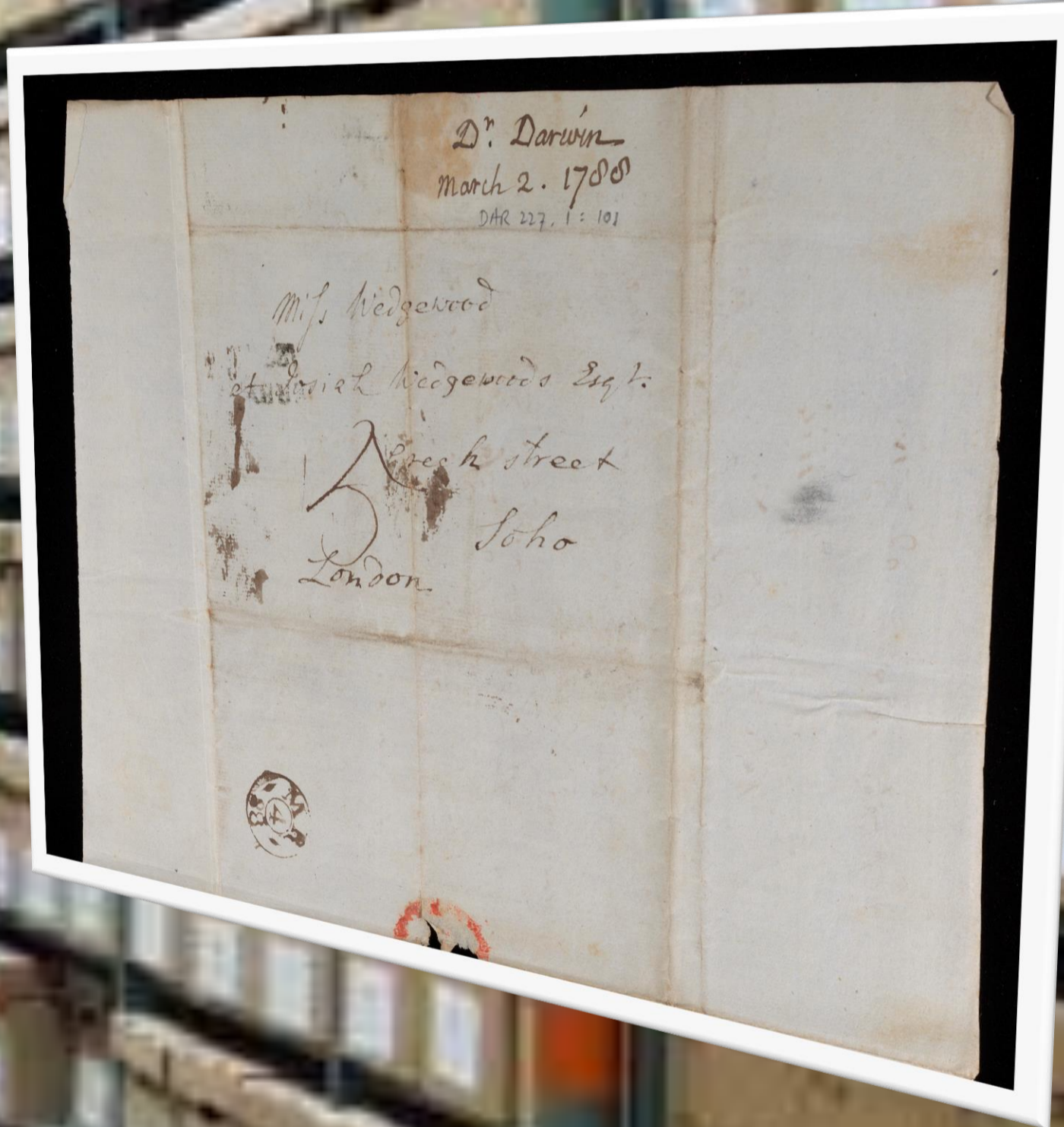
My project aims to textually transcribe and edit overlooked historical handwritten letters belonging to Susannah. Through exploring how Susannah interconnected with leading intellectual discourses of the day, I aim to introduce her as a significant historical figure in her own right.

Susannah's letters contain the names of predominant, influential men of her time who were a part of her wider social circle. Today we know these men as the Lunar Men. They were amateur experimenters, who came from humble families, but went on to be influential during the industrial revolution.

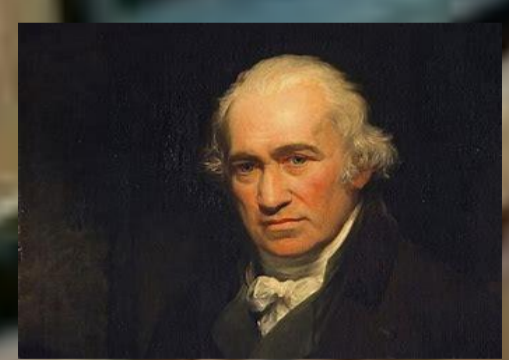
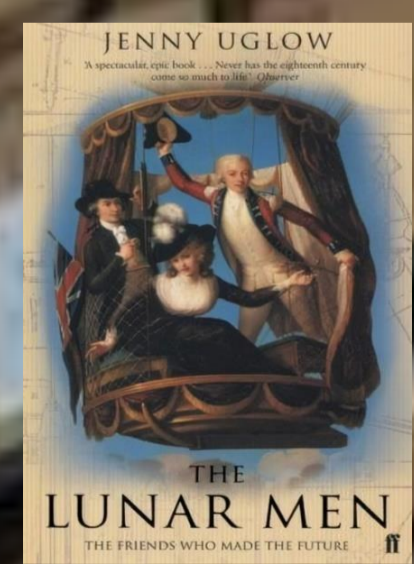


Susannah Wedgwood, mother of Charles Darwin, by Peter Paillou the younger, 1793 © The Fitzwilliam Museum

Though there has been some scholarly interest in Darwin's attitudes towards women, few critics have focused on the lives of women he knew. Dr Philippa Hardman's research at 'Cambridge University's, Darwin's Correspondence Project', suggests that the letter form offers scope to access and explore elements of women's lives that have not been studied before.



Alongside transcribing Susannah's letters, I aim to write three accompanying scholarly chapters drawing upon historical biographies, feminist criticism, and life writing studies. These three chapters will explore Susannah's contributions and involvement with medical, scientific and industrial discourses. This will be in addition to exploring Susannah's legacy and likely influence on Darwin.



James Watt
1736 - 1819



Richard Lovell Edgeworth
1744 - 1817



Erasmus Darwin
1731 - 1802

Though scarcely studied and not publicly accessible in their entirety, the forty letters spanning two decades seem to form an important record of a Georgian woman's experiences of education, religion, science, medicine and family life.