

MC 920

Marston, William Moulton, 1893-1947. Papers of William Moulton Marston, 1899-2002: A Finding Aid

Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard Radcliffe Institute

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Summary Information

Repository: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute

Creator: Marston, William Moulton, 1893-1947

Title: Papers of William Moulton Marston, 1899-2002

Identifier: MC 920

Date: 1899-2002

Physical Description: .83 linear feet ((2 file boxes) plus 1 folio + box, 2 folio + folders, 3 folio + photograph folders)

Language Of Materials:
Materials in English.

Overview:
Correspondence; autobiographical writings; photographs; published and unpublished articles; genealogical notes; poetry and songs; clippings; diary entries; etc.; of William Moulton Marston, psychologist and author, and his lover Olive Byrne.

Access Restrictions:
Access. Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use: Copyright. Copyright in the papers created by William Moulton Marston is held by the President and Fellows of Harvard College for the Schlesinger Library. Copyright in other papers in the collection may be held by their authors, or the authors' heirs or assigns.

Copying. Papers may be copied in accordance with the library's usual procedures.

Immediate Source Of Acquisition: Accession number: 2017-M44

These papers of William Moulton Marston were given to the Schlesinger Library by Byrne Marston in March 2017.

Processing Information:
Processed: October 2017

By: Mark Vassar, with assistance from Margaret Dalton.

Related Material:
There is related material at the Schlesinger Library; see William Moulton Marston Papers ([MC 948](#)).

Preferred Citation:
William Moulton Marston Papers, 1899-2002; item description, dates. MC 920, folder #.
Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

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Biography

William Moulton Marston was born in 1893 to Annie (Moulton) Marston and Frederick William Marston in Saugus, Massachusetts. He graduated from Malden High School in ca.1911. While at Malden High School he was president of the Literary Society and a member of the football team. Following graduation he attended Harvard University receiving a BA in 1915 (Phi Beta Kappa) and his LL.B. (Bachelor in Law) in 1918. Both he and his future wife entered graduate school in psychology ca.1918, Marston at Harvard University and Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston at Radcliffe College. Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston had received a BA in psychology from Mount Holyoke College in 1915 and her LL.B. from Boston University Law School in 1918. Marston received his PhD and Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston received her MA in 1921. The

couple married in 1915.

After completion of his PhD, Marston taught psychology at American University in Washington, DC, and at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. At Tufts (ca.1925), Marston met student Olive Byrne (daughter of feminist Ethel Byrne who was Margaret Sanger's sister), with whom he began a sexual relationship and who ultimately came to live with the Marston couple. Elizabeth Marston had two children: Moulton ("Pete") (born 1928) and Olive Ann (born 1933), named after Olive Byrne. Olive Byrne also had two children by Marston, Byrne (born 1931), and Donn (born 1933). Olive took care of the home and the children, while Elizabeth worked to support the family indexing the documents of the first fourteen Congresses; lecturing on law, ethics, and psychology at American and New York universities; serving as an editor for *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *McCall's*; and serving as assistant to the chief executive at Metropolitan Life Insurance, when Marston was unemployed and after his death in 1947.

While completing his PhD at Harvard University, Marston developed the systolic blood pressure test, wrote about its use in detecting deception in a number of professional psychology journals, and it was the subject of his dissertation entitled, "Systolic Blood Pressure Symptoms of Deception and Constituent Mental States." His systolic blood pressure test is one component of current polygraph examinations. Marston also employed his test in his position at Universal Studios as Director of Public Services (1929). It appears that he tested emotional reactions to films and offered suggestions regarding rewriting certain portions of those films based on the emotional reaction they elicited in viewers. In addition to his writing regarding his systolic blood pressure test, Marston frequently wrote on the psychology of women throughout the 1930s. He also wrote a number of popular psychology books, including *Emotions of Normal People* (1928), *Try Living* (1937), and *March On! Facing Life with Courage* (1941). In the 1940s he began to develop the comic-book character of Wonder Woman, originally called "Suprema," combining the "strength of Superman" with the "allure of a good and beautiful woman." Inspired by early feminists, he was an advocate of fostering women's talents and abilities and worked closely with his wife, Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston, and Olive Byrne on the evolution of Wonder Woman. Wonder Woman, an Amazon princess who fought crime during World War II in the United States debuted in 1941, and was modeled on Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston and Olive Byrne. Marston continued to write the Wonder Woman comic until his death from cancer in 1947. Elizabeth and Olive continued to live together until Olive's death in 1985. Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston died in 1993. Marston was inducted into the Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2006.

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Scope And Content

The collection consists of correspondence; autobiographical writings; photographs; published and unpublished articles; genealogical notes; poetry and songs; clippings; diary entries; etc. The bulk of the material was created by either Olive Byrne or William Moulton Marston. Material belonging to Olive Byrne includes autobiographical writings; a biography of her mother Ethel Higgins Byrne who opened a birth control clinic with her sister Margaret Sanger; school transcripts and diplomas; published articles regarding William Moulton Marston and psychology; resumes; poems and songs; a yearbook and reunion booklets from Saint Joseph's Academy and Tufts University; an intelligence test; correspondence; etc. Several letters refer to the activities of Margaret Sanger and Ethel Byrne, as well as Olive Byrne. Genealogical notes refer to the Byrne, Marston, and Higgins families. Also included are Byrne's notes regarding all four of the Marston children and a detailed notebook on her son Byrne's growth, physical development, and feeding schedule. Also included are an interview transcript and reminiscences of Margaret Sanger.

Material created by William Moulton Marston include a series of letters to his son Byrne, written to Byrne while he was away from home. They include descriptions of the activities of the Marston/Byrne family, the care of pets, and several mentions of the most recent Wonder Woman comic (other than these references, there is no material documenting Marston's work on the Wonder Woman comic). Other material by Marston consists of published articles on the systolic blood pressure test, the psychology of women, and the lie detector, and several journal entries by Marston with occasional references to pain he was suffering from (likely as a result of cancer). Photographs in the collection documents Marston's time in high school and at Harvard University; his life with Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston, Olive Byrne, and their four children; and his work with the lie detector and systolic blood pressure test, particularly when employed by Universal Studios. Also included are several photographs of Ethel Higgins Byrne and one photograph of Margaret Sanger.

Most of the photographs in this collection are or will be digitized and available online. Other than photographs and published articles, there is no other material documenting his work on the systolic blood pressure test or the lie detector. Folder titles were created by the archivist. The collection is arranged alphabetically by individual followed by photographs.

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Collection Inventory

Ethel Higgins Byrne: biography by Olive Byrne and letter (copy) from Margaret Sanger, 1952, 1978

Identifier: 1.1. Box 1

Olive Byrne: article, "I, Mary, Take Thee, John," undated

Identifier: 1.2. Box 1

Olive Byrne: articles (published) re: William Moulton Marston, psychology, etc., 1935-1939

Identifier: 1.3. Box 1

Olive Byrne: autobiography, "As It Was in the Beginning," undated

Identifier: 1.4. Box 1

Olive Byrne: autobiography (draft), undated

Identifier: 1.5. Box 1

Olive Byrne: correspondence, 1907-1987

Identifier: 1.6. Box 1

Olive Byrne: diploma, 1921

Identifier: F + D.1. Folio + _box | FOLIO + PROCESSED, Box 71

Olive Byrne: education: Tufts University grades and 25th reunion booklets and Columbia University grades, 1922-1927, 1951

Identifier: 1.7. Box 1

Olive Byrne: "Favorite Poems," undated

Identifier: 1.8. Box 1

Olive Byrne: genealogy (Byrne and Higgins families), undated

Identifier: 1.9. Box 1

Olive Byrne: handwriting analysis and numerology reading, 1931, 1937

Identifier: 1.10. Box 1

Olive Byrne: interview transcript re: Margaret Sanger, 1978

Identifier: 1.11. Box 1

Olive Byrne: letters to the editor, etc., 1967-1987

Identifier: 1.12. Box 1

Olive Byrne: master's thesis: "The Evolution of the Theory and Research on Emotions," 1927

Identifier: 1.13. Box 1

Olive Byrne: "Notes on the Children," 1934-1939

Identifier: 1.14. Box 1

Olive Byrne: poetry, songs, quotes, 1918-1966, undated

Identifier: 1.15. Box 1

Olive Byrne: reminiscences of Margaret Sanger, undated

Identifier: 1.16. Box 1

Olive Byrne: resumes, undated

Identifier: 1.17. Box 1

Olive Byrne: Stanford-Binet intelligence test, 1940

Identifier: 1.18. Box 1

Olive Byrne: yearbook (Saint Joseph's Academy), 1920

Identifier: 1.19. Box 1

Marjorie Wilkes Huntley: clipping, note, burial instructions, poem, 1974, 1982, undated

Identifier: 2.1. Box 2

Annie Dalton Marston: genealogy (Marston family) and poem, undated

Identifier: 2.2. Box 2

Byrne Marston: growth, development, and food consumption notebook, 1931-1944

Identifier: 2.3. Box 2

Loose notes and charts removed from #2.3

Identifier: 2.4. Box 2

Byrne Marston: letters from William Moulton Marston, 1942, 1944.

Identifier: 2.5. Box 2

Scope And Contents:

Includes letter from brother Donn.

Byrne Marston: letters from Elizabeth (Holloway) Marston, 1963-1993

Identifier: 2.6. Box 2

Byrne Marston: "Memories of an Unusual Father," 2002

Identifier: 2.7. Box 2

Byrne Marston: sketch of "Dotsie" (Olive Byrne), undated

Identifier: 2.8. Box 2

Elizabeth (Holloway Marston): biographical card (Boston University Law School), undated

Identifier: 2.9. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "The Bodily Systems of Elementary Emotions," 1929

Identifier: 2.10. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "The Lie Detector Test" (reprint), 1989

Identifier: 2.11. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Materialism, Vitalism, and Psychology," 1928

Identifier: 2.12. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Motor Consciousness as a Basis for Emotion," 1927

Identifier: 2.13. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Negative Type Reaction-Time Symptoms of Deception," 1925

Identifier: 2.14. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Sew, Sow," 1943

Identifier: 2.15. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Sex Characteristics of Systolic Blood Pressure Behavior," 1923

Identifier: 2.16. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Studies in Testimony," 1924

Identifier: 2.17. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "Systolic Blood Pressure Symptoms of Deception," 1917

Identifier: 2.18. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: article: "A Theory of Emotions and Affection Based Upon Systolic Blood Pressure Studies," 1924

Identifier: 2.19. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: articles: *Polygraph* (special issue) articles re: the lie detector, 1985

Identifier: 2.20. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: articles re: psychology, 1936-1938

Identifier: F + D.2. Folio + _box | FOLIO + PROCESSED, Box 71

William Moulton Marston: articles re: William Moulton Marston and Wonder Woman, 1997, 2001, undated

Identifier: 2.21. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: biography and obituary, 1940, 1947

Identifier: 2.22. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: loose diary entries, 1935-1945.

Identifier: 2.23. Box 2

Scope And Contents:

Includes letter to Byrne Marston.

William Moulton Marston: poetry, 1915, undated

Identifier: 2.24. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: program (George Washington University): "Emotion Correlates of Autonomic Antagonisms," ca. 1925

Identifier: 2.25. Box 2

William Moulton Marston: scrapbook of clippings by and about Marston, 1914-1947

Identifier: 3F + B. Folio + _box 3

Margaret Sanger: paper and article about, undated

Identifier: 2.26. Box 2

Photographs: Ethel Higgins Byrne, Olive Byrne, Elizabeth Marston, Byrne Marston, Marjorie Wilkes Huntley, and Margaret Sanger, 1899-1988

Identifier: 2.27. Box 2

Photographs: Marston and Byrne family photograph album, 1906-1993

Identifier: PD.1f + . Folio + _box | FOLIO + PROCESSED | PHOTOGRAPHS, Box 22

Photographs: Marston family photograph album, 1911-1937

Identifier: PD.2f + . Folio + _box | FOLIO + PROCESSED | PHOTOGRAPHS, Box 23

Photographs: Marston family photograph album, 1932-1997

Identifier: PD.3f + . Folio + _box | FOLIO + PROCESSED | PHOTOGRAPHS, Box 24

Controlled Access Headings

- Birth control--United States
- Feminism--United States
- Lie detectors and detection--United States
- Non-monogamous relationships--United States
- Photographs
- Psychologists--United States
- Scrapbooks
- Women--Psychology
- Wonder Woman--Fictional character

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