

**Imagining an American National Poetics:
Charles Frederick Heartman's Early 20th-Century
Recovery of Phillis Wheatley Peters**

Sarah Ruffing Robbins

SEA Conference, June 2023

What role does “recovery” play in literary studies?

“The concept of recovery has been essential to the study of literary history during the past several decades, and it has been key to the field’s ongoing development beyond the white, male canon. Recovery generally refers to seeking out previously understudied texts and making them more widely available for research and teaching. The importance of recovered texts to the study of white women writers and writing by nonwhite people cannot be understated” (18).

Brigitte Fielder in "Recovery." *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism*, vol. 30 no. 1, 2020, p. 18-21.

Phillis Wheatley Peters & Charles F. Heartman



PWP, Heartman, Schomburg, Dunbar-Nelson



Phillis Wheatley



ALICE DUNBAR-NELSON

Transatlantic Anglophone Literatures, 1776–1920

AN ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY LINDA K. HUGHES, SARAH RUFFING ROBBINS AND ANDREW TAYLOR



Phillis Wheatley (1753–84)

'The following Letter and Verses, were written by the famous Phillis Wheatley, the African Poetess, and presented to his Excellency Gen. Washington.' (1776)

One early effort to produce bibliographic resources and analysis of Phillis Wheatley's writings came from Charles Heartman, a German immigrant (to England in 1907 and then to America). Donaldson credits the collector, book-seller and editor with important scholarship for literature studies through a 78-volume book series. One, Heartman's 1915 *Phillis Wheatley*, extended her then-available oeuvre beyond the *Poems* by publishing texts like the lyric below.

Heartman described it as previously 'lost' and identified its original publication in *Pennsylvania Magazine* (19–20). He also printed the grateful letter Washington sent to 'Miss Phillis' in late 1775. Besides documenting Washington's having received Wheatley's missive directly, Heartman provided the General's assessment of the piece as 'elegant' and 'striking proof of [her] poetical talents'. Washington's description of Wheatley as 'favoured by the muses' affirmed their shared engagement in classical learning, while his invitation to visit his headquarters situated them as joined in the battle for nation-making.

Similarly, Heartman's introduction to *Phillis Wheatley* characterised her as, like himself, both a cosmopolitan honouring classical culture and a promoter of American nationhood. He observed that, during her earlier visit to London, 'she was to have been introduced to the king', but for 'her mistress' [poor] health' leading to a rush back to America. Although, Heartman averred, such a meeting might have been 'interesting' to Wheatley, who had 'reaped the highest honors in England', her loyalty was firmly placed with 'the colonies'. Accordingly, Heartman contrasted Wheatley's tone in "'To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty'" with the 'strength and feeling' in her 'poem to George Washington' (19).

Echoing its focus on Washington as hero for the emerging nation, Wheatley's poem confirms her affiliation by turning the rhyming couplets of Pope – long associated with a different national identity – into an anti-colonial statement. Thus, 'Britannia droops the pensive head' while showing 'Cruel blindness to Columbia's [America's] state', suggesting a British stance toward revolutionary righteousness at odds with 'the eyes of [other] nations on the scales', hoping instead that 'Columbia's arm prevails'.

'The following Letter and Verses, were written by the famous Phillis Wheatley, the African Poetess, and presented to his Excellency Gen. Washington.'

SIR,

I have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being

appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excited sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in. I am,

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant, Phillis Wheatley,
Providence, Oct. 26, 1775.¹¹

His Excellency Gen. Washington.

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,
Columbia's¹² scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful¹³ in refulgent¹⁴ arms.
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:¹⁵
Wherever shines this native of the skies,
Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse!¹⁶ Bow propitious while my pen relates
How pour her armies through a thousand gates,
As when Eolus¹⁷ heaven's fair face deforms,
Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
The refluents¹⁸ surges beat the sounding shore;
Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
In bright array they seek the work of war,
Where high unfur'd the ensign¹⁹ waves in air:
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.

11 Wheatley's 1775 dating for her letter to Washington, like this poem's original publication date of 1776, marks a significant distance from the 1773 release date of her *Poems on Various Subjects*. After potential Boston-based publishing routes had failed because racist attitudes there prevented publication, *Poems* first appeared in England, not America, with support from Selina Hastings, countess of Huntingdon, to whom Wheatley dedicated that book. Accordingly, several lyrics in that collection locate Wheatley's affiliations with Britain and patrons there just a few years before her Washington text signalled a definitive shift in her loyalties, both political and cultural.

12 Wheatley uses 'Columbia' as a term for America.

13 Awe-inspiring

14 Brightly shining

15 Classical literature often depicted deities as becoming directly involved in human strife. The 'laurel', meanwhile, was an evergreen used to crown victors and poetic excellence.

16 Calling on the muse or muses for inspiration and guidance was a familiar neoclassical poetic technique.

17 God of winds

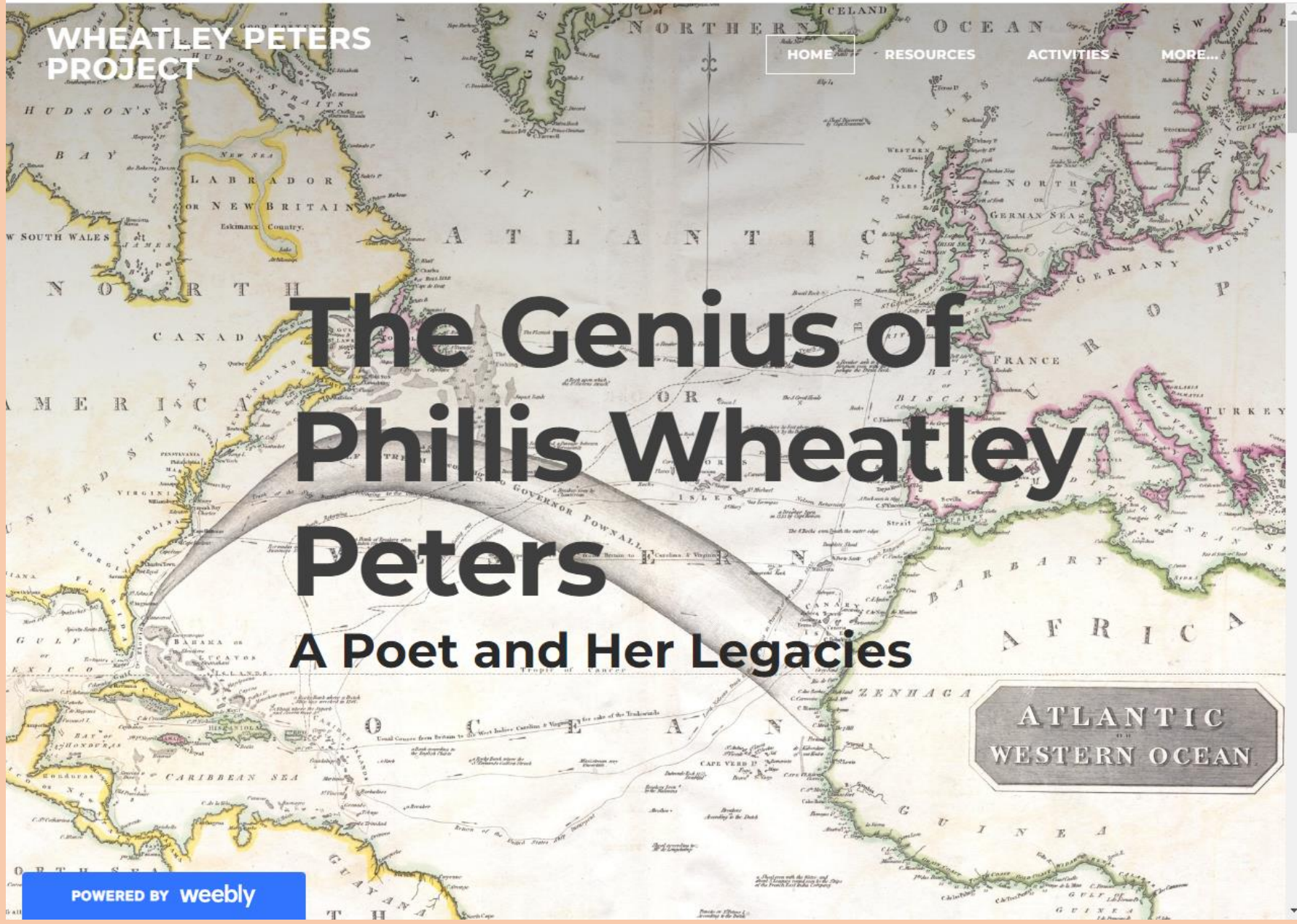
18 Flowing backwards

19 Flag or banner

Archives and Memory-Making

“Archives . . . engage in the process of memory preservation and the creation of narratives through documentation of historical records” (1).

Mason Jones, “Selective Memory: Assessing Conventions of Memory in Archival Literature.”



WHEATLEY PETERS PROJECT

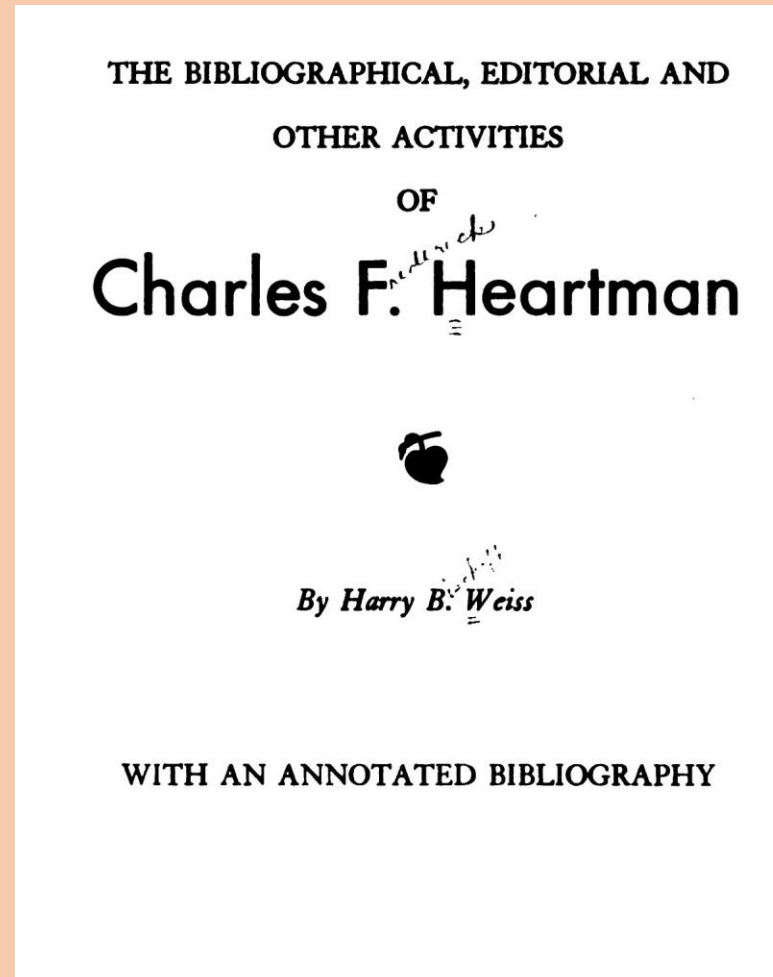
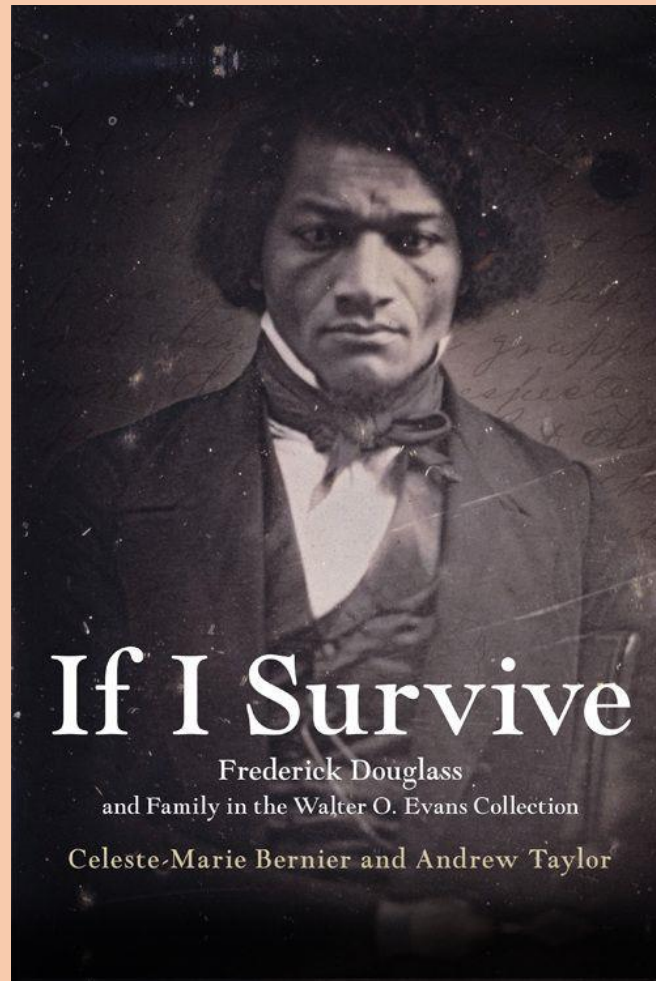
HOME RESOURCES ACTIVITIES MORE...

The Genius of Phillis Wheatley Peters

A Poet and Her Legacies

ATLANTIC WESTERN OCEAN

For more on the importance of the collector role and on Heartman's life

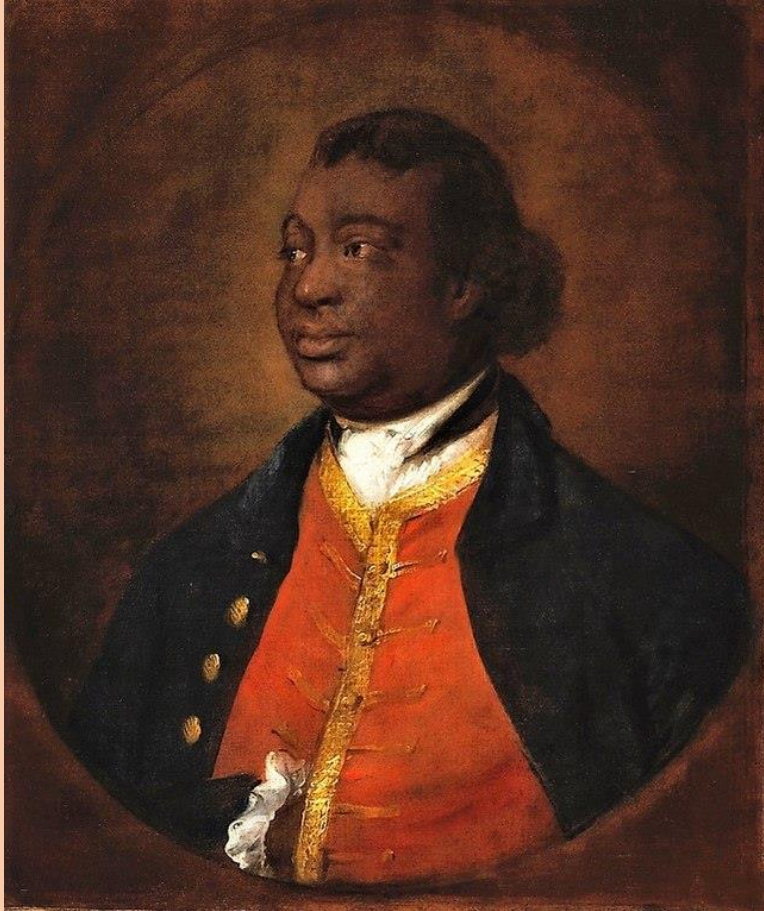


Gary Donaldson, "The Career of Charles F. Heartman And the Tradition of Collecting Americana." *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*. 84.1 (1990): 377-96.

Three Heartman-Made Publications on PWP in 1915:
AAS Holds a Copy of Each; Each Links to Literacy Networks
Each Thereby Illustrates Operations of Material Memory

- *Phillis Wheatley (Phillis Peters): A Critical Attempt and a Bibliography of Her Writings.*
- *Six Broadsides Relating to Phillis Wheatley (Phillis Peters), with Portrait and Facsimile of Her Handwriting.*
- *Phillis Wheatley (Phillis Peters): Poems and Letters. First Collected Edition. With an Appreciation by Arthur A. Schomburg.*

Charles Crawford's *Observations Upon Negro Slavery* (1784)



“an instance of genius among Negroes” (21)

Ignatius Sancho from Wikimedia Commons

Crawford on Wheatley

Reprints two poems:

“To the University of Cambridge,
In New England”

“To a Clergyman, on the death of
his Wife”

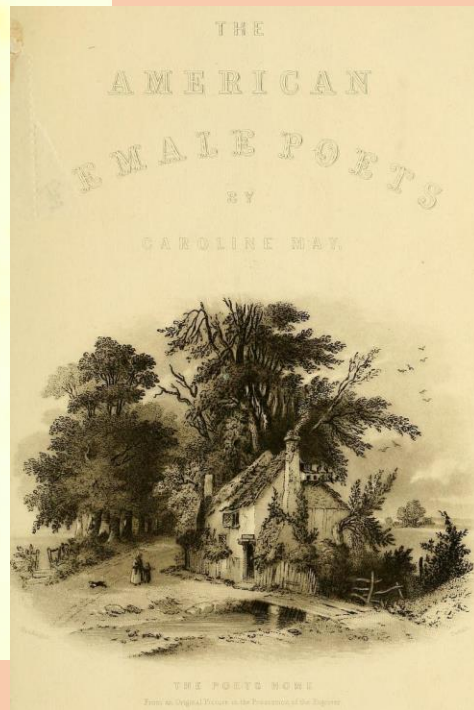
Praises her “great talents” and
the “Considerable merits” of her
“admirable” verse

THE
AMERICAN
FEMALE POETS:

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES,

BY
CAROLINE MAY.

PHILADELPHIA:
LINDSAY & BLAKISTON.
1848.



THE
FEMALE POETS

OF

AMERICA.

BY RUFUS WILMOT GRISWOLD.

I AM OBNOXIOUS TO EACH CARPING TONGUE
THAT SAYS MY HAND A NEEDLE BETTER FITS;
A POET'S PEN ALL SCORN I THUS SHOULD WRONG,
FOR SUCH DESPITE THEY CAST ON FEMALE WITS....
BUT SURE THE ANTIQUE GREEKS WERE FAR MORE MILD,
ELSE OF OUR SEX WHY FEIGNED THEY THOSE NINE,
AND POESY MADE CALLIOPE'S OWN CHILD?—
SO MONGST THE REST THEY PLACED THE ARTS DIVINE.

The Four Elements: By Anne Bradstreet. Boston, 1640.



PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY AND HART, CHESNUT STREET.

MDCCCXLIX.



PHILLIS WHEATLEY

(PHILLIS PETERS)

A CRITICAL ATTEMPT
AND A
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HER WRITINGS

By CHAS. FRED. HEARTMAN

Ninety-nine Copies printed
for the Author. New York, 1913



Phillis Wheatley

American Monthly Museum'' for April 1776. This poem Phillis Wheatley sent to George Washington, enclosing the following letter.

Sir:

I have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed Poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in, I am

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,

PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

Providence, Oct. 26, 1775.

I also cite the poem which runs as follows:

HIS EXCELLENCY GEN. WASHINGTON.

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light.
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:
Wherever shines this native of the skies,
Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates

SIX BROADSIDES
RELATING
TO
PHILLIS WHEATLEY
(PHILLIS PETERS)

WITH PORTRAIT AND FACSIMILE
OF HER HANDWRITING

Twenty-five Copies printed for Chas.
Fred. Heartman, New York City, 1915



Phillis Wheatley



THE extreme rarity of the originals of the six Broad­sides repro­duced here is sufficient reason for this publication. After a very careful search only one copy of each Broadside could be located, as follows :

Number One is in the Library Company of Philadelphia. A copy of the same is also in the Pennsylvania Historical Society, but although being the same in every detail, it has no imprint and has therefore to be considered as a different issue.

Number Two is in the American Antiquarian Society.

Number Three is in the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

Number Four is in the New York Historical Society.

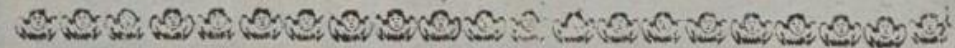
Number Five is in the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

Number Six is in the Connecticut Historical Society.

I am greatly indebted to these libraries for their courtesy in allowing this reproduction. Only twenty-five copies have been printed, ten of which are for presentation purpose. The plates have been destroyed.

Will Comyns

H.



To the Hon'ble THOMAS HUBBARD, Esq;
On the Death of
Mrs. THANKFULL LEONARD.

WHILE thus you mourn beneath the Cypress shade
That hand of Death, a kind conductor made
To her whose flight commands your tears to flow
And wracks your bosom with a scene of wo:
Let Recollection bear a tender part
To sooth and calm the tortures of your heart;
To still the tempest of tumultuous grief;
To give the heav'nly Nectar of relief;
Ah! cease, no more her unknown bliss bemoan!
Suspend the sigh, and check the rising groan.
Her virtues shone with rays divinely bright,
But ah! soon clouded with the shades of night.
How free from tow'ring pride, that gentle mind!
Which ne'er the hapless indigent declin'd,
Expanding free, it sought the means to prove
Unfailing Charity, unbounded Love!

To the University of Cambridge wrote in 1767

While an intrinsic love bid me write
The muse with promise to assist my pen,
'Twas but vain words I left my native shore
The sable land of error's darkest night
Thou sacred Nine! for you no place was found
Parent of ideas 'twas the Hon'ble's hand
That brought me in safely from the death's abode. ^{Flaw in}
To you, bright nymphs! be points the height of
To you, the knowledge of the depths profound
Have, contemplate the eth'ral space
The glorious systems of revolving worlds.
Still more, ye Sons of Science, you've received
The pleasing sound, by our fingers from heaven,
The precious blood, for your Redemption flow
To him, with hands unceasing cast upon the cross!
Quene can appear in his before glow.
He hears wonders with oblique regard
What Lord'sunkin in the Son of God!
When the whole human race, by sin had fall'n;
He deign'd to die, that they might rise again,
To live with him beyond the stony day
Life without death, and glory without end.
Improve your privileges while they stay,
Careful, redeem each moment, which with haste
Bears on its rapid wing to eternal bliss.
Let hateful vice be baneful to the soul,
Be still avoid'd with becoming care,
Suppress the sable monster in its growth,
Ye blooming plants of human race, divine
In Whom, tell you, is your greatest foe



PHILLIS WHEATLEY
(PHILLIS PETERS)

POEMS AND LETTERS

FIRST COLLECTED EDITION

Edited by
CHAS. FRED. HEARTMAN

With an Appreciation by
ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

Four hundred Copies printed for
Chas. Fred. Heartman, New York.

BIBLIOGRAPHICA AMERICANA

A SERIES OF MONOGRAPHS

Edited by
CHARLES F. HEARTMAN

VOLUME II

AMERICAN NEGRO POETRY
By ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

CHARLES F. HEARTMAN
NEW YORK, 1916

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST

OF
AMERICAN NEGRO POETRY

Compiled by
ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG



CHARLES F. HEARTMAN
NEW YORK, 1916

Heartman's Continued Support of Black Literacy Networks: Editor-Publisher of Schomburg's *American Negro Poetry (a Bibliography)*

BIBLIOGRAPHY of the Poetical Works of PHILLIS WHEATLEY

(Copyrighted by Charles F. Heartman.)

An elegiac poem, on the Death of that celebrated Divine, and eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, the Reverend and learned *George Whitefield*, Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Countess of Huntingdon, &c., &c. Who made his Exit from this transitory State, to dwell in the celestial Realms of Bliss on Lord's-Day 30th of September, 1770, when he was seiz'd with a Fit of the Asthma, at Newbury-Port, near Boston, New-England. In which is a Condolatory Address to His truly noble Benefactress the worthy and pious Lady Huntingdon; and the Orphan-Children in Georgia, who, with many Thousands are left, by the Death of this great Man, to lament the Loss of a Father, Friend, and Benefactor. By Phillis, A Servant Girl, of 17 years of Age, belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley, of Boston:—She has been but 9 Years in this Country from Africa. Boston: Printed and Sold by Ezekiel Russell, in Queen-street, And John Boyles, in Marlboro'-street (1770).

8 p. 12". N. Y. H. S. L. O. C.
Advertised as "This Day was published" in Massachusetts Spy of Oct. 11, 1770.

(Woodcut)

An Elegiac Poem, on the Death of that celebrated Divine, and Eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, The Late Reverend, And pious *George Whitefield*, Chaplain to the right Honourable the Countess of Huntingdon, &c., &c. Who made his Exit from this transitory State, to dwell in the Celestial Realms of bliss, on Lord's-day, 30th of September, 1770, when he was seiz'd with a fit of the asthma, at Newbury-Port, near Boston, in New-England. In which a consolatory address to his truly noble benefactress the worthy and pious Lady Huntingdon,—and the orphan-children in Georgia; who, with many thousands, are left, by the death of this great man, to lament the Loss of a father, friend, and benefactor. By Phillis, a servant girl of 17 years of age, belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley, of Boston:—and has been but 9 years in this country from Africa. (Boston:) Sold by Ezekiel Russell in Queen-Street, and John Boyles, in Marlboro'-Street (1770).

1 leaf folio. L. C. P.

An Elegiac Poem, on the Death of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, wrote by Phillis, a servant girl of 17 years of age, belonging to Mr. Wheatley, of Boston. New-York. Printed and sold by Samuel Inslee and Anthony Car, 1770.

No copy could be located, but it is advertised as "just published" in the New York Gazette and Weekly Post Boy of October 30, 1770.

Phillis's Poem on the Death of Mr. Whitefield. (Boston 1770.)

1 p. Folio. A. A. S.
Contains also: "Bedlam Garland. Together with The Spinning Wheel."

Six-page listing from Heartman's bibliography of PWP works

Heartman's + Schomburg's Support of Black Women's Literary + Literacy Networks

Mail - Ruffing Robbins, Sarah - C x PAHistoricalSociety.jpg | Power: x #9 - A bibliographical checklist x Harlem Renaissance Influencer x +

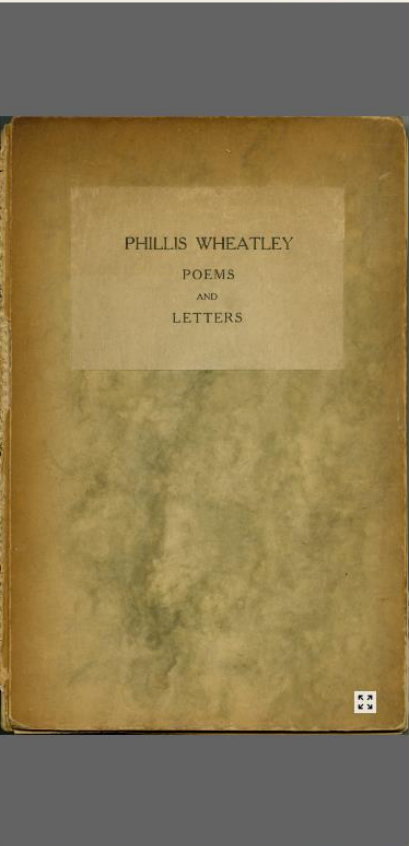
https://rosenbach.org/virtual-exhibits/exhibition-sections/harlem-renaissance-influencer/

13. Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), *Poems and Letters*: first collected edition, edited by Charles Frederick Heartman (1883-1953) with Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938)

New York: C. F. Heartman, [1915]
Courtesy of University of Delaware Library, Museums, and Press, Special Collections & Museums
PS866.W5 1915

Warmly inscribed in Spanish by Arturo Alfonso Schomburg to Dunbar-Nelson, this collection of poems and letters by legendary enslaved Black poet Phillis Wheatley was one of the first editions of her writings. Compiled and edited by Charles F. Heartman with an appreciation by Schomburg, this work was published as part of the Heartman Historical Series in a limited edition of only 350 copies. Schomburg, a librarian, scholar, and collector, was a major intellectual figure of the early 20th century and the Harlem Renaissance. His collection formed the basis of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, one of the world's greatest collections of Black literature, history, and culture.

As Dunbar-Nelson grew older, her interest in Black history grew. Her work in this area culminated with close to a year of intensive reading on this subject, in 1931, when she partnered with historian Carter G. Woodson to help develop a curriculum for teaching Black history.



PHILLIS WHEATLEY
POEMS
AND
LETTERS

heartman edition....pdf | Literacy Life Iden....docx | weiss on heartman....pdf | Phillis Wheatley (P...jpg | Show all x





PHILLIS WHEATLEY
(PHILLIS PETERS)

POEMS AND LETTERS

FIRST COLLECTED EDITION

Edited by
CHAS. FRED. HEARTMAN

With an Appreciation by
ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG

Four hundred Copies printed for
Chas. Fred. Heartman, New York.

X.

Why, *Phoebus*, moves thy car so slow?
So slow thy rising ray?
Give us the famous town to view,
Thou glorious king of day!

XI.

For thee, *Britannia*, I resign
New-England's smiling fields;
To view again her charms divine,
What joy the prospect yields!

XII.

But thou! Temptation hence away,
With all thy fatal train
Nor once seduce my soul away,
By thine enchanting strain.

XIII.

Thrice happy they, whose heav'nly shield
Secures their souls from harms
And fell *Temptation* on the field
Of all its pow'r disarms!

HIS EXCELLENCY, GENERAL WASHINGTON
(1775)

Celestial choir, enthron'd in realms of light,
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,

And nations gaze at scenes before unknown:
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:
Wherever shines this native of the skies,
Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
How pour her armies through a thousand gates,
As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,
Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
The reflux surges beat the sounding shore;
Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
In bright array they seek the work of war,
Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.
Thee, first in peace and honours,—we demand
The grace and glory of thy martial band.
Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,
Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!

One century scarce perform'd its destined round,
When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;
And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!
Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,
While round increase the rising hills of dead.



ALICE DUNBAR-NELSON

Dedication

To the children of the race which is herein celebrated, this book is dedicated, that they may read and learn about their own people

THE DUNBAR SPEAKER AND ENTERTAINER

CONTAINING

The Best Prose and Poetic
Selections by and about
THE NEGRO RACE

With Programs arranged for special entertainments

Edited by

Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson

And an Introduction by
Leslie Pinckney Hill

Illustrated

Published by

J. L. NICHOLS & CO.

Agents Wanted Naperville, Ill.

Wreaths of lilies and immortelles,
Scattered upon each silent mound,
Voices in loving remembrance swell,
Chanting to heaven the solemn sound,
Glad skies above, and glad earth beneath,
And grateful ones who silently
Gather earth's flowers and tenderly wreathe
Woman's sweet token of fragility.

—ALICE RUTH MOORE.

HIS EXCELLENCY, GEORGE WASHINGTON

(1775)

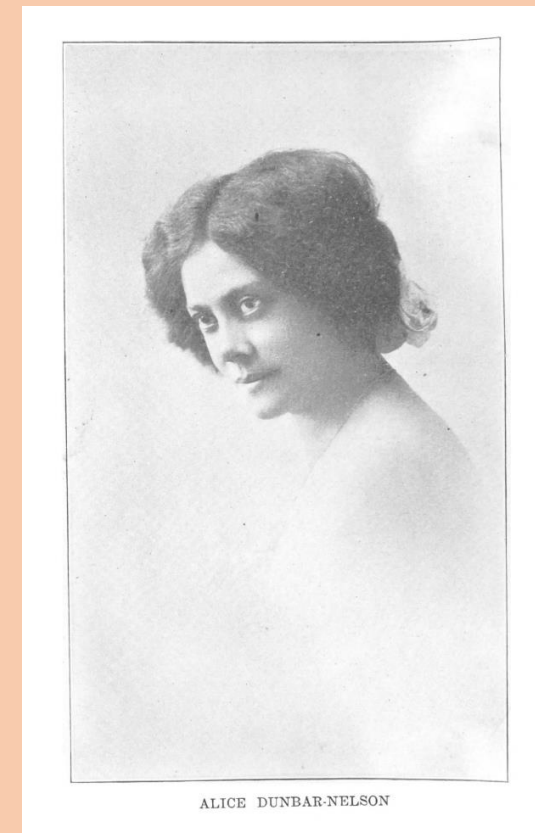
CELESTIAL choir, enthron'd in realms of light,
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
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See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,
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PWP, Heartman, Schomburg, Dunbar-Nelson



Phillis Wheatley



ALICE DUNBAR-NELSON