Atlantic Exchange: Books, Ideas, and Eighteenth-Century Print Culture

By the eighteenth-century, print had become an important medium for linking disparate parts of empires, distributing revolutionary ideas, and fostering intellectual debate. This exhibition, held in conjunction with the meeting of the Northeast American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, examines some of the threads of the transatlantic conversation carried out in print.

Like any good eighteenth-century book of poetry, we offer materials written "on several occasions" to try to better understand the complex social and literary world of the time. Starting with Dartmouth’s provincial history, the materials reach into the literary world of Boston and London and show different encounters Europeans had with America through books. The connection of one of Dartmouth founding leaders, Samson Occom, with the slave poet Phyllis Wheatley and her owners, and her linkage to the Earl of Dartmouth (shown here by his presentation copy of Pope’s translation of Homer) show a surprising social network tying together a diverse group of people. They contrast with romantic and often fanciful visions of America and the divergent literary scene in London to show multiple narratives making up the transatlantic conversation.

The exhibition was be on display in the Class of 1965 Galleries from October 1 to November 23, 2007.

Materials Included in the Exhibition

   1. Presentation copy from Lord Dartmouth to Phyllis Wheatley, 1774.
6. Phyllis Wheatley. *An Elegiac Poem, on the Death of that Celebrated Divine, and Eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, the Reverend and Learned George Whitefield ... Who Made his Exit from This Transitory State, to Dwell in the Celestial Realms of Bliss, on Lord's-Day, 30th of September, 1770 ... By Phillis, a Servant Girl, of 17 Years of Age, Belonging to Mr. J. Wheatley, of Boston*. Boston: Ezekiel Russell and John Boyles, 1770. Rare Book PS866.W5 E5 1770

8. Susanna Wheatley to Samson Occom and Nathaniel Whitaker, 31 December 1765.


15. Benjamin Franklin. *A Narrative on the Late Massacres in Lancaster County of a Number of Indians, Friends of this Province, by Persons Unknown.* Printed in the Year 1764. [Val 815 F85 T5]


