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**Phyllis Wheatley**

Phyllis Wheatley believed in the immeasurable power of poetry (Shields, 1980, p. 101). Most of her poetry is based on her personal beliefs and experiences in life. However, she also reflected on the literature she read through her poetry. For this reason, John Shields commented that Phyllis’s poetry had more than just conformity. He further expressed that her allusions to the goddess of the morn and the god of the sun always appeared in close association with her quest of poetic inspiration, which remained of central importance to her (Shields, 1980, p. 100). Overall, Phyllis has used three elements in most of her poetry, i.e., classicism, Christianity, and hierophantic solar worship (Shields, 1980, p. 103).

Phyllis’s use of classicism in her poetry is amazingly impressive. Classicism is the method of following ancient Roman styles and principles in literature and art. It is generally associated with the elements of adherence, restraint, and harmony to the recognized standards of craftsmanship and form. This form of writing is particularly found in the art works of the eighteenth century. It is one of the qualities that successfully makes Phyllis’s writing style different and unique from the other poets and writers of her era. Moreover, the timely and thoughtful use of classicism in her work has made her poems original and unique, which eventually provides her poetry deserving to extended treatment (Shields, 1980, p. 98). Therefore, it can be argued that Phyllis’s work is reflective and contemplative rather than just shimmering and brilliant (Shields, 1980, p. 100).

Christianity has played a major role in the upbringing and nourishment of the poetic work of Phyllis. Therefore, she has made several references to Christ in her poems over the years. For instance, sun is a homonym to son. Therefore, it can be articulated that the main purpose of her using various terms to represent solar gods in her poetry was to double reference the Christ (Shields, 1980, p. 103). Also, in two of her poems, Phyllis has used the word heavenly muse, who in mythology refers to nine goddesses but she used it to represent Christ with the purpose of signifying her idea of Christianity deity (Shields, 1980, p. 102).

Since Phyllis belonged to Africa, she brought hierophantic solar worship in her bloodline. The African culture is enriched with the worship of the solar gods. Moreover, her parents were sun worshippers as well. For this reason, it can be articulated that she had an interest and a sheer liking for the sun gods, and that’s why, she has used so many different names for them in her poetry. For instance, she used the terms Sol twice, Phoebus twelve, Apollo seven, and Aurora eight times in her poems to represent the solar gods (Shields, 1980, p. 103). Therefore, light has been a major inspiration for her work because it represented Africa for her, a past that she physically left behind while moving forward in the world, and her life.

Due to her strong connection with Christianity, Phyllis’s poem do not present her condition as a slave but the white Christian’s view of slaves. In this regard, she made perfect use of the writing techniques of neoclassical conventions, classical references, and biblical allusions. Her poems such as *On Being Brought from Africa to America*, *To The Right Honorable William*, and *Earl of Dartmouth* are the must-mentions, to name a few, in this context. Moreover, it can be expressed as an honor that the writing style of Phyllis is somewhat similar to that of writer Alexander Pope. He was an early eighteenth century poet, who was highly regarded in the era of Phyllis Wheatley.

Still, the fact that the ideas presented in her poetry are an outcome of Phyllis’s unique thinking, cannot be denied. She borrowed images such as *autumn’s golden reign, astonished ocean,* and *realms of lights* from the neoclassical themes. Simultaneously, she also included references such as *the god of wind, Eolus, muses and celestial choirs,* and *versethe goddess of freedom* from Greek mythology in her work. Also, most of her writing is in heroic couplet, where the last words of the two stanzas rhyme such as rise and skies, and hair and fair. Simultaneously, Phyllis has employed a similar number, such as ten, syllabus in her poetry lines.

As per the work of Jamison (1974, p. 410), Phyllis Wheatley has primarily written about the white slaves because whites dictated her. They controlled her mind, and her actions, which eventually led them to control her pen. Moreover, it has also been argued in the literature that because Phyllis’s life was comfortable and cultivated, she had been writing from the whites’ point of view. Overall, it can be articulated from this discussion that Phyllis took over the whites’ viewpoint in her poetry due to the fact that she had not been subjected to the relative harshness of slavery (Collins, 1975, p. 81). However, the fact that she was known of the conditions of slaves in the country, and how the whites look at them, cannot be denied. Such facts are supported by her poetry. For instance, in the poem *On Being Brought from Africa to America*, Phyllis writes, “*Some view our race with scornful eyes*” (Levernier, 1981, p. 25). She also expressed her concern about the whites viewing the Negros as a *diabolic dye* due to their skin color (Levernier, 1981, p. 25).

**Works Cited**

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