

THE POEMS OF

Phillis Wheatley

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION



Edited with an Introduction by

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A fifth in trembling terrors yields her breath;
While the sixth seeks some gloomy cave in vain,
Struck with the rest, and mingled with the slain.

One only daughter lives, and she the least;
The queen close clasp'd the daughter to her breast:
"Ye heav'nly pow'rs, ah spare me one," she cry'd,
"Ah! spare me one," the vocal hills reply'd:
In vain she begs, the Fates her suit deny,
In her embrace she sees her daughter die.

* "The queen of all her family bereft,
"Without or husband, son, or daughter left,
"Grew stupid at the shock. The passing air
"Made no impression on her stiff'ning hair.
"The blood forsook her face: amidst the flood
"Pour'd from her cheeks, quite fix'd her eye-balls stood.
"Her tongue, her palate both obdurate grew,
"Her curdled veins no longer motion knew;
"The use of neck, and arms, and feet was gone,
"And ev'n her bowels hard'ned into stone:
"A marble statue now the queen appears,
"But from the marble steal the silent tears."

* This Verse to the End is the Work of another Hand.

TO S. M. A YOUNG AFRICAN PAINTER, ON SEEING HIS WORKS.³⁹

TO show the lab'ring bosom's deep intent,
And thought in living characters to paint,
When first thy pencil did those beauties give,

39. This poem was not listed in her 1772 Proposals. In a copy of Wheatley's book at the American Antiquarian Society (see the note for her ode to Neptune) there is a notation which identifies S. M. as: "Scipio Moorhead—Negro Servant to the Revd Mr. Moorhead of Boston, whose Genius inclined him that way." (See the note for her poem to Mary Moorhead.) John Moorhead's wife, Sarah (1712–74), was well known in Boston as an art instructor. (Also see

And breathing figures learnt from thee to live,
How did those prospects give my soul delight,
A new creation rushing on my sight?
Still, wond'rous youth! each noble path pursue,
On deathless glories fix thine ardent view:
Still may the painter's and the poet's fire
To aid thy pencil, and thy verse conspire!
And may the charms of each seraphic theme
Conduct thy footsteps to immortal fame!
High to the blissful wonders of the skies
Elate thy soul, and raise thy wishful eyes.
Thrice happy, when exalted to survey
That splendid city, crown'd with endless day,
Whose twice six gates on radiant hinges ring:
Celestial *Salem* blooms in endless spring.

Calm and serene thy moments glide along,
And may the muse inspire each future song!
Still, with the sweets of contemplation bless'd,
May peace with balmy wings your soul invest!
But when these shades of time are chas'd away,
And darkness ends in everlasting day,
On what seraphic pinions shall we move,
And view the landscapes in the realms above?
There shall thy tongue in heav'nly murmurs flow,
And there my muse with heav'nly transport glow:
No more to tell of *Damon's* tender sighs,
Or rising radiance of *Aurora's* eyes,
For nobler themes demand a nobler strain,
And purer language on th' ethereal plain.
Cease, gentle muse! the solemn gloom of night
Now seals the fair creation from my sight.

Robinson, *Her Writings*, pp. 274–75.) A briefer, variant version of this poem was published during Wheatley's lifetime, in the London *Arminian Magazine* for April 1784 (see the note for her poem "On Imagination" in this volume). Some think that Scipio Moorhead drew the picture of Wheatley that was used for the frontispiece of her book (see "A Note on the Text").