

A Hymn to the Evening

By Phillis Wheatley

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring.
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dies are spread!
But the west glories in the deepest red:
So may our breasts with ev'ry virtue glow,
The living temples of our God below!
Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the light,
And draws the sable curtains of the night,
Let placid slumbers sooth each weary mind,
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labours of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair *Aurora* rise.



Born in the Senegal-Gambia region of West Africa, Phillis Wheatley arrived in Boston on a slave ship when she was about seven years old. When Mrs. Susanna Wheatley purchased her as a personal servant, she named Phillis after the ship. After 16 months, Wheatley could read and understand any part of the Bible, and she began writing poetry at age 12. She was one of the best-known poets in pre-19th century America; her name was a household word among literate colonists and her achievements a catalyst for the fledgling antislavery movement.

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