Phillis Wheatley’s Poetry: Literary Form And Social Significance

Over the past six centuries, hundreds of thousands of millions of immigrants have immigrated to North America that was artisans, artists, engineers, refugees, slaves, families, and authors. Since the early 1900s, Los Angeles has become one of the greatest multiethnic metropolitan cities in the world through immigration. Throughout the county of Los Angeles, there has been a severe change in diversity shifting to a predominantly Latinx community in the eastern and southern districts. Many have brought nothing with them to these areas from their homeland except for the clothes that they carry upon themselves, but more importantly their culture. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when there was immigration to early America, two intelligent female poets, Anne Bradstreet and Phillis Wheatly, came to America and not of their own free will. Although Anne Bradstreet was the first American women to publish major literary work, Phillis Wheatley had a greater impact on society during her time as her poetry was written with many literary techniques, reflective, and transgressed Bradstreet’s works pertaining to religion by creating aspersion and infringing on bases about which the religion that was forced upon her.

Phillis Wheatley became known as an abolitionist and was known as a great conversationalist from her work. She was very erudite and had written ironic remarks about the early United States government. She studied all the time to become the second woman to publish work in America and never was jaded but instead transcended all of her wildest dreams. Her work contained many literary techniques including her standard eight-line poem, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”, that is her most famous with many clever remarks. She used loaded dictation by italicizing words that could be seen as praise to some but lurid to others. She mixed words with positive and negative connotations to elude her readers. Though she writes on the horrors made by Christian slave owners she also does so without alienating her readers. She uses euphuisms and semiotics to describe circumstances that might otherwise be quite difficult to talk about.

Phillis Wheatley’s work was very reflective of the times that she was stuck in and how she wanted the two feet of social justice in her government. Within the line, “That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:”, Wheatley alludes to how she was forced to convert to Christianity, a loving, peaceful religion with a ‘Saviour’, but how can they speak of God’s mercy with the savior when she had in bondage and sold into slavery? Another time she uses loaded dictation is when she says, “Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain, May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.”(Wheatley), she again references the hypocrisy of Christians with references to Christians and Negros, but Cain can be read two ways. One way is a reference to the bible in the book of Cain and Abel where Abel is believed to be the first African after he did an evil deed and his skin was turned dark and so he was associated with evil. Another reason for ‘Cain’ is for the sugar cane and how slaves were the producers of it but when it was made it was burnt and molten to then become dark and then is ‘refin'd’ to become beautiful, delicious white crystals(Pierce) as baptism is supposed to cleanse and purify.

Previous and past experiences build people and indirectly influence them to perceive life in a certain way. Clearly seen in copious amounts of work by numerous authors, the audience is able to recognize the reason in which the documents were written from the author’s past.

According to the analysis done by Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, Anne Bradstreet is one of the greatest puritan poets that was affected by this. Within her poems, she writes without failure to talk of her own puritan life and explain the family state analogy that she began to reverse and introduce females with leading roles in the family, (61, Engen) in which she endures. Yet, the writing themes and messages that Bradstreet uses are ineffable compared to Phillis Wheatley as an African American woman and poet in the eighteenth century, including her experience of being brought through the Atlantic slave trade that she describes in her famous poem, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”. Anne Bradstreet’s work was looked over until just recently when twentieth-century feminists found it and use it to speak on old family stereotypes and the oppression of women.

Phillis Wheatley and her work were nothing close to nominal, but instead extraordinary in all aspects of all times. All people read her work, masters and slaves alike. Phillis Wheatley’s impression on the world through her poetry and culture expressed through her words. But let the readers and audience not forget that if “Wheatley’s piety and conversion to Christianity are the central themes of her work, then the lack of attention paid to the word “mercy” undermines such suggestion.”(Loving,70) From the scholars around the world that pay attention and value her work, it is clearly seen that the level of irony and honesty that she puts into her work can be achieved through intelligent remarks. Phillis Wheatley kept aplomb and shared her culture with all that would listen from past to present to future