

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

© Paul P. Reuben

(To send an email, please click on my name above.)

Chapter 2: Jupiter Hammon (1711-1806?)

Page Links: | [A Biographical Outline](#) | [Primary Works](#) | [Selected Bibliography 1980-Present](#) | [Jupiter Hammon's Poem "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly" \(sic\)](#) | [Study Question](#) | [MLA Style Citation of this Web Page](#) |

Site Links: | [Chap. 2: Index](#) | [Alphabetical List](#) | [Table Of Contents](#) | [Home Page](#) | February 1, 2008 |

Jupiter Hammon is considered the first Black writer to publish in America; his religious exhortations deal with the themes of race, slavery, and the alienation of slaves. Since his writings were edited (and probably approved) by White patrons, his themes of White injustices have taken on even more importance.

Jupiter Hammon: A Brief Biographical Outline

Hammon received his unusually extensive education on the Lloyd Manor Estate, from Nehemiah Bull, a Harvard graduate and later noted New England divine. Hammon was basically allowed to partake of any business he wished. This included reading in the Lloyd library and writing his poetry. He was very privileged and took advantage of the kindness offered him.

1760: Hammon's first work *An Evening Thought* published.

1763: Henry Lloyd (his owner) dies and Hammon becomes the property of Joseph Lloyd, an American revolutionary.

1778: "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly" is published.

1779: "An Essay on the Ten Virgins" is published.

1780: A despondent John Lloyd commits suicide because of the apparent American surrender at Charlestown.

1782: "A Winter Piece" is published.

1782: It is thought that Hammon composed a set of verses, not yet found and probably not published. These verses supposedly celebrate the visit of young Prince William Henry to the Lloyd Manor House.

1783: "An Evenings Improvement" published. 1806(?): This is the believed year of Hammon's death on the Lloyd Manor Estate.

Details:

* Jupiter Hammon wrote broadside poems and prose. All of his works are deeply steeped in his religious beliefs, with little exception.

* Hammon was a preacher for his fellow brethren on the Lloyd Manor Estate.

* Hammon is not really considered one of the great literary figures of his time (as Phillis Wheatley is), because of the rather narrow focus of his work.

* The actual death date of Jupiter Hammon is not known because no one can find a death certificate or the exact spot of his burial.

(Biographical Source: Ransom, Stanley A. *America's First Negro Poet*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat P, 1970.)

Primary Works

Evening Thought, 1760; *An Essay on the Ten Virgins*, 1779; *A Winter Piece*, 1782; *An Evening's Improvement*, 1783; *An Address to the Negroes in the State of New York*, 1787.

Selected Bibliography 1980-Present

Herron, Carolivia. *Early African American Poetry*. NY: Columbia UP, 1993.

Johnson, Lonell E. *Dilemma of the Dutiful Servant: The Poetry of Jupiter Hammon*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992.

---. *Portrait of the Bondslave in the Bible: Slavery and Freedom in the Works of Four Afro-American Poets*. Ann Arbor, MI. 1987.

Nelson, Emmanuel S. ed. *African American Authors, 1745-1945: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000 .

Richards, Phillip M. *Nationalist Themes in the Preaching of Jupiter Hammon*. Chapel Hill, NC. 1990.

| [Top](#) | "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly [*sic*], Ethiopian Poetess, in Boston, who came from Africa at eight years of age, and soon became acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Miss Wheatly; pray give leave to express as follows:

O, come you pious youth: adore
The wisdom of thy God.
In bringing thee from distant shore,
To learn His holy word.

Thou mightst been left behind,
Amidst a dark abode;
God's tender Mercy still combin'd,
Thou hast the holy word.

Fair wisdom's ways are paths of peace,
And they that walk therein,
Shall reap the joys that never cease,
And Christ shall be their king.

God's tender mercy brought thee here,
tost o'er the raging main;
In Christian faith thou hast a share,
Worth all the gold of Spain.

While thousands tossed by the sea,
And others settled down,
God's tender mercy set thee free,
From dangers still unknown.

That thou a pattern still might be,
To youth of Boston town,
The blessed Jesus thee free,
From every sinful wound.

The blessed Jesus, who came down,
Unveil'd his sacred face,
To cleanse the soul of every wound,
And give repenting grace.

That we poor sinners may obtain
The pardon of our sin;
Dear blessed Jesus now constrain,
And bring us flocking in.

Come you, Phillis, now aspire,
And seek the living God,
So step by step thou mayst go higher,
Till perfect in the word.

While thousands mov'd to distant shore,
And others left behind,
The blessed Jesus still adore,
Implant this in thy mind.

Thou hast left the heathen shore;
Thro' mercy of the Lord,
Among the heathen live no more,
Come magnify thy God.

I pray the living God may be,
The sheperd of thy soul;
His tender mercies still are free,
His mysteries to unfold.

Thou, Phillis, when thou hunger hast,
Or pantest for thy God;
Jesus Christ is thy relief,
Thou hast the holy word.

The bounteous mercies of the Lord,
Are hid beyond the sky,
And holy souls that love His word,
Shall taste them when they die.

These bounteous mercies are from God,
The merits of his Son;
The humble soul that loves his word,
He chooses for his own.

Come, dear Phillis, be advis'd,
To drink Samaria's flood;
There nothing is that shall suffice,
But Christ's redeeming blood.

When thousands muse with earthly toys,
And range about the street,
Dear Phillis, seek for heaven's joys,
Where we do hope to meet.

When God shall send His summons down,
And number saints together.
Blest angels chant, (triumphant sound)
Come live with me forever.

The humble soul shall fly to God,

And leave the things of time,
Start forth as 'twere at the first word,
To taste things more divine.

Behold! the soul shall waft away,
Whene'er we come to die,
And leave this cottage made of clay,
In twinkling of an eye.

Now glory be to the Most High,
United praises given,
By all on earth, incessantly,
And all the host of heav'n.

Composed by Jupiter Hammon, Hartford, August 4, 1778

Study Question

Describe the way in which Christian thought and rhetoric structured Hammon's racial consciousness.

MLA Style Citation of this Web Page

Reuben, Paul P. "Chapter 2: Jupiter Hammon." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide*. URL: <http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap2/hammon.html> (provide page date or date of your login).

| [Top](#) |