

The power of poetic discourse

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Poetry serves as a potent tool in providing insight, as it expresses universal themes and universal sentiments that enlightens readers. The poem of Countee Cullen entitled, “ Yet Do I Marvel,” is one such piece of literature. In the first reading, the first eight lines of the poem, the octave, seems to illustrate examples of injustices. Cullen begins the poem by establishing that he does not doubt the goodness, the kindness, of God; but he questions the acts of God.

Acts which seem to be incredulous, like creating the mole to be blind and yet making the creature toil and work without sight; making humans appear like him, but making them mortal; and handing down cruel punishments, as in the cases of Tantalus and Sisyphus, Greek mythological figures who suffer cruel punishments. Upon examination of the verses, however, the reader understands that these examples are not illustrations of injustice; they are instead illustrations that God is wise enough to render entities and events in their current state.

It is only right for the mole to be blind, because his natural task is to burrow hole underground, where sight is not necessary. It is only right for human beings to be mortal, because the soul is more important than the flesh, and without death, spiritual fulfillment could not be realized. It is only right for Tantalus to suffer hunger and thirst because his immoral act of stealing the food of the Gods, and presenting his son as a food offering was a terrible crime. It is only right for Sisyphus to work on a never-ending task because he was overly ambitious and vain to aim for eternal life.

Following this insight, the reader is led to the thought that the last six lines, the sestet, offer the resolution that it is only right for a poet to be black and

for God to, “ bid him sing” (line 14, Cullen) because it is only appropriate for a black poet to express and articulate his hopes, his dreams and his sentiments about his people and about his race.