PHILIP FRENEAU'S WILDFLOWER
AN ANALYSIS OF THE "AMANDA" POEMS

By

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ABSTRACT

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According to Philip Freneau's biographers, an early disillusionment appears to have resulted from Freneau's first experiences at sea as well as from an abortive love affair that began on the island of Bermuda in 1778. Freneau left behind scores of poems which detail his years in the Caribbean, seven of which, after much revision, he grouped together in 1809 and linked directly to his experiences in Bermuda. And although it can be shown that Freneau incorporated diverse biographical material into these poems, the resulting fiction demonstrates that the poet was able to transcend his own unhappiness through literary art.

These seven poems, subsequently labelled the "Amanda" poems in honor of the woman they seem to celebrate, have been ignored by Freneau's critics, who often regard them as little more than conventional love verses. The present study challenges this assumption and attempts to demonstrate that the creation of the "Amanda" story was of

central importance to Freneau. The research has included a linear comparison of the known variants of the "Amanda" poems and has found that although the series comprises only seven poems in its final format, it holds major clues to unlocking the mysterious forces which shaped Freneau's intellectual, emotional, and artistic maturity.

The study examines not only the poems in the "Amanda" series but also many other poems with structural or thematic ties to the series. Since Freneau's experience in the West Indies is the most pervasive motif in his work, "Amanda" surfaces in numerous poems, and her image becomes a vehicle through which the poet tests a sequence of metaphysical abstractions. To Freneau, she first comes to represent unattainable beauty, then disappointment, and finally resignation. As such, the myth of "Amanda" is arguably more important to Freneau than her real-life model. Whoever she was, "Amanda" profoundly affected the poet, his philosophy, and his art; and her influence on him has been overlooked far too long.

To my mother, Jeanne, and Kim
and to the memory of
my father

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

For nearly a century after his death in 1832, Philip M. Freneau was recalled chiefly as "The Poet of the American Revolution" whose patriotic verse had helped to enflame the fighting spirit of our colonial militiamen. While Freneau himself encouraged such recognition from his own contemporaries, the title, by calling attention chiefly to his occasional poetry, has subsequently clouded the literary reputation of the very man it purports to immortalize. In fact, Freneau wrote hundreds of poems that might be categorized as patriotic verse, and many of them were no doubt effective when they first appeared in colonial newspapers and pamphlets. However, later readers, remote in time and interest from the events of the 1770s and 1780s, have often criticized this verse for appearing to be rushed, rather slipshod in technique, and unrestrained. Even as early as 1809 a patronizing reviewer who sensed that Freneau's poetry had already gone out of fashion sought to praise faintly by reminding his readers that, after all, Freneau had been "a useful poet."[1]

Freneau's immediate successors continued to regard him as having been a dedicated agent of colonial propaganda

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and an important voice for American democracy--but a minor poet nonetheless. Subsequently, many critics who have come to his defense have been ambivalent in discussing his poetry. Writing in 1865, Evert Duyckinck represents a view that has dominated Freneau criticism:

> What is perhaps most worthy of notice in Freneau is his originality, the instinct with which his genius marked out a path for itself in those days when most writers were languidly leaning upon the old foreign school of Pope and Dryden. He was not afraid of home things and incidents. Dealing with facts and realities, and life around him, wherever he was, his writings have still an interest where vague expressions of other poets are forgotten. . . . It is not to be denied, however, that Freneau was sometimes careless. He thought and wrote with improvidence. His jests are unequal in execution.[2]

While twentiety-century critics and historians have often found that Freneau's writings "have still an interest," the poet has been regarded by few as a major figure in American literature. In fact, until very recently those who have reassessed Freneau's poetry in light of twentieth-century scholarship have remained substantially in agreement with Duyckinck's earlier evaluation. For example, Lewis Leary, who has done perhaps more than anyone to revive an interest in the poet's work, has subtitled his biography of Freneau as "A Study in Literary Failure." This is not to suggest, however, that Freneau has found no advocates among contemporary critics. Leary and others have certainly provided realistic evaluations of what is good as well as bad in Freneau's writing. Nevertheless, there has been, it seems, from the very beginning of Freneau criticism, a

prevailing opinion that the poet compromised his talent by engaging in political and ideological verse wars, often reducing his poetry to shallow sentiment, invective, and doggerel.

As implied earlier, this negative evaluation is not altogether unfair to the poet. Indeed, Freneau himself seemed to recognize that his muse was occasionally second-rate, although he blamed his lack of poetic inspiration on the philistine culture of young America:

> An age employed in edging steel
> Can no poetic raptures feel;
> No solitude's attracting power,
> No leisure of the noon day hour
> No shaded stream, no quiet grove
> Can this fantastic century move.
> ("To an Author, 11. 35-40, text: 1809)[3]

While this picture of the poet longing for a halcyon retreat in order to give himself over to the pleasures of belles-lettres is perhaps convenient for Freneau's apologists, we might overlay it with another picture of Freneau as newspaper editor who must have realized the "copy" value of his own political verse. Moreover, as Mary Bowden has recently pointed out, Freneau enjoyed verse tirades and probably did not begrudge the time it took to write them.[4] Yet these tirades often lack restraint and subtlety. For example, seldom could Freneau write about the British, whom he detested, without screaming at them or anything connected with them. In the following passage he castigates Gen. Cornwallis, who has just surrendered to Washington:

What pen can write, what human tongue can tell
The endless murders of this man of hell!
Nature in him disgrac'd the form divine;
Nature mistook, she meant him for a -- swine:
That eye his forehead to her shame adorns;
Blush! nature, blush--bestow him tail and horns!
("On the Fall of Gen. Earl Cornwallis,"
ll. 15-20, text:1809)

Freneau did not spend all his venom on foreigners, however. During the early 1790s, when he was editing the National Gazette, he engaged in an editorial war with John Fenno, the conservative publisher of The Gazette of the United States, a newspaper allied with the political fortunes of Alexander Hamilton. Fenno and Hamilton had used their paper to charge Freneau publically with being a lackey of Thomas Jefferson. Freneau answered them in kind, and critics who have found his verse to be, at times, indelicate, have in mind this sort of writing:[5]

Because some treasury-luncheons you have gnaw'd,
Like rats, that prey upon the public store:
Must you, for that, your crude stuff belch abroad,
And vomit lies on all that pass your door!
("To SHYLOCK AP-SHENKIN," ll. 5-8, text:1795)

Whether or not "an age employed in edging steel" did sometimes dictate to Freneau, causing him to sacrifice literary polish for grit, he has been censured by later critics for his faults as a poet. Yet there has also been a significant thrust, particularly by recent scholars, to demonstrate the strengths of the man whom Russel Nye has described as "the first genuine poetic voice to be heard in the United States," and whom H. H. Clark has called "The Father of American Poetry."[6] For despite his often-cited

weaknesses, Philip Freneau also had a poetic gift for translating personal experiences into delicate lyrics that often meliorate a disturbing vision of the world and the nature of mankind.

This recognition of Freneau's talent did not occur on a wide scale until after 1929, when Harry Hayden Clark divided the poet's work into "Poems of Freedom" and "Poems of Romantic Fancy." Subsequently, critics have become more aware of the dichotomy that exists between Freneau's occasional poems and his personal lyrics. Recent scholarship, almost totally given over to a study of Freneau's lyric poems,[7] has been focused on their derivative nature. It has been argued that Freneau, particularly in his early verse, was deeply indebted to classical and neo-classical (chiefly British) authors. In fact, the list of poets and writers whose influence has been traced to some work done by Freneau becomes so long that it may appear a bit pointless.[8] There is no doubt that Freneau, a serious young poet, had read widely and deeply in the works of classical authors as well as those of his modern counterparts. But while the scholarship that has so thoroughly documented this fact has been useful to later criticism, it leaves a picture of the poet as a sort of literary tape recorder, splicing and editing a myriad of lines, images, and symbols into rather second-rate poetry. In short, it has often ignored Freneau's own contributions to the art form.

In 1949, however, Nelson Adkins published a short study entitled Philip Freneau and the Cosmic Enigma. The work represents the first concerted effort to analyze the inner vision which Freneau's best poems set forth between roughly 1775 and 1795. Adkins is the first critic to explore in depth Freneau's apparent rejection of Christian dogma and his subsequent attempt to merge his own classical stoicism and Deistic rationalism with Biblical revelation. Adkins traces this agonizing struggle which absorbed the poet throughout his early career and which concluded with Freneau's rather uneasy position that if there is a benevolence in the universe, it works through natural principles that remain indecipherable to the limited vision of mankind. Adkins argues that Freneau resisted skepticism by assuring himself and others through his poetry that answers might be found by observing, learning, and practicing the simple truths of nature. And while such facile advice became at times rather fragile even for Freneau himself to lean on, according to Adkins, the poet "repeatedly, though not consistently . . . found a philosophic equipoise in this central concept of the eighteenth century."[9]

Since the publication of Adkins' study, there has been a continuing effort on the part of scholars to re-examine Freneau's place in American literature; yet the studies (both long and short) that have appeared since 1949 have begun to place a new emphasis on Freneau's personal esthetic, his individual philosophy, and his distinctly

national voice. For example, William Andrews' "Goldsmith and Freneau in 'The American Village'" stresses the uniquely American purpose of Freneau's poem--a poem loosely modelled, of course, on Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village."[10] Martin Itzkowitz has pointed out that Freneau's "The Indian Burying Ground" provides an interesting philosophic counterpoint to Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn": both poems contemplate the nature of art and reality.[11] Jane Eberwein, who has examined the images and persona of "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," finds the poem "more complex and troubled . . . than generally recognized."[12] And Carol Kyle argues that The Pictures of Columbus maintains a tight structural coherence by use of a series of images that carry the reader from the dream-like theory of Columbus through a testing of the dream (in the journey) to a final discovery of reality (in the landing on the new continent) which, unlike the dream, eventuates in good and evil.[13]

Perhaps one of the most helpful contemporary studies in dispelling the long-standing charges that Freneau lacked poetic consistency is Richard Vitzthum's Land and Sea: The Lyric Poetry of Philip Freneau (1978). Vitzthum has analyzed many of the poems which he feels contain personal statements by Freneau and has found in them a recurrent system of symbols through which the poet manifested his fears that existence is a human delusion. Tracing the images of land and sea that pervade Freneau's poetry, Vitzthum argues that there is a progression of ideas often

articulated through multi-layered symbols which flesh out the poet's mental struggle--a struggle between female and male, fancy and reason, art and science, unreality and so-called fact. In Vitzthum's words:

> The philosophical conclusions that . . . [Freneau] expressed through his symbols evolved slowly, often painfully, but with remarkable consistency over a period of many years. Emotionally and intellectually committed during the 1770's to a fancy-oriented eighteenth century romanticism, he expressed a belief in the poems he published before 1780 that fancy was superior to reason and provided a groundwork not merely for a poetry that idealized nature but for a life style that eschewed the humdrum of ordinary life. But after 1780 the fancy-reason pendulum swung the other way, until by the mid-eighties Freneau had concluded that fancy and the pastoral, female landscapes he associated with it were delusive and that only the ocean and the rationalistic stoicism it taught were real.[14]

By the mid-1790s this stoic resignation, which had been severely tested by Freneau's personal and financial problems, had nevertheless given the poet an emotional reserve from which he drew the strength needed to accept life whether delusive or real; and, according to Vitzthum, Freneau's moderation came only after a hard-won battle.[15]

These recent studies, then, seem to mark an emerging interest in Freneau's poetry; and as more scholarship is directed toward colonial literature, Freneau will certainly receive his share of the attention. Yet until an acceptable variorum of Freneau's poems is edited, future critics are liable to many of the difficulties that have plagued their predecessors. The editing of such a variorum, however, will be an immense task, for in his own lifetime Freneau

published six editions of his poems.[16] Four of these, appearing in 1786, 1788, 1795 and 1809, constitute the bulk of his work--nearly six hundred poems--and present enormous problems for determining a canon. In fact, the four editions reveal a continual overlapping of poems and include literally thousands of revisions, minor as well as major. And while these changes run throughout the entire corpus, most of them occur, significantly, in those poems which have attracted most critical attention.

Some of the most troublesome problems regarding Freneau's revisions are found in the 1786 edition. This was the first major collection of his work and included most of the poems that he wrote between 1768-1785. However, since many of the verses that Freneau claimed to have written in the 1770s have been found in print nowhere prior to this edition, it is difficult to be certain how much he altered these poems in preparation for the press. Given his penchant for revising, it seems likely that many, if not all, of the early poems were revised to some extent. The revisions were probably done during the late winter of 1784 and early spring of 1785 when Freneau secluded himself at his home to recuperate from an undisclosed illness.[17] At this time, the poet was being encouraged to ready his poems for publication by Francis Bailey, editor of The Freeman's Journal. Freneau was extremely productive during 1785, despite his illness. Yet judging from the poems original to this period, it is clear that Freneau was also severely

depressed; and it is probable that this mental anguish affected any revisions of earlier poems that he might have made at this time.

Consequently, the problem of dating and evaluating Freneau's early verses is thorny. If, on the one hand, these poems were revised not at all (or very little) during 1784-1785, then they indicate that, even as a young artist, Freneau had already partially understood the bleak realities of life which he later compulsively examined in his poetry. On the other hand, it is also possible that the more cynical observations which appear in some of the poems attributed to the 1770s may have been the result of later revisions. Valid arguments can be advanced for both points of view. When we examine the few texts of poems which were published in the early 1770s (most notably "The American Village"), we find that Freneau was undeniably concerned with such themes as mankind's loss of innocence, the brevity of life, and the cosmic uncertainty which surrounds us at every moment. However, when we are also able to make comparisons between earlier published texts and their revisions found in the 1786 edition, we invariably note that the poems in question have been darkened in tone and generally made more pessimistic.

The radical changes made in two of his major poems, "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" and "The House of Night" seem to indicate a profound shift in perspective between the late 1770s and the mid-1780s; and a comparison of the earlier

(1779) texts of these poems with their 1786 revisions will be made later in this study in order to demonstrate exactly this point. In addition, there are a few minor poems which also provide a basis for comparison. In its earlier form "The Farmer's Winter Evening" (1772) voices a young man's wish to escape the pressures of modern life, but as revised for the 1786 edition, this idyl (retitled "The Citizen's Resolve") paraphrases Horace's "Second Epode," and, like its classical model, caustically argues that city people cannot be satisfied with rural life and should not even consider trying it.[18] The final lines of the 1786 revision indicate the failure of urban man to adapt to the country:

> And to the western forests flew
> With fifty airy schemes in view;
> His ships were set to public sale--
> But what did all this change avail?--
> In three short months, sick of the heavenly train,
> In three short months--he moved to town again.
> (11. 81-86, text:1786)

One critic, apparently much displeased with Freneau's sarcastic alterations, has noted that this poem was "renamed, changed almost beyond recognition, and worst of all, furnished with a new ending which mocks at the poet's own sentiment."[19]

In a somewhat different vein, "Upon a Very Ancient DUTCH HOUSE..." (1772) and "The Dying Elm" (1779), both already somber in their original texts, were made even more bleak for the 1786 edition. But although numerous revisions were made in poems that first appeared in The Freeman's Journal between 1781 and 1785, they appear to be, for the

most part, minor stylistic ones and of less thematic consequence than revisions made in the earlier verses. Perhaps this is because The Freeman's Journal poems already reflected a more mature revision of the poet.

Regardless of whether we can positively ascertain that in 1784 and 1785 Freneau made extensive revisions in all of his early verses, we know that he had readied them for publication before November 1785 when he put out to sea.[20] However, because he left the poems in Bailey's hands, it has never been determined to what extent Freneau himself directed the publication of this edition and to what extent Bailey had an editorial free hand. Whatever the case, the poems (numbering over one hundred) in this volume were arranged by someone to follow roughly a chronological order according to dates of composition and/or first publication, though the placement of some of these poems has been challenged by knowledgeable scholars.[21] For instance, both "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" and "The House of Night" are juxtaposed with other poems written around 1775-1776. And while the first drafts of these poems were possibly completed by these early dates, we have already noted that major revisions were made sometime after 1779--and probably as late as 1785. Therefore, the poems, as they appear in the 1786 edition, actually represent work done largely after the mid-70s. Moreover, "The Jamaica Funeral," which seems to round out a sort of trilogy, is found with the other two poems. A reader might conclude, then, that it too was

written around 1775-1776. But in fact it is found in print nowhere before this edition, and, due to the specifics of its West-Indian setting, it was probably not written prior to Freneau's own experiences in the Caribbean after 1776. It seems likely the poem was written at about the same time that the other two were being revised.

These obvious problems notwithstanding, the placement of most of the poems in the 1786 edition seems reliable in chronological terms. Nearly two-thirds of them are political pieces, easily dated because many first appeared in The Freeman's Journal. Therefore, while we must always remain aware of the problems of compositional dating surrounding this edition, for the purposes of this study we will generally accede to Freneau's (or Bailey's) dating unless internal evidence requires an alternative dating.

But the problems of the 1786 edition do not stand alone in challenging Freneau's would-be editors. As one critic has recently noted, some poems appear to be so radically altered from one publication to another that they might be considered as separate pieces although they share the same title.[22] In fact, Freneau's life-long efforts to refine his serious work is evidenced by the thousands of revisions he made over the years in his poems. Revisions may be found not only from edition to edition but also in a multitude of newspaper variants that continued to be reprinted well into the nineteenth century.

Although an obvious solution to establishing copy texts for the many variants would be to accept as "definitive" the last published version of a poem, there are numerous difficulties in such a procedure. Regarding the newspaper verse, for instance, we cannot be sure that later revisions were not made by someone other than Freneau who might have been trying to "improve" the poem in question. Moreover, the collected editions themselves present problems. We know that both the 1786 and 1788 editions were printed by Bailey in Philadelphia; and, due to the manner in which Freneau left the manuscripts with the printer, it is possible that Bailey (or someone in his employ) made minor editorial changes in Freneau's text prior to publication. In 1795, however, Freneau, who had retired for a short time to his home in Monmouth, New Jersey, revised and personally reprinted most of the poems found in the earlier editions, adding to them some more recent verse. In 1809, he revised the 1795 text, adding many poems while omitting a few and republished it in an enlarged, two volume edition. Of the four editions mentioned here, the 1809 text is by far the most physically attractive. The type is sharper, cleaner, and more readable than that found in the earlier editions. Moreover, the spelling of many words has been purged of the eighteenth-century oddities that Freneau used as a young writer. Also there appears to have been a final attempt to place the poems in a coherent order.

Even though Freneau acknowledged his editorial supervision of the 1809 text, we should hesitate before accepting the edition as the copy text. For, in truth, there are some confusing problems surrounding the process of editing and printing the work. In a letter written to Thomas Jefferson just prior to the 1809 publication, Freneau reiterated a claim that he had also made to James Madison a few weeks earlier.

> This [the 1809 edition] is the first Edition that I have in reality attended to, the other two having been published, in a strange way, from manuscripts left to the destiny of winds, while I was wandering over gloomy seas, until embargoed by the necessity of the times. . . .[23]

The statement is clear enough, but it contradicts the facts. Certainly Freneau was referring to the 1786 and 1788 editions, published by Bailey, as "the other two"; but he had set the type and printed, on his own press in New Jersey, the 1795 edition. Yet he made no mention of this in his letters. We can only guess, then, that knowing how much the 1809 edition was going to be like the 1795 one, Freneau chose to divert attention from his own handiwork in favor of soliciting subscriptions for the newer publication. If this was the case, his judgment paid off; Philip Marsh has pointed out that "from a commercial view, it [the 1809 edition] was a success; over 1600 sets were placed."[24]

Although Freneau had laboriously edited the 1795 text, the 1809 edition also reflects careful and serious reworkings of many of the poems. Revisions can be found

throughout the later text, yet they are not as extensive nor often as important as those he had made in the 1795 edition, though variances in punctuation occur everywhere. This rather inconsequential changing of earlier punctuation may have been the printer's not Freneau's responsibility: because Lydia Bailey, the widow of Francis Bailey's son, had the poems run off at her press in Philadelphia, we cannot be absolutely sure that Freneau saw this edition through to the final proofs as we know he had done with the 1795 edition.

Critics, on the whole, however, do not challenge the authority of the 1809 text. Bowden, for example, simply accepts it as definitive.[25] And Leary notes that although the poems were published for the ostensible benefit of the widowed Mrs. Bailey, Freneau "was determined nonetheless that . . . [the edition] should be a representative collection and carefully edited."[26] If there are arguments to be raised against the 1809 edition, then, they are perhaps esthetic ones which an editor might be chary to pursue. But certainly these kinds of questions have been implied by some and asked outright by others. Does the 1809 edition represent Freneau at his best? And more importantly, do many of the poems, so radically revised by the time they appeared in the 1809 edition, reflect in their tone, structure and content the motives that had created them twenty to thirty years earlier? For as we make textual comparisons of Freneau's editions, we should keep in mind that we often confront poems in the earlier publications that were written

by a young man with a troubled view of life; whereas in the later ones, we find the same poems rewritten by an older man with quite another view of life.

Such problems have troubled other critics. Vitzthum argues that even as early as the 1795 edition, but certainly by the time the 1809 edition appeared, "Freneau tried to bring many of the pessimistic poems already collected in the 1786 and 1788 edition into line with the optimism of his post-1790 philosophy, notably softening them in the process."[27] In 1902, Samuel Forman, a descendant of the poet, wrote that the 1795 edition "is the most important edition of Freneau's poetical works that we have." Forman concluded that the 1809 edition is "neither so picturesque nor so valuable as the 1795 edition."[28] There has been no consensus among contemporary critics about the superiority of any of the editions in question; however, some critics seem to accept Forman's evaluation. Leary, for example, commends the care with which Freneau seems to have edited the 1809 edition, but also asserts that by the late 1790s "Freneau's prose was more forceful than his verse."[29] Another of Freneau's biographers, Jacob Axelrad, concurring with Leary, has noted that by 1800 "the Muse, like everything else, had failed the poet of Monmouth."[30]

Readers may judge for themselves whether or not Freneau's Muse failed him in later life. Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish the primacy of the later texts, for if Adkins, Vitzthum and others are correct, certainly

the poet's vision altered as he matured. Therefore, what really must be investigated by the would-be editor are Freneau's own reasons for radically changing some poems. Even if we set aside important considerations of poetic growth, it seems evident that by the early 1800s Freneau had become quite sensitive to critics, especially those who censured him "for the vulgarity of his language."[31] Very possibly this accounts for the euphemistic substitutions that we find throughout the 1809 edition. While the younger Freneau, in the tradition of eighteenth-century satire, had often vigorously applied a vocabulary that some more "refined tastes" might condemn, he later seemed ready to make polite revisions. As already noted, we are apt to find in Freneau's early political verse caustic attacks on the British as well as on personal enemies. But even the tone and diction of many of these poems were noticeably softened in later revisions. In some instances, Freneau expunged entirely the vitriolic passages from his earlier poems, though more often he made less radical changes. For example, in the 1786 version of "The British Prison Ship," he referred to enemy troops as ". . . those monsters whom our soil maintain'd"; by later editions (1795, 1809), they had become ". . . those legions whom our soil maintained." It may be argued that a certain objectivity is gained by this sort of revision, but other examples of "refinement" seem unsuccessful. Most modern readers, we imagine, would prefer the lively sarcasm of the lines,

> In the reign of a virgin (whom some called a whore)
> Drake, Hawkins and Raleigh in squadrons came o'er--
> ("Sketches of American History," 11. 109-110,
> texts:1786, 1795)

to their punchless revision:

> In the reign of a virgin (as author's discover)
> Drake, Hawkins and Raleigh in squadrons came over....
> (11. 109-110, text:1809)

Similar revisions are found elsewhere. In the earlier versions of "The Rising Glory of America," we encounter such words as womb, strumpets, and even breast; but by 1809, they have been changed respectively to lap, vagrants, and bosom. Here, for example, are lines which celebrate the emerging new nation:

> Just in the dawning of these mighty times,
> Whose scenes are pregnant with eternity!
> (11. 366-367, text:1786)

later revised to read:

> Just in the dawning of these mighty times,
> Whose scenes are paintings for eternity.
> (11. 367-368, texts:1795, 1809)

The image, if more consistent in the revision, is also trite.

Without further exploring the issue of Freneau's revisions at this time, we may apply a recent generalization made about the poem "The British Prison Ship" to a larger frame of reference. Bowden has noted that the language of this poem becomes "more genteel and less graphic" in later revisions.[32] This same observation might well be made about many of Freneau's poems: both in his lyrical verse and in his political verse, the revisions are almost always towards

gentility. And it is also noteworthy that several poems showing Freneau's "vulgar" side are entirely omitted from the 1809 edition.[33] Whether social, philosophical, or esthetic pressures brought about these changes in Freneau's tone and diction, the quality of his revisions must be addressed by those interested in editing his poetry.

These problems confronting future Freneau scholars have been raised for two important reasons. First, since the present study will be chiefly concerned with a number of poems that radically vary from one of Freneau's editions to the next, it seems appropriate that the reader should be introduced not only to the problem itself but also to the terminology that will be used in discussing it. Secondly, I would like to caution anyone interested in Freneau to be careful whenever using any single text of his poems--even those that have been edited by reputable scholars. Heretofore, F. L. Pattee's three-volume edition, The Poems of Philip Freneau, has provided a critical basis; but although Pattee's 1902 edition is a useful scholarly tool, it is unreliable in many instances. In fact, several years ago, Joseph Griffith noted in his Ph.D. dissertation on Freneau that "a kind of variorum text of each poem must be compiled, since no modern edition does so."[34] This is still true.

However, thanks to the efforts of Leary, who has recently supervised the reprinting of Freneau's original editions and to the work of Judith Bair, who has compiled and edited an exhaustive collection of all the known

newspaper variants of Freneau's poems, we now have available the necessary texts to begin to assess Freneau's work fully.[35] Therefore, the present study is the first to enjoy easy access to all of the textual variants. Accordingly, my preparations have included a detailed, linear comparison of the respective texts, and a compilation from that comparison of what I believe could be the essential "raw" data for determining a variorum. But as I earlier indicated, the problems of editing Freneau's work definitively will probably take years and the collective efforts of many scholars to solve.

It was in fact the aim of working towards a variorum that was the original motivation for this study. However, in the process of evaluating the textual variants, I became fascinated by a series of images that consistently appear in the verse of the mid-to-late 1780s. Most of the poems in which these images appear delineate, in some way, Freneau's youthful experiences in the West Indies and may be called for the sake of convenience his island poems. The basic theme of the recurrent images is the effect of death on the human psyche. The island group includes poems which lament the brevity of life, the loss of innocence, and the torment of unachievable goals. Drawn no doubt in part from the conventions of the eighteenth century, these "variations on a theme" nevertheless permeate the poet's work during the 1780s and become central elements in all his subsequent poetry.

Within the larger framework of the so-called island poems, there is also a sub-grouping of seven important poems which has collectively been labeled, by others, as the "Amanda" series. The poems in this series were written to or about an unidentified woman ("Amanda" is probably a fictitious name) whom Freneau apparently met on his trips to Bermuda and/or the West Indies. Curiously, as important as the "Amanda" poems appear to be to Freneau's overall life, they have been either overlooked or somewhat tentatively explored by other critics. But apart from their biographical interest, it is equally important to understand the seminal force of these poems in shaping the poet's mature vision. When we look closely at his later revisions of not only these poems but also of other related pieces, we may see, in the consistent repetition of certain words, lines and images, a major impulse in all his art. Indeed, a measure of how important the "Amanda" poems were to Freneau himself might be indicated by how laboriously he worked on them over a period of years. Radically altering them in both the 1795 and the 1809 editions, he recast lines and images, often changing meanings entirely, omitting some passages, and, in at least one instance, borrowing a complete section from one of his other (island) poems to create an "Amanda" poem.[36]

Already cited are studies by Adkins, Vitzthum and others that describe a seemingly "dark" period shadowing Freneau's philosophy during the 1780s. This study will show

that the "Amanda" poems were an essential part of that experience. It is not to be denied that, to a certain extent, the poetic mechanisms of the eighteenth century provided Freneau with a vocabulary, a languid, "grave-yard" style, and even an imagistic mix which he often used to elaborate the themes of death and unrequited love. Certainly Freneau was familiar with the literary traditions of his era. Yet the "Amanda" poems are too poignant and personal to be characterized as merely "the conventions of Romantic melancholy," as one critic has done.[37]

In order to demonstrate the importance of the "Amanda" series in Freneau's life and art, this study will examine individually as well as collectively the plots, themes and poetic structures of the poems in the series. The study will also examine poems outside the series with structural and thematic links to poems within it. For while Freneau finally limited the "Amanda" poems to seven, the "island" motif permeates his work; and there are many poems and revisions of poems which detail--directly or indirectly--portions of a complex story about the poet's life in the West Indies. Therefore, "Amanda" surfaces in numerous pieces, and her image is a symbolic vehicle through which Freneau, over the years, tested a sequence of metaphysical abstractions. To the poet, she first came to represent unattainable beauty, then earthly disappointment, and finally human resignation. As such, the myth of "Amanda" perhaps became more important to Freneau than her

real-life model. The final portrait of "Amanda," which is found in the 1809 edition, is a composite drawn from a lifetime of people and experiences that Freneau had encountered; and the story attaching itself to the figure of the island woman stands as a testament to Freneau's ability to resolve fact with fiction. The creation of the "Amanda" story provided the poet with an artistic challenge that constantly drove him to explore further his own talents. Whoever she was, "Amanda" played an important role in the poet's life; and though scholars may be severely challenged to put together all of the pieces of the puzzle represented by Freneau's island poems, by studying these poems (and their revisions) we see that, as Freneau grew older, he strove to personify in the image of "Amanda" the stoic lessons he had learned. The fact that she haunts so much of his major work indicates how powerfully Freneau had been affected by the siren's image.

At the same time there will be little attempt here to belabor a maudlin and perhaps spurious love story. Although this study offers a number of biographical theories concerning Freneau, it offers them cautiously. While the island poems, taken together, strongly suggest that Freneau lived through several unhappy "episodes of love" during his sea-faring adventures, there are inconsistencies in them which often make drawing correlations between Freneau's art and life nearly impossible--and very probably that was Freneau's intention. We see, for example, that in some

poems only one woman emerges, Venus-like, from the island settings, while elsewhere there appear to be at least two who have caught the poet's interest. Furthermore, some revisions in the 1795 and 1809 editions seem to make the alleged affair(s) more immediate; other changes provide a harmonizing distance for the poetic voice framing them. Yet, throughout Freneau's poetry, the image of the island woman (or women) consistently represents the unattainable in life. Others have maintained that the poet achieved a degree of intellectual and emotional maturity by the end of the 1780s; undoubtedly it had been shaped to a large extent by his trips to the West Indies and by his encounters there with "Amanda."

The present study will begin by reviewing the work of Freneau's youth (1768-1775) in order to establish the groundwork for further exploring the "Amanda" poems. It will then focus on the poet's early life at sea (1776-1784) as well as the dark period which followed (mid-1780s). The conclusion will discuss how Freneau ultimately transcended personal bitterness by fashioning, in verse, a story drawn from the memories of his youth. Since the study will enlarge its scope to include more than the seven "Amanda" poems <u>per se</u>, it will also try to shed light on Freneau's work as a whole. Hopefully, this analysis will then prove helpful to the larger task that lies immediately ahead--the task of producing a definitive edition of Freneau's work.

CHAPTER TWO

The Power of Fancy

The Dreamer

In 1770, Philip M. Freneau, then a young student at Princeton, poetically prayed to "The Power of Fancy" to help him escape the commonplace world, through flights of romantic imagination, to lands far off in space and time. It was not uncommon for an eighteenth-century poet to make such a request; ever since Milton's "Il Penseroso" had sung the praises of isolation, nearly every English-speaking bard had, in an "ode" of one kind or another, asked the goddess of Fancy (or Imagination or Melancholy or even Solitude) to ". . . lead me wandering still/Up to Ida's cloud-topt hill" ("The Power of Fancy," ll. 103-104, text:1786). Perhaps, then, William Shenstone was little exaggerating when, at mid-century, he exclaimed that "Milton's 'Il Penseroso' has drove [sic] half our Poets crazy." Yet Shenstone also found that this poetic mania had produced "some admirable Odes to Fancy."[1]

Probably the young, would-be poet at Princeton rather enjoyed taking part in the stylish "madness" of his age, for certainly his early poems indicate that he was well acquainted not only with the work of Milton but also with

many of the "admirable odes" of his British contemporaries.[2] Indeed, Freneau's poems written during this time rely heavily on the pensive, nearly brooding, tone that characterizes so much neo-classical melancholy. It may even be argued that they provide little more than well-worn echoes of eighteenth-century set pieces. For example, "The Power of Fancy" and "Retirement" (1771?), both subdued in tone, search for an idealized escape from the pressures and boredom of modern life while "The Pyramids of Egypt" (1770) and "Upon a Very Ancient DUTCH HOUSE on LONG ISLAND" (1772) sound conventional laments over the ravages of time and the unhappy lot of mankind. These poems, as well as other early verse, echo scores of eighteenth-century British models; nevertheless, they reflect in theme, tone and often technical virtuosity that the young college student had seriously applied himself to contemporary literature and was, even as a teen-ager, writing well in a tradition he had already absorbed.

Yet, the study of modern authors had not completely dominated Freneau during his college years. By the time he graduated in 1771, he had become, as was expected of all students at Princeton, widely read in the classics, especially Latin.[3] An indication of Freneau's respect for classical literature may be noted by his choosing the affirmative in a college debate: "Does Ancient Poetry Excel the Modern?" But more essential than his concern for ancient and/or modern literature was, perhaps, his study of

theology, for his biographers tell us that he had gone to Princeton with the intention of becoming a Presbyterian minister.[4] It seems, then, that in his college years Freneau was already thinking about moral and doctrinal problems. Such concerns surface in his writing ofthis period; and, perhaps, as Adkins has suggested, Freneau's immersion in the classical authors, particularly Lucretius, began very early to undermine his initial plans to be a Christian preacher.[5] For whatever reasons, he had determined by 1773 to renounce "his calling" and, as he wrote in one of his notebooks to bid "farewell to the study of Divinity which is, in fact, the study of Nothing!"[6]

Philip Marsh has suggested that shortly after this time, Freneau became a Deist.[7] Although other critics have been less certain about setting a date for Freneau's conversion, there is a general consensus that he did become a "free-thinker" by the time he was in his early twenties. Yet it is difficult to codify Freneau's religious beliefs at any time during his life, for his effort to find spiritual significance in a cosmos that offered contradictory physical evidence became a life-long quest. Unlike John Locke, whose materialism did not prevent the philosopher from finally acting on his choice to accept faith in a higher power, Freneau very early trapped himself in a Lucretian world of sensory perceptions that proved, much to his later despair, to be spiritually bleak and unbending. On the other hand, it took him years to realize fully the

implications of such a world view; and, in that sense, the very act of testing his vision became his "life's work." It seems clear that by the mid-1770s the poet had not fully understood the intellectual and emotional implications of his materialistic philosophy. Although his early verse shows a penchant for melancholy, it shows little evidence of genuine, personal suffering. Of course he had known sorrow when his father died in 1767; but it took several more emotional shocks as well as years at sea before he fully grasped the nihilistic "truths" he had posited in some of his early work.

Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain just how severely young Freneau was testing his own beliefs in the early 1770s, for the facts concerning his life immediately after graduating from college are sketchy. Again, his biographers compose a picture of a young artist searching unsurely for a way to fit into a society "employed in edging steel." His mother having been twice widowed by 1772 and the family estate in Monmouth, New Jersey, having already begun to decline, Freneau found little time to devote himself solely to poetry. Needing a way to earn a living, the young man, "fitted for nothing in particular," as Jacob Axlerad has said,[8] tried for a short time in Philadelphia to study law and even medicine in hopes of finding his niche. As with many other early ventures, these produced little reward; and, more out of necessity than inclination, he decided to become a teacher--first (1772) at a school in

Long Island and later (1773) with his college friend Hugh Henry Brackenridge, at Somerset Academy near Princess Anne, Maryland. Both experiences were odious to him.[9] In the next year or so, always apparently close to poverty, he travelled throughout the middle colonies, becoming increasingly involved in the Revolution and publishing many anti-British poems. By 1775, he was in New York City caught up in the hectic preparations for war but, if we can surmise correctly from his verse, wishing he were somewhere else.

It is the verse of the early years that most concerns us here, for, as was noted in the introduction, many of the themes explored in depth in Freneau's more mature work seem to be only touched upon in these first poems.[10] Perhaps the most fundamental struggle of Freneau's youth--his refusal to become a preacher--was first poetically sublimated in the character of Jonah, the Old-Testament prophet whose resistance to God's Will made him seek more to avoid Jehovah than to obey Him. Freneau had paraphrased the biblical story in verse ("The Poetical History of the Prophet Jonah") as early as 1768. At that time the poet's own apostasy was too ill defined (if it existed at all) to defend Jonah's anger at God, even when the Creator, as a final test, destroyed a gourd tree, the shade of which had protected Jonah from the desert sun. Nevertheless, Freneau vigorously set forth Jonah's defiance at being forced into God's service, then seemingly betrayed and even tortured:

My rage is just, (the frantic prophet cry'd),
My last, my only comfort is deny'd--
The spreading vine that formed my leafy bower,
Behold it vanish'd in the needful hour!
To beating winds and sultry suns a prey
My fainting spirit droops and dies away--
Give me a mansion in my native dust,
For though I die with rage, my rage is just.
(11. 69-76, text:1786)

We find here not only an expression of righteous anger but also hints of unhappiness at being deprived of a refuge from the harsh realities of life. This need to escape from harshness is an important theme in Freneau's early verse, one that suggests that Freneau's escape to the West Indies in 1776 was a self-created fulfillment of the romantic dreams so often expressed in earlier poems. For, directly or indirectly, much of the early work repeats this basic question: How can I avoid the call of unpleasant duty, find freedom to explore my own romantic nature as well as my talents, and yet not suffer the consequences?

In a few early pieces, Freneau had begun to look for an answer close at hand. A piece entitled "The Farmer's Winter Evening: A Poem to a Nymph I Never Saw" (1770) creates a somewhat naive observer who requests very little of life. He wants only a modest home in the country and a loving wife to share it with.

O could I here [on the farm] find my abode,
And live within this fancy'd wood,
With thee [an imagined wife] the weeks and
years to pass,
My pretty rural shepherdess;
With thee the cooling spring to sip,
Or live upon thy damask lip:
The sacred groves, and shades divine,
And all ARCADIA should be mine.
(1145-52, text:1772)

In another poem, "Retirement" (1771), a narrator also voices his desire to escape modern civilization by moving to the country. He too asks for "A Hermit's house beside a stream/With forest planted round." The conclusion of this poem, however, embraces a deeper understanding of mankind's condition than is found in "The Farmer's Winter Evening." In condemning the vanity of human ambition in general, the narrator implies that even humble desires may be unattainable:

> Vain foolish man! how vast thy pride,
> How little can thy wants supply.'--
> 'Tis surely wrong to grasp so wide--
> We act as if we only had
> To triumph--not to die![11]
> (11. 16-20, text:1786)

Perhaps, then, the vision of a country "retirement" was already darkening for Freneau, sensing as he did that such a life could not really evade reality. At least he seemed to realize this in another poem written about the same time as the two above. In "Upon a Very Ancient DUTCH HOUSE..." (1772), he used a description of an abandoned farm to symbolize mankind's fate. Here the speaker treats rural life as a wishful dream, the pursuit of which fails to alter the human condition.

> BEHOLD this antique dome by envious time,
> Grown crazy, and in ev'ry part decay'd:
> Full well, alas, it claims my humble rhyme,
> For such lone haunts and contemplations made.
> (11. 1-4, text:1772)

Farm houses (and by extension, their occupants) are destroyed by time; perhaps for Freneau the dreams of rural escape were equally fragile.

Nevertheless, it is difficult in these early poems to separate Freneau's real convictions from his literary devices. It is even more difficult to determine how deeply he had thought about his impulse to escape life's unpleasantness. On the one hand, his persistent declaration that he wanted "to run away from it all" indicates a kind of immaturity; on the other hand, his equally persistent assertion that mankind cannot "run away" suggests a reasoned acceptance of the facts of life. Perhaps, he had become at least intellectually convinced, as he left college, that all of man's efforts to evade reality were doomed to defeat; though, as we have already noted, the stoicism of some of his early verse often seems wise beyond the poet's own experiences. For instance, "The Pyramids of Egypt" (1770) asserts that everything must decay:

> ...Man, and, Death, and Time,
> (Time no immortal, but a fancied point)
> In the vast circle of eternity)
> Are swallow'd up, and, like the pyramids,
> Leave not an atom for their monument.
> (ll. 131-136, text:1786)

Although Freneau voiced these apparent realizations that rural life was, for him at least, an untenable dream and that human efforts in general were doomed to oblivion, he was not yet ready to resign himself to apathetic despair. On the contrary, he seems to have been at heart a dreamer; and while his life immediately after college was anything but glamorous, he continually envisioned grand, romantic escapes for himself.[12] "The Power of Fancy," written

shortly before he left college, can be understood as more than a conventional piece if seen in light of Freneau's escapist tendencies. Although on one level it appears to be a college imitation of other poems of the genre, it nevertheless externalizes Freneau's youthful desire to leave the stifling artistic climate of colonial America. Freneau's narrator in the poem almost begs "Fancy" to help him escape to any point in space and time--even to Great Britain; for despite his later reputation as an Anglophobe, Freneau was always a bit envious of British poets who had never been forced to contend with American materialism. At least in imagination, then, he wanted to see the motherland.

> Lead me to yon' chalky cliff,
> Over rock and over reef,
> Into Britain's fertile land,
> Stretching far her proud command.
> (ll. 85-88, text:1786)

But of course a still greater delight was that poetic fancy could take him wherever he chose to go.

> Fancy, to thy power I owe
> Half my happiness below;
> By thee Elysian groves were made
> Thine were the notes that Orpheus play'd;
> By thee was Pluto charm'd so well
> While rapture seiz'd the sons of hell--
> Come, O come -- perceiv'd by none,
> You and I will walk alone.
> (ll. 149-155)

Escaping into the world of the mind, however, could not long satisfy Freneau. Mental voyages did little to alter one's life fundamentally; and, therefore, he seemed to ask constantly in his early verse where he might find real

"Elysian groves" here on earth. As this dream of evading a life plagued by daily problems became an obsession during the next few years, Freneau simultaneously began in the fiction of his poetry to shape a recurrent image of tropical islands which might offer such refuge. As early as "The Power of Fancy," he had asked to be taken away "To Bermuda's orange shades,/Or Demarara's lovely glades."[13] But it was not until two years later, in a much longer poem entitled "The American Village" (1772), that Freneau began to explore in depth his own fantasies about the tropics. This poem, which was published in a thin volume (including only three other verses), has been closely studied by numerous critics who often compare it to Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," on which it is obviously modelled. But the essential thrust of Freneau's poem is, as William Andrews has suggested, not so much to imitate Goldsmith's poem as to reapply creatively the subject matter to Freneau's own philosophical purposes. "The Deserted Village" eulogizes the passing of a rural English way of life. "The American Village," on the other hand, examines the passing of man's innocence in the modern world while still extolling the potential glory of America.[14]

As a vehicle for expressing his own ideas, Freneau structured, mid-way through the poem, an elaborate yet rather bizarre passage about a lovely island that ". . . once adorn'd the sea/Between New-Albion and Mexic Bay." There follows a long, pastoral description of this lost island where happy native "swains" once spent ". . . days in

labour's pleasant pain" working on their farms. The idyl concludes, however, with a disturbing vision of the island's destruction by ". . . envious time conspiring with the sea."[15] Following this seventy-six-line tribute to "paradise lost," the poem returns to its basic theme--celebrating the emergence of America. Although the inclusion of this island passage may seem to cause a puzzling thematic break in the poem's development, it integrates a picture of past glory as a sort of societal yardstick by which to measure the greatness of America. Ultimately the poem suggests that the only possible place where mankind has a chance to reinstate the "golden age" is in the new country. In fact, the juxtaposition of these themes (mankind's loss of innocence as well as hope for refinding it in America) reveals in this early poem a conscious political and philosophical message not only about Freneau's view of America and the so-called pastoral myth but also about his view of mankind's need to create myths. Vitzthum has noted that in the poem,

> since the realities of mortal life (the physical decay symbolized by the inevitable erosion of the island by the sea) rule out the possibility of a truly harmonious relation between human beings and nature, Freneau will celebrate a pastoral, a relatively benign America . . . as a socially and politically useful second choice. Freneau's promulgation of an agrarian, quasi-primitivistic political myth for America during the course of the next forty years stemmed from a decision reflected in these lines and was cool, premeditated, and in a sense manipulative from beginning to end.[16]

Because this politically motivated pastoralism is traceable throughout Freneau's work (in poems set in America

as well as those set in the West Indies), we should question how much the young poet actually believed in his own romantic history of a sunken paradise or, for that matter, how much he really believed that he would find freedom and artistic inspiration by journeying to warmer climates. Indeed, one of the notable features of the poet's evolving art was his ability to "see" himself examining his own ideas. In "Upon a Very Ancient DUTCH HOUSE...," for instance, he had realized that only a self-conscious poet would lament decaying farmhouses and wander in "such lone haunts." Perhaps, then, Freneau's practical side suggested to him, even at an early age, that only in fiction could man create unspoiled landscapes. Such a realization seems implicit in his pastoral myth of America, which was, according to Vitzthum, "premeditated and manipulative" from the start. Furthermore, both Adkins and Bowden have also noted that as Freneau became more sensitive to the contradictions of life, he also became aware of the philosophical contradictions of some of his poems.[17] And it does appear that the poet was always conscious of merely working out answers with which he could live.

But even if the young poet was using the myth of the sunken island only as political propaganda in 1772, he was ready by 1775 to realize his dream of escape. Despite his pessimistic assertions about the fate of man, Freneau undeniably heard a romantic "call of the tropics" and determined to make his break with the life he had known and put

to sea. He seems to have realized how untested he was for such a life; for even as early as "The Prophet Jonah" (1768) he had described with some feeling the horrors of an ocean storm:

> But He who spread the ocean's vast expense,
> And views all nature with a single glance,
> Forth from their prisons bade the tempests fly--
> The tempests swell'd the oceans to the sky;
> The trembling barque, as the fierce billow knocks,
> Scarce bears the fury of repeated shocks.
> (ll. 25-30, text:1786)

He would come much closer than this to a "trembling barque" and "fierce billows" over the next few years, but for now the safety of inexperience convinced him to leave behind the colder climates, the rigors of war, and the personal hardships he had already known in order to seek paradise. Indeed, the vision of the islands had grown strong in his poetry. It is possible, of course, that he was again merely echoing the British literary tradition that from the time of Shakespeare's The Tempest to James Grainger's The Sugar-Cane had romanticized the West Indies.[18] But, it is also possible that the poet was being quite sincere when he prayed to the Goddess of Fancy to "Waft me far to Southern Isles/Where the soften'd winter smiles."

Nowhere in the early verse, however, did Freneau more clearly indicate his rebellion against the life he was living than in a poem called "MacSwiggen; A Satire." Revised from a college verse, the poem was first published in 1775 as an attack on an unidentified, rival poet

("MacSwiggen") who had apparently ridiculed some of Freneau's work.[19]

> If thus, tormented at these slightly lays,
> You strive to blast what ne'er was meant for praise,
> How will you bear the more exalted rhyme
> By labour polish'd, and matur'd by time?
> (ll. 13-16, text:1786)

The rest of the poem explores the poet's own present dilemma. Admittedly he is repulsed by "Macswiggen's" crude verses as well as by his rival's stupidity. But thinking that the fight may not be worth the trouble, the poet considers retreating to some rural haven. Predictably, he asks the Muses to help him escape:

> O waft me far, ye muses of the west--
> Give me your green bowers and soft seats of rest--
> There happy in those dear retreats to find
> A safe retirement from all human kind.
> (ll. 51-54)

But then, angered by the thought that running away may admit defeat, the poet momentarily considers fighting:

> Assist me, gods, to drive this dog of rhyme
> Back to the torments of his native clime.
> (ll. 83-84)

As the poem concludes, however, the poet tires again of the battle and, in appealing to Reason to help him, voices the overriding fantasy that now seems to control his thinking.

> Sick of all feuds, To Reason I appeal
> From wars of paper, and from wars of steel,
> Let others here their hopes and wishes end,
> I to the sea with weary steps descend,
> Quit the mean conquest that such swine might yield,
> And leave MacSwiggen to enjoy the field--
> In distant isles some happier scene I'll choose,
> And court in softer shades the unwilling Muse.
> (ll. 149-156)

"MacSwiggen" indicates how eager Freneau was for adventure and how bent he was on leaving his own homeland. As we have seen in these early poems, he had prayed to Fancy, to the Muses, and finally even to Reason to "waft" him away. Surely enough, in 1776, perhaps through the aid of family and friends, Freneau at last found employment aboard a trading ship bound for St. Croix (Santa Cruz) in the Danish West Indies.[20] Having created a vision of himself as a poetic wanderer who would be most content living "in distant isles," he now set out to test the vision.

The Voyager

The next three years seemed to bring Freneau the excitement he had been seeking. By the time in 1779 when he first began to publish his adventures, he had sailed all over the Caribbean, had seen first-hand the lush beauties of the islands, and had been greatly affected by them. The first published account of his experiences in the tropics frankly confesses his inadequacy to write about them: "But how shall I describe this fair, this romantic island [Bermuda], such as nature has formed it? I am unequal to the task, and can only draw some faint sketches of what is not to be described."[21] Although he may have felt unable to describe the "romantic" islands, their sensual pleasures nevertheless lured him to return repeatedly to southern waters in the decade between 1776 and 1786--a period filled with events which shaped the rest of his life and art.

When he first arrived in Santa Cruz in early 1776, Freneau was invited to stay as a guest of Captain John Hanson, on whose ship he had taken passage.[22] Hanson's luxurious plantation must have provided the poet with not only artistic inspiration but also a base of operations from which to sail to nearby islands and to apply what he had been studying in Robertson's Elements of Navigation.[23] Soon adopting the life of a seaman and perhaps even becoming a war-time privateer, he spent the next several years as a professional sailor. A glimpse of his travels may be gained from notes he jotted on the fly leaf of his copy of Ovid: ". . . in 1777 I was Supercargo of the Sloop Liberty. Several voyages to Bermuda . . . also to Demerara, Honduras, Curassoe, Porto Cavallo, and Cumana, Maracaybo, in 1776. 1777."[24] After a two year odyssey, Freneau returned to New Jersey for a short time in the summer of 1778. On this return voyage, his ship was captured by the British; but obviously Freneau convinced his captors that he was a civilian, for he was released once in port.[25]

Over the next few years, however, Freneau's life, both on land and sea, became as hectic as the times in which he lived. The war he had left behind was still being fought, and, possibly responding to his conscience, he enlisted, for a short time, in the New Jersey militia. But his apprentice years at sea having qualified him now to become a ship's captain, he sailed again in October of 1778 as "master of the Indian Delaware" bound for St. Eustatius.[26]

During the course of the next year, he completed a number of voyages, for patriotic as well as for commercial reasons, which took him as far away as the Canary Islands of Teneriffe.[27]

During the periods of time that he spent at home, Freneau was also busy. In January 1779, his college friend and fellow writer, Hugh Henry Brackenridge began to edit in Philadelphia a new literary journal, the United States Magazine. It is possible that Freneau helped Brackenridge formulate the democratic principles that guided the journal, but in any event the publication provided "Captain" Freneau with a ready outlet for his own poems and prose. In fact, the very first issue (January 1779) carried Freneau's ecstatic prose account of the West Indies (and Bermuda), written, so the title claimed, by "a young American Philosopher and Bel Esprit, just returned from several small Voyages amongst those Islands."[28] Although the journal ceased publication after only one year, "almost every number of the United States Magazine contained contributions from Freneau."[29] More significantly, the magazine published two of Freneau's major poems, "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" and "The House of Night," both of which reflect his early experiences in the West Indies and both of which were later radically revised before inclusion in the 1786 edition. Together, they provide an indispensable record of the poet's emotional growth during these years and help to clarify other "island poems" that were written in the 1780s.

"The Beauties of Santa Cruz" narrates a way of life that Freneau had known in the tropics. Published in the second issue of the United States Magazine (February 1779), the poem was an addendum to a prose description of St. Croix.[30] As such, the piece was left untitled at first, but when Freneau revised it for the 1786 edition he gave it the title. Reworking the poem for the 1795 edition, he simply called it "Santa Cruz"; then in 1809 he went back to the earlier, long title. In fact, Freneau never seemed satisfied with "Santa Cruz," revising it in minor ways like this as well as in more significant ways that reveal the shifting perspective of the poet as clearly as anything he ever published. Moreover, the 1786 revisions suggest that during his life in the West Indies, Freneau had experienced some personal unhappiness which perhaps included the death of a young woman.

The first published version of "Santa Cruz" is fifty-two quatrains long. Ostensibly a narrative, the poem is actually a very personal and reflective examination of the tropical island, spoken by a sensitive observer who ponders the beauties of nature not only from an intimate, personal point of view but also at times from a critical distance.[31] Writing from a first-hand knowledge he did not have in his earlier, island poems, Freneau was now able to describe a lovely, paradisiacal world he had actually seen. Nevertheless, he was, as always, eager to politicize his

subject matter; and from its opening stanzas, "Santa Cruz" reveals a kind of propagandist motive:

> Sick of thy northern glooms, come shepherd seek
> Less rigorous climes, and a more friendly sky:
> Why shouldst thou toil amidst the frozen ground,
> Where half year snows a barren prospect lie?
>
> When thou mayst go where never frost was seen,
> Or north-west winds with cutting fury blow.
> (ll. 1-6, text:1779, United States Magazine)

This attempt to lure the northerner to the tropics continues as Freneau, often using specific names and details, catalogues what a "northern shepherd" should hope to find when he journeys southward: a healthy climate, beautiful waters, abundant fish, and exotic flora and fauna. As the poem concludes, it presents an openly political argument for coming to the West Indies:

> Then shepherd haste and leave behind thee far,
> Thy bloody plains and iron glooms above
> Quit thy cold northern star, and here enjoy,
> Beneath the smiling skies this land of love.
> (ll. 193-196)

Because this call is made so overtly, some critics have been ready to point out that "Santa Cruz" is a poem filled with Freneau's own sense of guilt for leaving his homeland, embroiled in war, and seeking refuge in island retreats. Thus the poem has been seen as Freneau's troubled apology for evading military duty. In a recent article, Jane Eberwein has even suggested that "the northern shepherd . . . may be seen as another dimension of . . . [Freneau] himself rather than a second person, and the invitation to escape becomes an internal argument."[32]

However that may be, the poem does reveal some troubling contradictions that exist in Freneau's paradise. The original 1779 version, in fact, contains some unsettling references to the dangers of Santa Cruz. Almost as soon as the speaker introduces his readers to the lovely island, he also informs them that ". . . threatening waters roar on every side." In addition, the tropical foods, though tasty and abundant, can sometimes deceive newcomers who should beware ". . . the poisonous manchineal,/Which for its fragrant apple pleaseth thee." And though the celebrated sugar cane is not deadly, it has been known, nevertheless, to act as a narcotic, causing hapless sailors, Ulysses-like, to "think no more of home."

Not only is the narrator concerned about these incidental hazards of the island, but, toward the end of the poem, he also briefly denounces the institution of slavery that he has seen there. The subject depresses him greatly, however, and he forces himself to erase it from his mind: ". . . O quit them [these thoughts] my muse." Unfortunately, this mental depression leads him to consider the island's violent hurricanes, a subject that seriously challenges the poem's carefully wrought images of nature at peace with the world. While the opening of the poem invites the northern shepherds to leave their cold, "rigorous climes," while soothing them with assurances that "no threatening tides upon our island rise," the conclusion suddenly warns them that:

These climes, lest nature should have been too kind,
And man have sought his happiest heaven below,
Are torn with mighty winds, fierce hurricanes,
Nature convuls'd in every form of woe.
(11. 157-160)

Perhaps, as a recent critic has noted, "Freneau's personal sense of guilt at having sat out part of the Revolution while lolling in the West Indies" forced him to acknowledge these negative features of his island paradise.[33] The poem's last two stanzas seem to indicate the speaker's own awareness that his entire effort to lure northerners south may be unconvincing.

Yet if persuaded by no lay of mine,
You still admire your climes of frost and snow,
And pleas'd prefer above our southern groves,
The darksome forests that around thee grow,--

Still there remain--thy native air enjoy,
Repel the tyrant who thy peace invades,
While pleas'd I trace the vales of Santa Cruz,
And sing with raptures her inspiring shades.

Although others have already noted this negativeness concerning the island, it is much more pronounced in the 1786 version than in the 1779. Indeed, the 1779 poem is primarily a song of praise; whereas the 1786 revision, which is more than twice as long, poignantly stresses the delusiveness of the entire island adventure.[34] The eight-line prologue, added to the 1786, sets the tone of the entire revision:

Sweet orange groves, the fairest of the isle,
In soft shade luxuriously reclin'd,
Where, round my fragrant bed, the florets smile
In sweet delusions I deceive my mind.

> But Melancholy's gloom assail my breast;
> For potent nature reigns despotic here;--
> A nation ruin'd, and a world oppress'd
> Might rob the boldest stoic of a tear.
> (Prologue, text:1786)

While the earlier text certainly touches on unpleasant features of the island, the 1786 almost belabors topics such as slavery:

> See, yonder slave that slowly bends this way,
> With years, and pain, and ceaseless toil oppress,
> Though no complaining words his woes betray,
> The eye dejected proves the heart distrest.
> (ll. 285-288)

hurricanes:

> Low hung the clouds, distended with the gale
> The clouds, dark brooding, winged their circling flight,
> Tremendous thunders joined the hurricane,
> Daughter of chaos, and eternal night!
> (ll. 333-336)

and personal sadness amid the ruins:

> That plantane grove, where oft I fondly strayed,
> Thy darts, dread Phoebus, in those glooms to shun,
> Is now no more a refuge or a shade,
> Is now with rocks and deep sands over-run.
> (ll. 341-344)

Moreover, the 1786 text introduces a subject which is not even mentioned in the 1779 version. Venereal disease plagues the island.

> Nor think Hygeia is a stranger here--
> To sensual souls the climate may fatal prove,
> Anguish and death attend, and pain severe,
> The midnight revel, and licentious love.
> (ll. 97-100)

Obviously these dark, introspective additions heavily color the 1786 version of "Santa Cruz" and point to major shifts in Freneau's evaluation of his own life in the

Caribbean. Among the most significant revisions in the poem, however, is the addition of a narrative about a young island woman named "Aurelia" who dies awaiting the return of her absent lover. But although the story seems to be crucial to the revised poem, it is outlined in rather vague terms, hinting at more than it clarifies. Nevertheless it does make clear that the narrator himself mourns the young woman's death and that, to a certain extent, her death accounts for his overall depressions about the island.

> Once in these groves divine Aurelia stray'd!--
> Then, conscious nature, smiling, look'd more gay;
> But soon she left the dear delightful shade,
> The shade, neglected, droops and dies away,
>
> And pines for her return, but pines in vain,
> In distant isles belov'd Aurelia died,
> Pride of the plains, ador'd by every swain,
> Sweet warbler of the woods, and of the woods the pride.
>
> Philander early left this rural maid,
> Nor yet return'd, by fate compell'd to roam,
> But absent from the heavenly girl he stray'd,
> Her charms forgot, forgot his native home.
>
> O fate severe to seize the nymph so soon,
> The nymph, for whom a thousand shepherds sigh,
> And in the space of one revolving moon
> To doom the fair one and her swain to die!
> (ll. 137-152)

Despite its neoclassic conventions--swain, shepherds, nymph, Aurelia, Philander--[35] the passage hints of biographical fact, however truncated and ambiguous. Who, for instance, is "Philander"? It appears that he is a third party whom "divine Aurelia" has loved--even though he has deserted her. If this is the correct reading, the narrator is lamenting "Aurelia's" inability to forget"Philander."

However, if, instead, "Philander" represents the narrator, who once having left the islands, returns now to find "Aurelia" dead--and thereby emotionally "dies" himself--the poem gains a new meaning. This second reading seems unlikely, however, unless the entire section is considered as an abstract reflection on the part of the narrator, who specifically intends the line, "Nor yet return'd, by fate compell'd to roam . . .," to indicate, after the fact, that he has come home too late to save "Aurelia." Unfortunately, there are no other clues in the poem to help resolve the issue. Only this fact emerges clearly: the narrator has been left alone because "Aurelia" has died.

His loneliness notwithstanding, he gets some pleasure from the other beautiful features of the island. He is acutely aware of the lush forms of life surrounding him as he moves through "paradise," where, Adam-like, he names the plants (and fruits) he encounters: fustick, manchineal, lemon, lime, orange, banana, mangrove, gregory, mastic, tamarind, grenadillo, guava, melon, cashew, plumb, bell apple, jayama, anana, cotton, coffee bean, papaw, mamee, cocoa-nut, shaddock, palmetto, prickly pear, cassada, plantane, and, of course, sugar cane.[36] But these pleasant distractions do not cheer him up for long. Ultimately saddened, he encounters in the lonely tidal waters of the island an enchanting flower which serves as a metaphor for his entire Santa Cruz experience:

Along the shore a wondrous flower is seen,
Where rocky ponds receive the surging wave,
Some drest in yellow, some attired in green,
Beneath the water their gay branches lave.

This mystic plant, with its bewitching charms,
Too surely springs from some enchanted bower,
Fearful it is, and dreads impending harms,
And ANIMAL the natives call the flower.
(11. 257-264)

Though the narrator cannot precisely identify "this mystic plant," he may be describing the sea anemone, which thrives in tropical waters. Possibly the word animal is itself a corruption of the word anemone, or perhaps it is an unschooled observation that this "flower" is really a marine animal. Whatever the actual plant may have been, it conveys to the narrator a lesson that he feels the whole island has been trying to teach him:

From the smooth rock its little branches rise,
The object of thy view, and that alone,
Feast on its beauties with thy ravished eyes,
But aim to touch it, and--the flower is gone.

Nay, if thy shade but intercept the beam
That gilds their boughs beneath the briny lake,
Swift they retire, like a deluding dream,
And even a shadow for destruction take.

Warned by experience, hope not thou to gain
The magic plant thy curious hand invades;
Returning to the light, it mocks thy pain,
Deceives all grasps, and seeks its native shades!
(11. 265-276)

This unobtainable flower becomes a central symbol in the 1786 version of "Santa Cruz," one tightly linked in meaning with the earlier, unhappy episode concerning "divine Aurelia" who was "ador'd by every swain," including the narrator himself. Unlike "Aurelia," who forsaking her

"delightful shade" brought death not only to herself but also to her lover, this "magic plant" thrives only in "its native shades," and "deceives" all who would carry it away. Yet for the narrator the results are similar. He has not been able to make contact with either; and this realization carries through to the poem's conclusion, in which the narrator, "warned by experience," is no longer deluded by a floral paradise that has kept him from reality. Sadly he acknowledges that he must now leave the island.

> On these blue hills, to cull Fancy's flowers,
> Might yet awhile the unwelcome work delay,
> Might yet beguile the few remaining hours--
> Ere to those waves I take my destined way.
> (ll. 361-364)

The revised "Santa Cruz," therefore, rejects the narrator's earlier attempts to escape into an imaginary world of beauty that proves to be deceptive. Duty, necessity, and death cannot be avoided by an act of will. The loss of "Aurelia" as well as his inability to touch the "mystic flower" reminds the narrator that all of mankind's delusions must fail. Found in Freneau's verse throughout the 1780s, the theme permeates not only the revised "Santa Cruz" but also the revisions of "The House of Night," a long narrative poem which examines the power of death over the human psyche.

Because the subject matter of "The House of Night" seems unrelated to that of "Santa Cruz," a reader may at first find little to connect them. Yet their tone, structure, and method of composition bind them together. For one

thing, "The House of Night" like "Santa Cruz" first appeared in the United States Magazine in 1779 (October) and was greatly revised and lengthened (from 73 quatrains to 136) for the 1786 edition.[37] While the 1786 revisions of "The House of Night" perhaps indicate a less drastic change in overall tone and message than do the revisions of "Santa Cruz," they also reflect Freneau's growing pessimism as he matured. "The House of Night" may be compared to "Santa Cruz" in other ways as well. For instance, it is technically similar, utilizing the stanzaic formula (iambic pentameter) and rhyme scheme (basically abcb with occasional alternates abab) often found in Freneau's longer poems. Moreover, the poem's narrator also seems to waver between emotional and rational reactions to the events he witnesses. Yet unlike the narrator of "Santa Cruz," who appears to be more troubled in the 1786 revision, the narrator of "The House of Night" remains relatively consistent in both versions.

In both the 1779 and 1786 versions, however, "The House of Night" is a bizarre tone piece dominated by images of sickness, gloom, and death. Gothic sensationalism may have been Freneau's chief aim in the first draft, probably finished as early as 1775 before he left for the West Indies.[38] But as the poem developed during the next ten years, themes and images derived from the Caribbean experiences surfaced, so that by 1786, "The House of Night" appeared as part of a three-poem block which includes not

only "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" but also another poem (in the same metrical style), entitled "Jamaica Funeral." It seems clear that the ideas that first shaped each of these poems became linked in the mind of the poet, who grew to regard them as a nexus of meaning which he continually recombined and reshaped. In fact, by the time the 1795 editions appeared, Freneau had dismantled "The House of Night"[39] cutting 115 of its quatrains and completely omitted "Jamaica Funeral" while revising "Santa Cruz" to include stanzas taken from both of the others. Also, he created two apparently "new" funeral pieces--"The Sexton's Sermon" and "Elegaic Lines"--by recombining verses taken from "The House of Night" and "Jamaica Funeral."[40]

At least in the process of its revisions, then, "The House of Night" can be linked to Freneau's island poems in general and to "Santa Cruz" in particular--even though its setting is clearly established in both the 1779 and 1786 versions as the Chesapeake region of North America. Actually, the poem's real setting is the dark landscape of phantasmagoria; and, in this regard, it echoes Freneau's earlier tribute to the "Power of Fancy" as a force able to transmit the poet to other worlds.[41] Yet the narrator here does not travel to exciting and romantic lands; instead, he takes a mental voyage to an austere, howling region near the sea where, in the gloom, he discovers "a pile of buildings." Entering one of these, he encounters a gruesome scene in which Death, himself, is in the process of dying.

> Turning to view from whence the murmur came,
> My frighted eyes a horrid form survey'd!
> Death, dreary death, upon the gloomy couch,
> With flesh-less limbs in rueful form was laid.
> (ll. 61-64, text:1779, United States Magazine)

The narrator, repulsed and even angered by Death's own pleas for mercy (and hopes for salvation), is moved by a sense of pity to minister to the dying victim. He joins with another young man (unnamed in the 1779 version, but called "Cleon" in 1786) who is already present, and together they watch at the bedside throughout the night while carrying on a conversation with Death about his crimes. After Death dies, the narrator attends his funeral along with demons who have been associated with Death ("Each wore a vest by Pluto's consort wove"). At this time, the narrator feels compelled to write what he has seen:

> But as I stoop'd to write the appointed verse,
> Swifter than thought the airy scene decay'd;
> Blooming the morn arose, and in the east
> Stalk'd gallantly in her sun-beam parade.
> (ll. 265-268, text:1779)

In the 1779 version, the entire experience is precisely identified as a fantasy: "Waking I found my weary night a dream" (l.269). And even the 1786 revision, which is less direct on this point, still leaves little room for doubt:

> But as I stoop'd to write the appointed verse,
> Swifter than thought the airy scene decay'd;
> Blushing the morn arose, and from the east
> With her gay streams of light dispell'd the shade.
> (ll. 521-524, text:1786)

Because this "victory" over Death is represented as appearing in a dream, the final message of "The House of Night" has remained ambiguous. On the one hand, a Christian might

find, in both versions, a narrative of Death's long-awaited defeat, made more elaborate in the 1786 revision:[42]

> Lights in the air like burning stars were hurl'd,
> Dogs howl'd, heaven mutter'd, and tempest blew,
> The red half-moon peep'd from behind a cloud
> As if in dread the amazing scene to view.
> (ll. 417-420, text:1786)

On the other hand, a non-Christian might point out that, after all, the death of Death is treated in the poem as nothing more than a deluded fantasy. In the 1779 version, the narrator himself is left questioning the meaning of the nightmare:

> Do they [dreams] portend approaching death, which tell
> I soon must hence my darksome journey go?
> Sweet Cherub Hope! Dispel the clouded dream
> Sweet Cherub Hope, man's guardian god below.
> (ll. 273-276, text:1779)

Possibly aware that the 1779 version leaves important questions unresolved, Freneau simply added in 1786 what amounts to a pagan codicil, derived almost verbatim from Lucretius' De Rerum Natura.[43]

> What is this Death, ye deep read sophists say?
> Death is no more than unceasing change;
> New forms arise, while other forms decay,
> Yet all is Life throughout creations range.
>
> . . .
>
> Hills sink to plains, and man returns to dust
> That dust supports a reptile or a flower;
> Each changeful atom by some other nurs'd
> Takes some new forms to perish in an hour.
>
> . . .
>
> When Nature bid thee from the world retire,
> With joy thy lodgings leave, a sated guest,
> In Paradise the land of thy desire,
> Existing always, always to be blest.
> (ll. 525-528, 533-536, 541-544, text:1786)

"The House of Night" exemplifies, as well as anything else Freneau wrote, his ambivalence toward both Christian and pagan concepts of immortality. If the final stanza of the 1786 version seems to hold out hope for the existence of some sort of "paradise," however defined,[44] such hope seems seriously compromised by the ideas advanced in the stanzas that precede it. Taken as a whole, the ending of the 1786 version seems little more conclusive than that of the 1779 version.

Because of the diverse elements found in the poem, critics have been able to cite numerous works, both classical and contemporary, that could have influenced Freneau's composition. The poems most often cited as being direct models are Robert Blair's "The Grave" (1743), Edward Young's Night Thoughts (1745), and Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751). To these might here be added William Thompson's "Sickness" (1725).[45] Yet "The House of Night" is different from many poems of the genre in not developing consistently the theme of Christian salvation that dominates the other poems mentioned, all of which offer Christian doctrine as the anodyne for human suffering. Freneau's poem, on the other hand, does not follow this pattern, withholding as it does an affirmation of Christ's redemptive powers to save mankind from death. Moreover, the 1786 conclusion of "The House of Night," by suggesting a sort of "physical salvation" in the recombining of life forms here on earth, strongly implies a non-Christian

viewpoint. And though the poem occasionally utilizes Christian trappings (". . . for the sake of Mary's son,/ Thy tears of pity on this wretch [Death] bestow"), it often seems to parody the religious moralizing found in other grave-yard poems. Several recent critics have even suggested that "The House of Night," at least in its 1786 version, is more satirical than it appears to be on first reading.[46]

In addition, the 1786 conclusion, which establishes the ambiguities already mentioned, does not "work" very well with the rest of the poem. The Lucretian epistemology forces onto the poem an ending which has not been prepared for in preceding sections. Although Freneau himself seemed aware of this problem, he was evidently determined, even in later years, that the Lucretian ending remain somewhere in his poetic canon. In 1795, when he decimated "The House of Night," he created another context for the ending. Combining stanzas (30, 73, 116, 132, 133, 134 and 136) from the poem with stanzas from "Jamaica Funeral," Freneau recast the ending as a new poem called "The Sexton's Sermon" which eschews all hints of Christianity in favor of pagan materialism.[47]

Although the revisions of "The House of Night" from 1779 to 1786 are significant, they are not as significant as those of "Santa Cruz." For the most part, the later version of "The House of Night" is merely an elaborate refinement of the 1779 poem. Yet the revisions do alter the poem in

several important ways. First, by expanding the horrifying death scene, the poem more dramatically depicts Death's final agony in a manner not unlike Christ's own passion;[48] however, secondly, by elaborating the personal sorrow of "Cleon" (the other young man in the poem) whose sweetheart Death has recently killed, the poem undercuts any sympathy that might be felt for Death himself. Moreover, this story of the tragic death of a young woman who has loved another man (i.e. other than the narrator) suggests a remarkable parallel to the love story found in the revision of "Santa Cruz." In an elaborate, thirteen-stanza lament not found in the 1779 version, "Cleon" details his grief over losing his sweetheart, "Aspasia," as well as his anger at Death for having taken her:

> Twas he [Death] that stole from my adoring arms
> Aspasia, she the loveliest of her kind,
> Lucretia's virtue, with Helen's charms
> Charms of the face, and beauties of the mind.
>
> . . .
>
> Such charms shall greet my longing soul no more,
> Her lively eyes are clos'd in endless shade,
> Torpid, she rests on yonder marble floor;
> Approach, and see what havock Death has made.
> (ll. 153-156, 169-172)

The passage obviously echoes the conventional "lover's sorrow" found in many eighteenth-century romantic poems. For example, Young's Night Thoughts contains a notably similar story of a "Lysander" who also "woo'd" a young woman named "Aspasia"--who also dies.[49] Nevertheless, Freneau's "Aspasia" receives a more detailed description than does the

girl in Young's poem. Also, her portrait, although derived chiefly from stock images of romantic heroines, includes details (she is tall and dark) that tend to define her more clearly:

> The blushy cheek, the lively, beaming eye,
> The ruby lip, the flowing jetty hair,
> The stature tall, the aspect so divine,
> All beauty, you would think, had centered there.
> (ll. 157-160)

More notable, however, the death of "Aspasia," like that of "Aurelia" in "Santa Cruz," becomes a focus of key ideas in Freneau's revised poem. Her death foreshadows Death's own passing and provides "Cleon" and the narrator with corroborative evidence that all are "doom'd by the impartial God to endless rest." In addition, the loss of "Aspasia" shows that Death has always toyed with mankind. In this case, he allowed "Cleon" to fall in love with the alluring woman only in order to teach the young man that beauty on earth is ephemeral. In detailing this significant point, Freneau once again, as in "Santa Cruz," utilized the image of an incipient flower (killed at the moment of its loveliest blooming) to represent an ideal, unattainable beauty.

> Sweet as the fragrance of the vernal morn,
> Nipt in its bloom this faded flower I see;
> The inspiring angel from the breast is gone,
> And life's warm tide forever chill'd in thee!
> (ll. 165-168)

The language here is, of course, filled with cliche, but as we have seen in "Santa Cruz," the image of a flower that denies to man its beauty became an important symbol in

Freneau's personal system of values. In fact, poem after poem written during the 1780s repeats the idea that beauty is a rare and delicate flower, no sooner found by its true lover than cruelly destroyed by fate. And while this concept is rather cursorily developed in "The House of Night," it is so pervasively woven into the metaphorical texture of the 1786 "Santa Cruz" that the floral imagery itself provides a central focus for the poem.

It is also revealing that neither "Aurelia" nor "Aspasia" play any part in the earlier versions of their respective poems. When considered by themselves, the heroines certainly appear to be conventional; yet the larger context surrounding them cannot be ignored, for they surface in Freneau's poetry at a crucial period in his life--the early 1780s--and mirror a distant, but important, image of a woman who repeatedly takes shape in his subsequent verse. Moreover, during the 1780s, Freneau's poetry redefines this woman's symbolic significance in a way, as we shall see, that parallels his philosophical shift during the decade from naive despair over cosmic uncertainty to mature resignation.

The Pessimist

The changes and emendations found in the 1786 texts of "Santa Cruz" and "The House of Night" indicate that events in Freneau's life were deeply influencing his poetry. It seems evident, as a recent critic has noted, that these

revisions "reveal a radical shift [in Freneau's poetry] from the pre-1780 romantic theory to a post-1780 view that fancy is delusive and untrustworthy."[50] Indeed, by the time he reached his thirtieth birthday in 1782, he appears to have gained a view of reality which rejected facile optimism as well as romantic escapism.

No hardship he ever suffered, however, seemed to influence him as deeply as that which he experienced in 1780. Having escaped most of the horrors of war until the summer of that year, he was introduced to them when he once again was taken prisoner by the British. According to Freneau's own prose account of the incident, he left Philadelphia in May 1780 as a passenger aboard the ship Aurora, bound for St. Eustatia.[51] Six days later, after a harrowing chase at sea, the Aurora was captured by the British frigate Iris. After the seizure, Freneau was unable to convince the British he was a non-combatant though one Hugh Ray, an officer on board the Iris, evidently knew Freneau and attested to his being a civilian.[52] Nevertheless, Freneau was treated as a prisoner of war and forced with many others into a ship's hold, where he languished for more than six weeks--first aboard the prison ship Scorpion and later aboard the hospital ship Hunter. Subjected to inhumane treatment, fed rotten meat and kept pent-up in a suffocating bilge, Freneau witnessed the deaths of his fellow prisoners who were buried in shallow graves on the Long Island shore. Finally, on July 12, after weeks of

torture, Freneau was released near Elizabethtown, New Jersey. From there he literally staggered home to Mount Pleasant, a two-day journey made by a man who could "scarcely walk."[53]

Of course, what came out of this embittering experience was Freneau's most celebrated political poem, The British Prison Ship. An extremely important piece to the poet, the verse received careful revisions throughout its many publications.[54] Written during Freneau's convalescence in the fall of 1780, the poem denounces everything associated with Great Britain. Although he was not so shallow as to believe that evils of humanity were restricted solely to the British, Freneau was driven from this time on by a venom against England that produced scores of poems about British tyranny during the next three decades. The thematic prototype of them all was The British Prison Ship, which concludes with this typical indictment:

> Foes [i.e. British and allies] to the rights of
> freedom and of men,
> Flush'd with the blood of thousands you have slain,
> To just doom the righteous skies decree
> We leave you, toiling still in cruelty,
> Or on dark plans in future herds to meet,
> Plans form'd in hell, and projects half complete:
> The years approach that shall to ruin bring
> Your lords, your chiefs, your miscreant of a king
> Whose murderous acts shall stamp his mane accurs'd,
> And his last triumph more than damn the first.
> (ll. 637-646, text:1786)

Recovering from the prison ship ordeal slowly, Freneau evidently remained in Monmouth throughout the winter. In 1781, The British Prison Ship was published in broadside

by the poet's friend Bailey, editor of The Freeman's Journal in Philadelphia. By the summer of 1781, Freneau began not only to contribute to this journal but also to help edit it. No doubt this practical experience later proved useful when Freneau established several newspapers of his own.[55] Equally important was that over the next six years, The Freeman's Journal published many of Freneau's essays and poems and helped to advance his reputation as one of the leading writers of his day. And of course Bailey encouraged Freneau to collect and revise his earlier poems, which Bailey himself published in a single volume in Philadelphia in 1786. Freneau was doubtless fortunate to have at hand a well-known journal which accepted practically everything he submitted.[56]

Accordingly, Freneau used The Freeman's Journal as a vehicle for publishing both his public and his private poetry. A number of his better lyric poems that were later collected in the various editions appeared first in The Freeman's Journal during the 1780s. And it was in several of these poems that Freneau examined the dilemmas of his own philosophy. One of the most penetrating of the earlier verses published in the journal was a poem entitled "A Moral Thought."[57] First published in 1781, the poem was revised for the 1786 edition and finally retitled "The Vanity of Existence" for the 1795 edition. The conflict between Freneau's youthful idealism and his mature skepticism was defined more sharply in this poem than in anything he had

written up to this time. Reflecting the direct influence of the classical stoic philosophers, "A Moral Thought" reveals again Freneau's denial of Christian idealism.[58]

> In youth gay scenes attract our eyes,
> And not suspecting their decay
> Life's flow'ry fields before us rise,
> Regardless of its winter day;
>
> But vain pursuits, and joys as vain,
> Convince us life is but a dream.
> Death is to wake to rise again,
> To that true life I best esteem.
>
> So nightly on the flowing tide
> Oft have I seen a raree-show;
> Reflecting stars on either side,
> And glittering moons were seen below.
>
> But when the tide had ebb'd away,
> The scene fantastic with it fled,
> A bank of mud around me lay,
> And sea-weed on the river's bed.
>
> (text: The Freeman's Journal, October 24, 1781)
> (1786 alteration: l. 8; I is altered to you.)

Joseph Griffith has pointed out that the most significant change made in the poem was the shifting of the pronoun I to you for the 1786 edition. This variation creates, Griffith suggests, a distancing for the speaker who thereby implies that others are deluded by false dreams.[59] However, the change does not really alter the poem's basic message. Stanza one tells us that the joys of youth are evanescent. Stanza two rejects our attempts to create another "reality" that somehow exists apart from what we can see and touch. Stanzas three and four argue that any attempt here on earth to prove the existence of such another world simply proves our delusions are self-made. The poem,

therefore, asserts that living human beings, even those with "glittering" systems of hope, can never know ultimate reality as anything more than "a bank of mud."

Yet the poem also suggests that we need to strip away illusion. If Cleon in "The House of Night" warns us not to look "to the stars" for answers to ultimate questions, so the voice of "A Moral Thought" informs us that the earth may also deceive us unless we are willing to probe its surface brilliance for darker knowledge.[60] At about this time in his life, Freneau privately noted the same thing to himself: "The world is undone by looking at things at a distance," he wrote, and then concluded that "a man who finds not satisfaction in himself looks for it in vain elsewhere."[61] And in an essay published in The Miscellaneous Works of Philip Freneau (i.e. the 1788 edition), he wrote that "the investigation of truth is scarcely worth a man's pains."[62] Unfortunately, Freneau himself could not avoid this pain.

Obviously restless and uneasy in the early 1780s, Freneau again sought out the ocean and his southern islands. Perhaps driven by his failure to find a steady job as well as to earn a substantial income from his writing, he put out to sea on June 24, 1784, aboard the brig Dromelly bound for Jamaica. Whether he was a passenger or a seaman is not known, but what is known is that, after about a month at sea, the poet encountered another horrifying experience. This time, however, he was threatened not by British

sailors but by the elemental rage of a hurricane. Miraculously, his ship survived the storm which destroyed all but eight of the one hundred fifty ships in nearby harbors.[63]

Experiencing a hurricane at sea should have been all that a rather introspective and pessimistic man such as Freneau needed to sour him on his plans to return to paradise. However, there are strong indications--found in the later poems--that while staying in or near Jamaica during the next several months, he lived through other tormenting and disheartening experiences of a more personal nature. Although these private dilemmas did not surface in much of his writing until the 1788 edition, he wasted little time in detailing the horrors of the hurricane. Returning to Philadelphia in November of 1784, Freneau spent the winter helping a local printer, but, obviously very ill with an undiagnosed malady, he returned to his New Jersey home in the early spring of 1785. By summer he had journeyed to South Carolina, where his brother Peter lived.[64]

In April 1785, "Verses, made at Sea, in a Heavy Gale" appeared in The Freeman's Journal.[65] Later titled "The Hurricane," this poem has been cited by numerous critics as one of Freneau's most powerful portrayals of a malevolent universe. The poem, like others of the period, seems to derive some of its imagery directly from Lucretius' work. For example, the first lines,

Happy the man who, safe on shore,
Now trims, at home, his evening fire;
Unmov'd he hears the tempests roar;
That on the tufted groves expire:
  Alas ! on us they doubly fall,
  Our feeble barque must bear them all.
    (ll. 1-6, text:1785, The Freeman's Journal)

echo the opening of Book II, De Rerum Natura:

> Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
> e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
> non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
> sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.[66]

But for the most part the ideas expressed in Freneau's poem are his own. The images sharply contrast the delusive sense of well-being that people on shore feel with the dark knowledge of truth that sailors learn at sea. Vitzthum has noted that the poem addresses the helpless predicament of mankind, contending with a malign universe (symbolized here by the chaotic ocean) "capable of swallowing up nature's benign forces."[67] The last four stanzas clearly imply that nothing in our world is safe:

While o'er the dark abyss we [sailors] roam,
Perhaps, whate'er the pilots say,
We saw the Sun descend in gloom,
No more to see his rising ray,
  But bury'd low, by far too deep,
  On coral beds unpitied sleep!

But what a strange, uncoasted strand,
Is that, where death permits no day--
No charts have we to mark the land,
No compass to direct that way--
  What pilot shall explore that realm,
  What new Columbus take the helm!

While death and darkness both surround,
And tempests rage with lawless power,
Of friendship's voice, I hear no sound,
No comfort in this dreadful hour--
  What friendship can in tempest be,
  What comforts on this angry sea?

The barque accustom'd to obey
No more the trembling pilots guide,
Alone she gropes her trackless way,
While mountains burst on either side--
  Thus, skill and science both must fall,
  And ruin is the lot of all.
    (11. 13-36)

By now Freneau did not really need to experience a hurricane at sea to learn that mankind's intelligence ("skill") and technology ("science") are no match for cosmic disorder. His 1784 trip to the islands left him, nevertheless, in deep spiritual and physical depression as he returned to America in the winter of that year. And, assuming that he made extensive revisions to his earlier poems during this period of depression, it is possible that the melancholy tone that overwhelms the 1786 edition was primarily the result of revision. In any case, the poems in this volume clearly reflect the pessimism of defeated dreams and, for the most part, offer a rather dark picture of humanity. If forced to choose only one poem from the edition that best represents the intellectual thrust of the entire collection, perhaps we would choose "The Vernal Ague," an overwhelmingly bleak piece.

Although placement of the poem in the edition suggests that it was first written in 1775, the poem itself seems to detail a more severe emotional depression than is found in the other early verse. Most likely, then, this is one of the poems that was greatly revised for the 1786 edition or was written much later than 1775. Vitzthum has even argued that the poem reflects Freneau's mid-1780s crises.[68]

Notably unlike some of Freneau's darker poems, "The Vernal Ague" makes little attempt to link the poet's own unhappiness to a larger philosophical despair. On the contrary, the poem seems intensely personal and lonely. It is surely not a conventional neo-classic tone piece about melancholy.

There are, however, similarities between the emotional setting of this poem and other psychic landscapes already noted in Freneau's work. For example, the narrator of "The House of Night" complains:

> Sweet vernal May! tho' then thy wood in bloom
> Flourish'd, yet nought of this could Fancy see,
> No wild pinks bless'd the meads, no green the fields,
> And naked seem'd to stand each lifeless tree.
> (ll. 25-25, text:1786)

Likewise, the narrator of the 1786 "Santa Cruz" notes his inability to commune with nature:

> But Melancholy's gloom assail my breast,
> For potent nature reigns despotic there.
> (Prologue)

In a sense, "The Vernal Ague" is an extension of the emotional state described in these other poems. In fact, the narrator's gloom which allows him to see only death in nature, constitutes "The Vernal Ague" itself.

> Where the pheasant roosts at night,
> Lonely, drowsy, out of sight,
> Where the evening breezes sigh
> Solitary, there stray I.
>
> Close along a shaded stream,
> Source of many a youthful dream,
> Where branchy cedars dim the day
> There I muse, and there I stray.

Yet, what can please amid this bower,
That charmed the eye for many an hour!
The budding leaf is lost to me,
And dead the bloom on every tree.

The winding stream, that glides along,
The lark, that tunes her early song,
The mountain's brow, the sloping vale,
The murmuring of the western gale,

Have lost their charms!--the blooms are gone!
Trees put a darker aspect on,
The stream disgusts that wanders by,
And every zephyr brings a sigh.

Great guardian of our feeble kind!--
Restoring Nature, lend thine aid!
And o'er the features of the mind
Renew those colours, that must fade,
When vernal suns forbear to roll,
And endless winter chills the soul.
(text:1786)

The utter loneliness, despair, and inability of the narrator to overcome his own isolation and self-pity combine to suggest that this poem was a product of the early-to-mid 1780s. Reflecting the personal devastation found elsewhere in the poems of the period, it summarizes what Freneau was saying in many poems of the '80s.

But whether sick at heart or simply sick of "northern climes," Freneau set out in 1785 and again in 1786 on commercial voyages between his homeland and the West Indies. During the next several years he spent intermittent periods at home and abroad, continuing throughout the period to publish in The Freeman's Journal as well as in other newspapers.[69] In 1788, Bailey collected these new poems in another edition, The Miscellaneous Works. Although this volume is occasionally light and trivial, it is dominated

by the sort of desolation found in "The Vernal Ague." More significantly for our purposes, the edition contains many of the poems which directly explore the events of 1784, the year that was probably the darkest of Freneau's life. For it is not correct to maintain, as Axelrad has, that during the mid-1780s, "save for events that involved him deeply, . . . [Freneau] scarcely touched on the facets of his own life, dwelling rather on the life of his time."[70] On the contrary, the ground work for Freneau's very personal "Amanda" series, which was begun in the 1786 edition, was further developed in The Miscellaneous Works. Consequently, many of the lyric poems found later yield, upon careful reading, a concrete picture of the mental, emotional, and, to some extent, physical experiences of Freneau's life during these important years. Unless the poet wrote wildly fantastic poems about experiences he never had or simply enjoyed composing conventional love verse, many of the poems offer insight into the essential dilemma that was plaguing his life. In fact, he was still confronting this problem when he retired from the sea in 1790 and returned home to marry his long-time sweetheart, Eleanor Forman.[71]

Clearly Freneau had reached a spiritual nadir by the mid-1780s. He was still poor, having achieved neither wealth nor literary fame. He had agonized over the religion of his ancestors; and while he renounced it rather uneasily, he also found little comfort in his own vision of an indifferent cosmos. Ironically, he was driven, for a number

of reasons, to test himself repeatedly against the very ocean that taught him such dark lessons. The poems and revisions thus far examined reveal that the poet developed the incipient pessimism he had felt during the 1770s into outright despair by the mid-1780s.

There is, however, an essential piece of this complex emotional puzzle that now needs to be put in place. It is apparent that between the late 1770s and mid-1780s Freneau had loved a woman deeply but, for reasons that perhaps can never be known precisely, was unable to achieve a lasting union with her. This failure seems to have scarred him so severely that its total effect saturated his writing--directly and indirectly--for at least two decades. Moreover, the episode was crucial to his personal growth, for it was not until he had worked himself out of this emotional loss that he could begin to reconcile himself to the uneven fortunes of life. Indeed the act of overcoming this private ordeal is linked inseparably with Freneau's larger dilemma; and in order to trace the pervasive significance of the affair on the poet's work, we will now look back to 1778 when Freneau first met "Amanda."

CHAPTER THREE

Her Whole Duration--But an Hour

The Lover

When Freneau returned to America from the Caribbean in July 1778, it was probably the first time the young man had been home since leaving for Santa Cruz. In the year that followed this return, he constantly published his work in the United States Magazine, which printed an unsigned poem in October 1779 called "The Sea Voyage." Detailing experiences in the West Indies, the poem thematically resembles other pieces (see above, Chapter Two, p. 42ff) that Freneau submitted to the magazine and has, therefore, been attributed to Freneau by later critics, even though the poet himself never acknowledged the authorship by including it in any later collection.[1] Perhaps Freneau simply overlooked the poem later or perhaps saw little merit in it; the monotonous tetrameters hammer out an uninspired verse tale of a sailor's life, a common story in the newspaper verse of the day.[2] Yet if, as seems likely, the poem was written by Freneau, it probably recounts his 1778 trip back home from the islands. It is, in this regard, biographically significant.

The narrator of the poem is a sailor who matter-of-factly describes how he left a tropical island in order to return to his homeland:

> From a gay island green and fair,
> With gentle blasts of southern air,
> Across the deep we held our way,
> Around our barque smooth waters played,
> No envious clouds obscur'd the day,
> Serene came on the evening shade.
> (ll. 1-6, text:F. L. Pattee, The Poems, I, 293)

The calm seas did not last, however, for succeeding stanzas tell how the ship encountered a storm off "Porto Rico" where "the sea obey'd their [sic] tyrant force." But as night fell, the storm abated somewhat, and by the next morning, the ship was making good headway under clear skies. Although never becoming very vivid, the poem details another incident that occurred before the ship made port.

> A ship o'ertook us on the way,
> Her thousand sails were spread abroad
> And flutter'd in the face of day.
> (ll. 40-42)

Understated to the point of vagueness, these lines may, nevertheless, record Freneau's 1778 encounter with the British. Since there is no further detailing of the event, the episode appears to have been rather insignificant. The poem uneventfully concludes with the sailor's predictable joy at arriving home to meet his sweetheart.

> At length, through many a climate pass'd,
> Caesaria's hills we saw at last,
> And reach'd the land of lovely dames;
> My charming Caelia there I found,
> 'Tis she my warmest friendship claims,
> The fairest maid that treads the ground.
> (ll. 43-48)

Treating a common subject in a common manner, the poem probably recounts the true story about Freneau's voyage home. What may seem dull may actually record Freneau's feelings on returning home after an absence of two years; and perhaps the stereotypical "Caelia" may represent a real sweetheart that he had left behind. However, without more solid evidence, it is impossible to identify "Caelia" further. And while the poem may encourage biographical speculation, it also denies real insights into Freneau's early life at sea.

But there is another poem which Freneau himself attributed to the same period (1778) and which appears to speak more directly to known events in his life. Not published until July 1782 in The Freeman's Journal,[3] the poem indicates, in its rather long title, an earlier date of composition: "On a Lady's Singing Bird, a native of the Canary islands, confined in a very small cage: Written in Bermuda, 1778." A mix of iambs, anapests and trochees, the poem's light-hearted triplets set forth a rather serious protest made by a small bird against being caged.

Happy in my native grove,
I from spray to spray did rove,
Full of music, full of love.

Drest as fine as bird could be,
Every thing that I did see,
Every thing was mirth to me.

There had I been, happy still,
With my mate to coo and bill
In the vale, or on the hill.
(ll. 1-9, text: The Freeman's Journal, July 3, 1782)

Though the theme seems trivial, the caged bird evokes in places the image of a human slave who berates mankind in general and his young mistress in particular for capturing and imprisoning him:

> But the cruel tryant, man,
> Tryant since the world began
> Soon abridg'd my little span:
>
> How shall I the wrong forget!--
> Over me he threw a net,
> And I am his captive yet.
>
> To this rough and rocky shore*
> Ocean I was hurried o'er,
> Ne'er to see my country more!
> (*altered in 1795: To this rough
> Bermudian shore)
>
> To a narrow cage confin'd
> I, who once so gaily shin'd
> Sing to please the human kind.
> (ll. 10-21)

The poem concludes with the bird's plea for his freedom or for his death:

> 'Tis a blessing to be free,
> Fair, Belinda, pity me
> Pity that which sings for thee:
>
> But if cruel, you deny
> That your captive bird should fly
> Here detain'd so wrongfully,
>
> Full of anguish, full of woe,
> I must with my music go
> To the cypress groves below.
> (ll. 31-39)

At first appearing to have little depth, the poem deserves attention for several reasons. First, it is set in Bermuda, an island that Freneau visited in 1777-1778, suggesting biographical significance. Secondly, the poem was important enough to Freneau to revise and republish in 1786

and again in the 1795 and 1809 editions. In 1795, the name "Belinda" was changed to "Amanda," and the poem itself was retitled "On Amanda's Singing Birds [sic]." At this time it was grouped with three other "Amanda" poems. Finally, for the 1809 edition, the poem was significantly enlarged, and again included in a distinct grouping of "Amanda" poems, now seven in number.

Even though the 1809 additions to the "Singing Bird" were made nearly thirty years after its initial composition, they seem to clarify an original intention of the poem and to give it a complexity not found in the earlier versions. To the thirteen original stanzas, Freneau added five in which the canary becomes even more human than before. Now his plea for freedom is a transparent metaphor for courtship:

> Dear Amanda!--leave me free,
> And my notes will sweeter be;
> On your breast, or in a tree!
>
> On your arm I would repose--
> One--oh make me--of your beaus--
> There I would relate my woes.
> (ll. 22-27, text:1809)

Moreover, in the next stanzas (of the 1809 revision), the speaker undeniably clarifies his attitude toward "Amanda": while in earlier versions he says, "I so fond, so full of play," he now admits "Now, all love, and full of play." Clearly, then, the speaker in the 1809 poem is expressing his love for "Amanda"--a love that is not frivolous despite the trappings of the poem. Subsuming his original identity

into that of a suitor, the speaker alludes to the conditions of his imprisonment at the hands of the British:

> From the chiefs who rule your isle,
> I will never count a smile
> All, with them, is prison style.
> (ll. 34-36, text:1809)

But what follows is the most perplexing of the additions. Here the speaker says that he could find courage to accept his ordeal if only "Amanda" would give him the emotional and intellectual strength she alone can impart.

> But from your superior mind
> Let me but my freedom find,
> And I will be all resign'd.
>
> Then your kiss will hold me fast--
> If by you but once embraced,
> In your 'kerchief I will rest.--
> (ll. 37-42, text:1809)

Clearly this "conditional surrender" to imprisonment contradicts the speaker's essential plea for freedom. The 1809 poem in fact concludes with a declaration, found in the earlier versions, that he will die if he is not freed. The revised poem, thus, creates an ambiguous relationship between the speaker and the woman. He is enthralled by her, and she alone has the power to free him. The five additional stanzas in 1809, though a bit unclear (i.e. does the prisoner want freedom or not?), indicate that "The Lady's Singing Bird" had for Freneau a more esoteric meaning than the original version suggests. But most important for our purposes, the poem contains the first verifiable appearance in Freneau's work of "Amanda."

If the "Amanda" of Freneau's poems does represent only one woman whom he encountered as early as 1778 in Bermuda, we are tempted to ask an obvious question. Was this their only meeting? Evidence from the poems which we will examine suggests that, especially after 1790, Freneau's memory of "Amanda" became inseparable from his memory of the early island experiences in general. More specifically, as her image evolves in poems dated from 1784 through 1809, it ultimately transcends any single point in space and time and seems rather to symbolize the overall unhappiness of his life in the West Indies. Because "Amanda" is present in some form in all of Freneau's island poems, it seems possible that either before or after the encounter in Bermuda in 1778, the two might have met somewhere else on the islands of the Caribbean. It is not out of the question to suppose that he first saw her at Hanson's estate in Santa Cruz, or that he met her again on later trips to the tropics. Perhaps it is even possible to suppose that "Amanda" was a creative composite of more than one island woman that Freneau had known. One thing is clear: "Amanda" was most often associated in Freneau's mind with Bermuda--the small island lying considerably north of others in the Caribbean.

For this reason, Freneau's biographers have generally concluded that "Amanda" was probably one of the daughters of George James Bruere, Governor of Bermuda at the time Freneau visited this British colony. Evidence for the theory is strong but not conclusive. Freneau was in Bermuda

in 1777 and again in 1778; on the second trip he remained for five weeks as a guest of the governor.[4] Moreover, the Bruere family, numbering fourteen children, might have been generally friendly with Freneau. The governor (and his family) was by 1778 in general agreement with the Tory sentiments of Bermudians at large: two of Bruere's sons had earlier gone to Boston to enlist in Gage's army. However, Bruere himself had, at one time, provided Washington with arms; and his oldest daughter, Frances, had married Henry Tucker of Bermuda, who supported the rebel cause.[5] In exploring this family in more depth, Leary has suggested that Frances might have had "a crush" on her husband's brother, Nathaniel, who left Bermuda to study medicine, but not before openly "courting" the young woman with poetry. With Leary, we are tempted to ask whether Frances, attracted to one poet, might not also have been attracted to young Freneau when he came to visit.[6] Axelrad, however, simply says that "Amanda" was ". . . one other daughter of Gov. Bruere."[7] Speculation aside, one fact is evident: subsequent poems that Freneau wrote often allude to a deserted island woman who awaits the return of a lover.

Although we cannot be certain "Amanda" was in fact any of Governor Bruere's daughters, she was probably a Bermuda lass. The poems about her certainly indicate this, as does a cryptic note written by Freneau and preserved by Margaret Freneau, the poet's youngest daughter:

Philip M. Freneau
A.D. 1778--
Bermuda--St. George's
April 22, 1778

Once more on these sweet isles to meet your love--[8]

It is noteworthy that Freneau, who later married a New Jersey woman and reared four daughters, saw fit, for reasons of his own, not to destroy a private message written to (or about) another woman that he had apparently once loved. Perhaps even more telling is that his youngest daughter, who never married, also decided to preserve this bit of family history. Either very important or simply inconsequential to father and daughter, this note provides us with the most solid clue that "Amanda" was real and that she and Freneau had known each other prior to the April 1778 meeting. Yet it is difficult even to guess how many of Freneau's trips back to the tropics might have been made in hopes of seeing her; for if the later poems that contain references to "Amanda" do, in fact, detail the poet's relationship with her, then clearly he was not always encouraged by her to pursue the courtship. What does seem likely is that he persisted in his efforts to see her until 1784, when he made his unhappy trip to the islands.

But the Freneau of 1784 was surely not the same young man who had romantically ventured out to sea in the mid-1770s. He had now become hardened and embittered by war, imprisonment, poverty and hard work. Seeking perhaps a return to paradise in 1784, he encountered the "death and

darkness" of a hurricane and a subsequently disillusioning experience on the islands. Moreover, if he did not actually have an unhappy reunion with "Amanda" on this trip, he nevertheless seems to have learned something about her which so upset him that he gave up hope of ever seeing her again. For, whatever "Amanda's" real physical state at this time, it is evident that she was "dead" to Freneau, as indicated by allusions to her found in his poems.

The Elegist

Recreating "Amanda" in verse, however, was a slow and apparently painful process. Shortly after his return to America in November 1784, Freneau published in a special New Year's sheet (January 1, 1785) of The Freeman's Journal a poem entitled "New Years Verses."[9] The poem reappeared in the 1786 edition in a section including several other new-years verses, but by 1795, it had been retitled, "On the Vicissitude of Things."[10] As the revised title indicates, the poem is another reminder that life is unpredictable. Utilizing ironic structures that undercut its seriousness, the poem contains a fast-paced iambic beat which might encourage a reader to sing the verse--if it were not so bleakly pessimistic. Seven of the ten stanzas uneventfully reiterate how foolish we humans are to believe our own fantasies as we await death:

> The constant lapse of rolling years
> Awakens our hopes, provokes our fears
> Of something yet unknown;

> We saw the last year pass away,
> But who, alas! can truly say
> The next shall be his own?
> (11. 31-36, text:1786)

Amid these recanting generalizations, however, three stanzas introduce important images that recur frequently in Freneau's subsequent poems.

Stanza three, opening with a conventional lament of how fast the seasons run, and then using a stock image of "the wheel of fate," contrasts these generalizations with a peculiar analogy between human beings and reptiles:

> How swift the vagrant seasons fly
> They're hardly born before they die,
> Yet in their wild career,
> Like atoms round the rapid wheel,
> We seem the same, though changing still,
> Mere reptiles of a year.
> (11. 13-18)

Of course the implications of this reptilian simile are that, relative to eternity, man endures no longer than a snake and his life is no more meaningful. More importantly, the image signals an evolving associative link in Freneau's mind between mankind and lower forms of life which becomes a metaphorical "truth" in the poetry of the 1780s.[11] Its most important expression, as we shall see, was in terms of the hour-long life of flowers.

Stanza three sets up a logical "given": humans do not really understand their own existence. Yet the supportive examples provided in stanzas four and five are not very far reaching; they unify quickly into a single narrative obviously detailing an unresolved incident.

Some run to seek a wealthy bride,
Some, rhymes to make on one that died;
And millions curse the day,
When first in Hymen's silken hands
The parson joined mistaken hands,
And bade the bride obey.

While sad Emelia* vents her sighs,
In epitaphs and elegies,
For her departed dear,
Who would suppose yon' muffled bell,
And mourning gowns, were meant to tell,
Her grief will last--a year?
(11. 19-30, text:1786)
(*1795 alteration: Amelia)

The examples suggest three specific situations linked in the poet's mind. First, "some" men marry wealthy women although not suitable to be husbands. Secondly, "some" poets write verses about "one that died"; and finally, "while" all of this is happening (or has happened), "sad Emelia vents her sighs" and awaits a departed lover. But since the poem does not develop the situations further, it is likely that Freneau was not yet ready to explore the situation any further. It is also likely, however, that these lines represent the first time that the poet addressed a portion of the sorrow he had encountered in 1784.

Perhaps, this sorrow was being even more indirectly approached in a longer narrative poem that Freneau published in May 1785 in The Freeman's Journal.[12] He called it "The Monument of Phaon," and although in the 1786 edition (where the poem was reprinted), he claimed that it had first been written in 1770, he had probably revised the material before publishing the piece. The story itself is not very complicated. Focussing again on a tale of love, betrayal and

death, Freneau recast his characters as the classical lovers Sappho and Phaon. A long prologue summarizes the action of the poem and also informs the reader that Ovid's basic narrative has been embellished by the addition of a character.

> Phaon, the admirer of Sappho, both of the isle of Lesbos, privately forsook his first object of his affection, and set out to visit foreign countries. Sappho, after having long mourned his absence . . . is here supposed to fall accidently into the company of Ismenius, a traveller, who informs her, that he saw the tomb of a certain Phaon in Sicily, erected to his memory by a lady on the island. . . . She thereupon, in a fit of rage and despair, throws herself from the famous Leucadian rock, and perishes in the gulph below. (Prologue, text: The Freeman's Journal, May 25, 1785)

Before she "perishes," however, Sappho voices her anger at Phaon's betrayal of her.

> Ah faithless Phaon, thus from me to rove,
> And bless my rival in a foreign grove!
> Could Sicily more charming forest show
> Than those that in my native Lesbos grow.
> (11. 111-114)

Here, as well as in the other romantic narratives that Freneau was composing or revising in 1785-1786, we can see that the poet was often not at his best. Except for some of the vivid passages found in both "The House of Night" and "Santa Cruz," he was not even being very original. From one view, these melodramatic stories utilize stock, neo-classical situations (deserted heroines) and time-worn conventions. From another view, however, they are remarkably similar in many ways; and whether or not we grant that the apparent connections of Sappho-Phaon, Aspasia-Cleon,

Aurelia-Philander, and Emelia and her lover are anything more than coincidental repetitions, we have to accept the fact that these stories appear suddenly and often in the work published between 1779 and 1786. Moreover, if they do represent an initial effort on Freneau's part to vent a personal problem in verse, then they can be seen to be related to the later verses which much more directly confront the same problem.

It apparently took nearly a year before Freneau could write less evasively about his 1784 experiences. A poem which he later called "Written in Port Royal" (or simply "Port Royal") appeared in a Charleston newspaper on February 2, 1786.[13] Unlike the revised "Santa Cruz," this poem clearly states Freneau's post-1784 attitude toward the West Indies. The narrator is in a severely depressed emotional state. At first it appears that his depression has been caused by a walk along the pallisades near Port Royal, Jamaica. However, it soon becomes obvious that the narrator's psyche is in a state of "ruin" worse than that he sees around him, although he finds the physical decay of Jamaica a correlative for his own more recent experiences on the island. First he realizes that on the very spot where he now stands, the British had long ago dreamed of building a great empire:

> Of all the towns that grac'd Jamaica's isle,
> This was her glory, and the proudest pile;
> Where toils on toils bade wealth's gay structure's rise,
> And commerce swell'd that glory to the skies.
> (ll. 5-8, text: The Columbian Herald, February 2, 1786)

Freneau had confronted elsewhere in his poetry the destructive power of nature, and his first-hand knowledge of this power helped him now to envision what the earthquake that devastated Port Royal in 1692 must have been like:

> While o'er these wastes with pensive step I go,
> Past scenes of death return with all their woe;--
> Here opening gulphs confess'd the Almighty hand,
> Here the dark ocean roll'd across the land.
> (ll. 15-18)

The narrator continues to imagine the town's last moments, picturing the thousands that died (". . . crowds in mingled ruin lay"). But what most upsets him about the horrible event is that somehow mankind itself continues to pursue foolish little activities, seemingly unaware, as had been the colonists, that at any moment it could all happen again. Even those people who presently go about their business on this deceptively lovely island seem blissfully unaware of the reality around them:

> Where yon proud barque, with all her ponderous load,
> Commits her anchor to its dark abode;
> Eight fathoms down, where unseen waters flow
> To quench the sulphur of the caves below;
> There, midnight sounds torment the sailor's ear,
> And drums and fifes play drowsy concerts there;
> Dull songs of woe prevent the hours of sleep,
> While fancy hears the fiddlers of the deep.
> (ll. 23-32)

The narrator is equally depressed by the current society of misfits and slaves that populates the island:

> What now is left of all thy boasted pride;
> Lost are thy splendours that were spread so wide;
> A spit of sand is thine, by fate's decree,
> And mouldering mounds that scarce oppose the sea;
> No sprightly lads, or gay, bewitching maids
> Walk on these wastes, or wander in these shades;
> To other shores past time beheld them go,

> And some are fiddling in the groves below:--
> A negro tribe but ill their place supply,
> With bending back, short hair, and downcast eye;--
> A feeble rampart guards the wretched town
> Where banish'd Tories come to seek renown,--
> Where worn-out slaves their drams of gin retail,
> And hungry Scotsmen watch the distant sail.
> (ll. 31-44)

Up to this point, the narrator has offered what seems to be a more or less objective argument for finding the island very unpleasant. Yet a close look at some of the preceding lines indicates that more personal disappointments may be under examination here. "No sprightly lads, or gay, bewitching maids/Walk on these wastes." They have gone "to other shores" we are told. Could these, then, have been past acquaintances of the narrator himself? The final section of the poem suggests that he has come to Port Royal, as had the English, in hopes of finding something more rewarding than what he has actually found. The conclusion, therefore, provides a structural mirror for the poem's opening, and unites the destructive historical experiences with the private ones of the narrator.

> To these dull scenes with eager haste I came
> To find some reliques in this sink of fame--
> Not worth the search, what domes are left to fall,
> Guns, fires, and earthquakes shall destroy them all.
> Where shall I go, what Lethe shall I find,
> To drink these dark ideas from my mind!--
> (ll. 45-50)

Unable to find this purging drink, however, the narrator seems to be unable to join the drunken revels of whores who tempt men to share illicit sex and deadly disease:

> A church without a priest I grieve to see,
> Grass round its door, and rust upon its key;
> One only inn, with weary search I found,
> Where parson Lovegrog deal'd the porter round,
> And gay quadroons their killing glances stole,
> Watch'd at the bar, or drain'd the passing bowl.
> (11. 53-58)

This poem, which intensifies the disillusionment depicted in the 1786 "Santa Cruz," is one of the most powerful poems Freneau had yet made. The stateliness of the Augustan couplets elaborates a long, halting meter that in itself precisely "weights" the lines and evokes, surprisingly well, the isolation and despair affecting the speaker. Furthermore, the immediacy of the poem cannot be denied; it is a real experience, being precisely detailed ("one only inn, with weary search I found") and being tightly focused on the emotional issue. There seems to be little reason to doubt that "Port Royal" records significant biographical information. The trip described here had been thoroughly depressing for Freneau, and its date was written into the title by him. It was September 1784.

The experiences in Jamaica, then, had badly upset Freneau in 1784. Although the hurricane in July had affected him deeply, "Port Royal" indicates that something further had happened on the island itself. The precise nature of this event appears to have been much more directly revealed by Freneau when he revised the poem for the Miscellaneous Works (1788). Here is a crucial addition inserted into the 1788 poem immediately following the narrator's rhetorical

question, "Where shall I go, what Lethe shall I find,/ To drink these dark ideas from my mind!--"

> Not even these walls of the ruins a glad
> remembrance claim
> Where grief still wastes a half deluded dame,
> Whom to these coasts a British Paris bore,
> And basely left, lost virtue to deplore.--
> In foreign climes detain'd from all she lov'd,
> By friends neglected, long by Fortune prov'd,
> While sad and solemn pass'd the unwelcome day
> What charms had life for her, to tempt her stay!
> Deceiv'd in all--for meanness could deceive--
> Expecting still, and still condemn'd to grieve,
> She scarcely saw, to different hearts allied,
> That her dear Florio ne'er pursued a bride.--
> Are griefs, like thine to Florio's bosom known?--
> Must these, alas, be ceaseless in your own?
> Life is a dream--its varying shades I see;
> But this base wanderer hardly dreams of thee--
> (ll. 91-102, text:1788)

What was strongly implied by the romantic narratives found in "Santa Cruz," "The Monument of Phaon," and "On the Vicissitude of Things" is clearly stated here. In other words, "Port Royal," while detailing specific events that I believe are directly relevant to Freneau's life, includes a straightforward story about an island woman who has been severely mistreated and then abandoned by her British lover. Still there arises in this love story an ambiguity much like the one found in "Santa Cruz." If, for instance, "Florio" is taken to mean the absent lover (the "base wanderer"), then the question, "Are griefs, like thine to Florio's bosom known?--" is rather rhetorical, for the answer is clearly no. However, if "Florio" is understood to be a third party, perhaps even the narrator himself, then the question seems to ask whether or not the bereaved woman has even noticed

that her "other" lover grieves for her. She is, like "Aurelia" in "Santa Cruz," unconsolable--even by her would-be suitor.

Despite its ambiguities, this passage seems to detail a real event. Nevertheless, it was omitted from the later versions of "Port Royal." In 1795, the entire sixteen-line episode was removed from the poem, revised and reshaped, with the addition of four concluding lines, and then repositioned as though it were a "new" poem entitled "The Mourning Nun." By revising it again in 1809, and retitling it "The Fair Solitary," the poet indicated that this material was important to him even though he had removed it from its original context. But besides simply eliminating this long passage from "Port Royal," Freneau made other revisions in the poem. In fact, it became one of his most laboriously reworked poems. Space does not permit a detailed examination of all the revisions made to "Port Royal." Freneau continually added new material to it, and despite the removal of the sixteen lines from the later versions, the poem was almost as long in 1809 (108 lines) as it had been in 1788 (110 lines). Broad discussion of the poem's alterations, therefore, becomes difficult because the changes throughout the various texts are so numerous. However, the final twelve lines, which were first added in 1788 then revised in 1795 and again in 1809, are important enough to warrant textual comparison.

Evidently Freneau decided, after the poem had first been published in 1786, that the narrator needed to bid a decisive farewell to the island. Accordingly, the 1788 conclusion indicates how thoroughly the narrator has come to dislike the island and how ready he is to leave.

> Ye mountains vast, whose heights the heaven sustain,
> Adieu, ye mountains, and fair Kingston's plain:
> Where Nature still the toils of art transcends--
> In this dull spot the fine delusion ends.
> (ll. 100-104, text:1788)

In the 1795 version, however, this last line reads:

> In this dull spot the enchanting prospect ends.
> (l. 88, text:1795)

And in 1809, the line is again altered, and two new ones are added:

> On this gay spot the dear attachment ends!--
> Who would be sad to leave a sultry clime,
> Where true Columbian virtue is a crime.
> (ll. 98-100, text:1809)

The 1809 alterations are noteworthy because of their inappropriateness. The poem has not described any "dear attachment," though the narrator earlier admits that he first came to the island "with eager haste." Also curious are two lines immediately following each of the passages cited above. In 1788, these two lines contain insignificant generalizations about the ruined buildings on the shore; but, as revised in 1809, they detail the narrator's negative opinion of the people who inhabit the island.

> 1788: Where burning sands are borne by every blast
> And these mean fabrics still bewail the past.
> (ll. 105-106)

1795: Where burning sands are borne by every blast
And these mean fabrics but entomb the past.
(11. 89-90)

1809: Where parching sands are driven by every
blast,
And pearl to swine are by the muses cast--.
(11. 101-102)

Although in recent years it has become a critical commonplace when analyzing a poem to distinguish between the poet and the poem's speaker, it seems apparent that the 1809 narrator is meant to be seen as Philip Freneau. Calling the islanders "swine" because they cannot appreciate "the pearl" of "the muses," Freneau rejects them because they apparently have rejected his poetry.

In any event, the narrator, who also is a sailor, at last prepares to leave this place, "Where want, and death, and care, and grief reside" (1. 105, 1786). The concluding four lines express this final resolve. Although the various texts reveal minor revisions throughout these four lines, there were only two changes made in 1809 which significantly alter the earlier readings. The 1788 version concludes:

Ye stormy winds, awhile your wrath suspend,
Who leaves the land, a bottle, and a friend,
Quits this bright isle for yon' blue seas and sky,
Or even Port Royal quits--without a sigh!
(11. 107-110, text:1788) (emphasis mine)

The 1809 changes are striking:

Ye stormy winds! awhile your wrath suspend--
Who leaves the land, a female and a friend,
Quits this bright isle for a dark sea, and sky--
Or even Port Royal leaves--without a sigh!
(11. 105-108, text:1809) (emphasis mine)

The final revisions include important observations that may always have been meant to be in the poem. The poet/narrator admits in 1809 that he is leaving behind a "female," and even though the sea is now described as threatening, he has obviously become so disillusioned by his stay on the island that he prefers this danger to staying in Jamaica.

Overall, "Port Royal," in its many revisions, is one of the most important poems that Freneau wrote. The events of 1784 and his reactions to them are no doubt shifted about in the various texts of the poem, requiring careful examination of all of the variants in order to piece together a story. The poem unites Freneau's own bleak view of paradise with the actual history of the "fallen" island. If by 1784, "Port Royal" was no longer the "proudest" town in Jamaica, neither was Philip Freneau able to accept any longer his own "fine delusion" about the tropics. When he left Jamaica, sometime during that autumn, perhaps he knew that he faced dark seas, both physically and metaphysically. Perhaps he bid farewell to more than the island itself; perhaps he bid farewell to dreams he was leaving behind.

Yet, as was noted, sixteen important lines that tell the story of the island woman who is deserted by her lover are omitted from "Port Royal" after 1788. The story itself, however, is preserved in the 1795 and the 1809 editions in such a way as to make key elements found in the 1788 version less precise. For example, "a British Paris" (l. 93, 1788) is revised to read "a modern Paris" in the 1795 text and "a

modern Theseus" in 1809. More importantly, the indisputable fact (as seen in the 1788 version) that the young woman has ". . . been basely left, lost [emphasis mine] virtue to deplore," is altered in the 1795 and 1809 texts to suggest much more ambiguously that she has ". . . been basely left, frail virtue to deplore." Finally, her deserter is described in the 1809 text as ". . . this cold wanderer" instead of ". . . this base wanderer."

These are minor, yet pertinent, revisions. They suggest that as Freneau moved away from the initial events of this poem, he wanted to disguise a few of the more precise details of the narrative. Nevertheless, the basic story remains the same. The young woman, described in these lines, suffers deeply as a result of being abandoned. The 1795 text adds four lines to the narrative which provide a crucial summation and which suggest that the young woman is beyond help:

> This bloom of health, that bade all hearts adore,
> To your pale cheeks what psychic shall restore?
> Vain are those drugs that art and love prepares,
> No art redeems the waste of sigh and tears!
> (ll. 17-20, text:1795)

When considered as a separate poem, "The Fair Solitary" reiterates themes encountered elsewhere in Freneau's poetry. In "The House of Night," the narrator reviles the learned men (doctors) whom he overhears discussing sickness, death and medicine. And in "The Hurricane" the narrator tells us that in face of cosmic disorder, mankind's "skill and science both must fall." Similarly, the

narrator of "The Fair Solitary" indicates that neither doctors nor those who love the young woman can save her, implying that mankind's skill and art--and even love--are no match for complex human disorders. Also, the last four lines seem to indicate that the narrator loves the young woman but has been ignored by her.

These last four lines, therefore, provide a needed conclusion that the narrative lacks in the 1788 "Port Royal." The young woman's death appears imminent in the revised poem, and this additional information is important; for in the 1809 text, "The Fair Solitary" is included as the fifth poem of the "Amanda" series and creates--as we shall see--a turning point in the overall story outlined by the seven poems. Indeed, "The Fair Solitary" begins a three-part movement in the 1809 series that continues with "Amanda's" death in the sixth poem and concludes with an elegy for her in the seventh, delivered by the unhappy narrator whom she has rejected. Although the poem as it appears in the 1795 and the 1809 editions seems to have no obvious connection with "Port Royal," the fact remains that the sickness and death detailed here are associated with the disheartening events of the summer and autumn of 1784.

When "Port Royal" was first published in early 1786, Freneau had, of course, been away from the islands for over a year; but he had found life "at home" to be very unsettling and unrewarding. In the autumn of 1785, he left Charleston, where he had gone to recuperate, journeyed to Middletown

Point, New York, assumed command of his brother's sloop Monmouth, sailed back to Charleston, and finally took the vessel out to sea on a commercial voyage. Probably during this period, he had submitted "Port Royal" to The Columbian Herald, a liberal newspaper in Charleston,[14] which began to publish Freneau's work regularly over the next few years and which on March 6, 1786, carried another of Freneau's island poems called "The Lost Adventurer."[15]

The poem was variously retitled later: "The Lost Sailor" (1788), "Argonauta: Or the Lost Adventurer" (1795), and "The Argonaut: or Lost Adventure" (1809). Following the sestet-rhyme scheme (ABABCC) that Freneau often used, the poem relates a story told by a narrator who has encountered an old sailor named "Ralph" on one of the tropical islands. "Ralph" laments that as a young man he was lured into becoming a sailor by the romantic aspects of sea life:[16]

> 'With masts so trim, and sails as white as snow,
> 'The painted barque allur'd me from the land,
> 'Pleas'd, on her sea-boat decks I wish'd to go
> 'Mingling my labours with her hardy band;
> 'The Captain bade me for the voyage prepare
> 'And said, by Jasus, 'tis a grand affair!
> (ll. 7-12, text: The Columbian Herald, March 6, 1786)

Yet instead of satisfying his libido, the sea has proved to be a harsh mistress, giving him little more than danger and loneliness:

'But how disheartening is the wanderer's fate!--
'When conquer'd by the loud, tempestuous main,
'On him no mourners in procession wait,
'Nor do the sisters of the grove complain;--
'Nor can I think on coral beds they sleep
'Who sink in storms, and mingle with the deep.[17]
(11. 31-36)

Lonely, brutal, unrelenting, the sea life is the only life that "Ralph" knows; therefore, like the narrators of "Santa Cruz" and "Port Royal," he prepares to leave the island, although he first warns the narrator to ". . . stay my gentle swain,/Bred in yon' happy shades--be happy there." The narrator, remaining behind on land after the old sailor has gone, is deeply troubled about the fate of "Ralph":

But, whether winds or waters did prevail,
I saw the black ship ne'er returning more:
Though long I walk'd the margin of the main,
And long have look'd and still must look in vain.
(11. 43-48)

Several recent critics have noted that "The Lost Adventurer" provides a clear thematic corollary to "The Hurricane." Both poems argue that sailors, by always confronting death openly and manfully, are better prepared to understand the universe than those who do not venture out to sea.[18] The old mariner confesses that, had he been reared among the lovely "gay groves" of tropical islands, he might not have been so easily lured away by the "painted barque." Nevertheless, prior to this confession "Ralph" has also demonstrated an undeniable pride in his profession. The ocean, he claims, is no place for cowards and weaklings:

'Courage might sink when lands and shores withdrew.
'And sickly whelps might spoil the best manoevre;
'But fortitude--though woes and death await,
'Still views bright skies and leaves the dark to fate.
(ll. 21-24)

"The Lost Adventure" demonstrates that Freneau was examining, once again, the lessons he had learned at sea as well as on the islands. Yet by creating dual speakers (the narrator and "Ralph"), the poet achieved an artistic control that allowed him to look at both sides of an issue: life on shore may provide more safety than life at sea, but, paradoxically, the greater dangers offered by the sea bring not only greater challenges but also much greater rewards for those brave enough to test themselves against it. In a more precise sense, as Griffith has argued, ". . . 'The Argonaut' becomes the poet's dialogue with himself, one part of him wanting to be both physically and poetically safe and secure, but doubting the possibility, the other part of him needing to seek but knowing the danger full well."[19] Jane Eberwein sees a similar type of internal dialogue occurring in "Santa Cruz" between the narrator and "the northern shepherd." Here it is difficult not to agree with Griffith's assessment since the biographical suggestions already raised strongly support such a reading. When this poem was written, Freneau was well qualified, through first-hand experience, to describe how the sea lures young men away from home only to provide them with sober lessons in reality. But he was equally cognizant of the thrill of danger that continually

drove some men to this life. In fact, by the time this poem was published, Freneau, like his old sailor, had already gone back to sea to earn his living.

While physically returning to the more dangerous profession of seaman, Freneau had also "returned" in poetry to his unhappy reflections on life in the West Indies. A poem he ultimately called "Carribbiana" in 1795 first appeared as an untitled piece in Bailey's Pocket Almanack for 1787.[20] When he republished the poem in the 1788 edition, Freneau gave it quite a long title: "Stanzas Written in a Blank Leaf of Burke's History of the West India Islands"; and he also indicated that the poem had been written in Philadelphia in 1786. Actually "Caribbiana" is a rather uninspired island poem which generally denounces the corruption, greed, and slavery that were according to Freneau plaguing the tropics. Although the poem's meter and stanzaic structure evoke the solemn mood of "Port Royal" and "The Lost Adventurer," the poem itself lacks the dramatic tension of either of those pieces. The narrator of "Carribbiana" remains, for the most part, intellectually and emotionally aloof and provides little more than a conventional lament for the loss of primitive innocence:

> These Indian isles, so green and gay
> In summer seas by nature plac'd--
> Art hardly told us where they lay
> Till tyranny their charms defac'd;
> Ambition there her conquests made,
> And avarice rifled every shade.
> (ll. 1-6, text: Bailey's Pocket Almanack, 1787)

The poem does contain three stanzas, however, that suggest more personal links between the narrator and his material although its allusions to the death or exile of some inhabitants of the islands and to an unhappy love affair are at best vague:

> The Genius wept his sons to see
> By foreign arms untimely fall,
> And some to other climates flee
> Where later ruin met them all--
> He saw his sylvan offspring bleed
> That fiercer natures might succeed.
>
> No more to Indian coasts confin'd,
> Aw'd by some proud victorious chief,
> While he to tears his heart resign'd
> With pain he saw the falling leaf;
> "And thus (he cry'd) our reign must end,
> "We, like the leaves, must now descend.
>
> "Ah, what a change! the ambient deep
> "No longer hears the lover's sigh--
> "But wretches meet to wail and weep
> "The loss of their dear liberty,
> "Unfeeling hearts possess these isles,
> "Man frowns, and only nature smiles."
> (ll. 7-18)

It is difficult to judge whether these three stanzas are meant to chronicle the downfall of an established Caucasian population on the island (because of war or internal bickering) or to describe the downfall of the native Indian population in confrontation with incoming whites. But the poem provides no further clues. It concludes with a long condemnation of slavery that undercuts a somewhat unconvincing attempt to celebrate the West Indies' potential for greatness. Freneau had said all of this--with more force--in "Santa Cruz" and in "Port Royal." What "Carribbiana" does

provide is one more bit of evidence that after 1784 Freneau had had enough of the islands.

"Carribbiana" also has other features in common with poems such as "Port Royal" and "The Lost Adventurer." All of them show, in one way or another, that Freneau was learning to cope with, and perhaps fictionalize, his prior experiences. "Port Royal," especially in its 1788 revision, exhibits a narrator intensely disappointed with life at sea as well as on the islands, while "The Lost Adventurer" creates a poetic tension between a narrator who stays on land and a sailor who must return to sea. "Carribbiana," though rather vaguely conceived, reveals a certain objectivity about the negative aspects of the West Indies. While critics have seen the period which produced these poems (1785-1787) as a time when Freneau began to work out his depressions, these and other poems represent moments of artistic control in dealing with past events.

Perhaps the darkest of Freneau's poems to come out of this period is ironically one of his most controlled. "The Departure" (retitled in 1795 as "The Wintry Prospect") did not appear in The Freeman's Journal until April of 1787 and may seem, at first, to post-date the three poems discussed immediately above, but this poem was precisely dated by Freneau in a post-script.[21] It was written on November 26, 1785, during the time that Freneau had first returned to sea after the 1784 incidents. The Journal version of this poem is subtitled, "Written at Leaving Sandy Hook on a Voyage to

the West Indies," though the poem itself avoids specific references to the islands except in two places. The overall mood of dejection that by now seemed to grip Freneau each time he considered the tropics permeates "The Departure," which echoes the desolation heard in "The Vernal Ague" (see above, p. 69), probably written about the same time. But unlike "The Vernal Ague," this poem expands the narrator's grief into a universal commiseration with humanity.

"The Departure" opens with the narrator--a sailor--preparing to leave the cold northern water:

> From Hudson's cold, congealing streams
> As winter comes, I take my way
> Where other suns prompt other dreams,
> And shades, less willing to decay,
> Beget new raptures in the heart,
> Bid spleen's dejective crew depart,
> And wake the sprightly lay.
> (11. 1-7)

The initial prospect of a trip to "other suns" and "shades less willing to decay" inspires hope that somehow this journey to warmer climates will revivify the narrator's spirits. However, the succeeding stanzas progressively erode this hope, which the narrator himself realizes is based on fantasy.

> Good-natur'd Neptune, now so mild,
> Like rage asleep, or madness chain'd,
> By dreams amus'd or love beguil'd,
> Sleep on 'till we our port have gain'd.
> The gentle breeze that curls the deep,
> Shall paint a finer dream on sleep!--
> Ye nymphs, that haunt his grottoes low,
> Where sea green trees on coral grow,
> No tumults make
> Lest he should wake,
> And thus the passing shade betray
> The sails that o'er his waters stray.

Sunk is the sun from yonder hill,[22]
That noisy day is past;
The breeze decays, and all is still,
As all shall be at last;
The murmuring on the distant shore,
The dying wave is all I hear,
No painted butterflies are near,
And laughing folly plagues no more.

The woods that deck yon' fading waste,
That every wanton gale embrac'd,
Ere summer yet made haste to fly;
How smit with frost the pride of June!
How lost to me! how very soon
The fairy prospects die!
Condemn'd to bend to winter's stroke,
Low in the dust the embowering oak
Has bid the fading leaf descend,
Their short-liv'd verdure at an end;
How desolate the forests seem,
    Beneath whose shade
    The enamor'd maid
Was once so fond to dream.
  (ll. 8-41)

Freneau employed a technique here that he used with less success in "On the Vicissitude of Things" and "The Lady's Singing Bird." The short, fast-paced rhythms of the occasional dimeter lines contrast with the longer lines that carry the poem's primary weight. Moreover, the stark images that crowd the poem have been used, in one place or another, by nearly every narrator who ever personified Freneau's grief.

The next two stanzas, centrally located in the poem, describe the narrator's bleakest frame of mind. This trip, he understands, will not, in itself, restore him; in fact, no single human action leads to final solutions.

What now is left of all that won
The eye of mirth while summer stay'd--
The birds that sported in the sun,
The sport is past, the song is done;
And nature's naked forms declare,
The rifled groves, the vallies bare,
Persuasively, tho' silent, tell,
That at the best they were but drest[23]
Sad mourners for the funeral bell!

Now while I spread the venturous sail
To catch the breeze from yonder hill,
Say, what does all this folly mean?
Why grieve to pass the wat'ry scene?
Is fortitude to heaven confin'd?--
No--planted also in the mind,
She smooths the ocean when she will.
(ll. 42-57)

The concluding three stanzas of the poem, however, broaden in scope to unite the narrator's plight with the human condition itself, and, in so doing, repeat the message of "On the Vicissitude of Things."

But life is pain--what ills must try,
What malice dark and calumny,
Indifference, with her careless eye,
And slander with her tale began;
Bold ignorance, with the forward air,
And cowardice, that has no share
In honours gain'd or trophies won.

To these succeed, (and these are few
Of nature's dark, unseemly crew)
Unsocial pride, and cold disgust,
Servility, that licks the dust;
Those harpies that disgrace the mind;
Unknown to haunt the human breast
When pleasure her first garden dress'd--
But vanish'd is the shade so gay,
And lost in gloom the summer day
That charm'd the soul to rest.

What season shall restore the scene
When all was calm and all serene,
And happiness no empty sound
The golden age, that pleas'd so well?--
The Mind that made it shall not tell

To those on life's uncertain road;
When lost in folly's idle round,
And seeking what shall ne'er be found
We press to one abode.
(11. 58-84)

Although "The Departure" is another bleak poem, offering no resolution to the despair that the narrator faces, it nevertheless takes the stoic position that, by realizing "life is pain," we are all better able to persevere against the odds. The narrator concludes, therefore, (as does "Ralph" in "The Lost Adventurer") with a new-found fortitude, the lessons of which he offers to others as a means of combatting indifferent fate. Bleak though it is, "The Departure" objectifies a personal dilemma in a way that Freneau was seldom able to manage in his poetry.

The later revisions of the poem are, at times, uneven--some provide more distance between the narrator and his personal setting and some bring them closer together.[24] The two most intriguing alterations occur in stanzas three and six. In stanza three Freneau added (in 1795) a bit of information clearly establishing an "island" frame of reference. The lines,

Beneath whose shade [i.e. the now dead trees]
The enamour'd maid
Was once so fond to dream.
(1787/1788 texts)

were revised to read,

Beneath whose shade
The island maid
Was once so fond to dream.
(1795)

Freneau also made important revisions in stanza six, but in these he seemed to move away from a specific frame of reference toward a more generalized one. In the original newspaper version (1787), the narrator asks a rhetorical question, then provides his own answer:

> Is happiness to place confin'd?
> No--planted also in the mind
> She makes an Eden where she will.
> (1787)

In the 1788 version Freneau rather pessimistically altered this question by eliminating the allusion to "Eden."

> Is fortitude to heaven confin'd?--
> No--planted also in the mind,
> She smooths the ocean where she will.
> (1788)

The alterations are important in two ways. First, terms such as "Eden" and "paradise" are consistently associated in Freneau's poetry with the tropics. He had gone to great lengths in "Santa Cruz," "Port Royal," "Carribbiana" and other island poems to demonstrate that man cannot possess "Eden" here on earth. It is likely, then, that the 1787 reference to "Eden" reflects a complex association in Freneau's mind of paradise, the tropics, and his own youthful dreams of finding an artistic haven; it is also likely that the 1788 revisions indicate that the poet had come to realize that this association had always been his own special delusion.

The 1788 revisions have a second important function. Freneau replaced the concept of "happiness" with the stoic idea of "fortitude." And although the (1788) imagery

is still drawn from Freneau's island/ocean background, it no longer suggests that human beings may hope to find internal peace (a mental "Eden"). It offers us only "fortitude" as the ultimate psychic buffer against "life's ocean."[25] Notably, by 1795, Freneau was able to reassert the idea of "happiness," and, in fact, to suggest that actually "the mind" is the only place where happiness may be found.

> Is happiness to place confin'd?
> No--planted only in the mind
> She meets her votary where she will.
> (1795)

While it is apparent that neither the image of the enamored island maid nor the references to a mental "Eden" are deeply explored in any of the texts of "The Departure," they have been examined here because Freneau himself saw fit to incorporate these revisions into the poem at various points in his process of composition. Moreover, they provide us with another glimpse into the creative synapses which often linked Freneau's more effective poems of despair with images of the West Indies. Granted, such brief allusions to the tropics, if seen in isolation, might easily pass unnoticed; but in view of what has been demonstrated up to this point about "Amanda" and the island poems in general it seems probable that these changes are significant. Once again, Freneau associated images of the islands and of a woman with a devastating emotional pain that seems to have dominated his poetry and to have reached a kind of artistic culmination in "The Departure." The fact that no reference

to the island maid appears in the earlier versions of the poem may well account for the artistic control which they reveal. Indeed, wherever her image appears in other earlier verse, it almost always signals a narrative interruption that confuses, to some degree, the basic movement of the poem, as in "The House of Night," "Santa Cruz," "Port Royal," and "On the Vicissitude of Things".

"The Departure" is one of a number of poems of the mid-to-late 1780s that document Freneau's attempt to merge the island references into larger, even unrelated, contexts. It is tempting to introduce here the many images of islands, unhappy women, and lonely sailors that are found in Freneau's newspaper verse of this period;[26] but because the writing of many of these poems was, in itself, an objectifying process by which Freneau probably recaptured his psychic equilibrium, it would be rash to insist on links between all these images and Freneau's experiences in the West Indies. For although it may not be quite right to say, as one critic has, that Freneau was "more mellow" in the poems he wrote immediately after 1785-1786,[27] it does seem that he was gaining some creative distance from the pain of his earlier life. Accordingly, "Amanda" and the youthful island adventures seem to begin to move out of Freneau's "real" world and into the fictional world of poetry. But it is also obvious that by 1787-1788 he had only begun to fashion the image of "Amanda" into the complex, poetic symbol she was later to become. While the multitude of "sailors and sweethearts"

that appear in his minor poems may or may not directly reflect Freneau's own affairs, "Amanda's" portrait is unmistakably drawn in several major poems. One of them, first titled "Stanzas on a Young Lady in a Consumption" and ultimately called "Amanda in a Consumption," became perhaps the central poem in the "Amanda" series, for it records her death.

After the poem's initial appearance on February 7, 1787, in The Freeman's Journal,[28] Freneau subsequently revised and republished it four more times: in the 1788 edition, in The National Gazette on October 13, 1792, and in the 1795 and 1809 editions. Perhaps most apparent are the revisions of the central character's name. She is first (1787) called "Cynthia." In the 1788 text, she is addressed as "Marcella," although the poem is rather inappropriately titled "To Marcia."[29] In the 1792 and 1795 versions, however, she consistently appears as "Marcella" in both the title ("Marcella in a Consumption") and in the body of the poem itself. Finally, in the 1809 revision, she has become "Amanda." Obviously, then, Freneau continued to tinker with this poem, as he did with all of the "Amanda" poems, making numerous revisions over the years. Many of the changes are minor, but, beginning with the 1788 text, Freneau began to rework the poem in such a way as to create, almost imperceptibly, an increasing distance between the narrator and the dying woman he praises.

However, the poem, in each of its versions, passionately eulogizes the island woman. The narrator seems torn between his love for her and his sense that she has rejected him. Plainly, this story is not a new one in Freneau's poetry; the narrator, who clearly identifies himself as a poet, hopelessly loves a young woman who is herself consumed by grief. But the elements of this poem unify in what is perhaps Freneau's most personal as well most honest tribute to "Amanda." The 1787 version begins:

> On the lost charms of Cynthia's eyes,
> And wasted bloom when I would gaze,
> Strange feelings in my bosom rise,
> And passion all my reason sways;
> Worlds I would banish from my view,
> And leave the gods, to talk with you.
> (11. 1-6)

The 1788 text revises the opening lines as follows:

> Smit by the charms of thy bright eyes,
> When I, Marcella, fondly gaze.
> (11. 1-2)

Minor changes also occur in the 1795 text, but it is the 1809 version which adds "Amanda":

> Smit by the glance of your bright eyes
> When I, Amanda, fondly gaze.
> (11. 1-2)

Though a bit different, each version states that the narrator has been so in love with "Amanda" that he would have done anything to win her. The succeeding stanzas (two and three), however, pose his real dilemma, which is that, realizing the woman is deeply suffering, he also realizes that he is unable to comfort her and that she has rejected him.

The smile that decks your fading cheek
To me a heavy heart declares,
When you are silent I would speak,
But cowardice alarms my fears;
  All must be heaven that you do prize,
  As all is death that you despise.

When, wandering in the evening shade,
I shar'd her pains and felt her grief
Though many a tender thing I said
No words of mine could bring relief;
  When from her hair I brush'd the dew
  She sigh'd, and said--'tis not for you.
    (11. 7-18, text:1787)

Again, among the many minor changes that run throughout these lines in the various texts, there are several important ones. For example, in the 1792, 1795 and 1809 texts, the revised couplet of stanza two alters the relationship between the narrator and the woman by implying that if she had allowed him to, he would have courted her. But she has not:

When you are silent I would speak,
But cowardice alarms my fears;
All must be sense, that you do prize,
All that I say, be grave and wise.
  (19-12, texts:1792, 1795, 1809)

Similarly, later revisions in the final couplet of stanza three stress her bluntness in rejecting him:

When from her hair I dried * the dew
She sighed and said--I am not for you.
  (11. 17-18, text:1809)
  (* 1795: brush'd)

The next three stanzas of the original version recount the unhappy events that have led the poet to despair. However, in them we also detect a certain impatience he feels in trying to deal with this unresponsive woman.

When drooping, dull, and almost dead
With fevers brought from sultry climes,
She would not hold my fainting head,
But recommended me some rhymes
  On patience, and on fortitude,
  And other things, less understood.

When aiming to engage her heart
With verses from the muse's stock,
She sate, regardless of my art,
And counted seconds by the clock;
  And thus, she cry'd, shall verse decay,
  And thus the world shall pass away!

When languishing upon her bed
(No longer fond of India gowns)
I came--and while the parson read
Of chrystal skies and choral crowns,
  She bade me at a distance stand,
  And lean'd her head upon her hand.
    (ll. 19-36, text:1787)

As we have seen elsewhere, what appears at first to be a conventional situation is given biographical suggestiveness by specific narrative details. The speaker has caught a fever in "sultry climes," a fact to which "Amanda" has coolly responded by recommending that he read poetry "on patience and fortitude." But she has also been unappreciative of his own poetry, reminding him that everything--including works of art--will decay. Finally, she falls so ill that she no longer cares how she looks or dresses. The seemingly biographical reference to her fondness for "India gowns" (l. 32) is omitted only in the 1809 text, where a more important change also occurs. The "I" and the "me" of lines 33 and 35 are respectively changed to "we" and "us," which increases the emotional distance that has been forced on the narrator by the woman herself. According to the revision, she does not address him

specifically as she lies on her death bed; he is merely one of several who have been at her side.[30]

The concluding stanzas return to the poem's present time in which the narrator (as so many other narrators of Freneau's grave-yard verse) ponders the familiar theme of transience. However, these last twelve lines interestingly recombine thoughts and images explored in other poems.

> So drooping hangs the fading rose
> When August sends the driving shower,
> So in the grave my Cynthia [Amanda] goes--
> Her whole duration--but an hour;
> Yet who would think she ought did ail.
> So beautiful--and yet so pale![31]
>
> Such virtue in her spirit dwells,
> Such triumphs crown her bed of pain,[32]
> That now with pride my bosom swells
> To think I have not liv'd in vain,
> Since, slighting all the sages knew,
> I learn philosophy from you.
> (ll. 37-48, text:1787)

Plainly, Freneau was reworking here the concept of "life's brief hour" found in "The House of Night" and "On the Vicissitude of Things." But instead of linking the concepts as he had done in the earlier poems, with something sinister, he linked it to the symbol of the dying flower also found in other verse. By recombining the ideas in this way, he seems to have been trying to soften the sadness and desolateness of the earlier poems. Resembling the narrator of "Santa Cruz," the speaker in this poem also learns to accept what "Amanda" has been trying to teach him but what he has been unable to comprehend so long as he has maintained an abstract, intellectual frame of mind. Only in

"slighting all the sages knew" has he learned that life is fleeting and indifferent to our desires, and that, even when these desires drive us to madness, our personal agonies are of no concern to the universe. In order to survive disappointment, we must learn to practice "patience and fortitude," the hallmarks of Reason itself.

Freneau had said as much in a multitude of earlier poems and, indeed, had been almost compulsively repeating the lesson in the poems of the mid-80s; but, significantly, this is one of the last blatant reiterations of the theme. His often repeated admonition to resign oneself to life's injustice seems, in retrospect, to have been much easier for Freneau to preach than to practice. It is an oversimplification to suggest that, as the 1780s came to a close, Freneau simply overcame his depression; yet, as other studies have shown,[33] the poetry that he wrote after this period, for the most part, indicates that he progressively achieved a sort of psychological peace.

In any event, the poem "To Marcia" ("Amanda in a Consumption") appears in the 1788 edition as a part of a short story ostensibly told by Robert Slender--the most famous of Freneau's fictitious essayists. Called "Light Summer Reading," the story almost exactly repeats the scenario that we have sketched from Freneau's earlier verse. Slender relates an experience that he supposedly had at some earlier time on the "Summer Islands," or Bermuda. He has been the guest there of a man described only as wearing a

"white linen suit" who has acted as his guide as well as host. In September of the year in question, they meet on the island a young, beautiful woman named "Marcia" who has been deserted by her lover, a philosophy student, gone off to Europe. With "Marcia" is her only companion, a small canary bird that she keeps in a cage. "Marcia" spends her time walking about her garden and reading not only from a large volume of poetry about the brevity of life but also from a treatise "about patience and resignation to the divine will" (Freneau's emphasis) that her lover has left for her to read.

Shortly thereafter, Slender meets another person--a distracted young poet who has been vainly trying to win "Marcia's" attention. The would-be courtship is described at some length, but the upshot is that "Marcia," unresponsive to the poet, dies of an illness. Slender and his guide later find a copy of the poem "To Marcia," which then appears in the text. Later they attend her funeral, but because a bumbling preacher has forgotten to bring a Bible, the service is first conducted by a native Indian whose pagan sermon celebrates the natural cycles of life and death here on earth--and employs the floral imagery that is found in so many of Freneau's own eulogies.

> . . . Fair daughter of the morning, thou didst not perish by slow decays. At the rising of the sun we saw thee; the ruddy bloom of youth was then upon thy countenance in the evening thou wert nothing, and the pallid complexion of death has taken place of the bloom of beauty.--And now thou

> art gone to sit down in gardens that are found at the setting of the sun, behind the western mountains, where the daughters of the white men have a separate place allotted to them by the spirit of the hills. As much as the mind is superior to the body, so much are those charming regions preferable to these which we now inhabit.--Man is here but an image of himself the representation of an idea that in itself is not subjected to a change.
> (text:1788, pp. 266-267)

This platonic tribute, however, offends the preacher, who has returned with the Bible and takes over the funeral services by delivering such a depressing sermon that the Indian is heard to remark: "In my country, . . . they would make a more animated speech at the interment of a favorite fox!"

The funeral concluded, Slender, the guide and the Indian enter into a discussion about death, at which time they again meet the distracted poet, wandering alone, still unable to resolve his sadness. The three agree that it is unhealthy to continue to grieve for the dead and that "Marcia's" epitaph should read:

> You, who should round this tomb your vigils keep,
> Wake me, wake me--I do not wish to sleep.
> My eyes were always pleasures with the day;
> Wake me, wake me, for here I dread to stay.
> In these dark shadows of our mother ground
> Where no sun-beam, or moon's pale ray is found,
> No gentle muse bids poor Marcia weep,
> Wake me, wake me--I came not here to sleep.
> (p. 269)

Although the narrative is rather heavy-handed, its plot providing little more than philosophical exchanges among the characters, the story itself is extremely important to our understanding of Freneau's later approaches to

"Amanda." For here is created a narrative envelope, and thereby a supposedly objective context, for a very personal lyric. Indeed, the 1788 text does not even identify the narrator of the poem with Slender, the narrator of the story. And, of course, neither Slender nor the distracted poet is identified with Freneau himself. It is also obvious that Slender is emotionally removed from the young man's agony; along with the guide and the Indian, he discusses the dilemma from an intellectual distance.

The prose tale, nevertheless, illuminates some of the more obscure references found in the poem. For instance, the young woman has recommended to the impassioned poet that he read verses on "patience and fortitude," and we learn here that such verses have been left by her other lover. Perhaps jealousy accounts for the poet's rejecting them in the poem. The story and the poem, then, clearly complement each other, but as the verse is absorbed into the larger framework of the story, the enveloping narrative weakens any association one might make between Freneau and the lyric itself. The verse now appears as a story within a story within a story--and thereby thrice removes the real poet from the woman he mourns.

The distancing that "Light Summer Reading" creates between Freneau and his work, marks, in a general way, the beginning of Freneau's ability to subordinate his ego to his art. Overall, the later revisions and repositionings of the "Amanda" poems indicate that Freneau was ultimately able to

collect, edit and expand his material to create a fictionalized version of the truth. Still there are curious omissions in later texts. For instance, never included in the "Amanda" series is a 1788 poem called "Elegiac Lines" (to avoid confusion with other poems of the same name to be discussed, this poem is hereafter referred to as "Elegiac Lines [I]"). This poem obviously refers to the death of a young woman in Jamaica in September 1784. When we recall that this dating precisely matches that of "Port Royal," we naturally associate the two poems. Moreover, beginning with line seven, "Elegiac Lines [I]" obviously describes an island woman:

> . . . As she her shining race begun,
> Confest the daughter of the sun,
> Of all the beams that from him play,
> She was the most delightful ray:
> Her brow so black, her lips so red,
> Her breath by melting blossoms fed,
> Her eye with beauty so replete,
> Her breast, where love his music beat,
> Gay smiles upon her face so fair
> And every pleasure painted there.
>
> Tho' round her grave the muses play,
> And many a tender thing they say,
> Here she did not wish to stay
> From her Florio far away:
> Then cheer the night and gild the gloom,
> Dear keeper of this shaded tomb,
> Till day approach, and opens the door,
> And morning comes, to cease no more.
>
> Jamaica, September 1784
> (11. 7-24, text:1788)

These lines patently echo descriptions found elsewhere. First, the dead woman is dark, as is "Aspasia" in "The House of Night." Perhaps "daughter of the sun" implies she is non-white; in any event, she does not appear to be a

typical, neo-classical shepherdess. Secondly, she offers "painted pleasures" on her face, an image suggestive of the "painted pleasures" that the land offers in "The Departure." Thirdly, we also learn that "love" measured out his music on her breast (l. 14), and we are reminded, therefore, of "Amanda's" canary who describes himself as "all love" and who asks,

> Dear Amanda! --leave me free
> And my notes will sweeter be,
> On your breast.
> (11. 22-24, text:1809)

Fourthly, the male lover in this poem is called "Florio," the same classical pseudonym used for the male lover in "Port Royal." Finally, the "September" death links this woman not only with the "deluded dame" of "Port Royal" but also with "Marcia" in "Light Summer Reading," where we are informed that the young island woman falls ill in August and dies in September.

It is apparent, then, that "Elegiac Lines [I]" laments the death of a young woman in September of 1784 and that "Port Royal" (1788) also implies the death of a "deluded dame" during the same time. By piecing together the many variants of "Amanda in a Consumption," we can see that it too establishes a setting during August and September. "Elegiac Lines [I]," then, evidently commemorates the death of the island woman hinted at in so many other poems.

This fact would seem to argue that "Elegiac Lines [I]" should have been an important poem in the "Amanda" canon. Such is not the case. On the contrary, Freneau rather carelessly rewrote it for inclusion in the 1795 edition. The new title, "Under the PORTRAITURE of MARTHA RAY," indicates that the poem is to be identified with a portrait of a woman by that name. Moreover, the word ray (i.e. the sun's most "delightful ray") in line ten is capitalized to underline the pun, and, in several other ways, the tone of the piece is trivialized so that it implies little connection with the "Amanda" trauma. It even includes a post-script which reads: "Killed by the hands of her desperate lover, HACKMAN (an attorney) to prevent her being possess'd by his more fortunate rival, LORD SANDWICH, then at the head of British Naval Affairs." For whatever reason, Freneau changed the poem so thoroughly by 1795 that, after line twelve, the narrator becomes merely a kind of reporter--seemingly uninvolved in the events:

> Her brow so black, her lips so red,
> Her breath by India's odours fed,[34]
> The crimson cheek, the forehead fair,
> The ringlets of her auburn hair !
> The eye, with beauty so replete,
> The breast, where Love his pulses beat:
> All these were fuel for his blaze.
> And these were only half her praise,
> Soaring, afar above the crowd
> To her the Lord of thunder bow'd:
> Like Juno, she, in spangles drest,
> By Lords would only be caress'd,
> 'Till, grown a rival to the skies,
> AN EARTHLY LAWYER SEIZ'D THE PRIZE.
> (ll. 13-26, text:1795)[35]

Again, we see that Freneau revised and objectified a poem which appears to be quite personal in its original form. Certainly the narrator of the 1795 poem is not the lover of the dead sweetheart; he even implies a mild contempt for this young woman who "By Lords would only be caress'd." Yet if these examples indicate that in his poetry Freneau was moving away from the "real" island woman and toward a fictitious characterization of her, he was nevertheless not completely consistent; for there are other revisions which seem to indicate a reversal of the process. In the 1788 edition of his poems, there are two more funereal pieces which also lament the deaths of women. These poems are respectively called "Lines on the Death of a Lady" and "Epitaph." In the 1788 edition both of these poems are placed near "Elegiac Lines [I]"; but in the 1795 edition they are combined into one poem and called, quite confusingly, "Elegiac Lines" (hereafter referred to as "Elegiac Lines [II]"). More importantly, this so-called "new" poem becomes the final poem of the "Amanda" series in the 1809 edition. It becomes, in fact, her elegy, clearly reiterating that her death is a part of the implied story of the seven poems. Here is the 1809 version of "Elegiac Lines [II]."

> With life enamoured, but in death resigned,
> To seats congenial flew the unspotted mind:
> Attending spirits hailed her to that shore
> Where this world's winter chills the soul no more.
> Learn hence, to live resigned;--and when you die
> No fears will seize you, when that hour is nigh.

Transferred to heaven, Amanda has no share
In the dull business of this world of care.
Her blaze of beauty, even in death admired,
A moment kindled, but as soon expired.
Sweet as the favourite offspring of the May
Serenely mild, not criminally gay:[36]
Adorned with all that nature could impart
To please the fancy and to gain the heart;
Heaven ne'er above more innocence possessed,
Nor earth the form of a diviner guest:
A mind all virtue!--flames descended here
From some bright seraph of some nobler sphere;
Yet, not her virtues, opening into bloom,
Nor all her sweetness saved her from the tomb,
From prospects darkened, and the purpose crossed,
Misfortunes's winter,--and a lover lost;
Nor such resemblance to the forms above,
The heart of goodness, and the soul of love!
Ye thoughtless fair!--her early death bemoan,
Sense, virtue, beauty, to oblivion gone.

Except for inserting the name "Amanda" into the poem, the text of the 1809 version differs very little from that of 1795. The poem's tone is stately, yet somehow emotionally distant from the events described, perhaps because the images, for the most part, lack the personal intensity and specificity of the other eulogies. We note, of course, such familiar ideas as "misfortune's winter" and "a lover lost"; but it is obvious that this "farewell" is controlled and studied. Quite possibly by 1809 the stateliness of the poem struck Freneau as being the most fitting last tribute to "Amanda."

Besides "Elegiac Lines [I]" and Elegiac Lines [II]," the reader of Freneau's later editions will find yet another poem titled "Elegiac Lines" (hereafter referred to as "Elegiac Lines [III]").[37] Although at first the piece appears to be a new tribute to the dead woman, it simply

combines those stanzas from the 1786 "Santa Cruz" which describe the death of "Aurelia" with those from the 1786 "The House of Night" which lament "Aspasia." In fact, the 1795 version of "Elegiac Lines [III]" uses the name "Aspasia" throughout while the 1809 version uses "Aurelia."[38]

We have already noted that Freneau made major changes in both "Santa Cruz" and "The House of Night" by the time they appeared in the 1795 edition and that, in the case of the latter poem, he very nearly dismantled it. Leary has said that the mature poet of 1795 perhaps could not accept the "amorphous suggestion of sublimity" of the earlier versions of "The House of Night."[39] However that may be, the sad love stories, first added to both the poems sometime after 1779, were later combined by Freneau into a single poem. And the fact that he did so supports the argument that "Aspasia" and "Aurelia" sprang from the same creative source in Freneau's mind and that both have to do with his life in the West Indies. In any event, by 1795, the poet saw fit to merge their portraits into one.

"Aspasia," "Aurelia," "Amanda" and all of the "other" island women who appear in the verse of the 1780s may seem to some critics to be nothing more than conventional heroines; yet Freneau's leading ladies constantly turn up in remarkably similar stories which nearly always end as in "Elegiac Lines [III]":

> Such charms shall greet my longing soul no more,
> Her radiant eyes are clos'd in endless shade . . .
> Torpid she rests on yonder marble floor,
> Approach--and see what havoc here is made.
> (ll. 35-38, text:1795. Also see, ll. 169-172,
> "The House of Night," text:1786)

Whatever his motives, Freneau repeated the tale too often for it to be ignored. Whoever she was, "Amanda" died young; and though she had obviously not loved him deeply, Freneau continued to grieve for her for many years--until he was able to accept what she herself had tried to teach him.

CHAPTER FOUR

Resolution: The Tar, Grown Fonder of the Shore

The Realist

Perhaps because Freneau was a late eighteenth-century poet who usually wrote in the neoclassical style of Pope, modern critics have sometimes made unwarranted assumptions about the sincerity of the "Amanda" poems. In general, our age seems to hold the view that poets of the Enlightenment wrote romantic verse which employs conventional images, meters and rhyme scheme but which does not reflect deeply felt emotions. This is certainly the attitude taken by a number of critics when discussing Freneau's "Amanda" poems. Bowden, for example, has noted that, although they may be biographically significant, "the fact that so few of Freneau's feelings enter the poems gives us little assurance about this supposition. If Freneau experienced the emotion and loss he describes," Bowden concludes, "he conceals it well behind the conventions of Romantic melancholy."[1] Even Leary, who has done as much as anyone to rekindle interest in Freneau's poetry concurs: "Nothing . . . [Freneau] said [in the "Amanda" poems] could be taken seriously. . . . It was pleasant to play the poet courtier, and with no responsibility."[2]

There are certainly reasons for understanding why Bowden, Leary and others have come to regard the "Amanda" poems as conventional set pieces. It has already been noted that, in places, the poems (including all those generally identified with the islands) repeat stock ideas found in the romantic verse of the day. Therefore, it is difficult at points to judge the level of sincerity in many of the "Amanda" elegies. When we read, for instance, "O fate severe to seize the nymph so soon,/The nymph, for whom a thousand bosoms sigh," we may justifiably wonder about the heartfeltness of the poet's sorrow. But while there has been no attempt thus far in this study to deny that Freneau's poetry is often derivative, the evidence presented here suggests that he was in earnest when he wrote about "Amanda." It is true that crucial poems in the series itself, as well as other poems that reflect the island adventures have overtones of the ubiquitous melancholy of the Grave-yard poets. Yet Freneau's poems also show that he sought harsh answers to philosophical question in an unusually dangerous life at sea. When he did finally confront the "truths," as he saw them, he had the courage to accept their darker implications despite the depression that resulted. Among these "truths" was his relationship with "Amanda."

There is, however, one more series of incidents that must be explored for a full understanding of the "Amanda" poems. Judging by Freneau's life after 1790, it is clear

that he did not waste time pining in romantic self-absorption over the lessons he had learned. On April 15, 1790, he married Eleanor Forman, a beautiful, young New Jersey woman whom he had known and loved for years.[3] Exactly when the two had become formally engaged is not known, but, according to one account, sometime after the close of the war they reached an understanding that one day they would marry.[4] Their courtship was not without difficulty, however, for even though the Formans and the Freneaus had known each other for a long time, Eleanor's family did not approve of their beautiful daughter's marrying a poor poet. Nevertheless, "Nelly," who evidently had a mind of her own, is reported to have said: "With the man I love I could wander penniless but unwearied all through life."[5] The poet, however, must have realized that Eleanor's family was right about his inability to support a wife; therefore, motivated perhaps by more than a simple desire to see the tropics again, Freneau put out to sea in the late 1780s "to establish," in the words of Leary, "some measure of financial security before he further pled his suit."[6]

What, then, was the relationship of Eleanor Forman to Freneau's poetry during the mid-80s? First, it seems clear that she was not the original model for "Amanda." She was only twelve years old when Freneau first addressed poems to the island woman in 1778 and would not have fit the description of the island woman if "Amanda" was, in fact, a dark-haired beauty. Eleanor has been described as "a type

which has always appealed to poets. Her features were regular, her eyes blue and languishing, and her hair the color of pale sunshine."[7] But if Eleanor was not "Amanda," Freneau's courtship of this intelligent, sensitive, and literate woman began to affect his work significantly in the years before their marriage. Eleanor was well educated, her mother having reared all her daughters to believe "that they were wits as well as beauties."[8] Eleanor herself wrote poetry and must have followed with great interest the publications of Captain Freneau. It has been reported that written in one of her books was a copy of "To a Lady's Singing Bird," the first verifiable "Amanda" poem.[9] Eleanor evidently loved Captain Freneau and admired his work, and, true to her word, she waited for him to return from the sea. That he returned this love is revealed in the way his poetry begins to reflect her image during the late 1780s.

Sometime during these years, when Eleanor as well as "Amanda" must have been on his mind, Freneau wrote an intriguing narrative poem called "Philander and Lavinia," in which the image of a northern girl in port appears. Published in the 1788 edition, the poem was revised and republished in 1795 as "Philander, The Emigrant," but was omitted from the 1809 edition. The poem casts a fascinating light on Freneau's attempts to blend fact with fiction in order to create an island story out of his own adventures. Yet another story about a sailor who leaves his sweetheart, its uniqueness relative to the poems we have discussed so far

lies in the fact that it contains references to two women, both of whom the sailor loves. In other words, it sets up a romantic triangle.

The story is about a sailor named "Philander" who has once loved a South American (or Caribbean ?) woman and who has now returned to the "colder" shores of his northern homeland. Here he has fallen in love with another sweetheart, "Lavinia." Yet "Philander" is irresistibly drawn back to the tropics; therefore, he leaves "Lavinia" in order to return to the Caribbean basin, "where Demarara pours her sultry wave."[10] There he unfortunately contracts a fever and dies under the "vertic sun," while "Lavinia" waits in vain for him to come back.

Submerging parts of his own experience in that of the luckless sailor, Freneau also re-examined themes explored elsewhere and invented an intriguing tale about an eighteenth-century sailor compelled to go to sea. In addition, the revisions found in the 1795 text interestingly redefine the three-way relationship depicted in the 1788 version of the poem, which opens thusly:

> While lost so long to his Creolian maid,
> Careless of fortune and of fame he stray'd,
> Philander to a barbarous region came
> And found a mistress in a colder shade
> Fair as Aurelia; and perhaps might claim
> With her the impassion'd soul, and friendship's
> holy flame.
> (ll. 1-6, text:1788)

In the 1795 text, the phrase "to his Creolian maid," which denotes a dark-skinned woman, is replaced by the more

neutral wording: "While lost so long to his Arcadian shade." Similarly, the word "mistress" (1.4) is also altered in 1795 to read "partner," which is perhaps meant to desensitize the relationships between Philander and the two women. However, while both relationships are generalized in the revisions, the name "Aurelia" (also used in "Santa Cruz") is predictably changed to "Amanda" in 1795. Although these changes may be intended to disguise the association that could exist between the name "Amanda" and a dark-skinned "Creolian maid," they do not alter the fact that the northern woman does not surpass the southern woman in beauty or zest. The young sailor has found a northern woman only as "fair as Amanda," one who "perhaps might claim with her the impassioned soul." In fact, we learn from "Philander" himself that "Lavinia" cannot take "Amanda's" place. The sailor admits that "Lavinia" is lovely, but she has somehow lost her radiance--at least as far as he is concerned:

> (For now the frosts had spoil'd the daisies
> pride, [i.e. Lavinia]
> And dull November did his storms prepare.)

The 1795 text is even more explicit:

> (For now the frosts had spoil'd the daisies pride,
> And he once more for roving did prepare.)
> (ll. 11-12)

Although "Philander" must leave, he is notably not happy about returning to the tropics; and his depression, so like that of Freneau's sailors in other poems, leads him to explain why he became a seaman. His narrative reads like an

abridgement of Freneau's own life. "Philander" remembers, for instance, that once he was happy to live on shore, and "pipe upon the hollow reed." Now, however, he compares himself to the "vagrant [sea] wead," that "never finds a shore." Continuing to use botanical imagery, he also remembers that as a young man he was driven to sea by his own unsettled mind as well as by the exigencies of war:

> But other fields and other flowers were mine,
> Till wild disorder drove me from the plain,
> And the black dogs of war were seen to join.
> (ll. 20-22, text:1788)

Now, however, he momentarily considers letting others take to the "wild seas," while he will stay on shore and "with . . . Lavinia's tresses play." But, mysteriously depressed by his stay in northern climates, he prepares to "leave these shores and lose these lands" even though he regards his compulsive journey back to warmer climates as unlikely to revive his wintry soul, a viewpoint resembling that of the narrator of "The Departure."

> . . . And southward to the high equator stray:
> But fancy now has lost her vernal hue;
> See nature in her winter garb array'd--
> And where is that fine dream which once she
> drew
> While yet by Cobra's stream I fondly play'd!
> (ll. 31-35)

"Lavinia," who is aware of "Philander's" unhappiness, enters the dialogue. Telling her lover that although she does not understand his reasons for leaving, she knows he must go; she wishes him "smooth seas" and assures him that she will wait for his return. Using images that associate

death and sex, "Lavinia" seems to intuit that "Philander" must seek other mistresses, and she also seems to brace herself against the fears that he may die or be unfaithful:

> Some consolation will it be to know
> No pain or anguish can afflict the head
> The limbs or stomach when the heart is dead;
> And those black eyes that sparkle with desire,*
> When turn'd to pearls the sea nymphs shall admire.[11]
> (ll. 51-55)
> (*Lines 54 and 55 are omitted from the 1795 text.)

At this point the omniscient narrator reenters and describes "Philander's" departure. It is implied that "Philander," an experienced sailor, realizes full well that the ocean is treacherous and his hope of finding peace of mind is delusory. He himself curses the fair weather and smooth seas for not detaining him:

> Why do not the tempests brood upon the deep
> And all but the moist south in quiet sleep!
> (ll. 64-65)

"Philander" knows he is being lured back to sea by deceptively smooth northern waters and that such deception will end when he is greeted by the hurricanes of the "moist south." However, no storms delay his trip; and "Philander," so the narrator tells us, resigns himself to leaving.

> Nor had he one excuse to urge his stay
> But only that he wish'd to linger there.
> (ll. 61-62)

It is perhaps notable that in the 1795 text, the statement ". . . that he wish'd to linger there" is omitted. But whether or not he wants to stay, "Philander" in fact chooses to leave, a decision that brings about his death and

"Lavinia's" subsequent bereavement, "Till seven long years had round their orbits run" (l. 107).

"Philander and Lavinia," then, is a telling example of how Freneau merged his own experiences of the mid-1780s--in this case his returning to sea--with his often repeated story of the deserted woman. This time, however, the point of view is sympathetic to the departing sailor as well as to the shore-bound sweetheart. Moreover, unlike the hapless island woman of other poems, there is no suggestion the "Lavinia" dies as a result of her unhappiness. Indeed, only the male lover dies.

Although "Philander" chose to return to his southern sweetheart, Philip Freneau came back to northern climates in 1789 and, less than a year later, married Eleanor Forman. The years that immediately followed (1790-1795) provided him with the opportunity to review and perhaps reassess his life and work. Determined to earn his livelihood on shore, Freneau vigorously applied himself to his other profession as newspaperman. In 1790, he helped edit The New York Daily Advertiser, a paper published by his friends Francis Child and John Swain.[12] In 1791, however, he became involved in a more challenging type of journalism when he moved to Philadelphia and, with the help of Thomas Jefferson, established the stridently democratic National Gazette. The Gazette soon became involved in an editorial war with federalist journals. What ensued was a series of public charges that Freneau's paper was nothing more than

Jefferson's mouthpiece. Though defending his own integrity and launching counter-attacks on rival editors (see above, p. 4), Freneau ultimately withdrew from the fight and ceased publication in October 1793, although continuing his editorial career by publishing other newspapers in the late 1790s.[13] Both The Daily Advertiser and the National Gazette carried many of the poems Freneau wrote during this period, some of which indicate how radically he was reshaping the image of "Amanda."

To a certain extent, he had already begun this reshaping in earlier poems by treating her somewhat negatively. For instance, in "Amanda in a Consumption," the narrator suggests that his encounters with the sick woman had tested his energies until he learned from her the virtues of "patience and fortitude." And in "Port Royal," the narrator calls the suffering woman a "deluded dame" for awaiting the return of an indifferent lover. Finally, in recasting "Elegiac Lines [I]" (1788) as the story of "Martha Ray" (1795), Freneau treats her death rather frivolously in the last line: "An Earthly Lawyer Seiz'd the Prize."

Whether or not these examples mark a specific turning point in Freneau's mind, it is true that he was generally able to paint less melancholy portraits of women as he grew older. Occasionally, he was even able to satirize them mildly. Moreover, in two poems, both of which appear in the 1795 edition, he was uncharacteristically indelicate in portraying young women. The first of these poems also appears

in the 1788 edition under the title "The Modern Miracle" changed in 1795 to "Susanna's Revival." The poem is a curiously cynical account of a sick young woman, "Florella," who lives in a hot climate (l. 7) where there are parrots (l. 10). She suffers from an unidentified illness, described in the poem's opening lines, which, although ambiguous, may be nothing more than pregnancy or sexual frustration. Here is the 1788 text:

> Why on my heart this weight of care,
> Why sigh to reach the elbow chair!
> My eyes are dim--alas, too slow
> I feel the purple current flow;
> No more am I to mirth inclin'd;
> What strange ideas haunt my mind--
> What means this deadly parching heat?--
> What pulses in my bosom beat!
> (ll. 1-8, text:1788)

Since "Florella" is so ill, "Sir Gilbert," her doctor (?) and suitor (?) decides to bleed her. Unlike "Amanda" in a consumption, however, this young woman does not "lean her head upon her [own] hand," (l. 36, "Amanda in a Consumption") and refuse the aid of her comforter: "Florella" surrenders herself to "Sir Gilbert."

> Sir Gilbert, then his lancet took,
> And while they flew to fetch a band,
> She lean'd her head upon his hand.--
> (ll. 14-16, text:1788) (italics Freneau)

Apparently not wanting to alarm his patient, "Sir Gilbert" explains to her what he is doing in humorously suggestive language:

Dear Madam, let me bare your arm;
The lancet was not meant for harm:
I only wish to find a vein
And thence a gentle current drain
Which to your bosom shall restore
That pulse of health it knew before.
(11. 17-22, text:1788)

The prospect of such an operation, nevertheless, makes "Florella" faint, whereupon she is carried into her own room and placed on a sofa. Then "Sir Gilbert" privately visits her and somehow restores her to health. The conclusion of this poem is unlike anything else Freneau published:

FLORELLA to the couch convey'd,
(As fame suppos'd a real maid)
The servants from the corpse withdrew
But Gilbert would more sorrow shew--
He went--for what?--Florella, tell--
Perhaps, to take his last farewell--
Perhaps he did--for want of grace--
What few will dream, in such a case;
Like Orpheus, he, by passion led,14
Explor'd the kingdoms of the dead,
Reliev'd the fainting maid so fair,--
Out-doctor'd death--and got an heir!
(11. 65-76, text:1788)

The ambiguity of the poem's opening is matched by this conclusion, which implies that perhaps "Florella" is no maiden and that "Sir Gilbert" commits some act just short of necrophilia, that produces an heir. Although the 1795 revision lengthens and euphemizes the poem a bit, its conclusion is no less risque than the one above:

Perhaps he did--for want of grace--
What few will dream, in such a case.
Like Orpheus, he, by passion led,
Explor'd the kingdoms of the dead,
Through gloomy groves pursued his way
'Till all Elysium open lay,
But Fate decreed too short a stay!
Ye fair ones, be not too severe

If from the borders of a bier
Sir Gilbert won a blooming heir!
(11. 75-84, text:1795)

Sarcastic and bawdy, "Susanna's Revival" indicates the degree to which Freneau was becoming capable of laughing at love-sick young women--and their suitors.

In addition, several years after "The Modern Miracle," Freneau published "The Fair-Buckle Thief,"[15] a poem that also reveals his more playful and even scatological side. The poem is a story told by an omniscient narrator about a country girl from Flushing who comes to the city and gets caught stealing. As she is being led off to jail, she makes good her escape in this clever way:

"Alack (she cry'd) I cannot utter
"A word--my soul's in such a flutter--
"While you [her captor] my mittimus prepare
"Pray, let me take a moment's air;
"These summer heats require some shade,
"And nature, sir, must be obey'd"--
So, stealing back, as fairies do,
(The 'squire too modest to pursue)
Without a fall,
She scal'd the wall,
And left his worship reading Law!
(11. 55-65, text: The National Gazette, June 4, 1792)

Since neither "Susanna's Revival" nor "The Fair-Buckle Thief" appears in the 1809 edition, their omission stands as further evidence that, as he grew older, Freneau became more sensitive to critics who had earlier called his poetry "vulgar." Yet the poems themselves provide evidence of an emerging sense of humor during a period when he was trying to overcome private pain. Perhaps this humor helped him objectify and depersonalize his painful experiences in

the West Indies, so that by 1795 he was at times able to inject "lighter" elements into the "Amanda" series itself.

In fact, several poems published during this period (1790-1795) appear to merge the image of the island woman with that of Eleanor Forman herself. One such poem, "Constantia," utilizes humor and fictional characters to reframe the familiar story of the sailor and the lady. The earliest version of the poem appears in The Daily Advertiser of May 1, 1790, but later revisions are found in the editions of 1795 and 1809 (where it is enlarged by one stanza).[16] "Constantia" is a name Freneau subsequently associated with the "Amanda" series itself (see Note #30, p. 193); more importantly, the poem's plot suggests a link between "Amanda" and the lady described here. "Constantia" is a young woman who is "sick of the world, in prime of days," and who decides to renounce all earthly pleasures and become a nun. A sailor, however, dissuades her by admitting that he will do anything "to gain so fair a flower." At first she rejects him, but, unlike the luckless island women of earlier poems, she finally gives in:

> What else was said, we secret keep;--
> The Tar, grown fonder of the shore,
> Neglects his prospects on the deep,
> And she of convents talks no more:--
> He slyly quits the coasting trade;
> She pities her--that dies a maid!
> (ll. 43-48, text:1795)

The setting, the situation, as well as other internal hints found in "Constantia" imply that, in some way, the poem is linked to the island stories, a linkage

supported by the fact that one of the poems in the "Amanda" series is entitled "The Mourning Nun" (1795 edition). Yet "Constantia's" happy conclusion is inconsistent with the overall "Amanda" story, which of course ends in death. Also, since Freneau first published "Constantia" a few days after his marriage to Eleanor Forman, the poem would seem to celebrate in fiction the sailor's successful courtship of his "northern sweetheart" rather than to joke about his unhappy past. However that may be, it can also be argued that "Constantia" is one of several 1790-poems which blend "Amanda" with Eleanor and thereby reflects the intellectual and emotional changes occurring in Freneau during the period.

The rather patronizing view of women in such pieces as "Constantia," "Susanna's Revival," and "The Fair-Buckle Thief" seems to have carried over directly into the "Amanda" series in a poem called "Amanda's Complaint," which appears in both the 1795 and 1809 editions. Actually written in 1789, the earliest version of the poem, entitled "Tormentia's Complaint" is found in The Daily Advertiser of September 7, 1790,[17] and is noteworthy not only because it is addressed to "Tormentia" but also because it is set in Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, a region of the Atlantic that Freneau came to know well during the late 1780s. Although it may be argued that Freneau merely adapted an unrelated piece for his purposes, apparently while he was writing the poem, he sensed the affinities between it and the earlier

island poems. In any event, he had begun to revise it in line with his earlier work by the time it appeared in the National Gazette on March 19, 1792.[18]

This 1792 version lengthens the original six stanzas to seven and, significantly, resets the poem in Bermuda--an alteration that indicates the changes occurring in Freneau's thought. The 1795 revisions are, for the most part, minor, but they do include the change of name from "Tormentia" to "Amanda." Likewise, the 1809 edition makes few changes, though those it does make seem awkward and would therefore seem to establish the 1795 version as preferable to the 1809.[19] More importantly, although the 1790 version appears to be unrelated to the "Amanda" series, its revisions and ultimate inclusion in the grouping constitutes an important structural link in the sequence of poems. Positioned, in 1795, as the second poem in the series, "Amanda's Complaint" describes an early, playful encounter between the young woman and her would-be suitor, the narrator, and provides one of the rare light moments of this unhappy relationship.

In the opening sextet (ABCABC), "Amanda" complains about his failure to flatter her.

> In shades we live, in shades we die;
> Cool zephyrs breathe to our repose,
> In shallow streams we love to play--
> But, cruel, you that praise deny
> Which you might give, and nothing lose,
> And then pursue your destin'd way.
> (ll. 1-6, text:1795)

She continues to complain throughout the rest of the poem.

Ungrateful man! when anchoring here,
On shore you came, to beg relief,
I show'd you where the fig trees grow;
And wandering with you, void of fear,
To hear the story of your grief
I pointed where sweet waters flow.[20]

The men that spurn'd your ragged crew,
So long expos'd to Neptune's rage,--
I told them what your sufferings were;
Told them, that landsmen never knew
The trade, that hastens frozen age,
The life, that brings the brow of care.

A lamb the loveliest of the flock,
To your disheartened crew I gave,
Life to sustain on yonder deep--
Sighing I cast one sorrowing look,
When on the margin of the wave
You slew the favorite of my sheep.

Along your native northern shores,
From isle to isle where'er you stray,
Of all the nymphs that catch the eye,
They scarce can be excell'd by ours;
Altho' in cooler shades they play,
And summer suns come not so high.
(11. 13-30)

Here is a petulant young woman, reminding her suitor that, among her many considerate acts, she has even argued in defense of "the ragged crew" of sailors evidently rejected by her fellow islanders.[21] She is upset that her kindness has been taken for granted. What is more, she also believes that her sweetheart has been unfaithful to her when he has sailed home to his "native northern shores,"[22] a reversal of the situation found in "Philander and Lavinia," where the northern woman suspects the sailor of having other mistresses in the south. "Amanda's" complaint seems more or less legitimate up to this point; but in continuing to chide her sweetheart, she admits the real reasons for her pique.

> Confess your fault, mistaken swain,
> And own, at least, our equal charms--
> Have you no flowers of ruddy hue
> That please your fancy on the plain:
> Would you not guard those flowers from harms
> If NATURE'S SELF each picture drew?
> (ll. 31-36)

"Amanda" feels slighted by the sailor's failure to see her as a sort of "wild flower" whose beauty unlike that of domestic (i.e. "northern") varieties, springs straight from "NATURE'S SELF." Apparently the sailor has earlier slighted Bermuda women in general, causing the proud and beautiful "Amanda" to conclude:

> Vain are your sighs--in vain your tears!
> Your barque must still at anchor lay,
> And you remain a slave to care,
> A thousand doubts, a thousand fears,
> 'Till what you said you shall unsay,
> Bermudian beauties are not fair.
> (ll. 37-42)

Even if this poem, in its original version, was not intended to be part of the "Amanda" series, Freneau must have realized that both the story line and imagery were easily adaptable. The analogy between the young woman and a flower "of ruddy hue" that needs guarding "from harm" calls to mind other delicate flowers found in his poetry, most notably, perhaps, the "fading rose" which is not protected from the "summer's driving shower" in "Amanda in a Consumption." In addition, "the ruddy flowers of the plain" (their color was "yellow" in the original) are associated here with the pleasures that distract the sailor on shore--an association reminiscent of the "painted pleasures"

("The Departure") and the "sweet delusions" ("Santa Cruz") of shore found in other poems.

But if these are more or less obvious imagistic links between the woman of this poem and "Amanda" as she appears elsewhere, a more subtle identification perhaps occurs in the final pun on the word fair (l. 42). In one sense, the pun suggests the true source of misunderstanding between "Amanda" and her sailor. Obviously she has understood his earlier remark ("Bermudian women are not fair") to mean that island women are not as pretty as northern women. Quite possibly, though, the sailor simply has meant that they are not as light-complexioned, a reading supported by the earlier lines, "Altho' in cooler shades they [i.e. northern women] play,/And summer suns come not so nigh." While no other poem included in the series describes "Amanda's" coloring, a dark, lovely woman has often appeared in other island poems (e.g. "The House of Night," "Philander and Lavinia," and "Elegiac Lines [I]").

Whatever the sailor's intention, "Amanda" feels slighted and steadfastly demands an apology. The last stanza implies that she will get one, for apparently she is in control of the situation. Until they are reconciled, he will "remain a slave to care," having "a thousand doubts, a thousand fears" that she will not forgive him. This underplayed, and admittedly conventional image of emotional enslavement (of a beau to his belle), might pass unnoticed except for the fact that "Amanda's Complaint," as it appears

in both the 1795 and 1809 texts, immediately precedes the one other "Amanda" poem which also expresses the emotional and physical enslavement of her lover. As will be recalled, it was "Amanda's Singing Bird" who asks for his freedom.

> But from your superior mind
> Let me but my freedom find,
> And I will be all resigned.
> (ll. 37-39, text:1809)

While it may be true, then, that "Amanda's Complaint" humorously patronizes the vain young woman as well as her love-sick boy friend and, in general, trivializes their courtship, the poem nevertheless offers the only fully-developed repudiation of the young sailor's infatuation in the series. His sweetheart, it seems, could be shallow and vain as well as wise and brave. Coming out of the creative period that produced satirical portraits of other females, "Amanda's Complaint," whether or not recording a real exchange between the poet and his island woman, reveals Freneau's mature assessment of pretty, vain, young women. It suggests strongly that, as he grew older, Freneau created a story that embodied the "truth" of his early relationship as he himself came to understand it.

Such refinements, in fact, were almost made complete by 1795 when Freneau added two final poems to the "Amanda" series. One of these, called "Philander to Amanda" (changed in 1809 to "Florio to Amanda"), clearly indicates that the poet had, for purposes of his own, deliberately substituted Eleanor Forman as the model for "Amanda." The earliest

version of this poem was published in The New York Daily Advertiser on April 15, 1789, but carried the post-script, "Dec. 10, 1788."[23] It was first written, then, during a time when Freneau was plying the waters of the Atlantic seaboard in particularly bad weather, as the poem itself testifies.[24] Although the name "Margery" appears in the text of the original poem, the title leaves little doubt as to who is really being addressed: "Lines written at SEA. Addressed to Miss ------, New Jersey." The poem was reprinted on April 16, 1789, in The City Gazette as "A Yankee Epistle Written at Sea, December 1788." However, a year later the piece was radically revised as "Polydore to Amanda (Written at Sea)" and republished in the Daily Advertiser on February 10, 1791.

In some ways "Philander to Amanda" may be seen as Freneau's mental and emotional farewell to his role as sea captain as well as to his unhappy adventures in the tropics. Solemn and pensive, the poem elaborates at length the pain of a sailor who is separated from his woman.

> Lamp of the Pilot's hope! the wanderer's dream,
> Far glimmering o'er the wave, we saw thy beam:
> Forc'd from your aid by cold December's gale
> As near your coasts we reef'd the wearied sail,
> From bar to bar, from cape to cape I roam,
> From you still absent, still too far from home.--
> (ll. 1-6, text:1795)

As he continues his lament, the sailor confesses that he should never have left "Amanda" in the first place. Now he agonizes at being held back by contrary winds so close to home:

To me, alas! the heavens less favouring prove:
Each day, returning, finds a new remove--
Sorrowing, I spread the sail, while slowly creeps
The dull Columbia o'er a length of deeps:
Her northern course no favouring breeze befriends,
Hail, storm, and lightning on her path attends:
Here, wintry suns their shrouded light restrain,
Stars dimly glow, and boding birds complain;
Here, boisterous gales the rapid GULPH controul,
Tremendous breakers near my Argo roll;
Here, cloudy, sullen HATTERAS, restless, raves
Scores all repose, and swells his weight of waves.
(11. 31-42)

Undoubtedly, this "Amanda" poem deals with specific details from Freneau's own life. First, the Columbia is the actual name of the schooner that he commanded during 1788-1789.[25] Second, the sailor here is returning north, away from the tropics. Third, the mention of Cape Hatteras precisely identifies his whereabouts. Finally, the poem addresses a woman living north of the cape, and probably on the mainland; no doubt she is Eleanor Forman. The succeeding verse contains further biographical evidence. Reminding himself that in these dangerous waters others have drowned, he anxiously turns his attention to the woman waiting for him and, as though she can hear him, reassures her that he has been loyal to her while at sea. This concern is, of course, a familiar one, and the images that crowd the poem at this point are very like those we have seen in the contexts of other "Amanda" poems.

Now--while the winds their wonted aid deny,
For other ports from day to day we try;
Strive, all I can, to gain the unwilling shore,
Dream still of you--the faithful chart explore;
See other groves, in happier climates plac'd
Untouch'd their bloom, and not one flower defac'd.

Did Nature, there, a heaven of pleasure shew,
Could they be welcome, if not shar'd with you?--
(11. 49-56)

Elsewhere the wandering sailor of Freneau's poems is suspected of disloyalty by his mistresses, yet here (in lines first added in 1791) he avows to the northern woman that he has been guided only by a "faithful chart"; and while he has seen the "other groves" in "happier climes," he has not "defac'd" a single "flower" in those lands. Admitting to her that he has experienced a tropical paradise where nature might provide "a heaven of pleasure," he also claims that such joy is meaningless if not shared with his northern sweetheart. Or, in other words, with his northern woman, he may at last find the "Eden" of his mind. This admission suggests a like idea found in "The Departure": "Is happiness to place confin'd--?/No--planted also in the mind/She makes an Eden where she will." Realizing this, he also realizes that there is no place like home:

Lost are my toils--my longing hopes are vain:
Yet, 'midst these ills, permit me to complain,
And half regret, that finding fortune fail,
I left the muses--to direct the sail:
Unmov'd, amidst this elemental fray,
Let me, once more, the muses' art essay,
Once more--admist these scenes of Nature's strife,
Catch at her forms, and mould them into life;
By Fancy's aid, to unseen coasts repair,
And fondly dwell on absent beauty there.
(11. 57-66)

Freneau's narrator has come full circle. "The Power of Fancy" (1770) is filled with an eager hope that somehow the young dreamer can really visit the tropical lands that he is imagining. Now the sailor wants only to return home,

to take up his pen again in the colder climates ("these scenes of Nature's strife"), and to be satisfied with visiting imaginary lands once more ("Fancy's . . . unseen coasts"). Nevertheless, the "beauty" that he is now able to "fondly dwell on" suggests a lingering ambivalence.

The lines above, outlining the sailor's future hopes, were added to the poem in February 1791 and thus benefit from hindsight. Freneau had in fact returned home in 1790, had married his northern sweetheart, had given up his ocean life (he believed forever), and had begun an intensely creative period as poet and editor. Yet the question remains: why did he add to the "Amanda" series a poem obviously written about and probably to Eleanor Forman?

An answer is not difficult to frame. In the 1795 edition, "Philander to Amanda" is the last poem in the four-part series (three other "Amanda" poems included in the 1809 series are found elsewhere in the text). Therefore, the poem, as placed in the earlier series, fills at least one of two functions, depending on a reader's point of view. On the one hand, it may simply complete the four-part series: the sailor, who has met and courted "Amanda" in the preceding poems, now regrets leaving her and wants only to rejoin her. Although the internal references provide clues to knowledgeable readers that "Amanda," as depicted here, is not the Bermudian woman, they do not require such an interpretation. It is arguable that nothing inconsistent with the rest of the series appears in this poem.

Indeed, if the sailor is on a northerly course, he could be heading for Bermuda, an island far to the north of the Caribbean. Moreover, vague phrases like "happier climates" and "amidst these scenes of Nature's strife" suggest emotional states and may not refer to the sailor's return to North America. Without the earliest title, all the poem undeniably tells us is that the sailor, who is being detained somewhere in the water off Hatteras, wants to return to "Amanda" and to take up a different life style. On the other hand, the details could be read differently by anyone interested; and Eleanor Forman, who was a poet herself, would have been interested. She and Freneau probably understood who was being addressed in this poem and why it was used to resolve the "Amanda" story. Elsewhere "Amanda" is the island woman; but in this verse, despite its apparent consistency with the other poems, she is really not the island woman.

The Story-teller

In all probability the "Amanda" story did not become solidified in Freneau's mind until he revised and edited it for the 1795 edition, when, evidently, he saw a need to introduce the series with a poem which he entitled "The Bermuda's" (in 1809 called "The Bermuda Islands"). Since no earlier version of this poem than the 1795 text has been found, "The Bermuda's" is probably the last poem written specifically about "Amanda," although paradoxically it opens

the series.[26] The dilemma outlined in the poem is so familiar that it hardly needs repeating. A young woman named "Amanda" apprehensively awaits the return of her lover who has gone to sea. Meanwhile an observer, who also seems to care deeply for "Amanda," narrates the story. However, unlike the narrators of other "Amanda" poems, this narrator takes a paternal attitude toward the woman as well as toward her lover. Also, the narrator does not appear to be callow and dejected; he suffers no delusions about the lovely woman nor her tropical island which combines beauty and death.

> These islands fair with many a grove are crown'd
> With cedars tall, gay hills, and lovely vales;
> But fatal rocks on every side are found,
> Fatal to him, that, unsuspecting, sails.[27]
> (ll. 1-4, text:1795)

Although these dangers threaten anyone who comes to the islands, "Amanda" fears only for the safety of her absent sweetheart. Because the 1795 version does not clearly establish whether the narrator himself is at sea, the reader may wrongly conclude that he is "Amanda's" sweetheart. An 1809 revision includes an entirely new (second) stanza to clarify the issue by placing the narrator unmistakably on shore with "Amanda."

> The gay Palmetto shades the adjacent wave:
> Blue, ocean water near the lime-tree breaks!--
> I leave the scene!--the stormy quarter leave,
> And rove awhile by Harrington's sweet lake.[28]
> (ll. 5-8, text:1809)

Plainly, he is not the one she awaits, and the story that follows underlines this point in both the 1795 and 1809 texts. Though the narrator goes on to praise the beauty of

the island and its women, he notes, in passing, how distracted "Amanda" appears to be. Although he confesses his own attraction to her, he ultimately transcends self-interest and prays for the return of her lover, since that is the only thing which will make her happy.

> In every grove fair woodland nymphs are seen
> In bloom of youth, to mourn some absent love,
> Who wandering far on Neptune's blue domain
> Heaves the fond sigh at every new remove.
>
> From hill to hill I see Amanda stray,
> Searching from anxious view, the circling main,
> To find the sail, so long, so far away,
> Rise from the waves, and bless her sight again,
>
> Now on some rock, with loose dishevell'd hair,
> By dashing waves, the weeping beauty stands,
> Hoping that each approaching barque may bear
> Homeward, her wandering hope from foreign lands.
>
> Ah! may no gales such faithful loves destroy,
> No hidden rock to Hymen fatal prove:
> And thou, fond swain, thy nicest art employ
> Once more, on these sweet isles, to greet your love,
>
> When verging to the height to Thirty-two,
> And east or west you guide the dashing prow;
> Then fear by night the dangers of this shore,
> Nature's wild garden, plac'd in Sixty-four*
> Here, many a pilot his lost freight bemoans,
> And many a gallant ship has laid her bones.
> *Lat. 32 deg. 15 m. N. Long. 64 deg. W.
> [Freneau's note]
> (ll. 5-26, text:1795)

If the pressures of a recent marriage, a revised personal philosophy, and a desire to re-create a verse story from previously written material all dictated that Freneau objectify this introductory poem to the "Amanda" series, he was certainly equal to the task by 1795. For while "The Bermuda's" introduces nearly all of the problems later explored in the "Amanda" series, the tone of this piece is

objective, betraying little overt personal involvement on the part of the narrator. Yet subtle details bind the narrator closely to the other two characters mentioned. For instance, this is the only "Amanda" poem in which the narrator depicts the missing lover as being worthy of the woman. The other poems in the series, especially "The Fair Solitary" and "Amanda in a Consumption,: clearly indicate that only the narrator himself really loves "Amanda" although she does not return his love. In fact, in "Amanda's Complaint," the poem immediately succeeding this one, the narrator, who is also a sailor, begins to profess his own love for her which she then begins to reject. Perhaps, then, his paternal solicitude in "The Bermuda's" that the sweethearts be reunited is really an attempt on Freneau's part to project himself into the idealized image of the other man. In this regard, the sailor and the narrator represent the wished-for and the actual image of the one man. And it is also likely that they both represent partial truths about Freneau's own distant affairs on the islands. We have already discussed an earlier work in which Freneau created dual characters embracing facets of his own personality. "Light Summer Reading" depicts not only an enamored young poet but also Robert Slender, the dispassionate older man who tells the story. Likewise, "The Bermuda's" is told by a narrator who appears uninvolved but who in fact may have been an alter ego through which Freneau

was surreptitiously expressing a longing for "Amanda's" love.

Overtly, then, the narrator of "The Bermuda's" appears to pray for the reunion of the lovers: "Ah! may no gales such faithful loves destroy." However, because the sailor symbolizes his own love for the island woman, the narrator senses that his prayer is hopeless. Such foreknowledge causes him, from the poem's opening, to undercut constantly his own optimism with images of death: "Fatal rocks on every side [of the island] are found." Apparently his "realistic" side believes that unseen realities may destroy young dreamers who make romantic journeys and that the tropical flowers of "Nature's wild garden," so lovely from a distance, are deceptive lures to sailors who voyage where ". . . many a gallant ship has laid her bones." Aware of the probable disasters to follow, the narrator nevertheless prays that somehow his own love (in the guise of the returning sailor) will find its way to "Amanda":

> And thou, fond swain, thy nicest art employ
> Once more, on these sweet isles, to greet your love.
> (ll. 19-20)

While free of youthful delusion, the lines express a hope that somehow love, if only in the abstract, will triumph against the odds. The narrator of this poem has become the spokesman of the mature poet of Monmouth, who finally was able to look back on "the plot" of his own troubled life and to objectify the role he had played in it. At last, Freneau submerged his own experience in the fiction of his poetry.

Yet he still recalled a time when, younger and more idealistic, he had sailed into a distant port, perhaps carrying this very note in his jacket:

Philip M. Freneau
A.D. 1778--
Bermuda--St. George's
April 22, 1778

Once more on these sweet isles to meet your love--

With the writing of "The Bermuda's," Freneau completed the "Amanda" series. And although he did not place the seven poems in their final sequence until the 1809 edition, he included all of them in the 1795 text. Moreover, he obviously followed some kind of criteria to determine which island poems he would include and which he would exclude from the series. Several other poems appear in the 1795 and 1809 editions that seem to be relevant but are never included in the "Amanda" series. Perhaps Freneau realized that much of the material is repetitious and that if all of the poems which contain any reference, however fleeting, to the unhappy island adventures were gathered in one place, the result would have been too bulky and tedious. Thus other poems that in some way echo the story are scattered throughout the later texts.[29]

Also, since the "Amanda" series is made up of fewer poems in the 1795 text than in the 1809, Freneau had probably not visualized the story as a coherent whole at the earlier date. Nevertheless, the 1795 text makes connections that carry through to the 1809 edition. For example, "The

Bermuda's," "Amanda's Complaint," "On Amanda's Singing Bird" and "Philander to Amanda" comprise the 1795 series and also comprise the first four poems of the 1809 series. In addition, two of the other 1809 "Amanda" poems, "The Mourning Nun" and "Elegiac Lines [II]," are juxtaposed in the 1795 text. More importantly, the 1795 series begins the sequential tale that is completed in 1809. As the story opens, the narrator is watching "Amanda" from afar and wishing that she be happily reunited with her absent lover. "Amanda's Complaint," however, directly addresses the narrator's own suit and implies that he has been half-playfully remonstrating against her icy disdain of him. She answers by reminding him of her verbal slight ("Bermudian women are not fair") and refuses his courtship with a threat to keep him a slave to his own doubts and fears. Though pursuing this tale through a non-human vehicle, "On Amanda's Singing Bird" nevertheless details the psychic enthrallment of the narrator to la belle dame sans merci, so that finally, in "Philander to Amanda," the narrator admits that he has long since left "Amanda" but now wants to return to her, never to leave again.

Not only do the four poems tell a coherent story, but their positioning within the 1795 text provides important information: they are placed with poems written around 1780-1781, suggesting that Freneau may have associated this time frame with an ardent but fruitless courtship. Furthermore, the other three poems appear with pieces written

during the mid-to-late 1780s. "The Mourning Nun" and "Elegiac Lines [II]" are found on page 293, near the revision of "Port Royal," (p. 295), a poem from which "The Mourning Nun" was extracted. "Marcella [Amanda] in a Consumption," however, appears near the end of the 1795 volume and is placed along with other pieces generally written around 1789-1790. Obviously, then, Freneau disregarded the actual dates of composition in placing these poems in the 1795 text. It seems that he favored a psychological time frame instead. The first four poems, which deal less severely with the island woman, were associated in his mind with the early 1780s. The three more despondent poems, that consign "Amanda" to sickness and death, were associated with the late 1780s, a time when he seems to have begun to overcome his personal gloom about the earlier events.

Yet, as we know, Freneau did not leave the "Amanda" poems as he had placed them in the 1795 text. Fourteen years later, he revised the series a final time. By then it had been over three decades since he had first met "Amanda" and more than a decade since he had put together the group of poems that told a story about her. In addition, he had now been married for nineteen years, had fathered four daughters, had struggled to earn a living as a newspaperman, but, driven by financial problems had returned to sea in 1801, despite the fact that, according to his biographers, he had lost some of his desire for this life.[30] Finally retiring from commercial sailing in 1804, he determined to

publish at least one more volume that would codify his work.[31] For although, as noted earlier, Freneau may not have controlled every editorial detail in the 1809 edition, there is no doubt that he revised and rearranged the earlier poems for it. Accordingly, the "Amanda" poems of 1809 deserve close examination, for here is found the last creative reworking of the story itself.

The 1809 edition is divided into two volumes, each subdivided into two books. Volume I, for the most part, contains Freneau's lyrics and non-political narrative verses, while Volume II contains most of the occasional pieces. The "Amanda" poems are found in Volume I, Book II (pp. 232-241). Their positioning relative to other poems is different from that of the 1795 text. Like earlier editions, the 1809 follows roughly a chronological ordering of all the poems; but since Freneau had restructured the seven "Amanda" poems as a unit, he had to decide once again where they should be placed. Significantly, he put them into a section which includes verses written around 1778-1779. It appears, therefore, that Freneau ultimately identified the story with the period of his early courtship in Bermuda. Perhaps, by 1809, the elder poet saw the whole affair as a youthful adventure.

The titles of the seven poems found in the 1809 edition are: "The Bermuda Islands," "Amanda's Complaint," "On Amanda's Singing Bird," "Florio to Amanda," "The Fair Solitary," "Amanda in a Consumption," and "Elegiac

Lines [II]." The revised series not only enlarges the four-part story of the 1795 text but also creates a new, more complex resolution to the love affair. The first three poems, as before, detail the more lighthearted, earlier events of the courtship; and, again, the fourth poem indicates the narrator's resolve never to leave "Amanda" once he is able to reunite with her. However, there is a new conclusion. Upon returning to "Amanda" in the fifth poem, the sailor finds her dejected over the absence of her other lover. She refuses the narrator's suit as well as his attempts to comfort her. In poem six, she falls ill and dies, rejecting the narrator to be sure but also teaching him, through her example, that life does not give us everything we want. In fact, she argues, we have no right to expect that it will.

The final elegy is, therefore, a curious mixture. On the one hand, it pays tribute to "Amanda's" beauty, wisdom, and patience; but, on the other, it suggests that attitudes like hers are false when they isolate lovers from each other. The final couplet of "Elegiac Lines [II]" echoes the conventional carpe diem theme in warning other young women not to languish pointlessly.

> Ye thoughtless fair!--her early death bemoan,
> Sense, virtue, beauty, to oblivion gone.
> (ll. 25-26, text:1809)

Yet the admonition is anything but conventional or trite. On the contrary, it bleakly warns us to live our lives as

fully as possible, because intelligence, fortitude, and physical beauty do not survive death. If "Amanda" had taught this, Philip Freneau had learned to live by it.

POSTSCRIPT: "THE WILD HONEY SUCKLE"

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet:
  No roving foot shall crush thee here,
  No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by;
  Thus quietly thy summer goes,
  Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom;
They died--nor were those flowers more gay,
The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
  Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power
  Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came:
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same;
  The space between, is but an hour,
  The frail duration of a flower.
    (text:1809)

Freneau published "The Wild Honey Suckle" in The Columbia Herald on July 6, 1786. Although he revised it for the later editions and, as Vitzthum has pointed out, softened the conclusion somewhat,[1] the poem maintains throughout its revisions a structural tightness, a delicate sensitivity, and an unremitting nihilism. It has received as much critical attention as anything Freneau wrote;

scholars who differ in their assessments of the other poetry generally agree that this lyric is not only one of Freneau's finest but also one of the finest produced by an American poet. Almost always anthologized, "The Wild Honey Suckle" is often singled out for special notice, and even the most restrained evaluations of it admit that while "the tone is conventional, [and] the theme is conventional, . . . all elements are so well combined that the poem rises above the conventional."[2] More enthusiastic tributes may be found. Paul Elmer More has called the poem "the most nearly flawless . . . [Freneau] ever wrote."[3] Leary claims that the writing of it "placed Freneau . . . chronologically at the head of America's procession of poets."[4] Marsh calls it his "best lyric". Axelrad waxes eloquent:

> Infused with the deep compassion which he had for all men and the macabre mood of dissolution which was never far from his thoughts, the poem in its symbolic treatment of the fragrant flowers that bloom for a little while and then wilt away, is a dirge for all men, for their lives, their hopes, their sad immutable destinies.[5]

"The Wild Honey Suckle" merits the praise it has received. The structure of the poem translates the narrator's own physical and spiritual movement into a realization of the theme itself: the journey to the flower cloaks, in its images of beauty, an inner journey to knowledge. In the first two stanzas the narrator is depicted as one who has sought out this hidden flower, "unseen" by the "vulgar eye." Begun as an effort to find beauty, the quest itself ultimately becomes the only available reality. When he

encounters the flower, the narrator realizes that no one may ever possess it; the concluding couplet of the second stanza ends the movement of the lover (narrator) toward the beloved (flower) with a sad truth.

> Thus quietly thy summer goes,
> Thy days declining to repose.
> (ll. 11-12)

The final two stanzas move the narrator away from the flower. Admitting that he deeply loves its beauty, he also admits that his personal desires can play no part in preventing the death and inevitable disappearance of the flower. In other words, what man wishes to be has no influence on what is. Surrendering his faith that anyone can touch lasting beauty, the narrator nevertheless acknowledges that mankind must give life purpose with a myth of a regainable Eden. Although he realizes that paradise never will be found on either side of the grave, he also realizes that only the illusion of Eden causes man to search for ways to regain it: this impossible quest creates its own joy and innocence. Life on earth is a beautiful illusion, a short "space between" the darknesses, no more lasting than "the frail duration of a flower."

One should not be surprised to find that, in 1786, Freneau was writing such a poem about annihilation. The preceding study has shown that the mid-1780s produced scores of poems that echo "The Wild Honey Suckle." Yet it is remarkable that, at this point in his life, Freneau was apparently able to channel his private sorrow into so

controlled and universal a meditation on the human condition. Although the uneven control of some other poems (e.g. "The House of Night [1786]," and "On the Vicissitude of Things") written during the same period indicate the rawness of Freneau's emotional wounds, this poem reflects a distillation in time when poet, theme, and medium solidified to create lasting art. And while "Amanda" is never mentioned in the poem, certainly her presence is felt throughout.

From the opening stanza, the "fair" honeysuckle, growing where "no busy hand may provoke a tear" reminds us of other untouchable wild flowers that bloom for a short time in Freneau's poems. For example, we recall the lovely, yet evasive, sea flower of "Santa Cruz" (1786) that permits the narrator there to "feast on its beauties" but does not allow him to touch "her." Ultimately this lover of beauty is "warned by experience" not to hope to gain "the magic plant" that his "hand invades." So too the narrator of "The Wild Honey Suckle" is hopelessly lured by a lovely plant:

> By Nature's self in white arrayed
> She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
> And planted here the guardian shade,
> And sent soft waters murmuring by.
> (11. 7-10)

Again we see that this flower, dressed by "Nature's self" and guarded by its own "shade," combines the qualities of the sea flower of "Santa Cruz" (which "deceives all grasp, and seeks its native shades") with the qualities of flowers found in at least two of the "Amanda" poems. In "The Bermuda's," for instance, the sailor risks dangerous seas

because he is lured by "Nature's wild garden" (i.e. Bermuda itself). And in "Amanda's Complaint," the young woman, in a sharp rebuttal of her would-be lover, reminds him that he has not had the good sense to appreciate "wild flowers" like her:

> Confess your fault, mistaken swain,
> And own, at least, our equal charms--
> Have you no flowers of ruddy hue
> That please your fancy, on the plain:
> Would you not guard those flowers from harms
> If NATURE'S SELF each picture drew?
> (31-36)

The narrator of "The Wild Honey Suckle" cannot be accused of the same offense, of course. He clearly recognizes the beauty of his flower arrayed by "Nature's self." He also knows that life itself is a deception, seeing the flower as a symbol of human beings who merely exist without being aware that

> Thus quietly thy summer goes,
> Thy days declining to repose.
> (11. 11-12)

Stanza three of "The Wild Honey Suckle" also bears notable similarities to passages in other poems which Freneau was writing at this time. For example, "Stanzas on a Young Lady [Amanda] in a Consumption," which was first published in The Freeman's Journal only six months after "The Wild Honey Suckle," begins with these lines:

> On the lost charms of Cynthia's eyes,
> And wasted bloom, when I would gaze.
> (11. 1-2, text:1787)

A year later, Freneau revised them to read:

> Smit with these charms of thy bright eyes
> When I, Marcella, fondly gaze.
> (ll. 1-2, text:1788)

And when we compare both sets of lines and then compare them with the third stanza of "The Wild Honey Suckle," we are struck with obvious similarities.

> Smit with those * charms that must decay
> I grieve to see thy future doom.
> (ll. 13-14, text:1809)
> (*The 1786-newspaper version reads, "these.")

The narrators of these respective poems not only resemble each other in tone but very nearly repeat each other's precise words.

Moreover, stanza three of "The Wild Honey Suckle" argues that losing one's naivete is a microcosm of mankind's loss of Eden.

> They died--nor were those flowers more gay *
> The flowers that did in Eden bloom.
> (ll. 15-16)
> (*The 1786 version reads, "less gay.")

Again, the words and images used here recall those of other narrators who have come to the same conclusion. In "Santa Cruz" (1786) and "The Departure" (1787), the sailor/narrator abandons hopes for paradise on earth:

> Such were the climes [i.e. tropics] which youthful
> Eden saw
> Ere crossing fates destroyed the golden reign.
> Reflect upon thy loss, unhappy man,
> And seek the vales of Paradise again.
>
> . . .
>
> These isles, lest Nature should have proved too kind,
> Or man have sought his happiest heaven below,
> Are torn with mighty winds, fierce hurricanes,
> Nature convulsed in every shape of woe.
> (ll. 49-52, 317-320, "Santa Cruz," text:1786)

> Is happiness to place confin'd--?
> No--planted also in the mind
> She makes an Eden where she will.[6]
> (ll. 57-59, "The Departure,"
> text:1787)

Earth provides no paradise. For the narrator of "The Wild Honey Suckle," accepting the inevitable disappearance of the flower means accepting the death of his own naivete:

> Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power
> Shall leave no vestige of this flower.
> (ll. 17-18)

Although these sentiments resonate throughout Freneau's mid-80s verse, the imagery reminds us most directly of "Philander's" sorrow in "Philander and Lavinia," 1788. "Philander" also sees the potential death of a flower in his northern sweetheart: ". . . For now the frosts had spoil'd the daisies pride" (l. 12). But, like the narrator of "The Wild Honey Suckle," he is able to apply this realization to himself. He understands that he too is aging and that his trip back to the tropics will do nothing to revive his dreams of eternal summer:

> That I must leave these shores, and lose these
> lands
> And southward to the high equator stray:
> But fancy now has lost her vernal hue:
> See nature in her winter garb array'd--
> And where is that fine dream which once she drew
> While yet by Cobra's stream I fondly play'd!
> (ll. 30-35, text:1788)

Finally, stanza four of "The Wild Honey Suckle" attests to a similar resignation that the beauties of nature vanish almost as soon as they appear:[7]

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came:
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same;
  The space between, is but an hour,
  The frail duration of a flower.
    (11. 19-24)

The only solace that can be found in the poem seems to lie in this final assertion that the nothingness which surrounds existence cannot appreciate gain or suffer loss. We have heard this stoic lesson in other poems:

Hills sink to plains, and man returns to dust,
That dust supports a reptile or a flower;
Each changeful atom by some other nurs'd
Takes some new form to perish in an hour.
  (11. 533-536, "The House of Night,"
    text:1786)

How swift the vagrant seasons fly;
They're hardly born before they die,
Yet in their wild career,
Like atoms round the rapid wheel,
We seem the same, though changing still,
Mere reptiles of a year.
  (11. 13-18, "On the Vicissitude of
    Things," text:1785)

But this last stanza of "The Wild Honey Suckle" seems most closely linked, thematically and imagistically, with the penultimate stanza of "Amanda in a Consumption."[8]

So drooping hangs the fading rose,
When summer sends the beating shower:
So, to the grave Amanda goes,
Her whole duration--but an hour!
Who shall controul the sad decree,
Or what fair girl, recover thee?
  (11. 37-42, text:1809)

And when we recall that an early version of "Amanda in a Consumption" appears as part of the story "Light Summer Reading" (1788), we also recall that the Indian there

delivers a eulogy that unmistakably echoes "The Wild Honey Suckle":

> Fair daughter of the morning, thou didst not perish by slow decays. At the rising of the sun we saw thee; the ruddy bloom of youth was then upon thy countenance: in the evening thou wert nothing, and the pallid complexion of death has taken place of thy bloom of beauty. And now thou art gone to sit down in the gardens that are found at the setting of the sun, behind the western mountains. . . . Man is here but an image of himself, the representation of an idea that in itself is not subjected to a change. . . . All shall be right when thou art arrived at the mountain, where the sound of the wintry winds will not be permitted to reach thee, and the light of the lamp is not extinguished by the sickly blasts of autumn.
> ("Light Summer Reading," text:1788, pp. 266-267)

The wild honeysuckle, like the island maid, has come from "the morning suns and evening dews" and must, the narrator of the poem asserts, return to the eternal unknown. In this one poem, therefore, the narrator passes through the same stages of maturation that are explored in the entire "Amanda" series. At first he is hopeful that lasting beauty may be found by dreamers who seek it. Sadly realizing that such a quest is fruitless, he resigns himself to his loss and concludes that life itself is a delusion that does not survive the grave. Philip Freneau bade farewell to his sweetheart in many other poems; but in "The Wild Honey Suckle," he crafted his most penetrating, artistic, and even visionary tribute to "Amanda," the wild flower he had loved.

NOTES

NOTES

Chapter One

[1]Joseph Lloyd, Pennsylvania Democrat, Sept. 8, 1809, as quoted in Lewis Leary, That Rascal Freneau: A Study in Literary Failure (1941; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1971), p. 339.

[2]Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature (New York, 1856), I, 336. For a helpful overview of how Freneau has been received by critics, see Philip M. Marsh, "Philip Freneau's Fame," Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 80, Nos. 2 and 3 (April, July 1962), 75-93 and 197-212.

[3]The original texts of Freneau's poetry that have been recently reprinted are: The American Village (1772; rpt. New York: Harry L. Koopman, 1906; 2nd rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968). The Poems of Philip Freneau: Written Chiefly During the Late War (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1786). The Miscellaneous Works of Philip Freneau (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1788). Both are reprinted in one volume: Lewis Leary, ed. (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975). Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794 (Monmouth, New Jersey: Philip Freneau, 1795; rpt. Lewis Leary, ed., Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1976). Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809; rpt. Lewis Leary ed., Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1976). A collection of Poems on American Affairs. . . . 2 vols. (New York: David Longworth, 1815; rpt. Lewis Leary ed., Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1976). Subsequent citations made from these editions will appear in the text of the dissertation and will be designated by the years in which the editions were first published (i.e. the 1786 edition, etc.).

[4]Mary W. Bowden, Philip Freneau (Boston: Twayne, 1976), pp. 57-58. Also see Freneau's poem "The Newsmonger" in which the poet acknowledged that sensationalism sells newspapers (1809 ed., II, 184).

[5]Freneau's work has apparently suffered from the delicacies of his later editors. In 1902, F. L. Pattee seemed to indicate his own polite prejudices in determining what was suitable to print in his three-volume edition of Freneau's poems. Writing about Freneau's early verse, Pattee noted that the college satires were "full of fire and invective, but . . . not always refined or quotable in print." See Fred L. Pattee, ed., The Poems of Philip Freneau: Poet of the American Revolution, I, xvii.

[6]Russel Nye, American Literary History: 1607-1830 (New York: Borzoi, 1970), p. 221. Also see H. H. Clark, "What Made Freneau the Father of American Poetry," Studies in Philology, 26 (January 1929), 1-22.

[7]Bowden's recent study (Philip Freneau) is a notable exception. Her work focuses chiefly on Freneau's political poems although they are not her only concern.

[8]To list here all of the studies which examine Freneau's indebtedness to classical and modern authors would duplicate later references. However, a useful survey of this topic can be gleaned from Ruth W. Brown, "Classical Echoes in the Poetry of Philip Freneau," The Classical Journal, 45 (1949-50), 29-34. Also see H. H. Clark, "The Literary Influences of Philip Freneau," Studies in Philology, 22 (January 1925), 1-33.

[9]Nelson Adkins, Philip Freneau and the Cosmic Enigma: The Religious and Philosophical Speculations of an American Poet (New York: Russell and Russell, 1949), p. 20.

[10]William Andrews, "Goldsmith and Freneau in 'The American Village,'" Early American Literature, 5, No. 2 (Fall 1970), 14-23.

[11]Martin E. Itzkowitz, "Freneau's 'Indian Burying Ground' and Keats' 'Grecian Urn,'" Early American Literature, 6, No. 3 (Winter 1972), 258-262.

[12]Jane D. Eberwein, "Freneau's 'The Beauties of Santa Cruz,'" Early American Literature, 12, No. 3 (Winter 1977), 271-276.

[13]Ms. Kyle has entitled her article: "That Poet Freneau: A Study of the Imagistic Success of 'The Pictures of Columbus.'" Kyle, therefore, seems to be among those who would dispell the aura cast by the title of Leary's biography. See Early American Literature, 9, No. 1 (Spring 1974), 62-68.

[14]Richard C. Vitzthum, Land and Sea: The Lyric of Philip Freneau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), p. 23.

[15]Vitzthum, p. 139.

[16]See above, no. 3.

[17]See above, Chapter Two, pp. 66-68.

[18]See Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), The Odes and Epodes of Horace, trans. Joseph P. Clancy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 202-204.

[19]Harry L. Koopman, "Introduction," The American Village, p. xiii.

[20]A reader who wants a general idea of the publishing history of Freneau's poetry should consult Judith Bair, "The Newspaper Verse of Philip Freneau: An Edition and Bibliographical Survey," Diss. University of Maryland 1979, I, 1-43. In this instance, however, Bailey himself acknowledged that he had possession of the manuscripts for about a year prior to their publication. In an "Advertisement" which prefaces the 1786 edition, Bailey wrote: "The pieces now collected and printed in the following sheets, were left in my hands, by the author, above a year ago, with permission to publish them whenever I thought proper." The "Advertisement" is dated June 1, 1786.

[21]Vitzthum discusses the problems, in general, of dating poems that appear in various of Freneau's editions. See Vitzthum, pp. 24-25.

[22]Bair, I, 11.

[23]"To Thomas Jefferson," 27 May 1809, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, as found in Philip Marsh, The Prose of Philip Freneau (New Brunswick, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1955), p. 486. Also see p. 484 of the same work for a copy of the letter to James Madison, in which Freneau wrote that he had had "no [editorial] control" over the minor blemishes that affected the "two former Editions."

[24]Philip Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau: A Critical Study (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1968), p. 158. Freneau never surrender his efforts to remarket his earlier poetry. In a letter of 14 May 1822, to Dr. J. W. Francis (of New York), the poet discussed publishing again poems to be taken from the 1786, 1795 and 1809 editions. Notably he did not mention the poems found in his

most recent edition (1815)--a volume that had met with little critical attention. See Charles F. Heartman, ed., Unpublished Freneauana (New York: Heartman's Historical Series, No. 28, 1918), p. 25.

[25]Bowden, Philip Freneau, p. 133.

[26]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 326. Elsewhere, however, Leary has written: "Until more can be known about how large a part Freneau took in seeing these two volumes [i.e. 1809 and 1815] through the press, the textual authority of the edition of 1795 will be difficult to challenge." See the "Introduction," rpt. Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794 (1795 ed.), p. viii.

[27]Vitzthum, p. 25.

[28]Samuel Forman, "The Political Activities of Philip Freneau," Johns Hopkins University Studies, NS 20, Nos. 9-10 (September-October 1902), 90.

[29]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 288.

[30]Jacob Axelrad, Philip Freneau: Champion of Democracy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), p. 354.

[31]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 325.

[32]Mary W. Bowden, "In Search of Freneau's Prison Ships," Early American Literature, 14, No. 2 (Fall 1979), 177.

[33]The poems "The Modern Miracle" (1788, 1795) and "The Fair Buckle Thief" (1795) both of which contain "off color" references are omitted from the 1809 edition. For further discussion, see above, Chapter Four, pp. 136-139.

[34]Joseph J. Griffith, "When Vernal Suns Forbear to Roll: Belief and Unbelief, Doubt and Resolution in the Poetry of Philip Freneau," Diss. University of Maryland 1977, p. 23.

[35]See above, No. 3.

[36]Freneau created "The Mourning Nun" (1795) by rewriting a passage taken from his earlier poem "Lines Written at Port Royal" (as found in the 1788 edition). For an in-depth discussion of these poems, see above, Chapter Three, pp. 94-96.

[37]Bowden, Philip Freneau, p. 137.

Chapter Two

[1]John Butt and Geoffrey Carnall, The Mid-Eighteenth Century, Vol. VIII of The Oxford History of English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 65.

[2]For a more complete picture of Freneau's familiarity with the work of Milton, see Thomas P. Haviland, "A Measure for the Early Freneau's Debt to Milton," PMLA, 55 (1940), 1033-1040.

[3]H. H. Clark, "The Literary Influence of Philip Freneau," p. 2. For background information on this topic, see W. J. Mills, ed., Colonial Society and the Life at Princeton College: 1766-1773 (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1903).

[4]Philip Marsh, Philip Freneau: Poet and Journalist (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1967), p. 31.

[5]Adkins, p. 68.

[6]Freneau's "Theology Notebook," Freneau Collection, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Also see Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 43.

[7]Marsh, Philip Freneau: Poet and Journalist, p. 33. Of course, a much more complete discussion of Freneau's struggle with this particular dilemma may be found in Adkins, p. 17 ff. and p. 33 ff. For a generalized discussion of Freneau's place in the Deistic movement, see Herbert M. Morais, Deism in Eighteenth Century America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), p. 153.

[8]Axelrad, p. 40.

[9]In a letter to James Madison written on November 22, 1772, Freneau complained that while in New York, he had been employed by "Scoundrels" to teach eight children some of whom "could read, others spell, and a few stammer over a chapter of the Bible." Madison Papers, Vol. I, p. 77. The letter is published in Marsh, The Prose of Philip Freneau, pp. 475-476. Also see Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 32-47. Also, Adkins, pp. 41-46.

[10]The reader is again cautioned to be aware of the problems regarding Freneau's early verse.

[11]Although Freneau was generally influenced by the grave-yard school of poets, he seems to have been particularly affected, even in his very early verse, by Robert Blair. For example, Blair's "The Grave" contains the following lines (which are remarkably like the conclusion of Freneau's "Retirement").

> . . . Fools that we are,
> Never to think of death and ourselves
> At the same time: as if to learn to die
> Were no concern of ours.
> (11. 470-474)

See Alexander Chalmers and Samuel Johnson, eds., The Works of the English Poets, XV (London: C. Whittingham, 1810), p. 66.

[12]The separate studies made by Vitzthum and by Griffith generally support the contention that Freneau's youth was given over to romantic dreaming despite his affected gloominess.

[13]Here, of course, we are making the supposition that the lines were initially included in the 1770 version of the poem. However, it is possible that they were added later when Freneau was preparing his manuscripts for the 1786 publication.

[14]Andrews, passim.

[15]Elsewhere Freneau had voiced his interest in a sunken land that had existed east of the American mainland. In "The Rising Glory of America" (1771), a character named Eugenio outlines the sad history.

> While straight between, the deep Atlantic roll'd.--
> And traces indisputable remain
> Of this primitive land, now sunk and lost.--
> The islands rising in our eastern main
> Are but small fragments of this continent.
> (11. 65-70, text:1786)

[16]Vitzthum, p. 29.

[17]Adkins, p. 14, and passim. Bowden, pp. 81, 165.

[18]A helpful study of this topic is Hoxie N. Fairchild, The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928).

[19]Victor H. Paltsits, A Bibliography of the Works Philip Freneau (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1903), p. 37.

[20]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 66 ff.

[21]Philip Freneau, "Account of some of the West-India Islands. . . .," United States Magazine, January 1779, as found in Marsh, The Prose Works of Philip Freneau, pp. 38-40.

[22]See Lewis Leary, "Philip Freneau's Captain Hanson," American Notes & Quiries, 2, No. 4 (July 1942), 51-52. Leary speculates in this article on the possible connection between Freneau's Captain Hanson and a rather prominent New York family of the same name. Also, during the eighteenth century there had been two governors of St. Croix who were named Hansen, and in 1702, the governor of nearby St. Thomas Island was also a Hansen. There is even a Hansen's Bay in St. Croix.

[23]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 375. Also, see Axelrad, p. 105.

[24]Freneau Collection, Rutgers. Also, see Marsh, Philip Freneau: Poet and Journalist, p. 56.

[25]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 73.

[26]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 75.

[27]Freneau's "Log Book," in Freneau Collection, Rutgers. Also, see Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 75-76. Also, see Axelrad, pp. 96-97.

[28]Marsh, The Prose of Philip Freneau, p. 38.

[29]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 77.

[30]Bair, I, 45-50.

[31]In this regard, Freneau's poem follows closely the pattern of the so-called "Loco-descriptive" poem as explained by M. H. Abrams. The narrator begins to reflect rather quietly on the significant features of his immediate surroundings; but as he proceeds, he establishes a spiritual rapprochement between his psyche and the physical world around him. See M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in Romanticism and Consciousness, Harold Bloom, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), pp. 201-229.

[32]Eberwein, p. 273.

[33]Griffith, p. 45.

[34]In the 1779 version, there are eleven stanzas out of the total of fifty-two that may be rather arbitrarily categorized as "negative." The 1786 revision contains forty-five "negative" stanzas out of a total of one hundred eight.

[35]The name "Philander" recurs in several later poems about unhappy lovers. In some instances, it can be more readily identified with Freneau himself. See above, Chapter Four, p. 145 ff.

[36]An interesting comparison may yet be made between Freneau's "Santa Cruz" and James Grainger's 1764 poem called The Sugar-Cane. Grainger's long poem has been consigned to relative obscurity by the ages, but, according to Alexander Chalmers, it was very well-known in its own time (although not highly regarded by Samuel Johnson's inner circle). Grainger's poem, nevertheless, bears remarkable similarities to Freneau's. It is essentially a propagandistic piece praising the beauties of the West Indies, in general, and the island of St. Christopher, in particular. The narrator of The Sugar-Cane describes at great length the flora and fauna of the island (not only in the verse itself but also in copious footnotes). He also considers such dangers as hurricanes and venereal disease (Grainger himself was a physician). But finally he encourages Europeans to settle in the islands and even defends the economics of slavery--listing qualities one should look for when buying slaves. The Sugar-Cane also includes a story of two, young island lovers whose relationship ends in tragedy.

Freneau's narrator, of course, shares many of the precise sentiments about the islands; but, in the 1786 version, he vigorously denounces slavery. Moreover, the fact that Freneau's narrator encourages Americans to migrate to the islands might indeed be a direct challenge to the call for Europeans that is made in The Sugar-Cane.

At least it is interesting to speculate that Freneau, on his trips to the islands during the late 1770s, may well have encountered an edition of Grainger's verse. If so, perhaps his own poem was colored by his knowledge of Grainger's work.

See Chalmers, The Works of the English Poets, XIV, 469-511.

[37]See Bair, I, 59-70.

[38]The final stanza of the 1779 "The House of Night" includes these lines: ". . . Content to die, just as it be decreed,/At four score years, or now at twenty-three." (See Bair, I, 70.) Freneau was twenty-three in 1775. Also the

poem is set on the Chesapeake Bay, an area in which Freneau had lived shortly before leaving for sea. Critics generally accept this 1775 date as the time of the first draft. See Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 52, 78.

[39]Vitzthum argues that by 1795, Freneau believed that the heavy gothic trappings of the poem were simply incomprehensible, and, therefore, he felt obliged to cut the poem radically. See Vitzthum, pp. 76-77.

[40]For further clarification of this poem and several others bearing the same title, see above, Chapter Three, pp. 123-124).

[41]Actually, the 1786 revision readily acknowledges that "Fancy" has made the poet take this trip into darker regions.

> . . . My frighted eyes a horrid form survey'd;
> Fancy, I own thy power--Death on the couch,
> With fleshless limbs, at rueful length, was laid.
> (ll. 98-100)

[42]This long section (i.e. stanzas 105-117) which depicts the death of Death is indeed one of the most vivid and effective passages to be found in the 1786 poem. Marsh notes his regret that Freneau omitted it from the later versions. See Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau, p. 32. And Vitzthum says that "the most remarkable new element in the 1786 'House of Night' is its tone of Christian moralism." See Vitzthum, p. 74.

[43]Note the similarities between Freneau's verse and Lucretius' Book III, ll. 940 ff.--broadly adapted here by R. Y. Tyrell.

> . . .
>
> Lo, if dumb Nature found a voice,
> Would she bemoan, and not make choice
> To bid poor mortals to rejoice,
>
> Saying, 'Why weep thy wane, O man?
> Wert joyous e'en when life began,
> When thy youth's sprightly freshets ran?
>
> 'Nay, all the joys thy life e'er knew
> As poured into a sieve fell through,
> And left thee but to rail and rue.'
>
> Go, fool, as doth a well-filled guest
> Sated of life: with tranquil breast
> Take thine inheritance of rest.

Why seekest joys that soon must pale
Their feeble fires, and swell the tale
Of things of nought and no avail?

Die, sleep! For all things are the same;
Tho' spring now stir thy crescent frame,
't will wither: all things are the same.

See Masterpieces of Latin Literature, Gordon J. Laing, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), pp. 76-77. For the full text of these lines see Lucretius (Titi Lucreti Cari), De Rerum Natura: Libri Sex, trans. Cyril Bailey, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 350-352.

[44]Griffith believes that Freneau's use of the word paradise actually implies little else than the atomistic concept of eternity: physical forms constantly rechannel into other physical forms, hence "existing always." See Griffith, pp. 40-41. In fact, a further indication of how Freneau regarded the human wish for paradise beyond this world might be gained by examining the revision of this stanza. In 1795 it was included in "The Sexton's Sermon," a poem which rather straightforwardly advances Lucretian materialism. In the revision, after-life is equated only with sleep, and those who would desire it are sluggards:

When Nature bids thee from the world retire,
With joy thy lodging leave, a sated guest,
In sleep's blest state (our DULLMAN'S fond desire)
Existing always--always to be blest.
(11. 29-32, text:1796)

"Dullman" is, of course, the name of a greedy, stupid constable who appears in Charles Churchill's The Ghost, a long poem which parodies the gothic tradition and which may well have influenced the composition of "The House of Night." The revision of this passage leaves us wondering whether Freneau is reassuring us of an after-life or laughing at us for being deluded.

The suggestion that "Dullman" may be an illusion to Churchill's character is presented here as an original idea; however, one may gain a further indication of Freneau's overall indebtedness to Churchill by referring to: Joseph M. Beatty, "Churchill and Freneau," American Literature, 2, No. 1 (March 1930), 121-130.

[45]It is particularly notable that Thompson, Blair and Young all develop their themes through a common progression. At the opening of each poem, the respective narrator is darkly absorbed in the topics of sickness, diseases, and death. Each enters a darkened building where he overhears (or witnesses) other humans trying to overcome the mortal

curse. Each particularly reviles doctors who scientifically try to cure the illnesses of mankind. Each finally realizes that only Christian salvation holds the answers. Freneau's narrator in "The House of Night" follows closely the journey taken by the others, but he never completely accedes to Christian redemption.

Leary also suggests that Freneau was strongly influenced by James Hervey's Contemplations and Meditations. See Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 52.

[46]See Vitzthum, p. 76. Also, see Griffith, p. 36.

[47]The outcome is a piece less thematically entangled and certainly less ambiguous. "The Sexton's Sermon" clearly and consistently reiterates pre-Christian ideas, unclouded by vague suggestion of a spiritual hereafter.

> . . . Millions have fallen--and millions must expire,
> Doom'd by the impartial God to endless rest.
> (11. 39-40, text:1795)

[48]Of course, it is uncertain what Freneau intended by detailing "Death's" death with such obvious similarities to the description of Christ's death (see Matthew 27:45-54). However, Marsh sees the early version of "The House of Night" as a sort of declaration of Freneau's independence "from orthodoxy and the church's tempting call to security." Marsh, Philip Freneau: Poet and Journalist, p. 38.

[49]According to Plutarch, Aspasia, the dark courtesan of Pericles, was as noted for her intelligence as for her beauty. See "Pericles," in Plutarch's Lives, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, IV (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 69-73. Perhaps such a judgment was implied about the Aspasia of Freneau's verse (i.e. she had ". . . charms of the face, and beauties of the mind"). Elsewhere we will see that Freneau celebrated the beauty of an island woman who had a "superior mind." See above, Chapter Three, p. 78. It is also possible, however, that Freneau chose the name simply because he had been influenced by his reading of Young's Night Thoughts. And finally, it cannot be overlooked that the name Aspasia is frequently found in neoclassical literature.

[50]Vitzthum, p. 73.

[51]Ms "Some Account of the Capture of the Ship Aurora," Freneau Collection Rutgers University, liberally quoted from in Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 80 ff. Also, see Axelrad, pp. 103-115. Also, see Bowden, "In Search of Freneau's Prison Ship." Bowden argues that inconsistencies found in Freneau's prose and poetic accounts cast doubt on

whether or not he was ever really captured by the British. The burden of proof, however, remains with Bowden in this issue.

[52]Axelrad, p. 109. It is perhaps worth noting that one of Freneau's poems which obviously identifies an island woman ("Elegiac Lines" 1788 ed., p. 186) utilizes the name "Martha Ray" as it appears revised in the 1795 edition; see above, Chapter Three, pp. 120-121.

[53]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 83.

[54]See Bowden, "In Search of Freneau's Prison Ship."

[55]Freneau edited: The New York Daily Advertiser (in 1790); The National Gazette (in Philadelphia, 1791-1793); The Jersey Chronicle (in Monmouth, 1795); with Alexander Menut, The Time Piece (in New York, 1797-1798). He also continued to contribute pieces to various newspapers and journals even after he retired from active editorship. For example, the "Letters of Robert Slender" were first published in the Aurora (in Philadelphia) in 1799.

[56]As politically important as were his anti-British pieces that constantly appeared in The Freeman's Journal, perhaps his more lasting contribution, however, was the extended prose series now known as The Pilgrim Essays, which ran in the journal from November 21, 1781, to August 14, 1782. Creating for the series, the persona of a worldly traveler (i.e. the Pilgrim), who had retired to primitive seclusion, Freneau skillfully emulated the writing of more celebrated earlier journalists: Addison, Steele, Johnson and Goldsmith. Moreover, in the 1788 Miscellaneous Works, Freneau revised many of the original Pilgrim Essays and included them as a major part of a new series called The Philosopher of the Forest. He also included another set of essays in the 1788 edition called The Slender Essays (and some of these also incorporate material from the Pilgrim series). The Slender Essays, of course, utilize Freneau's most famous mask--the fictitious Robert Slender, Philadelphia weaver, wit and cracker-box philosopher. Actually the Pilgrim, the Philosopher of the Forest, and Slender are all capable of pronouncing, on the one hand, grave homilies while, on the other, delivering rather frivolous observations about social customs. However, all of these essays, written during an intensely creative period, reflect Freneau's technical virtuosity in learning to distance himself from his material. "The project as a whole," Philip Marsh notes, ". . . is an ambitious attempt to promulgate a philosophy of protest against civilization, monarchy, tyranny, and war, and of argument for a

Rousseauistic love of wild nature, simplicity, freedom, and the brotherhood of man." See The Prose of Philip Freneau, p. 514.

While critics have sometimes been at variance in their evaluations of Freneau's poetry, they have generally recognized an important place in American letters for his prose. See H. H. Clark, "What Made Freneau the Father of American Prose?" Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, 25 (1930), 39-50.

In later newspaper essays, Freneau continued to develop other well-known characters (Adam Buckskin, Opay Mico, Tomo-Cheeki, Hezekiah Salem, Polly and Jonathon Bunker, and others) who voiced a multitude of opinions about American life and customs. Yet his most forceful and insightful prose is found in the Philosopher and Slender series. Certainly we can find in these essays the reworking of many important themes that run throughout his most perplexing poems. Also, see below, n. 61.

[57]Bair, I, 91.

[58]We note again how similar Freneau's images are to those found in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, Book IV, 11. 414-419 (translated here by Cyril Bailey).

. . .

et collectus aquae digitum non altior unum,
qui lapides inter sistit per strata viarum,
despectum prabet sub terras impete tanto,
a terris quantum caeli patet altus hiatus;
nubila despicere et caelum ut videare videre et
corpora mirande sub terras abdita caelo.

And yet a pool of water not deeper than single
finger-breadth, which lies between the stones on
the paved street, affords us a view beneath the
earth to a depth as vast as the high gaping mouth
of heaven stretches above the earth; so that
you seem to look down on the clouds and the
heaven and bodies hidden in the sky beneath the
earth--all in magic.

Lucretius, pp. 382-385.

[59]Griffith, p. 61.

[60]Cleon's stoic warning is somewhat like the advice that Cassius gives to Brutus.

Cleon: In Vain with stars he [the Power] deck'd yon' spangled skies,
And bade the mind to heaven's bright regions soar.
(11. 305-306, text:1786)

Cassius: . . . Men at some time are masters of their fates.
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
(Julius Caesar, Act I, Sc. II, 11. 139-141)

[61]According to Vitzthum, these two maxims are penned in the margin of Freneau's copy of Miscellanies for Sentimentalists (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1778), p. 4. There is a third maxim included in the ana: "The good conceal from Men the happiness of Death that they may endure life." See Vitzthum, p. 45.

In his own Miscellaneous Works (1788), Freneau, in the guise of Robert Slender, later noted: "The gods (said Seneca) conceal from men the happiness of death, that they may endure to live" (p. 228). This line appears in "The Academy of Death," an essay probably written in the mid-1780s. In fact, studying it carefully might well shed new light on the 1786 revision of "The House of Night." For the primary question posed in the essay is: "What happiness (i.e. knowledge) does death bring? Notably the answer offered is less ambiguous than the one found in "The House of Night." However, remarkably like the narrator of the poem, Robert Slender also details "an imaginary excursion" lately made "in a dream, during a long stormy night in the month of January." In this dream journey, Slender first meets a theologian ("heavy laden with books") who assures him that here may be found ". . . TRUTH, which pervades all things . . ." Continuing his travels, Slender soon comes to realize that he is in the underworld. He finds here "a building of immense size" which is "The Academy of Death." Not as frightened as he is curious, the weaver goes about the chambers hearing, along the way, the inmates discuss the relative merits of fancy and truth (the narrator of "The House of Night" also overhears learned debates on his journey through the dark house). Finally Slender comes face to face with the great monarch, Death; and he boldly asks Death to allow him to confer with various renowned thinkers of the past who are now in this land.

As Aeneas had done, Slender travels about the underworld, selecting certain of its worthier inhabitants to question. At first overawed by meeting such greats as Lucian, Plato, Alexander, Aristotle, Homer and Archimedes, he ultimately comes to realize, after talking with each of them, that no philosopher, poet, scientist or political

leader has ever really been able to explain TRUTH. Slender concludes that we (the living) grant to historical figures credit for much more knowledge than they ever really had. Finally the dream ends as a fragment, but not before Slender has given up his delusive hopes of finding TRUTH--even in the land of Death. He resolutely concludes: "But I am of opinion the investigation of truth is scarcely worth a man's pains. . . ."

Regarded as a whole, "The Academy of Death" does not absolutely deny the existence of TRUTH (or Providence) that guides all things; it does, however, reiterate that it is futile for mankind to try to fathom the secret. Cleon's advice (in "The House of Night") that we not look to the stars for final answers is, in essence, the same overall message delivered in "The Academy of Death."

For a more detailed analysis, see Lewis Leary, "The Dream Visions of Philip Freneau," Early American Literature, 11 (Fall 1976), 156-173.

[62]"The Academy of Death," p. 242.

[63]See Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 129-130. Also, see Axelrad, pp. 146-148.

[64]Both of Freneau's major biographers note this unspecified illness. See Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 135. Also, see Axelrad, p. 154. And Vitzthum notes that the poems of 1784 and 1785 seem to reflect a particularly bleak time in the poet's life. See Vitzthum, p. 63.

[65]Bair, I, 243-244.

[66]Sweet it is, when on the great sea the winds are buffeting the waters, to gaze from the land on another's great struggles; not because it is pleasure or joy that anyone should be distressed, but because it is sweet to perceive from what misfortune you yourself are free.

(trans. Cyril Bailey)

Lucretius, p. 237.

[67]Vitzthum, p. 161.

[68]Vitzthum, p. 81.

[69]A few of the other newspapers and journals in which Freneau's mid-80s verse may be found are: The Columbian Herald (Charleston, South Carolina), The City Gazette (Charleston), The New York Gazetteer, The New York Daily Advertiser. See Bair, I, 231-347.

[70]Axelrad, p. 149.

[71]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 160-165.

Chapter Three

[1]Pattee accepts the authenticity of this poem; he includes it in his edition. See Pattee, I, 243. Bair ascribes "probable" authorship to Freneau. See Bair, II, 705.

[2]Bair, II, 705.

[3]Bair, I, 143-144.

[4]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 72-73, 376. Also, see Axelrad, pp. 89-91.

[5]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 376. The Tucker family was, of course, very prominent in politics in Bermuda as well as in colonial Virginia. For a more detailed history of the relationship of the Bruere's and the Tucker's sea, Wilfred B. Kerr, Bermuda and the American Revolution: 1760-1783 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936).

[6]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 72.

[7]Axelrad, p. 90.

[8]Marsh, The Prose Works of Philip Freneau, p. 496. According to Marsh, someone (?) at Indiana University Library found the errant slip in the volume of poetry once owned by Margaret L. Freneau. See p. 589.

[9]Pattee, II, 284-286.

[10]Not only the revised title of this poem but also some of the verse itself shows likely affinities to a portion of Blair's The Grave:

> Oh! slipp'ry state of things!--What sudden turns!
> What strange vicissitudes in the first leaf
> Of man's sad history! To-day most happy,
> And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject.
> How scant the space between these vast extremes!
> (ll. 561-564)

See Chalmers, XV, 67.

If, in fact, Freneau had spent part of the winter of 1784-1785 re-reading some of the poets of the "melancholy" school, he certainly found food in them for his own dark mood during this time.

[11]We see at least two close approximations of the same image in the 1786 edition.

> Like insects busy, in a summer's day,
> We toil and squabble, to increase our pain,
> Night comes at last, weary of the fray,
> To dust and darkness all return again.
> (The Jamaica Funeral," 11. 183-186,
> text:1786)

> Hill sink to plains, and man returns to dust,
> That dust supports a reptile or a flower;
> Each changeful atom by some other nurs'd
> Takes some new form, to perish in an hour.
> ("The House of Night," 11. 533-536,
> text:1786)

For further discussion of this important concept in Freneau's mid-1780s verse, see above, Postscript, pp. 168-169.

[12]Bair, I, 249-252.

[13]Bair, I, 257-258.

[14]Axelrad, p. 154.

[15]Bair, I, 266-267.

[16]Vitzthum's study looks closely at the sexual implications of Freneau's dichotomy between land and sea. He notes: "The only kind of femaleness Freneau ever associated with the sea is that of the prostitute or bold and amoral mistress or coquette. 'Proper' women are always creatures of land who oppose or encourage the male urges to wander but who themselves never go to sea." Vitzthum, p. 67. Also, see Griffith, pp. 130-131.

[17]As it appears in the 1786 version, line thirty-five implies that sailors find no ease even in death (i.e. coral is a jagged death bed); but the line can easily be misunderstood to mean that sailors do not actually drown. Freneau seemed to sense this and changed the line in 1795 to read: "On coral beds and delug'd sand they sleep."

[18]Vitzthum, p. 68. Griffith, p. 131.

[19]Griffith, p. 137.

[20]Bair, I, 280-281.

[21]Bair, I, 292-294.

[22]Freneau used the images of the sun's being absorbed into the ocean in "The Hurricane" (ll. 15-18), see above, p. 67. Here we see the sun is swallowed up in the earth. Perhaps, once again, Freneau was being influenced by his close reading of Lucretius.

> In pelego nautis ex undis ortis in undis
> sol fit uti videatur obire et condere lumen;
> quippe ubi mil aliud nisi aquam caelumque tuentur
> ne leviter credas labefactari undique sensus.
> (Book IV, ll. 432-435)

> It happens to sailors in the sea that the sun seems to rise from the waves, and again to set in the waves, and hide its light; since in truth they behold nothing else but water and sky; so that you must not lightly think that the senses waver at every point. (trans. Cyril Bailey)

Lucretius, p. 384.

[23]This line (49) is broken into two dimeter measures in all other editions.

[24]To cite one example, the conclusion of the 1788 text is personal and immediate to the poem's present time:

> What season shall restore that scene
> When all was calm and all serene,
> And happiness no empty sound.
> (ll. 75-77, text:1788)

The 1795 conclusion, however, broadens the frame of reference and appears to pertain less directly to the narrator's immediate state:

> What century shall restore that age
> When passion, rul'd by reason's page,
> Made happiness no empty sound--.
> (ll. 75-77, text:1795)

[25]Perhaps Freneau was subconsciously recalling in his own lines the boast made by Satan in Paradise Lost:

> . . . One who brings
> A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
> The mind is its own place, and in it self
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
> (Book I, ll. 252-255)

[26] Indeed, there are many pictures of unhappy women (sometimes placed in island settings) and/or distraught lovers which surface in the newspaper verse of the late 1780s.

In February 1787, "Thomas and Susan, An Irish-Town Dialogue" appeared in The Freeman's Journal. The poem was later incorporated, as comic relief, in the long dramatic poem called The Pictures of Columbus. It is a light-hearted piece in which a sailor, Thomas, complains about his life on shore with his shrewish wife, Susan. For her part, the wife laments being married to a drunkard and being tied down with "brats." Even after the two humorously resolve their differences, Susan darkly suggests that she will overlook Thomas' faults only if he will go back to sea in order to earn money (as later incorporated into The Pictures of Columbus, this dialogue implies that Susan wants Thomas to sign on with Columbus). In any event, we see in this poem the picture of a woman more or less "driving" her man back to sea.

> . . . He [the recruiting captain] was hearty and
> free,
> And if you can agree
> To leave me, dear honey,
> To bring me some money!
> How happy indeed shall I be.--
> (ll. 32-36)

On April 11, 1787, The Freeman's Journal carried two poems by Freneau. The first, "The Insolvents Release . . .," primarily condemns society for jailing debtors. Some have speculated that Freneau must have been severely dunned by creditors during his lean years, but regardless of the personal applications of this poem to Freneau's civilian life, the poet had indeed been shown what prison was like by the British.

> Return, ye happy times, when all were free--
> No jails on land, no nets at sea;
> When mountain beasts unfetter'd ran,
> And man refus'd to shut up man
> As men of modern days have shut up me!--
> This is the dreary dark abode
> Of poverty and solitude.
> (ll. 32-38)

Another gloomy reflection on man's inhumanity to man, the poem contains little reference to women except an interesting observation that the prisoner has been kept cruelly away from his sweetheart "Jenny."

My days were dull, my nights were long:
My evening dreams,
My morning schemes
Were how to break the cruel chain,
And, Jenny, be with you again.
(ll. 54-58)

"St. Preux to Eloisa" was the second of Freneau's poems published in The Journal on April 11. It also deals with the separation of lovers but provides an ocean setting that suggests other of Freneau's poems. Even though the poet derived his two main characters from J. J. Rousseau's novel Julie, ou La Nouvelle Heloise (see Vitzthum, pp. 100-102), they are used here as vehicle for Freneau's own purposes. "St. Preux," while sailing around the Cape Horn, supposedly writes a love letter (in verse) to his beloved "Eloisa." Curiously, however, he mentions this unsettling thought:

Now, while through barbarous climes we sail,
Should Neptune force our ship on shore
On some rude isle, by some rough gale--
I to your arms return no more,
But for some swarthy dame shall bring
Cool waters from the Indian spring.
(ll. 13-18)

For some reason, then, "St. Preux" considers the possibility that he may fall in love with an island woman; but even if he does become involved with "a swarthy dame" and returns no more to "Eloisa," he assures her that no woman can ever really take her place in his affections:

Yet love, with undiminish'd joy,
Shall trace your form in fancy's glass,
While I more fond, and you, less coy,
O'er swelling seas together pass--
No rocks nor seas can love divide,
Where heart with heart is thus ally'd.
(ll. 19-24)

The mask developed in poems such as these was at times laid aside when Freneau seemed to consider more directly the personal problems he had faced. For example, his "Address to Misfortune" (The Freeman's Journal, July 18, 1787) looks precisely at the sort of ills Freneau himself had known (we should note here the last two lines of this "list of woe").

> Dire Goddess of the haggard brow,
> Misfortune, at thy shrine I bow,
> Where forms uncouth betray thee still,
> A leaky ship, a doctor's bill,
> A poem damn'd, a beggar's prayer,
> An empty purse, a load of care,
> The critics growl, the pedant's sneer,
> The urgent dun, the law severe,
> A smokey house, rejected love,
> And friends that void of friendship prove.
> (emphasis mine) (ll. 1-10)

Although this poem is a conventional tone-piece of eighteenth-century poetry, the ills enumerated are personal ones that Freneau, who was almost always in need of money, had experienced as a sailor, a poet, and a radical newspaper man. While the poem aptly, but not uniquely, restates Freneau's pessimistic pronouncements, it also introduces a new ocean setting--Cape Hatteras--which he later "revisited" in several subsequent poems (see above, Chapter Four, p. 140). As might be expected, the treacherous water off Hatteras often image destruction in Freneau's later poems. However, as a symbol, the region of Hatteras not only signaled the potential for danger but also began to evolve complex associations about land-based women and sea-going men (see Vitzthum, p. 131).

> On Hatteras' cliffs who hopes to see
> The maiden fair, or orange tree,
> Awhile on hope may fondly lean
> Till sad experience blots the scene.
> (ll. 27-30)

In this instance, since "on Hatteras' cliffs," the sailor cannot find the rewards he seeks, he is forced to envision "other shores" that might provide a haven; and the poem's conclusion strongly implies, therefore, that the mental associations of fair maidens and lush orange groves (and safety on shore) trace their imagistic lineage back to earlier associations of island women and sailors:

> On other shores, a happier guest,
> The mind must fix her heav'n of rest,
> Where milder skies, and softer climes
> Shall please the men of other times.
> (ll. 35-38)

"The Scornful Lady" (The Freeman's Journal, April 29, 1787) takes a different tack from some of the other poems addressed to women. For under its ostensible carpe-diem banter to "Celia" to stop being "coy" (reminding us of what "St. Preux" says to "Eloisa"), there lies an obvious

cynicism that is seldom seen in Freneau's verse heretofore about females. In this poem, "Celia" is metaphorically described as a ship of war who is pursued by other (male) ships. Yet the pursued really is the pursuer, for she "captures hearts" at will. In fact, she seems to enjoy the work. The narrator, who also has been "taken" by the cruel femme fatale, warns her nevertheless:

> Ah, Celia, what a strange mistake
> To ruin just for ruin's sake;
> Thus to delude us [males] in distress
> And quit the prize you should possess.
> (ll. 29-32)

Finally, the warning becomes even more dire, for if "Celia" will not relinquish her frivolous encounters, no real man (i.e. a sailor) will ever marry her. She will find instead that she will have nothing left but dull, landsmen to choose from.

> Years may advance with silent pace
> And rob that form of every grace,
> And all your conquests be repaid--
> With Teague O'Murphy, and his spade.
> (ll. 33-36)

For a further discussion of Freneau's shifting attitude toward women, see above, Chapter Four, pp. 136-140.

[27] Axelrad, p. 159.

[28] Bair, I, 282-283.

[29] Seneca's essay entitled "De Consolatione ad Marciam" ("To Marcia") thematically offers the same stoic advice (to accept life's hardships) that Freneau's poem advances. Although Seneca was writing to console a young woman who had lost her child, the message is easily adaptable to other purposes. It is quite likely that Freneau had the Senecan essay in mind when he retitled his poem and then incorporated it into his own narrative, "Light Summer Reading," a piece which also cautions us to endure our losses. For further discussion of how Seneca's essay might have influenced Freneau's other poetry, see below, Postscript Note #7, pp. 200-201. Also, see Seneca, Moral Essays, trans. John W. Basore, II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 3-97.

[30] In the 1795 text, Freneau eliminated the "parson" from the poem. He included a reference to another woman who seems to have been "Amanda's" friend or maid. Calling the

new person "Constantia," he had used the name earlier in a poem (1792) entitled "Constantia". He later (1809) changed the name again (to "Priscilla").

1788: I came--and while the parson read . . .

1795: I came--and while Constantia read . . .

1809: We came; and while Priscilla read . . .
(l. 33)

[31]Lines forty-one and forty-two were perhaps the most minutely reworked couplet in the poem.

1788: Who shall oppose the sad decree--
Or what, fair maid, recover thee.

1795: Who shall controul the sad decree
Or what, fair maid, recover thee.

1809: Who shall controul the sad decree
Or what, fair girl, recover thee.

[32]The first two lines of this stanza (i.e. ll. 43-44) were also continually reworked; by 1809 they read:

Such virtue in that spirit dwells--
Such fortitude amidst such pain!--

[33]Adkins, Vitzthum and Griffith all generally concur on this point.

[34]Perhaps the significant allusion to "India's odours" has some connection with "Amanda's" fondness for "India gowns" (see above, Chapter Three, p. 113).

[35]Due to a printer's error, this poem seems to appear on page 320 of the 1795 edition; actually the correct pagination should be 330.

[36]This phrase, "Serenely mild, not criminally gay . . .," is indeed curious. Earlier versions of this poem (1788, 1795) read: "Serenely mild, and innocently gay." In other poems Freneau had warned his readers that prostitution and venereal disease (see "Port Royal" and 1786 "Santa Cruz") were attendant evils of the islands. We are led to question, therefore, whether this vague reference implies that "Amanda's" gay attractions are quite distinct from those of less wholesome women.

[37]Perhaps due to an oversight on Freneau's part or to printer's error, both of the poems entitled "Elegiac Lines" in the text of the 1795 edition present several confusions. Both are called "Elegiac Stanzas" in the Table of Contents; possibly Freneau meant to differentiate between the two by calling one "Elegiac Lines" and the other "Elegiac Stanzas." He had, of course, already changed the title of the 1788 "Elegiac Lines" to "Under the PORTRAITURE OF MARTHA RAY."

[38]The stanzas taken from "Santa Cruz" are 35-38; those from "The House of Night" are 39-43. The sections, therefore, appear only in the 1786 versions of the respective poems.

[39]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 251.

Chapter Four

[1]Bowden, Philip Freneau, p. 137.

[2]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 72.

[3]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 170. Also, see Axelrad, p. 185.

[4]W. J. Mills, "The Poetic Courtship of Philip Freneau, The Poet of the Revolution," Through the Gates of Old Romance (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1903), p. 142. Mills' story of the courtship is itself romantic and impressionistic; how much we should rely on his "facts" is questionable; for he rarely identifies his own sources. Nevertheless, he writes with the conviction of one who has talked with people who had known the Freneaus. For another romantized portrait of Freneau and Eleanor, see Mary S. Austin, Philip Freneau: The Poet of the Revolution (New York: A Wessels Co., 1901).

[5]Mills, p. 144.

[6]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 160.

[7]Mills, p. 126.

[8]Mills, p. 138.

[9]Mills, p. 129. Austin also depicts Eleanor Forman as an elegant, intelligent, and sensitive woman who "wrote with ease." See Austin, p. 149.

[10]The 1788 and 1795 texts vary the place names which obviously were picked for the tonal qualities. Nevertheless, Freneau consistently chose names (Oronooke, Surinam, Amazonia, Parambiro) that designate locations (rivers) on the North Atlantic coast of South America. And even in the "Power of Fancy," the young poet had asked to be carried away to "Bermuda's orange shades,/Or Demarara's lovely glades" (ll. 75-76). Although these lines may well have been added to the poem in the mid-1780s.

[11]Lavinia's concern about Philander certainly seems to echo lines from Shakespeare's The Tempest. Shipwrecked and alone, Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, searches for his missing father, when he overhears Ariel singing:

Full fadom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change.
Into something rich and strange
Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell.
(Act. I, Sc. II, ll. 396-402)

Set in Bermuda, the romance of Ferdinand and Miranda must have greatly appealed to Freneau. And, in fact, it may yet be demonstrated to what extent the poet relied on Shakespeare to shape the imagery of his own island love story.

[12]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 167, 171. Axelrad, p. 185.

[13]See Philip M. Marsh, "Freneau and Jefferson," American Literature, 8 (May 1936), 181-189. Also, see Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 193-246. Also, Axelrad, pp. 209-222.

[14]Freneau used references to the myth of Orpheus quite often in his serious verse. The romantic idea of the lover visiting his dead sweetheart was a rather compulsive theme. One of his poems (that he claimed to have written as early as 1770) was entitled "The Prayer of Orpheus."

[15]Bair, II, 489-490.

[16]Bair, I, 387-388.

[17]Bair, I, 405-406.

[18]As the poem appears in the 1792 version, a signature clearly identifies the date and place where it was supposedly written: Castle Island, Bermuda, Jan. 20, 1789. See Bair, II, 406. It is indeed difficult to assert why Freneau chose to set the first version of the poem in Hatteras if it were written in Bermuda. Learly simply disclaims Freneau's later attribution. Leary says that "the poet was in Baltimore at that time." The theory is based on newspaper accounts which report that Freneau's ship, the Columbia, was ice-locked in Baltimore in January 1789 (Maryland Journal, January 2, 1789). Its departure date was announced in The Freeman's Journal on February 6, 1789. But even Leary's account of the year of 1789 admits to certain short periods of time which cannot be strictly accounted for (i.e. Freneau was at sea). See Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 162-163, 384. Therefore, if the verse was written in June of 1789, when Freneau was at sea, perhaps the later ascription of Jan. is a typesetter's error. But such a suggestion is tenuous at best.

Pattee evidently accepts the 1789 Bermuda trip, for in a footnote to another poem called "Florio to Amanda" (see below, note #23), he writes: "On Jan. 20, 1789, Freneau was at Castle Ireland, Bermuda, where eleven years before he had passed five delightful weeks in the family of the English Governor. The above lines were written on the tempestuous return voyage inspired by her who soon afterward became his wife." See Pattee, II, p. 319. However Pattee does not identify his source.

[19]Of course this sort of editorial decision is precisely what confronts a would-be editor of Freneau's work. I have chosen the 1795 text here because the 1809 adds a superfluous line at the end of stanza two; and also the later text makes minor changes that occasionally disrupt the meter:

1795: Although in cooler shades they play (l. 29).

1809: Not in more fragrant shades they play (l. 30).

[20]One of the problems that confronted early settlers on the island of Bermuda was finding fresh water supplies. See Jean Kennedey, Isle of Devils: Bermuda under the Sumers Island Company 1609-1685 (Hamilton, Bermuda: Collins, 1971), p. 20. The extra line added to stanza two (see above note #19) of the 1809 version reads: "And would have shown, if streams did flow!" (l. 13).

[21]This rejection of sailors by indigenous islanders is also noted in "Port Royal" where the narrator is contemptuous of the Jamaicans. See above, Chapter Three, p. 93.

[22]The 1790 version reads:

> Along these vast extended shores,
> From isle to isle where'er we stray.
> (ll. 19-20)

The 1792 version reads:

> Along your native northern shores
> Of all the nymphs, that catch the eye.
> (ll. 19-20)

See Bair, I, 406.

[23]Bair, I, 330-332. "Philander to Amanda" was so radically rewritten in 1791 that it appears to be two separate poems when one compares the later texts with the original 1789 version. Its final title is "Florio to Amanda."

[24]On November 14, 1788, Freneau's schooner left Charleston destined for Baltimore. According to Leary the ship sailed through "heavy winter seas . . ." and was "twice driven from her course before she reached her destination late in December." That Rascal Freneau, pp. 159-160.

[25]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, pp. 158-165.

[26]H. H. Clark, The Poems of Philip Freneau, dates the composition as 1788. See p. 346. Yet no version of the poem appears in the 1788 edition, and there is no appearance of the verse in Bair's collection. Perhaps Clark was merely following Pattee's unsubstantiated ascription which implies that the poem was written at the same time that "Light Summer Reading" was written (i.e. 1788). See Pattee, II, 318.

[27]The waters around Bermuda have been notorious for their hidden dangers. See Kennedy, pp. 17-39 and passim.

[28]This precise reference locates the poem in the eastern quadrant of Bermuda (not too far from the parish of St. George's).

[29]Certainly some of the other poems (not mentioned in this study) that might be considered in regard to the "Amanda" series are (according to their 1795 titles): "Palaemon to Lavinia," "Minerva's Advice," "Mars and Venus," "Alcina's Enchanted Island," "To Lydia: A Young Quaker Lady," "Female Caprice," "To the Memory of a Lady," "To Cynthia [I]" (p. 365), "To Cynthia [II]" (p. 378). Perhaps closely related is an 1809 poem called "The Fading Rose," which follows immediately after the conclusion of the series in the later text.

[30]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 323. Axelrad, pp. 361-362.

[31]Of course the 1815 edition is the last volume that Freneau himself published. It contains no material found in the earlier editions, however.

Postscript

[1]Vitzthum, p. 88.

[2]Bowden, Philip Freneau, p. 148.

[3]Paul E. More, "Philip Freneau," Shelburne Essays 5 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Son, 1908), p. 96.

[4]Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 144.

[5]Marsh, The Works of Philip Freneau, p. 52. Axelrad, p. 160.

[6]These lines, of course, imply that humans may be able to find internal "peace" during their lives on earth. Nevertheless, in the context of the poem ("The Departure"), the lines indicate that the narrator has sought to find a paradise on earth (i.e. a physical place) but has failed (see Chapter Three, pp. 102-108).

[7]It is interesting to speculate on the possible sources of Freneau's powerful last stanza. Certainly the poet was repeatedly indebted to Lucretius (as Adkins has shown) for providing images that explore life's brevity. But in the works of others, we may also find lines that perhaps had a telling effect on Freneau's psyche. For example, William Thompson's "Sickness" contains:

> Man is a flow'r, which in the morning, fair
> As day-spring, swelling from its slender stem,
> In virgin-modesty, and sweet reserve,
> Lays out its blushing beauties to the day,
> As Gideon's fleece, full with the dews of Heav'n.
> But if some ruder gale, or nipping wind,
> Disastrous, blow too hard, it, weeping, mourns
> In robes of darkness; it reclines its head
> In languid softness; withers every grace;
> And ere the ev'ning-star the west inflames,
> It falls into the portion of those weeds
> Which, with a careless hand, we cast away--
> Ye thoughtless fair-ones, moralize my song!
> (Book I, II. 81-93)

See Chalmers, XV, 38.

Grave" And we have already noted that Robert Blair's "The includes a lament about the brevity of human life, that is one day happy but

> . . . ere to-morrow's Sun has set, most abject.
> How scant the space between these vast extremes!
> (11. 563-564)

See Chalmers, XV, 67.

But perhaps the Senecan essay entitled "To Marcia" (see above, Chapter Three, Note #30, p. 193) provided the most direct source for Freneau's own conclusion to "The Wild Honey Suckle."

> . . . Si mortuorum aliquis miseretur, et non natorum miseratur. Mors nec bonum nec malum est; id enim potest aut bonum aut malum esse, quod aliquid est; quod vero ipsum nihil est et omnia in nihilum redigit, nulli nos fortunae tradit; mala enim bonaque circa aliquam versantur materiam. Non potest id fortuna tenere, quod natura dimisit, nec potest miser esse qui nullus est.
>
> . . . If anyone pities the dead, he must also pity those who have not been born. Death is neither a good nor an evil; for that only which is something is able to be a good or an evil. But that which is itself nothing and reduces all things to nothingness and consigns us to neither sphere of fortune; for evils and goods must operate upon something material. Fortune cannot maintain a hold upon that which Nature has let go, nor can he be wretched who is non-existent.
> (Section XIX, Part 5; trans: John W. Basore)

Seneca, Moral Essays, II, 66-67.

[8]Vitzthum has also noted the similarities in these verses. See Vitzthum, p. 119.

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