



About Philip Freneau - Targets and Self-Assessment

Mareike Hachemer

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1.0, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Department of English and Linguistics), course: The Rhyme and Reason of American Poetry, 20 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Philip Freneau was one of the most discussed poets of the late eighteenth century. On one hand he was celebrated as the “Poet of the American Revolution” (Eberwein 191) or the “Father of American Poetry” (Stauffer 52), a journalist of influence, a patriot and skilful writer, on the other hand he was forgotten for a long time. How did Philip Freneau see himself? What were his targets and how did he try to reach them?

This paper examines Freneau’s look on his role as an author on his poetry and plans. What kind of influences affected or promoted his career? Regarding his own poems “To an Author”, “The City Poet” and “To a New England Poet” his description of an author’s life – and therefore his life – will become apparent.

Furthermore, a closer look on his contemporaries, the Connecticut Wits, especially Dwight, Barlow and Bryant will display how independent and original Freneau’s writing was, and what kind of relationships he had towards these American authors.

At the same time his relationship towards British poets is interesting: He thought he rejected most of their writing; but was he really not influenced by them at all? Could it be that he sometimes even copied parts of their work?

After having a short look on other intertextual influences like Greek mythology, verses from the Bible and Classic forms, this paper will look back on his life in a retrospective way and analyse his attitude towards himself. Did Freneau manage to reach his goals or did he lose sight of them?

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