

NAME
English 207
8 February 2017

Exploded Analysis

On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country by Philip Freneau

Paraphrase:

Stanza 1: A group of people from Europe will travel to the untouched western land to farm and use the earth for the new country. From the new land will grow the free and mighty States, which will be successful and powerful.

Stanza 2: From the proud, tyrannical European land travels a man to explore the new world, which is filled with more happiness and simplicity than in Europe. In this new world, no unjust ruler will oppress the man, and there will be no slaves to make him king.

Stanza 3: The new world is full of appealing scenery, particularly the strong Ohio river. This land, untouched by man, is ruled by Nature, whose art cannot be compared. In this land, years have come and passed, and the forests have grown and died.

Stanza 4: The withdrawn Native American, at the arrival of the new men, leaves the hidden plains to claim a less beautiful land as his own, where the rivers are unpleasant and the forests are dark.

Stanza 5: The Mississippi River is massive and great, streaming through many different lands. Nature created thousands of other rivers to flow with the Mississippi. Now that man has arrived, these rivers will no longer flow uselessly through the forests.

Stanza 6: The flooded lakes and rivers will not be wasted anymore as they flow through an untouched forest to the ocean, to lands unknown. There will be new plans for these rivers.

Stanza 7: By the heavens, this virtuous land shall be a land of freedom. War will not happen on this new land, and European pride and values will not stain the land. In the new country, men will use Reason and create new laws and order from chaos.

Stanza 8: In this new land, the concept of kings and regal states will be forgotten, for the explorer knows that there is nothing more free than this new country, where there are no kings. Europe is trapped by royalty and religion.

Stanza 9: Soon, the day will come when men no longer oppress other men and Reason will rule, not kings. Still, the African Americans are enslaved and cry over their chains.

Stanza 10: This brighter, happier future will exist in the new States, which will engross the world in a new era. The new States will develop a happier world than the Europeans will ever be able to create.

Observe:

- “Reason” and “Nature” are personified multiple times throughout the poem.
- Freneau makes multiple references to slavery and bondage.
- In the first stanza, Freneau utilizes the term “Palemon” from English literature to refer to characters embarking on a journey.
- The first half of the poem addresses the physical beauty of the land, whereas the second half focuses on the opportunities the land may present to immigrants from Europe.
- The poem expresses a hopeful, empowered tone for the future.

Contextualize:

- Philip Freneau was imprisoned for over a year by the British during his travel in the West Indies.
- Philip Freneau sided with the Jeffersonian Republicans, which encouraged a less powerful national government, as opposed to the Federalist view established by Alexander Hamilton.
- At the time at which Freneau was writing, most works focused on liberation from England and political reform. Freneau is commonly known as “the poet of the American Revolution”, as he ardently encouraged American nationalism in his works.
- Freneau was well-educated, having attended the College of New Jersey (presently Princeton University). Because American poetry had not yet been established, Freneau was largely influenced by British poetry, especially that of Alexander Pope.

Select and Analyze:

- Philip Freneau seems to have been heavily influenced by his long imprisonment on a British prison ship, where he was a slave for over a year. Throughout the poem, Freneau mentions that Europe, and particularly the kings who rule there, enslaves its people. He expresses his hopes for a free America with no kings and no oppression in the last three stanzas; however, he seems hypocritical in his understanding of slavery as he addresses the “unbroken chains” of African slaves.
- Throughout the poem, Freneau describes the rivers and lakes of America as unused and “useless”, and he argues that, with the arrival of Europeans, these waters will be put to use. His only mention of Native Americans implies that they will move out of the way and let the Europeans take over. It is interesting that someone who is so opposed to

oppressive behavior and enslavement overlooks the tyrannical attitude between the Native Americans and the Europeans.

- Philip Freneau is remembered as “the poet of the American Revolution” because of his steadfast belief in American freedom and liberation, despite having spent most of the war in the West Indies. A recurring theme throughout the poem is freedom, both in terms of politics and nature. Freneau describes the spacious, empty land as a free “realm”, and he expresses hope for freedom from Britain in the new country.

Argue:

Philip Freneau expresses his hope for the future of America in his celebrated poem “On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country”, in which he utilizes idyllic imagery to describe the new country liberated from England. While the poem outwardly conveys a sense of optimism for the opportunities presented for America, Freneau’s underlying message warns against the dangers of kings and religious power, although he expresses a similar tyrannical disposition towards the natives in the new land.