

“To My Dear and Loving Husband” -Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persever,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" is a poem by the Colonial American poet Anne Bradstreet. The poem was first published in 1678, as part of Bradstreet's posthumous collection *Several Poems*. Bradstreet was the first poet—and the first woman—in colonial America to write and publish a book of poems. The poem is autobiographical and describes the passionate love between the speaker and her husband. The speaker describes that love as pure and redemptive. The poem thus implicitly argues against some religious poets who describe love as a sinful or unholy act.

If two people ever became one through marriage, then we have definitely become one. If a husband was ever loved by his wife, then surely you are loved. If ever a wife was happy with her husband, then surely I am happy. Compare your marriages against mine, women, if you can. I value your love more than a gold mine or all the riches that are in the East. My love is like a thirst so strong that not even rivers could satisfy it. Nothing but love from you can satisfy me. And I cannot in any way hope to repay your love. I hope that God will richly reward you for your love. So, while we're alive, let's stay so true to each other so that when we die, we will live forever.

In poetry of this era—particularly poetry written by Puritans like Bradstreet—love and sexuality are often portrayed as sinful. In "To My Dear and Loving Husband," Bradstreet takes a different approach, describing her relationship with her husband as unifying and eternal, powerful enough to even outlive death. The poem thus presents earthly love as something deeply good and even redemptive.

The poem begins by considering the physical, personal relationship between the speaker and her husband. The speaker notes that the two have become "one," and she stresses their personal happiness—it's so great that she would refuse all the riches in the world for it. The scope of the poem at this point is narrow: the speaker thinks about her marriage in relation to earthly happiness.

She does not yet mention broader matters, like religion or the relationship between love and the afterlife.

However, as the poem progresses, the speaker begins to consider the relationship between her love for her husband and her religious faith. This shift begins in line 7, where the speaker alludes to the biblical Song of Solomon, which says: "Many waters cannot quench love." Through that allusion, the speaker connects her own love with the Bible's presentation of love. And, as she notes that "rivers cannot quench" her desire for her husband, she subtly suggests that her love is undying—it will live on even past her own short time on earth.

The speaker builds on this suggestion in the poem's final four lines, where she describes the love she shares with her husband as eternal: it will "persevere" even after "we live no more." Moreover, she suggests that her husband's love will be to his credit when his soul is judged after death. In this sense, the speaker not only argues that her love is everlasting, but that it is *redemptive* in a religious sense. Far from being sinful, then, this love helps her husband (if not necessarily her) to enter heaven.

Do note that the poem celebrates only a very specific kind of love: marital. It's clear, then, that some kinds of love are pure and redemptive, but Bradstreet doesn't say whether her claims apply to *all* love or only to love within marriage.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" is an elegant and, in many ways, traditional love poem. Echoing language from the Bible, the speaker describes her marriage as a union of two separate persons who become one. She emphasizes the force and extent of her love, noting: "My love is such that rivers cannot quench." These are traditional tropes that by Bradstreet's time had been widely used in European love poetry, but with an important difference: until Bradstreet's time, these tropes were almost exclusively used by male poets to describe women—women who didn't have the chance to respond to the poems about them.

Bradstreet reclaims these traditions for her own use. She asserts that women are capable not only of writing poetry, but of expressing love and desire in the same terms that men use. What's more, she uses those very terms to fight against the misogynistic undercurrents that they often have in poetry written by men.

In writing about her love for her husband, Bradstreet draws on sources like poet Edmund Spenser and the Bible, adapting their modes of writing for her own purposes. The evidence of her deep reading of European love poetry is clear in the poem: she casually and skillfully uses the tropes of that tradition. But the difference is that she writes from the perspective of a married woman. This is quite different from the situation of, say, Petrarch's sonnets, where the poet writes about a distant and unreceptive woman.

Bradstreet thus adapts the tropes of the tradition of love poetry to her own situation as a married woman. And, in doing so, she asserts her capacity to articulate desire and passion—much as a male poet like Petrarch would. The poem argues, implicitly, for the capacity of women to use poetry to express their feelings and desires. This was a controversial argument at the time Bradstreet wrote.

But Bradstreet does not simply recycle the tropes of traditional love poetry: she also speaks back to them. For instance, she compares her love to a thirst so great that "rivers cannot quench [it]." This plays on widespread ideas about the female body in Renaissance medicine, namely that it is overly fluid. Rather than trying to dry her body out, to attain a male ideal, Bradstreet proposes ingesting an enormous quantity of liquid—that is, making her body even more fluid. And she proposes to take this subversive step *within* the traditional context of marriage. Bradstreet seems to be saying that women don't have to repress themselves in order to experience love and passion; she argues that it's possible to reject masculine ideas about what women should be and experience love on her own terms.

Bradstreet's poem thus poses problems and challenges as it uses the tropes of traditional love poetry. She is not content to merely claim these traditions; she also uses them to challenge oppressive and misogynistic forces in her culture.

As its title suggests, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," is a poem about married love between a man and wife. It proposes that such love has a powerful effect on the two people involved: as the speaker announces in the first line, they become "one." This suggests that their love is pure and unified. The speaker thus rejects a common view of marriage in Bradstreet's time: that it is a financial transaction, not a partnership. She stresses the value and pleasure of her love for her husband apart from any financial matters: the speaker, at least, would rather have her husband's love than "all the riches that the East doth hold." Love, for the speaker, is compensation in and of itself—she doesn't need any other wealth. For her husband, however, there does still seem to be a transactional aspect to their relationship.

The poem contains a surprising amount of financial language. The speaker refers to her marriage as a "prize" and compares it to "riches" and "gold." These are material riches, the kind of wealth that one uses during life. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the period in which Bradstreet wrote the poem: at this point in history, the ideal of marriage as a partnership had not yet fully emerged and many people treated marriage as a simple financial transaction. But the speaker rebels against this model of marriage. She stresses its non-financial rewards, even as she uses comparisons to material wealth to show how much she loves her husband. However, she also describes her relationship with her husband in financial terms, noting that she cannot "repay" him for his love. Love is still somewhat transactional here.

Then, the speaker prays that "the heavens" will "reward" her husband for his dedication to her, since she can't. In other words, she hopes that his love for her will get him into heaven when his

soul is judged at the end of his life. She thus imagines that he will receive a kind of compensation for loving his wife. Tellingly, though, she does not imagine an equivalent form of compensation for herself—she does not ask, for instance, that her own dedication to her husband will help her get into heaven.

It seems, then, that the poem reveals some inequality within the speaker's marriage, and perhaps within all marriages at this time. For the speaker, love is an end in itself—she doesn't need material wealth as long as she has her husband. The husband, however, can expect some kind of compensation—in his next life, if not this one. The poem ultimately suggests that marriage is always a kind of transaction, at least for men—even a marriage as loving and passionate as this one.

The first four lines of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" establish the poem's themes and formal patterns. In a series of end-stopped lines (though, to be fair, line 3 *could* be argued as being enjambed in spite of its punctuation), the speaker compares her own marriage to the ideals and histories of marriage in general. In each case, she finds that her marriage is the very best version of marriage. It unites two people who were separate, and it is based on mutual love and satisfaction.

At the start of each line, the speaker repeats the phrase "If ever." This use of anaphora sets the stakes for the poem. The speaker isn't simply praising her own marriage, on its own terms. Rather, she is measuring it against *all* marriages, ever. Further, the use of anaphora helps to bind together these lines so that they build on each other, becoming a single argument for the unique power and value of the speaker's marriage. (This effect is strengthened by the poem's simultaneous use of assonance, with a strong pattern of /e/ and /ee/ sounds through the first four lines). This sense of being both separate and together mirrors the speaker's claim: she and her husband are individuals, but they also form a unit together.

In the poem's first two lines, the combination of anaphora and end-stop forces the speaker to introduce a caesura as well. Since each line is a complete sentence, the "If" clause has to be complemented by a "then" clause. The caesura marks out the parts of these grammatical units, clearly defining cause and effect, hypothesis and conclusion. This structure contributes to the sense that these lines are unusually confident and well-organized: the speaker has perfectly balanced the parts of her sentences and thoughts to fit within a line.

Additionally, in the first three lines of the poem, the speaker directly addresses her husband, using apostrophe. This choice gives the poem the feel of a passionate, but intimate declaration of love, as though the reader were eaves-dropping on a conversation between the speaker and her husband. In line four, the speaker's approach shifts. Instead of comparing her marriage to all marriages, she asks "ye women" to compare their marriages to hers. This is a shift in the poem's

use of apostrophe. Instead of directly addressing a specific person, the speaker is now talking to a broad group that might include all women, ever. The poem is thus both public and private, intimate and ceremonial.

The poem's form is also clear and precise throughout these lines, which again underscores the speaker's confidence. The poem is in iambic pentameter couplets, often called "heroic couplets." This is a prestigious form, often reserved for noble, monumental subjects. In taking on the form, and in executing it effortlessly—with strong, clear rhymes and steady meter—the speaker asserts that her marriage is worthy of the form's nobility. What's more, she also argues that women are capable of taking on this prestigious form, a controversial proposition at the time of Bradstreet's writing. In light of this idea, the reference to "ye women" in line 4 becomes even more meaningful. It seems that Bradstreet might be calling women's attention to their own power, even as she seems to brag about her own marriage.

When the speaker talks about the "East," she is not referring to a direction, but rather to a culture (or a set of cultures) distant from her own. For people living in colonial America in the 17th century, the East was an exotic and opulent place, full of sensual and material riches. It symbolizes, for the speaker, all of the pleasures and wealth available in this world. It is thus also implicitly a sinful place full of earthly delights—just the opposite of the simplicity and piousness that Puritans like Bradstreet prized.

By choosing her husband's love over these worldly riches, the speaker asserts her own piousness and her commitment to the spiritual over the material. Of course, her view of Eastern cultures is, at best, highly stereotyped and largely inaccurate. Bradstreet uses the East as a simple symbol of earthly pleasure, rather than making reference to any real facts about Eastern cultures.

Literally, the "heavens" include everything that hangs over the earth: stars, moon, sun, clouds, atmosphere, etc. But the speaker of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is not asking the stars or the clouds to reward her husband for his love. (Indeed, she would probably consider such a request to be blasphemous, since it would be giving them powers that, in a Christian context, belong exclusively to God himself). Instead, she uses the "heavens" as a symbol for God himself, who, in Christian theology, resides in the heavens and judges human life. In this sense, she is hoping that her husband's devotion to her will help him earn salvation in this life and a place in heaven in the next.

As she praises her husband and her marriage, the speaker of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" often uses elaborate, exaggerated language. For instance, the speaker announces:

I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.

There's no reason to doubt the sincerity of the speaker's proclamation, but readers may feel that the language here is over-the-top, hyperbolic. However beautiful and moving this language may be, it is doubtless distant from the mundane daily reality of their marriage.

Hyperbole is widely used in Renaissance love poetry, particularly in the Petrarchan tradition. Male poets often describe the women they love in highly idealized terms. In "To My Dear and Loving Husband," Bradstreet reclaims hyperbole as a technique. The poem argues, implicitly, that a female poet is just as capable as a male poet of describing love in highly idealized, hyperbolic terms. Further, in the Petrarchan tradition, the poet generally praises a distant and inaccessible woman—someone with whom he'll never have a real relationship. But Bradstreet transforms the device: instead of describing an inaccessible object of desire, it describes a real relationship, making that relationship as dramatic and exalted as any Petrarchan obsession.

"Thee" is a now-obsolete synonym for the word "you." In the past, English—like most other European languages—had two ways of saying "you," one formal and the other informal. "Thee" was an informal way of addressing someone; it implies intimacy and familiarity.

The poem doesn't follow a specific overall form and instead consists of **six rhyming couplets**, creating twelve lines total. As we'll talk about more in rhyme scheme, these iambic pentameter couplets are more specifically something called "heroic couplets"—a form usually used to talk about big, important subjects. This suggests just how highly the speaker thinks of her love for her husband.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" is also a highly end-stopped poem. As a result, many of its lines stand on their own conceptually; there is not always a clear relationship between one line and the next, nor is there a clear order or logical progression to the poem. (For example, the first two lines could be reversed without really changing the poem's meaning.) There are places in the poem, however, where the second line of the couplet completes or comments on the idea set up in the first line, for instance in **lines 9-10**:

Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.

Line 10 acts almost as a response to line 9: since the speaker cannot repay her husband, she prays for Heaven to reward him. There is an implied causal relationship between the two lines—though the speaker does not spell it out. Instead, the reader is asked to assemble the pieces, to find the places in the poem where there are strong relationships between the lines of the couplets.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" is in iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is a meter with a distinguished pedigree in English poetry: it was used by some of the poets Bradstreet most

admired, including Shakespeare and Spenser. In taking on the meter, she is demonstrating her capacity to write literary poetry—demonstrating more broadly that women can write as skillfully as men can, a controversial point at the time she was writing. Bradstreet makes her point thoroughly: the meter of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is exceptionally precise and regular. There are no metrical variations to speak of until line 10. Line 10 is slightly more complicated than the previous lines:

The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray

The opening of the line is metrically ambiguous. After an unstressed and a stressed syllable, there are two unstressed syllables. This is an unexpected and disturbing hiccup after nearly a hundred syllables of iambic writing. Further, they make the line hard to scan with any certainty. It is tempting to read the first two syllables of the line as an iamb followed by a pyrrhic—but then the rest of the line becomes trochaic. Better, then, to read the first three syllables as an amphibrach (one stressed syllable between two unstressed syllables) followed by four iambs:

The heavens | reward | thee man- | ifold, | I pray

Though it is unusual to encounter amphibrachs in English poetry, they were used in the 17th century with some regularity as metrical variations.

After this disturbance, the following lines return to regular iambs (although both lines 11 and 12 have feminine endings). With the exception of a few moments of slight disturbance, the poem and the poet thus proudly display their mastery of a difficult and prestigious meter.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" is a poem in rhyming couplets:

AABBCCDDEEFF

None of the poem's rhymes occur in more than one couplet. This non-repeating rhyme scheme affects the reader's experience of the poem: the poem feels somewhat loose and unstructured. Its couplets are piled on top of each other, seemingly at random. For example, one might easily reverse the order of the first two couplets without seriously affecting the content or narrative of the poem. Though the poem's argument does build over the course of its twelve lines, the poem's rhyme scheme does not highlight or mark the internal variations in the argument.

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" generally uses strong, direct rhymes—most of which are one syllable. These strong rhymes convey a sense of confidence and self-assurance: though the speaker is making bold claims, she apparently does not feel any uncertainty about their merit. The major exception comes in lines 7-8:

My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.

"Quench" and "recompense" are, at best, slant rhymes. The introduction of slant rhyme is perhaps surprising: it seems like a moment of hesitation or complication in an otherwise smooth and confident poem. There is something apt and appropriate about using slant rhyme here. In these lines, the speaker emphasizes the depth of her love—and argues that only her husband's love will satisfy her. The imperfection in the rhyme scheme suggests the failure of other pleasures to satisfy her.

The lines are specifically rhyming iambic pentameter couplets, which are also called "heroic couplets." As their name suggests, heroic couplets are usually reserved for grand, important subjects: battles, political events, philosophical disputes. There is thus some tension between the rhyme scheme, with its grandiosity, and its subject: the love between married people, which tends to be rather more mundane. But the poem attempts to resolve this tension. By using a lofty form for a simple subject, Bradstreet subtly asserts that her marriage is as important and dignified as any traditionally "heroic" subject. The poem moves slowly to justify that assertion, beginning with the speaker's personal happiness. But, by its end, it has moved to weighty, monumental concerns—salvation, eternal life—and it argues that marriage is central to these issues. The content of the poem thus turns out to justify its formal ambition.

Like many of Bradstreet's poems, "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is almost certainly autobiographical. Bradstreet does not pretend that she and the speaker are somehow separate or distant from each other; instead, she speaks directly in her own voice. Indeed, because the poem was only published posthumously—and because the poems that were published in her lifetime were published without her permission—there is something voyeuristic about reading this poem. It is addressed to a specific person (Simon Bradstreet, Anne's husband) and written in the context of a specific relationship between two real people, and it's possible that Bradstreet never intended anyone but her husband to read it.

However, despite its intimacy with Bradstreet's life, the poem treats her marriage with her husband in generic and idealized terms: the reader does not learn much about, say, their daily routines or how they fell in love. Instead, in the poem's opening lines, the speaker describes her marriage by comparing it to other marriages—and to the ideals of marriage as an institution. Though the reader does not learn much about Bradstreet's specific marriage, they do learn that it models the virtues of marriage more broadly. As a result, it is easy to separate the poem from the circumstances of Bradstreet's life and instead read it as a general statement on marriage. The speaker of the poem is thus two people at once: a real historical individual, with a specific life and husband, and a generic advocate for the pleasures and benefits of marriage more broadly.

The setting of "To My Dear and Loving Husband" is vague and generic. The poem makes only one geographical reference, to the "East." The reference suggests that the speaker is not from the

"East," since she regards it as a distant and exotic space. But otherwise, the speaker makes no explicit references to the time and place of the poem's composition, nor does she situate her argument in historical or geographic space. This contributes to the poem's sense of generality; it seems that it might apply to any marriage at any moment in history.

This vague sense of place is particularly notable--and perhaps even strange--given Bradstreet's own historical position. Bradstreet migrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, early in the colony's life, and her family was central to its government. But while this poem does not describe her life in America in any detail or reflect on the life of the colony, its argument may nonetheless be colored by the setting of Bradstreet's real life. For instance, Bradstreet's insistence here that women can write poetry and experience passionate love implies that the world around her thought just the opposite. It seems, then, that Bradstreet's historical moment does inform the poem, even though the speaker doesn't mention it specifically.

By the mid 17th century, when Bradstreet wrote "To My Dear and Loving Husband," European poets had developed a vigorous and prestigious tradition of love poetry. The fathers of this tradition were Petrarch and Dante, two Italian poets from the 13th and 14th centuries. They set the agenda for much of the love poetry that followed—indeed, there is a whole tradition of love poetry referred to as "Petrarchan."

Though there is a great deal of internal variation in these traditions, the basic set-up remains constant: a male poet writes about a distant, inaccessible woman—someone so beautiful and so resistant to his love that the speaker is thrown into despair. The resulting poems are often melodramatic; they tend to praise the women in question in elaborate and idealized terms. Meanwhile, the women in these poems are routinely silent.

However, in the early 17th century, a number of women began to speak back to these traditions and reclaim them. For instance, in the early 17th century, Lady Mary Wroth wrote and published her own Petrarchan sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Though the sequence remains traditional in many ways, it nonetheless asserts that a female poet—and a female speaker—might articulate her desires through traditions developed by male poets. (The response from male readers was predictably harsh: one reader publicly described Wroth as a "hermaphrodite"—for him, a bitter insult).

Bradstreet arguably goes further than Wroth in "To My Dear and Loving Husband." Though she continues to use tropes from the history of European poetry, her poem scrambles the tradition's usual set-up. Instead of being about a distant, inaccessible love object, Bradstreet's poem is about marriage: her husband is present and already committed to her. Though she continues to idealize their relationship (and though her husband does not have the chance to respond to her characterization of him), she has transplanted the tropes she uses into an altogether new context, developing a new kind of love poem in the process.

Anne Bradstreet was born in England in the early 17th century, but she and her husband, Simon Bradstreet, migrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, where the Bradstreets became an important political family. Both Bradstreet's husband and her father became governors of the colony. The Bradstreets emigrated to America because of their religious beliefs: both Anne and her husband were devout Puritans, a radical Protestant sect that was persecuted in England in the first half of the 17th century. They thus sought in America the freedom to practice their religion.

While they may have found religious freedom in colonial Massachusetts, the colony remained subject to the prejudices of its time. The religious life of the colony was structured and controlled by male political and religious figures; women who challenged their positions, such as Anne Hutchinson, were exiled from it. Bradstreet thus found herself in a difficult, complicated position as a poet. Her writing was potentially threatening to her male relatives' political standing in a society that actively suppressed women's voices.

Throughout her writing, Bradstreet suppresses much of this historical context. She never, for instance, describes an American landscape or the political machinations of colonial society. Her work refuses to engage with the circumstances of her life, turning instead to classical and European models. However, she does consistently address the paradoxes and dangers of writing as a woman in her society. She is consistently apologetic about her writing. In a verse letter to her father, "To Her Most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq. These Humbly Presented," she notes, "My goods are true (though poor)." Bradstreet is humble about her work—and with good reason. A poet of considerable skill and ambition, Bradstreet surely did not consider her work "poor," but she had to pretend otherwise to avoid being seen as an overly ambitious woman writer.

The American Soldier
Philip Freneau - 1752-1832

[A Picture from the Life]

Deep in a vale, a stranger now to arms,
Too poor to shine in courts, too proud to beg,
He, who once warred on Saratoga's plains,
Sits musing o'er his scars, and wooden leg.

Remembering still the toil of former days,
To other hands he sees his earnings paid;—
They share the due reward—he feeds on praise.
Lost in the abyss of want, misfortune's shade.

Far, far from domes where splendid tapers glare,
'Tis his from dear bought peace no wealth to win,
Removed alike from courtly cringing 'squires,
The great-man's Levee, and the proud man's grin.

Sold are those arms which once on Britons blaz'd,
When, flushed with conquest, to the charge they came;
That power repell'd, and Freedom's fabrick rais'd,
She leaves her soldier—famine and a name!

Philip Freneau, in full Philip Morin Freneau, (born Jan. 2, 1752, New York, N.Y. [U.S.]—died Dec. 18, 1832, Monmouth county, N.J., U.S.), American poet, essayist, and editor, known as the “poet of the American Revolution.”

After graduating from Princeton University in 1771, Freneau taught school and studied for the ministry until the outbreak of the American Revolution, when he began to write vitriolic satire against the British and Tories. Not until his return from two years in the Caribbean islands, where he produced two of his most ambitious poems, “The Beauties of Santa Cruz” and “The House of Night,” did he become an active participant in the war, joining the New Jersey militia in 1778 and sailing through the British blockade as a privateer to the West Indies. Captured and imprisoned by the British in 1780, Freneau wrote in verse bitterly, on his release, *The British Prison-Ship* (1781).

During the next several years he contributed to the *Freeman's Journal* in Philadelphia. Freneau became a sea captain until 1790, when he again entered partisan journalism, ultimately as editor from 1791 to 1793 of the strongly Republican *National Gazette* in Philadelphia. Freneau alternated

quiet periods at sea with periods of active newspaper work, until he retired early in the 19th century to his farm in Monmouth county.

Well schooled in the classics and in the Neoclassical English poetry of the period, Freneau strove for a fresh idiom that would be unmistakably American, but, except in a few poems, he failed to achieve it.

American Soldier by Philip Freneau (1752-1832) is best known as the "Poet of the American Revolution". Freneau's primary intention early on in life was to become a minister. While aspiring to become a minister, Freneau attended Princeton University where his roommate was James Madison. Throughout his college years, he became involved in political debates with fellow students and pursued his interest in writing. Freneau established a newspaper called the National Gazette which was influenced by two of his close friends, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. By the early 1800's Freneau had retired to his farm where he pursued his career in writing essays and poetry. Being one of the most influential poets of the American Revolution, one of Freneau's most famous pieces of poetry is the poem "The American Soldier." The American soldier makes use of many typical poetic devices. The most common devices that Freneau uses throughout this poem are rhyme scheme, punctuation, alliteration, repetition, allusion, and meter. The poem has a unique rhyme scheme that is varied throughout different stanzas. In the first and third stanza, there is a rhyme scheme of ABCB. In the second and fourth stanzas of the poem, there is a consistent ABAB rhyme scheme. Although not all stanzas remain the same in their rhyme scheme, there is a larger pattern that the stanzas following giving the poem a nice flow. Another device that Freneau uses throughout the entire of this poem that is different from typical poetry is his use of punctuation. After every line in the poem, there is a comma, with the exception of line six where a semi-colon is used. Also, every stanza ends with a period making it a complete sentence. Freneau does this to separate thoughts throughout the poem. As the tone of the poem is dark and downbeat, the periods and commas throughout each line force the reader to read slowly. This is important because when reading aloud, the reader or listener of the poem can tell that the slow moving nature of the poem contributes to the dark and depressing tone. The poem has its value because it upraises the ideas of American Revolution, important event in the history of the USA.

Can you imagine being an American revolutionary, one who actually fought in the war, who later dared to express his mixed emotions about the new government and those who had led the cause for freedom? This man had the boldness to criticize the esteemed Father of the Country. Such a patriot writer and poet was Philip Freneau.

Americans who read Freneau's "The American Soldier" will likely recognize the echoes of American veterans' frustrations that began after the Revolution and continue through war after war. The Civil War, the World Wars, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan -- all have produced similar

carnage and unfortunate straits for brave, wounded warriors. Philip Freneau's work is alive and pertinent to the present day.

Freneau's National Gazette upheld Jefferson's "Republican" principles and even condemned George Washington's foreign policy. Freneau regularly denounced Washington as a monarchist:

"He holds levees like a King, receives congratulations on his birthday like a King, makes treaties like a King, answers petitions like a King, employs his old enemies like a King."

* (By the 1760s this custom was being copied by the King's representatives in British America, the colonial governors. Following American independence the levée became a social gathering, i.e., the presidential levée—established by President George Washington. He opened the presidential mansion weekly to the public, allowing Washington to greet and meet the public. The presidential levée was carried forward by John Adams and subsequently ended by Thomas Jefferson.)

Jefferson wrote:

"I do believe that General Washington had not a firm confidence in the durability of our government. He was naturally distrustful of men, and inclined to gloomy apprehensions; and I was ever persuaded by a belief that we must at length end in something like a British constitution, had some weight in his adoption of the ceremonies of levees, birthdays, pompous meetings with Congress, and other forms of the same character, calculated to prepare us gradually for a change which he believed possible, and to let it come on with as little shock as might be to the public mind."

Freneau's Gazette spent much of its time criticizing the policies of the Washington Administration. For example, the paper described Alexander Hamilton's financial policies in 1792 as "numerous evils...pregnant with every mischief," and described George Washington's sixty-first birthday celebration as "a forerunner of other monarchical vices."

Jefferson needed to have a nationwide party to counteract the Federalists, a nationwide party organized by Hamilton. Foreign affairs took a leading role in 1794-95 as the Republicans vigorously opposed the Jay Treaty with Britain, which was then at war with France. Republicans saw France as more democratic after its revolution, while Britain represented the hated monarchy.

The party denounced many of Hamilton's measures (especially the national bank) as unconstitutional. The party was strongest in the South and weakest in the Northeast; it favored states' rights and the primacy of the yeoman farmers.

Sick of the constant tirades against the government, an outraged President Washington actually called on Jefferson to put a stop to Freneau. Remarkably, Jefferson refused.

Jefferson later praised Freneau for having "saved our Constitution which was galloping fast into monarchy," while Washington grumbled of "that rascal Freneau" -- an epithet that became the title of Lewis Leary's authoritative biography (1949).

In the poem "The American Soldier," Freneau pictures the Revolutionary War veteran as a "scarred" and disfigured man "too poor to shine in courts and too proud to beg" for political help. Evidently unappreciated and uncompensated for his loyal service and physical loss, the veteran can only sit in his valley at home and watch his "earnings" paid to other, more noble hands.

The words *they* and *he* are italicized as formal titles to emphasize the division between the common soldier ("*he*"), who suffers dark misfortune, and the wealthy profiteer of the war of Revolution ("*they*"), who live enlightened lives under costly "domes where splendid tapers glare."

After the war, many wounded patriots undoubtedly literally "sold their arms" to survive while attempting to make a new start with the scant pension awarded by the government. It was impossible to survive in a new nation by "feeding on praise" of service. She leaves her soldier only "famine and a name!"

It should be understood that Washington was anxious to create an army that could stand up to the British, and he was very critical of the battlefield performance of the militia. He believed that relying on militia was "resting upon a broken staff." However, he praised the effectiveness of the militia acting behind the enemy lines.

And, soldiers often resented civilians whom they saw as not sharing equally in the sacrifices of the Revolution. Several mutinies occurred toward the end of the war, with ordinary soldiers protesting their lack of pay and poor conditions. Not only were soldiers angry, but officers also felt that the country did not treat them well.

So, it is true that, during the Revolution, a traditional and easy way for an American soldier to express his displeasure was to desert. Desertion was rife in all militaries of the eighteenth century. In part this was a reflection of the social origins of most soldiers, who came from the lower classes and who were used to easily walking away from unsatisfying or poorly paying jobs. Desertion was especially easy in America, where opportunities were varied and attractive.

Many men who deserted from the Continental army did so for personal reasons. They left to go home to support their families or to help harvest a crop. Others did so because they found

conditions in the army intolerable. The inability of the authorities to provide the army with adequate food and clothing excited a lot of anger.

Officers suffered hardships along with their men, but they had the advantage of being able to resign their commissions.

The Newburgh Conspiracy

The Battle of Yorktown was not the coup de grâce that so many make it out to be. Before that peace could be negotiated, another two years would pass before both Britain and America would sit down at the bargaining table. During this time, the Continental Congress faced a severe financial crisis, in which they were unable (or possibly not fully willing) to support Washington's army. Though the fighting had all but stopped, Washington was still forced to maintain the Continental Army until the final peace treaty was signed. As a result, the Continental Army suffered greatly in terms of hunger, lack of equipment, fatigue and cold.

Charles Royster, Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University, contends, "A disgusted soldier would go home, but disgusted officers found friends in the army and in political office who wanted to use their positions to increase the authority of government, especially Continental government."

Royster says this is exactly what happened in the Newburgh Conspiracy of 1783. By the final year of the war, Continental officers had many reasons to be disgruntled. Fighting had essentially ceased in late 1781 with the British surrender at Yorktown, but a formal peace treaty had yet to be signed.

Boredom became one of the army's chief enemies, one that gave officers plenty of time to envision their futures. Many did not like what they saw; they were apprehensive about leaving the brotherhood of their fellow officers and venturing into civilian life once again. They feared that the genteel status and respect they had earned through military service would not follow them when they returned.

In addition, they had sacrificed some of the best years of their lives to win American independence. Many had missed out on the opportunity to learn a civilian trade and a means for making a living. Furthermore, they knew their last month's army pay would not carry them very far. In light of these concerns, the officers decided they deserved pensions and repeatedly petitioned Congress to provide them. As the inevitable disbanding of the army approached, these petitions became decidedly more urgent.

In response to these justifiable grievances in March 1783, several officers within the Continental Army, including Major John Armstrong, aide to General Horatio Gates, formed what many historians believe to be an anonymous pact to overthrow the Continental Congress and establish a new government. This coup, known as the Newburgh Conspiracy, was backed by several of Washington's most trusted men, who felt that the cause of liberty was being threatened by the politicians at home.

Commander-in-Chief George Washington stopped any serious talk by appealing successfully to his officers to support the supremacy of Congress in an emotional address on March 15. Not long afterward, Congress approved a compromise agreement it had previously rejected: some of the pay arrears were funded, and soldiers were granted five years of full pay instead of a lifetime pension of half pay.

In the context of the poem, the line reads, "He, who once warred on Saratoga's plains." The line in its entirety refers to a soldier who "warred" or fought in battle on the plains of Saratoga. The use of allusion in line 13 also involves a case of alliteration. Line 13 says, "Sold are those arms which once on Britons blazed." In addition to the alliteration at the end of the line, the term "Britons" is an allusion to a native or inhabitant of Great Britain. Working together, the alliteration helps to put emphasis on the allusion. The war in which the speaker is referring to is the war of 1812. This war was between the British and Americans. Speaking of a native inhabitant of Britain, Freneau is referring to the weapons which were once in favor of the British.

The meaning of this poem is directly linked to the title. The speaker talks about the life of a former American soldier who is now scarred with a wooden leg from his time in battle. In the first stanza, the poem opens by talking of the American soldier who is now a stranger to arms. What this line signifies is that the soldier is no longer on duty. He is now a "stranger to arms" which means that he is now a veteran soldier who has survived battle. The next line states that he is, "Too poor to shine in courts, too proud to beg." This symbolizes the fact that he is extremely poor and although he lacks money, the pride that the military instilled in him does not allow him to ask for help as it is in his nature to be self-sufficient. The last two lines of the first stanza explain how he gave up his life to the war. All he is now left with is a wooden leg and scars that remind him of the days in which he had fought. In the next stanza, he recalls the hard work and labor he endured for others freedoms, only to see his earnings given away to an undeserving recipient. In the last two lines of the second stanza, the speaker explains how the citizens get to share the freedom and all the soldier wants in return is praise. However, the last line shows how he does not receive the praise he desires because he is "lost in the abyss of want."

The American soldier makes use of many typical poetic devices. The most common devices that Freneau uses throughout this poem are rhyme scheme, punctuation, alliteration, repetition, allusion, and meter. The poem has a unique rhyme scheme that is varied throughout different

stanzas. In the first and third stanza, there is a rhyme scheme of ABCB. In the second and fourth stanzas of the poem, there is a consistent ABAB rhyme scheme. Although not all stanzas remain the same in their rhyme scheme, there is a larger pattern that the stanzas following giving the poem a nice flow. Another device that Freneau uses throughout the entirety of this poem that is different from typical poetry is his use of punctuation. After every line in the poem, there is a comma, with the exception of line six where a semi-colon is used. Also, every stanza ends with a period making it a complete sentence. Freneau does this to separate thoughts throughout the poem. As the tone of the poem is dark and downbeat, the periods and commas throughout each line force the reader to read slowly. This is important because when read aloud, the reader or listener of the poem can tell that the slow moving nature of the poem contributes to the dark and depressing tone.

A Lasting Legacy

"The poverty of Revolutionary War veterans initiated a complicated history between the United States and its soldiers"

As the Revolutionary War ended, American soldiers, turned their attention toward land bounties and other rewards promised in their enlistment contracts. In an 1830 memoir titled "A Narrative of Some of the Adventures Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier," Sergeant Joseph Plumb Martin, a hard core veteran of seven years in the Continental Line, demanded to know why Congress and the people failed to deliver.

Why were he and his fellow soldiers 'turned adrift like old worn-out horses'? How was it that impoverished soldiers had to sell their land claims to 'a pack of speculators who were driving about the country like so many evil spirits, endeavoring to pluck the last feather from the soldiers'? Why, having spent his youth 'suffering everything short of death in his country's cause,' did poverty still haunt him all his life? And why, when the United States government finally provided a soldiers' pension in 1818, thirty-five years after the war, did Martin and his fellow veterans still face scorn from the 'hardhearted wretches' who were 'vile enough to say that [the soldiers] never deserved such favor from the country?'

Revolutionary War veterans, like Martin, found themselves victims of a weak government unable to pay them and of conflicts between American republican ideals and the military institutions veterans represented. The first veterans pension movement began during the war, when officers lobbied Congress in 1779 for half pay for life. Public outcry charged officers with attempting to establish a military aristocracy on the backs of the civilian population.

After the war, officers responded to the failures of government support by forming a hereditary veterans' organization called The Society of Cincinnatus, an allusion to an ancient Roman general

who gave up his military power to save the republic. The society provided some mutual support, but only officers could join, leaving enlisted soldiers like Martin to fend for themselves.

In the decades following the war, divisions within the Revolutionary War generation made achieving widespread veterans' compensation nearly impossible. Congressional acts of the 1780s limited settlement on tracts of military bounty lands to properties of greater than 4,000 contiguous acres, a larger area than the land grant even of a major general. They ostensibly allowed soldiers to combine their claims and settle together. In reality, the law allowed land speculators to take advantage of veterans, who found it nearly impossible to find and communicate with other veterans who might have contiguous claims.

In 1795, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Congressman James Madison, both veterans, disagreed over Hamilton's financial plan for the nation primarily because it allowed soldier's compensation notes to be redeemed by speculators. Hamilton's plan established the principle of transferable public credit in America, but on the backs of veterans. Not until after the War of 1812 was any widespread pension act passed for revolutionary veterans, though most states had previously made some provision for wounded veterans and soldiers' orphans and widows.

In 1818, the Federal Pension Act finally provided support for a large number of veterans, but it reflected the prejudices of its authors and excluded large groups of veterans based on race, gender, and region. The act provided \$96 a year to any male veteran who had served more than nine months in the regular army. It excluded women camp followers who had, in eighteenth-century terminology, 'belonged to the army' as support staff, doing cleaning, fatigue duties and sometimes fighting.

The act also excluded most African-American veterans on the grounds that, because most had served for their freedom from slavery, they did not deserve additional rewards. Because the act required proof of nine-months' service, it also excluded thousands of militia veterans and irregular troops, which particularly impacted the southern states, where the war had devolved into largely guerilla fighting by 1780. Only a small fraction of veterans, about 3,300, received benefits.

One year later, the War Department stripped from the rolls any pensioner not in dire poverty. A new pension act of 1832 liberalized the standards of evidence veterans needed to prove they had served, but it continued to exclude most women and African Americans and to favor northerners.

Even for white, northern, male veterans like Joseph Plumb Martin, who benefited from these federal pension acts, \$96 a year was little compensation for what they had lost in their service. On average, the longer an individual served in the Revolutionary War, the less property he or she accumulated in his or her lifetime. Martin, for example, took his little military pay and moved to Maine where rumor had it land was free.

One of his former generals, Henry Knox, bought up all the land where Martin lived and forced him and his fellow enlisted veterans to pay for legal title to lands they had already improved. Though Martin and his neighbors tried everything from law suits, to official petitions, to even firing on Knox's surveyors with their old Revolutionary War muskets, many of them ended up bankrupt under Knox's pressure. By 1820, Martin testified that he had "no real nor personal estate, nor any income whatever, my necessary bedding and wearing apparel excepted, except two cows, six sheep, one pig.

The poverty of Revolutionary War veterans initiated a complicated history between the United States and its soldiers. During the Civil War, draft rioters marched in protest of the greater burden military service placed on the poor. During the great depression a 'bonus army' of World War I veterans marched on Washington looking for long-overdue compensation. Vietnam Era veterans faced public outrage for a war that many of them did not choose to fight. Veterans of the United States Army in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to face threats of cuts to their medical and other benefits.

Like many veterans in American history, Joseph Plumb Martin drew a radical conclusion from his treatment by the United States government. 'The country,' he wrote, 'was rigorous in exacting my compliance to my engagements to a punctilio, but equally careless in performing her contracts with me, and why so? One reason was because she had all the power in her own hands and I had none. Such things ought not to be.

Martin charged his readership with the importance of vigilance against abusive power. While Martin and his fellow veterans may have thought their military victories their most important contributions to American freedom, these warnings are perhaps a more lasting legacy.