



*Portuguese Enlightenment poet, Francisco Manuel de Nascimento (1734-1819);
better recognized by some by his pen name "Filinto Elysio."*

An Ode
"TO THE LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES"
By Francisco Manuel de Nascimento.

In the interest of presenting a more impartial perspective, it is worth observing that chronologically the American Revolutionaries were preceded in their bid for liberty by General Pasquale Paoli's (1725-1807) Corsican Republic (versus the French)¹ and Poland's Bar Confederation of 1768-1772 (versus Russia.) And of course and as most already are aware, the writings of John Locke, a Puritan epistemologist and political theorist, and Montesquieu and other thinkers of the French Enlightenment left their indelible mark on the American Revolution by way influencing major colonial leaders like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin: the former's vision of universal equality as expressed in the Declaration of Independence reveals the spirit of Rousseau; while the deft witticisms and wry wisdom of Franklin, when he was minister plenipotentiary to France, smacks no little of Voltaire's style of repartee.

But, as we know, whatever America picked up from Europe it returned in reciprocal and ample proportion; with the success of the American Revolution playing a material role in encouraging and giving hope to subsequent radical and liberation movements in France, the Netherlands, Ireland, and, as well, South America; while providing a boost to nationalism and a searching for (and defining of) national identity in almost every country in Europe.

The role of France in helping to win American Independence is well known, but less so is the role of largely lesser known poets, artists, and thinkers in urging French support and intervention; such as L. Chavannes de la Giraudiere, Antoine Serieys, and Abbe Raynal who wrote ambitious epics and fervid poetical essays, stage plays, odes, and *cantates* on the American cause for Liberty. Indeed it comes somewhat as a surprise to learn here were some Frenchmen who chided and faulted Louis XVI and his ministers for delaying armed intervention too long. Finally, how ironic it is, now in retrospect, to realize that it was Rochambeau's *Royal* army, and without being aware of it, that was the very first army of "liberation" of modern times.

But such advocates for America, vociferous as they were, did not necessarily represent the greater majority. Some, including Lafayette at one despondent point in late 1779, viewed many Americans cynically; blaming them for, among other charges, their economic poverty, lack of culture, and absence of forceful central government. Yet such misgivings appear to have been the exception, and a significantly larger number of Frenchmen were impressed by and felt affinity for American ideas of reward based merit (rather than on birth); casual candor and notions of freedom of expression; the high mindedness, intellectual boldness, and modest sobriety of American women who visited France; and the concern for

¹ Paoli, Pennsylvania, site of Anthony Wayne's defeat, received its name from "General Paoli's Tavern;" which earlier had served as a gathering place for local Pennsylvania revolutionaries. Ironically, Paoli ultimately received most support for his movement from the British.

social, including racial, equality expressed by some Americans. Sometimes such perceived virtues and examples of virtue were occasionally more the result of imagination than fact; yet imagined or no, they did act as a palpable stimulus to the subsequent aspirations of Revolutionary France.²

Aside perhaps from the states that sent mercenaries to fight alongside the British, for most Germans America was something remote, and for which information on was sparse -- not unlike how later South America's revolutions (as often as not inevitably used as accessories of U.S. diplomacy directed against Spain; for purposes of acquiring Florida or Texas), were emotionally distant and little known of to many freedom loving Americans. In Book XVII of his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe wrote:

“[W]e wished the Americans all success, and the names of Franklin and Washington began to shine and sparkle in the political and warlike firmament. Much had been accomplished to improve the condition of humanity, and now when a new and well-meaning king of France evinced the best intentions of doing away a multitude of abuses and of limiting himself to the noblest ends, of introducing a regular and efficient system of political economy, of dispensing with all arbitrary power and of ruling by order as by right alone; the brightest hope spread over the world, and youth most confidently promised itself and the race a fair and a majestic future...”

Although Walter Wadepuhl in his most informative *Goethe's Interest in the New World* (1934) dismisses this more a product of Goethe's mature elderly reflections than his accurately reporting history; Goethe in his later years certainly did show a sincere appreciation for what America represented, and made up for lost time by more closely educating himself on both the people and their culture. Oddly, however, the only famous American he himself ever appears to have met was Aaron Burr in 1810; when the latter appeared at the Weimar court; on a prospective mineral and business venture that ultimately fell through and was abandoned.³ Yet however perhaps belated Goethe's ardor, it *can* be noted that Schiller in his drama “Kabale und Liebe” (“Intrigue and Love,” 1784) parodies a firing squad that shoots poor, young Germans refusing to sign on with the Hessians (Act II, sc. 2.) As well, and more significantly, the renown *Sturm and Drang* movement received its designation from a stage drama by Friedrich Maximilian Klingler of that name -- though the play was first titled “Der Wirrwarr” (1776) and later changed. It presents the story of a young Englishman going to America at the commencement of the Revolution to fight, but who, due in part to a romance with an American girl, ends up espousing the rebel cause and its ideals.

Venetian Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's Librettist for *Marriage of Figaro*,⁴ *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte*, was a stalwart and proud champion of American ideals, and in later years settled in the United States where he lived an active life as teacher and citizen.

But lesser known of the European enthusiasts for American Liberty was Portuguese poet Francisco Manuel de Nascimento, also known as “Filinto Elysio” (1734-1819); and who counted Chateaubriand -- himself an author famous for passionate and moving novellas centered on highly imaginative and evocative American locales and themes -- among his chief admirers. It is well to remember that in several countries on the continent, such as Spain and Portugal, the Enlightenment entered by way of royal courts and even some church clerics; of which in the latter case Nascimento was one; rather than by way of ground-level people movements as some might suppose. Moreover, some peoples did not seek freedom until aroused and goaded into doing so by wealthy societal elites. Sometime in probably the mid-1780's, Nascimento, living in exile in Paris wrote *To the Liberty and Independence of the United States*, but which upon looking I was at a loss to find an English translation for. Securing then the help of a friend of mine, Louis Chirillo, who knows Portuguese reasonably well as a second language, we attempted a translation of that ode; with what follows being the result of our joint efforts. First, let me be plain in saying that neither of us considers ourself properly qualified for such an undertaking; and if anything has been

² For a most splendid and edifying, if perhaps too brief, exposition of French reaction to the American Revolutionary War, see: “Revolution and the Muse: The American War of Independence in Contemporary French Poetry” by John L. Brown, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 1984), pp. 592-614; and available at: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1919155>

³ Wadepuhl, pp. 21-22.

⁴ The original story for this opera, we might add here, coming from the pen of Beaumarchais; whose involvement in and effect on the American struggle was no less than pivotal.

misworded we don't flinch at assuming full blame. But as we have, as best as we can tell, got most it right, we hope that under the circumstances this is sufficient.

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*To the Liberty and Independence of the United States.*

What is it that I hear, ye Gods?  
My ivory lyre  
That reposes, after illustrious glory  
I sang superbly of resolute Albuquerque,<sup>5</sup>  
Untouched it resonates  
Inviting the hand of the indolent bard!

Respectable prodigy!  
I accept the blissful welcome:  
Offered to the high Muse, who excites you,  
Appointing me to sonorous meters.  
I have already taken notice of the chords  
And, subject to my ear, the song fits.

That of the Sisyonian<sup>6</sup> beach  
Part of the uncertain Agenorian,<sup>7</sup>  
Searching for the timid and beautiful Irma  
In the deceptive Touro<sup>8</sup> of each brow;  
And bending forward the craggy  
Elongated tips of the rocky cliffs:

By strange seas  
Trampling insane fears,  
By way of Columbus, and by also the illustrious [Vasco de] Gama  
Western flags here will be fluttering  
Among people who kneel  
Before divine-men, of the lords of thunder.

The Tritons, impatient  
Of unbroken seas,  
With boldness are unleashed, so intoxicated  
By the bolder dweller of the far West,  
They depose the young ingrate  
Before the throne of the azure Tyrant.

Neptune enraged  
From the throne he hurls wrath,  
And with powerful arm, shakes the bottom  
Of the sea, that surges and breaks off;  
The rough shoots,  
From mountain to mountain,  
Of the bleached wood.

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<sup>5</sup> Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-1515), Portuguese Admiral and colonial Governor in India.

<sup>6</sup> Sicyonian?

<sup>7</sup> Agenor was the father of Europa.

<sup>8</sup> The reference here is unclear; this particular stanza being more elusive than any other in its meaning to we the translators. However, we could note as a possibly *related* explanation Isaac Touro (1738–1783), American Rabbi and later British Loyalist, originally from Amsterdam; who'd led a Portuguese Sephardic congregation in Newport, Rhode Island. His son, Judah Touro (1775-1854) served with General Jackson in the defense of New Orleans in 1815, and was wounded there.

Already here, Cabral,<sup>9</sup> discovers  
The undiscovered Brasils:  
With the heavily dripping briny frocks  
Kissing the golden beaches;  
And to the people who greet you,  
Ignorant of the coming spears and chains.

Goodness, Innocence,  
Which immemorial reigns  
In the benevolent realms of the golden candle,  
Yet from the customs of frightened Europe,  
People forsake the pitiful *People!*  
...Therefore to Liberty.

The unstained wings  
Throw down tyranny,  
With free air he acquitted himself,  
That saw evil slavery from afar,  
Clothes costuming saints,  
Comes now this climate requiring bliss.

The wind unfurls itself  
And the candles already white  
That the dark bloody laws bring,  
They bring ropes, chains, binds  
(Liberty in exchange)  
To Nations little familiar with crime.

America groans under the weight  
That insolence aggravates  
Vices of the cohort spotted:  
The poison is poured out of Europe,  
And the silent valleys tremble  
With the throaty roar of brass.

Themis, with hands to her face  
Suddenly her eyes shut  
When facing the blazing fires,  
The King handcuffed, the hangman thirsty  
By the evil gold devotee  
Cutting off innocent heads.

But...What sweet violence  
Removes from me such  
Scenes of horror? That which spills my nectar  
Muse, by the heavy dead limbs,  
Harm that touches, as light,  
The blue translucent waves?

This liquor bathed,  
The sweet Orpheus  
Thus following the provident Calliope,  
From the seas of Greece to the unknown Nile,

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<sup>9</sup> Pedro Alvares Cabral (c.1467-c.1520), Portuguese explorer and reputed discoverer of Brazil.

When the Egyptian mystery  
Wanted to register, all-Knowing miser.

Hail, leafy woods!  
Hail, placid asylum  
From the outlaw breed liberty!  
There I see the temple its portico, immense,  
That does not leave closed  
Its bronze doors, its artful ceilings...

There I see, still carved  
In this robust tree,  
The grateful name of the most human Penn:  
Even yet the customs are, what he plants,  
Breathing in these fertile fields,  
Made fresh by the dew of kind tolerance.

Here, in rough terrain  
The indigenous savage  
Seated and accepted  
The price for land already given:  
An outstanding example  
Compared to infamy's record  
Of capture by plagues!

No more, no more, oh Muse!  
No more anger to ignite me...  
I feel the running blood beaten,  
The brain assailing me with acute flames  
Of fatal fire:  
Already Jupiter from the future plucks the notes.

As, smiling and with right hand,  
Thirteen regions discourse!  
As the Lily<sup>10</sup> hands break the yoke  
And take them -- Liberty -- in a firm ring!  
As their right-hands grasp it,  
Upsurge their breasts with pride and hope!

Loosen free the banners  
To your earnest nod,  
Philosopher Franklin, you who snatched  
From the heavens the bolt, the scepter to tyranny!  
And to your alarm, Boston,  
The helper Lily flies [to you] triumphant.

By honor and armed valor,  
Washington, there hast risen,  
And to the undecided Congress instilled faith:  
You are its wall and its shield,  
As formerly, in Lazio,  
The wary Fabius [Maximus] was to oppressed Rome.

The allies safeguarded,

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<sup>10</sup> France.

The tyrants exhausted,  
Eternal are the crests of thy glory,  
That grows triumphant, in the vicinity,  
Like circles grow  
In the center of a lake that is disturbed.

In this untainted land,  
Sane Philosophy, poorly accepted  
Will come to sit on its throne;  
And more lenient laws govern the world  
With men more human,  
With the radius of Truth, the light spreads.

Already rich in wisdom,  
The Philadelphians gather as a host.<sup>11</sup>  
They will conquer Europe with good teaching;  
Without bayonets, without enslaving cannon,  
They will plant generously  
The branches of restored Liberty:

Those of flowering Hymettos  
Honey bees,  
Between the supported wings of Zephyrus,  
Will demand with wishful flight  
The remote pastures,  
In which to fashion sweetening combs.

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[The original text]

À Independência dos Estados- Unidos

Que é que ouço, oh Deuses?
A minha ebúrnea lira
Que repousa, depois que a clara glória
Cantei soberbo do Albuquerque duro,
Não tocada ressoa
E do vate incurioso a mão convida!

Respeitável prodígio!
Aceito o auspício fausto:
Feitos altos a Musa, que te excita,
Em grandiloquo metro me aparelha.
Já me assinala as cordas
E, ao meu sujeito ouvido, o canto ajusta.

Qual da Siciónia praia
Parte o Agenório incerto,
Buscando a linda Irmã mal-confiada

¹¹ While there were some Quakers and former Quakers among the revolutionaries (such as Nathanael Greene and Thomas Paine), by and large Quakers tended to be neutrals or loyalists in the Revolutionary War. And like Nascimento, several notable French intellectuals took it for granted that the Quakers, due to their egalitarian outlook, represented a major power and ideological block underpinning American Independence efforts.

No falaz Touro de necada fronte;
E dobra ansioso as crespas
Pontas dos alongados promontórios:

Por insólitos mares
Calcando insanos medos,
De alem Colombo, de aquí o ínclito Gama
Vão tremular ocidentais bandeiras
Entre povos que ajoelham
Ante homens-numes, dos trovões senhores.

Os Tritões, insofridos
Que os não-rompidos mares,
Com desatado arrojo, assim devasse
Do extremo Ocaso o morador afouto,
Depõem a ingrata nova
Ante o trono do cérulo Tirano.

Neptuno enfurecido
Do sólio se arremessa
E, c'o braço potente, abala o fundo
Do mar, que se amontoa e se espedaça;
Que encapelado atira,
De serra em serra, os descorados lenhos.

Eis já, Cabral, descobres
Os Brasis não buscados:
C'os salgados vestidos gotejando,
Pesado, beijas as douradas praias;
E aos povos que te hospedam,
Ignaro de vindouro, os grilhoes lanças.

A Bondade, a Inocência,
Que imemoriais imperam
Nos reinos não-avaros da áurea vela,
Dos costumes da Europa espavoridas,
As gentes desamparam,
Miserandas!... Entao a Liberdade

As asas, não-manchadas
De baixa tirania,
Soltou isenta, pelos ares livres,
Mal que avistou a Escravidão, ao longe,
Roupas trajando santas,
Vir esses climas demandar ditosos.

Ao vento se desfraldam
E as velas já branquejam
Que as leis escuras trazem, sanguinosas,
Trazem cordas, grilhoes, trazem seguros
(Da Liberdade em troco)
Para as Nações que o crime mal-conhecem.

Geme a América ao peso
Que insolente lhe agrava
Dos vícios a coorte maculosa:

O veneno da Europa se derrama,
E os mudos vales troam
C'o trémulo fragor do bronze rouco.

Témis, c'as mãos ao rosto,
Súbito os olhos cerra
Quando encara as fogueiras flamejando,
O rei manietado, o algoz sedento,
Pelo ouro mal-devoto,
Decepando as cabeças inocentes.

Mas... Que doce volência
Me retira de tanta
Cena de horrores? Qual me esparges néctar,
Musa, pelos mortais pesados membros,
Que mal toco, ligeiro,
As azuladas transparentes ondas?

Deste licor banhado,
O dulcíssimo Orfeu
Assim seguia a próspera Calíope,
Desde os mares da Grécia ao Nilo ignoto,
Quando o mistério egípcio
Quis registrar, de alto Saber avaro.

Salve, copado bosque!
Salve, plácido asilo
Da casta foragida liberdade!
Lá vejo o templo seu aprico, imenso,
Que encerrar-se não deixa
De brônzeas portas, de artezoados tectos...

Lá vejo, inda entalhado
Nessa árvore robusta,
Do humaníssimo Penn o nome grato:
Inda os costumes são, que ele plantar,
Recendem nestas veigas,
Orvalhados de amiga tolerância.

Aquí, nos terões toscos
Sentados, aceitavam
Os selvagens indígenas o preço
Da terra já além dada: exemplo insigne
Que insculpirá infâmia
Nos que as plagas não-suas cativaram!

Não mais, não mais, oh Musa!
Não mais furor me acendas...
Sinto o sangue correr atropelado,
O cérebro assaltar-me aguda chama
De fatídico incêndio:
Já do futuro a Jove arranco as chaves.

Como, risonha e destra,
Treze regiões discorre!
Como c'as alvas mãos mlhes quebra o jugo

E as toma –a Liberdade- em anel firme!
Como as dextas lhe enlaça,
Sopra, em seus peitos, brios, esperanças!

Soltam-se os pendões livres
Ao teu sisudo aceno,
Filósofo Flanklin, que arrebataste
Aos céus o raio, o ceptro à tirania!
E ao teu aviso, em Bóston,
O Lírio ajudador tremula, ovante.

De honra e valor armado,
Washington, alí te ergues,
E ao Congresso indeciso a fé abonas:
Tu és sua muralha e seu escudo,
Qual noutrora, no Lácio,
O Fábio tardador à aflita Roma!

Os sócios protegidos,
Os tiranos exaustos
São eternos brazões da tua glória,
Que cresce triunfal, na redondeza,
Comos os círculos crescem
Em lago que no centro foi ferido.

Neste limpo terreno,
Virá assentar seu trono
A sã Filosofia, mal-aceita;
E leis mais brandas regerão o mundo
Quando homens mais humanos,
C’o raio da Verdade, a luz espalhem.

Já de sapiência ricos,
Enxames filadélfios
Vão conquistar com almo ensino a Europa;
Sem baionetas, sem canhões escravos,
Vão planta generoso
Ramos da restaurada Liberdade:

Quais do florido Himeto
Melíficas abelhas,
Entre as asas do Zéfiro amparadas,
Vão demandar con voo desejoso
As remotas devesas,
Que hão-de adoçar c’os fabricandos favos.

William Thomas Sherman

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