BYRON AND THE FOURTH OF JULY

Charles E. Robinson

Exactly two years ago today, on 4 July 1998, I gave a version of this talk to a small audience in Hucknall, where Lord Byron is buried; and exactly 224 years ago, on 4 July 1776, almost to the hour,[1] the United States of America made a formal declaration of its independence from Great Britain; seven years later, in 1783, the Treaty of Paris concluded the Revolutionary War between the United States and Britain; and by July 4th, 1785, John Adams (who would become the second president of the United States) had established residence in London as the first United States ambassador to Great Britain (technically, an Envoy Extraordinary or Minister Plenipotentiary) – and he would depart London in 1788, just a month after Byron was born. Of the sixty-six envoys or ministers or ambassadors to the Court of St. James since then, a number of others went on to become presidents of the United States: for example, the envoy in 1815-17 was Adams's son, John Quincy Adams, who had no great love for Byron; and the envoy in 1803-07 was James Monroe, whose isolationist or "Monroe" doctrine John Quincy Adams supported to such an extent that he was loathe to support Greece in the early years of its revolution against the Turks. In effect, John Quincy Adams subverted his father's passionate commitment to the Declaration of Independence, in which "Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America" we encounter these revolutionary words:

> We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their CREATOR, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Although these stirring and rebellious words that were published on July 4, 1776, had been penned by Thomas Jefferson in opposition to the government of George III, they are not unlike the words written by Lord Byron forty-five years later in *The Vision of Judgment* against the same King George, who

> … ever warr'd with freedom and the free:
> Nations as men, home subjects, foreign foes,
> So that they utter'd the word "Liberty!"
> Found George the Third their first opponent. Whose
> History was ever stain'd as his will be
> With national and individual woes? (st. 45)[2]

To answer this question, Byron's Sathan in *The Vision of Judgment* proposed to call in two American witnesses, George Washington and Ben Franklin, to depose against the King who had finally died in 1821. This George III, it seems, inspired rebellion in both Lord Byron and Thomas Jefferson. And, as soon will be evident, Byron and America, indeed, Byron and the 4th of July, were also linked in that rich and complicated world of the struggle for freedom in the nineteenth century.

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[1]: This article is based on a lecture delivered at the Carlton Club in London on the evening of 4 July 2000, a lecture that was part of the 26th International Byron Conference held that week at the University of Nottingham.

[2]: Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Byron's poetry will be taken from *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1993). Hereafter cited as *CPW*.

Before pursuing some of these links, I first wish to emphasize the sacredness of the anniversary of that day of independence, 4 July 1776. Because I am from the University of Delaware, I should also remark that some Americans prefer to record our Independence Day as 2 July 1776, when the Delawarean Caesar Rodney rode on horseback 80 miles from central Delaware to Philadelphia to cast the decisive vote that led to the Declaration of Independence on 2 July – in fact, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail that July 2nd "will be the most memorable . . . in the history of America. . . . it will be celebrated by succeeding generations. . . . It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sport, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward, forevermore".[3] Adams, however, was writing on 3 July and did not realize how important and memorable the 4th of July would be when the words of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence were finally approved by the delegates of the thirteen colonies at the Second Continental Congress.

By July 4th, 1777, a year later, there was already a sense of remembrance and celebration, especially in Philadelphia's Independence Hall, the birthplace of America as we know it today. By the 1780s, there had developed a very ritualistic July 4th that included the reading of the Declaration of Independence, the delivering of hour-long public orations, the singing of patriotic songs and the reciting of odes to liberty, the assembling and marching of the militia, the ringing of church bells – together with a cannon salute of thirteen guns and a public dinner followed by thirteen toasts (to commemorate the original thirteen colonies, one of which was Delaware, the "first state" to ratify the Constitution eleven years later in December 1787 during the Constitutional Convention). While not quite so formal these days, the national holiday of July 4th still has ritual and tradition: the marching of the militia has become a parade with local bands, military veterans, firemen and their fire engines; the political and patriotic orations have been replaced by politicians shaking the hands of their constituencies; the civic dinner has become a picnic or family barbecue; the cannon salute during the day has become a fireworks display in evening; and the formal drinking of toasts at a prescribed time has become much more informal drinking during the course of the day.

The significance of the holiday is suggested by a chronicle of some famous Fourths of July, the first of which indirectly brings Byron into the picture. On July 4th, 1812, just four months after Byron awoke and found himself famous, the USS *Constitution* (the frigate that Byron boarded in Leghorn in 1822) fired a cannon salute while it was anchored at Annapolis, Maryland, in honor of Independence Day – the next day, 5 July 1812, the *Constitution* sailed off to engage the British in the War of 1812 – and one of the British Captains engaged was Richard Byron of the British frigate *Belvidera* – here was Lord Byron's first cousin (once removed) attempting to blow out of the water the ship that Byron eventually boarded in Leghorn ten years later.

On July 4th, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of Independence Day, two famous signers of the Declaration of Independence died within a few hours of each other: John Adams (the second president of the United States), age 90, in Quincy, Massachusetts – and Thomas Jefferson (the third president of the United States), age 83, at Monticello in Virginia.

On July 4th, 1831, President John Monroe died (thus three of the first five presidents of the U.S. died on the anniversary of the country over which they presided).

On July 4th, 1863, during the American Civil War, the North won over the South at the crucial battle of Gettysburg – and on the same day the South surrendered Vicksburg on the Mississippi to General Grant.

On July 4th, 1884, France formally presented the Statue of Liberty to the United States. [4]

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[3]: As quoted in Diana Karter Appelbaum, *The Glorious Fourth: An American Holiday, An American History* (New York: Facts on File, 1989), p. 6. This very useful book may be supplemented by Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997). See also *The Fourth of July: Political Oratory and Literary Reactions, 1776-1876*, ed. Paul Goetsch and Gerd Hurm (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992).

[4]: For some of these famous Fourths, see Appelbaum.

Where, you might ask, is Byron in all this celebration and U.S. history? Not far, for he discussed America and Americans on more than one July 4th – e.g., on or around Independence Day, 1821, Byron was visited by a 20-year old lad, Joseph Coolidge from Boston (a friend of Washington Irving and, later, the husband of the granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson) – Coolidge was so much a devotee of Byron that he had already obtained a copy of the Bertel Thorwaldsen bust of Byron to ship to America, and Byron was equally impressed: he confessed in his "Detached Thoughts" that he "was more flattered by this young enthusiasm of a solitary trans-atlantic traveller than if they had decreed me a Statue in the Paris Pantheon".[5] A year later, on July 4th, 1822, Byron repeated his frequently expressed wish to visit America – on that July 4th, he wrote to Edward J. Dawkins that because the revolutionary Gamba family was being exiled from Tuscany, he would go to Lucca or Genoa – "failing that – probably America – for – both Captain Chauncey of the American Squadron – (which returns in Septr.) and Mr. Bruen an American Merchant now at Leghorn offered me a passage in the handsomest manner" (Byron had also asked Bruen to lend him a life of Patrick Henry, the American orator famous for his personal declaration of "Give me Liberty or give me Death").[6]

Six weeks prior to this time, on 21 May 1822, Byron had boarded the *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides"), the flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron, where he met a number of Americans, including the American statesman and historian George Bancroft, Commodore Jacob Jones (who was born in Smyrna, Delaware, and had been a clerk to the Delaware Supreme Court before entering the navy), and Mrs. Catherine Potter Stith of Philadelphia. This is the famous Mrs. Stith who plucked a rose from Byron's lapel and brought it back to America, together with a letter from Byron and a book that he presented to her – all of which are now deposited at Yale University Library. In his letter to Mrs. Stith, Byron wrote that he had "been ever a Well wisher to your Country and Countrymen".[7]

Byron directly communicated his good wishes to other Americans that he met in England and in Italy. For example, two famous American educators Edward Everett (the Philhellene who later became president of Harvard and who was Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of St. James in the 1840s) and George Ticknor (another author, scholar, and educator) visited Byron during the last two weeks of June 1815, receiving letters of introduction to be used in Greece; Ticknor again met Byron near Venice in October 1817. Byron enjoyed his conversations with these and other Americans, frequently indicated an interest in visiting America, and revealed a very considerable knowledge of Americans and American history. The last American to meet Byron, sometime in early 1824 in Greece, heard Byron repeat his wish to visit the United States in order to satisfy five desires: to see Washington Irving; to see the stupendous scenery; to visit George Washington's grave; to experience the freedom enjoyed by Americans; and to encourage the United States to recognize Greece as an independent country.[8] (Unfortunately, at this very same time, back in London, Richard Rush, the Envoy to the Court of St. James, was telling the deputies from Greece, Mr. Orlando and Mr. Luriottis, that John Quincy Adams and therefore President Monroe would not actively aid the cause of

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[5]: See Byron to Thomas Moore, 5 July 1821, and "Detached Thoughts" in *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973-1982), 8: 146 and 9: 20-21. Hereafter cited as *BLJ*.

[6]: Bruen also commissioned a portrait of Byron by the American painter, William E. West. For these references to Bruen, see BLJ, 9: 162, 174, 179.

[7]: BLJ, 9: 161-62.

[8]: See Paul R. Baker, "Lord Byron and the Americans in Italy", *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 13 (1964): 61-75. For other discussions of Byron and America, see William Ellery Leonard, *Byron and Byronism in America* (Boston, 1905); Adolph B. Benson, "Catherine Potter Stith and Her Meeting with Lord Byron (With Unpublished Letters of Byron, Trelawny, Thomas Sully, and L. Gaylord Clark.)", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 22 (1923): 10-22; R. B. McElderry, Jr., "Byron's Interest in the Americas", *Research Studies of the State College of Washington*, 5 (1937): 145-78; Una Pope-Hennessy, "Byron and an American", *TLS*, 23 April 1938, p. 280; Joseph Jay Jones, "Lord Byron on America", *University of Texas Studies in English*, 21 (1941): 121-37; and Charles E. Robinson, "The Influence of Byron's Death on America", *The Byron Journal*, 5 (1977): 50-66.

Greek emancipation. It would take Byron's death two months later to encourage the American citizens directly to support the cause of Greece.)[9]

Of course, Byron also revealed his interest in things American in his poetry: we find America and George Washington and Daniel Boone and Patrick Henry and Benjamin Franklin in such poems as *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, *Venice: An Ode*, *Childe Harold IV*, *Don Juan*, *The Vision of Judgment*, and *The Age of Bronze*. Americans would have been very familiar with these poems because, from 1811 through 1824, over 100 separate editions of Byron's poetry had been published in the United States, primarily in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. As early as March 1809, Byron's *Hours of Idleness* was reviewed in the Philadelphia *Port Folio* (1: 258-61); and for the next fifteen years, magazines, journals, and newspapers were filled with reviews, excerpts, and discussions of Byron's poetry. The Americans were most certainly flattered when a young noble British poet, with an international voice and authority, celebrated America at the same time he celebrated the ideas of Freedom and of Greece – consider, for example, the following lines from *Venice: An Ode*:

> Still one great clime, in full and free defiance,
> Yet rears her crest, unconquer'd and sublime,
> Above the far Atlantic! [after lamenting the loss of freedom in
> England & Italy, Byron continued:] . . . better be
> Where the extinguish'd Spartans still are free,
> In their proud charnel of Thermopylae,
> Than stagnate in our marsh, – or o'er the deep
> Fly, and one current to the ocean add,
> One spirit to the souls our fathers had,
> One freeman more, America, to thee! (ll. 142-44, 154-60)

Or consider these less often quoted lines from Byron's *The Age of Bronze* about the 1822 Congress of Verona:

> But lo! a Congress! What, that hallowed name
> Which freed the Atlantic? May we hope the same
> For outworn Europe? With the sound arise,
> Like Samuel's shade to Saul's monarchic eyes,
> The prophets of young Freedom, summoned far
> From climes of Washington and Bolivar;
> Henry, the forest-born Demosthenes,
> Whose thunder shook the Philip of the seas;
> And stoic Franklin's energetic shade,
> Robed in the lightnings which his hand allayed;
> And Washington, the tyrant-tamer, wake,
> To bid us blush for thes e old chains, or break. (ll. 378-89)

Byron had published this poem on 1 April 1823, and within a few months three American editions appeared in New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati – and the lines I have just quoted were published in a Baltimore newspaper, *Niles' Weekly Register*, on 26 July 1823 (p. 327), just 9 months before Byron died. Such pro-American effusions clearly ingratiated Lord Byron with most Americans, so that when the international poet died for his internationalism, it is no wonder that his name in 1824 became a beacon to Liberty and that his deeds and his works were celebrated at hundreds of political and patriotic events.

News of Byron's death on 19 April 1824 did not reach the United States until late June, and within days the poet was immortalized in the United States as a defender of Greece and of Liberty. For example, on the 48th anniversary of America's independence in July 1824, when Greece was toasted four times at a public dinner in Washington, D.C., William Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury, stood up and made the following toast: "Lord Byron: The Poet who

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[9]: See entry for 3 February 1824 in Richard Rush, *Memorandum of a Residence at the Court of London* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845), pp. 482-83.

has immortalized modern Greece by his pen, and defended her liberties by his sword – sacred be his memory".[10] Also in that same July, at a New York dinner party, the American poet Fitz-Greene Halleck toasted Byron with the lines: "For him the voice of festive mirth / Be hush'd – *his name* the only sound". Halleck, when he first heard of Byron's death, "could not restrain his tears. He walked up and down the drawing-room wringing his hands, saying, with brief pauses between each remark: 'What a terrible loss to literature!' – Byron dead, and I did not see him!'"[11] But during the next six months Halleck could at least witness the effect of Byron's death in Greece on America. At this time, the American newspapers gave Byron more attention than any other European – even more than Lafayette who visited the United States a few months after Byron's death. News of Byron's involvement in Greek affairs was mainly taken from the British papers, which arrived five to eight weeks after publication in London. *The Albion*, a New York weekly, mentioned Byron in practically every issue for the next six months, sometimes devoting two or more full pages to matters Byronic – even printing in Greek bold large type Mavrocordato's letter of 19 April on Byron's death. In September and October, the *Boston Medical Intelligencer* printed lengthy articles on the "Last Sickness" and on the "Dissection" of Lord Byron (11 October 1824, p. 91; 28 September 1824, p. 83).

Many of the tributes to Byron were done in verse – in fact, scores of poets elegized and eulogized Byron in 1824 and 1825. For example, *The New-York Mirror, and Ladies' Literary Gazette* on 3 July 1824 printed not only Thomas Moore's "Elegy on the Death of Lord Byron" (p. 387, col. 3), but also a "Lord Byron" poem by "Patti" (p. 392, col. 3) that begins with "That mind of dark magnificence hath set" and eloquently concludes:

> Darkness, alas, now sits on the sad air,
> Looking as if there never had been light;
> And men are shaking hands with dumb despair,
> And Africa's dark cheek is wet and white;
> And Asia sighs, and sayeth not a word,
> And Greece, her child, is weeping on her breast;
> And o'er the Atlantic a bleak groan is heard,
> Like an orphaned people, *not* in false crape drest –
> Sorrow is leaning on creation's shoulder,
> And looking as if heaven would not behold her.

"Patti", it seems, managed a very skillful verse, but it appears that there were many less accomplished poetasters who attempted more than they could poetically accomplish. Even as early as 6 July 1824, the editor of the *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia) complained:

> There have been a few pieces written in this country, expressive of feeling at the loss of Byron, which really do credit to their authors. . . . The two-penny poets of the day are however at their game, and "Greece," "Byron," "the Muses," "classic ground," &c. are in full flow. These things should be reserved till Southey dies – they would become him and Wordsworth. (p. 1, cols. 2-3)

Indeed, many of these elegists were unequal to the task of Byron – and I spare you the rimes of Alexander Coffin, Lucretia Davidson, George Hill, John Doddridge Humphreys, George Lunt, Grenville Mellen, John Neal – and I will ignore "Henrietta", who published a poem on Byron in November 1824 in *The Monitor, Designed to Improve the Taste, the Understanding, and the Heart* (Boston), in which she deplored the fact that Byron had not

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[10]: *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), 7 July 1824, p. 3, col. 3. The July 4th celebration that year was held on 5 July, the 4th being a Sunday.

[11]: See James Grant Wilson, *The Life and Letters of Fitz-Greene Halleck* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1869), p. 305; and Nelson Frederick Adkins, *Fitz-Greene Halleck: An Early Knickerbocker Wit and Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 157. See also John W. M. Hallock, *The American Byron: Homosexuality and the Fall of Fitz-Greene Halleck* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

embraced Christianity (2: 394-95). But I would like to resurrect one Ebenezer Bailey, whose eleven-stanza ode "The Triumphs of Liberty", while offering only an incidental reference to Byron, does so with grace and genius:

> And Greece, – the golden clime of light and song,
> Where infant genius first awoke
> To arts and arms and godlike story, –
> Wept for her fallen sons in bondage long:
> She weeps no more; – Those sons have broke
> Their fetters, – spurn the slavish yoke,
> And emulate their fathers' glory.
> The Crescent wanes before the car
> Of liberty's ascending Star,
> And Freedom's banners wave upon
> The ruins of the Parthenon.
> The clash of arms rings in the air,
> As erst it rung at Marathon; –
> Let songs of triumph echo there!
> Be free! ye Greeks, or, failing, die
> In the last trench of liberty.
> Ye hail the name of Washington; pursue
> The path of glory he has mark'd for you.
> But should your recreant limbs submit once more
> To hug the soil your fathers ruled before
> Like gods on earth, – if o'er their hallow'd graves
> Again their craven sons shall creep as slaves,
> When shall another Byron sing and bleed
> For you! – oh, when for you another Webster plead![12]

This poem was recited at the Boston Theatre on 22 February 1825, on the anniversary of George Washington's birthday – and by linking the name of Byron with Greece and Liberty and the famous Americans George Washington and Daniel Webster, these lines return me to my theme of Byron and the Fourth of July. Consider, for example, the jubilee celebration of American Independence in July 1826, just 2 years after news of Byron's death reached the United States. At that time, craftsmen and ladies in Arlington, Virginia, made medallions and wreaths with an inscription reading: "Bozzaris, Byron, and the martyrs who have perished for the liberties of Greece. Fabvier, Jarvis, and the good and brave who aid a Christian people in their struggle against infidel oppressors".[13] Because Byron had died in the cause of Liberty, his name or at least his poetry became part of the Independence Day rhetoric throughout the nineteenth century.

Here are some results of a brief survey of July 4th orations: E. H. Kellogg at Amherst College in 1836, at the Social Union Society, intoned *Childe Harold II* when he compared America to Greece and cited

> The Battle-field, where Persia's victim horde
> First bowed beneath the brunt of Hellas' sword. (2: 89)

Later in same address, after a lengthy description of the battle between the British and the Americans that started just six days after the Declaration of Independence (a battle that the Americans almost lost), Kellogg quoted *The Giaour*:

> For Freedom's battle once begun
> Bequeathed by bleeding Sire to Son,

12: Samuel Kettell, *Specimens of American Poetry, with Critical and Biographical Notices* (Boston: S. G. Goodrich and Co., 1829), 3: 307-11.

13: As quoted in Stephen A. Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece*, 1775-1865 (New York: New York University Press, 1957), p. 148.

Though baffled oft is ever won. (ll. 123-25)[14]

At another address before the Peace Society at Amherst College, John Lord in 1839 asserted that "War desecrates the Sabbath" and observed that (and I quote John Lord paraphrasing and quoting *Childe Harold*) "it was on Saturday night that the city of Brussels had gathered together her beauty and her chivalry. Nought was heard in that gay capital but the swell of voluptuous music and the voice of universal revelry. But, ah, who could think

That on a night so sweet such awful morn could rise.
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Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife
The morn the marshalling in arms, – the day
Battles magnificently stern array!
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent,
The earth is covered thick with other clay
Which her own clay shall cover – heaped and pent
Rider and horse, – friend, foe – in one red burial blent [3: 24, 28]".[15]

It is very likely that some of Byron's poetry was quoted on every July 4th in nineteenth-century America – we know, for example, that he was invoked in numerous orations during the centennial jubilee on July 4th, 1876 – for example, the Honorable I. C. Parker in a "Centennial Oration" in Fort Smith, Arkansas, quoted those famous lines on "Freedom's battle . . . ever won" from *The Giaour*. In Cincinnati, on the same day, General Durbin Ward delivered an oration on "The Past Century Reviewed" and lamented that America had not produced the likes of a Humboldt or Davy or Darwin or Herbert Spencer or Goethe or Burns or Wordsworth – or Byron.

Again, on that same July day in 1876, in Covington, Kentucky, the Honorable William E. Arthur, in order to make a point about the fleetingness of fame and fortune, took a very circuitous route through Macaulay ("Such is fame; and it is said by one of whom Macauley [sic] declares, 'he had a head which statuaries loved to copy, and a foot the deformity of which the beggars in the streets mimicked'") in order to quote from Byron's *Don Juan*:

What is the end of fame? 'tis but to fill
    A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
    Whose summit, like all hills', is lost in vapor;
For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill.
    And bards burn what they call their 'midnight taper,'
To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust. (1: 218)

Arthur concluded his centennial oration on "The American Age Contrasted" with another quotation from Byron, the conclusion to his 1814 *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*:

Where may the wearied eye repose
When gazing on the Great;
Where neither guilty glory glows,
Nor despicable state?
Yes – one – the first – the last – the best –
The Cincinnatus of the West,
Whom envy dared not hate,

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[14]: See E. H. Kellogg, *Oration: Delivered July 4th, 1836, before the Social Union Society of Amherst College* (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, 1836), pp. 6, 21.

[15]: John Lord, *An Address Delivered before the Peace Society of Amherst College, July 4, 1839* (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, 1839), p. 19.

Bequeath'd the name of Washington,
To make men blush there is but one.

This is one of Byron's most famous invocations of Washington, and some readers may find it a bit surprising that the world (and therefore the Americans) did not know about this stanza until 1831 – that is, no edition of Byron's famous ode published before 1831 contained these stanzas – but almost every edition since then had these lines,[16] lines that must have endeared an already beloved Byron to even more Americans.

In Geneseo, Illinois, on that same July 4th, 1876, the Honorable Shelby M. Cullom delivered an oration on "The Distinctive Features of our Republic" in which he paraphrased Byron's lines on fame and then quoted those concluding lines from *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*:

> One of the greatest of British poets, in the light of history, looked at the great names of ancient and modern times, saw self-sacrificing virtue – looked at courage and ambition as they climbed every hill and scaled every summit of fame and glory – viewed them in history, in poetry, and in song – and as he looked, he exclaimed: [and then he launched into those famous lines about Washington as the Cincinnatus of the West"].[17]

To explain the interest in and passion for Byron that has been so much a part of American consciousness since 1824 (and to bring this essay to a conclusion), I wish to quote from a very famous 47-page obituary and review of Byron's life and works that appeared in the *North American Review* in January 1825, written by Alexander Everett, the brother of Edward Everett. The review begins as follows:

> The death of Lord Byron, without depressing the price of stocks or affecting the election of President, has produced a deep and general feeling of regret throughout the country. The loss of a truly great poet is in fact an event that affects immediately, in their occupations and their pleasures, a much larger number of persons, than that of a distinguished statesman or of a military conqueror.

To explain the cause of America's grief, Everett observed that, unlike a great politician or a warrior whose personal influence on the masses is limited, a gifted poet

> … makes a warm, personal friend of every man of education and feeling within the circle of his readers. . . . He enters in person the sanctuary of every private bosom, and establishes himself as a dear and familiar guest in the minds of men, that never saw his face or heard the sound of his voice. In fact, we often really know more of his character and sentiments, than we do of those of our most intimate associates. . . . Every one of his successive publications is felt as a visit from a valued friend. Our occupations and our pleasures become in some degree identified with his existence; and when he dies, one of our principal sources of happiness is dried up forever.

Consequently, Everett continued, the death of Lord Byron "has been lamented as a public calamity, by a hundred nations in Europe and America, nay, in Asia, Africa, Australasia and Polynesia. We have no doubt that tears were shed at the first news of this sad event at Calcutta, at Botany Bay, and at the Sandwich Islands, as well as at Berlin, Paris, Rome, Philadelphia, and London". Our grief, Everett continued, increases when we realize that we mourn not only for a friend but also for a "public benefactor. The sympathy of others gives a new intensity to all individual emotions; and we are doubtless struck with double sorrow for the death of Lord Byron, when we recollect that half the civilised world is bearing us

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16: See McGann, CPW, 4: 456.

17: All of these 1876 orations are quoted from *Our National Centennial Jubilee: Orations, Addresses and Poems Delivered on the Fourth of July, 1876*, ed. Frederick Saunders (New York: E. B. Treat, 1877), pp. 762, 589, 530, 542, 659.

company".[18] Byron, Everett is telling us, is a poet of the oceans, not of the lakes – and his internationalism is what keeps his spirit alive on this 4th of July in America – in England – in so many countries – as witnessed by all of us here assembled this evening, on July 4th in a new millenium, as we begin the twenty-sixth international Byron seminar.

[18]: *North American Review*, 20 (January 1825): 1-4.