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Commentator: J.T. Kirkwood

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A PINDARICK ODE ON PAINTING ***

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Typographical errors are marked with mouse-hover popups. In the Ode, all dashes were printed as groups of 2-5 hyphens. This format has been retained. Brackets are in the original. Stanza numbers X and XXIX are conjectural.

In addition to the ordinary page numbers, the printed text labeled the recto (odd) pages of the first leaf of each 4-page folio. These will appear after the page numbers as **B, C...**

Joshua Reynolds was knighted in 1769, two years after this work was published.

The Augustan Reprint Society

THOMAS MORRISON

A PINDARICK ODE ON PAINTING

Addressed to Joshua Reynolds, Esq.

(1767)

With a preface by
Frederick W. Hilles
and a biographical introduction by
J. T. Kirkwood

Publication Number 37

Los Angeles
William Andrews Clark Memorial Library

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PREFACE

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The poem here reprinted has remained unread and, with a single exception, apparently unnoticed from the day it was published until the present. It is printed from a copy which I acquired many years ago at a London bookstore and which for a while I thought unique. I did not find it listed in the catalogues of the chief libraries of England or America, nor in the various books on anonymous publications. I have found no mention of it in the newspapers and magazines of the time, no mention of it in contemporary letters or diaries. The one man in England who took the trouble to record the ode for posterity was, as might be expected, Horace Walpole, who in his manuscript *Books of Materials* merely noted that the poem had been published in 1768 (*Anecdotes of Painting . . . Volume the Fifth*, ed. Hilles and Daglian, Yale University Press, 1937). When challenged to locate Walpole's copy of the ode, the greatest of modern collectors was able, after perhaps forty-five seconds, to say not only that it was in the Houghton Library at Harvard but that on the title in Walpole's hand was the information that the poem was published on the sixteenth of May, a fact which would otherwise be unknown. A third copy was in the possession of the late Professor Heidbrink of Northwestern, inscribed in a contemporary hand "T. M., M.A." and thus, possibly, the author's own. There are, then, three known copies extant. Doubtless others will be found, bound up with pamphlets of the same vintage, as yet uncatalogued.

What Walpole did not know was the name of the author, and quite possibly the ode would have remained unread and unnoticed for another two centuries had Mr. Kirkwood not brought to light the letters which are first published in the introduction that follows. From these letters and a few known facts the history of the ode seems clear enough. Reynolds had a number of relatives living in Great Torrington. In the summer of 1762 when he and Dr. Johnson went to Devonshire they were entertained by Morrison. Johnson's published letters prove that he did not forget Morrison, and Reynolds was soon painting the portrait of Morrison's daughter. In the summer of 1766 Morrison sent his ode to Reynolds. The following January he learned that Johnson, "as severe a Critic as old Dennis," praised it and ordered it to be published. Reynolds himself must have arranged for the publication.

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The publisher selected was William Griffin, who a few years later was to bring out some of Sir Joshua's *Discourses*. The work of the printer was only moderately well done. It will be noted that *whose* (second line of stanza V) is obviously a misprint for *whole*, that the second line has dropped out of stanza XXXIV (Mr. Kirkwood ingeniously suggests that Morrison wrote: "for every trifler's breast/Is by the hope of future fame possest"), and that in two places the number of a stanza has been omitted. And yet the ode, which is physically thinner as well as historically and aesthetically inferior to Gray's famous odes, is priced at 1/6, whereas the Strawberry Hill edition of Gray's *Odes* (1757) sold for but a shilling.

Clearly Morrison was not influenced by, if familiar with, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. His ode is Pindaric in the late seventeenth-century sense. In his brief preface he explains that he has sought to please us "with a little variety of wild music," believing "that the perpetual recurrence of the same measure in such a multiplicity of stanzas would have been rather languid and fatiguing." An examination of the poem shows that Morrison has carried his desire for variety to the extreme. The poem consists of thirty-five stanzas, not one of which repeats both the metrical pattern and rhyme scheme of any other. The stanzas range from six to eighteen lines in length, and the lines themselves from four short syllables to the long Alexandrine. At times one has the feeling that this love of

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changing rhythms and rhymes has improperly warped the meaning of a given passage.

The author shows his familiarity with the standard books on aesthetics. In *Idler* No. 76, published in 1759, Reynolds laughed at those who by mastering a few phrases posed as connoisseurs. He introduced a gentleman who had just returned from Italy, "his mouth full of nothing but the grace of *Raffaelle*,... and the sublimity and grand contorno of *Michael Angelo*." This gentleman criticised a Vandyck because it "had not the flowing line," and of "St. Paul preaching" said, "what an addition to that nobleness could *Raffaelle* have given, had the art of contrast been known in his time! but above all, the flowing line." Morrison is familiar with the jargon, as is seen throughout the ode. At the beginning he displays wit in applying these phrases not to painting but to his verse:

With my easy flowing line
To unite correctness of design.

And at the end he rather neatly twists the famous statement of Appelles into a justification for his writing a poem to add to the reputation of a great painter.

The ode falls into two roughly equal parts. In the first half the poet describes specific examples of what he calls History and Landskip. The battle painting sounds like something by Il Borgognone, the crucifixion perhaps by Guido Reni. The other painters are named--Vanderveld and, inevitably, Claude. The late Miss Manwaring would not have been surprised to learn that more space is devoted to Claude than to the others. Then almost precisely at the half-way point a pleasing trance is interrupted by the portrait of a "hoary sage," perhaps, Mr. Kirkwood suggests, the portrait Reynolds had recently completed of the Rev. Zachariah Mudge, then seventy-two years of age, who had been since 1737 a fellow prebendary of Morrison's at Exeter, and whom Reynolds described as "the wisest man he had ever met." From this point on the poet addresses Reynolds and incidentally describes with skill two of his most popular portraits, "Lady Sarah Bunbury sacrificing to the Graces" (exhibited in 1765) and "Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy" (exhibited in 1762). Garrick was then at the height of his fame, and this was the most notable of the many portraits painted of him. Lady Sarah, "the bright Lenox" of stanza XXIII, was equally celebrated in her sphere. Among the bridesmaids at the wedding of George III she was, in Walpole's opinion, the "chief angel." "With neither features nor air, nothing ever looked so charming as Lady Sarah Lenox; she has all the glow of beauty peculiar to her family." She was the great granddaughter of Charles II; hence Morrison's *regal*. And in the poem as in the painting she is feeding the flame which does honor to the Graces.

Johnson's hostility to "our Pindarick madness" is well known. The "first and obvious defect" of Dryden's *Threnodia* "is the irregularity of its metre." The "lax and lawless versification" of this type of poetry, he wrote in the *Life of Cowley*, "concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle." One cannot but wonder therefore at his praise of Morrison's ode. To be sure, Reynolds quotes Johnson as pronouncing it "superior to any Poem of the kind that has been publish'd these many years," and Johnson may well have considered praise of this sort as he did lapidary inscriptions. It may be worth noting, however, that none of his recorded comments on Pindaric verse antedate the publication of this ode. Conceivably he himself was unaware of his hostility until, more than ten years later, he was forced to criticise the poets who made the English Pindaric popular.

Perhaps too by ordering its publication he was saying indirectly what he had already expressed in many of his writings, for example in *Rambler* No. 23: "the publick, which is never corrupted, nor often deceived, is to pass the last sentence upon literary claims." If this is so, a series like the Augustan Reprints necessarily deals with literary failures. And yet Morrison's ode is well worth reading today as a pleasing example of what I somewhat fearsomely term the baroque, of what the cultured gentleman of that time regarded as a token of good taste. Long dormant, it is here given new life. Who knows but that the prophecy made by Morrison at the end of the poem may after all be fulfilled:

In the long course of rolling years,
When all thy labour disappears,
Yet shall this verse descend from age to age,
And, breaking from oblivion's shade,
Go on, to flourish while thy paintings fade.

Frederick W. Hilles
Yale University

Postscript

Mr. Kirkwood has sent me information, too late to be incorporated in the preface, which adds to, and in an important way corrects, what I have written.

In the Print Room of the British Museum there is an engraving by James Watson "From an Original Picture by Vandevelde, in the Possession of Mr. Reynolds." Every detail in the engraving tallies with Morrison's word-painting of the Vandevelde. Furthermore the description of a landscape by Claude (a View near Castle Gondolfo) in the sale of Sir Joshua's collection of paintings in 1795 suggests that this was the Claude Morrison had in mind when writing his ode. In other words, it is probable that all the paintings discussed in the poem had been seen by Morrison in Reynolds's house.

As to matters of fact, the ode, it turns out, was not unnoticed in its day. It was commented upon in both the *Critical* and the *Monthly*--not in 1767 but in 1768. The reviewer in the *Critical* (vol. 25, p. 393, in the monthly catalogue for May) wrote: This is an elegant and ingenious descriptive poem. The author supposes himself viewing several pieces of historic, landskip, and portrait painting; and from thence takes occasion to represent the figures, prospects, and passions, which the artist has exhibited. As the poet has touched upon various topics, he has very properly used many different kinds of metre." The review in the *Monthly* (vol. 39, p. 316, in the monthly catalogue for October), written by John Langhorne, as Professor Nangle's *Index* shows, was less favorable. "There is great variety in the numbers of this ode; but, in our opinion, they are not combined in such a manner as to produce a natural or agreeable harmony. There is sometimes, too, a falling off, not far removed from the Bathos. Thus, when the Author says his poetical ideas

Resistless on the rous'd imagination pour,
And paint themselves as lively as before;

we cannot help feeling the weakness of the latter verse. Yet there is poetry, there is enthusiasm, there is energy in this piece, on the whole, though it is not without many defects." That these reviews appeared in May and October 1768 is compelling evidence for dating the pamphlet, in spite of Mr. Griffin, 1768. Walpole once more proves himself a reliable source. Why the publication was delayed for over a year will probably remain a mystery.

F. W. H.

INTRODUCTION

Apart from the few papers relating to him that have survived since his death in 1778, little more is known of the Rev. Thomas Morrison of Great Torrington in Devon than the main facts of his life; among those papers, however, are some letters--written by Sir Joshua Reynolds and others--about his literary pursuits, in which Dr. Johnson was at one time briefly concerned.

He was born on March 26, 1705, at Midhurst in Sussex, the elder son of Thomas Morrison of that place and Sarah Bridges. As to his ancestry, the family seems to have claimed kinship with the Morrisons of Cassiobury Park in Hertfordshire. At the age of twelve he was entered as a scholar upon the foundation at Winchester, where he remained until his election in 1723 to a probationary fellowship of New College, Oxford; his admission as a full fellow followed in 1725. Having received his Bachelor's degree in 1727, he became M.A. in 1731, took orders, and was presented to the college living of Steeple Morden in Cambridgeshire.

It may also have been in 1731, though possibly earlier, that he went down into Devon to act as tutor to John Basset of Heanton Court near Barnstaple--a step which was, as things turned out, to make him a resident of that county for the rest of his life. His pupil's father had died in 1721, leaving a widow, Elizabeth, the only daughter and eventual heiress of Sir Nicholas Hooper, Sergeant-at-Law. Sir Nicholas, who had represented Barnstaple in seven successive parliaments and was a man of considerable wealth, died in May, 1731; almost exactly a year later, in May, 1732, his daughter, then thirty-seven years of age and described in a letter written at that time as a lady much admired for her piety, prudence and good conduct, was married to Thomas Morrison, then twenty-seven. Three children were born of their marriage: Mary in 1734, Eleanora in 1736, and Hooper in 1737. In the year following the birth of their son Mrs. Morrison died, presumably at Bath as she is buried in the Abbey Church of that city; on the tablet he placed there to her memory her husband said that she had been the best of wives who, for the few years she lived with him, not only made him a much happier man, but a better man, since not only had her rational and endearing conversation been the perpetual delight of his heart, but her exemplary conduct had likewise been the pleasing rule and constant direction of his life.

Upon his marriage Morrison had necessarily resigned his fellowship of New College, and two years later he also gave up the college living in Cambridgeshire; the benefices that he afterwards held were all in the diocese of Exeter. In 1736 he was made a prebendary of Exeter and became Rector of Wear Giffard; the following year, after obtaining a dispensation to hold the two livings together, he was also instituted to High Bickington, which, however, he resigned in 1742. In 1744 he became Rector of Littleham, soon afterwards resigning Wear Giffard; and finally, in 1758, after resigning Littleham in its turn, he was instituted to Langtree, of which parish he continued Rector until his death twenty years later. The presentations to these livings were made as follows: to Wear Giffard by Lord Clinton, Lord Lieutenant of the county from 1721 to 1733, whose seat was at Castle Hill near Barnstaple; to High Bickington and to Littleham by John Basset of Heanton--who was patron of half a dozen livings; to Langtree by John Rolle Walter of Bicton in South Devon and Stevenstone House near Great Torrington, Member of Parliament for Exeter.

These parishes all lie within six miles of Great Torrington where Morrison appears to have been resident from at least as early as 1750. In his answers to the Bishop's queries of 1744 he had, however, declared himself to be resident partly in Huntshaw, a parish adjoining Wear Giffard; and--for reasons of his health and the education of his children--partly at Westleigh on the mouth of the Torridge, a few miles off. In which intervening year he established himself at Great Torrington is not known.

Meanwhile, he had made two further marriages: in 1739 to Margaret, daughter of the Rev. Robert Ham and widow of John Ham of Widhays, who died in 1744; and in 1745 to Honour, daughter of Sir Thomas Bury and widow of the Rev. George Bussell, who died at Great Torrington in 1750. Both these later marriages were childless.

Hooper Morrison followed his father into the Church and became Rector of Atherington near Barnstaple. In 1769 he bought the property of Yeo Vale, some five miles from Great Torrington. Eleanora Morrison, who never married and seems to have lived with her father until his death, sat to Reynolds in her younger days; the portrait then painted, which was formerly at Yeo Vale, shows her in profile and wearing a blue velvet mantle edged with ermine.

There was also among the portraits at Yeo Vale a three-quarter length of an agreeable-looking man, apparently between thirty and forty years of age, shown wearing a red velvet cap and an unusual coat, like a full-skirted cassock made of blue satin; this portrait, the work of Hudson, was believed to represent Thomas Morrison.

Coming now to the letters, the earliest of these, written in February, 1753, is from Morrison to the Bishop of Exeter, Dr. Lavington, who two years before had published the third part of his book, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*. The letter is inscribed on the outside "Mr. Morrison's Ode," and must have been returned to its writer after the Bishop's death in 1762.

My Lord,

Since I had the honour of being with your Lordship in Exeter I have with great pleasure read over the third part of the *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compar'd*, and as by having my Boy at present under my own Care I have been oblig'd to renew my acquaintance a little with the Classicks, I have endeavour'd to express my Sentiments of your Lordship's learned and acute performance in the following Ode, which if it should afford you a Quarter of an Hours Amusement will be no little pleasure to me--that your Lordship may read it with the more Indulgence think that the Scribbler of it has not attempted to write Latin verse for above twenty years, and believe me to be with the Highest Respect,

Your Lordship's most oblig'd
and most obedient Humble Servant
T. Morrison.

My best Respects wait on your Lady and Miss Lavington.

Here follows the ode ("Reverendo admodum Episcopo Exoniensis in doctissimum adversus Methodistas Librum cui Titulus etc.") which begins:

Verende praesul, praesul amabilis,
Qui dulce rides, utiliter doces;
Jucunda permiscens severis,
Incolumi gravitate ludens,

Quia Methodistes scripta legens tui
Amenitatem respuat ingeni,
Suumque vestro--vel reluctans--
Abstineat sociare risum?

and continues for a further sixteen stanzas.

There is nothing to show to whom the next letter was written, though, considering the later ones, it seems likely that it was addressed to Joshua Reynolds. It concerns a tragedy (on the subject of the Emperor Otho) of which Morrison was undoubtedly the author. John Beard, on whose behalf the letter was written in February, 1763, had become manager of Covent Garden Theatre in the previous year.

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Sir,

Mr. Beard's attention to the Affairs of the Theatre having entirely taken up his Time, during this Season, from which, as yet, he is not releas'd, deprives him of the Pleasure of writing to you, in Answer to the Letter you did him the Favour of communicating from the Author of Otho; he, therefore, hopes you will excuse his deputing me to convey to you the Opinion of his Friends thereon; and if they differ in Sentiment with the Author, it is with some Concern, as they wou'd rather give Approbation to a Piece, which has, indeed, great merit in the Writing, but will not suit the Taste of an English Audience.

How well, and with what Propriety, a Dramatic Piece may be conducted wherein are very few Characters, it is not now intended to be entered upon; but it is very certain, from the Want thereof, many Productions have fail'd of their expected Applause; of which, very many Instances might be produc'd; wherein that has been the Chief, if not the only Defect. The French, indeed, tho' a Nation of great Levity, can attentively listen to long declamatory Speeches, when an English Audience wou'd fall asleep; who love Action and Bus'ness, love Plot and Design; Variety of Incidents is their Delight, but yet that Plot must be founded on Reason and Probability, and conduce to the Main Action of the Drama. It is the Advice of a celebrated Author, *Habitu hujus Temporis habe*; the Taste of the Town, you know, Sir, right or wrong, must be comply'd with; without which, to hope for Success, is striving against the Stream, and however great the Merit of this Piece may be, it must be confess'd, in this Particular, it is defective; nor does there appear a Probability of that Defect's being corrected; and even then it wou'd be esteem'd but a Copy of Cato.

From the Author's great Candour and Impartiality, remarkably shewn thro' the whole Tenour of his Letter, it is hop'd a few additional Remarks will not give Offence. [Here ensues a lengthy passage of detailed criticism, at the end of which the writer continues:] It wou'd greatly trespass on yours and the Author's Time to enlarge on this Subject, as Mr. Beard cannot give him any Encouragement to make Alterations. Undoubtedly there are several good Scenes, and much good Writing, which deserve their proper Encomiums; and the Perusal may give much pleasure in the Closet, but does not bid fair for equal Reception on the Stage.

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I cannot dismiss this without clearing up a mistake which the Author is run into; tho' urg'd with the utmost Tenderness and Delicacy imaginable; I mean the Supposition that a Recommendation from a Person of Figure in the Fashionable or the Letter'd World is necessary for the having the Piece accepted. Be assur'd, Sir, every Piece must be determin'd by its own intrinsic Worth; and by that must stand or fall. Such a Recommendation undoubtedly wou'd raise the Expectation and, consequently, engage a more particular Attention of the Manager, but the Piece must speak for itself; and shou'd it not answer Expectation, might probably not appear in so good a Light as it might deserve, purely from the Disappointment.

I have the Honour, Sir, of sending Mr. Beard's Compliments to yourself and the Author, with the Assurance that he wou'd with greater Pleasure accept than refuse the Piece, stood it within the Probability of Success. At the same Time, tho' unknown, I beg leave, with great Deference, to subscribe myself,

Sir, Your's and the Author's
very obedient, humble Servant,
J. Stede.

There now follow the three surviving letters from Joshua Reynolds in London to Thomas Morrison in Devon. Whether or not the two men had known each other before, they certainly met when Reynolds visited his sister, Mrs. Palmer of Great Torrington, during his Journey into the west country with Johnson in 1762. According to Reynolds' engagement book, Morrison was his host on August 27 of that year; while a letter written by Johnson, after returning to London, contains a message for "Dr. Morison" to say that a set of *Idlers* was being sent to him with sincere acknowledgements of all his civilities. The first of Reynolds' letters is dated, at the end, August 16, 1766.

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Dear Sir,

The greatest compliment I have ever yet receiv'd for any fancied eminence in my profession has not been so flattering to my vanity as having had the honour to have so excellent a Poem address'd to me as this really is which I have now before me, and the consideration that this compliment is made me by Mr. Morrison makes me at a loss in what manner to express the obligation I feel myself under for so great a favour. I may truly say and without affecting much modesty that I am not worthy of the attention you please to honour me with.

As I have not had time yet to consider it as maturely as I intend to do, I can only say in general terms that I admire it exceedingly.

Here there is a break in the letter.

I am quite ashamed to have kept this Letter so long, which proceeded from an expectation I daily had of reading the Poem with Mr. Johnson and Dr. Goldsmith but which I have not yet been able to accomplish.

The former part of this Letter was wrote a few days after I had the pleasure of seeing your Son; you have surely the greatest reason in the world to think me the most ill mannered as well as the most ungrateful person breathing in not returning my thanks sooner; and now that it is delay'd so long it has not answer'd any end except that I have the pleasure of saying, I find no cause on a second and third reading to retract what I said in the former part of the Letter, my

own opinion is worth but little; but I hope soon to have the pleasure of acquainting you with the approbation of those Critics which it is some honour to please.

With great acknowledgment for the distinction you have been pleased to honour me with,

I am with the greatest respect your
most obliged humble servant,

J. Reynolds.

I beg my compliments to Miss and Mr. Morrison.

To this Morrison evidently sent a reply expressing his pleasure at Reynolds' praise of the poem, for on January 8, 1767, Reynolds wrote again.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for the compliment you make me in thinking my approbation of any value, to tell you the truth the reason of my setting so little value on it myself, proceeds not so much from modesty, or an opinion that I cannot feel the powers of Poetry, or distinguish beauties from defects, but from a consciousness that I am unable to determine (as all excellence in comparative) what rank it ought to hold in the scale of Art; and this judgement can be possess'd I think by those only who are acquainted with what the world has produced of that kind.

I have lately had the pleasure of reading your Poem to several friends, who have spoken much in its commendation, and Mr. Johnson who is as severe a Critic as old Dennis approves of it very much, he thinks it superior to any Poem of the kind that has been publish'd these many years and will venture to lay a wager that there is not a better publish'd this year or the next.

The Characters of the several Masters mention'd in the Poem are truly drawn; and the descriptions of the several kinds of History Painting shew great imagination and a thorough knowledge of the Theory of the Art, and that this is deliver'd in Poetry much above the common standard I have Mr. Johnson's word who concluded his commendation with *Imprimatur meo periculo* which order if you have no objection we will immediately put in execution.

I have scarce left room to subscribe myself

Yours,

J. Reynolds.

There is no record of any copy of the poem, either printed or manuscript, having been at Yeo Vale; but that the order had indeed been put in execution became apparent lately when Professor Hilles, on reading the above letter, recognized the identity of Morrison's poem with the *Pindarick Ode on Painting* published in 1767.

The last of the three letters from Reynolds to Morrison is dated March 2, 1771. Notwithstanding the rejection of "Otho," its author had written a second tragedy, the manuscript of which was among the papers at Yeo Vale, according to a note made in 1917 by the late Major J. H. Morrison Kirkwood.

Dear Sir,

Nothing would give me greater uneasiness [than] if you should suspect that my not answering your Letter proceeded from neglect, it would be a shamefull return for the kindness I have allways experienced from you, the truth is Mr. Coleman [sic] as well as myself is allways so full of business that I have not been able to meet with him so often as I could wish, however when we do meet I have endeavourd to press him to complete the negociation by Letter as I found it impossible to persuade you to come to Town. The last time I saw him he told me he would write to you in a few days, as by this time you have probably receiv'd his Letter, you have a more explicit account than any I can give. In regard to the hundred Pounds for which I told him you would let him have the Tragedy, he said he fear'd that you suspected that he wanted to decline receiving it, which was not the case, that he wish'd to receive it and certainly would when those alterations were made, that if he gave this sum for the Tragedy, he should probably receive more profit from it than he had any right to, that he never would receive any profit but as Manager.

I beg my Compliments to Miss Morrison and am with the
greatest respect your most humble and obedient servant
Joshua Reynolds.

On reading this, Morrison may well have thought that his tragedy was almost certain of acceptance; a few months later, however, he heard from George Colman, who had succeeded Beard as manager of Covent Garden Theatre in 1767. The letter is dated July 23, 1771, and its opening sentence is explained by the death of Colman's wife earlier in the year.

Sir,

My last Letter would very soon have been succeeded by another if a very unexpected & most shocking domestick calamity had not rendered me wholly incapable of attending to every kind of business. I have however lately read your Tragedy over & over with the strictest attention, and after considering it again & again, not without a real partiality to the Author, & the strongest desire of encouraging the most favourable idea of it, I am with much concern obliged to declare it unfit for representation.

The first act is very excellent, & with a few slight alterations, would be a most affecting opening of a Tragedy. In the second act the scene of Iphigenia is also extremely beautiful and interesting; but the other parts of the act have no dramattick merit. The circumstance so much insisted on of Clytemestras's dressing (tho' I believe in Euripides) wd. appear ridiculous on our stage: and the scenes of Memnon and Achilles are weak & illwritten, tho' the entrance of Achilles at that juncture might afford a spirited & interesting scene.

In these acts, as well as the two following, the conduct of the fable is in general just: at least it is most wonderfully improved since your first draught of the Tragedy: and yet the characters & dialogue are so managed as to render the whole cold, uninteresting, & totally destitute of that spirit essential to the success of the Drama. The personages are all suffered

to languish, tho' in situations which require the utmost animation & force. Clytemnestra & Iphigenia, though defective, are indeed better sustained than the rest, but the consequence of the Atridae hardly survives the first act, and Achilles never maintains any consequence at all.

The same remark may in general be applied to the fifth act as to the foregoing. The management of the catastrophe might perhaps admit of alteration. The nature of the subject indeed renders it a very nice point: tho' I think it would be very possible to give it due warmth & interest, were the more arduous task accomplished of perfecting the preceding parts of the Drama.

Believe me, Sir, that in this as well as in all my other Letters to you, I have delivered my real sentiments, tho' it is not without reluctance & regret on the present occasion. I had at first some objections to the subject. These vanished; & in the first draught there were here & there some touches which inclined me to hope that the whole piece might be worked up by the same hand. I am sorry to pronounce it has failed: but *Ponere Totum* is the great secret; and in our exhibitions a common Dauber, possess of that happy knack, will often be attended with tolerable success, and exult at the failure of a superior artist who has only laboured particular parts.

I am, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. Colman.

This letter, which must have left its recipient without further hope for the production of his tragedy, is the last that remains.

Thomas Morrison died on July 20, 1778, and was buried beside his third wife in the churchyard at Great Torrington. The inscription on the tablet placed to his memory in the church nearby says of him that his diffusive charity and benevolence towards man, his amiable manners, the goodness of his heart and his exemplary conduct deservedly endeared him to all his acquaintance.

Hooper Morrison died in 1798; his only son, Thomas Hooper Morrison, in 1824; and his son's widow in 1861. The Yeo Vale property then passed to his son's niece, Eleanora Elizabeth Hammett, who was the wife of John Townsend Kirkwood, great-grandfather of the present writer, and the sole surviving child of Hooper Morrison's youngest--but only married--daughter.

J. T. Kirkwood
White's Club, London.

xvii

A
P I N D A R I C K
O D E
O N
P A I N T I N G.

ADDRESSED TO

JOSHUA REYNOLDS, Esq.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. GRIFFIN, in Catharine-Street,
Strand.

MDCCLXVII.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

THE
P R E F A C E.

AS the subject of this Ode is, from the copiousness of it, almost an inexhaustible one (were I to take notice of all the minuter branches of this art, in which the several masters have distinguish'd themselves, such as the painting of fruit,

flowers, still-life, game, buildings, ships, &c.) I have confin'd myself chiefly to the three greater species of it: namely, History (under which Battle-painting may justly be included) Landskip and Portraiture---and as, in a composition of this length, I imagin'd that the perpetual recurrence of the same measure in such a multiplicity of stanzas would have been rather languid and fatiguing, I have therefore indulg'd myself in many different kinds of metre; but, at the same time, have blended them as harmoniously as I could contrive; by which indulgence I have not only consulted my own ease, but hope I have likewise, in some degree, consulted the pleasure of the Reader, by entertaining his ear, at least, with a little variety of wild music, even if the composition should have no other sort of merit to recommend it.

1 B



A

P I N D A R I C K O D E

O N

P A I N T I N G.

I.

SWEET mimick art! Which to our ravish'd eyes,
From a few blended colours, and the aid
Of attemper'd light and shade,
Bid'st a new creation rise---
Oh! to this song of tributary praise,
Which Poetry thy sister art
Now with friendly homage pays,
Could I contrive thy beauties to impart!
With my easy flowing line
To unite correctness of design, 10
And make a TITIAN'S colouring conspire
With RAPHAEL'S grace, and BUANOROTI'S fire---

II.

And this moment I perceive
(Or does some illusion bless me,
Some sweet madness now possess me?)
My tumultuous bosom heave,
Like the rapt SIBYLL'S when she feels the load,
The painful influence of th' in-rushing God---

III.

Yes---once again with joy I find
(Nor think my friend th' assertion bold) 20
This languid age-enfeebled mind,
As in life's prime, it's powers unfold---
Again th' ideal scenes arise,
The visions stream before my eyes,
Resistless on the rous'd imagination pour,
And paint themselves as lively as before-----

IV.

But be this mental picture grac'd
With all th' adornings fancy can bestow, 30
How is it's beauty now effac'd,
How fast all it's splendor declines,
Out-dazzled by those brighter lines
Which on yonder canvas glow----

V.

Where---by th' Historick pencil's aid

2

What breast can cease to heave, what eye forbear to
flow?

XI.

But sorrow now o'erpow'rd by fear,
Soon is check'd the starting tear,
While in yonder piece I view,
Which VANDERVELD'S bold pencil drew 100
Through all it's gloom'd extent the ocean
Work'd into wild impetuous motion,
And with more dread t' impress the soul
Grimly frowns the lurid sky,
And the condensing vapours roll,
And the fork'd light'nings fly--- 6
With shatter'd sails and low-bent mast
Drives before the whirling blast
The fondering vessel---Hark! I hear
(Or does the eye deceive the ear?) 110
The thunder's voice, the groaning air,
The billows loud roar
While they break on the shore,
The cries of the wreck'd, and their shrieks of despair.

XII.

With pleasure now I turn my sight
From horror and death to those scenes of delight,
Where CLAUDIO'S pencil has essay'd
With every heighten'd touch to trace
The wide-stretch'd Landskip's varied face,
And all it's sweet delusive skill display'd--- 120

XIII.

How the genial colours warm us?
How the gay deceptions charm us?
The objects here advancing nigh
As with brighter tints they bloom---
There receding from the eye
As suffus'd with deeper gloom;
And, while here to bound the scene,
Their tops half-blended with the skies,
The misty mountains intervene, 130
Or rocks in dim confusion rise;
There the wild ocean terminates the view;
It's green waves mingling with th' æthereal blue--- 7

XIV.

And, lo! what numerous beauties grace
Th' enchanted intermediate space!
Rivers winding through the vales,
Here, full in view; there, faintly shewn,
Hillocks, inter-mix'd with dales,
Rural cotts at distance thrown---
There, some foaming cataract pours 140
From the steep cliff it's watery stores;
Here, spreads it's gloom some awful grove,
Through whose thick branches interwove,
While the sun darts his slanting beams,
Delightful to the eye the yellowish lustre streams---

XV.

Above the strong illumin'd skies,
The clouds in shining volumes, roll'd
Their fleecy skirts bedeckt with gold,
Half-dazzle the spectator's eyes---
And does the real solar light 150
Flash at present on the sight?
Or, does the pencil'd radiance only flow,
And flowing with such fervour beat
That e'en with all the dog-days heat
The sultry painting now appears to glow?

XVI.

Beneath some oak's projecting shade,
 Where the shot rays scarce passage find,
 See many a rustick youth and maid
 In languid attitudes reclin'd---
 Mark! with features all relenting, 160
 And with down-cast eyes consenting,
 How each nymph listens to the amorous tale;
 Her half-bar'd bosom, panting with desire,
 Expos'd, as if to catch the cooling gale;
 But more, perhaps, to fan the lover's fire.

XVII.

Ye dear deceptions! how ye move
 The breast to long forgotten love?
 Luxurious scenes! how ye excite
 The traces of distinct delight!
 E'en now around this poor half-frozen heart 170
 Agnizing it's accustom'd smart,
 Like some mild lambent flame the passion plays;
 And, vanquish'd by ideal charms,
 I sink in the imagin'd arms
 Of some sweet PHILLIS of my youthful days.

XVIII.

But, lo! the Portrait of yon hoary sage
 From whose grave lore I learnt in youth
 Many a rigid moral truth,
 Frowns me again to cold unfeeling age---
 How are the soft emotions checkt 180
 While tow'rd me he seems to direct,
 As if alive, his conscious eye;
 At whose austere reproving glance,
 I wake reluctant from my trance,
 And feel with pain each pleasing passion die!---

XIX.

VENUS yokes her purple doves,
 In an instant dispossesst,
 All the little sportive loves
 Hurry---hurry from my breast--
 And the whole charming vision flits away
 Like the night's golden dream at break of envious 190
 day--

XX.

Poor human life! how short the date
 Assign'd thee by relentless Fate!----
 Poor transient Beauty! tender flower!
 Still shorter thy allotted hour!----
 Then stretch the canvass---quick, my Friend,
 Thy pencil seize---thy work attend--
 E'en exempt from deforming diseases,
 How it fades by the torches of Time;
 Every moment that flows 200
 Steals the gloss from the rose;
 Then catch the bright hue while it pleases,
 And fix the fair face in it's prime.

XXI.

Nay-- thus, great Artist, has thy hand
 To half the high-born beauty of the land
 A permanence ensur'd,
 And from th' attacks of wrinkling age,
 And from the pustule's venom'd rage
 Th' untarnish'd form secur'd--

XXII.

It's dear resemblance has at least
 Been in thy faithful lines exprest; 210

In thy firm colours still persists to bloom;
Nor does it cease the heart t' alarm,
Nor does it cease the eye to charm,
E'en when the real Fair is mouldering in her tomb--

XXIII.

And eminent in beauty as in birth,
When the bright LENOX shall as well
In the same gloomy mansion dwell
And mingle with her kindred regal earth,
Still in thy tints shall she survive, 220
With sweet attraction still engage,
Still feed the flame as when alive,
And (e'en improv'd by mellowing age
Each charm of person and of face)
Still sacrifice to every grace---

XXIV.

For we not see the outward form alone
In thy judicious strokes defin'd,
But in them too---distinctly shewn---
The strong-mark'd features of the mind---
Each charmer's attitude and air 230
The internal character declare,
With ease the varied temper we descry,
The full-soul beaming from th' expressive eye--

XXV.

Here---in the sweetly pensive mein
Is the soft gentle Nature seen,
And chaste reserve, and modest fear,
And artless innocence appear---
There---the little fly coquet
Aiming her insidious glances:
For trapping hearts each feature set,
From the canvass makes advances, 240
Nay---if we credit the delusive face,
She seems just springing to our fond embrace---

XXVI.

And if such meaning can be thrown
Into the single form alone---
With what fresh rapture should we gaze,
How would thy kindling genius blaze,
To what superior heights aspire, 12
If working on some grand design,
Where various characters combine
To call forth all it's force, and rouse thy native fire? 250

XXVII.

And that thy hand can equally excel
E'en in this noble part,
This shining branch of thy expressive art,
To it's own happy labour we appeal,
To that rich piece whose pleasing fiction
And splendid tints with full conviction
Strike the spectator, while he views
THALIA and the tragick muse,
Each eager on her side t' engage
Th' unrivall'd Roscius of the British stage--- 260

XXVIII.

Stern and erect the buskin'd dame
In high dramatick wrath appears,
With energy supports her claim
And seems to thunder in his ears;
While the inveigling comick Fair,
With aspect sly and artful air
To draw her favourite to her arms
Strains every nerve; but as she strives,

With the sweet attitude contrives
T' impart the stronger influence to her charms-- 270

XXX.

Betwixt them with distracted mein
The object of their strife is seen;
His eyes with wild confusion roll,
Mixt passions, with alternate sway,
In his ambiguous features play,
And speak as yet the undetermined soul;
But that half-assenting leer,
Obliquely on the little wheedler thrown,
Portends, though checkt with aukward fear,
That soon the apostate will be all her own-- 280

XXX.

Spare, Oh! Time, these colours; spare 'em,
Or with thy tend'rest touch impair 'em:
At least, for some few centuries space,
Shine they with unlessen'd grace!
They shall--yet, Oh! these noble works at last
Must, by the gathering mould o'ericast,
Or rotted by the damps, decay,
Or by the air's corrosive power,
Or e'en the slowly-fretting hour,
Must every trace of beauty melt away. 290

XXXI.

When er'st APELLE'S friend enquir'd,
Why touch'd so oft in every part
With repeated strokes of art,
The picture which already they admir'd,
The Artist, with becoming pride,
"I'm Painting for Eternity," replied.

14

XXXII.

But vain, great Genius! was thy boast;
Long since th' eternal piece is lost---
Thy VENUS now no more expresses,
Rising from her watery bed, 300
The moisture from her twisted tresses
O'er her dazzling bosom spread---
No more thy colours bloom, effac'd by age,
But in the poet's or th' historian's page.

XXXIII.

Oh then---reject not with disdain,
Great Artist, this unpolish'd strain---
Though happy while it may intend
Thy shining merits to display,
It may serve only in the end
My own weak genius to betray, 310
May shew with what presumption I aspire
To build the rhyme
And tow'er sublime
With PINDAR'S vanity without his fire.

XXXIV.

Yet---confide---(for every trifler's breast)
And by this influence I presage
In the long course of rolling years,
When all thy labour disappears, 15
Yet shall this verse descend from age to age,
And, breaking from oblivion's shade, 320
Go on, to flourish while thy paintings fade.

XXXV.

If so---at present though thy hand
May glory of itself command,
Nor can the muse's laurels now,

Though wove with nicer skill than mine,
Help to adorn it, while they twine
Round thy already loaden brow---
Yes---if my presage is not vain---
Yes---if this verse hereafter should remain--- 330
(Though now indeed as needless quite
As at noon's blaze the taper's light)
It may then serve to aggrandize thy name,
And add some splendor to thy future fame.

FINIS.

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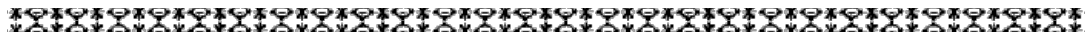
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