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978-1-107-49503-6 - Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds
Edited by Frederick Whitley Hilles
Excerpt
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THE LETTERS

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I, II, & III¹

To the Reverend SAMUEL REYNOLDS

[October, 1740.]

... We see his wife she says she will write to him about it, but I am at present at my Uncle's.²...

[December, 1741.]

...on Thursday next, Sir Robert Walpole sits for his picture, master says he has had a great longing to draw his picture, because so many have been drawn, and none like....

[July, 1742.]

...While I am doing this I am the happiest creature alive.³...

¹ From Cotton's *Gleanings*, 47, 50 *et seq.* They are sentences extracted from young Joshua's letters to his father (1681–1745), a Scholar of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a Fellow of Balliol, and Master of the Plympton School. The approximate dates are determined by the recipient's letters.
² Joshua had just arrived in London and here refers to his master, Thomas Hudson (1701–1779), the most popular portrait-painter of the day, who was at this time in Bath. The uncle mentioned was probably the Rev. John Reynolds, a Fellow of Eton.
³ *I.e.* while he was painting.

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To MISS WESTON

Dear Miss Weston December o.s. 10th 1749

My Memory is so bad that I vow I dont remember whether or no I writ you about my expedition before I left England, since, I am sure I have not, for I have writ to nobody. I saild from Plimouth so long agone as May 11th² and am got no further yet than Port Mahon, but before you shall receive this expect to be on 'tother side the water; I have been kept here near two months by an odd accident, I dont know whether to call it a

1 From the original in my possession. All that is known about the recipient is the romantic story told by John Williams ("Anthony Pasquin") in his *Authentic History of the Professors of Painting . . . in Ireland*, London (1796), 60, where this and the other two letters to Miss Weston were first published. Briefly, she professed an unrequited love for Sir Joshua, and though "many young Gentlemen paid their addresses" to her, she died unmarried, faithful to him "who, by the suavity of his manners, and the force of his accomplishments, became the point of admiration in those circles in which" she moved. She it was, perhaps, who sat for her portrait on October 20, 1757. Reynolds must have met her some time between 1740 and 1743, during his apprenticeship to Hudson, who, like Miss Weston, lived in Great Queen Street.

2 He had sailed as the guest of the Hon. Augustus Keppel (*cf. post*, Letter XLVIII), then a captain in the navy, who had been appointed commodore of a small squadron which was to carry presents to the Dey of Algiers and to demand restitution of the property taken from the *Prince Frederick*. An account of the trip is given in Northcote, i, 28 *et seq.*

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1749]

To MISS WESTON

lucky one or not, a fall from a horse down a precipice, which cut my face in such a manner as confined me to my room, so that I was forced to have recourse to painting, [for my a]musement at first [but have] now finishd as many [pictures as] will come to a hund[red . . .] pounds¹ the unlucky [part of the] Question is my lips are spo[iled for] kissing for my upper [lip was so] bruised that a great p[art was] cut off and the rest [so disfigured] that I have but a [sorry face] to look at, but in [time you] wont perceive the d[effect].]

So far it has been t[he best] tour to me that can [be imagined.] When we were at sea [I occupied] myself with reading [and made] use of a well chosen [library of] Books which belong'd to [the Commodore.² I] was allways in his Cabb[in with him] and drank with him so that [the whole] voyage did not cost m[e a penny.] There will be the more mony you know to spend at the Jubilee.³ Whenever the Commodore went *a shore* at Cadiz Lisbon Gibraltar he allways took me with him and even when he waited upon the Day or King of Algiers I went with him and have had the honour of shaking him by the hand three several times, he

1 The lacunae in the MS. are caused by a part of one of its sides being torn off. "...before his visit to Italy, his price had been three guineas a head." (Leslie and Taylor, i, 101 n.)

2 Thus annotated by Reynolds at the bottom of the page: "Commodore Keppel".

3 1750 was Jubilee year in Rome.

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[More information](#)*To MISS WESTON*

[1749]

Introduced me likewise to the Governour here General Blackney¹ in so strong a manner that the Governour insisted on my not being at any expence whilst I was on the Island but to eat at his house and orderd his secretary to provide me a lodging. You may imagine I spend my time here very agreeably. here are above thirty English Ladies Balls continually at the Generals, and on Board the ships.

When I am settled at Rome I will write to you again to let you know how to direct to me in the mean time I shall be much obliged to you if you will call and see that my Goods are safe and not spoiling I would write to him who has them could I think of his name I should be glad if you had a spare place in your Garret that could they be at your house

From your slave

J REYNOLDS

my compliments to Mr. Charlton and Mr. Wilks² I hear the whold world is to be at the Jubilee I hope to see Mr Charlton at least there At Lisbon I saw a Bull fight and another at Cadiz which will be the subject of many conversations hereafter

¹ William Blakeney (1672–1761), an Irishman of English descent, who first gained fame as Lieutenant-governor of Stirling Castle during the Rebellion of 1745. In 1756 he defended Minorca against the French, gallantly but unsuccessfully.

² A Mr Charlton appears in his pocket-book for January and August, 1757. “Mr. Wilks” is John, the notorious politician (1727–1797).

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[More information](#)V¹

To LORD EDGCUMBE

My Lord,

[1750.]

I am now (thanks to your Lordship) at the height of my wishes, in the midst of the greatest works of art² the world has produced. I had a very long passage, though a very pleasant one. I am at last in Rome, having seen many places and sights which I never thought of seeing. I have been at Lisbon, Cadiz, Gibraltar, Algiers, and Mahon. The Commodore staid at Lisbon a week, in which time there happened two of the greatest sights that could be seen had he staid there a whole year—a bull feast, and the procession of *Corpus Christi*. Your Lordship will excuse me if I say, that from the kind treatment and great civilities I have received from the Commodore, I fear I have even laid your Lordship under obligations to him upon my account; since from nothing but your Lordship's recommendation I could possibly expect to meet with that polite behaviour with which I have always been treated: I had the use of his cabin and his study of books as if they had been my own; and when he went ashore, he generally took me with him; so that I not only had an opportunity of

¹ From Northcote, i, 34 *et seq.* The recipient, Richard, Baron Edgcumbe of Mount Edgcumbe (1680–1758), had introduced Reynolds to Keppel.

² In the first edition this word is followed by “that”.

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[1750]

seeing a great deal, but I saw it with all the advantages as if I had travelled as his equal. At Cadiz I saw another bull feast. I ask your Lordship's pardon for being guilty of that usual piece of ill manners in speaking so much of myself; I should not have committed it after such favours. Impute my not writing to the true reason: I thought it impertinent to write to your Lordship without a proper reason; to let you know where I am, if your Lordship should have any commands here that I am capable of executing. Since I have been in Rome, I have been looking about the palaces for a fit picture of which I might take a copy to present your Lordship with; though it would have been much more genteel to have sent the picture without any previous intimation of it. Any one you choose, the larger the better, as it will have a more grand effect when hung up, and a kind of painting I like more than little. Though¹ it will be too great a presumption to expect it, I must needs own I most impatiently wait for this order from your Lordship.

I am, &c. &c.

JOSHUA REYNOLDS

¹ In the first edition this word is followed by "perhaps".

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VI¹*To MISS WESTON*

Dear Miss Weston, [1750.]

I wonder I have not receiv'd an Answer to all the Letters I have sent you this is the third from Rome and one before from Mahon² I suppose they have all miscarried so I take this opportunity of sending one by my good Friend Mr. Dalton³ and a Worthy man he is, I hope he will deliver this Letter himself that you may be acquainted and when I return we shall have many agreeable Jaunts together.

I shall set out from Rome immediatly after the next Lent or Carnival, Give my service to Mr. Charlton and Mr. Wilks and tell them that if it was possible to give them an Idea of what is to be seen here, the Remains of Antiquity the Sculpture, Paintings, Architecture &c., they would think it worth while, nay they would break through all obstacles and set out immediatly for Rome, then

¹ From the original in the Gratz Collection, in the possession of the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The letter is endorsed in a contemporary hand: "Addressed to Miss Weston of Great Queen St./Lincoln's Inn Fields/ and written at Rome in 1751". I have dated it 1750 because of the reference to "this Jubilee or Holy year".

² Letter iv in this edition.

³ Richard Dalton (1720–1791), at this time a student of art, later became librarian for George III and first antiquary of the Royal Academy.

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[1750]

the Carnival of which I have heard so much that I am resolved to stay here to see the next which they say will exceed all the former since there has been none this Jubilee or Holy year so the next they will make up for the old & the new, If they would set out so as to be here a Month or two before the Carnival after which Ashley¹ and I will accompany them (as we intend to do otherwise) to Venice and from thence to Paris seeing every thing between those two places that are worth seeing going now and then a little out of the direct Road and from thence to England or perhaps we shall go to Antwerp first. I am not in jest now but good earnest and wish they would really think of it Mr. Dalton will acquaint them with the time such a journey will take and the Expence, and the most expeditious way of traveling, I don't think they need be out of England above a year I wish them a good journey if they will write me when they set out I will come as far as Florence to meet them.

send me all the newes you know, not forgetting to say something about my Goods

I am My Dear Miss Weston

Yours

J REYNOLDS

¹ John Astley (*d.* 1787), portrait-painter, who, like Reynolds, had studied under Hudson. His portrait by Reynolds in black and white chalks on blue paper is in the Print Room of the British Museum.