

I N T E R L U D E III.

Bookfeller. **P**OETRY has been called a fister-art both to Painting and to Mufic; I wifh to know, what are the particulars of their relationship?

Poet. It has been already obferved, that the principal part of the language of poetry confifts of thofe words, which are expreffive of the ideas, which we originally receive by the organ of fight; and in this it nearly indeed refembles painting; which can exprefs itfelf in no other way, but by exciting the ideas or fenfations belonging to the fenfe of vifion. But befides this effential fimilitude in the language of the poetic pen and pencil, thefe two fifters refemble each other, if I may fo fay, in many of their habits and manners. The painter, to produce a ftrong effect, makes a few parts of his picture large, diftinct, and luminous, and keeps the remainder in fhadow, or even beneath its natural fize and colour, to give eminence to the principal figure. This is fimilar to the common

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manner of poetic composition, where the subordinate characters are kept down, to elevate and give consequence to the hero or heroine of the piece.

In the fourth aisle of the cathedral church at Lichfield, there is an antient monument of a recumbent figure; the head and neck of which lie on a roll of matting in a kind of niche or cavern in the wall; and about five feet distant horizontally in another opening or cavern in the wall are seen the feet and ankles, with some folds of garment, lying also on a matt; and though the intermediate space is a solid stone-wall, yet the imagination supplies the deficiency, and the whole figure seems to exist before our eyes. Does not this resemble one of the arts both of the painter and the poet? The former often shows a muscular arm amidst a group of figures, or an impassioned face; and, hiding the remainder of the body behind other objects, leaves the imagination to compleat it. The latter, describing a single feature or attitude in picturesque words, produces before the mind an image of the whole.

I remember seeing a print, in which was represented a shrivelled hand stretched through an iron grate, in the stone floor of a prison-yard, to reach at a mess of porrage, which affected me with more horrid ideas of the distress of the prisoner in the dungeon below, than could have been perhaps produced by an exhibition of the whole person. And in the following beautiful scenery from the *Midsummer-night's dream*, (in which I have taken the liberty to alter the place of a comma), the description of the swimming step and prominent belly bring the whole figure before our eyes with the distinctness of reality.

When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive,
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

Which

Which she with pretty and with swimming gate,
 Following her womb, (then rich with my young squire),
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land.

There is a third sister-feature, which belongs both to the pictorial and poetic art; and that is the making sentiments and passions visible, as it were, to the spectator; this is done in both arts by describing or portraying the effects or changes which those sentiments or passions produce upon the body. At the end of the unaltered play of Lear, there is a beautiful example of poetic painting; the old King is introduced as dying from grief for the loss of Cordelia; at this crisis, Shakespear, conceiving the robe of the king to be held together by a clasp, represents him as only saying to an attendant courtier in a faint voice, "Pray, Sir, undo this button,—thank you, Sir," and dies. Thus by the art of the poet, the oppression at the bosom of the dying King is made visible, not described in words.

B. What are the features, in which these Sister-arts do not resemble each other?

P. The ingenious Bishop Berkeley, in his Treatise on Vision, a work of great ability, has evinced, that the colours, which we see, are only a language suggesting to our minds the ideas of solidity and extension, which we had before received by the sense of touch. Thus when we view the trunk of a tree, our eye can only acquaint us with the colours or shades; and from the previous experience of the sense of touch, these suggest to us the cylindrical form, with the prominent or depressed wrinkles on it. From hence it appears, that

there is the strictest analogy between colours and sounds; as they are both but languages, which do not represent their correspondent ideas, but only suggest them to the mind from the habits or associations of previous experience. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, that the more artificial arrangements of these two languages by the poet and the painter bear a similar analogy.

But in one circumstance the Pen and the Pencil differ widely from each other, and that is the quantity of Time which they can include in their respective representations. The former can unravel a long series of events, which may constitute the history of days or years; while the latter can exhibit only the actions of a moment. The Poet is happier in describing successive scenes; the Painter in representing stationary ones: both have their advantages.

Where the passions are introduced, as the Poet, on one hand, has the power gradually to prepare the mind of his reader by previous climacteric circumstances; the Painter, on the other hand, can throw stronger illumination and distinctness on the principal moment or catastrophe of the action; besides the advantage he has in using an universal language, which can be *read* in an instant of time. Thus where a great number of figures are all seen together, supporting or contrasting each other, and contributing to explain or aggrandize the principal effect, we view a picture with agreeable surprize, and contemplate it with unceasing admiration. In the representation of the sacrifice of Jephtha's Daughter, a print done from a painting of Ant. Coypel, at one glance of the eye we read all the interesting passages of the last act of a well-written tragedy; so much poetry is there condensed into a moment of time.

B. Will you now oblige me with an account of the relationship between Poetry, and her other sister, Music?

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P. In the poetry of our language I don't think we are to look for any thing analogous to the notes of the gamut ; for, except perhaps in a few exclamations or interrogations, we are at liberty to raise or sink our voice an octave or two at pleasure, without altering the sense of the words. Hence, if either poetry or prose be read in melodious tones of voice, as is done in recitativo, or in chaunting, it must depend on the speaker, not on the writer : for though words may be selected which are less harsh than others, that is, which have fewer sudden stops or abrupt consonants amongst the vowels, or with fewer sibilant letters, yet this does not constitute melody, which consists of agreeable successions of notes referable to the gamut ; or harmony, which consists of agreeable combinations of them. If the Chinese language has many words of similar articulation, which yet signify different ideas, when spoken in a higher or lower musical note, as some travellers affirm, it must be capable of much finer effect, in respect to the audible part of poetry, than any language we are acquainted with.

There is however another affinity, in which poetry and music more nearly resemble each other than has generally been understood, and that is in their measure or time. There are but two kinds of time acknowledged in modern music, which are called *triple time*, and *common time*. The former of these is divided by bars, each bar containing three crotchets, or a proportional number of their subdivisions into quavers and semiquavers. This kind of time is analogous to the measure of our heroic or iambic verse. Thus the two following couplets are each of them divided into five bars of *triple time*, each bar consisting of two crotchets and two quavers ; nor can they be divided into bars analogous to *common time* without the bars interfering with some of the crotchets, so as to divide them.

3 Soft-warbling beaks | in each bright blof | som move,
 4 And vo | cal rosebuds thrill | the enchanted grove, |

In these lines there is a quaver and a crochet alternately in every bar, except in the last, in which *the in* make two femiquavers; the *e* is supposed by Grammarians to be cut off, which any one's ear will readily determine not to be true.

3 Life buds or breathes | from Indus to | the poles,
 4 And the | vast surface kind | les, as it rolls. |

In these lines there is a quaver and a crotchet alternately in the first bar; a quaver, two crotchets, and a quaver, make the second bar. In the third bar there is a quaver, a crotchet, and a rest after the crotchet, that is, after the word *poles*, and two quavers begin the next line. The fourth bar consists of quavers and crotchets alternately. In the last bar there is a quaver, and a rest after it, viz. after the word *kindles*; and then two quavers and a crotchet. You will clearly perceive the truth of this, if you prick the musical characters above mentioned under the verses.

The *common time* of musicians is divided into bars, each of which contains four crotchets, or a proportional number of their subdivision into quavers and femiquavers. This kind of musical time is analogous to the dactyle verses of our language, the most popular instances of which are in Mr. Anstie's Bath-Guide. In this kind of verse the bar does not begin till after the first or second syllable; and where the verse is quite complete, and written by a good ear, these first syllables added to the last complete the bar, exactly in this also corresponding with many pieces of music;

2 Yet | if one may guess by the | size of his calf, Sir,
 4 He | weighs about twenty-three | stone and a half, Sir.

2 Master | Mamozet's head was not | finished so soon,
 4 For it | took up the barber a | whole afternoon.

In these lines each bar consists of a crotchet, two quavers, another crotchet, and two more quavers: which are equal to four crotchets, and, like many bars of *common time* in music, may be subdivided into two in beating time without disturbing the measure.

The following verses from Shenstone belong likewise to common time:

$\frac{2}{4}$ A | river or a fea |
 Was to him a dish | of tea,
 And a king | dom bread and butter.

The first and second bars consist each of a crotchet, a quaver, a crotchet, a quaver, a crotchet. The third bar consists of a quaver, two crotchets, a quaver, a crotchet. The last bar is not complete without adding the letter A, which begins the first line, and then it consists of a quaver, a crotchet, a quaver, a crotchet, two quavers.

It must be observed, that the crotchets in triple time are in general played by musicians slower than those of common time, and hence minuets are generally pricked in triple time, and country dances generally in common time. So the verses above related, which are analogous to *triple time*, are generally read slower than those analogous to *common time*; and are thence generally used for graver compositions. I suppose all the different kinds of verses to be found in our odes, which have any measure at all, might be arranged under one or other of these two musical times; allowing a note or two sometimes to precede the commencement of the bar, and occasional rests, as in musical compositions: if this was attended to by those who set poetry to music, it is probable the sound and sense would oftener coincide. Whether these musical times can be applied to the lyric and heroic verses of the Greek and Latin poets, I do not pretend to determine; certain it is, that the dactyle verse of our language, when it is ended with a double rhyme, much resembles the measure of Homer and Virgil, except in the length of the lines.

B. Then there is no relationship between the other two of these sister-ladies, Painting and Music?

P. There is at least a mathematical relationship, or perhaps I ought rather to have said a metaphysical relationship between them. Sir Isaac Newton has observed, that the breadths of the seven primary colours in the Sun's image refracted by a prism are proportional to the seven musical notes of the gamut, or to the intervals of the eight sounds contained in an octave, that is, proportional to the following numbers :

Sol.	La.	Fa.	Sol.	La.	Mi.	Fa.	Sol.
Red.	Orange.	Yellow.	Green.	Blue.	Indigo.	Violet.	
$\frac{1}{9}$	$\frac{1}{16}$	$\frac{1}{10}$	$\frac{1}{9}$	$\frac{1}{16}$	$\frac{1}{16}$	$\frac{1}{9}$	

Newton's Optics, Book I. part 2. prop. 3 and 6. Dr. Smith, in his Harmonics, has an explanatory note upon this happy discovery, as he terms it, of Newton. Sect. 4. Art. 7.

From this curious coincidence, it has been proposed to produce a luminous music, consisting of successions or combinations of colours, analogous to a tune in respect to the proportions above mentioned. This might be performed by a strong light, made by means of Mr. Argand's lamps, passing through coloured glasses, and falling on a defined part of a wall, with moveable blinds before them, which might communicate with the keys of a harpsichord; and thus produce at the same time visible and audible music in unison with each other.

The execution of this idea is said by Mr. Guyot to have been attempted by Father Caffel without much success.

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If this should be again attempted, there is another curious coincidence between sounds and colours, discovered by Dr. Darwin of Shrewsbury, and explained in a paper on what he calls *Ocular Spectra*, in the Philosophical Transactions, Vol. LXXVI. which might much facilitate the execution of it. In this treatise the Doctor has demonstrated, that we see certain colours, not only with greater ease and distinctness, but with relief and pleasure, after having for some time contemplated other certain colours; as green after red, or red after green; orange after blue, or blue after orange; yellow after violet, or violet after yellow. This he shews arises from the *ocular spectrum* of the colour last viewed coinciding with the *irritation* of the colour now under contemplation. Now as the pleasure we receive from the sensation of melodious notes, independent of the previous associations of agreeable ideas with them, must arise from our hearing some proportions of sounds after others more easily, distinctly, or agreeably; and as there is a coincidence between the proportions of the primary colours, and the primary sounds, if they may be so called; he argues, that the same laws must govern the sensations of both. In this circumstance, therefore, consists the sisterhood of Music and Painting; and hence they claim a right to borrow metaphors from each other; musicians to speak of the brilliancy of sounds, and the light and shade of a concerto; and painters of the harmony of colours, and the tone of a picture. Thus it was not quite so absurd, as was imagined, when the blind man asked if the colour scarlet was like the sound of a trumpet. As the coincidence or opposition of these *ocular spectra*, (or colours which remain in the eye after having for some time contemplated a luminous object) are more easily and more accurately ascertained, now their laws have been investigated by Dr. Darwin, than the *relics* of evanescent sounds upon the ear; it is to be wished that some ingenious musician would further cultivate this curious field of science: for if visible music can be agreeably produced, it would be more easy to add sentiment to it by the representations of groves and Cupids, and sleeping

nymphs amid the changing colours, than is commonly done by the words of audible music.

B. You mentioned the greater length of the verses of Homer and Virgil. Had not these poets great advantage in the superiority of their languages compared to our own?

P. It is probable, that the introduction of philosophy into a country must gradually affect the language of it; as philosophy converses in more appropriated and abstracted terms; and thus by degrees eradicates the abundance of metaphor, which is used in the more early ages of society. Otherwise, though the Greek compound words have more vowels in proportion to their consonants than the English ones, yet the modes of compounding them are less general; as may be seen by variety of instances given in the preface of the Translators, prefixed to the SYSTEM OF VEGETABLES by the Lichfield Society; which happy property of our own language rendered that translation of Linneus as expressive and as concise, perhaps more so than the original.

And in one respect, I believe, the English language serves the purpose of poetry better than the antient ones, I mean in the greater ease of producing personifications; for as our nouns have in general no genders affixed to them in prose-compositions, and in the habits of conversation, they become easily personified only by the addition of a masculine or feminine pronoun, as,

Pale Melancholy sits, and round *her* throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose.

Pope's Abelard.

And

And secondly, as most of our nouns have the article *a* or *the* prefixed to them in prose-writing and in conversation, they in general become personified even by the omission of these articles; as in the bold figure of Shipwreck in Miss Seward's Elegy on Capt. Cook :

But round the steepy rocks and dangerous strand
Rolls the white surf, and SHIPWRECK guards the land.

Add to this, that if the verses in our heroic poetry be shorter than those of the ancients, our words likewise are shorter; and in respect to their measure or time, which has erroneously been called melody and harmony, I doubt, from what has been said above, whether we are so much inferior as is generally believed; since many passages, which have been stolen from antient poets, have been translated into our language without losing any thing of the beauty of the verification.

B. I am glad to hear you acknowledge the thefts of the modern poets from the antient ones, whose works I suppose have been reckoned lawful plunder in all ages. But have not you borrowed epithets, phrases, and even half a line occasionally from modern poems?

P. It may be difficult to mark the exact boundary of what should be termed plagiarism: where the sentiment and expression are both borrowed without due acknowledgement, there can be no doubt;—single words, on the contrary, taken from other authors, cannot convict a writer of plagiarism; they are lawful game, wild by nature, the property of all who can capture them;—and perhaps a few common flowers of speech may be gathered, as we pass over our

neighbour's inclosure, without stigmatizing us with the title of thieves; but we must not therefore plunder his cultivated fruit.

The four lines at the end of the plant *Upas* are imitated from Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*. The line in the episode adjoined to *Cassia*, "The salt tear mingling with the milk he sips," is from an interesting and humane passage in Langhorne's *Justice of Peace*. There are probably many others, which, if I could recollect them, should here be acknowledged. As it is, like exotic plants, their mixture with the natives ones, I hope, adds beauty to my Botanic Garden:—and such as it is, *Mr. Bookseller*, I now leave it to you to desire the Ladies and Gentlemen to walk in; but please to apprise them, that, like the spectators at an unskilful exhibition in some village-barn, I hope they will make Good-humour one of their party; and thus themselves supply the defects of the representation.