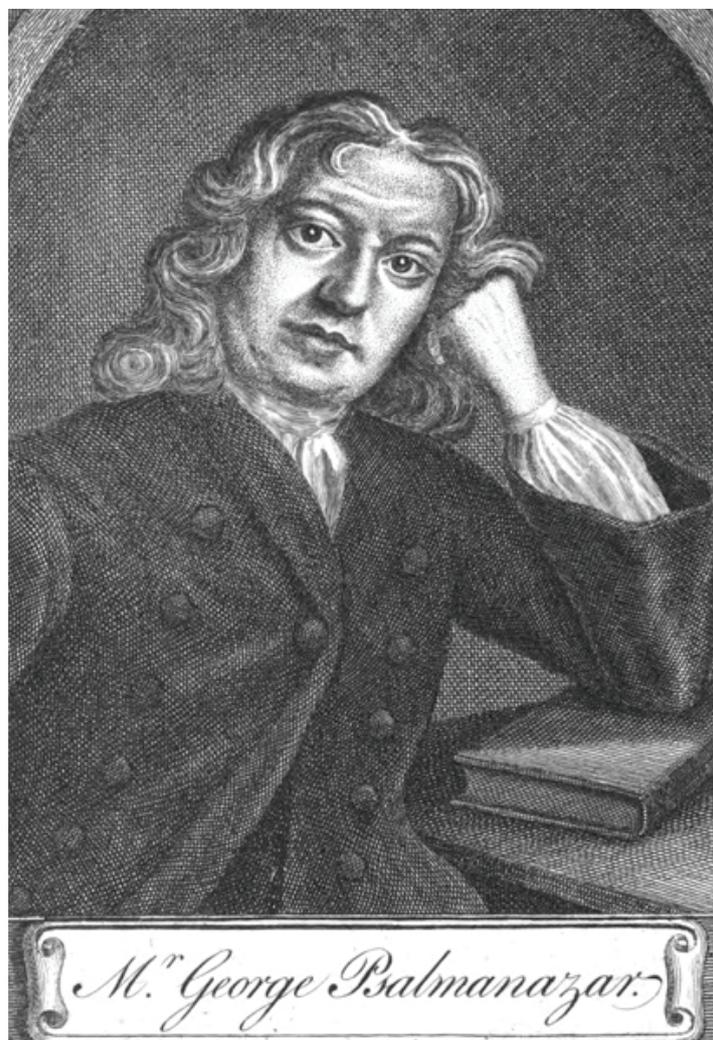


THE LAST WILL
AND TESTAMENT
OF ME A POOR
SINFUL AND
WORTHLESS
CREATURE
COMMONLY
KNOWN BY THE
ASSUMED NAME
OF GEORGE
PSALMANAZAR

George Psalmanazar was a bogus Taiwanese man who gained a reputation in learned social circles in early eighteenth-century London. His book *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa* (1704), portraying a bizarre wonderland of naked savages, floating villages, Satanism, cannibalism, and human sacrifice, never failed to satiate the curious desire for projecting the alterity of the other. Despite having white skin and blond hair, Psalmanazar managed to get by as Formosan, partly because of his hyper-exotic performance of eating raw meat and sleeping with his eyes open, and partly because of the lack of proper knowledge about Taiwan in particular and ethnicity in general. As part of the Taipei Biennial 2012, The Museum of Psalmanazar is intended to realize his fantastical Formosa, invoking the crossing of his spirit from early Enlightenment London to the Taiwan of the present. Until today the real identity of Psalmanazar remains unknown, though his accent caused some to believe he was French. Ultimately he was a man who identified more with the fictitious than with the original and the real. The following excerpt from his book *Memoirs of ***** (1765)—which was to be published posthumously, though it was still signed with his alias—is his last will and testament, in which he confesses to having been a fraud.

Thy ever blessed and unerring Will, Oh most gracious, though offended God! be done by me and all the world, whether for life or death. Into thy all-merciful hands I commit my soul, as unto a most gracious Father, who, though justly provoked by my past vain, and wicked life, but more especially so during the youthful sallies of a rash and unthinking part of it, has yet been graciously pleased, by thy undeserved grace and mercy, to preserve me from the reigning errors and heresies, and the more deplorable apostasy and infidelity of the present age, and enabled me to take a constant and steadfast hold on the only author of our salvation, thy ever adorable and divine Son Jesus Christ, our powerful and meritorious Redeemer, from whose alone, and all-powerful intercession and merit. I desire that my body, may be kept so long above ground, as decency or conveniency will permit, and afterwards conveyed to the common burying-ground, and there interred in some obscure corner of it, without any further ceremony or formality than is used to the bodies of the deceased pensioners where I happen to die, and about the same time of the day, and that the whole may be performed in the lowest and cheapest

manner. And it is my earnest request, that my body be not enclosed in any kind of coffin, but only decently laid in what is called a shell of the lowest value, and without lid or other covering which may hinder the natural earth from covering it all around.



But the principal manuscript I thought myself in duty bound to leave behind, is a faithful narrative of my education, and the sallies of my wretched youthful years, and the various ways by which I was in some measure unavoidably led into the base and shameful imposture of passing upon the world for a native of Formosa, and a convert to Christianity, and backing it with a fictitious account of that island, and of my own travels, conversion, and etc.. All or most of it hatched in my own brain, without regard to truth and honesty. I have long since disclaimed even publicly all but the shame and guilt of that vile imposition, yet as long as I knew there were still two editions of that

scandalous romance remaining in England, besides the several versions it had abroad. I thought it incumbent upon me to undeceive the world, by unraveling that whole mystery of iniquity in a posthumous work, which would be less liable to suspicion, as the author would be far out of the influence of any sinister motives that might induce him to deviate from the truth. All that I shall add concerning it is, that it was began above twenty-five years ago with that view, and no other, during a long recess in the country, accompanied with a threatening disease, and since then continued in my most serious hours, as any thing new presented itself; so that it hath little else to recommend itself but its plainness and sincerity, except here and there some useful observations and innuendos on those branches of learning in which I had been concerned, in the producing a more perfect body of Universal History, and more answerable to its title than that which hath already passed a second edition. And these, I thought, might be more deserving a place in that narrative, as the usefulness of them would in a great measure make amends for the small charge of the whole. If it therefore shall be judged worth printing, I desire it may be sold to the highest bidder, in order to pay my arrears for my lodgings, and to defray my funeral; and I further request that it be printed in the plain and undisguised manner in which I have written it, and without alteration or embellishment. I hope the whole is written in the true, sincere spirit of a person awakened by a miracle of mercy, unto a deep sense of his folly, guilt, and danger, and is desirous, above all things, to give God the whole glory of so gracious a change, and to show the various steps by which his Divine Providence brought it about.

The whole of the account contains fourteen pages of Preface, and about ninety-three more of the said relation, written in my own hand with a proper title, and will be found in the deep drawer on the right hand of my white cabinet. However, if the obscurity I have lived in, during such a series of years, should make it needless to revive a thing in all likelihood so long since forgot, I cannot but wish, that so much of it was published in some weekly paper, as might inform the world, especially those who have still by them the above-mentioned fabulous account of the Island of Formosa that I have long since owned

both in conversation and in print, that it was no other than a mere forgery of my own devising, a scandalous imposition on the public, and such, as I think myself bound to beg God and the world pardon for writing, and have been long since, as I am to this day, and shall be as long as I live, heartily sorry for, and ashamed of.

These I do hereby solemnly declare and testify to be my last Will and Testament; and in witness thereof have thereto set my name, on the 23d day of April, in the year of our Lord 1752, O. S. and in the 73rd year of my age.

— George Psalmanazar