

Benjamin Ralph's *School of Raphael* (1759): Praise for Hogarth and a Direct Source for Reynolds

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Joshua Reynolds' first three published literary works appeared in his friend Samuel Johnson's paper, *The Idler*, a supplement to *The Universal Chronicle: or Weekly Gazette*. The first of these essays, written anonymously, was printed in the *Idler's* 76th issue on 29 September 1759. In it Reynolds parodies a self-styled 'Connoisseur' of the variety defined by Dr Johnson in his *Dictionary* of 1755, as a 'pretended critick'. Fresh from his Grand Tour of Italy Reynolds' 'Connoisseur' plies his newly gleaned knowledge of the Old Masters, scrutinising the Raphael cartoons, then in Hampton Court, for blemishes and mistakes. Reynolds' ridicule is directed mainly at the 'Critick [...] who judges by narrow rules, and those too often false [...] for whatever part of an art can be executed or criticised by rules, that part is no longer the work of Genius, which implies excellence out of the reach of rules'. The 'Connoisseur' is eager to show his familiarity with traditional academic terms, and current principles of beauty, remarking of Raphael's *St Paul Preaching at Athens*,

what nobleness, what dignity there is in that figure of *St. Paul*; and yet 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, which constitutes Grace and Beauty. You would not then have seen the upright figure standing equally on both legs, and both hands stretched forward in the same direction, and his drapery without the least art of disposition.¹

The formal aesthetic principles called for by the 'Connoisseur', the 'art of Contrast' and the appropriate arrangement of drapery, had been promulgated by the French Academy since the seventeenth century. Roger de Piles' *Cours de peinture par principes* (Paris 1708) had included more than one chapter on 'Draperies'. It advocated that painted folds be well contrasted. These rules were taken over by such English eighteenth-century writers on art as the portrait painter Jonathan Richardson, who in 1715 encouraged contrast and variety, with no limbs answering one another in parallel lines, and draperies with 'broad Masses of Light, and Shadow, and noble large Folds to give a Greatness; and These artfully subdivided, add Grace'.²

In the eighteenth century such rules were carried to extremes, and it is not surprising that an artist like Reynolds should parody their application, inventing a 'Connoisseur' who (mis)uses them to point out the 'mistakes' of Raphael! What does surprise us is that the 'Connoisseur' advocates beside them the 'flowing line, which constitutes Grace and Beauty'. This is an

obvious allusion to William Hogarth's 'Line of Beauty and Grace' as laid down in his *Analysis of Beauty* of 1753. For Michael Kitson this was the first sustained anti-academic treatise in the history of aesthetics.³

It has always been assumed that Reynolds' essay was written as a direct response to the *Analysis of Beauty*. However, it appeared nearly six years after the publication of Hogarth's treatise. By then the direct response to it was over. In 1752 Reynolds had returned from two years in Rome studying Raphael and Michelangelo, and acquiring a taste for the 'Grand Style'. Reynolds would surely have reacted well before 1759 to Hogarth's treatise, with its exhortation to study defective nature as opposed to the idealisation of the imperfect.

Indeed, there exists an undated manuscript drafted by Reynolds, called 'Observations on Hogarth'. It remained unpublished during the author's lifetime. Historians have been inclined to assign it to the same period as the *Idler* essay, as both deal with the 'Line of Beauty'. However, I am inclined to place the 'Observations' as early as 1754, the year of the greatest response to Hogarth's book. The 'Observations' reveal Reynolds' opinion that Hogarth was less 'profound a Philosopher as it appears he thinks himself'. He points out the lack of philosophical substantiation in the 'Line of Beauty', criticising Hogarth's accusation of his 'Brother Artists', that 'tho they knew the beauty of the line they did not know it Philosophically'. Reynolds goes on to point out: 'one might reasonably expect [...] a philosophical investigation of [the] cause of the beauty of this line. Notwithstanding this air of superiority & self-sufficiency, he has given no philosophical account why this line of Beauty is so pleasing, it is so only because it is so.'⁴

This is not the cool irony one would expect from a critic who has had time to recover from an initial emotional reaction. It is a passionate discussion of Hogarth's theories. Amongst other attacks on Hogarth, Reynolds' 'Observations' must have been a direct response to the newly published *Analysis of Beauty*. Hudson, too, thinks that Reynolds 'originally intended to reply to Hogarth more directly'.⁵

Perhaps the 'Observations' were also prompted by the calls in 1753-1754 for a new academy of fine arts in London. Both the Society of Dilettanti and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce had put forward plans for a public academy. Reynolds and other London artists were supportive of these proposals. Hogarth was not. He and his adversaries are depicted in the print, *A Club of Artists* (1754), by Thomas Burgess. In Paul Sandby's caricature, *Puggs Graces* (1753/54), Hogarth is shown in his studio using three completely un-ideal, graceless Graces as models for his painting, 'Pharaoh's Daughter'. Significantly, against a stool in the right foreground leans an open book, inscribed 'Reasons against a Publick Academy, 1753'.⁶

If the views in Reynolds' 'Observations' were aired around 1754, something else must have prompted the 'Connoisseur' essay. An almost completely forgotten book appeared in 1759. This was Benjamin Ralph's *The School of Raphael, or the Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting*.⁷ It

was printed by John Boydell. Advertisements in the *London Chronicle* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* show it to have been published in the May before the *Idler* essay appeared.⁸ Ralph, like the 'Connoisseur', promotes traditional academic rules, and combines them with Hogarth's anti-academic 'Line of Beauty', but he is not being ironic. This earnest fusion of two different theories of art was unusual, if not unique, for the period. Perhaps this is why the book came to Reynolds' attention. Ralph's *School* has been largely ignored by modern scholars. In its day, however, it may well have had an effect. My intention is to examine the book, its contents, and its possible impact on Reynolds' writing.

We know little about Benjamin Ralph. It is possible that he was the same Benjamin Ralph noted as a member and 'Honorary Exhibitor' of the Society of Artists of Great Britain.⁹ Only four modern scholars refer to his *School of Raphael*: Johannes Dobai, Werner Busch, Stephanie Dickey and Arline Meyer.¹⁰ According to Dobai, Ralph first published his *School* in 1754, with a second edition in 1759. I have been unable to trace the earlier edition. The 1759 edition includes a thorough 'Description of the Cartons of Raphael Urbin'. This part of the book appears again in 1764, as a separate volume, under the title *A Description of the Cartons of Raphael Urbin in the Queen's Palace*, after the seven pictures had been moved to Buckingham Palace. The advertisement in the front of this abridged edition tells us that the genesis of the publication went back to the year 1754, when

it was thought, that by adding a Number of Plates, describing the Rudiments of Design, the Anatomy of the Human Body, and Several of the best Antique Statues, a most useful and elegant Drawing Book might be made, in order to give young Students a true Taste of Design, and an early Acquaintance with the great Ideas of Raphael.

Later editions of the *School of Raphael*, published by John Boydell and his nephew, or their nineteenth-century successors, appeared in 1782 and 1825. There were also numerous other issues with new title pages. Curiously, in the early nineteenth century the book was occasionally bound with Reynolds' *Discourses*.

The later editions indicate that, in spite of the high price of one guinea, Ralph's *School* must have enjoyed a measure of popularity in England throughout the century. The second part of the book contained valuable engravings by the best French engravers of the period: Louis Desplaces, Bernard Lépicier, Nicolas Pigné, Nicolas Henri Tardieu, Simon Henri Thomassin, Gaspard Duchange and his pupils, Nicolas Gabriel Dupuis and Nicolas-Dauphin Beauvais. All had copied original drawings by Nicolas Dorigny, who, claimed the subtitle, had 'inspected' the execution of the prints. As he lived in London only from 1711 to 1724, the major part of the illustrations in Ralph's book must have been taken from a rare volume of forty-five plates showing ninety heads (two on each plate) engraved from Dorigny's drawings of the Raphael cartoons, the *Recueil de XC têtes*, published

without text in London in 1722. As comparison proves, the *School of Raphael* is an expanded English version of the *Recueil*, with forty-five additional plates depicting outlines of the ninety heads, and twelve further plates.

The *School of Raphael* with its 102 copper plates was an immense undertaking which would certainly have made an impression upon London's art world. Ralph understood his treatise first and foremost as a manual of correct drawing, mainly of the different human passions. Unlike other texts in this field, such as Charles Le Brun's *Method to Learn to Design the Passions*, which was aimed at the advanced history painter, Ralph's *School* was written to 'contribute to the proficiency of every one', like Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, which was for 'ladies, as well as gentlemen', 'whose judgments are unprejudiced'.¹¹

The first part of Ralph's book teaches the fundamentals of drawing and begins with simple geometric figures. In the chapter 'Of the Study of Geometrical Figures' (p.3f.), the author states that 'a perfect Designer [...] should be acquainted with the form and construction of the most simple Geometrical Figures, which are in fact the basis of the Art he would study'. The student is instructed to bisect a line, for example, or to divide a circle into four equal parts, 'to erect a Perpendicular', 'to form a Parallelogram, or Long Square', or 'to form an Equilateral Triangle' (cf. plate I, fig.1-8). This sounds somewhat artificial, but such ideas were current throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹² Hogarth, too, produced a set of plates representing cycloids, diagrams and equilateral triangles.¹³

The main chapter of Ralph's book goes under the heading 'Observations on the Art of Designing or Drawing'. Here, practical knowledge is not everything. Equal attention must be paid to the 'theory of design'. The best authors have 'laid down rules for the attainment of the art scientifically'. The student must 'frequently examine good pictures in the presence of such as are esteemed judges of the art'. These are ways of 'acquiring taste' (p.7). Here Ralph is indebted to Jonathan Richardson's ideal of the connoisseur as a fine gentleman, well informed in all matters of taste and 'distinguished as one that has Wit, and Learning'.¹⁴

Practical study must be assisted by theory, 'the great support of painting': 'By practice the hand acquires a facility which gives freedom [...] which must constantly be corrected by judgment in placing every particular part in the object to be delineated in its proper order' (p.7). The practical instructions of the main chapter begin with the 'manual part of designing', namely 'Outline and Relief. The first of these, with regard to *human figures*, comprehends *anatomy* and *proportion*; the second, *light* and *shadow*'. Here, in keeping with the method of drawing taught at the time, the budding artist or dilettante is recommended to 'begin rather with parts than a whole figure' (p.7). This was common of instructive manuals, going back more than a hundred years.¹⁵ Ralph carries on the idea of including patterns for the depiction of eyes, noses, mouths, ears, hands, feet, arms and legs (plates II-IV), mostly

borrowed from the Raphael cartoons, or, more probably, from sketches made from the cartoons by Sir James Thornhill. These sketches of hands and feet are now in an album in London's Victoria and Albert Museum.¹⁶

The 'measures of the human body' in Ralph's book are given according to rules laid down by Roger de Piles, in Dufresnoy's *Art of Painting*, published in 1695.¹⁷ Following these principles, Ralph quotes that the 'knowledge of Anatomy is the basis of design' (p.11-12). Ralph may also have been influenced by illustrated English books on anatomy. He represents two skeletons and two musclemen reminiscent of works on anatomy by William Cowper, published some sixty years previously.¹⁸ It is more likely, however, that Ralph's illustrations derived from Bernhard Siegfried Albinus' *Tables of the Skeleton and Muscles of the Human Body*.¹⁹

In line with De Piles, Ralph expounds on eleven 'precepts' which must be observed in designing draperies: draperies must not be overcharged, and should suggest the body they cover; folds should be 'large and graceful'; they should relieve a sense of stiffness, they should help give contrast to the body, and so on. As examples 'none are fitter [...] than those of the Cartons [to enable the artist] to cast them himself in a true taste, when he afterwards makes designs from real draperies' (p.12-13). Thomas Bardwell's *Practice of Painting and Perspective Made Easy* (London 1756) contained an extensive chapter on draperies, which may also have inspired such 'precepts'.

Ralph reproduces four examples of perfect proportion after the antique: 'two views of the celebrated Torso of Michael Angelo', the Apollo Belvedere, the Farnesian Hercules and the Venus de Medici (plates V, X, XI and XII). Hogarth had used the same examples for plate I of his *Analysis of Beauty*. Ralph advises the student to 'finish his studies by considering the antique and nature' with the tip, 'the Duke of Richmond's collection of casts [...], and the academy for painting and sculpture in St. Martin's Lane, are both accessible to the ingenious' (p.13). From 1758 on, drawings by young English artists were exhibited by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in the Duke's gallery at Whitehall, which opened in 1758, and in the more democratic St Martin's Lane Academy, with which Hogarth was keenly engaged. Ralph informs us of the large collection of casts in the Duke of Richmond's gallery, taken 'from the best antique statues and busts [...] in Rome and Florence'. It was imagined 'that the study of these [...] exact copies [...] may greatly contribute towards giving young beginners of genius an early taste and idea of beauty and proportion', and it was advertised that any known artist or young man or boy above twelve 'to whom the study of these gesses may be of use, shall have liberty to draw, or model, from any of them' (p.1, note). Perhaps Hogarth had access to these casts for plate I of his *Analysis of Beauty* before the gallery was open to the public.

It can be no coincidence that Ralph had such a favourable opinion of the St Martin's Lane Academy. Under Hogarth's direction it placed more emphasis on life studies than upon the antique. It must have been due to

Hogarth that Ralph endorsed the study of nature. In his *Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth stated that no works by the ancients had yet equalled 'the utmost beauty of nature. Who but a bigot [...] will say that he has not seen faces and necks, hands and arms in living women, that even the Grecian Venus doth but coarsely imitate?' His unpublished 'Apology for Painters' (c.1761) claims that none could maintain that 'there is more variety or truer characters or expressions in a print (?) statues and picture than in ever varying life'.²⁰ Ralph likewise warns young artists not to follow the antique model too strictly, as 'a design correctly made after the finest statue will never convey any other idea than that of a statue'; its 'stiffness inseparable from marble or plaister.' This 'should be avoided with the utmost care and assiduity' (p.13).

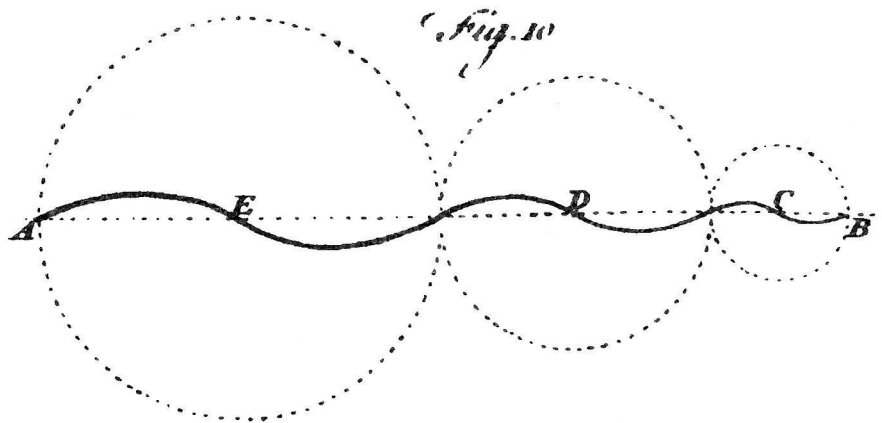
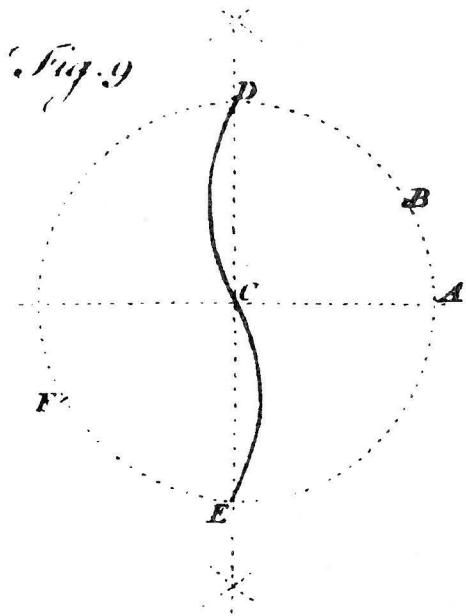
Ralph's *School* is couched largely in the academic style of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century art discourse. Yet, while it recalls Le Brun's *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions*,²¹ it explicitly promotes Hogarth's 'line of beauty', so vehemently attacked by advocates of a French-style academy in London. In plate I in the *School of Raphael* Ralph demonstrates the drawing of the curved line, which, he adds, 'the author of the *Analysis of beauty* has, with as great propriety as authority, termed, the line of beauty'. He even gives (p.4)

a rule whereby the precise line of beauty may be found;²² in consequence of which objection, and in order to enforce the study of that line, this figure is given; not as a mathematical demonstration, nor as an insult upon the author of the *Analysis of Beauty*, (whose meaning is very obvious, though perhaps not so fully explained as to silence the clamours of ignorance and detraction) but as a line extremely well worth studying, being in itself simple, elegant, easily drawn [...] the *precise line of beauty* described by that great artist, whose plain unaffected manner of referring to the most familiar objects for the explanation of his ideas, we shall endeavour to follow [...] it is to be found in [...] a six pointed star, of which the contrasted halves of any two opposite points give the line required.

Like Hogarth, though more critically, Ralph refers to one of Michelangelo's 'precepts', that of the pyramidal, serpentine figure, 'multiplied by one, two, and three'. In his opinion, this 'precept' is absurd (p.5):

to talk of *multiplying by the number one* is a gross impropriety, and that MICHAEL ANGELO should [so] advise his scholar [...] must be a mistake, [...] it is not to be preserved in a figure sitting or stooping, and consequently MICHAEL ANGELO, who well knew the necessity of such attitudes, would never impose such a stricture. [...] It is perhaps more rational to believe [...] MICHAEL ANGELO endeavoured to persuade his pupil [...] to draw a figure, *or line*, which was pyramidal, serpentine, and *increasing in the proportion of one, two, and three*, as a sure means of acquiring a habit of designing the outlines of the human body in a masterly manner, and thereby, as the author of the *Analysis* terms it, always expressing the *lines of beauty and grace* [Fig.1]

From Dryden's translation of Dufresnoy's *Art of Painting*, a book Hogarth was very familiar with, Ralph quotes (p.5):



1. Fig. 9, how to draw the *Line of Beauty*, and Fig. 10, Michelangelo's 'precept' to draw a line which is 'pyramidal, serpentine, and increasing in the proportion of one, two, and three'
 Two figures from plate 1 in Benjamin Ralph's *School of Raphael*

The outlines which are in waves, give not only a grace to the parts, but also to the whole body, as we see in the Antinous, the Venus of Medicis, and others. [...] the figures and their parts ought almost always to have a serpentine and flaming form naturally; these sorts of outlines have [...] life and seeming motion in them, which very much resembles the activity of the flame, and of the serpent.

In the second part of his *School*, Ralph bases a detailed interpretation of the Raphael cartoons on these criteria. The book contains several illustrations of heads after the 'inimitable' cartoons, which he calls 'a vast fund of variety, from which every man may enrich himself' (Introduction, p.1). In his *Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth also pleads explicitly for 'variety' as significant in producing beauty. Ralph's obvious esteem of both Raphael and Hogarth was not isolated. Another of Hogarth's few supporters was Samuel Foote, the actor, who talked of 'enthusiasm in arts [...] that effort of genius' which 'is as discernible [...] in the comic pencil of a Hogarth as the serious designs of a Raphael'.²³ What is more, in his *School* Ralph is seeking to connect Hogarth's new principles of beauty with the traditional standards of aesthetics so perfectly represented by the Raphael cartoons. It seems as if, in promoting Hogarth's 'modern' aesthetic theories, such as the beauty of 'composed variety', or the pleasurable effect of curved lines, Ralph might be attempting to update the old rules. Traditional treatises referred to a composition of various parts with regard to a unity of proportions. For example, Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London 1725) laid great emphasis on the classical principle of 'Uniformity amidst Variety'. For Hogarth, a 'composed variety' produces beauty. By calling the Raphael cartoons a 'vast fund of variety', Ralph clearly dissociates himself from the older theories.

In the *Idler* Reynolds' 'Connoisseur' also tries to describe the Raphael cartoons in both Hogarthian and academic terms. Yet his comments amount to little more than a simple enumeration of Raphael's 'mistakes'. His description of *Christ's Charge to Peter* is a parody of traditional academic conventions. It is not an update.

what a pity [...] *Raffaelle* was not acquainted with the pyramidal principle; [...] the figures in the middle [would be] on higher ground, or [those] at the extremities stooping or lying; which would not only have formed the group into the shape of a pyramid, but likewise contrasted the standing figures. Indeed [...] I have often lamented that so great a genius as *Raffaelle* had not lived in this enlightened age, since the art has been reduced to principles, and had his education in one of the modern Academies; what glorious works might we then have expected from his divine pencil!²⁴

These words recall those of the Abbé Du Bos in 1719, who noted that contemporaries had more help from art than had been possible for Raphael. If Raphael could return today, he would be a better painter than he had been in his lifetime.²⁵ In the *Analysis of Beauty* even Hogarth, despite his anti-

academic attitudes, refers to the pyramid as an object of 'much variety'. He depicts a vitreous pyramid on the title page, as a receptacle for his 'Line of Beauty and Grace'.

Like Roger de Piles and other 'authorities' of the French Academy, Jonathan Richardson, too, recommends the 'art of Contrast': 'if one Figure in a Composition Stands, another must Bend, or Lye on the Ground; and of those that Stand, or are in any other Position, if there be several of them, they must be varied by Turns of the Head, or some other Artful Disposition of their Parts'.²⁶ These words could indeed be regarded as the source for the 'Connoisseur's' comment on the *Christ's Charge to Peter* cartoon, especially in view of the fact that Reynolds knew Richardson's treatise well.²⁷ It is more likely, however, that Reynolds was reminded of the above passage by Ralph's account of the cartoons. Confronted with the rigid tedium of shopworn rules, and their admixture with Hogarth's theories of beauty, it is of little surprise that Reynolds invented the 'Connoisseur' to ridicule Ralph's *School*, and all it represented.

What arguments can be put forth to confirm my conjecture? Firstly, the publication of Ralph's book precedes the publication of Reynolds' *Idler* paper by only four months. Secondly, it cannot be pure coincidence that both writers refer to the Raphael cartoons, and that both emphasise strict rules of pictorial composition. Thirdly, and most cogently, Ralph's is the only significant treatise to combine traditional academic rules and Hogarth's anti-academic 'Line of Beauty' to describe an Old Master painting. This was extremely unusual for the time. The only similar example is in its parody, in Reynolds' shallow 'Connoisseur'.

In the 1750s, Reynolds was turning away from the visual and mechanical approach favoured by Hogarth, towards a deeper, more philosophical understanding of painting. Ralph's guidelines in the *School of Raphael* were pointing the wrong way. The older, more pedantic, and perhaps more pragmatic approach became Reynolds' target. Benjamin Ralph reminded him of Dufresnoy, De Piles and Richardson. Its combination with Hogarth's modern, anti-academic, yet still 'narrow' principles of beauty, was too much for Reynolds. Ralph, championing Hogarth, confirmed Reynolds' reservations about the *Analysis of Beauty* and its philosophical weakness. Surely Ralph's *School* presented Reynolds with the opportunity for a sideswipe at Hogarth that he was not going to miss.

Several passages from the *School of Raphael* suggest Ralph as Reynolds' source. Ralph must be thinking of Hogarth's 'Line of Grace' when he describes the beauty of the columns in Raphael's *The Lame Man Healed*: 'The Effect of the Waving Line [...] is perhaps no where made use of to such Advantage, nor better proves its Gracefulness' (p.16). Reynolds' 'Connoisseur' picks up on this when he regrets the lack of Hogarth's 'flowing line, which constitutes Grace and Beauty' in Raphael's *St Paul Preaching at Athens*. Although the 'Connoisseur's' comments on *Christ's Charge to Peter* do not seem inspired by Ralph's description of this cartoon, they compare with his remarks on the *Death of Ananias* (p.18):

Ananias is the principal Figure; but [only] [...] the profound Skill of this Great Master [made] him appear so: The Figure being prostrate by Necessity, must have appeared to some Disadvantage had the Spectators been all standing, even though they had inclined as much as the two Men who are stooping over him; *Raphael* [...] has most judiciously given all the Figures in the fore Part of the Picture such Attitudes, as [...] make the Figure of *Ananias* more conspicuous. Accordingly, the subordinate Figures are all either kneeling or stooping; and these, at the same time, give an inexpressible Dignity to the Apostles, who are standing [...]

The 'Connoisseur', like Ralph, explicitly calls for 'stooping', 'lying' or 'standing figures' in *Christ's Charge to Peter*. Ralph's description of Raphael's *St Paul Preaching at Athens* also reminds us of comments made by the 'Connoisseur' concerning the importance of the correct placing of figures (p.21-22).

This fine Picture is divided into three Groupes; the first of which is composed of four Figures, among whom the Apostle is eminently distinguished [...] The Man who is about to ascend the Steps, the Woman behind him, and eight other Figures who are represented standing, compose the second Groupe; and the third is formed by six Persons who are sitting [...] *Raphael* has employed every Artifice, in Order to make the Apostle particularly conspicuous; all the Figures in the Picture are subservient to that Purpose; the Man and Woman at the Bottom of the Steps are actually nearer to the Eye than the Apostle, but their Situation causes the base Line of the Picture to cut off Part of their Height; and as they are both stooping, they are effectually prevented from lessening the Importance of the Apostle.

Can it be pure chance that Reynolds' words are so similar to Ralph's (the demand for 'standing', 'stooping' or 'lying' figures; the 'waving' or 'flowing line' which constitutes 'Grace')? Reynolds would not have been so trite as to quote Ralph literally. In his *Idler* essay no.82 as well as in other, later writings, such as his famous *Discourses* or his notes to William Mason's new translation of *De Arte Graphica* (1783), he more than once borrowed ideas from other sources without giving their authors credit.²⁸ One hitherto undetected example is in *Discourse VI* (1774), which deals mainly with the problem of 'imitation' in art (that is, borrowing from other masters). Reynolds refers to the work of the ancients as a

magazine of common property, always open to the public, whence every man has a right to take what materials he pleases [...] [whereas] the works of the moderns are more the property of their authors. He who borrows an idea from an antient, or even from a modern artist not his contemporary, and so accommodates it to his own work, that it makes a part of it, with no seam or joining appearing, can hardly be charged with plagiarism; poets practise this kind of borrowing, without reserve.²⁹

These lines are deeply inspired by – indeed plagiarised from – the detailed observations on 'imitation' in 'Lecture the Seventh' of John Lawson's *Lectures Concerning Oratory* (Dublin 1758), in which he writes, 'The Writings of the Antients are considered, by common Consent, as a kind of publick Magazine,

to which Authors of all Nations may repair, and take [...] what Materials they want. If they have Skill enough to work them up well, they are deemed the Property of the Workmen: But every Composition of a Modern is regarded as belonging to the Author alone' (p.124-25). This obvious plagiarism might indicate that Reynolds could have borrowed, though perhaps not so literally, from sources such as the *School of Raphael*. Reynolds would hardly have seen Ralph's treatise as a contribution towards establishing a real unprejudiced connoisseurship in England, especially in view of the fact that he complains in 1772 of the

many writers on our art, who, not being of the profession, and [...] not knowing what can or cannot be done, have been very liberal of absurd praises in their descriptions of favourite works [...] [Praising] excellencies that can hardly exist together [...] fond of describing [...] the expression of a mixed passion, which more particularly appears to me out of the reach of our art. Such are many disquisitions which I have read on some of the Cartoons and other pictures of Raffaele, where the Criticks have described their own imaginations; or indeed where the excellent master himself may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of the art; and has, therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every imagination, with equal probability to find a passion of his own.³⁰

Although ostensibly a 'Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting', Reynolds was more likely to have felt that the guidelines advocated in Ralph's *School* would lead to a shallow understanding, since the book fuses academic and Hogarthian terms – contrary artistic principles which, in Reynolds' words, 'cannot subsist together'. In this light, it is understandable that this strange fusion of art theory became one of the main objects of ridicule in the 76th issue of the *Idler*, the more so as about the same time English satirists and amateur painters alike were attacking rigid academic rules in painting. In *Tristram Shandy* (written a few months after the *Idler* essays), Laurence Sterne ridicules the 'principle of the pyramid,' which he could not find 'in any one group' of a grand picture.³¹

It is unknown how well, if at all, Benjamin Ralph was acquainted with Hogarth, or whether he was related to Hogarth's friend, James Ralph, who helped to correct some passages of the *Analysis of Beauty*. We know that Benjamin Ralph held a high opinion of Hogarth's friend, Joshua Kirby. In the introduction to his *School* Ralph excuses himself from discussing linear perspective, since 'that incomparable method' had been 'laid down by Dr. Brooke Taylor, and [...] explained by Mr. Kirby'. Ralph recommends study at the Duke of Richmond's gallery and the St Martin's Lane Academy. He must have belonged amongst the artists in London who were promoting English painting. This increases the likelihood of his being in some form of direct contact with Hogarth. Ralph, in his *School*, declares that, however he may be censured or ridiculed, he cannot help the assertion that 'a collection

of the Passions, as they are found in Nature, might be made from the works of Mr. Hogarth, which would do honour to that Master and prove of great utility to young Students' (p.2, note).

In this context it is interesting to look closely at the *Four Heads from the Raphael Cartoons at Hampton Court* (Fig.2), allegedly part of Hogarth's personal estate and released posthumously by his widow in 1781.³² The heads on the left and right resemble the two heads by Nicolas Gabriel Dupuis in the second part of Ralph's book (Fig.3) taken from the same cartoon, *The Blinding of Elymas*. The *Four Heads* is generally considered to be a Hogarth of circa 1729. It was released by Jane Hogarth with a caption referring to a statement on the cartoons by Horace Walpole. According to the caption, Sir James Thornhill, Hogarth's father-in-law, 'made copious studies of the heads, hands and feet, [apparently intending] to publish an exact account [...] for the use of students'. Walpole's source was George Vertue, whose manuscript notes of 1734 stated that Thornhill 'had made remarks on the Cartons of Raphael [...] whilst he was copying them at Hampton Court. [...] these sheets not long before his death he had revised & etchd with a design to publish them [...] for the use of students in the Art of Painting & Sculpture, but dying left this work unfinishd'.³³ Jane Hogarth found it 'not impossible' that the plate 'might have been engraved' by Hogarth for Thornhill's intended publication.³⁴ Thornhill's 162 original small wash designs of details of the Raphael cartoons (Victoria and Albert Museum) might well have been executed with Hogarth's assistance, as may 'over two hundred' tracings, eventually purchased by the dean of St Paul's Cathedral in 1936.³⁵ Arline Meyer notes a resemblance 'in spirit' between two of the tracings and the etching, yet it is doubtful whether they were models for the print.

Were the '22 Heads from the Cartoons' noted in 'Proposals' for a sale of Hogarth's earlier works in 1744 formerly a part of the Thornhill tracings?³⁶ Had the print once belonged to the '22 Heads'? Was it executed by Hogarth? It is certainly not in his late 1720s style. Beside the French illustrations in Ralph's book, the draftsmanship appears somewhat dilettantish, even inferior, perhaps the work of a hack in Hogarth's workshop. It could even have been made long after Thornhill's death, for Hogarth's widow.

Nothing is certain. It is equally plausible that the *Four Heads*, perhaps with other proofs of 'Heads', was etched for Ralph as an illustration for the *School of Raphael* in the 1750s. Ralph included several heads as classical examples after the 'inimitable Cartoons', in order to 'encourage the study of the most profound part of Painting, the Characteristics of the Passions' (Introduction, p.1). Most copies of the cartoons from this period, including Thornhill's full-size paintings, finished in 1731, showed whole scenes with figures in full length. Exceptions are the *Recueil de XC têtes* finally used for Ralph's book, Thornhill's designs, and the '22 Heads' sold by Hogarth.

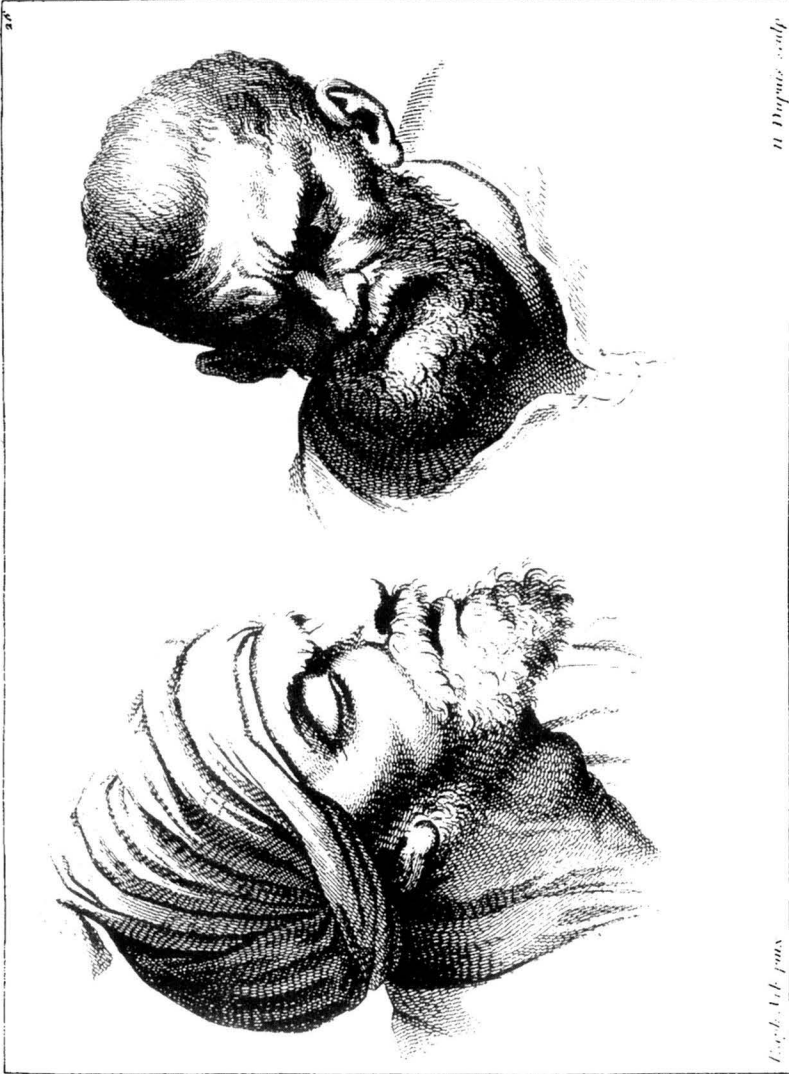
In line with Le Brun and those British writers on the passions who emphasised the face as a vehicle of expression, the illustrations in Ralph's book all depict heads only; they stop at the neck with some lines



Mr. Raphael in his Stanzas of "Raising to 12 1/2 1/2" speaking of the Cartoons at Hampton Court, observes that "Mr. James's Beard will have many original studies of the heads, hands, and feet, in general, in some account of the artist, for the use of students, but that in the present plate were printed, necessary others belonging to the two, Mr. Reynolds, it is not impossible, but that it might have been engraven by him for his plate in some of his own publications."

Published at the Art Store, No. 1, 178, in St. Dunstons at the Golden Head, Leadenhall Fields.

2. William Hogarth(?). Four Heads from the Raphael Cartoons at Hampton Court



3- Nicolas Gabriel Dupuis after Raphael, Two heads from *The Blinding of Elgymas*
Illustration 26 in Benjamin Ralph's *School of Raphael*

economically sketching the collar area. The *Four Heads* correspond well with these specifications. Thornhill is said to have planned to publish his sketches of heads, hands and feet from the cartoons for the use of students, but apparently never did. Could it be that Ralph took up the idea dropped by the late Thornhill?

In this light it is conceivable that Ralph knew Hogarth well, and commissioned his workshop to make prints of heads from Thornhill's drawings, with the expectation that these Hogarthian prints would come closer than common French engravings to the updated art theory proposed in his book. Perhaps Ralph was disappointed with the proofs, and cancelled the commission in favour of prints which were already at hand; like the ones in the *Recueil de XC têtes*. This is pure conjecture. What is not conjecture is that Jane Hogarth had a print which looks like an illustration for Ralph's book. Seen in this light, the *Four Heads* do hint at a direct contact between Hogarth and Benjamin Ralph.

Whatever connection between Hogarth and Ralph, the theories of both artists were the target of Reynolds' satire in the *Idler*. At first glance it does appear that the lack of philosophical substantiation in Hogarth's theory of the 'Line of Beauty' (1753) was the main object of Reynolds' ridicule. When the essay appeared, Hogarth and Reynolds were vying for the lead in English art. By 1759 Reynolds was securing as much as 100 guineas for a full-length portrait, showing that he had outrun Hogarth in this field. John Nichols states that Hogarth 'beheld the rising eminence and popularity of Sir Joshua with a degree of envy; and [...] frequently spoke with asperity both of him and his performances'.³⁷ In his third Discourse, of 1770, Sir Joshua still utters his dislike of those 'painters who have applied themselves more particularly to low and vulgar characters, and who express with precision the various shades of passion, as they are exhibited by vulgar minds, (such as we see in the works of Hogarth,)'.³⁸ What an opportunity for Reynolds to have one of the very 'Connoisseurs' Hogarth despised criticise an Old Master painting using Hogarthian terms!

The 'Connoisseur' uses this Hogarthian, anti-academic combination with older, more academic principles of art. Such an odd fusion appeared in only one other publication during the period, Benjamin Ralph's *School of Raphael*, an edition of which appeared only four months before Reynolds' essay. This cannot be coincidence. Unlike the *Idler* essay, the *School of Raphael* does not disparage, but extols both academic and anti-academic principles. Reynolds may well have sensed this as a danger to real unprejudiced connoisseurship in England. His direct response was a parody on a 'pretended critick' who totally mis- and overuses 'Ralphian' terminology. Perhaps it was because of this ridicule that Benjamin Ralph's *School of Raphael* has left no lasting traces in the history of English art.

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their many helpful suggestions concerning the finer points of the English language. Deep gratitude goes to Heather Eastes for transferring the rough style of the first version of the text into fluent English and for pruning the whole essay. A good deal of the material presented here was included in a paper delivered on 26 July 1999 at the Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment, University College, Dublin.

NOTES

1. *The Idler*, ed. Samuel Johnson, 2 vols (London 1761), ii.130-33.
2. Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*, 2nd edn (London 1725), p.132, 193.
3. Michael Kitson, 'Hogarth's "Apology for Painters"', *Walpole Society* 41 (1966-1968), p.65. For modern critical editions of Hogarth's book, see William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty, with the Rejected Passages from the Manuscript Drafts and Autobiographical Notes*, ed. Joseph Burke (Oxford 1955), and Ronald Paulson's recent annotated edition (New Haven and London 1997).
4. Ms. in Mrs Copland-Griffith's collection; cited in Derek Hudson, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Personal Study* (London 1958), p.66. For a complete edition of Reynolds' letters, see *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. John Ingamells and John Edgumbe (New Haven and London 2000).
5. Derek Hudson, *Joshua Reynolds*, p.65.
6. For Thomas Burgess's *A Club of Artists*, see Brian Allen, *Francis Hayman* (New Haven and London 1987), p.4-5, 165, no.97. For Sandby's *Puggs Graces*, see Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth, Volume 3: Art and Politics, 1750-1764* (New Brunswick 1993), p.137 and fig.29; Ruth Ann McNamara, 'Hogarth and the Comic Muse', *Print Quarterly* 13 (1996), p.251-58. On the academy discussion in London and Hogarth's opposition to the 'academicians', see Paulson, *Hogarth, Volume 3*, 132f., 186f.; *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences: Studies in the Eighteenth-Century Work and Membership of the London Society of Arts*, ed. D. G. C. Allan and John L. Abbott (Athens, Georgia, and London 1992), 93f.; Gill Perry, "'Mere face painters'? Hogarth, Reynolds and Ideas of Academic Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art*, ed. Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham (New Haven and London 1999), p.139f.
7. *The School of Raphael, or The Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting. Illustrated by Examples Engraved by Duchange and Others, under the Inspection of Sir Nicholas Dorigny, from his Own Drawings after the Most Celebrated Heads in the Cartons at Hampton-Court. To Which are Now Added, the Outline of Each Head, and Also Several Plates of the Most Celebrated Antique Statues, Engraved by an Eminent Artist. With Instructions for Young Students in the Art of Designing, and the Passions, as Characterized by Raphael in the Cartons, Described and Explained by Benjamin Ralph* (London 1759).
8. See *The London Chronicle: or, Universal Evening Post*, 17-19 May 1759, p.472, and 19-22 May 1759, p.480; *Gentleman's Magazine* 29 (May 1759), p.232.
9. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791, The Free Society of Artists 1761-1783: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from the Foundation of the Societies to 1791* (London 1907), p.207, 309.
10. See Johannes Dobai, *Die Kunstliteratur des Klassizismus und der Romantik in England*, 3 vols (Berne 1974-1977), ii.681-82, 1003-1004, 1023; Werner Busch, *Nachahmung als bürgerliches Kunstprinzip: Ikonographische Zitate bei Hogarth und in seiner Nachfolge* (Hildesheim and New York 1977), p.175-76; Stephanie Dickey, 'The Passions and Raphael's Cartoons in Eighteenth-Century British Art', *Marsyas: Studies in the History of Art* 22 (1983-1985), p.33-46, esp. p.37-38; Arline Meyer, *Apostles in England: Sir James Thornhill & the Legacy of Raphael's Tapestry Cartoons*, exh. cat., Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University in the City of New York, 15 October-21 December 1996, particularly p.1, 3f., 52f.
11. Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Burke, p.22, 23; ed. Paulson, p.18.
12. Ralph's instructions may have been borrowed from older English manuals on the art of drawing, such as Henry Peacham's *Graphice, or The Most Auncient and Excellent Art of Drawing and Limning* (London 1612), John Dunstall's *Geometria, or Some Geometrical Figures by Way of Introduction to the Art of Portraiture, Delineation, or Drawing* (London 1693), or their eighteenth-century followers which also emphasise the geometrical method. Peacham gives the reasons for these exercises: 'it is impossible that you should be ready in the bodies, before

you can draw their abstract & generall lines' (ch.5, p.16-17). For such manuals, see also Frederick Schmid, *The Practice of Drawing and Painting in England from 1650 to 1850* (London 1935); Ann Bermingham, "'An exquisite practise": The Institution of Drawing as a Polite Art in Britain', in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London 1995), p.47-66.

13. See John Nichols *et al.*, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* (London 1785), p.127; William Bates, 'Geometrical Plates by Hogarth', *Notes and Queries*, 4th series, I (7 March 1868), p.217.

14. Jonathan Richardson, *Two Discourses*, I, *An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as It Relates to Painting*, II, *An Argument in Behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur* (London 1719), ii.222. On Richardson's theory of art, see also Carol Gibson-Wood, 'Jonathan Richardson and the Rationalization of Connoisseurship', *Art History* 7 (1984), p.38-56; Irene Haberla.v.d. *Jonathan Richardson (1666-1745): Die Begründung der Kunstkennerenschaft* (Münster and Hamburg 1991), particularly ch.2 and 5; Stephanie Mora, 'Jonathan Richardson's Art Theory: The Canon of History Painting and its Preeminent Realization in Raphael's Cartoons', PhD thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1996), esp. ch.3; Carol Gibson-Wood, *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment* (New Haven and London 2000).

15. Edward Norgate, in his manuscript, *Miniatura, or The Art of Limning* (c.1621/1626; partly published in William Sanderson's *Graphice: The Use of the Pen and Pencil, or The Most Excellent Art of Painting*, London 1658), recommends a similar method. Alexander Browne, in *The Whole Art of Drawing, Painting, Limning and Etching* (London 1660), represents patterns for the drawing of eyes, noses, mouths, ears or other parts of the body.

16. See Meyer, *Apostles*, p.52, and 54, fig.37-44.

17. John Dryden's edition of Dufresnoy's *Art of Painting* (London 1695) includes Roger de Piles' *Observations on the Art of Painting*.

18. William Cowper's *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies with Figures Drawn after the Life by Some of the Best Masters of Europe* (Oxford 1697) and his posthumous *Myotomia Reformatata: or A New Administration of All the Humane Bodies* (London 1697) include some illustrations 'chiefly designed for the Use of Painters and Statuaries'. It is interesting to note in this connection that Hogarth, in his *Analysis of Beauty*, also mentions 'Cowper, the famous anatomist', and that he obviously borrowed the leg depicted in fig.65 on plate I of his treatise from the 1724 edition of Cowper's *Myotomia Reformatata*. See Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Burke, p.xxxv, xxxvi, n.1, p.72; ed. Paulson, p.53, 151.

19. London 1749; supplement, London 1754.

20. See Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Burke, p.81-82; ed. Paulson, p.59; Kitson, 'Hogarth's "Apology for Painters"', p.86.

21. Illustrated edn (Amsterdam 1698); trans. John Williams as *A Method to Learn to Design the Passions Proposed in a Conference on their General and Particular Expression* (London 1734).

22. It could well be that Ralph knew Lessing's 'Vorbericht' to the second German edition of the *Analysis of Beauty* (Berlin and Potsdam 1754), in which Lessing misses the criteria for Hogarth's selecting out of seven lines of beauty (cf. plate I, fig.49) only one, which deserves to be called the precise line of beauty, and in which he proposes that the exact line of beauty may perhaps be determined with the aid of higher mathematical calculations and philosophical measurement. On Lessing's opinion, see also Edmund Heier, 'Lessing and Hogarth: The Empirical Concept of Beauty', in *Analecta Helvetica et Germanica*, ed. Achim Arnold, Hans Eichner, Edmund Heier and Sigfrid Hoefert (Bonn 1979), p.77-98.

23. Samuel Foote, 'Letter to the Reverend Author of *Remarks, Critical and Christian, on the Minor*' (1760), *The Works with Remarks and an Essay by Jon Bee*, 2 vols in one (repr. Hildesheim and New York 1974), ii.ciii, note.

24. *The Idler*, ed. Johnson, ii.133-34.

25. See Jean Baptiste Du Bos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 3 vols, 4th edn (Paris 1746), i.380-81.

26. Richardson, *Essay on the Theory of Painting*, p.133.

27. See George Watson, 'Joshua Reynolds's Copy of Richardson', *Review of English Studies* 42 (1991), p.425-28.

28. In his *Idler* essay no.82 (10 November 1759) Reynolds borrowed his description of the 'most beautiful' as 'the most general form of nature' from Claude Buffier, as paraphrased by Adam Smith (1723-1790), *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London and Edinburgh 1759). See *The Idler*, ed. Johnson, ii.165-72; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford 1976), p.198-99; John Barrell, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds and the

Englishness of English Art', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London 1990), p.160-61. Lawrence Lipking has discerned that Reynolds 'borrows freely though tacitly' from Roger de Piles. See Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton 1970), p.61. He even draws on early Christian writers. See Barry Baldwin, 'A Classical Source for Reynolds on the Relativity of Beauty', and 'Reynolds and Tertullian: A Passage Located', *Notes and Queries* 239, n.s. 41 (June 1994), p.208-209. On Reynolds' sources for his writings, see also Frederick Whitley Hilles, *The Literary Career of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (Cambridge 1936), p.112-28. In the introduction to his recent edition of Reynolds' *Journey to Flanders and Holland* (Cambridge 1996), Harry Mount emphasises the influence of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy, especially in view of Reynolds' notes to William Mason's new translation of *De Arte Graphica* (1783). Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson have shown that Reynolds' *Discourse XIV* 'discusses Gainsborough in terms derived directly from his own "Character of Rubens", written 1781-2 and appended to the *Journey to Flanders and Holland*. That, in turn, draws heavily on the writings of Roger de Piles'. However, 'Reynolds interprets de Piles through a characteristically English set of ideas, incorporating the French critic into a framework provided by the English empiricists, particularly Locke and Hume'. See Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson, 'On Reynolds's Use of de Piles, Locke, and Hume in his Essays on Rubens and Gainsborough', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997), p.215-29. It should also be noted that Reynolds' *Ironical Discourse* (1791), particularly its preface, was written as a response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event, in a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris* (London 1790). See Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth 1992), p.338-46; Barrell, 'Sir Joshua Reynolds and the Englishness of English Art', p.171.

29. Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Rogers, p.167; Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven and London 1997), p.107.

30. Fifth *Discourse* (10 December 1772). See Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Rogers, p.137; ed. Wark, p.78-79.

31. See Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. Graham Petrie and Christopher Ricks (Harmondsworth 1985), p.193.

32. See Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 3rd rev. edn (London 1989), no.264 [no.115 in the older editions].

33. 'Vertue Note Books, volume III', *Walpole Society* 22 (1933-1934), p.70. According to his manuscript notes written five years earlier, Vertue, visiting Hampton Court in August 1729, saw Thornhill copying the cartoons 'with all the exactness possible the same size as the originals'. He added that Thornhill's 'several studies of the heads hands feets. seperately &c. from these originals on paper drawn out lines some shaded. some not are surely the truest & justest demonstration of Raphaels merit' (p.39). Several drafts and 'off Tracts from the Cartoons' are listed in the sale of Thornhill's collection of prints and drawings of 26 February 1734/1735. See Meyer, *Apostles*, p.43.

34. 'It may be observed that the text speaks of the plate as "engraved", though it is in fact pure etching.' See A[lbert] C[harles] Sewter, *Hogarth Printmaker: An Exhibition of Engravings and Etchings*, exh. cat., Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester 5 February-31 March 1962, p.31.

35. See *Notes and Queries*, 7th series, 7 (20 April 1889), p.306; Meyer, *Apostles*, p.43-45 and fig.59, 63, 65, 66, 68. On Thornhill's small sketches, see also Meyer, p.45 and fig.29, 37-44, 60, 62 and cat.31.

36. See British Museum, Additional ms.33,402, f.62. According to an annotation in ink, they were sold for '22g'. See Robert L. S. Cowley, 'Hogarth's Titles in his Progresses and Other Picture Series,' *Notes & Queries* 30 (1983), p.46, 47. Paulson also mentions 'twenty-five heads from the Raphael Cartoons, either by Thornhill or by Hogarth and Thornhill', which were sold to William Beckford, together with fourteen Hogarth paintings. See Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth, Volume 2: High Art and Low. 1732-1750* (New Brunswick 1992), p.237-38; John Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* (London 1782), p.193.

37. Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes*, ed. 1782, p.87. A few months before his death, Hogarth was of the opinion that Francis Cotes 'excelled Reynolds as a portrait painter'. See Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters Who Have Resided or Been Born in England, With Critical Remarks on their Productions* (London 1808), p.34. On the differences between Hogarth and Reynolds, see also Paulson, *Hogarth, Volume 3*, p.191-92; Hildegard Omberg, *William Hogarth's Portrait of Captain Coram: Studies on Hogarth's Outlook around 1740* (Uppsala 1974), p.8-9.

38. See Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Rogers, p.113; ed. Wark, p.51.