

Cymon and Iphigenia

By an Unknown Nineteenth-Century Artist (after Sir Joshua Reynolds RA)

**Research Forum at The Courtauld Institute
Conservation and Art Historical Analysis**

**MOLLY HUGHES-HALLETT – POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN THE CONSERVATION OF EASEL PAINTINGS
GAVRIELLA LEVY HASKELL – MASTERS IN THE HISTORY OF ART**



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Introduction

This project's research was the result of a collaboration between a post-graduate Art History student and an Easel Paintings Conservation student as part of the painting pairs program, which is organised annually within the context of the Courtauld's Sackler Research Forum. The aim of the partnership is to bridge the gap between material meaning and art historical context, culminating in the presentation of findings in two presentations in the Sackler Research Forum, along with this report.

The focus of this research collaboration is on an unknown artist's *Cymon and Iphigenia* (see figure 1), which was most likely

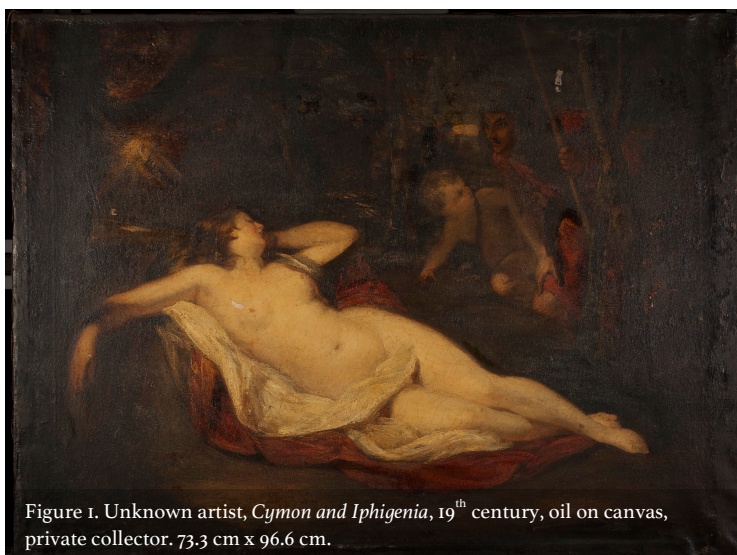


Figure 1. Unknown artist, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 19th century, oil on canvas, private collector. 73.3 cm x 96.6 cm.

Painted in the nineteenth century. The painting bears a striking resemblance in composition and technique to Joshua Reynolds' version of *Cymon and Iphigenia* (see figure 2), which is owned by the Royal Collection. The version



Figure 2. Joshua Reynolds, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, c. 1755-89, oil on canvas, Royal Collection. 143.2 cm x 171.6 cm.

under scrutiny is owned by

a private collector, and was selected for this research pairing due to its unclear authorship and object purpose. Through study and evaluation of the painting's materials, techniques and history, we hope to place the work within its context, enabling better viewing and deeper

understanding. The painting is of standard kit-kat dimensions,¹ and depicts a nude woman (Iphigenia) sleeping, draped horizontally at a slight diagonal across the

¹ The kit-kat is a standard canvas size of 36 inches by 28 inches, frequently used in portraiture, which would have been readily available at the time.

painting, while a man and infant (Cymon and Cupid) look on, hidden in the bushes to the right of the composition; the figures are based on a story from Giovanni Boccaccio's fourteenth-century book *The Decameron*. There is a dark tree trunk framing the painting on the left with an impasto light source shining out at the viewer. The painting requires conservation and will be treated in tandem to the research performed on it as it is currently unfit for display.

In this report, we investigate the possible attribution of the painting, fleshing out three main possibilities: whether it is by Reynolds himself, by Reynolds' immediate workshop, or a later copy. Based on our conclusion that it is a later copy, we explore the ramifications for the work's purpose and potential authorship, tentatively proposing William Etty as a possible artist.

Material History and Provenance

Adding to the difficulty of studying this work, its provenance is incomplete. It was purchased by its current owner at a small provincial auction, where it was described as 'Attributed to William Etty, classical nude with cherub and other man'.² Prior to that, its only definite appearance was at a Christie's auction on February 15, 1904 (lot 71), confirmed by the stencil mark, '6AR 4', legible on its top strainer bar.³ The catalogue entry reads:

Sir J. Reynolds (After).

Cymon and Iphigenia, by W. Etty, R.A.

27 in. by 36 in.⁴

It was consigned by Thomas Kerr, a wholesale grocer and commission merchant—who presumably did so on behalf of the work's anonymous owner, or his estate. Because it did not make its reserve price, and therefore was not sold, Christie's has no record of its whereabouts after the unsuccessful sale.⁵

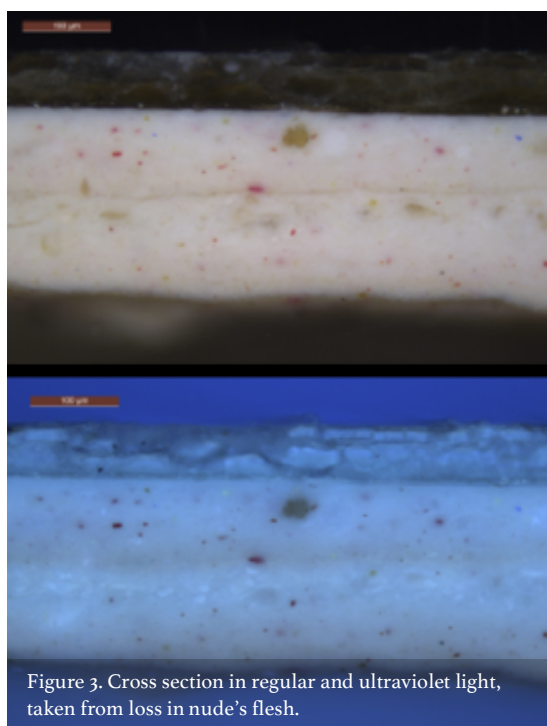


Figure 3. Cross section in regular and ultraviolet light, taken from loss in nude's flesh.

The condition of this painting (and previous conservation efforts) ultimately effect our reading of the artist's technique and intention. The painting is covered in up to ten layers of varnish in some areas, and has been selectively cleaned in the past, which is shown

through comparative cross sections. A cross section (see figure 3) taken from the loss in the figure's chest displays four layers of disintegrated varnish, while a comparative cross section from the loss in the upper right background shows ten resinous layers (see figure 4).

The yellowed varnish disguises and flattens the modelling of forms and the

² Private collector to authors, personal communication.

³ Christie's archive to private collector, personal communication.

⁴ *Sale catalogue* (London: Christie, Manson and Woods, 1904).

⁵ Christie's archive to private collector, personal communication.

flesh, while making it difficult to identify any forms in the background, including the two on-looking figures of Cymon and Cupid. A past restorer has cleaned the female figure and areas of lightness while avoiding the dark background, increasing the contrast between the two. The cross section from a damaged area in Iphigenia's flesh shows that a very pale figure lies beneath the yellow varnish, with paint layers comprised of predominantly lead white (see figure 3), with ochre and vermillion. This shows how the flesh matches the ghostly paleness that is so commonly seen in Reynolds' figures, including the version owned by the Royal Collection.

This selective cleaning has imbalanced the equilibrium between light and dark areas, and ultimately affects our reading of the figure in relation to the space around her. She glows amid a mass of darkness, while the painting becomes less of a historic 'scene' than intended, as the visual experience becomes solely about her and the viewer, with the experience of Cymon's encounter becoming secondary.

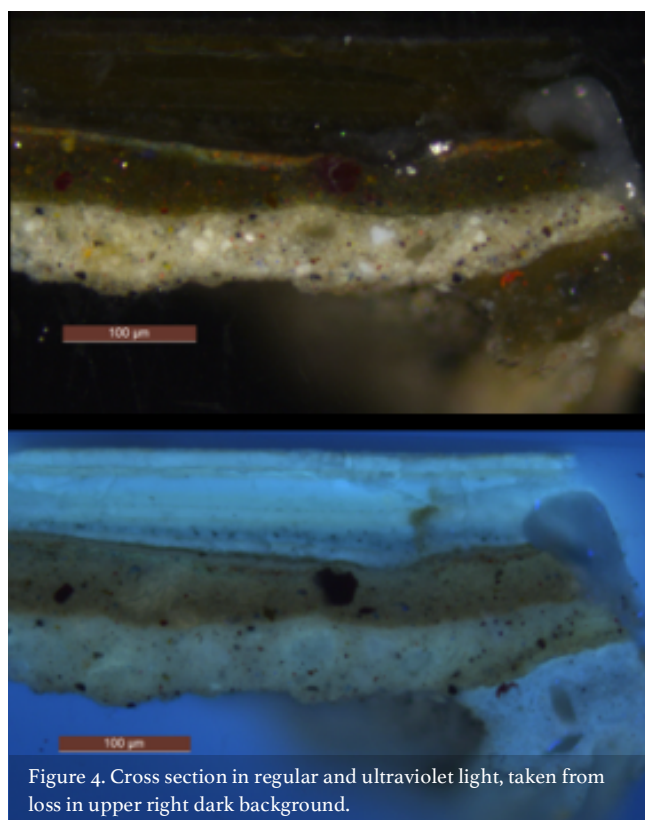


Figure 4. Cross section in regular and ultraviolet light, taken from loss in upper right dark background.

As well as diluting the narrative of the work, the selective cleaning can alter it entirely: the brightness of Iphigenia by comparison to Cymon and their surroundings could be read, erroneously, as a meaningful choice on the part of the artist, casting her as a source of enlightenment literally as well as metaphorically. Just as she casts light on the scene around her, she casts light on Cymon's ignoble life. The intention may, indeed, have existed—however, the cleaning's false enhancement of the effect makes it problematic to determine the significance of the contrast.

This thick varnish also makes it difficult to judge the finished state of this work and its quality of technique. In addition, the painting suffers from widespread varnish delamination, especially in the darker paint passages. The crazed and broken surface prevents one from seeing the paint layers below (see figure 5). In addition, there is significant dirt embedded in the varnish and between the

varnish layers. It can be assumed due to the indications of tobacco residue along with the dirt, that this painting resided in a home, potentially a smoky

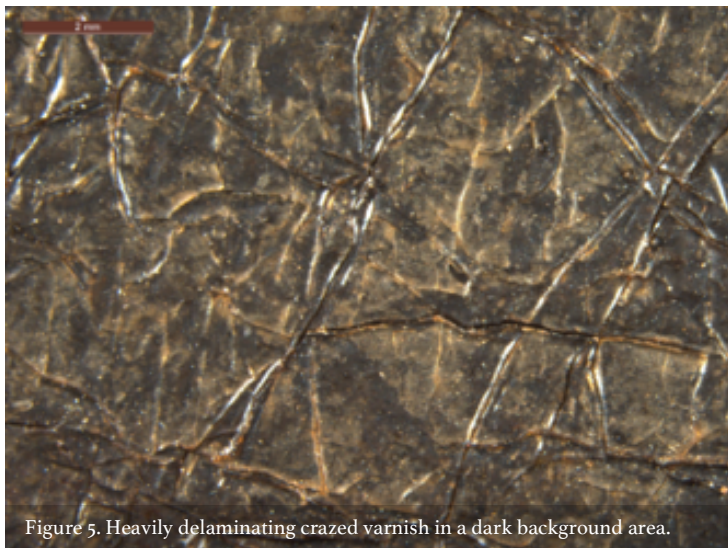


Figure 5. Heavily delaminating crazed varnish in a dark background area.

drawing room, for a number of years while it progressively became more illegible. This means that the varnish layers being removed are incredibly difficult to differentiate between the dark brown glazed background. During the conservation and cleaning

of this painting, varnish layers have been gradually and systematically unpacked over time to reveal more of the painting through attempting to develop an appropriate cleaning system for each layer without effecting the next. Unfortunately, due to the condition of the painting and sensitivity of the glazes, this painting cannot be full cleaned.

Sir Joshua Reynolds and His Version of *Cymon and Iphigenia*

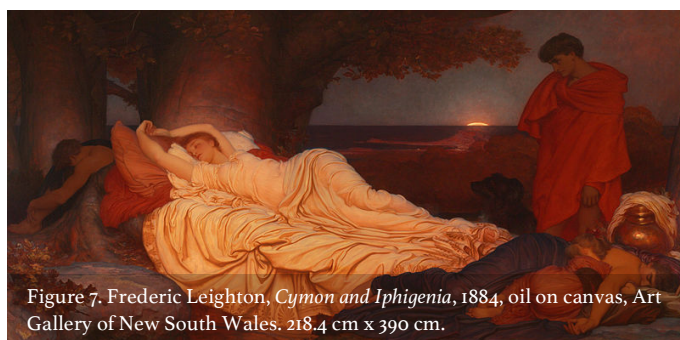
The painting studied in this report closely follows the composition of Sir Joshua Reynold's *Cymon and Iphigenia*, currently in the Royal Collection, painted circa 1775 to 1789 (see figure 6). It is 143.2 centimetres by 171.6 centimetres, and is therefore much larger than the work currently being examined, as well as a slightly different shape: the version here described is 73.3 centimetres by 96.6 centimetres. However, it is otherwise visually very similar.

Reynolds (1723–92) is best known as a portrait painter—and as the first president of the Royal Academy of Arts—but also forayed into history painting, which, he notes 'ought to be called Poetical, as in reality it is'.⁶ That is to say, the works are called such for conveying narratives from history or mythology, not necessarily for conveying actual events. Reynolds' motivation for thus straying



from his usual wont is clear enough: he himself described a hierarchy of painting in which history takes precedence over portraiture. He writes, 'a good portrait painter may not be capable of painting history, but a good historical painter, for certain, has the ability to paint portraits'.⁷

It is this category of painting that encompasses Reynolds' *Cymon and Iphigenia*. Following a story from Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, the



painting depicts a young nobleman—who has, until now, grossly disregarded his garments, deportment, and education—finding the beautiful Iphigenia in a field. Upon seeing her, he falls instantly in

⁶ Henry William Beechy, *The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1876), 348.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

love, and to make himself worthy (despite her low birth) becomes a refined polymath.

The story has been illustrated by a wide variety of artists, from Frederic Leighton (*Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1884, figure 7) and Sir John Everett Millais (*Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1847–8, figure 8) to Benjamin West (*Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1773, figure 9) and Peter Paul Rubens (*Cimon and Iphigenia*, 1617, figure 10).

Reynolds' version was first exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1789, where it was displayed alongside Reynolds' *Cupid and Psyche* (see figure 11) and *Continence of Scipio* (see figure 12).⁸ All



three paintings emphasise the gaze: in *Cymon and Iphigenia* the focus is on Cymon's rather epiphanic glimpse of Iphigenia; in *Cupid and Psyche* (c. 1789), owned by the Courtauld Gallery, Psyche holds aloft a candle for a similarly revelatory look—realising that her previously anonymous lover is Cupid, depicted here unsettlingly young; and in *Continence of Scipio* (c. 1789), in which Scipio gazes at a beautiful woman, the gaze is less a revelation for the gazer than it is for its recipient—Scipio, known to be somewhat of a womaniser, is returning the kidnapped woman to her family, ransom-free. In each is the trial aspect of threat, transformation, and desire. *Cymon and Iphigenia* was eventually donated to the Royal Collection in 1814 by Mary Palmer, Marchioness of Thomond and Reynolds' niece, where it remains.⁹



As well as its first exhibition in the Royal Academy, the work was shown in 1813,

⁸ Ibid., 290.

⁹ David Mannings and Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), entry 2045.

1826, 1828, 1833, 1862, 1884, 1878, and 1994. That access means it was widely engraved four times on three occasions (1797, 1834, and 1836) and copied at least eleven times.¹⁰



Figure 11. Joshua Reynolds, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1789, oil on canvas, Courtauld Institute of Art. 168 cm x 140 cm.



Figure 12. Joshua Reynolds, *Continence of Scipio*, 1789, oil on canvas, Hermitage Museum. 166 cm x 240 cm.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Attribution: Reynolds, His Workshop, or an Unrelated Copy

We began our research with three hypotheses as to the nature of the relationship between the work here described and the painting in the Royal Collection: that the work under investigation was a preparatory study by Reynolds, that it was a copy made with his or his workshop's involvement, or that it was a copy made after his death by some unrelated artist.

A Preparatory Sketch by Reynolds

If the work were a sketch by Reynolds, he used it as a means to experiment with suitable compositions, and tailored the final painting based on this initial mapping of forms. A comparison of other known Reynolds sketches to the painting we are investigating suggests that this painting is not within his style of preparatory sketches. Other known sketches are usually much smaller in size. This painting, however, is of standard kit-kat dimensions, which Reynolds was known to use frequently for finished paintings. Hypothetically, he could have been using what was readily available in the studio. The change in composition is one of the key differences between the two paintings; the Royal Collection version is a more compact and tightly cropped composition, with the body of Iphigenia occupying much of the picture plane.



Figure 13. Joshua Reynolds, *Sketch of Captain Philemon Pownoll*.



Figure 14. Joshua Reynolds, *Sketch of Lady Mary Worsley*.



Figure 15. Joshua Reynolds, *Sketch of Mrs. Mary Robinson*.

However, unlike the painting being examined, other sketches by Reynolds have a markedly free quality, with abstract gestural paint dabs suggesting form and features or only select details (such as a face) being brought to a defined level.¹¹ Our piece, in contrast, has been brought to a much higher finish across

¹¹ David Mannings, 'Reynolds's Oil Sketches' in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.133, No. 1061 (Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd. Aug. 1991) 491-498.

the entirety of the painting, and does not give the impression of a "sketch" in the same sense as the preparatory works such as the sketches for *Captain Philemon Pownell* (see figure 13), *Lady Mary Worsley* (see figure 14), or *Mrs Mary Robinson* (see figure 15) exhibit. While there is a certain assuredness of position and form that is often lost in copies, it does not share the same execution as Reynolds' sketches.

In addition, the painting strays in materials from Reynolds' usual practice. The painting being examined is on a tabby weave canvas, however all Reynolds paintings bar one post 1770 were on twill weave, as he liked the diagonal texture that showed through the paintings.¹² In addition, the OSIRIS Infra-Red (see figure 16) image shows what appears to be an under-drawing, which is slightly visible around the nose and the lips. Reynolds did not draw, and there are no paintings of his that have evidence of an under-drawing.¹³ Again, this is further evidence proving it is not a Reynolds, as it strays too far from his technique. This also shows us a little glimpse into the process of making this painting. The line

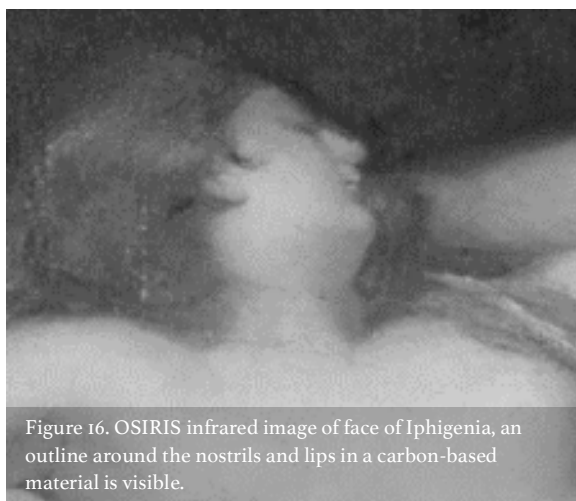
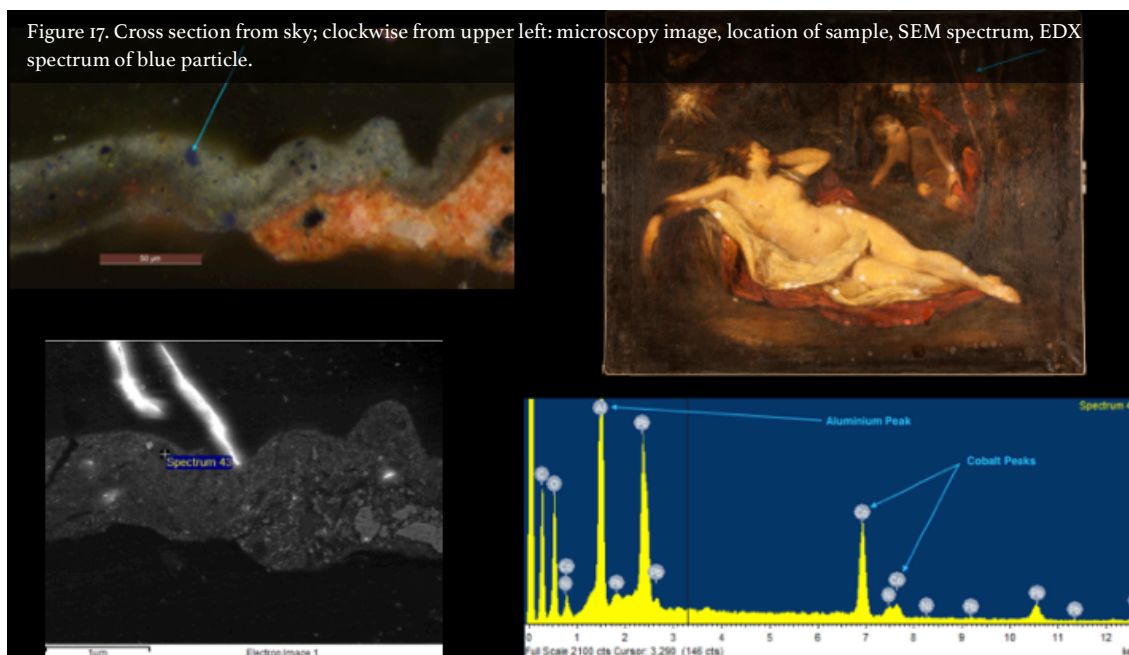


Figure 16. OSIRIS infrared image of face of Iphigenia, an outline around the nostrils and lips in a carbon-based material is visible.



¹² Alexandra Gent, Ashok Roy, Rachel Morrison. 'Practice Makes Imperfect: Reynolds' Painting Technique' in *The National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, Vol. 35, (Yale University Press, 2014) 13.

¹³ Ibid., 19.

appears to be quite fluid, suggesting perhaps a carbon black liquid, either paint or ink, as opposed to a drawing utensil which would leave a more crumbly mark.

Most importantly however, is the presence of cobalt blue, which was discovered through SEM-EDX analysis (see figure 17). This material discovery confirmed that the work could not have been by Reynolds himself or his active studio during his lifetime. Literary sources agree that Cobalt Blue was invented in 1802, ten years after his death. Initially, due to his infamous reputation for experimentation, the potential for Reynolds experimenting with an early version of Cobalt Blue before his death was discussed; however a lack of Cobalt blue in any of his other works, along with all sources clearly stating a decisive discovery date for cobalt blue eliminated this possibility.¹⁴ A non-destructive form of analysis, Scanning XRF also confirmed the presence of Cobalt across the painting, while particles could be identified in multiple cross sections. The particles in the cross section are also visually more akin to cobalt blue, as they are fine rounded particles, as opposed to smalt's (the other key cobalt containing blue pigment) large conchoidal glass-like particles.

Reynolds' Workshop

While the work under consideration could thus not have been completed by Reynolds' workshop during his lifetime, they nonetheless could have copied it after his death.

Many of Reynold's assistants and pupils can be eliminated immediately, having died before the invention of cobalt blue—for example, Peter Toms.¹⁵

Of the others, Giuseppe Marchi and James Northcote seem most likely.



Figure 18. Giuseppe Marchi, *Thomas Jones*, 1768, oil on canvas, National Museum Wales, 92 cm x 72 cm.

Marchi painted draperies and copies for Reynolds, starting at the age of fifteen

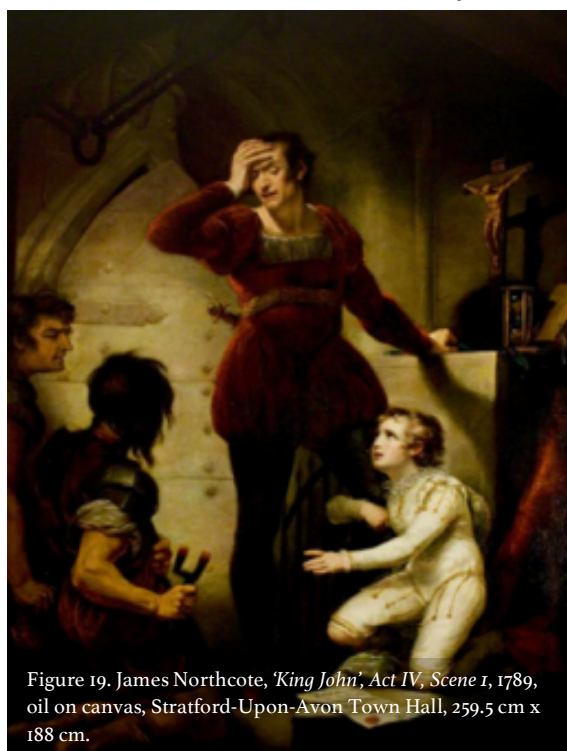
¹⁴ Ashok Roy, 'Cobalt Blue' in *Artist's Pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics* Vol. 3 (National Gallery of Art, Washington 1998), 152.

¹⁵ Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painters who Have Resided Or Been Born in England* (London: Luke Hanford and Sons, 1808), 53–55.

and continuing until Reynolds' death. After Reynolds died, Marchi spent the rest of his career restoring Reynolds' paintings.¹⁶ He therefore had a continuing interest in Reynolds' work, and might well have made a copy of *Cymon and Iphigenia* in 1802.

However, the paintings and copies he completed on his own were not, by and large, history and mythological scenes, but portraits. Furthermore, while cobalt blue was invented in time for him to have painted the work, it was only put into commercial production a year before he died. Given that he had very little career as an independent artist, it would be surprising for him to be such an early adopter of a new pigment.

James Northcote was also very familiar with Reynolds' work, and lived long



enough to have ample opportunity to work with cobalt blue: he lived until 1831. He was only a pupil of Reynolds' for a few years, but it was a connection that continued to matter to him: in 1819, he published a thorough biography of Reynolds.¹⁷

However, after he left Reynolds' studio Northcote does not appear to have continued painting copies of his works. Furthermore, he had no need to; he was a popular portraitist, and a full academician in his own right as of 1787.¹⁸ He had both the popularity

and the money to paint what he chose.

An Unrelated Copy

Eliminating Reynolds and his workshop, we are left with a complicated task: because of the many prints after, and exhibitions of, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, the pool of possible copyists is vast.

¹⁶ Freeman Marius O'Donoghue, 'Marchi, Giuseppe Filippo Liberati', *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1885).

¹⁷ James Northcote, *The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London: Henry Colburn, 1819).

¹⁸ Lionel Henry Cust, 'Northcote, James', *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1885).

The one traceable candidate who still seems possible is William Etty. The 1904 Christie's auction of the work in question listed him as the painter.¹⁹ Furthermore, Etty had a strong and demonstrated interest in the original, having painted at least three copies of it.²⁰

One of them is held by the York City Art Gallery (see figure 20), one by the Joslyn Museum in Nebraska, and one is currently missing. The Reynolds catalogue raisonné by David Mannings and Martin Postle suggests that the third, bought by Sir William Walton in 1947, is also the work sold in the 1904 Christie's auction. However, it also describes the work Walton bought as an oil on panel, which the work currently under investigation is not.²¹

However, given his history with the piece, Etty may well have chosen to copy it again. The York City copy, like the copy examined in this report, is of a different size and proportion to the original, which Etty has accommodated partially by stretching the figure and partially by extending the space around her, as has the copyist in this case. Even the depiction of the figure bears some similarities, including a dark semi-circular shadow under her breast, a



Figure 20. William Etty, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1810–1815, oil on canvas, York City Art Gallery, 47.3 cm x 63.3 cm.

continuation of the line in the muscle of her calf, and the simplification of her knees.



Figure 21. Unknown artist, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 19th century, oil on canvas, private collector. 73.3 cm x 96.6 cm.

Furthermore, Etty used both twill and plain weave canvases, so that choice does not rule him out as it does Reynolds.²² In addition, the somewhat haphazard reuse of the strainer, leaving all the old

¹⁹ *Sale catalogue* (London: Christie, Manson and Woods, 1904).

²⁰ Mannings and Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, entry 2045.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Rushfield, *Conservation of Easel Paintings* (London: Routledge, 2012), 139.

nails in, is consistent with Etty's opportunistic approach to materials: he used bed sheets as canvas for a few of his larger historical paintings.²³

However, there is also evidence to suggest against Etty as the author of the copy currently under investigation. The figure in the York City copy demonstrates much greater changes from the original, as might be expected from Etty, a preeminent figure painter. Furthermore, the sheen characteristic to his depiction of flesh—visible especially in the knees of the York City copy—appears to be absent in the copy in question (see figure 21), though perhaps it is simply obscured by the darkened varnish.

Finally, Etty worked in a relatively restricted palette, with the exception of a few experiments with bitumen late in his life, and that palette does not seem to have included cobalt blue.²⁴ While it is fully possible that it, like bitumen, featured in his late experimentation—especially given his known fondness of bright colour—it adds another barrier to attribution.²⁵

The many opportunities for a wide audience to view the original (and faithful prints thereof) between the invention of cobalt blue in 1802 and the unsuccessful auction of this copy in 1904—taken in conjunction with the uncertain case for Etty and the almost certain case against the other nameable figures with a connection to the work—mean that a confident attribution is unlikely.

²³ Ibid., 138.

²⁴ Leonard Robinson, *William Etty: The Life and Art* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2007), 265–266.

²⁵ Ibid.

Making the Copy: Motives, Materials, and Techniques

Reynolds' *Cymon and Iphigenia* was, as many of his paintings were, a fairly popular subject for copyists.²⁶ Part of this popularity was likely a result of ease of access.

There are three recorded print editions of the painting. It is common for artists to trace a work or a print to get a close match in compositional proportions to the original painting. To test if our artist potentially used a tracing from a print, an outline was made of our painting and compared to prints and the original painting (see figure 22). While close, the proportions did not match, with key components of the background inaccurate. This suggests the artist did not base the painting on a tracing or

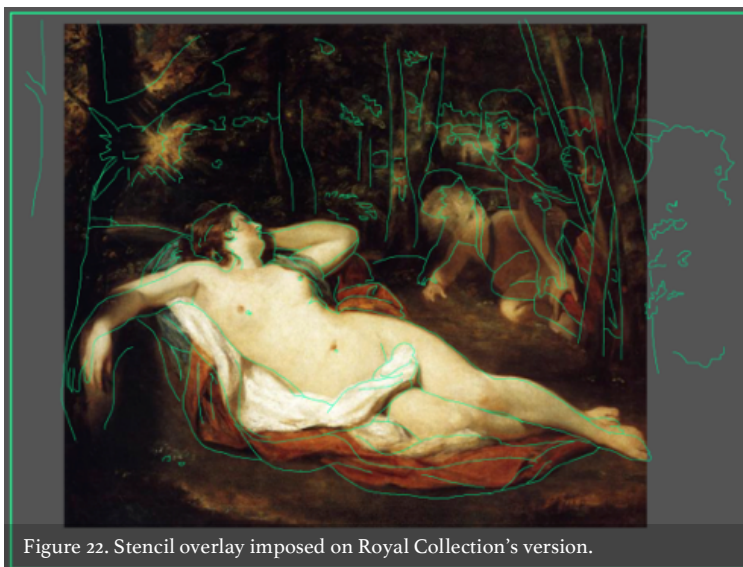


Figure 22. Stencil overlay imposed on Royal Collection's version.

grid, but worked free hand. Iphigenia's right arm reaches further, the figures of Cymon and Cupid are smaller, and the fabric is generally painted more freely and with impasto, and background detail positions do not match.

A drawing (see figure 23) for another copy by Henry Bone (see figure 24) has

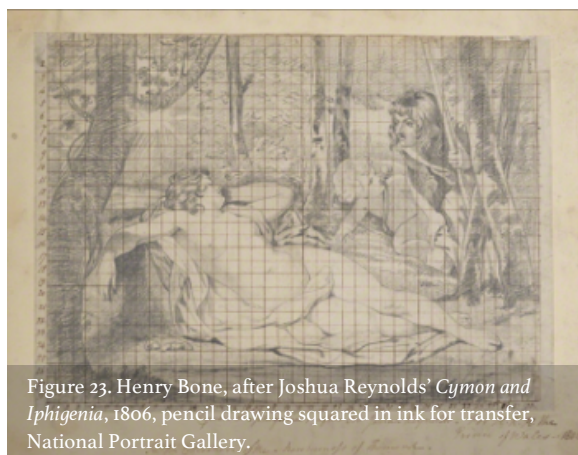


Figure 23. Henry Bone, after Joshua Reynolds' *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1806, pencil drawing squared in ink for transfer, National Portrait Gallery.

survived, and we can compare the method by which Bone chose to copy Reynolds. This enamel on copper copy commissioned by George IV in 1806 provides valuable insights. We can see the gridded lines that Bone has used to accurately and faithfully plot the composition of the painting.

Meticulous measurements such as these are not evident in the painting we are examining. In addition, as the Royal Collection's painting was made just prior to 1789, it gives us a good suggestion of the painting's condition in 1806—the

²⁶ Mannings and Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, entry 2045.

pigments are strong and Bone has not tinted his copy with yellow from the varnish—the flesh of Iphigenia remains milky white.

We can analyse the copyist's technique and deduce information on the making of the painting from the materials used. The ground is inconsistent in colour and is somewhat “slapdash” in preparation. The canvas has been prepared first with a proteinous glue size, and then has been primed while off the strainer. After this process, it was stretched onto the current strainer, which is reflected in the ground crumbling at the tacking holes along the cusping of the upper edge, demonstrating the strain on the dried application. The ground



Figure 24. Henry Bone, after Joshua Reynolds' *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 1806, enamel on copper, Royal Collection.



Figure 25. X-ray image

application varies in thickness across the painting, the top edge has a visibly thick lip, however tapers out at the bottom and right edges to being thin with visible losses. Paint particles have been added to tone the ground to a buff colour. A cheap strainer has been used as the primary support instead of a stretcher. From the X-Ray (see figure 25) we also can deduce that the strainer has been used once before, as an extra set of nails are visible in the X-Ray and are still embedded in the wood, and some of the previous canvas remains. This recycling would have been more economical than buying a completely prepared canvas, while the inconsistent and poorly applied ground suggests an artist's application rather than an experienced colourman's. The copyist potentially selected a canvas which was currently available in their studio and made it fit appropriately.

In Infra-Red (see figure 26), we see that the artist has made some minimal alterations to the positioning. These small changes are in the arrangement of Cupid's fingers and the face of Cymon. These small changes suggest that the artist was



Figure 26. Infra-red image

possibly following a sketch or print very closely. Varied painting techniques can be seen across the painting, the artist has used a confident and quickly applied wet-in-wet technique of thicker impasto in the red and white draperies, while brown glazes have been built up methodically in the background.



Figure 27. Unknown artist, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, 19th century, oil on canvas, private collector. 73.3 cm x 96.6 cm.



Figure 28. Joshua Reynolds, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, c. 1755-89, oil on canvas, Royal Collection. 143.2 x 171.6 cm.

This inconsistent approach has been applied, too, to the composition. A somewhat amorphous bush, revealed on the right-hand side during the cleaning process, has been added to fill the empty space left by the differently proportioned canvas.

Although the addition of the bush was almost certainly not intended to alter the meaning of the composition, it nonetheless does. Added to the wider space around Iphigenia, and Cymon's positioning higher above her, it adds to an impression of threatening voyeurism: in the original, he enters from the side of the canvas, neither an especially powerful nor a particularly hidden position. In the version here examined, he is both more central and better defended, the bush offering him a sort of shelter (see figures 27 and 28).

The impression of the moment of gaze—and epiphany—is thus altered, however inadvertently.

Conclusion

We began this project with the intention of determining, as far as was possible, the authorship and context of the painting, and of cleaning it enough to allow it to be displayed.

The latter goal has been achieved, but the former has proven more complex. Because the work has little definite provenance, and because there are an insurmountable number of artists who would have had access to the original work, both authorship and context remain uncertain.

However, there are nonetheless a small number of things that we can claim to know. We can state with certainty that the copy under investigation was painted sometime between 1802, when cobalt blue was invented (or, more likely, 1807, when it was first commercially produced) and 1904, when it was unsuccessfully auctioned by Christie's. It is furthermore on a reused strainer, painted oddly in thin glazes with peculiar, thick highlights, and is made with painting materials in keeping with those of the nineteenth century. It was neither gridded nor traced. Even some of its history since can be deciphered: given the tobacco residue in the layers of varnish, it was very probably displayed in a home.

Beyond those assertions, we have only tentative guesses about the work. Christie's attribution to Etty may prove accurate; future work on Etty's method and materials, as of yet generally understudied, might serve to confirm or refute the possibility.

In the meantime, the project has beautifully demonstrated the way interpretation and conservation, as they mutually reveal and obscure, literally and figuratively, are tightly interwoven processes.

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