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978-1-108-06901-4 - The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds: Containing his Discourses, Idlers, a Journey to Flanders and Holland (Now First Published), and his Commentary on du Fresnoy's Art of Painting: Volume 1

Edited by Edmond Malone

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### The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds

This two-volume posthumous edition of the writings on art of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), one of the greatest of eighteenth-century artists and the first president of the Royal Academy, was published in 1797. It is prefaced by a short biography of Reynolds by his friend, the Shakespearean critic Edmond Malone (1741–1812), which includes a list of Reynolds' paintings with their sale prices, when known. Reynolds took his role as president and fellow of the Royal Academy very seriously, delivering fifteen 'discourses' to the fellows and students of the Academy, which are collected in Volume 1, along with three 'letters' on art criticism published in *The Idler*. This periodical's editor, Dr Johnson, was one of Reynolds' most intimate friends, and Reynolds was one of only three writers, in addition to himself, whom Johnson published in it. These essays provide a fascinating insight into the intellectual basis of Reynolds' work.

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*Sir Joshua Reynolds pinxit*

*Caroline Watson Engraver  
to her Majesty sculpsit*

## SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

*Tum demum sana mentis oculus acute cernere  
incipit ubi corporis oculus incipit hebescere.*

*Seneca.*

*Published according to Act of Parliament March 1789 by T Cadell, Strand.*

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AND HIS COMMENTARY ON DU FRESNOY'S ART OF PAINTING;  
PRINTED FROM HIS REVISED COPIES,  
(WITH HIS LAST CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS,)  
*IN TWO VOLUMES.*  
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED  
AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR,  
By EDMOND MALONE, Esq.  
ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

—QUASI NON EA PRÆCIPIAM ALIIS, QUÆ MIHI IPSI DESUNT. CICERO.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUN. AND W. DAVIES, IN THE STRAND.  
M DCC XCVII.

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TO  
THE KING.

THE regular progress of cultivated life is from necessities to accommodations, from accommodations to ornaments. By your illustrious predecessors were established marts for manufactures, and colleges for science ; but for the arts of elegance, those arts by which manufactures are embellished, and science is refined, to found an Academy was reserved for Your Majesty.

HAD such patronage been without effect, there had been reason to believe that Nature had, by some insurmountable impediment, obstructed our proficiency; but the annual improvement of the Exhibitions which Your Majesty has been pleased to

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## DEDICATION.

encourage, shews that only encouragement had been wanting.

To give advice to those who are contending for royal liberality, has been for some years the duty of my station in the Academy; and these Discourses hope for Your Majesty's acceptance, as well-intended endeavours to incite that emulation which your notice has kindled, and direct those studies which your bounty has rewarded.

May it please Your MAJESTY,

Your MAJESTY'S

Most dutiful servant,

and most faithful subject,

[1778.]

Joshua Reynolds.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF  
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

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THE Author of the following admirable works, having, for near half a century, been well known to almost every person in this country who had any pretensions to taste or literature, to the present age an account of him, however brief, may seem wholly unnecessary; nor should the reader be detained, even for a few minutes, from the pleasure which awaits him, but that Posterity, while they contemplate with delight and admiration those productions of his pencil which place him on a level with Titian and Vandyck, will naturally wish to know something of the *man*, as well as of the *painter*.

JOSHUA REYNOLDS was born at Plympton in Devonshire, July 16th, 1723; the son of Samuel Reynolds and Theophila Potter. He was on every side connected with the Church, for both his father and grandfather were in holy orders; his mother was the daughter of a clergyman, and his maternal grandmother the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Baker, an eminent mathemati-

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cian in the last century, of whom we have an account in the *BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA*. His father's elder brother, John, was also a clergyman, a fellow of Eton College, and Canon of St. Peters, Exeter.<sup>1</sup>

MR. Samuel Reynolds taught the grammar-school of Plympton, which could have afforded him but a moderate subsistence; nor was he enabled by any ecclesiastical preferment to provide for his numerous family, amounting to eleven children in all, of whom Joshua was the tenth. Five, however, of these children died in their infancy.—His father had a notion,<sup>2</sup> that it might at some future period of life be an advantage to a child to bear an uncommon christian name, which might recommend him to the attention and kindness of some person bearing the same name, who, if he should happen to have no natural object of his care, might be led even by so slight a circumstance to become a benefactor. Hence our author derived the scriptural name of Joshua, which, though not very uncommon, occurs less frequently than many others; of this baptismal name,

<sup>1</sup> This gentleman, who died in 1758, left his library, and the greater part of his fortune, to Exeter College in Oxford.—There is a mezzotinto print of him, scraped by M<sup>r</sup> Ardell, (from a portrait painted by his nephew) which has erroneously been supposed to represent the father of the painter. See Bromley's *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits*, 4to. 1792, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> From Dr. Percy, Lord Bishop of Dromore.

however,

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. v

however, the Register of Plympton by some negligence or inaccuracy has deprived him. ’

UNDER the tuition of Mr. Reynolds he was for some time instructed in the classicks; but at an early age his inclination for that art of which he afterwards became so illustrious a professor, began to display itself; and his early attempts \* at delineation were encouraged by his father, who was himself fond of drawings, and had a small collection of anatomical and other prints. The young artist’s first essays were made in copying several little things done by two of his sisters, who had likewise a turn for the art; and he afterwards (as he himself informed me) eagerly copied such prints as he met with among his father’s books, particularly those which were given in the translation of Plutarch’s Lives, published by Dryden. But his principal fund of imitation was Jacob Catt’s book of Emblems, which his great grandmother by the father’s side, a Dutch woman, had brought with her from Holland. When he was but eight years old, he read with great avi-

In the Register of Plympton, by which it appears that he was baptized on the 30th of July, he is styled “*Joseph*, son of Samuel Reynolds, Clerk;” probably in consequence of the entry not being made at the time of the baptism. The name, I suppose, was written originally on a slip of paper in an abbreviated form—“*Jos.* son of Samuel Reynolds,”—and was at a subsequent period entered erroneously by the clergyman or clerk of the parish.

\* Lady Inchiquin has one of these very early essays; a perspective view of a book-case, under which his father has written—“Done by Joshua out of pure idleness.” It is on the back of a Latin exercise. Joshua’s idleness was, his preferring the employment of his pencil to that of the pen.

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dity and pleasure THE JESUIT'S PERSPECTIVE, a book which happened to lie on the window-seat of his father's parlour; and made himself so completely master of it, that he never afterwards had occasion to study any other treatise on that subject.<sup>4</sup> He then attempted to draw the School at Plympton, a building elevated on stone pillars; and he did it so well, that his father said, "Now this exemplifies what the author of the 'Perspective' asserts in his Preface,—that, by observing the rules laid down in his book, a man may do wonders; for this is wonderful." From these attempts he proceeded to draw likenesses of the friends and relations of his family, with tolerable success. But what most strongly confirmed him in his love of the art, was Richardson's Treatise on Painting; the perusal of which so delighted and inflamed his mind, that Raffaele appeared to him superior to the most illustrious names of ancient or modern time; a notion which he loved to indulge all the rest of his life.

His propensity for this fascinating art growing daily more manifest, his father thought fit to gratify his inclination; and when he was not much more than seventeen years of age, on Oct. the 18th, (St. Luke's day) 1740, he was placed as a pupil under

<sup>4</sup> From himself in 1786.

<sup>5</sup> From the late James Boswell, Esq. to whom this little circumstance was communicated by our author.

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Mr. Hudson,<sup>6</sup> who, though but an ordinary painter, was the most distinguished artist of that time. After spending a few years in London, which he employed in acquiring the rudiments of his art, on some disagreement with his master about a very slight matter, he in 1743 removed to Devonshire, where, as he told me, he passed about three years in company from whom little improvement could be got: when he recollected this period of his life, he always spoke of it as so much time thrown away, (so far as related to a knowledge of the world and of mankind,) of which he ever afterwards lamented the loss. However, after some little dissipation, he sat down seriously to the study and practice of his art; and he always considered the disagreement which induced him to leave Mr. Hudson as a very fortunate circumstance, since by this means he was led to deviate from the tameness and insipidity of his master, and to form a manner of his own.

WHILE in this career, the first of his performances which brought him into any considerable notice, was the  
portrait,

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hudson, who was the scholar and son-in-law of Richardson the Painter was born in 1701. "He enjoyed" (says Lord Orford, *ANECDOTES OF PAINTING*, iv. 122, 8vo.) "for many years the chief business of portrait-painting in the capital, after the favourite artists, his master and Jervas, were gone off the stage; though Vanloo first, and Liotard afterwards, for a few years diverted the torrent of fashion from the established professor. Still the country gentlemen were faithful to their compatriot, and were content with his honest similitudes, and with the fair tied  
wigs

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portrait of Captain Hamilton, father of the present Marquis of Abercorn, which he painted so early as in the year 1746.<sup>7</sup> When at a late period of his life he saw this portrait, he was surprised to find it so well done; and comparing it with his later works, with that modesty which always accompanies genius, lamented that in such a series of years he should not have made a greater progress in his art.<sup>8</sup>

ON Christmas-day, 1746, his father, a man highly respected in his native county, died; and left our young painter to raise, as he could, the fabrick of his own fortune. After spending a few more years in the practice of painting, partly in London<sup>9</sup> and partly in Devonshire, where many of his early essays yet remain, he became acquainted with the late Lord Edgumbe

wigs, blue velvet coats, and white satin waistcoats, which he bestowed liberally on his customers, and which, with complacency, they beheld multiplied in Faber's mezzotintos. The better taste introduced by Sir Joshua Reynolds, put an end to Hudson's reign, who had the good sense to resign the throne soon after finishing his capital work, the family-piece of Charles Duke of Marlborough." [About 1756.] He died, Jan. 26, 1779, aged 78.

<sup>7</sup> It is now in the possession of the Marquis of Abercorn; and there is a portrait of the same gentleman with his children around him, a small family-piece, painted about the same time, in the Collection of Lord Eliot, at Port Eliot in Cornwall.

<sup>8</sup> He made the same observation on viewing the picture of a Boy reading, which he also painted in 1746; an admirable piece, which was sold by auction among other of his works in 1795, to Sir Henry Englefield, Bart. for thirty-five guineas.

<sup>9</sup> At this period he lived in St. Martin's Lane, which was then a favourite residence of artists; nearly opposite to May's Buildings.

and



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and Captain (afterwards Lord) Keppel, by each of whom he was warmly patronised; and the latter being ordered to cruise in the Mediterranean, Mr. Reynolds embraced the opportunity which his kindness offered, and accompanied him thither, sailing from Plymouth, May 11th, 1749. In the course of their voyage, (during which he had accommodations in the Captain's own ship,) they touched at Algiers, Gibraltar, Cadiz, Lisbon, and Minorca; and after spending about two months in Portmahon, the principal town of that island, in December he sailed to Leghorn, from which place he proceeded to Rome.

AMONG our author's loose papers, I have found some detached and unconnected thoughts, written occasionally as hints for a Discourse on a new and singular plan, which he appears, at a late period of his life, to have had it in contemplation to compose and deliver to the Academy, and which he seems to have intended as a history of his mind, so far as concerned his art, and of his progress, studies, and practise; together with a view of the advantages which he had enjoyed, and the disadvantages he had laboured under, in the course that he had run: a scheme from which, however liable it might be to the ridicule of Wits and Scoffers, (a circumstance of which, he says, he was perfectly aware,) he conceived the Students might derive some useful documents for the regulation of their own conduct and

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practise.

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practise. It is much to be regretted that he did not live to compose such a Discourse; for, from the hand of so great and candid an Artift, it could not but have been highly curious and instructive. One of these fragments relating to his feelings when he first went to Italy, every reader will, I am confident, be pleased with its insertion.

“ IT has frequently happened, (says this great painter,) as I was informed by the keeper of the Vatican, that many of those whom he had conducted through the various apartments of that edifice, when about to be dismissed, have asked for the works of Raffaele, and would not believe that they had already passed through the rooms where they are preserved; so little impression had those performances made on them. One of the first painters now in France told me, that this circumstance happened to himself; though he now looks on Raffaele with that veneration which he deserves from all painters and lovers of the art. I remember very well my own disappointment, when I first visited the Vatican; but on confessing my feelings to a brother-student, of whose ingenuousness I had a high opinion, he acknowledged that the works of Raffaele had the same effect on him, or rather that they did not produce the effect which he expected. This was a great relief to my mind; and on inquiring further of other students, I found that those persons

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persons only who from natural imbecillity appeared to be incapable of ever relishing those divine performances, made pretensions to instantaneous raptures on first beholding them.—In justice to myself, however, I must add, that though disappointed and mortified at not finding myself enraptured with the works of this great master, I did not for a moment conceive or suppose that the name of Raffaele, and those admirable paintings in particular, owed their reputation to the ignorance and prejudice of mankind; on the contrary, my not relishing them as I was conscious I ought to have done, was one of the most humiliating circumstances that ever happened to me. I found myself in the midst of works executed upon principles with which I was unacquainted: I felt my ignorance, and stood abashed. All the indigested notions of painting which I had brought with me from England, where the art was in the lowest state it had ever been in, (it could not indeed be lower,) were to be totally done away, and eradicated from my mind. It was necessary, as it is expressed on a very solemn occasion, that I should become as *a little child*.—Notwithstanding my disappointment, I proceeded to copy some of those excellent works. I viewed them again and again; I even affected to feel their merit, and to admire them, more than I really did. In a short time a new taste and new perceptions began to dawn upon me; and I was convinced that I had originally formed a

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false

false opinion of the perfection of art, and that this great painter was well entitled to the high rank which he holds in the estimation of the world. The truth is, that if these works had really been what I expected, they would have contained beauties superficial and alluring, but by no means such as would have entitled them to the great reputation which they have so long and so justly obtained.

“ HAVING since that period frequently revolved this subject in my mind, I am now clearly of opinion, that a relish for the higher excellencies of art is an acquired taste, which no man ever possessed without long cultivation, and great labour and attention. On such occasions as that which I have mentioned, we are often ashamed of our apparent dullness ; as if it were to be expected that our minds, like tinder, should instantly catch fire from the divine spark of Raffaele's genius. I flatter myself that *now* it would be so, and that I have a just and lively perception of his great powers : but let it be always remembered, that the excellence of his style is not on the surface, but lies deep ; and at the first view is seen but mistily. It is the florid style, which strikes at once, and captivates the eye for a time, without ever satisfying the judgment. Nor does painting in this respect differ from other arts. A just poetical taste, and the acquisition of a nice discriminative musical ear,

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are equally the work of time. Even the eye, however perfect in itself, is often unable to distinguish between the brilliancy of two diamonds, though the experienced jeweller will be amazed at its blindness ; not considering that there was a time when he himself could not have been able to pronounce which of the two was the most perfect, and that his own power of discrimination was acquired by slow and imperceptible degrees.

“THE man of true genius, instead of spending all his hours, as many artists do while they are at Rome, in measuring statues and copying pictures, soon begins to think for himself, and endeavours to do something like what he sees.—I consider general copying <sup>10</sup> (he adds) as a delusive kind of industry : the student satisfies himself with the appearance of doing something ; he falls into the dangerous habit of imitating without selecting, and of labouring without any determinate object : as it requires no effort of the mind, he sleeps over his work, and those powers of invention and disposition which ought particularly to be called out and put in action, lie torpid, and lose their energy for want of exercise. How incapable of producing any thing of their own, those are, who have spent most of their time in making finished copies, is an ob-

<sup>10</sup> This observation occurs nearly in the same words in the first Discourse.

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servation well known to all who are conversant with our art.”—

We may be assured, therefore, that this great painter did not fall into the error here pointed out ;—did not long continue the practice of copying the great works “ which were at this period within his reach ; but rather employed his time in examining and fixing in his mind their peculiar and characteristic excellencies. Instead of copying the touches of the great masters, he aspired to copy their conceptions. “ From contemplating the works of Titian, Coreggio, &c. (says he in another of his fragments,) we derive this great advantage ; we learn that certain niceties of expression are capable of being executed, which otherwise we might consider as beyond the reach of art : this inspires us with some degree of confidence, and we are thus incited to endeavour at other excellencies in the same line.”

SOME account of his particular practise and habits of study, while he was in Italy, is, I know, much desired by several artists of the present day ; but these I have no means of investigating. The method which he followed when he was at Venice, in order to ascertain the principles on which the great

“ Of the few copies which he made while he was at Rome, two are now in the possession of the Earl of Inchiquin, who married his niece, Miss Palmer : St. Michael the Archangel slaying the Dragon, after Guido ; and the School of Athens, from Raffaele ; both admirable performances.

masters

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masters of colouring wrought, and to attain the true management of light and shade, he has himself particularly mentioned in a note on Du Fresnoy's Poem.<sup>12</sup>

WHILE he was in Italy, he occasionally indulged himself in Caricatura, which was much in vogue at that time. Of pieces of this description, the only one which I have seen of his hand, is a large picture,<sup>13</sup> containing about twenty figures, being all the English gentlemen of note who were then at Rome.

AFTER an absence of near three years, he began to think of returning home; and a slight circumstance which he used to mention, may serve to shew, that however great delight he may have derived from his residence in a country which Raffaelle and Michael Angelo had embellished by their genius and their works, the prospect of revisiting his native land was not displeasing. When he was at Venice, in compliment to the English gentlemen then residing there, the manager of the opera one night ordered the band to play an English ballad-tune. Happening to be the popular air which was played or sung in almost every street, just at the time of their leaving London, by suggesting to them that metropolis with all its connexions and

<sup>12</sup> Vol. II. p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> In the collection of Joseph Henry, Esq. of Straffan in the county of Kildare, in Ireland.

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endearing circumstances, it immediately brought tears into our author's eyes, as well as into those of his countrymen who were present.

ON his arrival in London in 1752,<sup>14</sup> he very soon attracted the publick notice; and not long afterwards the whole-length portrait which he painted of his friend and patron, Admiral Keppel, exhibited such powers, that he was not only universally acknowledged to be at the head of his profession, but to be the greatest painter that England had seen since Vandyck. The whole interval between the time of Charles the First and the conclusion of the reign of George the Second, though distinguished by the performances of Lely, Riley, and Kneller, seemed to be annihilated; and the only question was, whether the new painter, or Vandyck, were the more excellent. For several years before the period we are now speaking of, the painters of portraits contented themselves with exhibiting as correct a resemblance as they could, but seem not to have thought, or had not the power, of enlivening the canvas by giving a kind of historick air to their pictures. Mr. Reynolds very soon saw how much animation might be obtained by deviating from the

<sup>14</sup> On his return from Italy he hired a large house in Newport-street, now divided into two houses. Here he continued to dwell till the year 1761, when he removed to Leicester-Fields.



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insipid manner of his immediate predecessors ; <sup>15</sup> hence in many of his portraits, particularly when combined in family-groups, we find much of the variety and spirit of a higher species of art. Instead of confining himself to mere likeness, in which however he was eminently happy, he dived, as it were, into the mind, and habits, and manners, of those who sat to him ; <sup>16</sup> and accordingly the majority of his portraits are so appropriated and characteristick, that the many illustrious persons whom he has delineated, will be almost as well known to posterity, as if they had seen and conversed with them.

VERY soon after his return from Italy, his acquaintance with Dr. Johnson commenced ; and their intimacy continued uninterrupted to the time of Johnson's death. Happening to meet with the *Life of Savage* in Devonshire, which, though published some years before, was then new to him, he began to read it (as Mr. Boswell has informed us) “ while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his

<sup>15</sup> Dahl, Richardson, Jervas, Thornhill, Hudson, Slaughter, &c.

<sup>16</sup> The various portraits of Mr. Garrick, those of Dr. Johnson, Dr. Robinson Archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Burke, Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Gibbon, Lord Mansfield, Lord Thurlow, Lord Heathfield, Mr. Pott, Mr. Boswell, Mr. Windham, and Mr. Cholmondeley, are eminent instances of the truth of this observation.

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arm totally benumbed.”<sup>17</sup> Being then unacquainted with the author, he must naturally have had a strong desire to see and converse with that extraordinary man ; and, as the same writer relates, he about this time was introduced to him. “ When Johnson lived in Castle-street, Cavendish Square, he used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him ; [Mr. Reynolds ;]<sup>18</sup> Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr. Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his *Life of Savage*, conceived a very high admiration of Johnson’s powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him, and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua indeed was lucky enough at their very first meeting to make a remark, which was so much above the common-place style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations ; upon which Reynolds observed,—“ You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from the burthen of gratitude.” They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish ; but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of

<sup>17</sup> *Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson*, i. 144.<sup>18</sup> In Newport -street.

human

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human nature, which it exhibited, like some of the Reflections of Rochefaucault. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.

“ SIR Joshua told me a pleasant characteristical anecdote of Johnson, about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells’, the then Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank, came in. Johnson, thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry ; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making their great visitors imagine they were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr. Reynolds, saying, ‘ How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were *to work as hard as we could*?’ as if they had been common mechanics.”<sup>19</sup>

How much he profited by his acquaintance with this excellent and extraordinary man, he intended to have particularly mentioned in the Discourse which, as I have already observed, he had it in contemplation to compose. “ I remember, (says

<sup>19</sup> Life of Johnson, i. 217. Johnson, however, continued to live in intimacy with these ladies, whom he frequently mentions in his letters to Baretti. In that dated Dec. 11, 1762, he says, “ Miss Cotterell is still with Mrs. Porter: Miss Charlotte is married to Dean Lewis, and has three children.” *ibid.* p. 341.

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he,) Mr. Burke, speaking of the *Essays* of Sir Francis Bacon, said, he thought them the best of his works. Dr. Johnson was of opinion, 'that their excellence and their value consisted in being the observations of a strong mind operating upon life; and in consequence you find there what you seldom find in other books.'—It is this kind of excellence which gives a value to the performances of artists also. It is the thoughts expressed in the works of Michael Angelo, Coreggio, Raffaele, Parmegiano, and perhaps some of the old Gothick masters, and not the inventions of Pietro da Cortona, Carlo Marati, Luca Giordano, and others that I might mention, which we seek after with avidity. From the former we learn to think originally. May I presume to introduce myself on this occasion, and even to mention as an instance of the truth of what I have remarked, the very Discourses which I have had the honour of delivering from this place. Whatever merit they have, must be imputed, in a great measure, to the education which I may be said to have had under Dr. Johnson. I do not mean to say, though it certainly would be to the credit of these Discourses, if I could say it with truth, that he contributed even a single sentiment to them; but he qualified my mind to think justly. No man had, like him, the faculty of teaching inferior minds the art of thinking. Perhaps other men might have equal knowledge; but few were so communicative. His great pleasure was to talk to those who looked up

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up to him. It was here he exhibited his wonderful powers. In mixed company, and frequently in company that *ought* to have looked up to him, many, thinking they had a character for learning to support, considered it as beneath them to enlist in the train of his auditors; and to such persons he certainly did not appear to advantage, being often impetuous and overbearing. The desire of shining in conversation was in him indeed a predominant passion; and if it must be attributed to vanity, let it at the same time be recollected, that it produced that loquaciousness from which his more intimate friends derived considerable advantage. The observations which he made on poetry, on life, and on every thing about us, I applied to our art; with what success others must judge. Perhaps an artist in his studies should pursue the same conduct; and instead of patching up a particular work on the narrow plan of imitation, rather endeavour to acquire the art and power of thinking. On this subject I have often spoken; but it cannot be too often repeated, that the general power of composition may be acquired; and when acquired, the artist may then lawfully take hints from his predecessors. In reality indeed it appears to me, that a man must begin by the study of others. Thus Bacon became a great thinker, by first entering into and making himself master of the thoughts of other men.”

IN

IN consequence of his connexion with Dr. Johnson, he in 1759 furnished that writer with three Essays on the subject of painting, which appeared in the IDLER, and were, I believe, our author's first literary performance.

To mark the gradual progress of his reputation from year to year, is not the object of the present memoir; but the era of the establishment of that Academy which gave rise to the following DISCOURSES, forming a memorable epoch in the history of the Arts, may justly claim particular notice.

THE Painters of Great Britain from about the year 1750,<sup>20</sup> with a view of promoting their art by painting from living models, associated together in a kind of Academy in St. Martin's Lane, which they supported by annual subscription. Their efforts, however, were not very successful till ten years afterwards;<sup>21</sup> when they formed a scheme of an annual exhibition of

<sup>20</sup> The first effort towards an Institution of this kind in the present century, was made in 1724, when Sir James Thornhill opened an Academy for Drawing at his house in Covent-garden. He had before proposed to Lord Halifax to obtain the foundation of a Royal Academy, to be built at the upper end of the Mews, with apartments for the Professors, &c. See Walpole's ANECDOTES OF PAINTING, iv. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Their first Exhibition was in the year 1760. "The Artists (says Dr. Johnson in a letter to Joseph Baretti, dated London, June 10, 1761,) have instituted a yearly exhibition of pictures and statues, in imitation, as I am told, of foreign Academies. This year was the *second* exhibition. They please themselves much with