

Raphael: a sorority of Madonnas

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RAPHAEL'S *Madonna of the pinks*, the jewel-like panel in pristine condition published as the original version by Nicholas Penny in this Magazine in 1992 and now in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 50), notably advanced our knowledge of the artist.¹ The rediscovered painting reminded us how closely in spirit Raphael could approach a painter such as Gerard David, and how effectively he could people a quasi-Flemish interior with Italianate forms, pursuing in this endeavour – and arguably surpassing – his immediate inspiration, Leonardo. It showed how, towards the end of his Florentine period, probably in late 1507, Raphael was continuing to use, in a small *Madonna*, the grey-based colour combinations he had tried in the *Entombment* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) and was attempting in the *St Catherine* (National Gallery, London). Less positively – but importantly – it demonstrated that Raphael could not always avoid a certain stiffness in design, even with a subject of which he was a supremely fluent master, when, as here, he was attempting to synthesise various pictorial ambitions in a panel more impeccably enamelled than any other of his surviving paintings. Furthermore, Penny's discovery of a *Madonna* – one which, while

never entirely forgotten, remained in an art-historical limbo so long as the original painting went unrecognised – worked as a magnet to draw still less familiar compositions from still deeper obscurity.

The *Madonna of the pinks*, despite features displeasing to some modern viewers, was once widely admired. Penny supplied a list of copies which continues to lengthen. He also reproduced another *Madonna of the pinks*, of similar size, in the collection of the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton House, Salisbury: it bears the signature 'RAPHAELLO URBINAS' and the date 'MDVIII' on the edge of the Virgin's bodice (Fig. 51).² Penny left open the question of whether this painting reflected a composition by Raphael or by a close follower, but the first is the virtually certain option. As in the National Gallery's picture, the Child reaches for a carnation held in the Virgin's hand, but otherwise the two paintings differ considerably. The Virgin is shown almost full face rather than in three-quarter profile, while the Child sits very differently, with one ankle crossed over the other and facing right rather than left. The interior is more plainly domestic than that of the National Gallery painting, lacking the Italianate architecture of the rear aperture, and, especially in features like the shutters, is conceived in a Flemish manner. The setting is enclosed, and the Virgin and Child are illuminated from a single window, high on the left, without competition from a secondary light source, as in the National Gallery painting: the lighting is thus more concentrated and more realistic. In short, the



50. *Madonna of the pinks*, by Raphael. 1507–08. Panel, 29 by 23 cm. (National Gallery, London).



51. *Madonna of the pinks* (the 'Pembroke Madonna'), by an unidentified artist after Raphael. After 1508. Panel, 31.7 by 22.6 cm. (Collection of the Earl of Pembroke, Wilton House, Salisbury).

¹ N. Penny: 'Raphael's "Madonna dei Garofani" rediscovered', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 134 (1992), pp.67–81.

² *Ibid.*, pp.67–68 and fig.5. Sidney, 16th Earl of Pembroke: *Painting and Drawings at Wilton House*, London 1968, pp.85–86, no.231, not repr., as 'Italian School, seventeenth century'. Penny, *op. cit.*, p.68, note 7, remarked that the painting 'oddly combines a figure-group of Raphael's Florentine period with the sort of dark interior and

large curtain favoured by Giulio Romano in the 1520s'. But Raphael exploited dark interiors while still in Florence, as the *Orléans Madonna* (Musée Condé, Chantilly) and *Bridgewater Madonna* (Duke of Sutherland, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh) demonstrate, and some of Giulio's earlier Madonnas are indebted precisely to this period of Raphael's work.



52. Copy after the 'Pembroke Madonna', by an unidentified artist after Raphael. After 1508. Panel, dimensions unknown. (Present whereabouts unknown).



53. Copy after the 'Pembroke Madonna', by Jacques Stella. c.1630?. Panel, 35 by 27 cm. (On the art market in Paris in 1996).



54. Copy after the 'Pembroke Madonna', by Jean Morin. c.1640. Etching, 35 by 22.7 cm. (plate size), 30.7 by 22.2 cm. (image size). (British Museum, London).



55. Study for the 'Pembroke Madonna', by an unidentified artist after a lost drawing by Raphael. After 1507-08. Silver-point and white heightening on a dark grey prepared ground, 15.2 by 13.2 cm. (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).



56. *Madonna del latte*, by Marco Dente da Ravenna after a lost painting by Raphael of c.1508. c.1515. Engraving, 16.7 by 11.8 cm. (British Museum, London).



57. *Madonna del latte*, by Pietro Torrigiano, c.1508–09. Pigmented terracotta, 12 cm. high. (Formerly with Daniel Katz, London).

Pembroke *Madonna of the pinks* is neither a copy nor a variant: its arrangement is to that of the National Gallery's *Madonna of the pinks* as the *Small Cowper Madonna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington) is to the *Madonna del Granduca* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence), or the *Madonna del Cardellino* (Uffizi, Florence) to the *Madonna del Prato* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), and such a relation is to be expected: Raphael customarily pupped his Madonnas in litters, exploring a particular action or arrangement over two, three or more panels before passing to another sequence.

On a visit to Wilton in 1998 the present writer found the Pembroke *Madonna of the pinks* of high quality, both compositionally and in execution, despite the abrasion and over-painting that it has endured. The late Earl of Pembroke generously consented to have the painting studied at the National Gallery later that year.³ However, neither X-radiography nor infra-red examination produced evidence in favour of Raphael's own execution, and it must be accepted that the Pembroke painting is an accurate early copy of a now lost original, probably of the same size. Other copies of what must have been a well-regarded composition are known. One, of indeterminate date and size, but evidently on panel, is recorded in an unsourced photograph in the Witt Library, London, as in an English collection, but without further information (Fig. 52). Another example, also on panel, sweetened, simplified and marginally larger than the Wilton painting, was made in France in the early seventeenth century by Jacques Stella (Fig. 53);⁴ and there is a



58. *Virgin and Child*, by Andrea del Sarto, c.1510. Panel, 82.5 by 65.4 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

³ I am grateful to Raymond Stedman for making the painting available for examination, to Rachel Billinge for carrying it out, and to Nicholas Penny for his help and encouragement.

⁴ Reproduced in colour on the back cover of the August 1996 issue of THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, then with the Galerie Eric Coatalem, Paris.

reversed etching of the composition by Jean Morin of c.1640 (Fig. 54).⁵ Whereas Stella's painting, in which the colours bear little relation to those of Raphael, is an adaptation rather than a copy, Morin's print was presumably made from the lost original, from the Wilton panel, or from some other version then in France and now untraced.⁶ A further copy takes us closer to the painting's origins: a drawing in the Uffizi must replicate a lost study by Raphael for the Child (Fig. 55).⁷

The lost original of the Wilton *Madonna of the pinks* must once have been an only slightly less Leonardesque and less glamorous twin to the London *Madonna of the pinks*. There was also a third sister, although the evidence is slighter for her existence. A *Madonna del latte* is now known in its presumed original form only through an engraving by Marco Dente da Ravenna of c.1515 (Fig. 56). Its three-quarter length, the type of the Virgin, the compact arrangement, the corner setting, the single window, the lively physical interaction, the characterisation of the Child and his crossed ankles, all are very similar to the two *Madonnas of the pinks*; novel – and very bold – is the pose of the Child, seen from the side and back.⁸ Nothing, of course, can be said about the colour, but the engraving conveys the impression of solid form and refined surface detail and was more likely based on a painting than on a silverpoint drawing.⁹ This third composition rapidly found imitators. Pietro Torrigiano employed it, extended to full-length, in a *Madonna del latte* in pigmented terracotta (Fig. 57). This piece, when it passed a few years ago through the London art market, was considered to date from Torrigiano's English sojourn, largely on the basis of technical similarities to his effigy of Dr Younge and the bust of Henry VII.¹⁰ But there is no reason to suppose that Torrigiano's working methods changed much over the years and this *Madonna* exhibits none of the northern stylistic traits found in his English sculptures: it is entirely

Italian. It was no doubt among the latest terracottas modelled by Torrigiano in Italy before he left for Flanders, where he is first documented in April 1510.¹¹ If so, then his *Madonna* would antedate by half a dozen years the publication of the engraving. This is significant for it implies either that Raphael himself made his design available to Pietro or that Pietro encountered Raphael's painting in a Florentine collection before he left Italy. Given Raphael's fascination with sculpture and his extensive collaboration with sculptors during his Roman period, it seems reasonable to conclude that already in Florence he was providing sculptors with designs.

The integration of these two further *Madonna* compositions into Raphael's late Florentine work serves to enhance our understanding of the young artist's energy, sophistication and versatility, his interest in transalpine art and in sculpture, and his restless experimentation. In the historiography of Renaissance painting, works of which the originals are lost and known only through copies, are generally ignored in synthetic accounts and, at best, placed among the also-rans of catalogues raisonnés where they languish. Closer attention to what is missing enlarges our understanding of Raphael as one of the most potent, versatile and influential of all artists.¹² It is still insufficiently appreciated that Raphael, arriving in Florence in 1504 desirous to learn, had within three years surpassed in invention and execution in a strictly Florentine manner all his Florentine contemporaries, who must have regarded him with awe.¹³ In addition to the unexpected reaction of Pietro Torrigiano, it is evident that Franciabigio, Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, Bugiardini and the youthful Andrea del Sarto looked intently at Raphael's Florentine work, above all at his *Madonnas*. Indeed, Andrea counts for a moment among Raphael's closest followers and it is the pose of the Child in his *Madonna* in Boston (Fig. 58) that provides a second *terminus ante quem* for the *Madonna del latte*.¹⁴

⁵ A.P.F. Robert-Dumesnil: *Le Peintre-Graveur Français*, Paris 1835, II, p.40, no.14. The etching is inscribed: 'Dilectus meus mihi et Ego illi qui Pascitur inter lilia / Raphael urbin pinx Jean Morin scul et excud avec priv Regis.'

⁶ A *Holy family* in Palazzo Pitti, Florence, long associated with Raphael's school and recently attributed to the master himself by K. Oberhuber: *Raphael, the Paintings*, Munich, London and New York 1999, pp.234–35, depends from the scheme of the Wilton *Madonna*, particularly in the pose of the Child. It is probably Emilian: a pricked *cartonetto* for it appeared at Sotheby's, New York, 21st January 2003, lot 13, as by Bagnacavallo.

⁷ Anonymous Florentine XVI c.1327F. I am grateful to Paolo Nannoni and Nicholas Turner for the photograph. This drawing was connected by B. Degenhart: 'Unbekannte Zeichnungen der Uffizien', *Mittelungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 4, nos.2/3 (1933), pp.119–28, esp. pp.122–27, with the composition recorded in Morin's etching, but he was obviously unaware of the painted versions. In this pioneering and, it would seem, subsequently overlooked article, Degenhart gave 1327F to Raphael himself, an attribution that the present writer cannot accept.

⁸ A painted adaptation of this composition appeared at Sotheby's, London, 19th April 1989, lot 27, oil on panel, 48.5 by 33.5 cm., catalogued as by a follower of Andrea del Sarto but bearing an old attribution – surely nearer the mark – to Andrea del Brescianino.

⁹ K. Oberhuber, ed.: *The works of Antonio Raimondi and of his school*, New York 1978, *The Illustrated Bartsch* XXVI, p.88, no.61 (68). The group exists in a second version, *ibid.*, p.87, nos.60–61 (67), probably issued by Marcantonio after Raphael's death: St Joseph has been added and the drapery forms and coiffures are fussier and more decorative, changes for which Raffaellino del Colle may have been responsible (this order, reversing that of Bartsch, was established by D. Landau and P. Parshall: *The Renaissance Print*, New Haven and London 1994, p.137; it is further justified by Y. Oshio: 'After Raphael: Raphael and Printmaking', unpublished Ph.D. diss. (University of Cambridge, 2003), pp.132–34). J. Shearman: *Andrea del Sarto*, Oxford 1965, I, pl.167a, and II, p.281, stating that the traditional attribution to Raphael of the design of this second engraving was 'certainly wrong', claimed it to be after a lost painting by Andrea del Sarto of the later 1520s. However, the painting by Andrea that he cited in support of this view is distinctly different in design and spirit, being strongly Michelangesque, and Shearman was obviously unaware of the full context. Although I know of no drawings or copies of drawings specifically preparatory for this *Madonna*, Raphael's fragmentary *Virgin and Child with St John* of c.1507 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 526v; see P. Joannides: *The Drawings of Raphael*, Oxford

1983, no.173v; and E. Knab, E. Mitsch, K. Oberhuber and S. Ferino Pagden: *Raffaello. I Disegni*, Florence 1983, no.142), known complete in various copies, shows St John from the rear. The exceptionally complex and ambitious composition of the same subject on the recto of the sheet includes in the right background a Serlian loggia framing a landscape view, an arrangement close to that of the London *Madonna of the pinks*.

¹⁰ I am grateful for help from Stuart Lochead and Gordon Balderston of the Daniel Katz Gallery, London.

¹¹ A.P. Darr: 'New Documents for Pietro Torrigiano and other early Cinquecento Florentine Sculptors active in Italy and England', in M. Cammerer, ed.: *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, Munich 1992, pp.108–38, 110 and 121.

¹² For example, the *Madonnas* or *Holy families* based on the drawings in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv.nos.3949 and 3859; see Joannides, *op. cit.* (note 9), nos.152 and 167; Knab, *op. cit.* (note 9), nos.246 and 258. A picture probably of the seventeenth century, at Bonhams, London, 29th October 2003, lot 38, catalogued as Manner of Raphael, eighteenth century, oil on panel, 24.7 by 19.4 cm., furnishes a good account of the lost painting by Raphael based upon the first of these. T. Henry, reviewing J. Meyer zur Capellen: *Raphael: The Paintings, I, The Beginning in Umbria and Florence, ca.1500–1508*, Landshut 2001, in *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 143 (2001), pp.575–76, raises the issue of Raphael's lost works with regard to another composition.

¹³ The authenticity of the letter of recommendation for Raphael from Giovanna Feltria della Rovere to Piero Soderini is rejected by J. Shearman: *Raphael in Early Modern Sources*, New Haven and London 2003, II, pp.1467–72, but even if he is right in doing so, it must be allowed that everything in and suggested by the letter fits with the other implicit evidence for Raphael's Florentine period.

¹⁴ Andrea's interest in Raphael, underestimated by Shearman, *op. cit.* (note 9), is addressed by S. Freedberg: *Andrea del Sarto*, Cambridge MA 1963, I, p.7, and A. Natali: *Andrea del Sarto*, Milan 1999, pp.20 and 27–28. The now fragmentary Giustiniani *Madonna* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (but see A. Bliznikov: 'Un dipinto ritrovato di Andrea del Sarto', *Paragone* 50 (1999), pp.43–46), and the *Madonnina* in Palazzo Barberini, Rome, depend respectively from the *Madonna del Cardellino* and the *Large Cowper Madonna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington). Andrea's Boston *Madonna*, first published only in 1995, see P.C. Sutton: exh. cat. *Paintings from the William Appleton Coolidge Collection*, Boston (Museum of Fine Arts) 1995, pp.36–38, no.4; entry by P. Sutton and E. Zafra, is, inevitably, absent from earlier accounts.