PERSONIFYING HISTORY: VERNON LEE AND RE-IMAGINING THE FLORENTINE RENAISSANCE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES OF MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

CEMRE NAZ KUTLUATA

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 2015

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. Dr. Elvan Altan
Head of Department

This is to certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Ali Cengizkan (TEDU, ARCH) _____

Prof. Dr. Elvan Altan (METU, AH) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci (METU, AH) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Surname: Cemre Naz Kutluata

Signature:

ABSTRACT

PERSONIFYING HISTORY: VERNON LEE AND RE-IMAGINING THE FLORENTINE RENAISSANCE

Kutluata, Cemre Naz

M.A., Department of Architectural History

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci

September 2015, 148 pages

This thesis analyses the alternative approaches to the history writing that emerged during the later half of the nineteenth century with the re-discovery of Florence as the centre of Renaissance art and architecture. It discusses this topic by focusing on the British writer and critic Vernon Lee (1856–1935) and her works on interpreting the past through a personal and impressionistic viewpoint, including her 'formal' studies of the Renaissance *Euphorion* (1884) and *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895), and her essay collections *Belcaro* (1882) and *Baldwin* (1886). Accordingly, it seeks to place Lee in relation to her contemporaries through her standing in the Victorian society as a woman writer of history but her reception as a 'non-professional' historian; her practice which was derived from an understanding of history writing as an issue of literature rather than science; her direct connection with the Renaissance lore as a lifelong resident of Florence; and the active role she played as a leading member of the Anglo-American community in the city regarding the conservation of historical sites against modernisation projects of the time. Despite an interdisciplinary reintroduction of Lee's works in gender/queer studies, the interest on her works in the studies of nineteenth century Renaissance historiography remains sparse. Therefore, in introducing her treatment of history, and her personal contact with Florence and

Florentine Renaissance, this thesis aims to show her status as a rewarding historian worthy of recognition on her own.

Keywords: Women art historians, Renaissance historiography, Florence in the nineteenth century.

ÖZ

TARİHİ KİŞİLEŞTİRMEK: VERNON LEE VE FLORANSA RÖNESANS'INI YENİDEN HAYAL ETMEK

Kutluata, Cemre Naz
M.A., Department of Architectural History
Tez Yöneticisi: Y. Doç. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci
Eylül 2015, 148 sayfa

Bu tez, 19. yüzyılın sonunda Floransa'nın Rönesans sanatı ve mimarisinin merkezi olarak yeniden keşfiyle ortaya çıkan alternatif tarih yazım geleneklerini araştırır. Tez, bu konuyu Britanyalı yazar ve eleştirmen Vernon Lee (1856–1935)'nin tarihi, izlenimcilik ve öznellik ile yorumlamaya dayanan fikirlerini savunduğu Rönesans çalışmaları olan *Euphorion* (1884) ve *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895) başlıklı eserleri, ve *Belcaro* (1882) ve *Baldwin* (1886) isimli iki makale derlemesi üzerinden tartışacaktır. Buna göre tez, Lee'nin Viktoryen toplumda bağımsız bir kadın tarihçi olması fakat tarih yazımını edebî bir süreç olarak ele almasından dolayı ortaya çıkan 'profesyonel olmayan tarihçi' konumunu; neredeyse bütün hayatını Floransa'da yaşayan Anglo-Amerikan topluluğunun bir parçası olarak geçirmesi sebebi ile hem üzerine bir çok eser verdigi Rönesans dönemine ait sanatsal ve mimari kalıntılarla birlikte yaşaması, hem de şehrin tarihi alanlarının dönemin kentsel dönüşüm projelerine karşı korumasıyla iç içe geçtiğini gösterir. Her ne kadar günümüzde Lee'nin edebi eserleri kadın ve cinsiyet calışmaları alanlarında disiplinlerarası olarak inceleniyor olsa da Rönesans üzerine olan sanat tarihsel eserleri hala büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmektedir. Bu sebepten dolayı tez, Lee'nin tarihi değerlendirme biçimini ve

sanatsal, mimari, ve kentsel bir Floransa deneyimini ön plana çıkararak Vernon Lee'yi çağdaşlarından farklı bir tarihçi olarak inceler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kadın sanat tarihçileri, Rönesans tarih yazımı, 19. yüzyılda Floransa.

For Dad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my utmost gratitude to my thesis supervisor Assist. Prof. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci for first and foremost introducing me to Renaissance historiography and to Florence, and for her guidance, advice, and encouragements as I made my way through this thesis.

I also would like to thank Prof. Dr. Elvan Altan and Prof. Dr Ali Cengizkan for their criticism and suggestions.

My indebtedness to my parents Gülçin and Yalçın, my family Mine and Doruk, and my friends Ceren, Christopher, and Erika for being there whenever I need remain immeasurable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A lifelong friend of the American painter John Singer Sargent, Vernon Lee wrote to her 'dearest Mamma' in a letter dated June 1881 about her portrait done by the artist himself (Figure 1.1): 'The sketch is, by everyone's admission, extraordinarily clever & characteristic; it is of course more dabs & blurs & considerably caricatured, but certainly more like me than I expected […] rather fierce & cantankerous'.[1] The description was not a moment of self-admiration on Lee's behalf for she was later described by another friend and companion, the English poet Agnes Mary Frances Robinson as 'audacious, refined, argumentative, and shy'.[2] Now read and discussed only by a small circle, for her contemporaries Vernon Lee was known for her uncompromising nature, her idiosyncratic prose, and more importantly, for her grasp of an Europe that no longer existed. Born a Victorian and lived well into the modernist 1930s, she never fit comfortably into either periods.

Vernon Lee was born as Violet Paget – a name which she never gave up in and continued using in her personal correspondences – on 14 October 1856, at Château Saint-Léonard near Boulogne-sur-Mer, a French town with an improvident English community. In a moment of introspection, Lee wrote to an Italian friend, Carlo Placci, in 1894: 'I recognise now that my family is, on one side acutely neuropathic and hysterical; and that my earlier years were admirably calculated, by an alternation of indiscipline and terrorism, by excessive overwork and absolute solitude, to develop

[1] Quoted in Richard Ormond, 'John Singer Sargent and Vernon Lee,' *Colby Quarterly* (September 1970), 166. Originally appears in Irene Cooper Willis, ed., *Vernon Lee's Letters* (London: Privately printed, 1937), 65.

[2] Quoted in Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 49.

Figure 1.1 John Singer Sargent, *Vernon Lee*, 1881.
Tate Gallery, London

these characteristics. Had I known this at 22 or 23, instead of learning nearer forty, I should now be a good deal sounder and happier.'[3] She was born to Matilda Paget, the 'acutely neuropathic and hysterical' mother who would rule much over Vernon Lee's life until her death in 1896, and Henry Ferguson Paget, a man of English heritage and European background. Through a previous marriage of her mother, Vernon Lee was

[3] Quoted in Marie-Carmen Thue-Tun, 'Vernon Lee (Violet Paget, 1856–1835) : une odyssée scripturale entre romantisme et modernité', Université de la Réunion. *Hal-SHS: Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société,* https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00671392/document. (Accessed March 2014.)

the half-sister of the poet Eugene Lee-Hamilton, whose name she would adopt as a 'nom de plume.'

Lee's education was typical of upper-middle-class daughters of the late Victorian period and was conducted at home by mentors, tutors, and governesses from various European backgrounds.[4] Her upbringing was also encouraged strongly by a constant state of travelling during her formative years, and was shaped by the close supervision of her mother Matilda Paget, whom Vernon Lee pays homage to in *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Psychology* (1906) by crediting her as the first and only writing teacher she ever had, and whose lessons she never outgrew.[5] Living on unsettled finances, the Paget family drifted about Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy during the first twenty years of Lee's life, staying at inns and rented rooms. While recalling the wanderings of her family through the 1860s and 1870s in a collection of essays published as *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places* (1908), Lee makes a point of calling them the opposite of travelling: 'This was moving, not travelling,' she insists, 'and we contemned [*sic*] all travellers. […] We never saw any sights. […] Neither did we see anything registered in guide-books.' Although they avoided sight-seeing and visiting touristic places, they still took promenades at unfrequented hours with Mrs Paget reading out loud while walking from her favourite eighteenth-century authors, 'interrupting herself only to enlarge upon the subject, to tell stories, and to discuss theories'.[6] These annotations by her mother would later help Lee to endow 'every promenade in Europe' as a host to the representations of imaginary persons and places in her mind. The intellectual framework set by Matilda Paget for the studies of her daughter included mathematics, grammar, and rhetoric, with a sound belief in rational thought, was centred around the art of writing, and a high notion of 'the dignity of literature, and of the divine quality of genius'.[7]

---

[4] Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 2.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Vernon Lee, *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places* (London: John Lane, 1908), 9.

[7] Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words* (London: John Lane, 1923), 301.

Despite later spending a part of every year in England for the most of her literary career to maintain contacts and to solicit publishers for her manuscripts, it was not until around 1881 that Vernon Lee set foot to the country of her nationality for the first time. Being French by accident-of-birth, she spoke better French than English while growing up and published her first works in French, initially hesitating 'between becoming a French or an English writer'.[8] Lee, however, considered herself Italian by choice. Italy was not only the country where she lived more than half a century, but also the place that accompanied her throughout her life in her imagination, and the object of her life as a scholar and a traveller.[9] Her spoken Italian was purely Tuscan, which she spoke it, as Aldous Huxley later recalled it, 'with the kind of literary perfection which can only be achieved by a foreigner who has completely mastered the language but still speaks it from the outside, so to say, as an artist consciously manipulating his medium'.[10] 'For all my interest in England, this is my country,' she wrote of her 'chosen home',[11] and sometime in 1912 she was questioning whether she ever 'cared for any other country except Italy' while recounting her travels in Lombardy.[12]

While spending the winter of 1866–67 in Nice, Pagets became acquainted with the family of John Singer Sargent. Vernon Lee spent the following year, at the age of twelve, in Rome with Sargents, and in a house over the Spanish Steps on Piazza Mignanelli. Although initially possessing very little appreciation for the city, which she called 'the dreary, horrible [city] of the popes', her discovery of Rome came in the form of an epiphany, while watching the sunset through a window in one evening in spring after returning from a promenade let by Mary Singer Sargent: 'This child would

[8] Ibid., p. 293.

[9] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 1.

[10] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 49.

[11] Quoted in 'Violet Paget ("Vernon Lee", 1856-1935), A Chronology', The Sibyl – A Journal of Vernon Lee Studies, http://thesibylblog.com/violet-paget-vernon-lee-1856-1935-a-chronology/. Originally in Cooper Willis, *Vernon Lee's Letters*, p. 238. (Accessed January 2014.)

[12] Vernon Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors* (London: John Lane, 1914), 153.

watch the bank of melting colours, crimson and smoke purple, and gold, left by the sun beind the black dome of St Peter's […]. The child was in love: in love with what it hated, in love, intensely, passionately, with Rome.'[13] Along with the discovery of Rome, came Lee's realisation of vocation. Devoting herself to reading books on Italian art, she began to develop her initial theories on the subject, heavily influenced by Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764).[14] According to Vernon Lee's first biographer Peter Gunn, Mary Singer Sargent was influential in complementing her initial enthusiasm for Italian art and history. Together with Matilda Paget and Marie Schülpach, Lee's Swiss governess, Gunn cites Sargent as one of the most guiding women in her upbringing, and in *The Sentimental Traveller*, Vernon Lee herself remembers 'the enchanting, indomitable, incomparable Mrs S[argent]' as the 'most wisely fantastic of Wandering Ladies,' a fellow-traveller whom Lee felt obliged to her for introducing the idea of *genius loci*, the spirit of the place, a theme she often explored through her writings on Italy.[15] A curious child in Rome, Vernon Lee produced her first publication at the age of fourteen on the artefacts she collected and believed to be antique Roman coins. Written in French, a language she already had mastered, the biography of an ancient coin '*Les aventures d'une pièce de monnaie*' (*The adventures of a coin*) was published as a serial in the Lausanne journal *La famille* between May–July 1870.[16] While travelling throughout Italy with her family, Lee was drawn to the eighteenth century Italian culture, searching through the bookstalls and researching libraries whenever she had the chance for eighteenth-century materials: books, musical scores, and libretti.

---

[13] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887), 25–6.

[14] H. Beaunis, 'Vernon Lee, Psychologie d'un écrivain sur l'art', *L'année psychologique* 10 (1903), 487.

[15] Vernon Lee, *The Sentimental Traveller*, p. 11.

[16] *Les aventures*, tells the story of a Roman coin which passes through the hands of a gladiator, a Roman sculptor, and a Christian; surviving into Renaissance and into the possession of the artist Guido Reni; is later found by the child prodigy Mozart as he performs in Rome during the eighteenth century, and finally ends in a collection of a modern numismatist. Throughout the work, Lee blends story-telling with scholarship, supported with footnotes. See Colby, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 10–11.

Although having published her earlier works under her birth name Violet Paget, Lee was certainly aware of the need for a male persona in order to be taken seriously in the literary circles dominated by men. 'H.P. Vernon Lee' was the name she chose for herself, in part paying homage to her half-brother Eugene Lee-Hamilton and to her father Henry Paget, for a series of articles on eighteenth-century Italian art for the journal *La rivisita europa* in 1875. While justifying her choice for the masculine pen-name for her professional writings, Lee wrote to her mentor Henrietta Jenkins in December 1878, two years before her first major literary success, that: 'I don't care Vernon Lee should be known to be myself or any other young woman, as I am sure no one reads a woman's writing on art, history, or aesthetics with anything but unmitigated contempt.'[17] The articles 'Vernon Lee' sporadically wrote and published in French, Italian, and English between 1870–80 were completed and printed under the title *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* in 1880 as an 'imaginative travel book'.[18] Besides being her initial foray into publishing about Italian cultural history, *Studies* was essentially Lee's first attempt of reconstructing the past through a literary output, bringing it into life in an imaginative manner, fortified with a scholarly research and diligent footnotes.

By 1880, the year which saw the publication of the *Studies* in England, there were important changes in Paget family. In 1882, they finally settled in *5 via Garibaldi* in Florence, and then in the spring of 1889, they moved to the villa *Il Palmerino* within a short distance from Florence, in Fiesole. Vernon Lee herself was to inherit the villa later on, and remain there until the end of her life in 1935. In an eulogy written in memory of Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Mary Robinson reminiscences Pagets' first Florentine residence on *via Garibaldi*, 'Casa Paget', and its guests: the high-ceiling rooms, tall windows with their crimson hangings, polished marble floors and quaint eighteenth-century furnishings.[19] For the Anglo-American expatriates, Florence was

[17] Quoted in Peter Gunn, *Vernon Lee. Violet Paget, 1856–1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 66.

[18] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 30–2.

[19] Madame Duclaux [Mary Robinson], 'In Casa Paget: A Retrospect,' *Country Life* 28 (December 1907), 936.

not unknown, and had long been in the preference of English tourists, many of whom chose to make it their permanent home. From the Robert and Elizabeth Barret Browning (who settled down in Florence for good), to George Eliot (researching for her historical novel *Romola*), and to Henry James (one of the many constantly-returning transients), Florence provided a settlement for the expatriates that was less congested than Rome or Venice, and of more temperate climate.[20] Around 1880, Vernon Lee became a reputable member of the Anglo-Florentine community, and the city itself offered the cultural background she later used in two of her works dealing specifically with Italian Renaissance: *Euphorion* (1884) and *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895). Florence, however, was not merely a backdrop for Lee to use in her studies. When Pietro Torrigiani, mayor of Florence, announced in 1897 a new urban-planning scheme which required a complete destruction of a group of fourteenth-century buildings in some of the historically significant sites, Vernon Lee was one of the most influential figures in the community to oppose the plan. It is largely due to the attention and foreign intervention brought to Florence by her outcry, and the *Association for the Defence of Old Florence* (founded in 1898) which she was a member of, that the 'rehabilitation' projects of Torrigiani came to a halt, and that the banks of Arno preserved (for the most part) their medieval character.

Starting with settling down in Florence in the early 1880s, for more than a decade, Vernon Lee had worked persistently on Italian Renaissance. After the mid-1890s, she abandoned the role of an 'art philosopher', and moved to different intellectual pursuits. While Lee's works on art and aesthetics were discussed widely by her contemporaries both due to her position as a female intellectual and her unorthodox views, she never was 'popular'. Found herself isolated from the literary mainstream around the same time, she confided to her half-brother in 1893 shortly before the publication of *Althea: A Second Book of Dialogues* (1894): 'At thirty seven, I have no public.'[21] Yet, she was still far from being played out and still had a small but loyal readership. Unlike her contemporaries, Lee did not work with literary agents

[20] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 47–8.

[21] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 308.

but instead chose to handle the business aspects of her publications directly with the publishers herself, despite not having a close relationship with any of them. More often than not she complained about fees, the motivation of which Vineta Colby interprets as 'pride' rather than financial need.[22] On 25 October 1902 she complained to her long-time companion Kit Anstruther-Thomson about one of her publishers: 'I am rather depressed about my writings. Unwin behaved disgracefully, after keeping *Ariadne* a year nearly, he sprang absurd conditions on me, which I couldn't accept […]. He evidently wanted to get rid of me and succeeded.'[23] By 1906, she was certain that '[she] can never imagine what [she wrote] being read'. 'It makes one feel a bit lonely,' she admitted, 'as if one were the vox clamans not in the desert but inside a cupboard.'[24] The English critic Roger Fry, who felt indebted to Lee for her work in the aesthetics, wrote two years before her death in 1933 to praise her last major work, *Music and Its Lovers*: 'You've never had the reputation you deserve, but no doubt it'll come'.[25] Lee's response was grateful: 'You are quite right,' she wrote, 'that I haven't had the recognition from my equals (or betters!) which I should have liked when I was young, some forty or fifty years ago. But what your letter does make up for is the incurable disappointment (even at seventy-six!) of finding my work on aesthetics utterly wasted.'[26] Lee believed that it was a 'misfortune' that she was born before her time, 'a Victorian who should have been a modern'.[27] Many of her 'loyal readership' died out with the World War I, and for the younger generation of Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury circle she wrote like a 'garrulous baby' and Woolf herself remarked on

[22] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 308.

[23] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 308.

[24] Quoted in Sophie Geoffroy, 'Encountering the Florentine Sibyl', The Sibyl, http://thesibylblog.com/encountering-the-florentine-sibyl-by-sophie-geoffroy/. (Accessed January 2014.)

[25] Quoted in Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 10.

[26] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 311.

[27] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 335.

Lee: 'such a watery mind'.[28] Woolf, who has made conscious effort to distance herself from the Victorian period, has read the writers of the older generation of women but rarely mentioned them in her reviews. She very briefly mentions Lee in the fifth chapter of *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

> I had come at last, in the course of this rambling, to the shelves which hold books by the living; by women and by men; there are almost as many books written by women now as by men. Or if that is not yet quite true, if the male is still the voluble sex, it is certainly true that women no longer write novels solely. There are Jane Harrison's books on Greek archaeology; Vernon Lee's books on aesthetics; Gertrude Bell's books on Persia. There are books on all sorts of subjects which a generation ago no woman could have touched.[29]

Due to her almost exclusive concentration on psychological aesthetics, Vernon Lee was often too-readily dismissed as a Victorian eccentric. After her death in 1935, her work fell into an almost immediate neglect. While there have been sporadic periods of interest in her, only a small selection of her fiction (mainly her supernatural stories) were republished after 1935 and her philosophical essays, aesthetic criticism, and historical studies were seldom touched by publishers. Burdett Gardner, writing in 1952, mentions that

> Today, however, this same Vernon Lee has dropped into a curious time-hole and has all but vanished. […] The fact that she is relegated to an appendix to a footnote in a recently published history of English literature can only be regarded as a further instance of the almost completely fortuitous manner in which literary history is often written.[30]

---

[28] Quoted in Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 195.

[29] Virginia Woolf, *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), 612.

[30] Burdett Gardner, 'Who Was Vernon Lee?', in *Colby Quarterly* (November 1952), 120, 122.

Some of the republished works of Vernon Lee during the twentieth century are: *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (1886; New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1792), *The Poet's Eye: Notes on Some Differences Between Verse and Prose* (1926; Folcroft: Folcroft Library Editions, 1974), *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895; New York: Garland, 1977), *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics* (1913; Folcroft: Folcroft Library Editions, 1970, 1974; Norwood: Norwood Library Editions, 1977; Philadelphia: R. West, 1978), and *Studies in the History of Eighteenth Century Italy* (1878; New York: Da Capo Press). The most recent republication of her non-fiction work are two editions of her *Handling of Words*, one in 1992 and another four years later in 1996.[31] However, most of her non-fiction work, which Lee considered to be her major works, still remain out of print.

The lack of access to Lee's works, Christa Zorn claims, is the reason why she was overlooked in recent studies of Renaissance historiography, such as J.B. Bullen's *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (1994) which completely ignores Lee's contributions. It is largely due to the efforts of Hilary Fraser, whose *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (1992) supplements for the first time the male critics with women's voices by including George Eliot, Elizabeth Bartlett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Vernon Lee. As a historian familiar with reappraisal of Jakob Burckhardt, Fraser shows that much like Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), Vernon Lee was also involved in the 'making' of the Renaissance and was influential in, through her studies of Italian art, literature, and music, creating what has now come to be called as the 'cultural studies'. By examining Lee alongside the likes of Symonds, Pater and Ruskin, Fraser recognises her as a historian in her own right, 'an acute critic of her contemporaries' attitude towards and treatment of the past and as a more subtle historiographical practitioner than she might first appear.'[32]

---

[31] *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (1923), ed. Stuart Sillars (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); ed. David Seed (Lewistown: Edward Mellen Press, 1992). Previous editions include one by University of Nebraska Press (1968), and one by Peter Smith (1968).

[32] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 228.

The academic interest on Vernon Lee was revived to some extent in the 1980s with the opening of her extensive correspondences with friends and literary acquaintances left to Colby College in Maine to a wider public. *The Sibyl: Journal of Vernon Lee Studies* was created in 2003 to promote and encourage studies on Lee. Current fields of research focus more on her 'outsider status as a woman intellectual; her confidence in her intellectual prowess; and her lifelong search for female companionship through the life of the mind',[33] and cover a wide range of disciplines from literature to history, and to feminist-queer studies. Unlike earlier studies, these place Vernon Lee in a more central position than before in the context of female aesthetes, instead of keeping her second to Ruskin, Pater, Symonds, and other 'great men'.[34] Three recent studies, *Women and British Aestheticism* (1999), edited by Talia Schaffer and Kathy A. Psomiades, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes* by Schaffer (2000), and *Women Writing Art History in The Nineteenth Century: Looking like a Woman* by Hilary Fraser (2014) show how a significant group of female intellectuals, including Lee, have challenged and expanded the traditional male-centred critique of aestheticism.

Despite an interdisciplinary reintroduction, the interest in Vernon Lee in the studies of nineteenth century Renaissance historiography remains sparse. Although the literary representations of the past by 'non-professional' historians become recognised more with the recent developments in the theory of history,[35] Vernon Lee is still often referred to in a triad of Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds, and rarely on her own. While there are common features to be found in their representations of the Renaissance and in their approach to history writing, what sets Lee apart is her acknowledgement of the personal, impressionistic approach to the history writing

[33] Janice Schroeder, review of *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* by Vineta Colby, in *Victorian Periodicals Review* 38, No. 3 (2005), 434–36.

[34] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 18–9.

[35] As Hilary Fraser points out, the use of poetic and fictional devices in history writing, suggesting a fluidity of the boundary between history and literature has been a topic of particular concern recently. See Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 213–4.

rather than a complete literary one, and her direct connection with the subject matter as a resident of Florence. In my thesis, I intend to explore how, and to what extend, the effects of both place Lee on a distinct place, setting her apart from Pater, Symonds, and the likes.[36]

This thesis is divided into three sections based on characteristics with which Vernon Lee was regarded as an 'non-professional' historian in the nineteenth century. Each section examines that particular characteristic in relation with Vernon Lee and her contemporaries, and aims to compare and contrast the differences that set Lee apart. First section – Chapter 2: Writing History as an Aesthete – explores the act of writing about Italian Renaissance as an aesthete. While nineteenth century saw in the Continent a 'scientific' approach in Renaissance studies, in England prominent self-proclaimed aesthetes and literary critics such as John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, and Vernon Lee also produced their own interpretations of the Renaissance. Comparing the definitions of Renaissance conceptualised by Symonds, Pater, and Lee, the thesis attempts to show Lee's novel understanding of the period different not only from the 'immoral' arguments of John Ruskin, but also from Symonds and Pater, whose ideas she built upon. Second part of Chapter 2 deals with Vernon Lee's comparison of writing history to an impressionist painting, and her intention to evoke an image of the past through a personal standpoint. Third chapter – Writing History as a Woman – deals with the gendered nature of writing art history, and women constructing a conceptualisation of Renaissance through their personal interpretations of the period. First part introduces Emilia Dilke, English art historian and author who

[36] My interest in Vernon Lee initially started with my discovery of the nineteenth-century Florence. The course offered by my thesis supervisor Assist. Prof. Sevil Enginsoy Ekinci during the 2012–2013 Spring semester at Middle East Technical University, *Rethinking the Historiography of Renaissance Architecture: Florence in the Nineteenth Century* (AH 671) introduced me to the re-discovery of Renaissance in relation with Florence in the nineteenth-century. The course focused on the 're-discovery' of Renaissance in historiography, the nineteenth-century interest in Florence in literature and as a famous travel destination, and the city's modernisation process. I was intrigued by the figure of Vernon Lee, whose *Euphorion* was introduced in the first part, as a recurring figure in different evaluations of Florence and Renaissance: the sections I have chosen to focus in my thesis (the alternative interpretations of the Renaissance: through history writing, travel writing, fiction, and through its physical remnants in the city) seemed to me an organic connection between Vernon Lee and Florence, providing a new way of looking at 're-creating' the past.

also wrote on Renaissance. Comparing Dilke and Lee through their interpretation of Renaissance as a period of individuality, and their refusal to follow Ruskinian ideals regarding the relevance of morals to art, this part aims to show Lee's standpoint on the 'immorality' of Renaissance culture, and the effect it had on its art in a historical context. Second part of the third chapter focuses on women travellers who, through visiting Florence, produced output other than scientific studies (guidebooks and/or diaries), to write and comment about Renaissance art and history. Final part in the thesis, Chapter 4, focuses on 'Writing History as an Expatriate' based on Lee's own personal relationship with the city of Florence in the nineteenth century which had an effect of both in her fiction and Renaissance studies (and how, in return, Lee herself had an impact on the city). First part is concerned with the idea that Vernon Lee named '*genius loci*', and her 'evocation' of the past through certain characteristics of the cities, and in the case of Florence, her life among the 'rags of the Renaissance'. Second part is based on overlapping fact and fiction through blending history and literature, a characteristic which Lee often utilised in her writings dealing with the past. It includes a discussion on a travel essay by Lee about Ravenna, which soon turns into a retelling of a myth. Divided into two sub-sections, the first one examines George Eliot's (whose œuvre Lee admittedly wished not to be compared with) historical novel, *Romola* (1863), which tries to recreate the late fifteenth-century Florence through a laborious study of its past. The second part compares two different representations of Italy – the 'ideal' represented in historical studies and fiction, and the 'real' one on the brink of modernity – through the writings of Henry James on Florence. The final section in Chapter 4 examines the 'modernisation' and 'rehabilitation' projects carried out in Florence throughout the nineteenth century, and the outcry it resulted in the Anglo-American 'Italophile' expatriate community of the city, who, believing Florence to be the cradle of Renaissance, were concerned with keeping the image of Renaissance Tuscany alive.

CHAPTER II

WRITING HISTORY AS AN AESTHETE

2.1 Defining the Renaissance

After the publication of *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860, Wallace K. Ferguson points out in *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (1948), for more than half a century Renaissance historiography followed largely the conceptualisation set by the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt. However this 'high tide of Renaissancism', as Ferguson argues, failed to produce no worthy successors with the exception of John Addington Symonds.[37] Symonds' introduction to British academic circles as a young poet-scholar coincides with a particularly promising time for the Renaissance historiography in Britain, as J.B. Bullen points out, shortly after the publication of Burckhardt's Renaissance, in the month of June in 1863. The appearance of George Eliot's thirteenth instalment (of the fourteen in total) of *Romola* in the *Cornhill Magazine* was concurrent with a lecture by the critic Matthew Arnold in Oxford on the influence of Renaissance on European culture, and on 17 June a young John Addington Symonds was awarded the Oxford Chancellor's Price for his essay, titled *The Renaissance*.[38] While on the Continent as early as 1855 Jules Michelet had conceptualised his idea of the Renaissance as a period originating from the sixteenth century as the 'arrival of a new art and a free development of the

[37] Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 195.

[38] J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 239–40.

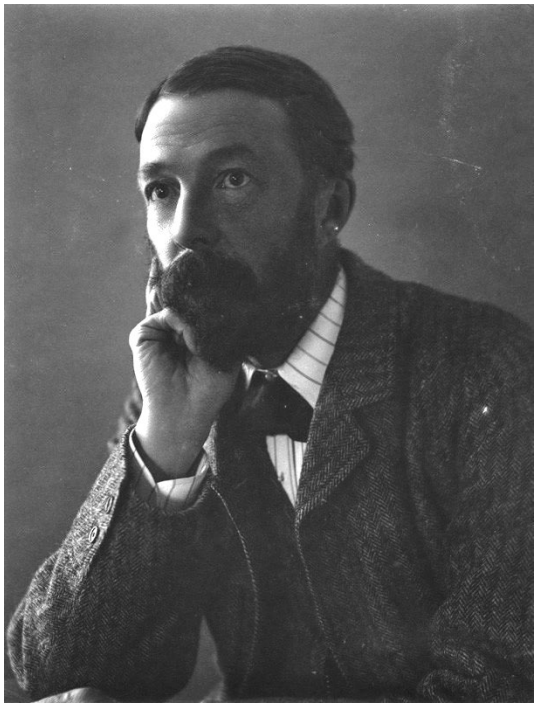

Figure 2.1 John Addington Symonds, ca. 1880. National Portrait Gallery, London

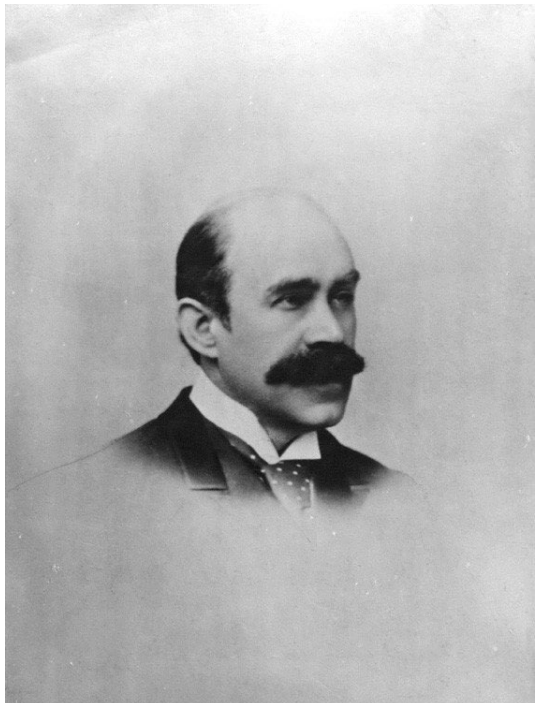

Figure 2.2 Walter Pater, ca. 1890. National Portrait Gallery, London

imagination',[39] and under the influence of German and French intellectuals the academic research into Renaissance was becoming more and more institutionalised, British historians maintained a 'vestige of the literary freedom of the amateur tradition.'[40] Contemporary literary figures in Britain indeed contributed to the conceptualisation of the Renaissance through fictionalised narratives, and the visual arts were dominated by a Pre-Raphaelite classicism with its origins in High Renaissance art,[41] however until the last three decades of the nineteenth century, no

[39] 'L'aimable mot de Renaissance ne rappelle aux amis du beau que l'avènement d'un art nouveau et le libre essor de la fantaisie.' Quoted in Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 1. Originally from Jules Michelet, *Renaissance* (1855), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Viallaneix, vii (Paris, 1978), 51.

[40] Ferguson, *Renaissance*, p. 196

[41] No lesser literary figures than George Eliot and Robert Browning were influential in this conceptualisation. In painting, not only neo-classicists like Edmund Blair Leighton and George Frederic Watts, but also the Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones were heavily influenced by the Renaissance lore. See Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 179, p. 187, p. 206, pp. 212–3.

work produced by British writers on the cultural history of Italian Renaissance, providing a particularly Briton perspective representing the period.[42] Symonds (Figure 2.1) wrote his prize-winning *The Renaissance* in 1863 and Walter Pater (Figure 2.2) first published his essay on Winckelmann in 1867, however it was not until the 1870s that it became a concluding chapter in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and Symonds published *The Age of the Despots* (1875) as the first volume in his comprehensive studies of the Renaissance.

During a visit to England with her friend and longtime companion Mary Robinson[43] in the summer of 1881, Vernon Lee became acquainted with the English critic and essayist Walter Pater while spending some time in Oxford within the university's literary circle. Although she was not quite warmed up to Pater at first, her reception changed considerably when Pater praised Lee's book on eighteenth-century Italian culture, and later consulted her regarding his own research. Starting in March 1882 when Vernon Lee sent Pater a copy of her newly-published *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (1881) (to which Pater had high praise for), their correspondence continued and flourished, and Lee never failed to visit Pater during her annual visits to England. Another well-known reader of Lee was John Addington Symonds, whom she sent a copy of her *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880) shortly after its publication and requested a critique of. He found it 'charming', but was curious on how the general public, unfamiliar with the Italian history and culture, would appreciate the book. Symonds was also troubled about Lee's 'want of thinking out' her chapters, her disorganised prose – 'superfluous adjectives, repetitions, & incoherent strings of clauses' – and her allusiveness that 'cannot fail to confuse people for whom the whole set of musicians & literary people are unknown'.[44] When Vernon Lee published *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique*

[42] Fraser, *Victorians*, pp. 212–3.

[43] A writer, poet, and a literary critic in her own right, Mary Robinson later published her works on French language and literature under her married name, Agnes Mary Frances Ducleaux, or Madame Ducleaux.

[44] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 41.

and the Medieval in the Renaissance in 1884, composed of the essays published previously in various periodicals, the influence of Pater and Symonds were more pronounced than any other contemporary of hers. Lee's indebtedness to both was reflected in an eloquent, albeit brief, dedication to Pater, and a quotation by Symonds on the first volume of *Euphorion*. When Pater died in 1894, a year before the publication of Vernon Lee's last substantial collection of essays on Renaissance, *Renaissance Fancies and Studies*, she included a final retrospective essay, 'Valedictory', written as an eulogy on the occasion of Pater's death, but is also Lee's reflections on a decade of Renaissance studies: 'I was saying farewell to some of the ambitions and to most of the plans of my youth.'[45]

The nineteenth-century understanding of the Renaissance in Britain constitutes of a hybrid between Burckhardt and Michelet with a particular disregard to their ideological differences,[46] and the radical denouncement of Renaissance in favour of Middle Ages as championed by John Ruskin and proponents of the Gothic revivalism. The studies provided by Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds, therefore constitute a peculiar perspective on interpreting the Renaissance amidst their contemporaries. As an aesthete and a writer of history, Vernon Lee is often considered alongside Symonds and Pater as all three share the idea that 'Renaissance was not an isolated or miraculous phenomenon but a stage in the onward development of human civilisation',[47] a transitory device between the antique and the modern, and neither of them are considered professional historians.[48] John Hale, for instance, begins the chapter on Symonds in *England and the Italian Renaissance* by stating that he 'was

[45] Vernon Lee, *Renaissance Fancies and Studies: being a Sequel to 'Euphorion'* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 235.

[46] Burckhardt defines the idea of Renaissance as a cultural movement associated in particular with Italy in the fifteenth century (reaching its peak around the year of 1500), and Michelet's French-based attribution sets Renaissance as a movement of sixteenth century launched by Charles VIII's invasion of Italy in 1494.

[47] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 58.

[48] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 213.

not primarily an historian […] he was a poet',[49] and Pater himself identifies as an 'aesthetic critic' first. Nevertheless, both Pater and Lee considered their works to be a collection of studies on the Italian Renaissance. However, as Hilary Fraser points out, the use of 'studies' in the title of their works drew criticism from their contemporaries. In her review of Pater's *Studies*, Emilia Pattison (later Emilia, Lady Dilke) remarks that the title is 'misleading' because 'the historical element is precisely that which is wanting, and its absence makes the weak place of the whole book.' The work lacks 'true scientific method' and 'is in no wise a contribution to the history of the Renaissance.' While 'these studies of the sentiment of the Renaissance have a real critical value', Pattison concludes, 'they are not history, nor are they even to be relied upon for accurate statement of simple matters of fact.'[50] At the time of its publication, *Euphorion* (1884) was considered inferior to Symonds' Renaissance studies by the *Saturday Review* due to Lee's confusion of 'impressions with ideas' and her admission of not having thoroughly read his works.[51]

Together with Vernon Lee, Pater and Symonds also wrote in the Burckhardtian tradition, applying the methods of *Kulturgeschichte* to Italian Renaissance.[52] While their works provide the groundwork for establishing a particularly English perspective, the criticism pointed at Burckhardt in his conceptualisation of the Renaissance are often levelled at Symonds, Pater, and Lee as well. Writing in 1938, Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce argued that Burckhardt, by denying 'the conception of history as a process of continuously novel actions',

[49] John Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2005), 128.

[50] Mrs. Mark Pattison [Emilia Dilke], 'Art', *The Westminster Review* (1873), 639–40. Quoted in Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 214.

[51] Quoted in Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 12. Originally appeared in *The Saturday Review* (6 September 1884), 317–8.

[52] Fraser, *Victorians*, pp. 212–3.

> gets rid of history altogether, for history is history just because it does not recur and because every one of its actions enjoys its own private individuality. […] The same anti-historical motive led Burckhardt to try to substitute for the history of events the history of culture and civilisation […]. Thus his historical works tend not to give the "story" or the drama and dialectic of action, but to give the "picture," the description of a fixed and immobilised reality.[53]

As Fraser points out, however, in the light of recent developments in theory of history proponents of 'metahistory' argued in favour of adapting 'a more flexible notion of what constitutes history', and '[breaking] down the boundaries between history and literature', [54] which, in return, resulted in a reaffirmation of the different methodological practices utilised by the likes of Pater, Symonds, and Lee, and a reconsideration of their works on the Renaissance as being 'historical'. While such studies, which previously fell into cracks between the uncompromising pillars of history and literature, are now often grouped together due to their similar methodological approach, it is important to note the differences in their respective conceptualisations of Renaissance, their understanding of writing history, and utilisation of 'scientific' research.

For J.B. Bullen, English studies of the Renaissance since the beginning of the nineteenth century were troubled with contradictions 'concerned with the discrepancy between the cultural and spiritual standing of the period'.[55] Even for George Eliot, he points out, Renaissance remained a dark period despite her Positivist progressivism in *Romola*. However, for one of the earliest readers of Vernon Lee, John Addington Symonds, the misgivings of Renaissance disappear in a 'mixture of outrageous daring and boyish idealism'.[56] By the 1880s, Symonds was already acknowledged as a cultural historian known for his works on the Renaissance and his biographies of the

---

[53] Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, trans. Sylvia Sprigge (Middlesex: Clements Newling and Co., Ltd., 1949), 103–4.

[54] Fraser, *Victorians*, pp. 215–16.

[55] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 252.

[56] *Ibid*.

artists (his *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* appeared in English translation in 1887), and with Walter Pater emerged as two of the most influential, albeit also controversial, figures of the Renaissance studies in Britain. A fine literary stylist, compared to Burckhardt's subdued and careful tone, Symonds wrote in true Victorian fashion, and set out to compile a comprehensive and complete account of the Renaissance. Despite stylistic differences however, Symonds continued aligning himself with his predecessor Burckhardt, considering the subject of history not the 'spirit which is always creating new forms, but man suffering, aspiring, and acting as he has always done',[57] and similarly was also concerned more with pursuing 'the connection between spirit of the age and the men in whom it is incorporated'[58] rather than a linear representation of history of ideas. Symonds structures his history of the Renaissance thematically after Burckhardt, however the latter's chapters become volume-length studies in Symonds' version. 'This work on the Renaissance in Italy', he prefaces the two-volume *Italian Literature* (1881), 'was designed and executed on the plan of an essay or analytical inquiry, rather than on that which is appropriate to a continuous history.'[59] His choice of following a thematic rather than a continuous approach to history writing remains curious, as earlier in his studies of the Renaissance, in *The Age of the Despots*, he warns his readers to be careful and not 'carried away by words of [their] own making.'[60] For Symonds, Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution are not to be isolated from the greater flow of events, and while it is convenient to name such eras differently, 'history itself is one and continuous, so that our utmost endeavours to regard some portion of it independently of the rest will be defeated.'[61] Symonds' understanding of the history of a civilisation

[57] Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, p. 104.

[58] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Revival of Learning* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 8.

[59] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*, i (London: John Murray, 1914), v.

[60] John Addington Symonds, *Age of Despots*, p. 5.

[61] Ibid.

is 'continuous and undivided',[62] as despite all the change while an age succeeds to another,

> the development of human energy and intellectual consciousness has been carried on without cessation from the earliest times until the present moment, and is destined to unbroken progress through the centuries before us. History, under the influence of this conception, is rapidly ceasing to be the record of external incidents […]. We have learned to look upon it as the biography of man.[63]

Symonds' studies are also characteristic of the High Victorian age for being histories of individuals. Of history, Symonds writes: 'We have learned to look upon it as the biography of man,' and through this approach he finds that 'the Italian history of the Renaissance resumes itself in the biography of men greater than their race.'[64] John Hale observes in England and the Italian Renaissance (1954) that while 'Burckhardt emphasised the individual to understand the mass, Symonds laboured to detach him from the mass.'[65] Symonds' preoccupation with the individual and his extremely personal approach to the thematic division of the Renaissance is reflected in his studies of the Renaissance, where chapters are structured to accommodate the lives of his 'heroes'.[66] Despite his views of history as a sequence of unbroken events and his personal admiration of the Renaissance as the 'protagonist of the universal drama',[67] however, Symonds disassociates himself from the idea of promoting a revival of the Renaissance in nineteenth-century. 'The deepest interest in the Italian Renaissance', he argues,

---

[62] John Addington Symonds, *Italian Literature*, ii, p. 460.

[63] Ibid., pp. 460–61.

[64] John Addington Symonds, *The Revival of Learning*, p. 4.

[65] Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, p. 145.

[66] 'Though he believed, for instance, that Raphael was a greater artist than Signorelli, he devoted more space to the latter because of his influence on his special hero, Michelangelo.' See Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, p. 145.

[67] Ibid., p. 461.

> the warmest recognition of its services to modern Europe, are compatible with a just conviction that the tone of that epoch is not to be imitated. Such imitation would, in point of fact, be not merely anachronistic but impossible. To insist on anything so obvious would be impertinent to common sense […]. We cannot extract from Renaissance a body of ethical teaching, an ideal conduct, or a discipline of manners, applicable to the altered conditions of the nineteenth century.[68]

In his review of the first volume of Symonds' studies on the Renaissance, The Age of the Despots, Walter Pater has nothing but praise for his historical method:

> The aim of the writer is to weave together the various threads of a very complex period of European life, and to set the art and literature of Italy on that background of general social and historical conditions which they belong, and apart from which they cannot really be understood, according to the received and well-known belief of most modern writers. […] It is that background of general history, a background upon which the artists and men of letters are moving figures not to be wholly detached from it, that this volume presents. […] That sense of interdependence on each other of all historical conditions is one of the guiding lights of the modern historical method, and Mr. Symonds abundantly shows how thoroughly he has mastered this idea.[69]

Like Symonds, Pater was also a 'cultural' historian, and argued against the 'superficial' understanding of the Renaissance presented in the study of Winckelmann, which regards the Renaissance as a fashion fixed in a definite period of time. Renaissance was, for Pater as much as it was for Symonds, 'an uninterrupted effort' and was 'ever taking place'.[70] However, where Symonds chose to present a comprehensive study of the Renaissance divided in seven volumes, Pater remained in

---

[68] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*, ii (London: John Murray, 1921), 460–1.

[69] Walter Pater, 'Review of *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots,* by John Addington Symonds (London, 1875)', in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (the 1893 Text)*, edited by Donald L. Hill (California: University of California Press, 1980), 196–98.

[70] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (New York: Modern Library, 1873), 187–88.

essay-form. Due to this 'representative choice', however, Pater's Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) was received as lacking in 'symmetry and a governing idea'.[71] Many critics attacked Pater's Studies on its publication, accusing its author of immorality based on his advocacy of sensory experience in the work's 'Conclusion':

> Not the fruit of the experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. […] To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. […] For our one chance is in expanding [our] interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time.[72]

Margaret Oliphant found it 'pretentious' and 'artificial', and Pater suffering from 'some fundamental incompetence – some impotency of the mind and imagination',[73] and when George Eliot deemed it as 'quite poisonous in its false principles of criticism and false conception of life',[74] she represented a large portion of the readers. Owing to a letter by John Wordsworth, once a student of Pater at New College (and the great-nephew of the poet Wordsworth), Pater moved to suppress the 'Conclusion' altogether. 'Could you indeed have known the dangers into which you were likely to lead minds weaker than your own', Wordsworth questioned Pater, 'you would, I believe, have paused.'[75] For reasons unknown, Pater restored the 'Conclusion' for the third edition of the *Studies*, but he did so by adding in a footnote stating that it had previously been 'omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead

---

[71] Sidney Colvin, Unsigned review, *Pall Mall Gazette* (1 March 1873), 11–12. Quoted from R.M. Seiler ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), 49.

[72] Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 119–20.

[73] Margaret Oliphant, Unsigned review, *Blackwood's Magazine* (November 1873), 604–9. Quoted from R.M. Seiler ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), 60.

[74] George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, Gordon S. Haight ed., vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 455.

[75] Quoted in Gerald Cornelius Monsman, *Walter Pater* (Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1977), 67.

some of those young men into whose hands it might fall'.[76] However, akin to a heretical religious treatise, Pater's *Studies* even received episcopal condemnation from John Mackerness, Bishop of Oxford.[77] The prejudice against Pater remained so great that in 1874 he was given by Benjamin Jovett, the respected Master of Balliol College, an epigram: 'the demoralising moraliser'.[78] Previously a popular candidate for the proctorship of Brasenose College, Pater lost the post and the generous stipend of £300 to, ironically, John Wordsworth. Two years later in 1876 he withdrew his name from candidacy for Matthew Arnold's Oxford professorship of poetry due to bitter opposition. Still, more than a decade later after the publication of infamous 'Conclusion', Pater faced discrimination: in 1855, after Ruskin's resignation as the Slade professor of arts, Pater's name was considered for the position but he was once more passed over by the electors. Described by his friend Edmund Gosse as being 'startled by strangers' and 'apt to seem affected', Walter Pater, after a decade-long criticism of his work, 'retreated as into a fortress, and enclosed himself in a sort of solemn effeminacy. […] It was, at its worst, […] reminded one too much of Mr. Rose.'[79] Mr. Rose was a depiction of Pater in W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic* (1876), which was a satire of a number of well-known critiques at Oxford University. While it is reported that Pater was not offended by the author's unjust treatment of his character,[80] Mallock's homophobia against Pater was effective in his perception by the public.

Vernon Lee, however, appears to have remained unperturbed by the 'scandalous' reputation of Pater. In the summer of 1881 when she travelled to England with Mary Robinson to set out her literary connections, she was introduced to the Paters. Her

[76] Pater, *Studies*, p. 177.

[77] Monsman, *Walter Pater*, p, 64.

[78] Monsman, *Walter Pater*, p, 64.

[79] Edmund Gosse, *Critical Kit-Kats* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903), 266–67.

[80] Monsman, *Walter Pater*, p. 64.

initial impression of him as 'a heavy, shy, dull looking, brown mustachioed [*sic*] creature over forty, much like Velásquez' Philip IV, lymphatic, dull, humourless',[81] is quickly changed by his character. 'The Paters are all very friendly', Lee wrote in a letter to her mother on July 21, 'What strikes me is how wholly unlike Pater is to the Mr Rose of Mallock; so much so that, in some of Mr Rose's sentiments & speeches, I could imagine him meant for Symonds rather than for Pater.'[82]

A blend of Symonds' tendency to 'personify history' and Pater's aestheticism can be seen in the Renaissance studies of Vernon Lee, however, it is her 1884 collection of essays, published in two volumes under the title of *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Medieval in the Renaissance*, that shows the influence of Paterian aestheticism more strikingly than that of any other Victorian critic. A year before its publication, Vernon Lee confided in to Pater about her wish to publish a collection of her essays on the art of Renaissance, and his response was nothing but encouraging: 'I am very glad to hear you are going to collect those papers which I have admired so much from time to time. They certainly deserve republication, and I shall be pleased and proud of your dedicating them to me, and thus in a way associating me in your so rapidly growing literary fame. The title of your proposed volume is I think ben trovato'.[83] While the 'well found' title of her book is the name bestowed by Goethe upon the child of Faust and Helena in the second part of *Faust*, Vernon Lee acknowledges John Addington Symonds' use of the name for the choice of her title, and quotes him directly in the 'Introduction':

> Faustus is therefore a parable of the impotent yearnings of the Middle Ages – its passionate aspiration, its conscience-stricken desire, its fettered curiosity amid the tramping limits of imperfect knowledge and irrational dogmatism. The indestructible

[81] Quoted in Monsman, *Walter Pater*, p. 42.

[82] Quoted in R.M. Seiler, *Walter Pater*, p. 294.

[83] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 66.

> beauty of Greek art, – whereof Helen was an emblem, became, through the discovery of classic poetry and sculpture, the possession of the modern world. Mediævalism took this Helen to wife, and their offspring, the Euphorion of Goethe's drama, is the spirit of the modern world.[84]

The citation in the opening of *Euphorion* and a mention in its bibliography are the only references to Symonds, as Lee was 'careful to substantiate her views by authorised intellectual voices'[85]. 'I have trusted only to myself for my impressions',[86] she admitted in an appendix at the end of the second volume, however having taken 'from others everything that may be called historical fact'.[87] Jules Michelet was a particular inspiration: 'How much I am endebted [*sic*] to the genius of Michelet; nay, rather, how much I am, however unimportant, the thing made by him, every one will see and judge.'[88] For general historical information she lists her sources as 'the works of Jakob Burckhardt, of Prof. Villari, and of Mr. J.A. Symonds in everything that concerns the political history and social conditions of the Renaissance.'[89] Lee, however, admits having not read the fourth and fifth volumes on Italian literature of Symonds' *Renaisance Italy* 'from a fear that finding [herself] doubtless forestalled by him in various appreciations, I might deprive my essays of what I feel to be their principal merit, namely, the spontaneity and wholeness of personal impression.'[90]

Although Vernon Lee cites Symonds as the source of the title of her book, *Euphorion*, it was not Symonds but rather Pater who was first to interpret Goethe's

---

[84] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Revival of Learning*, ii (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1908), 54.

[85] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 42.

[86] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion: being Studies of the Antique and the Medieval in the Renaissance*, ii (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1884), 237.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, ii, pp. 237–8.

Euphorion as a symbolic union between the Romantic age and the Hellenism, 'made known to him by Winckelmann'.[91] Symonds, however, took this interpretation further as for him Euphorion was 'the spirit of the modern world'.[92] The union between Faust and Helena was a result of the yearnings of the Middle Ages with the antiquity to produce Renaissance. While Pater attributes the achievement of this modern spirit to the 'transparency, […] rationality, […] desire of beauty' of Romantic sensibility, Symonds, on the other hand, finds that this realisation of the dream of Middle Ages through Renaissance is by the

> long and toilsome study, by the accumulation of MSS., by the acquisition of dead languages, by the solitary labour of grammarians, by the lectures of itinerant professors, by the scribe, by the printing press, by the self-devotion of magnificent Italy to the erudition.[93]

While Lee follows Symonds in calling her work Euphorion, she argues that it does not represent the 'modern age' as Symonds suggests. According to Lee, 'not only is our modern culture is no child of Faustus and Helena', it is merely a descendant, a complex phenomenon consisting of 'various sides, of many and various civilisations'.[94] More importantly, Lee argued that contrary to what Symonds believed, the 'bringing together of Faustus and Helena' had no meaning for the one living in the sixteenth century, who stood in a place too far from the antiquity and too near to the Middle Ages to perceive the 'strange difference between them.'[95] The difference of conceptualisation between the interpretations of the same myth of Euphorion by Veron Lee, John Addington Symonds, and Walter Pater reveal significant historiographical

---

[91] Pater, *Studies in the History of Renaissance*, p. 114.

[92] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Revival of Learning* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 39.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 6.

[95] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887), 97.

difference between their approaches to Renaissance. As opposed to Symonds, for whom the Renaissance was a well-defined, indivisible period, stood Lee and Pater, who argued an interpretation of Renaissance not as a 'period' but rather as an 'experience', which Lee described

> inasmuch as it is something which we can define, and not a mere name for a certain epoch, *is not a period, but a condition*; and if we apply the word to any period in particular, it is because in it that condition was peculiarly marked.[96]

For Lee, and as for Pater, Renaissance was not a period of predestined change from the Middle Ages leading to the modernity, but instead it originated from a meeting between the art of antiquity and the art of Middle Ages, through series of encounters 'friendly or hostile or merely indifferent'.[97] As the Renaissance art reached its maturity around the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and was born of the seeds of antiquity that was 'remained for nearly a thousand years hidden in the withered, rotting remains of former vegetation', it was still closely intermingled with Middle Ages and represented not a complete separation, but an early medieval revival.[98] Despite such differences in the interpretation, however, Pater, Symonds, and Lee regardless still represented a common understanding of Renaissance which stood against the Ruskinian hostility towards the period as a corruptive change to Middle Ages.

Through an examination of its architecture, Renaissance played a prominent role in Ruskin's arguments against the positive representation of the period. 'The Renaissance frosts came, and all perished',[99] he condemned the shallowness and degradation of Renaissance for destroying the Gothic. While in *The Stones of Venice*

---

[96] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 30.

[97] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 171.

[98] Ibid., p. 172.

[99] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice: The Foundations* (New York: John Wiley, 1851), 234.

he mourned the loss of medieval culture, Renaissance architecture in particular exemplified the 'rather terrifying force in the historical process'.[100] Ruskin found the Renaissance architecture sinful because 'it embodied the immorality of its creators and the society at large'.[101] In his romanticised view of the architectural profession as a craft Ruskin removed Renaissance 'from its historical setting in order to demonstrate its central impact on modern civilisation', drawing a direct connection between the faults of the Renaissance and the architecture of his modern Britain. Described in a 1860 review published in the *Atlantic Monthly* as the leading Victorian authority on art and aesthetics, and possessing 'an individual taste and critical ability entirely without peer in the history of art-letters',[102] Ruskin inevitably influenced an entire generation's understanding and interpretation of the Renaissance aesthetics through his rule-driven and primarily moralistic attitude.

As Hilary Fraser argues, an important challenge Pater, Symonds, and Lee posed against Ruskin's insistence upon creating a rigid division between the Renaissance and Middle Ages as 'two morally opposed cultural epochs'[103] was shifting the boundaries of Renaissance and adapting a more flexible approach. In *The Age of the Despots*, first of his ambitious seven-volume studies *Renaissance in Italy* (1875–86), Symonds accepts immediately in the Preface the difficulty of determining the limits of Italian Renaissance as an epoch. Despite his view of history as a sequence of unbroken events, however, Symonds assigns a certain importance to Renaissance as the 'protagonist of the universal drama',[104] and, pressed to be precise, suggests two 'convenient' dates for fixing the narrow space of Renaissance: 1453 for the fall of Constantinople. and 1527

[100] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 123.

[101] Katherine Wheeler, *Victorian Perceptions of Renaissance Architecture* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2104), 19.

[102] Unsigned review. 'Modern Painters, by John Ruskin', *The Atlantic* (August 1860). http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1860aug-00239?View=PDF. (Accessed May 2013.)

[103] Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*, p. 230.

[104] Ibid., p. 461.

for the sack of Rome.[105] However in the opening paragraph of *The Age of Despots*, a discussion titled aptly as 'Difficulty of fixing Date', Symonds argues that

> [w]e use [the word Renaissance] to denote the whole transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern World; and though it is possible to assign certain limits to the period during which this transition took place, we cannot fix on any dates […]. The truth is, that in many senses we are still in mid-Renaissance. The evolution has not been completed. The new life is our own and is progressive.[106]

Pater also remarks on the use of 'Renaissance' as a term to define a transition and not a fixed period in time. In the opening of his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, where he presents an argument on the 'origins' of Renaissance as being French or Italian, he suggests that 'Renaissance'

> indeed is now generally used to denote not merely that revival of French antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century, and to which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element of symptom. For us the Renaissance is the name of a many sided but yet united movement […].[107]

Pater accepts from the very outset that his understanding of Renaissance gives it a 'much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote only that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century.'[108] Calling Renaissance 'an outbreak of the human spirit', like Symonds whose Renaissance follows the lives of sixteenth-century Italy, Pater's Renaissance traces its origins back 'into the middle ages itself', and as an aftermath of French medieval poetry.[109]

---

[105] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1881), ix.

[106] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1881), 1–2.

[107] Pater, *Studies in the History of Renaissance*, p. 9.

[108] Ibid., 5.

[109] Ibid.

Out of the three – Pater, Symonds, and Lee – it was for Vernon Lee that the historical limits of Renaissance was the most insignificant, as she assigned Renaissance not as a period, but as a 'condition' instead, and 'if we apply the word to any period in particular, it is because in it that condition was particularly marked.'[110] Like Symonds and Pater, however, Lee is also interested in the transition of Middle Ages into the Renaissance. The Renaissance 'interests me', she admits,

> not merely for what it is, but even more for what it sprang from, and for the manner in which the many things inherited from both Middle Ages and Renaissance, the tendencies and necessities inherent in every special civilisation, acted and reacted upon each other; […] producing now some unknown substance of excellence and utility […] unexpected here.[111]

While Ruskin perceived Renaissance as a fallout of the Middle Ages, and identified as the declining point of the modern period, Symonds, Pater, and Lee saw in the 'depravity' of Renaissance a historical necessity for the change. While Symonds and Pater were reluctant on dwelling on the subject, Vernon Lee provided a critique of the 'great English critic who is irrefutable when he is a poet, and irrational when he becomes a philosopher'[112] in *Euphorion*, arguing against Ruskin's association of culture with religious morality. According to Lee, the nations that came into contact with Italy at the height of Renaissance 'opened their eyes with astonishment, with mingled admiration and terror', a reaction that was mirrored by the people of the nineteenth century as they contemplate the 'picture of a people moving on towards civilisation and towards chaos.'[113] The dual nature of Renaissance as a period of both advanced culture and moral corruption, Lee believed, was an 'anomaly',[114] and was

[110] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 30.

[111] Ibid., p. 8.

[112] Ibid., p. 212.

[113] Ibid., p. 29.

[114] Ibid.

one that the nineteenth-century historiography was not fit to accommodate for. Determined to disprove Ruskin, Lee refuses to consider moral and religious judgements on art, and instead, offers an alternate reading of historicism. Unlike her contemporaries who try to 'mix with the life of the past',[115] Lee denies any kind of kinship between the Renaissance and the nineteenth-century Victorian society: 'The moral atmosphere of those days is an impossible for us to breathe as would be the physical atmosphere of the moon: could we, for a moment, penetrate into it, we should die of asphyxia.'[116] She claims that Ruskin was 'wrong' when teaching that 'in its union with the antique art, the art of the followers of Giotto embraced death, and rotted away ever after',[117] but does not align herself with the opposition ('who would teach us that in uniting with the antique, the medieval art of the fifteenth century purified and sanctified the beautiful but evil child of Paganism'[118]). Instead, she offers her own interpretation as an alternative. She suggests that the Italians 'had seen the antique and had let themselves be seduced by it, despite their civilisation and their religion'.[119] Contrary to the argument that the 'corrupt pride'[120] of Renaissance brought an abrupt end to the superiority of Middle Ages, Lee defines a more 'organic process'[121] of change. Similar to Ruskin, Lee also follows a reading of funerary monuments through the Middle Ages to Renaissance, however she pushes back the 'assumed beginning of the Renaissance into the Middle Ages' to avoid the 'antagonism of art and morality'.[122] The ornamentation of tombs, she asserts, belonged to architecture during the Middle

[115] Ibid., p. 21.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p. 212.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., ii, p. 17.

[121] Ibid., i, p. 214.

[122] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 67.

Ages as it 'had left no moral room for ideal sculpture once freed from the service of architecture':[123]

> The sculptor's work was but the low relief on the church flags, the timidly carved, outlined, cross-legged knight or praying priest, flattened down on his pillow as if ashamed even of that amount of prominence, and in a hurry to be trodden down and obliterated into a few ghostly outlines. But to this humiliated prostrate image, […] came the sculptor of the Renaissance, and bade the wafer-like simulacrum fill up, expand, raise itself, lift itself on its elbow, arise and take possession of the bed of state, the catafalque raised high above the crowd, draped with brocade, carved with rich devices of leaves and beasts of heraldry, roofed over with a daïs, which is almost a triumphal arch, garlanded with fruits and flowers, upon which the illustrious dead were shown to the people; but made eternal, and of eternal magnificence, by the stone-cutter, and guarded, not for an hour by the liveried pages or chaunting monks, but by winged genii for all eternity.[124]

For those who 'call this degradation', Lee provides an alternative reading: the change in funerary sculpture was due simply to the fact that it had lost its employment as a part of the architecture, and that 'a great art cannot be pietistically self-humiliating'.[125] By removing the context of morality, Lee presents the issue as a question of history, and demonstrates the difficulty in differentiation of time periods as her chief point.[126]

2.2 Writing History as an Impressionist Painting

Disguising herself as young male Polish historian of twenty-four in her short story 'Amour Dure' (1887), Lee condemns the 'modern scientific vandalism' [127] of

---

[123] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, ii, p.16.

[124] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

[125] Ibid., p. 17.

[126] Zorn, p. 67.

[127] Vernon Lee, 'Amour Dure: Passages from the Diary of Spiridion Trepka' in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulhalm eds. (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006), 41.

contemporary German historians because what she – or rather, *he* – seeks is to 'come in spirit into the presence of the Past.'[128] In contrast with the traditional scholarship of her contemporaries, Lee admits having 'not mastered the history and literature of the Renaissance', yet claims to have recreated the images of the past nevertheless:

> I have seen the concrete things, and what I might call the concrete realities of thought and feeling left behind by the Renaissance, and then tried to obtain from books some notion of the original shape and manner of wearing these relics, rags, and tatters of a past civilisation.[129]

At the same time, Lee is also determined in distancing herself from the figure of the positivist historian and describes her own kind of history writing:

> Were I desirous of giving a complete, clear notion of the very complex civilisation of the Renaissance, a kind of encyclopædic atlas of that period, […] I should not merely be attempting a work of completely beyond my faculties, but a work moreover already carried out with all the perfection […]. I have tried to understand only where my curiosity was awakened, tried to reconstruct only where my fancy was taken; in short, studied of this Renaissance civilisation only as much or as little as I cared, depends all the incompleteness and irrelevancy and unsatisfactoriness of this book, and depends also whatever addition to knowledge or pleasure it may afford.

Following her first major publication, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880) close behind, Vernon Lee's *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (1881) is compiled from articles published previously in *Cornhill*, *Fraser's*, and *Contemporary Review*. In the prefatory essay 'The Book and its Title', dedicated to Mary Robinson, Lee cautions her readers that the collection of essays presented in *Belcaro* does not make 'a system' of thought, but are instead 'mere fragmentary

[128] Ibid., p. 42.

[129] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 16.

thinkings out of æsthetic questions.'[130] Lee explains her personal development from being first interested in a very specific period and place – eighteenth-century Italy – and later to her ventures into aesthetic theory. Aware of the contextual differences between *Studies of the Eighteenth Century* and *Belcaro*, Lee herself admits that:

> To plan, to work for such a book as that first one, seems to me now about the most incomprehensible of all things; to care for one particular historical moment, to study the details of one particular civilisation […]; all this has become unintelligible to my sympathies of to-day.[131]

In order to rid herself of 'any desire to teach any specified thing to anybody', Lee descends 'from [her] small magisterial chair or stool of 18th century', and decides to go 'to school as a student of æsthetics'.[132] Her schooling is 'mainly to art itself, to pictures and statues and music and poetry, to [her] own feelings and [her] own thoughts',[133] and by large refers to the school of aesthetic criticism defined by Walter Pater in the 'Preface' to the *Studies in the History of Renaissance*:

> What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the æsthetic critic has to do.[134]

---

[130] Lee, *Belcaro*, p. 8. *Belcaro* alternates between essay and fictive forms. 'The Child in Vatican' is a reflection on the enjoyment of art. 'Orpheus and Eurydice' is an account of Lee mistaking a statue, but using it to explain appreciating a work of art without the values connected with it. 'Faustus and Helena' is an exploration between the art and the supernatural through a study of the different interpretations of Faustus myth. 'In Umbria' is a study of the artist's persona and whether the artists's character should match the art they create. 'Ruskinism' is a commentary on the moral value of art. 'A Dialogue on Poetic Morality' is conducted between a young poet and an older mentor.

[131] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro*, pp. 4-5.

[132] Ibid., p. 5.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Pater, Studies, p. 5. (Emphasis in the original.)

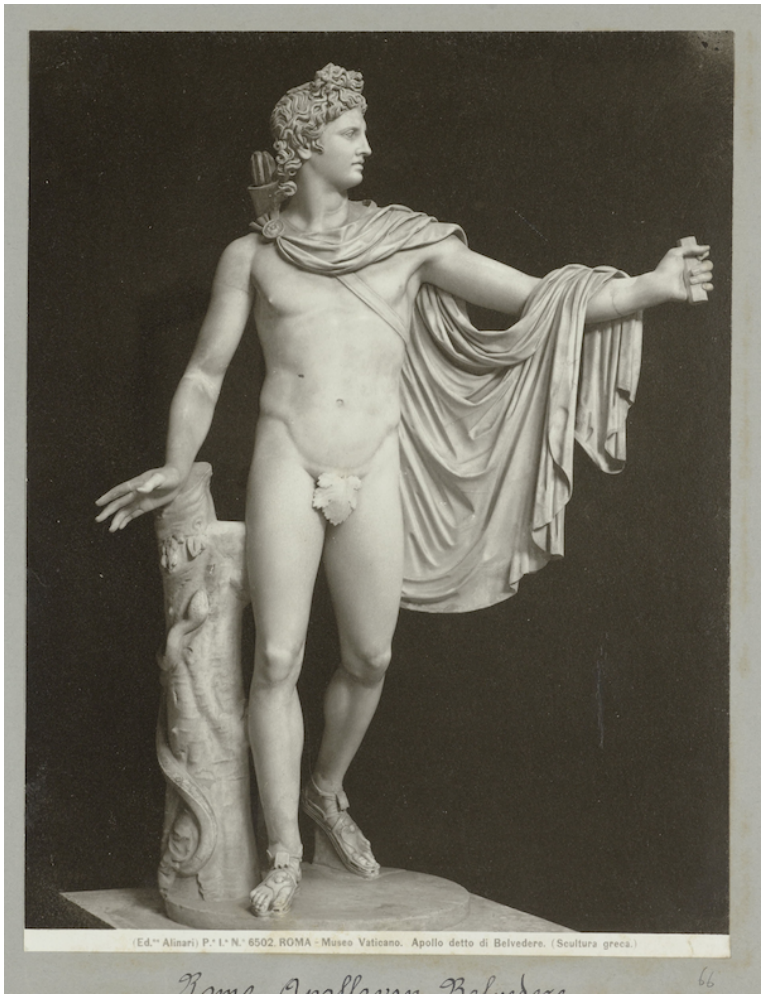

Figure 2.3 The Fratelli Alinari, *Apollo Belvedere*, between 1893–1903. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Pater's emphasis on personal experience over didactic criticism is accepted by Lee in her studies of the art in *Belcaro*. Following Pater in her introductory essay, Lee relates the 'value any work of art [possesses]' to the 'amount of pleasure which it [can] afford'.[135] Defending the personal appreciation of art over its intellectual readings, Lee criticises her contemporaries who are 'substituting psychological or mystic or poetic enjoyment […] for the simply artistic enjoyment which was alone and solely afforded by art itself'.[136] Pater's influence on Lee, in fact, predates the compilation of *Belcaro*.

[135] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro*, p. 21.

[136] Ibid., p. 11-12.

In ‘The Child in the Vatican’, an essay that resonates Pater’s ‘The Child in the House’ (1878) not only in its title but also its content, Lee appears to have been recalling her own childhood in an attempt to examine the effects of art in a child’s consciousness, through a somewhat invented ‘fairy tale’[137] which turns one of the most prized galleries into an obsolete museum. Standing in front of *Apollo Belvedere* (Figure 2.3) at the Vatican in 1764, the eighteenth-century art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann describes a state of rapture that carries the viewer ‘into the realm of incorporeal beauty’[138]

> and seek to be the creator of a heavenly nature […]. For there is nothing mortal here, nothing which human necessities and weaknesses require. No veins or sinews heat or excite this form; but a heavenly spirit, poured out like a gentle stream, has filled the sphere in which this figure lives and moves. I forget all else as I gaze on this miracle of art […]. I feel myself transported to Delos and the Lycian groves graced by the presence of Apollo […].[139]

In comparison, standing in the same gallery and in front of the same *Apollo* in 1881, Vernon Lee does not acknowledge such fervour:

> it is a desolate place, this Vatican, with its long, bleak, glaring corridors; its half-lit, chill, resounding halls; its damp little Belvedere Court, where green lichen fills up the fissured pavement; a dreary labyrinth of brick and mortar, a sort of over-ground catacomb of stones […].[140]

It is a construction for the modern consciousness that is fit for ‘art-studying’, rather than ‘art-loving’, ‘a place of exile, or worse, of captivity, for all this people of

---

[137] Ibid., p. 23.

[138] Walter Copland Perry, ‘The Apollo Belvedere’, in *Famous Sculpture: As Seen and Described by Great Writers*, Esther Singleton ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1910), 144.

[139] Quoted in Perry, ‘The Apollo Belvedere’, p. 144.

[140] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro*, p. 17.

marble'.[141] For the child, Vatican is the 'most desolate, most unintelligible of places', because the child's 'fancy' is unable to understand the language of the art of sculpture: 'For this fancy language of our modern child is the language of colour, of movement, of sound, of suggestion, of all the broken words of modern thought and feeling: and the statue has none of these.'[142] The statues will try to talk to the child, but they only will talk to them in a language of their own. 'We have been talking', Lee writes,

> of the teachings of the statues themselves, of the lesson which they, with their unchangeable attitude and gesture, their lines and curves and lights and shadows of body, their folds and plaits of drapery, have silently, slowly taught to a child; and the statues themselves, who have never read Winckelmann, nor Quartremère, nor Ottfried Müller, do not know all these wondrous classifications of schools of which […] we are so justly proud.[143]

The 'lesson' that Lee wishes 'the child of our fairy tale must have learned from its marble teachers in Vatican' is influenced greatly by Pater: that 'the only intrinsic perfection of art is the perfection of form, and that such perfection is obtainable only by boldly altering, or even casting aside, the subject with which this form is only imaginatively, most often arbitrarily, connected.'[144]

Lee's interest in personal experience and impressionism brings her closer to Walter Pater's interpretation of history, which gave her a justification to examine the past through an individual consciousness. Like Pater before her, Lee too believed that 'the past can give us, and should give us, not merely ideas, but emotions'[145] which could not be understood by the 'cynical scepticism of science, which derides the things it cannot grasp'.[146] She was also aware of the insufficiency of the 'scientific' approach

---

[141] Ibid., p. 17-18.

[142] Ibid., p. 20.

[143] Ibid., p. 29.

[144] Ibid., p. 48.

[145] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 12.

[146] Ibid., p. 4.

to science compared to the emotional language of impressionistic interpretations, as 'no historical allegory', she claimed, 'can ever be strained to fight quite tight – the lives of individuals and those of centuries',[147] and therefore turns to Pater's definition of the historian as an artist rather than a transcriber, making history not a scientific truth but a layered piece of art open to interpretation:

> Your historian, for instance, with absolutely truthful intention, amid the multitude of facts presented to him must needs select [*sic*], and in selecting assert something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within.[148]

Despite initially catering for a similar audience (of educated middle-class individuals partaking in intellectual discussions of art and aesthetics), Lee addresses to a less esoteric readership than Pater. While Pater restricts his circle to an academic, 'sensitive artistic individual; Lee's resembles that of the communal chronicler who wanders casually through the landscape.'[149] Lee believes that her upbringing among the remains of Italian Renaissance provided her with an ability to fully immersing herself in the subject matter, and rewarding her with a superiority over the 'scientific' historians who wrote from a distance away from their subject:

> It is living among such things, turn by turn delighted by their beauty and offended by their foulness, that one acquires the habit of spending a part only of one's intellectual and moral life in the present, and the rest in the past. *Impressions are not derived from description, and thoughts are not suggested by books.*[150]

According to Vernon Lee, history is constructed through a series of personal impressions one gets to experience through the remnants of the past evident in the

---

[147] Ibid., p. 7.

[148] Walter Pater, 'Style' (1888), in *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008), 9.

[149] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 38.

[150] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 19. (Emphasis mine.)

present. Her own historiographical approach, which she compares with the principles of painting through a lengthy argument in the 'Introduction', enables Lee to question the contemporary claims of recreating a complete and unified historical picture as, in the celebrated words of Leopold von Ranke, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*.[151]

> [W]e do not know what were the elevations which made perspective, what were the effects of the light which created scales of tints, in that far distant country of the past […]. [T]o the people who were in it, [the past] was not a miraculous map or other marvellous diagram constructed on the principle of getting at the actual qualities of things by analysis; that it must have been, to its inhabitants, but a series of constantly varied perspectives and constantly varied schemes of colour, according to the position of each individual, and the light in which that individual viewed it. To attempt to reconstruct those various perspective-making heights, to rearrange those various value-determining lights, would be to the last degree disastrous.[152]

Like Pater, Lee also emphasises on the connection between the recreation of the history and the persona of the historian interpreting it. Unlike Pater, however, Lee acknowledges the failings of interpreting history through a personal standpoint:

> We see only very little at a time, and that little is not what it appeared to the men of the past; but we see at least, if not the same things, yet in the same manner in which they saw, as we see from the standpoints of personal interest and in the light of personal temper.[153]

Drawing an analogy of the Impressionistic painting, which gives 'you a thing as it appears at a given moment, gives you as it really ever is',[154] Lee makes her

---

[151] 'The present attempt [at history writing],' Ranke argues, '[…] merely wants to show *how it actually was*.' (Emphasis mine.) Quoted in Colin Brown, 'History and the Believer' in *History, Criticism and Faith*, ed. Colin Brown (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1976): 147–218, 177. The citation is from Ranke's *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker, 1494–1535* (Berlin: Reimer, 1924).

[152] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion,* i, pp. 10-12.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid., p. 10.

interpretation of the past clearer, as something subjective and peculiar to, and influenced only by herself. Lee admits to being intend on bringing back the personal responses back into the reading of history, and asks her reader 'be not therefore too hard' upon her for having 'followed upon those pleasurable and painful impressions rather more than sought to discover the exact geography of the historical tract which gave them.'[155] Instead of a 'scientifically complete' treatise of the Renaissance, her studies are 'mere impressions developed by means of study; […] currents of thought and feeling in [herself] which have found and swept along with them certain items of Renaissance lore.'[156] Despite a strong commitment to her 'impressions', however, Lee is also aware that 'we cannot treat history as a mere art',[157] and as an expatriate Englishwoman living in Italy surrounded by the 'rags of the Renaissance', she was sceptical about the possibility of encountering a 'real' past amidst the impressions:

> [W]e can see, or think we see, most plainly the streets and paths, the faces and movements of that Renaissance world; but when we try to penetrate into it, we shall find that there is but a slip of solid ground beneath us, that all around us is but canvas and painted wall, perspectived [*sic*] and lit up by our fancy […] Turn we to our books, and seek therein the spell whereby to make this simulacrum real; and I think the plaster will still remain plaster, the stones still remain stone.[158]

As Hilary Fraser points out, Lee's argument sets itself apart from the 'confident empiricist histories that we associate with the nineteenth century' in its suggestion for creating alternative ways to '[engage] with the past'.[159] In the epilogue, she recreates an image of Florence, where she found herself 'wandering about in spirit among the monuments of this particular historic region' and 'feeling a particular interest in one,

---

[155] Ibid., p. 13–4.

[156] Ibid., p. 16.

[157] Ibid., ii, pp. 226.

[158] Ibid., pp. 21–2.

[159] Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 116.

then in another, according as each happened to catch [her] fancy'.[160] The 'dramatis personæ' of her recreation is, however, not the 'existing buildings, books, pictures, or statues, individual and really registered men, women, and events,' but rather her 'mental conceptions' and 'modes of feeling'[161] which she extracted from a subjective reading of the reality. However, while Lee walks through this imaginatively reconstructed and 'startlingly life-like' space of Renaissance, she is well aware that her history is in fact nothing but a representation of the past, and it is impossible to have an authentic connection with the past:

> Out of the Renaissance, out of the Middle Ages we must never hope to evoke any spectres which can talk with us and we with them; nothing of the kind of those dim but familiar ghosts, often grotesque rather than heroic, who come to us from out of the books, the daubed portraits of times nearer our own, and sit opposite us, making us laugh, and also cry, with humdrum stories and humdrum woes so very like our own.[162]

'No', Lee adapts a firm stance, 'such ghosts the Renaissance has not left behind it'.[163] She does not bring the history directly to her reader any more than the ghosts of the past speak directly with the wanderer in Florence. Instead, it is her impressions which 'exist only in [her] mind and in the minds of those who think like [her]' that she presents as an abstraction of the period.[164] She also acknowledges the potential dangers that might arise from interpreting the past through one's experience. Commenting on the difficulty of estimating a just character of Dante, she advises her reader to be careful 'to distinguish the few touches which really belong to him, from the great mass of colour and detail which we have unconsciously added thereto, borrowing from our

[160] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion,* ii, p. 222.

[161] Ibid., pp. 222–3.

[162] Ibid., i, p. 22.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid., ii, p. 223.

own experience'.[165] As Hilary Fraser points out, that it is through observations like these that Vernon Lee is set apart from her contemporaries, adapting the role of a critic against their treatment of the Renaissance.[166]

[165] Ibid., i, p. 116.

[166] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, pp. 116–17.

CHAPTER III

WRITING HISTORY AS A WOMAN

3.1 Gendering the Renaissance

When we first meet Henry James' Christopher Newman on a warm day in May 1868 in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, where he suffers from a headache after having 'looked out all the pictures to which an asterisk was affixed in those formidable pages of fine print in his Baedeker', we are told that this wealthy American businessman faces a 'new kind of arithmetic'[167] at the sight of Raphael, Titian, and Rubens. Viewing paintings is an 'initial step' to a 'freer appreciation of life and culture' for Newman, and his 'liberal response'[168] to the Louvre is in contrast to the 'moral malaise'[169] of the Unitarian minister Babcock, for whom the European life seems 'unscrupulous and impure'.[170] 'Poor Mr. Babcock', writes Henry James, 'was extremely fond of pictures and churches, and carried Mrs. Jameson's works about in his trunk; he delighted in aesthetic analysis, and received peculiar impressions from everything he saw.'[171] James' tongue-in-cheek needle-thrust might, at first, seem to have been a reflection of the contemporary opinion on Anna Jameson and her works. It was, however, far from the truth. Printed thirty-two years after her death, an article on the 'Art Critics of To-Day' published in the *Art Journal* (1892) reminds the reader that 'We have not yet

[167] Henry James, *The American* (Boston: James R. Osgood &co., 1877). Reprint. (London: Sovereign, 2013): 7.

[168] Peter Brooks, *Henry James Goes to Paris* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007):70.

[169] James, *The American*, p. 63.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid.

forgotten Mrs. Jameson'.[172] By the time Jameson's first two volumes of *Sacred and Legendary Art* were printed in the 1840s, art was still widely accepted as a means to moral improvement and it is evident from contemporary reception that her work was favoured by a large readership, and remained so long afterwards. Until the last one printed in 1911, *Sacred and Legendary Art* went through 113 printings altogether.

Hilary Fraser points out that women intellectuals who made significant contributions to aesthetic criticism and formed 'distinctively female cultural discourses' have rarely remained in focus for the modern readership.[173] Yet, according to Adele Holcomb, 'the first professional English art historian'[174] was a woman: Anna Jameson. As Holcomb notes further, 'several of the most admirable writers on Art […] have been, and are, highly cultivated women […]. Among our contemporaries the names of Mrs. Oliphant, Miss Julia Cartwright, Miss Helen Zimmern, and others occur readily.'[175] In the notably masculine circle of art criticism, 'Art Critics of To-Day' gave visibility to the 'normally invisible'[176] female critic. 'A good many ladies are to be found', the author notes, 'regular critics of well-known weekly and daily journals […] who are invariably visible on these and the like occasions'.[177] The 'invariable visibility' of the female critics refers to the women who appear in an accompanying illustration, captioned 'Press Day at the Royal Academy, 1892',[178] both as visitors and journalists. The profilic novelist Margaret Oliphant herself famously declared in 1855 that nineteenth century 'which is the age of so many things – of enlightenment, of

---

[172] Quoted in Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 17.

[173] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 17.

[174] Adele Holcomb, 'Anna Jameson: The First Professional English Art Historian', *Art History* 6 (1983): 171–87.

[175] Quoted in Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 17.

[176] Hilary Fraser, 'Through the Looking-Glass: Looking like a Woman in the Nineteenth Century', in *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Francesca Orestano and Francesca Frigerio (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009): 197.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid.

science, of progress – is quite as distinctly as the age of female novelists'.[179] What Oliphant's remark fails to acknowledge is, however, the extensive range women contributed to nineteenth-century literary culture in its widest sense.

As a recollection of the state of Renaissance studies in Britain during the 1930s, Edinburgh historian Denys Hay recounts in a tribute to Hans Baron that despite being encouraged to read Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of Renaissance in Italy* (1860) at secondary school, he was discouraged upon expressing his desire to study the Italian Renaissance as an undergraduate at Oxford in 1936. Hay was, supposedly, told by an unnamed tutor that the Renaissance was done only by 'girls,' and he was to 'concentrate on the manly Middle Ages'.[180] In a footnote, Hay admits that the Oxford academic's advice to his male student was perhaps inspired by the fact that the subject of Renaissance was then taught only by a woman, Cecilia M. Ady, at 'a women's college'.[181] The anecdote is nevertheless a characteristic of the most British historians who considered Renaissance at best a transitional period between the Middle Ages and the Reformation.[182] As Hay further points out the low opinion Renaissance was regarded with, the reputable *Cambridge Medieval History* series contain only two brief synopses of the Renaissance,[183] which incidentally were written by a literary scholar, Arthur A. Tilley, rather than a cultural or political historian. This particular understanding of Renaissance studies as a disregarded literary field of history writing associated primarily with female figures of authorship, which dominated the field until

[179] Margaret Oliphant, 'Modern Novelists – Great and Small', in *The Victorian Age of Fiction: Nineteenth-Century Essays on the Novel*, ed. Rohan Maitzen (Ontario: Boardview Press, 2009): 106. Reprinted from Margaret Oliphant, 'Modern Novelists– Great and Small', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 77 (1855): 554–568.

[180] Denys Hay, *Renaissance Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1988): 137.

[181] Ibid., n.

[182] Kay Schiller, 'Made »fit for America«: The Renaissance Historian Hans Baron in London Exile 1936–1938', in *Historikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos, und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000*, ed. Stefan Berger et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 353–4.

[183] The last two volumes in the series, vols. 7 (1932) and 8 (1936) contain 'The Early Renaissance' and 'The Renaissance in Europe' respectively.

after the Second World War,[184] finds an earlier counterpart in the mid-nineteenth century, with the rediscovery of the Renaissance lore.

While 'modern feminist historians have been reluctant to associate themselves with […] the ladylike "Lives" and "Memoirs"',[185] through the diverse medium of works from travel writing to commentaries on art, there is still a lore of nineteenth-century women participating in a culture dominated by men 'while maintaining a culture of their own,'[186] articulating views different from those of men, and criticising male voices. Women who wrote about the Renaissance through their personal interpretations of the period in order to create a cultural positioning for themselves faced a similar exclusion and dismissal to the example provided by the feminist historian Joan Kelly in her article 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?'.[187] However their complex conceptualisation of the traditionally male-identified Renaissance succeeded in disrupting the conventional periodisation of history during the nineteenth century. Hilary Fraser observes that 'the process of enabling diverse voices […] began for Victorian women with the necessity of raising their own voices against the dominant historical and aesthetic orthodoxies of their day.'[188]

Like Vernon Lee, who had a close and often difficult relationship with Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds as 'mentor' figures, another English author and art historian, Emilia Dilke also had her fair share of clash of opinions with the mentor

---

[184] Schiller, 'Made »fit for America«', p. 354.

[185] Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 100.

[186] Newton, 'History as Usual?', p. 102.

[187] To question the universalist view of history, Joan Kelly uses Renaissance as an example. Examining the economic, political, and cultural roles of women (e.g. 'access to property, political power, and the education or training necessary for work'), Kelly demonstrates that the quality of women's historical experience differs greatly from that of their male counterparts as members of the emerging classes of the Italian Renaissance, and concludes that the women of Renaissance 'experienced a contraction of social and personal options that of their male classes […] did not', and they were not deemed influential enough to be included in the later studies of the period, with their roles being subsequently undermined. See Joan Kelly, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Susan Mosher Stuard (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 176.

[188] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 100.

figures of her professional life, Walter Pater and John Ruskin, who, despite their vast difference in identifying and conceptualising Renaissance, were two of the foremost Victorian commentators of art. As Lee had no qualms about challenging the 'great English critic' Ruskin, it should come not as a surprise that Dilke too felt the need to renounce her mentors' view on art and aesthetic orthodoxies in favour of her own interpretations.

Despite not being particularly 'cosmopolitan', during the first half of the nineteenth century Oxford was still undoubtedly a centre of intellectual life in England where local families formed social circles of men and women interested in science, art, theology and politics under heavy influence of the Colleges.[189] A 'gentleman commoner' of Christ Church from 1836 to 1840, John Ruskin was one of the many to remain closely with the University of Oxford throughout his life. (In 1843 Ruskin published the first volume of *Modern Painters* as 'A Graduate of Oxford', and it was not until the fifth edition in 1851 that his name appeared on the title page.) Then known as Emily Francis Strong, Dilke's childhood coincided with the growing local interest in art history, as during the 1840s and 1850s Oxford was a locus of the development of Pre-Raphaelitism. When William Tuckwell recalled that 'art was in the air' in mid-century Oxford, he presented museums, exhibitions, 'the graceful sunshade work outside Dr. Acland's windows', and the presence of John Ruskin as evidence.[190] The extent of Dilke's social circle in Oxford prior to her arrival in Kensington Art School was later recalled by Maria Teresa Earle: '[Francis] was well acquainted with Ruskin and all the young pre-Raphaelite painters. I quite recall how this excited my envy.'[191] It was Ruskin who recommended Dilke personally to study anatomy in London, and he continued directing her work in his usual, autocratic way until the mid-1860s.

---

[189] Kali Israel, *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 42.

[190] William Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford*. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1908): 52.

[191] Israel, *Names and Stories*, p. 42, 45.

Emilia Dilke's initial artistic and intellectual interests, including her studies of drawing, were in accordance with the Ruskinian and Pre-Raphaelite ideals. However, starting with two articles published in 1869 and 1870, she took great pains to differentiate her views from those of her mentor, and her first book, *The Renaissance Art in France* (1879), focused entirely on the period which Ruskin himself had famously disparaged. In her essay 'Art and Morality' (1869), Dilke objects to the 'extreme' and limited aesthetic theories of her contemporaries. She contends that 'a certain school of writers' rigidify virtue and art 'into a relation of mere oppugnancy'.[192] What she rejects is not the 'immortality' of art, but rather the highly-moralised practice of criticism made famous by Ruskin. Unlike Ruskin, Dilke considers morality irrelevant to artistic pleasure, citing that while the art of Renaissance Italy was not a product of the morally uplifting times or morally superior artists, it was nevertheless beautiful.[193] What Dilke saw in Renaissance was a period of surging individuality, the artists' struggle to free themselves of the constraints forced upon them through their medieval predecessors and to produce works of 'grace', 'majesty', and 'meaning': 'That which is depicted by mature art is not "man as moral being" […] so much as man as a physical being […]. The progress of art […] consists of its passage from the representation of spirit to the representation of body.'[194] While Emilia Dilke considered morals 'irrelevant' to appreciation of art, Vernon Lee, who saw Italian Renaissance as a 'phase' between the feudalism of Middle Ages and the city states and tracked the shift of autonomy and the rise of 'individualism' not only in art but also in literature and politics, tried to unravel 'the causes of the Renaissance's horrible anomaly of improvement and degradation, […]

---

[192] Quoted in E.S. Shaffer, *Comparative Criticism: Volume 17. Walter Pater and the Culture of the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): pp. 72–3. Originally from E.F.S. Pattinson [Emilia Dilke],'Art and Morality', *Westminster Review* 35 (January 1869): 149–60.

[193] Quoted in Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 101. Originally from E.F.S. Pattinson [Emilia Dilke],'Art and Morality', *Westminster Review* 35 (January 1869): 178.

[194] Quoted in Israel, *Names and Stories*, p. 247.

with its loathsome mixture of good and evil'. Claiming that the 'immorality' of the Italian Renaissance is like the immorality of any historical period, Lee attempted to confront issues of historical relativism, an issue her contemporaries often chose to ignore.

'Under the thin mask of humane refinement', Symonds wrote of Renaissance in the conclusion of his *Revival of Learning*, 'leered the untame [*sic*] savage',[195] referring to the images of 'horror' utilised often by English playwrights he maintains that Italian life 'furnishes a complete justification for even Tourneur's plots'.[196] Lee, on the other hand, chose to question and challenge the reputation of Renaissance Italy as a 'land of horrors'[197] and the impact this 'loathsome mixture of good and evil' spirit of the era in her chapter on Elizabethan dramatists in *Euphorion*. She suggests that 'reviewing in our memory the literature and art of the Italian Renaissance, remembering the innumerable impressions of joyous and healthy life with which it has filled us', we can answer 'without hesitation, and with only a smile of contempt at our credulous ancestors – no.'[198] The Italy of the Renaissance was, according to Lee, nothing of the 'nightmare visions of men such as Webster and Ford, Marston and Tourneur',[199] but she does not readily dismiss the images of 'lust and blood which haunted and half crazed the genius of Tourneur and Marston'. She poses a second question: 'Does the art of Italy tell an impossible, universal lie? or is the art of England the victim of an impossible, universal hallucination?'[200] Her answer is neither. Art, according to Lee, is not capable of telling lies nor being a victim of a lie, and exists separately from the horror and light-heartedness of a period:

---

[195] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, ii, p. 521.

[196] Ibid., p. 102.

[197] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 79.

[198] Ibid., pp. 79–80.

[199] Ibid., p. 80.

[200] Ibid., p. 86.

> the Italians, steeped in the sin of their country, seeing it daily and hourly, remained intellectually healthy and serene; while the English, coming from a purer moral atmosphere, were seized with strange moral sickness of horror at what they had seen and could not forget.[201]

However, Lee also makes it clear that she is making 'no plea for the immortality of the Renaissance', and that 'evil is none the less evil for being inevitable and necessary; but it is nevertheless well that we should understand its necessity.'[202]

In *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895), planned as a sequel to *Euphorion* and published just a year before when Vernon Lee declared that she 'loathed art, abhorred aesthetics and that the only thing she really cared about was sociology and economics',[203] Vernon Lee's interest in the material and political influences of art which sets her approach to Renaissance different from those of her contemporaries different becomes apparent. She first poses a question: 'How then do matters stand between art and civilisation?'[204] There's a moment, she argues, 'in the history of every art' when the art bestirs itself:

> The circumstances of the nation and time make this art materially advantageous or spiritually attractive; the opening up of quarries, the discovery of metallic alloys, the necessity of roofing larger spaces, the demand for a sedentary amusement, for music to dance to in new social gatherings—any such humble reason, besides many others, can cause one art to issue more particularly out of the limbo of the undeveloped, or out of the lumber-room of the unused.[205]

---

[201] Ibid., p. 87.

[202] Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 52.

[203] Quoted in a letter from Bernard Berenson to Mary Berenson, dated 1 January 1896. See Bernard Berenson, *Selected Letters of Bernard Berenson*, ed. A.K. McComb (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), 31.

[204] Vernon Lee, *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (London: Smith, Elder, &Co., 1895), 37.

[205] Ibid.

Figure 3.1 Fratelli Alinari, *Firenze - Galleria Uffizi. L'Annunziazione (Luca Signorelli)*, date unknown. Fondazione Federizo Zeri, University of Bologna

The context for the cultural change is, for Lee, possesses an important influence on the art, because the artist 'is a human being, and as such not only sees and draws, but feels and thinks'.[206] Whenever there is 'innovation in the conception and arrangement of a Scripture history' in the Renaissance, Lee argues, 'we shall find also the beginning of the new technical method which suggested such a partial innovation'.[207] Therefore in addition to the importance of context, the technique is also important for Lee. There was an abundance of scriptural subjects – 'The themes were there, thank Heaven! no one need bother about them; and no one did.'[208] – and they were all beginning to transformed by the technical innovation brought on by cultural change. One of the favourite themes of the early Renaissance, the Annunciation of the Virgin was, for Lee, among those that were freed of their 'extreme monotony' by the Florentine artist of the fifteenth century (Figures 3.1 and 3.2):

> Among this crowd of unimpressive, nay brainless representations of one of the grandest and sweetest of all stories, there stand out two – an Annunciation by Signorelli, a small oil painting in the Uffizi, and one by Botticelli, a large tempera

[206] Ibid., p. 69.

[207] Ibid., p. 81.

[208] Ibid., p. 84.

> picture in the same room. But they stand out merely because the one is the work of the greatest early master of form and movement, or rather the master whose form and movement had a peculiar quality of the colossal; and the other is the work of the man, of all Renaissance painters, whose soul seems to have known most of human, or rather feminine wistfulness, and sorrow, and passion.[209]

Lee's 'hypothesis' to the question she posed earlier, of the relationship between the work of art and the civilisation that produced it, therefore, is that while any work of art is undeniably the product of an organic transition between the periods, it is the 'historical context' that bestirs the art and allows it to change both technically and

Figure 3.2 Sandro Botticelli, *Annunciation*, c. 1489. Uffizi Gallery, Florence

[209] Ibid., p. 87.

spiritually during the 'sparking points' of a continuous timeline, such as the Renaissance. While the 'immorality' of the Renaissance is rendered irrelevant in discussions of an aesthetic quality of an artwork, it can not be removed fully from the discussion as the same 'immorality' becomes a part of the historical context that produces it.

3.2 Travelling women

In the third book of *Histories*, Herodotus gives 'three great reasons' for travel: 'commerce, war, and sightseeing'.[210] While it is the Homeric hero Odysseus, a 'prototype of the traveler-observer type'[211] who has, prompted by the Trojan war, 'traveled a great deal; has seen the cities and learned their minds',[212] Roxanne Euben suggests that it is the immobility of his wife Penelope that frames the narrative (and even 'reproduces' the journey later when her son leaves in search of Odysseus).[213] So thoroughly travel has been regarded as what Eric Leed identifies (in *The Mind of the Traveler*) as 'a gendered activity', that 'there is no free and mobile male without the unfree and sessile female, no knight without the lady, no father without the mother.'[214] However, despite the male dominance, literary tropes, and 'pressures for female immobility', [215] women still have travelled willingly (and on occasions, also unwillingly[216]) across a wide range of places at least from the fourteenth century

---

[210] James Redfield, 'Herodotus the Tourist', in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Thomas Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25.

[211] Carol Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

[212] Translation by Dougherty, *Raft of Odysseus*, p. 4.

[213] Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 134.

[214] Eric Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991): 217.

[215] Euben, *Journeys*, p. 134.

[216] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 200. Mills records that in *The Wilder Shores of Love*, Lesley Blanch includes women

onwards, and wrote accounts of their travels.[217] Part of the difference between the 'male' and 'female' travels lie in the nature of the journey itself, as Jane Robinson states: 'Women have rarely been *commissioned* to travel, and so their accounts tend not to be prescribed by the need to satisfy a patron or professional reputation'.[218]

'The first English feminist'[219] Mary Astell, who began her diverse array of literary works with a tract for women's educational reform *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694, second part in 1697), contributed a preface to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Embassy Letters*, where she directly addressed to and reassured the reader that the work possessed an originality which was not to be found in the works of men:

> I confess, I am malicious enough to desire, that the world should see, to how much better purpose the Ladies travel than their Lords; and that, whilst it is surfeited with Male Travels, all in the same tone, and stuft [*sic*] with the same trifles, a lady has the skill to strike out a new path, and to embellish a worn-out subject, with variety of fresh and elegant entertainment.[220]

A common Victorian argument was that 'all the lady is fit for' was 'to wander along in her husband's footsteps scribbling down whatever fancy happens to flit into her homely little head': one could not be a lady *and* a traveller at the same time.[221] In fact, public debates about the proprieties of women's travel writing were carried out

---

who have been kidnapped and forced to travel against their will as 'travellers', and in Mary Russell's *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt*, a woman forcibly carried up Mont Blanc is a 'woman mountaineer'.

[217] Mills, *Discourses*, p. 201. Margery Kempe's (ca. 1373–after 1438) *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1436–8) is considered as the earliest recorded travel book, as well as the first autobiography in English language.

[218] Jane Robinson, *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), x.

[219] *The Literary Encyclopaedia*, s.v. 'Mary Astell', last modified March 21, 2002, http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=168. (Accessed May 2015.)

[220] Mary Astell, preface to *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (London: Printed for T. Cadell [etc.], 1784). Astell's text was written in 1725 after Lady Mary, who had no intention of publishing the letters herself, had loaned her letter-book in 1724. It was subsequently adapted as a preface to the work at the front of the 1763 edition and continued thereafter.

[221] Robinson, *Unsuitable for Ladies*, xii.

in periodicals throughout the nineteenth century. Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, herself an accomplished art historian and traveller, published an anonymous essay, discussing the superiority of women's travel writing. She asserted in 1845 that:

> there are peculiar powers inherent in ladies' eyes, this number of Quarterly Review was not required to establish; but one in particular, of which we reap all the benefit without paying the penalty, we must in common gratitude be allowed to point out. We mean that power of observation which, so long as it remains at home counting canvass stitches by the fireside, we are apt to consider no shrewder than our own, but which once removed from the familiar scene, and returned to us in the shape of letters or books, seldom fails to prove its superiority. […] Who does not know the difference between their books – especially their books of travels – the gentleman's either dull and matter-of-fact, or off-hand and superficial, with a heavy disquisition where we look for a light touch, or a foolish pun where we expect a reverential sentiment, either requiring too much trouble of the reader, or showing too much carelessness in the writer – and the lady's – all ease, animation, vivacity, with the tact to dwell upon what you most want to know, and the sense to pass over what she does not know herself; neither suggestion authorly [*sic*] effort, nor requiring any conscious attention, yet leaving many a clear picture traced on the memory, and many a solid truth impressed on the mind?[222]

While fiction remained 'a popular literary form that enabled women to explore issues'[223] that they otherwise would not be able to, women's writing in general was nevertheless regarded as marginal, and women's travel as 'breaking the boundaries of proper women's activities.'[224] One of the many struggles women faced in travel writing was the 'establishment of authority'.[225] Compared to their male counterparts who had no difficulty in listing their credentials, women often felt compelled to

---

[222] Elizabeth Rigby, 'Lady Travellers', in *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period, 1837–1901: An Anthology*, ed. Harriet Devine (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 39.

[223] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 62.

[224] *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopaedia*, s.v. 'Women travellers, Nineteenth century', ed. Jennifer Speake (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1287–8.

[225] *Literature of Travel and Exploration*, p. 1288.

contend for similar recognition. In her memoirs of *South Africa a Century Ago*, written between 1797–1801, Lady Anne Barnard yearns for freedom to choose her own degree of education:

> I often wish, when I hear anything new, curious, or useful, that I could divest myself of that portion of false shame which prevents me from taking out a memorandum-book and marking it down while I remember the particulars, which afterwards escape my memory, and the thing sinks into oblivion. But for a woman very ill-informed on most subjects – I might have said on *all* subjects – to give herself the *air* of wisdom, while she knows how superficial she is, by marking down anything that passes in company, I cannot endure it! […] In this I often put myself in mind of what an old friend used to say to us when children at her feasts: 'My dears, eat as much as you *can*, put pocket nothing.' Was I a man, I would pocket without shame.[226]

It must be noted that despite the taboos on women's role as professional writers, the idea of which have been 'reinforced by women's relative lack of education and for negative judgements on individual women authors'[227], by the second half of the nineteenth century women nevertheless succeeded in establishing themselves as equally important contributors as their male counterparts.

Irish traveller and writer Anna Jameson's publishing career produced works on a range of topics, from Shakespeare's heroines to her experiences as a traveller in Europe and Upper Canada, and to art history. First of her travel accounts, *The Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826), published anonymously, was widely read as the genuine journal of a heartbroken young English lady travelling through the continent. Beginning with the writer's justification on the 'necessity of writing a diary'[228] – 'What young lady, travelling for the first time on the continent, does not write a "Diary?"[229] – the text

---

[226] Lady Anne Barnard, *South Africa A Century Ago: Letters Written From the Cape of Good Hope (1797–1801)*, ed. W.H. Wilkins (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1910): 129–130.

[227] Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 40–1.

[228] Anna Jameson, *Diary of an Ennuyée* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), Introduction.

[229] Ibid.

tracks the journey starting from Paris, then is taken to Italy, on to Florence, Rome, Naples and Turin. The anonymous writer appears to have been suffering from an unidentified illness and bouts of recurring melancholy, with the final sections of the account being her becoming increasingly ill and dying. The publisher of the book, Henry Colburn, informs the reader that the diary in question was 'published exactly as it was found after the death of the Author', and as 'a real picture of natural and feminine feeling'.[230] A newer edition of the work was later re-published under Anna Jameson's name and was included in the two-volume *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* (1834), where Jameson makes clear of her regrets regarding the ambiguity surrounding the first edition of *The Diary of an Ennuyée*, and explains that 'the intention was not to create an illusion, by giving to fiction the appearance of truth, but, in fact, to give to truth the air of fiction.'[231] The 'truth' was a romanticised version of her trip to Europe in 1821, influenced greatly by Mme de Staël's *Corinne* (1807), and 'was a sentimental Childe Harold's journey for impressionable and adventure-hungry young ladies.'[232] Like Mme de Staël's *Corinne*, *Diary of an Ennuyée* is presented as a hybrid between a guidebook and a novel. Ellen Moers proposes that:

> The oddest thing about *Corinne* is that it is a guidebook to Italy just as much as it is a guidebook to the woman of genius. Mme. de Staël called the novel *Corinne; or Italy* to signify its double usefulness.[233]

The double-sided nature of Jameson's text turns it into a source of criticism. Writing in 1826, a reviewer in *Westminster Review* states that 'a guide-book and a romance

---

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid., xi.

[232] Clara Thomas, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto), s.v. 'Murphy, Anna Brownell (Jameson)'. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=4101. (Accessed May 2015.)

[233] Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1963; London: Women's Press, 1978), 200. Quoted in Kathryn Walchester, *Our Own Fair Italy: Nineteenth Century Women's Travel Writing and Italy 1800–1844* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007), 187.

form an incongruous mixture, and we certainly wish that they should be separated in future.'[234] Hinting at her knowledge in the arts, the narrator of Jameson's *Diary* gives accounts of the galleries she visited entwined together with her opinions. She 'shudders' at the sight of Leonardo da Vinci's 'ghastly Medusa'[235] in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, and declares her disagreement with 'all the connoisseurs in the world' when she finds a picture by Michelangelo in the Tribuna of the Uffizi so 'disagreeable' that it is 'an opinion which fire could not melt out of [her]'.[236] In Rome, she wishes 'to know and learn more', and admits that 'so much of [her] time is spent in hunting books'.[237] While she provides an extensive account of the 'most valuable and splendid collection of pictures' in the various galleries and churches of Venice, she soon makes it clear that she has 'no intention of turning [her] little Diary into a mere catalogue of names which [she] can find in every guide-book'.[238] As James Buzard notes that '[d]isdain for the "mere catalogues" of facts offered by guidebooks were reinforced by the conviction that the objects giving rise to the most powerful feelings of the tour cannot truthfully be rendered in words.'[239]

While Jameson's view that her diary, with its inclusion of personal reflections on the places she visited, is far more superior to a 'mere catalogue' can be interpreted as her effort at diminishing the effect of traditional guidebook, Hilary Fraser argues that the 'gothic romance fictional framing device may suggest that Jameson did not at this stage of her career feel authorised to publish a piece of straightforward travel literature or a guidebook'.[240] Jameson continued writing books on travel, and her later travel

---

[234] 'English in Italy', *Westminster Review,* Volume 4: May–July 1826 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826), 339.

[235] Jameson, *Diary*, p. 112.

[236] Ibid., p. 107.

[237] Ibid., pp. 201–2.

[238] Ibid., p. 73–4.

[239] James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture 1800–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 163.

[240] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History,* p. 65.

books (*Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* in 1834, and *A Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and Near London* in 1842) were 'markedly more confident and coherent',[241] and were better defined in terms of genre. While she was widely criticised by her contemporaries due to her ideas regarding the role of women in European society, by the mid-1840s she was also praised for her 'blending of thought',[242] and had already established herself as a travel writer and a guide on art.

The visitors of the nineteenth century who streamed steadily into the Continental Europe after the fall of Napoleon were, as Michael Levey puts it, 'pioneers'.[243] Not only they pioneered in establishing the figure of a bourgeois traveller, who favoured the newest form of transport by train (and often accompanied with family), 'venturing abroad with no social contacts there and little or no knowledge – especially in Italy – of foreign customs and foreign languages,'[244] but also in making the women (or rather, 'ladies') travelling without male escort not an uncommon sight for the first time.[245] The fact that the sole purpose of these travellers were 'improving their cultural education by seeking famous medieval and Renaissance monuments'[246] required foreign places to be translated into familiar sights for the visitor.[247] While the detailed guides of Baedeker remained in vogue with the travelling majority, women writers soon provided alternatives in the form of guidebooks as well.[248] It was the women who built their entire literary reputations on being travel writers, rather than those who

---

[241] Ibid.

[242] 'Mrs. Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada', *The British and Foreign Review*, Volume 8: January–April 1839 (London: Richard and John Edward Taylor, 1839), 148.

[243] Michael Levey, *Florence: A Portrait* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 459.

[244] Ibid.

[245] D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2004), 48.

[246] Michael Levey, *Florence*, p. 459.

[247] Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, pp. 48-9

[248] Fraser, *Women Writing Art History*, p. 64.

produced travelogues and guidebooks as a stepping stone to moving on to more 'serious' forms of art-historical writing (in addition to Anna Jameson, other travellers-turned-into-art-historians include the well-travelled Maria Graham and Elizabeth Rigby, whose careers as art critics were launched initially through their travel journals).[249]

Among the first women to be credited in 'creation of the travel guidebook as contrasted with the travel memoir'[250] was Mariana Starke, who, despite starting her literary career with two plays, *The Sword of Peace* (1788) and *The Widow of Malabar* (1791), was discouraged by criticism and soon saw an opportunity in writing small-format guidebooks. Her first stay in Italy for seven years (1792–1798) where she was a witness to French Revolutionary Army's invasion provided the setting for her travel memoir, *Letters from Italy* (published in 2 volumes, 1800), with a compendium of advice for people visiting Italy.[251] Returning back to Italy in 1816 after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Starke began making continuous revisions of her memoir to turn it into a guidebook for the new travelling public: middle-class Britons who often travelled with family.[252] Previously, travel guides focused on architectural and scenic descriptions for places to be seen by wealthy young men during Grand Tour. When Starke's best-selling guidebook, *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent* appeared in 1820 (and went through subsequent reprints until her death in 1838), it showed that 'travel in the new century would be something in which women would play a major role.'[253] The fifth edition (1828) appears with an 'Advertisement'

[249] Ibid., pp. 64–5.

[250] Jeanne Moskal, 'Politics and the occupation of a nurse in Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy*', in *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of travel 1755–1844*, ed. Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 151.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: The British Discover Europe 1814–1914* (London: Macmillan, 2009), 155–6.

[253] Ibid., pp. 156–7.

where Starke makes her aim of creating a guidebook containing 'all the information necessary for Travellers on the Continent of Europe',[254] and assures her readers that:

> it was requisite to examine with exactness, and give a detail, calculated to be read upon the spot, of the ancient edifices, principal museums, and galleries, public and private, in the above-mentioned countries. It was also requisite to copy all the most frequented routes from post-books lately published by Royal authority; and this has been the Author's employment during the last three years.[255]

While *Information and Directions* alludes back to the popular guidebooks of the Grand Tour due to its inclusion of similar destinations and lengthy travels, one crucial difference that set Starke apart was her understanding that her readers would not be male aristocrats but families. As Jeanne Moskal credits Starke's importance to 'her creation of the genre of the travel guidebook as contrasted with the travel memoir'[256], a considerable length of *Informations and Directions* is devoted to the pure logistics of travel, where she carefully explains a wide variety of instructions from getting a passport to currency exchange, and an extensive list of what to pack beforehand.[257] Stylistically, too, the language Starke opts for using is imperative, rather than the personal past tense employed by the memoirists. In her accounts of Florence, Starke notes her intention of offering the 'minute detail' about 'the objects best worth a Traveller's attention'.[258]

> I will now endeavour to point out the most convenient way of visiting the Antiquities, Churches, Palaces, &c.; mentioning the objects best worth notice only; in order to prevent Travellers from wasting their time, and burdening their memory,

---

[254] Mariana Starke, *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent. Fifth Edition, Thoroughly Revised, and With Considerable Additions* (London: John Murray, 1824), Advertisement.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Moskal, 'Mariana Starke's *Letters*', p. 151.

[257] Moskal, 'Mariana Starke's *Letters*', pp. 156-7.

[258] Starke, *Information and Directions*, p. 57.

> by a minute survey of what is not particularly interesting; and thereby, perhaps depriving themselves of leisure to examine what really merits the closest attention.[259]

In Palazzo Pitti, for instance, Starke makes a catalogue of all the paintings and sculptures, divided accordingly by the floor and room they are located in, and ranks them 'according to their value'.[260] Of all the items listed, only one – Raphael's *Madonna della seggiola* – receive her highest rating of four exclamation marks. Starke undertakes to simplify the tourist's task by noting the paintings worthwhile of their limited attention and time by summarising the views of various critics in her 'ample, and I hope correct Catalogues of the most valuable specimens of Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture which adorn France, Germany, Italy, &c., together with the opinions of Nardini, Venuti, Winckelmann, and Visconti, on some of the most celebrated works of Art.'[261]

Writing about Margaret Oliphant's biographical approach in her travel writings, Elisabeth Jay remarks about her fondness for human nature, her well-researched yet casual analysis, and her 'power to recognise the demands of the market and transform these into a vehicle for her own talents'[262] in her series of guidebooks on Italian cities. Like her fellow Victorians of certain standing and means, Margaret Oliphant also considered it befitting for her family to spend at least a part of each year travelling abroad in the Continent. Initially moving to a warmer climate for the sake of her husband's health and well-being, travelling set for Oliphant an occupation until the remainder of her life. In 1859, with her family and their nurse, Oliphant makes her first travel to Italy. Their journey to Florence is a 'dreadful'[263] one, being the 'first

---

[259] Ibid., p. 125.

[260] Moskal, 'Mariana Starke's *Letters*', p. 152.

[261] Starke, *Information and Directions*, v.

[262] Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs. Oliphant: A 'Fiction of Herself'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 255.

[263] Margeret Oliphant, *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*, edited by Elizabeth Jay (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), 107.

experience of having to take the management of things [herself]'.[264] Her first travel essay published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in July 1859, 'A Week in Florence', does not shy away from reflecting not-so-favourable views of her new surroundings:

> […] there is nothing but stone and marble, and universal chill – and another quarter of an hour's walk through these ghostly stone passages ere you can hope for some dinner. Oh much-abused climate of England, where the cold keeps out of doors and comfort lives within! Shall we ever speak ill of thee again![265]

Oliphant herself was a published author of eighteen novels by 1859, and later in her memoirs she notes her disappointment with having not been introduced to the Anglo-American community of Florence: 'We had brought an introduction to the Embassy, and the Embassy sent us huge cards in return, but took no more notice'.[266] Her displeasure is only to become greater upon learning that the Brownings – Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who famously took up residence in Florence – had already left for Rome.[267] While she later recalls her visits to Palazzo Pitti and 'the treasures of the galleries',[268] with the exception of one essay published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and a 'story of Florence called "Felicita"'[269], it was not until 1874 that Oliphant began working on *The Makers of Florence: Dante, Giotto, Savonarola and their city* (1876) upon a suggestion by her publisher. Essentially thought as a collection of texts about the cultural history of three Italian cities (namely Florence, Rome, and Venice), *The*

---

[264] Ibid.

[265] Oliphant, 'A Week in Florence', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (July 1859), 584. Quoted in Anne Scriven, '"Oh this terrible, fatal, miserable Rome!": The unhappy wanderings of Margaret Oliphant', *The Bottle Imp*, May 2012, http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue11/Scriven.pdf. (Accessed September 2015.)

[266] Oliphant, *Autobiography*, p. 114.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid., p. 115.

Makers of Florence soon adapted the form of travel writing after a research trip to Florence in 1874. Oliphant, as a published author of novels, was well aware of the reception of travel books by the public, and used the opportunity of writing *The Makers of Florence* to not only surveying the cultural history of the city through a series of biographical sketches, but also providing her own critical perspectives on the Victorian society she was living in, revealing her mastery of realising great moments in the history of a country through the stories in a common man's life.

Similar to Margaret Oliphant and her 'deservedly popular'[270] *Makers of Florence* (1876), among the 'indispensable'[271] contributors of the portable guidebooks in the nineteenth century were the sisters Susan and Joanna Horner, daughters of a family from Edinburgh's intellectual classes who went on to extended trips to Italy in 1848 and 1861, and published their *Walks in Florence and Its Environs* in 1873. Marguerite A. Tassi states that 'one remarkable characteristics of nineteenth-century English travel literature on Florence […] is its pictorialism',[272] and Horners' guidebook is no exception. Sisters Susan and Joanna preface the *Walks of Florence* with a picturesque depiction of the sight one might catch upon arriving the city from north on an evening in spring or autumn:

> Villas and farm-houses, scattered in every direction over hill and valley, increase in number and proximity as they approach a centre, until the buildings appear gradually to cluster around the cupola of the Cathedral. As the sun sinks behind the distant mountains—whose purple outline is sharply defined against a sky of gorgeous colour—the spires, towers, and lofty palaces, with the river which divides the city in

[270] Francis A. Hyett, *Florence: Her History and Art to the Fall of the Republic* (London: Methuen and Company, 1903), vi.

[271] Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, p. 48.

[272] Marguerite A. Tassi, 'Picturing Florence: The Role of Visual Perception in Nineteenth-Century English Representation of Florence', in Irene Marchegiani Jones and Thomas Haeussler eds., *The Poetics of Place: Florence Imagined* (Florence, 2001), 28.

two, are bathed in a ruddy glow, gradually melting into cooler tints, until all vanishes in the sudden darkness which follows sunset in Italy.[273]

Earlier on in his essay 'Picturing and Representing', visual theorist Marx W. Wartofsky embraces the view that 'human vision is a cultural and historical products of the creative activity of making pictures',[274] or, to put it baldly, vision is therefore often changed and challenged by 'picturing'. For instance, the rules of perspective in painting and drawing are not, according to Wartofsky, true representations of how they look 'but rather proposals to see things the way they are represented pictorially.' The reason why they look the way they are 'is because we have adopted the rule of picturing as a rule of seeing the world—that is, we see by way of our picturing'.[275] It can be said that therefore the sights are perceived as two-dimensional planes, with rules prevalent in picturing. Tassi argues that such an act – to imagine Florence as a picture – enabled nineteenth-century writers '[to reveal] their perceptual habit of seeing the visual world by way of familiar paintings, illustrations, and visually heightened poetry.'[276] English writers of the nineteenth century typically focused on their first sights of Florence, which Horner sisters follow as well. The chapters of *Walks in Florence*, as the name suggests, are organised in such a succession as to suggest a walk from the city centre – chapters I–IV focus on the Baptistery and the Cathedral – to the other side of the river Arno by crossing the Ponte Vecchio and leaves the traveller in Palazzo Pitti and the Boboli Gardens in twenty-ninth chapter. Each section frames a picture, a written panorama within. Either by walking or by the mere act of reading, when the traveller arrives at Boboli Gardens they are greeted by a sight reflected equally picturesque in text:

---

[273] Susan and Joanna Horner, *Walks in Florence: Churches, Streets and Palaces* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1877), vii.

[274] Marx W. Wartofsky, 'Picturing and Representing', in *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics*, Joseph Margolis ed. (), 307.

[275] Ibid., p. 308.

[276] Tassi, 'Picturing Florence', p. 28.

> Tall trees and hedges of bay, cypress, olive, ilex, and other evergreens, divide the ground into endless walks, shady pathways, and groves adorned with statues of unequal merit, and varied with water containing gold fish. Above all towers the noble stone pine, and beneath are banks of roses and grassy lawns, which refresh the eye, fatigued by the glare of the city. […] The little meadow on the plateau is called L'Ucellaja [*sic*], probably from having at one time been a bird-snare, so common around Florence. A little higher is a winding staircase, the entrance to the Garden of the Cavaliere, […] from whence is obtained a distant view of hill and valley in the direction of Arezzo and Rome.[277]

The image of Florence experienced as a panoramic view is almost a 'sanctification'.[278] Like Horner sisters, who project a panorama of various sights by taking the traveller – or the reader – to a walk through its streets, Vernon Lee's Florence also is a sight to be experienced as a painting rather than raw nature:

> And once, I remember, the dusk took living shape, the divinities stood revealed. It was at the close of a burning day which had brought fever to me […]. The sun had dipped behind the hills, leaving the distant valley of Florence luminous, when we got with our cart to the first flanks of Morello, its peaks dim, distant. Among the little cypress-woods in the ineffable freshness we met some big white calves browsing up-hill.[279]

From the 1880s onwards, Lee started producing what she became to be known among a wider public for, her short impressionistic travel essays. Ranging a period from the end of the nineteenth century until the first quarter of the twentieth,[280] Lee's travel

---

[277] Horner, *Walks in Florence*, pp. 613–14.

[278] Vernon Lee, *The Tower of Mirrors: And Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (London: John Lane, 1914), 232.

[279] Ibid., p. 233.

[280] Her travel essays were published in following collections: *Limbo and Other Essays* (1897), *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (1899), *The Enchanted Woods and Other Essays on the Genius of Places* (1905), *The Spirit of Rome* (1906), *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places* (1908), *The Tower of Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (1914) and *The Golden Keys and Other Essays on the Genius Loci* (1925).

writing was in the 'art of weaving a delicate net of words in which to catch the spirit of place, not even Henry James is more skilled.'[281] The objective of Vernon Lee's travel essays remains the same as her objective in aesthetics and her approach to writing history: 'not to teach others, but to show them how far I have taught myself, and how far they may teach themselves.'[282] Through an unapologetically self-centred standing, each and every one of her travels become a quest to find the picturesque ideal.

> the well-nigh passionate and certainly romantic feelings we may have for towns wherein we are utter strangers, and for roads and paths along which, as we know full well, we shall never pass again. *Amours de voyage* I have allowed myself to call them, as distinguished from the love we may have for localities wherein our everyday lot is cast.[283]

She possesses a passion 'for localities, the curious emotions connected with the lie of the land, shape of buildings, history and quality of air and soil',[284] and while her essays focus on many European places, for Vernon Lee nowhere does that passion finds a deserving recipient than Italy. The reality of Vernon Lee's Italy is a mixture of its present and past. Suffering from 'an acuteness of aesthetic desire very near akin to starvation', she returns from a winter's stay in London to the South, where 'winter is a word and the commonest objects are as lovely as the rarest.'[285] A traveller since from her birth, as discussed earlier, Lee's perceptions of the places are often entwine present impressions with past memories from her childhood. Although in her middle-age she calls herself a 'Sentimental Traveller', living a stay-at-home life '[repressing] of all

---

[281] Desmond MacCarthy, 'Out of the Limelight' (1941), *Humanities* (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1953), 190. Also quoted in Catherine Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee and Unfolding the South', p. 212.

[282] Lee, *Belcaro*, p. 14.

[283] Lee, *Genius Loci*, p. 203.

[284] Lee, *The Sentimental Traveler*, p. 14.

[285] Lee, *Genius Loci*, pp. 197-8.

longings for travel',[286] in the concluding essay to the eponymous collection of travel essays, Lee reminiscences about a moment of pause at a marketplace in Padua a couple of years earlier, because 'the big-domed palace, sentineled with towers and clustered round with booths and awnings' reminds her a book that she 'pored over while convalescing from a childish illness'.[287]

> The prints were of that soft and vaporous style which made you feel (like Turner's illustrations, for the rest) that the scenes depicted, […] were reserved for persons of most sensitive nerves and refined manners: Lady Blessingtons and *Ennuyées* with their *Diaries*. […] [I]t was a slow, beneficent rapture, spread through the hours, days, and weeks, the timeless time of convalescence. And something of it lasted. I was aware, all through my youth (I have before me a note to the effect, written twenty-three years ago), that to this must be due an undercurrent of delicious, faint excitement, independent of the pleasure of the actual moment, and filling me whenever I realised that I was in Verona, Bologna, or any characteristic North Italian city.[288]

The subjective nature of Lee's approach to history is also evident in her travel writing. She believed that there was no objective way for a traveller to recount their impressions: 'If places are hackneyed, it is only in our eyes and soul, because we see their commonplace side and the rubbish of everyday detail which we bring with us.'[289] One of her most 'impressionistic' accounts is *The Spirit of Rome* (1906), a collection of essays relating to her travels to Rome between the years of 1888 and 1905. What makes Rome a destination worth noting is that the 'impersonal and almost eternal, […]

---

[286] Lee, *Sentimental*, p. 273.

[287] Ibid., p. 275.

[288] Ibid., pp. 275–76.

[289] Ibid., p. 229.

which have stood two thousand years'[290] landscape of the city evokes in her memories of people from her life. However, when she returns to the city in the spring of 1902, after a loss of certain relationships, Rome for her becomes 'a vast rubbish heap and sink; that nothing matters, nothing comes out of all the ages save rags ad brutishness'.[291] Similarly, in 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' (1894), an account of her travels to Ravenna which serves as an example of her melding of the genres between travel writing and supernatural fiction, there is also a constant evoking and exorcising of ghosts. Even though she attempts to ignore the ghosts by mentioning the acquaintances who live there – 'Since then, as I hinted, Ravenna has become the home of dear friends, to which I periodically return, […] without taking thought for any of the ghosts'[292] – her first impressions of the city is still marred by the 'supernatural':

> All round the church lay brown grass, livid pools, green rice-fields covered with clear water reflecting the red sunset streaks; and overhead, driven by storm from the sea, the white gulls, ghosts you might think, of the white-sailed galleys of Theodoric, still haunting the harbour of Classis.[293]

[290] Lee, *The Spirit of Rome*, p. 205.

[291] Ibid., pp. 139–40.

[292] Vernon Lee, 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' (1908), 161.

[293] Ibid., pp. 161–2.

CHAPTER IV

WRITING HISTORY AS AN EXPATRIATE

4.1 Literature and History: Fiction and Fact

Fiction and fact often overlapped in the writings of Vernon Lee: 'In her stories of the supernatural she invented historical and literary sources. In her histories, she introduced legends'.[294] Ghosts of the past are for Lee everywhere, even in her non-fiction works, despite her assertion that 'more complete the artistic word, the less remains of the ghost'.[295] More apparent in her travel writings, the landscape surrounding her can easily be turned into a mental picture, or a recreation of a memory, a change that she often describes in physical terms: 'The white riband before me, twisting along the dull green and brown valley of the Apennine stream which I hear but cannot see, twists into my past.'[296] In *The Enchanted Woods* (1905), Lee recalls the reality promenade with a companion soon turning into an imagined scene:

> at a turning of the path my interest in politics and economy suddenly went out; we were in romance, in the fairyland, of Italian poetry. Imagine (and I seemed imagining rather than walking in reality) a mediaeval castle of the Scaligers, perfect with battlemented walls, circular like its rock, but a castle turning magically into a villa such as d'Annunzio has made immortal.[297]

---

[294] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 247.

[295] 'Tell us the character and history of those vague beings […] What do we obtain? A picture, a piece of music, but the ghost is gone.' Vernon Lee, 'Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art' in *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, p. 310.

[296] Lee, *The Sentimental Traveller*, pp. 92–3.

[297] Lee, *The Enchanted Woods*, pp. 190–1.

For Lee, the 'ghosts' of the past are a metaphor for the remnants of that rose to the surface. Her understanding of the present is a reality permeated with the imaginative associations of the past, that can only be seen by a sensitive viewer. Commentating on Italian gardens in *Limbo and Other Essays*, Lee records that

> the whole ghosts of the ladies and cavaliers of long ago who haunt the gardens; not the ghost of the everyday, humdrum likeness to ourselves, but the ghost of certain moments of their existence, certain rustlings, and shimmerings of their personality, their waywardness, momentary, transcendent graces and graciousness, unaccountable wistfulness and sorrow, certain looks of the face and certain tones of the voice (perhaps more of the steadiest), things that seemed to die away into nothing on earth, but which have permeated their old haunts, clung to the statues with the ivy, risen and fallen with the plash of fountains, and which now exhale in the breath of honeysuckle and murmur in the voice of the birds, in the rustle of the leaves and the high invading grasses.[298]

Ravenna, for instance, is such a place for Lee where past is entwined with the present. Initially meant for a travel essay, 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' is now more often than not included in collections of her fictional works. Printed in a collection of her supernatural stories, *Pope Jacynth and More Supernatural Tales* (1956), the publisher feels the need to make a note about 'Ravenna' that the essay 'is not a story, although in this vignette is retold a medieval legend of the supernatural. It has been included in this volume because it is not far from the stories which make up this book.'[299]

Despite her attempts to remove the 'ghosts' of Ravenna from the narrative, Lee can't help but take a turn in the second half of the essay, haunting her text by introducing a Gothic legend into what meant to be a travel account. The legend originates not in Ravenna, but in the neighbouring forests of Classis, where every week a ghostly hunt takes place in pursuit of a young woman (Figure 4.1). She acknowledges

[298] Lee, *Limbo and Other Essays*, p. 130.

[299] Vernon Lee, 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' in Pope Jacynth and More Supernatural Tales (London: Peter Owen, 1956), 124–126, 125.

Figure 4.1 Sandro Botticelli, *The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti (I)*, ca. 1483. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

the interpretations of the same legend done before her – 'Boccaccio wrote it in prose [*Decameron*, 8th story, 5th day]; Dryden re-wrote it in verse ['Theodore and Honoria', *Fables Ancient and Modern*]; Botticelli illustrated it ['Nastagio degli Onesti' panels]; and Byron summed up its quality in one of his most sympathetic passages [*Don Juan* 3. 105–8].'[300] – and admits the uselessness of retelling the same story once more had she 'not chanced to obtain […] another version, arisen in Ravenna itself, and written, most evidently, in fullest knowledge of the case.'[301] Her version is in the 'barbarous Romagnol dialect of the early fifteenth century and lacks all the Tuscan graces of the Decameron', which she translates for her readers because 'it possesses a certain air of truthfulness, suggesting that it was written by some one who had heard the facts from those who believed in them'.[302] However, the ambiguity surrounding the source of

[300] Vernon Lee, 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' (1908), p. 179. For the identifying the reproductions of the tale, see: Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 248.

[301] Vernon Lee, 'Ravenna and her Ghosts' (1908), p. 180.

[302] Ibid.

Lee's Romagnol manuscript (which she is 'not at liberty to divulge'[303]) and it's sudden end ('the outer sheet being torn through the middle'[304]) leads the reader to consider the imaginative nature of her 'discovery'.

It is, however, not of importance for Lee as later in her essay 'Puzzles of the Past' (published in *Hortus Vitae* in 1904) she questions the 'evidence' used by historians. According to Lee, what historians provide as evidence 'promotes only a particular version of their own period'.[305] 'Is not what we think of as the Past', she asks, 'what we discuss, describe, and so often passionately love – a mere creation of our own?'[306] Recent studies by the likes of Hayden White and J.B. Bullen suggest that 'historiography is a literary genre, and that writing about the past, like other forms of writing, is determined by rhetorical conventions such as plotting, character, metaphor, and so on'.[307] Hayden White writes: 'What the historian must bring to [their] consideration of the record are general notions of the *kinds of stories* that might be found there […]. In other words, the historian must draw upon a fund of culturally provided *mythos* in order to constitute the facts as figuring a story of a particular kind'.[308] Bullen, in *The Myth of the Renaissance*, further explains the 'relationship between past events and the written record of those events':[309]

> History has its heroes and heroines, whose fate, comic, tragic, or romantic, is inexorably linked to the historical process, and the picture of the past which is created verbally in historical discourse […] shares many of the characteristics of fiction. This alignment between the fictive and the historical is strengthened by the fact that in the nineteenth century many of the texts which communicated powerful

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid., p. 193.

[305] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 32.

[306] Vernon Lee, Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Garden of Life, (London: John Lane, 1904), 196.

[307] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 2.

[308] Hayden White, *Topics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), 60.

[309] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 3.

> if partial views of the Renaissance were themselves confessedly fictions – Browning's Renaissance monologues and George Eliot's historical novel *Romola* for example – but even a work like Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, which appears at first sight empiricist and positivist, is only nominally so.[310]

Following Stephen C. Pepper's analysis in *World Hypotheses*, Hayden White identifies four 'paradigms of the form that a historical explanation […] may be conceived to take': Organicist, Formist, Mechanistic, and Contextualist. [311] The Organicist historian, as he defines, are those who 'attempt to depict the particulars discerned in the historical field as components of synthetic process.'[312] The Organicist mode, in general, is governed by 'individual entities' which aggregate 'wholes that are greater than […] the sum of their parts', and by a common spirit (e.g. the Zeitgeist).[313] Historians working in this mode, therefore, are interested in characterising the whole process rather than its individual elements. Taking Renaissance as an 'individual entity', J.B. Bullen identifies John Ruskin and Walter Pater as Organicist historians.[314] By comparison, the Formist mode of argument takes those 'individual entities' and evaluates them as self-contained and relatively autonomous historical units, and the Formist historian 'aims at the identification of the unique characteristics of objects inhabiting the historical field.'[315]

The Renaissance studies of Vernon Lee stands as a blend of Pater's aestheticism and Symonds' tendency to 'personify history'. Similar to Symonds, Lee too makes use of theatrical metaphors to describe her own historical methodology, but while Symonds refers to 'actors', Lee's 'dramatis personæ have been modes of feeling and

---

[310] Ibid.

[311] Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 13.

[312] Ibid., p. 15.

[313] Ibid., pp. 15–6.

[314] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 208.

[315] White, *Metahistory*, pp. 13–4.

forms of art,'[316] which draws Lee closer to Pater than Symonds. However, as she characterises her studies as the opposite of comprehensive, where she 'tried to understand where [her] curiosity is awakened',[317] through her selective approach to the history, it is possible to identify Lee as a Formist historian.

4.1.1 *Romola* and Recreating the Florentine Past

With her pronounced dedication to aesthetics in *Belcaro* (1881), Lee had chosen a direction for her future work: essays on *Renaissance in Euphorion* (1884), the novel *Miss Brown* (1884), and philosophical dialogues in *Baldwin* (1886). A satire on Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, *Miss Brown* intended to argue that it is not art itself which is corrupting, but its worship instead. However, the hostile reception of *Miss Brown* disappointed Lee. She did not prefer to be known as a 'novelist', and considered it to be an 'inferior' genre.[318] Responding to a letter of praise which compared her to George Eliot, Lee refused to accept the tribute: 'You must not mention my name in the same breath as that of George Eliot, […] there is something in this that perfectly abashes me.'[319] For the Victorian public, the novel had the best chance of commanding a large audience. While Vernon Lee loathed the idea of 'selling' herself by producing a popular novel, she was nevertheless in favour of manipulating fiction to provide a commentary on the moral and ethical issues of the day, an impressive example of which was set by George Eliot. In fact, by 1893 she was defending Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), about an Oxford clergyman going through a crisis of faith. '[Ward] *does not* sell herself;' Lee wrote, 'and if she has made more money by her novels than anyone since George Eliot […] it isn't because she has written down to

[316] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion,* ii, p. 223. Emphasis in the original.

[317] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 8–9.

[318] A letter addressed to her mother quotes Lee's response to a suggestion by her literary agent to write a novel: 'Think if I were a novelist! But even had I the time, I should shrink from writing what would certainly be a vastly inferior to my other work.' Quoted in Gunn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 98.

[319] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 271.

the public but because, writing her own serious and excellent […] views of religion, etc. she has happened to meet the wants of the majority.'[320]

Despite Lee's disclaimer on Eliot, however, the latter still occupies a place comparable to that of Vernon Lee not only through her own use of a male pseudonym throughout her career, but also her choice of mixing fact and fiction in her works. As a midway point between the studies of Ruskin and Pater, George Eliot's *Romola* can be identified as a Formist depiction of history.[321]

> In Ruskin, the details of Venetian building and the decoration of building converge to demonstrate the moral and aesthetic richness of Gothic art together with the corresponding degradation and shallowness of the Renaissance. In George Eliot, the plentitude of archaeological detail and the variety of local character in fifteenth-century Florence resists that convergence. […] The word 'Renaissance' though absent from the text is hidden behind multiplicity of meanings, […] but her mastery of the ambiance of fifteenth-century Florence introduced a large audience to the richness and colour of a period which still had an unstable and highly ambiguous status in English writing.[322]

Product of a thorough research (Eliot would later remark in her life that she began *Romola* 'a young woman' in 1860, and 'finished it an old woman'[323] in 1863) and of diligent field work in Florence, Eliot intended *Romola* to be a faithful representation of the Dominican friar Savonarola's rise and fall in the final decade of fifteenth century. From the time she became independent after her father's death in 1849, then at the age of thirty, until the final year of her life Eliot made frequent trips to the Continent, 'exploring with eager interest most of the great cities of Western Europe,

---

[320] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 96.

[321] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 208.

[322] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, pp. 208–9.

[323] Quoted in Margaret Harris, 'Romola' in *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*, ed. J. Rignall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 340.

as far east as Berlin and Vienna'.[324] Eliot's appreciation of the places she visited was later described rather condescendingly by Henry James:

> her perception was a perception of nature much more than of art [...]. It is a part of this same limitation of the pleasure she was capable of taking in [...] the various journals and notes of her visits to the Continent are [...] as near as she ever came to rapture. She enumerates diligently all the pictures and statues she sees, [...] a proof of her active earnest intellectual habits; but it is rarely apparent that they have, [...] said much to her, or that what they have said is one of their deeper secrets.[325]

However, while she was a well-known traveller among her contemporaries, her fiction remained 'provincially English in its setting'.[326] Although due to 'her active earnest intellectual habits' Eliot's writings were still informed by a profound knowledge of a wider world beyond the Midlands, with the exception of *Romola* (1862–3), no work bears a sign of her travels besides sparse Roman episodes in *Middlemarch* (1871–2).[327]

George Eliot's personal contact with Italy was limited to four visits, with two very short ones to Florence. In April 1860, Eliot and her long-time partner George Henry Lewes went to Italy for the first time. Although she had been learning Italian since 1840, her literary and historical interests were centred mainly on Germany.[328] Like many of her contemporaries, she came to Italy as a result of the rekindled interest in its past, however, as J.B. Bullen points out, unlike her contemporaries Eliot's views on Italian Renaissance were not dominated by Ruskin despite her admiration of his works, and she was drawn to High Renaissance art, having been discovered Raphael's

---

[324] John Rignall, 'George Eliot and the Idea of Travel', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36 no. 2 (2006): 139.

[325] Henry James, 'George Eliot's Life', in *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 1885), 674. Reprinted in David Carrol ed., *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Routledge), 499.

[326] Rignall, 'George Eliot and the Idea of Travel', p. 139.

[327] Rignall, 'George Eliot and the Idea of Travel', p. 139–40.

[328] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 215.

Madonna del Sisto in Dresden.[329] Her first contact with Italy in the spring of 1860 was significantly important to her, which she identified as 'one of those journeys that seem to divide one's life in two by the new ideas they suggest, and the new veins of interest they open'.[330] Describing her arrival in Rome as 'gradually rising from the depth of disappointment to an intoxication of delight', Eliot found 'a glimpse of the broken grandeur and Renaissance splendour'[331] in the city. Despite her admiration of Rome, however, it was Florence 'from its relation to the history of Modern Art, has roused a keener interest in us even than Rome, and has stimulated me to entertain rather an ambitious project'.[332] Lewes' journal entry for May 21 of the same year shows it was his suggestion that '[Savonarola's life and times] afforded fine material for an historical romance', and Eliot 'at once caught at the idea with enthusiasm'.[333] Writing to her publisher John Blackwood on August 28, Eliot explains the 'ambitious project' of hers:

> When we were in Florence, I was rather fired with the idea of writing a historical romance, – scene, Florence; period, the close of the fifteenth century, which was marked by Savonarola's career and martyrdom. Mr. Lewes has encouraged me to preserve in the project, saying that I should probably do something in historical romance rather different in character from what has been done before.[334]

After its publication in April 1861, Eliot made another trip to Florence between the months of May and June, spending thirty-four days in the city for the purposes of research. Her days 'were spent in looking at streets, buildings and pictures, in hunting

---

[329] Ibid.

[330] Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 201.

[331] George Eliot, *George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals*, ii (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885), 151.

[332] Ibid., p. 180.

[333] George Eliot, *The Journals of George Eliot*, p. 333.

[334] George Eliot, *George Eliot's Life*, p. 212.

up old books, at shops or stalls, or in reading at the Magliabecchian Library.'[335] Eliot was not an 'ordinary' tourist in Florence but 'a highly intelligent sightseer'.[336] English writer Thomas Trollope, who accompanied Eliot and Lewes to an overnight's journey to the monasteries of Camaldoli and La Vernia in 1861, notes Eliot's acute perceptivity after reading *Romola*:

> I had much talk with George Eliot during the time – very short at Florence – when she was maturing her Italian novel *Romola*. [...] I knew that she was digesting the acquisitions of each day with a view to writing; but [...] when I read *Romola*, I was struck by the wonderful power of absorption manifested in every page of it. The rapidity which she squeezed out the essence and significance of a most complex period of history, and assimilated the net results of its many-sided phases, was truly marvellous.[337]

Eliot writes to R.H. Hutton, a literary critic who had published a review of *Romola*, that 'there is scarcely a phrase, an incident, an allusion [in *Romola*] that did not gather its value to me from its supposed subservience to my main artistic objects.' Calling it a 'habit of [her] imagination', Eliot strives after a medium in which the 'character moves as of the character itself':

> The psychological causes which prompted me to give such details of Florentine life and history as I have given, are precisely the same as those which determined me in giving the details of English village life […].'[338]

Romola is to give the reader the spirit of the Renaissance, through a recreation of the fifteenth-century Florence with minute detail (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Not only it creates a more geographically remote setting than Eliot's previous studies of English

---

[335] Ibid., p. 239.

[336] Leslie Stephen, *George Eliot* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902), 129–30.

[337] Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember*, ii (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1887), 283–4. For the entire account of the journey and his later remarks upon reading *Romola* see 'Mr. and Mrs. Lewes,' pp. 267–293.

[338] George Eliot, *George Eliot's Life*, p. 286.

Figure 4.2 Frederic Leighton, *A Florentine Street*, 1862. Illustration for George Eliot's Romola. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine.*

Figure 4.3 Frederic Leighton, *The Cloister Gate*, 1862. Illustration for George Eliot's Romola. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine.*

provincial life, but also a temporal one. Using Florence as its primary setting, *Romola* can be said to be the first novel by a major British literary figure that deals exclusively with Renaissance as a focal point. Leslie Stephen, writing in his biography of George Eliot (1902), finds *Romola* a provoking book, after reading which he was 'alternately seduced into admiration and repelled by what seems to me a most lamentable misapplication of first-rate powers.'[339] Dealing with the nature of 'historical novel', which he names a 'literary hybrid', Stephen points out that the historians condemn *Romola* for its inaccuracies, and the readers for the dullness.[340] It is the dullness which he finds Eliot to be a victim of, due to her 'attempt to be historically accurate' which had 'a painfully numbing effect on her imagination':

[339] Stephen, *George Eliot*, p. 132.

[340] Ibid., p. 126.

> It is no easy task to go back for some centuries; […] to the inhabitant of Florence in the fifteenth century requires a more difficult transformation. Did George Eliot achieve it even approximately? […] 'She spent,' says an admiring critic '[seven] weeks in Florence in order to familiarise herself with the [...] inhabitants.' In spite of this, it is said, her characters, when she began to write, not only refused to speak Italian to her, but refused to speak at all. […] George Eliot had not, like some novelists, been primarily interested in a period, steeped her mind in its literature simply for the love of it, and then felt a prompting to give form to her impressions.[341]

Romola is, according to Harry E. Shaw, has passed largely under-appreciated until very recently. Beginning his examination of the book with the 'philistine' question of 'Why bother to write about history at all, if it's so trivial, and if life in the past is only superficially different from life in our own day?' his main concern is with the under-appreciation of the writers who 'demythologise the past' and write historical fiction without an acute interest in historical positivism. The characters and symbols found in historical novels, according to Shaw, reveal themselves as clearly as those in the works 'that view history with utmost seriousness'.[342] Eliot's 'epic intention' with *Romola* was, as Felicia Bonaparte argues, 'to explore the historical confrontation, and to trace the influence on Western civilisation, of the pagan and Christian cultures in their mythological forms.'[343] Set in the final decade of the fifteenth century in Florence (the events beginning with the day after Lorenzo de' Medici's death in 1492), the dichotomy of the period between the Christian orthodoxy and Renaissance humanism is the main element of the plot,[344] where the principal characters are seen as the representatives of the Renaissance revival and the collapse of medieval antiquity.[345]

---

[341] Ibid., pp. 126–30.

[342] Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 106.

[343] Quoted in Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction*, p. 106. Originally appears in Felicia Bonaparte, *The Triptych and the Cross: The Central Myths of George Eliot's Poetic Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 80.

[344] Fraser, *Victorians,* p. 206.

[345] Bullen, *Myth of the Renaissance*, p. 217.

The struggle between the two cultural predecessors of Renaissance are explored through the struggles of the eponymous heroine as she negotiates between loyalties to her father and her brother, and her husband and her conscience. Tito Melema is a young Greek scholar who arrives in Florence after being shipwrecked, and his marriage to Romola enables him access to the influential circles of the Florentine society. Tito, along with Romola's father, Bardo de' Bardi (a blind Classical scholar living in Florence), can be seen as the pagan heritage of Renaissance. The Christian heritage, on the other hand, is principally represented by Savonarola, whose influence guides Romola's life, and Dino de' Bardi, the estranged son of Bardo and the brother of Romola, who refused to study Classics and chose to become a Dominican monk instead. It is also the city of Florence itself which the Christian heritage 'breathes through the very walls and buildings of the medieval city'.[346] When the barber Nello, who fancies his shop in Piazza San Giovanni as a gathering place for the Florentine intelligentsia, meets Tito for the first time, he takes the young scholar to a tour of the Piazza (Figure 4.4):

> The mercurial barber seized the arm of the stranger and led him to a point on the south side of the piazza, from which he could see at once the huge dark shell of the cupola, the slender soaring grace of Giotto's campanile, and the quaint octagon of San Giovanni in front of them, showing its unique gates of storied bronze, which still bore the somewhat dimmed glory of their original gilding. […] The façade of the cathedral did not stand ignominious in faded stucco, but had upon it the magnificent promise of the half-completed marble inlaying and statued niches which Giotto had devised a hundred and fifty years before […]. On that April morning, it seemed a prophetic symbol, telling that human life must somehow and some time shape itself into accord with that pure aspiring beauty.[347]

[346] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 206.

[347] George Eliot, *Romola* (Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 31.

Figure 4.4 Frederic Leighton, *'Suppose you let me look at myself now'*, 1862. Illustration for George Eliot's Romola. The British Museum.

Figure 4.5 Frederic Leighton, *The Blind Scholar and his daughter*, 1862. Illustration for George Eliot's Romola. The British Museum.

While the barber Nello is proud to take his guest a walk through the sights of the Duomo, Piazza San Giovanni, and Giotto's Campanile, it 'was not the impression it appeared to produce on the Greek'. Tito's response 'was rather piquing to Nello's Florentine spirit', thus the barber dares him to say if he has ever seen a 'finer work than […] Giotto's tower, or any cupola that would not look like a mere mushroom by the side of Brunelleschi's'.[348] For Tito, the buildings 'smack too much of Christian barbarism':

> I have a shuddering sense of what there is inside – hideous smoked Madonnas; fleshless saints in mosaic, staring down idiotic astonishment and rebuke from the apse; skin-clad skeletons hanging on crosses, or stuck all over with arrows, or

[348] Ibid., pp. 31–2.

> stretched on grid-irons; women and monks with heads aside in perpetual lamentation. I have seen enough of those wry-necked favourites of heaven at Constantinople […].[349]

Through a street 'of stone buildings pierced by comparatively small windows […] of which there are many examples still to be seen in the venerable city', Nello takes Tito to the house in which Bardo de' Bardi lives. A grim door lets them inside an empty courtyard, and from there a smaller one to the stone staircase and the rooms on the ground-floor. Bardo's second-storey study is

> a long, spacious room, surrounded with shelves on which books and antiquities were arranged in scrupulous order. Here and there, on separate stands in front of the shelves, were placed a […] headless statue […]; some well-preserved Roman busts; and two or three vases of Magna Grecia. A large table in the centre was covered with antique bronze lamps and small vessels in dark pottery. The colour of these objects was chiefly pale or sombre; the vellum bindings […] gave little relief to the marble livid with long burial […]. [T]he dark bronzes wanted sunlight upon them to bring out their tinge of green, and the sun was not yet high enough to send gleams of brightness through the narrow windows […].[350]

Bardo de' Bardi is a 'moneyless, blind old scholar', 'who sat among his books and his marble fragments of the past, and saw them only by the light of those far-off younger days which still shone in his memory' (Figure 4.5).[351] His study, faded in colour and dimly lit, reflects his character. The scholar, although he never made any of his manuscripts public, assumes his library and collections to be the only way he would be remembered for after his death:

> "If even Florence is only to remember me, it can but be on the same ground that it will remember Niccolò Niccoli – because I forsook the vulgar pursuit of wealth in

[349] Ibid., p. 32.

[350] George Eliot, *Romola* (ed. 1994), p. 45–6.

[351] Ibid., p. 45.

> commerce that I might devote myself to collecting the precious remains of ancient art and wisdom, and to leave them, after the example of the munificent Romans, for an everlasting possession to my fellow-citizens. […] Yet, Lorenzo's untimely death has raised a new difficulty. I had his promise […] that my collection should always bear my name and should never be sold […]."[352]

Despite their shared appreciation of Roman humanism and discontent with the 'medieval orthodoxy',[353] Tito and Bardo possess different approaches to the past as characterised by their rooms.[354] Old scholar's library – dimly lit and filled with vellum crumpling away – is in contrast with Tito's *salotto*:

> Tito entered a room which had been fitted up in the utmost contrast with the half-pallid, half-sombre tints of the library. The walls were brightly frescoed with "caprices" of nymphs and love sporting under the blue among flowers and birds. The only furniture besides the red leather seats and the central table were two tall white vases, and a young faun playing the flute modelled by a promising youth named Michelangelo Buonarotti. It was a room that gave a sense of being in the sunny open air.[355]

Romola's room, on the other hand, is a mixture of the both to emphasise her intermediary characterisation. It is a long, narrow space like the library, but 'painted brightly like the other, […] with birds and flowers. The furniture in it was all old; there were old faded objects […]; above the cabinet was the portrait of Romola's mother; and below this […] stood the crucifix Romola had brought from San Marco.'[356] Entering the room, Tito proceeds to leave an impression of his own. Removing the crucifix from the cabinet on which it stood to Romola's discontent, he replaces it with

---

[352] Ibid., p. 51.

[353] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 206.

[354] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 208.

[355] George Eliot, *Romola* (ed. 1994), p. 190.

[356] Ibid., p. 190.

a tabernacle made by the painter Piero di' Cosimo upon his request, the purpose of which is 'to hide away from [Romola] for ever that remembrancer of sadness.'[357] Piero di' Cosimo's tabernacle given to Romola by Tito is among the many details found in Romola that Eliot uses to add symbolic effect to narrative, which also serve the purpose of recreating the extraordinarily diverse creative milieu of Florentine Renaissance.[358] Such references give a dimension to the characters that inhabit Eliot's fifteenth-century Florence and evoke an image of the city as a centre of art and learning. However, these acts are not confined to certain characters or groups of people only, as Nello's barber shop is regarded as a centre where Florentine intellectuals come together, and is frequented by artists and scholars.

George Eliot's Florence is, like the dual nature of the novel itself, is a result of both a mythical understanding of the Renaissance as a utopia where even the most ordinary person on the street is excited by the prospect of learning, and the meticulous research and field-work done by Eliot herself as a preparation, bursting with historical detail. However, Eliot also 'deals with a private history and […] political proceedings remain for the most part in the background.'[359] As Hilary Fraser points out, Eliot choses to project nineteenth-century 'problems, preoccupations, and attitudes onto her carefully reconstructed Florentine past.'[360] As the author of an unsigned review in *Westminster Review*, published in 1863, suggests:

> The hills indeed are, as George Eliot says, where they were of old, and the rivers flow in their accustomed beds; but many and great are the changes which four hundred years produce in these great features of physical nature, and greater far the differences which such a lapse of time brings with it in the form of the moral questions which are offered to each generation of mankind. We cannot escape from the feeling that the chief interest of Romola reposes on ideas of moral duty and of

[357] Ibid., p. 191.

[358] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 207.

[359] Stephen, *George Eliot*, p. 133.

[360] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 209.

> right which are of very modern growth, and that they would have been more appropriately displayed on a modern stage.[361]

Shaw, calling Eliot's representation of nineteenth-century problems in a distant historical setting a 'palpable anachronism', points out that the 'symbolic structure underlying *Romola*' causes a shift in novel's focus.[362] However, it is inevitable that any representation of the past to be 'coloured by the present'.[363] Therefore Eliot, as the Victorian historical novelist, constructs a representation of the past that is 'significantly different from the present, yet in which the present may find its origins'.[364] Although as a work of fiction it is viewed as not representing the positivist history, *Romola* is not of less value than the contemporary studies of the period.[365] In the sense of creating fiction through facts, and re-inventing the past through its remnants left in the present, Eliot's *Romola* is comparable with the alternative writings of history as advocated by Vernon Lee.

4.1.2 Henry James and Two 'Florences': The Ideal and the Real

The desire to travel through the 'old' Continent was not limited to the British. The idea of foreign travel both deplored and fascinated the nineteenth-century patriotic American as well. Writing in the 1830s, the essayist Washington Irving proclaimed that '[w]e send our youth abroad to grow luxurious and effeminate in Europe: it appears to me, that a previous tour on the prairies would be more likely to produce that manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence most in unison with our political institutions'.[366] Yet Americans were eager to learn about the Old Country and the

---

[361] Unsigned review. Westminster Review (October 1863). Reprinted in David Carrol ed., George Eliot: The Critical Heritage, p. 217.

[362] Shaw, *Forms of Historical Fiction*, pp. 108–9.

[363] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 211.

[364] Fraser, *Victorians*, p. 211.

[365] John Addington Symonds was influenced by *Romola* to turn his attention to Renaissance.

[366] Washington Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies* (London: John Murray, 1835): 69–70.

Continent. While American accounts of European travel vary in opinion and literary representation, they unite in the aspect of detaching oneself from both the figure of a tourist, and a habitant of the foreign places they visit, 'absenting themselves from the grand boulevard and floodlighted cathedral, [seeking] a quaint, rural, pre-modern Europe'.[367] The major American travel writers of the nineteenth century – Henry Adams, Henry James, and Edith Wharton to name but three – are exemplars of a time when the Grand Tour was still thought to be essential for an elite upbringing. For the American traveller to be in Europe meant to behold the antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Almost all having read Ruskin, they followed his 'cathedral trail', but adopting a 'secular means of celebrating the monuments of a European Christian past'.[368]

Dedicatee of Vernon Lee's *Miss Brown* (1884) – 'To Henry James, I dedicate, for good luck, my first attempt at a novel'[369] – Henry James was a highly esteemed friend who was welcome to Casa Paget during his visits to Florence until their friendship came to a sudden end in 1892, when Vernon Lee, 'as oblivious as ever to the sensitivity of others',[370] introduced Henry James as a character in her short story 'Lady Tal'. Feeling himself caricatured through the references to his personality and appearance, James refrained from reading 'Lady Tal'. On 16 January 1893, he wrote to a friend, American journalist Morton Fullerton, in exasperation about the 'irrepressible Vernon Lee':

> I believe (as I have been told) the said Vernon has done something to me ("Lady Tal?") but I don't know what it is and if I should know I should have to take upon

[367] William Merrill Decker, 'Americans in Europe from Henry James to the present', in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, Alfred Benedixen and Judith Hamera eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 127.

[368] Ibid., p. 128.

[369] Quoted in Henry James, *Selected Letters*, ed. Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 207.

[370] Ibid., p. 109.

> myself the burden of "caring" in some way or other established of men, or of women—and oh, I don't *care* to care […].[371]

However, in a note dated four days later he cared enough to warn his brother William, who was in Florence at the time and was planning to meet Vernon Lee in Casa Paget:

> I hope you won't throw yourself into her arms […]. My reasons are several, and too complicated some of them to go into; but one of them is that she has lately, as I ams told […] directed a kind of satire of a flagrant and markedly "saucy" kind at me!! […] For God's sake don't betray that I have *spoken* to you of the matter or betrayed the faintest knowledge of it: I haven't read these tales and never mean to.[372]

Henry James' first travel writings, collected in *Portraits of Places*, were published in 1883 and were built upon Washington Irving's idea that to travel is 'to compile impressions from ephemeral contact with venerated foreign sites'.[373] Like many of his contemporaries, James began his travel writing in letters written to home as 'portraits' of the places he visited. Possibly an influence of Ruskin and 'word-painting', for James Venice forms a 'masterly composition':

> The sea took on a thousand shades, but they were only infinite variations of blue, and those rosy walls I just spoke of began to flush in the thick sunshine. Every patch of colour, every yard of weather-stained stucco, every glimpse of nestling garden or daub of sky above a calle, began to shine and sparkle – *began, as the painters say, to 'compose'*.[374]

---

[371] Henry James, *Letters, Volume III*, ed. Leon Edel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 399.

[372] Quoted in *Henry James: A Critical Heritage*, ed. Roger Gard (London: Routledge, 1997), 238.

[373] Ibid.

[374] Henry James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America* (New York: Viking Press, 1993), 298. (Emphasis mine.)

A ‘sentimental tourist’ as James describes his travel persona, (like his contemporaries) he remains in a spectator-like relationship with the places he visited, like ‘a dramatic scene observed from the shelter of a box seat’.[375] These transatlantic ‘pilgrims’ included Italy to see the ruins, monuments, and the arts to compare the Italy he had read about with the one he saw.[376] It was a land of dualities, politically complex and culturally rich, both threatening and desirable, about which the Americans wrote with a ‘romantic longing for a simpler, slower way of life’ than the one they had left behind.[377] Henry James, in an review of W.D. Howells’ *Italian Journeys* in 1868, recognises the potential of reading about Italy to substitute actually being there:

> [T]ake the reader over roads much travelled, and conduct him to shrines worn by the feet — to say nothing of the knees — of thousands of pilgrims, no small number of whom, in these latter days, have imparted their impressions to the world. But it is plain that the world is no more weary of reading about Italy than it is of visiting it; and that so long as that deeply interesting country continues to stand in its actual relation, aesthetically and intellectually, to the rest of civilisation, the topic will not grow threadbare.[378]

Having travelled to Italy in 1896, James was able to address the differences between the states of the ‘picturesque’ Italy conveyed in travel writings and of the actual country habited by the natives, something which Emily Dickinson remained at a remove from in her experiences of ‘vicariously’ visiting Italy. Writing in 1878 in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Henry James remarks that ‘observation in any foreign land is extremely superficial, and our remarks are happily not addressed to the inhabitants themselves, who, at a hundred points, would certainly exclaim upon the impudence of

---

[375] Decker, ‘Americans in Europe”, p. 128.

[376] Alfred Benedixen, ‘American travel books about Europe before the Civil War’, in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, Alfred Benedixen and Judith Hamera eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 121.

[377] Ibid.

[378] Henry James, ‘W.D. Howells’s Italian Journeys’, *The North American Review* 106 (1868), 337.

the fancy-picture'.[379] He stresses the clash between the tourist's and native's Italy: 'Young Italy, preoccupied with its economical and political future, must be heartily tired of being accounted picturesque'.[380] James' distinction between the real and the ideal Italy is also central to his critique of Ruskin's late works which he consulted to during his travels, *Mornings in Florence* and *The Stones of Venice*.

Henry James begins his 'Recent Florence' (1878) with an allusion to the picturesque nature of the city, in accordance with 'word-painting': 'I had never known Florence more charming than I found her for a week in this brilliant October. […] All this brightness and yellowness was a perpetual delight; it was a part of that indefinably charming colour which Florence always seems to wear.'.[381] Although he speaks with envy about 'a way of life that is not afraid of a little isolation and tolerably quiet days',[382] something which could perhaps be a 'charming entertainment' if only for 'a week or so', he cannot help but give in to the 'brooding expression' of the villas around him, part of which 'comes, even when they have not fallen into decay, from their look of having outlived their original use'. [383] The metaphysical abandonment and despondency of the architecture that 'deposits a certain weight upon the heart' is something that James finds easy to analyse:

> It came from a sense of the perfect separateness of all the great productions of the Renaissance from the present and the future of the place, from the actual life and manners, the native ideal.[384]

---

[379] Henry James, 'Italy Revisited', *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1878), 411. http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1878apr-00437/. (Accessed May 2013.)

[380] Ibid, p. 439.

[381] Henry James,*Travelling in Italy With Henry James*, Fred Kaplan ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), 260–1.

[382] Ibid., p. 262

[383] Ibid., p. 263

[384] Ibid., p. 264

Turning to Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence* ('amusing little books') to aid his understanding of the 'separateness' of the old and the new in Florence, James notes, and is soon disappointed with, the 'irritation' Ruskin responds to the notion with (Figure 4.6):

> The wreck of Florence, says Mr. Ruskin, 'is now too ghastly and heart-breaking to any human soul that remembers the days of the old'; and these desperate words are an allusion to the fact that the little square in front of the cathedral, at the foot of Giotto's Tower, with the grand Baptistery on the other side, is now the resort of a number of hackney-coaches and omnibuses. […] A cab-stand is a very ugly and dirty thing, and Giotto's Tower should have nothing in common with such conveniences. But there is more than one way of taking such things […].[385]

Figure 4.6 Fratelli Alinari, *Piazza del Duomo*, ca. 1880. *Omaggio a Firenze* (Florence: Alinari, 2010)

[385] Ibid.

While the traveler is left to choose between Ruskin's 'personal ill-humour' and 'the incongruity of horse-pails and bundles of hay', James directs the reader to a middle ground, towards how he believes the city might best be appreciated: 'Reading Ruskin is good; reading the old records is perhaps better; but the best thing of all is simply staying on'.[386] The only way to care for the city is to 'linger and remain and return', as the danger of not lingering enough to form one's personal impressions and relying solely on the author's knowledge instead mean to have 'nothing left to discover or describe'.[387] The idea of travel according to James is not to master the cities, but rather is a transformation of one's self as being a witness to the transformation of the city itself. In his recollections of Venice, he refrains from giving a description of the St. Mark's Basilica ('it is surely the best-described building in the world'[388]) but instead mentions a different way of taking it: not as an object to be examined, but a space to be experienced. James advises his readers not to actively possess the city, but be possessed by it, and be its 'helpless captives'.[389] While Ruskin laments on what he believed to be an irreplaceable loss of grandeur, James celebrates the emergence of an impulsive new Italy 'growing into an old Italy again, [which] will continue to take her elbow-room wherever she finds it'.[390]

4.2 '*Genius Loci*' and Florence

'I absolutely prohibit any biography of me,' Vernon Lee instructed her executrix Irene Cooper Wills. 'My life is my own and I leave that to nobody.'[391] She herself did

[386] Henry James, 'Venice', *The Century Magazine* (November 1882), 4. http://www.unz.org/Pub/Century-1882nov-00003/. (Accessed May 2013.)

[387] Ibid., p. 5

[388] Ibid.

[389] Ibid., pp. 8–9

[390] James, *Travelling in Italy*, p. 265.

[391] Quoted in Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, 1.

not leave behind an autobiography either, but her studies of the past were more often than not presented to the reader through her personal memories and relationship with places. With 'acute sensibility and observation', Christa Zorn points out, '[Lee] achieves a remarkable fusion of personal and general history.'[392] The introduction to *Baldwin* (1886), for instance, reads as an account of Lee's writerly persona. The eponymous character Baldwin is her double, introduced to the reader as a 'dear abstract friend on the borderland between fact and fancy.'[393] Both their persona evolve 'from an amalgamation of history, education, gender, and the "genius of the place"'.[394] Personal identification with the places she wrote about is a significantly recurring theme in the works of Vernon Lee, for whom the subjective impressions of the surrounding landscape and architecture often provided a more truthful representations of the history than the academic studies. Noting the inadequacy of the modern terminology to describe the places that affect one favourably, 'for want of a better name'[395] Lee suggested borrowing '*genius loci*' from classical mythology. However, she completely rejected the Roman tradition of erecting statues personifying a given area:

> A divinity, […] and deserving of some silent worship. But, for mercy's sake, not a personification, not a man or woman with mural crown and attributes, and detestable definite history, like the dreadful ladies who sit round the Place de la Concorde. To think of a place or country in human shape is, for all the practice of rhetoricians, not to think of it at all. […] The Genius Loci, […] is of the substance of our heart and mind, a spiritual reality. And as for visible embodiment, why that is the place itself, or the country; and the features and speech are the lie of the land, pitch of the streets,

[392] Ibid., p. 90.

[393] Vernon Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 14.

[394] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 90.

[395] Vernon Lee, *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (London: John Lane, 1907), 5.

> sound of the bells or of weirs; above all perhaps, that strangely impressive combination, noted by Virgil, of rivers washing round old walls.[396]

Although Lee believed what she calls *genius loci* could not be personified as they represented ethereal beings, she also admits they feel 'nearer and more potent' in certain places or features of landscape.[397] She goes on to compare the feelings 'we can have for places with the feelings awakened in us by certain of our friends', and urges her readers to find the *genius loci* of their favourite place for themselves. 'Certain river districts' in England and the 'Tuscan valleys and stony hillsides' are the places where one 'may live habitually, yet never lose the sense of delight' for Vernon Lee herself.[398] As a transitory figure, an expatriate both to her native English culture and to her adopted home of Italy, Lee was obsessed with the fleeting nature – the 'ghosts' – of the past. Through an examination of her preface to 'Winthrop's Adventure', in which Lee is fixated on a portrait of the eighteenth-century castrato Farinelli, Catherine Maxwell shows her perpetual search for the 'traces of ghosts'.[399] Living among the 'rags of the Renaissance'[400], Lee believed her everyday contact with the past provided her with an opportunity to recreate the images of the past through specific locations of Italy. Through Baldwin, Vernon Lee's life hangs 'flakewise, like the wool of a sheep' on every part, 'every stone and bramble' of the *genius loci* of Italy:

> the only place I have possessed in absolute familiarity […], the only place where I have been obliged to take an interest in everything, or rather within whose limitations I have had to find everything. […] [T]he complete intimacy with every turn, every path; the interest in the fern growing on certain walls, in the scarlet mushroom on a

---

[396] Ibid.

[397] Ibid. p. 6

[398] Ibid. p. 7

[399] Catherine Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee and the Ghosts of Italy' in *Unfolding the South: Nineteenth Century British Writers and Artists in Italy*, Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 215.

[400] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, pp. 18–20

> particular bank skirting a beech wood; the historical mania and fancies evoked by a few scraps, a tower, an old piece of wall, a graven hand on a milestone.[401]

The Italian Renaissance was for Lee a 'place', rather than a 'period', 'from which she could respond to cultural processes from within'.[402] Throughout her life and through her aesthetic sensibilities, Lee believed herself to be 'organically' linked to the Renaissance and felt entitled to oppose her predecessors and speak out for the 'other' Renaissance.[403] Free from theoretical restrictions, Lee 'tried to evoke historical "moments" in a place or an area':[404]

> I can remember all this, and the effort to construct myself a universe out of this tiny spot [a small Italian village]. The same happened, with a more mature myself, greater wants and richer surroundings, here; the same making out of this place my microcosm of the world.[405]

Lee often traces the origins of her passion with the *genius loci* to sounds and smells, which she believes Italy to be rich with such sensory exploits. Smells not only have the power of evoking memories and feelings from the past, but they also 'seem to distill and volatise so many indefinable peculiarities of season, of climate, and of civilisation'[406] Vernon Lee's Italy is full of places with their past 'not homely and warm and close to us like that of the North, but distant, forlorn, tragic with the smell of dead leaves'.[407] Such a realisation comes to her during an autumn walk at

---

[401] Vernon Lee, *Baldwin*, p. 9.

[402] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 39.

[403] Vernon Lee, *Euphorion*, i, p. 58. In her essays 'The Sacrifice' and 'The Italy of the Elizabethan Dramatists', Lee speaks out against the 'false' images of the Renaissance created by the imaginations of English playwrights, and celebrates the 'splendid and triumphant wickedness of Italy'.

[404] Zorn, *Vernon Lee*, p. 39.

[405] Vernon Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 9–10.

[406] Vernon Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 150–1.

[407] Ibid., p. 150.

Castiglione d'Olona near Milan, merging the 'peculiarities of season, of climate, and of civilisation':

> [T]here rose to my nostrils in the autumn afternoon the mingled scents of long-neglected drains, of sun-dried filth, of mint crushed underfoot, and, purifying all with its sense of life and ripeness, the smell of leaves baked by a summer's heat and fresh from a frosty dew. That mingled scent meant what cannot be put into words, the faint thrill of hundreds of such impressions, long merged and forgotten; blurred memories of other solitary walks through other forlorn little places of the past, between dust-heaps and palaces, past little corners of garden and terrace, which might be that where Romeo's ladder had hung.[408]

The neglect and squalor she saw in the smaller Italian towns during her travels were far greater than the crumbling ruins of the Rome or Venice, and Lee herself was not indifferent to the poverty and cruelty the poor had to face in Italy. However, through her sturdy Romantic sensibility, she continued creating the idealised image of what she loved from what she saw around her. She finds in Castiglione d'Olona an 'exquisite, empty, forsaken little church', where the 'ghosts of the Renaissance prelates must have said Mass at shuddering chill daybreak'.[409] On a carriage ride back to Florence, Lee witnesses a quintessential Italian sunset:

> I turned back over and over again, until the belfries and walls of Castiglione d'Olona had vanished behind her yellowing poplars in the meadows, folded back into the past. Then the cupolas and pinnacles of Monte Rosa suddenly loomed into sight, carved out of mother-of-pearl, fabulously high above a bank of opalescent vapours, against a pure pale evening sky. Had I really ever cared for any country except Italy?[410]

[408] Ibid., pp. 150-1.

[409] Ibid., pp. 152.

[410] Ibid., p. 152.

While Lee possessed attachment to other countries based on childhood memories, she was never entirely comfortable in anywhere else but Italy. Her indulgence in Florence was not only rooted in her identification as a 'sentimental traveller', but rather in her role as a self-confessed 'expatriate'.

4.3 Urban Transformation of Florence: The Past and the Present

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton's epic poem retelling the Fall of Man, Satan's shield is said to have 'Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb / Through optick glass the Tuscan artist views / At evening from the top of Fesole [*sic*]'.[411] After his two visits in Florence between 1638–39, Milton felt such an affinity for the city, he wrote years later to his Florentine friends that the city 'planted strings in my heart which now rankle there deeper'.[412] Captivated by the city's reputation as 'the new Athens on the Arno',[413] Florence had been, since the seventeenth century, a favoured destination for the Britons. The Baedeker guide called Florence a 'focus of intellectual life' in Italy, possessing 'an amazing profusion of treasures of art, such as other locality possesses within so narrow limits'.[414] However, by the time Napoleon had marched his army into Florence in 1799 and dissolved the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, most of the British residents in the city had fled.[415] Fifteen years later, however, the Grand Duchy was restored in 1814 and by 1828 a flourishing British 'colony' had returned. American poet William Cullen Bryant described the British expatriates in Florence in 1834 as:

> As the day advances, the English, in white hats and white pantaloons, come out of their lodgings, accompanied sometimes by their hale and square-built spouses, and

[411] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1. 287–289.

[412] Quoted in Ben Downing, *Queen Bee of Tuscany: The Redoubtable Janet Ross* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giraux, 2013), 82.

[413] Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 6.

[414] Karl Baedeker, *Italy From the Alps to Naples: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1909), 137.

[415] Ben Downing, *Queen Bee of Tuscany*, p. 82.

> saunter stiffly along the Arno, or take their way to the public galleries and museums. Their massive, clean, and brightly polished carriages also begin to rattle through the streets, setting out on excursions to some part of the environs of Florence – to Fiesole, to the Pratolino, to the Bello Sguardo, to the Poggio Imperiale.[416]

Visitors who were staying in the city for any length of time could join the Gabinetto Scientifico-Litterario, better known from its founder's name as *Gabinetto Vieusseux*. Founded in 1819, the library was not only one of the leading libraries in Florence, but was also a meeting place for the foreigners. In addition to books and journals in English, French, and German, it also provided a tea-room.[417] Daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly memberships were provided for a small fee, and library's membership logs show a steady increase in users from America and Britain from 1820 to 1914.[418] Over eight decades, for many prominent figures from Henry James, one of the many perpetually returning visitors, to the Brownings who chose the city as their permanent home, and to transients like George Eliot and John Ruskin, Gabinetto became a meeting place. By 1870s, 'out of a total population of 200,000, there were nearly 30,000 Anglo-American inhabitants'.[419]

The city became the perfect choice for Pagets to settle down when, by the mid-1870s, Eugene Lee-Hamilton's health began failing, and Florence provided the cultural atmosphere Vernon Lee needed for her work. The transformation of the Paget family circle was largely due to Lee's rising reputation, as some years later she would open Casa Paget on 5 via Garibaldi to visitors and take the role of a hostess for the people who had known the likes of Thackeray, George Eliot, and the Brownings,

---

[416] William Bryant, *Bryant's Letters of a Traveller* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1851), 31–2.

[417] Bernd Roeck, *Florence 1900: The Quest for Arcadia*, Steward Spencer trans. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 84.

[418] In 1842, more than half of the 660-some entries were English names. See: Richard Mullen and James Munson, *Smell of the Continent*, p. 127.

[419] Harry Brewster, *The Cosmopolites: A Nineteenth Century Family Drama* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 1994), 1.

discovering 'lively transplanted Anglo-American society that defied the conventions of their homelands yet remained essentially and eminently respectable'.[420] In the spring of 1889, during the period between the years of 1887 and 1896 when Vernon Lee was suffering from long periods of illness and inactivity,[421] the Pagets moved to a gentrified farmhouse, Il Palmerino, in the village of Maiano on the hill of Fiesole. During her slow recovery Lee took an interest in the management of the estate, which she purchased after the death of her parents and remained until the end of her life.

Three books she produced in this period were *Juvenilia* (1887), *Althea* (1894), and *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895), and were collections of essays some of which were previously unpublished. It is in 'Imaginative Art of the Renaissance', the second essay in *Renaissance Fancies* that Lee, in her usual way of blending her personal and general history, provides an excerpt of her environs in Florence:

> In a Florentine street through which I pass most days, is a house standing a little back (the place is called the Square of Purgatory), the sight of which lends to that sordid street of stained palace backs, stables, and dingy little shops, a certain charm and significance, in virtue solely of three roses carved on a shield over a door. The house is a humble one of the sixteenth century, and its three roses have just sufficient resemblance to roses, with their pincushion heads and straight little leaves, for us to know them as such. Yet that rude piece of heraldic carving, that mere indication that some one connected with the house once thought of roses, is sufficient, as I say, to give a certain pleasurableness to the otherwise quite unpleasurable street.[422]

Lee possessed a genuine congeniality for the city, which was 'her refuge from the ugliness of the present and the centre of everything she valued'.[423] Throughout her

---

[420] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 9.

[421] Much of the depressive illness Lee was going through was brought upon her failure to stop Mary Robinson's marriage to James Darmesteter in 1888. See Colby, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 135–36.

[422] Vernon Lee, *Renaissance Fancies*, p. 67.

[423] Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 136.

numerous travel writings – published between 1897 and 1927 – and more importantly in her collection of essays *The Tower of Mirrors: And Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (1914), she developed an idea what she called 'the Emotion of Italy'.[424] It was a 'set of feelings', as she termed, triggered largely by smells, but also by sights and sounds of the countries ('like the people', as she makes a note of) she loved that awaken memories in her.[425] The representations of her beloved Italy often originate from personal memory and sensory perceptions in Lee's writing, which she then often combines with historical facts and literary myths.

These mental spaces of refuge aroused by emotions, however, is not sheltered fully from the world around her. While 'giving too much attention to the past and the imaginary, as happens wherever, […] even in Florence', Lee is uncomfortable by the attacks of the 'Present' and the 'Real'.[426] These sudden encounters with the 'Present' and the 'Real' in Florence that Lee recounts with disdain can, in some part, be attributed to the city's never-ending celebration of its past, which in return was supplemented with new architectural projects, monuments, exhibitions, historical reenactments, and artistic and scholarly productions that took place 'to provide the young nation with a visible and tangible nationalising vocabulary'[427] in fin de siècle Florence. As Medina Lasansky explains:

> [c]elebraing the Renaissance took place throughout the country in Turin, Milan, and Rome, but above all in Vasari's adopted city of Florence, where the Renaissance proved to be central to the contemporary practice and culture and key to the definition of the new nation. In what one scholar has recently termed "the use and

[424] 'Or, rather, one, perhaps the most poignant and almost harrowing, of the emotions which Italy can give.' See Vernon Lee, *The Tower of Mirrors: And Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (London: John Lane, 1914), 149–50.

[425] Lee, *Tower of Mirrors*, p. 150.

[426] Ibid., pp. 171–72.

[427] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 25.

abuse of the Renaissance past," a variety of mechanisms were used to foster a collective sense of identity.[428]

This renewed interest in Florence's past to 'foster a collective sense of identity' resulted in reclaiming several of city's centuries-old buildings and landmarks, and turning them into places 'for the people'. One striking example is the Bargello – also known as 'Palazzo del Popolo' – and its 'rehabilitation' from a former prison into a national museum (Figure 4.7). While the museum was opened in 1865, the building

Figure 4.7 Fratelli Alinari, *Exterior of the Palazzo del Bargello*, ca. 1870. Fratelli Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

[428] Ibid.

itself had gone through various transformations since the 1250s. Initially built as a palace for the 'Capitano del popolo' (*Captain of the people*), in 1261 it was turned into 'Palazzo del Podestà' (*Palace of the Mayor*), the highest judicial court of Florence, and from trecento onwards, the Podestà heard informal testimonies on public criminal acts. The medieval tower and fortified walls of the building, as Allie Terry points out, reflected 'the strength of Florence's government and its judicial system, since the architecture transported the visual landscape of feudal protection into the city'.[429] The exterior of the building was used as a more direct way of communicating with the people, as early as 1292 the frescoes on the walls were used in lieu of a 'wanted' board

Figure 4.8 Detail from School of Giotto, *Paradiso*, ca. 1337. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Photo: Wolfgang Sauber

[429] Allie Terry, 'Criminals and Tourists: Prison History and Museum Politics at the Bargello in Florence', *Art History* 33/5 (2010), 842.

for criminals at large.[430] Beginning from the Medicis' return to Florence and until the end of the Ducal reign (1569–1737), Palazzo del Podestà was transformed into the prison 'Bargello' became famous for, receiving its name from the title of the police chief of Florence who resided in the building from that time until the end of the Grand Duchy in nineteenth century.[431] As the ownership of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany changed hands in the later half of the eighteenth century, the death penalty was banned in Tuscany in 1786 and the executions and torture carried out in Bargello came to a halt even though the building remained as a prison until 1858 when a new one was built on the edge of the city.[432] The decision to turn the former prison into a museum open for all public is linked by Allie Terry to the discovery of the Dante portrait in a fresco done by Giotto (Figure 4.8). The restoration project inspired a 'Dante-mania', which in return brought attention to Bargello that was no longer limited to locals. Even though Dante himself was sentenced to death at Bargello in 1302, the discovery of his portrait led to a reclamation of the Bargello from a prison with condemned penal practices into a national museum to promote a common identity.[433] One of the earliest guidebooks to include Bargello in the travellers' itinerary as a museum was the Horner sisters' – Susan and Joanna – *Walks in Florence*. They introduced the traveller to Bargello with a note that immediately places the nineteenth-century visitor into the historical setting of the building's past, and provided them with a window to frame the experience of visiting the museum:

> The chief interest of this palace consists in the building itself, a record in stone of the darkest incidents in Florentine history, preserved in the midst of modern civilisation, and happily affording a contrast to the habits as well as manners of the present century.[434]

---

[430] Terry, 'Criminals and Tourists', p. 843.

[431] Ibid.

[432] Ibid., p. 844.

[433] Ibid., pp. 846-47.

[434] Horner, *Walks in Florence*, p. 242.

Figure 4.9 Fratelli Alinari, *The Church of Santa Croce*, ca. 1842. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

Figure 4.10 Fratelli Alinari, *The Church of Santa Croce*, ca. 1853/63. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

Figure 4.11 Fratelli Alinari, *Giotto's Campanile in Florence. On the left partial view of the Baptistry and Arnolfo's façade of the Cathedral. In the background the Cathedral dome*, ca. 1855. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

Figure 4.12 Fratelli Alinari, *The façade of the Cathedral of Florence*, ca. 1900. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

The transformation of the walled-up (both physically and metaphorically) state of Bargello the prison into the 'openness' of a museum not only enabled the nineteenth-century government to transform a part of the Florentine history that alluded violence into a project to promote a 'new' identity for the resident, but also, by housing the 'new' within the shell of the 'old', allowed visitors to engage physically with the past.

Another reclamation project which arose from the reaffirmed interest in Florentine Renaissance was designing new façades for the Santa Croce (Figures 4.9 and 4.10) and Santa Maria del Fiore (Figures 4.11 and 4.12). As early as the 1840s, proposals for the unfinished western façades of both were prepared. The architect Niccolò Matas presented two proposals for Santa Croce: a neo-Classical one in 1837, and a neo-Gothic one in 1854. It was the latter, with references to Tuscan architectural models, that was used as a basis for execution between 1857 and 1862. For Santa Maria del Fiore, three international competitions were held between 1859 and 1868, and over a hundred designs were submitted, among which were those by architects such as Gottfried Semper and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. The competitions were also accompanied by lively public debates carried about the most appropriate style.[435] The Florentine public, as Lasansky points out, 'was not amateur when it came to understanding the importance of celebrating the relationship between Florence and Renaissance art',[436] and as a result, they actively partook in the discussions appeared in the local newspaper, *La nazione*, and the winner, Emilio de Fabris, had to defend his project in several writings.[437]

The transformation of the 'desolate front'[438] of Santa Maria del Fiore was not the only intervention carried out in Piazza del Duomo during the nineteenth century in

[435] 'The debate centered on whether [the façade] should be crowned in a pointed neo-Gothic style or with what is commonly described as a heavy horizontal Renaissance-style cornice.' See: Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 26.

[436] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 27.

[437] Jukka Jokilehto, *History of Architectural Conservation* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 165–6.

[438] 'I was going to say, entering by one of the side doors of the aisles; but we can't do anything else, which perhaps might not strike you unless you were thinking specially of it. There are no transept doors; and one

Florence. Preceded by earlier – and in some cases, more radical – changes in the areas surrounding the Duomo, Campanile, and the Baptistery, the new façade was a part of the grander design scheme which aimed to alter the way the Cathedral was viewed (Figure 4.13). Upon the order of Grand Duke Ferdinando III in 1823, Gaetano Baccani (the acting architect of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore) began working on a proposal to modernise and rationalise the Piazza del Duomo, and frame the cathedral. Baccani's submission resulted in the destruction of a complex of late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century buildings to the south side of the cathedral. In addition to clearing the area, Baccani also designed uniform façades forming a continuous arcade for the surviving buildings.[439] Placed at the centre of the middle building as an homage

Figure 4.13 Fratelli Alinari, *The Piazza del Duomo with the South tribüne of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Palazzi de' Canonici*, ca. 1920. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

never wanders round to the desolate front.' See John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn eds. (London: George Allen, 1906), 363.

[439] Graham Smith, 'Gaetano Baccani's "Systematisation" of the Piazza del Duomo in Florence', *JSAH 59/4* (2000), 454-55.

were the sculptures of Arnolfo di Cambio and Filippo Brunelleschi, with the latter's gaze fixed on the famous dome of the cathedral that he engineered (Figures 4.14 and 4.15). Graham Smith, in his study of Baccani's 'systematisation' suggests that Baccani believed his proposal to be in line with what the original architects of Duomo had intended, and 'perceived his role to be similar to that of an editor seeking to reconstruct an "authentic" text from a corrupt manuscript.'[440] As Smith points out, the neo-Classical character of Baccani's new façades, however, suggest that while reflecting the necessary changes for the early nineteenth-century, Baccani rather prepared a new edition of the piazza instead of 'reconstructing' an old text.[441]

Besides the historic centre of the Florence, the surrounding landscape was also a target for reorganisation and reclamation. In 1864, the architect and town planner

Figure 4.14 Statue of Arnolfo di Cambio, Piazza del Fiore. Personal photograph by author. Florence 2013

Figure 4.15 Statue of Filippo Brunelleschi, Piazza del Fiore. Personal photograph by author. Florence 2013

[440] Ibid., p. 456.

[441] Ibid. 457.

Figure 4.16 Fratelli Alinari, *Piazzale Michelangelo*, ca. 1900. *Omaggio a Firenze* (Florence: Alinari, 2010)

Figure 4.17 Fratelli Alinari, *The panorama of Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo*, ca. 1870. Alinari Museum Collections, Florence

Giuseppe Poggi started laying out the plans for the construction of a new neighbourhood, Viale dei Colli, of neo-Renaissance villas on the hills.[442] Above this neighbourhood, at the height of the hill, a large piazza was built in 1876, providing a definitive vantage point from which the city of Florence could be seen in a panoramic view under a bronze copy of Michelangelo's *David* which had been unveiled in the middle of the piazza (Figure 4.16). Standing against a view of Florence from Forte Belvedere to Santa Croce, and framing the famous silhouettes of Ponte Vecchio, Brunelleschi's Dome, Giotto's Campanile, and the Bargello, the Piazzale Michelangelo provided a systematic organisation of the city's panorama as seen from the hills of Oltrarno, which had been for generations of artists an inspiration to sketch and paint (Figure 4.17).

The 'historicism of daily life' in Florence, as Bernd Roeck points out, was going 'hand in hand with the destruction of history'.[443] Florence's historical importance and cultural fame meant that Vittorio Emanuele II of Sardinia, the first king of a united Italy since the sixth century, had set his eyes on the city as the new capital after acquiring the Grand Duchy in 1860. Once declared capital of the new Italy, the 'conflicting needs of creating a modern city and preserving the Renaissance past came to a head'.[444] Before the turn of the century, Giuseppe Poggi was assigned with the task of leading the urban reforming of Florence:

> Under Poggi's direction, the city walls were torn down to accommodate a multilane *viale*, or avenue, that circled the historic centre and provided easy access to the new neighbourhoods. The city gates were left standing as islands within these traffic arteries. As in the case of Piazzas Beccaria and San Gallo, the gates became awkward monuments to the city's past, now embedded within a modern context. Palaces dating to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries were reconfigured, moved,

[442] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 30.

[443] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, p. 124.

[444] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 27.

and even demolished. More than 350 (predominantly poor and powerless) families were evacuated from the neighbourhood commonly known as the ghetto.[445]

French poet Charles Baudelaire mourns after the changing face of the city under Baron Haussmann at the end of the second stanza of 'Le Cygne': 'Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas ! que le cœur d'un mortel'.[446] First published in 1857, Baudelaire's lament that the 'form of a city changes more quickly than the human heart' still found resonance at the turn of the century in Florence. One of the most striking outcomes of re-regulating the historic city centre after the proclamation of Florence as the capital of Italy (1865–71) was creating a space for Piazza del Re Vittorio Emanuele II (Figure 4.18; renamed to Piazza della Repubblica in the post-war period). During the period known as the *Risanamento* between 1885 and 1895, the old market square in the city centre – named Mercato Vecchio in the sixteenth-century – and the surrounding neighbourhood commonly referred to as the Ghetto (Figure 4.19; where the city's Jewish population were forced to live) was destroyed completely to make space for a new, imposing neo-Renaissance square and uniform housing blocks by architects such as Vincenzo Micheli and Enrico Lusini.[447] A photograph taken on 20 September 1890 shows the inauguration of an equestrian statue for Vittorio Emanuele II by the sculptor Emilio Zocchi with the construction work still going on in the Piazza (the statue itself was removed in 1932 to Piazzale delle Cascine) (Figure 4.20). The triumphal arch on the western entrance of the piazza was completed in 1895. Described by Medina Lasansky as 'marking a border between the Renaissance and modernity',[448] the gate was designed by Micheli and said to have

[445] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 28–9. For a more concrete estimation of the numbers, see Roeck, *Florence 1900*, pp. 125–6: 'Twenty-six old streets were destroyed, together with twenty squares and twenty-one parks; 341 dwelling houses, 451 *botteghe* and 173 *magazzini* were torn down. And a total of 1,778 families numbering 5,822 individuals were forcibly resettled.'

[446] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Cygne,' in *Œuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1869), 258.

[447] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 29.

[448] Ibid.

Figure 4.18 Fratelli Alinari, *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, now Piazza della Repubblica*, ca. 1910. *Omaggio a Firenze* (Florence: Alinari, 2010)

Figure 4.19 Fratelli Alinari, *Piazza del Mercato Vecchio*, ca. 1880. *Omaggio a Firenze* (Florence: Alinari, 2010)

been inspired by the Florentine Renaissance architecture but bearing little-to-none resemblance to the fifteenth-century Palazzo Strozzi it framed. Perhaps a justification for the complete renovation of the piazza, the imposing neo-Renaissance edifice bore an inscription composed by Isidoro del Lungo: 'L'ANTICO CENTRO DELLA CITTÀ / DA SECOLARE SQUALLORE / A VITA NUOVA RESTITUITO.'[449] The demolition presented as a necessity to improve the sanitation conditions of the area had indeed restored a 'new' life into the urban fabric of Florence. However, its claims to legitimacy as a successor to the 'real' Renaissance remained doubtful, as voices soon were raised against the creation of a nineteenth-century ideal of the Renaissance at the glaring cost of its historical reality by destroying the old city centre. Guido Carocci, the inspector of antiquities and the arts, took a public stand:

> The Brown Palace of the Giandonati from the fourteenth century […] the Palazzo de' Canacci, decorated with amazing graffito frescos from the early sixteenth

Figure 4.20 Unknown photographer, *The inauguration of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II*. 20 September 1890. Public domain

[449] 'The ancient centre of the city / from centuries-old squalor / to new life restored'. Translation taken from Jonathan White, *Italian Cultural* Lineages (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 219.

> century, the palazzo of the *capitani* of the Guelph party […] and the Tower of the Buondelmonti, the Palazzi of the de' Carducci and the impressive towers of the Amidei and de' Consorti – all these buildings have committed the error of disrupting the beautiful straight line of arbours and so they, too, must be sacrificed.[450]

By the time when the mayor of Florence, Pietro Torrigiani, announced yet another urban-planning scheme to reduce congestion and improve sanitation in the city centre, Carocci's article had gained nationwide recognition and was read as far as in Rome. Torrigiani's plan, if approved, required the complete destruction of another group of fourteenth-century buildings in some of the historically significant sites near Ponte Vecchio. In addition to the buildings movingly recalled by Carocci,

> It also would have required partial destruction of the Palazzo Davanzati; demolition of the Torre de Baldovinetti, located at the intersection of Por San Maria and Borgo Santi Appostoli; elimination of a portion of the scenic Via delle Terme; and reworking the Piazza Santo Stefano.[451]

Vernon Lee enjoyed her status as an 'European', and the Europe she loved was of the past. When she was taken to Le Mans to see Wilbur Wright demonstrating his 'flying machine', Lee regretted watching 'the whirring locust flight'. She was not happy with the intrusion of modernity, and she very much preferred visiting a nearby church instead:

> the elephantine Norman nave, and wonderful tartan glass, whose scarlet and green and inky purple shone wonderful in my memory. The Future! Yes. it will be agreeably free from abuses and atrocities; at least one hopes so. But will it ever build things like a great Gothic church, or know, or care, how to make such windows![452]

---

[450] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, p. 125.

[451] Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 33.

[452] Lee, *Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 14-15.

The Great Exhibition of 1900 in Paris was for her a 'stupid wicked carnival sacrilege towards the *Genius Loci*'. The only real Paris for her is the 'Paris of history, of romance, Dumas and Balzac, of hope and effort and day-dreams also, Socialists, and scientific struggling young girls of Rosny's novels, and ardent expatriated creatures fit for Henry James!'[453] She was used to living among the abbeys of the past, but having the misfortune of living well into 1930s, she was also confronted with a world that she was increasingly becoming a stranger to. When her own city of Florence was threatened, as one of the few 'foreign' members of the *Associazione per la difesa di Firenze Antica* (Society for the Protection of Old Florence),[454] Vernon Lee sent petitions

> to get *as many* (anybody's) [signatures] as possible by December! The only hope of stopping the now systematic destruction and rebuilding of Florence (a deed of jobbery in a bankrupt country!) is to convince the shop and hotel keepers etc. that foreigners, so far from being attracted by a modernised Florence, will cease to come to it.[455]

In a letter dated 5 December 1898 and published in *The Times*, Vernon Lee explained the work of the Society and tried to draw attention to the 'flood of modernisation'[456] taking place in Florence. In her letter, she first explains how, as a result of the cholera epidemic of 1885, the authorities had chosen to simply demolish the historic city centre of Florence rather than improving the sanitary conditions of the area. While Lee admits that she is not against improving the living conditions of the poor, she argues that the project proposed by Torrigiani would destroy one of the oldest and most picturesque

[453] Lee, *Enchanted Woods*, pp. 81–82.

[454] Founded in 1898 by the Florentine prince, senator, and former mayor Tommaso Corsini, the Society included among its members art historians Pasquale Villari, Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini and Arnoldo Pozzolini, and architects Enrico Lusini and Guido Carocci, all friends and acquaintances of Vernon Lee. See Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 34.

[455] Originally in a letter sent to Annie Fields and Sarah Orne Jewett in the United States of America, dated 15 October 1898, quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, pp. 265–66.

[456] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, p. 126.

areas in Florence, causing a complete 'Haussmannisation of the city'. It was not only 'scandalous', but almost a 'self-mutilation':

> Every means should be taken to educate the taste and historic spirit of the small *bourgeoisie* and working people by lectures, newspaper articles, tracts, pamphlets, and such public events as the proposed congress of art history. Moreover, it ought, by every similar method, to be made clear to the hotel and shop keepers, to the owners of lodgings, to jobmasters and cabowners, and to every class directly or indirectly interested in the presence of foreigners that one of the chief attractions of this city is its well preserved medieval character, an attraction in which it already has very dangerous rivals in Siena and Perugia.[457]

Through her campaign in the press, Lee was able to give rise to debates in the city council. Her contacts in London, fellow 'British Italophiles' that included Edward John Poynter, the director of the National Gallery, the painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, the artist Walter Crane, and the director of the London Corporation of Artists, Thomas Stirling, Lee soon joined the public outcry. The foreigners' fight to save the historic centre of Florence was successful, and by March 1899, the Society was able to present Tommaso, Prince Corsini, with a plea to stop the destruction of the old city, signed by more than ten thousand signatures. It was a list of 'who's who of international politics, literature and art, symbolising the worldwide importance of Florence'.[458] In the course of the years that followed the most intense 'battles' over old Florence between December 1898 and March 1899, the Society turned into a

[457] Quoted in Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee and the Ghosts of Italy', p. 212. The letter dated 5 December was printed in The Times on 15 December 1898.

[458] 'The long list of signatures ranged from Carducci to Verdi from Swinburne, Shaw, Kipling, and the actress Sarah Bernhardt to Auguste Rodin and painters such as John Singer Sargent, Léon Bonnat and Franz von Lenbach. Other names included those of Theodore Roosevelt, later president of the United States of America and at that date governor of New York, James Balfour and the Socialist Jean Jaurès. Academy presents and museum directors such as Wilhelm Bode and Hugo von Tschudi, Cosima Wagner, Eugène Müntz and the explorer Henry Morton Stanley rubbed shoulders with bishops, princes, and princesses. Even the governor of Tasmania added his name alongside those of other Australian statesmen, Florence evidently being capable awakening strong feelings on the other side of the world.' Roeck, *Florence 1900*, p. 133.

'peaceful institution organising lectures on art history and modestly venturing its opinion on questions relating to urban aesthetics'.[459] Upon the attention brought to Florence by the Society and its ten thousand supporters, essentially initiated by Vernon Lee's letter to *The Times*, Marquis Uguccione noted that the interference of the Anglo-American community was due to their acknowledgement of 'Florence [as] the cradle of Renaissance', pointing out that 'nobody has written about […] the glorious past of Florence better than English people.'[460] The English community had, for decades, kept the image of Renaissance Tuscany alive.[461] It was largely thanks to Vernon Lee, who, as a member of the British cultural elite, was fighting aggressively to marshal and focus the outrage of her fellow expatriates and intellectuals alike against the upcoming modernisation which they saw as a threat and not an improvement that by the time the Association faded from view in 1909, they had been successful in convincing Torrigiani to cease the demolition projects, saving what has come to be known as one of the most pristine piazzas in Florence.

[459] Roeck, *Florence 1900*, p. 134.

[460] Quoted in Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 35-6.

[461] As Medina Lasansky explains, the 'writing of Henry James (Italian Hours), the guidebooks of Janet Ross (Florentine Villas), collections of John Temple Leader, and copies of paintings and frescoes made by Charles Fairfax Murray, John Bunney, and others at the request of John Ruskin founded contemporary careers made largely by collecting, documenting, and selling the image of Renaissance Florence.' Lasansky also describes those involved in saving Florence as 'the association [...] composed of individuals who were dependent upon the city's Renaissance image for their livelihood.' Lasansky, *Renaissance Perfected*, p. 33–5.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Vernon Lee was firm in her belief that she had been born long before her time: a Victorian-born woman who should have been a modern. Within the boundaries of the Victorian society, fiction and poetry – or rather, 'Silly novels by Lady Novelists',[462] as George Eliot titled her anonymous criticism addressing the 'feminine' fatuity of her times – were seen acceptable roles for women. However, despite the age of rediscovering the Renaissance and ever-expanding culture of travel, museums, and exhibitions, those who ventured into history, art and aesthetic criticism, and philosophy faced arduous limitations.

Lee modelled her literary career after the Victorian 'man of letters'. Despite these limitations, by the age of twenty-four she had published her first historical study, and soon became a prolific contributor to the contemporary criticism of Renaissance art and aesthetics. Her conceptualisation of the Renaissance – while shared common ground with Walter Pater and John Addington Symonds, Lee had significant historiographical differences – enabled a view of the period not as an 'epoch' fixed at both ends, but as an organic 'condition'. Her wilful disregard for a 'scientific' approach to history, and her blending of fact with fiction implied the essentially fictive nature of history writing, and also showed the possibility of evoking the 'ghosts' of the past through everyday locations. At the end of the century, she was one of the most read travel writers, and also achieved recognition for her supernatural fiction. Vernon Lee's emphasis on the 'morality' of art was not based on the Ruskinian interpretation of the direct correlation between the art and religious morality, but on her independent

[462] George Eliot, 'Silly novels by Lady Novelists' (1856), in *The Essays of George Eliot*, Nathan Sheppard ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883).

reading in search of a transcendental experience in art. The Renaissance – specifically the Italian past and music – sustained her. *Euphorion*, her interpretation of a haunted-but-vibrant Renaissance, and her travel essays filled with 'ghosts' created an image of Europe that no longer existed (or perhaps, had never existed). She succeeded in, and advocated for bringing the past back to life with more energy and colour than the standard histories of her contemporaries. While she was aware of the impossibility of 're-living' the past as opposed to 'looking at' it through one's own impressions and the remnants left in the city, she regardless saw the destruction of the past a threat. In her pursuit of the *genius loci*, she saw the modernisation of Europe (which she experienced in Florence and Paris) a genuine threat posed against the 'spirit of the place', and thus the Renaissance, which she fought to stop relentlessly.

In the twentieth century, she could have established herself a 'woman of letters', but for the younger Bloomsbury generation, she was simply the 'garrulous old woman'. Her aestheticism belonged to Walter Pater, her historiographical experiments were 'unscientific' and superseded by scientific-specialists, and her writing was dismissed as subjective and self-indulgent. On top of everything, her difficult character – an independent Englishwoman who chose to make her home in Italy, who deplored nationalism, communism, capitalism, and colonialism at the verge of World War I, her rejection of the conventional values of society and her queer identity led her to alienate many who might have been her 'followers'.

What her Victorian and Georgian contemporaries, and (for the most part) her twentieth-century readership saw as her open resistance, disobedience, and perverseness, we may now see as her independence of spirit, her willingness to push the traditionally perceived limits of interpretation. For bringing the twentieth-century audiences in contact with the wit and aloofness of the fin de siècle/late-Victorian times, George Bernard Shaw considered Lee to be the last representative of 'the old guard of Victorian cosmopolitan intellectualism',[463] but we may read her as a category of her

[463] Quoted in Colby, *Vernon Lee*, p. 307.

own. Her 'in-between' status between the past and the present, fictional and the factual, and between literary genres serves as a point of departure from the academically defined styles and disciplines. 'Like the age to which it responded, Lee's was a complex genius',[464] and I hope that in introducing her treatment of history, association, and her contact with Italy and the Italian Renaissance, this thesis has gone some way in showing her status as a richly rewarding writer of histories, and a female intellectual.

[464] Susan J. Navarette, *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 145.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Addison, James. *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c.: In the Years 1701, 1702, 1703*. London. 1708.

Anderson, Linda. 'At the Threshold of Self: Women and Autobiography.' In *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*. Edited by Moira Monteith. Brighton: Harvester Press. 1986.

Astell, Mary. Preface. *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. London: Printed for T. Cadell. 1784.

The Atlantic Monthly. 'Modern Painters, by John Ruskin.' August 1860. http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1860aug-00239?View=PDF.

Baedeker, Karl. *Italy From the Alps to Naples: Handbook for Travellers*. Leipzig: Karl Baedeker. 1909.

Barnard, Lady Anne. *South Africa A Century Ago: Letters Written From the Cape of Good Hope (1797–1801)*. Edited by W.H. Wilkins. London: Smith, Elder & Company. 1910.

Barolsky, Paul. *Walter Pater's Renaissance*. University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1986.

Baron, Hans. *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1966.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Œuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire: Les Fleurs du Mal*. Paris: Michel Lévy frères. 1869.

Beaunis, H. 'Vernon Lee, Psychologie d'un écrivain sur l'art (Observation personnelle).' *L'année psychologique* 10 (1903): 487–92.

The Atlantic Monthly. 'Modern Painters, by John Ruskin.' August 1860. http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1860aug-00239?View=PDF.

Benedixen, Alfred. 'American travel books about Europe before the Civil War.' In *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*. Edited by Alfred Benedixen and Judith Hamera. 103–126. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009.

Benson, A.C. *Walter Pater*. Reprint. Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific. 2009.

Brewster, Harry. *The Cosmopolites: A Nineteenth Century Family Drama*. Norwich: Michael Russell. 1994.

Brown, Colin. 'History and the Believer.' In *History, Criticism and Faith*. Edited by Colin Brown. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press. 1976.

Blackwood's Magazine. "Modern Tourism." August, 1848. http://www.forgottenbooks.com/readbook_text/Blackwoods_Magazine_1848_1000542800/189.

Blumenau, Ralph. *Philosophy and Living.* Exeter: Andrews UK Limited. 2003.

Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*. New York: Cornell University Press. 1994.

Bonaparte, Felicia. *The Triptych and the Cross: The Central Myths of George Eliot's Poetic Imagination*. New York: New York University Press. 1972.

Brake, Laurel. 'Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle'. In *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, edited by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham. 40–57. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006.

Bristow, John. 'Vernon Lee's Art of Feeling.' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 25, no. 1 (2006): 117–39.

The British and Foreign Review. "Mrs. Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada." Volume 8: January–April 1839. London: Richard and John Edward Taylor. 1839.

Brooks, Peter. *Henry James Goes to Paris*. New Jersey: University of Princeton Press. 2007.

Brown, Alison. 'Vernon Lee and the Renaissance. From Burckhardt to Berenson'. In *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance*, edited by John E. Law, Lene Østermark-Johansen. 185–210. Surrey: Ashgate. 2005.

Bryant, William. *Bryant's Letters of a Traveller; or, Notes of Things Seen in Europe and America*. New York: George P. Putnam. 1851.

Bullen, J.B. *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994.

Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture 1800–1918.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1993.

————. ‘The Grand Tour and After (1660–1840).’ In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs. 37–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002.

Carrol, David, ed. *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1971.

Chénier, Marie-Joseph de. *Tableau historique de l’état et des progrès de la littérature française, depuis 1789*. Paris: Maradan. 1816.

Colby, Vineta. *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.

Cooper Willis, Irene. *Vernon Lee’s Letters*. London: Privately printed. 1937.

Croce, Benedetto. *History as the Story of Liberty*. Translated by Sylvia Sprigge. Middlesex: Clements Newling and Co., Ltd. 1949.

Decker, William Merrill. ‘Americans in Europe from Henry James to the present.’ In *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*. Edited by Alfred Benedixen and Judith Hamera. 127–144. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009.

Dickinson, Emily. *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. 2 vols. Edited by Thomas Herbert Johnson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1986.

Dilke, Emilia. ‘Art,’ *Westminster Review* (1873): 639–40.

————. *The Book of Spiritual Life*. London: John Murray. 1905.

————. Unsigned review. *Westminster Review* 63 (April 1873): 639–42.

Dougherty, Carol. *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer’s Odyssey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001.

Downing, Ben. *Queen Bee of Tuscany: The Redoubtable Janet Ross*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giraux. 2013.

Duclaux, A. Mary F. Robinson. ‘In Casa Paget, A Retrospect. In Memoriam Eugène Lee-Hamilton.’ Country Life (28 December 1907): 935–7.

Euben, Roxanne L. *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2006.

Eliot, George. *The George Eliot Letters*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1955.

————. *George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals*. 3 vols. Edited by John Cross. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1885.

————. *The Journals of George Eliot*. Edited by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

————. *Romola*. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1994.

Elliot, Frances. *Diary of An Idle Woman in Constantinople*. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz. 1892.

Evangelista, Stefano. 'Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle.' In *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*. Edited by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulhalm, 91–112. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006.

Finnerty, Páraic. 'Rival Italies: Emily Dickinson, John Ruskin and Henry James.' *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 31 no. 2 (2009): 113–125. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440350903323538.

Fraser, Hilary and Johnston, Judith. 'The Professionalisation of Women's Writing: Extending the Canon'. In *Women and Literature in Britain: 1800–1900*. Edited by Joanne Shattock. 231–50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Fraser, Hilary. *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 1992.

————. 'Through the Looking-Glass: Looking like a Woman in the Nineteenth Century'. In *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century*. Edited by Francesca Orestano and Francesca Frigerio. 189–211. Bern: Peter Lang. 2009.

————. 'Writing a Female Renaissance'. In *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance*, edited by John E. Law, Lene Østermark-Johansen. 165–180. Surrey: Ashgate. 2005.

————. *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2014.

Ferguson, Wallace K. *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1948.

Gardner, Burdett. 'Who Was Vernon Lee?' *Colby Quarterly* (November 1952): 120–2.

Geoffroy, Sophie. 'Violet Paget ("Vernon Lee", 1856–1935), A Chronology'. The Sibyl: A Journal of Vernon Lee Studies. http://thesibylblog.com/violet-paget-vernon-lee-1856-1935-a-chronology/.

————. 'Vernon Lee's relatives, friends, acquaintances and names referred to in her correspondence'. The Sibyl: A Journal of Vernon Lee Studies. Accessed January 12, 2014. http://thesibylblog.com/vernon-lees-relatives-friends-acquaintances/.

Gosse, Edmund. *Critical Kit-Kats*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company. 1903.

Gunn, Peter. *Vernon Lee. Violet Paget, 1856–1935.* London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Hale, John. *England and the Italian Renaissance*. 1954. Digital Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2005.

Harris, Margaret. 'Romola.' In *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*. Edited by J. Rignall. 340–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000.

Hay, Denys. *Renaissance Essays*. London: Hambledon Press. 1988.

Hervey, Charles. 'La Rotta del Cane.' In *Ainsworth's Magazine: A Miscellany of Romance*. Edited by William Harrison Ainsworth. 187–8. London: Cunningham & Mortimer. 1843.

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth. 'Letter to a Young Contributor.' *The Atlantic*. April 1, 1862. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1862/04/letter-to-a-young-contributor/305164/.

Holocomb, Adele. 'Anna Jameson: The First Professional Art Historian'. *Art History* 6 (1983): 171–87.

Horner, Joanna B. and Horner, Susan. *Walks in Florence: Churches, Streets, and Palaces*. London: Henry S. King & Co. 1887.

Hyett, Francis A. *Florence: Her History and Art to the Fall of the Republic*. London: Methuen and Company. 1903.

Iggers, Georg G. 'The Intellectual Foundations of Nineteenth-Century "Scientific" History: The German Model.' In *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 4: 1800–1945*. Edited by Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguascha, and Attila Pók. 41–59. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2011.

Irving, Washington. *A Tour on the Prairies*. London: John Murray. 1835.

Israel, Kali. *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999.

Ivory, Yvonne. *The Homosexual Revival of the Renaissance Style, 1850–1930*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2009.

James, Henry. *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*. New York: Viking Press. 1993.

————. 'Italy Revisited.' *The Atlantic Monthly*. April 1878. http://www.unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1878apr-00437/.

————. *Travelling in Italy With Henry James*. Edited by Fred Kaplan. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1994.

————. *The American*. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1887. Reprint. London: Sovereign. 2013.

————. 'Venice.' *The Century Magazine*. November 1882. http://www.unz.org/Pub/Century-1882nov-00003.

————. 'W.D. Howells's Italian Journeys.' *The North American Review* 106 (1868): 336–40.

Jameson, Anna. *Diary of an Ennuyée*. London: Henry Colburn. 1826.

Jay, Elisabeth. *Mrs. Oliphant: A 'Fiction of Herself'*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1995.

Jokilehto, Jukka. *History of Architectural Conservation*. New York: Routledge. 2009.

Jones, Irene Marchegiani, and Haussler, Jones T. eds. *The Poetics of Place: Florence Imagined*. Florence: Olschki. 2001.

Kelly, Joan. 'Did Women have a Renaissance?' In *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Edited by Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz and Susan Mosher Stuard. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1987.

Kingsley, Mary Henrietta. *Travels in West Africa*. London: Macmillan & Company. 1897.

Lasansky, D. Medina. *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press. 2004.

————. ‘Reshaping Attitudes Towards the Renaissance: The Fight Against “Modern Mania” in Florence at the Turn of the Century’. In *The Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century. Le XIXe siècle renaissant*. Edited by Yannick Portebois and Nicholas Terpstra. 263–296. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies. 2003.

Law, John E., and Østermark-Johansen, Lene, eds. *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company. 2005.

Lee, Vernon. ‘A Postscript on Ruskin’. In *North American Review* (November 1903): 678–90.

————. *Art and Life*. New York: Roycroft Printing Shop, 1896.

————. *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1886.

————. *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887.

————. *Euphorion: being Studies of the Antique and the Medieval in the Renaissance*. 2 vols. 1884.

————. *Genius Loci: Notes on Places*. London: John Lane. 1907.

————. *The Handling of Words. London: John Lane, 1923.*

————. *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales. Edited by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulhalm. Ontario: Broadview Press. 2006.*

————. *Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Garden of Life*. London: John Lane. 1904.

————. *Juvenilia: Being a Second Series of Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions*. 2 vols. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887.

————. *Limbo and Other Essays. London: John Lane. 1908.*

————. *Pope Jacynth and More Supernatural Tales*. London: Peter Owen. 1956.

————. *Renaissance Fancies and Studies: being a Sequel to ‘Euphorion’*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons. 1896.

————. *The Sentimental Traveller: Notes on Places*. London: John Lane. 1908.

————. *The Spirit of Rome: Leaves From a Diary*. London: John Lane. 1906.

————. *The Tower of Mirrors. London: John Lane, 1914.*

Leed, Eric. *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*. New York: Basic Books. 1991.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1981.

————. 'Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges'. *Feminist Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1/2 (Autumn 1975): 5–12.

Levey, Michael. *Florence: A Portrait*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1988.

Lew, Laurie Kane. 'Cultural Anxiety in Anna Jameson's Art Criticism'. *Studies in English Literature*, 36 (1996): 829–56.

Maxwell, Catherine, and Pulham, Patricia eds. *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006.

Maxwell, Catherine. "Vernon Lee and the Ghosts of Italy." In *Unfolding the South: Nineteenth Century British Writers and Artists in Italy*. Edited by Alison Chapman and Jane Stabler. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2003.

Meskimmon, Marsha. *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*. London and New York: Routledge. 2003.

Michelet, Jules. *Œuvres complètes.* Edited by Paul Viallaneix. Paris. 1978.

Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. New York: Routledge. 1991.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008.

Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. London: Women's Press. 1978.

Monsman, Gerald Cornelius. *Walter Pater*. Boston: G.K. Hall and Company. 1977.

Moskal, Jeanne. "Politics and the occupation of a nurse in Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy*." In *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of travel 1755–1844*. Edited by Amanda Gilroy. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2000.

Mullen, Richard, and Munson, James. *The Smell of the Continent: The British Discover Europe: 1814–1914*. London: Macmillan. 2009.

Navarette, Susan. *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1998.

Newton, Judith Lowder. 'History as Usual?: Feminism and the "New Historicism"'. *Cultural Critique* 9 (Spring 1988): 99–100.

O'Gorman, Francis. 'The Ruskin's Aesthetic of Failure in "The Stones of Venice".' *The Review of English Studies* 55 (2004): 374–375.

Oliphant, Margaret. *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*. Edited by Elisabeth Jay. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press. 2002.

Oliphant, Margeret. Unsigned review. *Blackwood's Magazine* (November 1873): 604–9.

Ormond, Richard. 'John Singer Sargent and Vernon Lee.' *Colby Quarterly* (September 1970): 154–78.

Pater, Walter. *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style.* Reprint. Rockville, MD: Arc Manor. 2008.

————. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2010.

Perry, Walter Copland. 'The Apollo Belvedere.' In *Famous Sculpture: As Seen and Described by Great Writers*. Edited by Esther Singleton. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1910.

Pigoreau, Alexandre-Nicolas. *Troisième Supplément à la petite biographie biographico-romancière*. Paris: Pigoreau. 1828.

Ranke, Leopold von. *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker, 1494–1535*. Berlin: Reimer. 1924.

Redfield, James. 'Herodotus the Tourist.' In *Greeks and Barbarians*. Edited by Thomas Harrison. 24–50. New York: Routledge. 2002.

Rigby, Elizabeth. 'Lady Travellers.' In *Women's Writing of the Victorian Period, 1837–1901: An Anthology.* Edited by Harriet Devine. 39–43. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1999.

Rignall, John. ‘George Eliot and the Idea of Travel.’ *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36 no. 2 (2006): 139–52.

Robinson, Jane. *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001.

Roeck, Bernd. *Florence 1900: The Quest for Arcadia.* Translated by Stewart Spencer. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

Ross, Michael L. *Storied Cities: Literary Imaginings of Florence, Venice and Rome*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1994.

Ruskin, John. Præterita: The Autobiography of John Ruskin. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989.

————. *The Stones of Venice: The Foundations*. New York: John Wiley. 1851.

Salenius, Sirpa. *Florence, Italy: Images of the City in Nineteenth-Century American Writing*. Veneto: Il Prato. 2009.

————. *The American Authors Reinventing Italy: The Writings of Exceptional Nineteenth-Century Women*. Joensuu: University of Joensuu Press. 2009.

Schaffer, Talia. *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2000.

Schiller, Kay. ‘Made »fit for America«: The Renaissance Historian Hans Baron in London Exile 1936–1938’. In *Historikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos, und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000*, edited by Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, Peter Schumann, 345–60. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 2003.

Scriven, Anne. ‘“*Oh this terrible, fatal, miserable Rome!*”: The unhappy wanderings of Margaret Oliphant.’ *The Bottle Imp* 11 (May 2012): 1–4. http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue11/Scriven.pdf.

Seiler, R.M., ed. *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge. 1990.

Shaffer, Elinor., ed. *Comparative Criticism: Volume 17. Walter Pater and the Culture of the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995.

Shaw, Harry E. *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors.* New York: Cornell University Press. 1983.

Smith, Graham. ‘Gaetano Baccani’s “Systematisation” of the Piazza del Duomo in Florence’. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (December 2000): 454–477.

Speake, Jennifer, ed. *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopaedia*. New York: Routledge. 2003.

The Spectator. “Euphorion.” July 12, 1884. http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/12th-july-1884/16/books.

St Armand, Barton Levi. *Emily Dickinson and Her Culture: The Soul’s Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986.

Stanley, Henry M. *Through the Dark Continent.* London: George Newnes. 1899.

Starke, Mariana. *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent. Fifth Edition, Thoroughly Revised, and With Considerable Additions*. London: John Murray. 1824.

Stephen, Leslie. *George Eliot*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1902.

Symonds, John Addington. *Renaissance in Italy*. 7 vols. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1908.

————. *Renaissance in Italy*: *The Age of Despots*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1881.

————. *Renaissance in Italy: The Revival of Learning*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. 1918.

————. *Renaissance in Italy: Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*. 2 vols. London: John Murray. 1921.

Swindells, Julia. *Victorian Writing and Working Women: The Other Side of the Silence*. Cambridge: Polity. 1985.

Tassi, Marguerite A. ‘Picturing Florence: The Role of Visual Perception in Nineteenth-Century English Representation of Florence’. In *The Poetics of Place: Florence Imagined*. Edited by Irene Marchegiani Jones and Thomas Haeussler. 27–53. Florence. 2001.

Terry, Allie. ‘Criminals and Tourists: Prison History and Museum Politics at the Bargello in Florence’. *Art History* 33/5 (2010): 836–855.

Thomas, Clara. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. 'Murphy, Anna Brownell (Jameson).' Toronto: University of Toronto. 1985. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=4101.

Thue-Tun, Marie-Carmen. 'Vernon Lee (Violet Paget, 1856–1835) : une odyssée scripturale entre romantisme et modernité.' Université de la Réunion. *Hal-SHS: Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société*. https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00671392/document.

Trollope, Thomas Adolphus. *What I Remember*. 2 vols. London: Richard Bentley and Son. 1887.

Tuckwell, William. *Reminiscences of Oxford*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company. 1908.

Walchester, Kathryn. *Our Own Fair Italy: Nineteenth Century Women's Travel Writing and Italy 1800–1844*. Bern: Peter Lang AG. 2007.

Wartofsky, Marx W. 'Picturing and Representing'. In *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics.* Edited by Joseph Margolis. 307–319. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1987.

Westminster Review. "English in Italy." Volume 4: May–July 1826. London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy. 1826.

Wheeler, Katherine. *Victorian Perceptions of Renaissance Architecture*. Surrey: Ashgate. 2014.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1973.

White, Jonathan. *Italian Cultural Lineages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2007.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions. 2007.

Zorn, Christa. *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003.

APPENDIX A

TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez Vernon Lee'nin 19. yüzyılda "profesyonel olmayan tarihçi" olarak nitelendirilmesine sebep olan özellikleri üzerinden üç bölüme ayrılmaktadır. Her bölüm belirli bir niteliği Lee ve Lee'nin çağdaşlarına bağlı olarak inceler. İlk bölüm İtalyan Rönesans'ını bir estet olarak yorumlamayı ele alır. Her ne kadar 19. yüzyıl "bilimsel" Rönesans çalışmalarında bir artış görmüş olsa da Britanya'da tarihçilere kıyasla Walter Pater, John Addington Symonds, ve Vernon Lee gibi estetler öne çıkmaktadır. Tez Pater, Symonds, ve Lee'nin Rönesans kurgularını karşılaştırarak Lee'nin kendine özgü geliştirdiği tarih yazım yöntemlerinin John Ruskin'den olduğu kadar genellikle birlikte incelendiği Pater ve Symonds'tan da farklı olduğunu savunur. İlk bölümün ikinci kısmı ise Lee'nin tarih yazımını izlenimci bir resim olarak ele almasını ve kişisel gözlemlere dayalı tarih yazımını savunmasını inceler. İkinci bölüm 19. yüzyılda sanat tarihi üzerine olan çalışmaların cinsiyetçi doğasına, ve kadın yazarların kendilerine özgü bir "Rönesans" anlatımı oluşturmalarına değinir. İkinci bölümün ilk kısmı İngiliz sanat tarihçisi ve yazar Emilia Dilke'in Rönesans üzerine olan çalışmalarından bahseder, ve Dilke ve Lee'nin John Ruskin'e karşı olarak öne sürdükleri Rönesans tanımlarını karşılaştırarak Lee'nin Rönesans sanatının "ahlaksızlığı" üzerine olan bakış açısını sanatı tarihsel bir bağlam içerisinde yorumlamasını inceler. İkinci bölümün ikinci kısmı yaptıkları seyahatler üzerinden yazdıkları gezi denemeleri ve rehber kitaplar ile Rönesans tarihi ve sanatı üzerine kritiklerde bulunan kadın yazarlar üzerinedir. Tezin son bölümü ise Lee'nin Floransa ile olan kişisel bağı, ve bu bağın hem kurgusal metinlerine hem de Rönesans çalışmalarına olan etkisini inceler. İlk kısım Vernon Lee'nin geçmişi Floransa'da gündelik hayatı boyunca karşılaştığı "Rönesans paçavraları" üzerinden yeniden hayal etmesi üzerine yoğunlaşır. İkinci kısım Lee'nin kurgu ve gerçekliği iç içe kullanmasını

inceler, ve iki alt başlığa ayrılır: birincisi George Eliot'un tarihsel romanı *Romola* üzerinden geçmişi yeniden yaratmasını incelerken, ikincisi 19. yüzyıl Floransa'nın "geçmiş" ve "şimdiki" hallerinin Henry James'in seyahat yazıları üzerinden nasıl anlatıldığını inceler. Üçüncü bölümün son kısmı ise Floransa'da 19. yüzyılın sonunda başlayan modernleşme çalışmaları, ve bu değişimlerin Lee'nin geçmişi yeniden kurgulamasını nasıl tehdit ettiğini inceler. Her ne kadar günümüzde Lee'nin edebi eserleri kadın ve cinsiyet çalışmaları alanlarında disiplinerarası olarak inceleniyor olsa da Rönesans üzerine olan sanat tarihsel eserleri hala büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmektedir. Bu sebepten dolayı tez, Lee'nin tarihi değerlendirme biçimini ve sanatsal, mimari, ve kentsel bir Floransa deneyimini ön plana çıkararak Vernon Lee'yi çağdaşlarından farklı bir tarih yazarı olarak inceler.

Britanyalı yazar ve estet Vernon Lee hayatı boyunca sürekli olarak iki çağın arasında yaşadığını savunmuştur. 14 Ekim 1856 tarihinde Fransa'nın Boulogne-sur-Mer şehri yakınlarında İngiliz bir ailede dünyaya gelen Lee'ye göre, hem kendisi, hem de ortaya çıkardığı eserleri 20. yüzyıla uyum sağlayabilmek için çok erken, Viktoryen toplumunda kabul görmek için ise çok geç bir dönemde var olmuştur. Her ne kadar ilk eserlerini doğum ismi olan Violet Paget ile yayımlamış olsa da, Vernon Lee de çağdaşı bir çok kadın yazarın tercih ettiği gibi entelektüel çevreler tarafından kabul görmek için bir "edebiyat adamı" kimliğine bürünmesi gerektiğinin bilincindeydi. Babası Henry Paget ve üvey kardeşi Eugene Lee-Hamilton'a ithafen "H.P. Vernon Lee" ismini benimseyen Lee, yazınsal kariyerini dönemin kadın yazarları için uygun görülmeyen tarih çalışmaları alanında başlatmıştır.

İlk tarih çalışmasını 18. yüzyıl İtalya'sı üzerine yayımlayan Lee, kısa sürede İtalyan kültürel tarihi ve Rönesans üzerine yazdığı eleştiri ve denemelerle zamanının tartışmalı tarih yazarları arasında yer almıştır. Her ne kadar Rönesans kurgusu estet Walter Pater ve John Addington Symonds ile ortak noktalar taşısa da Lee tarih yazımı ile ilgili kayda değer yorumlamalar üretmiştir. Lee'ye göre Rönesans dönemi belirli bir zaman dilimi içerisine sınırlandırılmamalı, onun yerine organik bir durum olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Tarih çalışmalarında "bilimsel" bir bakış açısından çok kurgu ve gerçekliği harmanlamaya önem veren Lee hem tarihin kurgusal anlatılar üzerinden, hem de geçmişin günümüzde bıraktığı fiziksel kalıntılar ("geçmişin hayaletleri") ile

yorumlanmasının önemini savunmuştur. 19. yüzyılın sonuna gelindiğinde en çok okunan seyahat yazarlarından biri olan Lee aynı zamanda doğaüstü öyküleriyle de ün kazanmıştır. Rönesans çalışmalarında ise döneme hakim olan ve ünlü sanat eleştirmeni John Ruskin tarafından ortaya atılan, sanatı etik ve ahlakî bir çerçeve üzerinden değerlendirme düşüncesine karşı çıkan Vernon Lee, Rönesans sanatı için kendine özgü deneyüstü bir yorumlama getirmiştir. Rönesans dönemi üzerine ilk çalışması olan *Euphorion*'da (1884) "geçmişin hayaletleri" üzerinden artık var olmayan bir Avrupa imgesini yeniden hayal eden Lee, tarihi kişisel izlenimleri üzerinden yorumlayarak çağdaşları arasında görülmemiş bir şekilde geçmişi hayata döndürmüştür.

19. yüzyıl Rönesans tarih yazımı yarım asırdan fazla bir süre boyunca Jacob Burckhardt'ın *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) isimli çalışmasında kuramsallaştırdığı fikirler üzerinden ilerlemiş, ancak Wallace K. Ferguson'a göre bu süre boyunca ortaya çıkan Avrupalı ve Britanyalı yazarların hiçbirisi Burckhardt'ın bıraktığı "Rönesansçılık" mirasına John Addington Symonds kadar layık olamamıştır. Symonds'ın genç bir şair-öğrenci olarak akademik çevrelerde isminin geçmeye başlaması Britanya'ya özgü bir Rönesans tarih yazımının oluşmaya başladığı bir döneme denk gelmektedir. *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*'nin Britanya'da basılmasının ardından 1863 yılının Haziran ayı aynı zamanda İngiltere'de yazar George Eliot'ın *Romola* isimli romanının on üçüncü bölümünün baskısını, eleştirmen Matthew Arnold'ın Oxford Üniversitesi'nde Rönesans üzerine ders vermeye başlamasını, ve John Addington Symonds'un "The Renaissance" isimli şiiri sayesinde ödül kazanması ile geçmiştir.

Her ne kadar Rönesans kavramı Avrupa'da 1855 yılında Jules Michelet tarafından 16. yüzyılda özgür düşünce ile birlikte ortaya çıkan yeni bir sanat akımı olarak kuramsallaştırılıp, Alman ve Fransız tarihçiler tarafından bu alandaki çalışmalar giderek kurumsal bir hale getirilmiş olsa da, bu dönemde Britanyalı entelektüeller Avrupalı mevkidaşlarına kıyasla daha amatör çalışmalar sürdürmektedir. Dönemin ünlü Britanyalı yazar ve sanatçıları Rönesans'ı yorumlamaya gerek kurgulanmış anlatılar, gerekse de ilhamını Yüksek Rönesans döneminden alan Ön-Raffaeloculuk akımıyla katkıda bulunmuş olsalar da, 19. yüzyılın son otuz yılına kadar İtalyan kültür tarihi üzerine Britanyalı bakış açısı sunan bir eser ortaya çıkmamıştır. Symonds'ın

ödüllü "The Renaissance" şiirinin ardından estet Walter Pater 1867 yılında Alman sanat tarihçi Johann Joachim Winckelmann üzerine bir deneme yayımlamış, ancak her ikisinin de Rönesans üzerine daha kapsamlı çalışmalar haline gelmesi 1870'li yılları bulmuştur. Pater'ın Winckelmann denemesi *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* kitabının son bölümü olarak 1873 yılında basılırken, Symonds Rönesans üzerine yedi ciltlik çalışmasının ilk kısmı olan *The Age of the Despots*'u 1875 yılında yayımlamıştır. 1881 yılının yaz aylarına gelindiğinde ise o sırada İngiltere'ye yaptığı bir seyahat nedeni ile Oxford Üniversitesi'nin edebî çevrelerini ziyaret eden Vernon Lee, Walter Pater ile tanışmış ve kısa sürede hem Pater, hem Symonds ile kendi Rönesans çalışmaları hakkında yazışmalarda bulunmaya başlamıştır.

Viktorya dönemi üst orta sınıf ailelerine özgü bir şekilde Lee'nin çocukluğu Avrupalı mürebbiyeler eşliğinde evde eğitim görerek ile geçmiş, aynı zamanda ailesinin çocukluk ve ergenlik yılları boyunca sürekli seyahat etmesinden de etkilenmiştir. Belirsiz parasal durumları sebebiyle Paget ailesi Lee'nin hayatının yaklaşık ilk yirmi yılını Almanya, İsviçre, Fransa ve İtalya'da yaptıkları kısa süreli konaklamalarla geçirmiş, ve Lee *The Sentimental Traveller* (1908) isimli makale derlemesinde 1860 ve 1870 yılları arasında yaptığı bu seyahatleri turistlik gezilerden ziyade daha çok "zorunlu taşınmalar" olarak görmüştür. Ancak annesi Matilda Paget'nin ısrarı ile çıkılan aile gezintileri ve Matilda Paget'nin bu sırada gözde 18. yüzyıl yazarlarından yüksek sesle alıntılar yapması, Lee'nin hayatı boyunca defalarca tekrar ziyaret edeceği bu yerleri hayalî tasvirlerle betimlemesine yardımcı olmuştur. 1866-67 yılının kış mevsimini Roma'da ailesiyle geçirirken İtalyan sanatı ve tarihini keşfeden Lee, konu üzerindeki ilk eserini 14 yaşındayken yayımlamıştır. Madenî bir paranın maceraları olan "Les aventures d'une pièce de monnaie" (1870) isimli denemede Lee, Roma'da bulduğu antik bir sikkenin biyografisini yazmıştır.

Tanınmış bir yazar olduktan sonra yayınevleri ve edebî çevreler ile bağlantılarını sürdürmek amacı ile her yılın belirli bir süresini İngiltere'de geçirmesine rağmen Vernon Lee'nin vatandaşı olduğu ülkeyi ilk kez ziyaret etmesi 1881 yılını bulmuştur. Fransa'da doğup büyümesi nedeniyle Fransızcayı İngilizceden daha akıcı konuşması ve bu sebepten dolayı bir dönem "Fransız veya İngiliz yazar" kimlikleri arasında kararsız kalmış olmasına rağmen Lee kendisini her zaman "tercihen İtalyan" olarak

görmüştür. Yarım asırdan fazla bir süre Floransa'da yaşamasının yanı sıra, Lee hayatı boyunca İtalya'yı hayalî imgelerle sürekli yanında taşımış, ve bir yazar olarak hem tarih üzerine olan çalışmalarının hem de seyahat denemelerinin odağı haline getirmiştir. Lombardiya bölgesine yaptığı seyahatlerini 1912 yılında yazıya aktarırken Lee açık yüreklilikle hayatı boyunca başka bir ülkeyi İtalya kadar önemseyip önemsemediğini sorgulamaktadır. Violet Paget'nin yeni kimliğiyle Vernon Lee olarak 1870 ve 1880 yılları arasında yazdığı makaleler *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* başlığı altında "kurgusal bir seyahat kitabı" olarak 1880 yılında yayımlanmıştır. İtalyan kültür tarihine yönelik ilk çalışması olmasının yanı sıra *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* aynı zamanda Lee'nin geçmişin tamamen bilimsel bir bakış açısına karşılık edebî ve yazınsal bir şekilde yorumlanabileceğini savunduğu ilk eserdir. Bu düşünce üzerinden yola çıkan Lee, bundan sonraki çalışmalarını geçmişin kişisel izlenimler üzerinden yeniden hayal edilmesi üzerine yoğunlaştırmıştır.

Her ne kadar ilk izlenimleri tamamen farklı yönde olsa da 1881 yılında Pater'la tanışmasının ardından İngiliz estetin 18. yüzyıl İtalya'sı üzerine olan çalışmalarından övgüyle bahsetmesi ve kendi araştırmaları hakkında fikirlerini sorması üzerine Lee'nin Pater'a karşı önyargıları ortadan kalkmış, ve hatta Pater'a 1882 yılında *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (1881) isimli eserini yollamıştır. Lee'nin bir diğer ünlü okuru olan John Addington Symonds ise *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*'i "cazip" bulmuş, ancak eserin İtalyan tarihi ve kültürüne alışkın olmayan bir okuyucu kitlesi tarafından nasıl değerlendirileceği konusundaki şüphelerini Lee'ye açıkça bildirmiştir. İtalyan kültür tarihi üzerine bir diğer makale derlemesi olan *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Medieval in the Renaissance* (1884) yayımlandığında ise Pater ve Symonds'ın Vernon Lee üzerindeki etkileri diğer çağdaşlarına kıyasla daha belirgindir. İtalyan Rönesans'ı üzerine yaptığı ilk çalışma olan *Euphorion*'u Pater'a ithaf eden Lee, aynı zamanda iki ciltlik eserin birinci bölümüne Symonds'tan yaptığı bir alıntıyla başlamaktadır.

Rönesans'ın 19. yüzyıl Britanya'sında bulduğu karşılığın Burckhardt ve Michelet'nin kurgulamaları ile John Ruskin'in Rönesans dönemini Orta Çağ sanat ve mimarisini ortadan kaldıran "ahlak dışı" bir etken olarak yorumlamasının bir karışımı olduğu söylenebilir. Bu sebepten dolayı "estet-yazar" olarak Vernon Lee, Walter Pater

ve John Addington Symonds tarafından ortaya konulan Rönesans çalışmaları dönem üzerine alışılmışın dışında bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Rönesans'ın bir istisna veya tek başına değerlendirilebilecek bir dönem olmadığını savunan Lee, Pater ve Symonds, bunun yerine antik ve modern zamanlar arasında yer alan organik bir geçiş dönemi olarak incelenmesi gerektiğini savunmuştur. Her ne kadar Lee, Pater ve Symonds ortaya koydukları eserleri Rönesans üzerine çalışmalar olarak değerlendirseler de bu üç yazar çağdaşları tarafından profesyonel tarihçi olarak ele alınmamışlar, hatta "Rönesans çalışmaları" başlığı altında yayımladıkları denemeleri çoğu zaman yanıltıcı olduğu sebebiyle eleştirilmiştir. Yayımlanmasından kısa bir süre sonra Sunday Review *Euphorion*'u Symonds'un çalışmalarına kıyasla başarısız bulmuş, ve bunun sebebi olarak Lee'nin tarihi izlenimsel bir bakış açısıyla ele almasının göstermiştir. Lee, Pater ve Symonds'un 19. yüzyılda yüzyılda yaptıkları bu çalışmalar Britanya'ya özgü bir Rönesans anlayışı kurgulamasında öncü olarak görülse de 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına kadar "tarih dışı" olarak değerlendirilmiş ve eleştirilmişlerdir. Ancak "metatarih" kavramının ortaya çıkması ve tarih yazımlarında bilimsel ve kurgulanmış anlatıların arasındaki sınırların giderek ortadan kalkması ile Lee, Pater ve Symonds'ın "alternatif" olarak görülen metinlerinin tarihsel özellikleri tekrar gözden geçirilmeye başlanmıştır. Ancak her ne kadar günümüzde bu üç yazar tarih yazımındaki benzer yönelimleri nedeni ile tek bir başlık altında ele alınsa da gerek Rönesans kurguları, gerekse de tarih yazımının gerekliliği ve bilimsel yöntemleri kullanma konularındaki görüş farklılıklarından dolayı tek başlarına değerlendirilmelidirler.

19. yüzyılda özellikle Britanya'da ortaya çıkan edebiyat ve sanat akımları arasında disiplinlerarası çalışmalar yapan J.B. Bullen'a göre Viktorya döneminde İngiltere'de ortaya konulan Rönesans kurgulamalarının büyük bir bölümü Rönesans kavramının kültürel ve düşünsel konumları arasındaki çelişkiden dolayı bu zaman dilimini sıkıntılı ve tedirgin bir dönem olarak yansıtmaktadır. George Eliot'un ünlü romanı *Romola*'yı örnek gösteren Bullen, Eliot'un pozitivist yaklaşımına rağmen Rönesans'ı hala karanlık bir dönem olarak ele aldığını savunur. Ancak Vernon Lee'nin en erken okurlarından biri olan John Addington Symonds için bu durum farklıdır. Her ne kadar Pater ve Lee gibi kültürel tarih geleneğinde yazmaya devam etse de, Burkchardt'ın topluluğu anlamak için bireyi öne çıkarmaya dayalı olan anlayışına karşılık Symonds

bireyi toplumdan tamamen ayırmaya çalışmıştır. Symonds'ın birey kavramına olan yakın ilgisi Rönesans çalışmalarında da görülmektedir. Rönesans dönemini birbiri ardına gelen sürekli olaylar dizini olarak ele almak yerine tematik bölümler haline getirmiş, ve yedi ciltlik çalışmasının her bir bölümünde belirli karakterleri ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ancak Rönesans'ı "evrensel bir dramanın baş kahramanı" olarak görmesine rağmen, Symonds kendini 19. yüzyılda ortaya çıkan Rönesans'ı yeniden canlandırma fikrinden uzaklaştırmış, Rönesans dönemine ait değerlerin başka hiç bir döneme uygulanamayacağını savunmuştur. Bir başka "kültürel tarihçi" olan Pater, Symonds'ın tarihsel yöntemini övgüyle karşılamıştır. Winceklmann'ın Rönesans'ı tarihte sabit bir dönem olarak gören "yüzeysel" anlayışına karşı çıkan Pater, Rönesans'ı kesintisiz olarak devam eden bir süreç olarak yorumlamaktadır. Ancak kapsamlı bir Rönesans tarihi sunmayı amaçlayan Symonds'ın aksine Pater'ın çalışmaları deneme formunda kalmış, ve bu sebepten dolayı *Studies in the History of Renaissance* yayımlanmasından kısa süre sonra belirli bir ana fikre sahip olmamasından dolayı eleştirilmiştir.

Lee'nin tarihsel yöntemi, Symonds'ın tarihi kişiselleştirmeye olan yönelimi ve Pater'in tarih yazımını bir estet olarak ele almasının karışımı olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Rönesans üzerine yazdığı denemeleri tek bir başlık altında toplamasından bir yıl önce Lee bu fikrinden Pater'a bahsetmiş, ve Pater Lee'nin bu derlemeye verdiği "Euphorion" ismini yerinde bulmuştur. Goethe'nin ünlü draması *Faust*'un ikinci bölümünde Antik dönemi simgeleyen Helena ve Orta Çağ'ın bir betimlemesi olan Faust'un çocuğuna verilen isim olan Euphorion'ı Rönesans çalışmalarına başlık olarak seçen Lee, bunun için John Addington Symonds'ı kaynak olarak göstermiştir. *Euphorion*'ın giriş bölümünde Symonds'tan bir alıntı yapan Lee, kişisel tarih görüşünü diğer "yetkili" yazar ve tarihçilerin etkilerinden uzak kurgulamaya dikkat etmiştir. *Euphorion*'ın ikinci cildinin ek kısmında bibliyografik bir paragrafta yer alan ve Lee'nin sadece "tarihsel gerçeklikler" için kaynak gösterdiği bir kısım tarih yazarları ("Jacob Burckhardt'ın, Prof. Villari'nin ve Bay J.A. Symonds'un çalışmaları") dışında *Euphorion* tamamen, Lee'nin betimlemesi ile, kendi izlenimleri üzerinden oluşturulan bir Rönesans kurgulaması sunmaktadır.

Her ne kadar Vernon Lee kitabı için ismi Symonds'tan almış olsa da, Goethe'nin

Euphorion karakterini Romantik ve Hellenistik dönem arasında sembolik bir bağ olarak yorumlayan ilk kişi Walter Pater'dır. Ancak Symonds bu betimlemeyi bir adım daha ileri götürmüş, ve Euphorion'ı "modern dünyanın ruhu" olarak kurgulamıştır. Symonds'a göre Euphorion, Antik dönemi simgeleyen Helen'in ve Orta Çağ'ın ruhu olan Faust'un çocuğu olarak aslında Rönesans'ın doğuşunu simgelemektedir. Symonds'ın bu yorumlamasını kitabının başlığı için bir çıkış noktası olarak kabul eden Lee ise Euphorion'ın modern çağı yansıttığı düşüncesine karşı çıkmaktadır. Vernon Lee için yaşadığı dönem Faust ve Helena'nın çocuğu değil, Antik dönem ve Orta Çağ'ın soyundan gelmesine rağmen bir çok farklı uygarlık ve zaman diliminden de etkilenmiş bir fenomendir. Üstelik Lee'ye göre Faust ve Helena'nın bir araya gelerek Euphorion'u, yani Rönesans'ı ortaya çıkarmasının 16. yüzyıl için bir karşılığı yoktur. Rönesans, Lee'ye göre Antik dönemden etkilenmek için çok uzak, Orta Çağdan farklı olduğunu idrak etmek için ise çok yakındır. Euphorion mitinin Lee, Pater ve Symonds tarafından farklı yorumlanması aynı zamanda üç tarih yazarının kurgusal farklılıklarını da ortaya koymaktadır. Symonds'ın Rönesans'ı sınırları belirli ve bütün halinde olan bir dönem olarak tanımlamasına karşılık, Pater ve Vernon Lee için Rönesans bir dönem değil, bir durum ve deneyimlemedir.

Vernon Lee, Walter Pater ve John Addington Symonds'ın bir diğer ortak noktaları ise bu üç figürün John Ruskin'e kıyasla daha olumlu bir Rönesans kurgulaması ortaya koymalarıdır. *The Stones of Venice* isimli eserinde Rönesans'ı Orta Çağ ve Gotik kültürünü ortadan kaldırmakla suçlayan Ruskin için Rönesans ahlak dışı bir dönemi temsil eder. Çağının önde gelen sanat eleştirmenlerinden biri olan Ruskin, Rönesans'ın modern zaman üzerindeki etkisini göstermek için onu tamamen tarihsel bağlamından çıkarmış, ve içinde yaşadığı 19. yüzyıl Britanya'sı ile paraleller kurmaya çalışmıştır. Lee, Pater ve Symonds'ı Ruskin'den ayıran en önemli özellik, Rönesans ve Orta Çağ'ı zıt iki dönem olarak görmek yerine kesin sınırları olmayan, ve kimi zaman iç içe geçmiş dönemler olarak yorumlamalarıdır. Pater ve Symonds'a kıyasla Lee, Rönesans'ı tarihsel olarak en az limitleyendir. Symonds, Rönesans'ı 1453 ve 1527 yılları arasında geçen bir dönem olarak belirlerken, Pater'a göre ise Rönesans Fransa'da ortaya çıkmış ve kökeni Orta Çağ kültüründe yer alan bir geçiş dönemidir. Ancak Lee, Rönesans'ı bir "durum" olarak tanımlar, ve Lee'ye göre belirli bir zaman

diliminin "Rönesans" olarak tanımlanmasının tek sebebi Rönesans'a ait olan özelliklerin yoğun olarak bu dönemde ortaya çıkmasıdır. Aynı zamanda Vernon Lee'nin Rönesans'a olan ilgisi dönemin ne olduğunun yanı sıra, nasıl ortaya çıktığı üzerinedir. Rönesans'ı Orta Çağ'ın kalıntısı olarak gören Ruskin'in aksine Lee için Rönesans'ın "doğru yoldan ayrılması" tarihsel bir gerekliliktir. Rönesans kültürünün çift taraflı olarak yorumlanması (gelişmiş bir kültüre karşılık ahlaki değerlerde düşüş) Lee'ye göre 19. yüzyıl tarih yazımının uyum sağlayabileceği bir şey değildir. Rönesans'ı modern dönem ile birlikte yorumlamaya çalışan çağdaşları aksine Vernon Lee için geçmişte nefes almaya çalışmak ay yüzeyinde nefes almaya benzer. Her ne kadar modern birey geçmişi kurgulayıp yeniden hayal etme yeteneğine sahip olsa da eski dönemleri günümüze taşımak imkansızdır.

Vernon Lee'yi Pater ve Symonds'tan ayıran bir diğer özellik ise tarihi izlenimcilik ve öznellik ile yorumlamayı savunmasıdır. Pater gibi kendini bir estet olarak tanımlayan Lee, geçmişin bir sanat eseri gibi kişisel deneyimlemeler üzerinden yorumlanabileceğini savunur. Lee için geçmiş dönemler bireye sadece fikirler değil, aynı zamanda duygular da sunmaktadır. Pater'ın estetik yorumlamaları akademik bir kitleye hitap ederken Lee'nin izlenimciliği bireye dayalıdır. Çalıştığı konuya kendisini tamamen adayabilmesini çocukluğunu İtalyan Rönesans'ının kalıntıları arasında geçirmesine bağlayan Lee, bunun kendisine Rönesans'a yazılı kaynaklardan yaklaşan "bilimsel" tarih yazarlarına kıyasla daha büyük bir avantaj sağladığını savunmaktadır. Vernon Lee'ye göre tarih, bireyin geçmişi kalıntılar üzerinden bire bir deneyimlemesi ve ortaya çıkan izlenimlerini yorumlaması ile yazılmaktadır. Bu sebeple Lee kendi tarih yazımını bir manzara resmetmeye benzetir. Ancak her perspektifin farklı bir resim ortaya çıkarması gibi, geçmişe dönük her bakış açısı da farklı bir tarih ortaya çıkarır. İzlenimlerine olan bağlılığına rağmen Vernon Lee, "bilimsel" tarihçilere kıyasla "gerçek" bir tarih yaratma arzusunda değildir. Bunun yerine Lee geçmişi yaşadığı dönem üzerindeki kalıntılardan deneyimlemeyi önerir.

Vernon Lee'yi çağdaşı Rönesans yazarlarından öne çıkaran bir başka özelliği ise Viktoryen toplumda bağımsız olarak tarih üzerine çalışan bir kadın yazar olmasıdır. Dönemin kadın yazarları tarih ve sanat üzerine olan eleştirilerini denemeler yerine genellikle gezi makaleleri ve romanlar üzerinden yayımlamışlardır. Her ne kadar

Viktoryen toplumun değerleri kadının hem gezgin hem de yazar olamayacağı yönünde olsa da, 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına gelindiğinde kadın yazarlar yayımladıkları gezi makaleleri ve rehber kitaplar ile kabul görmeye başlamışlardır. İrlandalı gezgin ve yazar Anna Jameson kariyeri boyunca Shakespeare'in kadın kahramanlarından Kanada seyahatlerine ve sanat tarihi üzerine bir çok alanda eserler vermiştir. *The Diary of an Ennuyée* ismiyle anonim bir roman olarak yayımlanan ilk eseri aslında Jameson'un Avrupa'da yaptığı seyahatleri anlatmasına yardımcı olan bir aracıdır. 1834 yılında kendi ismiyle tekrar yayımlanan roman için Jameson, amacının kurguya gerçek hissi vermek değil, gerçekleri kurgu üzerinden anlatmak olduğunu belirtmiştir. Rönesans sanatı hakkındaki bilgilerini romanın kahramanının Floransa'daki Uffizi Müzesi'ne yaptığı gezilerde rastladığı resim ve heykelleri yorumlaması üzerinden sunan Jameson, bir bakıma aynı mekanları gezen okurları için bir rehber görevi görmektedir. İngiliz yazar Mariana Starke ise Jameson'a kıyasla rehber kitaplar üzerine daha belirgin bir tutum sergilemektedir. 1820 yılında ilk kez yayımlanan ve Avrupa'da kendi yaptığı seyahatlerden ortaya çıkan *Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent* isimli eseri, kadınların yeni yüzyılda seyahat alanında daha aktif rol alacağını göstermiştir. 1828 yılında beşinci baskısı yapılan rehber için Starke, gezginlerin gerek duyabileceği bütün bilgileri tek kitapta topladığını savunmuştur. Hatta Palazzo Pitti, Floransa'da yer alan bütün resimleri ve heykelleri listeleyen Starke, kendi geliştirdiği puanlama sistemi ile gezginlerin hangi eserleri mutlaka görmeleri gerektiğini belirtmiştir. 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına gelindiğinde kadın yazarlar seyahat rehberlerinde gezi notlarından daha fazla olarak sanat ve tarih eleştirilerine yer vermeye başlamıştır. Örneğin Floransa'yı ilk ziyaret ettiğinde zaten ünlü bir yazar olan Margaret Oliphant 1874 yılında yayımladığı *The Makers of Florence* ile hem şehrin bir incelemesini çıkarmış, hem de yazdığı biyografik denemeler üzerinden Rönesans dönemi ve yaşadığı 19. yüzyıl toplumu ile ilgili değerlendirmelerde bulunmuştur. *The Makers of Florence* gibi şehir üzerine panoramik bir inceleme sunan bir diğer eser ise Susan ve Joanna Horner kardeşlerin 1876 yılında yayımladığı *Walks in Florence* isimli eserleridir.

Vernon Lee ise 1880'li yıllardan itibaren seyahat üzerine izlenimsel denemeler yazmaya başlamıştır. Susan ve Joanna Horner'ın pitoresk Floransa'sı gibi, Lee'nin

betimlediği şehirler de birer resim olarak deneyimlenebilmektedir. Lee'nin seyahat yazılarındaki amacı, tarih üzerine olan çalışmaları ile aynıdır: okurlarına yeni bir şeyler öğretmek değil, sadece kendi izlenimlerini aktarmak. Her ne kadar seyahat yazılarında çocukluğundan beri ziyaret ettiği bir çok Avrupa şehrinden bahsediyor olsa da İtalya'nın Lee için olan önemi ayrıdır. Rönesans ile olan bire bir ilişkisi nedeniyle Lee için İtalya hem geçmişi hem de şimdiki zamanı bir arada bulundurur. Lee'nin gezdiği mekanlar kimi zaman yüzyıllar öncesinden imgeler, kimi zaman ise kendi çocukluğundan gelen hatıralar ile dolup taşar. Lee'ye göre geçmişin tarafsız anlatılamayacağı gibi, gezdiği yerler üzerine olan izlenimlerinin de objektif olması imkansızdır. Bu sebeple Vernon Lee'nin seyahat yazıları, diğer bütün eserlerinin de olduğu gibi, kurgu ve gerçeklik arasında gidip gelmektedir.

İç içe geçen kurgu ve gerçeklik kavramlarını geçmişi yorumlamak için kullanan bir diğer figür ise İngiliz yazar George Eliot'tır. Gerçek adı Mary Ann Evans olan yazar, Vernon Lee gibi eserlerini takma bir isimle yayımlamıştır. Daha çok Britanya'daki taşra hayatı üzerine yazdığı romanlarla ün kazanan Eliot'ın 1863 yılında yayımladığı *Romola* Britanya dışında geçen ilk tarihsel romanıdır. Eliot, *Romola*'nın 15. yüzyıl Floransa'sının (hikaye 1490'lı yıllarda geçmektedir) gerçeğe bağlı bir betimlemesi olmasına özen göstermiş, ve romanı yazarken Rönesans tarihi üzerine detaylı bir araştırma yapmasının yanı sıra 1861 yılında Floransa'ya inceleme amaçlı bir ziyarette bulunmuştur. Bir tarihsel roman olan *Romola*, okuru için 15. yüzyıl Floransa'sını en küçük detaya kadar yeniden yaratmayı amaçlar, ve bu sebeple yazınsal bir "melez" olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Eliot'ın detaylara olan bağlılığının kimi zaman hayal gücünü kısıtladığı savunulsa da kritikleri için *Romola*'nın en büyük kaybı bir çok 19. yüzyıl tarihçisinin de yaptığı gibi Viktoryen toplumunun Rönesans üzerinden bir eleştirisini sunmaya çalışmasıdır.

Vernon Lee'nin Floransa ile olan bağı eserlerinde yorumladığı geçmiş ve şimdiki zaman arasındaki ilişkiden gelir. Floransa'da "Rönesans'ın paçavraları arasında" yaşayan Lee için tarihi yorumlamak gündelik hayatında gördüğü imgeleri kurgulamakla başlar. Bu sebeple Lee için Rönesans'ın bir "durum" olduğu kadar aynı zamanda bir "mekan" olduğu da söylenebilir. "Bilimsel" yazarların aksine kişisel izlenimleri üzerinden tarihi yorumlayan Lee'nin Floransa'ya olan bağlılığı onun bir

gezginden ziyade şehri orada yaşayan bir estet olarak deneyimlemesinden gelir.

19. yüzyıl boyunca Floransa turistlerin yanı sıra çeşitli Anglo-Amerikan komünlerine ev sahipliği yapmıştır: kısa bir süreliğine kalan George Eliot ve John Ruskin'e karşılık Robert ve Elizabeth Barret Browning çifti şehre tamamen yerleşmiş, Henry James ise Floransa'yı defalarca ziyaret eden tanıdık bir figür olmuştur. 1870'li yılların ortasında Floransa, Paget ailesinin temelli olarak yerleştiği ilk yer olmuş ve şehir Lee'nin tarih çalışmalarına başlaması için gerekli ilhamı sağlamıştır. 1889 yılında ailesi ile birlikte şehrin dışında yer alan Fiesole bölgesindeki bir villaya taşınan Vernon Lee, hayatının sonuna kadar "Il Palmerino" adını verdiği evde kalmıştır. Lee için Floransa ve şehrin "Rönesans paçavraları" yaşadığı zaman diliminin çirkinliğinden bir kaçış sunar. Bu dönemde yazdığı denemelerinde yer alan Rönesans betimlemeleri, Lee'nin kişisel hatıraları ve Floransa'dan edindiği duyumsal algıları üzerinden ortaya çıkar. Kurgu ve gerçeklik, geçmiş ve şimdiki zaman Lee için her zaman olduğu gibi iç içe geçmiştir. Bu sebeple 19. yüzyılın sonuna doğru şehre ulaşan modernlik akımları Lee için birer tehdit oluşturmaktadır.

Yeni birleşmiş İtalya'nın 1867 yılında başkenti ilan edilen Floransa'nın Rönesans'ın çıkış noktası olarak görülmesi, şehir üzerinden yeni bir İtalyan kimliği yaratılması fikrine yol açmıştır. Şehrin geçmişi üzerinden yeni ve modern bir kimlik yaratma düşüncesiyle ortaya çıkan planlar sonucunda 16. yüzyıldan itibaren hapishane olarak kullanılan Bargello halka açık bir müze haline getirilmiş, Santa Croce kilisesi ve Santa Maria del Fiore katedralinin bitmemiş cephelerinin tamamlanması için yarışmalar düzenlenmiş, ve şehir merkezinin güneyinde yer alan Oltarno tepesinin üzerine şehrin panoramik manzarasını sunan yeni yerleşim yerleri ve meydanlar inşa edilmiştir. Ancak bu gündelik hayatın tarihselleştirilmesi aynı zamanda şehrin tarihsel dokusunun ortadan kaldırılmasına yol açmıştır. "Risanamento" olarak da adlandırılan 1885 ve 1895 yılları arasındaki bu dönemde şehri çevreleyen duvarlar geniş bulvarlara yol açmak için yıkılmış, ve şehir merkezinde yer alan Orta Çağ'dan kalma pazar yerleri, meydanlar ve Yahudi mahalleleri sıhhi tesisat sorunları gösterilerek ortadan kaldırılmıştır. Yaşadığı şehirde geçmişle ilişkilendirdiği kalıntıların teker teker yok olduğunu gören Vernon Lee, hemen harekete geçmiştir. *The Times* gazetesine 5 Aralık 1898'de gönderdiği bir mektupta şehir için önerilen yeni planları "skandal" olarak

gören Lee, Floransa'nın sistematik bir şekilde yıkılıp yeniden inşa edilmesinin durdurulmasını istemektedir. Lee'nin çabaları sayesinde Floransa'nın tarihsel dokusunu korumak amacı ile kurulan *Associazione per la difesa di Firenze Antica*, 1899 yılında başlatılan bir imza kampanyası ile yurt dışından yaklaşık 10,000 gönüllü toplamış, ve şehrin tarihsel dokusunu tehdit eden projelerin durdurulmasını sağlamıştır.

APPENDIX B

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ☐
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐
Enformatik Enstitüsü ☐
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı: Kutluata
Adı: Cemre Naz
Bölümü: Mimarlık Tarihi

TEZİN ADI: Personifying History: Vernon Lee and Re-Imagining the Florentine Renaissance

TEZİN TÜRÜ: Yüksek Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: