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Joel Hollander

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John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen, eds.

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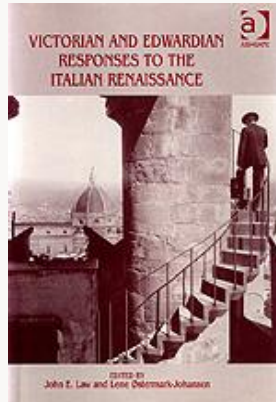
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Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance

John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen, eds.

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For what it may lack in broad appeal, this historiography of late nineteenth and early twentieth century English examinations of Italian visual art from the *quattrocento* through the *Risorgimento* makes up for it with a tightly woven focus and lofty goal. The Foreword's defiant remarks set the tone, drawing the reader into a provocative, intellectual skirmish that becomes this volume's *raison d'être*. Namely, *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance* takes aim at current art historical scholarship, arguing that it not only lacks the well-crafted language of its nineteenth century forebears, but also that it fails to engage in effective interpretation. What follows is a compilation of essays, edited by John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen, that goes well beyond its complaint that the stature of Victorian art historians has been "radically undervalued" by "insensitive," overly analytical, and often "arid disquisitions" that condescend to the Ruskinian "poetic" approach. To be sure, this book admittedly holds a Florentine bias, yet by adopting a methodology that embraces biography, politics, economic history, material culture, feminism, and curricular developments in higher education, it makes a significant contribution to Italian Renaissance scholarship.

The momentum of the Foreword carries ahead into the first chapter, Graham Smith's "Florence, Photography and the Victorians," which highlights the fact that typical English travelers prepared for their trips to Italy by purchasing photographs, along with traditional supplements such as journals, memoirs and guide books. Smith suggests that, despite employing the new technologies of daguerreotypes and calotypes, photographers selected conventional subjects, such as the Uffizi, Campanile, Ponte Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria, and the Arno river, that had been memorialized by earlier artists. He contextualizes the Victorian photographers' visual strategies not only within the framework of William Gilpin's eighteenth century doctrine of the Picturesque, but also by drawing upon Roland Barthes' twentieth century definition of the panorama. While his reliance upon Barthes' definition is anachronistic, nevertheless, Smith's examination of the Alinari Catalogue of 1856 identifies

an essential element of the Victorian photographic aesthetic: its tendency to convey the monuments of Florence as removed from ordinary life and experience, as well as devoid of human presence. Smith's analysis not only deconstructs Henry James's 1878 observations of Florence, which the novelist described as a city of "spiritual solitude," but it also employs Barthes' schema by considering the photograph as a form of appropriation and a "certificate of presence," in that it provides permanence to a transitory cultural encounter. Smith's ability to supplement his investigation with postmodern methodology is convincing, if for nothing else, it links the Victorian attempt to preserve memories of the icons that defined Italian Renaissance culture for them with our own ubiquitous digital preoccupations that are now available in multimedia formats.

The book's historiographical approach shines in Donata Levi's chapter, "Let agents be sent to all the cities of Italy': British Public Museums and the Italian Art Market in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," which considers the impact of Prince Albert's decision to reorganize the national art collection. Levi's examination turns on an assessment of C.L. Eastlake, appointed in 1855 as the director of the National Gallery, who decided to acquire much of the institution's objects directly from Italy. Based on Eastlake's charge to create a collection based on schools and chronology, preference for acquisitions was given to the Florentines, Venetians and Lombards of the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century. However, purchases focused more on decorative arts than on paintings. Levi explores the collaborative nature that existed between public and private collectors, as well as the practice of enriching the National Gallery through private loans, while simultaneously tackling the thorny issue of English spoliation. The author examines the political implications of "plundering" the newly emerging Italian nation on the eve of reunification, the Italian cultural and ecclesiastical environment during this period, and the English argument put forward by Ruskin in favor of such purchases—that it was necessary on grounds of preservation and a whole series of other practical needs. Conversely, Levi undertakes a discussion about the Italian provisional government's response to English greed, which was to instigate their own inventory that listed all the works of art preserved in the recently suppressed churches and convents. In a balanced approach, Levi not only reveals the initial net result of the Italian inventory, which was that it raised the hopes of nationalists and promoted a determined, systematic approach to conservation of their artistic heritage, but she also discloses its shortcomings—that it gave preference to paintings from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries at the expense of sculptures, illustrated manuscripts, and earthenware. Levi's article is the kind of art history that emphasizes archival research and historical contextualization, which contributes more to our understanding about the Italian Renaissance than the theoretical posturing and the aesthetic bantering that the Foreword derides.

This book is not above addressing a canonical, or even cultish, artist whose popularity during the Victorian period verged on a "craze." Adrian S. Hoch's "The Art of Alessandro Botticelli through the Eyes of Victorian Aesthetes," begins by addressing the emotional and intellectual differences between Ruskin's disinterest in the *quattrocento* Florentine master, and Robert Browning's preoccupation with a positive perception of Botticelli favored by the large English expatriate community in Florence in which Browning lived. Hoch deserves kudos here, for the transition to a discussion about the vanguard role that Elizabeth Eastlake, the National Gallery director's wife, served in praising the work of Botticelli is well placed. Just as important, the author unveils both the exhibition history of Botticelli in

England and the reasons for the painter's rapid and widespread acceptance in Victorian culture.

One factor Hoch introduces for the transformation of Botticelli's reputation is the significant influence exerted by the rival French art critic Alexis-François Rio, whose publication, *De L'Art Chrétien* (1864), reiterated Botticelli's stylistic trademarks of depicting a 'melancholy' Madonna, as well as the figures' uniform flat, linear appearance, and a penchant for a feminine ideal typified by long, flowing, gold hair. After briefly examining the English critics who paid attention to Rio, Hoch concentrates on the poet Swinburne's 1868 analysis introducing a "dark side" to the appreciation of Botticelli's art; the idea of deriving enjoyment from an ideal female beauty characterized by 'pallor and deformities,' which was a type exalted by the Pre-Raphaelites with whom the poet had been intimately associated for over a decade. Swinburne's study would profoundly alter Victorians' appreciation of the Florentine master, including that of Walter Pater, who, in the August 1870 edition of *Fortnightly Review*, not only stressed the inherent sadness and other-worldliness of Botticelli's figures, but also contrasted the Florentine's aesthetic to the contemporary "generation of naturalists." In what is perhaps the finest jewel of information in this chapter, Hoch informs the reader that, during the same year, the Arundel Society published another article by Pater that included a chromolithographic image of the *Birth of Venus*. According to the author Pater's analysis, in which he described the painting as depicting 'the grotesque emblems of the middle age ... in the gothic manner...,' "became the penultimate model for an *aesthetic* interpretation of Botticelli." For Hoch, Pater's "decadent impression" appealed to Victorians because it permitted them to abandon the banal present and enter "an imaginary past of a vanished culture such as that of ancient Greece or Rome ... and by extent ... a possible dream-like escape into a fantastic realm."

Hoch's article then pivots to a discussion about Ruskin's impact on the Victorian acceptance of Botticelli, whose work had previously been conceived as belonging to a secondary tier of artists. Hoch places Ruskin's intellectual acceptance of Botticelli within a broader scope by observing that Ruskin felt an urge to compete with Pater. Hoch's reading of Ruskin's lectures, given in late 1872 and printed between 1873 and 1876 as *Ariadne Florentina*, draws a distinction between the critic's earlier essays emphasizing social awareness and the tone in these articles, which "sounds more like the adulation of an aesthete..." Hoch is quick to point out that not all Victorian intellectuals approved of Ruskin's assessment of Botticelli, particularly Margaret Oliphant's unrestrained, acerbic remarks, anonymously published in a review of late 1873, which admonished the critic for buying into the rationale established by Pater.

Hoch completes her remarks about Ruskin's self-described "crush" on "the stupendous power of Botticelli" by discussing the impact of the critic's visit to Rome during the summer of 1872 when he viewed the frescoes illustrating the *Life of Moses* in the Sistine Chapel, and, upon his return to Florence, his selection of two other pictures by Botticelli in the Uffizi. The author also scans the critical, aesthetic pronouncements about Botticelli's paintings made by Ruskin's one-time protégé, Edward Burne-Jones, and also by John Addington Symonds, both of whom reinforced Ruskin's less "jaundiced" impression of the master's paintings than Pater. The widening rift over the interpretation of Botticelli's style between two schools of criticism in Victorian England completes the chapter, with Hoch outlining

both Ruskin's and Pater's claims of 'finding' Botticelli. She concludes that, although credit must be shared, the more significant, and unintentional result was the "phenomenal" growth of Botticelli's popularity in England throughout the 1870s.

In the fourth chapter, Pater's import is reiterated in Østermark-Johansen's "On the Motion of Great Waters: Walter Pater, Leonardo and Heraclitus," through an exploration of the critic's interest in viewing the Renaissance as "a state of mind, an imaginative event rather than a temporal one." According to the author, this view was antithetical to skeptical Victorian readers who expected an historical and social schema, rather than Pater's contention that the Renaissance was a 'movement' rather than a 'period.' Østermark-Johansen links this concept to a neglected passage from Pater's famous 'Leonardo essay' about the painter's obsession with water. In doing so, Pater contextualizes Leonardo's fascination by setting it within a Hegelian tradition that, by the end of the nineteenth century, regarded Heraclitus, the Pre-Socratic philosopher whose work appears to have been fairly well known in Renaissance Italy, as the greatest thinker from Antiquity. The chapter emphasizes intellectual history, examining a range of issues including Neo-Platonic circles at the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the myth of Heraclitus, and the Renaissance cult of melancholy. Yet the study also considers works of art such as the *Deluge* drawings that accompany Leonardo's scientific treatises and manuscript fragments. These not only served as a means by which Pater could explore the artist's soul, but also as a literary device by which the critic could expressively describe Leonardo's paintings in a "stream-of-conscious" writing style.

Østermark-Johansen concludes by revisiting a theme that had been accented previously in the volume: the dialectical conflict between Pater's and Ruskin's view of the Renaissance. The author suggests that it is "highly plausible" that Pater's 'Leonardo essay' responded not only to Ruskin's *Queen of the Air* (1869), which was published around the time when Pater was composing his essay, but also to Ruskin's dismissive remarks about Leonardo in *Modern Painters* (Vol. 1), and to diary notes from his archrival's visit to the Louvre in which Leonardo's landscapes are characterized as 'artificial' and 'grotesque.' This detail serves as the springboard by which Østermark-Johansen ties the chapter together. First she suggests that Pater delighted in proving the deeper significance of Leonardo's 'grotesque' mountains in the background of the *Mona Lisa*. Second, Østermark-Johansen deduces that Pater uses a tone, pace and frame of reference in his "Conclusion" chapter of *The Renaissance* which encourages his audience to read it as natural science rather than a study of art. The public response reinforced the intellectual divide: Pater's contributions to Italian Renaissance studies were revered as either a manifesto of aestheticism by a generation of scholars during the 1870s or, alternately, ridiculed (even in popular culture) as 'invasive' and unforgettable prose.

Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance then briefly turns away from a Eurocentric historiography in Flaminia Gennari Santori's "Renaissance *fin de siècle*: Models of Patronage and Patterns of Taste in American Press and Fiction (1880-1914)." Here the author analyzes the economic factors involved in framing the cultural aspirations of an emerging American 'Medici' by looking at the art criticism, theories of connoisseurship, and literature. For example, Santori's discussion about James Jackson Jarves (1818-88) introduces the reader to a purveyor of taste whose collection of *trecento* and *quattrocento* paintings was

eventually acquired in 1871 by Yale University, but then forgotten for decades. Jarves hoped to provide a model for America's *nouveaux riches* in his 1883 article, 'A Lesson for Merchant Princes,' which emphasized the example of the Florentine aristocracy. Like many Americans, the Florentines were self-made men who encouraged artistic production that was ultimately more relevant to society than the artists. Further, Jarves maintained that private expenditure would endow the nation with the treasure of western civilization.

As a corollary, Santori contextualizes Jarves' article by examining the influence of the political weekly, *The Nation*, whose editorials on art collecting developed a complex notion of 'taste' as the criterion for establishing social values and hierarchies within the American upper class. The periodical's goal was to transform American institutional standards for acquiring works of art from an eclectic approach to one anchored in Renaissance painting and classical sculpture, and endorsing Pater as the best guide for taste. Santori also discusses *The Nation's* advocacy of Bernard Berenson. His three short books on the Italian Renaissance published between 1894 and 1897 were said to have taken a 'modern' approach that targeted a general audience. Santori explains that Berenson used a method of connoisseurship that merges Pater's aesthetic theories with a 'scientific' technique for detecting authorship of paintings. The author also glosses the work of *The Nation's* art critic, Frank Jewett Mather, who also wrote for the *New York Post*, and *Burlington Magazine* while concurrently teaching art history at Princeton University. Mather's book of short stories introduced characters involved in the art market and the typical patterns of trade.

The author's treatment of Mather is something of a teaser, for her historiography about emerging trends of taste in *fin de siècle* America closes strongly with a literary study of one of the protagonists in Henry James's late masterpiece, *The Golden Bowl* (1904; revised 1909). Even though Santori draws upon secondary sources to establish the preliminary argument that works of art in James's novel became a way to address the morality of ownership, to explicate the plot, and to suggest the novel's psychological nuances, she does effectively probe its ubiquitous references to the Renaissance, which are distinguished as belonging "... not to the luminous Tuscan *quattrocento*, but rather to the somber, grandiose and at once sinister and melancholic Roman *cinquecento*." The significance of this stylistic differentiation is that Santori links it to the *The Golden Bowl's* protagonist who, she asserts, "regarded himself as an enhanced reincarnation of Renaissance Roman patrons." What is so impressive about Santori's reading of James's text, is an ability to relate it back to Berenson's theory of connoisseurship and to distill meaning so that it corresponds to *The Nation's* editorial position all along — that paying was a necessary, and yet fulfilling, step in the creation of civilization.

The volume also explores the historiography and imagery that addresses the Medici's role in reviving the arts in Italy. In particular, Katerine Gaja's "Illustrating Lorenzo the Magnificent: from William Roscoe's *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici called the Magnificent* (1795) to George Frederic Watts's Fresco at Careggi (1845)" investigates how the nineteenth century refinement and subtle alterations of Lorenzo's visage sought to stabilize the word 'Renaissance.' Beginning with an introduction to Roscoe's biography of Lorenzo, which ran to thirteen editions from 1795 to 1883, Gaja details not only how its multiple translations stimulated a European interest in Italian literature and history, but also how nineteenth century engravers gradually idealized Lorenzo's features so that it communicated the idea

of hero-worship. Gaja creates an effective counterpoint by analyzing Henry Fuseli's letters to Roscoe, which express skepticism over Lorenzo's idealized portraits; Fuseli equated Lorenzo's ugliness with evil and tyranny. Fuseli's opinion is significant, because it corresponds to a widely held belief that runs counter to Roscoe's judgment. Gaja transitions nicely by making the assertion that Roscoe's wish to separate art from politics became blurred when taking a clear pro-Medici line that belittled the motives of the Pazzi conspiracy, which remained a sensitive issue during the early nineteenth century. Drawing attention to scholarship that characterizes divergent accounts about Lorenzo's role in 'myth-making texts,' Gaja emphasizes how Roscoe's tome contributed to "nostalgia for the munificence of patronage in Renaissance Florence," rather than characterizing Lorenzo as a scheming tyrant pitted against Savonarola, who, for many, during the nineteenth century (and certainly in the aftermath of the Napoleonic era), embodied the republican spirit of the Risorgimento.

Gaja's discussion shifts then to an appraisal of the 1843 competition for the decoration of the Palace of Westminster, in which the 'public' and 'democratic' art of fresco was compared to the fifteenth-century Florentine competition for the Baptistery bronze doors. Awarded to the young George Frederic Watts, Gaja recounts that the painter's fresco designs eschewed the depiction of Lorenzo in his stereotypical glory (the manner in which Lorenzo is portrayed on the walls of the Villa Medici, which Watts visited during his travels to Italy), choosing instead a controversial narrative of illness and death. The author neatly ends the chapter by demonstrating that Watt's fresco accentuates the early Victorian shift away from Roscoe's pro-Medici tone, in favor of the politics embodied by Savonarola's blend of religious enthusiasm and radicalism. Again, as it remains consistent throughout this book, the editors' emphasis upon an interdisciplinary approach sprinkled with visual analysis rewards the reader with a breadth of information that expands one's appreciation of the Renaissance.

At the midpoint of the book is John Easton Law's chapter, "John Addington Symonds and the Despots of Renaissance Italy," another finely crafted example of historiography. Law initially concentrates on determining the degree to which Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy* is indebted to Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860). While noting that Symonds acknowledges a debt to Burckhardt, particularly in his effort to explain the social and political conditions in Italy, Law writes that there is nothing in Symonds's correspondence to suggest a derivative relationship. In fact, Law states emphatically that historical hindsight can exaggerate the initial impact of *Die Cultur*. As support, Law not only cites a laundry list of Symonds's primary sources as well as his familiarity with "a remarkably wide range of major and minor Italian literary figures from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries," but also suggests that contemporary literary writers such as Shelley, Browning and Eliot shaped his views on Italy more than historical studies.

Law's article builds upon the relationship between Symonds and Burckhardt to seamlessly shift to a discussion about despotism. The author aims for equanimity by beginning his analysis with statements that neither of the writers explores the etymology or history of the term, yet they share a similar definition that equates despotism with tyranny (*i.e.*, the violent seizure and exercise of power and disregard for legitimacy and the common good). However, Law highlights the fact that Symonds gives far more examples and goes into

greater detail than Burckhardt. Another difference that Law identifies is that Symonds's writings about despotism are formulated in Nietzschean terms that attribute the phenomenon of despotism to political and economic divisions, factionalism, and ecclesiastical patronage. The author also characterizes what Symonds may have considered to be the consequences of despotism—namely, a more elitist, court-based patronage system whose "circumstances produced original characters and many-sided intellects in greater profusion than any other nation at any other period," with the exception of ancient Greece.

Law's argument then logically highlights the critical reception Symonds's *The Age* received from Pater and others. In fact, Pater gave the book a stellar recommendation, praising it as 'a remarkable volume' for its comprehensiveness and balance; however, he criticized Symonds's style as too flowery and subjective. Other reviews also recognized *The Age*'s value for delineating European culture and for popularizing a little studied topic. Yet there was not unanimous approval; some critics felt it displayed too much "French" spirit, that it was too rhetorical in tone, and that its arrangement and method were too closely aligned to Burckhardt. Toward the end of the chapter Law's aims to restore Symonds's reputation by drawing attention to the complex treatment he employs when discussing the despots, particularly when contrasted to Ruskin's formulation. Law highlights Symonds's belief that despots created a golden age for Italy, yet he admits they were responsible for the foreign invasions and Italy's downfall. While Law acknowledges some of Symonds's weaknesses (e.g., economic issues receive flimsy treatment, methods of government are virtually ignored), the author nevertheless argues it is "a sad irony" that *The Age*—despite its careful reliance on "a remarkably wide range of evidence" and "confident, informed, evocative and accessible style," which may have well been the reason why Burckhardt's relatively unknown *Die Cultur* was translated in 1878 — eventually was overshadowed by an "impressionistic" treatment of the Italian Renaissance.

The next three out of four chapters focus on an emerging feminism in Victorian historiography. In "Writing a Female Renaissance: Victorian Women and the Past," Hillary Fraser sets out to show that some Victorian women's history was "quite radically revisionist," but she also has a specific goal to consider the ways these Victorian female art historians debunk the myth that their contributions were "hegemonic ideologies" and "anonymous" fancies, but rather were "composed of many voices," "internally divided" and "unstable."

For the most part, this chapter's revisionist approach is well suited for a volume devoted to historiography, in that it reinforces many of the intellectual personalities and themes already established in the book. Fraser's contextualizes the subjects by examining how their mature production breaks from the influence of their mentors. For instance, when Fraser introduces Emilia Dilke, the point is emphasized that the Victorian scholar countered all that her mentor, Ruskin, held most dear—namely, rejecting the "religio-aesthetic" doctrine by asserting that "Art is neither religious, nor irreligious; moral nor immoral; useful, nor useless," and by arguing, instead, for the primacy of 'the organic pleasure belonging to the simple sense-impression." Similarly, Fraser's discussion of Vernon Lee underscores this female art historian's criticism of Ruskin's most famous formulations, but notes that neither does Lee mimic the fields of study, methodologies, and theories of perception of her intellectual mentor, Pater. The author even goes so far as to inform her reader that Lee wrote a severe review of Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, on grounds that it was

insufficiently historical. The effect, according to Fraser, was that it set the female scholar radically apart from mainstream English aestheticism.

Fraser's examination of Anna Jameson delves not only into the issue of how female Victorian art historians show an awareness of female Renaissance painters, but it also draws attention to the fact that their production resonated with heroic female figures, and even feminist themes. In other words, Fraser argues that Jameson subscribes to "the ideological formulation that men and women occupy 'separate spheres,' which in its early Victorian lexicon, anticipates Tennyson's more famous endorsement of 'distinctive womanhood.'" According to Fraser, Jameson's incipient feminism corresponds to a New Feminist historicism, because it "raises many questions about how art, its production, its consumption, its histories and historiography are mediated by gender." Editorially, this passage seems out of place, not only temporally in that it relates Jameson to a Romantic poet, but more so because the majority of this volume sets its discussion within the framework of a stricter historiography.

The same is true for the next issue Fraser tackles: the ambiguous cultural status that female art historians endured. This is emphasized in a discussion about Vernon Lee, who adopts an androgynous pseudonym once she began to publish in the British periodical press. Fraser's interpretation, while rather intriguing, exceeds the bounds of much of this volume. She considers Lee's appropriation as a means by which to fashion herself as a person inhabiting an "in-between" position. Fraser supports this claim by dwelling upon Vernon Lee's personal identity: she was a lesbian expatriate living in Italy who wore severely tailored, masculine clothes. In the same vein, Fraser interprets the *fin de siècle* moment during which Lee was as another indication of how her "in-between" identity corresponds to the Renaissance, "which might itself be seen as an intermezzo, a hybrid of the classical and the medieval from which sprang modernity." Fraser is at her best when she blends aesthetic concepts with cultural, social, political and economic conditions — and analyses of 'exceptional,' unrepresentative women (e.g., Julia Cartwright) whose effect, according to the author, was to legitimize her own and other women's efforts and scholarly aspirations.

Alison Brown's chapter, "Vernon Lee and the Renaissance: from Burckhardt to Berenson," does exactly that. Unlike Fraser, Brown does not digress from an emphasis upon historiography. Instead, she concentrates on a brief period in Lee's career (from the 1880s to the mid-1890s) that saw a radical shift in her attitudes toward aesthetics, forged by her relationship with the two luminaries of Renaissance studies at the time — Pater and Symonds. Brown indicates that Lee knew Pater well in the early 1880s, dedicating *Euphorion* (1882) to him and concluding *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895) with a valedictory tribute to him after his death the previous year. According to Brown, not only did Pater's aestheticism exercise a powerful influence on Lee, but like Pater, she thought the Renaissance grew out of the Middle Ages because they shared more characteristics with each other than with antiquity. As for Vernon Lee's relationship with Symonds, the author suggests it was more fraught, though no less important. Brown claims that Symonds alternated between admiration and criticism of Lee's theory and production, which may have been because of Lee's closer affinity with Pater's understanding of the Renaissance as "not a period but a condition" rather than Symonds's view of the Renaissance as a well-defined historical period that divided the Middle Ages from the modern age.

Brown also discusses other sources of influence over Vernon Lee's scholarship—chiefly that of Burckhardt—and examines how her approach differs from Pater and Symonds. The author contends that what Burckhardt and the essayist share is a view of the Renaissance as a phase between feudalism and the rise of nation states. Lee and Burckhardt both track these changes by studying the impact of a new ethos that is evident in literature and art, as well as in politics, and that reveals a "loathsome mixture of good and evil." Brown's interprets their "ambivalence" as an example of a cultural relativism that reflects the changing values of their own age. The author then distinguishes Vernon Lee's methodology from Pater's and Symonds's, suggesting that the principal difference is that Lee became interested in material and spiritual, influences on art, in addition to historical context. For example, Lee identifies thematic shifts (*e.g.*, a newfound interest in the Resurrection and Annunciation scenes) and technical innovations in the mastery of form and movement that distinguish the Renaissance from the medieval age.

The middle portion of Brown's chapter examines Vernon Lee's indebtedness to other thinkers who were radically influencing the decades in which she was writing. In 1896 Lee declared she "loathed art, abhorred aesthetics and that the only thing she really cared about was sociology and economics." Brown handles the assessment of the late Victorian's interest in Marx, Darwin, and Freud in a cursory fashion by claiming: "Allusions can be found in her work to these thinkers, even if her knowledge of them was indirect." However, the discussion about the influence of William James is more substantial. After appraising the personal relationship Lee maintained with James's brother, Henry, during the 1880s and her eventual meeting with William James in Florence during 1892-93, Brown concentrates on Lee's and William James's shared religious and cultural assumptions. By examining Lee's "The Responsibilities of Unbelief," the author concludes that, while neither she nor James were "dogmatic atheists" or Nihilists, their loss of belief in God, combined with the desire for social improvement, was common to many late Victorians and influenced her understanding of the pagan spirit that existed in Renaissance art and culture.

Just as importantly, Brown discusses the impact that William James's *Principles of Psychology* had upon Lee and its role in the charges of plagiarism brought against Lee by Berenson, who had, in fact, attended James's course on psychology and logic as a student at Harvard. The author's archival research is noteworthy, as is her explication about the nuances of the disagreement, which turned on Berenson's famous formulation that the painter can only accomplish his task "by giving tactile values to retinal impression." True to this book's mission, Brown's interest in the rift between Lee and Berenson is narrowed to its impact on the social context of Renaissance studies in Florence in the later 1890s. The author stresses the fact that Lee had never kept any kind of diary or a record of her own or other persons' sayings, and that much of the quarrel hinged on whether Lee had a good enough memory to record Berenson's words verbatim during their visits to the Uffizi. Brown concludes the chapter by tracing the reconciliation between the parties, and, in so doing, brings a bit of humanity to academic personalities that can often seem fossilized. This essay, in its use of methodology, analysis, and concentrated scope serves as a model paradigm of the potential for historiography.

Before the book's final feminist reading, the editors interject a chapter, D.S. Chambers' "Edward Armstrong (1846–1928), Teacher of the Italian Renaissance at Oxford," which is

devoted to the historiography of a late Victorian university teacher at Oxford who, if not the most famous, was probably one of the most influential promoters of the Italian Renaissance. At the outset, the author probes Armstrong's innovative approach in designing a "Special Subject"—which meant a thematic course that required a close and critical reading of contemporary source material in the original language—relating to the Italian Renaissance; and the political obstacles that had to be overcome before The Faculty Board formally adopted it into the curriculum. Chambers is quick to point out that, once on the books, the class remained there for the better part of a century, and would be studied by a long succession of undergraduates, many of whom later became professional Renaissance historians or art historians. Before digging into Armstrong's writings, Chambers comments that the word "Renaissance" does not appear in the title of the Special Subject, probably a deliberate omission so that the course would not have been associated with the literary aestheticism of Walter Pater, which would have been taboo to most members of the History Faculty Board at Oxford; according to the author, Pater and Armstrong were in most ways complete opposites, with the latter delivering lectures in a strictly factual format.

Chambers' analysis of Armstrong's printed works first concentrates on his life of *Lorenzo de' Medici* (1896). Claiming that it contains insights which sometimes anticipate the findings of research carried out in Florence over the following century, and still in progress today, the author suggests that Armstrong's study was all the better for want of Pater's advice. Yet Chambers does not hesitate to identify *Lorenzo's* shortcomings, particularly its almost complete lack of footnotes or references to sources. The author's historiography also examines Armstrong's other published contributions to Renaissance historical studies, which Chambers now finds very dated in their "ethical-political" approach. The overall impression left with this reader is that Armstrong's written output was thin. Nevertheless, the chapter runs consistent with the volume's methodology, bolsters the book's aims, and expands the scope of its examination.

Benjamin G. Kohl's chapter, "Cecilia M. Ady: The Edwardian Education of a Historian of Renaissance Italy," is the book's last exploration of a female art historian. The essay, which plots the scholar's first steps in becoming one of Oxford's leading historians of the Italian Renaissance in the mid-twentieth century, adopts a biographical methodology; however, the author's archival research is impressive, relying on the extensive diaries of Ady's mother, Julia Cartwright, whose life and work is briefly addressed in Fraser's earlier chapter. Much of Chambers' chapter chronicles the arduous task of publishing Ady's book about the Sforza monuments in Milan, as well as her extensive travels and opportunistic rise through the ranks of a male-dominated academic environment. It is not until the end of the chapter that Kohl evaluates Ady's methodology, a combination of detailed narrative with copious translations from primary sources that "owed much both to Armstrong's brand of political history and her mother's rather amateurish approach to depicting the life and times of significant figures of Renaissance Italy." According to Chambers, Ady created works of *haute vulgarization* meant to attract a cultured, but not especially demanding, Edwardian readership.

Russell Price's essay, "L. Arthur Burd, Lord Acton, and Machiavelli," is surprising for its claim that during most of the nineteenth century in Great Britain, despite a widespread knowledge of Italian among the educated classes, there was little interest in Machiavelli.

This essay begins by setting apart Burd's 1891 version of *Il Principe* (*The Prince*) from several new translations that became available during the 1880s and 1890s, emphasizing that later editors and commentators frequently used Burd's edition. The beginning of Price's text also illuminates the difficulties of accounting for Burd's biographical information, despite his fame as a Machiavelli scholar; however, through clever hypotheses and rigorous archival research, Price presents valuable information.

The author's most important findings address Burd's relationship with Lord Acton, to whom he served as a tutor for his only son, and with whom he shared common intellectual interests that resulted in a decade-long literary collaboration. Evidently, Acton, a former Cambridge University professor who maintained a deep interest in Machiavelli, helped Burd considerably in his studies by suggesting books to read and points to consider or develop. He also helped proofread the manuscript and reviewed Burd's volume for the monthly periodical, *The Nineteenth Century*, in April 1892. The historiography then provides an account of other contemporary reviews, most of them eliciting universal praise for Burd's thorough treatment of Machiavelli's 'sources' and his Historical Abstract. Among these, there was much praise for Acton's Introduction, with the only reservation that it was found to be far from easy reading.

Price concludes his chapter with an analysis of two other substantial pieces on Machiavelli from Burd's hand. The first was a long study, "The literary Sources of Machiavelli's *Arte della Guerra, together with illustrative Diagrams*," which is lauded by the author for its almost exclusive use of ancient sources that required expertise in the Latin and Greek languages and a literatures. The second piece Price addresses is Burd's chapter on Florence and Machiavelli in *The Cambridge Modern History* (1902), which Acton edited. Again, Price's archival research is impressive, discovering correspondence between the men dealing with both design problems in publication and Burd's lack of confidence in tackling the topic. In all, this chapter, which may have been better served by positioning it toward the middle of the volume after Gaja's chapter about Lorenzo the Magnificent, is characteristic of the high quality of scholarship addressing topics that are so often overlooked by contemporary art historians.

The final chapter breaks from the strictly Florentine context in Edward D. English's "Medieval and Renaissance Siena and Tuscany c. 1900: Civic Life, Religion and the Countryside," an examination of the influence of late nineteenth and early twentieth century English-language histories, travel narratives, and guide books on later historians' interpretations of Sienese art. It specifically considers the biographies of four authors, known as the "Sieneese Gang," who wrote about that late medieval and Renaissance city and its culture and art. In a tightly controlled, well-organized essay, English offers some preliminary observations on the four authors' interpretations and assumptions about the history of the Tuscan city-state, particularly as seen through the lens of Burckhardt's bourgeois ethos. In addition, the author examines the lives and accomplishments of the Sieneese Gang within the intellectual framework established by Edward Said's *Orientalism*; although a well-established interpretation of imperialist politics, Said's work seems unnecessary in this historiography.

So it is that once English embarks upon telling the story of these relatively unknown authors, the book's mission to expand Italian Renaissance studies is well served. English argues that the Sienese Gang—comprised of Edmund G. Gardner (1869–1935), William Heywood (1857–1919), Robert Langton Douglas (1864–1951) and Edward Hutton (1875–1969)—produced much better writing and more sophisticated historical material than the usual run of travel and local history writers, establishes they were also good friends or acquaintances with the director of the state archives of Siena, and hints that each of these authors' eventual conversion to Catholicism may have impacted their sensitivity to the Tuscan environment and culture. Methodologically, English interprets their books as having approached these city-states in terms of culture "in the round," which he defines as including politics, society, art, religion, architecture, topography and secular and religious literature. English accounts for the Siena Gang's popular appeal on the grounds that their books "encouraged a leisurely but serious acquaintance with their cities rather than compulsively marching readers through museums and streets in what contemporaries called a Ruskinian 'school mistress or master' way."

English concludes the chapter with an analysis of the Sienese Gang's version of history, distinguishing between two distinct periods — the 'Golden Age' of the Nine (1287–1355) and the defense of the city against Medici tyranny in the mid-sixteenth century. The author also acknowledges the Sienese Gang's trumpeting of the Tuscan devotion to the Virgin and its reflection in civic ritual and art, which was much different from earlier Victorian attitudes toward Mariology. Overall, it seems as though the editors have conceived this chapter as something of a "book-end," because its use of primary sources mirrors those employed by Graham Smith in chapter one; however, English's contribution does not end this volume with the same intensity found throughout the book.

Responses to the Italian Renaissance is an academic "must read" not only for those with a particular interest in this time period, but also for graduate students who are being introduced to methodology. This volume is an excellent example of how to direct a scholar's attention to the importance of archival research and historiography. And it is this latter interest that is at the core of the book's mission: its ability to demonstrate how the history of scholarship influences our understanding about the aesthetic arguments at play in forging the boundaries of taste. Although a book like this is limited in its appeal, it expands our knowledge while maintaining a standard of excellence.

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