Notions of Method: Text and Photograph in Methods of Connoisseurship

by

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Class of 2010

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Art History

Middletown, Connecticut
April, 2010
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Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a year and a half in the making, and over the course of that time I have been fortunate to find immeasurable support from professors, employers, family, and even people I have never met in person.

To begin, I thank my advisor and thesis advisor at Wesleyan, Nadja Aksamija. Her ability to be straightforward and honest with me about my work while always balancing her criticism with positive commentary has been instrumental in my research and writing process. I also thank Phillip Wagoner, my first advisor and first art history professor at Wesleyan, for encouraging me to major in art history. Thank you also to Lynn Orr and Melissa Buron at the Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, for continuing to take an interest in my education even after my internship had ended. I am also grateful to Susanne Javorski, art librarian at Wesleyan, for helping me hone my researching skills; Carol Kearney and Rhonda York, administrative assistants in the Art and Art History Department; and the staff of the Center for the Arts at Wesleyan.

I also thank Jonathan Katz Nelson, Professor of Art History at Syracuse University in Florence (SUF). It was through dialogue with him and my seminar paper for his Botticelli course that the seeds of this project germinated. Even after my paper was turned in, he remained interested and available to discuss my ideas. I must also thank him for recommending me for an internship at the Villa I Tatti, the place where my thesis really developed, as well as Debora Spini, professor and coordinator of the internship program at SUF, and Barbara Deimling, director of SUF, for making my internship happen during the spring semester and helping to extend my time there into the summer. I would also like to thank my two Italian professors, Antonella Battaglia and Donatella Costantini, for helping me get to the point that I could start reading sources in Italian. I also thank my host mom Elisabeth Schneider, Maria Pia Brini (Nonna), and the Talarico family (Virgilio, Anna, Luca, and Black) for welcoming me into their respective homes; they made my time in Florence truly special.

At the Villa I Tatti, I am eternally grateful to Elisabetta Cunsolo and Giovanni Pagliarulo, my two supervisors, who so graciously entertained my questions about the fototeca, allowed me to conduct my own research there, and wrote and called other fototeche on my behalf. Without their support my project would never have been realized. I also thank everyone else I worked with in the fototeca during my time there for welcoming me into their workspace: Eve Borsook, Sanne Wellen, Anne Roger, and Tiziana Resta. At the fototeca of the Fondazione Longhi in Florence I extend my gratitude to Silvia Benassi for allowing me to consult the archive and for answering my questions. At the Fondazione Zeri in Bologna I thank Elisabetta Sambo for welcoming me on multiple occasions and answering my numerous questions, as well as Davide Ravaioli of the fototeca and Chiara Basalti of the biblioteca. I also thank Grazia Visintainer at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz for answering my questions about the fototeca there. At the Robert Lehman Collection at the
Metropolitan Museum of Art, I thank Meg Black, Associate Museum Librarian, for welcoming me to the library to consult the Richard Offner photograph archive.

I must also thank several individuals who offered their help without ever having met me. Thank you to Thomas Martin, Professor of Art History at Bard High School Early College, for reading my Botticelli seminar paper and giving me feedback. Thank you also to Lucy Fernandes for sending me her Masters thesis on the Witt Library, Venetia Harlow for sending me her conference paper on the photograph collections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, and Dorothea Peters for telling me about her research.

Last but far from least, I thank my family and friends. From my high school friends to my ice skating friends (SCPT), from my beautiful housemates to my SUF friends, thank you for making me laugh until I cry (a lot), for listening to me rant about my thesis, and for sharing your time and insight with me. Thank you to my brothers Pete, Steve, and Jon and to my Aunt Liz for supporting me always. Thank you also to my Aunt Darcy and Grampy. Mom and Dad, I’m really sorry I couldn’t hang out over winter break when I was writing my first chapter. In all seriousness, there are no words on the planet in any language that can express how grateful I am to have you as parents; your endless support of my endeavors both academic and personal astounds me, and I love you so much.
Illustrations

1. Early photograph of Fra Angelico and Studio’s “Christ Carrying the Cross,” from *Scenes from the Life of Christ* in the Museo di San Marco, Florence

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7. Back of photograph from Botticelli “Homeless” folders (Berenson)

8. Page from the Emilio Cecchi’s translation of Berenson’s *Italian Painters of the Renaissance* with Zeri’s notes (Zeri)

9. Detail from a photograph attributed by Zeri to the Maestro di Santo Spirito (Zeri)
Introduction

In discussions of connoisseurship, the name that inevitably crops up is Giovanni Morelli. Between 1874 and 1891 Morelli, an Italian “amateur” art critic, connoisseur, and politician who wrote under the pseudonym “Ivan Lermolieff,” published a series of revolutionary books and articles re-baptizing Italian Renaissance paintings in prominent collections in Germany and Italy. His “Morellian method” is cited exhaustively as the foundation of modern connoisseurship, especially in conjunction with that of Bernard Berenson, one of the most famous American connoisseurs of the early twentieth century. Though Morelli and Berenson did not strike up a master-pupil relationship, Morelli’s writing was the foundation upon which Berenson, the “young Lermolieff from Boston,”¹ based his own practice.

However, for the most part, Morellian and Berensonian methods are simply referenced rather than explored in detail. Scholars assume that their reader is familiar with Morelli’s method, or that it can be distilled into a coherent system using a few sentences. Statements about Berenson’s method are often confined to one of his essays, “Rudiments of Connoisseurship.” Morelli’s method is usually cited using words like Morelli’s “scientific” or “systematic” method,² boiled down to Morelli’s

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attention to “telling” details. For example, Max Friedländer, one of Berenson’s contemporaries, describes Morelli’s method as based on “the impressions of the individual portions” of a work of art as contrasted to the impression of the whole. Edgar Wind’s essay, “Critique of Connoisseurship,” published in 1965 in his Art and Anarchy, also focuses on Morelli’s interest in details like ears and hands. Taking this focus as a jumping-off point, Wind interprets Morelli’s penchant for such details as a Romantic attachment to the authentic fragment as synecdoche. Richard Wollheim’s “Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of Scientific Connoisseurship,” published in 1973, similarly focuses on Morelli’s attention to detail, making much of his “schedules” of ears and hands, which are in fact not systematic or even that widespread in Morelli’s writings. Wollheim analyzes Morelli’s method using the psychology of perception to understand whether or not it really is possible to identify an artist based on the perception of individual forms. He asks of the method “Is it coherent? Is it complete?, and, How is it justified?” In 1980 Carlo Ginzburg published what is probably the most frequently cited essay on Morellian method, “Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method.” This essay defined Morellian method as the

3 David Alan Brown writes “the revolutionary method of attribution he devised emphasized the isolation and careful one-to-one comparison of the forms of hands and ears, among other motifs.” David Alan Brown, Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting: A Handbook to the Exhibition (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1979), 35.


6 Ibid., 188.

investigation of “clues” or signs, taking this aspect of Morelli’s method as a starting point for a broader discussion of the history of what Ginzburg terms the “conjectural paradigm of knowledge.” Writings such as these draw connections between Morelli’s ideas and Freud’s focus on the subconscious—a similarity later scholarship interprets as a misunderstanding of Morelli’s method, which in fact treats all outward forms as significant.8 In 1990 Hayden B.J. Maginnis took up similarly psychological questions, using studies of visual perception to discuss how viewers take in information about the objects they observe.9 Maginnis seeks to correct Wollheim’s interpretation, explaining Morelli’s work not in terms of the schedules of ears and hands that appear sporadically in Morelli’s texts but rather in terms of what he sees as Morelli’s nineteenth-century theory of vision. In 2005, Maurizio Lober made similar investigations, employing psychological studies to support the idea that viewers do not perceive individual parts but the relationships of forms within totalities.10

In the 1980s, interest in the methods of connoisseurship picked up, with a slew of articles on the subject coming out in journals such as *Artibus et Historiae, The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* and *Critical Inquiry.*11 Like the work of Wind and Wollheim, these essays were interested in the applicability of connoisseurship to

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the present day. Published in 1988, David Ebitz’s “Connoisseurship as Practice” cites Morelli as the starting point of “scientific” connoisseurship and sees his work as part of a trend of “a general ascendance of natural science.”\textsuperscript{12} He then draws links between the practice of connoisseurship and modern scientific practices, suggesting that both fields engage in a continuous process of revision. The prevailing interest of this scholarship is to understand connoisseurship’s relationship to and importance for the discipline of art history.

In scholarship such as that mentioned above, the term “method” is assumed to mean method of making an attribution. However, this extremely broad definition causes confusion: not all descriptions of method refer to the same part of the process of making an attribution. In glossing over the precise meaning of the term “method,” treating it as ahistorical and wide-reaching, our understanding of the history of connoisseurship—ultimately our heritage as art historians—becomes oversimplified.

This thesis seeks to distinguish aspects of methods of connoisseurship, dividing the general concept into terms such as cognitive attributional method, method of study, method of looking, and working method. By asking the question, “What were connoisseurs like Morelli and Berenson really doing?”, it works to place Morelli and Berenson’s methods in the historical context of their lives and the texts in which their methods are explicated. The late 1980s saw a flurry of interest in Morelli from such a contextual perspective, and such work has continued into the 2000s. In 1987, there was a major exhibition of Morelli’s collection and library mounted at the Accademia Carrara entitled \textit{Giovanni Morelli: da collezionista a conoscitore} and a

\textsuperscript{12} Ebitz, 208.
conference, *Giovanni Morelli e la cultura dei conoscitori*. At the latter, papers were presented about Morelli and nineteenth-century European connoisseurship, Morelli’s activities as they related to Risorgimento politics and cultural values about art, and Morelli’s method. Richard Pau contributed an essay on the scientific origins of Morelli’s method, finding in Morelli’s university notebooks on natural history an alternative to the predominant focus of scholars like Wind, Wollheim, and Ginzburg on Morelli’s medical training. In 1988, Carol Gibson-Wood published her doctoral dissertation, *Studies in the Theory of Connoisseurship from Vasari to Morelli*. In her chapters on Morelli, Gibson-Wood uses Morelli’s correspondence with Sir Austen Henry Layard, one of his longtime friends, along with passages from Morelli’s published texts, to define and contextualize Morelli’s method within his broader ideas about art history and connoisseurship. Jaynie Anderson has also written extensively about Morelli, focusing on the political implications of his connoisseurship and his role in the nineteenth-century European art market. Donata Levi has made similar strides in her studies of Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, one of Morelli’s chief rivals. These scholars take letters and travel notebooks as primary source material, expanding their discussions of connoisseurship beyond published texts. Scholarship

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on Berenson, particularly David Alan Brown’s handbook to the 1979 National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC exhibition *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting* have also used unpublished sources such as letters, notebooks, and photographs to gain insight into Berenson’s method. Ernest Samuels’ biographies of Berenson, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur* (1979) and *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend* (1987) also discuss method using such sources in the wider context of Berenson’s life.16

This thesis builds on the research of scholars who have focused on Morelli’s and Berenson’s connoisseurship as products of specific historical moments, taking an understanding of method in a different direction. The authors mentioned above use unpublished writing for their sources, diversifying the material from which they draw conclusions about method and recognizing that published texts are not the only source of information about method. However, they in great part do not address the question of how “method” functions within published texts. Gibson-Wood does this to some extent, identifying the rhetorical, polemical nature of Morelli’s writing. The first two chapters of this thesis seek to expand on her work, asking, “What is method as it is explained in texts?” “How does method function and how is it employed in texts?” “What are the reasons behind its application as a rhetorical tool?” and “What are the implications of this use of method?” This is done by situating close textual analysis of Morelli and Berenson’s writings within the research of scholars like Anderson and Samuels.

Having defined and examined method as it exists in texts, the third chapter works to expand the discussion of Morelli and Berenson’s methods beyond published texts to include an understanding of their practical working methods, asking the question “How did Morelli and Berenson make attributions?” In particular, working method is explored as evidenced in the two scholars’ use of photographs. While it is acknowledged that Morelli and Berenson used photographs in their work, as with the precise definition of method this aspect of their work is glossed over or only mentioned in passing. There is a growing body of literature, initiated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, investigating the role of photography in the discipline of art history, but nothing devoted specifically to the role of photography in Morelli and Berenson’s methods. This scholarship has mostly been interested in the relationship of the art historian to the individual photographic object. Within the last fifteen years, and especially in the past two years, several scholars have begun writing about photograph *collections* as meaningful sources for historiographic information about art history. The third chapter of this thesis draws on both strands of this research, investigating the place of the individual photograph in Morelli and Berenson’s

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practices but taking special interest in Berenson’s collecting habits and his photograph library, now the fototeca of Harvard University’s Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, the Villa I Tatti.
Chapter I

Morelli

I: The shape of Morelli’s method

Born in 1819 in Verona, Giovanni Morelli (1819-1891) and his family moved to Bergamo shortly thereafter. He was a complicated and cosmopolitan figure, having been born in Italy, brought up as a Swiss Protestant, and educated in Germany, where he studied anatomy and natural history.\(^{20}\) At heart, however, he was an Italian patriot. Deeply involved in the long process of the Risorgimento, or Italian unification, he fought in the Lombard revolt against Austro-Hungarian rule in 1848. He served as a politician in the role of representative to the Camera dei Deputati for Bergamo from 1860-70 and as a senator in 1873.\(^\)\(^{21}\)

Originally desiring to be recognized as a writer, Morelli published numerous articles throughout his life.\(^{22}\) Though he was interested in art at least from the time he was a student in Munich, his first substantial published writings about art debuted in 1874 in German in the Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst under the pseudonym Ivan Lermoljeff (a Russianized anagram of his name) with translation by Johannes Schwartz (the German version of “Giovanni Morelli”). These were essays revising


\(^{21}\) Gibson-Wood, 175.

\(^{22}\) Anderson, Collecting Connoisseurship, 10. For a list of Morelli’s published writings see Giovanni Morelli, Della pittura italiana: studii storico-critici, 581.
the attributions of Italian paintings in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. In 1880 he published a book, *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von München, Dresden und Berlin* that revised attributions in the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries. This study was subsequently translated into English by Louise Richter, wife of Morelli’s friend and disciple Jean-Paul Richter, in 1883 and released under Morelli’s real name. In 1890-91 reworked and rearranged versions of the articles on the Roman galleries and the book on German galleries were published in German as *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei* and in 1892-93 in English under the title *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of their Works*. So extensive were these revisions that Morelli considered the publication to constitute an entirely new book. The first volume was comprised of the discussion of the Borghese Gallery, a new section on the Doria Pamphili Gallery, and an introduction entitled “Principles and Method.” The second volume treated the Munich and Dresden galleries only; Morelli died before finishing the third volume of the series, which expanded on the section from the 1880 volume on German galleries on the National Gallery in Berlin. His


27 Morelli, *Critical Studies*, vol. 1, [43].
friend and disciple Gustavo Frizzoni 28 published the volume based on Morelli’s notes in 1893.29 The gallery sections, which comprise the bulk of the collected volumes, are broken up by schools of painting, then artists within schools.30 Though it is stated that the volumes are organized around specific galleries, in fact Morelli interprets this scheme loosely, citing works of art in a range of collections, in the volume on Roman galleries especially those in Florence, and in particular the Uffizi.

It is out of Critical Studies that Morelli’s peers and subsequent generations of connoisseurs drew a definition of what he called his “experimental method” of connoisseurship. But what exactly does method mean? Broadly understood it is a way or process of doing something. In Morelli’s case it can be understood as a way of making an attribution, or assigning authorship—the name of an artist—to a work of art. However, a distinction must be made between the process of making an attribution and the process of studying a work of art in order to make an attribution. This difference is not neatly presented in Critical Studies, in part because Morelli’s publications are not coherent statements primarily about “method.” Rather, “method” is embedded in a larger text, the bulk of which focuses on presenting corrections to attributions of paintings in well-known public collections. This textual context is important for an understanding of what “method” means and how it is used in the texts. Many twentieth-century scholars writing about Morelli tend to discuss

28 Jaynie Anderson, Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v “Frizzoni, Gustavo,” http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T030018 (accessed April 11, 2010). Frizzoni (1840-1919) was, like Morelli, an Italian of Swiss Protestant origin. Morelli was close with the Frizzoni family. As with Richter, Morelli’s epistolary exchange with the Frizzoni family is a key source about nineteenth-century connoisseurship.

29 Gibson-Wood, 205-207.

30 Ibid., 203. This is a break from the format of the original articles published in the Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst, which were arranged room-by-room.
Morelli’s method as if it were a theory applicable across time. However, as evident from the fact that method as we (and the scholars mentioned) understand it—as it is described in words—is constituted in the texts themselves, the use and even the fabric of the method itself are inextricable from the context of Morelli’s life and the context of the books in which the method is discussed. Out of this context emerge nationalistic motivators that would remain hidden were method to be discussed only as abstract and theoretical.

Many twentieth-century scholars, such as Richard Wollheim, David Ebitz, and Richard Neer have ignored the textual context in which Morelli’s method is presented and have focused on method as an abstract, theoretical concept. In reviewing Morelli’s method they have probed the epistemological validity of connoisseurship and questioned whether or not the method is scientific in the sense of its logical coherence, the level of certainty of its results, or its role in the production of knowledge. This discussion, limited largely to Morelli’s published texts, in particular Critical Studies, is concerned with philosophical questions like “are attributions ever certain?” and “how reliable are they as forms of knowledge?”

Some of these concerns arise out of an association in Critical Studies between the study of art and scientific study. The “scientific” link is first forged in the 1880/1833 version of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin volume, in which Morelli calls his method an “experimental method,” calling those who wish “to get out of dreary

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dilettantism, and attain to a real Science of Art…[to] take up the cross and follow me.”

The term “scientific” is sprinkled throughout Critical Studies and an association with the idea of “science” is one of the volume’s strongest themes. At one point Morelli notes, “the main point [is] that the basis of all art study is the form and the technic [technique]. Observation and experience… are the foundation of every science.” Here, he more or less defines what he considered scientific, the key words being “observation” and “experience.”

Carol Gibson-Wood agrees, citing a letter to Morelli’s friend A.H. Layard to conclude that “by ‘experimental’ or ‘scientific’ he simply meant ‘observational.’” Much of the twentieth-century discourse on Morelli’s method focuses on this association, and the philosophical questions that later scholarship grapples with can be seen as an effort to make sense of connoisseurship using our own understanding of the term “scientific.”

For example, in his 1980 essay “Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method” Carlo Ginzburg seeks to elucidate what kind of knowledge connoisseurship produces. He uses the three case studies of Morelli, Freud, and Holmes to paint a broader history of knowledge paradigms. First establishing Freud’s connection to Morelli, Ginzburg says Freud took from Morelli’s writing (most likely the 1897 edition of the Borghese and Doria Pamphili galleries) the idea of “an interpretative method based on taking marginal and irrelevant details as revealing

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33 Morelli, Italian Masters in German Galleries, vii.

34 See Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 8, 25.

35 Ibid., 11.

36 Gibson-Wood, 250.
clues.”

Indeed, this resonates with a passage in the Preface to *Critical Studies* in which Morelli states that through the study of “the whole outward frame,” the particulars of which many people wrongly dismiss as meaningless, one can discern “the deeper qualities of the mind.” Setting up a triple analogy between his three case studies, Ginzburg says these “clues” are “tiny details [that] provide the key to a deeper reality, inaccessible by other methods. These details may be symptoms, for Freud, or clues, for Holmes, or features of paintings, for Morelli.” These three types of clues are analogous under “the model of *medical semiotics*, or symptomatology—the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of the layman.”

Ginzburg asserts that the connection between the three case studies through medical semiotics is not only due to the historical, biographical coincidence that they were all trained as doctors, but part of a nineteenth-century knowledge paradigm of the “human sciences” “based on the interpretation of clues.” He traces this paradigm through the ages, beginning with ancient hunters who read signs to track animals, providing the overarching definition of “an approach involving analysis of particular cases, constructed only through traces, symptoms, hints.” This “building up knowledge of the whole from the parts” is termed by Ginzburg “the

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37 Ibid., 11.

38 Morelli, *Critical Studies*, vol. 1, [45].

39 Ginzburg, 11.

40 Ibid., 12.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 14.
conjectural paradigm.” From this point on the essay becomes much less specifically about Morelli and turns instead to an explanation of what conjectural disciplines are and how the type of information they offer is different from “scientific” disciplines. He sets up medical practice, and other conjectural disciplines (such as history), in contrast to Galilean science, which deals in generalities rather than the individual and requires the measurement and repetition of phenomena as opposed to treating as opposed to dealing with the individual case studies of conjectural disciplines. Conjectural disciplines are bound to the object, while Galilean science becomes increasingly detached and abstract.

In a way, the perceived failure of connoisseurship to produce "facts," as discussed by scholars in the 1980s, is explained by its status as a conjectural discipline that is judged under standards of Galilean science. However, as convincing as the conjectural model may be, it does not explain how Morelli made attributions. Rather, it takes the definition of method for granted, even reducing an understanding of it to one aspect: its focus on particular features. Writing in 2005, Maurizio Lorber disagrees with Ginzburg’s interpretation on the basis that it is founded on a mistaken understanding of what is meant by “Morelli’s method.” He holds that Morelli's method, both as described in Morelli’s own texts and in subsequent scholarship on him, does not present a procedure, but an a posteriori explanation of a process that occurred on an unconscious level. Citing psychological

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43 Ibid., 15.

44 Ibid.

45 See especially David Ebitz, “Connoisseurship as Practice,”; Richard Neer, “Connoisseurship and the Stakes of Style.”
studies of visual perception, Lorber posits that the attributional process proceeds not from the analysis of particulars but from the comprehension of totalities. Hayden B.J. Maginnis, writing in 1990, proposes a similar theory, pointing out that Morelli (and Berenson after him) would not have understood this concept in the same way modern viewers do because of the nineteenth-century memory-image model of vision, in which retinal images are stored as “slightly faded copies of the original experience.”

In this interpretation the process of making an attribution is not based on a search for iconic configurations (specific hand forms, for example) but rather for formal relationships, or how a particular part relates to the rest of the painting both within that specific work of art and as compared with formal configurations found in previously seen works of art.

In an anecdote concluding the Borghese gallery section of the first volume of *Critical Studies*, Morelli himself may have explained what was going on cognitively when he made an attribution, though not on such a neurological or psychological level as Lorber. Discussing a portrait of a woman in the Borghese, he relates,

> Before examining this attractive portrait critically, I thought of Dosso; but the dark background, the stone parapet, and the simplicity of the treatment did not appear to me to show the hand of this master. Then it occurred to me that it might be of Sebastian del Piombo’s early period; but for him also the conception appeared too profound, and the form of the hand too nearly akin to the *quattrocento*. One day, as I stood before this mysterious portrait, entranced, and questioning, *the spirit of the master met mine, and the truth flashed upon me*. [emphasis mine] ‘Giorgione, thou alone,’ I cried in my excitement; and the picture answered, ‘Even so.’

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47 Morelli, *Critical Studies*, vol. 1, 249.
This passage is unusual in Morelli’s text. Though he includes anecdotal material two other times over the course of the two volumes and at least once in the earlier version of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin volume,\(^{48}\) it is usually fictionalized. Further, anecdotes are usually exchanges between two characters. Though this anecdote is also a conversation of sorts, it is an internal one—a monologue. As he tells it, after he initially jumped to a conclusion (Dosso) he paused to consider other options. Upon further reflection, in which he examined the portrait critically and noticed details, he thought the painting might be by Sebastiano del Piombo. But this conclusion was undermined by further analysis of details. After more exposure to the painting, the truth “flashed” upon him,\(^ {49}\) its true identity as a Giorgione revealed. Morelli notices one aspect as characteristic of a certain painter and discusses it with himself; finally, the actual attribution is made via a flash of recognition. This internal conversation can be understood as the process by which the attribution is made.

In the rest of the text, the term “method” (along with a host of other words) is used to refer to the process of making an attribution rather than to show it as the above anecdote does. The anecdote demonstrates that the term “method” is different from the idea of “method as cognitive process.” Lorber describes connoisseurship as a cognitive, visual procedure that resists verbalization—in essence, visual thought.\(^ {50}\)

\(^{48}\) “Principles and Method” is entirely anecdotal. Another anecdote is included at the end of the Doria-Pamphili section of Critical Studies, vol 1. In Italian Masters in German Galleries (1883), a third anecdote is found in the Dresden section on p. 129.

\(^{49}\) This “flash” is the flash of recognition, which Lorber and Wollheim compare to the cognitive process of facial recognition. Even earlier, in the seventeenth century, French artist Abraham Bosse’s compared his process of determining authorship to recognizing a familiar face in Sentimens sur la distinction des diverses manieres de peinture, dessein & graveure, & des originaux d’avec leurs copies (1649). Gibson-Wood, 52.

\(^{50}\) Lorber, 120-122.
Thus, method as a verbal thing situated in texts must be understood as distinct from method as a visual, cognitive process.  

In the Borghese Gallery anecdote cited above, Morelli references a “critical” way of examining a work of art. The term “critical” is a key indicator that the “method” in the text is often not the cognitive “attributonal method” described above but a critical “method of study,” that is to say a guide to the proper way to examine paintings. In this way the method in the text is prescriptive, but not of what the reader expects: rather than outlining how to make an attribution, the method in the text outlines how to look. Knowing how to look leads to the actual making of the attribution. More specifically, Morelli’s statements on “method of study” can be broken into two categories: “method of looking” and “prescriptions about which materials of art history qualify as reliable evidence.”

In the Borghese and Doria Pamphili volume of the 1890 edition of Critical Studies Morelli introduces a section called “Principles and Methods” after the preface and before the main body of the book. The section is set up in the first person as a

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52 Gibson-Wood, 230. Gibson-Wood uses this term to distinguish Morelli’s more general recommendations from his attributional method. In the preface to the Munich and Dresden volume Morelli calls his method a “method of study.” Elsewhere in the same preface and that of the Borghese volume and in “Principles and Method”, he calls it an “experimental method.” In “Principles and Method” it is referred to as a “study of form and technique,” “analytical research,” and “theory.” However, by “theory” he does not mean an abstract theory: he contrasts his method as “practical examination” to other scholars’ preference for “abstract theories” about art. This variety of terminology may have contributed to readers’ and reviewers’ confusion. Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 58; Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 2, 8; Morelli, Critical Studies, vol.1, 18-19.

53 That the method he describes is not the method for making a conclusion but rather reaching a conclusion is supported by his oblique reference in “Principles and Method” to method as a “path” or a “road” which leads to the goal of connoisseurship—the truth, or a “correct” attribution. Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 21.
conversation between Ivan Lermoliev, an amateur Russian connoisseur and the supposed author of the text (though by this time Morelli’s authorship was well-known), and an elderly Italian gentleman.\textsuperscript{54} The conversational format is particularly persuasive, allowing Morelli to put forth an idea through the mouthpiece of the Italian gentleman and reiterate the point for emphasis through the young Russian.\textsuperscript{55} The conversation begins in the streets of Florence and eventually moves into the Uffizi and galleries of the Palazzo Pitti, where the Italian gentleman guides the Russian through the rooms, explaining his technique for distinguishing genuine works of Botticelli and Raphael. However, as noted in the introduction to this section, statements about “method” are woven into the many portions of the text. Beyond the “Principles and Method” section, method finds its way into the prefaces to both the Borghese and Doria-Pamphili and the Munich and Dresden volumes (written in 1889 and 1890, respectively), the Introductory Remarks to the Borghese section and the Munich section.\textsuperscript{56}

Taken together, these sometimes far-flung statements constitute the definition of Morelli’s method (in this thesis, understood as “method of study’’). First, the study of art must take place in the galleries, in front of the works themselves as opposed to in front of books about art.\textsuperscript{57} “The only true record for the connoisseur,” says the

\textsuperscript{54} This setup recalls the preferred Renaissance format of discourse on subjects like painting or villa and garden architecture, as exemplified in Aretino’s “Dialogue on Painting” (1557). The larger implications of this conversational format will be discussed later.

\textsuperscript{55} For example, see Morelli, “Principles and Method,” 18.

\textsuperscript{56} Much more rarely method is brought up in footnotes and body of the main text; when it is, it is brought up to reinforce the importance of the study of form above all else.

\textsuperscript{57} See Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 15, 54. On p. 54 in “Principles and Method,” the Italian and the Russian encounter a professor in the gallery and the Italian lectures him “just look at the painting with
Italian gentleman, “is the work of art itself.”  

Signatures are easily forged, and documentary evidence is often misleading, causing art historians and critics to make false attributions. Form and technique—the “external signs”—are the aspects of the work to be studied, and this study must be conducted with patience and care.

Having established which materials of art history are important—the works of art themselves—he lays out a method for studying those objects: in essence, his method of looking. Contrasting his method with a concern for aesthetics, in “Principles and Method” the Italian tells the Russian that however charming the Raphael they are examining may be, at the moment they will, “keeping to our method, consider the forms only; the hand and ear, for instance.”  

The Italian gentleman notes, “The typical, or fundamental, form (Grundformen) of hand and ear is characteristic in the works of all independent masters, and affords valuable evidence for identifying them.”  

Other Grundformen that merit analysis are explained via practical examples throughout the book, the forms focused on varying depending on the artist. The Italian gentleman’s analysis of fingernails in the painting provokes a snide remark from the Russian, who exclaims “‘For goodness’ sake...leave such unsightly things...”

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your own eyes, my dear sir, and never mind what the critics in Berlin and Paris see fit to tell us about it.”


59 Ibid., 29-31.

60 “Only charlatans and novices in the study have a name ready for every work of art,” Morelli says in “Principles and Method.” Throughout that section he emphasizes the importance of prolonged study of works of art. He also says, as the Russian, “a true knowledge of art is only to be attained by a continuous and untiring study of form and technic [technique].” Morelli, “Principles and Method,” 46, 18.


62 Ibid., 45.
as nails out of the question,”
reinforcing in this passage Morelli’s placement of importance on all forms. As the Italian gentleman Morelli notes,

Only by gaining a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of each painter—of his forms and of his colouring—shall we ever succeed in distinguishing the genuine works of the great masters from those of their pupils and imitators, or even from copies; and though this method may not always lead to absolute conviction, it, at least, brings us to the threshold.

In such statements, Morelli lays out his method as a way to “see form.” He also defines the ultimate goal of connoisseurship as to tell the difference between masters and their schools and imitators. To reach this understanding, connoisseurship requires an acquaintance with more than just the artist in question: it calls for the study of “every example of the school whence these masters emanated,” and an estimation of “the merits of their predecessors and contemporaries, as well as of their immediate scholars.”

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In Critical Studies, the substance of Morelli’s method is built in statements highlighting its contrast to other methods. As in the fingernail example cited above, sometimes the aesthetic standpoint is used as a counterpoint. The aesthetic is equated with a magical and emotional engagement with art, whereas Morelli’s

63 Ibid., 37.
64 Ibid., 23.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 14.
67 In discussing Bernardino de’ Conti, Morelli notes “The aesthetic estimate of works of art is a subject on which might be said…omne quod recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur. Adhering to our usual method, however, we will first particularize those characteristic signs which distinguish the paintings and drawings of this master…” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 191.
method is presented as practical, even prosaic. The clearest contrast Morelli emphasizes, however, is that between his method and the "general impression." The Italian gentleman muses, "As a matter of fact…all art-historians, from Vasari down to our own day, have only made use of two tests to aid them in deciding the authorship of a work of art—intuition, or the so-called general impression, and documentary evidence." Along with his disparagement of those who consult documentary evidence, he criticizes those who rely on “the so-called general impression” to deduce authorship. For such scholars, a first glance is enough to recognize a painter: They make their attributions based on the perception of the “spirit” of the master. Though Morelli admits that he, too, gives heed to “spirit,” though always along with form, and that it is possible for the general impression to be “sufficient to enable an astute and well-trained eye to guess at the authorship of a work” and to determine geographic region, for finer distinctions (between Venice and Padua for example) it is not sufficient. The general impression is defined as a cursory and superficial way

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68 For example, in discussing a Raphaelesque portrait, the Russian exclaims “My dear sir…spare me these details of hands and ears before such a picture. In the presence of art like this it is utterly impossible to think of these things. Raphael’s spirit has cast its magic spell on me, and I cannot descend to that prosaic level requisite for studying forms and details in a work of art.” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 55.


70 Ibid., 19. For Morelli, Charles Blanc was an example of someone who relied on the “general impression.” In the introduction to the Borghese Gallery section, he says “a few words to M. Charles Blanc, a celebrated French art-critic…they may also serve as a criterion of the method I have pursued.” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 69-71.


72 Ibid., 22.

73 In a footnote Morelli says “Most directors of galleries, who are wont to follow tradition and to identify a painting only from a superficial general impression, almost invariably confuse Botticelli’s genuine works and the productions from his scholars and imitators.” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 81, n.8.
of examining paintings—that is, a hasty way of looking—based on a perception of “spirit,” which results in a quick decision that amounts to little more than an inconclusive guess. In contrast, for Morelli the real way to “penetrate to the spirit” of the painter is through the study of form.\textsuperscript{74} In setting up a dichotomy between his method and the general impression, Morelli implies that those who rely on the general impression/intuition do not look carefully. This is what his method purports to do: to teach the student how to look.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, however, it is important to recall the textual context in which these statements were made. The summary presented above is a compilation and distillation of what is laid out over the course of two volumes. Most importantly, the format of “Principles and Method” makes it especially difficult to distinguish and pull out methodological and procedural points. The distinction made in this thesis between looking and attributing is not neatly packaged in \textit{Critical Studies} and this ambiguity may be the locus from which later criticism of Morelli stems. In particular, Max Friedländer levels the accusation that Morelli did, in fact, employ the “general impression” as a method.\textsuperscript{75} Lorber and Maginnis also allude that Morelli employed the general impression in making his attributions, and the Borghese Gallery anecdote cited above also implies that he did so. However, these conclusions operate under the assumption that statements such as:

\begin{quote}
...even art-critics of authority do not always succeed in distinguishing, with any certainty, the works of a pupil from those of the mater, or \textit{vice versā}, when they judge them from the so-called aesthetic standpoint of the ‘tournure
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{75} Friedländer,166-67.
de l’esprit, l’âme,’ of the painter, or when they rely solely on the ‘general impression…’

refer to the cognitive process of making the attribution rather than a way of looking at
a work of art. In the Introductory Remarks of the Munich and Dresden volume,

Morelli responds to criticism in a footnote, saying:

It has been asserted in Germany that I profess to recognize a painter solely by
the form of the hand, the finger-nails, the ear, or the toes in his work. Whether
this statement is due to malice or to ignorance I cannot say; it is scarcely
necessary to observe that it is incorrect. What I maintain is, that the forms in
general, and more especially those of the hand and ear, aid us in
distinguishing the works of a master from those of his imitators, and control
the judgment which subjective impressions might lead us to pronounce.

Here and elsewhere, Morelli describes his method as a tool to control judgment along
the road to an attribution, clearly indicating that by method he primarily means a
method for conducting the activity leading up to the act of making an attribution, not
the actual assigning of authorship.

Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 73.


Responding to the same criticisms in a different place, in the preface to the Dresden volume he
writes that as he saw it, “I took every opportunity of impressing upon my reader that the experimental
method was only to be regarded as an aid in determining the authors of works of art—an aid, that is to
say, to connoisseurship.” In the introduction to the Munich section of that volume, between the 1880
and the 1891 versions of the volumes, he adds, “In the history of Art it [the method] can, of course,
only be regarded as a means to assist in identifying the author of the picture.” Morelli, Critical Studies,
vol. 2, [10], 2. This is further corroborated in the Borghese section of volume one, where Morelli
quotes from The Life and Letters of Louis Agassiz, a biography of the scientist, noting “observation
and comparison being, in his opinion, the intellectual tools, most indispensable to the naturalist (and, I
may add, to the art-connoisseur also). His first lesson was one in looking.” Morelli, Critical Studies,
vol. 1, 74, n.1.
II: Polemics in *Critical Studies*

The polemical nature of *Critical Studies* makes the types of method outlined above difficult to discern in the text. Morelli buries statements about method under strong contrasts between himself and the rest of the art world. The opposition between his method and the “general impression” has already been mentioned, but this is but one of many layers of contrasts. The subtext of *Critical Studies* is comprised of dichotomies reaching beyond what appear superficially to be methodological points to encompass positions on attributions themselves and the management of museums in Italy, two issues which have serious implications for nationalistic concerns and the ownership of artistic patrimony. To unearth these sets of dichotomies, it helps to ask the questions “what was Morelli purporting to do in *Critical Studies*?”; “what do we see him actually doing?”; and “how did Morelli’s argument and structure of that argument change between the publication of the 1880 volume on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries and *Critical Studies* in 1890-91?”

To begin, intended audience is a key aspect to examine. In several instances Morelli establishes the audience of his text as the “student of art.”79 *Critical Studies*

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79 For example, at the conclusion of “Principles and Method” the Russian says “After a sojourn of two years in Tuscany I reached the Eternal City [Rome] at last. Here for any months I have studied art in churches, and, finally, I have conceived the presumptuous idea of imparting some of the results to the young students of art in my own country.” Morelli, “Principles and Method,” 63. In books on connoisseurship published before Morelli, the audience varies. Gibson-Wood details various writings on connoisseurship: Mancini’s *Considerazioni sulla pittura* and *Discorso di pittura* (both written, though not published in the early seventeenth century, the latter between 1617 and 1619) were intended to instruct other amateurs or laymen in the appreciation of painting. D’Argenville’s 1762 *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres* was more of a handbook for collectors. Jonathan Richardson, an eighteenth-century English artist and writer, wrote several essays on connoisseurship. While his first published work, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715) was directed at painters and established lovers of art, his 1719 *Two Discourses I. An Essay on the whole Art of Criticism as it relates to Painting...II. An Argument in Behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur* was addressed to the
purports to guide the reader by both setting straight mistaken attributions and
providing a method by which to study art, with the idea that one day the student will
be able to make his own attributions. However, nestled between descriptions of
paintings and in the footnotes of the main body of the text, more loudly expressed in
the prefaces and introductory sections of the book, and practically screamed in
“Principles and Methods,” are statements made in reaction to criticisms of the book
and conditions of the outside world. Morelli’s text can thus be seen as chiefly directed
at his contemporaries.

It is also important to note where and how methodological statements are
made. The majority of them are laid out in “Principles and Method.” This section and
the introductions and prefaces to each section were part of the 1890-1 revisions made
to the two previously published series of works, the 1874 articles on the Borghese
gallery and the 1880 German book on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries.
Comparing what is written in the prefaces, introductions, and especially “Principles
and Method” to the body of the text which treats galleries and schools of artists, it
emerges that the heart of the conflict Morelli has with other critics lies in the
attributions themselves. In thinking about method of looking, it is easy to pass over
the fact that it is the attributions that are the main issue at stake in connoisseurship.
Morelli was moved to publish writings on art by what he perceived as wrong
attributions published by other scholars. In Morelli’s eyes the art world of the
nineteenth century was a mass of confusion and misleading misclassification that
needed his help, and he was only too happy to oblige, enjoying proving others wrong

novice connoisseur, particularly the one who was forming his own collection at the time. It is not until
the nineteenth-century, particularly with Crowe and Cavalcaselle, that literature on connoisseurship
assumes the scholarly student as an audience. See Gibson-Wood, sections I-IV.
and conceiving of attributions as a battleground. Thus, “Principles and Method” and the introductory sections and prefaces, modified after the initial ideas were published, are therefore reactions to the initial publications, which were more focused on attributions with some but less discussion of method than is present in Critical Studies. From this it becomes clear that attributions lie at the heart of the polemics Morelli crafts in Critical Studies.

A good point of entry into the subtextual world of Critical Studies is through the theme of “science.” As explained, later interpretations and discussions of Morelli’s method, from Berenson onward, tend to describe it as “scientific connoisseurship” and focus on this association. As early as 1881 in an article on Morelli’s method written by Anton Springer, continuing with an article written by Bode right after Morelli’s death in 1891, and repeated often in twentieth-century scholarship on connoisseurship, Morelli’s medical experience is invoked as the impetus behind his use of the term “scientific.” While Ginzburg’s argument for the medical connection is logically sound and interesting, Morelli’s medical interest is not as explicit in his writing. At best, it should be considered as one of many

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80 Gibson-Wood indicates that Morelli “delighted in demonstrating his own skill as an attributionist, proving his adversaries wrong, and generally stirring up controversy” and “was fighting a battle, replete with protagonists and antagonists, attacks, victories, and propaganda—all centred on his opinions as a connoisseur.” Gibson-Wood, 192, 194.


83 See Wind, “Critique of Connoisseurship” or Wollheim, “Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of Scientific Connoisseurship.” To be fair, this also stems from Morelli himself: there is a remark in “Principles and Method” which characterizes the Italian gentleman as a “former student of medicine.” Morelli, “Principles and Method,” 59.
factors. In an essay published in 1993 Richard Pau contends that Morelli rejected medicine and did not think of himself as a doctor at all. His training in anatomy and natural history should also be taken into account, especially because these themes often crop up in Critical Studies of Italian Painters. For instance, again disparaging those who take only a cursory glance at art, Morelli writes that to know something and write about art, “we ought first to be thoroughly acquainted with it. No one, for instance, would dream of writing on physiology without having first mastered anatomy.” The Russian interlocutor quips that the Italian’s “matter-of-fact way of identifying works of art by the help of such external signs savoured more of an anatomist, I thought, than of a student of art, and was moreover entirely opposed to the accepted method.” Botany is a frequent analogy, as in the Borghese section when Morelli quotes a professor of aesthetics as saying a painting “is like a flower of the field—pure and refined natures delight in it, and care not whether learned botanists classify it among the Rosaceae or the Malvaceae.” Pau posits that Morelli’s method owes largely to his studies of comparative anatomy and natural philosophy, particularly Cuvier’s method of identifying animals and placing them in sequence relative to one another based conclusions derived from bones, or individual

84 Gibson-Wood, 170-1.


87 Ibid., 35-6.

88 Ibid., 68.
fragments. Cuvier’s idea, as cited by Pau, was that every animal formed a complete
whole and that each part, even considered separately, was indicative of the rest of the
whole. The work of Louis Agassiz, who Morelli knew personally and accompanied
on a glacier expedition in 1838, also influenced him, as evidenced by his footnote
on Agassiz in the Introductory section of the Borrhese volume in which he remarks
on Agassiz’s requirement that his pupils “not only…distinguish the various parts of
the animal, but…detect also the relation of these details to more general typical
features.”

For the purposes of how method functions in Morelli’s publications, it is
sufficient to note that by “scientific” Morelli meant “observational.” Whatever the
proportions of the influence of medicine, anatomy, and/or natural history on Morelli
were, in reading Critical Studies it becomes apparent that the concept of “science”
functioned rhetorically. Carol Gibson-Wood notes that unlike Crowe and
Cavalcaselle, who worked in the 1860s with the intent to publish, Morelli published

89 Anderson notes that Morelli studied with Rudolph Wagner, a former student of Cuvier’s, during his
time studying at the University at Erlangen. Anderson, “Dietro lo pseudonimo,” 495.

90 Ibid., 497.


92 As the Italian gentleman he posits, “the main point [is] that the basis of all art study is the form and
the technic. Observation and experience… are the foundation of every science: Per varios usus artem
experiential fecit, exemplo monstrante viam.” In essence, he defines what he considered scientific, the
key words being “observation” and “experience.” Gibson-Wood notes that “by ‘experimental’ or
‘scientific’ he simply meant ‘observational,’” citing a letter to Layard as evidence. Gibson-Wood, 250.

93 Carol Gibson-Wood uses the term “rhetorical” to describe Morelli’s “Principles and Method.”
Gibson-Wood, 220.

94 Joseph Arthur Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle were the authors of two series similar to
Critical Studies entitled A New History of Painting in Italy and A History of Painting in North Italy.
Cavalcaselle and Morelli were personal enemies and had worked together in 1861-2 on a government
inventory of paintings in Umbria and the Marches, which will be discussed later in this chapter and in
chapter three.
retroactively in response to “the appearance in print of others views with which he disagreed.”95 As a result, she says, his writings took on a contradictory tone.96 This can be seen in the polemical format of the “Principles and Method” section, in which one character puts forth a viewpoint in a way such that the other responds directly. As Edgar Wind notes, “the use of dialogue made it possible for him to contrast his own plain Socratic statements with the inflated language of his opponents.”97 Gibson-Wood further notes that underneath Morelli’s self-effacing claims against his own authority, this polemicism was intentional.98 Indeed, in the preface to the Borghese volume, he notes “writings on art which do not raise a storm of opposition can have little real merit.”99

Indeed, in reading Critical Studies, it becomes clear that Morelli uses the term “scientific” in a combative way. He applies the term repeatedly, in essence layering it on top of his analysis and actively forcing the association between his method and “science.” Throughout Critical Studies he pits the empirical associations of the term “science” against the idea of the general impression, labeling his method as

95 Gibson-Wood, 201. However, Gibson-Wood also notes that “as early as 1866 Morelli indicates that he intends to write up the results of his artistic studies” of the Lombard school. However, by 1868, “his intended publication has assumed the definite shape of a work on the art galleries of Italy,” a format which “may well have been fixed upon as a result of Morelli’s dissatisfaction with the cataloguing in the galleries where he was studying.” Ibid., 187.

96 Ibid., 203. Regarding his self-effacing claims, See for example his statement in Critical Studies, vol. 1 “but you must not look upon me as an authority, or upon my judgment as infallible. I would never claim for myself either knowledge or endowments sufficient to warrant my setting myself up above my fellows.” In the Borghese section he assures the reader “that this work is only the more or less unpretending effort of a student.” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol.1, 33, 65.

97 Wind, 37.

98 Gibson-Wood, 203.

“scientific” and all others as “unscientific.” Though others before him, like Jonathan Richardson in the eighteenth century, had used the word “scientific” to describe connoisseurship, through his employment of the term Morelli asserts that he is doing something completely new and revolutionary. Morelli thus sets his method apart from all those that had come before him. Henri Zerner suggests that the most original aspect of Morelli’s method was not its emphasis on morphological detail but rather “its pretension to scientific validity.” Thinking about Morelli’s employment of the word “science” as a pretension or construction, the revolutionary aspect of his text and the reason it drew criticism becomes not so much that it was the first “scientific” theory, but that it claimed to be so.

The question then arises, “why did Morelli need to claim to be scientific and set himself apart from other scholars?” Morelli’s antagonism to the German school of criticism is a prominent theme in his Critical Studies. In the “Principles and Method” section, the conflict is treated in general terms, with the entirety of the German school targeted mostly for their love of reading. The young Russian interlocutor tells the Italian how art is studied in Germany, explaining that Germans read books instead of

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100 Gibson-Wood, section III.

101 Gibson-Wood, 210-11. Gibson-Wood notes that while “today we would see Morelli as simply following in the footsteps of Rumohr, Crowe and Cavalcaselle in attempts to revise traditional accounts of Italian art through the questioning of attributions and the fresh evaluation of works, he regarded his empirical approach as new.”

102 See David Alan Brown, “Giovanni Morelli and Bernard Berenson,” in Giovanni Morelli e la cultura dei conoscitori, 39, n.11.

103 Gibson-Wood’s dissertation seeks to expose the constructed nature of Morelli’s assertion that Morelli’s work was new by writing about earlier connoisseurs, developing a theme of increasing attention to detail and constructing a line of intellectual heritage from Vasari to Morelli. The difference between what is claimed in writing and what is practiced in the field will be examined in chapter three of this thesis.
look at paintings to study art.\textsuperscript{104} Using the conversational format to drive home his opinion about this preference of texts over works of art, Morelli sets up a situation in which the Italian gentleman pays German scholars a compliment to which the Russian reacts strongly. Referring to the educational system, the Italian says that he thought that it was only in Italy “that education was so backward, and that everywhere else in Europe, and especially in Germany, great strides had been made in knowledge of art, just as much as in other sciences.”\textsuperscript{105} Continuing later in the paragraph, he adds “the educated public in Germany…is a very large body, larger than that of all the other countries of Europe put together, and I scarcely think that they would read so many books on art unless they hoped to derive from them something beyond mere satisfaction of the senses…”\textsuperscript{106} At this point, the Russian interlocutor interrupts him to say that the man who reads books gains only a worthless stock of names and dates.\textsuperscript{107} Later, again using the conversational format to drive home a point through repetition, the Italian reiterates the Russian interlocutor’s point that German (and Parisian) art historians attach importance to intuition and documentary evidence, regarding “the study of works of art as purposeless and a waste of time.”\textsuperscript{108} They are more interested in either reading another scholar’s criticism or consulting archival documents and tradition, which are writings about art and artists like Vasari’s \textit{Lives.}

\textsuperscript{104} He notes, “There people will only read, and art must be brought to public notice, not through the medium of brush or chisel, but through that of the printing press.” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 3.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 19.
In effect, the Russian interlocutor summarizes the key points against which Morelli aligns his method, but with specific groups attached to those counterpoints. By the time the Russian and the Italian have met in the Uffizi gallery, Morelli has so entrenched the oppositional relationships between his own connoisseurship and German scholarship, that when he speaks generally of his opponents, “art-historians and art-critics so-called,” who reject his views with “wonted assurance, though unable to produce a single reason for so doing,” the reader cannot help but associate these opponents with the German school of criticism. Essentially, Morelli crafts a bundle of dichotomies: Morellian connoisseurship vs. German scholarship, scientific vs. unscientific methods, his own method of careful looking vs. that relying on the general impression, and a viewpoint with the work of art as the primary document vs. an art history focused on documentary evidence.

Elsewhere, Morelli is more pointed in opposition to German scholarship. Specifically, he directs his vehement attitude toward Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Berlin Museum (now the Altes Museum). In the gallery sections of Critical Studies, Bode is frequently the opinion against which Morelli positions himself and which he seeks to dismantle. He does this both in the text and in footnotes. On rare occasions he actually agrees with Bode; other times he disagrees emphatically,

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109 Ibid., 34.


111 For an in-text example, see Morelli, *Critical Studies*, vol. 1, 181, 286. For a footnote example, see Ibid., 254, n.5.

112 Ibid., 152, n.3, 239, n.6.
inserting an exclamation point after his comment.\textsuperscript{113} Perhaps most interestingly, Morelli explicitly says that his extensive discussion of Garafalo is, “among other reasons, because Dr. Bode refuses to acknowledge that the large “Descent from the Cross,” and other pictures, which I hold to be early works of Garafalo, are by the master.”\textsuperscript{114} Indeed, when reading \textit{Critical Studies} this antagonism is a prominent theme. In this more targeted criticism, the attributions themselves are the chief concern. In the preface to the Borghese volume, Morelli addresses Bode directly when he says,

Dr. Bode attacks me, among other reasons, because I venture to differ from Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, his teachers and guides, and to characterise their writings as misleading. He accuses me, as a former student of medicine, of being a mere empiric; and further, though following me closely in my own studies…he would give his readers to understand that I am a mere interloper, wholly unqualified to speak on the subject of Italian painting, and that my superficial teaching ‘must necessarily lead to the most fatal dilettanteism.’ From his point of view Dr. Bode is no doubt in the right; for, if my theories and opinions are correct, his must of necessity be radically wrong, and \textit{vice versa}, as in everything we are unfortunately diametrically opposed. What appears black to me is white to him, and pictures which in his eyes are masterpieces of art, in mine are, as a rule, simply feeble works of the school.\textsuperscript{115}

Despite the fact that in the Introduction to the Dresden volume he ascribes his disagreement with German art-critics over attributions (not the method by which they were made, importantly) to the fact that “a German sees things differently from a

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 159, n.4.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{115} Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, [46-7]. This diatribe is a reaction to Bode’s charge that Morelli confused Leonardo with Matteo de’ Predis, an instance also related in the main text in the Borghese section on Ambrogio de’ Predis. Preceding this, in the Leonardo da Vinci section, Morelli notes “As Dr. Bode’s estimate of the Italian masters differs so widely from mine, it will scarcely surprise my readers to learn that I can only regard the drawing of a female head in the Borghese gallery…which he ascribes…to Leonardo, as the production of some inferior imitator of Bernardino de’ Conti.” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 181, 177.
Frenchman, a Russian, or an Italian” imploring the reader not to think that “because I cannot always agree with the directors of galleries in their estimate and attribution of Italian pictures, I must of necessity be systematically opposed to them” here Morelli outright characterizes their intellectual tendencies as “diametrically opposed.” In doing so, he expands the conflict from attributions to the entire system of thought. The small section in the Dresden Preface aside, the rest of Morelli’s text operates on an agenda set out to drive home his opposition on a fundamental, methodological and systematic level.

As with Bode, throughout the gallery sections of Critical Studies Morelli points out “wrong” attributions made by Crowe and Cavalcaselle. In the scheme of dichotomies outlined above, Crowe and Cavalcaselle are bundled with Bode and unscientific German scholarship. Though Morelli does not outright expand his conflict over specific attributions with Crowe and Cavalcaselle to a systematic level, never locating his disagreement with them in their use of documentary evidence, in the above quotation he does write that Bode accuses him of characterizing their writings as “misleading,” the same word he used to describe documentary evidence. He does disparage documentary evidence and the “fungus-growth of tradition,” which clouds judgment and distracts from the work of art itself. By association, therefore, by bundling Crowe and Cavalcaselle with Bode and German scholarship, which favors documentary evidence, he makes an indirect critique of

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116 Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 2 [9].

117 A glance at the index of Critical Studies, vol. 1 reveals that Crowe and Cavalcaselle are cited many times for “wrong” attributions.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s use of documentary evidence in their work. On another level, when he critiques the administration of museums and restoration work, he indirectly but obviously criticizes Cavalcaselle specifically, who held a governmental position as inspector general of the Italian galleries.\textsuperscript{119}

Importantly, however, this indirect criticism is located in “Principles and Method.” Throughout the gallery sections of the text, references to Crowe and Cavalcaselle do not explain why their attributions were wrong, only that Morelli disagrees (and very occasionally agrees) with them.\textsuperscript{120} In the gallery sections, Morelli’s issue with Crowe and Cavalcaselle is not method, but attributions.

In the 1883 English version of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin volume, however, Morelli does clearly state his issue with the pair in terms of method, writing in the preface:

The reason of such different opinions lies essentially in my method of study, which deviates from that of the distinguished critics I have named. My views and my judgment on the different painters are based solely on the study of their works, and not only of one work, or of a few, but of all that I could possibly examine. Again, apart from historical data, there is not much that I have gleaned from books, having come very early to the conclusion that there is but little to be learnt from books on art, —nay, that most of them blunt and paralyze our taste for a true living knowledge of art, rather than quicken and refine it. This repugnance to a bookish study of art is probably the reason why my researches sometimes lead to other conclusions than those of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} Gibson-Wood, 184.

\textsuperscript{120} In the Doria-Pamphili section he simply says “The view of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle...that some of these portraits are by Girolamo Genga is inadmissible. There is not a trace of this painter’s manner in any one of the twenty-nine pictures, and moreover the series was probably already complete in 1476, the year of Genga’s birth.” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 251, n.2. He also makes comments such as “it is extraordinary that Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Titian's biographers, should have attributed this beautiful woman of indescribable charm, and of a distinctly Titianesque type, to that much coarser painter Pordenone.” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 307.

\textsuperscript{121} Morelli, \textit{Italian Masters in German Galleries}, vi.
In this passage, Morelli locates his issue with Crowe and Cavalcaselle in their method of study, specifically their opinion of which materials of art history are useful.

However, this passage is confused by a comment in the first portion of the Venetian section of the Munich Gallery section. In the 1880 version of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries (which was essentially reprinted verbatim in the 1890 volume), Morelli advises students to examine paintings uninfluenced by the opinions of others, presumably written opinions. Contradicting his assertion in the preface that Crowe and Cavalcaselle are “bookish,” Morelli counts Crowe and Cavalcaselle among the ranks of scholars who do not consult others’ opinions. Thus, when he refers to their bookishness, he must be referring to their use of archival documents and related materials. However, he seems to indicate that he also uses such materials, to get “historical data.” From this, we can conclude that Morelli was disparaging their bookishness in so far as it impeded or replaced their practice of looking.

Between the 1880 volume on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries and *Critical Studies*, the clarity of Morelli’s position toward Crowe and Cavalcaselle is obscured. The focus of the 1891 Munich and Dresden volume shifts from them to German critics. In the preface to that edition, Morelli dispenses with his discussion of Crowe and Cavalcaselle altogether, instead addressing criticism of the 1880 publication. Though at first he does not identify the critics of his work, he eventually terms them “my opponents at Berlin and Paris,” emphasizing the Berlin critics further by referencing his “numerous opponents at Berlin.”

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122 Morelli, *Critical Studies*, vol. 2, [7, 8].
The idea of a scientific connoisseurship, first expounded in the 1880 publication, is further developed in Critical Studies to emphasize the contrast between Morelli’s method and that of German scholarship. This occurs along with a replacement of the term “intuition” with “general impression.” Returning to the Morelli-Bode contrast, passages in the prefaces of the Borghese and Dresden volumes support the idea that the term “scientific” was applied rhetorically by both sides of the argument. Noting, “It does not require much foresight to predict, that the confusion resulting from such conflicting opinions about the same pictures must be disastrous to the study of Italian art,” Morelli suggests that a neutral arbiter settle disputed attributions between Morelli and Bode. “Whatever be their verdict,” he says, “we may console ourselves with the thought that the scientific study of art, which we both have so much at heart, will eventually be furthered by these means.” In this breakdown of the dichotomy he has constructed, Morelli emphasizes their common interest in the “scientific study of art.” In the Preface to the Dresden volume, he

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123 Gibson-Wood indicates that there is a shift to the term “general impression” in the later publications from the term “intuition.” Asking why Otto Mündler made so many mistakes, in the Munich Introduction of the 1880 German language version of the volume on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries, Morelli uses the word “Intuitionsgabe” to describe Mündler’s connoisseurship. Lermoljeff, Die Werke italienischer, 2. In the 1883 English version he writes, “In my opinion these are traceable to the fact that while Mündler relied solely on his fine memory and marvelous gift of intuition, he followed no regular method in his researches.” Morelli, Italian Masters in German Galleries, 2. In Critical Studies, vol. 2, the first sentence reads, “It was, I think, because he pursued no method in his studies, but was wont to be guided solely by the general impression produced upon him by a picture, relying too implicitly on his instinct and his truly prodigious memory.” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 2, 1-2.

124 Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, [47-8].

125 Ibid., [48].
characterizes Berlin as “the centre of the scientific study of art,” though he may be doing so sarcastically. Perhaps most shockingly, in the Dresden preface he writes,

Now let me ask any unprejudiced reader, who may have glanced at my unpretending writings, whether on one single page of my ‘Critical Studies’ I have ever claimed for them the rank of a scientific treatise? To have done so would have been simply ludicrous on my part. As it happens, however, I took every opportunity of impressing upon my reader that the experimental method was only to be regarded as an aid in determining the authors of works of art—an aid, that is to say, to connoisseurship—and that in time it might come to serve as a more solid basis for that science of art-criticism which we all alike desire to see established.127

This and the other instances quoted, however, are small slips in the otherwise consistent association Morelli crafts between “scientific” practice and his method, “non-scientific” practice and the German school. Because Morelli sets up most of his text in a dialectical way, it is his writing that assumes the “scientific” weight—when in reality it appears, from his comments in the prefaces of the Borghese and Dresden volumes, Gibson-Wood’s study, and opinions of the work of Crowe and Cavalcaselle, that his work is nestled within a broader trend towards more a more “scientific” (or empirical, observational) study of art at the time. This is further corroborated by Morelli’s comment in the preface to the Dresden volume that “some of the most persistent among my numerous opponents at Berlin condemned my interpretation of the history of Italian art as unscientific,”128 implying that those critics held a reverse view of the dichotomy, considering their own scholarship scientific and Morelli’s as unscientific.

126 Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 2, [8].

127 Ibid., [10].

128 Ibid., [8].
In light of this, Morelli’s efforts to strongly associate his “experimental method” with “science” are revealed as a response to criticism that his attributions (his “interpretation of the history of Italian art”) were not scientific and an effort to simultaneously de-legitimize methods that involved the study of documentary evidence (i.e., Cavalcaselle’s preferred method). Despite Morelli’s assertion that he never claimed scientific status for his method, in his continued association of it with science in Critical Studies he was producing a well-founded reason justifying his denial of others’ opinions. Perhaps no one could hear Morelli’s cry that he did not outright claim to practice scientific art-criticism over his persistent shouts, disguised as implicit association in the rest of his text, that his method was scientific.

Though in his text he boils down his intellectual relationship with Bode to a neat, black and white opposition, in fact Morelli’s attitude toward Germany was complicated. As noted, Morelli’s intellectual formation took place in Germany. He held Germany in some regard, choosing to publish Critical Studies in German first, “primarily because he felt he had a larger audience there of serious students of art history, including many with whom he disagreed” (though he also did it for the money). Yet at the same time he faulted Germans, even close and respected friends like Otto Mündler, for what he considered wrong, sometimes stupid, attributions.

Returning to the fundamental issue of disagreement over attributions, though Morelli couched his disagreement with the German school in terms of method, an

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130 Ibid., 190. Gibson-Wood says that Morelli attributed German shortcomings to race, egotism, and “of course, want of method.”
1868 letter to Layard about Mündler does not discuss method of looking, focusing instead on the results (the “wrong” attributions).\textsuperscript{132} Later, in an 1883 letter to Layard he expresses what Gibson-Wood terms “a more canonically Morellian” sentiment when he says that German professors did not study art with method (his method, presumably), but rather the “caprice of the moment.”\textsuperscript{133} This caprice of the moment is equivalent to the “general impression” or “intuition” denigrated throughout \textit{Critical Studies}. Thus, as Gibson-Wood notes, though he displayed a love-hate relationship with German scholarship from an early period, method was not a primary concern for Morelli until later, around the time that he began publishing his views on the Italian and German galleries.\textsuperscript{134} This emerges as an important distinction that supports the idea that Morelli’s conflicts with Bode and Cavalcaselle were not methodological initially but became so in his published texts. Morelli’s continuing criticism of German intellectuals morphed from a criticism of results to one that included method of looking as well. Thus, the elaborate construction of method in Morelli’s texts is revealed as a strategy in his quest to justify his attributions over Bode’s and

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\textsuperscript{131} Ibid. In addition, as noted previously, in the introduction to the Munich gallery section, Morelli notes regarding Otto Mündler, “Why, then, did he, with his fine perception and his passion for art, occasionally commit such palpable mistakes? It was, I think, because he pursued no method in his studies, but was wont to be guided solely by the general impression produced upon him by a picture, relying too implicitly on his instinct and his truly prodigious memory.” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 2, 1-2.

\textsuperscript{132} Morelli to Layard from Vienna, 7 October 1868, British Museum, Layard MSS, Add MSS 38963 fol. 87, quoted in Gibson-Wood, 190. Translation mine.

\textsuperscript{133} Morelli to Layard from Milan, 6 August 1883, British Museum, Layard MSS, Add MSS 38964 fol. 87, quoted in Gibson-Wood, 225. Translation mine.

\textsuperscript{134} Gibson-Wood, 225. She also notes that after verbalizing his views in his publications, he began citing characteristic formal details in his correspondence with Layard and Richter, something he had not done prior to publishing his articles and books. She notes, “the ideas there expressed took on a new authority for him and he began more consciously to apply the methods he had described.” Ibid., 233.
\end{flushright}
Cavalcaselle’s conclusions, with the emphasis shifting to Bode and German scholarship between the publications of the 1880 text and Critical Studies.\textsuperscript{135} If, then, Morelli’s core impulse was to put forth reattributions, the question arises, why did he feel the need to do so? It has already been noted that the appearance of others’ attributional opinions spurred Morelli to publish his own corrections. In addition to attributions put forth by individuals like Bode, though, Morelli was deeply troubled by misattributions in museum catalogues.\textsuperscript{136} Hinted at in the stated format of Critical Studies (a book centered on specific collections of art), the formation and management of collections, both public and private, was as a major issue.

Before being an art critic Morelli was first and foremost an Italian patriot. Politics were in essence his day job and art criticism his other life passion, though the two did cross over as when Morelli served on commissions on the exportation of paintings from Italy and when he undertook a government survey with Cavalcaselle of paintings in public collections in Umbria and the Marches.\textsuperscript{137} On his trips, both on

\textsuperscript{135} In the preface to the Borghese volume, Morelli notes “if, in course of time, it is evident that my attributions are incorrect, the blame will attach to me alone; if, on the other hand, they stand the test and prove sound, the merit will be due to me—that is to say, to the experimental method which I recommend.” Morelli, preface to Critical Studies, vol. 1, [43]. In the preface to the Dresden volume, he says “the method of study which I have recommended must not, however, be held responsible for the mistakes which I made ten years ago. On the contrary, in nearly every instance where I have been misled in forming a judgment upon a picture, I had either misapplied the method or had not made use of it at all. Of course, however, I do not pretend to say that it is infallible, for in no branch of science is there any infallible method.” Morelli, preface to Critical Studies, vol. 2, [9].

\textsuperscript{136} In his “Introduction” to the Borghese and Doria-Pamphili volume written in 1891, A.H. Layard described the situation: “It is difficult to conceive what this ignorance was—and in some instances still is. Spurious works and manifest copies were ascribed to the greatest masters. No distinction was made between the different schools of painting. Pictures, whose authors would have been evident to the merest connoisseur, were attributed to painters with whom in manner they had no connection whatever, and who belonged to entirely different schools. The student sought in vain for instruction; and the public was only misled.” A.H. Layard, “Introduction,” in Critical Studies, vol. 1, [16].
his own or part of official business as was his trip with Cavalcaselle, Morelli’s chief concern when studying a collection was the “correctness of labeling.” He was constantly frustrated by what he saw as the inept administration of Italian public galleries. Gibson-Wood suggests that this is both a symptom of and a factor in his political disagreements with Cavalcaselle, who later held an official position in the public gallery system. To begin, the two men came from opposing political parties, Morelli a moderate royalist who followed Cavour and Cavalcaselle at one point a supporter of the revolutionary Mazzini. They further clashed on policies regarding the export of Italian art, Cavalcaselle advocating for stricter regulations. This political opposition may have contributed to Morelli’s decision to almost blanket disagree with Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s attributions, though certainly it would not have been the only or even the driving factor.

In addition, Morelli harbored strong feelings about the work of certain museum and gallery directors, taking issue above all with the inaccuracy of attributions assigned by those directors. This inaccuracy was of national consequence. Morelli’s aforementioned inventory trip with Cavalcaselle arose out of a growing concern regarding the sale of paintings and sculpture from public Italian

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137 Gibson-Wood, 125, 180.
138 Ibid., 189.
139 Ibid., 183.
140 Ibid., 182.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 189.
institutions.¹⁴³ Outside of the textual realm where Italian paintings existed in list form they were desirable, collectible objects that were, in the later half of the nineteenth century, being snatched up in a buying frenzy. This surge in acquisitions in was tied to political concerns, with countries building up national collections, not of their own national art, but of Italian Renaissance paintings.¹⁴⁴

Jaynie Anderson suggests that Morelli’s activities as a connoisseur grew out of his patriotic response to the threat other countries posed to Italian artistic patrimony and in the context of his political activities working on laws to prevent the exportation of Italian paintings.¹⁴⁵ In particular, German museums posed a serious threat from the 1870s onward. In 1872 an alarmed Morelli wrote to his cousin, Giovanni Melli, that a significant amount of money had been allocated to German museums for the express purpose of purchasing Italian artwork.¹⁴⁶ Their funds had increased sevenfold, and with that came an aggressive acquisitions policy preceded only by that of the National Gallery of London under Sir Charles Eastlake.¹⁴⁷ At first it seems odd that Morelli would feel threatened by German museum acquisition policy and not England’s, given the tenacity of both. It would seem even odder that despite his political work to keep Italian art in Italy, he acted as an advisor/dealer to Eastlake and subsequent directors of the National Gallery of London, among other

¹⁴³ Ibid., 180.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 110.
¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 108.
¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
foreign collectors including the German Royal family."\textsuperscript{148} However, as Layard explains, “Morelli’s opposition to the exportation of art works related only to the sale of works from religious and other public institutions, not from private collections, except in cases involving extremely rare or valuable pieces.”\textsuperscript{149} Anderson describes Morelli’s dealings with the English collectors as a complicated balancing act. As she elaborates, though some later Italian scholars (who she declines to name, though she may be referring to Donata Levi) have called him unpatriotic for his dealings with the English, at a point when Italian museums had little funding and the government was preoccupied with other issues.\textsuperscript{150} Morelli created collections of important works for his Italian friends. Anderson, using Morelli’s letters to his cousin Giovanni Melli as primary source documents, paints Morelli as an advisor guiding both foreign and Italian collectors with the goal of preserving and protecting Italian heritage at the forefront. That which he sold to foreign collectors, even his friends, was of a lesser quality and more intended to promote the study of the regional schools of Italian painting abroad.\textsuperscript{151} This may also have to do with Morelli’s personal interests: as Madeline Lennon notes in her essay on Morelli’s influence in the formation of Layard’s personal collection, Morelli saw himself as a teacher and preferred the role

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 116.

\textsuperscript{149} Gibson-Wood, 177.


\textsuperscript{151} Anderson, \textit{Collecting Connoisseurship}, 36. In addition, A.H. Layard indicates in his introduction to the 1890-1 publication of \textit{Critical Studies} that Morelli thought highly of the National Gallery in London, considering it “the most complete in Europe in the representation of the Italian schools of painting, and consequently the most instructive to the student.” Layard, “Introduction,” [20]. The reason for his high approval was that he himself played a large role in guiding the formation of the collection.
of mentor.\textsuperscript{152} Still, Morelli’s recommendations for acquisitions were not necessarily made with the underlying motive of exposing the public to the history of Italian art. He recommended purchases intended for private collections, which presumably would be seen by few people except when exhibited publicly in special exhibitions. These collections served to educate the collectors, and, importantly to Morelli, to at least preserve the works of art.\textsuperscript{153} In contrast to Jaynie Anderson, Donata Levi portrays the art market of the mid nineteenth century as “a situation fraught with ambiguousness and double-dealing.”\textsuperscript{154} She regards Morelli’s increasing involvement in the international art market, particularly advising the staff of the London National Gallery and British private collectors in the 1860s as a sign of his “liberal attitude” in offering help to the British cause of collecting Italian art.\textsuperscript{155}

Thus, Morelli’s patriotism should not be taken as a singular and uncomplicated driving force behind his actions, but part of a complex interaction of nationalistic and personal forces. The same can be said of Cavalcaselle’s patriotism. After all, both he and Morelli spent significant time outside of Italy, Morelli as a student and Cavalcaselle in exile after his participation in the 1848 revolt against Austrian forces. Both also traveled extensively and formed close working relationships and friendships with British and German connoisseurs. Alliances were not always straightforwardly nationalistic; for example, Otto Mündler, who was

\textsuperscript{152} Madeline Lennon, “Morelli and the Layard Collection: Influence as intellectual exchange,” in Giovanni Morelli e la cultura dei conoscitori, 245.

\textsuperscript{153} The preservation argument was also used by British officials to justify “depriving” the young state of Italy of its artistic heritage. Levi, “‘Let agents be sent to all the cities of Italy,’ ” 33.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 44.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
German, acted as Eastlake’s traveling agent in the 1850s, procuring works of art for a British institution.

Nonetheless, Morelli’s underlying patriotism, however ambivalent, is key to an understanding of Morelli’s relationship with Bode. Morelli more or less had a handle, sometimes a loose grasp, over English collecting, because those collectors were his friends largely under the sway of his advice. German museum collecting, on the other hand, was operating under an aggressive acquisitions policy he did not have direct control over. Likewise, Bode was irritated that Morelli advised the German royal family on their art collection. Thus, as Anderson points out, Morelli and Bode had a less than cordial relationship not because of differences over method, but rather because of a conflict over which nations would have certain works of art. This is exemplified in a quarrel regarding versions of Botticelli’s Portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici: the version in Morelli’s collection “appeared to be the original until Bode bought a version for Berlin. Continual squabbles over which version was a copy followed, until 1942 when the archetype surfaced, now in the National Gallery of Washington, and generally regarded as ‘the original.’” In this example especially, questions of attribution and the antagonistic relationship bolstered in Critical Studies between Morelli and Bode are revealed as deeply embedded in the nationalistic desire to possess genuine Italian Old Masters. Method can be seen as a symptom of this disagreement, a weapon used in a tug-of-war over national treasures.

It was important to possess these objects and exercise control over who could have which ones because in fact, the creation of a collection is an interpretive act, and


157 Ibid., 112-13.
the stakes of this interpretation are high. Despite Morelli’s stringent efforts to oppose himself to aesthetic analysis of paintings, the aesthetic element was extremely important as an indicator of value. Properly attributing high quality paintings to known masters was an act of creating a value-laden aesthetic idea of the Italian past. This area is perhaps another locus of Morelli’s disagreement with Cavalcaselle’s attributions. Incorrect attributions give the wrong idea of the history of art, denying some artists and schools the merit they deserve or diluting their excellence with poor-quality school works or imitations. Using letters to Layard, Gibson-Wood describes Morelli’s disagreement with Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s view of the history of painting\footnote{Gibson-Wood, 209.} which to him is superficial, perhaps lacking “that total familiarity with regional character which he regards as crucial“\footnote{Ibid., 215.} for his biological-environmental view on the evolution of schools being tied to regional environment. Wrong attributions would misrepresent the distinct characters of the different regions of Italy. This understanding of the history of art as akin to natural history\footnote{Ibid., 211. Richter’s description of Morellian practice is a clearer explanation of Morelli’s idea of this “organic” history of art. Richter speaks of a new scientific school “which takes its start from the fact that in Italy local schools of painting not only existed independently of each other, but that also they made progress until they reached the summit according to the law of natural growth or evolution.” Gibson-Wood, 217.} ties back to the dichotomy in Critical Studies between the scientific and non-scientific study of art, adding a new pair of oppositions: Morelli’s organic understanding of the history of art and the superficial understanding exemplified by Crowe and Cavalcaselle that stands with the Germanic school reliant on the superficial general impression.

\footnote{Gibson-Wood, 209.}
\footnote{Ibid., 215.}
\footnote{Ibid., 211.}

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On the nationalistic level, collections of paintings communicated something about the identity of the possessors of those works of art. For Morelli as an Italian to present a collection of artworks constituting a history of Italian Renaissance painting was to present the greatness of his own country. It was also an opportunity to define that country, which was at that very moment going through the process of unification. The desire to export the greatness of Italy via the historical idea of the country is perhaps the impetus behind his work to educate other countries (such as England) on the history of Italian art by manipulating their acquisitions. On the other end, those same foreign countries, by importing the history of Italian art via those meaningful groupings of objects, sought to gain cultural capital by tapping into the connotations of taste and culture that went along with those objects. In acquiring Italian paintings, they were appropriating the history of Italian art as a humanist ideal represented by the Renaissance that they could connect back to and make their own.162

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162 This tendency is exemplified in the activities of the Pre-Raphaelites and related artists active in England in the mid-nineteenth century, who appropriated early Renaissance painting as their muse and model.
Chapter II
Berenson

I: Definitions and uses of method

Unlike Morelli, Bernard Berenson\(^{163}\) came to connoisseurship early and with a keen awareness of who and what had come before him in the field. In marked contrast to Morelli’s comment in “Principles and Method” that “it would be simply ludicrous if a youth of twenty or twenty-four were to say: ‘I am going to be an art-critic, or perhaps even an art historian,’” Bernard did just that.\(^{164}\) In an oft-quoted incident that took place in Bergamo in 1890, sitting at a “rickety table outside a café in the lower town of Bergamo,” he pointed out to his friend and fellow connoisseur Enrico Costa,

Nobody before us has dedicated his entire activity, his entire life to connoisseurship…We shall give ourselves up to learning, to distinguish between the authentic works of an Italian painter of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, and those commonly ascribed to him…We must not stop until we are sure that every Lotto is a Lotto, every Cariani a Cariani, every Santacroce a Santacroce.\(^{165}\)

More importantly, also unlike Morelli, method was a concern for Bernard from the very beginning.

It was Morelli’s method in particular that inspired Bernard in the early stages of his career and it is with Morelli that Berensonian connoisseurship has remained

\(^{163}\) From here on, I will often refer to Berenson by his first and last names or by first name. I do this in order to distinguish him from his wife, Mary. This is also an attempt to set them on equal footing: women are usually referred to using first names and men using the last name only (Bill and Hillary Clinton, for example). For more on Mary’s role, see note 177.

\(^{164}\) Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 15.

\(^{165}\) Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 105.
associated in later scholarship. The incident quoted above occurred after he visited
Morelli for the first time. The two did not strike up a master-pupil relationship,
however, and Morelli died the next year. Rather, Bernard befriended Morelli’s two
disciples Jean-Paul Richter, who had introduced him to Morelli, and Gustavo
Frizzoni.  

Bernard’s primary entrée to Morellian method was thus through conversation
with Morelli’s friends and by reading Critical Studies. Before their brief meeting,
Bernard had already read both volumes of Critical Studies, even gaining access to the
advance sheets of the Roman volume through his friendship with Richter. As soon
as the German language version of the Roman volume was published in December
1889, he purchased it and wrote an unpublished review of it. As related in Ernest
Samuels’ biography, Bernard “declared that although Morelli was unknown to the
great mass of Americans his ‘services to the science of pictures are greater than
Wincklemann’s to antique sculpture or Darwin’s to biology.’” Discussing the Caen
Spozalizio, which Morelli attributed to Raphael, as an example, he went on to
conjecture how Morelli would analyze the painting, noting that Morelli would cite
details such as the “bulging fleshy palms.” To Berenson, Morelli’s method was not
“a mere reduction of a work to ‘accidental minutiae of dirty nails and queer ears and
quirks...’” nor a mechanical system, but a method by which one could “learn the

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166 See chapter 1, notes 24 and 28 for more information on Richter and Frizzoni.
168 Ibid., 101.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., 102.
style of the old masters, to distinguish accurately one from another and to assign the many lost sheep that still stray about the walls of the galleries to their right owners.”

In this review, Bernard shows an awareness and interest in Morelli’s “method” as such, referencing anatomical characteristics like “bulging fleshy palms,” and picking up the association of Morelli’s method with “science.” However, the fact that the review remained unpublished is significant. During the late 1880s, Bernard embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe with the intent of becoming a man of culture. In addition to frequenting cultural events—particularly the opera—and seeking out intellectual conversation, he spent much of his time visiting museums. In England he met his future wife, lifelong companion, and scholarly collaborator Mary, who was then married to Frank Costelloe, an Anglo-Irish barrister. Mary came from a progressive Philadelphia family of Quakers; both of her parents were well-known preachers and her mother was a feminist. She attended Smith and the Harvard “Annex,” or the “Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women,” which later became Radcliffe College. During her marriage to Costelloe, she was active in

171 Ibid., 102.

172 After graduating with a degree in linguistics from Harvard University in 1887, Berenson applied for a Parker Travelling Fellowship with the hope of becoming a literary critic. He was denied, but several of his influential Boston friends, among them Isabella Stewart Gardner—later an important friend and client—sponsored his year abroad. On June 18, 1887, Berenson set off for Europe, where one year abroad was to grow to over seven before he finally set foot on US soil again. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 51.


175 Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 110.
politics and wrote extensively about women’s rights.\textsuperscript{176} Upon meeting Bernard, she became more interested in thinking and writing about art. The two explored museums in France and Germany together and scoured Italian churches for masterpieces. Using Morelli’s \textit{Critical Studies} among other books such as the Baedecker guide, they built up an extensive firsthand knowledge of Italian Renaissance art. Because of the symbiotic nature of their scholarship, the terms “Berensonian connoisseurship” or “the Berensons” are best suited to refer to their collaborative work.\textsuperscript{177}

From late 1889 onward, Bernard the wandering aesthete began to transform into Bernard the art expert. By November 1890, he had more or less made Florence a home base.\textsuperscript{178} After the money for his planned year abroad ran out, he managed to secure stipends from other friends such as Charles Loeser, a fellow connoisseur with whom Berenson eventually had a great falling-out.\textsuperscript{179} By December of 1891, Mary

\textsuperscript{176} Ibíd., 65.

\textsuperscript{177} The joint nature of the Berensons’ work is an important feature of their written output. Though all of their publications carry only one of their names, especially in the early years these works derived from a collaborative study. The level of independence of Mary’s scholarship is debatable, however. Mary Ann Calo does not regard her as an independent scholar in her own right. Mary Ann Calo, \textit{Bernard Berenson and the Twentieth Century} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 22. In the 1890s, Mary did more writing about art than she did later in life, after her marriage to Bernard in 1900. This writing often served as a defense, justification, or explanation of Bernard’s work. As the years passed, her role became more and more administrative, both of Berenson’s work and home. However, this viewpoint of Mary as Berenson’s primary support system, though truthful, denies the discursive nature of their relationship. I accord her a more important position and see her essays as equally if not more important sources about Berenson’s connoisseurship. This is also the reason I sometimes use the terms “Berensonian connoisseurship” or “the Berensons’ connoisseurship” rather than “Berenson’s connoisseurship,” because I feel the former are more encompassing of Mary’s contribution. In doing so, for simplicity’s sake I refer to Mary as a “Berenson” even when discussing work executed in the period before her marriage to Bernard. For more on Mary’s role, see Tiffany Latham Johnston, “Mary Berenson and the Conception of Connoisseurship” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2001).

\textsuperscript{178} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 127.

\textsuperscript{179} Loeser and Berenson had been allies at Harvard; Loeser earned a master’s degree in philosophy in 1887. In the summer of 1889 he, too, was putting his roots down in Florence. Ibíd., 93.
had joined him in a separate residence.\textsuperscript{180} He began sharing his knowledge, giving lecture tours in museums mostly to older ladies in Florence and at the National Gallery in London. He and Mary, who brought organization to the endeavor by taking notes and making lists of paintings and places they visited, roved over Europe changing attributions wherever they went, sometimes to the chagrin of private collectors who were upset to have their paintings dethroned.\textsuperscript{181}

That the upsetting aspect of the Berensons’ connoisseurship at this point was attributions is a key point, for during this period Bernard had not yet published anything substantial and his connoisseurship remained practical rather than theoretical. Part of this may be due to the trouble he had with writing. Though Berenson’s knowledge was extensive and he had no problems communicating it in the form of letters to family and friends, and despite the fact that he had once hoped to become a writer, he had difficulty connecting writing and connoisseurship. In a letter “Michael” of “Michael Field,” an aunt and niece who wrote poetry under one pen name, Berenson relayed “As to my scribbling, that also is purely domestic. I am writing a little for practice, and much because it helps me think.”\textsuperscript{182} But this worried him, for at times he felt his diligent practice writing got in the way of his looking. He later remarked, resenting the obligation to produce publishable written work, “If only I could feel that my sole function in life was growth I should be the happiest of

\textsuperscript{180} Barbara Strachey and Jayne Samuels, ed.,\textit{ Mary Berenson: A Self-Portrait from her Letters and Diaries} (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), 46.

\textsuperscript{181} Samuels,\textit{ The Making of a Connoisseur}, 138-9.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 149.
mortal.” It was largely due to Mary’s influence that Berenson started to effectively write about art. During the early period of Mary and Bernard’s collaboration, they mostly produced shorter articles. Both had experience publishing in magazines, Bernard having published in the *Harvard Monthly* and trying and failing to sell stories during his first years abroad to other magazines and Mary having published articles on feminist issues in periodicals like the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Home Reading Union* before meeting Berenson as well as continuing to publish articles such as “The Woman Question in Novels” during the first years of her relationship with him. In general, writing came easier to Mary than it did to Bernard. Their intellectual relationship at this point was marked by Mary’s pressure on Bernard to produce written work—part of her lifelong role as the one consistently more concerned with maintaining their income and affluence—and Bernard’s struggle to do so.

At this stage of experiential rather than theoretical connoisseurship, though keenly interested in Morelli and consciously adopting his method, method at this stage was not an interest for Berenson in its own right. He seems to have been interested in method in so far as it was a practical tool. The main issue was the attributions themselves, and the little published writing about art that emerged from this early period focused on the correction of erroneous labeling. For example, during their travels Bernard and Mary researched together for a catalogue of the collection of Italian paintings at Hampton Court in London, a project Mary had taken on beginning in early 1891 to correct the errors of the official catalogue. Bernard’s *Venetian

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183 Ibid., 159.
184 Ibid., 116.
Painters of the Renaissance (1894), which was begun in 1892 and was also one of Mary’s projects, was similarly unconcerned with method, consisting of an essay on the spirit of the Renaissance as embodied in Venetian painting and lists of works by major Venetian masters. Method is only mentioned briefly in the preface when Morelli and the buzzword “scientific” are invoked to explain the origins of the attributions in the lists.\footnote{186}{Ibid., 137. As noted, during this early period, Mary and Bernard’s writing was as entwined as their study and romantic involvement. Where one began and the other ended was ambiguous. The Hampton Court booklet was eventually published under her name only, due to the necessarily secretive nature of their collaboration given that Mary was still married to Costelloe. Berenson’s first book, The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance (1893) was begun in 1892 and germinated from an article Mary had written on Venetian painting in Vienna. This was published under his name only, again because of the social delicacy of their situation. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 172, 169.}

The notion of method becomes expressed in the Berensons’ writing beginning in 1894, arising as a central concern for a variety of reasons. To begin, Venetian Painters put forth attributions not in congruence with accepted assignments, and explaining the method by which those reattributions were arrived at served to justify them. In addition, while working on Venetian Painters and various other articles, Bernard had also been writing a monograph on Lorenzo Lotto. He asked Vernon Lee,\footnote{187}{When he says, “the attributions are based on the results of the most recent research,” he means the research of Morelli. “Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have been superseded,” he says, “and to a great degree supplemented by the various writings of Morelli, Richter, Frizzoni, and others.” Bernard Berenson, Venetian Painters of the Renaissance (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894), ix.} a fellow Anglo-American expatriate turned Anglo-Florentine, for a critique of his draft. She returned the devastating verdict that Bernard was completely lacking in literary prowess and that he was far more suited to work of the “scientific sort.”\footnote{188}{Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v. "Lee, Vernon," (Edwina Burness), http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T050010 (accessed April 11, 2010). Vernon Lee is the pseudonym of Violet Paget (1856-1935), a British-born but Continent-educated novelist and art critic who ran in (and sometimes ran) the same circles Berenson moved among.}
Along those lines she encouraged him to put his understanding of the “scientific”
method of connoisseurship down in writing. 189

Out of the uneasiness over new attributions and Vernon Lee’s criticism came
two essays describing method. The first was a “fragmentary” essay Berenson wrote
detailing method as a procedure for studying a work of art entitled “Rudiments of
Connoisseurship,” intended as the beginning of a larger, unfinished book on
aesthetics that was ultimately published in the second volume of The Study and
Criticism of Italian Art series in 1902. The second was an essay Mary wrote for the
general public, “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” which was published in the
May 1894 issue of the British periodical Nineteenth Century and describes the basics
of “scientific criticism.” Because of their overlap in timing, it is important to look at
these two essays together.

“Rudiments” is a straightforward explanation of what Bernard terms the
“Science of connoisseurship.” Unlike Morelli’s “Principles and Method,” it does not
present any viewpoint but Bernard’s own and the entire text is dedicated to the
exposition of how to study art. First, he takes the reader through what he calls the “the
materials for the historical study of art,” 190 which are contemporary documents,
tradition, or writings like Vasari’s Lives, and the works of art themselves, explaining
the merits and faults of each and rehashing Morelli’s point that the work of art is the


189 As Samuels quotes, Berenson wrote to one of his sisters “that Vernon Lee ‘thinks I have a far
clearer and deeper understanding of the laws governing the methods of criticism than anybody has ever
had before and she is anxious that I should write it all down and get credit for it.’” Samuels, The
Making of a Connoisseur, 175.

190 Bernard Berenson, “Rudiments of Connoisseurship,” in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 2nd
only reliable material of study. Differentiating the history of art from general history, he asserts:

All that remains of an event in the general history is the account of it in document or tradition; but in art, the work of art itself is the event, and the only adequate source of information about the event, any other information, particularly if of the merely literary kind, being utterly incapable of conveying an idea of the precise nature and value of the event in art.

He then delves into the specifics of the tests to be applied to what he identifies as the “problem,” which is, for example, “the Venetian school…how it originated, how it ripened to maturity, how it decayed, and what were its characteristics in all those phases.”

Here, in identifying the problem as such, Bernard departs from Morelli: while Morelli made the correction of misattributions his primary angle, Bernard makes what is implicit in Morelli’s work (the importance of attributions to the historical interpretation of schools of painting) explicit. Bernard brings the focus back to attributions, though, saying “as the factors in the problem given are pictures, it is of radical importance that each picture be submitted to the severest criticism before it is accepted.”

He then takes the reader through the tests of connoisseurship, elaborating on the “methods of the science [of connoisseurship]” which he defines as “the comparison of works of art with a view to determining their reciprocal relationships.” He says:

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191 Ibid., 120.
192 Ibid., 121.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid., 122.
Connoisseurship is based on the assumption that perfect identity of characteristics indicates identity of origin—an assumption, in its turn, based on the definition of characteristics as those features that distinguish one artist from another.\footnote{Ibid.}

The characteristics Bernard describes are largely those Morelli had identified throughout \textit{Critical Studies}, but Bernard elaborates on Morelli’s outline by describing the process of looking in more detail. He advises the reader to first seek out affinities, then to focus on differences. This is part of the process of narrowing the scope of the research from school to individual artist. While several factors, like “types of the faces, the compositions, the groupings, and the general tone,”\footnote{Ibid.} are good indicators of school and might point to a certain artist, for fine analysis capable of distinguishing between an original and a “clever copy”\footnote{Ibid., 124.} morphological study is necessary. The morphological characteristics mentioned are those that Morelli had indicated, but Bernard departs from him in defining characteristic details as those executed unconsciously, an idea often misattributed to Morelli.\footnote{Ibid., 132-33.} From this discussion, he deems that details can be considered characteristic insofar

…(a) as they are not vehicles of expression; (b) as they do not attract attention; (c) as they are not controlled by fashion; (d) as they allow the formation of habit in their execution; and (e) as they escape imitation and copying, either because of the minuteness of the peculiarity, or of the obscurity of the artist.\footnote{Importantly, Berenson notes, “we must have the patience to examine all the important details separately, with a view to discovering how likely each is to become a characteristic, bearing in mind…that the less necessary the detail in question is for purposes of obvious expression, the less consciously it will be executed, the more by rote, the more likely to become stereotyped, and therefore characteristic.” Bernard Berenson, “Rudiments of Connoisseurship,” 125.}
In the process of codifying Morelli’s method, Bernard undoubtedly made it his own, positioning himself as a developer of Morelli’s ideas. Indeed, in the essay, he elaborates on Morelli’s indications prescribing what to look at by explaining how and why different characteristics are important.

In “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” rather than go into detail as Bernard does in “Rudiments” as to how the method works, Mary, who was writing for a more general audience, explains what the method espoused in “Rudiments” does. To do so she explicitly describes Morelli’s “scientific” method as she understands it, in the process detailing how she and Bernard conceived of their relationship to Morelli. Addressing the purpose of Venetian Painters, she defines scientific connoisseurship as an attempt to correct mistakes in galleries. To begin the essay she takes the reader through several misattributions in the Louvre and the National Gallery of Art in London, mentioning characteristics identified in “Rudiments” such as color, hands, drapery, or hair but without going into “the detailed proofs of authorship.”

She then asks the reader, “but how does it happen…that pictures are so wrongly named?” from then on in effect relating the history of connoisseurship as she sees it. She identifies the origins of the “new method” in large part in “the efforts of the late Senator Morelli, who was the first art-critic who went to work with the aid of photographs to study Italian art in a really scientific way.” Significantly, she

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200 Mary Whitall Costelloe [Mary Berenson], “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” The Nineteenth Century 35, no. 207 (May, 1894): 833. At the Louvre, she focuses first on Raphael, noting that of the fourteen paintings attributed to him, only four should be considered genuine. At the National Gallery in London, she targets paintings ascribed to Botticelli.

201 Ibid.
explains the problems of previous connoisseurship as a lack of technology: except for Morelli, those who had come before, despite their best efforts, lacked the essential tools of “good photographs and quick travel.”

She then asks the questions of “scientific criticism” “In what sense is it new? In what sense is it scientific? [and] What does it add to the enjoyment of art?” In response to her first question, Mary sees “accurate knowledge of the originals” as the new aspect of scientific criticism. Interestingly in light of what has been established here as one of the novelties of Morelli’s method—namely, its scientific pretensions—Mary also sees the method’s scientific association as one of its fresh aspects. In her opinion, “Art is so much of an ‘extra’ in the lives of most people that they can hardly bring themselves to think of it seriously, and the idea of using the two words ‘art’ and ‘science’ in connection seems like a mere paradox.”

In these passages Mary also continues to refine her definition of science, establishing it as something serious and practical. Thus, as she writes, “the novelty…of the new method of art study is that it brings the scientific spirit and the usual scientific criteria to bear upon a subject hitherto left outside the range of science.” This is the same positivistic “scientific spirit” then gaining currency in philology, history, and archeology. This more explicit definition of science connecting it with history, philology and archaeology is important, since in “Rudiments” Bernard leaves this understanding of the term implicit.

202 The role of photographs will be examined in the next chapter; for now it is important that Mary establishes Morelli as the beginning point of scientific connoisseurship.


204 Ibid., 834.

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid., 834-5.
Thus, Mary makes explicit what she sees the “new connoisseurship” doing in relationship both to what had come before in both the field of connoisseurship and the field of science, unlike in “Rudiments,” which does not treat of the history of the discipline. She also explicitly designates the implications and importance of the method, writing that correct attributions are necessary to understand the historical connections “between an artist and his epoch,” information which ultimately constitutes “a part of the autobiography of the human race.”  

“Rudiments” must also be looked at as the framework within which Bernard wrote his subsequent texts of the 1890s. Though in the 1902 preface to The Study and Criticism of Italian Art Bernard explains that rather than develop “Rudiments” further he “thought it wiser to exemplify method in a concrete instance, and wrote my ‘Lotto,’” the fact is that he reworked Lorenzo Lotto, first published in 1895, based on “Rudiments.” Lotto is therefore quite literally a concrete example of the method espoused in “Rudiments.” It is significant that it is in this concrete form of argument rather than its rhetorical form that method is understood beginning with Lotto.

“Method” is a process, a step-by-step argument that proves attributions. It is a silent structural format, not an explicit statement as in Mary’s essays. As Bernard later characterized it in Three Essays in Method, these texts “are essays in Method, not essays on Method [emphasis mine].” The words constitute the method, rather than explain it.

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207 Ibid., 836.
208 Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 2nd ser., vi.
The Introduction to Lotto briefly explains many points of “Rudiments,” though here Bernard places more emphasis on how to identify the relationships between master and pupil using morphological analysis than he does in “Rudiments.” Most importantly, Bernard departs from Morelli in emphasizing the psychological viewpoint, closing the introduction by stating, “the artist is not a botanical but a psychological problem.” Significantly, though the ideas outlined in the introduction are consistent with those in “Rudiments,” the format of presentation is different. The ideas are presented as a key or legend for understanding of the rest of the book, not as an independent essay. The first section of the book consists of a painting-by-painting analysis of works from Lotto’s early years. The second chapter breaks from this formula, a narrative explanation of the artist’s relationships with other artists intended to untangle Lotto’s artistic genealogy, always with the characteristics outlined in “Rudiments” referenced in support of the argument. At times more general characterizations find their way into the argument before the morphological analysis, as in description of a Bonsignori painting in chapter two, where Bernard writes, “Naïf and awkward as this picture is in many respects, it is yet overwhelmingly impressive, the figures towering majestically over the sky-line, and thus producing one of the most cosmic effects in art.” The next five chapters, delineating the different periods of Lotto’s career, consist of introductory remarks followed by painting-by-painting

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211 This includes the location, title, description, material and dimensions, photographer and sometimes engraver, and then the morphological analysis focused on differentiating between Alvise Vivarini, Giovanni Bellini, and Giorgione.

212 Berenson, Lorenzo Lotto, 39.
analysis. Chapter eight is about Lotto’s followers. Chapter nine, entitled “Resulting Impression,” is a summary of why Bernard finds Lotto important and worthy of study.

In Lotto, method in this practical incarnation acts to support Bernard’s attributions by means of detailed, rational argument. However, the conclusions drawn in Lotto are also concretized by Mary’s April 1895 review of the text in The Studio and her August 1895 essay “The New Art Criticism,” which appeared in Atlantic Monthly. “The New Art Criticism” expands on the points of “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” though it more forcefully positions Bernard as an innovator of Morellian methods and places slightly less central emphasis on the role of technology.213 Developing earlier arguments further and in a slightly different direction, in “The New Art Criticism” Mary indicates that while she does not deny that documents have value, her “contention is that for the person whose interest in Italian pictures is artistic, not merely archaeological or technical, the work of art is the first and most necessary object of study.”214 In saying this, she pushes the method, or “new criticism” beyond its empirical, scientific association by distinguishing between an artistic/critical interest in art and the archaeological/technical interest, the latter of which had been associated with the scientific characterization of the method in “The New and Old Criticism.” However, important to note is that she does this while

213 Mary Logan [Mary Berenson], “The New Art Criticism,” Atlantic Monthly 76, no. 454 (August, 1895). In particular, she develops the concept of “artistic personality,” eschewing further discussion of the role of photography in connoisseurship. Whereas in “The New and the Old Art Criticism” she had noted the fallibility of memory, in “The New Art Criticism” she stresses that the connoisseur should have extensive experience in front of the works themselves; he “should have sufficient experience and memory to carry constantly and clearly in mind all the pictures in all the European collections (and especially all the pictures in the public and private galleries, and in the many thousands of churches in Italy itself).” Mary Logan, “The New Art Criticism,” 264.

214 Ibid., 263.
bolstering the scientific association, saying the critic is not truly proficient as such unless “he can classify Italian paintings with the accuracy of a botanist in classifying plants.” Later in the article, she advises that galleries “be treated like natural history museums, as a branch of the national education.” She repeats the idea presented in “The New and Old Art Criticism” that one task of the connoisseur is “to warn the public away from what is insignificant and poor.” In sum, she reinforces the scientific aspect of the method, which is part of its novelty, but makes sure to expand beyond “mere empiricism,” ensuring the method’s relevance to larger questions of aesthetics and the education of popular taste.

Throughout the remainder of the article, she seeks to both ally Berensonian connoisseurship with scientific methods, in particular Morelli’s, while at the same time setting it apart “in opposition to the old forms” like Vasari, German critics, Morelli’s “mere connoisseurship,” and Ruskin and Pater’s subjective criticism. Other previous publications, like Burckhardt’s Der Cicerone (1855), are lauded, deemed thoughtful and suggestive though inaccurate. Mary calls Crowe and

215 Ibid., 263.
216 Ibid., 267.
217 Ibid., 267.
218 Ruskin (1819-1900) and Pater (1839-1894) represent the epitome of British nineteenth-century lyrical art criticism; their writing is considered literature in its own right. Both Mary and Bernard read them (especially Pater) in the early days of their connoisseurship. In “The New Art Criticism,” Mary remarks that although Ruskin and Pater “felt” the Renaissance, they are not reliable sources for information about the Renaissance. Ruskin’s argument is undermined due to his lack of connoisseurship, which causes him to focus on poor-quality art. Pater’s Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) is “only his idea of the period, a delightful subjective affair, not very close to the real Renaissance.” Mary Logan, “The New Art Criticism,” 265.

Cavalcaselle’s efforts “undertaken in the more scientific spirit” but notes that they, too, did not have the technology necessary for precision analysis. Mary highlights Morelli’s scientific training with Agassiz, noting, “he has often been called the Darwin of art criticism.” However, as in other essays, she dismisses his efforts as “purely empirical.” This explicit setting apart and against previous work is an interesting echo of Morelli’s same assertion in “Principles and Method” that his work was unlike anything before, though slightly different in that it does not completely deny a connection with precursors.

Both of Mary’s essays demonstrate that rather than seeing Berensonian connoisseurship as a break (the way Morelli saw his work), the Berensons viewed their connoisseurship as the next development. However, between “The New and the Old Art Criticism” and “The New Art Criticism” a shift in attitude toward Morelli takes place. What emerges out of reviews of Lotto and Mary’s defenses of the book is the idea that Bernard’s book goes beyond Morelli to define the “artistic personality,” aiming “at something higher than mere connoisseurship or archaeology...nothing less than the psychological reconstruction of the artistic personality of the painter,” what Mary terms in her April 1895 review of Lotto in The

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220 Mary Logan, “The New Art Criticism,” 266. She continues, “he was the first to set himself resolutely against the haphazard or “inspiration” theory of genius, and to prove that art follows certain fixed laws of evolution...he traced with the minute care of a Darwin the derivation of one artist from another.”

221 Ibid.

222 Morelli uses the word personality to describe an understanding or familiarity with an artist, saying that by means of careful examination of early works, “the personality of the painter has been made clearer to us and has certainly gained by the process.” However, he does not elaborate on what exactly personality signifies, as Mary Berenson does. Morelli, Critical Studies, vol.1, 232.
Studio the “psychological method.” This characterization of connoisseurship as psychological rather than simply “scientific” is a definite break from Morelli. Whereas before, in “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” Mary had chiefly defined the novelty of the new connoisseurship as its scientific viewpoint and its use of photography and travel, in “The New Art Criticism” she points to psychology as the novel element of the method. As Mary asserts in her review of Lotto appearing in The Studio, “the value of the monograph [Lotto] does not consist in its Morellianism.”

Employing the term “scientific” to fortify Morellian connoisseurship, at the same time Mary claims a departure from its simplicity, establishing “Morellianism” as a solid base off of which she asserts Bernard’s importance in developing the next phase of the new criticism. This next phase, based on “the most minute comparison, point by point, of the undated works with those which happen to be dated,” is especially valuable in the determination of chronology—the relationship to masters and the evaluation of early, middle, and late manners of painters. The idea that emerges is termed the “artistic personality,” which is a personality “in so far as [the artist] was an artist—with the gossip about him as a man we have nothing to do.” That the delineation of artistic personality was the most important implication of an attribution to Berenson is demonstrated in Berenson’s 1898 essay “Alessio Baldovinetti and the New “Madonna” of the Louvre.” In that essay, Berenson notes that though others had already convincingly made the attribution of the work in question—a Madonna

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223 Mary Logan [Mary Berenson], “On A Recent Criticism of the Works of Lorenzo Lotto,” The Studio 5, no. 25 (April, 1895): 64.

224 Ibid., 63-64.

225 Ibid., 65.

226 Ibid.
recently acquired by the Louvre—he would go into more detail. There had to be reason for him to go through such an effort, and the motivation was not to simply illustrate how his method worked but rather, through the medium of step-by-step rational argument, to relate the painter to his teachers and followers. In doing so Berenson makes explicit “the great influence he seems to have exercised upon his contemporaries in Florence.”227 Thus, the definition of artistic personality, as understood to mean the assemblage of a corpus of paintings by relating them to other artists, is the main goal of these texts. “Method” became the justification for attributions now significant not just that they correct wrong ideas about artists but in that they delineate relationships of artistic heritage.

Though in terms of the development of Bernard’s ideas “Rudiments” must be looked at as a text from 1894, it should not be overlooked that it was not published until 1902 in the second volume of The Study and Criticism of Italian Art. In terms of what method is and what role it plays in Bernard and Mary’s texts, it is important to look at the publishing history of their books, articles, and essays. Outside of the publication of Mary’s essays, in the last years of the 1890s, the Berensons’ output remained in the form exemplified in Lotto—essays in method rather than on method.228 Upon the publication of The Study and Criticism of Art,229 however,


228 In his October 1897 article, “Certain Copies after Lost Originals by Giorgione,” originally published in French, Bernard writes “How shall we agree that such and such a picture must be a copy after a Giorgione? Rather than describe in the abstract the method of research, I will allow the method to reveal itself in the course of this article.” Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 1st ser. (1901; repr. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1920), 72. Similarly, in “The Caen ‘Spinalizio,’” published in 1896 and reprinted in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 2nd series, he makes no self-reflexive mention of “scientific” method. Rather, he takes the reader step-by-step through a
method again took on the explicit rhetorical role it had in Mary’s defensive essays. This time, however, the rhetorical statements went from being an exterior supplement existing in a magazine like the Atlantic Monthly to residing in and around Bernard’s texts “in method.” The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, in particular the first two volumes, imposed a new framework on the essays included therein. Bernard did not tend to edit his essays and articles, but rather rearranged them, collecting them in anthologies. This act of gathering was one of interpretation: since with few exceptions most of the articles did not explicitly state their relevance to questions of method, Bernard’s writing on method in the prefaces, in which he explicitly stated that certain essays dealt with method, was essentially layered on top of the articles. Sometimes, as with the pamphlet “Venetian Painting, Chiefly Before Titian,” this was a radical re-imagining of the original slant of the essay from a focus on attributions to a focus on method. “Rudiments” had never been published before, and by

[229] The Study and Criticism of Italian Art was a three-volume series composed of essays first published elsewhere. The first two volumes, published less than a year apart in 1901 and 1902, contained essays published between 1893 and 1902. These essays were not ordered chronologically in the volumes.

[230] The second edition of Lotto does have some edits, as on p. 89 where Berenson includes portraits by Alvise he had discovered between the first and second editions and on p. 108, where he adds a portrait formerly in the Dötsch collection to the list of works discussed.

[231] As mentioned above in note 228, “Certain Copies after Lost Originals by Giorgione” includes the note “Rather than describe in the abstract the method of research, I will allow the method to reveal itself in the course of this article,” an instance in which he refers explicitly to method. In addition, in this fifth section of this essay, Berenson addresses the “Historical Method,” which according to him blinds the student to the questions the work of art addresses in favor of “the question of mere origins.” He then notes that Historical Method concentrates “on the question how the artist came to be what he was…taking only a feeble and languard interest in what the artist actually was.” Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian art, 1st ser., 72, 79, 80.

[232] This was an essay Berenson published in 1895 as a pamphlet to correct attributions in catalogue of the exhibition of Venetian Painting at the New Gallery in London. The essay was initially framed with attributions as the main focus. Berenson later wrote in the preface to the first series of The Study and
including “Rudiments” as the last essay in the second volume along with the prefaces, Bernard effectively sandwiched his articles now framed as in method between statements on method. Later, in the second edition of The Drawings of the Florentine Painters of the Renaissance, Bernard remarked on his decision to let his writings remain unedited, for the reason that “this book, like very book I have attempted to write, is an essay in method.” Thus the term “method” was retroactively applied as a rhetorical tool and the essays in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art were consciously collected to shift the focus from attributions to method.

As Bernard’s rhetorical use of the term “method” evolved, so, too, did his understanding of his relationship to Morelli. Specifically, the explicit statements Bernard makes on method in the prefaces to The Study and Criticism of Italian Art dismiss Morelli as a “mere” connoisseur, an attitude that germinated in Mary’s essays of the mid-1890s. In the preface to volume one of the series, he notes that his first essay on Correggio is “crassly Morellian.” He goes on to reference “the sterile prosings of the so-called connoisseurs.” Again picking up the thread Mary laid in “The New Art Criticism,” in which she promoted Bernard’s accomplishment of identifying “artistic personalities” over “mere connoisseurship,” Bernard stresses the

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*Criticism of Italian Art* “My excuse for reprinting it is that it contains a number of general remarks on method, and much information on Venetian pictures in England.” Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1st ser., ix.


235 Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1st ser., v.
importance of the qualitative over the quantitative in art criticism at the expense of

Morelli, writing,

Quantitative analysis such as, if you are foolish enough to take him at his
word, Morelli seemed to advocate as all sufficing, is within the capacity of
any serious student… but the sense of quality must first exist as God’s gift,
whereupon, to become effective, it should be submitted to many years of
arduous training.\footnote{Ibid., viii-ix.}

In the preface to the second volume of *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, Bernard
calls Morelli “a mere empiric.”\footnote{Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 2nd ser., vii.} In the preface to the second volume, Bernard
explains that his purpose in writing “Rudiments” was to explain Morellian
connoisseurship in a way that Morelli had been incapable of doing. Morellian
connoisseurship, Bernard writes, “was founded on facts which, had he not
deliberately refused to use his powers of reasoning, [Morelli] easily could have
thought out and stated, thus presenting himself, not as a mere happy inventor, but as a
real discoverer.”\footnote{Ibid., vii-viii.} By the publication of the third volume of *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, Bernard had cut ties with his inner “Morellian,” referring in an essay on
Leonardo first published in that volume to the Morellian in him as “only a secondary
personality.”\footnote{Bernard Berenson, “Leonardo,” in *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 3rd ser. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1916), 6.} Later in that essay, which attempted “to expose and bring down
nearly all the famous idols of Leonardo’s art,” he explains how his Morellian
connoisseurship has evolved. He writes:

Morellianism, surgical, pitiless, iconoclastic even as it seemed was yet
inspired by the Romantic ideal of genius and founded on the axiom that the

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\footnote{Ibid., viii-ix.}

\footnote{Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 2nd ser., vii.}

\footnote{Ibid., vii-viii.}

greatest artist from cradle to grave never derogated from his greatness, and on its converse that whatever the great artist did was necessarily faultless. It was in defence of this that we Morellians fought for authenticity with the uncompromising zeal of Legitimists. It was, indeed, a brave fight and worthy, although it fortified the snob collector’s blind confidence in mere names, and led him to accumulate unpalatable but authentic daubs by Rembrandt and other prolific geniuses. But the very method of establishing authenticity by tests so delicate, so subtle, and so complicated has led us on, little by little, to conclusions the exact opposite of the axiom with which we started out. Strict connoisseurship has taken the further and more painful step of recognizing that there are poor things among the autographs of the great artists, and that not every Bellini or Botticelli, Raphael or Rubens, Velasquez or Van Dyck is a flawless masterpiece.240 [emphasis mine]

Thus, “strict” (Morellian) connoisseurship had morphed into Berenson’s increasingly more permissive connoisseurship, taking the “further and more painful” step of paying attention to less aesthetically valuable paintings, what Quentin Bell referred to in 1975 as the “foothills” of art history.241 This open-minded connoisseurship comes to full fruition and expression in Berenson’s 1931 articles on homeless paintings of the Florentine Trecento.242 In that essay, he uses the terms “Expansionist” and “Contractionist,” to describe a shift in his connoisseurship from operating under the idea that an artist’s habits do not change—that he has one “hand” only—to believing that differences between paintings may not indicate distinct “hands” but rather “oscillations of the same artist.”243

240 Ibid., 34-35.


243 Bernard Berenson, “Homeless Paintings of the Florentine Trecento,” 105. Further implications of Berenson’s expansionism are discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.
Bernard positions himself in relation to Morelli’s method, at first favorably and then more disparagingly. Increasingly, he contrasts his own work to Morelli’s to establish the freshness and relevance of his work. This is not to say that method did not genuinely interest Bernard, that his statement in the preface of volume one of *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art* “method interests me more than results, the functioning of the mind much more than the ephemeral object of functioning” is untrue.²⁴⁴ The scholarly side of Bernard was interested in method for its own sake: later, in 1916, he published *Three Essays in Method*, like *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art* a compilation of previously published essays, all of which were “concerned more with Method than with the works of art and the artists discussed.”²⁴⁵ The didactic element is more overt in this book than in *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*: its goal is to expose the working method of connoisseurship, letting students into Bernard’s workshop.²⁴⁶ However, this interest does not preclude that method also served as a rhetorical tool, especially in the Berensons’ earlier publications.

²⁴⁴ Bernard Berenson, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1st ser., ix.

²⁴⁵ Bernard Berenson, *Three Essays in Method*, viii.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., ix.
II: Authority: attributions as social currency

The question then arises, why, in the early 1900s, did Bernard feel the need to reframe his work in terms of method and emphasize the importance of defining artistic personalities? What was behind his use of method as a rhetorical tool? Though like Morelli Bernard and Mary’s essays are often stated to be aimed at the student of art, their rhetorical emphasis on method seems to have been targeted at a different audience: their critics. Their emphasis on defining and highlighting method as a primary concern arose as a counter to increasing criticism of Bernard’s attributions.\(^{247}\) In particular, as Samuels relates, “Venetian Painting, Chiefly Before Titian,” a pamphlet originally published in 1895 as a supplement to the exhibition of Venetian Painting at the New Gallery in London, “sent a shock wave of indignation and fear through the rich and titled owners of Italian paintings” particularly those who had lent their works to the exhibition, making Bernard a “marked man” in London.\(^{248}\) Method came to serve as a legitimization of Bernard’s authority to make corrections and an effort to minimize criticism and social disfavor of him.

Authority can be understood in social terms as one’s position in the world. Morelli’s position was secure: connoisseurship, in published form, was an activity he pursued later in life, and he had a day job as a politician. Bernard, on the other hand, started out as a connoisseur, building his own personality right along with the artistic personalities he was constructing. In the introduction to the 1979 handbook to the

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\(^{248}\) Ibid., 222, 208. In the pamphlet, Berenson is particularly dismissive of several works, calling a drawing “not worth notice” and Lord Rosebery’s painting “a valueless work, of no assignable character.” Bernard Berenson, “Venetian Painting, Chiefly Before Titian, at the Exhibition of Venetian Art,” in *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1st ser., 108, 121.
National Gallery of Washington exhibition *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting*, David Alan Brown notes, “more than any other scholar, Berenson cultivated the role of connoisseur.” Unlike Morelli, who may have even conceived of Ivan Lermolieff as a separate personality, Bernard’s identity as a person—what Samuels terms his “vanity”—was bound up in his connoisseurship and his authority (understood as social standing). While at the beginning of his career Morelli frequently wrote under pseudonyms, Bernard wrote under his own name. His monetary livelihood as a connoisseur was also tied to the perceived veracity of his attributions. Over the course of his career, Bernard became increasingly involved in the art market, first as an advisor to rich American collectors like his early supporter Isabella Stewart Gardner and then in an ambiguously defined and secretive role as a consultant to various art dealers, most particularly the Duveen brothers. In this capacity his financial status rested on whether or not his clients believed him. His scholarly identity also rested on the approval and perception of him by his peers.

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249 David Alan Brown, *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting*, 12.

250 Gibson-Wood notes that Morelli frequently referred to his ideas about art as “Lermolieff’s ideas.” She notes that the pseudonym “seems, as evidenced by his correspondence, to have taken on an independent existence.” Gibson-Wood, 199.

251 It is also worth noting that unlike Berenson, Mary Berenson published under a variety of names, including her legal name prior to her marriage to Berenson (Mary Whitall Costelloe) and her pseudonym, (Mary Logan). This fragmentation of her repertoire of published writing certainly did not help her to cultivate an independent scholarly identity. This is not to say that Berenson’s relationship to his name was straightforward. Like many immigrant families, the Berensons had changed their last name upon arrival, Berenson’s father changing his name from Valvroyenski to Berenson. In addition, after WWII, Berenson changed the spelling of his first name from “Bernhard” to “Bernard”—from the Germanic spelling to the French spelling—to divorce himself from German associations in the wake of Nazi actions. Samuels, *The Making of a Legend*, 200.

252 Samuels relates that Duveen warned him that a false step would ruin both of their enterprises, but “The caution was hardly needed, for Berenson’s chief pride--not to say vanity--lay in the superiority of his attributions. He was keenly aware that his livelihood depended on his preeminent reputation, and that in the intense rivalry of the art market that reputation was a prime target for his competitors, who hungrily chewed on every morsel of hostile innuendo.” Ibid., 120.
In his chapter “Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of Scientific Connoisseurship” in *On Art and the Mind* (1973), Richard Wollheim suggests that both Morelli and Bernard Berenson’s concerns over attributions are rooted in issues of identity and parentage, and in particular are a response to a lack of or denial of connection to their fathers.\(^{253}\) For Bernard, this meant his ambivalence to and sometimes rejection of his Jewish heritage. Though as a child he steeped himself in the Old Testament, after the family moved to America in 1874 he drifted away from his roots, becoming an Episcopalian.\(^{254}\) One of his articles written in the early days of his time in Europe was an article on recent Yiddish literature from Russia. Though this was his background, as Meyer Schapiro noted in his 1961 article “Mr. Berenson’s Values,” Bernard’s article clearly establishes his distance from that heritage. He writes of “the Jews”: “Their character and their interests are too vitally opposed to ours to permit the existence of that intelligent sympathy between us and them which is necessary for comprehension.”\(^{255}\) Setting up a construct of “us vs. them,” he asserts that he does not belong to, as Schapiro characterizes it, the “uncouth ghetto world” of the Jews.\(^{256}\)

\(^{253}\) Wollheim, 185.


\(^{256}\) Iris Origo cites other instances in which he referred to “Jews” as “them” in her preface to Berenson’s *Sunset and Twilight*. Iris Origo, “82 to 93,” in Bernard Berenson, *Sunset and Twilight: from the Diaries of 1847-1858* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), xv. However, Berenson did not completely reject his Jewish identity. As Schapiro notes, “He seems never to have lost his interest in Jewish things. He could speak of them with tenderness and excitement if the hearer were of a suitable Jewish temperament.” Schapiro, 218. Origo, too, relates that in old age Berenson became more accepting of his roots. Origo, xv.
To what world did Bernard belong, then? Though he moved among the interlaced Anglo-Saxon social-intellectual worlds of England, America, and Europe (particularly Florence), he was not an Anglo-Saxon. At Harvard, Bernard gained entrée into the O.K. Club, a group of the literary elite at the University, but had a hard time dealing with the snobbery, remarking on how “cliquey and exclusive” was the “schoolboy or the schoolboy-minded Anglo-Saxon.” Samuels relates that later in life Bernard sometimes used the term “Angry-Saxons” instead. As Mary mused to her sister Alys in 1916, perhaps the reason she felt Bernard was different from her and many of their other friends was that he was not an Anglo-Saxon. He entered “as a foreign element with claims and demands and desires none of us can understand or sympathize with,” she wrote, “but he is so nice and interesting and delightful, it's a pity he is a ‘foreigner.’”

The idea of the “foreigner” is important for an understanding of Bernard’s social and cultural identity. Though later in life he would remark, "I have roots nowhere and associations everywhere," Samuels notes that he was strongly attached to Florence and Italy and also harbored an intense loyalty for places like Boston and Harvard. His activities as an art advisor to wealthy Americans can be interpreted as tied to his feelings of loyalty and the desire to build a cultural patrimony for the country. Samuels relates that Bernard was inspired by Isabella Stewart Gardner’s ambition to build a museum to house her collection, excited by his primary role in the

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259 Ibid., 59. Iris Origo also makes note of Berenson’s conception of himself as rootless, not belonging to any one society or place. Origo, xxii.
creation of an establishment that would bring culture to Boston.\textsuperscript{260}

Perhaps Berenson’s world might be best understood under the broad term “culture,” specifically Anglo-American high aesthetic culture. Not exactly geographically specific, this society was spread over Europe and America, floating slightly above the rest of the population both figuratively and literally in the case of Florence, where many culturally elite Anglo-Americans inhabited the hills of Fiesole and Settignano. Samuels, citing the Berensons’ friend Carlo Placci’s disbelief at the detachment of the Anglo-Florentines from real world concerns like the 1896 war with the Abyssinians at Adowa, notes that Italy was a fantasy land of artistic and literary associations.\textsuperscript{261} “You strange people,” Placci wrote, “inhabiting hills and abstract ideas, how do you manage to exist outside of actualities à large base?”\textsuperscript{262}

The intellectual-artistic associations of Italy were clearly at the forefront of Bernard’s mind, as evidenced by his characterization in 1897 of the view from the house he had just rented near San Domenico on Via Camerata as populated by “dear toy castles,” like “a Gozzoli landscape.”\textsuperscript{263} Later, during World War I, he complained to Placci about Italy’s actions, alluding to his preference for the “real” Italy, the Italy of the Renaissance as embodied through art.\textsuperscript{264}

However, the very current social climate and Berenson’s status in relation to others was also a chief concern of his. Upon meeting Placci in 1894, Bernard was

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 239.
\item Ibid., 274.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 291.
\item Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Legend}, 229.
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introduced to many of “titled nobles” who owned luxurious villas and art. Added to the list of Harvard and Oxford intellectuals and literary geniuses, like Vernon Lee, art collectors, and the community of Anglo-American expatriates, these were the circles in which Bernard desired to move. Ultimately, for Berenson the currency in such groups was attributions. A positive opinion of Bernard’s authority situated him favorably in the hierarchy of the Anglo-American/Anglo-Florentine social milieu, a world in which he was constantly insecure about his position.

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It is clear that attributions were deeply tied to social position, by extension understandable as personal identity. Connoisseurship, like scientific practice today, is consensus-based: a conclusion is accepted as long as one’s peers can be convinced to lend their support. This makes attributions a shaky ground on which to base authority. Ultimately, they are deeply personal, subjective opinions. This makes them extremely vulnerable, for one of Berenson’s peers could simply choose not to believe Bernard. This choice ultimately reflects that person's opinion of Bernard the man. The implication is not just “I don't believe in the attribution, but “I don't believe in you.” Thus, attributions are inextricably tied up in the attributor's personal identity.

In Morelli’s as well as Berenson’s writings, the logic of method is used as an attempt to establish the legitimacy of the writer. Logic is perceived as universal and objective. By playing up his method’s objective associations, Bernard tried to overcome the supreme importance of attributions, begging his readers not to discount

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the method even if the conclusions were later deemed to be wrong. In so doing, he
attempted to shift the locus of his authority from results to process, from a subjective,
shaky, personal foundation to a more solid, universal ground.

This was not an easy move to make. Subjectivity—the connoisseur as a man,
his personality—could not be disposed of easily. As Bernard discovered in the mid-
1890s when his thoughts on method were cohering, quality is the ultimate test of
authorship. As he concludes in "Rudiments":

Indeed, it may be laid down as a principle, that the value of those tests which
come nearest to being mechanical is inversely as the greatness of the artist.
The greater the artist, the more weight falls on the question of quality in the
consideration of a work attributed to him. The Sense of Quality is indubitably
the most essential equipment of a would-be connoisseur. It is the touchstone
of all his laboriously collected documentary and historical evidences of all the
possible morphological tests he may be able to bring to bear upon the work of
art.

Unlike morphological study, the "science" of connoisseurship, the analysis of quality
"does not fall under the category of demonstrable things." It cannot be taught, but
resides in individuals, and above all is personal.

The impossibility of exorcising subjectivity and the personality of the
connoisseur is exemplified in Bernard’s 1899 essay, “Amico di Sandro.” The essay
purported to reveal the connections between works of art then attributed to Filippo
Lippi, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio and Filippino Lippi, ultimately grouping them under a

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266 Regarding his essay “Certain Copies after Lost Originals by Giorgione,” Berenson notes that even
were he to change his designation of the St. Petersburg Judith that figures into his analysis from copy
to heavily repainted original, “This, however, would not prove my method the worse.” Bernard
Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 1st ser., ix.


268 Ibid., 148.

269 “Amico di Sandro” was published in two parts in the June and July 1899 issues of the Gazette des
Beaux-arts and republished in 1901 in The Study and Criticism of Italian Painting, 1st ser.
new personality dubbed the “Amico di Sandro,” or “friend of Botticelli.” Like Lotto, “Amico di Sandro” was an essay in method, reframed in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art as an essay on method. Along with other articles like his later “Alunno di Domenico,” Amico di Sandro is an example of a rearrangement based solely on formal analysis without an established name such as Lotto’s attached, in a sense serving as an example of “pure” Berensonian connoisseurship in which documents and tradition are useless. The essay was praised for its logical progression and was reframed, when published in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, as exemplary of Berenson’s method for constructing an artistic personality. Where it unraveled was in the results it proposed. Thus, while some of Bernard’s peers praised the method, they still took issue with the attributions.

The conditions of Amico’s dissolution support the idea that attributions were deeply connected to the connoisseur on a personal level. To return to the idea that attributions are significant in that they constitute an opinion or an assessment about a

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270 Though his conclusions in “Amico di Sandro” were subsequently deemed wrong, the method employed to reach them did sometimes work, as in “Alunno di Domenico,” published in the Burlington Magazine in 1903. In the opening of the essay, Berenson hopes “some day the archives may yield up the real name of this artist.” Bernard Berenson, “Alunno di Domenico,” The Burlington Magazine 1, no. 1 (March, 1903): 6. In actuality, G. Bruscoli had identified the painter of the predella of central concern in “Alunno di Domenico” the year before. Still, the resulting implications were the same had events transpired in the reverse order: documentary evidence was found, and the Alunno di Domenico became Bartolomeo di Giovanni. Nicoletta Pons, Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v., “Bartolomeo di Giovanni,” http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T006621 (accessed April 12, 2010).

271 Patrizia Zambrano, “Amico di Sandro,” in Amico di Sandro, Bernard Berenson (Milan: Electa, 2006), 13. In “Amico di Sandro,” as prescribed in “Rudiments,” Berenson built up an oeuvre first by identifying similarities and differences between the paintings in question and established works by Botticelli, Filippo Lippi, and Filippino Lippi. The conclusions from this analysis provide a list of qualities used to link the paintings to a common author. Once a painting has been established as linked to previously mentioned works, it is used to establish new qualities to add to the list. For example, regarding a painting referred to as the “National Gallery Madonna,” Berenson writes, “with its points of resemblance to both the earlier and more recent works of our [Amico], [it] is like a clamp helping to hold them together in the bond of identical authorship. It will assist us in attaching to the same group still further works.” Berenson, “Amico di Sandro,” in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 1st ser., 58.
particular artist, “Amico di Sandro” was generated from Bernard’s personal, aesthetic opinions of Filippino Lippi and Botticelli. Patrizia Zambrano, a Filippino Lippi scholar, suggests that Amico was born from Bernard’s prejudice against Filippino.  

The nature of the lines of influence between Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, and Filippino Lippi had been causing problems for scholars throughout the nineteenth century, the similarities between the artists making it difficult to untangle their oeuvres. Zambrano cites precursors to “Amico di Sandro” in such ambiguous attributions as “from the hand of a fellow disciple of Sandro and Filippino from the school of Fra Filippo” given by Frizzoni, or Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s description of a painter combining the modes of Filippo Lippi and Botticelli but inferior to both.  

The blurred boundaries between the artists are also immortalized in Carlo Placci’s Un furto (1891), in which the hero classifies an unattributed painting “as by an artist close to Botticelli or Filippino Lippi.” Even in Critical Studies Morelli notes "the Pitti gallery also includes an example of Filippino, not, however, as the authorities would have us believe, No. 388, the "Death of Virginia"—the work apparently of another and much feebler pupil of Botticelli [emphasis mine]—and still less No. 347, the "Madonna and Child with Angels"—more probably by some imitator of Ghirlandaio—but No. 336."  

These opinions about individual artists ultimately had larger implications for the conception of an entire school of painting. Attributions gave connoisseurs the

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272 Zambrano, 17.
273 Ibid., 13, n.10.
274 Anderson, Collecting Connoisseurship, 58.
power to shape understanding. On the most basic level, to name something is to situate it. By naming paintings—and going further by delineating artistic family trees—Bernard and other connoisseurs were giving shape and structure to history. The act of rearrangement in “Amico di Sandro” and other essays is significant in that it constitutes an interpretation of the Italian Renaissance. “Amico di Sandro” was Bernard’s most famous and most ridiculed essay on artistic personality for the reason that the personality he created was later dissolved, the consensus being that Amico’s corpus of paintings actually belongs to the young Filippino Lippi. The splitting of Filippino’s oeuvre that Bernard enacted in the essay fundamentally altered the fundamentals of Filippino's artistic personality, and by extension the make-up of the Italian Renaissance.\(^{276}\) For Mary and Bernard, the attributions were the artist; they were interested in defining artistic personalities, not biographic entities.

Without his early works, at least according to Bernard, Filippino was an artist to be dismissed. Berenson felt that he exhibited a tendency toward “Seicentismo,” or a “sentimentality in feelings” and “baroque form”\(^{277}\) that anticipated the style of late

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\(^{276}\) In her 1895 review of Lotto in *The Studio*, Mary explains different artists’ capacities for embodying and shaping modern ideas of the Renaissance as a historic period: “Other artists—Titian in especial—were able to catch the dominant note of their age and express its master passions. But they 'only embody in art forms what we already know about the ripe Renaissance, while Lotto supplements and even modifies our idea of this period.' She continues that Lotto’s paintings are of interest to modern viewers because "The charity of Lotto's spirit gives us a very different idea of the sixteenth century from that which our fancy conjures up when we concentrate our attention upon the murder of Lorenzino di Medici." Mary Logan, “On A Recent Criticism of the Works of Lorenzo Lotto,” 27.

\(^{277}\) Zambrano, 23. Berenson writes, “Despite the resemblances existing between Filippino and Amico, their purposes were different. At bottom Filippino was a painstaking, almost academic artist, with a strong tendency toward what the Italians call ‘Seicentismo’—sentimentality in feeling, and the baroque in form. There is nothing of that in Amico, who, whether grave or gay, is a ‘Quattrocentist,’ and always a ‘Quattrocentist’: with nothing that is already Sodoma, with nothing at all that prefigures the late Bolognese.” Berenson, “Amico di Sandro,” 65.
sixteenth-century Italian art, which Berenson regarded as a degenerate period.\textsuperscript{278} Were he to include the early works in Filippino’s œuvre, Berenson would have had to change his conception of Filippino. Zambrano traces Bernard’s dismissal of Seicento art, variously termed as baroque or Mannerist, as a reason behind his unwillingness to accept many of Amico’s works as early Filippino works, saying that the creation of Amico is an indirect consequence of Bernard’s negative view of Mannerism.\textsuperscript{279} She characterizes Amico as his attempt to resolve the chronological problem of Filippino’s work, which, given his idea of Filippino’s later work, did not allow him to rationalize the link between the earlier corpus (which he assigned to Amico) and Filippino’s “Seicento” later works.\textsuperscript{280} She holds that even later, when Amico was dissolved back into Filippino, Bernard continued to conceive of the earlier works as separate from the later works, “two personalities destined to cohabit in one body.”\textsuperscript{281}

In addition, in the climate of confusion surrounding Botticelli, Filippino, and Filippo Lippi, Bernard allied himself along the lines demarcated by Morelli in \textit{Critical Studies}, taking a stance against Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s opinion that Filippino was influenced by his father, Filippo Lippi. Instead, he reinforced the Botticelli-Filippino axis, a link he favored due to his propensity for Botticelli. This inclination toward seeing Botticelli as a paragon of Quattrocento Florence, embodied most forcefully in the writings of Ruskin and Pater and in the art of the Pre-

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 31. Translation mine.
Raphaelites, was, as Mary Berenson put it, “a distinctly Anglo-Saxon fad.”

From Zambrano’s discussion, it is clear that Bernard’s personal opinions on the merits and demerits of certain schools and eras in the history of art are the basis of "Amico di Sandro." His opinions are manifested in the making of attributions—more precisely, via the naming and ordering of works of art in terms of chronology and the identification of precedents and antecedents. These attributions are ultimately significant in that they carry personal opinions of value along with them. In the Berensons’ case the value attached to a work of art, at least as they tell it in their publications, is aesthetic. Mary especially stresses in her essays the role of the connoisseur as a guide whose purpose was to ensure that art-lovers were not wasting their time on aesthetically unworthy objects. In “The New Art Criticism,” she advises that galleries “be treated like natural history museums, as a branch of the national education.” In both “The New and Old Art Criticism” and “The New Art Criticism” she indicates that one task of the connoisseur is “to warn the public away from what is insignificant and poor.” This is because contemplating low quality works of art fails to enhance the spirit of the viewer, which Bernard came to view as the purpose of art.

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284 This is a different purpose than what Morelli had set out to do: A.H. Layard indicates in his introduction to the 1890-1 publication of Critical Studies that Morelli thought highly of the National Gallery in London, considering it “the most complete in Europe in the representation of the Italian schools of painting, and consequently the most instructive to the student.” Layard, “Introduction,” [20]. For Morelli, the aspect the public needed education about was not aesthetics necessarily, but the shape of historical schools, ultimately the shape of Italian history.
It was Bernard Berenson's opinion that the lens of aesthetics was the right way to approach a work of art. Herbert Horne, a friend turned enemy of Bernard’s, held a different opinion.286 In the preface to his 1908 Botticelli: Painter of Florence, Horne indicated his intention to, in a subsequent volume, “discuss the productions both of his immediate disciples and of those painters who fell indirectly under his influence, or who were associated with him in some way or another; in short, the productions of his school in the widest sense of the word.”287 This is a markedly different intention from that of the Berensons, who as mentioned viewed it as their duty to direct people to masterpieces.288 They made a distinction between "paintings" (high quality) and

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285 Bernard coined the phrase “life-enhancing” to describe paintings that were spiritually beneficial to the viewer under his theory of tactile values. This theory, which Berenson developed in Florentine Painters, originates in William James’s concept that some ideas are derived from physical perceptions (“tactile sensations”). As Mary Ann Calo describes, his post-Venetian Painters approach was “to use the close scrutiny of the work itself as a tool to explain the enjoyment of painting ... Berenson places the formalist method of Morellian connoisseurship at the service of a system of appreciation and, in so doing, elevates it to the stature of an aesthetic theory.” Calo, 46. In The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance, as Calo paraphrases a letter to his sister, Berenson’s “absorbing interest was to know why people enjoyed art.” Ibid., 56. In the preface to the first series of The Study and Criticism of Art, Berenson indicates that the purpose of the “lay man” should be “to enjoy the kernel of the work of art, shelled of all the husks of historical, literary, and personal consideration.” Earlier in the preface, disparaging connoisseurship, he remarks “I see now how fruitless an interest is in the history of art, and how worthless an undertaking is that of determining who painted, or carved, or built whatsoever it be. I see now how valueless all such matters are in the life of the spirit.” Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 1st ser., vi, v.


288 Berenson’s contempt for lowly painters is revealed in “Venetian Painting, Chiefly before Titian” when he notes, “Further examination reveals, however, certain mannerisms and something of the spirit—if such a word may be used in connection with so stupid a person!—of Lazzaro Sebastiani...” Bernard Berenson, “Venetian Painting, Chiefly Before Titian,” in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 1st ser., 105. Still, Berenson was in practice interested in looking at works of art of varying quality, since he believed that knowledge of lesser masters was essential for an understanding of great artistic personalities. In her autobiographical memoir, Nicky Mariano depicts Mary, on the other hand, as only interested in “sacred pictures” (masterpieces), despising inferior productions. Nicky Mariano, Forty Years with Berenson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 138.
"pictures" (low quality), though it is prudent to note that Bernard was more interested than Mary in the “lesser” artists, especially as he grew older. Zambrano notes that though Horne was initially influenced by Pater, in *Botticelli* he moved away from that tradition and therefore from the Berensons.

Horne’s effort to distance himself from Pater, his interest in Botticelli’s entire school, his preference for archival research and his tendency to start his studies from such sources points to Horne’s primary interest being the history of the Renaissance and *not* Bernard’s Paterian aesthetics. Thus, Horne and Berenson were at conflict on their basic viewpoint as to what was important about the Renaissance. On the one hand Bernard was interested in the Renaissance for what it had to offer aesthetically—its importance to the modern viewer. On the other hand, Horne was more interested in understanding Renaissance material culture in the context in which it arose.

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289 See notes 242 and 243 on Berenson’s “expansionism” in part one of this chapter.

290 Zambrano, 60.

291 This is further corroborated by Horne’s project to restore the Palazzo Corsi in Florence (now the Museo Horne). He aimed to recreate an authentic Renaissance environment for the collection of Renaissance objects, including paintings, silverware, and furniture, he had acquired. This shows his interest in the total picture of the Renaissance, or an interest in how the Renaissance actually was, not just what the individual *artist* actually was (the latter point being what Berenson identified as the interest of his method, in this case method being viewpoint, which was opposed to the "Historical Method" that "concentrat[es] attention overpoweringly on the question how the artist came to be what he was" rather than what he was. Bernard Berenson, “Certain Copies after Lost Originals by Giorgione,” in *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, 1st ser., 80.

292 Mary Ann Calo discusses the implications of Berenson’s writing on the criticism of Modern art. However, I am not convinced that Berenson’s interest in art was purely aesthetic. As will be discussed in the next chapter, his activities as a collector and cataloguer of photographs point to a topographic interest in both the peaks and the hills of art history, to borrow a phrase from Quentin Bell.

293 It would, however, be dangerous to assume that Horne was anti-aesthetic. His Palazzo Corsi is also somewhat of a mishmash of things from different areas (Florence and Siena, for example). In it, he created a museum-like, idealized historical picture of the Renaissance, not living in the main portions
Perhaps it is in part due to this underlying contrast in their fundamental viewpoints that Berenson and Horne clashed over “Amico di Sandro.” Indeed, at first glance it seems like the very fabric of the “Amico di Sandro” essay would have been enough to incite Horne’s disapproval, for, as Bernard described in the preface to volume one of The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, in the essay he had “attempted without the aid of a single document, or a single ‘literary’ hint”—the very materials Horne championed—“to construct an artistic personality.”

However, this is not the case. Berenson and Horne were amiable colleagues around the time “Amico di Sandro” was published, as evidenced by Bernard’s inclusion of Horne’s suggestions and comments in the footnotes of the essay. As late as Horne’s 1908 publication, his monograph on Botticelli, Horne believed in the existence of Amico di Sandro, attributing the portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici in the Morelli Collection of the Accademia Carrara to him. The two scholars had both read Morelli and engaged in a similar process of careful looking at works of art. Horne traveled around the countryside on “conoshing” trips to look at paintings with Mary and Bernard in Horne’s first years in Florence. They even bought a

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294 Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 2nd ser., viii.

295 Horne, Botticelli, 66.

296 “Conoshing” is a term that Bernard and Mary sometimes used in letters that turns the noun “connoisseur” into a verb.

damaged Botticelli fresco together, dividing it between themselves. That Horne and Berenson worked together in their research trips is key, for it shows that their difference does not lie in their method of looking, but must lie somewhere else.

The deterioration of their cordiality towards one another is actually located in their differences over attributions. That this would cause the dissolution of a friendship makes sense: as I have shown, attributions are extremely personal statements, and a disagreement over one is essentially a disagreement with the person behind the attribution. For example, one of Bernard’s longstanding enemies, Charles Loeser, started off as a friend and as mentioned previously even covered some of Berenson’s living expenses in the early 1890s but soon became an enemy when the two disagreed over attributions. That the academic and the personal were intertwined is further evidenced in an event involving Roger Fry, Bernard’s friend with whom he had a falling-out. In questioning some of Bernard’s chronology of Giotto’s work in his own essay on Giotto he was met with resentment and hostility, evidence that Bernard disliked being contradicted and took that contradiction personally.

Caroline Elam’s account of the triangular relationship between Horne, Fry, and Berenson provides ample evidence of instances in which conflicts between scholars germinated from the treatment of attributions as personal intellectual

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298 Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 265. This actually points to the fact that even Horne had a limit to his historic fidelity, not having a problem with dividing a historical object. Perhaps Horne had no problems dividing this fresco because it was damaged. This would support the idea in note 293 above that Horne’s aesthetic concerns were a major factor in his life and scholarship—though in a different way than Berenson’s were.

299 Samuels relates that Loeser, too “had become a Morellian, but unlike Costa he was not inclined to yield to Berenson’s critical judgment, and they disputed attributions with mutual vehemence. Chagrined, Berenson complained to Mary that no other of his acquaintances “has so fought my point of view, just because it was mine.” Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 128.
property. For example, one of the bitterest conflicts Bernard engaged in was with Langton Douglas.\textsuperscript{300} He thought Douglas was a poor critic with poor judgment, and Douglas had a low opinion of Bernard as well. Though one factor in their enmity might be the fact that Douglas was a partisan of Crowe and Cavalcaselle whereas Bernard was a “Morellian”—a dichotomy inherited from Morelli’s \textit{Critical Studies} and one that applied to other Berenson enemies, like Sandford Arthur Strong\textsuperscript{301}—their conflict truly erupted over an attribution. Douglas, extremely protective of his attributions and eager to receive the glory that went along with making a new discovery, was enraged to learn through Fry that Bernard already knew that a panel at Chantilly as a Sassetta.\textsuperscript{302} Bernard, likewise, was upset to learn that Douglas claimed the attribution as his own.\textsuperscript{303} Elam reports on the incident saying “Berenson became convinced that Douglas had stolen unpublished attributions from him,” the word “stolen” reinforcing the idea that attributions were thought of as property.\textsuperscript{304}


\textsuperscript{302} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 391.


\textsuperscript{304} This view of attributions as property and the idea that they can be stolen is paralleled in the literary climate of the time. Alison Brown writes of “the enmeshed and competitive world of these Renaissance scholars, encouraging charges of plagiarism” with regard to a dispute between Lee and John Addington Symonds over ownership of ideas about the \textit{Carmina Burana}. This tendency is also seen in Lee’s later dispute with Berenson over the concept of tactile values. Alison Brown, “Vernon Lee and the Renaissance: from Burchardt to Berenson,” in \textit{Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance}, ed. John. E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 188.
That attributions were property is further cemented in an incident that occurred in May 1903 between Berenson, Horne, and Fry. Berenson and Fry, after visiting the Gambier Perry paintings at Highnam Park,Gloucestershire together, had decided to collaborate on several articles about them for *The Burlington Magazine.* They focused particularly on *The Nativity and Adoration of the Magi,* which Bernard placed close to Giotto under the temporary name of “pseudo-Giotto.” Fry remarked to Bernard and Mary that he planned to attach a note by Horne to their joint article. The note would expand their analysis by commenting on two other altarpieces which Fry and Horne thought were by the same “pseudo-Giotto.” This upset the Berensons, who recalled that Horne had been asking them about Bernard’s views on the artist. To them, that Horne would take Bernard’s opinions (likely attributions) about the artist and profit from them by earning social points, by having his name in print in a scholarly magazine, was a violation of their ownership of those views. What Elam terms “Fry’s ingenuousness, Horne’s somewhat Machiavellian secretiveness and…Berenson’s paranoia” reveal how important attributions were for the social weight they carried, and their role as social capital.

Ultimately, the fact that the locus of these conflicts between scholars was personal and attributional is essential to an understanding of how method was employed in their texts. In both their own essays and especially in reviews of each other’s work, along with specifically criticizing each other’s attributions the two

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305 *The Burlington Magazine* was founded by Roger Fry in 1903 and was the platform for print wars between Berenson and his enemies.

306 Elam, “Roger Fry and Early Italian Art,” 90. Elam relates that in addition, the Berensons were convinced that a photograph of *The Nativity and Adoration of the Magi* had been sent to Horne instead of them. The role of photographs as intellectual property is interesting as a parallel to the role of attributions as intellectual property. This will be explored in the next chapter.
camps—for and against Bernard—often phrased their issues with each other in methodological terms. In 1903, Fry—who, along with Bernard and others like Langton Douglas was involved with the fledgling Burlington Magazine—asked Thomas Sturge Moore, a British poet and art critic, to review Sandford Arthur Strong’s book on drawings in the Chatsworth collection. Fry advised Moore that in his review he should point out the “one or two really obvious howlers in the matter of attributions” in the article—that is, the attributions that he, Berenson, and Horne thought were incorrect. However, both Moore and Strong were of the anti-Berenson camp—Strong especially, whose long-standing vendetta against Bernard stemmed from both social and art historical roots.\(^{307}\) As a result, the review Moore wrote, as Fry related to Mary, contained “vehement diatribes against an imaginary idea of scientific criticism.”\(^{308}\) In effect, Moore transferred his misgivings about Bernard into methodological terms. Douglas’ essay on Sassetti—part of the conflict mentioned above—points out one of Bernard’s erroneous attributions with the added note that the error was shared “even by scientific critics,” mocking and undermining “scientific method” as a way to discredit attributions.\(^{309}\) Thus, as seen in Morelli’s texts, method enters the fray as a layer on top of the real issue: attributions.

That this war was played out in publications like The Burlington is significant because they constituted a prominent public arena in which reputations were forged. Words exchanged in this realm had a direct effect on Bernard’s public identity. As

\(^{307}\) The social being that in 1896, after a fight, Strong’s fiancée, Eugénie Sellers, fled to Italy on a long art tour with the Berensons. The art historical reason was Strong’s offense at Fry’s having assigned Morelli rather than Crowe and Cavalcaselle the honor of inventing scientific connoisseurship in Fry’s aforementioned Giotto essay. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 272, 355.

\(^{308}\) Ibid., 392.

\(^{309}\) Ibid., 394.
shown, these words came in the form of direct criticisms of attributions and references to method, both of which were the raw materials that established a connoisseur’s authority.

Returning to Horne and Berenson, their clash over the figure of Amico di Sandro was very much a conflict about authority, a disagreement over whose opinion should be believed. In the first decade of the 1900s, both Berenson and Horne became advisors to John G. Johnson, a lawyer and collector from Philadelphia.310 This caused tension when they made conflicting attributions to a set of predella paintings in Johnson’s collection. Horne had helped acquire the paintings and had declared them pre-Rome Botticellis.311 When the Berensons visited the United States shortly after and examined the panels, however, Bernard’s immediate reaction was that they were not Botticellis but rather by Amico di Sandro. Though he later changed his mind, word of his doubt reached Horne, prompting a strong reaction in a 1912 letter to Johnson.312 “As for the attribution to Amico,” Horne says, “it is monstrous and ridiculous. Mr. Berenson’s Amico is a farrago of good, bad and indifferent: but with one early exception, all the pictures show Fillipinesque traits.”313

Years later, after Horne’s death in 1916,314 Amico disappeared from print,

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312 Ibid., 433.

313 Ibid. Interestingly, Horne’s phrasing is a direct quote from Morelli: “But enough for the present of Botticelli’s imitators whose works, good, bad, and indifferent, are recommended to the public by the catalogue, and so too, as a matter of course, by guide-books, as originals by the master” Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 87.

first silently from the lists in the 1932 revision of *Florentine Painters* and then vocally in a revised edition of *Drawings of the Florentine Painters* published in 1938 in an appendix dismantling Amico.\(^{315}\) Amico “held together so well,” Bernard wrote in the appendix, “that it took time before even so cautious a student as the late Herbert P. Horne began to doubt its reality…many years later I returned to the subject with a better eye, a better method…and it did not take me long to realize that Amico di Sandro was a myth.”\(^{316}\) Method, however, seems here not so much to refer to Bernard’s process of study as the types of conclusions (results) he came to regard as acceptable.\(^{317}\)

While Berenson and Horne’s conflicting methodological standpoints (in this case “method” meaning their viewpoint on what materials were important to the study of art, not how those materials were studied) underlie the deterioration of their friendship and professional relationship, it was their conflicts regarding attributions that pushed them over the edge. Ultimately these attributions, with their inherent implications regarding larger views on art were inextricably bound up in the identity of the attributor. They were thought of as property and functioned as the currency of social status.

\(^{315}\) Zambrano, 30.

\(^{316}\) Bernard Berenson, "Appendix VI: Amico di Sandro" in *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, 1: 335.

\(^{317}\) As noted, Berenson’s attributions became more inclusive later in life. In the introduction to the 1938 edition of *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, Berenson notes “we must not hastily dismiss a drawing because it does not seem good enough for him. We must make very sure indeed that he was not capable of doing it in some listless or difficult moment.” Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, 1: xiv.
Chapter III
Photography

I: The photography of art

From the early days of photography, paintings were a subject upon which the camera was trained. William Henry Fox Talbot, an English pioneer of photography,\textsuperscript{318} produced images of a variety of objects from leaves, plants, and flowers to sculpture and statuary, etchings, paintings, letters, and music.\textsuperscript{319} During the 1840s, the main goal in photography was to maximize the amount of information recorded.\textsuperscript{320} Both Talbot’s calotype\textsuperscript{321} and Louis Daguerre’s daguerreotype\textsuperscript{322} were fascinating for their


\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid. Ward notes that Talbot’s “overriding objective was to record information, even though his photographic studies show an awareness of textual and tonal contrast as well as composition.” Artistic application of the medium came later: the most famous art-photographer of the nineteenth century, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), began her practice of photography in 1864. Joanne Lukitsh, Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v. ”Cameron, Julia Margaret,” http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T013434 [accessed March 22, 2010]).

\textsuperscript{321} Talbot’s technique, which used paper coated with light-sensitive silver salts, was originally called “photogenic drawing.” By 1835 he had developed a process involving producing an initial negative from which infinite positive copies could be printed. In 1839 Talbot was spurred to publish his findings by the Louis Daguerre’s release of the daguerreotype. In 1840 he made a significant advance by sensitizing the paper with gallic acid, which produced a latent image that was developed later, cutting down significantly on exposure times. He named the process the calotype, under its patented name called the Talbotype.

\textsuperscript{322} By 1837, Daguerre had perfected the process of making images on polished, silvered plates by exposing them in a camera to sunlight, treating them with mercury post-exposure and stabilizing them in a bath of sodium chloride. Daguerre and Isidore Niépce, son of Daguerre’s original business partner Joseph Niépce, attempted to sell the technology by subscription but, having difficulty doing so, made a deal with the French government to present the process to the world free of licensing fees except in
ability to render detail, though the calotype produced an image less sharpenly detailed than the daguerreotype, the fibers of the paper base creating a softer, slightly blurred image. In 1847, William Stirling published an edition of 25 of his book, *Annals of the Artists of Spain*. This was the first book on art illustrated with photographs, containing sixty-six calotypes.\textsuperscript{323}

It was not until the 1850s that systematic photographic campaigns began, and not until the 1860s that the practice exploded. In 1853 the Alinari brothers founded the Fratelli Alinari, a photographic firm based in Florence that specialized in portraits, art reproductions, landscapes, and architecture, particularly those of Italy.\textsuperscript{324} By 1855, extensive catalogues of their works were available to the public.\textsuperscript{325} Aside from the Alinari brothers, Adolphe Braun, a French textile designer, began photographing and producing catalogues in 1854. With the help of his family and then other photographers, he photographed flowers, landscapes, monuments, and works of art.\textsuperscript{326} Prior to the activities of such firms, art historians and critics had access to photographs or works of art, but only in the form of individually produced prints.

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\textsuperscript{325} Hamber, 91.

Part of the mission of these firms was to democratize art, making works sequestered in museums and private collections available to the public. Firms such as Alinari and Braun were engaged in nationalistic enterprises to document the artistic, cultural, and geographical heritage of their respective countries. But Braun, Alinari, and others were also commercially motivated. In addition, the tourist market had a voracious appetite for reproductions of masterpieces. In his 2005 essay “Florence, Photography and the Victorians,” Graham Smith suggests that it is reasonable to think that the Alinari’s early catalogues respond to “a predominantly ‘English’ [or tourist] canon of art an architecture.”

In addition to documenting their own national heritage, they made efforts to cater to an international audience, traveling outside of their home countries to photograph popular tourist destinations and collections of art. Beyond French subjects, Braun photographed many objects outside of France. In 1868-70, for example, as the official photographer of Pope Pius IX, he photographed the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican sculpture collections. The Alinari also carried out campaigns for private collectors, like Prince Albert, who was forming a collection

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327 Ibid., 26.


329 Braun documented regional costumes; Naomi Rosenblum interprets his 1872-3 series on costumes of Alsace and Lorraine, made after those regions had been ceded to Germany, as a lament over France’s loss of those territories. He also produced stereoscopic views of landscapes in the Rhine Valley, the Alps in Switzerland and Savoy, the German countryside, Belgium, ad Holland, for example. Naomi Rosenblum, “Reproducing Visual Images,” in Image and Enterprise, 38.

documenting all of Raphael’s works. Bernard Berenson’s first published writing on art, an 1890 letter to the editor of the *Nation* dated January 19, concerns these issues of access and economics. It states:

Allow me respectfully to call the attention of your readers to the photographs that Marcozzi of 7 Piazza Durini has just taken of all the important pictures in the Poldi-Pezzoli collection. Tourists know how impossible it is for love or money to get good photographs of any pictures save the few favorites. They will be delighted with Marcozzi’s, which are perfect reproductions, rivaling Braun’s, and at a tenth of the latter’s prices. It is to be hoped that the sale of these photographs will be great enough to induce Marcozzi to undertake other collections.

Here, Berenson highlights several key concerns such as the price of photographs as impacting the public’s ability to purchase them as well as the important role of tourists in the determination of which works of art were to be reproduced—not many, it seems, aside from “the few favorites.”

Nationalistic concerns are, however, a definite factor in the campaigns to document art, both for the firms seeking permission to photograph and the institutions that either resisted or embraced their presence. In the early 1850s, the preservation and recording of France’s landmarks and art was a top priority of the government. One of Braun’s earliest campaigns, in 1857, was to photograph the sites, buildings,

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333 Photography itself has national implications, especially regarding France and England, the two countries where initial technological developments were made. In her article on photography appearing in 1857 in *The Quarterly Review*, Lady Eastlake notes “The photographic and the political alliance with France and this country [England] was concluded at about the same period, and we can with nothing more than that they may be maintained with equal cordiality” [Lady Eastlake?] “History and Practice of Photogenic Drawing…” *Quarterly Review* 101, no. 202 (1857): 445.

and works in the region of Alsace.\textsuperscript{335} In 1883 he signed an exclusive contract with the Louvre to photograph its collections, the most important repository of France’s artistic patrimony.\textsuperscript{336} The Alinari in Florence began their work during the beginning of the \textit{Risorgimento}, when Italian unification was at the top of everyone’s priorities.

Large numbers of art reproductions, especially of drawings, were sold to individuals, art schools, libraries, and museums.\textsuperscript{337} In the early days of photography, though, many museums were not interested in having photographers document their collections. In 1866 the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, director of the Louvre, enacted a policy forbidding photography of the museum’s collections, and it was not until the early 1870s that Braun could realize his ambition to document the collection.\textsuperscript{338} In 1860, appealing to the patriotism of the director of the Uffizi, Michele Arcangiolo Migliarini, the Alinari brothers wrote asking permission to photograph in the galleries:

\begin{quote}
The Direction of the Louvre has accorded the reproduction of the most famous paintings with special permission to an able photographer [Braun], and his efforts were received with applause. Adding that soon that same photographer will come to Italy…so that the Collection is enriched by reproductions of the beautiful pictures of our peninsula…\textsuperscript{339}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{337} Mary Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” in \textit{Image and Enterprise}, 123.

\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., 121.

\textsuperscript{339} “La Direzione del Louvre aveva con speciale permesso accordata la riproduzione dei quadri più famosi ad un abilissimo fotografo [Adolphe Braun] e che i suoi saggi erano riusciti con piacere. Aggiungendo che in seguito il medesimo fotografo sarebbe venuto in Italia…onde arricchire la Collezione con le riproduzioni delle belle piture della nostra penisola…” Leopoldo Alinari, quoted in Massimo Ferretti, “Fra traduzione e riduzione” in \textit{Gli Alinari}, 117. Translation mine.
There is an element of national pride at work in this request, the Alinari arguing that an Italian firm should photograph Italian works of art before a French photographer moves in. However, forwarding this request to the Department of Public Instruction, which had to grant their approval, Migliarini wrote:

The Direction has always followed the maxim of not permitting the reproduction of the precious monuments entrusted to it, principally for their conservation, in light of many just reasons. The first: knowing that photographic rendering is always fallacious, with uncertain results, it would be horrible if one were to see the greatest works of the great Masters for sale in public in an altered state. This would not directly protect and help with the scattering of artistic mediocrity made thus. Since Genius is not subjected to any mechanization; actually the mechanization in the Fine Arts is the death of Genius. Lithography enough has made the art of engraving perish! One does not see the celebrated Masson, Andron, or even Morghen resurrected; in spite of the fact that this is a nepotism of painting. Now that one attacks the most suave of human productions, Painting itself becomes a mechanism! And society [?] from its mediocre and vain instruction, does not realize that even the most beautiful photographs done from life lack that spirit that one finds in even third-rate pictures.  

The Alinari did gain access to the collection, but Migliarini’s letter shows that some officials had reservations about the ability of the medium of photography to accurately convey information about works of art. Migliarini characterizes photography as deceptive, lamenting that photographs fail to capture the spirit of the original work of art, present even in third-rate works. Further, taking a stance opposite the hopes of photographers such as Braun that art reproductions would

340 “La Direzione ha seguito sempre la massima di non permettere la riproduzione dei preziosi monumenti a lei affidati, principalmente per la loro conservazione, in vista di molte e giuste ragioni. La prima: poiché sapendo quanto la riuscita in fotografia sia sempre fallace, e d’esito incerto, mal soffrendo che si vedesse in commercio pubblico i capi d’opera de’ grandi Maestri, svisati ed alterati; non proteggere direttamente e cooperare allo spargimento di siffatte mediocrità artistiche. Giacché il Genio non si assoggetta a nessun meccanismo; anzi la meccanica nelle Arti belle, è la morte del Genio. Abbastanza la litografia, ha fatto perire l’arte dell’Incisione in rame! Non si vedranno più risorgere i celebri Masson, Andron, e neppure i Morghen; malgrado essa sia un nepotismo della pittura. Ora si attacca la più soave delle produzioni umane, la Pittura stessa diviene un meccanismo! E la società ebra della sua mediocre e vana istruzione, non si avvede che anche le più belle fotografie fatted al vero sono prive di quell’anima che si ritrova pur anche nelle pitture di terz’ordine.” Michele Arcangioi Migliarini, quoted in Wladimiro Settimelli, “La famiglia Alinari e la fotografia italiana dell’ottocento,” in Gli Alinari, 18-19. Translation mine.
positively educate public taste, officials such as Migliarini thought photography’s infidelity had consequences on the public’s cultural instruction, misleading them and inundating them with mediocrity.\textsuperscript{341}

Though Migliarini’s letter represents an extreme viewpoint, opposite on the spectrum from the attitude of Sir Charles Eastlake, director of the National Gallery of London,\textsuperscript{342} it encapsulates many of the concerns people had about photography, especially as it related to older print media. To begin, many viewed hand-made images as more capable of rendering the spirit of a work of art: engraving or watercolor involved interpretation by an artist, which some trusted to convey the proper ideas about a work of art more than an indiscriminate machine. Though some people perceived photography as a scientific pursuit, the camera accurately recording what it saw, in the realm of art reproductions it came up against a long tradition in which reproducing works of art was an art in itself, with value placed on the interpretive skills of the printmaker.\textsuperscript{343} These artists were tasked with “grasping the spirit” of a work of art and transmitting it to the viewer in a concise way.\textsuperscript{344} These intermediary artists would sometimes retouch, fill in missing areas, and emphasize or deemphasize certain aspects of the original work in their reproductions. For example,

\textsuperscript{341} See Rosenblum, “Reproducing Visual Images,” 42. This attitude resonates with Bernard and Mary Berenson’s views of the role of the connoisseur to direct the public to spiritually uplifting and worthy works of art by correctly attributing them.

\textsuperscript{342} Eastlake used photography from the 1850s, and was actually the first President of the Photographic Society in 1853. See Hamber, “The Use of Photograph by Nineteenth-Century Art Historians,” 103; David Robertson, et al., Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v. “Eastlake,” http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T024751pg1 (accessed March 22, 2010).

\textsuperscript{343} Hamber, “The Use of Photograph by Nineteenth-Century Art Historians,” 94. Hamber also cites “the heritage of the traditional reproductive print being a work of art in its own right, a transcription of the "spirit" of a work rather than its literal physical appearance.” Ibid., 101.

\textsuperscript{344} Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” 122.
when Prince Albert employed a Miss Severn to copy Raphael’s *Madonna and Child* at the Kensington Palace for his Raphael collection, she asked whether he wished her “to copy the Picture as it is (only retouching those parts wh. are broken away) or advise her to keep her copy lighter, more refined, in short to try to make it more as she imagines it to be underneath.” Estelle Jussim, writing in 1974, sees this intermediary involvement of the printmaker-artist as the distinguishing factor between print media and photography, which gets rid of the artist as primary codifier of information contained in the reproduction (though the photographer could also be active, retouching the original photograph). Printing processes and photographic processes were not mutually exclusive, though, one replacing the other. Jussim posits dual goals of photography: one, to fix a faithful image of an object, and two, to render that image on printable surfaces. Given print media’s precedence for rendering images on printable surfaces, printing processes, such as lithography and intaglio printing, were employed in efforts to render the photographic image printable on a variety of surfaces, especially in books.

345 Montagu, “The ‘Ruland/Raphael Collection,’” 43.

346 Estelle Jussim, *Visual Communication and the Graphic Arts* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1974), 57. Much of the early history of the photograph is bound up with the search for ways to print reproductions of objects—including works of art—in books. This aspect of its history ties it especially close to developments in various techniques of printing, such as engraving, woodcut, and lithography. Leopoldo Alinari, one of the founding brothers of the Fratelli Alinari, trained in a lithography shop in the Oltrarno area of Florence. Settimelli, “La famiglia Alinari e la fotografia italiana dell’ottocento,” in *Gli Alinari*, 14. Though the placement of the photograph in the book is important to art history, this thesis is more concerned with the role of photographs as independent objects. This will be discussed in part two of this chapter.

347 Jussim, 57. Photogravure is an example of an intaglio process appealing to art historians for the richness of its images. For more about the photograph in the book, the development of photomechanical processes, and the complex relationship between print processes and photography see Jussim and Trevor Fawcett, “The Graphic versus the Photographic in the Nineteenth-Century Reproduction,” *Art History* 9, no. 2 (1986): 185-212.
In fact, many early photographs reproduced not the original painting, but a print of it.\textsuperscript{348} Of the three hundred five subjects listed in the 1863 catalogue of Robert MacPherson, a contemporary and firm competing with the Alinari and Braun along with Domenico Anderson, fewer than ten were taken from original paintings.\textsuperscript{349} This may seem strange, especially in light of one side of the discourse around photography that promoted its capacity for faithful reproduction, but it was in fact a result of the limitations of early photography, which had trouble rendering color information due to its uneven light sensitivity. Engravings translated better because they were already in black and white. Similarly, drawings were ideal subjects for photographs due to their emphasis on line and tendency to be depicted in colors photographic media could detect, as compared to oil or tempera paintings.\textsuperscript{350} In addition, photographers often had an easier time gaining access to drawings than to paintings.\textsuperscript{351} It was also easier to reproduce drawings in their actual size, something critics valued.\textsuperscript{352}

From the very beginning, there were those who, along with its capacity for rendering detail, pointed out photography’s shortcomings, especially when it came to

\textsuperscript{348} Jussim notes that Sir William Stirling’s \textit{Annals of the Artists of Spain}, mentioned above as the first photographically illustrated art book, consisted of Talbotypes of engravings of paintings. Jussim, 246.

\textsuperscript{349} Hamber, 97.

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., 103. After adopting the carbon transfer process, in 1867 Braun released a series of photographs of master drawings and paintings. This process added carbon-black to the gelatin coating of the printing paper. The negative was exposed on the back side of the paper, and the gelatin then transferred to another sheet of paper. Eventually, other colors were added to the gelatin besides black, enabling more faithful copying of drawings done in colors other than black, such as red chalk. Though complicated, this process produced stable, rich prints superior in quality to other methods. The photographs of drawings were especially good. Rosenblum, “Reproducing Visual Images,” 40.

\textsuperscript{351} Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” 122.

\textsuperscript{352} For example, Kenyon Cox’s review of Berenson’s \textit{The Drawings of the Florentine Painters} in \textit{The Nation} (1903): “In all but one or two cases [the] plates are the exact size of the original...and in almost every case they are so exact in color and the rendering of touch and method that they are, for purposes of study and pleasure, almost equal to their originals.” Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 409.
communicating information about paintings, which possessed details of surface
texture and color not easily rendered by the camera. Though she did not directly
address problems with reproducing works of art, Lady Eastlake, wife of Sir Charles
Eastlake and the anonymous author of an extensive article on photography appearing
in 1857 in *The Quarterly Review*, did address issues of color, and it is possible that
she had photographs of works of art in mind when she wrote. After relating the
history of photographic processes, she details what she calls the third, “photographic
function” of the solar ray, after its role in giving light and heat, which causes “of all
the disturbances, decompositions, and chemical changes which affect vegetable,
animal, and organic life.” She continues:

The prepared paper or plate which we put into the camera may be compared to
a chaos, without form and void, on which the merest glance of the suns rays
calls up image after image till the fair creation stands revealed: yet not
revealed in the order in which it met the solar eye, for while some colours
have hastened to greet his coming, others have been found slumbering at their
posts, and have been left with darkness in their lamps. So impatient have been
the blues and violets to perform their task upon the recipient plate, that the
very substance of the colour has been lost and dissolved in the solar presence;
while so laggard have been the reds and yellows and all tints partaking of
them, that they have hardly kindled into activity before the light has been
withdrawn. Thus it is that the relation of one colour to another is found
changed and often reversed, the deepest blue being altered from a dark mass
into a light one, and the most golden-yellow from a light body into a dark.

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353 Hamber implies that she comments on photography’s application to the recording of the fine arts,
writing “Elizabeth Eastlake had a detailed and intimate knowledge of both the art and photographic
worlds and was thus eminently qualified to write both on photography and its application to the
recording of the fine arts.” Hamber, 102. In fact, she does not address photography’s role in
disseminating information about works of art, but rather the question of whether and how photography
should be understood as an art form. In doing so she demonstrates her knowledge of art, citing various
artists and their styles in comparison to the photographic image.

354 Eastlake, 457.

355 Ibid., 458. Hamber also cites this particular passage. In addition, he cites William J. Newton’s 1853
article in the *Journal of the Photographic Society*, which presents similar conclusions about the
rendering of different colors. Hamber, 103, n.29.
This skewed rendering of color values was the biggest problem critics had with photographs of works of art. Ralph Wornum, the man who had organized the first catalogue of the National Gallery in London in 1847, noted this problem as it regards the photography of paintings in his 1872 introduction to a photographically illustrated book about several paintings in the London National Gallery:

The more toned and rich in colour a picture is, the more difficult is it to produce any approach to it in the photograph; dirty or highly varnished pictures are also unfit objects for photography; the touches often of a picture, as well as a drawing, may be adequately given, but the colours and tone will constantly fail. The most successful results have been attained in the cases of the tempera pictures, of many of which beautiful reproductions are given, though owing to the peculiar effects of certain colours the true tone or harmony is commonly missed, as no colour can be exactly reproduced in its proper value in chiaroscuro; reds, green, and yellow come too dark; blues too light.\footnote{Ralph N. Wornum, \textit{A Selection of Pictures by The Old Masters Photographed by Signor L. Caldesi with Descriptive and Historical Notices} by Ralph N. Wornum, Keeper and Secretary, National Gallery (London: Virtue and Co, 1872) quoted in Hamber, 108.}

Anthony Hamber reports that the albumen prints in this text were of extremely variant quality, many tending toward the side of horrible.

In the 1880s, Attout Tailfer, a French chemist, developed orthochromatic plates.\footnote{Helene. E. Roberts, “Documents in the History of Visual Documentation: Bernard Berenson on Isochromatic Film,” in \textit{Art history through the Camera’s Lens}, 123.} At the time this was called isochromatic photography; later, in 1906, when further developments were made, it was termed panchromatic photography.\footnote{Trevor Fawcett, \textit{Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online}, s.v. "Reproduction of works of art," http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T071551 (accessed March 22, 2010).} This new technology brought greater sensitivity to color. For example, two reproductions of Fra Angelico and Studio’s “Christ Carrying the Cross,” from \textit{Scenes from the Life of Christ} in the Museo di San Marco, Florence, one an example of early photography...
[Fig. 1] and the other an isochromatic photograph [Fig. 2], show an improvement in the rendering of the blues and yellows. In the older photograph, the blues appeared white and the yellows as dark gray.

![Figure 1. Early photograph (Visual Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, reproduced in Art History Through the Camera’s Lens, 125)](image1)

![Figure 2. Isochromatic photograph (Fratelli Alinari/Art Resources, reproduced in Art History Through the Camera’s Lens, 126)](image2)

For art reproductions, isochromatic photography represented a major improvement. In 1893, Bernard Berenson published an article in the Nation on the subject of isochromatic photography and Venetian painting, focusing on its positive impact on connoisseurship.\(^3\) Describing the current status of the fields of art history and photography, he notes that most paintings are placed in conditions unfavorable for viewing and photographing: dark corners, under arches, or between two windows, light streaming through and obscuring vision. “The great ‘Pietà,’ Titian’s last masterpiece,” Berenson writes, “is so placed between the reflecting lights of two windows and a door that an impatient critic like Mr. Kenyon Cox may almost be

excused for comparing it contumuously to old cheese.”" Impeded access, coupled
with a lack of acceptable reproductions of Old Masters to compare to one another,
made connoisseurship a “quack science,” and everyone who practiced it “often in
spite of himself, more or less of a quack.”" According to Bernard Berenson, with
the advent of photography, however, connoisseurship gained legitimacy—or at least
connoisseurs no longer had an excuse for their quackery. It became “not at all
difficult to see at any rate nine tenths of a great master’s works (Titian’s or
Tintoretto’s, for instance) in such rapid succession that the memory of them will be
fresh enough to enable the critic to determine the place and value of any one
picture.”" Isochromeic photography, as the only technique capable of keeping the
relative values of the different colors, " was essential for effecting this revolution.
When “continuous study of originals is supplemented by isochromeic photographs,”
he writes, “such comparison attains almost the accuracy of the physical sciences.”

In the article, Berenson identifies these advances in photography as the
driving force behind advances in connoisseurship, along with improved

360 Ibid., 128.

361 Ibid., 128-9. Prints were not acceptable, for “a moment’s comparison of even the best print with its
original will show how utterly untrustworthy and even misleading such an aid to memory must be. No
engraver, however well intentioned, can help putting a great deal of himself into his reproduction. His
print has no other value than that of a copy.”

362 Ibid., 129.

363 The old system, incapable of rendering color, was only fit to give outlines; for this reason drawings
were ideal, while paintings “as a rule came out wretchedly.” To compensate, photographers “estitute
of special artistic talent” retouched the photos such that “even an engraving gave a better idea of Titian
or Tintoret than photographs of this kind, such as Naya’s...for the engraving was executed by a person
with at least some pretense to art culture.” Ibid., 129, 130.

364 Ibid., 129.
transportation. He repeats these assertions in the 1894 preface to Venetian Painters, noting:

Even such painstaking critics of some years ago as Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle laboured under terrible disadvantages, because most of their work was done at a time when traveling was much slower than it has now become, and when photography was not sufficiently perfected to be of great service. Rapid transit and isochromatic photography are beginning to enable the student to make of connoisseurship something like an exact science. 365

In Mary Berenson’s article, “The New and the Old Art Criticism” published in 1894, transportation and photography are also touted as the impetus behind the new developments in connoisseurship. As noted previously, like Bernard in the preface to Venetian Painters, she relates the problems of previous connoisseurship to a lack of technology: those who had come before, despite their best efforts, lacked the essential tools of “good photographs and quick travel.” 366 As Berenson had touched on in “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures,” she claimed:

…until very recent times collectors have been forced to rely chiefly upon engravings or fading memories of the ‘grand tour’ for their knowledge of the works of the early painters, and we all know how inaccurate are both memories and prints for purposes of fine discrimination. 367

Significantly, as opposed to Morelli, who couched the novelty of his practice in terms of method of looking, in the “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures” and “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” technology is described by the Berensons as the source of change in the discipline.

365 Bernard Berenson, preface to Venetian Painters, x.


367 Ibid.
II: Morelli, Berenson, and the photography of art

In “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures” and the preface to *Venetian Painters*, Bernard Berenson picks up the threads of Morelli’s dichotomy between himself and Cavalcaselle, framing the former as “the first critic who made systematic use of photographs, and the overwhelming superiority of his work from the point of view of connoisseurship is so great that even his bitterest opponents have been obliged to adopt most of his conclusions” and Cavalcaselle as outdated for not employing photographs. In “The New and the Old Art Criticism” Mary also notes that the new method “owes its origin in large part to the efforts of the late Senator Morelli, who was the first art-critic who went to work with the aid of photographs to study Italian art in a really scientific way.” However, the Berensons’ pronouncements, repeated by subsequent scholarship, should not be taken at face value given the complex polemics at work in Bernard’s writing, in particular the inherited dichotomy between Morelli and Cavalcaselle, which manifests in many of his early prefaces.

369 That Cavalcaselle did in fact use photographs will be demonstrated later in this chapter.
372 In the preface to *Venetian Painters* Berenson notes “Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have been superseded, and to a great degree supplemented by the various writings of Morelli, Richter, Frizzoni, and others” because, he says, the latter used photographs while the former did not. Bernard Berenson, *Venetian Painters*, ix.
Still, regardless of whether or not Morelli was the first, it is clear that he utilized photographs in his practice,\footnote{That Morelli used photographs is evident from several large-format photographs in his library, now at the Accademia Bergamo and from frequent references to photographs in \textit{Critical Studies}. In addition, in “Principles and Methods” he has the Russian interlocutor comment about Raphael’s \textit{La Donna Velata} “Until now I had never seen this picture, and knew it only from photographs” Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 54. Photographs are also referenced in the footnotes in at least one instance in the 1880 and 1883 editions of the volume on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries. Lermolieff, \textit{Die Werke italienischer Meister}, 103; Morelli, \textit{Italian Masters in German Galleries}, 82.} probably from the early days of photography and at least from 1877, when he is known to have purchased photographs of master drawings from the Braun atelier in Dornach.\footnote{Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” 125. It is likely that Morelli made use of them before that date as well.} From the frequent references in \textit{Critical Studies} to photographs of drawings\footnote{For example, in the Filippino Lippi portion of the Borghese section, Morelli provides the reader with both the museum number and the Braun catalogue of a drawing in the Lille collection. Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 116.} and from his purchases from Braun in 1877, it is clear that Morelli consulted and valued photographs of drawings in particular. In the introduction to the Munich section of the 1883 English version of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin volume, he elaborates on the benefits of studying drawings, noting that in drawings “the whole man stands before us without disguise or affectation, and his genius with its beauties and its failings speaks directly to the mind.”\footnote{Morelli, \textit{Italian Masters in German Galleries}, 7.} He continues:

I have therefore thought it advisable here and there to point out particularly characteristic drawings by the old masters, and to recommend the acquisition of the respective photographs of them to those students who feel inclined to take up the studies which I have gone through. They can thus, in a cheap way, procure the most valuable aids to a serious study of art.\footnote{Ibid., 7.}
This citation, beyond indicating Morelli’s favorable opinion of photographs of
drawings, reveals his general opinion that photography “the most valuable aid” to
comparative study. 378 Notably, Morelli’s caveat that his recommendation hinges on a
familiarity with paintings and sculpture is not a response to the syntax of photography
but to the difficulties of reading drawings, which “bewilder novices.” Yet, at the same
time, in Critical Studies Morelli also displays skepticism toward photography, or at
the very least an acknowledgement of its shortcomings. In “Principles and Method,”
the Italian gentleman opines:

As the botanist lives among his fresh or dried plants, the mineralogist among
his stones, the geologist among his fossils, so the art-connoisseur ought to live
among his photographs and, if his finances permit, among his picture sand
statues. This is his world, and here he learns to see with the trained and
cultivated eye of an artist, for visis, quí nisi est verus, ratio quoque falsa sic omnis. 379

The Russian interlocutor responds that this is a lot to ask of a connoisseur, asking
“how do you expect a beginner in the study of art to distinguish the photograph of a
genuine work from that of a spurious painting? for in these days good and bad, weeds
and flowers, are all photographed promiscuously.” 380 Though Morelli possessed
photographs of paintings and we also find references to photographs of paintings in
the gallery sections of Critical Studies, 381 through the Russian interlocutor Morelli

378 In Critical Studies, his note is more concise and direct (though this may also have to do with the
fact that the two volumes were translated by different people). Morelli writes, “For purposes of serious
and comparative study photography is an invaluable aid, and I should therefore advise all who intend
to devote their attention to original drawings to procure reproductions of those which I have mentioned
in these pages are particularly characteristic.” In this instance, instead of calling photography “the most


380 Ibid., 12.
warns the reader to be aware of the equalizing potential of the photographic medium, which troubles distinctions between originals and copies. What comes through in this exchange, however, is not so much a denial of the value of photography but a reserved appreciation of various modes of reproduction of works of art, with the caveat that those reproductions never replace face-time in front of the work itself. Morelli collected all kinds of reproductions, from chromolithographs commissioned by the Arundel Society,\(^{382}\) to line engravings, to engravings extracted from issues of the “Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst,” the same periodical in which Morelli’s first essays on art had appeared. Perhaps Morelli’s reserved attitude toward reproductive media gives us a better idea of why he disparaged the "general impression," or the tendency to judge art by only the "spirit" of the master, when we think about his argument in terms of reproductive media. As noted previously, some viewed engraving or watercolor as better able to transmit the "spirit" of the artist. If we think about these kinds of art reproductions, which do not reproduce form exactly, as physical manifestations of the general impression as a way of looking, we find therein what Morelli was thinking about when he made his arguments about the “general impression.” It is possible that those who employed the “general impression,” who also tended to be bookish and too absorbed in written sources, accepted art

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381 For example, Morelli mentions an Alinari photograph of Granacci’s Holy Family in the Pitti Palace in Florence. Morelli, Critical Studies, vol. 1, 100, n.4.

382 The Arundel Society was founded in 1848 with the goal of distributing truthful as opposed to decorative reproductions of works of art (usually frescoes) to the interested public. Morelli’s friends James Hudson and Layard were involved, Layard advising the Society to use chromolithography in its practice. From 1866 onward, the Society also published books. Tanya Harrod, Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online, s.v. "Arundel Society," http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T004476 (accessed April 12, 2010); Giacomo Agosti, “Le « impressioni artistiche e storiche » di un conoscitore: la biblioteca di lavoro di Giovanni Morelli,” in Giovanni Morelli: da collezionista a conoscitore (Bergamo: Accademia Carrara, 1987), 64.
reproductions like engravings as sufficient evidence to pass judgment on a painting. That this may have been Morelli’s opinion is evident in a comment in the introduction to the Borghese section, in which Morelli, responding to Charles Blanc’s\textsuperscript{383} claim for Leonardo’s authorship of a painting of Saint Sebastian, asks “if indeed it is permissible from a very poor engraving to discuss a painting and to pass judgment upon it at all.”\textsuperscript{384} Here he indicates that he has high standards for the types of intermediary visual materials (if any at all) acceptable as final criteria for judgments of attribution.\textsuperscript{385}

Yet, at the same time we also find Morelli making attributions on the basis of photographs alone, sometimes even poor-quality photographs. In the Gianpetrino section of Borghese section of \textit{Critical Studies}, Morelli notes “in this painting, which I only know from a photograph, [footnote 1: Braun, No. 74, under the name of Luini] the master may be recognized, more especially in the form of the left hand, which differs from that in the pictures both of Luini and Andrea Solario.”\textsuperscript{386} Later in the

\textsuperscript{383} Charles Blanc was a French writer, engraver, and head of the Bureau des Beaux-Arts beginning in 1848. He was also the founder of the \textit{Gazette des beaux-arts}, a periodical in which many of Berenson’s articles appeared. Paul Gerbod, \textit{Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online} s.v. "Blanc, Charles," http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T009140 (accessed April 12, 2010).

\textsuperscript{384} Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 70.

\textsuperscript{385} Morelli’s comment could also be construed as an indirect jab at those who favored engraving over photography, for in the 1850s and 60s Blanc was a staunch opponent of photography and an engraver himself. See Wolfgang Freitag, “Early Uses of Photography in the History of Art,” \textit{Art Journal 39}, no. 2 (1979-1980): 117-123; and Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” 122. In the introduction to the Borghese section, Morelli criticizes Blanc for his emphasis on the “spirit” of the work. In engraving, with which it was difficult if not impossible to transmit information about color and texture, the goal was to capture the “spirit” and the artist’s intended effect of the painting. In fact, however, by 1867 Blanc had changed his mind about photography upon seeing Braun’s photographs. Bergstein, “Art Enlightening the World,” 123. In addition, given Morelli’s propensity for collecting engravings and his reservations about the fidelity of photography, it is unlikely that he was dogmatically opposed to engravings and other print media and whole-heartedly in favor of photography.

\textsuperscript{386} Morelli, \textit{Critical Studies}, vol. 1, 162.
Borghese section, discussing the characteristics of Ambrogio de Predis (in reference to an article Bode had written about a portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza), he writes “from the heliotype appended to the article I notice that nearly all the characteristics of Ambrogio de Predis, enumerated by me on p 180, note 3, are present in this portrait.” In his 1891 introduction to the Borghese volume, Sir Austen Henry Layard relates an anecdote about Morelli’s use of photography intended to impress upon the reader Morelli’s great skill as a connoisseur and his correctness of judgment:

Last year [in 1890] a collection of pictures was to be offered for sale by auction at Cologne. Small and ill-executed photographs of those of the Italian schools were sent to him. He detected amongst them at once two of importance—one by Bazzi or Sodoma, and one by Giulio Romano. He wrote to me on the subject, and urged me to go to Cologne to see them, which I was unable to do. He then called the attention of two of his German friends to them. On his advice, although he had never seen them, the one he attributed to Bazzi was purchased by Herr Habich of Cassel—himself a successful collector and one of Morelli’s followers—and proved to be so fine an example of this rare and original painter that, at Morelli’s request, Herr Habich generously ceded it to the Brera at Milan, of which it is now one of the principle ornaments. The ‘Giulio Romano,’ acquired by Miss Hertz, proved to be a charming work of his early time, when he was under the direct influence of his great master.

In this passage Layard boasts of Morelli’s skill by indicating that even in poor photographs he could make just attributions. The citation also shows, along with the aforementioned instances in the text in which Morelli commented on a work known only through photographs, that despite Morelli’s frequent proclamations that the work of art itself should be the primary element in the study of art, that he did make conclusions based on an understanding of the object mediated through photography.

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387 Ibid., 189.

However, beyond this it is difficult to ascertain exactly how Morelli used photographs, since his photograph collection has been lost.\footnote{Giacomo Agosti relates that the collection was donated to Morelli’s friend, the Marchese Visconti-Venosta, president of the Accademia Milanese, but has since been lost. Agosti, “‘Le « impressioni artistiche e storiche’” 63.} Subsequent scholarship about Morelli cites his use of photographs, but does not tend to explore how they were used.\footnote{See Bergstein, “Freud’s Moses of Michelangelo”; Hamber, “The Use of Photography by Nineteenth-Century Art Historians.”} In his essay, “The Use of Photography by 19\textsuperscript{th} Century Art Historians,” Anthony Hamber posits that Morelli used photographs as mementos rather than as tools.\footnote{This distinction that will be discussed later in this chapter.} Though this may be true in some cases, Hamber draws his conclusion from a misunderstanding of Critical Studies. He says that Morelli’s writings do not directly refer to the use of photographs, when in fact, as shown, they do.\footnote{See the aforementioned passage about the value of photographs of drawings.} Further, he indicates that all of Morelli’s in-text illustrations are line drawings. While this is true of the 1880 German language, 1883 English language, and 1886 Italian language volumes on the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin galleries, and while there are woodcuts of outlines of details, such as hands or ears in it, the 1892-93 English edition of the Critical Studies also includes halftone prints and photogravure. Even having corrected Hamber’s misunderstanding, though, it is dangerous to draw conclusions about working method from textual sources alone. In the text, Morelli consistently advocates for the study of the works themselves, as when he notes in the preface before “Principles and Method” that despite the difficulty of limiting the number of illustrations he included in Critical Studies:
My choice was, of course, mainly guided by the idea that the illustrations were to render the meaning of the text as plain as possible to the reader. I confined myself, therefore, to such as appeared to me strictly necessary, assuming that they who intend to make a more serious study of the forms would go to the works of art themselves [emphasis mine].³⁹³

However, as shown, this textual attitude does not preclude Morelli’s own use of photographs alone to make attributions. Further, the fact that Morelli was able to make attributions based on photographs only indicates that in some cases, they were not used as mementos of previously viewed objects but rather as sources of new information about an unknown object. It also appears that Morelli used them to convey information to friends or family members he was advising on purchases, though in one case it seems the poor quality of the photograph may have been used as part of an attempt to discourage the purchase of a work by James Hudson, a friend of Morelli’s and Layard’s and English diplomat, in 1871.³⁹⁴

From the fact that Morelli used photographs for new information, it is possible to draw conclusions as to what kind of information Morelli required to come to an attribution. As indicated in part one of this chapter, photographs were limited in their rendering of color. Thus, the kind of information they provided was primarily that of form and proportion, elements that were often tweaked by printmakers. A focus on these aspects is in line both with Morelli’s own words and with Maurizio Lorber and Hayden Maginnis’ theories about the psychological-perceptual aspect of the attributional process.

The little that remains of Morelli’s photograph collection might also tell us a little about how he used photographs his working method. Two large-format


³⁹⁴ Anderson, Collecting Connoisseurship, 37.
photographs found in Morelli’s library and exhibited in the 1987 exhibition Giovanni Morelli: da collezionista a conoscitore are annotated, presumably in Morelli’s handwriting. One reads “Raffaello-affresco” and the other “Rafaello,” corrected with “Pordenone,” below which is written in another hand “Spiacemi non avere pronta una prova buona avendo esaurita l’edizione di queste stampe” (“Excuse me for not having a good version ready, having exhausted the edition of this photograph.”) If the attributional annotations are written in Morelli’s hand, then it is possible that his collection was organized like Berenson’s was, with changing attributions recorded on the backs of photographs.

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As outlined in the previous chapters, Morelli and Cavalcaselle clashed in opinion, and later scholars in Berenson’s generation held on to the partisan split between the two, dividing themselves more or less into Morellian and Cavalcasellian camps. Recalling Layard’s aforementioned laudatory comments about Morelli’s impressive eye when confronted with inadequate photographs, it is instructive to compare these to Langton Douglas’s comment about Cavalcaselle and photography in the 1903 English edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s A History of Painting in Umbria, Florence, and Siena, edited by Douglas and assisted by Charles Augustus Strong, both Berenson enemies mentioned in the previous chapter. Douglas writes in

395 Since I have not seen the photographs in person, nor am I familiar with Morelli’s handwriting, I cannot say for sure whether these annotations were written by him.

396 Agosti, “Le « impressioni artistiche e storiche »” catalogue II.14, 75.

397 Ibid., catalogue III.3, 75.

398 This is elaborated in the last section of this chapter.
his short biography of Cavalcaselle, “his extraordinary memory enabled him to do
without the help of photographs [emphasis mine] more than less richly endowed
critics are able to accomplish with all the modern aids to study.” Here, Douglas
takes the stance opposite from Layard, making the idea that Cavalcaselle eschewed
the use of photography a badge of honor and a testament to his connoisseurial
prowess.

Though obviously a much later opinion than Layard’s, Douglas’s assertion is in
line with the bundled oppositions between Morelli and Crowe and Cavalcaselle
expressed in Critical Studies. “Photophile vs. photoboe” could be another contrast
added to the list, fitting in nicely with the dichotomy between the “general
impression” and careful looking. But this is a false dichotomy, for in working method
Morelli and Cavalcaselle were more similar than Morelli’s polemics would have us believe.

Morelli and Cavalcaselle’s 1861-2 government inventory trip through Umbria
and the Marches is a pivotal moment in the comparison of the two scholars. Most
importantly, Donata Levi presents evidence that Cavalcaselle made a habit of drawing
particulars such as ears and hands as early as the late 1850s. Since attention to
morphological detail is almost exclusively attributed to Morelli in subsequent
literature, this is an important revelation. Though there is speculation in both
Morellian and Cavalcasellian camps as to who may have learned this focus on
particulars from whom, it is likely that both Morelli and Cavalcaselle had relatively

399 Robert Langton Douglas, “Biographies of the Authors,” in A History of Painting in Italy, J.A.

established ways of looking at art prior to their contact with one another.\footnote{Gibson-Wood, 181.} Indeed, as mentioned, Cavalcaselle already had a habit of drawing ears and hands prior to his trip with Morelli. In addition, Morelli’s library contains examples of museum catalogues annotated by him from 1860 featuring drawings of particulars.\footnote{Agostì, “Le « impressioni artistiche e storiche,”” catalogue I.10, 72.}

This shows that despite the polemics of Critical Studies, which seek to label Crowe and Cavalcaselle as reliant on the general impression, implying that they did not look carefully at art, the differences between Morelli and Cavalcaselle did not actually reside in their methods of looking, which appear to be quite similar. Not only that, but Crowe and Cavalcaselle did in fact consult photographs, from at least around 1877. In the preface to Titian: His Life and Times (1877), they note:

…the pictures to which the name of Titian is attached exceed the number of one thousand, in Italy, in England, and on the continent…we have been at pains to visit and to study all but a very few of these works, with which we have compared, when it was possible, numerous engravings and photographs\footnote{J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavalcaselle, Titian: His Life and Times (London: John Murray, 1877), xi.} [emphasis mine].

This small note proves that like Morelli, Crowe and Cavalcaselle consulted a variety of kinds of art reproductions, including photographs, in their working method.

Where differences between Morelli and Crowe and Cavalcaselle are revealed is in where and how their working methods manifest in their respective published texts. If both Morelli and Cavalcaselle were focusing on details as part of their practical working methods, they did not equally translate such a focus into textual argument. In A History of Painting in Italy, Cavalcaselle tends to use general mood and descriptions in lieu of Morelli’s detailed, at times anatomical characterizations. In
addition, in *A History of Painting in Italy* Crowe and Cavalcaselle do not supply their readers with catalogue numbers of photographs available for purchase from major ateliers, but rather the museum catalogue numbers only. Morelli, on the other hand, sometimes notes photograph numbers so that students can purchase their own copies for study, even as early as 1880.

Further, the choices each scholar made with regard to the type of illustrations included in their publications is telling. The second edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s *Early Flemish Painters* (1872) and the 1877 edition of *The Life of Titian* contain exclusively engravings as illustrations. Morelli’s 1880 and 1886 editions of the Munich, Dresden, and Berlin volume also contain exclusively engravings and woodcuts. However, by the 1890-91 edition of *Critical Studies*, Morelli includes a combination of engravings, photogravure, and halftone prints. As late as 1894, an Italian language edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s *A History of Painting in Italy* includes exclusively engravings.

From these examples, it appears that though Crowe and Cavalcaselle were engaged in a similar way of looking to Morelli’s, this did not translate into the same type of published material, with both the kinds of observations and the choices of illustration differing significantly from those that Morelli made in his books. Importantly, though, later edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s *A History of Painting in Italy* edited by Langton Douglas contains mostly halftone prints and several examples of photogravure, showing that despite Douglas’ pride in his biography of Cavalcaselle over Cavalcaselle’s supposed rejection of photography, by then photography had fully infiltrated the book and was used in some capacity by every
connoisseur.

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Berenson matured in a time when photographs had become ubiquitous. In the absence of the original paintings, photographs sometimes came to hold a position of coveted surrogate. For example, before his trip to Europe, upon matriculating at Harvard in 1884, the first thing Bernard did was to go shopping with his sister Senda for photographs of paintings to decorate his room. At the time, with the exception of James Jackson Jarves’ collection of Italian Renaissance paintings, the primary way students and the American public learned about art was through photographs and other reproductions, like plaster casts of sculpture. Samuels relates an incident in 1890, in which while touring with fellow connoisseur Enrico Costa Bernard saw the original painting of which he had given a large, framed photograph to Mary. Upon seeing it in person, he realized the mistake in his attribution of the work to Botticelli; after relaying this information to Mary, she took it down from its “place of honor.”

From the very beginning, then, photographs were of the utmost importance to Berenson. On his post-graduate “Grand Tour,” he collected them voraciously. In these early days, he was constantly thinking about how to borrow or earn money, not just for his basic needs, but to feed his appetite for photographs. Mary shared in this

404 Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 28, 55. While in Paris, Samuels relates Bereson’s absorption in the study of paintings in museums “whose photographic copies he had pored over so raptly in Boston.”

405 Berenson’s study of photographs is in line with his study of plaster casts of Greek sculpture at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 82.

406 Ibid., 122.

407 In 1888 we find him trying to get articles published because he needed money “to collect photographs of his favorite pictures in the Dresden museum.” At one point he sent his annotated
desire for photographs, confiding in 1892 to friend Gertrude Burton that a check from
an article she had published in the Woman’s Herald “was the beginning of the wealth
I dream of when I can buy as many photographs as I need.”

In Critical Studies and in the Berensons’ earlier publications, the importance
of studying works of art directly is emphasized. As mentioned previously, Morelli
took frequent trips to museums, public galleries, and churches to look at works of art.
Berenson followed, sometimes literally, traveling across Europe to study collections
of paintings, at one point making it a policy to revisit every major museum at least
once every two years. Mary and Bernard’s notebooks from the early 1890s are
filled with a combination of written description and drawings. Mary also created
ledgers detailing the works they had seen and where they were located. Samuels
reports a strenuous and methodical touring schedule in 1889, because Berenson
wanted to “possess” an unprecedented knowledge of Italian Renaissance painting in
memory.

Dresden catalogue and 50 photos to his sister, Senda, for safekeeping. At the end of 1890, Loeser
added to Berenson’s subsidy, giving Bernard “a more comfortable financial margin and helped him
enlarge his collection of books and photographs.” Samuels notes that in 1895 “the indispensable
isochromatic photographs of paintings from Alinari in Florence, from Domenico Anderson in Rome,
and from expert photographers in Milan, Paris, and elsewhere made incessant inroads on his purse.”
By mid-1896, Mary and Bernard had a combined income of the equivalent of $100,000, so luxuries
became necessities, including photos. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 74, 128, 224, 278.

Strachey, Mary Berenson, 62.

Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 163.

In 1891-2, Mary kept ledgers “identifying the paintings and drawings…in which she listed in
alphabetical order hundreds of artists with concise descriptions of their works” a primary resource for
BB’s first books. Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 148. These “Lists” will be discussed further
below.

Samuels, The Making of a Connoisseur, 94.
One role photographs played was certainly as aids to the memory of works already seen on trips such as those mentioned above. In “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures” Berenson describes photographs and engravings as memory aids.\footnote{Bernard Berenson, “Isochromatic Photography,” 128.} But as demonstrated by Morelli’s case, the rapport between photograph and original work was sometimes more complicated than that of a simple stand in or placeholder. Photographs were also consulted for information about objects never before seen, and were capable of illuminating features and aspects of paintings not noticed in the originals.

As Berenson notes in “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures,” one of the major benefits of possessing a photograph of a work of art was the potential for comparing works of art side by side. These comparisons could be both between two or more photographs of works of art or between a photograph and a painting. Especially valuable was the potential to compare works in distant collections.\footnote{For example, in 1870, John Charles Robinson praised this aspect of photography in the introduction for his catalogue of drawings by Michelangelo and Raphael in Oxford, noting “what was before a practical impossibility, namely, the actual comparison of the numerous dispersed drawings of any particular master, has become quite practicable…the comprehensive work of Passavant [who wrote a monograph on Raphael], though abounding in errors, a great proportion of which the art of photography, had it been available in the writer’s time, would have enabled him to avoid, was a great service.” Hamber, 107.} For example, Anthony Hamber relates an instance in 1869 in which William Boxall, successor to Charles Eastlake as director of the London National Gallery, Layard, and William Blundell Spence, an English artist living in Florence, compared Michelangelo’s \textit{Doni Tondo} in the Uffizi to a specially commissioned photograph of the London National Gallery’s \textit{Entombment}, which had been recently purchased.\footnote{Ibid., 103.} In
November of 1889, by which time Berenson had rented an apartment on the Arno near the Ponte Vecchio, Berenson carefully studied photographs, checking them against volumes by Vasari, Burckhardt, and Crowe and Cavalcaselle, at times even popping down to the Uffizi or the Pitti Palace to study a relevant work.\textsuperscript{415} Samuels relates that on an 1891 trip to Venice with Enrico Costa and Mary, the afternoon routine for Berenson and Costa was to roam the galleries, checking original paintings with their respective photographs.\textsuperscript{416}

Also importantly, photographs enabled Berenson to extend his study \textit{outside} of the gallery. Though face-to-face confrontation with the work itself was still important to Berenson, a good portion of his analysis was relocated to his library. As Samuels points out, with photographs spread on his desk, he could analyze paintings “undistracted by gaping tourists.”\textsuperscript{417} By 1910, the base of his knowledge and his collection of photographs extended greatly, new paintings he encountered were checked against his library of photographs.\textsuperscript{418} In 1917, to launch a counterattack against Osvald Sirén, who held that a marriage salver in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts that Berenson had attributed to Matteo di Giovanni in 1897 was by Boccati, Berenson took to his “greatly augmented” photograph files.\textsuperscript{419}

This kind of library study of photographs as surrogates was an integral part of Mary and Bernard’s daily routine, deeply influential in their scholarship. Bernard’s

\textsuperscript{415} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 98.

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., 148

\textsuperscript{417} Ibid., 103.

\textsuperscript{418} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Legend}, 100.

\textsuperscript{419} Ibid., 223.
monograph *Lorenzo Lotto* grew as more photographs were analyzed by Bernard and Mary, who, when Mary was not typing or correcting the manuscript, would “huddle over sheaves of photographs to establish the authenticity of the paintings.” With *Lotto* and later for *North Italian Painters* (1907), Mary would assemble lists of works, quasi-genealogical charts of artists, and piles of photographs to help Bernard work through his ideas. In 1907, despite the health problems Mary and Bernard suffered, Samuels reports that “with dogged persistence Bernhard would pore over photographs each morning, pencil in hand, forever making his notes.”

Photographs were so entrenched in the day-to-day happening at the Berensons’ home that they even became a form of entertainment. Eugénie Sellers, wife of Sandford Arthur Strong, wrote a sketch describing a social engagement at Bernard’s abode around 1896, noting “here and there one saw people amusing themselves leafing through albums of photographs selected by the celebrated connoisseur Mr. Berenson.” Mabel Dodge the custom in around 1911 recalled in her biography:

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420 Samuels, *The Making of a Connoisseur*, 181, 188. This example also supports the idea that Mary and Bernard were fairly equal collaborators.


422 Ibid., 54.

423 See chapter two, note 307.


At the Berensons’ they played a guessing game that consisted of spreading a lot of photographs of paintings on a table and then taking one, somebody would cover it with a piece of paper out of which a little hole was cut, so that only a fold of a cloak, or a part of a hand would be seen, and everybody would guess, by the ‘treatment,’ who had painted it. That was considered the way to pass a really gay evening up at I Tatti.\textsuperscript{426}

Photographs were also extremely important in Berenson’s business dealings at an advisor to both private clients and to dealers. In such a context they took on yet another role, this time not as aids to memory or objects providing new information, but as surrogates and attributions made physical. In 1894, Isabella Stewart Gardner, one of Berenson’s most important clients, sent him photographs of two paintings she was thinking of buying, asking him for his opinion.\textsuperscript{427} From then on they frequently exchanged photographs of potential purchases, Berenson sending her detailed letters describing paintings along with photographs of the paintings, the descriptions filling in attributes the photographs could not convey, like color. Sometimes he would also send a comparative photograph; for example, when recommending a Bellini to her in 1895, he also sent along a photograph of a Bellini recently purchased by Theodore M. Davis, a retired financier and copper magnate.\textsuperscript{428} On a trip to America 1908, he brought photographs of paintings offered by European dealers to show to prospective clients.\textsuperscript{429} Sometimes, as with Dan Fellows Platt, one of Berenson’s admirers and a collector of photographs and paintings himself, Berenson would exchange

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\textsuperscript{426} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Legend}, 129.
\textsuperscript{427} Samuels, \textit{The Making of a Connoisseur}, 193.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid., 242, 181.
\textsuperscript{429} Ibid., 71.
\end{flushright}
photographs with a client/friend for scholarly purposes. He would also request photographs of paintings in his clients’ collections, as in 1904 when he asked John G. Johnson to send him photographs for a book on Venetian paintings in America. 

Bernard’s dealings with Joseph Duveen of the Duveen Brothers, the international art-dealing firm with whom Berenson was most formally contracted, were similar to his exchanges with private clients but on a more demanding and intense, focused level. Duveen would send Berenson a photo, and if Berenson liked the photograph, an intermediary courier would bring him the original painting to inspect. However, Berenson was also asked to give his opinion based on photographs alone. In 1911 Duveen asked Berenson to cable him his opinion about a painting offered for sale by a woman in Quebec, and sent along with this request a host of other photographs, asking for attributions. Sometimes when Berenson only worked from a photograph he made “mistakes.” For example, in early 1913 he accepted a reputed Bellini the Duveens had recently purchased from Langton Douglas on the basis of a photograph. However, Cavenaghi, a restorer Morelli had also

430 Samuels, The Making of a Legend, 12.

431 Ibid., 8. This eventually took the form of Venetian Painting in America: The Fifteenth Century.


434 In 1906, Mary stopped in Paris in early October “to ‘baptize’ a collection of ‘horrible’ photographs for Salomon Reinach. Ibid., 37.

435 Ibid., 134, 136.
frequented, discovered it was a modern imitation.\textsuperscript{436} In another series of incidents surrounding a portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici, photographs played a key role. First, Berenson and Baron Michele Lazzaroni, an Italian dealer, spent hours looking at the painting and studying photographs, presumably of the painting and photographs of others of Botticelli’s work. Berenson concluded that it was a Botticelli. After the sale of the portrait to Otto Kahn, a rich New York investment banker, Horne, being a Botticelli expert, asked the Duveens for a photograph of it, which they sent despite Berenson’s objections. Corrado Ricci, a member of the Italian Fine Arts Commission, had asked the seller, Count Procolo Isolani of Bologna, whether he had sold a Botticelli. He said he had not, because Berenson had been the first to identify it as a Botticelli and thus Count Isolani operated under his own assumptions about the authorship of the work. From this, Ricci inferred that the painting was not authentic. Ricci’s opinion reached Horne, who accepted it having only seen the photograph. Horne then wrote to Walter Dowdeswell, a Duveen associate, declaring the painting a forgery. This was a troubling opinion to have from a Botticelli expert, and the Duveens panicked. They declared they would only be satisfied by a declaration from Count Isolani that the painting had been in his family for generations. This came in the form of a letter, but more importantly also in the form of a statement written by the Count on the back of a photograph of the painting.\textsuperscript{437}

Photographs were therefore the medium through which much of Berenson’s business was conducted. Attributions inscribed on the backs of the photographs became quasi-legal documents, representing official opinions exchanged between

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 181.
dealers, connoisseurs, and clients. This can be also seen in an incident of 1910, when a Parisian art dealer sent Berenson a photograph with a check for 2,000 francs asking him to write Moroni’s name on the back of it so that the dealer could reassure his client, the Canadian collector Sir William Van Horne, who wanted certification that the painting was genuine. He insisted that Berenson had identified the painting as a Moroni on a visit to his shop. Berenson denied having seen the painting and returned the check, at which point the dealer offered him 15,000 francs to help him out of his difficult position. Berenson refused.\textsuperscript{438}

Photographs became attributions made tangible, and this was important in Berenson’s scholarly life as well. As mentioned in previously, in various instances tensions mounted between Douglas, Fry, Horne, and Berenson over “stolen” attributions. In his 1903 conflict with Horne and Fry over the “pseudo-Giotto” paintings in the Gambier Perry collection at Highnam Park, Berenson was convinced that a photograph of \textit{The Nativity and Adoration of the Magi} had been sent to Horne instead of to him.\textsuperscript{439} Private photographs like these, of paintings not photographed by firms such as Braun or Alinari and therefore unpublished, were extremely precious. Whoever had access to them had access to information his or her peers lacked. In 1901, during a period when he was annoyed with Fry (thinking his method

\textsuperscript{438} Ibid., 103. Probably in response to situations such as this, Nicky Mariano, the Berensons’ secretary from 1919 until Berenson’s death, relates in her autobiography, notes that Berenson was “very careful in expressing his opinion” when visiting private collections or dealers with whom he did not regularly collaborate. Mariano, 134.

\textsuperscript{439} Elam, “Roger Fry and Early Italian Art,” 90.
presumptuous and growing mistrustful of his motives), Berenson resolved not to lend him any unpublished photographs.440

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In addition to consciously differentiating their scholarship from Morelli’s, the Berensons also differed from him in that they wrote extensively about photography. The Berensons’ mention of Morelli as the first scholar to systematically utilize photographs may tell us more about their early attitudes to photography than about Morelli’s. In making such a statement in the context of early articles (prior to Mary’s “The New Art Criticism,” which marks the beginning of a tendency for the couple to distance themselves from Morelli’s “crass” empiricism), they worked to legitimize and find a precedent for their own extensive use of photographs.

Photography and its importance in the practice of connoisseurship are mentioned explicitly in several early publications. As noted in the first part of this chapter, Berenson’s first published writing on art was a notice about Marcozzi’s photographs. In 1893 he wrote “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures,” an article devoted to the description of photography and its impact on connoisseurship. A significant portion of the preface to Venetian Painters (1894) is devoted to photography, including a note at the end thanking a long list of photographers from whom Berenson had purchased photographs. Mary makes mention of photography as an integral part of connoisseurship in “The New and the Old Art Criticism.”

Photographs also played an important structural role in some publications. While Morelli sometimes mentioned specific photographs in the gallery sections,

Berenson’s *Lorenzo Lotto* amplified this tendency, listing a photograph for every work for which one was available. Concluding the introduction to *Lotto*, Berenson writes, “the reader is invited to examine the data upon which rests my theory of Lotto’s origin and development,” to which is footnoted

To follow me in my arguments, the reader should have before him the photographs of the various pictures discussed. Photographs of Lotto’s works are indicated in the text; of others in an index following after the last chapter.⁴⁴¹

Unlike Morelli, Berenson systematically incorporates photographs into the book by instructing the reader to assemble a specific set of photographs that will be used as part of the reading process. In addition, in chapter two, Berenson describes a hypothetical situation that seems like it was inspired by the idea of having a set of photographs laid out on the table. He writes:

If we could see arranged in a row all these early pictures, and in rows above them the pictures Giorgione, Titian, and Palma painted at the same time, the first glance would reveal a striking likeness in general tone, types, and artistic aspiration between the three artists last mentioned (none of them younger than Lotto, it will be remembered), and a striking difference between them and Lotto.⁴⁴²

With a large enough photograph collection, or even one just comprised of photographs mentioned in *Lotto*, it would have been possible to create such an arrangement of (photographs of) the paintings.

In the preface to *Lotto*, Berenson presents his opinions on the values of various types of information available to the art historian, such as documents. Relevant to his understanding of the role of photographs, he notes: “As to pictures known only by hearsay, they cannot and must not be considered in forming an

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⁴⁴² Ibid., 17.
estimate or in defining the quality of an artist, vicarious experience of the work of art being less than useless in criticism.” Most important is his use of the term “vicarious experience.” In today’s post-Benjamin world, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that photographs fit the idea of “vicarious experience” perfectly: they remove the viewer one step from the original, offering a glimpse but not a genuine experience of the original. However, in the context of Lotto, “vicarious” means “known only through hearsay.” Since photographs are integrated into the structure of the reading experience, the implication is that photographs do not count as vicarious experience, but rather are essential and valuable tools—far from being “less than useless.”

Beyond this somewhat elliptical statement on the value of photography and the aforementioned statements in the preface of Venetian Painters, “Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pictures,” and “The New and the Old Art Criticism,” much of Berenson’s published work of the 1890s does not explicitly address the role of photographs. The focus of much of his output during that time was showing his method rather than explaining it abstractly. Thus, the articles and essays of the type that appeared in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art are useful for their anecdotal information about Berenson’s use of photographs. In particular, his essay “Alessio Baldovinetti and the New ‘Madonna’ of the Louvre” opens with an anecdote that tells much about how Berenson used photographs and their role in Berensonian connoisseurship. He writes:

A number of years ago, turning over one day the photograph albums in the hospitable shop of MM. Braun, Clément et Cie, my eye fell by chance upon

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443 Ibid., vii.
the reproduction of a “Madonna” attributed to Piero dei Franceschi (Piero della Francesca). I recognized at once the style of a master much rarer, quite as interesting, and sometimes almost as great as Piero,—the Florentine Alessio Baldovinetti.444

After tracking the painting down, he was able to view it in person. However, the important part of the story is that Berenson’s initial opinion about the painting formed from his encounter with a photograph. This further supports the idea developed above that photographs did not only act as memory aids, but functioned as surrogates for the original painting which provided new information to the connoisseur. From them, Berenson could essentially make an attribution, confirming it later in front of the painting itself but with the real work being done in front of the photograph.445 Perhaps, from both Morelli’s and Berenson’s abilities to make attributions from photographs alone, we find a corollary to the division Berenson sets up in “Rudiments of Connoisseurship” between the “Science” and the “Art” of connoisseurship.

Photographs are the tools of the “Science” of connoisseurship, which examines mainly form and proportion. However, the “Art” of connoisseurship, which pertains to the more general the apprehension of a feeling or sense of quality, cannot be deduced by photographic information alone and requires time spent analyzing the original painting.

In the above example, the painting itself remained the primary object of study, with the photograph acting as a jumpstart to inquiry. In several articles that had come out between 1923-1925 and were published in book form as Three Essays in Method

444 Bernard Berenson, The Study and Criticism of Italian Art, 2nd ser., 23.
445 Nicky Mariano notes in her autobiography an instance in which a collector sent up an actual painting to be attributed by Berenson: Nicky showed the original painting to Berenson, “who confirmed his attribution already made on the basis of a photo.” Mariano, 133.
in 1926, in practice the primary object of study shifted from the original painting to the photograph. In the preface to the book, he writes:

As these three essays are concerned more with Method than with the works of art and the artists discussed, I have tried to speak only of matters that can be followed in the illustrations. No argument has been based on evidence that does not appear in the reproductions. 446

He then defines what kind of information can be gleaned from photographs: “for the plainer archaeological purpose of determining when and where and by whom a given design was invented,” he writes, “a good reproduction is enough.” 447 For determining the difference between an autograph work and a studio or contemporary version, it is essential to view the work in person. With this in mind, because he has never seen the work discussed in the last essay, “A Possible and an Impossible ‘Antonello da Messina,’” Berenson never inquires as to the work in question’s status as an autograph or a copy, his conclusions not dealing with “evidence that the original painting alone might be presumed to supply.” 448

Along these lines, reproductions in books became increasingly important in Berenson’s publications. In a series of articles later compiled into a book in 1969 about “homeless” paintings, or paintings whose whereabouts were unknown to Berenson at the time of their publication between 1929-1932, Berenson structured his essays around photographs of the homeless paintings, which he reproduced in the periodicals in which the articles appeared. In this context, for Berenson the photographs of homeless paintings serve primarily as aids to memory; the

446 Bernard Berenson, *Three Essays in Method*, viii.
447 Ibid.
448 Ibid., ix.
conclusions he presents about various paintings are based on his first-hand knowledge of them, albeit sometimes far in the past. However, in another way they also play an important role as stand-ins for the objects, remaining as the sole proof of the existence of lost originals. In becoming detached from a known original object they become their own, autonomous objects. However, they must be used cautiously, for as explained above, the ultimate stamp of approval for an attribution is that of quality, a characteristic unascertainable through a photograph.

Despite this limitation, though, Berenson does indicate that photographs help one see things one might not otherwise notice. Berenson concisely expresses this idea in his 1948 book *Aesthetics and History in the Visual Arts*, where he devotes an entire section to photography. After warning the reader of the subjectivity of the camera and recommending the purchase of many photographs done by different photographers of the same work of art, he remarks:

> ...the photograph brings out not only details but aspects of the objects that escape our notice. When the work of art is present one cannot avoid enjoying it as a whole...and thus fail to work up interest in detail, or lose the capacity for coping with it.\(^4\)

In this passage, Berenson accords photographs a role as literally shapers of vision. Interestingly, he continues:

> I have more often gone astray when I have seen the work of art by itself and alone, than when I have known its reproductions only. Nowadays I hesitate to come to a conclusion about a work of art without submitting it to the leisurely scrutiny of photographs.\(^5\)

Here, he strongly departs from his earlier, Morellian credo that the work of art must be studied first and foremost in person. By 1948, in Berenson’s mind the photograph

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\(^5\) Ibid.
had become the primary object of study, the original painting entering at the last
moment when a confirmation check of quality had to be performed. Still, not two
paragraphs later, he adds the caveat, which echoes Morelli’s conclusion to the
introduction of Critical Studies in its caveat about the study of original works of art:

What has just been said about photographs is based on the supposition that the
student is at home with original works in the style of the school and artist he is
studying. Without this preparation the photograph can serve little better than
an acquaintance with flattened and dried specimens can help the botanist.\footnote{451}

Thus, it is perhaps best to understand Berenson’s attitude to the role of the
photograph over the course of his career as undergoing a gradual shift in emphasis.
Whereas at first the scale was tipped in favor of the original work of art with a
secondary use of photographs, at the end of his life we see a shift in the primary
importance of the photograph.

\footnote{451 Ibid., 205.}
III: Berenson and photographs as objects

To return to the role of the photograph outside of text, essential to an understanding of the role of photographs in Berenson’s scholarship is a study of photographs as objects and an investigation of how they were collected and exchanged. The Berensons’ collection of photographs as such—as a form of ordering—is meaningful, conveying information and constituting interpretation through organization. Berenson’s archive—a largely untapped scholarly resource—adds another dimension to the information we can glean from published texts about the Berensons working methods.

As mentioned, the Berensons consulted photographs practically daily, comparing them with other photographs and with paintings in museums or in churches. They were also used to communicate information and opinions to others. In addition to the many articles on specific painters Berenson produced, both Bernard and Mary published numerous “lists” of paintings. For example, in 1897 Bernard and Mary contributed a list of “the best, and only the best, Italian pictures in galleries and private collections” to The Golden Urn, a small-run literary magazine dreamed up by Mary’s brother Logan and privately printed in Fiesole. In 1908 Mary published “A Tentative List of Italian Pictures Worth Seeing,” which included no introduction but only a list of paintings by location. However, by far the most important of these lists were the lists appended to the four volumes of Italian Painters of the Renaissance: Florentine Painters, Venetian Painters, Central Italian Painters, and North Italian
Painters. In fact, many reviewers focused on these lists, arranged by the location of the painting, as a more important contribution than the essays comprising those volumes. Originally intended in Venetian Painters to be an appendix to aid the student somewhat like a guidebook, as the years wore on, more and more time came to be devoted to these lists, and they grew to be an obsession as Mary and Bernard sought to make them as complete as possible. They were constantly being revised and expanded; in 1932 Berenson published them as volumes separate from the essays.

As noted, on their trips to galleries and churches to look at paintings, Mary kept detailed records of what they had seen in the form of ledgers and notes. These records came to form the basis of lists of paintings by given artists. In the early days, these lists were largely the purview of Mary. She was the detailed cataloguer of the two, the organizer. It was she who, with the help of their secretary, would gather photographs and lists to stimulate and urge Bernard on in his writing and thinking. The collaborative nature of their intellectual enterprise is best seen in the lists and related activities with photographs. For example, in August 1904 when Bernard was away in St. Moritz recuperating from various nervous illnesses, Mary and her mother, Hannah Whithall Smith, set to work correcting the lists. After Mary entered her opinions in the form of corrections, they were looked over by Bernard.

In 1919 Mary asked Elisabetta “Nicky” Mariano to fill the post of secretary to the Berensons.452 From then on, she assisted greatly with the organization of the lists, though in the beginning she worked mostly in the library of books. This involved

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many trips with the Berensons to inspect paintings in person as well as attending to
the organization of the photograph library.

As previously pointed out in chapter two, beginning in 1916 and especially
during the period of the 1920s and later, Berenson’s became more expansionist in his
connoisseurship, discarding “Amici, Compagni, and Alunni, hand A, hand B, and
hand C.” 453 As Luisa Vertova, editor and compiler of a revised edition of the “Central
Italian and North Italian Lists” based on Berenson’s notes and published after his
death, noted “he was just as eager to demolish an ‘Amico di Sandro’ as he had been
proud to create him, and never felt obliged to stick by an attribution because he had
once believed in it.” 454 This attitude is reflected in the lists, and perhaps in part
engendered by them: regarding the Florentine Lists, the first list of 1896 covered 33
painters; the 1932 edition of Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Florentine School
contained 77 lists; and the 1963 revision of that text comprised of 101 lists. 455 In
addition, numerous paintings and/or drawings were added under many of the lists,
with ever increasingly nuanced labels such as “part,” which meant the artist had
executed a portion of the composition, and “in great part,” meaning the artist had
executed a large portion of the composition; and “studio work” versus “studio
version.” 456 Along with this expansion of lists and labels came a claim to


454 Luisa Vertova, “Introduction,” in Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central Italian and North

455 Ibid., xiii.

456 The designations are as follows, as enumerated in Berenson, Italian Pictures of the
Renaissance, 1: xxvii. c. : copy.; d. : dated (i.e. the date appears on the pictures itself;
wherever a date is given without this prefix, it is drawn from documents or other sources).; fr.
: fragment.; g.p.: in great part autograph.; p.: partly autograph.; r.: ruined, restored, repainted.;
completeness: whereas in the first edition of *Florentine Painters* the first line of the
note preceding the lists is “the following lists make no claim to absolute
completeness,”457 in the 1932 edition of the “Lists,” “the ideal of completeness was
accepted.”458

In addition to the published lists, in all of their varying forms and editions, a
key indicator of Berenson’s expansionism is found within his photograph archive.
The photograph files themselves reveal information not evident in the published
“Lists,” chiefly via the inscriptions written on the backs of the photographs.459 There
is no set formula for the information included in the notes on the backs of the
photographs, though the location or “home” of the original work is always listed,
usually in the bottom right corner. The attribution will often take the form of “listed,”
“with,” or “school of” followed by the artist’s name. Other information included at
times is the provenance and/or exhibition history of the work of art; the person who
sent the photograph (if it had been sent by a dealer, for example Duveen); the
measurement of the original painting; and more rarely the literature in which the work

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st.: studio work.; st. v.: studio version.; u.: unfinished; E.: early; L.: late; Sd.: signed


458 Vertova, x.

459 Important to note is that at some point, former director of the fototeca Dottoressa Fiorella
Gioffredi Superbi, who worked with Berenson personally before he died, rewrote most of the notes
on the backs of the photographs in her own handwriting, presumably as a way of standardizing them
and making them more legible than Berenson’s loopy scrawl. At times half-erased original handwriting
is visible underneath, and on a good number of photographs Berenson’s handwriting remains.
Important also to remember is that the fototeca has changed locations. Originally, the photographs
were located among the library books, in folders. Now, given that the collection has grown, they are
stored in folders within boxes arranged by location, the homeless photographs coming at the end of the
group. Materials within the folders and boxes have also been rearranged over the years. For example,
there is now an “except photographs” category, which includes everything not considered a true
photograph. However, in Berenson’s time, many of these materials (which included everything from
newspaper clippings to pages ripped out of catalogues) were interspersed with the photographs.
has been mentioned or perhaps a note about the price the work was being sold for at the time that particular inscription was made.

In its own way, the archive can be viewed as a form of “List.” However, important to note is that not every entry in the “Lists” is represented by a photograph in the archive. Vertova explains that is the result of a variety of factors, including that Berenson did not collect photographs of objects, chiefly those executed by lesser masters, which he could easily reach to visit in person. Also, at times photographs were rearranged, placed in another artists’ folder either for comparison or because the attribution had changed.\(^{460}\) Conversely, not all photographs are represented in the “Lists.” Among the Botticelli photographs, in addition to those labeled “Listed Botticelli,” we find many photographs that bear the label “with Botticelli.” [Fig. 3]

\(^{460}\) Vertova, xii.
Figure 3. Back of photograph no. 104770, from Botticelli “Homeless” folders. Among visible inscriptions is “with Botticelli” in Berenson’s handwriting. Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.

This broad label could mean a variety of things: that Berenson thought the work might be by Botticelli or one of Botticelli’s pupils or followers, or that it should be put with the Botticelli photographs for comparative purposes. Often, photographs of uncertain attribution are cross-referenced: within the Piero della Francesca files we
find one copy of a photograph “listed Signorelli,” with the note “this photo with Piero della Francesca,” for example. [Fig. 4]

Figure 4. Back of photograph from Piero della Francesca folders. Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Renaissance Studies.

This kind of ambiguous labeling is a far cry from Berenson’s early days of strict connoisseurship. Gradations of authorship abound, and arrangements of works of art are preliminary and provisionary. For example, in figure 5, what is presumably
the first inscription, written in pen, reads “With Piero della Francesca. Bohler 1913 said to come fr. Petersburg. Copy.” After the word “copy,” Bernard has added a note saying “no, most likely Northern Italian.” In another handwriting next to this is another note reading “With Piero della Francesca.”

Figure 5. Back of photograph from Piero della Francesca folders. Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Renaissance Studies.

In this example, the categories inscribed on the back of the photograph are not distinct, but rather broad umbrella classifications like “Northern Italian” or “With”
Piero della Francesca.” Nicky Mariano recalls teasing Berenson “about certain smaller eclectic masters being like waste-paper baskets for him. Whatever he could not place definitely would be thrown into one of them.”\(^{461}\) Indeed, in “Nine Pictures in Search of an Attribution” in *Three Essays on Method*, Berenson reveals his way of dealing with “lesser” works, saying in regards to Michele da Verona, a follower of Domenico Morone, “Michele for a time served, like Bissolo, Basaiti, Cariani, &c., as a convenient waste-paper basket for throwing pictures into when we did not know what else to do with them.”\(^{462}\) In the preface to the 1932 edition of *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*, Berenson explains his system of labeling:

> A question mark does not mean that I expect the picture necessarily to turn out to be by the painter in whose list [and we could also say box of photographs] it is included. The intention is rather to provoke a discussion which might not arise if the picture were relegated to the limbo of anonymity, and to point out, as far as I can, the most fruitful line of inquiry.\(^{463}\)

In the context of the lists and photograph archive, attributions serve to locate the work of art so that it can be discussed and studied.

One of the major difficulties faced in studying these inscriptions is the number of different handwritings represented and the extreme difficulty in determining the chronology of inscriptions. As Luisa Vertova notes, Berenson’s photographs are truly palimpsests: “one analyses the loosening of B.B.’s handwriting and the overlapping layers of writing, watching a palimpsest of criticism and self-criticism until the back

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\(^{461}\) Mariano, 139.

\(^{462}\) Bernard Berenson, *Three Essays on Method*, 55.

of a photograph keeps one’s attention riveted more than the front. In discussing method, it is this element of criticism and self-criticism that is most interesting. Names are often written down followed by a question mark, then crossed out or superseded by a later note by Fiorella Superbi reading “listed” under another artist. The notes can become downright unwieldy, with as many as four different handwritings crowding the same space, as in figure 6 from the Piero della Francesca box.

![Figure 6. Back of photograph from Piero della Francesca folders. Villa I Tatti, Harvard University Center for Renaissance Studies.](image)

464 Vertova, xiii.
In this example, Mary seems to have written “? Boccates ? / Ex-Agnard / Phil. Lehman, New York/ (as a Piero della Francesca!) / more likely Antoniazzo.”

“Antoniazzo” is at some point crossed out. Underneath that we find Berenson’s handwriting, reading something like “Carrara Master.” Under this is written “listed Piero della Francesca (?)”, but “Piero della Francesca” is crossed out with “Master of the Carbell Nativity” written above—though the “Carbell” is difficult to read because there is a red “x” over it. In other instances, as in figure 7, the person who sent the photo wrote an elaborate inquiry on the back, presenting his own opinion and asking for Berenson’s ideas.
These kinds of exchanges are reminiscent of a series of conversations—

between Bernard and Mary, between dealers and Bernard, and between Bernard and himself. I would argue this is one of the key aspects of the working method of
connoisseurship that does not come through in published texts. Method as explained in the texts prescribes a method of looking/study for the *individual*, when from these photographs and knowledge of how Bernard and Mary interacted with one another, it appears that a significant part of the process of connoisseurship was *conversation*. Though Morelli set up his “Principles and Method” as a conversation, the type in that instance is an expository one, where one conversant is clearly more knowledgeable than the other and the goal being to explain the methods of an individual practice of connoisseurship. In addition, both Morelli and Bernard often refer to other scholars’ opinions in their writings, a type of scholarly conversation of ideas. However, spoken or casually written conversations also occurred frequently, and in great part it was through this dialogue—sometimes taking place over a period of years—that attributions were forged. This conversational element should be integrated as an aspect of the process of connoisseurship along with method of study (method of looking and prescriptions about what kinds of materials are worth consulting) and cognitive attributional method.
Conclusion

In looking at Morelli and Berenson’s published texts, it becomes clear that “method” is employed rhetorically, with the ultimate goal the legitimization of each scholar’s authority to make attributions. The heart of their polemical writing is these attributions, which function as social and cultural capital on both personal and nationalistic levels. This version of method, as it exists in published texts, cannot and should not be taken as the sole definition of the term “method.” There are various ways to understand “method”—cognitive attributional method, method of study, method of looking, and working method—and in writing about Morelli, Berenson, or any other connoisseur, we should be clear about to which one we refer.

With published writings revealed as non-neutral rhetorical tools, other sources can be mined for information about how attributions were made practically—to answer the question, “what were Morelli and Berenson really doing as opposed to what did they say they were doing?” In Morelli and Berenson’s published texts connoisseurship is painted as a solitary activity, an interaction taking place between the connoisseur and the work of art (or sometimes a reproduction of it). The fact is that conversation surrounds attributions and is a key aspect of their connoisseurship. Both scholars were constantly talking to friends and exchanging letters about attributions or engaging rival scholarly opinion in their writings. This is true especially of Berenson, whose intellectual relationship with his wife, Mary, reveals that far from going at it alone, Berenson was in constant dialogue with others about the authorship of works of art. Connoisseurship was a social activity, its results subject to group consensus and carrying with them social and cultural implications. It
follows that when we talk about the methods of connoisseurship, we should take into account that the term “method” encompasses more than simply the way a connoisseur analyzes a work of art visually.

We get a glimpse of the conversational aspect of connoisseurship in the dialogue between the Russian interlocutor and the Italian gentleman in the “Principles and Method” section of Morelli’s *Critical Studies*, but it is truly revealed in sources like letters, notebooks, and inscriptions on the backs of photographs. In particular, photograph archives like Berenson’s reveal a working method predicated on conversation and revision, inscriptions on the backs of the photographs never being final but rather undergoing constant re-evaluation.

There is much insight to be gained from thinking about working method as conversational and consulting sources outside of the realm of the published book or essay. To begin, understanding connoisseurship as conversational has the potential to illuminate the character of relationships between connoisseurs. In 1932, when Berenson was defining his more expansive connoisseurship, he wrote:

> The difference between them [contractionists] and ourselves [expansionists] is not based on observation, but on theory, and experience, *for an attribution depends not on retinal sensations alone, but on the whole of one’s being, modified by one’s entire emotional, spiritual, and intellectual life* [emphasis mine].

Berenson’s comment neatly encapsulates the idea that an art historian’s biography is as much a part of his scholarship as the tenets of his or her method. In 1906, Max Beerbohm, a British cartoonist and satirist, drew a caricature of Herbert Horne that cleverly inverts the idea of the artistic personality. Entitled “Celestial Attributions,” a

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Virgin and Child perched on a cloud gaze down on Herbert Horne, speculating about his identity:

Virgin: That’s a very doubtful Horne.
Child: M’yes. It looks to me rather as if it might be an early Berenson.
Virgin: (flying off at a tangent): Nonsense! Pooh! Bosh! Everything points to its being a particularly late Loeser.466

Beerbohm’s amusing parody highlights the idea that in our study of art historical figures like Morelli and Berenson, we should endeavor to be as sensitive to nuances of personality as they were to the details of artistic personalities. Our readings of connoisseurs’ published texts are enriched when we take into account their personal relationships with each other. Regarding Morelli and Cavacaselle, a study of their working methods deriving from the examination of their use of photography and their travel notebooks reveals their similarities in the face of a discourse centered on their differences, in the process recasting those differences from the methodological to the social, political, and cultural.

In the case of Roberto Longhi, one of Italy’s most celebrated art historians, and Berenson, much is revealed through an examination of their epistolary correspondence and a comparison of their photograph collections. Contrasting Longhi’s published writings to Berenson’s, John Pope-Hennessy describes Longhi’s writing as “impressionistic” and “casual,” preferring “the suggestive hint, the whispered innuendo, to a clear statement of fully formulated views.”467 Pope-Hennessy takes issue with the fact that as he sees it, Longhi presents his conclusions

466 Elam, “Herbert Horne,” 176. In a bubble near Horne’s head, Beerbohm writes “? Scuola di amico di Max?? Early Venticento?” — a play on Berenson’s Amico di Sandro.

as acts of divination, without explanation, when in fact they “must have been achieved with tape-measure and magnifying glass.” Indeed, an examination of Longhi’s photograph archive reveals that perhaps in method of looking, his habits were more similar than different from Berenson’s. Like Berenson, Longhi wrote on the backs of his photographs. Further, though he might decline to write the kinds of explanations Berenson typically featured in essays like “Amico di Sandro,” he used his photographs to examine details, even cutting them up to make his own detail photographs.

These studies of the relationships between scholars also have the potential to inform us about the place of patriotism in art historical scholarship. In the introductory essay to Roberto Longhi: Three Studies (1995), Stanley Moss notes that while most Anglo-Americans interested in art history are familiar with writers such as Panofsky, Gombrich, Berenson, and Pope-Hennessy, far fewer know much about Longhi. Just as nationalistic concerns factored into Morelli’s scholarship, the regionalism of scholarly tradition is an important aspect to study when reading the written output of people like Berenson, Longhi, and Federico Zeri (like Longhi one of Italy’s foremost art historians of the twentieth century). Patriotism is still an issue that enters into art historical scholarship today, even layered onto discussions about connoisseurship. In her review of Donata Levi’s book Cavalcaselle: Il pioniere della conservazione dell’arte italiana, Jaynie Anderson invokes the nationalism angle to explain their differing opinions, noting “Patriotism has stimulated a healthy admiration for her subject, but sometimes this leads to a misinterpretation of the

\[468\] Ibid., 313.
documents in Cavalcaselle’s favour especially where English museum politics and the history of restoration are concerned."^{469}

This persistent gulf between Italian and Anglo-American art historical traditions becomes less severe and more complicated when we examine the relationships between Italian and Anglo-American scholars in the context of the nascent art historical community in Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As noted previously, the Anglo-European art historical world—a society spread over the European continent and England and somewhat in America—was a zone of contact. United in their interest in the history of Italian art, at the same time the members of this society harbored strong national ties to their native countries. Italy, and especially Florence with its long history of being a second home for large numbers of Anglo-American expatriates, including Berenson, was a site of contact and intellectual exchange between the Anglo-American and Italian scholarly traditions.

The defining point in the relationship between Berenson and Longhi was their falling-out over Longhi’s translation of Berenson’s *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*. However, the fact that such a translation was undertaken can be seen as a point of connection between the two different scholarly traditions from which they came. Along these lines, the conversations between Longhi and Berenson indicate their contact with one another was an important, formative force in their scholarship. This may be the case more so for Longhi, who was much younger than Berenson: in the preface to *Lettere e scartafacci*, Cesare Garboli and Cristina Montagnani relate

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that Longhi’s interaction with Berenson gave him something concrete against which to position himself.\(^{470}\) Such engagements with each other’s work are also apparent in Zeri’s photograph collection and library. For example, he annotated his copies of Berenson’s “Lists.” In figure 8, he inscribes “si,” “no,” or “falso” next to Berenson’s attributions.

![Figure 8](image_url)

Figure 8. Page from the Emilio Cecchi’s translation of Berenson’s *Italian Painters of the Renaissance* with Zeri’s notes. Fondazione Zeri, Università di Bologna.

It is unclear whether these annotations refer to attributions or to the location of the paintings, which Zeri might be correcting or bringing up to date. In either case, he clearly engages in what could be called a conversation in these notes. Zeri also frequently recorded Berenson’s opinion in his notes on the backs of his photographs.

[Fig. 9]

Figure 9. Detail from a photograph attributed by Zeri to the Maestro di Santo Spirito, with reference to Berenson (B.B. (36): Pinturicchio). Fondazione Zeri, Università di Bologna.

Today, the photograph collections of Berenson, Longhi, and Zeri function as archives and research institutions. Technological developments for digitizing such collections are at a point where most analog photograph collections are engaged in digitization or at least contemplating it. In light of this, scholars like Joanna Sassoon
have investigated the implications of the translation of analog photographs to digital formats. Digitization promises increased access to the image content of collections, but Sassoon asks if such information should be privileged. She advocates for an understanding of photographs as documents in their own right, regarding them as “as an integral part of a communication chain.”

This is an especially apt characterization in the context of the understanding of connoisseurship as a conversation advocated in this thesis.

Much like the translation from oil painting to photography and other reproductive print media enacted a syntactical change that impacted the way the original object was understood, the process of digitization alters the way photograph collections like Berenson’s can be studied and what kind of information can be gleaned from them. Photograph archives worldwide have recognized this: in October of 2009 the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz spearheaded “the Florence Declaration,” a petition recommending the preservation of analog photograph archives.

As has hopefully been shown in this thesis, photograph archives, along with other forms of unpublished writing, are informative documents of the history of art. Though Berenson, Longhi, and Zeri used their photograph collections in slightly different ways, they reveal commonalities between the scholars: similar methods of careful looking and attention to detail. These archives have the potential to enrich our understanding of the history of art history—to tell us more about how certain scholars

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looked at and engaged with works of art. Ultimately, an understanding of this aspect of art history illuminates the lines of continuity between the connoisseurs of the past and our own ways of looking at art today.
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