Rediscovering Herbert Horne

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CHAPTER 7

The Art Historian: Italy and Botticelli

From the years 1894–1895 on, Horne was to spend much time in Italy. When in London, he utilized his mother’s house at 14 Cheyne Walk, though he kept his rooms for a few years at 4 Kings Bench Walk (where he designed a fireplace). In Florence, his life during the 1890s sounds lively enough:

The coals of love are coals of fire which have an exceeding vehement flame; and (tho’ the prophet sayeth not) are apt to illuminate divers things diversely . . . you know that Bottani and the altar piece (a so-called Botticelli) once in the church of St. Maggiore, occupy a considerable part of my research here. But how different a light has the flame of love cast upon all that. How differently, when sated with the beauties of Marcellina, I look askance from her window in the Borgo degli Albiggi, Numero—(But why should I tell you that). Secondo Piano, upon the ruined portico of S. Maggiore. How differently, and how nearly does Bottani occur to one—to say nothing of Botticelli—no more, therefore, with your Venetian nights in Florence. Enough that Marcellina confesses in me to have found the true "fuoco d’amore," and that we are immensely pleased with one another. Why should I explain to you that Marcellina is like a madonna of Botticelli, only the healthy creature, with none of the Botticellian morbid sentiments about her; none of the maladies of the soul, in short, not one
damned virginal thing in her whole self—you would but smile at me
. . . Find me in your filthy Piccadilly, the girl who knows not what
whisky is; whose aphrodisiac is a cup of hot milk; who has a charm­
ing apartment; who would not regard you with more approbation, if
you gave her a fiver, than when you gave her a Lire 20 note! Who
meets you under the shadow of a Donatello or a Michaelangelo: who
is mistress of every Italian sophistry that even you could desire. . . . In
brief sir, I wish you Florentine nights in London! . . . Servitore . . .
Herbert P. Horne.1

This attempt to make a Restoration Comedy urban­pastoral out of his Florentine life is not very secure. Marcellina,
successor to the English Violet Percival and Muriel Broadbent,
left him to marry a wealthy avvocato. This, he recalls with a
humorous self-pity, is the usual fate of his mistresses.

Marcellina was succeeded by Bianca, with whom Horne
passed a vacation in 1903 at Carcassone. She certainly
enlivened the Florentine scene:

Bianca is in great form here. She has just finished a very smart new
dress . . . and has been sailing about in it to-day, to the admiration of
the town, who has dubbed her "La Misteriosa Francescina." She is
making a collection of the astonishing things which men in the street
say to her, to her vast disgust. They are too slangy to transcribe and
too lewd to translate. "Che bel culo" is one of the more harmless.2

Muriel Broadbent had become mysteriously transformed
into Phyllis Hacon, wife of Ricketts’s partner in the Vale Press,
and was now a widow, her husband having died in 1910.
Randall Davies met her and described her to Horne as
"buxom." Hearing of Horne’s serious ill health she wrote to
him from Dornoch: "I rarely go to London now, my interests
are all here in the North, and lately I have taken up work
among the girls at the Herring Fishing in the Shetlands. I fancy
I can see you smile at the idea—all the same—I am very keen
in the work and am very happy over it." And referring ever so
obliquely to the days of the 1890s: "I was in Edinburgh last
week and on Sunday saw Fr. John Gray. He is very much beloved in Edinburgh and leads a splendid life and does heaps of work. I should so like to hear from you. I wonder whether you remember me."

Laurence Binyon, poet and art critic, was another correspondent of the Florence years. Horne's letters of 17 March and 11 April 1898 to Binyon are of particular interest as indications of how penetrating and pure was Horne's taste. Binyon had invited him to take part in a forthcoming Portfolio series which was to appear under the auspices of the Unicorn Press. To Binyon's suggestion of the Della Robbias, Horne replied:

Della Robbia is a host of persons, and in general has been admirably written about by Pater. . . . Why not discover somebody? That would be a good "lead off" for your series. Neither Piero della Francesca nor Jacopo Pontormo has ever yet been discovered in a popular sense. I want to do something on Pier Francheschi. . . . Only don't give away my plans for Pontormo."

These two artists roused special critical attention for the second quarter of the twentieth century, though Burne-Jones and Symonds, for example, were expressing high admiration for Piero as early as the 1870s. Binyon then suggested Pisanello, whom Horne approved in his April letter, but added

let me discover for you Agostino di Duccio, the carver of those beautiful reliefs in the "tempio" at Rimini . . . they are just the kind of decorative art which appeals to English people; and no one has yet written about him . . . one could legitimately indulge in all sorts of pretty writing, which would be out of place and absurd in discussing a really first rate artist like Donatello."

Horne instantly recognised the affinity of Duccio's (or pseudo-Duccio's) wavering low-relief carvings to later Pre-Raphaelitism and Art Nouveau, but his critical rigour constrained him from over-rating these attractive designs.
Though well-known in the Anglo-Florentine world of art historians, virtuosi, and exiles, Horne was to become more of a recluse, particularly after about 1906. It was a closed world, full of delicate gossip and graceful malaise, shadowy jealousies and arcane resentments, the species of quarrels "likely to arise in a small expatriate society not unafflicted with nerves," wrote the editor of Berenson's letters of an exchange between Berenson and Vernon Lee. And William Rothenstein, visiting Florence in the autumn of 1907, responded to the scene by saying "there were armed camps and fierce rivalries in Florence then, as in past times; but the fighting was far less bloody, concerned as it was with attributions rather than with Ducal thrones. Berenson, Horne, Loeser, Vernon Lee, Maude Crutwell, all had their mercenaries—and their artillery."

Of Horne's Florentine career, we can trace a vestige from the letters that Bernard and Mary Berenson exchanged virtually every day of their married life, and also from Mary's journal. As early as 1895, Horne and Berenson had engaged in transactions over paintings. From this period on Horne supplied on commission Ross's Carfax Gallery, but he was never able to attract Berenson's variety of high patronage. In keeping with his costive temperament, Horne's speculation in art works tended perhaps to the frugal and cautious. He was much involved with Roger Fry in dealings, but documentation of these transactions is wanting.

Berenson's first impressions of Horne were not favorable: a trip by bicycle over the Lombard plain is enthusiastically described, but "the one drawback was Horne . . . as it were dropped his mask and betrayed at once an exceeding incapacity for seeing with his own eyes and an excessive eagerness to gather into his notebook all the things he could squeeze out of me about the various galleries we visited." Mary's reaction initially was much more favorable, but wholeheartedly or tactfully we detect her sometimes agreeing with
her husband's sporadic feelings of disquiet and suspicion of Horne's activities. We find Berenson writing to Ross on 12 January 1908: "Horne is going to England, and as you are I doubt not an expert oyster-opener, you will get much delectation." Horne's opacity exercised a fascination over both Ross and Berenson, unmixed in Ross's case with irritation.

Mary Berenson on 18 August 1908 reports a comment "doubtless Oscar's, not [Ross's]. He was speaking, as he often is, of Horne and said his taciturnity was so persistent that no one else could get in a flash of silence edgeways." And a genuinely wounded note sounds in a letter of 18 September 1909 from Mary to Berenson: "Horne evidently puts himself in the right by speaking well of thee and no one can trace (or believe) his actions against thee." And four days earlier: "I met Perkins—he 'recognised' a Jacopo del Casentino at Loeser's, but Horne also guessed it and is going to publish it first."

Whatever their reservations, the Berensons certainly were helpful to Horne over the Botticelli book. Horne himself was more ready than might appear to assist the Berensons. A letter of Mary's in the archives at the Villa I Tatti affords us a glimpse of Horne turning aside from his absorbed copying of ancient records to older enthusiasms:

I went to Houghton's first and asked him if he could get a stone doorway from the library. He said Horne had just bought some fine ones from Logan [Pearsall Smith] and I went to Horne's . . . Horne was there, copying inscriptions. He said he would come up on Sunday and look at the room etc. He may be able to suggest something also for the awful casa colonica.

Berenson came in the end to recognise Horne's generosity no less than his unique knowledge of the Italian archives. When Horne died, Berenson described the event as "a great loss to our studies and such a waste. Had he lived the usual span of life he might have done work which would have been of real
value, for he was in his way a living spring." Berenson was a master of qualification. But twenty-two years later in the elaborated version of his *Drawings of the Florentine Painters* Berenson unequivocally acknowledged the permanent value of Horne's study of Botticelli and the generosity Horne consistently showed in furnishing him with archival material. There were clearly sharp temperamental differences between the two men; but their modes of approach to the earlier Renaissance were also radically opposed.

Berenson was no haunter of archives and he had, so he believed, derived a distinct "science" of attribution for his master, Giovanni Morelli, based on the careful comparison of the rendering of minor specialist physical characteristics in figures and, by extension, also aspects of landscape. It was this "system" which allowed Berenson to posit the existence of "Amico di Sandro" in the *Gazette de Beaux Arts* and of "Alunno di Domenico" in the *Burlington Magazine* (1903): a canon and an unnamed master. "Amico" was later dropped, but the method was not faulted. And Berenson was without the Anglo-Saxon distrust of abstract ideas, of speculation as play-impulse.

Horne, on the other hand, was temperamentally cautious; his attributions were the result of the archival work, published histories, painful comparisons of many details, not ears or left hands. What Berenson described as a "living spring" was Horne's knowledge of the archives. His architectural scholarship and the fruit of these two capacities effected a detailed familiarity with the physical presence of early Renaissance Florence. This enabled Horne to "place" paintings in time and space, to marry vague descriptions in inventories with the length of a particular wall or the height of a particular room. The work of art as a physical no less than as an aesthetic object was central to Horne's understanding: painting as furniture, as programme, propaganda, memorial, ritual. Berenson, whose
achievements need no defence, came to see that his and Horne's talents were reciprocal, not antithetical.

At about the time when the Berensons were exchanging their mildly sour letters, Max Beerbohm was in Florence, working on a drawing of Horne under the title of *Celestial Attributions* (7.2). Beerbohm described it to Ross:

Horne was standing in the foreground, placid and rather heavy, smoking a cigarette. In the sky behind are a Madonna and Child, looking down at Horne with a lively interest expressed in their primitive Siennese faces.

**Virgin:** That's a very doubtful Horne.

**Child:** M'Yes. It looks to me rather as if it might be an early Berenson . . .

**Virgin:** Pooh! Nonsense! *Everything* points to its being a particularly late Langton Douglas.¹³

Although mostly involved in the continued study of Botticelli, his sources and school, after the definitive move to Florence (dated variously as the autumn of 1902 or 1904) Horne published other work. From the phase of his most committed interest in English eighteenth-century art dates *An Illustrated Catalogue of engraved portraits and fancy subjects painted by Thomas Gainsborough, published between 1760 and 1820. And by George Romney published between 1770 and 1830 with the variations of the plates* (1891). In 1903 an edition appeared with notes of Vasari's life of Leonardo and the following year a translation of Condii's life of Michelangelo which for the first time used the type Montallegro, which Horne had designed for the Merrymount Press at Boston, Massachusetts. In 1907 Horne published an *Account of Rome in 1450* based to some degree on a fifteenth-century manuscript.

Horne's first extended article drawing from Florentine archival material, "Uccello's Battle-Piece," was published in
fig. 7.2 Celestial Attributions, caricature of Horne
Max Beerbohm
the *Monthly Review* for 1901. The audience was not precisely popular, though certainly not sternly specialist. The argument in this piece hinges on the definition of the event commemorated by Uccello in the National Gallery's official catalogue. It is, says Horne, perfectly inaccurate and "a pedantic piece of absurdity." The National Gallery, indeed, joins the Royal Academy as a polemical topic in Horne's writing. Here he demonstrates by employing his usual types of sources that the subject is not "Carlo Malatetsa, Lord of Rimini, and his nephew Galeazzo taken prisoner by Braccio di Montone" but rather the rout of San Romano when Niccolo da Tolentino and Michelotto da Colognola of the Florentine army defeated the famous *condottiero* Bernardino della Carda. Horne's intention then is to rectify the Gallery's error and to show by what was to become his customary method how it came about.

He started from some plain discrepancies between the National Gallery description of the battle and the actual detail of the painting, proceeds to Varsari's account of Uccello, and then to Vasari's later nineteenth-century editor, the archivist Milanesi who, while furnishing new archival evidence is less energetic in dispelling that *aberglaube* Vasari so agreeably accretes. "Demythologising" of this order is one of Horne's first motives in his art history, but he pays proper tribute always to Vasari's indispensability as an initial source.

From Milanesi, Horne proceeds to inventories, reconstructing the physical history of the National Gallery painting along with those other paintings, in the Louvre and Uffizi respectively, which constitute a narrative sequence. The London picture, according to Horne, was the best preserved. Such inventories inform us of the earliest location of the sequence, the dimensions of the room where they initially hung, and of the paintings themselves. Horne also details how the paintings were stored, possibly in an attic, exposed to extremes of heat, rain and cold—the Uffizi panel being the
most exposed and thus accounting for the varied condition of the three. Horne demonstrates how the confusion of subject in the National Gallery catalogue rose from the compiler assuming that Vasari was describing the San Romano picture when he was actually describing another picture altogether painted on canvas not on panel.

Finally, Horne establishes the precise narrative sequence. The archival evidence is printed at the close of an article written in forcible expository mode and one which has all the vivid logic of a detective story. This is a finely cogent piece and would be sufficient in itself to substantiate a claim for Horne as a scientific art historian of distinction.

"Quelques Souvenirs de Sandro Botticelli," which also appeared during 1901 in the Revue Archeologique, is of a miscellaneous character, dealing with disparate Botticellian problems. Horne restores the early The Adoration of the Magi to Botticelli's canon. Against Morelli's exclusion of this work, Horne appeals to contemporary tradition, to general internal evidence—the style approximates to that of Botticelli's other juvenilia—and to details, such as the design of hands and the plaits of drapery. Horne also establishes a corrected birth date of 1447 for the master. Moreover, he is placed first in the school of Fillip Lippi and not, as was then believed, in that of Pesellino. Subsequently Botticelli comes under the influence of Pollaiulo.

Horne also adds several other works to the Botticelli canon, including the Settignano Madonna, which he appears to have identified in company with Berenson. The thrust of this segment of Horne's piece is to clarify the chronology of Botticelli's early works, recording the transition of the phillipisant Botticelli to the Pollaioulesque.15

In the article, Horne alludes to himself as having been long engaged with a monograph on Botticelli. On 24 August of that same year, 1901, Mary Berenson wrote to her husband:
"Horne's Botticelli won't be ready for at least another year. Horne is in the right to go slowly." Originally the commission from Bell Scott's was dated 1894 and was intended for a modest volume in their Great Masters series.

In his piece on "Botticelli and Nineteenth Century England," Michael Levey informs us that writing on Botticelli in the 1890s was confined to aesthetes and dilettantes. This is not altogether true, as a brief correspondence in the Academy indicates. Grant Allen on 3 February 1894 resumes the state of interpretation of the Primavera, which follows the traditional Florentine interpretation of the figures: Mercury, the Graces, Venus, Flora "with personifications of Fertility, and a god of wind." It is the reading that Rossetti follows in his sonnet on the painting. Allen replaces this cast with Favonius instead of Mercury and Venus instead of Spring. The Graces are permitted to stay while the three figures on the right of the picture assert themselves as March, April and May. This leads to the conclusion that "it almost looks as if this picture were one of the four panels representing the Four Seasons and I would venture to suggest that each most probably contained in the centre the season it represented. . . . The Primavera occupied the first place on the wall so that the figure of March greeted the spectator entering." And analogously to Allen's reading of Primavera: "Winter might have had on the right allegorical figures (say Boreas and the Satyrs); and on the left, as if retiring toward the door, the successive figures of December, January and February." Finally Allen asks, "Did Botticelli ever paint any more of the series, for Cosimo de Medici's villa at Castello, or elsewhere?"

Allen was a brilliant dilettante and at least asked some of the right questions. But he was ignorant of archives, of Renaissance neo-Platonism, of the mythographies and of any but the most prominent Renaissance poetry. He was therefore ignorant of the elements that might have furnished and
restored the programme. His question about the Castello could have been answered by Vasari, though Vasari, as Horne was to point out in his *Botticelli*, was not above error. Archival material makes it clear that aside from *The Birth of Venus* and the *Primavera*, there were no allegorical pictures at Castello.

The following week Oscar Browning related the *Primavera* to Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, and also to Horace. Horne was to take Lucretius as a prime literary source, but Edgar Wind has defined a compound running back from *La Giostra* to Horace and Ovid's *Fasti* and more faintly to the Lucretian passage. Neither Allen nor Browning allude to the obvious literary source: Poliziano's *La Giostra*, stanzas lxviii-lxx. This was already established, along with Ovid's *Fasti*, by Aby Warburg in his *Sandro Botticelli's Gerbert der Venus und Frühling* (1893).

W. C. F. Anderson, at the time Professor of Classics at Sheffield University College and later Education Officer of Berkshire, had read Warburg, and his refutation of Allen's thesis is complete. Besides *La Giostra*, he cites the *Veris descriptio* and the *Rusticus* of the same author. Anderson continues: "the suggestion that the first three are months is impossible if the central figure is Venus; for April is the Goddess's own month. Spring, as described in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, closely resembles Botticelli's myth. . . ." Allen had asserted that the figure on the left of the picture was not Mercury, but Favonius (basing this on Horace). But the presence of Favonius is "easily disproved by the passage from Seneca *de beneficiis* 1, 3, quoted by Janitschek, as an explanation of Mercury's presence. . . ." Anderson then brings to bear Cartari's *Le Imagini de i dei degli antiche*, which puts him, as one might say, in a league above Allen and one Oscar Browning. Anderson follows this with the quenching observation "of which unfortunately I only possess a late Paduan
celli in the National Gallery is sufficient to suggest "that the central figure is intended for Venus." As for Allen's final suggestion that the picture belonged to a series of all the Four Seasons, Anderson cites Vasari's explicit statements about the painting and Warburg's comments about size.

Whether Horne read Anderson's note we do not know. By the turn of the century he had certainly both corresponded with and met Warburg, putting the great German scholar in touch with Roger Fry and Robert Ross, and exchanging books and information. A letter of 24 July 1903 from 12 Haymarket throws some light on the state of his Botticelli studies at that time. Horne returns Warburg's copy of Alesso Baldovinetti's Ricordi and announces that he has found since Warburg left Florence that original Memoriale of Francisco Baldovinetti in the Biblioteca Nazionale at Florence. "I am," writes Horne, "printing from it the notices relating to Alesso. The other notices I am printing from the MS copy at the end of your copy of the 'Ricordi'." Among other questions he enquires: "who was de Baudreail for whom the Botticellian tapestry of 'Pallas' reproduced by Muntz was executed for?"

Ross wrote to Berenson on 11 February 1908: "Herbert Horne is looking wonderfully well after his long confinement, and the baby Botticelli is doing very well, though not yet vaccinated by the press. After these perpetual annunciations it is really a great relief to realize that the Messiah is born at last. Horne is quite social and going out into society."¹¹

Alessandro Filepè commonly called Sandro Botticelli Painter of Florence is in folio, designed by the author himself with the usual pale blue Ingres paper cover, end papers of similar hue, and canvas spine with author and title on paper label. Part of the title-page is rubricated, as also are the side notes. In the private press tradition, margins, particularly the base margins, are generous. The paper is handmade and virtually all the pictures were photographed by Emery Walker,
who also made and printed the numerous plates. In this great book, Horne's critical method can be viewed at its most elaborate.

His introduction glances at the modern reputation of the master, over accenting the English role in the "rediscovery" of Botticelli during the nineteenth century. His intention, Horne continues, is

to bring together whatever throws any real light on the life, or work, of Sandro Botticelli, in a historical, antiquarian or aesthetic view; but without losing sight of the fact that the only valuable function of the connoisseur is to distinguish the genuine productions of a master (especially in the case of Sandro) from those of his imitators, and to disengage and note the significant qualities of such genuine works. In a future volume, I propose to 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. This second volume will, also, contain a catalogue of all the known works of the master and his imitators, and a full index to both volumes.22

The second volume was never to be completed; indeed, it was barely assembled, so any judgment on the first must engage with the fact that it is likely to strike the reader as faintly disjunctive in a total impression.

Though Lionello Venturi in his History of Art Criticism nowhere directly mentions Horne, it is useful to turn to Venturi's definition of the philological art critic, for it is clearly to such a category that Horne's work broadly belongs.23 Venturi's attitude to philological critics is negative, though he concedes that the best of such are characterised by a love of art, sensitive drawings, even by lyrical descriptiveness; but this avails them little for philological critics are almost always devoid of hard thinking about the nature of art itself, sharing as they do in that aversion from philosophy fashionable in the
second half of the nineteenth century, the period of positivism. This abstention leads, we are told, to a "renunciation of all authentic thought whether historical or philosophical." Still, Venturi admits that the philological critics at least never lose sight of the facts, verifying exact limitations and conditions before judgment. As Reginald Turner said, "Dear Herbert Horne! poring over Botticelli's washing bills—and always a shirt missing."24

Historians who are true critics and critics who are true historians, continues Venturi, are "justly irritated" by the philological school because neither iconography nor the history of technique nor the history of abstract figurative elements is the history of art. Art history is quite distinct from all these things and art itself is something nearer to what Hegel saw than to what is seen by the philologist. But, painfully limited though they are, the philological critics are surprisingly found superior to the abstract idealist philosophers who "explain genius rationally" and end by "rationalizing genius." What the philological critic instead explains are the elements of a work of art. Genius, the philological critic ignores; he can indeed only ignore it as one who is convinced that art, that genius, is not reducible to rationality. The function of philological criticism was "skepticism with regard to a definition of art like Hegel's which did not take enough account of the nonlogical character of art." And Venturi proceeds by stressing that the true modes of philological criticism—decomposition of sources, virtuosity in attribution (which always requires at least one work by the master on which to base one's deductions) and iconographical research—culminate in research into the individual artist only so that the proper form of philological criticism must be the monograph, the catalogue raisonné.

All this has plain implications for books by philological critics, even should they, as does Horne, attempt to deal with a
single artist. While no virtuoso in attribution, Horne's book reads in a somewhat atomised fashion, devoid of either generalisations about art or the character of the particular artist, proceeding from painting to painting with much reference here and there to contemporary documents and literature, and with lyrically descriptive panels for the more important works.

Precisely how Horne's *Botticelli* stands in relation to the above definitions may be gathered from Roger Fry's review in the *Burlington Magazine* (1908). Fry was a friend and business associate, besides being eventually the most influential British art critic of his time. It is significant that Fry finds Horne's book to be in some ways old-fashioned. This accords with Venturi's view that philological criticism is largely a nineteenth-century phenomenon. It also edges with a faint irony Fry's praise of the book's physical appearance and of its prose as possessing the qualities of the classic.

First, its leisurely unfolding of material involves the discarding "as modern toys all those methods of abbreviation and co-ordination . . . which writers have gradually elaborated for the greater ease of exposition and as aids to apprehension." The book demands from its reader, Fry tells us, "the same quiet persistence . . . as some folio by Causabon or Diodati." In plainer language it is hard to read both by reason of its ordonnance and its physical size. The knowledge of years is poured out in "one continuous and equable stream" rather like the old man in Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence." Nevertheless, Fry finds the monumental dignity of the book symptomatic of Horne's general attitude:

pure science as regards the matter and pure art as regards the presentment. The art critic as a rule adopts neither of these attitudes altogether. Indeed, one scarcely recognises the art critic in Mr. Horne. He gives but little hint of any personal views on aesthetics in general: his technical terms are such as Vasari might have used, or at least would have perfectly understood.
Unlike Venturi's ideal historian of art, or unlike Berenson, of whom Venturi approved as largely unconcerned with the bare accumulation of fact, Horne remains

either incapable or contemptuous of all that delicate analysis of the spiritual and temperamental components of a work of art, all that subtle exposition of the artist's intention, that illustration of the work of art by means of analogy and simile, which make up so large a part of the best modern critical literature . . . "It is, indeed, as well done as it is possible to imagine"—to phrases almost as simple as this Mr. Horne reduces all our elaborate modern apparatus. There is something bracing in this austerity, and much truth in the implied condemnation of a great deal of this criticism as too fine drawn, too theoretical, and too liable to personal bias.

At the same time, if Horne stints his audience in this direction, he is generous, even lavish, in another: "What is it,' he says, 'that we really know about Simonetta Vespucci?' 'What is it that we really know?' is a question always in Mr. Horne's mind, and no efforts are spared either in the task of sweeping away superincumbent guesswork or in finding out in rough documents what, in fact, we really know." And what was known, Horne generally tells us, was very little, and often very wrong:

And in that search no fact seems to Mr. Horne too minute to merit our attention, too insignificant to help towards the complete reconstruction of the past of Florence of which he perpetually dreams. . . . [He] never abbreviates; he seems always to have in view the future historian, whose gratitude he will earn by the fullness and accuracy of his descriptions.

Nonetheless the deliberation with which Horne works, the length of time his study took to reach the press, brought about some odd anomalies. The future historian, Fry observes, may well be puzzled to find Horne anticipating the publication of Berenson's book on Florentine drawings when that had
appeared four years before the Botticelli. And Horne's statement that the programme of Signorelli's *Pan* remains to be discovered reads strangely in view of an article published in the *Monthly Review*, fifth volume of 1901. Horne himself contributed to the same volume, commenting on the puzzling detail of that painting. Fry does not mention the author; it was himself. The details—moon as horn, starry robes, seven pipes—were explained by reference to texts in Macrobius and Servius; but despite an allusion to the fervid neo-Platonism of Lorenzo de Medici and his circle, Fry made no attempt to focus on contemporary Florentine source material. He did not point out that the painting is virtually unique in Signorelli's oeuvre but the vague suggestion that there are probably "later Latin" sources seems to suggest that he is not excluding Florentine pantheistic neo-Platonism nor literary texts on the ground of Signorelli's temperament or the type of patron he more usually found. Horne may not have been convinced by the article, or his mode of working may indeed have been such that he did not care for a return to material already composed.

A further feature of Horne's volume lies in his refusal to be satisfied till he has been enabled to visualise each painting precisely as it originally appeared among the surroundings for which it was designed. More than once this exercise leads to valuable suggestions about the painting itself. Fry also points to the presence in the Botticelli volume of what Venturi terms lyrical descriptiveness: "the wonderful use Mr. Horne has made of the now somewhat neglected practice of the verbal descriptions of pictures." With well-known pictures, such verbal description might seem superfluous, but, Fry assures us, frequently some small point is revealed "which one had always overlooked, some readjustment of the relative importance of the parts has been suggested. . . . One can hardly praise enough the admirable literary quality, the directness and beauty of these descriptions." The sensitive eye for detail
derives from Ruskin, and from Pater, though Horne's insistence on a contemporary description of Botticelli's figures, their "aria virile," removes from the master that languid and Laodicean image in which Pater had so eloquently imprisoned him.

Horne's caution in attribution leads him in the direction of "demythologising" and he furnished only one new attribution: the damaged fresco of the Annunciation at the suppressed monastery of San Martino in the Via della Scala at Florence. "This book," Fry concludes, "alike in the thoroughness of its scholarship and the gravity of its style has the air of a classic." Ironies and qualifications melt into submissiveness.

Horne himself seems to have been aware of the discontinuous effect of the book—its forward movement checked by repeated enrichment of centrifugal detail. Once he actually observes rather in the manner of a mid-nineteenth-century novelist that "we had broken off our story at the moment when Botticelli had been called to Rome to paint in the Pope's chapel," unless we rather implausibly take this as a device to impose suspense, while the phrase "but to come to the painting" becomes almost formulaic.

A work of such density remains difficult to characterise, difficult even to grasp. It is devoid of sections, chapters, headings and index. Only the side notes afford the reader assistance, and those are contextual references. In practice, the Botticelli is generally employed as an encyclopedia, where remarks on individual paintings may be consulted. Perhaps, indeed, it was never intended to be read through at once. But if it were an encyclopedia, then one might reasonably expect more elaborated assistance to the enquirer. As it is, a high proportion of the book is devoted to the drawings related to the Divine Comedy, recalling that Horne's taste in collection lay in the direction of the drawing, and not merely in reaction to the Victorian cult of the oil, or the comparative cheapness of
good drawings in the late nineteenth century for the knowl-
edgeable and persistent collector.

Pages again are devoted to the history of Florence after
the death of Il Magnifico in 1492. The power struggles in the
city are, of course, important for Botticelli's career, his loss of
Medicean patronage, his reaction to Savonarola's death and its
putative effect on the final works; but the minuteness with
which Horne enters into the politics of the six years up to
Savonarola's death in 1498 is faintly disproportionate. Still, as
Horne himself might have said, it is time to come to the con-
siderable merits of the book.

It is more accurate to say the Botticelli is both an encyclo-
pedia and a rich if oblique personal and aesthetic response to
Sandro's work. The image of Botticelli Horne presents is of a
painter who combines in himself what is best in Florentine
painting of his time, without becoming merely eclectic. For
Horne, Sandro is the unique master of contour, rather than
simply of expressive line: "he invariably uses his line, to
express a definite contour, not only in the outline of the figure,
but of feature, hand, or fold within its mass, and always with a
rhythm and beauty of intention which is unparalleled in Flor-
entine art." This distinguishes Sandro from the "sinewy line" of
Blake and a further distinction is made in discussion of the
painter's "imaginative sensuousness." He is "visionary" but not
"mystic." There is "no trace" of mysticism "in that alert, dis-
criminatory outlook upon the visible world which enables him
to interpret the unseen by the seen, the motive by the action,
the searchings of the heart by a glance of the eye, the gesture
of the hand." Unlike Blake, he is not one who "shuts the eye"
that he may see "things invisible to mortal sight."

Horne in making this judgment rather glides over the two
late works, the Mystic Nativity and the Magdalen at the Foot of
the Cross, the latter of which he attributed largely to the
Scuoloa. Botticelli, we are told, "elaborates from his subject
with an unfailing dramatic purpose, that variety of motives and attitudes which called forth the admiration of Vasari," a Vasari who was representative of the period that found Botticelli's work in general backward-looking, merely ingenuous. In his attitude to the nude, Sandro exhibits no anatomical curiosity, while in the presentation of suffering he evades the naturalism of his early contemporaries. His Saint Sebastian is without any "degradation of pain." The "visionary" quality of the painter's imagination works through not ideal women but recognisable Tuscan types of womanhood, and in discussing the detail of paintings Horne tends to lavish most attention on the female figures. The St. Catherine of the San Barnaba Altar Piece has all "the solemn magisterial beauty of gravid women." Elsewhere Horne speaks of "the fruit like grace" of feminine maturity. We are reminded of the lover of Marcellina in his lingering over the Tuscan physical type:

the long oval of the head, set on the lithe neck and drooping shoulders, the body big in structure and proportions, though angular in form, and heavy at the articulation of the joints and broad, square nails. Even the abundant golden hair, which at first sight might appear a piece of pedantry borrowed from the antique is found to be a Florentine trait.

There are, though, in Sandro's canon occasional reminiscences of antique sculpture.

The book proceeds chronologically, Horne concluding that the Vatican frescoes, overlooked or depreciated because of their proximity to Michelangelo's famous offerings, represent a high point in Sandro's art. The decade between 1482 and 1492 is defined as the time when the painter truly "came into his force." By then that art had become increasingly mannered, the draughtsmanship revealing "a more nervous and emphatic delineation of the forms. . . . He had attained the full
ripeness of manner, beyond which any further development must, in the nature of things, tend to a deterioration."

Yet Horne admires Botticelli at all periods in his art so that the Adoration of the Shepherds, now in the National Gallery, which we might expect to be somewhat unsympathetic to him, relating as it does to that renewal of the Church promised by Savonarola, is described as "the most spiritual, perhaps, and certainly one of the most lovely and imaginative of all Botticelli's works." The praise is deliberately vague as noted by Fry and, less indulgently, by Berenson. Horne makes no attempt to arrange individual paintings in any order of value, and for him the works of the master have an almost equal authority. Discriminatory remarks are mostly confined to suggestions—that a painting has been spoiled by insensitive restoration or by damage; that it does not proceed directly from Botticelli's hand, or only in part; or, inevitably, that it is sometimes the work of imitators merely.

Besides the "aria virile" so often coarsened and sweetened by imitators, a further feature of Sandro's maturity are those characteristic colours, used also to establish the canon, where overpainting or abrasion has not intervened. Fusing clarity with luminosity, they are gemlike in golden hatching, as if with actual sunlight: leaf-greens, olives, golden-browns, grape purples and azures. Horne marks the intensifying severity of Sandro's landscape backgrounds yet remains curiously less alert to an increasing use of architectural contexts to the figures. His rigour in attribution is evident in his rejection of superficially attractive works which capture manner, but—like Pater on occasions in his interpretation of the Master—distill delicate feeling into pure sentiment.

Even the rhythmic drama of the two late images of the Rimpianto di Christo derive, we are warned, from a sketch of Sandro's, while in the roughly powerful Magdalen at the Foot of the Cross (Allegria Sacra) only the saint herself in the fever-
ishly expressive energy of her abandonment is considered to be authentic. The naturalism of the Christ excludes the figure even from the work of the Scuola or the imitators. Later criticism tends to react against such radical disintegrationism.

In the conclusion, Horne defines his relationship to the two great English critics who rediscovered Botticelli for a wider public: Ruskin and Pater. Both mediate a highly person-alised image of the master, over-accenting elements that are indeed present but in pure solution. Ruskin reacted to a certain "strange hardness and gloom," that "aria virile," so admired by Botticelli’s contemporaries and by Vasari, which appeared to one who took the gentler virtues of English landscape painters and the English Pre-Raphaelites as his norm of judgment. Pater, on the other hand, detected "a sentiment of ineffable melancholy," thus establishing an antithesis to Ruskin's Botticelli. And it was Pater's image which predominated in the fin de siècle. But a major element in the work, the consequence of Botticelli's temperament, evaded both. That temperament was typically Florentine and his art constantly "reveals the ever-shifting colours of the Florentine temperament . . . the keen sense of expressive beauty, the bizarre imagination, the amatorious sweetness and tenderness of the age in which he lived," a strangeness in beauty which Horne distinguishes from the willed oddity of later Florentine painters such as Pontormo and Il Rosso. Yet Sandro's work displays also, as the later pictures witness, much of the feeling which is more distinctively characteristic of an earlier age of Florentine art:

If, like Dante, he can faint with love, he inherits, in common with the naturalistic painters, no small portion of the virility, the energy, the directness, and at times the gloom, or even some tincture of the cruelty of the Florentine temperament; qualities which live for all time in the Divina Comedia . . . the current obverse and reverse of the Florentine character.
Horne deduces the bizarre, unexpected element in Sandro's personal character from the capriciousness, whimsicality, almost practical joking that the scattered anecdotes of the master suggest.

The major set-pieces of writing in the volume are the prose descriptions of the allegory of *Primavera* and *Nascita di Venere*. The second of these may be quoted extensively to suggest affinities with Horne's master, Pater:

> The Goddess, amid a shower of roses, stands naked in the little bark of the shell, in the attitude of the Medicean Venus. On the left of the picture, two winged zephyrs blow hard across the gray water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails; the sea "showing his teeth" on thin lines of foam, and sucking in one by one the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's roses always are. On the other side, a nymph, in an ample dress of white, powdered with sprigs of corncockle, having a wreath of myrtle about the neck, and girdled about the waist with rose-branches, steps forward on the shore, ready to cast a purple cloak, sprinkled with knots of daisies, about the naked goddess, as soon as she shall step to land. The orange trees are in flower; and along the water's edge, the distant shore juts out into little promontories in the clear morning air.

Horne then proceeds to quote appositely some five and a half stanzas from Poliziano's *La Giostra* and from a Greek epigram of the same poet, which itself looks back to the Greek Anthology. In its Latin translation, Poliziano's epigram has the phrase "tegebat pubem"—a departure from the iconography of Apelles's painting, central to the tradition of representing the Love Goddess wringing out her hair with both hands. In another type of antique sculpture, though, Venus appears with legs draped, one hand screening her bosom, the other covering the pubes. In this controlled use of visual sources Horne notes the differences between Poliziano's and Botticelli's response to the incident. Where Poliziano "recovers the story as a scholar from out the vestige of the vanished Greek world,
relying on the felicity of phrase or the beauty with which he turns a familiar image," the painter

ever careful of that tradition of naturalism, which, for him, is an inseparable part of his art, seeks to refashion the legend out of his vision of the sensuous world around him, of what is "here and now." In place of the "stormy Aegean" Botticelli paints the water which has given birth to this damsel of more than human mould, as he may have seen it on his way to Rome, at Trasimeno, or Bolsena. The low, grassy dunes run down to the edge of the water which breaks under the light winds, into little waves among the bullrushes at the shore, only to stretch away at the horizon, serene and motionless as the sky above it. In the nude figure of the Venus Botticelli is careful to preserve the expressive, rather than beautiful, Tuscan type as he found it at Florence.

There follows the description already cited of that type, concluding with the judgment that

all these lineaments and characters . . . become in this figure of Venus transfigured by the sentiment of which they are themselves the expression. Clad in the proper robes of the gods, this "Donzella" wears her garments of nakedness like some cloistral habit; and comes on with a high, ineffable blytheness, which savours rather of the circles of Paradise, than of the heights of Olympus.

The use of the present tense, the interior rhymes, expressive epithets and the modulation of sentences—particularly that sentence describing the dunes running toward the horizon, so arranged as to suggest that both sand and water stretch to the western limits of the eye—all belong to the nineteenth-century tradition of discovering the significance of a work in the impression that its formal aspects make.

This species of prose has been acutely analysed for use in G. Robert Stange's "Art Criticism as a Prose Genre," stressing how in such writing the effects of rhythm and tone translate into kinetic activity, into synaesthetic effects, as though the
However, the cold excitement behind Horne's evocation of the "Donzella" is checked at once by a deliberately objective tone:

The colour, "cadaverous, or at least cold," which Pater noticed in the picture, is partly due to the fact that the medium, the glair and yolk of egg, with which the pigments were tempered, has much deteriorated in consequence of the canvas on which the picture is painted, and partly because the picture has not been varnished.

Thus preserved against damp, the surface suffers from overcleaning rather than repainting. The critic then proceeds to inform us that the execution is not everywhere equal to the conception, particularly in the treatment of draperies.

In the first part of the opening description, the quotation from *The Renaissance* melts rhythmically and tonally into its new context. The cunning epithet "cadaverous" by which obliquely, perhaps subliminally, Pater suggests his general interpretation of Botticelli's temperament is by tonic anti-climax reduced, though not abolished by the detached look at the colour effects and the state of the canvas that follow.

In the last analysis, Pater and Horne are not so far apart in their impression of the painting's effect: what Pater terms "mediaeval," Horne more precisely describes as "Giottesque" while Pater's point about Botticelli's work representing the Greek spirit to a greater degree for us than the best work of the Greeks themselves is elaborated by Horne. Elsewhere, though, Pater is criticized for a too liberal interpretation of the possible heretical effects implicit in the Tondo of the Magnificat. Like Pater, Horne delights in extended, elegant translation from literary sources. As I have suggested above, like Pater, too, he isolates the "Greek" and "Modern" elements in Sandro, rejoicing in fusions between Greek and Christian: so, the allusions to the "cloistral" Venus, aware as her "tagebat pubem" witnesses, of shame, the Fall, even before the Incarnation, as she
coasts landward from the glittering sperm of her origin. Here, as nearly always, though the personal response is subduedly present, the painting is barely related to Botticelli's psychology. The object is finally isolated as far as possible from its creator, but also, unlike Pater, left free-standing, from its critic.

It remains to be asked, why should Horne have so rapidly abandoned that second volume of the Botticelli which was to have comprised an index, catalogue raisonné and discussion of the "School" and the imitators? After a dozen arduous years at least with Sandro, he may have sensed that he was doing no more than elaborating norms and judgments explicit and implicit already established in the completed work. A deeper reason perhaps lay in the fact that the focus of this critical and archival interest had shifted to the period in which Botticelli came to maturity, to the early and middle fifteenth century in Florence, precisely as Horne had moved from Wren to Inigo Jones to Vitruvius. His last published article on Botticelli's Last Communion of Saint Jerome also reveals that his attention had veered from the painting to questions of ownership, genealogy, and the Florentine archives. Any one of the books he is recorded as planning after 1910 would have taken a decade of painful work, and that work was perhaps more formally appropriate in the bare presentation of documents.