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to nature’s way was, Hardy evidently felt, to accept its pace, its measure of time. If man were attuned to that pace, as were the rustics, and Oak, then he could work patiently for moderate change in his condition. The novel thus exemplifies at least one aspect of Hardy’s concept of evolutionary meliorism. Perhaps, in order to insure a more complete understanding of other Hardy novels we should forsake the more current, but less exact labels so often used in thematic discussion of his work, and explore instead the relationship between the author’s avowed philosophic position and the form of his novels.

A SLIGHT CASE OF PLAGIARY, PART I: BERENSON, PAGET, AND ANSTRUTHER-THOMSON

By Richard Cary

In a fit of ungovernable pique on August 24, 1897 Bernard Berenson, then just emerging as an art analyst and historian of assured brilliance, unleashed upon Violet Paget an ill-advised letter in which he denounced her and her adored housemate Clementina Anstruther-Thomson as outright plagiarists. He did not use the horrid word itself, nor did his tone ever depart from the urbane, but there was no mistaking his acidulous intent.

1 Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) became the best-known connoisseur, scholar, and authenticator of art during his time. Originally a scout for the museum of Mrs. Jack Gardner, he later collaborated with other notable American collectors and the art dealer Joseph Duveen. In 1899 he bought I Tatti, a villa in Settignano, Italy, where he lived the rest of his life. He wrote voluminously on aesthetics, history, and politics.

Violet Paget (1856-1935), under the name of Vernon Lee, wrote more than two score volumes on the fine arts of the Renaissance and 18th-century Italy, on the psychology of aesthetics, on the spirit of places, on pacifism, sociology, religion, metaphysics, the philosophy of civilization, and fantasy and fiction. A willful polemicist, she made and lost many eminent friends, among them William and Henry James, Shaw, D’Annunzio, Walter Pater, Browning, Wilde, H. G. Wells, and Edith Wharton.

Clementina Anstruther-Thomson (1857-1921) had lived with Paget for nine years before the onset of this controversy. They co-authored a Mémoire et questionnaire for the 4me Congrés de Psychologie as well as the essay “Beauty and Ugliness,” which triggered the blow-up. It was republished in a book of the same title in 1912, with “Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics.” In 1924 Paget edited and wrote an introduction to Anstruther-Thomson’s Art & Man: Essays & Fragments (London).
I have just had my "first read off" yr. paper & it certainly will not be the last. For where else shall I find such perfect distillations, such delightful reminders of numerous conversations I have been privileged to have with you at the Palmerino, & of even more numerous visits with Miss Anstruther-Thomson to the galleries? And here I must make the Amende honorable. Do you remember my sustaining that Miss Anstruther-Thomson was quite without a memory, while you opposed that she had a memory super-human, incapable of forgetting? I see from yr. paper that you were right. Her memory is indeed startling. I confess it inspires me with a certain awe; it is too much like conversing with a recording angel . . . .

With your main thesis I can not agree . . . . But with your instances, examples, & obiter dicta I am simply delighted. They are such familiar, cherished friends . . . & you make me appreciate them afresh. How can I sufficiently thank you!

But it is yr. gift of putting things freshly, with all the illusion of lucidity that I envy. What is insight, experience, thought compared to it?

No stranger to the innuendo game herself, Paget simmered for several days over these mandarin taunts then clawed back with the fury of a stung maenad.

I feel obliged after some days of repugnance, to take notice of certain statements & implications contained in your ostensibly very friendly & courteous letter; lest you should, perchance, misinterpret my silence . . . .

For the plain English of your elaborate ambiguities . . . the plain English of all this equivocating sarcasm is that Miss Anstruther-Thomson & I have stolen the larger part of our essay from our conversations . . . .

Ever since your letter arrived, I have been trying to get over my disgust & indignation & trying to understand by what extraordinary combination of superficial reading, of confused memory & rash & violent expression you can have written a statement so untenable and so slanderous . . . .

Paget proceeds at this pace for thirteen pages, pinpointing Berenson's persistent "confusion of meum & tuum" while claiming to seek reasons not to hold him "responsible for the

2 Vernon Lee & Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness, I," Contemporary Review, LXXII (October 1897), 544-569; "Beauty and Ugliness, II," (November), 669-688. Here the authors propounded and illustrated their theory of "the psycho-physical basis of the aesthetic phenomenon" which Berenson found so insidiously like his theory of the "tactile values" of a work of art, its ability to stimulate in the spectator a state of increased awareness or "life enhancement," which he had often explained to them and which he had briefly described in The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance (New York, 1896).

3 Unless otherwise designated, this and other letters quoted in this essay are now in the Colby College Library.

4 Berenson's letter of August 24, 1897 and Paget's of September 2 are printed in full in A. K. McComb, editor, The Selected Letters of Bernard Berenson (Boston, 1964), 55-60.
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charge of wholesale robbery which constitutes the gist of your letter."

Strife of this sort is endemic between aesthetes in tight expatriate groups, where sensibilities lie close to the skin or are, indeed, worn in the open. Berenson and Paget were active centers of such a rarified clique habituating the Florence-Rome-London orbit. So exquisite, so adventitious were the strains of circumstance which provoked this neurasthenic outburst, one slight change in the set might have nullified the whole imbroglio. Nicky Mariano, Berenson's secretary and literary executor, believes that Bernard (in St. Moritz for his health) would have probably written his letter but would never have mailed it had Mary Costelloe been nearby. Arthur McComb doubts that Violet would have responded so harshly had the matter not impugned "her great friend" Kit, already ravaged by intellectual overwork.

Having made his initiating lunge and received the incensed riposte, Berenson retreated behind the protective skirts of Mrs. Costelloe, with whom he had formed a professional and romantic liaison. Thereafter he watched the buzzing ideomachy from that vantage, ostensibly a noncombatant. On October 31 Mrs. Costelloe wrote, signed, and sent from Fiesole the following letter to Violet Paget — the guiding mind of Berenson implicit behind every point of dispute.

Dear Miss Paget.

Mr. Berenson, who has just returned from Sicily, has shown me your letter and the article in the Contemporary. I think your request that you should be given the grounds of his belief that a great deal of the article is taken from him without acknowledgement is a perfectly fair one. He spoke of this view of his at St. Moritz to the Countess Pasolini and to Carlo Placci, and no doubt you will hear of it through them. But he does not want to speak or think of it any more, and that's why he has put the matter into my hands with the request that I shall act for him. I think it is best, in such cases, do you not—that third parties should discuss the thing—if it must be discussed—for they can do it without laying themselves open to the charge of personal feeling. Therefore, as you request that the specific grounds of the charge should be laid before you, as Miss Anstruther-Thomson's representative, I will undertake to do so:—and I hope you will be persuaded at least of my desire to be entirely fair.

The first section, I take it, is a claim to be the first to suggest the application of this physiologico-psychological method to the study of form. As a matter of history, Hildebrand (who is mentioned only in a
slighting note) was before you in this attempt, as was also Mr. Berenson (who however makes no claim to priority in his *Florentine Painters*). The claim should have been that yours is a new *explanation*, not a new method, for the method had been already employed by Hildebrand and by Berenson. That you are aware of this distinction I see by referring me to your review of Mr. Berenson’s book in *Mind*, where you express thorough agreement with his method.

As to the *explanation*, Mr. Berenson has already in a letter to you expressed his disagreement. Naturally then *that* is not the part he complains of, and it is not necessary here to discuss that in detail. His point is that the method used was not used by you first; that he, so far as he can judge, first introduced you to the method; and that a great many of the illustrations and *obiter dicta* are taken directly from his writings and conversations!—and furthermore—that the problem, in the precise form in which you take it up, is entirely of his invention.

Granting that all, or a considerable part of all art pleasure is due to a feeling of life-enhancement itself produced by perception, just *what* processes does a given art accelerate? This is the problem as he, to my belief, was the first to state it. His answer to it, as far as architecture is concerned, was already implied in the article which you read three years ago. With regard to painting, his suggestion was that it was due to “tactile values” (I use his own language) & to “movement.” What Miss Anstruther-Thomson has done is to take up his problem and suggest another answer to it—to wit, that it is all due to breathing. Had she claimed this alone, which alone is hers, Mr. Berenson would have been very much delighted with the suggestion, although completely disagreeing with it. I can imagine it leading to most interesting discussions. But no—she claims not only to be the first to apply this method to the study of form, but—what concerns him far more—to have posed the problem that must, in his opinion, lead to the solution of the question. He cannot doubt that you are both well aware of the importance of the problem, and he feels that to take it from him & claim it for yourselves is to rob him of what is up to now his most serious achievement.

So much for the underlying assumption of the article; and now I will turn to the points of detail.

The section on architecture, it seems to me,—setting aside the question of definite ways of breathing—moving the eyes & head—could be shown to follow closely upon Mr. Berenson’s article already referred to, on Renaissance Churches—even if there had been no conversations. The whole view of architecture as *spatial enclosure* is one of his most intimate and personal theories. So far as I know, architecture has never been treated in just this way before him. This view Miss Anstruther-Thomson certainly got originally from going about with him, for I remember we used to talk over the strange things she used to say as one or the other of us took her to the Florentine churches; and we used to wonder if she would ever come to understand the point of view which regarded architecture not as the technique of construction but as symphonies of space. I can recall definite conversations, parts of which I set down in my journal, in which Mr. Berenson tried his best to impress upon her his own point of view about architecture—a view
which she certainly did not hold then (unless she was deceiving us) but which I find reproduced with fidelity in the present article. For example, I wrote in my Journal on March 8th 1894: “Went with Miss A.T. to Ognissanti, S. Spirito, etc. . . . At S. Spirito she said she thought the glass was the most important thing in a piece of architecture, because the eye naturally saw more of it than of anything else! Very hard work persuading her to look at a building as an enclosed space.”

What Miss Anstruther-Thomson says about the attractive forwards of the distance down the nave, the changes in sensation when we pass under the cupola, and the feeling of a perfectly composed church as a larger circumference of ourselves I distinctly remember Mr. Berenson saying to her, in almost the same words, in Santo Spirito.

Her great point in those days used to be that architecture was a question partly of technique & partly of the muscles of the eyes, and I can remember twenty conversations in which Mr. Berenson tried (he thought in vain!) to turn her from this point of view to the one expressed in the paragraph beginning “In passing as we do . . . .”

What follows about movement in architecture is so characteristic of Mr. Berenson’s way of speaking that anyone who, like Placci, had travelled with him, could not fail to be struck by the extraordinary likeness—and the long paragraph ends with what is practically an unacknowledged paraphrase from the Florentine Painters (Cf. “We seem to be living at twice our normal rate. & life, for no definable reason, seems twice as much worth living”; & “I am in the habit of realizing a given object with an intensity that we shall value as 2. If I suddenly realize this familiar with an intensity of 4, I receive the immediate pleasure that accompanies a doubling of my mental activity . . . the whole personality is enhanced . . . an exhilarating sense of increased capacity in the observer” etc.)

Furthermore, the note which follows this paragraph containing a comparison of Botticelli to Gothic artists, could have been taken from a lecture of Mr. Berenson’s to which I still have the notes, where he explained to us with photographs, & to Miss Anstruther-Thomson among the rest, the two lines of development in Florentine art—the structuralists like Masaccio, on the one side, & on the other the artists who continued the Gothic tradition of swift line, from Lorenzo Monaco to the crown of them all, Botticelli.

The discussions of the importance of the frame to a picture, recalls vividly a discussion which Mr. Berenson & Miss Anstruther-Thomson had in front of Ghiberti’s gate, when, as it seemed, she did not understand a word of what he meant then (& what he has expounded for years) about framing. After this, the subject was being continually discussed between them and, as it appears, she did understand it in the end.

Just at this period, may I say that we both resent very much the slighting allusion to Hildebrand’s serious and carefully thought out book? As it is perhaps the first,—in any case a very important attempt to work out problems on the lines laid down in your introductory section, it surely deserved something more than the phrase “remarkable, though rather extreme.”

In the formulae connected with the various Dimensions, please com-
"A sense of confidence in the reality of things. Feelings of increased interest toward the outer world" etc. . . "is brought home to us by art in a far completer way than in reality . . . we are usually satisfied with the mere optical perception of real figures, or even the mere recognition of them by certain qualities which serve as labels": with the formula on p. 10 et seq of the Florentine Painters: "being aware that this enhancement [of the personality] is connected with the object in question, they for some time after take not only an increased interest in it, but continue to realize it with the new intensity . . . in real life I should scarcely realize it [i.e. bulk] so well, the attention of each of us being too apt to concentrate itself upon some dynamic quality, before we have at all begun to realize the full material significance of the person before us—"

As to the Leonardo sketches, I do not think Miss Anstruther-Thomson herself would for a moment deny that it was Mr. Berenson who taught her what to look for in genuine Leonardo drawings, for with her excellent memory she will not have forgotten that when we first went to get in to see the Uffizi drawings her favourite "Leonardo" was that mushy dragon, which has none of his qualities.

Again, the note about the composition of Renaissance busts and 3/4 length portraits, serves to be a summary of conversations in the Bargello, and particularly of one of which Mr. Berenson told me at the time in front of the Granduca Madonna. Miss Anstruther-Thomson may have already had these ideas, but she impressed both Mr. Berenson & myself as being very much surprised when she heard them from us, & as having such difficulty in understanding them that they had to be repeated afresh before every new instance.

I have also found in my Journal the note of a conversation we had one night at dinner at the Palmerino, Nov. 27, 1895, in which Mr. Berenson tried to explain the difference between movement and motion ["movement—which, by the way is not the same as motion, mere change of place" Florentine Pirs p. 50]. Your remarks then upon the impulsion you received from sculpture and architecture to "move on," and upon the difference between the temperaments who care overwhelmingly for movement and betake themselves to the "arts of movement," as you called them—music, architecture & sculpture—& the static temperaments who care only for painting & poetry, led us to think you did not then understand a word of what we meant by movement. And this conversation was continued in another form on Dec. 8 of the same year, when I wrote: "From Miss Paget's remarks I gather that she does not distinguish movement from motion or form from shape. Mr. Berenson did his best to refute her strange idea that the excellence of architecture & sculpture lies in movement—i.e. movement interpreted à rebours, as making the spectator move, that is to say, walk around it or in it." I mention these talks, because you say your joint views were reached independently of Mr. Berenson's, to show you how the impression has arisen in his mind that the contrary is the case. Of course the hypothesis is conceivable that you concealed and misrepresented your views on purpose, for fear he should steal them—and it was some such report coming to him from the outside that made him stop going to see things with Miss Anstruther-Thomson, for he felt that after the extreme
openness with which he had all along talked to her about everything that was in his mind, such a suspicion, such a caution on her part was an insult.

But, after all, a discussion of ancient misunderstandings, if they be such, is not to the point here. I must go back to the article, for my letter is already tediously long, and yet I feel I ought, having undertaken it, to mention the chief points in dispute.

In section VI there is a note about Mr. Berenson's book which, as has been pointed out to him, amounts to an insinuation that he took his idea of the "life-enhancing" effect of art from your lectures of '95 at South Kensington. The fact that the note is so particular as to the date of the publication of his book (though not quoting the real title), when as I think you know the book was written here in May-June 1895, seems to him to point to an attempt on your part to establish a priority for your lectures.

In speaking of the Catena and the Titian, the formulae of "making the beholder feel more keenly alive," of "realization," of "sense of increased vitality," are the same which were invented by Mr. Berenson and used throughout his *Florentine Painters*. To Miss Anstruther-Thomson's application of these formulae, however, he does not pretend to lay the least claim, for he considers the Catena on the whole superior as a work of art, to the Titian.

In the last section the claim I spoke of at the beginning is again asserted. Where the object of the authors is stated as being to *suggest a method*, the implication of course is that no one else has suggested it before. Yet this psycho-physiological method had already been worked out on different lines by your two friends Hildebrand & Berenson, both of whom were at work definitely upon the very problems for which Miss Anstruther-Thomson was suggesting her own explanation. I do not want to say that they were the first, but at any rate they both came before the article, and one of them at least had constantly gone about with the author & had imbued her with his method & furnished her with numerous illustrations. Miss Anstruther-Thomson's originality does not consist then in the statement of the method, or the posing of the problem, but in the hypothesis that the secret of artistic pleasure lies in the manner in which a given work of art affects the breathing, and, through the breath, the whole vaso-motor system. To this amount of originality I think no one will dispute or wish to dispute her claim.

I have tried my best to set before you just the points that I believe Mr. Berenson would wish to make, and of course you are at liberty to use this letter where & how you will.

I have no desire to talk of the matter at all, and if I am drawn into conversation on the subject, I shall not say anything but what I have written here. I entirely agree with you that any open quarrel between yourselves and Mr. Berenson would be a mistake from every point of view; but at the same time, if you will recall what you said of him to Mrs. Gardner in Venice (which was repeated to him the next day, & which tallies so completely with what has been reported to him from other sources that he cannot doubt its being your real view of his character and capacities), you will not be surprised, I am sure, to learn that he cannot consider your attitude to him as in any way a friendly
But into questions of this kind it is not my place to enter at all, nor do I see that it will be necessary for us to speak of them again. Perhaps the whole subject, if you see fit, may well drop here.

Yours very sincerely,
Mary Logan Costelloe

Curiously, the barrage of indictments is leveled almost exclusively at Anstruther-Thomson, as though she were the lone offending warrior and Paget simply her envoy to the fray. Costelloe’s inflection in this and all her subsequent letters is distinctly conciliatory toward Paget, whom she admired and wished to retain as a friend. Paget, on her side, was “sincerely attached” to Costelloe. Berenson ridiculed Paget’s loquacity and cocksureness and respected her wit and intelligence; Anstruther-Thomson he considered green, gullible, and “profoundly stupid.” Paget had declared Berenson ingenious, a bearer of “important ideas,” and “destined to become famous,” but she invariably berated his ignorance of psychology and his inability to write “clear, precise” prose, stressing with no little condescension his place in art as mere connoisseur and historian. Anstruther-Thomson was ill, irritable, and perhaps a trifle guilt-ridden; Paget taut over the prospect of losing her bien-aimée. The emotional overcast spewed up by this fuming intermixture was bound to befuddle communication. Costelloe’s wistful hope that “the whole subject . . . may well drop here” was a straw before the oncoming gale.

From the start, Paget countered Berenson’s vague thrusts with details of her and Anstruther-Thomson’s prior entry into the field and their independent development of the hypotheses at issue. Never loath to engage a dazzling adversary, she tried to draw stricter battle lines which eliminated her highly vulnerable partner. “The matter rests between you & me,” she wrote Berenson. “I ask no explanations or apologies on your part,” only that he accompany his accusations “by a specified account of at least some of the alleged plagiarisms.” But the wily lion would not be lured into the arena; he shoved Mrs. Costelloe forward. Despite his maneuver by proxy, the letter she wrote contained chapter and verse, particularities which Paget could attack head on. She leaped to the task with a zest approaching frenzy. This is the rough draft of her letter to Costelloe on November 3.
My dear Mrs Costelloe

Many thanks for your very outspoken and thoroughly simpatica letter.

As Miss A.T. is so very much better that I need no longer apprehend bad results from her having to answer Mr. Berenson's allegations against her, I am heartily glad that he has reopened the question of the supposed plagiarism, for I am confident that Miss A.T. and I can answer to the satisfaction of every impartial looker on, and, I hope very much, to yours & to his also. Indeed, I should feel much inclined, if the latter should unhappily not be the case, to place the matter in the hand of two competent persons, known equally to both parties, & chosen one apiece, in order that the excellent system of arbitration should be introduced into disputes between others which it would probably considerably diminish.

I have never kept any kind of diary, still less a record of my own or other persons' sayings, but I happen to have what constitutes a chronological record of the growth & alterations of my ideas, namely the series of notebooks, kept with yearly increasing garrulity, which constitute the basis of all the work, not imaginative, which I have ever done. These I have, since receiving your letter, carefully looked over; and from them I have made a series of brief abstracts (indicative of subject) which can be checked by the indexes of the separate volumes, & which render it easy to find one's way in so immense a mass of heterogeneous ms. These notebooks with the guiding abstracts, I put entirely at your disposal for as long a period as you like, together with a copybook containing annotations on the proofsheets of Florentine Painters, my copybooks of notes on psychological reading, and my annotated copies of W. James, Fouillée, Wundt & Gurney (re-read while writing "Beauty & Ugliness"); because these copybooks & annotations shed a great deal of light both on the chronology and genesis (excuse such big words!) of my notions, and also on the notions themselves, of both of which I think that Mr. B. & yourself have erroneous views. All these papers I shall have the pleasure of sending up to your house, giving you full leave to read & copy & quote any portions on whatever the subject & promising never to suspect you of dishonourable use thereof. But I think if you would come & have tea with me first, I could save you much trouble by showing you the principal evidence myself, & that we should do things much better by word of mouth than by letter. For, I repeat, I think that my evidence alone, quite apart from Miss A.T.'s will persuade you that the whole question is only a very complicated misunderstanding & misinterpretation of the very simple fact that people working at the same sort of subject have coincided in one or two of

5 There are in Colby College Library twelve quarto manuscripts of approximately 1300 pages by Page entitled "Commonplace Book," New Series, III-XIV, 1887-1900, the contents of each indexed by subject. The last entry in volume XII and the first two in volume XIII are extended discussions of Berenson's aesthetic ideas, most of which she disapproves. There is also a 38-page manuscript recording the events, prior publications, and entries made in various notebooks from 1884 to 1896, which led to the writing of "Beauty and Ugliness" with Anstruther-Thomson. (See her defensive chronology below.) Page also prepared a set of rhetorical questions, her answers to which refute Berenson's charge of plagiarism.
the results of their separate studies.

There are, however, some points in your letter which I should like to dismiss beforehand.

1st I apologise for misquoting the title of Mr. Berenson's book (I am thankful that it is all right in mind). I read it in proof, and never have re-read it since, which may account for my having supplied a title out of my own head thinking it was the right one.

2d Countess Pasolini, from whom I had a long letter, & with whom I have had a long conversation about "Beauty and Ugliness" including reference to Mr Berenson & his theory of tactile sensations, CSS Pasolini has not hinted that Mr B. had accused us of plagiarism, perhaps because she shares my principle neither to repeat strictures heard in conversation, nor (if possible) to have them repeated to one. A propos, I am happy to be able to say, that I have not the faintest notion what Mr B or you have ever said to anyone about me, nor even whether you have ever said anything at all!

3. This brings me to the criticisms of Mr Berenson’s “character & capacities”—which of the three persons before whom I made them at Po Barbaro reported to him, how tactfully or correctly I do not know. These remarks, altho’ made after Mr B's attack, contained no indication of it; they were to the effect that he often changed his mind & that he expressed it in very exaggerated forms, a propos mainly of Sargent, to whom I think so fine a critic will one day be converted. They were moreover accompanied by expressions of admiration for his talents & learning, such as I make it a rule never to omit in speaking of him. I have just re-read the review in Mind;* and if that isn't a friendly way of writing about a person, may I never have another friendly critic in my life! As to the other “unfriendly” things which have been reported to you, let them be on the head of the friendly repeater.

4th. My note about Hildebrand is not in the least slighting: the references in the article had to be brief, & I preferred them sober. Considering that we entirely disagree with what I imagine to be the views contained in Hildebrand’s book, I don’t see why I should have spoken of him with more admiration than I did of James, Lange & Sergi, or of Edmund Gurney, whom I admire above all other writers on aesthetics.

5th. I could not indicate that Hildebrand had in any way forestalled Miss A.T. & my own method, because (if I understand him) I don’t think he has in the least. Perhaps I entirely failed to understand his very interesting but very obscure book, but it seems to me not to deal with the “motor element” (in the James-Ribot sense) in aesthetic phenomena, i.e. motor apart from ocular movement & walking in front of things, but merely with a theory of vision, of the same category, though not the same results or working out, as George Hirth’s very remarkable one summed up by Arreat. As to Hildebrand’s views about

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* In this review of Berenson's Florentine Painters (Mind, V [April 1896], 270-272), Paget puts it down for showing “no traces of psychological training,” establishes her own long experience in the “subject of aesthetics,” declares her conclusions entirely different from his although she approves of “the method and the spirit” he applies to aesthetic problems, and takes one more jab at him as “essentially . . . a professional expert rather than an engaging aesthete.”
relief, the section on sculpture shows that Miss A.T. and I have not been shaken by his arguments.

7th. About priority of method. Having taken the trouble to write for Mind an elaborate account of what I consider Mr B's contribution to psychology both as facts & method, & published that account (which is far more laudatory than most reviews in so sober a paper) several months before publishing "Beauty & Ugliness," I had (purposely) established Mr B's priority over Miss A.T. and myself, and saved myself from the necessity of encumbering my very limited article with further references. Despite this, I went out of my way, in order to help & conciliate Mr Berenson, to add a footnote (longer than those devoted to anyone else) stating that his book, published before my work, contained facts & theories of a cognate nature, in short pointing out for the 2d time (1st in Mind) his "very great merit" in the matter both of motor sensations & of the "life enhancing" quality. I proved moreover by putting the note in re "vitalising quality" and not merely in re motor sensations. So much did this note look like an acknowledgment of having taken the word "vitalising" and all the passages to that effect from Mr B's book, that, as I did not intend to convey an impression so remote from the truth, I added that I had myself mentioned the vitalising power (differentiated and harmonising also) in lectures publicly delivered six months before the appearance of Mr B's book. The person who suggested to Mr B. that this was an insinuation that he had taken these notions & opinions from my lectures is therefore more conspicuous for readiness to believe in roguery than for his capacity of drawing conclusions from facts. I may say in this place, that if Mr B. believed that he had suggested to me either the physiological basis of aesthetics, or the "life-enhancing" effect of beauty, he had ample opportunities [to] complain long before either his book or "Beauty & Ugliness" was published, viz: when I had the pleasure of reading my lectures, previous to delivery at S. Kensington, to you & to him in April or May 1895.

8th. Now as to my having taken my conception & definition of the problem contained in "B & U" from Mr B's book. I will not discuss that here, but show you, in my copy of "B & U" the passages which show that my problem is not the same as Mr B's, any more than my answer is his, or any more than that, in anything save the question of observation of bodily changes in aesthetic perception (which in Mind I had stated was not new to me), my method is his. I see that we differ entirely about the words "working out of a method"—from yr application of them to Mr B's Fl. P. To me working out a method means applying a regular system of criticism, by graduated experiment, by comparison & elimination, by reference to previous & collateral sources of knowledge, by constant proving (or attempts to prove) one's postulates & disproving of postulates of an opposed nature. Now in Fl. P there is only a dogmatic statement of facts, of alleged explanations of those facts, and of hypotheses connected therewith, in which I find no trace of method save what I had pointed out in kind (viz. the observation of motor phenomena) and certainly nothing like what I consider to be working out of a method. In case the word dogmatic be taken by you in an "unfriendly" sense I may add that there is, in my opinion, the same dogmatic, as distinguished from critical, kind of
statement in Fl. P. as in my own “Art & Life” wherever I have touched
on the questions of “vitalisation” of harmony and of physiological basis
of aesthetics. By the way, the principal facts & hypotheses of “B & U”
were quite ready in my mind when I wrote “Art & Life” & it was
merely in deference to Miss A.T.’s wish that her portion thereof should
not be published or alluded to till she had finished several sets of new
experiments, that I desisted from stating quite plainly why art was
vitalising and in what way this aesthetic negating of our vitality (and
this that I have been describing is, I pray you to observe, the aesthetic
phenomenon par excellence, “Art & Life” No 1). By the way
what this aesthetic negating of our vitality were explicable by “the relations
of certain visible & audible forms with the chief nervous & vital functions
of all sensitive creatures; relations established throughout the whole
process of human & perhaps even of animal evolution; relations seated
in the depths of our activities” etc (“Art & Life” No 1.) By the way
I think you ought to look over “Art & Life.” 7 It was not published till
May ’96 but Mr Bunting will testify if necessary to no alterations having
been made therein since I handed him the MS of these lectures (textu­
ally as I read them at S. Kensington & here) in July 1895.

And, now, dear Mrs Costelloe, let me say that I think the whole
misunderstanding originates in your & Mr Berenson having read “B &
U” not only without much recollection of such work as we had already
done in aesthetics (like “Art & Life”) but also entirely in the light of
Mr B’s own ideas. That this is the case is shown by your confusing
his formula with ours, and particularly by your not seeing that so far
from the hypothesis being, as you say, his with tactile senses & move­
ment replaced by “all breathing” (all breathing—it is depressing that
that shd be the result of so many months’s efforts to be explicit!) the
whole hypothesis rests on the notion that “visual perception” (long
before aesthetic perception as such, let alone artistic perception) is ac­
 companied by alterations in the most importantly organic functions;
without any admixture of sense of capacity or of any indirect action;
so that aesthetic pleasure & pain depend directly & solely upon altered
conditions in the respiration & circulation, the sense of equilibrium &
certain portions of the brain action connected with the merely animal
life. Do not imagine that I complain of this non-comprehension of my
work (for all the psychological part of the business is mine—the
subordinate, e.g. of aesthetic perception to perception as such). It was
as a student of psychology that I received Miss A.T.’s facts & hypotheses,
as a student of psychology & of mental evolution (however humble)
that I worked them out into a system whose importance to me was
entirely in relation to mental exercise. Mr B. was under no obligation
enter to into this attitude, which is quite different from any that his
books reveal; and how completely one sees other folk’s ideas through
one’s own, how much one’s interest in one’s own notions blinds one to
the fact of other folk having different ones, is a well known thing; how
much such absorption in one’s own ideas makes one unable to see that
other people have anything in the least interesting is shown by your

own account of my reception of Mr B’s explanations about movement & motions, after which I well remember wondering what in the world you could be both alluding to under the cover of a terminology which to me was incomprehensible. In fact, the moral of the thing seems to be that books & articles are written for the Writer not the Reader, & that “B & U” as the Editor of the Contemporary remarked “is uncommonly hard reading.”

The whole “case of plagiarism in aesthetic theories” (let me call it so) is what my friend Mr Brewster calls “a deed of speech”—let us have not a misdeed of speech. Fortunately, if words are misleading, & theories hard to grasp, yours as well as ours, facts remain, dates particularly, which are clear & convincing. It is in order to dispel this nightmare of misconception in the light of dates, of entries in notebooks & of notes in copybooks, that I beg you, dear Mrs. Costelloe, to come to tea any afternoon wh. you choose to name, & to allow me to send my voluminous papers to yr house afterwards.

Meanwhile, I remain, entirely at yr service in this matter as in any others,

Your sincere friend
V.P.

Miss A.T. is answering her half of yr letter.

To her own thorough satisfaction Paget accomplished several objectives with this letter: she refuted Berenson’s every charge; she began a relentless campaign for examination of her notebooks as proof of her originality; she broached a proficient machinery for judgment (choosing the philosopher Alfred W. Benn as arbiter for her side). And, however reluctantly, she enlisted consort Clementina in defense of her own rampart.

Anstruther-Thomson bared her mettle in a twenty-page letter to Costelloe on November 5, remarking at the outset that she had not heard of the matter before. She too offered her notebooks as verification that her aesthetic concepts preceded her conversations with Berenson, then grappled with the minutiae of his charges. Her frenetic condition may account for the damage she did to her case in proposing two dates and places in which she had formed “the Physiological reason of our caring about beauty”; 1) in the spring of 1894, looking at pictures in the Uffizi; 2) in August 1895, looking at chalices and cups in the South Kensington Museum. Nonetheless she acknowledged the “great generosity & kindness” of Berenson in teaching her, asserted that honest people do not steal each other’s ideas, and posited the coincidence of two people “having thought the thought in a different way.”

Mary Costelloe, who eventually proved the least fatigable
of the correspondents, replied posthaste the next day. After assuring Clementina that she comprehended how “this series of misunderstandings has come about,” she politely refused to review the notebooks since, dating only from 1894, “they practically begin after the time when Mr. Berenson used to take you to the Churches and Galleries of Florence.” Moreover, Berenson had been “applying his method & illustrating his attitude to art” long before his book was published. It could be, she said in gentle extenuation, that the similarities sprang from an unconscious (therefore blameless) absorption of ideas, adding, “Mr. Berenson now fully believes that these coincidences were not conscious, & regrets very much the mistake he made in thinking them so.” At this point she enunciated a startling retraction: “whatever grounds of resentment he may feel he still has, he admits that they are not such as he could substantiate before a third person. They are a matter of impression, not of legal proof.” By way of further comfort to the opposition, Mary let it be known that “I have all along expressed my strong disapproval of his making any charges.”

Berenson’s desire to extricate himself from a situation grown repugnant to him surfaced even more strongly in Costelloe’s November 7 & 8 letter to Paget. In the second of twenty-eight pages she wrote: “I read your letter to Mr. Berenson, and he confessed that he had made a mistake in proffering an actual charge of plagiarism against you and Miss Thomson, and that as he was not able to prove it, he would not repeat the accusation. He asks me to send his regrets and apologies . . .” With the obstinacy toward unconditional surrender which he retained till the end of the affair, Berenson had her say that “At the same time, his impression remains unchanged, and no amount of note-books . . . would shake his convictions [that] the writers of the notes, while they may have been morally without fault, were intellectually less conscious of the source of their ideas.” Opining that Berenson had placed himself “in an undignified and untenable position—and a ridiculous & petty one too,” Mary declared she felt it “a part of loyal friendship to help him out of it as best I can.” The rest of the letter is a tedious regurgitation of times and places and talks and “Miss Thomson’s splendid memory.”

Sweet as the tune of Berenson’s recantation sounded to her
ears, Anstruther-Thomson turned it off and mounted the moral high ground, unforgiving as a harpy.

I am very much obliged to you & Mr Berenson for yr willingness to take my word for my statements without seeing the proofs. But it is a thing I can not permit. Mr. Berenson's charge is too grave a matter to be lightly made & it can not lightly be refuted. My proofs must be examined to see whether my explanations disprove yr charges. I do not intend to avail myself of the fact that Mr Berenson c'd not substantiate his charges before a third person. The question we all want to settle is not whether Mr Berenson can or can not prove that I have stolen my ideas from him, but whether I have as a matter of fact done the thing or not, & to arrive at the truth of this the evidence must be sifted.

She then filled sixteen quarto-size pages, returning ball for every shot in Costelloe's November 6 letter. More instructive here, however, is the addendum she prepared on four more of these large unbleached sheets, a chronology of aesthetic maturation which she doubtless felt would utterly absolve her.

In 1884 I began learning painting professionally & spent 8 years over it first at S Kensington, then at Slade & later in Paris at Carolus Duran's. I gave it up in 1892 & took to looking at pictures instead* of trying to paint them, intending later to make it my business to show the galleries to the East end people in London. I knew modern painting very well but did not know anything about old pictures. I was already very much interested in Greek sculpture having learnt a little about it from lectures & conversations with Miss Sellers. I began now to take a great interest in Renaissance sculpture with a view to a lecture Miss Paget was going to deliver the winter of 1892 in Florence. I helped her with the technical & anatomical reasons of the various things.

In the autumn of 1892 I went to Bergamo & Venice, notes on Lotto in 1st notebook. I was immensely struck with Lotto's pictures. (I had read Morelli's first volume previously.)

In the winter of 1893 we went occasionally to galleries with Mr Berenson & Miss Paget but owing to the many discussions as to the misuse of words I saw very little during these visits. I believe it was at this time that I read Mr Berenson's article on Renaissance Architecture* but I did not understand any of its contents.

In the autumn of 1893 I was a great deal at the British Museum looking at Renaissance medals & learning about XIIth Cent. lettering with Mr Emery Walker. I did several lectures for working people's
clubs in the galleries before coming out to Florence.

It was at this point that I began going to galleries alone with Mr Berenson about the end of Jan 1894 I think must have been the first time.

I made a point of letting him tell me things in his own way, & rarely or never differing with him for my object was to learn as much as I could about connoisseurship & I thought he wd explain best in the way he found easiest. Of course I often did not understand as I have already explained in my second letter, & it has always been a matter of regret to me to think how much I must have lost, but I learnt to know one painter from another & to see the differences between school work & master's work, & in fact all I have been able to learn of connoisseurship has been learnt from Mr Berenson.

My notes of his conversations will supply details, they were written down when I returned. It was about the end of Feb if I remember right that Mr Berenson pointed out to me that the pace of a Perugino picture was special to it. I was very much interested & told Miss Paget. She said the idea was so important that Mr Berenson ought to write about it at once. She sent him a message by you & went to see him about it as you probably remember. I wrote it down in my notebook as a discovery of Mr Berenson's showed to me by him. You will duly find it. It is the only entry thus labelled because it is the only theory in the book that came from him.

About the middle of March 1894 I discovered what I take to be the physiological connection between Man & Art from noting one day that my breathing was involuntarily altered when I looked at different pictures. I daresay I overestimated the importance of the discovery but it seemed to me at the time very important indeed. When I got home I told Miss Paget & she believed it & said it supplied the proof for all of the views she had always held on Aesthetics.

I went on with the two things side by side, learning all I could about pictures from Mr Berenson & carrying on my own researches into my sensations in front of works of Art, every day adding something. In April we went to Rome where I made experiments on sculpture.

About the beginning of May I told Miss Adele Hay of the results, as I used to teach her all I knew.

In 1895 in February I told a certain number of my views to Donna Laura Gropello at Nervi as I wanted her advice on the psychology of the matter. A too generous appreciation of my researches made her confide some of them to one of her friends, Mr. Placci. I was unwilling to publish my views till I had worked on them enough to make them complete. So I was angry at this indiscretion & except to my Brother spoke of the matter to no one else. *Miss Paget helped me to study the subject of perception apart from its effect on Art, in consequence I made a study of perception when moving & when standing still.

After 1894 I had not the opportunity of learning any more connoisseurship as I do not think that I had the benefit of Mr Berenson's company in the galleries save one day in Paris at the Louvre, one day in the company of Miss Hay at S. Lorenzo 1895 & one day at the National Gallery in 1896.

I spent the summer of 1895 reading physiology in London with a
view to understanding the mechanics of the lungs & throat & the functions of the cervical nerves to try & find out why the art of perception shd be so closely connected with the breathing.

I think it must have been in Dec 1895 that I heard Mr Berenson had done very important work in Aesthetics & that he had a book which was shortly to come out. I declined to hear anything about its contents. I did not read it till about April 1896 & then found there was nothing in common between our Hypotheses. I was surprised that Mr Berenson had not thought it necessary to give the proofs of his beliefs considering how very necessary I thought it to give the proofs of mine.

I went on all through the summer & autumn of 1896 making experiments about equilibrium & Gothic Architecture, & during the winter into perception of rudimentary forms, void chaos etc. Returned to Florence in Nov & began writing out my part of the material for the article. The article was finished in March 1897.

To Anstruther-Thomas’s justificative letter Paget appended a fourteen-page postscript explicating ad infinitum the connotations of such words and phrases as verbatim, out of politeness, apparently, and segment of the circle, all to buttress the innocence of her beleaguered friend. In the close she railed at Berenson’s “accusation of plagiarism—plagiarism the most atrocious, stealing a man’s ewe lamb” and cooed over Mrs. Costelloe’s unwavering simpatia.

On November 12 Paget toed the firing line again, this time on her own. She complained first of Berenson’s behavior—shifting “the ground of his accusation to the region of the intangible” and declining to examine their notebooks. She then underscored the profounder moral aspect of his charge, the “irreparable injury” brought about by his “intolerable mischievousness.” Sternly she decreed that “all social relations between him & me must necessarily be at an end.” Determined now, by one means or another, to “completely settling the matter,” Paget laid down an ultimatum and an option: “I can drop the matter only if Mr B. will furnish in writing, for Miss A.T. & me & for each of the persons to whom he has accused us, an unambiguous statement that he recants completely and unreservedly all the accusations & suspicions he has entertained against us. And, if Mr B do not choose to do this, I shall be only too pleased to revert to the scheme of arbitration.”

On the same day, through his amanuensis, Berenson was swinging his double-edged ukase at Anstruther-Thomson. “Mr. Berenson begs me to say that he gave me full power to act for
him, that he send you by me an apology for the charge he had made and assured you he would not repeat it,” wrote Mrs. Costelloe. “If, however, you are not satisfied with his apology, he will withdraw it. But he will not go any further in the matter.” She expressed herself “very sorry” over the way he was acting, but impotent to alter his course as “he will not do anything else.” She concluded this fifteen-page message: “May I ask you to thank Miss Paget for her letter, which is entirely satisfactory to me. As Mr. Berenson prefers to ‘grouch’ away to himself... he has no desire to have things cleaned up to his satisfaction, and I feel any attempt on her part, mine, or anyone’s else would be useless!” Clementina’s brief, inadequate, and futile rejoinder to Berenson’s lofty dismissal was to send “an extract from my notes on what he said in 1894 or later” as validation that “I already held a theory, thanks to my researches.” Tepidly, she termed it “regrettable” that Berenson had disdained the tactic of arbitration.

The next move in this sultry chronicle of evasions came from Costelloe in a letter (November 15) which smothered in self-abasement any lingering hope on Paget’s part of extorting an unqualified apology from Berenson or his assent to arbitration. Hamstrung between fire and ice, Costelloe humbly conceded her mistake in trying to explain, gratefully welcomed Paget’s correction, praised her consistent dignity, and deplored Berenson’s decision “after drawing me into it, to take other advice than mine.” “I am powerless,” she said, to lead the affair into “the arbitration you (quite rightly) desire.” She wished “for all our sakes” that she “had not come into it.”

Paget’s letter of the 17th (they were now down to four pages or less) indicates her awareness that the peacock was inaccessible. Terrier-like, she clung to the lesser prey. After thanking Mary for her “kind & fairdealing” attitude and deposing that “here our intercourse with Mr Berenson ends,” Paget compulsively pounded on the proposal that “As Mr Berenson has apologized without examining the papers & without arbitration,” would not Costelloe “as an act of justice, examine our notes?” The latter’s abject capitulation simply would not satisfy Paget’s thirst for a drop of Berenson’s blood.

While neither Paget nor Anstruther-Thomson was placated by Berenson’s solution through withdrawal, they realized it was
Sir—

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of yr retraction & apologies through Mrs Costelloe. These apologies we accept on the understanding that they are complete & unreserved, and that Mrs Costelloe is acting as your official agent in this matter; although it is, we are told, usual in society that apologies should not be made by proxy.

faithfully yours

In her shortest epistle to date Mrs. Costelloe intoned by rote yet one more time the conditions of Berenson's apology, her spirit wholly subdued, roused to sentience only by the possibility that the two ladies meant "to cast any doubt upon my bona fides in acting as his representative." The pitch of her opening words pervades the entire letter: "Mr. Berenson begs me to repeat . . ." So like Svengali with Trilby.

There is no record that Paget or Anstruther-Thomson answered this demeaning missive. They had Mrs. Costelloe ground down to the point they had wanted to reduce Berenson, a dubious victory even to them in their inflamed state. They may have experienced some prickles of conscience at this turn of events. On November 20 Mary addressed a joint note to them, with no mention of Berenson, agreeing to look at "your notes preparatory to the article 'Beauty & Ugliness.'" On the 24th she confirmed an appointment for the following Friday, requesting to bring an old college friend (for support?), pleading a severe cold (for sympathy?), and trusting that Clementina's illness was not aggravated by this affair (patching up an old bond?). With this anticlimactic ritual the triologue ceased. No relaxation of Berenson's posture or clear acquittal from the charges transpired. The immediate upshot was the disruption of Paget's long-standing domestic arrangement with Anstruther-Thomson, who fled the region and for several years "was absorbed in sailing-boats and such-like outdoor things," with "building a wonderful puppet show . . . and staging elaborate fairy plays" before returning "to works of art and their whys and wherefores."¹⁰

Not until three years after Anstruther-Thomson died was the breach between the neighboring domiciles of Il Palmerino and

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¹⁰ *Art & Man*, 59.
I Tatti narrowed. It cannot be said to have closed, for the quality of the reactivated relations between Paget and Berenson remained tentative, careful, and cool, with provocative conversation at minimum. Upon publication of *Art & Man* (1924) Paget wrote, in part, to Mary Costelloe, since 1900 Mrs. Bernard Berenson:

I feel that the first copy of this book must go to you, just because a certain page thereof (p. 56) seems to conflict with my gratitude I owe you and Mr. Berenson for such hospitality and friendliness in the last few years . . .

Should it surprise or to any degree hurt you, (I hope not!) I want you to know that after many rewritings I found that that episode could not be omitted without my friend's subsequent intellectual life becoming more or less unintelligible . . . at this time of day I lay no blame on anyone; . . . But my own share in the wretched little old story makes me understand to the full that you, in your turn, may feel the claims of loyalty and may prefer to drop the acquaintance resumed with so much pleasure to myself . . .

Mrs. Berenson instantly assured Paget that “I can't imagine dropping your delightful acquaintance again for anything, certainly not those old unhappy far-off things, & battles long ago. . . . I am sure BB will feel just as I do.” And again on January 30: “We should love to see you again, & the car is at your disposal . . .”

Such irresistible grace dissolved any remaining traces of umbrage in Paget's recall of the long and turgid altercation. After a period of pained irresolution she decided “on the whole better do it!” June 4, 1924 she sent Mary these damning revelations.

I feel as if . . . I ought to let you see the enclosed slips, which I have only just found.

They were not among Miss A.T.'s MSS notes which I published, but had got somehow among her discarded photographs which I sorted only two days ago . . .

11 Paget's letter of January 23, 1924 and the following of June 4 are in *I Tatti*, quoted by permission of Miss Nikey Mariano.

On page 56 of *Art & Man* Paget describes in concise terms the grim emotional impact of Berenson's charge: “Coming in the middle of my friend's very grave illness, it failed to be amusing in my eyes; and in hers it took the dimensions and colour of tragedy . . . . To her rather military notions of honour, *PLAGIARISM*, if she had ever heard of it, was akin to cheating at cards.” And on page 57: “There remained in my friend's mind a long-enduring aversion for the intellectual circles where such accusations could arise, and even a distaste for the interests in life where one might be subjected to such attacks.”
I want you to see them (and please destroy) as they show how much she learned from Mr. Berenson, and show that one or two ideas which to me seem all important, she takes from Mr. Berenson. This clears up a good deal. I have long thought that the plagiarism business was at cross-purposes, that Mr. Berenson felt vaguely that some of his ideas in “Beauty & Ugliness” had originated with him, although when put to it he singled out just the ideas which Kit and even I had had quite independently, indeed had put in words in notes and diaries before our acquaintance. These memoranda seem to show what these ideas were: those, it seems to me, about the aesthetic importance (versus anatomic realism) of abstract line. Whether Kit had them before I don’t know, though I think it possible as a result of her analysis of her own drawings. Anyhow here she mentions having heard Mr. Berenson express them, and that is what I wish you to know.... whether or not she had come by it independently (I think so) here is the proof of her having noticed what Mr. Berenson said on the subject....

Perhaps all this is merely a bore. At all events it needs no answer. Only burn the notes.

There was indeed nothing left to be said. All the passion, all the protestation, all the thin-skinned sanctimony—and had Berenson been right from the first? Anstruther-Thomson was now beyond remorse or recrimination; Paget demonstrably clean of retrospective guilt or cloying fidelity; Berenson still impervious on his pedestal. The real and only victim of the distended scrimmage was Mrs. Berenson: pressed into service, snared in a dilemma of heart and head, disavowed, mortified, and left to tend the wounds. It is a manifest of her excellence that she survived the difficult role, wise and equanimous throughout. How appropriate that, in the long run, she carried off the two regal antagonists as trophies—one as husband, one as new-burnished ally.