

Maud Cruttwell and the Berensons: 'A preliminary canter to an independent career'

Tiffany L. Johnston

In the autumn of 1893 Violet Paget, the eminent expatriate who wrote on aesthetics under the pseudonym Vernon Lee, returned to Florence accompanied by Maud Cruttwell (1859–1939), the fourth of twelve children born to solicitor Wilson C. Cruttwell and his wife Georgina.¹ Cruttwell had lived in Frome with her widowed father for several years before moving to London where she pursued an artistic career and, between 1889 and 1894, exhibited her work at the Royal Academy, the Royal Institute of Oil Paintings, and the Society of Women Artists.² By 1893, however, Cruttwell had become disillusioned with her own work and seized on Lee's offer to be employed in Florence for October and November as secretary to Lee's invalid brother, Eugene.³ Lee described Cruttwell to Eugene as a well-dressed, 'clever, rather decadent aesthete', with a 'dulcet' Oxford-accented voice and 'a complexion like certain peaches, insufficiently *sleek* for a human being, furry'. 'But', Lee added, 'she is very intelligent and extremely willing, and seems to have read every mortal thing' (pp. 359, 367, 370, emphasis in original).

When Cruttwell arrived in Florence, Bernard Berenson and Mary Costelloe (*Fig. 1*) had been working intimately together in the study of Italian Renaissance art, employing Bernard's newly developed method of connoisseurship — the attribution of paintings through the identification of 'artistic personalities'.⁴ This was achieved by applying the comparison of anatomical details, such as ears and hands — a method first employed by Giovanni Morelli and therefore known as the Morellian method — to the

¹ I am grateful to Hilary Fraser, Susanna Avery-Quash, and Maria Alambritis for their kind invitation to participate in this issue of *19* as well as to an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments and suggestions.

² Information from the records of the Church of St John the Baptist, Frome, provided by the archivist Hilda Massey; birth records also provided by Peter Rapsey, the vicar of Christ Church, Frome; *Dictionary of British Artists 1880–1940*, comp. by J. Johnson and A. Greutzner ([Woodbridge]: Antique Collectors' Club, 1976), p. 130.

³ *Vernon Lee's Letters* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1937), p. 359.

⁴ After World War I Bernhard changed the spelling of his forename to Bernard, dropping the Germanic 'h'. I have used 'Bernard' throughout this article.



Fig. 1: Mary (Costelloe) Berenson and Bernard Berenson, 1901, photograph, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Renaissance Studies, Biblioteca Berenson. Courtesy of the president and fellows of Harvard College.

theory that the personality of the artist could be detected in a work of art.⁵ Berenson had been studying art in Europe after graduating from Harvard and, through a mutual friend, had met Mary, a former student of Harvard's

⁵ Tiffany L. Johnston, 'The Correggiosity of Correggio: On the Origin of Berensonian Connoisseurship', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 19 (2016), 385–425. For more on the development of old master connoisseurship, see Carol Gibson-Wood, *Studies in the Theory of Connoisseurship from Vasari to Morelli* (New York: Garland, 1988); and Catherine B. Scallen, *Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004). For more about the early influences on Berenson's method of connoisseurship, see *Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage*, ed. by Joseph Connors and Louis A. Waldman, Villa I Tatti Series, 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Annex for Women then living in London and married to an Irish barrister and scholar of philosophy, Benjamin F. C. Costelloe. Mary eventually left her husband and two daughters to be with Berenson and proceeded to skirt Anglo-Florentine society in order to avoid scandal. Therefore, despite his eagerness for Mary to make acquaintances, Berenson remained adamant that she not be introduced by him.

Despite having casually met Lee the previous summer at the British Museum, Mary was insecure about pursuing it further and felt fortunate when, in the autumn of 1893, Lee asked Berenson, whom she already knew well, for her address. 'I have heard she is your most brilliant pupil', Lee told Berenson, to which he replied, 'O she stands quite on her own two feet as an independent critic by this time.' As Lee was leaving for Ravenna, she sent Cruttwell to call first and Berenson assured Cruttwell that Mary could guide her around Florence as well as anyone living.⁶ An initial meeting between Mary and Cruttwell led to several subsequent engagements in the galleries. Fair-haired with a florid complexion, Cruttwell smelled strongly of chypre and the cigars which stained her teeth, and seemed to Mary to be 'one of these English "young girls" of 33, who is just beginning to wake up'.⁷ Not surprisingly, Mary relished their meetings, for Cruttwell kept saying, 'Why I have been with Miss Paget for six months, and she never told me *this!*' (HWSP, 28, 29 November 1893, emphasis in original). Cruttwell begged Mary to write down everything she said but as Mary did not have the time, Cruttwell rushed home to record every word she could recall. Mary assured her scandal-fearing mother that Berenson refused to join them in the galleries so that she could develop her own reputation as a connoisseur, further explaining that, 'of course, if he came it would be evident that he knew more than I, and that what I know I take from him' (HWSP, 29 November 1893).

A 'definite pupil'

As Cruttwell planned to return to England when Mary did, Mary suggested they travel together, informing her mother that it seemed possible that Cruttwell might 'take up my studies and possibly travel with me a great deal in the future'. To allay her mother's concerns, Mary added that travelling with Cruttwell could be 'the removal of *one* difficulty at any rate', reiterating that with very little encouragement, Cruttwell could do excellent work

⁶ Mary Berenson (MB) to Hannah Whitall Smith, 29 November 1893, Indiana University Bloomington, Lilly Library, Hannah Whitall Smith Papers (HWSP). Further references to letters from these papers are given after quotations in the text by date. They will be from Mary to Hannah Whitall Smith unless otherwise stated.

⁷ HWSP, 28 November 1893; Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Intimate Memories*, 4 vols (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), II: *European Experiences*, 282.

as her ‘definite pupil’ (HWSP, 1, 2 December 1893, emphasis in original). In fact, by March 1894, Mary had invited Cruttwell to rent a small villa together and it was arranged that Cruttwell, with her ‘exquisite sense of order’, would act as housekeeper in exchange for Mary’s instruction in the study of Italian Renaissance art.⁸ Villa Rosa, situated just below the hilltop town of Fiesole with spectacular views of Florence, was conveniently only a stone’s throw from Berenson’s nearby Villa Kraus.⁹ The arrangement was particularly advantageous for Mary, who not only received housekeeping and the respectability of a chaperoning room-mate, but also the substantiation of the value of her own studies in Italian Renaissance art. Over the next two years Mary followed through, publishing her *Guide to the Italian Pictures at Hampton Court* (1894) as well as numerous articles and book reviews, but used the pseudonym Mary Logan at her mother’s insistence to avoid further scandal.¹⁰ She lived quietly at Villa Rosa with Cruttwell, studying books, paintings, and photographs, working collaboratively with Berenson on his writing, and quickly discovering that her pseudonym could also be used effectively to shape the reception of his scholarship — work to which her own future prospects were intimately tied. Cruttwell managed the house deftly and economically and they had no visitors except when a class gathered once a week around ‘Bernard’s table’ to examine photographs and ask questions.¹¹

After the 1895 publication of Berenson’s *Lorenzo Lotto*, Berenson and Mary’s interest quickly shifted from demonstrating their method of attribution to more abstract questions of aesthetics. Exasperated one day over the pedantry of examining details in the determination of authorship, Bernard exclaimed that he was ready to give up connoisseurship entirely. When it was suggested that Cruttwell might then continue to work ‘in that line’, he retorted that he ‘wasn’t going out quite so soon as all that’.¹²

⁸ HWSP, 1 April 1894; Luhan, II, 283.

⁹ HWSP, 17 March 1894. Many thanks to Michael Gorman for showing me this particular location.

¹⁰ By 1894 Mary had published articles and reviews in several periodicals including the *Woman’s Herald*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Studio*, and the *Nineteenth Century*. See Tiffany L. Johnston, ‘Mary Berenson and the Conception of Connoisseurship’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University Bloomington, 2001). For an examination of Mary’s Hampton Court *Guide*, see the article by Ilaria Della Monica in this issue of 19.

¹¹ MB to Gertrude Hitz Burton, 5 March 1895, Florence, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Biblioteca Berenson, Berenson Papers (VIT). Further references to these papers are given after quotations in the text by date.

¹² Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 236; MB diary, 9 November 1895, VIT. Mabel Dodge Luhan would later observe that “‘B.B.’ said rather mean things about Maud. He didn’t like other people to write about the Italian painters’ (II, 283).

Though adept in following Mary and Berenson in the Morellian method, it seemed that the two former students of Harvard philosophy professor William James deemed her less capable of keeping up as they pivoted to more philosophical lines of enquiry.¹³ Mary's arrangement with Cruttwell remained congenial until February 1896 when Berenson made a careless remark about Cruttwell's mental capabilities to a third party who, unbeknown to Mary, then repeated it to Cruttwell.¹⁴ Almost predictably, Cruttwell entered 'a state of smoldering wrath', reproaching the villa for having 'degenerated' and losing her temper at the table, the only time they were typically in contact.¹⁵ Mary initially took the outbursts as Cruttwell's 'way', but the episode ended with Cruttwell renting rooms in Florence and Mary staying at Villa Rosa, sharing the expenses with her friends Janet Dodge and the archaeologist Eugénie Sellers instead.¹⁶ After enduring several months of Sellers's arguments with Vernon Lee and Dodge's illnesses, however, Mary longed for the days of Cruttwell's cheerfulness and independence (HWSP, 3 May 1896).

Their affiliation was resumed in October 1896 when Cruttwell stayed with Mary for a fortnight earning ten pounds to help organize Mary's art notes as well as to mount and catalogue Mary and Bernard's collection of over four thousand photographs. In working together, Cruttwell's attempts to engage in aesthetics did not improve Mary's impression:

Maud Cruttwell was a (nominal) contemporary, and she is now become rampant. Every idea that grazes the outside edge of her cranium she takes as divinely revealed dogma (an attitude I sympathize with when the cranium has openings to let ideas in!) and she declares that Rossetti, Keats, and Baudelaire are

¹³ William James (1842–1910), Harvard professor with whom Bernard studied psychology and logic. James was a close friend of Mary's father, so both Mary and her brother Logan frequented the James's home in Cambridge, MA; her brother Logan studied under James at Harvard and Mary attended his lectures at the Concord School of Philosophy. For more on Mary's time at Harvard, see Tiffany L. Johnston, 'Mary Whitall Smith at the Harvard Annex', *Berenson & Harvard: Bernard and Mary as Students* (online exhibition) <<https://berenson.itatti.harvard.edu/berenson/items/show/3030>> [accessed 14 March 2019].

¹⁴ MB diary, 6 March 1896, VIT; HWSP, 9 March 1896. In Mary's letter to her mother she changed the story; not wanting to disparage Bernard to her already disapproving mother, she blamed herself for the remark.

¹⁵ MB to Eugénie Sellers, 24 Feb 1896, University of Cambridge, Girton College Library (GCL), Eugénie Sellers Strong Papers. Further references to letters from these papers are given after quotations in the text by date. They will be from Mary to Eugénie Sellers unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶ HWSP, 11 March 1896. Eugénie Sellers married Sandford Arthur Strong (1863–1904) in 1897, adopting Strong's surname as well as his anti-Morellian stance. Personal as well as professional disagreements eventually caused a rift with the Berensons (see section 'Ambiguous positions' below).

‘not art’ and that Pater is not ‘life communicating.’ O B.B. [Bernard Berenson], what has thou to answer for with [...] Maud Cruttwell laying down the law on Art! (HWSP, MB to Alys Smith, 26 October 1896)

Cruttwell, after reading a translation of Plato, believed she had been ‘taught to think’ and felt compelled to share every platitude that occurred to her, reducing Berenson to ‘a silence of deep and disapproving gloom’. Cruttwell thought both Mary and Bernard had regressed, but Mary explained to Eugénie Sellers that they did not intrinsically lack interest in intellectual subjects, but rather lacked interest in discussing them with Cruttwell. Although Mary had hoped to encourage Cruttwell by combining the instruction of looking at photographs with financial profit, Cruttwell did not finish the project, asserting that the tedious work constrained her ‘power of thought’ (GCL, 24 November 1896).

In December 1896 Mary visited the much talked-about Florentine exhibition of modern paintings in order to review it for the *Gazette des beaux-arts* and *Studio* but ascertained it to be ‘a gallery of horrors’ with the exception of Adolf von Hildebrand’s *Old Faun*.¹⁷ Unable to find anything redeeming to write and remembering well the pleasure she derived from her own first ‘literary adventures’, Mary offered to let Cruttwell, a trained painter, write the *Studio* article.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the article remained unpublished. So, in April 1897, still hoping to leverage Mary’s contact, Cruttwell sent a different article to her asking that she send it with her recommendation to the *Gazette des beaux-arts*. Finding it not up to par but not wanting to hurt Cruttwell’s feelings, Mary wrote at length in order to explain to Cruttwell why she could not recommend it (HWSP, to Ray and Karin Costelloe, 9 April 1897). In recompense, when Mary, who had been working on a stalled book of Florentine profile paintings, was asked by her friend and later editor of the *Revue archéologique*, Salomon Reinach, to write an article on the types of female portraits invented by Renaissance artists, she referred him instead to Cruttwell:

She knows a good deal about Renaissance art (although, to speak frankly, I should never stand godmother to anything of hers I had not carefully gone over!) and she has some skill in writing and a fair amount (for a woman!) of general culture.¹⁹

¹⁷ GCL, 15 December 1896. The exhibition ‘Festa dell’Arte e dei Fiori’ was held by the Società di Belle Arti from December 1896 to March 1897.

¹⁸ HWSP, 13 December 1896; GCL, 15 December 1896.

¹⁹ MB to Salomon Reinach, 21 January 1897, Aix-en-Provence, Bibliothèque Méjanès (BM), Salomon Reinach Papers. Further references to letters from Mary to Reinach are given after quotations in the text. The book on profiles was apparently never published.

Perhaps related to this research, Cruttwell subsequently published an article in the *Art Journal* boldly suggesting that the painted female portrait in the Poldi-Pezzoli Gallery in Milan could have been executed by a sculptor, Desiderio da Settignano, but asked the reader to excuse her ‘for venturing a theory so hypothetical’.²⁰ Determined to establish herself, Cruttwell followed her article with a shorter notice in the *Art Journal* announcing the discovery of a Ghirlandaio fresco at the Florentine church of Ognissanti which depicted Amerigo Vespucci.²¹

‘A (nominal) contemporary’

In 1899 Cruttwell published her first monograph on an Italian Renaissance artist, *Luca Signorelli*, part of the George Bell and Son’s Great Masters in Painting and Sculpture series, demonstrating not only her emerging confidence in the field through her studies with the Berensons, but also her eagerness to harness the British publishing industry’s lucrative interest in artist biographies.²² Although Cruttwell did not mention Mary in her prefatory notice, she did express her gratitude to Berenson for ‘much help’. Only two years earlier Berenson had published his *Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* expounding the virtues of Signorelli’s feeling for ‘tactile values’ and, though Cruttwell avoided employing overarching aesthetic theories, she did devote a section to the ‘development and characteristics of the artist’s genius’ suggesting Berenson’s idea of ‘artistic personality’ (as exemplified in his *Lorenzo Lotto*).²³ There were other earlier studies of Signorelli, namely those of Crowe and Cavalcaselle and Robert Vischer, but Cruttwell’s was the first to distinguish between the artist’s early and middle style periods, providing a chronological table and catalogue of works, in addition to biographical and critical essays on the artist’s development and influence.²⁴

²⁰ Maud Cruttwell, ‘Three Mysterious Profiles of the Fifteenth Century’, *Art Journal*, October 1897, pp. 312–16 (p. 316). The most celebrated work in the Poldi-Pezzoli collection, the painting is now attributed to Piero Pollaiuolo. At the time the painting had been ascribed to Piero della Francesca, but Bernard Berenson (1896) gave it tentatively to Verrocchio before it was suggested by Frizzoni in 1900 that it might be by Antonio Pollaiuolo.

²¹ Maud Cruttwell, ‘The Discoverer of America’, *Art Journal*, May 1898, p. 150. As the Misericordia fresco, hidden after the chapel’s redecoration, had been previously described by Giorgio Vasari, the attribution to Ghirlandaio remains definitive.

²² For more, see Julie F. Codell, ‘Serialized Artists’ Biographies: A Culture Industry in Late Victorian Britain’, *Book History*, 3 (2000), 94–124.

²³ Bernhard Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London: Putnam’s Sons, 1897), p. 82; Bernhard Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto: An Essay in Constructive Art Criticism* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1895). For more on Berenson’s concept of ‘artistic personality’, see Johnston, ‘The Correggiosity of Correggio’.

²⁴ Gloria Kury, ‘The Early Work of Luca Signorelli’ (unpublished doctoral

An anonymous reviewer for *The Dial* found Cruttwell's monograph inappropriate for the series, for while it established an independent reputation for Signorelli, the book seemed better suited to an academic rather than amateur audience — an oblique confirmation of Cruttwell's meticulous scholarship.²⁵ Another reviewer writing for *L'Arte* felt the catalogue could be more complete, citing Cruttwell's exclusion of Signorelli's Sistine *Testament of Moses*, but nevertheless considered the book a conscientious and diligent study.²⁶ In a nepotistic gesture, Mary reviewed *Signorelli* for *La Chronique des arts* under her professional pseudonym Mary Logan and, without mentioning Morelli's method nor Berenson's term 'artistic personality', complimented Cruttwell for having understood the qualities that constituted Signorelli's genius.²⁷ Only the unsigned review in *The Times* rather knowingly noted Cruttwell's general adherence to Morellian principles and proclaimed the book 'an excellent example of the good and really scientific work which is now being done in this department by ladies'.²⁸

Throughout 1899 Cruttwell continued to frequent Mary and Berenson's company, studying their photo collection, enlisting Mary's help in editing the manuscript of her next monograph on Mantegna, and even standing witness at their civil marriage.²⁹ Cruttwell's *Mantegna* followed a similar format to her *Signorelli* but, like Berenson, who had grown less interested in explicating his connoisseurial method, she abandoned the attempt to define the 'artistic personality' for the reader. Despite Mary's assistance, Cruttwell again acknowledged only Bernard Berenson in the preface for his 'generous aid' and 'personal counsel' but both his article on the drawings of Mantegna and Mary's *Guide to the Italian Pictures at Hampton Court* were included in Cruttwell's short bibliography. Mary reviewed Cruttwell's *Mantegna* for the *Gazette des beaux-arts* along with two other works on Mantegna published in 1901: those of Paul Kristeller (with an introduction by S. Arthur Strong) and Charles Yriarte.³⁰ She described Cruttwell's

dissertation, Yale University, 1974), p. v. In her bibliography, Cruttwell referred to the 1898 Le Monnier edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *Luca Signorelli* and Robert Vischer's *Luca Signorelli und die Italienische Renaissance* (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit, 1879).

²⁵ Review of Maud Cruttwell, *Luca Signorelli*, *Dial*, 16 June 1900, pp. 470–71.

²⁶ 'Luca Signorelli', *L'Arte*, 3 (1900), 294–95.

²⁷ Mary Logan, 'Bibliographie', *La Chronique des arts*, 17 March 1900, pp. 99–100.

²⁸ Review of Maud Cruttwell, *Luca Signorelli*, *The Times*, 14 April 1900, p. 9.

²⁹ HWSP, 7 May 1901; Samuels, p. 351.

³⁰ Mary Logan, 'Bibliographie', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 28 (1902), 255–61, in which she also reviewed Charles Yriarte, *Mantegna: sa vie, sa maison, son tombeau, son oeuvre dans les musées et les collections* (Paris: Rothschild, 1901); and Paul Kristeller, *Andrea Mantegna*, trans. by S. Arthur Strong (London: Longmans, Green, 1901). Bernard wrote several reviews for Julia Cartwright, but he appears to have left all reviews of Cruttwell's work for Mary to write under her pseudonym, a job Mary undertook both as a gesture of friendship and as a means of defending Morellian connoisseurship in general.

study as an excellent monograph, concise, well written, and prepared conscientiously, and only found fault in the exclusion of the Downton Castle *Nativity*.³¹ However, Mary also described it as ‘a modest volume’, focusing her review on the two larger studies, their errors in attribution, and lack of Morellian methodology.³²

Cruttwell’s third book, *Luca and Andrea della Robbia and their Successors*, followed in 1902 and was a bolder demonstration of connoisseurship; she was the first to distinguish the work of Luca from the inferior works of his nephew Andrea, as well as from Giovanni della Robbia, through her original and painstaking scholarship.³³ At 350 pages, the hefty book contained approximately one hundred and fifty photo reproductions, numerous appendices, and, in a divergence from her earlier books, also included many previously unpublished archival documents. Not surprisingly, the study received laudatory reviews.³⁴ The reviewer for *The Dial* astutely observed that the study would likely long remain ‘the leading authority for students’. This time, Mary did not restrain her enthusiasm for Cruttwell’s ‘exceedingly good’ book and published a nine-page review in the *Gazette des beaux-arts*.³⁵ She called Cruttwell’s study ‘a model’ monographic study, noting that Cruttwell had worked alone to unravel the works of the prolific family of artists basing her criteria strictly on the question of quality.³⁶ This time, Cruttwell made no reference to the Berensons in her introduction.

Although Mary undertook her review in January 1903, it was not published until September 1905 as Cruttwell had requested that an article she was preparing on Girolamo della Robbia appear first (undated letter, VIT). Cruttwell had moved to Paris in the interval so Mary provided a letter of introduction to her well-connected friend with a penchant for young women, Salomon Reinach, explaining that Cruttwell’s recent book on the della Robbias was ‘far better’ than any other on the topic:

She is not brilliantly gifted, but she is patient and hard-working and conscientious. So she arrives at being one of the best writers existing on Renaissance things. She is well read in English also. I must warn you that she is not a beauty. She is 42 years old. (BM, 20 November 1902)

³¹ Now known as Mantegna’s *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, Metropolitan Museum, New York (acc. no. 32.130.2).

³² Logan, ‘Bibliographie’, *Gazette des beaux-arts* (1902), p. 259.

³³ For more on Cruttwell’s *Luca and Andrea della Robbia*, see the article by Francesco Ventrella in this issue of *19*.

³⁴ ‘Holiday Publications’, *Dial*, 16 December 1902, pp. 470–77 (p. 471); ‘More Books on Art’, *Nation*, 18 December 1902, pp. 483–85 (p. 484).

³⁵ Mary Berenson’s book register for January 1903, VIT.

³⁶ Mary Logan, ‘Bibliographie’, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 34 (1905), 256–64 (p. 256).

Despite this indifferent introduction, Cruttwell later reported to Mary that she was making no progress on her Girolamo article: ‘Every fresh book I open contradicts the last — the documents are misquoted — the dates all different. It’s unravelling a skein of knots and how to find out the most reliable of these unreliable people I don’t know’ (undated letter, VIT). Nevertheless, by February 1904 the two-part article appeared, providing biographical information, several documents, as well as arguments for an attribution to Girolamo for the friezes at the Ospedale del Ceppo in Pistoia.³⁷

‘Ambiguous positions’

It was also during this period that Cruttwell was offered the opportunity to contribute books on Verrocchio and Pollaiuolo to the Library of Art series, edited by Eugénie Sellers Strong’s husband and Berenson adversary, S. Arthur Strong.³⁸ Concerned about how the Berensons might react, Cruttwell wrote to Mary for her approval, explaining that the Florentine profile book had come to a standstill and that she was so interested in the ‘untrodden’ ground of these new subjects that she already anticipated making new discoveries. Cruttwell asked for Mary’s assistance in acquiring photos of works by Verrocchio and Pollaiuolo from America, and reassured her of her allegiance to Berenson. She reported that in Florence people were raving about a discovery made at San Miniato by the *Kunsthistorische Gesellschaft*, who, in photographing the Portuguese chapel, brought to light a work by Antonio Pollaiuolo. Cruttwell told the Germans who claimed it as their discovery that Berenson had preceded them by eight years though it was not included in his list. ‘I get every day to have less faith in other *Kunstforchers* and more and more in Mr. Berenson’, Cruttwell declared to Mary, further proposing to include a dedication to Berenson in one of her monographs: “‘To the only begetter of any wisdom in *Kunstforschung* dear BB all happiness and eternity etc. etc.” Shall I do it in my Verrocchio [...]?’.

In a subsequent letter to Mary, Cruttwell reported that she had completed both her della Robbia article and the manuscript for her book

³⁷ Maud Cruttwell, ‘Girolamo della Robbia et ses oeuvres’, *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 31 (1904), 27–52, 140–48.

³⁸ Though former friends, Eugénie Sellers had a change of attitude towards the Berensons for several reasons: Bernard had believed that Sanford Arthur Strong had anonymously written a bad review of one of his books and became accusatory; Bernard, disagreeing over Furtwängler’s method, had refused to review Eugénie’s translation of Furtwängler; the Strong’s were close to Charles Loeser who had long nursed a grudge against Bernard (see Samuels, p. 234); and when Eugénie converted to Catholicism her proselytizing grated on the Berensons, particularly Mary, whose first husband had been a fervent Catholic.

on Florentine profiles. In the book she had outlined three qualities of Florentine art: realism, psychological interest, and decorative sense as illustrated through line. To Mary she explained,

It was the only connecting thread I could weave satisfactorily and when I finished, I found that I had unconsciously just stolen from Mr. Berenson's *Florentine Painters* to an extent that would merit imprisonment on the score of plagiarism. But *que voulez vous?* I've fed on his ideas — they are bred in the bone and I can't put at the end 'All this I owe to the first father of criticism — the only begetter etc. BB.'

Fearing estrangement, she professed to Mary her devotion to Berenson for his 'genius and bearing', her frustration in being forced into 'ambiguous positions' over art research, and her preference for giving up art studies completely rather than have the Berensons doubt her allegiance as they had doubted Vernon Lee and the Strongs. Her temperament necessitated that she be 'freelance' but as she had begun her work late in life she was compelled to accept all offers to publish which came her way.³⁹

When Cruttwell's *Verrocchio* appeared in 1904, Berenson's name was conspicuously absent from the text.⁴⁰ Since Cruttwell had earned considerable respect with her work on the della Robbias, and the only serious work on Verrocchio to precede hers was part of a German series by the anti-Morellian Hans Mackowsky (1901), her *Verrocchio* was given due critical consideration. The battles over attributions for Verrocchio's works had plagued art historians since Morelli had condemned German art historian Wilhelm von Bode, the director of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie from 1890 to 1929, for seeing Verrocchios everywhere. Berenson had attributed eight paintings to the artist but Cruttwell was even more conservative, assigning only three to Verrocchio, bolstering her well-written and researched essays with an appendix of documents she herself had uncovered.⁴¹ Royal Cortissoz, seeming to note a distancing from Berenson and Morellianism, called it one of the best monographs 'based on system and industry rather than on an original impulse', not imposing 'a sense of new and fructifying criticism', but instead appealing 'with a warmth of conviction'.⁴² Other

³⁹ Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this and the previous paragraph are taken from undated letters from Cruttwell to Mary in the Villa I Tatti archive.

⁴⁰ Cruttwell does, however, cite Berenson's books on *Florentine Painters* and *Florentine Drawings*.

⁴¹ Cruttwell attributed to Verrocchio the Accademia's *Baptism*, the Uffizi's *Annunciation*, and Prince Lichtenstein's *Portrait of a Woman*. When documents surfaced about Verrocchio, she published them first as an article, 'Tre documenti del Verrocchio', *L'Arte*, 7 (1904), 167–68.

⁴² Royal Cortissoz, 'Significant Art Books', *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1905, pp. 270–81 (p. 278).

reviewers, including Sir Charles Holmes, the director of the National Gallery, were generally satisfied with Cruttwell's efforts, taking significant issue only with her reassignment of Donatello's *Head of a Horse* to Verrocchio.⁴³

After the publication of her book, Cruttwell continued to frequent the Berensons' circle. Though disagreeing with some of Cruttwell's attributions, Mary had judged *Verrocchio* to have been 'a respectable performance' and was surprised to find Cruttwell searching desperately for a new project, not understanding how her interest seemed 'to lead her no farther' once she had published a book.⁴⁴ Despite several monographs to her name, Cruttwell, lacking their education, library, and photographic archive, continued to defer to the Berensons on matters of connoisseurship. When Lady Henry sent Cruttwell a photograph of a della Robbia she was considering for purchase, Cruttwell made the trip to I Tatti in the rain to get their opinion, ultimately agreeing with them that the work was a forgery produced about sixty years earlier.⁴⁵ It soon emerged that Cruttwell's deference, particularly to Berenson, was not strictly scholarly for, according to a mutual friend, she proclaimed her hopeless and unreciprocated passion for him everywhere and bemoaned the fact that he could not bear to see her — for Mary this did not fall far from the truth.⁴⁶ Cruttwell even proposed founding a newspaper to glorify Berenson until Mary squelched the scheme.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Cruttwell did not need to proclaim her allegiance to Berenson, for by the time she was preparing her next book on the Pollaiuoli, she was widely recognized as a representative of the Morellian

⁴³ Review of Maud Cruttwell, *Verrocchio*, *Nation*, 26 January 1905, p. 77; Sir Charles Holmes, 'Bibliography', *Burlington Magazine*, 6 (1905), 413–14; George Breed Zug, 'Masters of the Early and Late Renaissance', *Dial*, 1 May 1905, pp. 320–22 (pp. 320–21).

⁴⁴ HWSP, 3 December 1904. Notwithstanding Mary's observation, Cruttwell subsequently published a related article, 'Un disegno del Verrocchio per la "Fede" nella Mercatanzia di Firenze', *Rassegna d'arte*, 6 (1906), 8–11. In a letter to Salomon Reinach, Mary expressed her disagreement with Cruttwell's pronouncements about the Colleoni monument, implying that Cruttwell was not a 'first-rate authority' (BM, 3 February 1905).

⁴⁵ Presumably Lady Henry Somerset (1851–1921), British feminist and temperance leader who was closely associated with Mary Berenson and her mother, Hannah Whitall Smith (HWSP, 10 November 1905).

⁴⁶ HWSP, 6 February 1906. Cruttwell described Berenson in a later fictionalized characterization as a petite man, 'delicately built as a girl'. See Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 41. In fact, another sapphic woman, Edith Cooper (poet writing together with her aunt Katharine Bradley under the pseudonym Michael Field) was attracted to the young Berenson, whose petite size, large eyes, and general interests might have been considered 'feminine'.

⁴⁷ MB diary, 22 January 1906, VIT.

school of connoisseurship and, as such, had begun to feel the wrath of their adversaries. Eugénie Sellers Strong, an authority on Roman art, had by now succeeded her husband as librarian at Chatsworth after his death in 1904. She must also have felt obliged to maintain her husband's enmity towards the Berensons for she wrote furiously to Cruttwell in an effort to convince her to leave Berenson's name out of her new book. Though Strong had herself adopted Morellian methods in her lectures on Greek sculpture at the British Museum in the 1890s, by 1907, when she published *Roman Sculpture from Augustus to Constantine*, her approach had changed.⁴⁸ Strong explained to Cruttwell that the public had turned against Morelli and Berenson and that if Cruttwell's book on the Pollaiuoli, which she felt was full of acknowledgements to Berenson, had any success, it would be because it followed upon the heels of the Correggio book by another Berenson antagonist, T. Sturge Moore (HWSP, 8 February 1907).

When Cruttwell's *Antonio Pollaiuolo* appeared, her acknowledgement to Berenson was conspicuous, if brief: 'But to one critic — Mr. Bernhard Berenson — I owe much.'⁴⁹ Berenson's influence is correspondingly found between the pages but was not comprehensive; one notable divergence was the Poldi-Pezzoli female profile which Cruttwell had previously attributed to Desiderio da Settignano but now gave to Antonio Pollaiuolo despite Berenson's tentative attribution to Verrocchio.⁵⁰ Cruttwell's allegiance to Berenson was duly noted by the *Nation* reviewer who found that she differed with him only on minor matters and details. While Cruttwell's study was 'careful, intelligent and for the most part excellent', her reviewer found that faults arose in too great an enthusiasm for the artist which led her to attribute works she admired to Antonio and all lesser works to his brother Piero.⁵¹

The *Nation* review could not have prepared Cruttwell, however, for the contemptuous and cutting review published in the *Burlington Magazine* by Wilhelm von Bode.⁵² Bode no doubt saw the review as an opportunity

⁴⁸ Claire Richter Sherman, 'Widening Horizons (1890–1930)', in *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts, 1820–1979*, ed. by Claire Richter Sherman and Adele M. Holcomb (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), pp. 27–59 (p. 36). For more on Strong, see also Stephen L. Dyson, *Eugénie Sellers Strong: Portrait of an Archaeologist* (London: Duckworth, 2004).

⁴⁹ Maud Cruttwell, *Antonio Pollaiuolo* (London: Duckworth; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. vii.

⁵⁰ Cruttwell, *Pollaiuolo*, p. 177. For more on the attributional history of the Poldi-Pezzoli portrait, see *Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo: 'Silver and Gold, Painting and Bronze...'*, ed. by Andrea Di Lorenzo and Aldo Galli (Milan: Skira, 2014), cat. no. 27; Maria Alambritis, 'Modern Mistresses on the Old Masters: Women and the Writing of Art History, 1865–1916' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, forthcoming).

⁵¹ 'Art', *Nation*, 6 June 1907, pp. 528–29 (p. 528).

⁵² Wilhelm Bode, 'A New Book on the Pollaiuoli', *Burlington Magazine*, 11 (1907),

for retribution against the Morellians, not only for Cruttwell's refutation of his Verrocchio attributions but also for Berenson's long history of purchasing paintings from under his nose (most notably Titian's *Rape of Europa* for Isabella Gardner).⁵³ Bode pulled no punches. At the outset he wrote that 'the mistaken view under which that book [*Verrocchio*] was written [...] precludes a sound and independent judgment of the Pollaiuoli', but it was the indebtedness to Berenson which for Bode explained the existence of the book (p. 181). While crediting Cruttwell for her diligence, accuracy, and thoroughness, he found it 'lacking in individual criticism', berating her for following 'her master blindly except in a few minor points' (p. 181). Bode further noted Cruttwell's tendency to attribute the paintings 'that pleased her best' to Antonio and giving the remainder to Piero, taking particular issue with the Poldi-Pezzoli portrait, which Bode likened to one in the Berlin gallery then attributed to Piero della Francesca. Bode found Cruttwell's criticism of sculpture particularly 'unfortunate' since in that area she 'had no master she could implicitly follow, for the Morelli school ignored plastic art'. He claimed that Cruttwell tried to affect a compromise between differing opinions and declared them with 'great scientific pretension'. Directing his ire as much to Berenson as to Cruttwell, Bode further wrote that 'the circulation of such books, which are regarded by the public as the results of the latest scientific research, only impedes the progress of art history, since all their theories are enounced with an air of absolute infallibility'. In Bode's concluding strike he asked the reader 'whether [...] books and pamphlets written by *dilettanti* of both sexes who wish to demonstrate their love of art, were not better left unwritten' (p. 182).

A disillusioned 'disciple'

Though Bode and the rest of the art world associated Cruttwell with the Berensons, the Berensons themselves made no claims on Cruttwell. When the *Gazette des beaux-arts* sent Cruttwell's book as well as Sturge Moore's *Correggio*, Mary reluctantly wrote reviews despite the facts that Cruttwell, as an 'enthusiastic friend', would expect 'unlimited praise', and that Moore's book contained blatant attacks on Berenson; Mary must have been relieved that the reviews remained unpublished.⁵⁴ Cruttwell's next project, her *Guide to the Paintings in the Florentine Galleries* (1907), was nevertheless already underway. The job was lucrative — one hundred pounds — and

181–82. See also Francesco Ventrella's article in this issue of 19, which refers to this review.

⁵³ For more, see David Alan Brown, 'Bode and Berenson: Berlin and Boston', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 38 (1996), 101–06.

⁵⁴ HWSP, 7 and 15 March 1907. Though she began writing the review of Sturge Moore, she did not indicate that these reviews were ever published.

Cruttwell, having freshly felt the sting of criticism, must have been relieved for a less controversial undertaking. While she remained constant in noting attributions by Berenson and Morelli and acknowledged her indebtedness to Berenson's published lists, she explicitly stated that her comments were her own and relied heavily on Giorgio Vasari. A review which appeared in the *Burlington Magazine*, while brief, praised the book, finding fault only in Cruttwell's criticism of Vasari — observing that stories like that of Leonardo painting the angel in Verrocchio's *Baptism* might more accurately be called questionable rather than, as Cruttwell wrote, 'erroneous'.⁵⁵ She then produced in the following year an adjunct *Guide to the Paintings in the Churches and Minor Museums of Florence*, followed in 1909 by *Venice and her Treasures* (a collaboration with Hugh Douglas) in which Berenson was dutifully cited in discussions of the work of Giorgione and Lotto.⁵⁶

By September 1907 Cruttwell had undertaken another monographic study, this time on the sculptor Donatello, relying on the expertise of the Berensons with whom she consulted on photographs of Donatello's work. Not published until 1911, *Donatello* would give Cruttwell the last word with Bode, for as she informed the Berensons, it was to be her final book on Italian art since she planned to move permanently to Paris to pursue 'modern journalism' (HWSP, 28 September 1907). Cruttwell's shift away from Berenson and his work was likely due in part to the influence of Leo and Gertrude Stein who were spending the summer at the nearby Villa Bardi in Fiesole and, according to Mary, 'regularly put BB [Bernard] though a mangle telling him all his faults with incredible honesty'.⁵⁷ Berenson's sex did not help his case, for Mary noted that at this time Cruttwell was 'a maniac *à rebours* loathing men and adoring women'.⁵⁸ Only in 1913, in a brief published notice about herself, did Cruttwell publicly confess that she had become dissatisfied with the 'narrow methods of the art critics' and felt driven into the 'wider field of Fiction'.⁵⁹ Though Cruttwell asked Mary if Berenson would mind her declaration, Mary's feelings towards Cruttwell had already deteriorated, her disapproval often manifesting itself in criticism of Cruttwell's appearance. In 1908 she had observed that Cruttwell

⁵⁵ Review of Maud Cruttwell, *Florentine Galleries*, *Burlington Magazine*, 11 (1907), p. 191; another short notice also appeared in *The Dial*, 1 July 1907, p. 21: thanks to Maria Alambritis for this reference.

⁵⁶ Cruttwell's second Florence guide was also reviewed in *Burlington Magazine*, 13 (1908), p. 113.

⁵⁷ HWSP, 21 September 1907. Leo Stein (1872–1947) was a noted American expatriate art collector and critic, while his sister Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) was a writer of novels and poetry as well as being an art collector around whom a Parisian avant-garde salon developed. The Steins, like the Berensons, had also attended Harvard (though at a later date).

⁵⁸ MB diary, 12 March 1907, VIT.

⁵⁹ HWSP, 13 January 1907; 'Miss Maud Cruttwell', *Graphic* (London), 17 May 1913, p. 816.

had taken to dressing in a ‘loud, almost improper way’; and by 1909, when Cruttwell visited, speaking of ‘poor Vernon [Lee]’ who looked old, Mary wrote to her family that she would prefer that to Cruttwell’s ‘white paste and arched black eyebrows!’ (HWSP, 24 October 1909). When Cruttwell visited again in 1912, she was overweight, ‘vulgarly dressed’, with a wrinkled, powdered face — an appearance so ‘appalling’ that Mary felt obligated to remove her to I Tatti’s library for a private talk (HWSP, 27 December 1912).

Nevertheless, in the following year Cruttwell again appeared in order to have her first work of fiction, *Fire and Frost* (1913), obligatorily feted by the Berensons (*Fig. 2*).⁶⁰ ‘What a book it is!’ Mary wrote to her family, ‘But in its horrid style fairly well done. Only it is so unconvincing when you make everybody beautiful!’ (HWSP, 23 February 1913). Cruttwell’s fictional foray provides insight not only into her own feminist conviction, for as one reviewer noted, it held ‘a brief for spinsterhood as the ideal state’, but also into her association with the Berensons.⁶¹ Her heroine, Clare Glynn,



Fig. 2: Maud Cruttwell, 1913, photograph. © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.

⁶⁰ HWSP, 5 January 1913. For more on *Fire and Frost*, see Fraser, pp. 40–42.

⁶¹ ‘Current Fiction’, *Nation*, 14 August 1913, pp. 143–44 (p. 144); Fraser, p. 41.

an idealization of Cruttwell herself, was drawn to beauty and longed to explore the art treasures of Italy. The depiction of Clare's friendship with the fictional couple called Maryx (likely a pun on Mary's variable surname, Mary X = Costelloe, Berenson, Logan), who 'had encouraged and helped her in her art studies [...] and been her companions in most of her travels' reflects Cruttwell's own motivation behind her early association with the Berensons. Clare never planned to marry, was 'sick of poverty', and had spent a year with the Maryxes as 'a preliminary canter to an independent career'.⁶²

John Lane had accepted Cruttwell's novel only after she removed all grandiloquent cultural conversation, so although she had mined her Florentine experiences, the fictionalization did not get to the heart of her ambivalent relationship with the Berensons (HWSP, 5 January 1913). Unlike the Berensons' later followers Kenneth Clark and John Walker — educated male scholars from affluent families who the Berensons selected for further training and dubbed 'disciples' — Cruttwell had herself elected to study under them at a time when they were endeavouring to establish their own authority in the fast-evolving and competitive field of art history. Although never acknowledged by the Berensons as a 'disciple', Cruttwell had also been trained by both Berensons in Morellian connoisseurship, had witnessed how their photographic archive and attributional lists evolved, and was dependent upon their expertise as well as their social network. But as she lacked a similar educational background and her feminist independence required the income that popular books could provide, her painstaking scholarship necessarily centred on artist monographs and guidebooks. Distinguishing her further, Cruttwell had to cope personally with the polarization of Italian Renaissance art studies which escalated in acrimonious articles and reviews at the beginning of the twentieth century — the Morellian connoisseurs against the largely British and German contingent of archivists and documentary historians — a division she attempted to reconcile but ultimately found so distasteful that she abandoned the field entirely.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Mary saw Cruttwell in London and learned of her intention to write a series of essays to be published by John Lane on topics relating to astronomy and psychology.⁶³ But publishing came to a standstill during the war years and Cruttwell felt isolated in Paris, her letters following Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas to Spain, full of compliments and entreaties for their return.⁶⁴ Stein, like

⁶² Maud Cruttwell, *Fire and Frost* (London: John Lane, 1913), pp. 8, 23, 40; Fraser, p. 41.

⁶³ MB to Geoffrey Scott, 23 October 1914, VIT.

⁶⁴ These letters are now part of the Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. At some point Cruttwell may have met E. M.

both Berensons, had become something of a paragon for Cruttwell, who continued to live in Paris after the war, writing two further books, both historical biographies of women: *The Princess des Ursins* (1927) and *Madame de Maintenon* (1930).⁶⁵ But when Cruttwell died on 25 April 1939 at the age of 79, her obituary in *The Times* remembered her as

one of the few, and perhaps the most notable of, women art critics whose writings show real independence and authority. She was an enthusiastic student of the work of the Italian Renaissance painters, the real pre-Raphaelites, and her books, written many years ago [...] are still valued as standard works. The deep research, keen critical ability, and fine literary style which marked her work in that field she used in later life on studies in historical biography.⁶⁶

Thus, despite her ultimate disillusionment, it was her popularizing and canon-shaping books on Italian Renaissance art — the outgrowth of her affiliation with the Berensons, which employed new archival research, promoted Morellian methods of connoisseurship, and championed Bernard Berenson's expertise — that remain Maud Cruttwell's most lasting and valuable contribution.

Forster, for a character apparently based on her named Lady Anstey appears in his story 'The Helping Hand'.

⁶⁵ As early as 1907, Cruttwell had befriended Ottoman Princess Mediha Sultan (1856–1928), whose family would be exiled in France; Cruttwell dedicated her book *The Princess des Ursins* to her. See Luhan, II, 284–86.

⁶⁶ 'Miss Maud Cruttwell', *The Times*, 21 August 1939, p. 12.