

Giovanni Morelli and his friend Giorgione: connoisseurship, science and irony

Luke Uglow



Figure 1 Giorgione and Titian, *Sleeping Venus*, c1510, oil on canvas, 108.5 x 175 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891), the nineteenth-century politician and connoisseur, is famous as the inventor of scientific connoisseurship. This reputation was validated by his 1880 attribution of the Dresden *Sleeping Venus* (Fig.1), which he gave to the sixteenth-century Venetian painter Giorgione. In 1890, Morelli attributed to the same artist a *Portrait of a Woman* (Fig.2), from the Borghese Gallery in Rome. When passing this judgement, the connoisseur referred to Giorgione as ‘my friend’. All things being equal, this seems a strangely unscientific thing to do, and the obvious question is why? Perhaps Morelli was sincere; perhaps he genuinely believed himself to have a personal, intimate relationship with a painter who died 300 years before he was born. Or perhaps he was being ironic.

Morelli advocated an ‘experimental method’ of connoisseurship, commonly understood as an inductive procedure modelled on scientific methods, the process involves the comparison of anatomical details, like hands and ears, identity of form indicating identity of authorship. The attribution of the Borghese *Portrait* is significant because Carol Gibson-Wood, in her excellent *Studies in the Theory of Connoisseurship*, concluded her analysis of Morelli with this painting, and interpreted it as a ‘vivid illustration’ that Morelli did not use ‘Morellian method’.¹ However, this is a strange position to adopt as the



Figure 2 Bernadino Licinio (attrib.), c1515, *Portrait of a Woman*, oil on canvas, 84 x 79 cm. Galleria Borghese, Rome.

¹ Carol Gibson-Wood, *Studies in the Theory of Connoisseurship from Vasari to Morelli*, New York: Garland, 1988, 222, 234.

attribution does appear to employ the 'experimental method'. The aim of this paper is to try to understand Gibson–Wood's complaint, and to explain why Morelli calls Giorgione his friend.

The connoisseur begins his attribution of the *Portrait* by stating that the author of the painting was unknown. He continues:

It represents a woman of about twenty–eight; her dark eyes, full of fire and passion, are overshadowed by a low and intelligent forehead; the arrangement of the dark brown hair on the temples recalls in a measure that of the Knight of Malta in the Uffizi;

Here Morelli seems to be using Morellian method, drawing the reader's attention to anatomical details characteristic of Giorgione, before making a specific comparison to one of his positive attributions. Next, the text reproduces the application of an inductive science, taking the reader through two hypotheses which are tested and falsified. At first Morelli claims it may be by Dosso Dossi, but tells his reader that he had not examined the painting critically, and changes his mind because of the dark background, stone parapet and 'simplicity of representation'. He then proposes Sebastiano del Piombo, but this attribution is rejected because the portrait is too 'profound', and the form of the hand too '*quattrocento*'. Morelli continues by describing how the sitter 'stands at a window holding a white handkerchief, and gazing out with a dreamy yearning expression, as if seeking one for whom she waits'. Next, the connoisseur narrates the actual moment of attribution, the text becoming an expression of his immediate experience:

One day, as I with a questioning and entranced mind, again stood before this mysterious picture, my own spirit encountered the spirit of the artist, which from these feminine lineaments looked out, and lo and behold, in that mutual touch it ignited suddenly like a spark, and I cried out in my joy: Only you, my friend, Giorgione can it be, and the picture answered: Yes, it's me.

The text continues with an escalating list of more Morellian details – the eyebrows, the mouth – all of which 'speak for Giorgione'. Morelli finishes by claiming that only Giorgione could paint portraits of such astonishing simplicity, with such mystic charm, yet so deeply significant and profound.² How can such an explicitly

² Giovanni Morelli, *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei: Die Galerien Borghese und Doria Panfili in Rom*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1890, 323–324. My translation: 'Das Bild stellt eine noch junge Frau von etwa 28 Jahren vor. Ihre intelligente kurze Stirn wölbt sich leicht über zwei schwarze Augen von leidenschaftlich feurigem Blick; das braunschwarze Haar ist an den Schläfen ungefähr so geordnet wie das des Malteserritters in den Uffizien–Galerie; (...) die Einfachheit der Darstellung (...) tiefsinnig (...) quattrocentistisch (...) Eines Tages jedoch, als ich wieder fragend und entzückt vor dem mysteriösen Bilde stande, begegnete mein eigener Geist dem des Künstlers, welcher aus diesen weiblichen Zügen herausah, und (cont.)

spiritual experience be considered scientific? And how can we explain the emotional and physical relationship between artist and connoisseur which is claimed in this text? It seems that an appeal to irony is one possible solution.

It was not until Morelli was in his late fifties, in 1874, that he started publishing connoisseurship, beginning with several articles on the Borghese gallery in the Viennese journal *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*. In 1880 he published his first book on the galleries in Munich, Dresden and Berlin, which was followed by three further articles. A collected, edited and expanded edition of Morelli's writing, *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei*, was published in two volumes in 1890 and 1891. The first volume contained the Borghese study and a new discussion of the Doria Pamphilj gallery; the second volume was concerned with the galleries in Munich and Dresden. English translations of Morelli's books appeared in 1883, 1892 and 1893.³ Morelli's publications were controversial and immediately elicited a polarised reception, a trend that continues today. Famous for his art–science, his own peculiar variety of *Kunstwissenschaft*, alongside the experimental method Morelli insisted on an evolutionist history of painting based on the psychology of race. This scientific approach was in opposition, the reader is told, to all previous art historians 'from Vasari down to our own day'.⁴ However, there have always been doubts. Although he inspired a fanatical school of disciples, others suspected this *Kunstwissenschaft* was nothing more than a rhetorical strategy designed to invest his attributions with authority. The interpretation of Morelli the scientist can be read in the contemporary English reviews, his method being described as a 'system of criticism' based on analysis 'as minute as that of the naturalist'. At the same time,

siehe da, in der gegenseitigen Berührung zündete es plötzlich wie ein Funken und ich rief in meiner Freude aus: Nur du, mein Freund, Giorgione kannst es sein, und das Bild antwortete: Ja, ich bin's (...) sprechen für den Giorgione'.

³ Giovanni Morelli, 'Die Galerien Roms: ein kritischer Versuch von Iwan Lermoloeff', and 'Die Galerie Borghese: Aus dem Russischen übersetzt von Dr Johannes Schwarze, mit Illustrationen', in *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, no. 9, 1874, 1–11, 73–81, 171–8, 249–53; *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von München, Dresden und Berlin: Ein kritischer Versuch*, Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1880; *Italian Masters in German Galleries: A Critical Essay on the Italian Pictures in the Galleries of Munich, Dresden and Berlin*, trans. Richter, L. M., London: George Bell and Sons, 1883; *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei: Die Galerien Borghese und Doria Panfili in Rom*, and *Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei: Die Galerien zu München und Dresden*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1891 and 1892; an edition of the study of the Berlin gallery was compiled from Morelli's notes by Gustavo Frizzioni and published in Leipzig in 1893; *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of their Works*, 2 vols., trans. Ffoulkes, C. J., London: John Murray, 1892 and 1893 – I shall cite these texts as: Morelli, 1874/1880/1883/1890/1891/1892/1893.

⁴ Morelli refers to 'meine Experimentalmethode' and 'Kunstwissenschaft' in the 'Vorwort' of Morelli 1880, ix–x; Morelli, 1891, 26, and 1893, 21.

however, Wilhelm von Bode was mocking Morelli's naïve, mechanical positivism, and calling him a 'quack doctor'.⁵

Although he was an Italian Senator, Morelli's family had Swiss heritage; he went to school at Aarau, before attending university in Germany at Munich and then Erlangen. From an English perspective, the problems with his writing are aggravated by the fact that Morelli wrote in German, and that a comparison between the German and English texts reveals multiple differences. His correspondence with his friend and English editor, Austen Henry Layard, shows that Morelli agreed to the removal of some of the more contentious content.⁶ However, the editors omitted and even added large amounts of material. For instance the 'Conclusion' to the 1883 translation, which helpfully defines the precepts of Morellian method, has no equivalent in the original text. Many of the changes were also stylistic. In German Morelli writes in a chatty, ludic, proverbially comic style, but in English this is gone and his books seem much less idiomatic, much more scientific. Most significantly, in the English translation Morelli does not call Giorgione 'my friend'.⁷

To fully understand Morelli's writing, we must acknowledge the importance of irony. Firstly, the author adopts an ironic structure. Morelli's art history is published under a Russian pseudonym, Ivan Lermolieff, a quasi-anagram of the author's name. The usual assumption is that Lermolieff is simply a surrogate for Morelli; however, this is more than simply a pen-name, it is a developed authorial character. All Morelli's writing contains conversations and narratives and dramatisation, and in this way his connoisseurship is fictionalised. Within this structure, there is nothing that Morelli wrote that is not characterised and therefore conditional. So it was not Morelli who referred to Giorgione 'my friend', it was a fictitious character, Lermolieff.

Irony exploits a gap between an appearance and a reality. There is a difference, a contradiction, an incongruity between the literal and intended meaning. This gap, this 'distance', between author and text is achieved by writing in character. This can be taken further by 'defamiliarising' the text, making the authorial character strange or absurd, perhaps Russian. This disjunction between literal and intended meaning is dialectical, and as Hutcheon argues, has a critical

⁵ [Elizabeth Eastlake], 'Morelli's Italian Painters', *The Edinburgh Review*, vol. 176, no. 362, 1892, 329–349; Wilhelm von Bode, 'The Berlin Renaissance Museum', *Fortnightly Review*, October 1891, 506–515.

⁶ Jaynie Anderson, 'Layard and Morelli', *Symposium Internazionale: Austen Henry Layard tra l'oriente e Venezia 1983*, Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1987, 109–137. Morelli himself made multiple changes between the 1880 and 1891 German editions; a list of changes in attribution can be found in Valentina Locatelli, 'Kunstkritische Studien über italienische Malerei: Die Galerie zu Dresden. Ein Überblick zu Giovanni Morellis Zuschreibungen', *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden*, Vol. 34, 2008/2010, pp. 85–106

⁷ Morelli, 1883, 442–444; I shall follow the nineteenth-century translations, but will occasionally supply my own.

'edge'. In this way irony is reflexive, and so Morelli is criticising himself, or more accurately, Lermolieff. In other words, the author's position in relation to what is being said is ambiguous. As one theorist has said, irony allows authors 'to say dreadful things', which they may do because they say them by 'achieving a distance, a playful aesthetic distance, in relation to what is being said'. And Lermolieff does say dreadful things. He is incredibly rude about other art historians, most noticeably about Wilhelm von Bode and Giovanni Batista Cavalcaselle. Pope-Hennessy complained that Morelli's writing was 'deliberately designed to cause the greatest possible antagonism'. Even Layard felt the need to apologise for the connoisseur, who 'adopted, it is true, a bantering and somewhat sarcastic tone in his criticisms on his opponents, calculated to cause offence, and this is, perhaps, to be regretted'; however, this was 'consistent with his assumed character of an ignorant Russian'.⁸ But maybe this might be taken further. Perhaps we should argue that not only is the 'sarcastic tone' consistent with this character, but Morelli's scientific connoisseurship too.

The critical reception of Morelli's writing simultaneously admits and dismisses the possibility of irony. Richard Wollheim, while focusing on the logic of the experimental method, does acknowledge that Morelli's work is 'ironically phrased'. Jaynie Anderson argues that the author believed 'the most striking way to present a truth was through irony'. Gibson-Wood complains that Morelli's ideas are contradictory, but struggles to decide if Morelli paraded his own ideas as Lermolieff's, or instead, if Morelli 'deluded himself' and regarded Lermolieff's 'ideas as belonging to the realm of factual truth'. David Carrier relates Morelli to Walter Pater, arguing that their synecdochic emplotment demonstrates that both writers shared 'a belief in the indescribable spirit of the whole', and that Morelli's irony falls into Hayden White's topological narrative of nineteenth-century historiography.⁹

A new and important study of the connoisseur has been produced by Valentina Locatelli, who follows Edgar Wind's interpretation that Morelli was deeply influenced by Romanticism, especially Friedrich Schlegel's *Fragments* (1798–1800). Locatelli provides an excellent survey of the depth of this intertextual influence, taking in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schelling, Wilhelm

⁸ Douglas Colin Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, London: Methuen, 1982, 33; Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, London: Routledge, 1994, 3; Paul de Man, 'The Concept of Irony', in *Aesthetic Ideology: Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 65, London, 1996, 169; John Pope-Hennessy, *The Study and Criticism of Italian Sculpture*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, 13–14; Morelli, 1892, [2], [28]. Tellingly, it is only with the English translations that Morelli's real name accompanies his writing.

⁹ Richard Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind: Essays and Lectures*, London: Allen Lane, 1973, 179; Jaynie Anderson, 'Giovanni Morelli et sa définition de la 'scienza dell'arte'', in *Revue de l'art*, vol. 75, 1987, 54 (my translation: 'la façon la plus frappante de présenter une vérité passait par l'ironie'); Gibson-Wood, *Studies*, 211, 199–200; David Carrier, *Principles of Art History Writing*, Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1991, 138.

Heinrich Wackenroder, Carl Gustav Carus and both Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel. Most significant for the attribution of the Borghese painting is the Romantic 'culture of dialogue', which can burst into an ecstatic conversation with the picture itself. In Locatelli's view, Morelli's 'open' scientific connoisseurship of the fragment emerges from a collaborative, 'friendly' discourse, as opposed to a sterile mathematical positivism. This interpretation acknowledges and denies irony by arguing that Morellian satire is unwittingly self-defeating.¹⁰ However, Morelli actively cultivated the view that his experimental method was a positivist science. While drenched in the heritage of Romanticism, especially a Schlegelian loss of self-identity, Lermolieff nevertheless sets up his *Kunstwissenschaft* in opposition, calling it 'matter-of-fact', or in the German '*unästhetische*'.¹¹ Accepting that irony was fundamental for Morelli makes it impossible to claim he believed in the application of 'a rigorously scientific procedure'.

From a close reading of his texts, it seems reasonable to assert that Morelli the author was not a scientist, he was an ironist. The forms of irony which are relevant for understanding Morelli's writing are epistemological and satiric. Epistemologically, irony is a function of scepticism and relativism, and in this regard it is worth noting that one of Morelli's favourite authors was Michel de Montaigne. Satire is a mode of writing that exaggerates in order to expose human folly, and in this regard it is curious that Morelli owned a copy of *Tristram Shandy* by Lawrence Sterne, a text which is directly cited in Morelli's writing.¹² In the nineteenth century, as has been argued, irony became more than a figure of speech but an entire outlook on life, as delineated in Søren Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* of 1841.¹³ Morelli was an ironist, and his writing follows a specific pattern. To adopt Kierkegaard's words: 'it does not destroy the vanity (...) but instead reinforces vanity in its vanity'; Morelli uses Lermolieff to discipline 'a silly, inflated, know-it-all knowledge' by encouraging it 'to ever greater lunacy'; his 'joy is to seem to be caught in the same noose'.¹⁴

During the period Morelli was writing, connoisseurial authority (or vanity) had become crucially important in the discourse pertaining to early sixteenth-century Venetian painting, especially that concerning Giorgione. This artist is

¹⁰ Valentina Locatelli, *Metamorfosi romantiche: Le teorie del primo Romanticismo tedesco nel pensiero sull'arte di Giovanni Morelli*, Pasion di Prato: Campanotto, 2011, 74–75, 77.

¹¹ Morelli, 1892, p.35; 1890, p.43

¹² Morelli owned an edition of the *Essais*; Loctaeli argues that Montaigne influenced his attitude to the fragment (*Metamorfosi*, 79). Interestingly, Morelli also owned versions of Petronius' *Satyricon*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* – Matteo Panzeri and Giulio Orazio Bravi, *La Figura e l'opera di Giovanni Morelli*, Bergamo: Biblioteca civica A. Mai, 1987, 73, 197; Morelli, 1880, 398, and 1883, 359–360.

¹³ Muecke, *Irony*, 30.

¹⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates: Together with Notes of Schelling's Berlin Lectures*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989, 256–257, 249–250.

understood today as a 'myth and enigma'. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the historians Giorgio Vasari and Carlo Ridolfi projected the myth: Giorgione was a painter who died young, a lover and musician, the inventor of a new, exciting style. The enigma is the Giorgione of today, a problem: sparse documentary evidence, intractable subject matter, uncertainty of attributions, defines the artist. Since the early twentieth century Giorgione has been represented by three stylistically, technically and iconographically unique paintings that manifest this mythic–enigmatic reputation: *The Tempest*, *The Three Philosophers* and the *Portrait of a Lady* ('*Laura*'). To this might be added Morelli's *Sleeping Venus*.¹⁵ It was around 1871 that art historians recognised that writing about Giorgione was fundamentally problematic. Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle's *A History of Painting in North Italy* radically reduced the number of paintings attributed to artist and demonstrated just how little is known about the his life and work. Based on rigorous attention to primary sources and detailed analysis of technique, their work represented the most advanced methods in 'scientific' art history. They termed their analysis a 'dissection'.¹⁶ To come to some understanding of Morelli's ironic attitude to connoisseurship, and to fathom why Lermolieff calls Giorgione his friend, it is necessary to consider the theory of Morellian method, demonstrating how it satirically conflates of material and spiritual modalities.

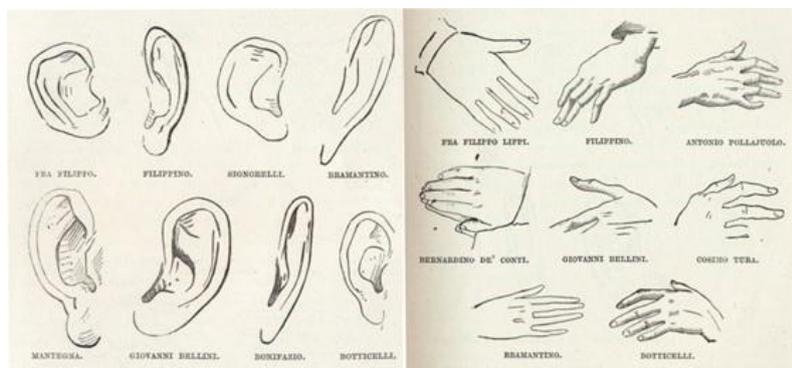


Figure 3 *Diagrams of Hands and Ears*, from Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters*, London, 1892, 77-78

¹⁵ The 2004 exhibition 'Giorgione' (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) was subtitled 'myth and enigma'. In 2011 a new primary source revealed that his surname was Gasparini. Whether this discovery generates a new, truer Giorgione only time will tell (Renata Segre, 'A Rare Document on Giorgione', in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 153, no. 1299, June 2011, 383–386).

¹⁶ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 August, 1871, 11; Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1, London: John Murray, 1871, 205. Charles Hope observes that Otto Mündler's 1869 discussion of the artist was also significant in the problematisation (Charles Hope, 'Giorgione's *Fortuna Critica*', in *Giorgione: Myth and Enigma*, Milan: Skira, 2004, 41–55).

There is a popular conception of Morellian method: each artist has a distinguishing way of painting hands and ears; the author of a painting is revealed in trivial idiosyncrasies. This morphological technique made connoisseurship seem easy and accessible, an ostensible 'democratisation'.¹⁷ All the public had to do was follow the diagrams that helpfully accompanied Morelli's text (Fig.3). However, this seemingly unassuming method has given rise to diverse and incompatible interpretations. Models for Morellian method have been found in Georges Cuvier's comparative anatomy and Louis Agassiz's geology, and analogies made with the 'symptomatology' of Freudian psychoanalysis or Arthur Conan Doyle's inductive detective fiction. Alternatively, the reader might look for influences on *Kunstwissenschaft* in Goethe's romantic morphology, or the idealist *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling.¹⁸ These various readings reveal a discordancy between positivist and idealist interpretations, and this stems from a dualism central to the theory of Morellian method itself: a dialectic between material and spiritual. This methodological doubleness was recognised by Anton Springer in 1881, and also Layard in 1892, who explained that in addition to studying formal aspects of style, Morelli argued that 'the student should endeavour to associate himself in spirit with the painter'.¹⁹

The double nature of Morelli's method is demonstrated by Lermolieff's enquiry into 'the forms and feelings [*den Geist und die Formen*]' of Giorgione. An infamously difficult word to translate, *Geist* can denote intellect and mind, but also spirit and even ghost; it is also a word particularly associated with German idealist philosophy. While other connoisseurs' attributions were based merely on documentary evidence and a general impression of the whole work, Lermolieff claims his judgements were established 'on spiritual and material grounds'.²⁰ This double method has led to a lack of critical consensus either on the definition or application of Morelli's 'experimental method'.

¹⁷ Aviva Briefel, *The Deceivers: Art Forgery and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2006, 56.

¹⁸ Jaynie Anderson, 'definition', 49–55; Carlo Ginzburg, 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method', trans. Davin, A., in *History Workshop*, no. 9, Spring, 1980, 5–36; Richard Pau, 'Le Origini Scientifiche del Metodo Morelliano', in *Giovanni Morelli e la Cultura dei Conoscitori*, Bergamo: P. Lubrina, 1993, 301–319. More recent discussions of Morelli include: Jeremy Melius, 'Connoisseurship, Painting, and Personhood', *Art History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, 288–309; Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011; Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, p. 27–40

¹⁹ Anton Springer, 'Kunstkenner und Kunsthistoriker', *Im neun Reich*, no. 11, 1881, 737–758; Morelli, 1892, [29–30]; On the relation between Springer and Morelli also see Valentina Locatelli, "'Die Jugendentwicklung Raffaels'" Ivan Lermolieff liest Anton Springer: Ein Beispiel der Auseinandersetzung Morellis mit dem deutschen Gelehrtentum', in *Raffaels als Paradigma: Rezeption, Imagination und Kult im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2012, 337–365

²⁰ Morelli, 1880, 1883, and 1891, 279, and 1893, 214; Morelli, 1880, 243, and 1883, 209 (my translation: 'durch geistige wie materielle Gründe').

In 1874 Lermolieff condemns a specious attribution to Leonardo by Charles Blanc. Quoting the critic in French, the Russian interrogates Blanc's contention that a connoisseur must know the spirit of the artist more than the technique, because only the soul is inimitable:

What would M. Blanc have said if I had replied, 'Mon cher Monsieur Blanc, I too, like you, believe myself to have, if not fathomed, at least studied "la tournure, le genie singulièrement complexe," of Leonardo to the best of my ability; but in addition to these studies of the master's personality [*geistigen Persönlichkeit*], which is ever present in a true work of art, and is indeed that which speaks to us out of the painting and touches the heart, in addition to these psychological studies, I repeat, I have never neglected the *procédes*, the *faire*, of the master, being well aware, from long experience, what tricks the imagination is apt to play on us. And because it has been my wont, in my art studies, to give heed to the spirit as well as the form, I believe I may confidently reply: this "St Sebastian" which you extol as a work by Leonardo is, in my opinion, assuredly not the work of the great Florentine.'

Lermolieff claims that 'it is only through unremitting study of form that one may gradually attain to understanding and recognising the spirit which gives it life'.²¹ This idea of recognising *Geist* in *Formen* is central to explaining why the connoisseur felt justified in calling Giorgione his 'friend'.

The explanation of this material–spiritual dialectic is very illuminating: 'it is essentially through the medium of "form" that we must penetrate to the spirit, in order, through the spirit, to win our way back to a truer knowledge of "form" itself.' Lermolieff immediately writes that this sounds like 'a philosophical precept', and states: 'its practical application is by no means so easy as it appears'. He then asks: 'What, for instance, is the "form" in a picture, through which the spirit of a master (...) finds expression?' As an answer, he offers a negative assertion phrased as a question: 'Surely not the pose and movement of the human frame alone, nor the expression, type of countenance, colouring, and treatment of the drapery?'

There still remain, for instance, the hand, one of the most expressive and characteristic parts of the human body, the ear, the landscape background if there be any, and the chords, or so-called, harmony of the colour. In the work of a true artist all these several parts of the painting are characteristic and distinctive, and therefore of importance, for only by a thorough acquaintance with them is it possible to penetrate to 'l'âme, la tournure de l'esprit' – to the very soul of the master.

²¹ Morelli, 1874, 4–8, and 1890, 88–90, and 1892, 69–71.

In 1890 Morelli added the notion that style ‘originates simultaneously with the idea, or, to put it more plainly, it is the artist’s idea which gives birth to the “form” and hence determines the character or style’. This obscure interaction between idealist concepts – form, spirit, idea, expression – is the foundation of the scientific method. Lermolieff then suggests an additional level to Morellian analysis:

As most men, both speakers and writers, make use of habitual modes of expression, favourite words and sayings, which they often employ involuntarily and sometimes even most inappropriately, so almost every painter has his own peculiarities, which escape him without being aware of it.

It may have been this idea that led Freud to connect psychoanalysis and Morellian method in his 1914 Michelangelo essay. Lermolieff concludes by recommending the study of ‘form’ to students who wish to attribute paintings with ‘more or less scientific certainty’.²²

This is why critics have had such trouble defining Morellian method. Rather than simply advocating comparison of anatomical details, the author conflates natural sciences with Romantic notions of spirit–mind. As Lermolieff mischievously explains, he will ‘particularise certain material signs and forms (which after all are not so material, or so accidental, as they may perhaps appear to some)’. This conflation places Morelli in a strong nineteenth-century tradition, including for instance Alexander von Humboldt, a tradition which tried to resolve two apparently discordant intellectual approaches. Again, in 1890, Lermolieff proclaims:

As in the human eye we discriminate between long and short sight, so among those who study art we find that there are some who have eyes to see, and others whom the most powerful of glasses would not benefit in the slightest degree, because there are practically two types of sight – physical and spiritual. The first is that of the public at large, and writers on art have at all times traded on the boundless credulity of this class; the second belongs to a very few intelligent and unprejudiced artists and students of art. Endowed with natural capacity, it is the privilege of the latter, after long and careful study, to discern in the features, in the form and movement of the hand, in the pose of the figure – in short, in the whole outward frame – the deeper qualities of the mind;²³

²² Sigmund Freud, ‘Der Moses des Michelangelo’, in *Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften*, vol. 3, 1914, 15–36; for the debate see Jack J. Spector, ‘The Method of Morelli and its Relation to Freudian Psychoanalysis’, in *Diogenes*, vol. 17, no. 66, 1969, 63–83; Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Clues’, 5–36; Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 22–23; Morelli, 1890, 89, and 1892, 71.

²³ Morelli, 1874, 6, and 1890, 90–91, and 1892, 72; Morelli, 1890, ix, and 1892, [44–45]

The metaphor of spiritual–sight represents the methodological synthesis, but how can this be related to Morelli’s reputation as inventor of a positivist, inductive, empirical technique of attribution?

Lermolieff certainly promotes his method as a positivist science, and indeed Morellian connoisseurship is normally understood as having been based on methodological models from the natural sciences. Morelli’s education in anatomy under Ignatius von Döllinger in Munich has been cited as the origin of the method, especially important being the zoologist Cuvier’s ‘principle of correlation of parts’.²⁴ In *Kunstkritische Studien* the author’s methodological inspiration is the Swiss naturalist Agassiz, who had applied the techniques of comparative anatomy to geology, and who Morelli accompanied on an expedition to the Alps in 1838. Lermolieff quotes Agassiz in a footnote: ‘*observation* and *comparison* being, in his opinion, the intellectual tools, most indispensable to the naturalist (and, I may add, to the art–connoisseur also). His first lesson was one in *looking*’.²⁵ Again, in ‘Principles and Method’, a fictional narrative appended as an introduction to *Kunstkritische Studien*, Lermolieff meets an elderly Italian gentleman who preaches that: ‘Observation and experience (...) are the foundation of every science’.²⁶

This was a common rhetoric in nineteenth–century Germany, and would have been recognisably positivist to the contemporary reader. The promotion of scientific methods based on ‘observation’ being exemplified by the chemist Justus von Liebig’s *Ueber das Studium der Naturwissenschaft* (1852). Linguistic and rhetorical similarities between the chemist and connoisseur may help explain why Morelli’s readership accepted his work as scientific. Liebig, political and polemical, just like Morelli, was a great populariser of science, and attempted to persuade the Prussian government to invest in chemistry.²⁷ In a similar mode, Lermolieff places his connoisseurship in the great tradition of positivism:

...even the most highly gifted and accomplished connoisseur will never attain to certainty of judgement without a definite system of study, and this, I believe, must be the so–called “experimental method” which, from the time of Leonardo da Vinci, of Galileo, and of Bacon, to that of Volta and Darwin, has led to the most splendid discoveries.

Liebig uses similar rhetoric, appealing to the efficacy of scientific method by citing ‘the extraordinary progress’ produced by experimentation, claiming that we have ‘Bacon and Galileo to thank’. However, typically, Morelli provides a provisional

²⁴ Anderson, ‘definition’, 53.

²⁵ Anderson has pointed out that Agassiz is himself quoting Döllinger - Anderson, ‘definition’, 53.

²⁶ Morelli, 1890, 94, 1, 13, and 1892, 74, 1, 11.

²⁷ Justus Liebig, *Ueber das Studium der Naturwissenschaft: Eröffnungsrede zu seinen Vorlesungen über Experimental–Chemie im Wintersemester*, Munich: Gotta, 1852, 17; William H. Brock, *Justus Von Liebig: The Chemical Gatekeeper*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 68.

irony that allows the reader to deny the relationship with positivism, as Lermolieff writes that: 'In the history of art [the "experimental method"] can, of course, only be regarded as a means to assist [*Hilfsmittel*] in identifying the author of a picture.'²⁸

There is also an ulterior mode of science that influenced Morellian method, the tradition of Romantic science and idealist *Naturphilosophie*, represented especially by Goethe and Schelling, both of who influenced Döllinger.²⁹ The poet Goethe was important for Morelli; *Faust* (1806) and *West-östlicher Divan* (1819) are both quoted in *Kunstkritische Studien*.³⁰ However, Goethe was also a scientist; he worked on optics and colour, but also botanical morphology, as found in his *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* (1790) and *Zur Morphologie* (1817–1824). In his early work, Goethe explored plant structure through the unifying notion of a *Grundorgan*, but later developed the idea of a primal or archetypal plant, the formative *Urpflanze*. This can be presented as parallel to Morellian particularisation of an artist's *Grundformen*. For Lermolieff, art is a living organism, and therefore the artist's characteristic forms are not determined by 'external coincidences' but by 'causative Nature [*ursächlicher Natur*]'. Here Morelli avoids directly appropriating the poet's language, as Lermolieff like Goethe focuses not on static form (*Gestalt*) but the process of formation (*Bildung*).³¹ Methodologically, both writers emphasise the significance of 'looking', yet like Lermolieff's 'spiritual-sight', Goethe discusses the difference 'between seeing and seeing', and so demands a method in which the 'eyes of the spirit have to work in perpetual living connexion with those of the body'. He therefore proposed a qualitative experimental science: 'a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object'.³² This science of quality is reflexive and, accordingly, ironic. As Goethe wrote in 1810:

²⁸ Morelli, 1880, 1–2, and 1891, 3–4, and 1893, 1–2; Liebig, *Studium*, 12 (my translation: 'außerordentlichen Fortschritte' and 'wir Franz Bacon und Galiläi verdanken').

²⁹ Anderson, 'definition', 53; Gabriele Bickendorf, 'Die Tradition der Kennerschaft: Von Lanzi über Rumohr und Waagen zu Morelli', in *Cultura dei Conoscitori*, 40, n. 6; Pau, 'Origini', 308–310; Jaynie Anderson, *I Taccuini Manoscritti di Giovanni Morelli*, Milan: F. Motta, 2000, 29; Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 33.

³⁰ Morelli, 1890, 22, 106, and 1892, 18, 83.

³¹ Walter Heitler, 'Goethean Science', in *Goethe's Way of Science*, Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998, 71–82; Timothy Lenoir, 'The Eternal Laws of Form: Morphotypes and the Conditions of Existence in Goethe's Biological Thought', in *Goethe and the Sciences: A Reappraisal*, Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1987, 17–28; Morelli, 1880, 4, and 1883, 4. For Goethe's distinction between *Gestalt* and *Bildung*, and its significance for Morelli, cf. Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 28–29

³² Qtd. in David Seamon, 'Goethe, Nature and Phenomenology', in *Way of Science*, 1–14; Arthur Zajonc, 'Goethe and the Science of his Time', in *Way of Science*, 15–30 ['ein Unterschied sei zwischen sehen und sehen, daß die Geistesaugen mit den Augen des Leibes in stetem lebendigen Bunde zu wirken haben', Goethe, J.W., *Goethe's sämtliche Werke* in vierzig Bänden, Vol. 35–36, 111]; Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. Douglas Miller, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 307, 310–311.

Every act of looking turns into observation, every act of observation into reflection (...) The ability to do this with clarity of mind, with self-knowledge, in a free way, and (if I may venture to put it so) with irony, is a skill we need in order to avoid the pitfalls of abstraction.³³

Lermolieff's theory of connoisseurship surreptitiously embraces this empiricist Romanticism, because the self-knowledge and irony is Morelli's.

To understand what Lermolieff means by *den Geist und die Formen* and to uncover the connoisseur's ideas about unconscious expression requires reference to the philosophy of Schelling. Although Carlo Ginzburg persuasively linked Morellian method to psychoanalysis within a paradigm of medical semiotics, this is an anachronistic and distorting frame for reading Morelli's writing. Instead, ideas of the unconscious had been evolving throughout the nineteenth century.³⁴ Morelli met Schelling in Munich in 1834 and again in 1841, later translating the philosopher's *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zur Natur* of 1807.³⁵ Despite being a post-Kantian idealist, Schelling's work engaged directly with the natural sciences, postulating the actuality of material reality and therefore describing his *Naturphilosophie* as 'positive'. For Schelling, visual art was the 'vital synthesis' of soul and nature. Like Lermolieff, the philosopher maintains that: 'We must look beyond form in order to gain an intelligible, living, and true perception of it'.³⁶ The basis of Lermolieff's notion of expression is Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800). The *System* develops an identity philosophy, negotiating between Johann Gottlieb Fichte's idealism and Baruch Spinoza's realism by demonstrating the 'absolute identity of mind and nature' with a theory of the unconscious: '*das Unbewußte*'. In Schelling's system art is the expression of this 'dark unknown force' which 'through our own free action realizes, without our knowledge and even

³³ Goethe, *Scientific*, 159.

³⁴ Recent literature on nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious include: Andrew Bowie, 'The Philosophical Significance of Schelling's Conception of the Unconscious', *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 57–86, and Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 76.

³⁵ Panzeri and Bravi, *Figura*, 20; Morelli's translation appeared as *Sopra la relazione tra l'arte belle e la natura*, Milan: Tipografia Valentini E. C., 1845. I will follow the concurrent English translation: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art, an Oration on the Relation between the Plastic Arts and Nature*, trans. A. Johnson, London: J. Chapman, 1845. For an excellent commentary on Morelli's translation see Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 33–39.

³⁶ *Naturphilosophie* was 'a naturalistic empiricism extended to the absolute', and in this context Goethe's morphology can be seen as 'a phenomenological pursuit of pure form' (Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2006, 5, 130–131); Schelling, *Philosophy*, 2, 7, 24.

against our will, goals that we did not envisage'.³⁷ Bizarrely, Morelli appropriated these ideas in his supposedly positivist connoisseurship.

The dialectics of German idealism partially illuminate Lermolieff's opaque references to internal and external, material and spiritual, but how can this be reconciled with Morelli's positivist reputation? Was the author being ironic about his character the romantic scientist? Schelling is not mentioned in *Kunstkritische Studien*, while Goethe is quoted through Mephistopheles (Lermolieff also appeals to the absurd authority of Doctor Pangloss, Voltaire's caricature of Leibniz's optimistic rationalism).³⁸ Perhaps the connoisseur did not mention Schelling because by the 1870s *Naturphilosophie* had been comprehensively replaced by materialist positivism, the tradition Morelli apparently represents. In 1840 Liebig had described speculative science as 'the black death', and an influential Hermann von Helmholtz lecture in 1862 argued that the idealist synthesis was no longer conceivable as it relies on 'not strictly logical induction'. This reaction was reasonable. By the 1840s Schelling's work on the unconscious had led him to become openly obscurantist, being influenced by the fourteenth-century Christian mystic Meister Eckhart. Especially significant were his Berlin lectures, 'The Philosophy of Revelation' (1841–1842), attended by Jacob Burckhardt and also Kierkegaard, although the two young intellectuals were unimpressed.³⁹ However, Lermolieff's art-science does have a mystical aspect, and the attribution of the Borghese *Portrait* is based on a revelation.

If Morelli was truly sincere about Lermolieff's aestheticism then the traditional narratives of art historiography are wrong and as Carrier argued he should be related to Pater. This is a surprising interpretation; these two writers are usually seen to represent opposing traditions: objective and subjective, positivist and idealist.⁴⁰ In the context of Morelli's scientific reputation these parallels can only be interpreted as a dialectical, methodological irony. Carolyn Williams has described an 'ingeniously ironic absorption of scientific method by Pater's aestheticism'.⁴¹ Maybe, to understand Morellian method, the reader must

³⁷ Andrew Bowie, 'Philosophical', 57–86; Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, 104; Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies*, 4; Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. P. Heath, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, 222–224

³⁸ Morelli, 1890, 106, and 1892, 83 – Appropriately, the scene in *Faust* to which Lermolieff refers sees Mephistopheles disguised as Faust giving contradictory advice to a student: 'Each man learns only what he can [No use you roaming scientifically]' (Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust: The First Part of the Tragedy*, London: Penguin, 2005), 67; Morelli, 1891, 14, and 1893, 9.

³⁹ Angus Nicholls, 'The Scientific Unconscious: Goethe's post-Kantian Epistemology', in *Thinking the Unconscious*, 87–120; Ffytche, *Foundation*, 76

⁴⁰ Wind, 1985, 36–39; Carrier, 1991, 130; cf. Maurizio Ascari, 'The Fortune of *The Renaissance* in Italian Art Criticism, 1894–1944', and Elisa Bizzotto, 'Pater's Reception in Italy: A General View', both in *The Reception of Walter Pater in Europe*, London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004, 34–61, 62–86.

⁴¹ Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, 49.

acknowledge that inversely Lermolieff absorbs aesthetics into science. However, the fundamental issue, implicit in all critical responses to Morelli's writing, regards the sincerity of the author. Locatelli describes what she terms an 'auto-irony', and considers the ironic aspect of his Romanticism to be 'involuntary', based on the assumption that the connoisseur was a heartfelt romantic scientist.⁴² This conclusion denies the consequences of a pervasive irony. Rather than mediate between positivism and idealism, Morelli ironically conflates them to show the impossibility, the absurdity of their synthesis.

The Borghese *Portrait of a Woman* was a new attribution when Morelli republished his work in 1890. Added as a digressive afterthought to the end of the Borghese study, the argument provided a climax to his review of the gallery, and was intended as a denouement of Morellian connoisseurship. The reader is presented with Lermolieff as a model Goethean scientist, making a long and careful study of the painting with both body and mind. The observations he makes are not measurable or objective, but qualitative and subjective. He tells the reader that the work cannot have been painted by Dossi because it is too 'simple'; equally, it cannot have been painted by Sebastiano because it is too 'profound'. Based on *Naturphilosophie*, this Romantic experimentation generates an identity between subject and object, in Lermolieff's experience the artist and critic are physically 'touching'. Therefore, after assimilating the object within himself, Lermolieff experiences a revelation. To express this he adopts the language of Schelling (and Eckhart), employing the metaphor of a spark: '*Funke*'.⁴³ This image of ignition represents Lermolieff's synthesis of conscious induction and unconscious divination, of material observation and spiritual perception: 'lo and behold, in that mutual touch it ignited suddenly like a spark, and I cried out in my joy: Only you, my friend'.

But Morelli's writing does not contain a developed theory of unconscious expression, or qualitative science. Instead, Morellian method was interpreted as objective, inductive, empirical, and if anything, Morelli compounded the confusion. As Gibson-Wood has rightly argued, Morelli's ideas are vague and inconsistent.⁴⁴ But perhaps we should read this vagueness and inconsistency as intentional. To do this involves seeing how Lermolieff's duplicitous method works in practice, looking at his most significant contribution to the history of art, his analysis of his 'friend' Giorgione.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 1871 history changed perceptions of Giorgione. The partnership's analysis of the artist was considered the most significant chapter of their work because, as contemporary reviews acknowledged, Giorgione's 'fame is left dependent upon one or two undoubted pictures, or, shall we say, *almost* undoubted'.⁴⁵ Pope-Hennessy explained how Morelli's art history was 'concerned

⁴² Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 55, 57, 58

⁴³ Ffytche, *Foundation*, 90, 150, 165, 168; Schelling, *Philosophy*, 12.

⁴⁴ Gibson-Wood, *Studies*, 223.

⁴⁵ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 August, 1871, 12.

with rectification rather than the groundwork for original research'.⁴⁶ This is an ironic mode of criticism; the structure is negational, calculated to disrupt established histories. In the introduction to his 1880 book, Lermolieff describes his work as 'contradictions', arising from his 'contradictious mind [*meines Widerspruchgeistes*]'. This same foreword includes a dialogue in which Crowe and Cavalcaselle are malevolently caricatured (never translated into English), and also states that the main purpose of the book is prove his dissenting opinions from the two connoisseurs.⁴⁷ In 1890 Lermolieff sanctimoniously describes Crowe and Cavalcaselle as 'mischievous and misleading', and with typical Morellian naturalist metaphors, compares their history to 'a bog', 'a thornbush', or a snail's 'slime'. In 'Principles and Method', the elderly Italian sets up his morphological method in opposition to their analysis of painterly technique, which he considers sophistry designed to fool 'a credulous public.' However, Lermolieff predictably appropriates their technical arguments: 'About 1516 or 1517, as Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle have observed, Cariani's technic underwent another change. He laid on his colours in a thin and liquid manner, grounding his pictures in tempera of a grey tone, and finishing them with thin glazes of oil'.⁴⁸ Ultimately, it is Giorgione that legitimates Morelli's contradiction of Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

The two connoisseurs discussion of the artist centred on the attribution of the *Concert* from the Palazzo Pitti (Fig.4), which they considered Giorgione's masterpiece, and on the disattribution of the Louvre's *Concert Champêtre* (Fig.5), which they thought lacked 'nobility'. Lermolieff, with little explanation, reverses this judgement, reinstating the Louvre painting while claiming the Pitti *Concert* was by the young Titian.⁴⁹ The climax of this competition comes with Lermolieff's attribution of the *Sleeping Venus*, which provided a tangible justification for the author's attack upon Crowe and Cavalcaselle's authority. Lermolieff expresses his surprise that they accept the Dresden gallery's attribution to Sassoferrato, and ridicules their claim to have found the original Titian in Darmstadt.⁵⁰ In the final paragraph Lermolieff stresses the disparity between the Dresden and Darmstadt paintings:

⁴⁶ Pope-Hennessy, *Study*, 14.

⁴⁷ Morelli, 1880, iii-x.

⁴⁸ Morelli, 1890, 220, 375 (my translations: 'einen Morast', 'ein Dorngestrüpp' and 'Schleim'); Morelli, 1890, 38-39, and 1892, 32; Morelli, 1891, 34-35, and 1893, 24.

⁴⁹ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *History*, 144-147; Morelli, 1880, 185-186, 190, and 1883, 156-157, 161.

⁵⁰ In 1877 Crowe and Cavalcaselle had given to Titian a *Sleeping Venus* in Darmstadt, and listed five paintings they believed to be copies, including Morelli's *Venus*, which the connoisseurs describe as 'assigned dubiously to Sassoferrato' (Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, *Titian: His Life and Times*, Vol.1, London: John Murray, 1877, 275).



Figure 4 Titian, *Concert*, c1512, oil on canvas, 86.5 x 123.5, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.



Figure 5 Titian, *Concert Champêtre*, c1510, oil on canvas, 118 x 136 cm. (Louvre, Paris)

Let true lovers of Italian art decide between these two antagonistic judgements! My words are not at all addressed to those who take pleasure in the *copies* after Holbein, Correggio, Lionardo da Vinci, Titian, and Moretto, and who are wont to gaze at and admire them as originals; may they quietly continue to solace themselves with sham art, provided they leave me undisturbed to my admiration of this Venus of Giorgione.⁵¹

The reader is left in little doubt, Crowe and Cavalcaselle's Giorgione is an illusion.

⁵¹ Morelli, 1880, 197, and 1883, 168.

Beginning afresh, Lermolieff tells his reader that: 'a student ought daily to look into the face of such a master as Giorgione, so that he may gradually absorb into himself the forms and the mind of this most exquisite of the Venetians'. However, the connoisseur also writes that Giorgione is 'a kind of myth', and that 'general confusion' surrounds him. Therefore: 'There is only one way to get out of the labyrinth, namely, and first of all, to examine well and make our own the authentic works'. The connoisseur does not, however, offer a Morellian analysis of *The Castelfranco Altarpiece*, *The Tempest*, and *The Three Philosophers*, instead he just gives details of their provenance, location and condition.⁵²

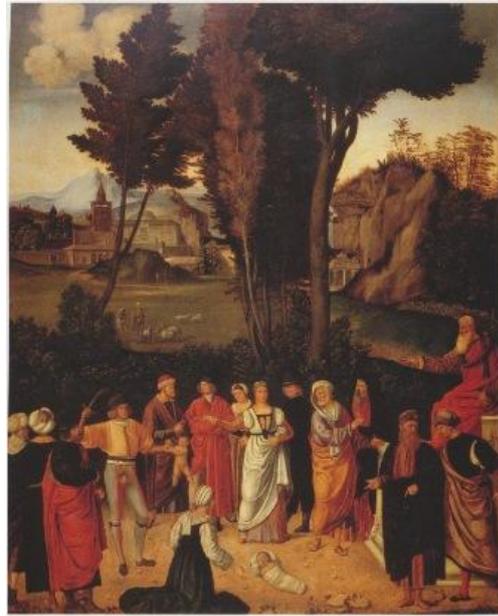


Figure 6 Giorgione, *The Trial of Moses*, c1505, oil on panel, 89 x 72 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 7 Giorgione, *The Judgement of Solomon*, c1505, oil on panel, 89 x 72 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Although Lermolieff does go on to define Giorgione's characteristic forms, this is not in relation to the 'authentic works', but with reference to the two Uffizi panel paintings *The Trial of Moses* (Fig.6) and *The Judgement of Solomon* (Fig.7). According to the connoisseur the details that indicate Giorgione's authorship are: 'the long oval of the female faces, the eyes brought rather too near the nose, the fantastic way of dressing the figures, the hand with an outstretched forefinger, the poetically conceived landscape with the tall trees, etc.'⁵³ These descriptions are terse and nominal; they cannot, with justice, be compared to Cuvier's osteological analysis which Morelli studied as a student. The first two details are anatomical and

⁵² Morelli, 1880, 185–188, and 1883, 156–159.

⁵³ Morelli, 1880, 188, and 1883, 160.

morphological. The third however is sixteenth-century fashion, which in the nineteenth century was a traditional observation to make about Giorgionesque paintings.⁵⁴ The fourth is a gesture, a very common gesture in Italian Renaissance art: an outstretched forefinger indicates pointing. The fifth, landscape, does mention tall trees, but the emphasis seems to be on the poetic conception. Lermolieff completes his list with the irritating, elliptical 'etc' (*u.s.f.* or *und so fort*). What does this mean? Is he implying that there are more but unlisted attributive details? Is he assuming the reader understands what poetical looks like? Or is he simply trying to vex?

In 1891 Lermolieff adds several pictures to his catalogue of Giorgione's works, including the *Nymph and Satyr* from Florence's Palazzo Pitti, a traditional attribution to the artist presumably rejected by the connoisseur in 1880.⁵⁵ Even so, now it serves as the basis on which he isolates further characteristic forms: 'the low forehead, the charming arrangement of the hair upon the temples, the eyes placed near together, and the hand with tapering fingers'. These are at least morphological, and two of them – the forehead and the hair – are directly referred to in the attribution of the Borghese *Portrait*. Again, however, Lermolieff ends with an omission, itself omitted from the English translation: 'and others'.⁵⁶ When discussing *The Three Ages of Man* (Fig.8), also from the Palazzo Pitti, Lermolieff argues that the young boy's head, half in shade, is so 'thoroughly Giorgionesque, that without further proof, I make bold to ascribe the picture to Giorgione'.⁵⁷ Rather than morphological *Grundformen*, it seems the key to understanding Lermolieff's Giorgione is explaining what he means by the words 'poetical' and 'Giorgionesque', and this leads us to the connoisseur's characterisation of the artist's *Geist*.⁵⁸

In a letter to Morelli (24 March 1878), Jean Paul Richter asks his friend who he believed painted the Louvre's *Concert Champêtre*. Morelli responded (5 April 1878) by expressing his faith in the traditional attribution: 'My firm belief is that this most characteristic, most gentle work by Giorgione was created around 1508–1510'. Strangely, he goes on to



Figure 8 Giorgione, *The Three Ages of Man*, c1510, oil on canvas, 62 x 77 cm. (Palazzo Pitti, Florence)

⁵⁴ See for example Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1837, 301–303 and Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone*, Basel, 1855, 961.

⁵⁵ As found in Burckhardt, *Cicerone*, 962.

⁵⁶ Morelli, 1891, 285, and 1893, 219.

⁵⁷ Morelli, 1880, 190, and 1883, 161.

⁵⁸ For the argument over Morelli's use of intuition and his reliance on the maligned 'general impression', where morphological analysis is employed merely as a subsequent justification see: Max J. Friedländer, *On Art and Connoisseurship*, 1942, p.167; Anderson, *Taccuini*, p.28; Valentina Locatelli, "'Es sey das Sehen eine Kunst" Sull'arte della connoisseurship e i suoi strumenti', *Kunstgeschichte: Open Peer Reviewed Journal*, 2014, p.18

draw a comparison with Titian's frescoes at the Scuola del Santo in Padua, explained by the fact the frescoes are 'animated by the breath of the Giorgionesque spirit'.⁵⁹ In 1880, Lermolieff characterises Giorgione's *Geist* in this way:

His few works that have come down to us (...) show such an original and highly-poetical mind [*hochpoetischer Geist*], his simple, unprejudiced, and fine artist-nature speaks out of them so freshly, so winningly, that whoever has once understood him can and will never forget him. No other artist knows like him how to captivate our mind and chain our imagination...⁶⁰

The connoisseur encapsulates his perception of the artist's *hochpoetischer Geist* in this statement: 'Giorgione was a genuine, harmless, cheerful nature, a lyric poet'. This characterisation is antithetical to Titian's, allowing for a connoisseurial discrimination: '[Giorgione was] a lyric poet, in contrast to Titian, who was wholly dramatic'. The reader is also given a moral distinction: Titian is servile and his *Danaë* in Naples is 'vulgarly imagined', while Giorgione is 'independent' and his *Venus* is 'yes, realistic too, but in the highest and noblest sense of the word'.⁶¹

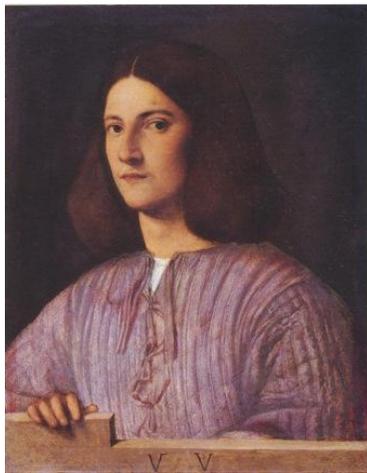


Fig. 9 Giorgione, *Portrait of a Young Man*, c1508, oil on canvas, 58 x 46 cm.
(Gemäldegalerie, Berlin)

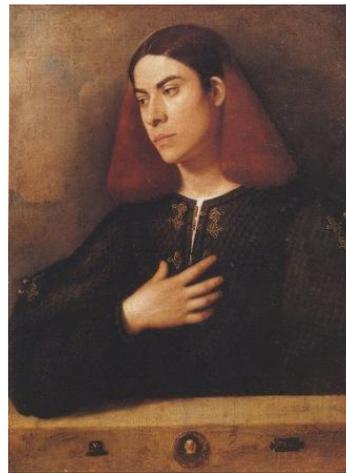


Fig. 10 Giorgione, *Portrait of a Young Man*, c1508, oil on canvas, 72.5 x 54 cm.
(Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest)

For Lermolieff, attributions are justified by their expression of the Giorgione's *Geist*: the *Concert Champêtre* is 'highly poetic', while the Berlin *Portrait of*

⁵⁹ Giovanni Morelli and Jean Paul Richter, *Italienische Malerei der Renaissance im Briefwechsel von Giovanni Morelli und Jean Paul Richter, 1876–1891*, Baden–Baden: Grimm, 1960, 39–46 (My translation: "Meiner festesten Überzeugung nach ist jenes Gemälde eines charakteristischsten, liebenswürdigsten Werke des Giorgione, etwa um 1508-1510 entstanden (...) durch und durch vom Hauche des Giorgionischen Geistes belebt sich erweist.")

⁶⁰ Morelli, 1880, 187, and 1883, 158.

⁶¹ Morelli, 1880, 187–195, and 1883, 158–169.

a *Young Man* (Fig.9) is ‘highly suggestive’ and exerts ‘over the spectator an irresistible fascination’. The *Budapest Portrait of a Young Man* (Fig.10) also corresponds to the artist’s characterisation: ‘It is with reluctance that we part from this melancholy figure; his significant face holds the spectator spell-bound, as if he were about to confide to him the secret of his life’. In 1880 Lermolieff is reluctant to positively attribute this portrait as he cannot see Giorgione in the ‘workmanship’; however, in 1891 he decides that ‘the whole feeling of the picture and the conception [*die Auffassung als auch der Geist*] seem to point to Giorgione’.⁶² The problem arises from the duality of Morellian connoisseurship: the material analysis is negative, but the spiritual evidence is positive. From the evidence of the text, it appears the author intended to be ambiguous (it should be noted that the last three sentences of this attribution from the 1893 English translation, in which Lermolieff conciliates by suggesting he ‘must leave the final decision of the point to others’, is an English adjunct).

Perhaps the connoisseur would have argued that his examination of *Geist* was scientifically psychological? This though would be optimistic. Lermolieff’s image of Giorgione as a sensualist, lyric poet is recognisable, if not cliché; it is essentially a propagation of the traditional nineteenth-century characterisation. The connoisseur paraphrases Vasari: ‘His love was given to music, beautiful women, and, above all, to his noble art’.⁶³ Since Ridolfi, Giorgione had been represented according to *Ut pictura poesis*: Franz Kugler in 1837 discussed the artist’s ‘particular poetic perspective’, and Wilhelm Lübke in 1868 argued that all Giorgione’s paintings display the artist’s ‘poetic spirit-mind’. Most famously, in 1877, Walter Pater writes of Giorgione’s lyrical ‘pictorial poetry’. In 1845, Anna Jameson compared the artist to Lord Byron, and suggested that although forgeries may have fooled some, ‘they could not for one moment deceive those who have looked into the *feeling impressed* on Giorgione’s works’. Finally, a negative source for Lermolieff’s definition of the painter’s *Geist* was Alexis-François Rio’s expanded edition of *De l’art chrétien* (1861–1867). By the author’s own admission this work was an audaciously subjective, transcendental, Catholic history of Italian painting. Rio had argued that Giorgione’s religious works ‘rarely rise above a purely human conception’, but that his paintings are ‘ennobled by a melancholic expression that opens a field of free conjecture’. Lermolieff also thinks the artist’s work is melancholic, but in 1891 adds a vigorous defence of the *Altarpiece*: ‘Giorgione’s saints are no fanatical impostors, but Christian heroes, animated by a true and living faith’.⁶⁴ The attribution of the *Borghese Portrait*, in the context of Lermolieff’s

⁶² Morelli, 1880, 190–191, and 1883, 159, and 1891, 284–285, and 1893, 218.

⁶³ Lermolieff does refer to ‘Kunstpsychologie’ (Morelli, 1890, 11–12), and Morelli has been related to Wilhelm Wundt’s laboratory for experimental psychology established at Leipzig in 1879 (Bickendorf, ‘Tradition’, 26); Morelli, 1880, 187, and 1883, 159.

⁶⁴ Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell’Arte*, Venice: Sgauri, 1648, 81–90; Kugler, *Handbuch*, 301 (my translation: ‘besondere poetische Anschauungsweise’); Wilhelm Lübke, *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*, Stuttgart, 1868, 275 (my translation: ‘poetischen Geist’; Morelli owned the (cont.)

representation of Giorgione's *Geist*, becomes a little easier to understand. It is a simple yet profound painting, showing a woman with an intelligent forehead, and with passionate eyes; it is mysterious, and entrances the connoisseur. The logical conclusion, it is by Giorgione.

From the very first moment Morelli was accused of dressing up traditional connoisseurship in guise of experimental science. It is easy to appreciate the justice of this criticism, even if Morelli was sincerely advocating a qualitative science. There seems little substantive difference between the method practiced above, and that followed by Karl Friedrich von Rumohr in his 1827 *Italienische Forschungen*, which was clearly a model for Morelli. In his seminal essay on Giotto, Rumohr also followed a double method: first, based on a close material analysis of what he believed was an authentic work, he identified anatomical signifiers of Giotto's authorship, for example snubbed noses and elongated eyes; secondly, he attributed works to the artist based on primary source analysis, from which he created a characterisation of Giotto's worldly, cynical personality.⁶⁵ If it is true that Morellian connoisseurship was traditional connoisseurship, why then did his work have such an impact? To answer this question requires an analysis of Morellian rhetoric.

The character Lermolieff was designed to be irritating, and Carl Justi displayed a typical reaction: he was struck by the strong opinions and arbitrary attributions, the many negative verdicts, the capriciousness of judgement, the barbarically grandiloquent style, the unwieldy chaotic arrangement, and yet he admired Lermolieff's erudition.⁶⁶ However, while the Russian is undeniably annoying, he was also very inspiring to such figures as Bernard Berenson. This dual reception was the result of Morelli's deliberately engineering divisions in his readership.

For Lermolieff, humans are defined by nationality. In one of Morelli's imaginary dialogues caricatures inhabit the Doria Pamphilj gallery: the Russian meets a supercilious French couple, a German and an Austrian argue, while gullible American tourists are led along by 'wretched ignorant Italian cicerones'. Nationality becomes the defining factor in art criticism, because 'a German sees things

1871 edition; Panzeri and Bravi, *Figura*, 160); Pater, "The School of Giorgione", *Fortnightly Review*, October 1877, 535; Anna Jameson, *Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters and the Progress of Painting in Italy*, vol.2, London: C. Knight & Co., 1845, 212, 217–218; qtd. in J. B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth Century Writing*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 82; Alexis-François Rio, *De l'art chrétien*, vol.4, Paris: Hachette, 1867, 133–135 (my translation: 'élevèrent rarement au-dessus de la conception purement humaine (...) ennoblent par une expression mélancolique qui ouvre un champ libre aux conjectures'); Lermolieff refers to Rio as 'the amiable neo-catholic art writer': Morelli, 1891, 294, and 1893, 226); Morelli, 1891, 281, 284, and 1893, 215–216, 226.

⁶⁵ Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, vol. 2, Berlin und Stettin: Nicolai'sche buchhandlung, 1827, 39–75

⁶⁶ Qtd. in a letter from Richter to Morelli (29 November 1881): Morelli and Richter, *Italienische*, 132–134.

differently from a Frenchman, a Russian, or an Italian'.⁶⁷ The most discussed division is between connoisseurs and art historians: diametrically opposite, the connoisseur studies art works, while the art historian is a bookish pedant. For the art historian, ironically, 'even to look at pictures irritates them', or rather, as it is in the German: 'looking at pictures is to them like a thorn in the eye'.⁶⁸

Morelli also separates amateurs and students from the professional, institutionalised art world. As Zerner has noted, in his first articles Lermolieff is presented as a novice, but one who is in open revolt against university professors and gallery directors.⁶⁹ The connoisseur also exploits a generation gap, as Lermolieff explains that these early writings were more favourably received 'by the younger, and consequently less biased, students of art'. Finally, if you are not a member of the art historical establishment, then you should consider yourself part of the *grosse Publikum*: 'resembling a peasant', the gullible gallery-going public believe whatever they are told. In fact, every imaginable demographic is attacked, the elderly Italian explaining that the enjoyment of art is reserved only for an elite, 'pardoned by God'.⁷⁰

But who then are these chosen few? By ostracising large sections of his potential audience, Morelli calls forth an ideal reader. This ideal reader is defined as a young student, and Lermolieff directly appeals to them as the final judge of attributions: 'my readers, who have a more refined feeling for art, will be disposed to accept my views'.⁷¹ This ideal reader therefore functions as an anti-authoritarian rhetorical device in the connoisseurial competition. Empowering the younger generation, Lermolieff encourages students to act as arbitrators of their professors' disputes, undermining experts by removing their prerogative to pass judgement. Morelli's aggressive, divisive rhetoric creates contrasting audiences: one sympathetic, the other justifiably antipathetic.

A contemporary reviewer commented that Morelli in a 'fatherly manner' takes the reader by the hand.⁷² But this is not the author, it is his characters, the Russian and the elderly Italian both being designed as mentors. In fact, Lermolieff is more than this: he is a spiritual leader, his evangelism verging on the messianic. Besides the connoisseur's scientific rhetoric there is another seemingly contradictory set of images. Lermolieff repeatedly employs the Italian idiom 'baptism' to refer to

⁶⁷ Morelli, 1890, 414–415, and 1892, 316–317; Morelli 1891, 14, and 1893, 9.

⁶⁸ Morelli, 1890, 17, and 1892, 15 (my translation: "'Bilderbegucken" ist ihnen geradezu ein Dorn im Auge'). For this perhaps contradictory distinction between *Kunstkenner* and *Kunsthistoriker* see Morelli, 1890, 17–19

⁶⁹ Morelli, 1890, 417, and 1892, 317; Herni Zerner, 'Giovanni Morelli et la science de l'art', *Revue de l'Art*, No. 40–41, 1978, 211.

⁷⁰ Morelli, 1890, v–vii, 42, and 1892, [41–43] 34; Morelli, 1890, 30–31 (my translation: 'von Gott Begnadigten').

⁷¹ Morelli, 1891, 110, and 1893, 84.

⁷² [Eastlake], 'Morelli', 349.

attribution;⁷³ this is taken further, the Russian describing an incorrect Giorgione attribution as ‘a true heresy’, and a poor restoration as ‘a true martyrdom’. This religious rhetoric can be found at the beginning of Morelli’s first article. Discussing received attributions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Lermolieff describes a time when art-criticism was reserved for ‘a few academicians and picture-collecting prelates’ whose attributions have ever since ‘been piously upheld’. Lermolieff therefore considers his attributions as ‘sacrilege in the eyes of the orthodox’.⁷⁴ Also, in ‘Principles and Method’, the elderly Italian is described as an ‘old heretic [*Wiedertäufer*]’ who is ‘devoid of religion and of veneration for the powers that be [*ohne alle Pietät vor dem Bestehenden und ohne Religion*]’.⁷⁵ Finally, the fact that Lermolieff is messianic can be clearly heard when, in the preface to the 1880 book, he appropriates Christ’s famous words from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke: ‘Whoever is not opposed to my experimental method, but sees in it a way to get out of dreary dilettantism, and attain to a *real Science of Art*, let him take up the cross upon his shoulder, and follow me’.⁷⁶ But why does Morelli employ incongruous religious metaphors in the context of a supposedly scientific connoisseurship? This absurd fusion of scientific method and religious rhetoric might be explained in relation to the mysticism of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, in which art is the interface between material and spiritual; Morellian connoisseurship is therefore ‘a *real Science of Art*’.⁷⁷

In the attribution of the *Portrait of a Woman* the reader witnesses a little miracle. Like the method itself, the rhetoric that adorns the discussion of the painting fuses science and religion, uniting material and spiritual. The attribution is structured around asking the picture a question: ‘Only you, my friend, Giorgione can it be, and the picture answered...’ Asking questions was a common rhetoric of science; Liebig used it to describe experimental method. It can also be found throughout Morelli’s writing; however, for Lermolieff, when applied to art, it becomes strangely actual. The connoisseur urges his reader, literally, to speak to the paintings.⁷⁸ The most significant instance is found in ‘Principles and Method’: ‘A question earnestly and intelligently asked of a painting or statue will undoubtedly

⁷³ Morelli, 1880, 47, 57, 77fn, 185, twice 239, 241, 383; Morelli, 1890, vii, twice 37, 56, 82, 108fn, 109, 128, 142, 166, 198, 237, 318fn; Morelli, 1891, 25, 28, twice 56, 97, 109, 276, 286, 329 fn, twice 353

⁷⁴ Morelli, 1892, 67; 1890, 84-85; 1874, 3

⁷⁵ Morelli, 1892, 61-63; 1890, 76-78

⁷⁶ Morelli, 1891, 282, 4 (my translation: ‘eine wahre Häresie’ and ‘einem wahren Martyrium’); Morelli 1880, ix-x, and 1883, vi-vii.

⁷⁷ This fusion of spiritual and scientific can also be found in one of Morelli’s early satires “Das Miasma diabolicum” (1839). Written in the condemnatory style of a fundamentalist protestant vicar, Morelli mocks an actual sect in Erlangen with an interdisciplinary clash of religious and scientific writing, for instance forwarding an axiomatic relationship between sanctity and the respiratory system; cf. Anderson, “Dietro lo Pseudonimo”, in *Della Pittura Italiana*, Milan, 1991, 516-518, and Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 45-51

⁷⁸ Liebig, *Studium*, 14, 17. As in his first article (Morelli, 1874, 6)

evoke an answer.’ This seems rational, but the translation is deceptive. In the original the critic must question ‘so vernünftig und zugleich so liebevoll [so reasonably and at the same time so lovingly]’, until the artwork ‘durch seine einsichtsvolle Liebe erwärmt, ihm Antwort gibt [warmed by his insightful love, gives him an answer]’.⁷⁹ The English version omits the sentimental aspect of the method. As with the idea of spiritual-sight, ‘insightful love’ combines sense and intellect. The question Lermolieff asks the *Portrait* is not logical, but emotional: ‘only you, my friend’. He instructs his disciples to ‘look into the face’ of Giorgione, ask him a friendly question, and wait for him to speak.



Figure 11 *Header for Vorwort*, from Giovanni Morelli, *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von München, Dresden und Berlin*, Leipzig, 1880, iii



Figure 12 *Header for Preface*, from Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Masters in German Galleries*, London, 1883, v

Given Morelli’s reputation as the inventor of a positivist, materialist method of attribution, this seems ridiculous. But maybe it was intentionally absurd. This is a hard argument to visualise, but there is some visual evidence. There are two different decorative headers that accompany the preface to Morelli’s first book. One from the German original (Fig. 11), which draws on Ancient Roman sarcophagus iconography and shows two figures balancing on garlands suspended in the middle by the winged child Eros. The two pan-like figures, one playing

⁷⁹ Morelli, 1890, 12–13, and 1892, 10–11.

music, the other in an attitude of Bacchus holding a *thyrsos*, signify humour and licence.⁸⁰ The iconography warns the reader not to trust the text, that the author is mischievous. This image should be compared to the innocuous, benign English substitute (Fig.12). It is interesting that Morelli's English editors noticed this, and removed it, as indeed they removed so much of the more bizarre aspects of Morelli's writing, most importantly, the moment Lermolieff calls Giorgione 'my friend'.

It is clear that Layard was uncomfortable with Morellian irony. In the preface to the 1887 edition of Kugler's *Handbuch*, he described Morelli's 1880 book as 'the most important contribution ever made to the study of art'; however, he also publicly stated that: 'It is to be wished that Signor Morelli would publish a work containing so rich a mine of information in a different and more methodical form'.⁸¹ The correspondence between the two men show that the Englishmen made this request directly to the author.

Morelli insisted (26 December 1885) that a new, more systematic edition of the German galleries book, including greater theoretical clarity, was 'not worth the pain', principally because: 'My aim has been achieved with the baroque form with which I have presented my book to the public'. After outlining his art-scientific principles, he claims that he has attained his purpose 'for better or worse – with the book of Lermolieff'. Morelli also refers to 'the method of Lermolieff' and therefore creates distance between himself and *Kunstwissenschaft*. After the publication of the 1887 edition of Kugler's *Handbuch*, Morelli sent him a satire he had written (29 May 1888), and asked his friend to take the final decision on whether he should publish it anonymously. Layard's refusal to sanction the text leaves no doubts about his opinion (4 June 1888): he argues that to publish would harm Morelli's reputation, and that the style of Lermolieff was easily recognisable. It almost seems as if Morelli was trying to provoke the Englishman with this *roman à clef*, Layard having recognised a caricature of himself which he judged 'very malicious'. Morelli graciously accepted his friend's decision (9 June 1888), but then explained that he did not place much value on connoisseurial authority: 'Vanitas vanitas totum vanitas'. He goes on to depreciate his writing as 'intellectual entertainment', and crucially, declares that he never dreamed of contributing to 'the so-called truth'.⁸² This last phrase shows that irony was fundamental to Morelli, and although he may have truly believed in the primacy of connoisseurship, it is still entirely possible to read *Kunstkritische Studien* as a satire of connoisseurship.

⁸⁰ Similar iconography can be found in Morelli's first publication, *Balvi magnus* (1836), a satiric attack on the archaeology department at Munich. Cf. Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 40-45

⁸¹ Franz Kugler, *Handbook of Painting: the Italian Schools*, Vol. 1, ed. and intro. A. H. Layard, London: John Murray, 1887, xv, xvi.

⁸² Qtd. in Gibson-Wood, *Studies*, 280-287. My translation: 'n'en vaut pas la peine (...) Mon but est atteint meme sous la forme baroque sous laquelle j'ai présenté mon livre au public (...) bien ou mal que ce soit – avec le livre du Lermolieff (...) la method de Lermolieff' and 'trop méchant (...) divertissement intellectuel (...) la soidisante verité'.

Writing a preface that is self-subversive is a standard ironic procedure. A famous example is Montaigne's *Essais*, which begins by telling the reader that this is a work of complete vanity, and that anyone with any intelligence would stop reading now: 'Adieu donc'.⁸³ Morelli, in his own way, does the same thing. Lermolieff concludes the foreword to the 1880 book with a statement that led Pope-Hennessy to accuse Morelli of 'astounding disingenuousness', the Russian hypocritically asserting that: 'To bickering and strife I am a declared enemy. Life is too short and time too precious to waste on the weary polemics daily waged by art-critics'. The reader is also given the familiar irony that the theoretical justification for science is scepticism: 'I have a principle that doubt is the basis of all knowledge'.⁸⁴ To be scientific is to doubt; however, if scepticism is absolute, then this leads to an infinite regress, and all that remains is irony.

The prefaces to Morelli's *Kunstkritische Studien* perform the same function. In 1890, to the accusation that Morellian method was unoriginal, Lermolieff writes: 'there is nothing new under the sun'. He then attacks his opponents who make his method 'appear ridiculous' by proclaiming it superficial and materialistic. Lermolieff then confuses the issue: he claims that Morellian method is not based on mannerisms (*Schnörkel*), which are chance occurrences and so very untrustworthy, but instead 'forms', which are determined 'by inward conditions [*hängt von geistigen Ursachen ab*]'. Strangely, this suggests that a purely material analysis is deceptive, and surreptitiously hints that Morellian connoisseurship draws on Goethe's science and Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. However, it also directly destabilises the most important aspect of Morellian method, as Lermolieff had intriguingly stated that 'material trifles (a student of calligraphy would call them flourishes [*Schnörkel*])' can aid us in identifying the author of a painting, and help us 'to attain, if possible, a scientific knowledge of art'. For Lermolieff 'Schnörkel', that most characteristically Morellian observation, are both important indicators of authorship, and yet highly problematic. Here Morelli is not trying to clarify, but intentionally introduce ambiguities, reminding us of Friedrich Schlegel: 'Why should I provide misunderstandings when no one wants to take them up?'⁸⁵

The preface of 1891 is even more explicit in its negational function, in its aim of undermining any definitive interpretation. In this text, Lermolieff retrospectively considers some 'adverse criticism', but ironically agrees with each negative judgement. The first concerns the quality of the text: 'it has been said that my writings lacked that grave and learned tone which alone is calculated to impress the reader'. Lermolieff replies: 'This is very possible' but that 'many persons say the

⁸³ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais. Livre premier & second*, 'Au lecteur', Bordeaux, 1580.

⁸⁴ Pope-Hennessy, *Study*, 13–14; Morelli, 1880, viii–ix, and 1883, v–vii; Morelli, 1880, iv (my translation: 'Ich halte es mit dem Grundsatz, dass der Zweifel der Grund aller Erkenntnis ist').

⁸⁵ Morelli, 1890, vii–ix, and 1892, [43–45]; Morelli, 1891, 7, n.1, and 1893, 4, n.1; Morelli 1890, 95, and 1892, 75; Friedrich Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde; and, The Fragments*, trans. P. Firchow, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, 250–271.

most foolish things with an air of the greatest solemnity, while others treat very important subjects in a light and playful manner'. This follows Friedrich Schlegel's definition of Socratic irony as 'playful and serious', which Locatelli has shown influenced Morelli.⁸⁶ Next, the Russian suggests that it is actually the voice of academic authority which is absurd, because 'nothing appears to me more ludicrous than that self-complacent assurance and pretentious gravity'. As to the suggestion that his books 'are badly written', Lermolieff concedes: 'This I willingly admit'. The preface continues with the assertion that, along with 'all my other shortcomings', the author is guilty of 'having only touched upon subjects that were deserving of fuller treatment.' Rather than negate the negative, the author affirms it as a positive; to do so would have been counter-productive, depriving 'my readers of the pleasure of thinking and studying for themselves'. The next criticism, 'courteously expressed by an English art-critic', regards the intentionally antagonistic design, suggesting that Lermolieff's writing is 'too controversial'. Again the Russian insists on the criticism's justness, but with the condition that this is from 'an English point of view'. With regards to the connoisseur's attributions and method, the reader is vexed by the provisional irony: 'in nearly every instance where I have been misled in forming a judgement upon a picture, I had either misapplied the method or not made use of it at all'.⁸⁷ The final renunciation is the most significant and most infuriating. Answering the claim that his connoisseurship is not scientific, Lermolieff asks his reader if he had ever suggested his 'innocent writings' constituted science? He considers this 'ludicrous', and with tangible hypocrisy states: 'I believe the opposite'.⁸⁸

Why then is the interpretation that Morelli is the inventor of scientific connoisseurship still with us today? Lermolieff blames his readers with the proverb: 'There are none so deaf as those who won't hear'.⁸⁹ The reader must listen for the irony, 'that black poison', as Charles Baudelaire termed it in *Les Fleurs du mal*. In a letter to Layard (29 November 1880), Morelli writes that his opponents have not discovered the 'poison' hidden in the preface to his first book: 'All the better for me!'⁹⁰ It has been said that the truly ironic is the ambiguously ironic; this is painfully true of *Kunstkritische Studien*. Morelli did make a contribution to the history of art; however, the function of the text is to undermine the discourse it enters into, becoming what Hutcheon terms 'counter-discourse'. The problem arises that the text is therefore complicit with 'the dominant discourse it contests', meaning

⁸⁶ Morelli, 1891, ix-x, and 1893, [8-9]; Schlegel, *Lucinde*, 265; Locatelli, *Metamorfosi*, 82.

⁸⁷ Morelli, 1891, viii-x, and 1893, [7-9].

⁸⁸ Morelli, 1891, x-xi (my translation: 'unschuldigen Schriften (...) lächerlich (...) Ich glaube im Gegentheil'). The nineteenth-century English translation moderates this unambiguous contradiction: Morelli, 1893, [10].

⁸⁹ Morelli, 1891, x-xi, and 1893, [9-10].

⁹⁰ Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. McGowan, J., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Qtd. in Gibson-Wood, *Studies*, 205 (my translation: 'Tant mieux pour moi!').

Morellian irony is 'hypocritically affirmative' and especially in danger of being read literally.⁹¹

Kierkegaard writes: 'Irony is a disciplinarian'.⁹² So the question is: what lesson are we being taught? I would argue that Morelli is educating his reader about the nature of connoisseurial authority, and the dangers of assuming a scientific knowledge. In the author's first article of 1874, Lermolieff informs his reader that he has overcome his 'natural diffidence' and let his 'vanity have full play'. He then offers this prayer: 'May the Gods preserve this audacious venture from the fate of the frog in the fable!'⁹³ Here the Russian equates himself with Aesop's frog, who wished to be as big as the farmer's ox: 'So the Frog took a deep breath, and blew and blew and blew, and swelled and swelled and swelled. And then he said: "I'm sure the Ox is not as big as..." But at this moment he burst.' This frog teaches us: '*Self-conceit may lead to self-destruction*'.⁹⁴ The irony is that Lermolieff's conceitedness, his seemingly infallible experimental method, did not lead to his downfall, but ensured his success. Morelli realises his aims by using Lermolieff to achieve a knowing self-aggrandisement, what August Wilhelm Schlegel called 'the half self-conscious hypocrisy towards ourselves'.⁹⁵ This hypocrisy in relation to the vanity of connoisseurship reveals the hidden depths of Morelli's contribution to art history.

Did Morelli really think Giorgione was his friend? Or was he laughing at Lermolieff? Did he even believe that Giorgione painted the Borghese *Portrait*? Or was he lying to his readers? It is a suspiciously bad attribution, and was never taken seriously by later connoisseurs. The gallery currently attributes the painting to Bernardino Licinio, a reasonable assumption when compared with the faces in the signed and dated *Portrait of Arrigo Licinio and His Family* from the same gallery. Unlike Cavalcaselle, whose notes and drawings and manuscripts have been left to posterity, the lack of primary sources means it is impossible to prove the sincerity of Morelli/Lermolieff's attributions.⁹⁶ A similar situation arises with Morelli/Lermolieff's controversial disattribution of multiple drawings by Raphael. After a lengthy justification, Lermolieff tells his reader that: 'It may be that the results of my researches on the history of Raphael's style is an illusion'.⁹⁷ Even the

⁹¹ Muecke, *Irony*, 8; Hutcheon, *Edge*, 30, 27, 16.

⁹² Kierkegaard, *Irony*, 326.

⁹³ Morelli, 1874, 2, and 1890, 82, and 1892, 65.

⁹⁴ Aesop, *The Fables of Aesop*, trans. J. Jacobs, London: Macmillan, 1922, 58.

⁹⁵ Qtd. in Muecke, *Irony*, 21 – From A. W. Schlegel's *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809–1811), which Morelli owned (Panzeri and Bravi, *Figura*, 73).

⁹⁶ Thousands of documents relating to Crowe and Cavalcaselle's research can be found in the National Art Library at the Victorian and Albert Museum in London, and also at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. For Morelli there are collections of letters, some annotated books at the Brera in Milan and Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, and a travel journal from 1861 contained in a private family archive and published by Anderson (*Taccuini* 2000).

⁹⁷ Morelli, 1880, 377, and 1883, 340; cf. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, 'Raffaello come test-case della validità del metodo morelliano', in *Cultura dei Conoscitori*, 331–350, and Locatelli, "Die Jugendentwicklung Raffaels", 349–351

famous Morellian method itself, Lermolieff tells his reader, 'may perhaps be an illusion'. To understand Morelli, we must read his writing closely. We must listen to Lermolieff when he quotes the proverb: 'appearances are deceitful'.⁹⁸

Luke Uglow – Luke's AHRC funded doctoral thesis on the reception of Giorgione was completed at the University of Edinburgh in 2012. He has since taught at the University of York, is currently Teaching Fellow at the University of Aberdeen, and is continuing his research into the historiography of Italian Renaissance Art, particularly responses to early sixteenth-century Venetian painting. He is interested in connoisseurship, and his article 'The Life and Death of *The Connoisseur*' is published in *Arts Libraries Journal* (January 2014).

luke.uglow@abdn.ac.uk

⁹⁸ Morelli, 1880, 3 (Unsurprisingly, not translated into English; my translation: 'dieß mag vielleicht auch eine Illusion sein'); Morelli, 1890, 19, 24, and 1892, 16, 20.