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Constructing the Renaissance: Leighton and Pater¹

The publication in 1873 of Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is the most famous but by no means sole manifestation of the Victorian preoccupation with the Renaissance in Italy, or rather with constructing an idea of that Renaissance. Literary manifestations of this impulse were numerous, most conspicuously in Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842) and "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" (1845), examples, as DeLaura notes, of Browning's "reveling in the strong personalities produced by the Renaissance" (371). "Pictor Ignotus" (1845), "Fra Lippo Lippi" (1855), and "Andrea del Sarto" (1855) are particularly intriguing for constructing an image of the artist confronting cultural prescriptions. *The Ring and the Book* (1868-1869) constitutes an incisive exploration of the Renaissance in all its violence, politics, and religiosity, its examination paralleled by Eliot's *Romola* (1862-1863). The influence of Alexis Rio's *De la poesie chretienne* (1836) was especially extensive among writers who theorized about the significance of the Renaissance, for Rio's emphasis on the primacy of the early "Christian" Renaissance artists, those of the duecento and trecento, formed the basis of an intense debate among Victorian historians of art. Anna Jameson in *Early Italian Painters* (1845) praised Fra Angelico as an idealist, Christian artist, contrasting with the naturalism of an artist like Lippo, as DeLaura observes (378), a position advanced in her *Sacred and Legendary Art* (1848). Ruskin read Rio in 1843 and referred to "the foul torrent of the Renaissance" (8.48) in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Ruskin's denunciation of the "pagan" Renaissance was to reach its most intransigent form in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* in 1853 with his discussion of "Roman Renaissance." Kingsley expressed his strong disapproval of the trecento in *Yeast* in 1848.

It is in the context of this debate about the Renais-

sance and about which Renaissance—the early (duecento/trecento) or the later (quattrocento/cinquecento)—was to be preferred, that the art and aesthetic theory of Frederic Leighton merits a unique place. Leighton, as Ormond has noted, exhibited the influence of Renaissance artists throughout his career: "Raphael is only one of many Renaissance influences observable in Leighton's work" (30). Leighton studied at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence during 1845-46; under Edward von Steinle at Frankfurt from 1850-52 Leighton absorbed the allegiance of the German school and the Nazarenes for Raphael, an impression reinforced when he met Cornelius and Overbeck when he went to Rome in November 1852. Much of Leighton's painting in the 1850s and 1860s was a "conscious tribute" (VHR 102) to Renaissance art and its masters, as with *La Nanna* (1859) or *Golden Hours* (1864), discussed below.

Leighton's construction of the Renaissance assumed two forms, one in pictures evoking Renaissance subjects and artists, the other a theorizing about the nature of the Renaissance itself in his address to students of the Royal Academy on 10 December 1887, "Art in Modern Italy; Tuscany. The Renaissance." Leighton had two specific objectives in his pictures and in his address: to construct an image of the artist and to configure an idea of the cultural metier in which the artist practiced. In this respect, Leighton's agendas were not unlike those of Pater in *The Renaissance*, a text which fashions discourses about both artists and their confrontation with cultural imperatives. Both Leighton and Pater implicitly repudiate Ruskin's rejection of the "pagan" High Renaissance (c. 1495-1520), especially Ruskin's denunciation of Michelangelo. In this they follow the emphasis and preference expressed by Vasari in *Lives of the Artists*, a common source for both Leighton and Pater.

Leighton's oeuvre is particularly unusual vis-a-vis

Pater's evolving idea of the Renaissance in the essays he produced between 1867 and 1873 which became *The Renaissance*. Leighton's earliest canvases dealing with the Renaissance date from the early 1850s, the period of his study in Frankfurt and residence in Rome. By the time Pater made his first trip to Italy in 1865, therefore, Leighton had already constructed an image of the Renaissance which Pater could not ignore. Leighton's idea of the Renaissance, however, differed from Pater's in one key respect. Throughout *The Renaissance*, Pater constructs an image of the Renaissance as "sweet"; as Bullen has noted, Pater uses the word "sweetness" in the essay on Michelangelo "some nineteen times" (66). Leighton's pictorial construction of the Renaissance was divided: one part of his oeuvre emphasized its festive and sweet character; the other, however, focused on its violence and militarism, which is virtually excluded from *The Renaissance* in favor of a tenor established in "Aucassin and Nicolette" (later expanded to "Two Early French Stories") which concentrates on a graceful Renaissance.

Both Leighton and Pater embrace the early as well as the High Renaissance. Pater makes this explicit in the opening essay, which acknowledges "this notion of a Renaissance in the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century—a renaissance within the limits of the middle ages itself—a brilliant, but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterward done in the fifteenth" (1). Leighton's explicit writing about the Renaissance, however, appeared only in 1887 with his RA address, the year before the third edition of Pater's study in 1888: Leighton therefore constructs a Renaissance in his painting of the 1850s and 1860s before theorizing its culture later in the century. At the same time, both Pater and Leighton use their respective discourses to construct an idea of the artist. Leighton's canvases and Pater's essays constitute their respective array of heroes as surely as Carlyle's project in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. The evolution of Leighton's canvases from decade to decade juxtaposes artist and culture, sweetness and violence, in a constant dialectic about the definition of the Renaissance which reflects the conflicted representation of the Renaissance during the nineteenth century, as the adherents of Rio (Ruskin, Jameson) confronted his opponents (Kingsley, Brown- ing).

The earliest surviving Renaissance canvas by Leighton is *Cimabue Finding Giotto in the Fields of*

Florence (c. 1848-50), showing Cimabue discovering Giotto's drawing of a sheep on a stone, taken from Vasari:

One day Cimabue was on his way from Florence to Vespignano, where he had some business to attend to, when he came across Giotto who, while the sheep were grazing near by, was drawing one of them by scratching with a slightly pointed stone on a smooth clean piece of rock. And this was before he had received any instruction except for what he saw in nature itself. Cimabue stopped in astonishment to watch him, and then he asked the boy whether he would like to come and live with him. . . . After he had gone to live there [Florence], helped by his natural talent and instructed by Cimabue, in a very short space of time Giotto not only captured his master's own style but also began to draw so ably from life that he made a decisive break with the crude traditional Byzantine style and brought to life the great art of painting as we know it today, introducing the technique of drawing accurately from life, which had been neglected for more than two hundred years. (57-58)

Leighton's canvas shows Cimabue bending solicitously over the boy, who gazes at this drawing. The canvas marks Leighton's strong interest early in his career with constructing an image of the artist. Giotto is conceived as both a natural genius and as a revolutionary for his interest in drawing from life. In this respect, Leighton aligns himself with both groups in the Victorian debate, praising the early Renaissance of the late duecento while noting the innovation of Giotto in insisting on a new realism in opposition to the "crude Byzantine style" of his predecessors. More significantly, however, is Leighton's underscoring of a prime—indeed primal—myth of the artist. As Kris and Kurz have noted (24-25), the legend of Cimabue finding Giotto has contributed powerfully to the construction of the idea of the artist:

Not only does this piece of information have no basis in any tradition traceable to the lifetime of either of the two men, but it is also contradicted by everything that we do know with any certainty of their lives. . . . The story has long been recognized for what it is—history faking. Here as elsewhere, the popular imagination has tried to link glamorous figures from the past with one another. . . . Alongside the general tendency to genealogize that is

expressed in the linking of Giotto and Cimabue, as pupil and teacher, there are more specific similarities that relate to the workings of fate—the role of Tyche.

The Cimabue/Giotto story represents “the discovery of talent as a mythological motif,” a motif that “seeks to highlight that a master’s genius already strives for expression in childhood” (26, 28). Leighton’s first canvas of the Renaissance, therefore, can be aligned with nineteenth-century British hero-worship. As such, it inaugurates Leighton’s strong interest in the construction of the artist and in his own self-construction.

Completed in 1851 when he was a student at Frankfurt, *Preparing for a Festa* (Figure 1) counterbalances *Cimabue Finding Giotto* with its emphasis on cultural metier. Depicting a section of Florence north of the Duomo during the quattrocento, the painting emphasizes the festive, not the violent, Florentine Renaissance: gardeners work on the left, the couple at the right put up a garland, a lady decorates a tree, a family descends a staircase on the left. In the background the dome of the cathedral is visible, a detail emphasized by the two medallions, of Arnolfo di Cambio and of Brunelleschi, the architects of the structure. This representational linking of artist with metier is reinforced by elements of the Florentine frame, especially the two allegorical female figures at the bottom representing Sculpture (on the left) and Painting (on the right). The myth of the artist advanced in *Cimabue Finding Giotto* is contextualized in the celebratory *Preparing for a Festa*, but the frame “like an altar picture” (VHR 99) emphasizes the religion of art, a topos emphasized by the deliberately inaccurate rendering of the dome of the cathedral, which renders it the City of God rather than that of Man. This exaltation of the artist is reinforced by the medallions and the female allegorical figures. These two early constructions of the Renaissance anticipate much of Leighton’s later representation.

Leighton evokes the same view of Florence in *The Death of Brunelleschi* of 1852 (Figure 2), with the gray-blue dome of the cathedral in the distance again evoking the transcendental City of God. The dying Brunelleschi’s head is cradled by Donatello (modeled by Leighton’s father). As the Ormonds observe, “its Renaissance prototypes are the familiar death scenes of the Virgin or of saints” (12), a factor crucial in its construction of the artist as hero. Again, the

juxtaposition of Brunelleschi with Donatello evokes the pseudo-relationship of Cimabue and Giotto. The canvas, however, also has a place in the debate between realists and idealists during the Victorian period, if one notes the anecdote about the crucifixes in Vasari’s life of Donatello, in which Donatello exhibited a wooden crucifix to Brunelleschi, expecting praise. When Brunelleschi objected that the body was more that of a peasant than of Christ, Donatello challenged him to make a better one, which the architect did in a more refined fashion. The canvas, like the *Cimabue Finding Giotto*, juxtaposes two artists to explore the idea of transition in styles of art, in fact evoking the dialectical discussion during the nineteenth century. The myth of the artist in the Renaissance is incorporated into the debate about early Christian art during the 1840s and 1850s.

Leighton’s final canvas during the 1850s about the nature of the artist is the famous *Cimabue’s Celebrated Madonna is Carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence* of 1855, derived from Vasari’s *Lives*:

Then he did a panel picture of Our Lady for the church of Santa Maria Novella, where it hangs up high. . . ; the figure was larger than any that had been painted up to that time, and some of the angels show that although he worked in the Byzantine style he was gradually adopting something of the draughtsmanship and method of modern times. As a result this painting so astonished his contemporaries, who had never seen anything better, that it was carried to the sound of trumpets and amid scenes of great rejoicing in solemn procession from Cimabue’s house; and Cimabue was generously praised and rewarded for it. (53)

The canvas depicts Cimabue, in white with a laurel crown, leading the boy Giotto in its center, preceded by ecclesiastics and musicians. Behind the two artists is a portrait gallery of famous painters and sculptors: in profile Arnolfo, previously depicted on the medallion of *Preparing for a Festa*; the sculptor Giovanni da Pisa; the bearded Andrea Tafi. King Charles of Anjou is represented on horseback, since in 1267 he had seen Cimabue painting the picture. At the right leaning against the wall is Dante, who included both Cimabue and Giotto in the *Purgatorio*. The canvas was acclaimed by the RA Hanging Committee and nearly all critics when exhibited, and it gained instant notoriety

when it was purchased by Queen Victoria.

Writing to William Allingham, Rossetti noted: "The R.A.s have been gasping for years for some one to back against Hunt and Millais, and here they have him. . . I think there is great richness of arrangement" (quoted in Rhys 71). Ruskin in *Academy Notes* declared:

This is a very important and very beautiful picture. It has both sincerity and grace, and is painted on the purest principles of Venetian art. . . Everything in it is done as well as it *can* be done. Thus, in the picture before us, in the background is the Church of San Miniato, strictly accurate in every detail. . . all things, throughout, with as much care as the painter could bestow. . . Its defect is, that the equal care given to the whole of it, is not yet *care enough*. (14.25)

As Vasari noted, Cimabue is celebrated for his transitional nature, moving from the forms of Italian Byzantine style for a stronger naturalism. The canvas, like *The Death of Brunelleschi* and *Cimabue Finding Giotto*, expresses an empowering mythos of the artist, now perfectly conjoining the artist and his historical metier. In the pencil and white chalk cartoon for the painting, this empowerment is emphasized by Cimabue's more arrogant carriage and Giotto's more vital gaze and posture than in the final canvas. Leighton's own sources, as Newall observes, are an homage to the Renaissance: "Leighton owed as much to his study of Raphael and Leonardo for the organization of the picture's figures in a single plane within an architectural setting, as he did to the Venetians for the richness of surface" (20). In this homage, the canvas evokes *Preparing for a Festa*, but here the artist is totally integrated with the festival, not outside it in medallions. Pater recognizes the significance of Leighton's achievement in his essay on Leonardo, where he notes that an exhibition of the cartoon for *Saint Anne* drew such crowds that it "gave Leonardo a taste of the 'triumph' of Cimabue" (96). Just as Botticelli, Luca della Robbia, and Leonardo constitute a pantheon of heroes for Pater, so in the 1850s did Cimabue, Giotto, and Brunelleschi exist for Leighton.

If paintings such as *Preparing for a Festa* and *Cimabue's Madonna* represent a "sweet" Renaissance, two other of Leighton's Renaissance subjects of the 1850s emphasized the bellicose and violent dimension of Italian culture, especially by turning to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for inspiration. In 1850 Leighton

had painted the untraced *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Duel between Romeo and Tybalt*. The first of the surviving canvases, *The Reconciliation of the Montagues and the Capulets over the Dead Bodies of Romeo and Juliet* of 1855 was conceived at the same time as *Cimabue's Madonna* and was originally intended to be the larger of the two works. In Leighton's canvas, Juliet lies on Romeo's body, while Lady Capulet has thrown herself over the corpses; to the right is Count Paris, while the Friar raises his arms on the left. In the center, forming a pyramid to contrast with the strong diagonal of the dead lovers, is Prince Escalus between the two fathers. Newall notes "the way in which the dead bodies fuse and support each other conveys the tragic symbolism of the piece" (13). To emphasize this bellicosity, a soldier in the background prevents a group of citizens from entering the tomb. Unlike the death scene of *The Death of Brunelleschi*, however, this canvas emphasizes an early Renaissance of hatred, political factionalism, and the divisive familial allegiances of the consorteria. Rather than showing the dead lovers alone, or the moment of their suicides, Leighton remains faithful to the text's emphasis on the role of the Prince, whose ruthless political education is the play's major subject.

The Feigned Death of Juliet of 1858 (Figure 3) juxtaposes a background scene of preparation for the marriage festival with the grim discovery of Juliet's apparently lifeless body. In the staggered posture of Capulet, the grief of Lady Capulet, and the lament of the Nurse, Leighton creates an effective tableau while he isolates the non-family members, Paris and the Friar, to the right. The two paintings evoke a Renaissance removed from that of Pater's text, balancing the image of the sweet Renaissance with a more violent paradigm to which Leighton was to return in the 1860s and 1870s. The fact that Leighton in the 1850s constructed a Renaissance both sweet and violent demonstrates a central difference from Pater's agenda in *The Renaissance*. As Ryan notes, "the essays on Botticelli, da Vinci, and others in *The Renaissance* are by no means objective studies but are frankly colored by Pater's own temperament, being a record essentially of the impressions made on him by the works of these artists, the thoughts they evoked in him" (29-30). While both Leighton and Pater construct artistic pantheons in their works, therefore, Leighton—as a practicing painter—is determined to construct an image of the artist but contextualize and historicize it in a

cultural metier more comprehensive than Pater's. *The Reconciliation of the Montagues and the Capulets* and *The Feigned Death of Juliet* are essential components of the artistic pantheon constructed in the *Cimabue Finding Giotto*, *The Death of Brunelleschi*, and *Cimabue's Madonna*.

In 1859 Leighton exhibited *A Roman Lady [Nanna Risi]* (Figure 4) at the Royal Academy, a study of the celebrated model Nanna Risi, whom Leighton had met during the winter of 1858-59. Leighton painted her several times, but this canvas is his most persuasive homage to Renaissance art, as Dorment (5) notes:

In many ways *A Roman Lady* reflects Leighton's admiration for the painters of the Italian Renaissance. The artist posed Nanna in the mode of Pontormo—detached, erect, one arm languorously held at her shoulder. The sfumato handling of her cheekbones and her thin smile evoke Leonardo, while the lush, scumbled colors and luxurious fabrics recall Veronese.

Leighton poses the model against a pilaster containing a grotesque, a detail adding to the mystery evoked by the model's face. Leighton had made studies of the *Mona Lisa* when he was in Paris in 1856, and there can be little doubt that *A Roman Lady* was to Leighton what *La Gioconda* was to Pater. In fact, it is remarkable the extent to which Pater's description of the *Mona Lisa* describes the enigmatic gaze of La Nanna with

the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. . . . All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form. . . the mysticism of the middle ages with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. (97-99)

The painting is an amalgamation of Leonardo with, as the Ormonds note, "the influence of sixteenth-century Venetian painting" (42). Since three portraits of Nanna Risi were exhibited in 1859, one being bought by the Prince of Wales, it is evident that this modern *Gioconda* resurrected for Pater and his audience the experience of Leonardo's original.

The 1860s were a transitional decade for Leighton as an artist, as he began to move from Italian subjects

to the classical evocations which have made him famous. During the decade, however, he continued to develop the ideas he had formulated in the 1850s, especially the examination of the nature of the Renaissance itself and the construction of the artist within this context. One of Leighton's major engagements with Renaissance subject matter was his involvement in illustrating Eliot's novel *Romola*, which appeared in twelve installments between July 1862 and August 1863. As Witemeyer notes, "it would be difficult to imagine a better-qualified illustrator for George Eliot's historical novel of Florence in the 1490s" (158). Eliot was pleased with some of Leighton's illustrations, less so with others, but both she and Lewes admired his first Renaissance canvas of the decade, the *Michael Angelo Nursing His Dying Servant* of 1862, derived from Vasari:

The same year saw the death of Urbino, Michelangelo's servant, or rather, since this was what he had become, his companion. Urbino first came to live with Michelangelo in Florence in 1530, the year of the siege, after his pupil Antonio Mini had gone to France. He proved a devoted servant, and during the twenty-six years that he lived with him was made a rich man by Michelangelo, who had come to love him so much that, old as he was, when Urbino fell ill he looked after him, sleeping in his clothes at night in order to see to his wants. (402-403)

Vasari quotes the artist's comment that "the better part of me has gone with him" (403). In Leighton's canvas, the servant leans against Michelangelo's shoulder, the sombre palette reflecting the subject. As in Pater's essay of 1871, the Michelangelo presented by Leighton is keenly human, sweet as well as intense. In examining Leighton's canvas, it is important to remember that in England Michelangelo was severely disliked and even despised by nineteenth-century writers such as Shelley, Hazlitt, Haydon, Dickens, and above all Ruskin, as Bullen has observed (62). Rather than choose between the artists of the duecento/trecento and those of the High Renaissance, Leighton by painting *Cimabue* and Michelangelo limns the significance of both the early and the late Renaissance.

By depicting Michelangelo in his studio workshop, Leighton makes this linkage explicit by noting the artist's role qua artist: he includes in his left hand his hammer and in the background the sculpture of *Moses*, the horns of which are reflected in the mirror above the

heads. In this manner, Leighton elevates the role of artist to that of prophet, and interpreter, of the divine. At the end of his essay on Michelangelo, Pater noted the "strange interfusion of sweetness and strength" (76) in the artist, and few painters have constructed a more paradigmatic expression of this idea than Leighton. Both Leighton and his confrere Edward Poynter repudiated Ruskin's denunciation of Michelangelo in his lecture of 1875. Leighton particularly in this canvas elevates the artist to vatic status while simultaneously constructing him in the domestic sphere. Leighton's intense identification with Michelangelo is overt in *Leighton House*, which retains a copy of the *Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John* as well as a reproduction of the creation of Adam from the Sistine Ceiling. In 1863-64, Leighton completed cartoons for mosaics for the South Court of the South Kensington Museum of Nicolo Pisano and of Cimabue, thereby linking the latter, a duecento artist, with his cinquecento descendant Michelangelo painted the previous year.

With the exception of these two mosaics, *Michael Angelo Nursing His Dying Servant* is the last in Leighton's gallery of hero/artists. In the sequence of Cimabue/Giotto/Brunelleschi/Michelangelo one perceives a marked anticipation of the corresponding construction of heroes in *The Renaissance* with its sequence of Botticelli, Luca della Robbia, Michelangelo, and Leonardo. In the same year, 1862, in which Leighton's canvas of Michelangelo was exhibited, there had been an exhibition of quattrocento sculpture, to be followed by Charles Perkins's *Tuscan Sculptors* of 1864. In both instances, the argument that Michelangelo had predecessors was advanced, which rejected the "standard view. . .that of Vasari who claimed that Michelangelo had no equals and no predecessors" (Bullen, 60). Leighton's sequence would appear to suggest paradigmatic correspondences if not influences among his four selected artists. In effect, this sequence becomes Leighton's pictorial Vasari.

Leighton's iconography of the artist, moreover, serves an additional purpose, for Leighton constructs a version of the Renaissance artist to negotiate the nineteenth-century "problematic of a male poetic" observed by Sussman in his analysis of Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" (185). Sussman contends that Browning's text constructed the artist as "a constellation of male sexual energy, commercial success, and artistic potency that seems to reconcile artistic achieve-

ment with entrepreneurial manhood" in an attempt to efface a "feminized romantic" conception of poetic identity: "the project of situating the source of poetry not in those qualities of isolation and emotional intensity associated with the feminine, but rather in the attributes of entrepreneurial manhood itself, in commercial engagement, energetic activity, and phallic sexuality" (186-87). Leighton's pictorial Vasari of Cimabue/Giotto/ Brunelleschi/Michelangelo, however, is strikingly different from his friend Browning's conception. Leighton, first of all, confronts in the discipleship of Cimabue and Giotto and the collegiality of Brunelleschi and Donatello homosocial affiliations marked by "emotional intensity" in contrast to the insistent heterosexuality of "Fra Lippo Lippi" and even of "Andrea del Sarto." Furthermore, Leighton's Michelangelo exhibits not only emotional intensity but also impending "isolation" in his nursing of his dying servant, with the "nursing" of the title defiantly incorporating the "feminine" so distrusted by Browning, a title exposing the nursing function of Donatello with the dying Brunelleschi in the canvas of 1852. All of Leighton's artist canvases emphasize "homosocial ties. . .beliefs shared with other men" (Sussman 191; Sedgwick *passim*). For Sussman, Browning's artists fail to realize this poetic of "the truly manly artist" (199). Leighton's Renaissance paradigms, however, offer an alternative: the incorporation of qualities constructed by the nineteenth century as feminine into the construction of a masculinity which acknowledges the feminine component of the male. Just as Leighton constructs a comprehensive paradigm of the Renaissance by inclusion of both the tender and the violent, so his construction of the Renaissance artist recognizes that gendered feminine in that gendered masculine.

In 1864 Leighton exhibited two canvases remarkably discrepant in direction. While no longer constructing the hero/painter, Leighton with *Dante in Exile* (Figure 5) depicts the Italian writer who had incorporated Cimabue and Giotto into the *Purgatorio*. Leighton's canvas represents the exiled Dante descending the palace stairs of the Duca della Scala in Verona, suggested by the lines in *Paradiso* XVII. A group of citizens is preparing for a festival (the young man carries a banner, the child a garland). Dante stands isolated, mocked by a jester on the right, while a sentinel stares at him. At the extreme right a more sympathetic young man contemplates the writer, bal-

anced by the gaze of the aristocratic young woman on the left. Behind Dante a nobleman and a priest descend the stairs, mocking him. Newall notes Leighton's "device of spacing the figures to indicate a psychological divide" (48). The isolation of Dante echoes that of Cimabue and Giotto in the 1855 processional canvas, but Leighton's conception of the artist and his metier has altered: by 1864, this is no longer a congenial and supportive environment. To emphasize this alienation, Dante's grey and drab costume contrasts with the lady's cloak and man's doublet decorated with peacock's eyes and with the vivid red drape of the jester. *Dante in Exile* evokes for the last time in Leighton's career the festival motif that he had deployed in the 1850s with *Preparing for a Festa*, with its grim situation echoing the blasted festivals of *The Feigned Death of Juliet*. Undoubtedly the experience of illustrating Eliot's *Romola* had intensified his awareness of the individual isolated from and combatting an uncomprehending society.

The other exhibit of 1864, *Golden Hours*, takes its inspiration "from Venetian pictures of the sixteenth century, with their dreamy and sensuous depictions of lovers, often with musical instruments" (VHR, 105-06). A young man with olive complexion sits at a clavichord or virginal, dressed in a black tunic; opposite him is a woman in creamy Venetian silk, with gold brocade. As Staley notes, "the effect of the dead gold wall-decoration behind the young man is superb" (67), setting off his hair and emphasizing its contrast with the auburn hair of the woman. The work evokes a dreamy but erotic Renaissance, and in its musical motif recalls Leighton's earlier *Lieder ohne Worte* (c. 1860) or *Duett* (1861) and anticipates the 1881 *Idyll*. Just as Leighton's *Golden Hours* evokes Giorgione, so it is in "The School of Giorgione," added to *The Renaissance* in 1888, that Pater enunciates the famous doctrine that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" (106). This essay, very strongly anti-Ruskinian in its idea that art should have no ideological interpretation and that form makes art, is anticipated by Leighton's Giorgionesque exercise in *Golden Hours*, especially Pater's declaration later in the same essay that "in music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art" (109). Leighton's *Golden Hours*, therefore, evokes definitively Venetian painting over a decade before Pater's formulation, first published in 1877. Pater may well have been thinking of *Golden*

Hours when he wrote: "In the school of Giorgione, the perfect moments of music itself, the making or hearing of music, song or its accompaniment, are themselves prominent as subjects. . . . Life itself is conceived as a sort of listening" (118-119).

During the 1860s, Leighton gradually turned from Italian to classical subjects in his canvases. Leighton's last Italian Renaissance subject in the 1860s is *An Italian Crossbowman*, exhibited in 1863 (Figure 6). This much-neglected canvas actually occupies a key position in Leighton's oeuvre. Coming after the illustrations to *Romola* and immediately preceding *Dante in Exile* and *Golden Hours* of 1864, the canvas reflects the turbulent nature of the Renaissance Leighton had suggested in the *Romeo and Juliet* subjects of the preceding decade. It acknowledges the violence of politics and religion underscored by Eliot in her novel and the vicious power struggles chronicled by Dante. The hardened soldier stands before a battle-scarred wall, to which a withered hand was originally affixed over the warrior's right shoulder: the crossbowman apparently intended to avenge this friend's death. In the *Italian Crossbowman* Leighton eschews the love motif of the *Romeo and Juliet* canvases to expose more starkly the wrath of warring families and states during the Renaissance.

The canvas is striking, also, in its suppression of any allusion to the art of the period, and unlike *The Feigned Death of Juliet* or *Dante in Exile*, no juxtaposition of the "sweet" is permitted in its construction. Leighton's unusual canvas, while not suggesting the Pater of *The Renaissance*, does anticipate the Pater who reviewed John Addington Symonds' *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots* in 1875. (Leighton owned all seven volumes of Symonds' study (1879-86), as the Christie's catalogue of 1896 indicates.) Symonds defined the age of despots as the trecento and quattrocento, and Pater recognizes "the earlier despots, the founders of the great princely families" (197) evoked in the Montagues and Capulets of Shakespeare's drama. Pater notes that Symonds emphasizes the "incident or trait of character in which man's elementary power to be, to think, to do, shows forth emphatically, and the writer has not chosen to soften down these characteristics" (198). The *Italian Crossbowman* is the Renaissance Pater was to mute in his study, but his recognition of its existence is clear from the 1875 review.

Pater's review may have received impetus from

Leighton's first Renaissance subject of the 1870s, *A Condottiere* of 1872 (Figure 7), a representation of one of the soldiers of fortune who tyrannized the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Leighton's *Condottiere* exemplifies Foucault's thesis about war and politics: "It is one of the essential traits of Western societies that the force relationships which for a long time had found expression in war, in every form of warfare, gradually became invested in the order of political power" (102). Leighton depicts this professional soldier in chain armour and steel cuirass, with the head covered by a helmet coif. The face of Leighton's soldier evokes that of Michelangelo's *David*, important at this time because in 1873 the original statue was removed from the Palazzo Vecchio and replaced by a copy. The *David*, however, is much more about Florence than about the Israelites, and Leighton's *Condottiere* serves the function noted of the *David*: "the robust body and the face showing courage and wrath are the symbols of Florence struggling for her liberty against powerful enemies" (Barret, 95). The right hand of the *David* is the model for the hands of Leighton's warrior in the *Condottiere*.

The canvas has a long ancestry in Renaissance depictions of the *condottieri*: Donatello's bronze *Gattamelata* (c. 1447-53) in Padua; Verrocchio's bronze *Colleoni* (1487-96); Andrea del Castagno's fresco *Condottiere Niccolo da Tolentino* (1456) in the Duomo, Florence; and Paolo Ucello's fresco *Condottiere Giovanni Acuto* (1436), also in the Cathedral. This last commemorates the Englishman Sir John Hawkwood, who may represent the British prototype of Leighton's soldier. For this reason, as Staley notes, "the colours of the hair and skin are dark, with evidence of toil and suffering" (89). In his review of Symonds' *Renaissance in Italy*, Pater, speaking of the temperamental individuals of the Renaissance, concedes "the movements of these energetic personalities, the magnificent restlessness and changefulness of their lives, their immense cynicism" (200), an accurate grasp of Leighton's *Condottiere* as well as of Symonds' despots. In his review, Pater distinguishes between the liberty of the politicians and that of artists during the Renaissance:

The Renaissance is an assertion of liberty indeed, but of liberty to see and feel those things the seeing and feeling of which generate not the "barbarous ferocity of temper, the savage and coarse tastes" of the Renaissance Popes,

but a sympathy with life everywhere, even in its weakest and most frail manifestations. Sympathy, appreciation, a sense of latent claims in things which even ordinary good men pass rudely by—these on the whole are the characteristic traits of its artists, though it may be still true that "aesthetic propriety, rather than strict conceptions of duty, ruled the conduct even of the best"; and at least they never "destroyed pity in their souls." (198-99)

Leighton's *Condottiere* evokes the martial exploits memorialized by Donatello and Verrocchio in their sculptures, a Renaissance Pater acknowledges but understates in his study.

Leighton's final construction of the Renaissance occurred with *The Arts of Industry as Applied to War*, a fresco for the South Court of the South Kensington Museum painted in 1878-80 but for which the cartoon was devised in 1870-72. (Its companion, *The Arts of Industry as Applied to Peace*, was a classical subject.) In this composition, Leighton "chose to represent the defence of a fifteenth-century Italian city" (Ormond, *Frescoes* 6). On the left, groups of men try on armour, balanced on the right by men testing swords. Between them, a man robed and armed stands at the foot of a stair, at the top of which two soldiers can be viewed beneath an archway. Other groups above these polish shields and examine banners. At the bottom left of the composition, women sew banners. The work is a tribute to both the militarism of the mid-quattrocento as well as to artists, above all to Raphael and his *School of Athens* and to Veronese "in the decorative arrangement of the figures" (30); the fifteenth century links the fresco with the *Romola* illustrations of a decade earlier. In the architecture behind the figures there are "echoes of the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio and the dome of the Duomo" (35), which recall the backgrounds of *Preparing for a Festa* and *The Death of Brunelleschi*. The warlike nature of the campaign preparations evokes the ethos of the *Italian Crossbowman* and the *Condottiere*, the latter completed while Leighton was conceiving the cartoon for the fresco. The work is much in the spirit of Symonds' *Age of the Despots* with its emphasis on the bellicose and violent nature of Renaissance society. As Leighton's final Renaissance-subject composition, it balances the "sweet" conception of the Renaissance advanced by Jameson and Pater.

With the exception of the completed fresco of *The Arts of Industry as Applied to War*, all of Leighton's

Renaissance subjects were completed before the appearance of the first edition of *The Renaissance* in 1873. The fact that Leighton's construction of the Renaissance takes account of both its artistry and its militarism, and that Pater emphasizes the former rather than the latter, is characteristic of Victorian practice regarding the construction of the Renaissance, as Bullen (1991) observes: "Though Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* appeared in 1873, his interest in the Renaissance dates from as early as 1864. Within this decade the concept of "renaissance" was historically unstable and its status as a historical myth extremely problematic" (155). For Leighton as for Pater, "the details of Renaissance history become a chain of signifiers" marked by a "high coefficient of selectivity in choice of subject" (157, 158). This process on the part of both Leighton and Pater is essentially metonymic, a strategy of selection emphasizing the artist's or writer's particular construction. For Leighton this consists of the amalgam Cimabue/Giotto/Brunelleschi/Michelangelo, the juxtaposition of the "sweet" with the violent, and the focus on Italy; for Pater, the sequence of Botticelli/Luca della Robbia/Michelangelo/Leonardo, the emphasis on the "sweet," and the incorporation of France as well as Italy.

Leighton was to elaborate upon, and respond to, Pater's construction of the Renaissance in the lecture he delivered in December 1887 to the students of the Royal Academy. Leighton's lecture parallels Pater's treatise in several ways. Both are interested in development, both integrating literature and art in their constructions of the Renaissance. While both discuss the "sweet" nature of the Renaissance (the word recurs in Leighton), Leighton does not exclude discussion of the militarism and treachery of the Italian states. Most striking is Leighton's recognition of *askesis* as a quality of art. While both Leighton and Pater are concerned with classical influence, Leighton focuses on its merging with Christianity and its influence. Some emphases, however, are different: Leighton regards Michelangelo as an artist rather than as a poet; Dante figures in Leighton as he does not in Pater, while Pater emphasizes Leonardo, who is not treated extensively by Leighton. Like Pater, Leighton was influenced by Perkins's *Tuscan Sculptors*: "Tuscany presents to us the most homogeneous and the most comprehensive image of Italian culture in all its aspects from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century; and is, therefore, best suited to illustrate our present inquiry"

(137). Leighton's divided sense of the Renaissance is based on his reading of Etruscan art, which he declares is both "delicate and graceful" but also "harsh," the former qualities explaining the grace of Giotto and Leonardo, the latter the "rugged angularities" of Verocchio and Donatello, qualities which he reproduced in his *Condottiere* and *Crossbowman*. Leighton notes of the Renaissance "how by degrees these communities, ever armed in strife one against the other, rent by faction within, and worn by ruthless civil feud, fell, one by one, under the rule of despots" (148). The essay is marked, as well, by his acknowledgment of the early and the late Renaissance, especially when he notes the importance of the duecento: "In Art, Andrea called Pisano. . . Arnolfo di Lapo, Cimabue, Giotto, and a host of others placed, within the thirteenth century, the name of Florence on a pinnacle from which it has not been dethroned" (148). For Leighton, the Renaissance was the result of two impulses: "These two forces, then—the impulse to reassert the dignity of man and to rehabilitate the world, and a new-stirred consciousness of a great intellectual inheritance—were the elements out of which the Renaissance movement was compacted" (151). For both Pater and Leighton, the emphasis on "consciousness" is pivotal.

After discussing Dante and Petrarch, Leighton focuses on artists, thereby glossing his paintings of the 1850s. The "thirteenth century has a character of transition," he notes: "In painting, the works, for instance, of Cimabue and of Duccio are still impregnated with the Byzantine spirit. . . . In the Art of Giotto and the Giottoesques, the transformation is fulfilled" (157, 158). Leighton proceeds to concentrate on Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. In his discussion of Leonardo he draws a conclusion similar to that of Pater, noting his "moody and fitful spirit" with "the same haunting sense of mysteries unsolved" (166). In focusing on Michelangelo as artist rather than as poet, Leighton balances Pater's assessment, recognizing the influence of Pater when he observes: "The graver spirit of religion. . . at last found its fullest expression in the sublime creations, and its saddest cry in the rugged sonnets of Michael Angelo Buonarroti" (165). Defying Ruskin and other detractors of Michelangelo, Leighton asserts that the artist is "like some unscaled, heavenward mountain-peak," a man who "saw in the human form a dim reflection of the Divine beauty—man was the all-absorbing and exclusive object of study" (167).

Leighton concludes his address by marking both the severity and the grace of the Renaissance:

Rather, I see in it dignity, throughout unfailling; often a vein of sadness; here and there, among the most impressive of its triumphs, a male severity and a sublimity of strain such as had not winged Italian poetry since the death of Dante. In the most joyous of them I find the limpid beauty of Poliziano's lines, and in the humblest something of the grace and tender charm of that sweet, spontaneous undergrowth of verse. . . . These things I see in Tuscan Art. . . . (171-72)

Leighton's Italian-subject canvases are parts of the dialectical, conflicted construction of the Renaissance in nineteenth-century England, constituting a dimension of the debate engrossing Jameson, Ruskin, Poynter, Browning, Kingsley, Symonds, and above all Pater. In his canvases derived from Vasari—*Cimabue Finding Giotto*, *Cimabue's Madonna*, *The Death of Brunelleschi*, and *Michael Angelo Nursing his Dying Servant*—Leighton constructs the figure of the artist as sufferer, civic hero, and artistic revolutionary, a tense paradigm of male artistic identity. His interest in the warlike, martial nature of the Renaissance, however, is an essential part of his representation of the era, particularly in *A Condottiere* and *An Italian Crossbowman*, one aspect of a cultural dichotomy the other part of

which is represented by *Preparing for a Festa*. This construction of the Renaissance is meta-significative of both his culture and of his function as artist: Leighton conceived his own era as both sensitive and crude, and he perceived himself—like Cimabue and Giotto—as an artist/revolutionary. In his isolated situation Leighton was the solitary but dauntless Michelangelo who as Moses/prophet integrated the classical and Renaissance components of history to formulate his own artistic practice and to lead the Royal Academy as its most distinguished president since Reynolds. In this respect, Leighton's canvases construct a Renaissance prior to, and eventually simultaneous with, Pater's evolving construction in his *The Renaissance*, while his Academy address subtly responds to and counterbalances Pater's emphases. Although Leighton's career from the 1870s to its end emphasized classical subjects, elements of his engagement with Renaissance painting remained, as Andrea Rose observes about *The Captive Andromache* of 1888, "The slightly penumbral landscape. . . recalls his early devotion to the quattrocento Tuscan school" (*Art and Mind*, 50). It was no accident that on his final excursion—to North Africa—in 1895 Leighton brought with him Pater's *Greek Studies*.

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NOTES

¹ The author would like to express his gratitude to the following persons for their decisive assistance with this project: Joanna Banham, Curator, Leighton House, London; Alex Kidson, Assistant Keeper, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Richard Humphreys, Director of Education, The

Tate Gallery, London; Sir George Christie; Barbara Fargher, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Sarah Colgrave, Victorian Paintings, Sotheby's London; Donna L. Sadler, Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia.

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Figure 1. Leighton, *Preparing for a Festa*, 1851; pencil and watercolor on paper; 34 1/2 x 24 1/8; The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 2. Leighton, *The Death of Brunelleschi*, 1852; oil on canvas; 101 x 74; Leighton House, London. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 3. Leighton, *The Feigned Death of Juliet*, 1858; oil on canvas; 44 x 68; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Elder Bequest Fund 1899. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 4. Leighton, *A Roman Lady [Nanna Risi]*, 1859; oil on canvas; 31 1/2 x 20 1/2; Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Henry Clifford Memorial Fund Supplemented by the John D. McIlhenny Fund. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 5. Leighton, *Dante in Exile*, 1864; oil on canvas; 60 x 100; Private Collection; Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's London. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 6. Leighton, *An Italian Crossbowman*, 1863; oil on canvas; 41 5/8 x 25 1/4; National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Reproduced with permission.

Plate 7. Leighton, *A Condottiere*, 1872; oil on canvas; 47 x 28 1/2; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Reproduced with permission.

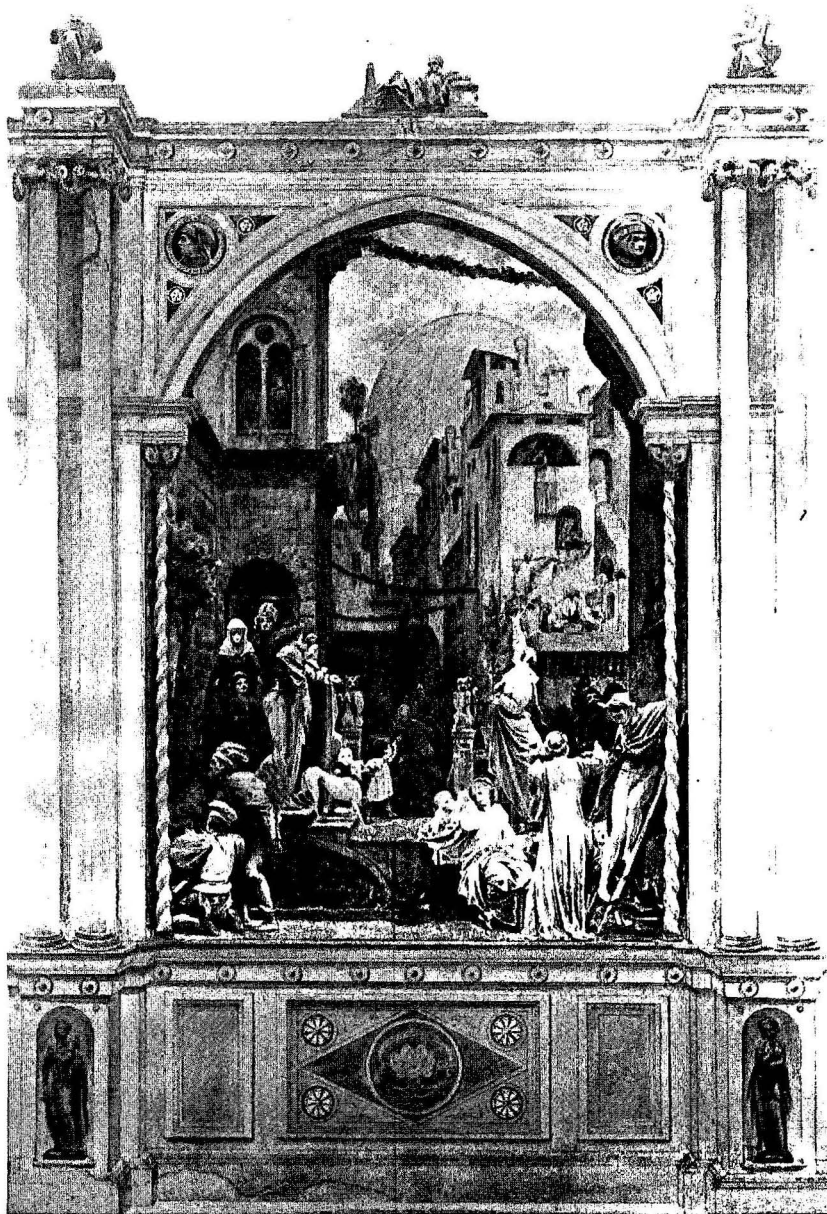


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Figure 3. Leighton, *The Feigned Death of Juliet*, 1858; oil on canvas; 44 x 68; Art



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