Intelligence is especially preservative and sheltering. It is the natural purifier and tidier-up where Genius and Stupidity, disrupting and corrupting by turns, have played the deuce with our poor mortal heritage. And in the face of the millionfold sacrifices of self and others which Ideals and Heroisms have once again presented to our foolish admiration, I would go so far as to add that Intelligence is often more humane than Sentiment, and oftener still, more beneficent than what we call Virtue.

From the misapplications of our Science, the exaggerations and lunacies of our Genius, and the havoc wrought by our higher instincts, we therefore need to be saved, not by Reason which is always too long in getting under weigh, but by Intelligence, active, alacritous, and ubiquitous, afraid neither of being laughed at nor of laughing at others...

Vernon Lee, PROTEUS; or, The Future of Intelligence (1925)

In her time, Vernon Lee’s (1856-1935) life across borders and her virtually unlimited thinking across disciplines, as well as her

\[1\] vernon lee, proteus, the future of intelligence, 1925. Image generated by DALL-E at https://labs.openai.com/e/hzAFxfVRdJKB0bakABzbfJQjG [accessed 5 January 2023]
tackling fields traditionally reserved to men, were seen as 'intellectual amateurishness'. But her multi-disciplinarity and her ability to cross boundaries, place her in our days as a modern thinker and a precursor.

Proteus – named after the mythical shapeshifter – is the title given to Lee’s boundary crossing essay which forms a part of the extensive To-Day and To-Morrow series (Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1923-1932). Lee’s volume appeared in 1925, the fourteenth in a staggering one-hundred and ten volume set. This expansive series included works from notable writers and thinkers of the time, including J. B. S. Haldane (DAEDALUS; or, Science and the Future), Bertrand Russell (ICARUS; or, The Future of Science), Dora Russell (HYPATIA; or, Women and Knowledge), Sylvia E. Pankhurst (DELPHOS; The Future of International Language), S. Radhakrishnan (KALKI; or, The Future of Civilization), and Vera Brittain (HALCYON; or, The Future of Monogamy). The first substantial study of the series, Max Saunders’ Imagined Futures; Writing, Science, and Modernity in the To-Day and To-Morrow Book Series, 1923-1932 clarifies that

The rationale for the To-Day and To-Morrow series was to combine the popularization of expert knowledge for the general reader with predictions about the future... [the] aim for the series was to facilitate intelligent debate by producing a co-ordinated act of comprehensive futurology; a kind of Mass Speculation, or Mass Future Observation.2

Lee’s essay reiterated the predictions and hopes of earlier volumes (revaluation of sexual morality, ovarian transplants, ‘facilitations for changing one’s sex’, the modification of the family unit, the alteration of ‘tenure and conception of property’, the abolition of ‘indissoluble marriage’, inheritance, and the family unit) and speculates upon the facility that enables, and facilitates, these speculations: intelligence. Lee’s Future Intelligence is capable of dealing with the ‘inconsiderable metamorphoses’ of reality and the world beyond the self because it is responsive, playful and engaged, whilst continuing to demonstrate empathy.

This conference aims to think about Lee’s life and works in ways that are responsive, playful, and multidisciplinary. Papers may demonstrate how Lee’s engagement within multiple disciplines resonated during the present moment and have the potential to shape future debates within a field or fields. We would particularly welcome discussions of:

- Psychology, psychiatry, neurology, and mental health
- Genetics, eugenics and evolutionary science
- philosophy, ethics, and morality,
- sociology and geography,
- memory studies,
- musicology and sound studies,

We would also like to hear the ways in which Lee’s works predict tomorrow’s events and trends, and postulate or enable the development of healthy, sustainable futures. We also welcome submission of artworks, creative pieces, performances, and work in non-traditional formats.

The conference will be organised by Sally Blackburn-Daniels (Teesside University, UK), Shafquat Towheed (The Open University, UK), the Associazione Culturale Il Palmerino, and the International Vernon Lee Society.

Papers (20 minutes) will be accepted in the following languages: English, Italian, and French.

We would be delighted to discuss proposals or to answer any questions you may have. Please submit abstracts (300 words) and short bio to the organising committee email thefutureofintelligence2023@gmail.com by April 8, 2023.

Your selection by the scientific committee will be notified to you by May 1, 2023, as well as detailed information about registration.

We hope this conference will be the start of a series of initiatives that will conclude in 2025 with the celebration of the anniversary of the publication of Proteus.

The conference is in partnership or association with: