Vasari’s *rinascita* has been the subject of many readings. In a classic essay on the Renaissance, August Buck stressed that ‘Giorgio Vasari was the first to apply the tripartite notion of history developed by the Renaissance to a continuous historical process, the history of European art.’ Since the publication of Buck’s paper, however, several scholars have diverged from and qualified his assessment. Paola Barocchi and Zygmunt Waźbiński demonstrated that the first (1550) and second—much enlarged—edition of the *Lives* (1568) contain contrasting attitudes towards history. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the term *rinascita* had currency long before Vasari.

In a paper given at the 1974 Vasari Conference, Eugenio Garin gave a lucid assessment of several problems connected with the concept of *rinascita* in Vasari that have yet to be addressed properly. First, he pointed to the fact that the term *rinascita* in the *Lives* has lost any connotation of social, political or religious reform. This was rehearsed and clarified in an exemplary way by Martin Warnke in an interpretation of the frontispiece to the *Lives*. Second, Garin suggested tantalising
similarities between Vasari’s concept of *rinascita* and the ideas of Guillaume Postel. The strong emphasis on the Etruscan origin of the arts in Vasari’s prohemium could reflect the influence of Postel, who published a book on Etruscan culture in Florence in 1551. Garin’s argument, however, did not stop at simply stating Postel’s influence on Vasari, which could have been mediated by Cosimo Bartoli or Giovanfrancesco Giambullari. He further hinted at an even deeper relationship between Postel’s philosophy of history as *rinascita* and Vasari’s art-historical project. Garin’s central thesis was that the universal concept of ‘art’ was derived from the idea of an universal origin of culture and of language in Etruscan civilisation.

In my opinion, this article by Eugenio Garin is also the starting point of Charles Hope’s work on Vasari’s *Lives*. Hope first mounted his argument in 1995, while reviewing a book by Patricia Rubin. A scepticism about Vasari’s authorship of the *Lives* brought Hope to a new interpretation of the internal chronology of the first edition, the Torrentina. Hope contends that the innovative, historiographical idea of dividing the evolution of Italian art into three epochs was not Vasari’s idea, but was devised by members of the Accademia Fiorentina from 1546, during the editing of the *Vite*. Examining the internal chronology of the first edition, Hope proves that the *Proemii*, which feature the historiographical concept of the three epochs, were written after the main bulk of the work had already been completed. Within the *Proemii*, he established a relative chronology, arguing that the *Proemio delle vite*, which tells the history of art *ab origine* through the Middle Ages to Cimabue, was composed first. It was therefore initially deemed sufficient to write a general introduction to the *Lives* recapitulating the history of art before Cimabue. From this ensued the idea of breaking the *Lives* into three epochs, each with its own preface. After this

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