

CALL FOR PAPERS - The International Vernon Lee Society (IVLS) Conference

‘Vernon Lee in America’  
29 June - 2 July 2025

Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO, USA



The International Vernon Lee Society (IVLS) is delighted to announce its first North American conference: ‘Vernon Lee in America’.

While it is well-known that Lee never crossed the Atlantic to visit America, this was not due to a lack of interest in the country, its history, or its people. Lee’s maternal grandmother, Amelia Sophia McPherson (later Abadam, 1776-1831), was one of the first non-native women born in the newly formed United States, and Lee’s half-brother, the poet Eugene Lee-Hamilton, travelled to America where he met his wife, American novelist Annie E. Holdsworth. In 1903 Lee briefly considered going to America on a lecture tour with her friend ‘Th. Bentzon’ (Marie-Thérèse Blanc) but this never materialized. Despite her lack of physical presence in the USA, her works were known and well-received there. Lee’s first novel, *Miss Brown* (1884) - contrary to its disastrous reception in the UK - was ‘voted the most popular novel in America’ in 1885 according to ‘Th. Bentzon’, Sarah Orne Jewett and Frances Power Cobbe.

Lee's popularity in American intellectual circles was owing to her Renaissance-level thinking and writing. Lee researched and wrote about key philosophical, psychological, historical, artistic, musical and literary issues, often focusing on the intertwined nature of these areas of thought. Like many intellectuals and artists of the 'Victorian Age', she experienced the massive changes that World War I brought, a cataclysm that overthrew so much of tradition and convention that all thinking persons were challenged to find ways to understand a whole new world. Lee's deep analysis and bold rhetoric both troubled and inspired other thinkers about the future of the arts, the sciences, the humanities, and intellectual pursuits in general.

'Vernon Lee in America' will be an in-person, three-day conference, open to academics, students, non-affiliated scholars and aficionados of Lee and her circle. There is a continually growing interest in Lee's works in North America, and one of the objectives of this conference is to hear and discover the many and varied research and ideas that scholars are pursuing. At this conference we would encourage speakers to present current research on Lee from any discipline, particularly in relation to Lee's often prescient thinking as a woman writer well ahead of her time(s).

We welcome proposals on any of Vernon Lee's texts, areas of interest and relationships, including:

- Lee's life and works particularly in 1925 (100 years from our 2025 conference)
- Lee's writing and work on travel, ecology, the natural environment, hydrotherapy and thermal tourism
- Lee's writings, relationships, correspondence relevant to feminism and women's liberty
- Lee's writing on psychological aesthetics, movement, *Einfühlung*
- Some possible special intersections with North America:
  - The Vernon Lee Archive in America: Colby College, Maine
  - Reception, editions of her works in America, including articles in American journals.
  - America and Americans in Vernon Lee's correspondence and friendships
  - Travel to America as it appears - or does not appear - in Lee's works
  - Americans in Lee's fiction
  - Lee, pacifism, and the American Civil War, the First World War
  - American philosophy and aphorism, literature and The New Criticism, the Transcendentalist Movement

We welcome individual paper presentations or round table discussions in any of the following formats:

- Individual paper (20 minutes speaking time/2500 words);
- Individual lightning talk (7 minutes speaking time/1000 words);
- Round table panel, up to 5 participants (40 minutes speaking time in total)
- Creative writing responses or creative/critical responses to conference themes (20 minutes speaking time/2500 words)

If you would like to propose an individual paper or panel to present at the conference, please submit a **300-word abstract and a brief biography (50 words)** to the conference organizers at [VLinAmerica2025@gmail.com](mailto:VLinAmerica2025@gmail.com) by **Friday 3 January 2025**. We welcome proposals from individuals at all stages of their academic careers, including graduate students. We will aim to inform you of the outcome of your proposal submission by **Friday 17 January 2025**.

All presenters will need to be members of the International Vernon Lee Society (IVLS) by the time of the conference. Email [IVLSMembers@gmail.com](mailto:IVLSMembers@gmail.com) for more information

**Colorado College** sits at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, in the city of Colorado Springs. In Lee's day, the area was a home to successful mine owners, artists, and writers. The climate and mountain setting made it a popular tourist destination and health resort, particularly for those with weak lungs or tuberculosis. With notable landforms, including the "Garden of the Gods," as well as an art museum with a vast collection of works of the American Southwest at The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Centre, conference goers will have ample opportunity to experience the "Genius Loci" of the area.

