Titian, Metaphor, and the Body

Jeremy Melius, *University of York, United Kingdom*

I Tatti Studies, volume 26, number 2, Fall 2023, pp. 397-419. [Final accepted manuscript.]

In taking measure of Titian's many afterlives, and especially the complex of ideas about embodiment, desire, and painterly mediation his achievements have come to evoke, one could do worse than begin with the writings of William Hazlitt (1778-1830). The English essayist had famously encountered several of Titian's *poesie* from the Orléans collection in 1798, while they were on display in London. "A new sense came upon me," he later said.[1] Hazlitt returned to the encounter as part of his essay "On Gusto" of 1816. Titian's rendering of human flesh, he writes, "leave[s] a sting behind it in the mind":

> Not only do his heads seem to think—his bodies seem to feel…. [H]is flesh-colour…seems sensitive and alive all over; not merely to have the look and texture of flesh, but the feeling in itself. For example, the limbs of his female figures have a luxurious softness and delicacy, which appears conscious of the pleasure of the beholder…. Rubens makes his flesh-colour like flowers; Albano's is like ivory; Titian's is like flesh, and like nothing else…. The blood circulates here and there, the blue veins just appear, the rest is distinguished throughout only by that sort of tingling sensation to the eye, which the body feels within itself.[2]

Both comparable and incomparable—"like flesh, and like nothing else"—Titian's "flesh-colour" is self-referential even as it subsists in a curious state of reciprocity with its viewer. It can seem at first that Hazlitt engages in all too familiar forms of delectation here, gaping at female flesh. At various points in the essay he activates his key term's proximity to the gustatory, speaking of how "the eye" might "acquire a taste or appetite for what it sees."[3]

Elsewhere, he marvels at the cohesive chromatic field—"blended, softened, woven together"—of *Diana and Actaeon* (1556-9; plate 3) and *Diana and Calisto* (1556-9; plate 4), where a "rich taste of colour is left upon the eye, as it if were the palate." Building on his synesthetic pun (palate/palette), Hazlitt celebrates a "texture of flesh that is thoroughly delicious, unrivalled, surpassingly fair," in which depiction becomes a site not only of taste but of tactile sensation, the textural weave of the canvas coterminous with that of delectable skin.[4] Under the perhaps familiar aegis of fetishistic appetite, then, something stranger unfolds in his texts. Describing Titian's portrayal of a Venetian senator, erotic appreciation gives way to more primal appetites: the brush grows "*carnivorous*."[5] And in "On Gusto," flesh becomes sentient, having "feeling in itself," at the same time as it "appears conscious of the pleasure of the beholder"—containing, somehow, that other sensation, too. "[G]usto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another," Hazlitt goes on.[6] Vision partakes of taste and touch. The senses commingle, insides turn out, and viewer and viewed come to inhabit each other. For where exactly does Hazlitt's "tingling sensation to the eye" take place? In the viewer, presumably; but also over the surface of the depicted figure, a sensation "which the body feels within itself"—"body" now redefined as a zone of engagement between painting and beholder.[7] The eye becomes an engine for the distribution of corporeal feeling. And the term "gusto," notoriously difficult to define in the essay, widens out from "an idea of taste once confined to the critic" to encompass artistic production as well, a "quality belonging to a picture as much as to its creator and appreciator," as David Bromwich puts it.[8] It is a space where transfers occur.

Hazlitt's phantasmatic intermingling of bodies provides a framework through which to approach other strong accounts of Titian's corporeal imagination. In front of his paintings, boundaries were always breaking down. In Hazlitt's own day, William Blake (who also studied the Orléans collection closely) noted the way that Titian's overwhelming presence

impinged upon and colonized his own painterly practice—an especially virulent instance of the "temptations and perturbations" Blake faced at "the hands of Venetian and Flemish Demons," who, he says, "put the original Artist in fear and doubt of his own original conception." (Rubens, "a most outrageous demon," was another repeat offender.) "The spirit of Titian," Blake claims, "was particularly active, in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model, and when once he had raised the doubt, it became easy for him to snatch away the vision time after time, for when the Artist took his pencil, to execute his ideas, his power of imagination weakened so much, and darkened, that memory of nature and of Pictures… possessed his mind…" Put in thrall to the visible world by the force of Titian's naturalism, the would-be visionary becomes merely a viewer, "walking in another man's style" and "possessed" by other people's pictures, which extend beyond their frames to displace the artist's very self.[9]

The psychic and somatic dimensions of the intermingling that Titian's paintings staged would only grow in intensity in later critical encounters. In what follows, I want to focus on two additional moments in the still-unfolding reception of Titian's expansive bodily effects. First, a cluster of texts from the years surrounding 1900 by the Anglo-Florentine critic and aesthetician Vernon Lee (Violet Paget, 1856-1935) and her partner Clementina Anstruther-Thomson (1857-1921), in which Titian comes to figure art's most intense forms of somatic entanglement. Second, I turn to the later twentieth-century responses of the philosopher Richard Wollheim (1923-2003), from whom I have adapted my title, where Titian's paintings epitomize the workings of "corporeal metaphor" as such. These accounts are of more than historiographic interest (although that interest is considerable). At stake in reactivating them as responses to the specificity and intensity of Titian's achievement is the development of an enhanced vocabulary, conceptual and descriptive, with which to bring that achievement into words. Nowhere would such language prove more salient, perhaps, than in

relation to Titian's *poesie*, which form the most advanced horizon of this essay's inquiry, and should be seen as the final testing-ground of the approaches it describes. The *poesie* present a dizzying array of ways of being in (and out of) the body, calling out for the kinds of corporeal attention these critics explore. In the operations of repetition and variation at work across its totality, the series sets such transformations into dynamic relation to each other, self-consciously elaborating its themes of somatic connection, undoing, and exposure from canvas to canvas: a turning outward of the body's many modes. If this essay attends mostly to other pictures by the artist, then, following the lead of the texts it considers, it also asks that the reader keep the *poesie* everywhere in mind. In the writings of Hazlitt, Lee, and Wollheim, Titian emerges as a privileged site for thinking about the forms of relation that painting opens up in its corporeal presence for its viewers, in all of its extremity, as well as the means by which critics might try to *write* that presence, feeling again something of Titian's force.

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An Anglo-Florentine writer central to the later phase of British Aestheticism, Vernon Lee also made significant contributions to psychological aesthetics of the period, developing a powerful and idiosyncratic account of what she would eventually call aesthetic empathy. To read Lee is always to catch her in media res. We encounter key aspects of her critical approach, for instance, as she bounds up the long staircase to the Uffizi Galleries on 12 December 1902: "Coming up the stairs (no palpitations), I discover a tune in my head and which I am actually singing or whistling.… It goes on, and I suppose keeps pace with my…heartbeat. I walk quickly and stop at the Baldovinetti *Madonna and Saints*…. Pleasure comes suddenly with perception of bearded saint's white gloves. I then begin to see the relief, go *into* the picture." From here she proceeds to the "Venetian Room"—"tired, bored, disinclined to look at anything." But then suddenly, she says, "Titian's *Flora* takes me [fig. 1]. Her glance, gesture, drapery, all drags one in. I have no desire to stroke, touch, or kiss, but

there is a delight of life, of clean warm life, such as one wishes for oneself in her flesh. Somehow she is physically attractive—no, if her head were tilted she wouldn't be…. Why have I the same pleasure, as just now looking into the river? She attracts me like that water."[10]

Recorded between 1901 and 1904, Lee's "Gallery Diaries" document episodes of what she called her own "aesthetic responsiveness": a fragmentary record of an attention always on the move, drawn into works but also failing to be drawn, disturbed by external circumstance and too restless, often, to stop anywhere for long. What exactly, we might ask, is this account of *Flora* a description of? Even across a few short, disjointed sentences, the picture's aspects keep shifting under Lee's regard, its magnetic polarity again and again reversed. *Flora* drags her in, but precisely not to touch or kiss. The figure is "attractive" in ways that arouse her desire for a Hazlitt-style transference of properties. Except that then she isn't. Lee looks, and is then compelled in memory to look away, down to the mobile surface of the Arno she has just seen out the window—but only to find *Flora*'s phantasmatic attraction calling to her once again. The question of what aesthetic experience is becomes a question of *where* it is—in what relation to the body, a matter of imaginative movement as much as traversal of real space.[11]

Even in this abbreviated form, one gets a sense of the strangeness and urgency of Lee's way with images. Beginning in the early 1890s, together with her lover and collaborator, Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, the pair had set out to record the empirical workings of form, understood as something more than just visible structure. For in the pair's conception, form was first of all something felt, something that moved through the field of sensation and elicited a variety of bodily effects. "Motion as form; form as motion…" Lee would write of their emerging awareness.[12] Drawing on Lee's command of the era's psychological literature in several languages, the pair detailed how their experiments in

galleries across Europe took on an increasingly scientific air, as they sought to verbalize and record the inner bodily movements they underwent before works of art—changes in the rhythmic operations of breath and balance, and of the beating of the heart.[13] The site of their investigation was the human frame's being in time, its wider horizon that of an organism's vitality and survival. For aesthetic experience, they thought, "impl[ied] active participation of the most important organs of animal life."[14] It was through such grounding rhythmic sensations that we came to inhabit aesthetic objects. Or was it the other way around? Were artworks best understood as events taking place in our own bodily feeling, or should corporeal experience itself be understood as an extension of art's reach? Were such intensely personal experiences repeatable? Could they be shared between one sensorium and another? At stake was a thorough-going redefinition of intimacy on material grounds—of what it might mean for bodies to move together, triangulated through the intricate relations of artistic form.

The problem, of course, lay in describing how exactly aesthetic encounters might bring this about. Such particularity was one of Lee and Anstruther-Thomson's strong suits, helping to distinguish their approach from the parallel emergence of psychological theories of empathy (*Einfühlung*) in their day, and with which Lee would eventually contend.[15] Here is how Anstruther-Thomson recalled a crucial moment of her own awakening. Having noticed, in March 1894, that her "breathing involuntarily altered as I looked at different pictures," she continued her "experiments" in April, during a trip to Rome, "noticing that I saw the statue of the Apoxyomenos much better during the noise a stone-mason was making on the floor close by while filing a marble slab [fig. 2]. The short, rapid strokes affected my breathing, and as a result the statue looked animated. When the workman stopped the statue looked distinctly tamer."[16] The encounter involves three crucial aspects. In the first place, it is contingent—coming upon the stone-mason is pure accident—and, we might say, porous to environmental

factors. And therefore, second, the experience is involuntary in its involvement of the observer's body. Anstruther-Thomson cannot help but be taken in. The "short, rapid strokes" of the stonemason's file conspire with the sculpture to lend the whole environment a rhythmic shape. In a strangely literal displacement of corporeal presence, sound floats away from the worker's laboring body and adheres to the standing figure, with its own scraping tool in hand—an acoustic hallucination of the statue somehow making itself.

It does so, third, by way of Anstruther-Thomson's own responsive body: for the encounter is deeply intimate in its effects. Notice the crucial place of breath here, a figure both of temporal being and of permeable boundaries.[17] In its rhythmic structure, breathing provides a temporal shape to bodily life. The unconscious self-regulation of the lungs establishes an animal's "respiratory independence," in the late Leo Bersani's phrase: that first taking of breath announces separation from the maternal body. But in the same moment, a new structure of dependence takes hold, as the infant comes to participate in a wider atmospheric environment. It models a capacity to be "affected," as Anstruther-Thomson insists. For air is at once the medium of self-expression and of a life-giving vulnerability—an experience of the "body's inescapable receptivity," Bersani suggests: "a taking-in which is inseparable from a letting-out."[18] In Anstruther-Thomson's recollection, statue and viewer come to breathe together in promiscuous synchronization, sharing, as it were, a single pair of lungs. In just this way, art and its audience become inextricably involved.

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In Lee and Anstruther-Thomson's most programmatic essay, "Beauty and Ugliness" of 1897, they would track such reciprocity across the visual arts, from architecture and ornament to painting and sculpture. If the experience of classical sculpture lay at the origins of their method, here the art of painting opened onto the widest ambitions of their approach.[19] The essay culminates in a long treatment of Titian's so-called *Sacred and Profane Love* (1514) in

the Borghese Galley (fig. 3). In 1897 the intricacies of the painting's subject matter had still to be worked out: the heady days of iconological debate were yet to come.[20] But for Lee and Anstruther-Thomson such analysis would have hardly mattered. At stake was how this painting vitalized the apprehension of space. "[W]e seem *to inhale colour*," they write in an astonishing phrase, so that painting's arrangements come to take place inside us and indeed *through* us—"a rush of cold air through the nostrils on to the tongue," "a curious effect on the top of the throat, amounting to an impulse to give out a voice."[21] Through that "impulse" to breathe color in and express it as living voice, the picture comes to offer an atmospheric embrace. The essay's terms for that embrace are *tie* and *time*. "Tie" names the way in which the constituent parts of pictorial form coordinate with each other and with the viewer's perceptual imagination, drawing her in. "[B]eing in time," meanwhile, constitutes the rhythmic vitality of perception itself, as form "forces us into quicker or slower inner adjustments" in our looking and being.[22]

Lee and Anstruther-Thomson explore Titian's staging of tie and time through comparison with a lesser picture: Vincenzo Catena's *Saint Jerome in his Study* (c. 1510) in London's National Gallery (fig. 4). An "excellent work of the second rank," it faces off against Titian's "consummate masterpiece." Catena's picture is of course successful: "[W]e see the picture at once and as a whole," they write, "as if all the parts of it were connected by invisible ties and obey an unheard beat": "Thus we see the crucifix, the bookshelf and St. Jerome not as separate items but in connexion with each other: the lion, the quail, the marble steps and the broad-brimmed hat we equally see in connexion. And the existence of all the details seems to be going the same pace and to be happening together." The painting hangs together, then: its "spatial and temporal relations" are "co-ordinated" through and through. And yet, something is missing. Catena never fully achieves what "Beauty and Ugliness" calls a quality of *intimacy*. The picture puts us in a mood which "continues delightful as we look at

it," but "we never seem to get into closer or more intimate relations with it… [I]t encloses us, but always as something into whose innermost we cannot penetrate." Titian's painting, meanwhile, "allows us… to enter in, and so to merge our existence in its nature." More than mere "connexion," "feelings of vivid fellowship" ensue.[23]

Anstruther-Thomson and Lee had tried for several years to comprehend such emergence. The painting seems to have become a touchstone for the pair almost soon as they met in 1888. A drawing of 1889 by John Singer Sargent (a childhood friend of Lee's) perhaps documents an early stage of their attachment (fig. 5). Lee would later describe it as depicting "C. Anstruther-Thomson in the costume of one of the ladies in Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love.'"[24] In it, Anstruther-Thomson leans forward intently, pencil and pad in hand, as if she were feeling her way into the picture by trying one of its figures on for size. But the limitations of so literally mimetic an approach would have quickly become apparent. Empathetic involvement could never simply be a matter of identifying with any single figure within a painterly array. It had to enable identification with the structure as a whole. And so Anstruther-Thomson took up her pencil again, producing a curious "Skeleton Diagram," in which "the continuous line" supposedly "shows the direction taken by the eye."[25] Nowadays, images like this tend to produce a shudder in art historians, reminiscent of various delinquent formalisms of the mid-twentieth century (Erle Loran's notorious Cézanne diagrams come to mind).[26] But the resemblance is ultimately misleading. For Anstruther-Thomson's drawing sought not to trace the activity of flat surface-organization so much as to describe the vectors along which that flatness gives way: the way they produce in us vibrant apprehensions of lived space. The linear "bones" of that space are placed at the figures' leading edges; its "flesh" is all around them, spreading out into the world.

"The quality we call life-likeness," Lee and Anstruther-Thomson write, "is really the quality of making the beholder feel more alive." What the essay describes as Titian's "greater

realisation" of the third dimension is a process continually underway—a ceaseless construction of "greater intimacy": "There is in Titian's picture that vital quality which corresponds to its compelling us to balance all the time we look at it, and thereby setting up a sense of *living over an unusually wide area*, of being alive, one might almost say on, on both sides, instead of only in front—in other words, the quality of universal movement." It is an experience not only of "being alive on both sides" of the body, but "on both sides" of the picture, too. The viewer becomes integral to the formal coalescence of bodies Titian depicts: "The two women on either side of the sarcophagus are not detached individuals, but combine with the little cupid in the middle to form a whole of which they are the evident parts; while they combine also with the landscape…" Even the small figures carved on the face of the fountain seem to participate in this art of combination, impinging on and mingling with each other. Everything is set in motion in the painting—"The figures seem to be still moving, the wind is still in their draperies." The "wave" of movement "sweeps" across the whole. These lateral velocities bring to life the entirety of the composition—bring it to life on both sides—in a distribution of form whereby "the two [figures] unite into a whole…organically produced by the equilibrium of the beholder."[27]

A beholder, it should be remembered, who is herself plural. [28] For among other things, what Lee and Anstruther-Thomson's description stages is the way that two bodies might balance and move with each other in relation to the figurations of the picture; the way in which these two bodies might become one. And yet, in the same moment as it knits them together, painting also extends connection far beyond the specificity of two selves—perhaps extends it infinitely—to encompass the whole of Titian's depicted world. If it brings Lee and Anstruther-Thomson together within a pictorialized same-sex utopia (no small feat in 1897), the picture also shows how such connections mediate a wider flow of aesthetic relations. Their intimacy becomes impersonal, grounds for community of another kind.[29]

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Richard Wollheim's *Painting as an Art* (1987) concludes with a remarkable consideration of Titian and embodiment. Throughout his career, Wollheim practiced a volatile mixture of analytic philosophy and Freudian thought, and their confluence goes on full display in these lectures. As far as I know, he was unaware of Lee's psychological writings: the recent resurgence of interest in them was not yet underway. Nonetheless, the philosopher's meditations on the corporeal dimensions of painting can be understood as picking up where Lee's left off. "Painting, Metaphor, and the Body: Titian, Bellini, de Kooning, etc.", the final lecture of *Painting as an Art*, is by far its most "fugitive and allusive," and my own brief account can only fail to do justice to its subtlety.[30] Drawing on the work of the philosopher Donald Davidson, Wollheim develops a notion of pictorial metaphor which, like all of his work on visual art, "rejects the assimilation of pictorial to linguistic meaning."[31] Nor is "the characteristic experience in which metaphorizing is grounded…exclusively visual," Wollheim claims: "it is largely affective...draw[ing] upon emotions, sentiments, phantasies, ordinarily directed on to the object metaphorized." Such feeling, generated and sustained by the work of metaphor, finds its ground in a primordial experience of somatic life. "The fundamental cases of pictorial metaphor are those where a corporeal thing is metaphorized: the painting becomes a metaphor for the body, or… for some part of the body, or for something assimilated to the body." Rather than confining itself to the literal depiction of figures, "such corporeality" will be, at bottom, a "global property" of the painting: as in Lee, a matter of "the picture as a whole." Paintings, of course, can and do offer metaphors of other things. But it is in "metaphoriz[ing] the body," Wollheim thinks, that a painting "uses the resources of pictorial metaphor to the full."[32]

In tracing "the way of metaphor," Wollheim also traces his affinity for the universe of Titian.[33] This is the kind of painting his descriptive abilities were made for. "The fundamental

burden of Titian's work is the human body," he suggests elsewhere: "the animated human body, either as it is in itself, in movement or in repose, or, more tellingly, as it seeks to reach out to, to make contact with, other like-minded objects, other living creatures."[34] For Wollheim, Titian's bodies are always reaching out. We see this in the disposition of his figures, but more crucially we also see it in a kind of expansiveness inherent to Titian's rendering as such. "[W]e become aware of the coloured expanse in which we see the body as something spreading or pushing outward."[35] The body acts, but it also "unfolds."[36]

In earlier works, such as the *Concert Champêtre* (c. 1509; fig. 7) or the *Three Ages of Man* (1512-1514), Titian depicts scenes in which sound—"the sound of music, the sound of water, the imagined sound of time passing"—emanates through the atmosphere, the body of the painting a container of acoustic space. Here Wollheim draws on "the writer who, to my mind, remains the most precise and most percipient critic of early Cinquecento Venetian art": for "[s]ound, Walter Pater observed…is at the core of this kind of painting."[37] Wollheim and Lee shared a source in Pater's work.[38] Wollheim refers to the Victorian critic's account of Venetian painting in "The School of Giorgione" (1877). Best known for its famous claim that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," the particulars of Pater's descriptive account of "Giorgionesque" painting have often been ignored.[39] Wollheim hones in on them closely. The "painted idylls" of this school lend themselves to musical treatment, Pater claims: "For although its productions are painted poems they belong to a sort of poetry which tells itself without an articulated story."[40] The "making or hearing" of music is a central subject of this art:

> On that background of the silence of Venice, so impressive to the modern visitor, the world of Italian music was then forming…. In sketch, or finished picture, in various collections, we may follow it through many intricate variations—men fainting at

> music; music heard at the pool-side while people fish, or mingled with the sound of the pitcher in the well, or heard across running water, or among the flocks; the tuning of instruments; people with intent faces, as if listening…to detect the smallest interval of musical sound, the smallest undulation in the air, or feeling for music in thought on a stringless instrument, ear and finger refining themselves infinitely, in the appetite for sweet sound; a momentary touch of an instrument in the twilight, as one passes through some unfamiliar room, in a chance company.

In such "music or music-like intervals in our existence," Pater goes on, "life itself is conceived as a sort of listening."[41] We see here a crucial precedent for Lee's aesthetics of the receptive body, so central to her own account of Titian. It was Pater who made such diffused sensation the governing principle of a whole school of art.

Drawing on Pater, Wollheim finds new ways to attend to Titian's musicality. The filling-up of the paintings with sound—with sensuous effects that both viewer and painting attempt to metaphorize as sound—provides a way to think about the complexity of painting's corporeal intimations. These are bodies that act (playing music, pouring water, conversing with each other): sound emanates out of them, extending its reach into the world. But they are also bodies that listen. Permeated by acoustic vibrations, they become involved with a wider distribution of sensuous matter. Wollheim finds in the earlier Titian's corporeal metaphors a quality that Pater called "a sense of receptivity."[42] And he also finds what goes along with it: a sense of acoustic potentiality, an intimation of all the vibrations that might go on to take place.

Such an understanding of the doubleness of the painted body—its "twofoldness," to adapt a favorite Wollheim term—carries forward into the description of Titian's later work.[43] Here, "the effects of spreading configuration" grow wider and wider. Depicted figures come

to impinge on each other more and more strangely, and the space of the painting seems to fill up with homogenous matter. In late portraits, "anonymity seeps in," as Titian "convey[s] a protean conception of man, a view of humanity as some vast physical mass which assumes temporarily, transiently, now this, now that, particular corporeal guise." In the San Salvatore *Annunciation* (1559-64) and the frightening *Tarquin and Lucretia* (1568-71), the viewer is struck "simultaneously" by "the giant protagonists, tense with action and recoil" and, as a transfiguration and extension of those bodies, by "the swelling contours of the painted areas in which these enormous figures are to be seen." "The paint skin becomes just that," Wollheim writes: "a skin." In *The Death of Actaeon* (c. 1559-75) we find a "protean" reciprocity between "the body active, the body passive, the body of the victor, the body of the victim."[44] And by the time we get to *The Flaying of Marsyas* (1570-6; fig. 8)—a painting in which music is thematized in almost unimaginably gruesome ways—"the vitality of the human frame is projected beyond all recognizable bounds": "Marsyas's body, defeated, degraded, in its final throes, has been so placed upon the canvas that, at any rate before the support was unevenly extended, the navel lay at the very centre of the picture, and from this vantage point the body then swells out to assume control of the picture as a whole." Titian's "flickering brushstrokes…attain an equilibrium as they mark the great cylindrical carcass, flaying it into incandescence," staging what seems to be "collusion" or even "confusion…between the body of the victim and the body of the victor." "Apollo, pressed up against the great hulk of his prey, stares into the exposed flesh with such intensity as to suggest that his desire is to envelop himself in the creature that he dismembers…. There is to be a merging of bodies."[45]

Wollheim's descriptive preoccupations correspond to his psychoanalytic cast of mind, always oriented towards the object relations theory of Melanie Klein. As Whitney Davis has done most to emphasize, Wollheim was a Kleinian through and through, with real

consequences for the understanding of his aesthetic thought.[46] No surprise, then, that in Wollheim's accounting for Titian, we find echoes of the special psychic world that Klein evoked: a world of pre-Oedipal anxieties and archaic bodily urges, in which unconscious processes of fantastic projection and introjection, modelled on basic somatic functions, eventually mold the crude "bodily ego" into something like a self.[47] It is a vision of a psyche oriented towards "the urgency of desire, the pain of conflict, the looming presence of heavily corporeal figures, and the enduring power of sensuous preverbal sensation."[48] In passages like this one, Wollheim could almost be describing Titian's pictorial world.

These aspects of his approach can best be seen in relation to the work of a painter Wollheim understood as coming in Titian's wake. Within the architecture of Wollheim's chapter, the paintings of Willem de Kooning come to extend Titian's metaphorical concerns. The power of their "undigested sumptuousness"—especially in canvases of the later 1970s (fig. 9)—lies in their overwhelmingly Kleinian appeal:

> The sensations that de Kooning cultivates are, in more ways than one, the most fundamental in our repertoire. They are those sensations which gave us our first access to the external world, … bind[ing] us forever to the elementary forms of pleasure into which they initiated us…. De Kooning, then, crams his pictures with infantile experiences of sucking, touching, biting, excreting, retaining, smearing, sniffing, swallowing, gurgling, stroking, wetting.

As in Hazlitt or Lee, boundaries between the senses break down. In their paradigmatic "earliness," the "infantile experiences" just listed "extend across the sense modalities, sometimes fusing them, sometimes subdividing them: in almost all cases they combine sensations of sense with sensations of activity." As Wollheim suggests, "[t]he corporeality of

any painter who deals with early conceptions of the body is shot through with intimacy"—repeating Lee and Anstruther-Thomson's crucial word.[49]

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But look at what their intimacy has now become:

> [T]hese pictures of de Kooning's …remind us that, in their earliest occurrence, these experiences invariably posed a threat. Heavily charged with excitation, they threatened to overwhelm the fragile barriers of the…precarious self…. The self is set over against the sensations it contains…. De Kooning's pictures assimilate themselves to enormous shallow saucers in which a great deal of primitive glory is held in delicate suspense: it slops around, but is kept back by the rim.

In "a drama between the mark and the edge," kicked up by the "turbulence of sensation," a fantasized bodily container begins to shape itself. The "insurgency of the paint" produces a sense of the "regulatory role of the edge." Anstruther-Thomson and Lee's "vital relations of similarity" have given way here to the overwhelming pleasure-pain of psychic formation. And in the face of Wollheim's primordial slop, which "presses itself up against us," we may well long for the earlier writers' aerated choreographies of space.[50]

Yet just where the bodily metaphors of these writers would seem to part ways, it is worth remembering the framework they share. They imagine pictures—perhaps Titian's most of all—to be sites of undoing and re-integration, the shattering as well as the formalization of embodied selves. Both insist on that viewer's primordial receptivity—a condition that Titian again and again thematized, as Hazlitt, Lee, and Wollheim all show.[51] For in Kleinian metapsychology, fantasy is always a two-way street—"the rhythmic process of introjection-and-projection which sets up a kind of oscillation" as Wollheim would have it: a breathing in

and out.[52] There is always a sending forth of psychic material into the world, and a ceaseless taking of that world in. As with Lee's account of psycho-bodily "readjustments," Wollheim's approach depends implicitly on the notion that viewers might be remade by their viewings of works of art. But with this key difference: Wollheim, so attuned to the edges of things, will always emphasize the difficulty of negotiating fragile boundaries— of the psyche, the body, the picture—as well as the primal need to keep them, however provisionally, intact. In De Kooning's paintings, the "early material" comes forward alarmingly—but it is "kept back by the rim." If they encourage us in our dissolutions, pictures also give us ways to stabilize bodily form.[53]

In her search for "relations of vital similarity," by contrast, laying viewers open to the pictures their bodies take in, Lee will always be drawn to imagine such boundaries giving way.[54] She is less beholden to—less fixed on—the static qualities of form. If Wollheim remains a Kleinian in his imagination of aesthetic experience as a species of object relations, Lee seems closer, perhaps, to some post-Winnicottian leap into the dark: "the object…pursued in order to surrender to it as a medium that alters the self," as Christopher Bollas has put it—an "envirosomatic caring, identified with metamorphoses of the self."[55] In Lee, Titian stands for an intimacy that is always mobile, always transforming: a tremulous surface to be taken in. "Form" is "motion" in the end.

Which allows us to return to Titian's *poesie*. What would it mean to look at these paintings in Lee's sort of way? Turning from *Sacred and Profane Love* to *Diana and Calisto*, two women become ten, in a profusion of metamorphic surfaces. Everywhere, those surfaces impinge on and mix with each other: water, foliage, textile, stone, skin.[56] Everywhere, they suggest and then occlude their intimations of depth. Sound fills up the landscape. Drapery hangs ready to rustle in the wind, an enormous dog pants in the foreground, water sprays out of the sinking, unbalanced fountain, splashing into the muddled reflections of the pool. Limbs

mass around Calisto's collapsed body, rubbing up against her, stripping her belly bare. The edges of Diana's outstretched arm, meanwhile, held aloft and catching the light, modulate into the wider atmosphere, becoming cloud. "Form," here, is an unforming—a spreading out and a spilling over; a being-together that remains unfixed. In this newly tilted world, the relations between bodies, metaphoric or otherwise, proceed untrammeled.

But more than this, Lee also asks her readers to look beyond an individual picture's edges to the somatic events of the gallery itself, a wider space of movement and constraint, constituting its own laboratory of forms. At various points in the "Gallery Diaries," she speculates about what it is like to come upon paintings distributed in the space of a room—Phillip II's *camerino*, say, real or imagined, or the museum galleries of Boston, London, or Madrid—encountering them together, sometimes on the periphery of vision, as we move and talk among them, our attention concentrated and then diffused.[57] Such pictures become an encompassing environment. Across the intervals, new relations might begin to open up. Figures would continue to take part in their delimited scenes, enclosed within the shelter of a single composition, turning in relation to each other. But they might also begin to reach out, crossing the boundaries of the frame, one sensitive body responding to a plurality of others: a collectivity centered on the vulnerability of flesh. A grouping of pictures such as Titian's, with its rich play of likeness and difference, would seem to cry out for just such relational mobility. Bodies breathing in and out as new intimacies take hold, "alive on both sides." These are Ovidian spaces, after all: zones of mutability and transformation, "looming presences" and lines of flight. Such (Lee might help us to see) was Titian's way with bodily life.

Contact Jeremy Melius at jeremy.melius@york.ac.uk

I am grateful to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, The Research and Academic Program at the Clark Art Institute, eikones – Zentrum für die Theorie und Geschichte des Bildes, Universität Basel, and the NOMIS Foundation for their support of this research. I also wish to thank Ruth Ezra, Shawon Kinew, Felipe Pereda, Nick Robbins, and David Russell for their generous responses to earlier versions of this text.

[1] William Hazlitt, "On the Pleasure of Painting" (1820), in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London, 1902-1906), 6.14. On the critic's admiration for Titian, see Eric McCauley Lee, "'Titianus Redivivus': Titian in British Art Theory, Criticism, and Practice, 1768-1830," unpub. PhD diss., Yale University, 1997, 311-29; Tom Nichols, "Hazlitt and Titian: Progress, Gusto and the (Dis)pleasure of Painting," in *The Reception of Titian in Britain from Reynolds to Ruskin*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Turnhout, 2013), 123-33.

[2] William Hazlitt, "On Gusto" (1816), in Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, 1.77.

[3] Ibid., 1.77.

[4] Hazlitt, *Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England* (1824), in Hazlitt, *Collected Works*, 9.33.

[5] Hazlitt, *Principal Picture-Galleries*, 9.44. Hazlitt describes a painting now known as *Titian and his Friends* (1550-60), attributed to a follower of Titian, in the Royal Collection Trust.

[6] Hazlitt, "On Gusto," 1.78.

[7] Norman Bryson and Stephen Bann have both emphasized the embodied, kinaesthetic nature of Hazlitt's treatment of paintings: Norman Bryson, "Hazlitt on Painting," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37.1 (1978): 37-45; Stephen Bann, "A Language of the Body? – The Art Criticism of William Hazlitt," in *Le corps dans tous ses états*, ed. Marie-Claire Rouy (Bordeaux, 1995), 27-35.

[8] David Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (New Haven and London, 1999), 229.

[9] William Blake, *Exhibition of* Paintings in Fresco, *Poetical and Historical Inventions* (1809), in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, newly revised edition, ed. David V. Erdman (New York, 1988), 547. On the importance of the passage for Blake's wider conception of artistic individuality, see John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven, 1986), 239-41.

[10] Vernon Lee, "Aesthetic Responsiveness, its Variations and Accompaniments (Extracts from Gallery Diaries of Vernon Lee)" (1901-4), in Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness, and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (London, 1912), 287-289, emphasis in original.

[11] In this way, Lee's approach is similar to the psycho-spatial coordinates of Bernard Berenson's bodily aesthetics as they emerge in *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (1896): see Jeremy Melius, "Connoisseurship, Painting, and Personhood," *Art History* 34.2 (April, 2011): 301-6.

[12] Vernon Lee, "Introduction," in Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, *Art and Man: Essays and Fragments* (London, 1924), 31.

[13] "[T]hese adjustments of breathing and balance are the actual physical mechanism for the perception of Form, the sense of relation having for its counterpart a sense of bodily tension," Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness" (1897), in Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 168-9.

[14] Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness," 157.

[15] Lee's engagement with professional, usually German-language psychological theory has been stressed by Susan Lanzoni, "Practicing Psychology in the Art Gallery: Vernon Lee's Aesthetics of Empathy," *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 45.4 (2009): 330-54; Carolyn Burdett, "'The Subjective Inside Us Can Turn into the Objective Outside': Vernon

Lee's Psychological Aesthetics," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 12 (2011); Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago, 2017), 219-54. For the wider philosophical background, see *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, (Los Angeles, 1994).

[16] Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, autobiographical notes (1897), quoted in Lee, "Introduction," 35.

[17] Peter Garratt emphasizes the place of Lee's writings in a longer tradition of what he calls "respiratory aesthetics": See Peter Garratt, "Out of Breath: Respiratory Aesthetics from Ruskin to Vernon Lee," in Arthur Rose, Stefanie Heine, et al., *Reading Breath in Literature* (Basingstoke, 2019), 65-89.

[18] Leo Bersani, *Receptive Bodies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 85. For Bersani's earlier discussion of these themes, see the texts cited below in fn. 29.

[19] The importance of sculpture to Lee's aesthetics has been emphasized by Lene Østermark-Johansen, "'Life is Movement': Vernon Lee and Sculpture," *Word & Image* 34.1 (2018): 64-72; Francesco Ventrella, "Encountering the Niobe's Children: Vernon Lee's Queer Formalism and the Empathy of Sculpture," in *Sculpture, Sexuality and History: Encounters in Literature, Culture and the Arts from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Jana Funke and Jen Grove (Basingstoke, 2019), 195-219; Jonah Siegel, *Material Inspirations: The Interests of the Art Object in the Nineteenth Century and After* (Oxford and New York, 2020), 211-21; Sarah Betzer, *Animating the Antique: Sculptural Encounter in the Age of Aesthetic Theory* (State College, PA, 2022), 179-82, 191-201.

[20] For the key iconological treatments, see Erwin Panofsky, "Zur Deutung von Tizians 'Himmlischer und Irdischer Liebe,'" in *Hercules am Scheidewege, und Andere Antike Bildstoffe in der Neuren Kunst* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1930), 173-80; Erwin Panofsky, *Studies*

in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 150-60; Edgar Wind, "Sacred and Profane Love," in *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance* (New Haven and London, 1958), 121-28; Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic* (London, 1969), 110-125. On the reception history of the picture more generally, see Maria Grazie Bernardini, "L''Amor Sacro e Profano' nella storia della critica," in *Tiziano: Amor Sacro e Amor Profano*, ed. Maria Grazie Bernardini, exhibition catalogue, Palazzo delle esposizioni, Rome (Milan, 1995), 35-59. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, the authorities of Lee's own day, preferred the title "Artless and Sated Love": see Joseph Arthur Crowe and Giovanni Cavalcaselle, *Titian: His Life and Times* (London, 1877), 1.62-65.

[21] Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness," 204, emphasis in original.

[22] Ibid., 230, 229.

[23] Ibid., 228, 230-231.

[24] Lee, "Introduction," caption facing 110.

[25] Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness," caption facing 234.

[26] Erle Loran, *Cézanne's Composition: Analysis of his Form, with Diagrams and Photos of his Motifs* (Berkeley, 1943). On the culture of eye movement studies, circa 1900, see Zeynep Çelik Alexander, *Kinaesthetic Knowing: Aesthetics, Epistemology, Modern Design* (Chicago, 2017), 83-9.

[27] Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, "Beauty and Ugliness," 231-34, emphasis in original.

[28] The attempt "to achieve a closer knowledge of, and identification with, each other through the shared act of looking" is emphasized in Kirsty Bunting, "'Feelings of Vivid Fellowship': Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson's Quest for Collaborative 'Aesthetic Sociability,'" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 52.2 (April 2016), 203-17, quotation at 204. Whitney Davis offers an account of Lee's aesthetic empathy as oriented towards new

forms of sociability as such: Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York, 2010), 175-85.

[29] On Bersani's concept of impersonal intimacy, see especially Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago, 2008) and Leo Bersani, "The Will to Know," in *Is the Rectum a Grave? and Other Essays* (Chicago, 2010), 154-67.

[30] Art & Language, "Richard Wollheim, 1923-2003," *Radical Philosophy* 124 (March/April 2004), 54.

[31] Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and its Depths* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 185. For Davidson's best known account of metaphor, see Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (Autumn 1978): 31-47.

[32] Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (London, 1987), 306, 305, 306. As Michael Podro notes, "our seeing the painting intimates a relation of one sensitive body to another" in Wollheim's account, Michael Podro, "On Richard Wollheim," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 44.3 (July 2004), 223.

[33] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 305.

[34] Wollheim, "The Body Unfolding," *Modern Painters* 16.2 (Summer 2003): 85.

[35] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 310.

[36] Wollheim, "The Body Unfolding."

[37] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 315.

[38] Lee's debts to Walter Pater are well established; for an overview, see Carolyn Burdett, "Walter Pater and Vernon Lee," *Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism* 2 (Autumn 2016): 31-42. For Wollheim's extended engagement with Pater, see Richard Wollheim, "Walter Pater as a Critic of the Arts," in *On Art and the Mind* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 155-76; Richard Wollheim, "Walter Pater: From Philosophy to Art," *Comparative Criticism* 17 (1995): 251-40.

[39] Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione" (1877), in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art Poetry. The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 106, emphasis in original. On the modernity of the essay's terms for Renaissance Venetian painting, see Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (New Haven, 2017), 220-37.

[40] Pater, "The School of Giorgione," 117. As Andrew Eastham puts it, Venetian painting was a key site for Pater's "continual… project[ion of] an ideal acoustic space," Andrew Eastham, "Walter Pater's Acoustic Space: 'The School of Giorgione', Dionysian *Anders-streben*, and the Politics of Soundscape," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 40.1-2 (2010), 196.

[41] Pater, "The School of Giorgione," 118-19.

[42] Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," *Fortnightly Review* 22 (October 1877), 536. The phrase occurs in a paragraph cut from subsequent reprintings of the essay.

[43] On "twofoldness" as a "phenomenological feature" of painting more generally, see Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 46-47.

[44] Ibid., 312, 316, 318, 322.

[45] Ibid., 326-7. On the metaphorization of paint as skin, and of the act of painting as flaying, see Daniela Bohde, *Haut, Fleisch und Farbe: Körperlichkeit und Materialität in den Gemälden Tizians* (Berlin, 2002). On the painting's undoing of ideas of the human, see Stephen J. Campbell, "Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas*: Thresholds of the Human and the Limits of Painting," in *Renaissance Posthumanism*, ed. Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano (New York, 2016), 64-98.

[46] See Davis, *Queer Beauty*, 271-95.

[47] On the "bodily ego"—a notion of Freud's to which Wollheim gave Kleinian emphasis through his career—see Richard Wollheim "The Bodily Ego" (1982), much revised in *The*

Mind and its Depths (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 64-78; Richard Wollheim, "The Sheep and the Ceremony" (1979), in *The Mind and its Depths*, 1-21.

[48] Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1990), xliii, quoted in Davis, *Queer Beauty*, 283.

[49] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 348-350. In passing, David Rosand had previously compared earlier paintings by de Kooning to Titian, citing the artist's famous remark that "flesh was the reason…oil painting was invented": David Rosand, "Titian and the Critical Tradition," in *Titian: His World and his Legacy*, ed. David Rosand (New York, 1982), 25.

[50] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, 349-50.

[51] The entwinement of viewers' receptivity with that of Titian's painted characters—their mutually constituted opening to emotion—is a recurrent theme of Philipp Fehl's essays on the artist: Philipp Fehl, *Decorum and Wit: The Poetry of Venetian Painting* (Vienna, 1992). In a more mediated way, threaded through a historicizing account of the humanist reception of Aristotelean theory, it returns in Thomas Puttfarken, *Titian and Tragic Painting: Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist* (New Haven, 2005). My thanks to Shawon Kinew for discussion of these texts.

[52] Richard Wollheim, "A Critic of Our Time," *Encounter* 12.4 (1959): 4. He is discussing Kleinian concepts in a review of Adrian Stokes, *Greek Culture and the Ego* (London, 1958).

[53] See the treatment of Wollheim's relation to Adrian Stokes—his deep attunement to Stokes's understanding of "the reparative possibilities of art," which Wollheim nevertheless refused to "*over*estimate"—in Davis, *Queer Beauty*, 280-285, quotation at 284, emphasis in original.

[54] Lee, "Aesthetic Responsiveness," 335.

[55] Christopher Bollas, "The Transformational Object," in *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York, 1989), 4.

[56] My language here draws partly on the observation of metamorphic effects in Paul Hills, "Titian's Transformations: Colour and Emotion in the *Poesie*," in *Titian: Love, Desire, Death*, ed. Matthias Wivel, exhibition catalogue, the National Gallery, London (London, 2020), 33-43.

[57] See, for instance, the discussion of the Sistine Chapel in Lee, "Aesthetic Responsiveness," 278-80.

Figure Legends

Figure 1. Titian, *Flora*, Florence, c. 1517. Oil on canvas; 79.7 x 63.5 centimeters. (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; photo, Gabientto Fotografico, Gallerie degli Uffizi).

Figure 2. After Lysippos, *Apoxyomenos*, Vatican, c. 50 CE. Marble; H. 205 centimeters. (Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican; photo, Marie-Lan Nguyen.)

Figure 3. Titian, *Sacred and Profane Love*, Rome, 1514. Oil on canvas; 118 x 279 centimeters. (Galleria Borghese / ph. Mauro Coen.)

Figure 4. Vincenzo Catena, *Saint Jerome in his Study*, London, c. 1510. Oil on canvas; 75.9 x 98.4 centimeters. (National Gallery, London; photo, Google Arts & Culture.)

Figure 5. John Singer Sargent, *Miss Anstruther Thomson*, Dublin, 1889. Charcoal on paper; 34.4 x 23.5 centimeters. (Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery.)

Figure 6. Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, skeleton diagram of Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love*, 1898. From Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness, and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (London, 1912), facing 234. (photo, author.)

Figure 7. Titian, *Concert Champêtre*, Paris, 1509-10. Oil on canvas, 105 x 136.5 centimeters. (Musée du Louvre, Paris; photo: Wikimedia.)

Figure 8. Titian, *Flaying of Marsyas*, Kroměříž, probably 1570s. (Archdiocesan Museum, Kroměříž; photo, akg-images / Erich Lessing.)

Figure 9. Willem de Kooning, *Untitled II*, Zurich, 1979. Oil on canvas, 195.5 x 223.5 centimeters. (Daros Collection, Switzerland; © The Willem de Kooning Foundation / ProLitteris, Zurich.)