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"Sinister Exile": Dionysus and the Aesthetics of Race in Walter Pater and Vernon Lee

Dustin Friedman

In the essay "Dionysus in the Euganean Hills" (1921), Vernon Lee memorialized her mentor Walter Pater by reflecting on his writings on Dionysus, the ancient Greek god of wine and spiritual ecstasy. According to Lee, we continue to be fascinated by the Olympians because we long both for enchantment, even in our ostensibly disenchanted modern world, and for the forbidden desires that supernatural experiences allow us ostensibly civilized, rationalistic modern people to access. She says that out of the pantheon, "Dionysus is the one fittest for such sinister exile" in the modern world because he represents an escape from modernity's stifling confines; he is a symbol for the "hopes and fancies, the ecstasies and barbarities which humdrum existence has said No to" ("Dionysus" 351). Lee draws on Orientalist imagery to describe the unorthodox gender and sexuality of the god, whom she reminds readers is traditionally "of Asiatic origin" (348). She says that he is characterized by an "effeminacy . . . like that of those beautiful languid Arabs . . . who strike one as women in disguise" (349). Edward Said has similarly explained that Dionysus

Abstract: The aestheticism of Walter Pater and Vernon Lee participated in a late-nineteenth-century discourse devoted to exploring the aesthetic's role in producing and sustaining, as well as undermining, notions of racial difference. Pater's "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew" (1876) and Lee's "Dionea" (1890) partake of Immanuel Kant's understanding of race as a matter of aesthetic perception, yet call into question his attempt to maintain distinct and essential racial categories. By affirming the universality of anti-rationalistic Dionysian experiences, Pater and Lee interrogate the racial logic of Kantian aesthetics on primarily aestheticist grounds, as part of their commitment to dismantling rationalistic intellectual frameworks that place unnecessary limits upon our perceptions of the world and of each other.

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is the locus classicus of Western Orientalism, the "Eastern god" who, in *The Bacchae* of Euripides (405 BCE), travels from Asia to Greece to avenge the death of his mother Semele (57). Said argues that Euripides uses the god to show how "rationality is undermined by Eastern excesses," which the play presents as "mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values," including those regarding gender and sexuality (57). He remarks that the nineteenth century is notable for its scientization of these long-standing tropes, arguing that nineteenth-century writers promoted "ideas about the biological basis" for differences between Oriental and Western selfhood expressed in the burgeoning Victorian racial sciences (206). Yet Lee departs from this trend, anticipating the insights of Said in her description of Dionysus as a primarily *aesthetic* figure for primitive desires denied by triumphalist narratives of the historical progress of reason and sublimated through the "Asiatic" wine god conjured by the Western imagination by and for itself.[1]

The present article seeks to establish that the aestheticism of Pater and Lee—particularly, their writings on Dionysus—participated in a late-nineteenth-century discourse devoted to exploring the aesthetic's role in producing and sustaining, as well as undermining, notions of racial difference. The racial aesthetics I identify here departs from strictly scientific, biological forms of essentialism by ascribing racialization to acts of aesthetic judgment. I argue that Pater's essay "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew" (1876) and Lee's fantastic tale "Dionea" (1890) partake of Immanuel Kant's understanding of race as a matter of aesthetic perception, yet call into question his attempt to maintain distinct and essentialist racial categories. Pater and Lee challenge such categories by affirming the universality of Dionysian experiences, writing against those Victorian writers on art, such as John Ruskin and Algernon Charles Swinburne, who formed part of the rationalistic, Apollonian tradition inaugurated by Kant and the eighteenth-century German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. While these latter figures associated Apollo with the universality of Western culture, and Dionysus with the insufficiently developed humanity and ineluctable particularity of racial others, for Pater and Lee the Dionysian encompassed both premodern and modern modes of experience that persist across racial categories. Although there is no evidence to suggest that either Pater or Lee was motivated by a consciously anti-racist ethic or politics, I argue that they were compelled to interrogate the racial logic that Kant's aesthetics imposes upon our impressions on primarily *aestheticist* grounds, due to their commitment to dismantling rationalistic intellectual frameworks that place unnecessary limits upon our perceptions of the world and of each other. Ultimately, my aim is to clarify Victorian aestheticism's place

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within the Enlightenment project of racialization. While Victorian aestheticism sometimes re-enforces the Enlightenment's naturalization of hierarchies and essentializing of differences, at other times it offers substantive challenges to the racial logic that continues to subtend aesthetic discourse.

I. Primitivism, Kant, and Aesthetic Teleology

In a recent special issue of *Victorian Studies*, Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy Wong take the field to task for not attending to the relationship between aesthetics and the politics of race. A "failure to theorize aesthetics and politics seems especially to beleaguer Victorian studies" (378) they say, due to scholars' tendency to "treat politics as an adjunct to aesthetic analysis" (377). I want to affirm their challenge to make race a more central category of analysis and frequent topic of discussion in the field, especially in works that have typically been construed as nonracial. The writing of the present article was, in fact, inspired by this challenge. Yet I also seek to establish that many authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (if not earlier), including Pater and Lee, were themselves aware of the role that aesthetic perceptions play in perpetuating racial categories and hierarchies.[2] A robust body of recent scholarly work has explored this phenomenon in revisionist accounts of aesthetic primitivism in modernist art. If we place Pater's and Lee's writings on myth within this context, it becomes clear they formed a bridge between Kant's aesthetic account of race and the more racially progressive versions of modernist primitivism that critics have recently identified. They also anticipated recent attempts to repurpose Kantian aesthetic philosophy for anti-racist and anti-colonialist ends.

Primitivism, which Michael Bell defines as a "nostalgia for a pre-civilized condition" that is "a projected attribution dependent on the viewpoint of the civilized," is "an ancient motif" that has been prevalent throughout human history and in many different cultures (353). It encompasses (to speak only of modern European writing) Michel de Montaigne's reflections on cannibalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of the noble savage, Wordsworthian romanticism, and the nineteenth-century German obsession with the Apollonian-Dionysian dyad that culminated in Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of tragedy. Yet the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed "a distinctive and transitional period" in primitivist discourse due to the "gradual establishment of anthropology as an intellectual discipline" devoted to the scientific "study of tribal peoples" (353). Scholars have described how aspects of early anthropology contributed to Victorian scientific racism, which distorted evolutionary

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theory for the purpose of ascribing hierarchized cultural differences to quasi-biological essences.[3] Patrick Brantlinger and Joseph McLaughlin have discussed how, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, many literary authors drew upon these concepts to represent non-Western cultures as the embodiment of crude, undeveloped, and barbaric threats to Western civilization, especially in the popular trope of representing socially transgressive white subjects as having reverted to a racially coded "savagery." Beginning in the 1880s and continuing into the first half of the twentieth century, however, some modernist artists began celebrating primitive cultures as the embodiment of an unspoiled purity and a healthy embrace of primal human impulses that could redeem the decadence of Western civilization. Yet in both situations, representations of non-Western peoples are condescendingly one-dimensional and contribute to the normalization, naturalization, and dissemination of the essentialist notions of difference that underlie racist and colonialist ideologies: racial and ethnic others are either "denigrated and humiliated *because* [they are] different," Sieglinde Lemke explains, or "valorized and idealized for *being* different" (27).

According to Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong, when scholars separate art and politics in their analysis, they ignore the role aesthetics plays in perpetuating such oppressive racial formations. To resist this logic, they turn to the writings of Kandice Chuh, a scholar who "puts pressure on foundational Western philosophical categories and methods," most notably Kantian philosophical aesthetics, "to reveal the thinking of race that subtends them" (Chatterjee et al. 377). Yet while Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong draw on Chuh's thinking to call on present-day critics to resist the depoliticization of aesthetics, I maintain that recent revisionist scholarship on primitivism has revealed embryonic versions of Chuh's insights within nineteenth- and twentieth-century writing, and that Pater's and Lee's writings on myth form part of this alternative genealogy.

Chuh explains that one of the ways in which liberal humanist ideology perpetuates multiple forms of oppression under the guise of Enlightenment is through an aesthetic discourse that associates primitivism with intellectual underdevelopment and local particularity. For her, this is apparent in the reception of Kant's aesthetics, especially through the dissemination of the notion of the sensus communis, or common sense, that he presents in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Western primitivist discourse "justifies domination by providing for the differentiated capacity for exemplary humanity on the basis of geography and gender difference made to appear natural, commonsensical. . . . Aesthetic education in its received form attempts to align perception with conception in the production of this common sense" (Chuh 51). In other words, an education in aesthetic judgment, in the ability to perceive

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and assess rightly what Matthew Arnold famously called "the best which has been thought and said," is actually a method for naturalizing the way the culturally dominant group—in this case, bourgeois white European males—perceives the world by deeming their perception to be simply self-evidently true in the eyes of everyone who has developed their inherent capacity for reasoned deliberation (50). Kant thus argues that, because judgments of aesthetic taste involve "a subjective principle which determines what pleases or displeases only by feeling and not by concepts, but yet with universal validity, . . . such a principle [can] only be regarded as a *common sense* [sensus communis]" (*Critique* 122). Since this common-sense appreciation of beauty is universal and ostensibly available to everyone, those who depart from such judgments are deemed unfit and backwards, hopelessly mired in their own particularity and "ontologically lacking competence" (Chuh 52). The perceptions of those who are positioned outside the culturally dominant group by virtue of their gender, race, or geography are inevitably deemed unbeautiful. Within this line of thinking, the position provides a testament to marginalized peoples' inadequately developed humanity and inability to achieve a truly universal, "common sense" understanding of the world. The problem, in other words, is their primitivism. Whatever experiences they have are held to be only personal and idiosyncratic. There is thus an incommensurability between their ineluctably particular subjectivity and the putatively universal, rational principles that accrue to white Western males and become the prerequisite for liberal self-governance. Yet Chuh also maintains that the Kantian sensus communis cannot simply be jettisoned altogether. Instead, to combat racist and colonialist ideologies in the present day, the sensus communis needs to be reformulated by literary critics such that it can include the perceptions of others, whether in terms of race, gender, or sexuality, so raising their perceptions to the dignity of universal common sense.

Chuh's interpretation of the Kantian legacy builds on historical arguments made by critical race theorist Sylvia Wynter, who posits that the development of so-called enlightened European concepts of human freedom from the fifteenth century onward occurred alongside and depended upon the dehumanization of non-Europeans. The creation of racial categories that cast these people as primitive, irrational, subhuman others allowed Europeans to engage in colonial conquest without having to confront the violence they enacted upon others. The racial sciences of the latter half of the nineteenth century were a continuation of and an innovation upon this project, providing scientific justification for excluding certain groups from the Enlightenment ideals of universal equality and freedom on the grounds of unalterable biological inferiority.

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While Chuh draws on Wynter to make an essentially presentist argument about how the legacy of Kantian aesthetics continues this same process of racialization and dehumanization in the current day, the historical trajectory described above suggests that an aesthetic discourse of race could have existed alongside and as an adjunct to the growth of race science in the nineteenth century. This proposition is borne out by recent scholarship on primitivism, which establishes that an understanding of race as aesthetically constituted is not new, but is instead a concept that was explored thoroughly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marianna Torgovnick suggests that there are likely "alternative lines of primitivism" that depart from the racist versions offered by the canonical authors who are the most frequent subjects of scholarship (248). Carole Sweeney similarly suggests that "the inherently complex nature of modernist primitivism . . . was often (but by no means always) a countercultural force that abhorred the silencing of colonial subjects" (7). Accordingly, Bell asserts that Nietzsche's main influence on modernist writing was his affirmation of the primal forces symbolized by Dionysus that had traditionally been denigrated by the Apollonian ideal of classical serenity offered by Winckelmann and his nineteenth-century acolytes. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian and Apollonian exist in dialectical tension with each other: although the chaotic and formless energy symbolized by Dionysus is a vital and necessary aspect of human existence, this energy is nevertheless "impossible to experience without the mediation of the Apollonian spirit of art" because "the pure Dionysian would destroy the individuality and consciousness on which the experience, as experience, would depend" (Bell 357).

Although Nietzsche's revisionist account of Dionysus is not explicitly racialized, Lemke demonstrates that modernist authors writing about Black culture adapted Nietzsche's dialectic to "implode the binary structure of racism," and to demonstrate that the primitive and the modern are mutually constitutive in the same manner as the Dionysian and the Apollonian (27). Ben Etherington has gone even further to argue that it was colonized subjects, rather than European imperialists, who in the twentieth century created the most radical versions of literary primitivism, which they portrayed as "a condition whose fulfillment would require no less than an exit from the capitalist world-system. To realize its project, primitivism seeks guidance from the remnants of noncapitalist societies conceived as self-sufficient totalities" (33). Jade Munslow Ong asserts that this kind of primitivism originated in peripheral and colonial literatures, such as the writings of radical South African authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Ong, figures such as Olive Schreiner and H. I. E. Dhlomo developed a version of aesthetic primitivism understood not as "crude" and

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"simple" but rather as "*first* and *original*," creating a distinctly African version of modernism grounded in allegorical narrative forms and devoted to "dissolving . . . the distinction between primitive and modern" (10) in order to "acknowledge alternative paradigms of experience—those of women, animals, black and coloured Africans, and the working classes—without obstructing the real and often unheard voices of those disenfranchised by European domination" (11). In all of the scholarship referenced here, critics demonstrate how works of art challenge notions of racial essentialism by showing that primitive cultural forms are capable of being objects of universal aesthetic admiration, effectively incorporating the primitive into a radically revised version of the sensus communis.

Pater's and Lee's writings on myth are important nineteenth-century precursors to these alternative lines of primitivism. Although there are certainly parallels between their apologias for Dionysian primitivism on aesthetic grounds and those of Nietzsche, I seek to demonstrate that both Lee's and Pater's discussions of Dionysus bear much stronger affinities to Kant's more explicitly racialized aesthetics. There is no evidence to suggest that Pater ever read Nietzsche's writings, but he was an avid reader of Kant throughout the 1860s.[4] Lee discussed Nietzsche's philosophy extensively in her later writings, but it is unclear if she encountered his writings before the turn of the twentieth century. Stefano Evangelista notes that in her essay collection *Belcaro* (1881) "Lee follows the critique of judgment formulated by Kant and adopted by Pater in *The Renaissance*" (*British Aestheticism* 56).[5]

Pater's and Lee's writings served as a conduit between what John Hoffman describes as Kant's "essentialist theory of race" that is nevertheless not grounded in "biologism" and the more radically de-essentialized understanding of racial difference as aesthetically constructed found in some versions of modernist primitivism (55). Perhaps no philosopher has been more closely associated with the Enlightenment project of racialization than Kant, though his writings on aesthetics have typically played a less prominent role in this context.[6] Yet his early piece *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) contains the frankly racist statement that "the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that arises above the trifling" (110) and that "not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science" (111). As Hoffman explains, however, by the time Kant reached his "critical period" beginning with the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he realized that his "championing of universal human dignity" was incompatible with biologically grounded notions of innate racial inferiority (55). At the same time, however, he persisted in a distaste for miscegenation, which he believed to result in an undesirable flattening of human diversity, as he understood it. The *Critique of Judgment* represents

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Kant's attempt to resolve "the contradiction between the egalitarian aspirations of the Enlightenment project, where equal moral and political standing was imputed to each individual, and theories that naturalized the interests of one group over others and justified practices of subjugation" (Hoffman 55).

Kant does so by articulating a "racialized ideal of beauty" grounded in the concept of "teleology" as a "regulative" principle that lends "necessary order and coherence to the myriad data furnished by empirical observation" (Hoffman 66). In Kant's words, "under these empirical conditions a Negro must necessarily have a different normal [that is, regulative] ideal of beauty than a white" (*Critique* 119). Following Kant's formulation, we deem the bodily shape of people of our own race the most beautiful, and we experience this subjective impression as if it were an inherent quality of the object itself. Therefore, in the manner Kant deems definitive of all properly aesthetic judgments, he asserts that race is a natural quality even if it is not an essential component of the body's biology. It is, instead, a psychological response within the viewing subject when he or she looks upon the body of another. In this way, Kant justifies maintaining racial distinctions while not violating conceptually the ostensibly universal human nature that underwrites Enlightenment notions of equality.

Yet in his descriptions of those beautiful bodies that happen to "please universally" due to their "bodily manifestation" of internal moral qualities, such as a "noble" profile and "goodness of soul, or purity, or strength, or repose," Kant translates into the language of aesthetics the biological racism of Winckelmann, whose writings were perhaps the most important influence on Kant's aesthetics (*Critique* 120). Winckelmann's famously rapturous homoerotic description of the Apollo Belvedere in *The History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) ascribes to ancient Greek bodies a racial purity and superiority over other ancient cultures due to their climate and geography that, as Hoffman notes, has had a "long, often dubious afterli[fe] in the history of the representation of race" (73). Kant's development of the concept of aesthetic teleology to resolve the contradiction between natural racial categories and the supposedly raceless ideal of universal equality clearly lays the groundwork for the racist logic Chuh identifies as central to present-day determinations of who is and is not fit to make proper aesthetic judgments.

I suggest that Pater's and Lee's writings on myth incorporate Kant's notion that race is constructed by aesthetic judgments, but reject his teleological notion of beauty as a necessary regulative norm to be imposed upon our impressions of the world. Pater's famous expression of his aesthetic impressionism in the conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873)—a core text of Victorian aestheticism and a key influence on Lee's art criticism—skeptically scrutinizes the purpose of regulative concepts in aesthetics, asserting that "the theory or

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idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us" (*Renaissance* 189). Accordingly, in Pater's and Lee's mythological writings, they question the regulative role of Apollonian beauty as both the only kind of aesthetic experience that can be shared universally and the sole aim of aesthetic education. In the process of interrogating Apollonian beauty in their writings on Dionysus, they were also led to question the racial logic subtending it for being a similarly regulative principle that both imposes "only conventional" limits on visual impressions of human bodies and encourages us to disregard the experiences undergone by those bodies—specifically, those classified as Dionysian.

Pater and Lee interrogate the logic by which Victorian culture's dominant Apollonianism includes and excludes particular kinds of embodied experiences from the shared common sense of humanity. By exploring the survival of an ostensibly premodern, primitive phenomenon—the supernaturalism they preeminently associate with the myth of Dionysus—they challenge the tendency toward teleological thinking that dominates post-Kantian aesthetics. They also demonstrate that the primitivism of Dionysian experience is actually more inclusively comprehensive than the Apollonian ideal of beauty. Its "ecstasies and barbarities" affirm the universal aesthetic and ethical value of embodied experiences that are typically deemed unbeautiful and distasteful—i.e., rapture, irrationality, subjectlessness, and the loss of self-control. The dominant culture, moreover, understood such experiences as marking racial others as primitive, hopelessly mired in particularity, and unable to attain the heights of universal reason ("Dionysus in the Euganean Hills" 351).

II. Pater's Unbeautiful Universalism

From 1875 to 1878, Pater was deeply engaged in the study of Greek myth, composing a two-part essay on "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone" (1876), as well as two essays on the wine god, "A Study of Dionysus: The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew" and "The Bacchanals of Euripides" (1889, but likely composed in 1878). Steven Connor, in tracing the series of revisions and adjustments Pater made to these essays, finds him gradually moving away from wholehearted acceptance of the "teleological" (32) theory of myth's development in John Ruskin's *The Queen of the Air* (1869), which Pater directly references in the text, and toward an increasing understanding of myth's "complex and occasionally puzzling series of points of overlap between apparently opposed

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complexions of thought and feeling" (30). Evangelista has also found in these essays that Pater offers "a critique of nineteenth-century Hellenism by recuperating and de-historicizing Dionysian myths and rites of Greece and extracting from them an independent aesthetic that must be seen to work well beyond the confines of the ancient world" as "material for aesthetic experimentation and radical cultural critique in the present" ("Revolting" 202–03). I build upon Connor's and Evangelista's insights, arguing that Pater's insistence that the experience of primitive Dionysian supernaturalism is just as universal as that of the ostensibly cultured Apollonian beauty created an opportunity for him to present the embodied experiences of cultural outsiders as central to, rather than definitionally excluded from, the universally shared human experience. These ranks included not just the queer subjectivities that have been a frequent topic of Pater scholarship, but also Orientalized racial others—Jews, in particular—whom he discusses in his characteristically subtle and oblique manner.

Ruskin's and Swinburne's writings reveal an investment in Apollonian aesthetics in the tradition of Winckelmann and Kant, one which elicits an undercurrent of racial essentialism in their writings on myth. Kant establishes the connection between primitivism and mythic supernaturalism when he writes in the *Critique of Judgment* that "deliverance from superstition is called *enlightenment*. . . . For the blindness in which superstition places us, which it even imposes upon us as an obligation, makes the need of being guided by others, and the consequent passive state of our reason, peculiarly noticeable" (171–72). For Kant, primitive supernatural beliefs undermine the capacities for rational self-possession and self-control that make for enlightened citizen-subjects. This assumption also underlies Ruskin's stadial theory of myth in *The Queen of the Air*, which proposes "three structural parts" to the historical development of a myth: "the root, in physical existence, sun, or sky, or cloud, or sea; then the personal incarnation of that, becoming a trusted and companionable deity, . . . and, lastly, the moral significance of the image, which is in all the great myths eternally and beneficently true" (382). He claims that myths continue to be relevant in the post-Enlightenment age, despite having their origin in the unscientifically naive and superstitious projections of human agency onto inanimate objects during the early stages of human development, because they eventually develop into parables with universal—that is, rational—significance to all humankind.

Ruskin attributes this ability to reach the universal through myth only to particular races. "Great myths," he says, are "myths made by great people":

> The myth of a simple and ignorant race must necessarily mean little, because a simple and ignorant race have little to mean. . . . And the real meaning of any myth

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> is that which it has at the noblest age of the nation among whom it is current. The farther back you pierce, the less significance you will find, until you come to the first narrow thought, which, indeed, contains the germ of the accomplished tradition; but only as the seed contains the flower. As the intelligence and passion of the race develop, they cling to and nourish their beloved and sacred legend; leaf by leaf it expands under the touch of more pure affections, and more delicate imagination, until at last the perfect fable burgeons out into symmetry of milky stem and honied bell. (301)

While all myths have their origins in particular experiences—"the first narrow thought"—they only attain universal significance when they exist within and progress alongside "the intelligence and passion of the race" that is superior to others, where they eventually attain the "delicate" beauty of the "milky stem and honied bell" that is the aesthetic equivalent of the rational truths they contain. By contrast, "a simple and ignorant race," or what Ruskin calls elsewhere in the text a "childish race," will remain mired in a particularity that has no "significance" to others because they are unable to transcend the particularity of that first "narrow thought" (301).

Ruskin's comments here rehearse the teleology of Enlightenment aesthetics and its underlying racial logic. They transform into a theory of racial development the essentially Kantian teleology of beauty he initially provided in the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), where he says that the question of "what is really high in art" must be "decided at first by few" and that "from these few the decision is communicated to the number next below them in rank of mind, and by these again to a wider and lower circle; . . . until, in process of time, the right and consistent opinion is communicated to all, and held by all as a matter of faith" (80). In *The Queen of the Air*, Ruskin states that while every human being throughout history has an embodied response to objects in the world ("the first narrow thought"), these responses can be educated over time into a more finely attuned appreciation of what is truly beautiful, the Kantian sensus communis. This appreciation is a worthy goal because, in Kant's words, it is "the object of an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction": the pleasure one receives from a properly aesthetic appreciation of a beautiful object does not arise from its ability to satisfy one's merely personal needs and desires, but truly for its own sake alone (*Critique* 55). It provides, Kant says, a "universal satisfaction" (58). The individual's achievement of an aesthetic appreciation for beauty thus testifies to the fact that his subjective experiences have transcended the merely personal and are now aligned with what is rational—that is, what is truly universal—insofar as it can be shared by and communicated among all other human beings as common sense or sensus communis. When an entire

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"race" achieves this ability, Ruskin states, this signifies their greatness and superiority over "simple and ignorant race[s]." Furthermore, Ruskin echoes Winckelmann when he indicates that the historical triumph of the universal reason attained by superior races over the irrationality of the primitive races is figured by the Greek god Apollo, whom he says represents the "kindling, purifying, and illuminating intellectual wisdom" that is "the purging of evil vision and fear" (*Queen of the Air* 305). In Greek myth, the music of Apollo's lyre triumphs in a contest against the pipe playing of Marsyas, whom Evangelista notes is for Ruskin "a Dionysian persona." This signifies the "victory of the music in which 'words and thoughts lead' over the one in which 'the wind or impulse leads,' the triumph of the Apollonian 'intellectual' over the Dionysian 'brutal, or meaningless' in art" ("Revolting" 214). In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin refers to these as the "animal feelings" that art must reject in favor of the "expression and awakening of individual thought" (135). Ruskin's rendering of Apollo indicates that, for him as much as for Kant, aesthetic beauty and intellectual rationality mutually reinforce each other, as both testify to the "greatness" of a people whose myths speak universal truths, as opposed to the "narrow," "childish," "meaningless," and animalistically "brutal" creations of more primitive races, represented by Marsyas.

Pater's "A Study of Dionysus" refers to the same stages Ruskin identifies, but moves away from his historical and aesthetic teleology, and hence from its racial implications. In these writings, Pater instead focuses on how the Dionysian supernaturalism that "great" myths and races supposedly leave behind is not actually brutal and meaningless, but instead can attain the universality that Ruskin associated with the Apollonian rationality achieved only by certain racial groups. Pater adopts Ruskin's three-phase theory of myth, but demonstrates that these phases overlap with each other in complex ways. Pater conceives of the history of myth in nonteleological and, ultimately, aesthetic terms as "a struggle, a *Streben*" in Greek art "between the palpable and limited human form and the floating essence it is to contain, . . . the free spirit of air, and light, and sky" ("A Study of Dionysus" 28). While Ruskin believes that the move from vague projections of human agency onto nature to concrete personification through the figures of the gods indicates myth's progress on the way to full rationalization, Pater instead anticipates Nietzsche in his understanding of Greek art to be defined by the continued dialectical struggle to do justice to those free-floating psychological impressions within representations that are necessarily limited by aesthetic form.

This admixture, which undermines the binary opposition between the "primitive" and the "modern," is especially apparent in the figure of Dionysus,

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whom Pater explains "came later than the other gods to the centres of Greek life; and, as a consequence of this, he is presented to us in an earlier stage of development than they" (23). Dionysus represents the "world of vision unchecked by positive knowledge, in which the myth is begotten among a primitive people, as they wondered over the life of the thing their hands helped forward, till it became for them a kind of spirit" (22). Pater associates this primitiveness with a universal ethical sensibility that Victorian writers like Ruskin more typically connected with the refinements of Apollonian beauty. "The religion of Dionysus" is, for Pater,

> one of many modes of that primitive tree-worship which, growing out of some universal instinctive belief that trees and flowers are indeed habitations of living spirits, is found almost everywhere in the earlier stages of civilization. . . . [S]uch feeling may still float about a mind full of modern lights, the feeling we too have of a life in the green world, always ready to assert its claim over our sympathetic fancies. Who has not at moments felt the scruple, which is with us always regarding animal life, following the signs of animation further still, till one almost hesitates to pluck out the little soul of flower or leaf? (3)

The "universal instinctive belief" Pater identifies here reaches out across histories and cultures: it still persists in our minds "full of modern lights" just as it did "everywhere in earlier stages of civilization," regardless of any racial differences. What Kant would perceive as a loss of rational self-control Pater instead presents as a "sympathetic fancy," one that testifies to our connections to all other human beings regardless of time or place, and even hints that we too may share a life in common with "the green world." This sympathy inspires us to care for the environment and its inhabitants, rather than to enact the rationalist mastery over nature implied by Kant's comments on reason's triumph over the supernatural. Instead of being the kind of "narrow thought" that for Ruskin bespeaks the uncommunicable and merely particular impressions of undeveloped peoples, the figure of Dionysus for Pater represents a primitive and irrational impulse that is not merely particular and idiosyncratic. Instead, we experience this impulse as an inherent quality of the object itself that we feel should necessarily compel universal assent, just as Kant describes the aesthetic experience of beauty as a subjective experience that feels as if it is an undeniable quality of the object. Furthermore, we refrain to "pluck out the little soul of flower or leaf" entirely for its own sake, not because it fulfills any of our appetites or desires, and not because its form alone gives us pleasure, as in the case in Kant's description of the beautiful. If we begin recognizing, as Pater does, that other kinds of embodied aesthetic experiences—especially those that the dominant culture deems unbeautiful because experienced by marginalized subjects—can be communicated with others, we can begin conceiving of universalism in a new way.

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Dennis Denisoff argues of "A Study of Dionysus" that Pater's contrast between "Apollonian self-conscious intelligence—that is, rational mental thought" with the Dionysian "instinctual sense of being that is not characterized by a humanist notion of self" represents "the sacrifice of liberal humanism itself" (439). I would qualify that statement by suggesting that Pater is instead seeking to define a more fully universal humanism. He describes aesthetic experiences that can be shared with and communicated to all other human beings but do not rely on the will to dominate self, other, and nature inherent to instrumental rationalism. This humanism can recognize the shared life of "the green world" rather than defining itself in opposition to it. Pater presents Dionysus as the figure for a new version of the aesthetic that, as Evangelista states, is entirely independent from Ruskin's celebration of Apollonian beauty. Pater says that for the ancient Greeks Dionysus "fills . . . the place of Apollo; he is the inherent cause of music and poetry" and suggests that in the modern era "the imitative arts would draw from [the Dionysian spirit] altogether new motives of freedom and energy, of freshness in old forms." This is because Dionysus "inspires; he explains the phenomena of enthusiasm, as distinguished by Plato in the *Phaedrus* (c. 370 BCE), the secrets of possession by a higher and more energetic spirit than one's own, the gift of self-revelation, of passing out of oneself through words, tones, gestures" (11). Dionysus demonstrates, in other words, that there is aesthetic and ethical value in the loss of independent self-direction, in the experience of the enthusiastic "gift" of "possession" and the subjectless "passing out of oneself" that rationalist, Apollonian cultural commentators like Ruskin typically associated with the unrefined savagery of racial others. Thus, for Pater, a Dionysian version of the aesthetic can testify to the universality of the embodied experiences of those whom many believed to be ineluctably particular, namely the Jews, whom Pater and others saw through Orientalist lenses.

In one of the most frequently commented upon passages of the "Dionysus" essay, Pater refers to an 1867 painting of "Bacchus" (the god's Roman name) by "a young Hebrew painter" (37). The person he refers to is Simeon Solomon, a Jewish Pre-Raphaelite who was arrested and charged with attempting to commit sodomy in a public urinal a year before the publication of Pater's essay. Although Solomon's homosexuality was well known in his social circles prior to this arrest, the ensuing public scandal caused him to be dropped by nearly all of his associates. This included the close friend he shared with Pater, the poet Swinburne, who stopped associating with Solomon soon after his arrest became public knowledge. Pater's reference to Solomon so soon after his arrest was audacious, and he describes the painting as presenting "the god of the bitterness of wine, of 'things too sweet'; the sea-water of the Lesbian grape

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become somewhat brackish in the cup" (37). Pater's comments refer to criticisms of Solomon's work made by Swinburne even before this scandal. In an 1871 article in the literary magazine *The Dark Blue* (1871–73), Swinburne said of the painter's classical artworks, like *Bacchus*, that they exhibit "an expression . . . which is not pure Greek, a shade or tone of thought or feeling beyond Hellenic contemplation; whether it be oriental or modern in its origin, and derive from national or personal sources" (445). These works imperfectly combine, he says, "the fervent violence of feeling or faith which is peculiar to the Hebrews with the sensitive acuteness of desire, the sublime reserve and balance of passion, which is peculiar to the Greeks" (450). Evangelista says that in this article "Swinburne attributes Solomon's impure Greekness to his Jewishness," which causes him to mingle improperly the "ancient and modern" ("Revolting" 208). Also notable in Swinburne's comment is the implication that the artworks are specifically marred by Solomon's racial particularity, the "national or personal" qualities preventing him from achieving proper Hellenic balance in his artworks. Swinburne's language here derives from Winckelmann's racist rhetoric of "pure Greek" biological and cultural superiority: instead of the classical universality of Apollonian "sublime reserve and balance of passion," the aesthetic effect created by his artwork is of a "fervent violence" that is "peculiar to the Hebrews," whereas the qualities that are "peculiar" to the Greeks are merely intensifications of qualities that everyone should strive to attain. For Swinburne, Solomon's Hellenism is aesthetically inferior not just because it is anachronistic, but also because it is irrevocably marked by an essential racial specificity, infused with primitive emotions ("feeling") and irrational beliefs ("faith") that simply cannot be transcended.

Pater, whose description of Solomon's *Bacchus* echoes the language of Swinburne's review, also implicitly focuses on the painter's race. In contrast to Swinburne, though, Pater makes an association between Dionysus's apparently Eastern origins and Solomon's own "Hebrew" ones that scrambles the supposed binary between Oriental irrationality and Western reason. When he rhetorically asks, "whether anything similar in feeling [to Solomon's melancholy modern Bacchus] is to be actually found in the range of Greek ideas," he answers emphatically "yes . . . something corresponding to this deeper, more refined idea, really existed" in the earlier figure of Dionysus Zagreus, whose Greek name literally refers to his being torn apart by the mainades (*Greek* 37). He thus affirms the true universality expressed by Solomon's distinctly modern, Orientalized Jewish vision, which he says is not "a late after-thought," but "a tradition really primitive, and harmonious with the original motive of the idea of Dionysus" (38). Pater thus challenges the historical and aesthetic teleology of

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Swinburne's Hellenism. Pater says that Solomon's painting reveals the melancholy that has actually always been present in the myth, even if modern people have often been unable to discern it. It is the dominant assumptions regarding the Apollonianism of the Greeks that are truly narrow, insofar as they prevent one from perceiving what has actually always been there: "you have no sooner caught a glimpse of this image [of Solomon's painting], than a certain perceptible shadow comes creeping over the whole story; for, in effect, we have seen glimpses of the sorrowing Dionysus, all along" (39). For Pater, Solomon's specifically Oriental perspective allows us to look back and see the entire history of the myth through new eyes, revealing a more emotionally inclusive version of universality that had heretofore been hidden by modern Apollonian assumptions. Pater shows that what Swinburne's Apollonian Hellenism understands to be a limiting racial particularity can instead now be seen as universal, "complete and very fascinating" in itself (37). Pater's universalization of Dionysian aesthetic primitivism can express new, more capacious versions of the human.

III. Vernon Lee's Dionysian Supernaturalism

While Pater emphasizes the development of new aesthetic constructions of universality beyond the limited Kantian notion of beauty, Lee instead focuses on how the exclusion of certain kinds of aesthetic experience from the universality of the sensus communis elicits both metaphorical and literal violence against those whom the dominant culture associates with Dionysian supernaturalism—namely, women and racial others—and hides that violence under the veneer of beauty. In her major critical account of supernatural aesthetics, "Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art" (1880), she echoes (and likely draws directly from) Pater's discussion of Dionysian mythology. Like Pater, she namechecks the teleological theory of myth found in Ruskin's *The Queen of the Air* in her discussion of how the "necessarily essentially vague" ("Faustus" 301) supernatural lies "beyond and outside the limits of the possible, the rational, the explicable" (294), and also like Pater, she rejects Ruskin's stadial, rationalist, progressive teleology in her celebration of pagan myth's continued "vitality" (296). Yet Lee emphasizes the violence of the historical movement away from supernatural vagueness and toward Apollonian formalism, as modern aesthetics and modern rationalism reinforce each other by aggressively excluding particular kinds of experiences from their ostensibly universal purview. The advent of aesthetic practices that focus on formal perfection "rudely seized and disentangled" (299) and "rudely severed" the inchoate experiences of early humanity's supernaturalism, resulting in the "destruction of their inherent power"

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(304). Ultimately, she says, when art reaches "maturity and independence" it goes even beyond restricting "impressions and fancies within the limits of form" and begins restricting them "yet closer within the limits of beauty" (304). More explicitly and emphatically than Pater, Lee understands that modernity's installation of beauty as the highest aesthetic ideal goes hand in hand with its installation of rationality as the highest intellectual ideal—"the synthetical definiteness of [formal] art," she says, "is as sceptical as the analytical definiteness of logic." Simultaneously, this ideal has the effect of casting out supernatural experiences that all of humanity shares from the realm of universality by denigrating them as unrefined and merely "primitive" (295).

In her essay "The Lake of Charlemagne, An Apology for Association" (1887), Lee articulates more directly than Pater how aesthetic beauty is shaped by racism while also perpetuating it. She rephrases and, in the process, calls attention to the political implications of Kant's discussion of racialized ideals of beauty in the *Critique of Judgment*, where he states that "a Negro must necessarily have a different normal idea of the beauty of a figure than a white, a Chinese person a different idea from a European," because "the basis for the normal idea of a beautiful man" changes depending on "the country where this comparison is made" (119). Although Lee does not cite Kant directly, she explores the implications of his statement in her explanation of how the aesthetic shapes our individual impressions via the ostensible common sense, or sensus communis, created by the aesthetic appreciation of beauty, such that prejudicial racial assumptions come to seem like universally shared, rational truths. Lee makes reference to the presumed racist and ableist aesthetic impressions of her presumably white readership, stating,

> Were we to seek the reasons why a strong and healthy human body of our race gives us a general sense of beauty which we should not receive from a deformed negro, we should find that the single elements of lines, curves, and tints were probably not, in the one case, more agreeable to our nerves of sight than in the other case; we should probably discover that the selfsame lines, curves, and tints were contained in a great number of objects of which we should call some ugly and some beautiful; and that we must consequently seek the explanation of the sense of beauty connected with the one figure, and of ugliness connected with the other, in the . . . suspicious loathing with which savages of a slightly superior race look upon other savages of slightly inferior race, their slaves or enemies. The original motive of preference has been obliterated by centuries. ("Lake of Charlemagne" 57–58)

Lee highlights how the historical development of the concept of formal beauty perpetuates racist beliefs by making them appear to be objective facts: at a particular historical juncture long ago, white people made the subjective judgement

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particular to themselves that Black people were inferior. Over time, as white people begin to associate not just personal and group "preference," but formal "beauty" to white bodies and "ugliness" to Black bodies, the subjective universality Kant ascribes to aesthetic judgment makes it appear that these qualities are inherent to the formal properties of the object itself (in its "lines, curves, and tints") and should be shared by everyone with properly educated tastes. When the group that holds this aesthetic judgment is in a position of cultural power, "beauty" becomes a way of making that dominance appear to be a reasonable and natural matter of course rather than the contingent outcome of political struggle. In this way, culturally dominant definitions of "beauty" are not just determined by cultural hegemony, but also actively help to perpetuate it.

For Lee, it is actually the supernatural, rather than beauty, that is a universal human experience, one that is both deeply subjective and truly shared by everyone precisely because it is primitive. Because it does not need to be cultivated through aesthetic education, it does not exclude anything or anyone from its purview. In "Dionea," supernaturalism reveals that it is merely the cultural dominance of whiteness that makes it appear as if beauty is the *only* universally shared aesthetic experience. Lee does this by having her main character, the love goddess Venus returned to a present-day Italian village, humiliate the white male artist who represents the rationalism, as well as the racism and misogyny, of Apollonian beauty, just as Kant says the supernatural humiliates reason, by "mak[ing] the need of being guided by others, and the consequent passive state of our reason, peculiarly noticeable" (*Critique* 171–72). Lee's tale is told through a series of letters written by Doctor Alessandro de Rosis to his patron, Lady Evelyn Savelli. The story begins in 1873, when de Rosis tells of the discovery of a young girl named Dionea who washes up on the shores of the fictional village of Montemurto. Over the years, de Rosis narrates Dionea's childhood raised by nuns and her eventual growth into the "village sorceress" ("Dionea" 93). Over the course of the story, a series of men attempt to exploit Dionea and die in mysterious circumstances. This culminates in Waldemar, a sculptor and Winckelmannian aesthete, killing himself and his wife in a quasi-pagan sacrificial rite after he fails to create a sculpture of Dionea. After this, Dionea disappears from Montemurto and returns to the sea.

Dionea's name clearly references Dione, the mother of Aphrodite in Greek myth, but also recalls the name "Dionysus," as Catherine Maxwell has noted.[7] When Dionea is first discovered, de Rosis says she "understood no kind of Italian, and jabbered some kind of half-intelligible Eastern jabber," recalling the Asian origins traditionally ascribed to Dionysus in Western Orientalist discourse (78). Like Pater's hero, her status as a supernatural outsider, a god in

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exile in a rationalistic modern world, intertwines with her status as a cultural outsider to the dominant culture in Montemurto—a status that contributes to the other characters' ambiguous perceptions of her as racially other. In response to criticisms of the story offered by her brother, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Lee echoed the language of the "Faustus and Helena" essay in her comments that Dionea's "obscurity" was deliberate and that "such a story requires to appear & reappear & disappear, to be baffling, in order to acquire its supernatural quality" (qtd. in Maxwell, "Vernon Lee" 31–32). These qualities combine to give the sense of Dionea as a vague, fluctuating figure who resists confinement within definite aesthetic, linguistic, and, I maintain, racial form. In "Faustus and Helena," Lee describes the supernatural as "vague, fluctuating impressions oscillating before the imagination" (299). De Rosis's descriptions of Dionea are just as fluctuating on this matter, as he continually struggles to locate her within the Kantian, regulative aesthetic teleology of race. Although he makes a passing remark about the picturesqueness of the "brown, barefoot boys" who shake olives off of the trees of Montemurto, he eventually comes to perceive Dionea's brown coloring as part of her overall otherness. He first describes her as innocuously as he does the local boys, as a "poor little brown mite!" and "brown as a berry" when she is first discovered on the seashore as a child (78). Yet when she grows older and "very nearly commit[s] a sacrilege" in the convent where she is raised, she is treated as a kind of subhuman, forced "to make the sign of the cross twenty-six times on the bare floor with her tongue" (84). At this moment, her coloring seems to de Rosis an aspect of her threateningly exotic appearance as someone who is "rather out of place, an amazing little beauty, dark, lithe, with an odd, ferocious gleam in her eye" (84). Similarly, when she evinces no shock upon being asked to pose naked for Waldemar, he describes her as "immaculate and savage" (97). Yet in a calmer moment, when de Rosis finds her "telling stories to two little blonde children," he describes her as having "a pale breast" (99–100). Whenever de Rosis sees Dionea as a threat to the reigning order of Montemurto, her physical qualities appear more markedly Oriental. His depiction of Dionea recalls the ambiguous descriptions of Bertha Mason-Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847), which Susan Meyer notes become more distinctly racialized as Bertha becomes more threatening to the status quo.[8] Lee thematizes and ironizes this trend by ascribing it to the notably obtuse de Rosis, who does not realize that Venus has reappeared in Montemurto despite having written a book on the topic of gods in exile.

Such variability in the perception of race is one reason why Kant developed his racial aesthetics: after Georg Forster challenged his earlier anthropological account of skin-color-based racial biology in 1764 by stating "that whites are

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more darkly colored in Spain, Mauritania, Egypt, Arabia, and Abyssinia than in Germany, Poland, Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden," Kant subsequently turned to aesthetic teleology to locate racial perception in the aesthetic judgment of the observing subject, rather than in the biology of the observed body—this is why a white person would classify an Italian as white and a so-called Oriental as nonwhite, even if the latter has lighter coloring than the former (qtd. in Hoffman 65). De Rosis's changing perceptions of Dionea's language embody the racism that subtends this aesthetic principle: his perception of her as less articulate and more animalistic occurs in tandem with her increased racialization in his eyes. Although she eventually learns Italian, de Rosis renders her all but inarticulate: he records her direct speech on only three occasions (each time in relation to one of the men who dies) and more frequently finds her "uttering strange, cooing sounds" (81), letting out "long-drawn guttural vowels" (87), using "a high guttural voice in a strange chaunt" (89), and "singing words in an unknown tongue" (104). The opacity he attaches to Dionea's language comes to signify as subhuman racial otherness just as he comes to interpret her coloring as a mark of quasi-Oriental racial difference, even though her brownness is shared by the other villagers. De Rosis shows how the sensus communis described by Kant's racial aesthetics allows one's subjective impressions to be perceived as an inherent quality of the body itself.

As the story concludes, Dionea's embodiment of a Dionysian aesthetic of racial otherness becomes a fatal enticement and threat to the sculptor Waldemar's misogynist and racist aesthetic principles, which are clearly modelled on Winckelmann's Apollonian ideal. When de Rosis first introduces him as a visitor to Montemurto from Northern Europe, he remarks that Waldemar's statues are only of "men and boys, athletes and fauns" (93). When he later asks why Waldemar only sculpts "male figures," Waldemar replies, "the female figure . . . is almost inevitably inferior in strength and beauty; woman is not form. . . . The point of a woman is not her body, but (and here his eyes rested very tenderly upon the thin white profile of his wife) her soul" (96). Lee clearly intends him to represent the sexism underlying the Apollonian ideal of beauty articulated by Winckelmann, who was the subject of an admiring essay by Pater in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Pater emphasizes the homoerotic rather than the racial element of this ideal, including a translation from one of Winckelmann's letters where he asserts that "those who are observant of beauty only in women, and are moved little or not at all by the beauty of men, seldom have an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female" (*Renaissance* 153). In "Dionea," however, Lee also focuses on how the Winckelmannian

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celebration of Apollonian beauty, which as we have seen was also a key influence for Kant's racialized ideal of beauty in the *Critique of Judgment*, justifies racism by providing a rationale for the objectification of bodies that are perceived to be nonwhite. When Gertrude, Waldemar's notably "white" wife, insists that he finally attempt to create a statue of a woman, she goes out "scanning the girls of our village with the eyes of a slave-dealer" before settling on Dionea (97). De Rosis says that Waldemar regards Dionea "utterly as a mere inanimate thing, a form to copy," a "body scarcely considered as human" (98). Even after spending "hours of the most rapt contemplation of her," "the way in which he speaks to Dionea . . . is almost brutal in its coldness. And yet to hear him exclaim, 'How beautiful she is! Good God, how beautiful!' No love of mere woman was ever so violent as this love of woman's mere shape" (98).

Yet Dionea's supernaturalism has its revenge. Waldemar at first dismisses his wife's request by quoting Schopenhauer's remark that women are "the unaesthetic sex"; Dionea proves this to be true, but not in the sense Waldemar intended: her Dionysian feminine supernaturalism comes to defeat Waldemar's Apollonian aesthetic formalism (97). Her fluctuating ambiguities continually elude his violent, objectifying attempts to capture them within the definite aesthetic form of an Apollonian sculpture, thereby demonstrating that Apollonianism's vaunted universality actually does have limits. Her resistance to being artistically represented by Waldemar brings out the "latent ferocity" of the "wild animal" in him (96), just as Dionysus brings out the "ecstasies and barbarities" lying latent in rationalistic modern people that Lee identifies in "Dionysus in the Euganean Hills." This eventually results in the murder-suicide of Waldemar and his wife, when he sacrifices her in front of a pagan altar he has built for the worship of Venus/Dionea in his studio, which he then sets on fire. The metaphorical violence aesthetic formalism does to the vague, fluctuating impressions of the supernatural, described in Lee's "Faustus and Helena" essay, has now been literalized by the violence Waldemar performs on Gertrude and on himself. As the very embodiment of Apollonianism, Waldemar worships Dionea to an extent that forces his supposedly superior reason to be humiliated and sacrificed to her powers. Waldemar's rationality literally self-immolates when he is unable to capture her within the ostensibly universal Apollonian ideal of beauty. The story ends when de Rosis informs Lady Evelyn that Dionea has been spotted sailing away on "a Greek boat," bespeaking the continued survival of her pagan supernaturalism even in an ostensibly disenchanted world (104). What had seemed to be subhuman qualities connected to a vague yet potent sense of racial otherness are now revealed to signify Dionea's divine transcendence of rationality. While a Kantian teleological aesthetics insists that all traces of supernaturalism must be

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purged from the beautiful, Lee's story shows that an artistic practice that forcefully excludes all that which does not fall under its limited definition of beauty, including the ideal racial purity of Apollonian rationalism, will eventually be consumed by the same violence it perpetrates upon others.

Pater and Lee both challenge the Kantian racialized ideal of beauty on primarily aestheticist grounds: as a regulative teleology, race imposes restrictive paradigms upon our subjective impressions that render us unable to experience fully and perceive rightly what is right in front of our faces, often to our own detriment. It is my hope that this essay is a first step toward deepening our understanding of how Victorian aestheticism mediated between the exclusionary and rationalistic aesthetics articulated by Kant and the more inclusive and progressive versions of modernist primitivism that were beginning to take shape in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. This version of Dionysian primitivism cannot simply be dismissed as appropriating non-Western cultural forms for the artistic expression of Western modernity. Instead, the version of aestheticism offered in Pater's and Lee's mythological writings anticipates artistic visions of the kind described by the South African modernist H. I. E. Dhlomo, who in his defense of primitivism in the essay "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?" (1939) asserts that non-Western artists can draw upon European techniques once they "realise they can preserve and glorify the past not by reverting back to it, but by immortalising it in art" (41). This aestheticism seeks to understand the relationship between the primitive and the modern as a dialectic rather than a binary, and to unshackle our aesthetic perceptions from the limiting, reductive dyad of particularity and universality.

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NOTES

1. I follow the leads of Marianna Torgovnick and Jade Munslow Ong in not putting the word primitive in quotation marks, other than when it appears in a direct quote. In Torgovnick's words, doing so would require "all other constructed terms—especially terms like *the West* and *Western*—. . . to require quotation marks as well" (20).

2. Sebastian Lecourt notes that during the 1850s and 1860s Matthew Arnold was "quite overt" (71) in his use of racial anthropology to promote "the idea that England needs to abandon any myth of its own purity" (75), a notion grounded in his "aesthetic liberalism" which modeled "the play of different national characteristics" in works of art "upon a polygenist understanding of race" derived from Ernest Renan (74).

3. For an exemplary version of this argument, see Bernal 337–400. A summary of work on Victorian scientific racism can also be found in Betensky.

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4. See Andrews.

5. Lee's first substantive discussion of Nietzsche was "Nietzsche and the Will to Power" in *Gospels of Anarchy and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (1908).

6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Simon Gikandi both argue for the significant absence of race in Kant's aesthetics, and Irene Tucker has similarly argued that Kant's anthropological rather than aesthetic writings challenge poststructuralist theories of race. Yet Hoffman demonstrates that race is central to the Kantian notion of beauty, even if it is mentioned only briefly in the *Critique of Judgment.*

7. See Maxwell, "From Dionysus to 'Dionea'" 263.

8. See Meyer 67–68.

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