WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY

BODY, IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVE IN TITIAN’S PAINTINGS

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Abstract:

In the Renaissance, the bodies of individuals were understood as guides to their internal identities, which influenced the public understanding of the figure represented in art—be it in terms of politics, personal life, or legacy. The classicizing and religious paintings by Titian (c. 1488/90-1576) show the subject’s state of being, at a particular moment in a story, through the use of body language. The body is a vehicle for narrative that demonstrates the sitter’s identity, relating the intricacies of the body to both the mind and the story. By exploring the humanist combination of philosophical theories regarding the relationship between the soul and the body, it is clear that Titian used these concepts to elevate the human figures in his narrative paintings. Formal analysis and Renaissance artistic theories by Alberti and others suggest that Renaissance artists operated under the assumption that how their sitters appeared was tantamount to representing their identities. Current scholarship has not yet considered this particular relationship in Titian’s works. Analysis of several of Titian’s depictions of female subjects—such as Mary Magdalene, Salome, Callisto, and Ariadne—suggests that while Titian fulfilled Alberti’s guidelines for figural narrative depictions, he went further, giving the women in his paintings identities and thus agency. In this way, Titian makes it clear that Alberti’s emphasis on the role of figures in a painted narrative does not do enough to give figures identity. By representing these females, not only through flesh, but also with identity, Titian creates paintings that act as equalizers for the female gender during the Renaissance.
Introduction

Self-proclaimed “people-watchers” intuitively understand the complex relation between the internal identity of an individual and the external appearance of that identity. For example, a subway rider might look over at a fellow passenger and notice his appearance: disheveled hair, over-grown sideburns, glazed-over eyes, and slumped shoulders. She may make the seemingly simple—and often unconscious—conclusion that her bench-mate has had a rough day and is thinking intensely about it. This “people-watching” phenomenon is not new. On the contrary, this close observation of the link between identity and the physical appearance of that identity was practiced since before—but especially during—the High Renaissance.

During the Renaissance, the average person believed the body contained and held traces of the mind and soul. This Renaissance assumption was based on a Humanist combination of ancient philosophies regarding the body, mind, and soul. It was through these combined philosophies that many people began to develop theories reversing this relationship; signals were recognized in the appearance of the body. These signs were translated to form a type of language pertaining to the inner workings of an individual’s identity. This study, known as Physiognomy, penetrated the world of painting. Artists recognized the way they painted patrons affected the public understanding of that individual—politically, personally, and in the way he or she was remembered.

Art theorists began to record these ideas on the visual arts in order to emphasize their impact for the audience. For example, Italian sculptor, architect, painter, theorist and writer, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), developed three particular treatises on painting, architecture and sculpture—*Della pittura* (1436), *De re aedificatoria* (1452), and *De statua*, respectively. These were the first treatises written since antiquity and provided the foundation for the
Renaissance theories on visual art. In *Della pittura*, Alberti developed theories pertaining to painting in order to best serve both the patron and the subject of a narrative painting. Alberti’s treatises were so widely read that, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, most Italian painters would have been influenced, either directly or indirectly, by his writings. Tiziano Vecellio (c. 1488/90-1576), more commonly known as Titian, was no exception.

Titian was clearly influenced by Alberti’s theories. In *Della pittura*, Alberti developed guidelines for what he considered the highest form of painting: *istoria*. After he wrote his treatise on painting, it affected many artists, including Titian, as seen in *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520-3) (fig. 1) and *Diana and Callisto* (1556-9) (fig. 2). Titian’s superior ability allowed him to communicate complex narratives through the depiction of the human body in accordance to Alberti’s theories. He also achieved Alberti’s goal of elevating the artist above the level of mere craftsman. Titian accomplished this by including history and poetry in his works, demonstrating his intellect throughout his *istorie*.

Moreover, by applying Alberti’s concepts to elements he had not considered—namely, the female figure—Titian empowered the female characters he painted, addressing their need for individual identities. He gave the women in his narrative paintings—both religious and classicizing—identity, and thus, responsibility for their role in the story; these females became the main agents of their own tales. By portraying both women and men in figural poses that emphasized the active nature of the figures’ minds and souls, Titian equalized the playing field between the genders. The women in the works analyzed here in *Saint Mary Magdalene in Penitence* (c. 1535) (fig. 3), *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* (c. 1515/6) (fig. 4), *Bacchus and Ariadne*, and *Diana and Callisto* were not objectified for the purpose of eye candy, but formed an integral part of the narratives.
Titian’s success at conveying the subtleties of the narrative through figures was indebted, at least partially, to his training. He was born c.1485/90 in Pieve di Cadore, in the Republic of Venice, and died in Venice on 27 August 1576. When he was ten or twelve years old, his uncle trained him as a painter. He subsequently apprenticed under Sebastiano Zuccato (1476-1527), Gentile Bellini (c. 1429-1507), and Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), the leading painter of the city at that time. While training under Giovanni Bellini, beginning in 1507, Titian also worked with Giorgione (c. 1477/8-1510) and Sebastiano del Piombo (c. 1485-1547). When Giorgione died in 1510, and Sebastiano went to Rome in 1511, Titian completed many of Giorgione’s unfinished paintings, creating confusion in attributions between Titian and Giorgione. However, Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) suggested that Titian’s figural style was already very distinct from Giorgione’s by as early as 1508. Titian was distinguished for his emphasis on the life and movement of the human figure. It has been argued that this emphasis allowed viewers to create an affinity with the perceived identities of the painted figures. His fame in this arena led to a wide circle of patronage.

Titian achieved great fame throughout Europe, beginning in the 1530s through his royal connections, and continued until his death. After painting for over 65 years, most of Titian's art—portraits, allegories, classical mythologies, histories and religious paintings—was spread throughout Europe. Titian was considered the Venetian school’s greatest painter, and one of the first Venetian artists to work for patrons outside of Venice. Due to his widespread fame, many art critics were familiar with him. For example, Vasari’s biography on Titian in Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects of 1568 was the earliest written record of Titian’s life and career, written while he was still alive. While Vasari was not supportive of many of
Titian’s artistic practices, the fact that Vasari devoted an entire section to Titian in his book demonstrated Titian’s presence in artistic circles during that time.

Vasari’s endeavor, the revival of biography, reflected prevailing Humanist practices. This type of learning—credited to Petrarch’s influence—focused on reviving Classical literature and antique art forms. These educational reforms developed into the Humanist idea of the Liberal Arts—grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy—in order to aid antiquarian intellectual search. For this reason, many Humanist Renaissance artists, including Titian, looked back to antiquity for source information, and themes as seen in Bacchus and Ariadne and Diana and Callisto. Particularly, in Bacchus and Ariadne, Titian combined several different Classical literary sources to form his narrative in a way that conformed perfectly to the Humanist idea of applying multiple perspectives to find numerous answers. However, the most important facet of Humanism was at the root of the word itself: human. Humanism was devoted to the importance of the human being as a secular individual—combining the body and the ancient philosophical composite of the mind and soul. This fostered the development of a whole, well-rounded individual, forming the Renaissance assumption regarding the relationship between the mind, soul, and body that Titian relied upon.

The Painted Parts of the Whole Individual

As previously mentioned, it was believed during the Renaissance that an individual’s mind and soul were inextricably connected to the physicality of that person. These parts were also separate facets of a singular identity. This ultimately translated into portraiture, where the internal identity of the sitter could be revealed, or construed through a physiognomic reading of that individual’s features. The reading of an individual person’s physical features based on physiognomy was especially important: the physical nature could be shown in painting directly,
while the mind and soul of an individual could not. The painted exterior presence of a figure could, in turn, influence the political reputation of the sitter, personal perception, or the lasting impact of the subject matter in the mind of the spectator. In order to better understand the way an artist was able to paint the whole person—mind, soul, and body—one must first become familiar with the philosophies regarding those facets leading up to the Renaissance.

Just as citizens of the twenty-first century are familiar with the Internet, cellular phones, and global warming, Titian would have been familiar with the cultural and intellectual debates and writings of the sixteenth century. The relationship between paintings and the political area, individual character, and legacy of the depicted figure became a crucial way of gaining commissions as an artist. This relationship was founded on much earlier ideas revived during this period, including those of the ancient Greeks, Plato (428/9 BCE–348/7 BCE), Aristotle (384 BCE–322 BCE), and Plotinus (204/5 CE–207 CE), as well as those of the Italian Dominican priest, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). While espousing very different philosophies regarding the relationship between the mind, soul, and body, the ideas of these philosophers were combined in a Humanist manner to form the Renaissance construction of a person’s identity at the time Titian painted.

Plato’s philosophies about the inner identity of the soul in relation to the body form the foundation of Renaissance thought. The permeation of his ideas throughout succeeding centuries placed his work as one of the foremost in philosophical discussions. In this way, Plato’s works were a crucial component of Renaissance discourses of the body as a direct expression of the soul—a part of identity.

Plato maintained that there was a more perfect realm than the realm humans can perceive, made up of universal, abstract objects, which he referred to as forms. One of these forms is
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Beauty. He argued that there was one Real entity, while all other entities were representations of that original form. Following this reasoning, if a painting was considered beautiful, it was as a representation of Beauty, rather than Beauty itself. He developed this reasoning in *The Allegory of Cave*, one of the most famous philosophical analogies. According to this source, there is a much more Real form of reality than the bodies we see, which are meant only to represent that original form of reality. Therefore, the human body was a step away from the ideal reality. Thus, a figural painting was a representation twice removed from Plato’s differentiation between the soul and the body.

Plato contended that the soul was immortal—indestructible—and could exist without the body, but the body could not live without the soul. In fact, he argued that the soul functioned more effectively without the imperfections of the body. In *The Republic* (c. 380 BCE), Plato defined the soul as a combination of three different parts: Appetite, Reason, and Spirit. The Appetite encompassed the life-giving processes to function as a human being. Reason involved the intellectual functions, or the active mind. Lastly, Spirit operated the moral functions. Reason, aided by the Spirit, controlled the Appetite. While these three components of the soul could not be separated from each other, and worked in tandem with the body, Plato separated the body’s physical nature.

Since Reason controlled the baser urges of the Appetite, these senses were tied to the physical body also placed in a hierarchy between “high” and “low.” Sight and hearing were given a superior ranking to taste, smell, and feeling, which were considered baser. There were schools of philosophers, influenced by Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE) and Plato, who placed sight as the “noblest and most accurate of all the senses.” The ancient Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (556 BCE – 468 BCE) applied his poetry to the visual arts; he argued that poetry was heard, and
therefore meant for those who could not see, while painting was for those who could not hear, but could see. Since sight was considered the most honorable sense, it followed that painting was more honorable than poetry. Renaissance artists, including Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), clung to this superiority of vision. The active nature of a human identity was often said to rest in the “windows of the soul,” referring to a figures’ eyes. Just as eyes were biologically used to let light to see, it was thought that that same window worked both ways, allowing other people outside to also see in. Therefore, portraying a person’s eyes was tantamount to portraying his or her soul. This gave the artist immense power and responsibility to portray the eyes of a person, and thus his or her soul, accurately. This importance placed on sight, and the manifestation of that sight in the eyes to relay the inner workings of soul, was a Renaissance construct.

The concept of the composite soul made evident through the body is akin to what is currently called identity. This identity applied to Titian, and upheld Plato’s assertion that the composite soul was what made a physical body truly living. Using this argument, comments regarding the life-like qualities of the figures in Titian’s paintings assert that he must have given his figures identity; for, without the composite soul, no body could truly appear lifelike, even in a representation. Plato regarded the soul and the body as separate entities, creating a hierarchy between the two, placing the soul above the physical nature of the body. However, Plato’s student, Aristotle, removed the Dualism of Platonic thought, and thus, the hierarchy between the soul and the body. Titian’s paintings discussed here seem to communicate a hybrid of these concepts.

Aristotle, following in the footsteps of his teacher, Plato, made an enormous impact on Philosophical thought from the time he wrote to the Renaissance. Even though he studied in
Plato’s academy, Aristotle focused much more on empirical endeavors in which he sought data to answer his philosophical queries. Using his more scientific approach, Aristotle categorized three different types of learning as “sciences:” theoretical, or knowledge for its own sake; practical, which referred to morality and the practice of that morality; and lastly, productive—the creation of beautiful or useful objects. It was through this latter science, explored in *Rhetoric* (fourth century BCE) and *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE), that Renaissance artists used Aristotle’s philosophy to elevate their position in society. Since Titian and other artists created beautiful paintings, they argued that their role as artists ought to change from mechanical to the intellectual science of the Liberal Arts. This elevation of artistic status was congruent with Alberti’s constructs for *istoria*.

Aristotle also addressed the relationship between the soul and the body. In contrast to Plato’s conclusions, Aristotle did not argue that the soul and the body were separate. For example, in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, he analyzed the relationship between the body and the soul. He maintained that the soul was the source of all life, present in the bodies of all living things. However, he argued that both the soul and the body were merely special forms of matter in one organism. When one part of the organism ceased to exist, the other must also cease to exist. Thus, the soul and the body were inextricably connected. This, too, was promulgated through the Renaissance.\(^\text{15}\)

In the Renaissance, Aristotelian philosophy provided the foundation of physiognomic theory. Aristotle’s arguments in *De Physiognomia* are be summed up by contemporary scholar, Martin Kemp: “the face serves as a field of ‘signs,’ which, rightly read, could be used to determine the inner nature of the soul behind the façade.”\(^\text{16}\) Renaissance physiognomists, such as Giovanni Battista Della Porta (1535?–1615), wrote that the face could be translated into an
understandable language.\textsuperscript{17} This language of the body could, however, be manipulated by the individual.\textsuperscript{18}

In the Middle Ages—providing a bridge form Antiquity to the Renaissance—these philosophies continued to be developed in the works of Thomas Aquinas. He sought to reconcile his religious beliefs with Aristotelian philosophy regarding individual identity. In practice, he paved the way for Humanists because he combined various philosophies. For example, he held that the soul could live apart from the body after death, fitting with Platonism. However, he was Aristotelian in his argument that the soul only “subsists” when apart from the body and was not a Substance on its own right:

But if we posit a thing that is existence only, such that it is subsisting existence itself, this existence will not receive the addition of a difference, for, if there were added a difference, there would be not only existence but existence and also beyond this some form; much less would such a thing receive the addition of matter, for then the thing would be not subsisting existence but material existence. Hence, it remains that a thing that is its own existence cannot be other than one, and so in every other thing, the thing's existence is one thing, and its essence or quiddity or nature or form is another.\textsuperscript{19}

In other words, Aquinas asserted, like Plato, that the body and soul could be separated, but also, like Aristotle, that the body and the soul were not whole if separated. Aquinas reconciled this view with his religious beliefs, concluding that the body must be resurrected with the soul after death in order for that person to be whole. It was partly because of Aquinas’ work that Aristotelian philosophy reigned between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. However, Humanists began to bring back Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought.

It was not until the Renaissance that Platonic thought was able to once again gain equal footing. Even in Antiquity, Platonism tended to be less popular after Aristotelian philosophy came about, there were several attempts to revive Platonic thought. For example, Plotinus
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developed Neo-Platonism. This new phase of Platonic philosophy focused on the spiritual aspects of Platonic thought as well as on the concept of The One. The One acknowledged an absolute, infinite entity after which all things are derived, similar to Plato’s construct of a superior reality.

This, along with other Platonic thought, was revived during the Renaissance largely because of the appearance of translated Neo-Platonic texts. Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) is credited with introducing Neo-Platonism to the Renaissance for his translation of Plato’s works (1462-1469) and Plotinus’ works (1484–1492) from Greek to Italian at the request of his Humanist patron, Cosimo I de’Medici. Ficino was instrumental in developing a blend of philosophies to which he applied pious truths; he saw Christianity and philosophy as mutually inclusive. Ficino held to the hierarchy of Platonic Dualism by placing the concept of the soul between the divine realm and above the earthly sphere:

> We would do well to call soul the third and middle essence, as the Platonists do, because it is the mean for all and the third from both directions. If you descend from God, you will find soul at the third level down; or at the third level up, if you ascend from body.20

Even though Platonism was revived during the Renaissance, those other philosophical theories did not disappear. While Plotinus clearly used many of Plato’s philosophies, he also incorporated ideas from other philosophers, including Aristotle. Humanist Renaissance scholars practiced this incorporation of many, sometimes contradictory, sources. The combination of these three differing philosophies, in this way, explains the Renaissance assumption of the connection between the mind, soul, temperaments, and the body. It was not surprising that Alberti, as a Humanist, sought to apply these theories to the visual arts, especially painting.
Titian executed Alberti’s application of these theories. However, Titian emphasized the individual figures in his paintings by confronting gender stereotypes. He included both genders in his istoria, which was typical of Renaissance artists. However, in the examples discussed below, he portrayed the interior identities of the males and females rather than simply objectifying the latter. In this way, Titian’s female nudes were not pornographic but expressions of the interior identities of the women in those religious and classicizing stories.

Since Titian was a prominent figure in the artistic sphere at this time, he would have been aware of public discourses regarding the identity and the body in art. It was commonly assumed that the body showed the identity of the person held within that body. This assumption was thoroughly explored in the study of Physiognomy, which aimed at interpreting the physical features of an individual as indicators of their character. Due to the presence of the spectator, any figure represented in painting influenced the public understanding of that figure. Physiognomic theory granted the artist the power to convey exactly what he or she wanted to about a subject, by dictating what a viewer observes. In this manner, the face became artifice, or fabrication of the artist that could enhance certain facets of a sitter’s identity to promote a particular image for the viewer. While Titian used the face to indicate identity, he also utilized the gesticulation of the entire figure to transmit the individual traits of his characters. Therefore, these portraits affected the spectators’ impression of the personal life of the figure, the political power held by that figure, and the lasting impact—or legacy—of the person portrayed. This is exemplified in Titian’s Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese of 1542 (fig. 5).

By depicting the figure and a few setting devices, Titian portrayed the personal history of the young Ranuccio Farnese (1530–1565). Ranuccio was made Prior of the Knights of Malta in 1542 at age twelve, as well as the Archbishop of Naples from 1544 to 1549. Three years later,
Ranuccio became a cardinal of Santa Lucia in Sicily. This was an important and politically charged task in the Roman Catholic Church: cardinals were members of the religious ruling body who elected the Pope from among their own ranks. Titian was commissioned by Ranuccio’s mother to paint this portrait the young boy when he visited Venice in 1542. The resulting life-size portrait depicted him as the newly elected Prior of the Knights of Malta, or religious director to the Knight’s of Malta’s property, San Giovanni dei Forlani.

Titian used the visual attributes of Ranuccio’s new position to display the status of his patron. Titian’s portrait displayed Ranuccio’s figure and wealth to comment on his personal virtues. Ranuccio was the grandson of Pope Paul III (1468–1549), son of Pier Luigi Farnese (1503-1547) and younger brother of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589). The inclusion of the small slashes in Ranuccio’s black coat, running down the length of his arm, hinted at the wealth of his aristocratic bloodline. Only the extremely wealthy could afford to have full sleeves of silk in an under layer. The slashes in the silk in the vest uncover yet another layer of expensive material, over which was the outer coat for the Knights of Malta. The wealth shown in Ranuccio’s clothing—as well as the finances expended to commission this over-life size portrait—attested to his family’s monetary success. This visualization of financial success was most likely to assure potential donors his or her money would be well taken care of in Ranuccio’s hands.

Even with the reassurance of family wealth and a newly acquired position, Titian painted Ranuccio with sensitivity to the young boy’s potential sense of vulnerability. Depicted with soft brown eyes, Ranuccio appears to be a young boy on the brink of manhood trying to fulfill his duty. Titian did not leave out the androgynous characteristics of boyhood. Ranuccio does not seem to have grown into his nose, ears or clothing. In fact, it almost appears as though Ranuccio
borrowed an older, much larger man’s clothing. For example, the buttons of his silk vest are to the left of the central axis of his body, creating the appearance of a more voluptuous torso and chest. His core is further emphasized by the large highlight painted into that area. Even his large jacket hangs slightly open, broadening the appearance of his shoulders. Regardless of whether those clothes appear to be borrowed from a larger man, Titian painted Ranuccio in a way that both suggests this and implores to spectator to focus on Ranuccio’s fortitude, poise, and readiness to fulfill his political, religious, and familial duties. Even though Titian emphasizes the softness of this twelve-year-old boy, through Ranuccio’s upright bearing Titian revealed the virtuosity of the adolescent Prior, bearing his burden with resolve despite his young age. Therefore, Titian communicated to the viewer that Ranuccio had great potential to fulfill the demands of his new position. The fact that this portrait exists also attested to Ranuccio’s resilience, since it was not an easy task to pose. Titian used this portrayal of steadfastness to show the resolute personality of a young religious leader in the face of uncertainty. It is implied that if he could withstand scrutiny at the time in his life when he was most unsure of himself, he would persevere in his new position as well. The way Titian conveyed the personal fortitude of his sitters translated directly into how he also portrayed Ranuccio Farnese’s political potential.

While Titian portrayed the virtuous personal traits of Ranuccio, he also included symbols to convince the viewer of the capability of his sitter to govern. Titian specifically attested to Ranuccio’s new political role and status in the Church—more specifically in the Knights of Malta. The Knights of Malta were also known as Knights Hospitaller, and the Knights of St. John. It was a military organization founded in the middle-eleventh century to fight on behalf of the Church in the Crusades for the Holy Land; the group also cared for pilgrims and the infirm. Organized into Priories—or provinces—the group was concentrated in Rhodes after 1310.
However, after the Turks displaced them in 1530, Emperor Charles V—one of Titian’s close friends and patrons—gave Malta to the organization. As the name Knights of Malta suggested, this island became the enduring base for the order.

The Knights of Malta wore thick, black mantles with the iconic eight-pointed Maltese cross. Any viewer of the Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese would have been immediately aware of his political ties to the Knights of Malta from these attributes alone. He was clothed in the red color of a cardinal, hinting at his status, and foretelling what he would soon become. The audience would have understood Ranuccio’s likelihood of becoming a cardinal based on his family history and Titian’s choice of color. However, Titian further emphasized the potential for Ranuccio to excel in this military order. For example, Ranuccio was painted in clothing typical of the military garb worn by civilians meant to recall the original militant function of the Knighthood. Aside of from obvious presence of a gilded sword, the barrel-chested shape of the clothing represents that shape of armor often worn beneath the formal clothing of military officers in civilian garb. The young boy also wears a silk codpiece to signify his masculinity as well as function as physical protection. This need for security at all times also explains the high-collars: officers usually wore a metal ring around their necks to prevent the penetration of a sword in the event of an attempted beheading. While the slashes in the silk were strategically placed to reveal Ranuccio’s wealth, they also imitate the slashes of a soldier’s leather jacket after being sliced open in battle. With subtle detail, Titian referenced a soldier’s experience in battle, regardless of whether or not Ranuccio ever saw military conflict firsthand.

The concept of identity in the Renaissance mediated realism and idealization of appearance between the painted and the actual subject. The painted appearance may have been representative of a desired political persona. For example, even though twelve-year-old
Ranuccio likely never saw the blood of battle, his clothing implied the idea that he *may* have. This served to secure him in the minds of viewers as a well-versed soldier who has risen to the lofty ranks of a Prior. Therefore, the exact physical congruity between the sitter and the painted image emphasized the identity based on social constructs of those physical attributes.

While there is little written about Ranuccio, his legacy lives on in Titian’s portrait of him. The *Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese* is an excellent example of Titian’s style of portraiture. Titian gave his sitters lifelike qualities with which viewers could empathize. The pose was given great importance in Titian’s portraiture, lending more information toward the identity of the subject. He was known for introducing a larger painting format to include additional objects in the scene that gave more information about the identity of the sitter. Whether or not this was merely Titian’s skill with artifice or his ability to see into the depths of his sitters’ souls, Titian created public images of his patrons that promoted both their power, and vulnerability. During the Renaissance, the public usually knew the images of their rulers through their representations in portraiture. These portraits had immense impact on the public’s perception of their leaders’ personal qualities, political power, and historical consequence.

Titian’s high regard in aristocratic circles was part of the reason his portraits were so well received. One such painting, *The Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese*, was so well received that it gave him great political power in that aristocratic sphere; he could then transmit this to his patrons every time he lifted his brush. While Titian worked and lived his entire life in Venice, he had many significant commissions from outside Venice, where better-paying clients were found. He worked for both Pope Paul III and Emperor Charles V simultaneously. Inter-familial relations among the royal families kept Titian working and wealthy for the rest of his life, earning him the nickname “preferred painter of princes.” Ranuccio became Titian’s patron as a result of his
close relationship with the Emperor. Titian’s *Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese* served to demonstrate Titian’s skill: he created an image of a leader for the public, simply by wielding his brush. By including certain elements in his royal aristocratic portraits, his work became a commentary on the political power of his sitter. Titian also used this power to depict certain personal and political features of an individual in order to create a legacy for his sitters. This importance of the individual shown in this portrait came as a direct result of the Humanist culture in which Titian painted. This glorification of the individual allowed figures like Ranuccio Farnese to be remembered for their personal virtues, political achievements, and lasting influence. Alberti applied these Humanist concerns to not only portraiture, but also figural paintings of religious and classicizing narratives.

*Istoria* and the Power of the Figure in Renaissance Art

Titian created portraits and figural narratives that encompassed the individual characteristics of figures, their political potency, and made images of those figures stand the test of time. Art theorists codified this Renaissance assumption of the body as an indicator of identity as it related to the art of painting. In his treatise on painting, *Della Pittura*, Leon Battista Alberti published theories of the necessary elements of excellent painting to best portray narrative content to the viewer. Alberti was the artist and art theorist credited with codifying the Renaissance understanding of how physiognomy could be used in painting to affect the comprehension of narrative content for the spectator. He called paintings that demonstrated all the characteristics of superb painting *istoria*. Artists painting during the High Renaissance, including Titian, were very aware of the requirements for *istoria*. While Titian’s works demonstrated the excellence of *istoria* painting, he did more than simply fulfill Alberti’s
requirements; instead, Titian gave his female figures identity. The concept of individual identity displayed in Titian’s paintings was tied with the Renaissance application of Humanism.

Alberti started the process of using Humanism—to compose the Renaissance philosophic understanding of identity and the body—elevated the status of artists to a Liberal Art, rather than mechanical exercise. Alberti wrote about this Humanist perception of the art, artists, and discussion regarding art; he even established the basis of academic art theory using Vitruvius (first century BCE) to draw attention to the importance of proportion, balance, harmony, and perspective. While these four categories were not necessarily Humanist on their own, the way Alberti used them to incorporate mathematical and philosophical arguments in the process of painting was Humanist. Alberti later put these into a set of suggested guidelines for painting in general, as well as for istoria painting into his treatise on painting.

Aside from codifying elements of successful painting, Alberti was largely responsible for raising painting to the level of a Liberal Art. Much of this dealt with the humanist concern of raising painting to the intellectual activity associated with poetry. The idea of relating painting to poetry was not new. Ut pictura poesis, or “as is painting so is poetry,” comes from Horace’s (65 BCE–8 BCE) Ars poetica written in c. 10 BCE–8 BCE. After Alberti, Venetian writers like Ludovico Dolce (1508/10-1568) sought to unify poetry and painting rather than having them compete against each other.

As a Venetian theorist of painting, Dolce stated that painting and poetry go hand-in-hand.25 Titian operated in this culture where the ultimate artistic geniuses demonstrated the combination of the painted visual world with poetry. As in Bacchus and Ariadne, and Diana and Callisto, Titian tied painting and poetry together for the mutually beneficial understanding of each.26 Because of this, both Bacchus and Ariadne, and Diana and Callisto are known as
Titian was determined to have his paintings be seen as visual poems, or poesie, elevating himself as a painter to the status with which ancient poets were held. This changed the way painting was seen. It made it less of a mechanical art, as it was traditionally viewed, instead more closely related to the intellectual process of a poet. Since Titian used multiple sources to construct the composition of Bacchus and Ariadne, his images are his own inventions, rather than the mere illustration of ancient philosophers’ work. The combination of various sources to compose Bacchus and Ariadne allowed Titian to create a new work with a completely never-before told narrative.

Since Humanists relied so heavily upon the written word, part of elevating artwork required using Classical literary sources, including poetry. Titian did this in Bacchus and Ariadne by relying on a Humanist approach for his Humanist source material: he combined the narrative accounts of several different antique sources to create one unique composite scene designed to recall antiquity. When Titian painted Bacchus and Ariadne for Alfonso I d’Este based on several different classical sources, he “[reconstructed an] antique pictorial culture.” Thus he fulfilled Alberti’s steps for finding the “appropriate invenzioni for istorie.” By combining sources, Titian created a much more dramatic moment in the narrative. In Bacchus and Ariadne, Titian combined ancient texts and visuals to depict the narrative scene. Catullus was used for the story of both Bacchus and Ariadne separately, while Ovid told the story of Bacchus and Ariadne meeting. Thus, Titian selected certain parts of these texts and combined them in his painting to tell a more complex story. This way of combining of sources required Titian’s supreme intellectual effort, fulfilling the inventive aspect of the artist necessary for istoria. In other words, Titian put in much more work “to tell a complex tale in a single image, representing an action in time and projecting a psychology of character.” Therefore, Titian
fulfilled Alberti’s goal to have painting reach the level of poetry. In fact, Titian’s painting surpassed poetry, because it took the linear aspects of a poem and portrayed it all at once.

Titian exemplified Alberti’s writings about the relation between visual art and the depiction of the body to show the internal identity of the sitter to create the narrative content. Following Cicero’s (106 BCE–43 BCE) *De re publica* (54 BCE–51 BCE), Alberti wrote that the only way to know the soul was to study the body, because that was the only part of another individual that could be observed. This was especially true for painting. Therefore, a painting should show both the liveliness of the body and the emotions of the soul, since the emotions of the soul were directly depicted in the expressive nature of the body.

While Alberti espoused that the body should be indicative of the interior identity of the represented person, on the surface, beauty was the ultimate goal of *istoria*. He listed several ways to best paint beauty. His three major concerns for painting were derived from nature: “circumscription,” which was derived from Latin and referred to the concept of looking carefully around at the word and applying the subtleties of the closely observed reality to the outlines of forms in a painting; “composition”; and the “reception of light.” Titian used these three parts of painting—displaying his acute study of the natural world—especially well in *Bacchus and Ariadne*.

By observing Ariadne’s calf (fig. 1a) as an example, it is clear that the outline with which Titian followed all the forms in *Bacchus and Ariadne* was completely congruent with Alberti’s construct for circumscription. Titian also fulfilled Alberti’s other basic compositional principles in *Bacchus and Ariadne*: he harmoniously portrayed both unity through the bold color scheme and similar brushstroke used throughout, as well as variety, seen in the different poses of figures, and animals. This created visual movement throughout the piece in an organized manner. The
way Titian attended to the light throughout *Bacchus and Ariadne* was especially demonstrated in
the dramatic folds of Bacchus’ red mantle: as it billowed behind Bacchus, Titian demonstrated
the “reception of light” Alberti cited as crucial to *istoria.* Titian painted the scene of *Bacchus and
Ariadne* so convincingly because of his familiarity with the natural world. The minute
observation of nature was essential to the creation of an effective painting, since the other three
steps could not happen if the observation does not first take place. To illustrate, even the detail
seen in the white caper flower in the foreground of *Bacchus and Ariadne,* common to rocky
shorelines and symbolically related to the satyr next to it, displayed Titian’s knowledge of the
environment.

It is clear from this analysis, therefore, that *Bacchus and Ariadne* conformed to Alberti’s
three major concerns for painting. While Alberti cited these three characteristics necessary for a
painting to be successful, he added more requirements for paintings he regarded at the highest
level of artistic practice: *istoria.* As will later be discussed, *Bacchus and Ariadne* was a painting
completely in fulfillment of Alberti’s goals for *istoria,* as well.

While the definition of *istoria* is complicated, there were several important features
Alberti cited as necessary for any painting to fit in this category. First of all, *istoria* was the most
important type of painting, and thus, was more important than any other type of art. *Istoria* was
not mere illustration, but rather a painting that drew inspiration and narrative content from
antique literature, as in *Bacchus and Ariadne.* It provided an expressive communication narrative
aimed at the viewer. While communicative, *istoria* should not enter into the overly dramatic.
Titian showed this in the figure of Ariadne: even while Ariadne is extremely distressed, she
appears controlled through the tightly flexed twist of her body. Finally, any meaning derived
from *istoria* paintings sprung from the use of the figure. In this way, Alberti emphasized the
necessity of depicting the figure in the optimal way to convey a broad range of emotion and meaning imperative for complex narratives. Alberti wrote that there should be a variety of figural poses in an istoria, balanced by color variation, and the representation of the sexes, ages, and animals.\textsuperscript{47} Alberti implicitly made this representation for the benefit of the spectator of a narrative painting. This variety of subject matter found in istoria was pleasing to both the soul of the spectator and that of the artist.\textsuperscript{48} Alberti listed these facets of istoria individually, presenting each part as a simple quest for balance. When combined, these parts formed a complex narrative achieved largely through the use of figure.

While istoria fulfilled the basic qualifications for what Alberti considered a successful painting—circumscription, composition, and reception of light, based on the natural world—istoria did more to communicate a powerful narrative through the body. Additionally, istoria allowed the Humanist idea of the individual more consequence for all levels of the painting: the artist, the characters depicted in the painting, and the spectators. Alberti raised the level of the individual artist by giving him greater responsibility in decision-making. Alberti also allowed Humanism to penetrate into the content of the painting by bestowing more importance to, specifically, the dignity of the characters portrayed by the figures. The dignity of painted figures was based on the aforementioned composite concept of the relation between identity and the body found in ancient philosophies, popular during the Renaissance. Without that understanding of identity, none of the figures in istoria could be representative of anything more than flesh. Finally, the identity of the spectator was acknowledged through Alberti’s conditions for istoria. By understanding the empathetic connection a viewer could feel for a painting, the narrative content was given life not only in the lifelike qualities of the paint, but also by impacting the viewer. These additional concerns regarding the inclusion of identity for the three entities
affected by the painting—the artist, subject, and the viewer—established a strong bond between all the levels of an istoria.

By introducing the identities of the artist, the painted figures, and the spectator, Alberti demonstrated why istoria excelled far past a “good painting” and into to the highest level of painting. The first identity influenced by the creation of an istoria is the artist. During the Renaissance, artists began to develop as individuals, with their own styles. The responsibility Alberti gave the artist in the creation of istoria, demonstrated the newfound autonomy on the part of the artist.

In Della pittura, Alberti laid out the number of choices to be made by the artist in the creation of an istoria painting. The responsibility Alberti placed on the artist’s identity was already inherent in the creation of inventive art. For example, the identity of the artist is connected—according to Renaissance assumptions—to his own body. Therefore, his identity is also portrayed by the work of his or her hand. When the artist painted figures in the narrative, those figures were extensions of that artist’s body, and thus the artist’s identity. Finally, the representations of the figures themselves were connected to the identities of the depicted figures. Following this logic, the artist’s identity was indirectly tied to the identity of the figure represented in the narrative. While he did not quite lay out this logical progression from the identity of the artist to the identity of the painted figures, he reiterated that the artist is ultimately responsible for the final product. Since identity was unique for each individual, any painting emanating from the identity of that artist would also be singular. Alberti included this relationship in his dictates for istoria. He wrote that the success of an istoria painting depended largely on the compositional choices of the artist, including the number of figures, positioning of figures, and color scheme. Most importantly, Alberti noted the momentous need for a painting to
be interesting, but in an ordered manner. Without order in a composition, Alberti argued, the artist would be unable to convey the beautiful nature of identities revealed in narrative painting.

The need for an artist to bring order to an artwork was meant to extend to the viewer both physically and psychologically. This organization was meant to clarify the narrative so as to transmit identity. He determined the essential need for a formula to depict this order—linear perspective—developed by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and codified by Alberti himself. Alberti gave the artist a personal role in the painting of an istoria. He wrote that this balance between the intense feeling often present in a narrative, and the composure dictated by societal decorum could best be found by representing the figures in an orderly manner. He emphasized the need for the figures in an istoria to form a harmonious composition made of rationally depicted space to set the scene for what was first and foremost: the narrative. In other words, the figures themselves had the task of directing the viewer’s attention to the other figures in the painting to tell the full story. Titian used this independence and imbued figures in his paintings with identity, authenticity, and dignity.

Alberti made suggestions about the number of figures for a composition. Even so, he did not explicitly define rules for the artist, but instead left the final decisions up to the artist. However, the ancient Roman scholar, Marcus Terentius Varro (116 BCE – 27 BCE), had provided a concrete opinion about the number of figures he believed necessary to paint a successful narrative. In Varro’s opinion, there should be nine figures in a painting, which allowed for enough variation and expressive potential without becoming too chaotic. Obviously, it was important to understand the size of both the figures and the painting material used in Varro’s reasoning. Regardless, his statement demonstrated that the balance of a piece rested within the artist’s responsibility and rationale. Similarly, Alberti focused not on dictating
the number of figures essential for an effective istoria, but rather on the importance of the artist
to find balance in the number of subjects depicted: essentially, the balance between unity and
variety was found in determining the number of figures so there were not too few and not too
many.\textsuperscript{55} Titian found this balance, especially as seen in Bacchus and Ariadne and Diana and
Callisto.\textsuperscript{56}

Once the artist determined the correct number of figures, Alberti recommended including
a variety of types and poses to create interest within the order of the istoria. The various figures
executed should vary by age, sex, and species. For example, in Bacchus and Ariadne, he
included a total of eleven mostly human figures and six animals: a fat satyr, a young lithe satyr, a
satyr child, a svelte male youth, a muscular young male, an older brawny man, two soft men, a
soft young maiden, two young women, two cheetahs, a deer head, a snake, a small dog, and a
donkey. Clearly, the variation found in Bacchus and Ariadne abided by Alberti’s suggestion. As
with Alberti’s recommendation for the number of figures, the variation found an istoria should
not border on chaos, but be tempered by the unity of the entire composition to more effectively
portray narrative content.\textsuperscript{57} He even stated that every figure in an istoria should
display similar characteristics so as to best convey an orderly and cohesive—and thus beautiful—piece.\textsuperscript{58}

Titian’s Bacchus and Ariadne could have bordered chaos but did not succumb to it: the variety of
the figures is, for example, contained in the lower half of the composition, balanced by the
airiness of the upper composition. The diverse figures are also tempered by their unified skin
tones. In this way, Bacchus and Ariadne demonstrates the quality of the Titian’s identity.

Alberti understood that multiple personalities must be present in the figures to catch the
attention of the viewer, in order to portray a convincing narrative. Since each of the figures
possessed different identities, the representative physical nature of those figures had to show
subtle differences. The varying expressions of identities affected the posing of those characters in istoria.\textsuperscript{59} Part of demonstrating the variation between emotions involved creating a lifelike figure—thus demonstrating the presence of an interior identity. Alberti took this idea of vivacity a step further in istoria: he wrote that each member of the body should be capable of transmitting lifelike qualities independently. In other words, if a limb were isolated from the rest of the body, it should still appear alive.\textsuperscript{60} This required the artist to depict the movements and feelings present throughout the entire body for every figure.\textsuperscript{61} Titian did this particularly well in Diana and Callisto, where the sudden tension between the group became almost palpable for the viewer.\textsuperscript{62}

While Titian demonstrated emotional tension through physical strain in Diana and Callisto, he still follows Alberti’s restrictions for istoria by doing so in a dignified manner. To Alberti, it was imperative that figures in an istoria were both dignified and show authenticity in identity.\textsuperscript{63} Titian carried this idea to other subjects. For example, while not an istoria by definition, Titian’s St. Mary Magdalene illustrated many of the qualities of istoria. In fact, St. Mary Magdalene is an excellent example of Titian’s ability to paint a dignified display of intense emotion. He showed Mary Magdalene in an obvious state of intense spiritual ecstasy, but painted her emotions in check: while her hair is all about her naked form, her right hand crosses her breast in a state of divine acceptance to the will of God; a tear leaks from the side of her left eye, but she does not sob. There were other instances where Alberti recommended that if ‘undignified’ emotions needed to be portrayed based on the dictates of the subject matter, that there had to be a ‘commentator’ or a mediator for the audience to better enter into those indecent emotions.\textsuperscript{64} An example of this is the little boy standing next to Salome, in Salome with the head of St. John the Baptist: he watched Salome as the enormity of what she accomplished with her body hit her. The emotional interpreter was put in place to serve the didactic nature of the
Essentially a go-between for the viewer and the emotions portrayed by the expressive qualities of the figures, the commentator linked the inner world depicted in the painting with the outer world of the viewer. In another sense, this mediator was meant to collapse the liminal space between the viewer and the painted plane.

Moreover, the figures in *istoria* linked the identity of the artist with the identity of the viewer. Due to the emphasis placed on order in the creative endeavors of the artist, it was not surprising that Alberti intended the artist to also create order for the viewer. As a result, Alberti essentially codified the idea that what a person perceived somehow affected the identity of that observer. The order in the composition of an *istoria* caused there to be order in what the viewer observed, affecting the balance of mind and body. Since Alberti also equated order with beauty bestowing the highest regard upon both the presence of order signified the existence of beauty. Since the foremost efforts of the artist were devoted to creating order in *istoria*, a successful *istoria* must be exceptionally beautiful. This beauty was the ultimate goal of the Renaissance artist, perhaps drawing from discussion Plato’s Forms. Regardless, the concept of beauty—based on mathematical order—was at the forefront of intellectual conversation during the Renaissance. This was partly due to Marsilio Ficino’s writings about identity and the body in terms of beauty: if one had a beautiful appearance, that individual was also regarded to have a beautiful soul.

Alberti also tied this concept of beauty to virtue. For example, in *Della Pittura*, he wrote that it took a virtuous soul to both appreciate as well as create a painting, because painting is virtuous and honorable; using the same reasoning, viewers and painters who appreciated beautiful paintings were also beautiful because they surrounded themselves with beautiful materials. This reasoning united the identities of the artist and the spectator through the representation of the identities of the painted figures. Based on these requirements of an *istoria*
as they deal with identity, the viewer should have felt what the figure experienced in the painting, creating an empathetic connection between the viewer and the subjects the artist created. In this sense, a painting creates an identity for the spectator of the work simply because of his or her interaction with the artwork. This demonstrates the power an artist had to alter identity in the painted the subject, as well as the viewer.

As demonstrated, Titian satisfied all these requirements for istoria. However, he took istoria to the next level by giving a particular group of over-looked people identities in his paintings: women. Even though Titian painted many women nude, or partially nude, certain works, such as Mary Magdalene, Salome, Bacchus and Ariadne, and Diana and Callisto, reflect a regard for female identity that is not often found in Renaissance narrative painting. He did this by manipulating the female body, but for a purpose overlooked by many scholars when studying Renaissance nudes: Titian manipulated the female body to demonstrate the internal intellectual activity of the females he depicted, rather than using them only as objects of male fantasies. By demonstrating the intelligence of these female characters, Titian gave them identity.

To give female figures identity, Titian had to first understand the power of the figure in a narrative painting. He recognized that the body could tell a story, regardless of the limits of painting. By depicting the body as a means to relay a complex story, Titian communicated important information about the figures’ character. In order to understand Titian’s narrative paintings, a viewer would also have to understand the individual identity of the main characters to give the story meaning. Therefore, the body is a crucial tool in istoria. Titian elevated the bodies of his female figures to more than objects by conveying their pivotal role in their own stories. Since he accomplished this with not only the men in his paintings, but also the women, he equated the identity of women to that of men at least in these works. Therefore, Titian did all
Alberti required and more for *istoria* by further defining a subcategory of identities for painted characters and emphasizing their role to provide commentary: it is through the identities of the painted females that Titian emphasizes the female role in society.

In each of these paintings—*Mary Magdalene, Salome, Bacchus and Ariadne*, and *Diana and Callisto*—Titian encapsulated the moments after these women used their bodies to gain power. These women were each shown with active identities even in contemplative states. By emphasizing the active presence of females in these narrative paintings, Titian acknowledged their ability to influence the viewer, and fulfilled one of the primary objectives of *istoria*. These female identities became the link between Titian and the viewers of his paintings. These women were no longer objects to be acted upon, but individuals complete with their own will and identity.

Unfortunately, male-centered societies prevail even now. At the time Titian was painting, the male authority was rarely questioned. In context, the four paintings discussed here depict narratives where the women are blamed, even though their actions were usually necessitated by the constructs of the patriarchal society from which they emerged. These women were all wounded by the male figures in their lives, but Titian shows them at the fulfillment of their true power: they used their bodies as sexual objects but realized their identities make them much more than objects. This realization did not come about easily for Mary Magdalene, Salome, Ariadne or Callisto. Their beautiful bodies forced them to confront the filth of the world. The exploitation of their bodies by men and also by themselves for the benefit of men, exposed their flesh as well as their identities to oppression. By experiencing the vile nature of sexual and emotional exploitation, these women also exposed their identities to the same foulness. These paintings demonstrate the eventual, though unconventional, redemption from this abuse.
By animating once overlooked figures, Titian changed the way the viewer saw females in narrative painting. He accomplished this by portraying women not as empty vessels. Platonic thought, as previously discussed, acknowledged the body as a container for the soul. Women were often depicted without identity, objectified as material containers. While inherently paintings could only represent identity through the presence of a physical figure, this did not excuse the lack of symbolic representation of the unseen to denote identity in female Renaissance depictions. Titian did not do this. For example, in *Bacchus and Ariadne* he painted such an emotionally charged narrative that the viewer could not help but acknowledge the representative existence of the characters’ identities in tandem with their bodies. Titian did this in many of his works, including those that did not have as many figures as a true istoria painting. For example, Titian deftly showed the identities of his figures in his religious works *Saint Mary Magdalene* and *Salome*.

**Titian’s Religious Paintings**

Titian’s religious paintings elevated the spiritual virtues of the women portrayed. In both *Saint Mary Magdalene in Penitence* and *Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist*, Titian painted a moment in time that encapsulated the spiritual journey of these women. In *Mary Magdalene* and *Salome*, Titian offers psychologically compelling narratives, exhibiting the identities these figures.

Since *Bacchus and Ariadne* has already been used to demonstrate Titian’s acuity with the principles of circumscription, composition and the reception of light in accordance with close observation of natural world, those elements of successful painting will not be overtly discussed in regard to *St. Mary Magdalene, Salome, or Diana and Callisto*. However, those three paintings demonstrate those principles nonetheless. These four paintings demonstrate Titian’s inclusion of
identity for the painted characters as part of the qualifications for istoria. However, they provided evidence of Titian’s ability to eclipse istoria by including explicit representations of those female identities.

Titian emphasized different aspects of the female identities he painted depending on whether the subject was religious or classicizing. For his religious paintings, exemplified by St. Mary Magdalene and Salome, Titian emphasized the potential for hopeful endings to long spiritual journeys. To fully comprehend the spiritual journey of Mary Magdalene as painted by Titian, one must first be acquainted with Titian’s artistic relationship with the Saint. Titian first painted Mary Magdalene in Noli Me Tangere of c. 1514 (fig. 6). Here, Mary Magdalene is shown with loose hair, uncovered arms, and a red gown (against the sumptuary laws in Venice at that time but also indicative of her status as a bride of Christ). Her hair is unkempt; she no longer cares about her outward appearance. It was not unusual for Titian and his workshop to show her this way, because she was depicted in penitence since the Middle Ages in Christian art.

The penitent Mary Magdalene is one of the most popular types produced by Titian’s workshop. It was refined through the years as Titian developed newer ways to change the painted representation of the saint’s body to better show her identity and story. The Pitti Saint Mary Magdalene (fig. 3) is especially interesting, since it is the only depiction in which the sensuous female saint is found nude. Nudity did not detract from the dignified identity of the repentant saint. On the contrary, her nudity hinted at her pious disregard for the things of the world, including clothes. Yet, he painted her with a moral quality that separated her from images of beautiful goddesses. Titian did not shy away from portraying her with a beautiful body: Instead he used her physical beauty to reference her beautiful soul.
Most Renaissance renderings of Mary Magdalene showed her extreme love for Christ as a beautiful woman, often erotically.\textsuperscript{77} The emphasis on her curves, femininity and secularity of her life before she met Christ converged to form Mary Magdalene’s primary characteristic of sexuality during the Renaissance, along with an ointment jar, long strawberry-blonde hair, and red gown.\textsuperscript{78} Her love, whether erotic or not, was not seen as dirty, but honored because she was the first to witness Christ after his resurrection.\textsuperscript{79} Mary Magdalene seemed to be rewarded for her love—erotic or Platonic—giving artists free reign to depict her suggestively.\textsuperscript{80}

Scholars have suggested that Titian used certain religious subjects, like Mary Magdalene, paint sensual subjects without reproach.\textsuperscript{81} This was supported by the possibility that Titian used courtesans as models, adding yet another dimension to his interpretation of the narrative of Mary Magdalene.\textsuperscript{82} The belief that Mary Magdalene was a hermit at the end of her life made it sensible for her to be painted nude in \textit{Mary Magdalene};\textsuperscript{83} it also made it difficult for Titian to portray her modestly.\textsuperscript{84}

Of course, Titian was not the first artist to paint a nude female. For example, the tradition of nudity in art had many different purposes. Specifically, the visual type adopted for Mary Magdalene was known as \textit{Nuditas temporalis}, which was demonstrative of the absence of worldly possessions in a deliberate penitent act.\textsuperscript{85} Alberti appreciated nudes in this manner for their lack of needless ornamentation, and thus truthfulness of identity.\textsuperscript{86} This was suitable for the overarching Renaissance opinion that unembellished beauty was of higher quality and closer to the divine realm than adorned beauty, which had to be augmented with earthly things.\textsuperscript{87} These two types of beauty translated to two different types of love, establishing a clear connection between what was seen on the exterior of a person to what lay within: “celestial” which was superior to what humans know and experience; and “terrestrial,” which was confined to the
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materialistic beauty of the here-and-now.\textsuperscript{88} Mary Magdalene was the perfect transitional character between one type of beauty to another as represented in \textit{Saint Mary Magdalene in Penitence}, and thus one type of love to the other. In order to portray Mary Magdalene’s transitional story between the earthly and eternal in terms of beauty and love, Titian used her nudity to demonstrate the result of her spiritual journey: closeness with God.

Titian portrayed Mary Magdalene after she chose to follow Christ and became a hermit, following Renaissance beliefs about this saint. She became filled through her relationship with Christ and therefore gave up prostituting her body. Instead of gaining the earthly wealth from subjecting her body to prostitution, she shifted her goal to serving Christ for the benefit of her identity. Titian emphasized this change in her spiritual journey by emphasizing her devotion to serving Christ with her body. Aesthetics fell to the wayside: she is shown undressed with bedraggled hair. Perhaps showing that with Christ’s redemption, she was as pure as before the Fall, and no longer needed to cover her flesh. The Saint’s nudity is not naked, unseemly, or suggestive, but is similar to the depictions of Christ as an unclothed baby in the Virgin Mary’s lap: human but pure. In this way, Titian advocated the contemplative life; it was pure and the closest one could get to divinity as humans. She is shown as a reformed woman leading a contemplative life as a hermit, rather her previous active lives: the misleading active life of prostitution, and the active live as a disciple of Christ—i.e. washing Christ’s feet. By leading a contemplative life, Mary Magdalene deemphasized worldly, physical issues.

Finally, Titian acknowledged the presence of the spectator in regard to \textit{Saint Mary Magdalene}. Part of the reason Titian’s workshop produced so many versions of Mary Magdalene was her popularity as a Biblical figure. She comforted sinners because, even as a prostitute, she was \textit{still} redeemed by Christ.\textsuperscript{89} Mary Magdalene’s sins included those of the body—sexual
exploits—and those of money—prostitution—and thus, covered many of the indiscretions of guilty patrons in Venice at the time Titian was painting. As such, Venetians had a close affinity to the forgiveness of Christ Mary Magdalene represented—nothing could be bad enough for Christ to reject them.

However, the oft depicted Mary Magdalene was much more complicated than her popularity with the general public suggests. The identity of Mary Magdalene in the Renaissance comes from a tripartite history of three different women mentioned in the Bible: the woman (unnamed) at Simon Pharisee’s house who washed Christ’s feet with her hair, demonstrating the repentant sinner (Luke 7:36; John 12:4-6); Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, of Bethany representing the contemplative life in contrast to her sister’s active life (John 11:2; Luke 10:38-42); and Mary of Magdala whom Christ exorcized seven devils at the well, representing the transformative power of redemption (Luke 8:2). Mary was called Magdalene because she hailed from a town called Magdala, known for the vice of prostitution. Even the saint’s name proclaims her sinful past in a way that she cannot escape; the saint’s name focuses her past in the context of her redemption in Christ—she was from Magdala but reborn as a saint, making her redemption in Christ present every time her past is recalled.

This tripartite Mary Magdalene was important for several reasons. Mary of Magdala represents the “archetypical repentant sinner,” because pre-marital and extra-marital sex was the “archetypal Christian sin.” This is particularly why spectators had such affection for Mary Magdalene: she was the ultimate example of how Christ’s love conquered any sin, even the spectators’. The spectator was brought into the images this way, causing the painting to act didactically: no sin can be past redemption with repentance. Secondly, Mary of Magdala, according to John 20:14-18, was the first to see Christ after he rose from the grave. Since she
was the first person to see Christ, Mary Magdalene was important to the Christian story of the Resurrection. This source was also frequently depicted in art as the *Noli me tangere* scene. Lastly, Mary of Bethany embodied the contemplative life—as opposed to her sister Martha’s active life—which brought her righteous eternity to the forefront of her actions.

Mary Magdalene—the tripartite Renaissance representation—was typically shown in two ways: before Christ redeemed her in luxurious clothing and jewels, and after her conversion as a penitent saint naked, or wearing simple clothing, tearfully looking upwards. Titian took the latter type to the extreme in a later version, now in the Hermitage (c. 1560-65) (fig. 7). Mary Magdalene’s tears seem to represent silent, physical prayers to the Lord, begging forgiveness for her past. She was almost always represented with abundant hair, since it became the symbol of her sexuality and female sensuality in general throughout the Renaissance. The sensual nature of Mary Magdalene’s hair was ironic since it was with her hair that she cleansed Christ’s feet to repent for her sinful past of sex. In this way, Mary Magdalene changed her sexuality from sinful to a devotional instrument for the betterment of the spectator. Rona Goffen puts the two extremes of Mary Magdalene’s femininity eloquently:

> More than any other saint, Mary Magdalene represents the Christian archetype of female humanity, incorporating two extremes of a woman’s identity: the seductress and the penitent. In both states of being, she unbinds her hair, first as a courtesan, then as a bride of Christ.

Goffen also compares the *pudica* poses of Eve and Mary Magdalene, where both hide the source of their spiritual remorse: their sexuality. Nudity was only innocent and faultless in the Garden of Eden before the Original Sin; the presence of the *pudica* pose demonstrates the obvious need for redemption on behalf of these once-fallen women.
Vasari—an eloquent stethoscope for the pulse of the public—stated that this piece was beautifully executed for its ability to make the viewer emotionally involved, pitying the hermit-Saint, rather than desiring her as a stunning woman. Beauty was capable of enhancing a devotional relationship with God rather than allowing the sin of lust to taint that divine relationship. In Titian’s Mary Magdalene paintings, the saint does not acknowledge or engage the spectator, causing the viewer to look where she does: upward to heaven. By questioning what the saint is doing, the viewer connects her actions with the personal devotion necessary for repentance from a sinful lifestyle.

Just as politicians used the active and contemplative lives to create examples for the citizenry, Mary Magdalene’s contemplative life was meant as an example of Christian devotion. It follows that one could only live the contemplative life by repenting from a sinful life, and working to righteousness. It is to Titian’s credit that he was able to create a didactic narrative out of a nude portrait of an attractive woman.

In a similar fashion, Titian made the erotic story of Salome into a didactic painting about the risks of feminine sexuality. While he demonstrated the hopeful outcome of Mary Magdalene’s repentance, he left Salome’s fate much less resolved. He did not portray Salome toward the end of her life, as he did in with Mary Magdalene. Instead, Titian created an active role for the viewer, who was left to formulate ideas as to how the rest of Salome’s life might have gone after the horrendous beheading she instigated.

Like Mary Magdalene, the subject of Salome was revisited many times by Titian and his workshop. In many later versions of Salome, Titian used a similar composition to the c. 1555 Salome (Fig. 8) where Salome holds John he Baptist’s head high up on a gleaming plate, and looks out to the viewer. The Salome of c. 1555 was most likely used as a model for the
subsequent Salome paintings done by Titian’s Workshop. Titian’s *Salome* at the Galleria Doria-Pamphili is similar to Sebastiano del Piombo’s c. 1510 *Salome* (fig. 9). The similarity between the works was not unusual, since both artists worked together in Giovanni Bellini’s workshop. Titian’s Doria-Pamphili *Salome*, in particular, is exemplary of Titian’s ability to use the bodies of his figures to portray their identities.

In *Salome*, Titian manipulated oil as a medium, painting silky gossamer falling against the milky, unblemished skin of Salome’s shoulder. Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) wrote that women, who allow their hair to fall on their faces, especially with exposed chests, shoulders, and arms were sexually alluring. Even the soft caress of the dead man’s hair on Salome’s arm intimates sensuality between the two figures, especially since the forearm was usually covered for modesty during the Renaissance. In this way, Titian contributed to the erotic implications of the Biblical story of Salome. The Cupid in the arch behind Salome stares intently at her, adding yet another layer of sensuality to this painting.

Many later artists explored this potential erotic relationship between Salome and John the Baptist, including Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872-1898), and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). In the Bible, Salome is referred to as the “daughter of Herodias”—therefore Herod II Antipas’ stepdaughter—or as “the girl” in Matthew 14:1-11 and in Mark 6:22-28. Art Historian Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) put the story of Salome well:

According to the Gospels, this “damsel” is a mere tool in the hands of her wicked mother. It is the latter who—enraged by the Baptist’s censure of her incestuous marriage to Herod who had taken her away from his half-brother, Philip—“instructs” her daughter to ask for the Baptist’s head as a reward for dancing at Herod’s birthday party. There is no implication of love, except for Herod’s obvious infatuation with his stepdaughter, cleverly exploited by his wife. And it is only as an accomplice malgre elle (lighthearted rather than malevolent, “mehr
leicht-sinnig als boshaft,” as Jacob Grimm puts it) that Salome becomes a victim of divine retribution in later legends.121

As Panofsky intimates, this biblical story of the beheading of John the Baptist was twisted into a love story between Salome and the Saint in the early twelfth century by St. Pharaildis of Ghent, known as Nivardus.122 In St. Pharaildis’ story, Herodias fell in love with St. John, sparking Herod’s jealous beheading; out of despair, Salome requested his head.123 Concluding this unconventional narrative, the legend stated that she was only consoled by the worship of many as a Saint.124 This story, however strange, remained fascinating throughout the centuries following its formation, influencing Titian’s Doria Salome.

With the knowledge of these various versions of the story, Salome’s sidelong glance in Titian’s work becomes a potent representation of her inner turmoil. This tumult was due to her dependency on her mother for her identity, rather than herself. Salome’s mother used her daughter’s body like Mary Magdalene chose to use her own. In Salome’s case, the only way her mother, and thus she, could accomplish anything was to play to the lustful tendencies of Herod; therefore, she danced and encouraged the sexual fantasies of men—exploiting her own body. As Salome peeks at the dead visage of St. John the Baptist, there is a hint of caution about her. It is as if she realizes the danger the allure of her body placed her in: she could end up as empty a shell as the saint’s decapitated head, void of life-giving identity.

Titian paints the flux of Salome’s emotions as she recognizes that she has placed the powers of her body above those of her soul. Even though she is captured warily holding the martyred Saint’s head, Titian portrayed a moment full of hope, where Salome appears to understand the repercussions of her actions and her soul teeters on the precipice of repentance. In this way, Titian involved the moral capacity of the viewer. The spectator, finding root in the
softly questioning eyes of the young boy looking up at the *femme fatale*, yearns for Salome to see the sinfulness of her ways. Perhaps, if she were able to comprehend the depravity of how she used her body, Salome could see that the death of a man was not a fair way to employ the sexuality of her body. The spectator can find hope in the potential Titian allowed the possibility. Salome might able to repent and save her soul from the mire of her own sin. Because the spectator’s hope is placed in the redemption of the Salome, Titian created a cautionary tale about the power of feminine sexuality. As demonstrated by Salome, the female body has the power to cause even a saint’s death; the body also has the capacity to condemn the soul of a female who does not recognize the power of her own identity through her body.

It was not only in the religious narratives of Salome and Mary Magdalene that Titian explored the portrayal of female identities. In fact, Titian’s classicizing paintings also empowered female characters by allowing the viewer to empathize with and understand their narratives.

**Titian’s Classicizing Paintings**

In the mythological paintings of *Diana and Callisto* and *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Titian demonstrated his intellectual ability as a painter by combining several sources to create a temporal image that represents eternal themes of human nature. By choosing women as vehicles to tell these stories, Titian elevates his female figures—mind, soul, and body.

The elevation of these female identities is much more complicated in these paintings due to the additional figures, designed to uphold Alberti’s construct of *istoria* painting. Another major difference between Titian’s religious and his classicizing narrative paintings was their patronage. By the early sixteenth-century, the art market was starting to morph into a free-market
atmosphere. For this reason, some religious subjects could be produced without a prerequisite commission by workshops and sold to anyone who could afford them.

On the other hand, large classicizing paintings were a different matter. For example, Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* was specially intended for the artistic program of Bacchanalia, collected by Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara’s (1476–1534). Since antiquity was the ultimate model for artistic works, Alfonso wanted to demonstrate his Humanist interests by displaying antique artifacts along with paintings that drew from antiquity. He had a small room in his castle at Ferrara, called a *camerino* (“small room”), for which he commissioned several paintings of Bacchanalian subjects based on the ancient writings of Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE – 17/18 CE) and Philostratus the Younger’s (third century CE) *Imagines.* Alfonso wanted erotic subject matter, fitting his scandalous reputation, which started with his naked run through the town in the middle of the day as a teenager.

Alfonso began to decorate his *camerino* after commissioning Giovanni Bellini to paint *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 10) in 1514. He initially wanted five different mythological paintings, each by a different well-known artist, but his plans fell through. Fortunately, the three paintings Titian completed for Alfonso—*The Worship of Venus* (1518-19) (fig. 11), *Bacchus and Ariadne*, and *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (C. 1524-25) (fig. 12)—were well received.

Titian combined several ancient literary sources to develop the narrative in *Bacchus and Ariadne*, regarding the trials two lovers must go through before meeting. Bacchus was the god of wine and fertility. Oddly enough, he chose marry a mortal girl, named Ariadne. There are many different versions of Ariadne’s story, but in all accounts she was a heart-rending protagonist who went through great suffering. She was romantically involved with either
Theseus, Bacchus, or both; her happiness and suffering was rooted in the actions of the males. In this sense, she is the traditional female pawn. Yet, Titian does not leave her without identity.

Titian was able to create an identity for Ariadne because he accessed other artistic renderings of her identity in ancient literature. One of Titian’s main sources for *Bacchus and Ariadne* was Gaius Valerius Catullus’s (ca. 84 BCE – ca. 54 BCE) “Poem 64.” “Poem 64” is a long poem about the complex issues surrounding the dichotomies of mortality and immortality, promises and betrayal, and seductions and marriage. In the poem, the wedding guests of Peleus and Thetis relayed Ariadne’s story as they analyzed the narrative embroidered on the bedspread: Theseus left Ariadne on the island of Dia; she awoke to see the sails of his ship growing smaller, both sad and angry, praying for revenge; in her anguish, her hair comes loose from her headband, her clothes fell off into the ocean. These details demonstrated her internal disrepair. The narrative then cuts back to Theseus and Ariadne’s first meeting: Theseus came to Crete; Ariadne fell in love with him at first sight; they slew the Minotaur together, and left Crete. Ariadne left her entire family and went with Theseus to the island of Dia only to have Theseus abandon her there whilst she slept. After the flashback, the poem relates how Bacchus heard Ariadne’s prayer, went to find her in order to marry her. In Titian’s adaptation of the narrative in *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Bacchus and his motley group are coming out of the woods into the open air just as the couple met. Silenus and the other Satyrs, typically shown as “bald, drunken old men with potbellies,” sporting weapons, musical instruments, and the carcass of a bull, made for a raucous bunch. The lax mental facilities of Bacchus’ retinue are typified in the character of Silenus. As per usual, Silenus is so drunk others must support him as he rides his donkey. Ironically, the revelry of Bacchus and his followers in drunken recklessness in direct opposition to Reason. Even though the representations of Bacchus’ followers are in direct
opposition with the principles of Humanism, Titian’s process of depicting them based on various antique sources is the embodiment of Humanism. The followers of Bacchus, as seen in *Bacchus and Ariadne*, were developed from Titian’s interpretation of this reading.

Making alterations to source material for artworks was not unusual during the Renaissance. Many artists at that time did not imitate art straight from antiquity but were *inspired* by the antique.141 There have been many scholarly debates regarding the source material for *Bacchus and Ariadne*. However, scholars do not dispute that Ovid’s writings played an integral part. Ovid has remained popular in Western humanism since c. 1100; therefore, it is not surprising that Titian and many other artists used Ovid’s mythological writings for source material.142 Panofsky characterized Titian’s use of Ovid:

> He must have felt an inner affinity to an author profound as well as witty, sensuous as well as aware of mankind’s tragic subjection to destiny. And it was precisely this inner affinity, which enabled Titian to interpret Ovid’s texts both literally and freely, both with minute attention to detail and in a spirit of uninhibited inventiveness. No other major artist interested in mythological narratives relied so largely on Ovid, and from a single phrase of the text drew visual conclusions of such importance. Yet no other major artist indebted to Ovid hesitated so little to supplement the text with other sources and even, in at least one case, to change its essential significance.143

It is clear Titian must have felt inspired by Ovid’s texts. Titian transmitted the energy of the ancient mythological story of Bacchus and Ariadne, since that vigor was so present in his painting.

Without even knowing the tale behind *Bacchus and Ariadne*, the tone of the narrative is clearly transmitted to the viewer through Titian’s dramatic figures: the heightened joy on the part of Bacchus and his drunken crew as they take part is loud revelry, and Ariadne’s curiosity
coupled with her disgust for the inebriated group. Titian seems to have painted this feeling into the scene by painting bright—yet harmonious—colors, and an active composition of lively figures. The active identities of the painted figures translate into physical motion. All parts of this composition are in motion—a strange realization since the viewer is intuitively aware that the figures cannot actually move. The only figures not in motion are the cheetahs, but even these stationary animals appear to move because of their patterned fur. By portraying figures complete with individual identities, Titian paints a static moment with the lifelines of a still frame in a film: the next moment is about to come to fruition.

The tension of this temporal limitation in painting is hinted at through the specific moment: the pause before the impetus of the figures. Bacchus’ whole procession has stopped from the cheetahs back, but Bacchus still carries on with forward momentum shown the second before he spans the open portion of the composition towards Ariadne. He vaults out of the chariot to arrive at Ariadne before the cheetahs drawing his procession frighten her. It is only the chaotic, volatile contortion of his body that stops him from catapulting himself into her. Bacchus’ clothing shows his trajectory and balances out his momentum. It is only the propulsion of Bacchus toward Ariadne that keeps him balanced. The balance implied between the figures of Bacchus and Ariadne—even in color scheme—is Titian’s way of showing the eventual unity of their identities in marriage.

The stars that appear about Ariadne’s head would have symbolized the unification of these two figures later in the narrative. It was believed that the stars determined the temperaments—or aspects of an individual’s identity. That, in combination with the presence
of a crown shape would have sufficed to signify their eventual marriage. To Renaissance viewers, a crown referenced vows, especially marriage, further connecting Titian’s imagery to the narrative. The “Cnossian crown of stars”—sometimes depicted on Ariadne’s head or in the sky in Renaissance representations—at the viewer’s left foreshadows the wedding gift of immortality to Ariadne from her god groom. The crown of stars represented both the literal and figurative embodiment of Bacchus’ (promise and) fulfillment of marriage to Ariadne: the eternity of the divine. Titian even emphasized this relationship in the color scheme of the painting: both Ariadne’s scarf and Bacchus’ cloak are red, suggesting a passionate unison between the two, but they are of different shades, which hint at their individuality at the moment the painting captures.

While Ovid ends his story of Bacchus and Ariadne in the physical meeting of their two bodies, Titian captures the moment before the resolution of the narrative, instead reproducing the fevered climax. Titian shows Bacchus standing at “a turning point in the literal sense of the word; it is a metaphor made visible,” choosing Ariadne instead of the life he was living without her. In fact, the entire composition revolves around Bacchus’ body. It is also the part of both narratives where Ariadne’s life seems to be turning for the better. The intensity of the gaze between the figures of Bacchus and Ariadne holds the composition together and balances the piece. Ariadne blushes, and the spectator is allowed into this intimate moment.

_Bacchus and Ariadne_ shows the moment of drama in the meeting of lovers both in body, mind, and soul. The bodies of Ariadne and Bacchus speak for their emotions. Their gestures convey a dramatic conversation. Theseus has abandoned Ariadne—shown in the sail on the sea—but she looks at Bacchus now; her contrapposto shows that she is pulled in two directions simultaneously. It was a Renaissance belief that a gaze between two people could both create
and express love. This made the locked gaze of Bacchus and Ariadne’s eyes all the more powerful to a Renaissance viewer. It is important to note that by portraying the figures this way, Titian shifted the depiction of Bacchus and Ariadne for the Renaissance viewer. Philostatus’ *Imagines* showed Ariadne asleep when Bacchus found her; Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was used, instead, to create Renaissance images where Ariadne was awake, grieving her abandonment. Titian employed one of the common Renaissance portrayals of Bacchus—either leaping out of the cart to meet Ariadne or sweeping her up into the chariot.

By letting Ariadne stand on her own two feet instead of being swept up, Titian gave credence to her personal will. Her choice at this moment in the narrative allows Ariadne to regain some of the power she sacrificed early in the narrative. The story began with Ariadne as a victim. She abandoned her family, only to be abandoned. It was not until Ariadne realized that Theseus had fooled her—that she allowed herself to be exploited—that she became powerful. Her prayer for revenge, and the inhibitions of her body as her anger boiled over drew Bacchus to her. In this way, her physical and inner being attracted Bacchus. Whereas only her appearance attracted Theseus, the attention between Bacchus and Ariadne was forged on the combination of the interior identity and exterior facade. For this reason, Ariadne is the most hopeful narrative of these four paintings: Ariadne was appreciated for both her body—as seen by the gaze between she and Bacchus—as well as her soul, since he answered her prayer. The gaze between the two figures serves as a reminder to the spectator who has entered into their intimate gaze.

The young Satyr boy was certainly aware he was being observed and acted as a mediating figure. It is only his direct gaze at the viewer that disrupts the voyeurism of the spectator. The young Satyr was not the only one who was aware he was being watched. Spectators understood Titian’s inclusion of elements of Venetian courtly life. For example, the
courtly lapdog in the foreground seems out of place—especially when contrasted with the
drunken satyr-child at which it barks ineffectively.\textsuperscript{170} Even the cheetahs would have alerted the
spectator to Titian’s relationship with the patron, for they were probably studied at the “Duke’s
menagerie.”\textsuperscript{171} Here, Titian combined characteristics of Venetian courtly life—i.e. the cheetahs
and the little dog—with the epic mythological story, shown in the athletic twist of Bacchus’ body
and the graceful contortion of Ariadne’s figure.\textsuperscript{172}

These small details were included for the viewer, whom Titian assumed had a working
knowledge of the source material he used for his istoria. Alfonso certainly would have known
that Bacchus was returning from India, justifying the presence of Cheetahs pulling his cart.\textsuperscript{173}
However, Titian most likely depicted the couples’ first encounter, only alluding to what would
occur later in their relationship.\textsuperscript{174} In this ambiguity, he connected the beginning and end of the
story to immortalize Bacchus and Ariadne’s love. Titian leaves the viewer with a visual reminder
of the legacy of both a story and the divinity of love.

Ariadne was in a privileged position as a female. She was portrayed with the will to make
her own choice about whether or not to accept Bacchus’ proposal. While this was most likely
Titian’s interpretation of the story, he also recognized that many interactions between gods and
beautiful females were not chosen by the women. Titian demonstrated a forced relationship
between gods and mortals in Diana and Callisto, like Bacchus and Ariadne.

However, Bacchus and Ariadne offers a scene of harmony and active balance within each
of the figures, while, in Diana and Callisto, the composition is only balanced when all of the
figures are taken into account.\textsuperscript{175} This “deliberate instability” fits the Baroque tendency to
exhibit the instability of an ever-changing world.\textsuperscript{176} This state of flux adheres to the tension of
the story between the protagonists. Here, Titian drew comparisons between individual identity
group identity. This, perhaps, suggests that there are situations where individuals have a stronger sense of identity as a part of a group; when the identity or body of one figure is threatened, the collective identity is threatened. Since Diana and her followers were tied together through their promise to remain chase, this bond was clearly broken when Callisto became pregnant. The result of the collapse of this group dynamic was violence. This violence was contrasted with sensuous figures.\textsuperscript{177}

While the legend of Diana and Callisto was started as a way to explain two unusual constellations visible year-round, Titian did not focus on that part of the story. Rather, he depicts the moment when a favorite follower of Diana has broken the rule of chastity. This painting shows the extreme emotional and physical trauma of that particular scene, described in Ovid’s narrative.\textsuperscript{178}

Callisto was a nymph devoted to Diana—goddess of the hunt—and therefore remained a virgin as did all of her followers. Zeus became infatuated with her and disguised himself as Diana, in order to lower Callisto’s guard in order to rape her.\textsuperscript{179} Callisto became pregnant.\textsuperscript{180} She hid it until she was forced to disrobe for spring bathing, and revealed her baby bump.\textsuperscript{181} As a result, Diana banished Callisto.\textsuperscript{182} Hera, Zeus’ wife, was also enraged with Callisto for attracting Zeus, and consequently transformed her into a bear.\textsuperscript{183} Callisto’s son was taken away from her, and given the name Arcas or “bear.”\textsuperscript{184} He grew up to be a skilled hunter like his mother.\textsuperscript{185} Some sources said Diana killed Callisto as a bear, but it was generally accepted that while Arcas was hunting, he almost killed his mother, Callisto, in bear-form; however, Zeus intervened by placing Callisto in the sky, forming the constellation Ursa Major, or “Great Bear.”\textsuperscript{186} He then put Arcas next to her as Ursa Minor, “little bear,” as some consolation for initially causing all her problems.\textsuperscript{187} Hera was still angry, and had her nurse deprive the mother and son of water; thus,
according to the legend, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor are visible year around because mother and son could not dip down to the water on the horizon for a drink.188

Titian emphasized the overarching theme of betrayal in *Diana and Callisto*:189 Diana considered Callisto’s pregnancy a betrayal; Zeus betrayed Callisto when he raped and impregnated her; he also betrayed his wife when he had sexual relations with Callisto; and Arcas nearly betrayed his mother by almost killing her as a bear. Titian emphasized the complex and emotional narrative, by depicting a fleeting, psychologically tempestuous moment.190 Yet, Callisto’s transgression against Diana was not of her own doing. One of the worst crimes a follower of Diana could commit was defiling her virginal body with sex. The figure of Diana—merciless and ignoring the possibility of rape—exudes power. Titian used Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (II, 401-531) and *Fasti* (II, 153-192) to portray the story of Diana and Callisto.191

The relationships between figures in a group also offer insight into the identity of individual figures.192 In *Diana and Callisto*, Titian painted the female, nude, in a variety of different positions and from various points of view.193 While anatomical correctness was essential for figure drawing and painting, it was essential to not over-do the musculature; emotion was included to provide a counter-balance to the figural anatomy.194 Titian demonstrated the balance between anatomical correctness and emotional content in *Diana and Callisto*.195 The painting is balanced in the overall unity of color and surface texture, even though there is great tension between the figures.196 Titian created this tension through the placement of his figures in his compositions. His free brushwork imbued figures with life, and allowed them to tell their own story.197
Lastly, Callisto was the victim of divine rape. She was transformed into an anonymous bear, lacking human identity. Matted fur and claws forever separated her from everyone who saw her. As a bear, Callisto’s appearance obscured her identity as an individual and as a woman. Titian emphasized this tragedy by showing her at a moment shortly before her exterior transformation. She was a tragic pawn, but still had her identity, as seen in the sexual depiction of her body, curvaceous with pregnancy. This is the most tragic narrative of the four paintings studied here: Titian painted Callisto as a female that did not embrace her sexuality before she lost it. She was able to make Zeus—the god of all gods—memorialize her in the sky, but she had to lose both her identity and sexuality first.

The tragedy of this story was not lost on the spectator. The link established between the identities of the artist, painted characters, and the viewer made Titian’s narrative in Diana and Callisto much more powerful. The desperation with which Titian showed Callisto impacted the identity of the viewer, providing a cautionary tale to women who did not effectively utilize their sexuality as a part—but not all of—their identities.

Conclusion

Through Mary Magdalene, Salome, Bacchus and Ariadne, and Diana and Callisto, Titian provided four stories of women, both hopeful and tragic. In each istoria painting, Titian empowered the females he depicted: by giving them identities, these females were thus responsible for their own actions, elevating them to the status of men. Titian expounded upon Alberti’s istoria to form a potent narrative; he accomplished this by representing his own identity, the identity of his figures—including women, and implied the identity of the spectator. Therefore, these four paintings represent Titian’s empowerment of women: he did not force
women to exist without an identity. Titian’s figures reinforce the ability of the artist to manipulate the assumption that appearance and identity were one, making the figural representations more compelling.

2 Ibid., 11-12.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 28.
6 Ibid., 11.
11 Ibid., 120.
14 Hazard, "The Anatomy of ‘Liveliness’,” 408.
16 Kemp, *Spectacular Bodies*, 94.
18 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 349.
22 Ibid., 346.
23 Hope, et. al., *Titian*, 22.
24. Titian painted portraits of Isabella d’Este, over thirty portraits of Federic II Gonzaga, Francesco Maria della Rovere I, the Duke of Urbino and commander of Venetian forces, and his wife, Eleanora, Duchess of Urbino, as well as Guidobaldo II della Rovere. Ibid., 19.


29. Ibid.


33. Ibid.


38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.


41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 72, 77.

43. Ibid., 67.

44. Ibid.


48. Ibid., 75-6.


50. Ibid., 27-8.

51. Ibid., 18.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 74-5.

54. Ibid., 26-7.

55. Ibid., 76.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 26-7.

58. Ibid., 74-5.

59. Ibid., 78.
60 Ibid., 75.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 26.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 18.
69 Ibid., 66-7.
70 Ibid., 24.
71 Goffen, Titian's Women, 172.
72 Ibid.
74 Hope, et. al., "Titian," 176.
75 Humfrey, Titian: The Complete Paintings, Np.
76 Goffen, Titian's Women, 192.
77 Ibid., 171.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 172.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 173.
84 Ibid.
85 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 226.
86 Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 113.
87 Ibid., 114.
88 Ibid., 115.
89 Goffen, Titian's Women, 171.
90 Ibid.
91 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 202-3; Goffen, Titian's Women, 171.
92 Goffen, Titian's Women, 171.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 203; Goffen, Titian's Women, 171.
96 Ibid.
97 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 203.
98 Goffen, Titian's Women, 171.
100 Ibid.
101 Goffen, Titian's Women, 182.
102 Ibid., 180.
103 Ibid.
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104 Ibid., 180-1.
105 Ibid., 181.
106 Ibid., 182.
108 Goffen, Titian's Women, 179.
109 Ibid., 183-4.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 42.
115 Ibid.
116 Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 43.
117 Ibid., 110.
118 Ibid., 43.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 44.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., 45.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 45-6.
125 Hope, et. al., Titian, 17.
127 Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 97.
130 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 37.
132 Poem 64, 80-1, 170-3, 180-1.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., 172-3.
135 Ibid., 82-5.
136 Ibid., 173.
138 Poem 64, 87;173.
139 Hall, Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols, 38.
140 Ibid., 37.
142 Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 140.
143 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Goffen, *Titian's Women*, 120.
149 Hope, et. al., "Titian," 104.
152 Barasch, "Character and Physiognomy,” 419.
155 Hope, et. al., "Titian," 104.
156 Goffen, *Titian's Women*, 120.
157 Ibid., 119.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
166 *Imagines* 1:15
167 *Metamorphoses* 8:176-182
170 Hope, et. al., "Titian," 104.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Steer, *Venetian Painting*, 139.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
190 Ibid., 261.
194 Kemp, *Spectacular Bodies*, 89.
195 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
Figure List


Fig. 2. Titian. *Diana and Callisto*, oil on canvas, 1556-59 (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh). http://uploads0.wikipaintings.org/images/titian/diana-and-callisto-1559.jpg

Fig. 3. Titian. *Saint Mary Magdalene*, or Pitti *Mary Magdalene*, oil on panel, c. 1535 (Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence). http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/Titian_-_St_Mary_Magdalene_-_WGA22795.jpg.

Fig. 4. Titian. *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist, Judith (?)*, or Doria *Salome*, oil on canvas, c. 1515/6 (Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome). http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-JkhSA4NEQZ8/TZEk75fScFI/AAAAAAAAnE/2Vih3g3S_8/s1600/DoriaPamphiliTitian.jpg.


Fig. 6. Titian. *Noli me tangere*, oil on panel, c. 1514 (National Gallery, London). http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/Noli-me-tangere-titien.jpg

Fig. 7. Titian. *Saint Mary Magdalene*, transferred oil to canvas from panel, c. 1560-65 (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg). http://imgfile.shijieminghua.com/uploads/allimg/c110227/12bO15RM260-5123T.jpg


Fig. 12. Titian. *Bacchanal of the Andrians (The Andrians)*, oil on canvas, c. 1524-25 (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid). http://www.wga.hu/art/t/tiziano/08a/1ferra3.jpg
Fig. 1
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Fig. 11
Fig. 12
Bibliography


