The Empathy Habit: Vernon Lee's Psychological Aesthetics

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A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

University of Virginia
May 2023

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude for the teachers I have had the opportunity to learn from in the English department at UVA, especially Professor Alison Booth for her commitment to advising me as I worked on this project: Her encouragement increased my writerly confidence, and her knowledgeable influence is present throughout.

Thank you to Karen, Tom, and Read for supporting me through life's challenging fracas and revitalizing celebrations. I am deeply grateful to Sarah for daily inspiration and for practicing the ethic of love with me.

I am also thankful for Vernon Lee, who opened more widely my own imagination; and to "the many writers I have read and the few readers who have read me let me gratefully dedicate these studies in writing and reading."

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"With whatever we choose to plant the portion of our life and our thought which is our own, and whatever its natural fertility and aspect, this much is certain, that it needs digging, watering, planting, and perhaps most of all, weeding." –Vernon Lee, *Hortus Vitae*, 1903

"Among my own contemporaries, especially in the one I know best, I can recognize long preliminary stages of being not oneself ; of being ; being not merely trying to be, an adulterated Ruskin, Pater, Michelet, Henry James or a watered-down mixture of these and others, with only a late, rather sudden, curdling and emergence of something one recognizes (even if there is no one else to recognize !) as *oneself*." –Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words*, 1923

Einfühlung, or "feeling into," has attracted critical attention in recent years, particularly in the sense of empathy as a mode of aesthetic engagement and distinct from the empathy of social participation. Violet Paget (1856-1935), the author, art historian, and aesthetic theorist more prevalently known by her pseudonym, Vernon Lee, considered perception, imagination, and empathy throughout her career. I aim to trace Lee's understandings of these concepts through her writings on aesthetics in relation to her involvement with, and differences from, the Aesthetic Movement and the scientific developments of her time. In keeping with a specific part of Lee's definition of empathy—namely, the emotional accumulation that each perceiving subject brings to aesthetic contemplation—I will first offer a brief biography and career retrospective. Placing her writings in the context of her life allows us to identify relationships, settings, and circumstances that influenced her ability to produce a body of remarkable works that have not been fully parsed and absorbed into traditions of aesthetic and critical thought. I will then discuss aspects of her manual explaining aesthetic preference, *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Æsthetics*, and compare Lee's ideas with current understandings of both empathy and emotional adhesion. These studies will bring her to the fore as a prescient thinker who anticipates more recent theorizing about embodied communication and affective response.

For many literary theorists and historians, Lee is labeled Walter Pater's disciple. This minimizes the import of her original contributions to aesthetic theory and makes opaque the fact that Lee was a pioneer in introducing empathy to English speaking audiences. Looking back on Lee's ideas with a twenty-first century lens affords us opportunities to identify commonalities with recently theorized concepts; for example, Hartmut Rosa's ideas about resonant relationships with self and world align with much of what Lee has to say.[1] Socially acquired memory is often overlooked as a significant contributor to human experience, aesthetic or otherwise. Part of my intention here is to foreground Lee's thinking about how memories are encoded and impress changes upon our bodies, both physical and phenomenal, and how memories shape expectations which anticipate future experiences. I am also advocating for a reconsideration of Lee's understanding of aesthetic empathy as it might inform our reading and interpreting texts, rather than confining its application to the visual arts. As an aesthetician, Lee offers both terminology and an interpretive framework we would benefit from revisiting in our contemporary world: Analyzing the ways we connect with art is vital to understanding the ways we might better comprehend one another.

I. Biographical Sketch

Vernon Lee was an indefatigable reader and writer from the start. She credits her mother, Matilda Paget, née Adams—a harsh, singular woman—for instilling in her "a high notion of the dignity of literature."[2] Violet was irregularly tutored by several Swiss and German governesses in languages, music, and moral philosophy; books from her mother's childhood supplemented Violet's education. Lee's nostalgic adoration for Matilda Paget belies her mother's almost

[1] Harmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*, trans. James C. Wagner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).
[2] Vernon Lee, "Can Writing be Taught?" in *The Handling of Words and other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane, 1923), 301.

exclusive emotional attachment to Violet's brother, poet Eugene Lee-Hamilton. According to biographer and critic Vineta Colby, "[Violet's] hunger for affection had to be filled elsewhere, and early on she adopted a series of surrogate mothers, initiating what were to become her many attachments to women in later life."[3] One such woman, Henrietta Camilla Jackson Jenkin, took an early interest in young Violet's uncommon intellectual aptitude. A published author herself, Jenkin introduced Violet to a professional network, enabling the *enfant précoce* to begin a writing career at age fourteen.[4] The publication was a short story told from the perspective of a coin as it was exchanged: "Les aventures d'une pièce de monnaie" was published serially in the periodical *La famille*. It marks the beginning of Lee's deep and sustained interest in kinesthetic engagement with aesthetic objects and the past.[5]

Despite her eventual connections with several members of London's literary scene, Vernon Lee remained an outsider for much of her life, due partially to geography. Colby opens her 2003 biography with a sentence describing Lee's identity: "English by nationality, French by accident of birth, [she] was Italian by choice."[6] Lee ultimately planted roots just outside Florence at her family's villa, Il Palmerino, but grew up frequently traveling, staying in Nice and Rome at some length. Her family was almost nomadic. It is difficult to read the first sentence of *The Beautiful*'s "Empathy" chapter—"*The mountain rises*."—without linking its imagery to the

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[3] Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 7.
[4] In an article written for the Italian newspaper *La rivista europea*, H. Vernon Lee (before she dropped the "H.") unabashedly ranks her mentor Mrs. Jenkin above George Eliot. Throughout her non-fiction œuvre, Lee's personal bias is undeniable. Christa Zorn has written about Lee's contemporaries' "concern [about] her lack of objectivity." Christa Zorn, *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 13.
[5] Lee writes her way into and out of an existing literary tradition: The it-narrative, or the novel of circulation. Many thanks to Alison Booth for calling this parallel to my attention. See *The It-Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England: Animals and Objects in Circulation*, ed. Mark Blackwell (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007).
[6] Colby, *Vernon Lee,* 1.

multiple family summers spent in Thun, Switzerland.[7] There, Lee met John Singer Sargent, who became a constant friend and would later paint her portrait.

In addition to travel, Lee held a lifelong interest in history. Her first book was a love letter and an escapist fantasy to an Italy of the past. As a result of Violet's independent scholarship, 1880 saw *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* published.[8] Its positive reception catapulted her from obscurity; this monograph, focused largely on Italian opera, earned respect from intellectuals who would later inspire her to study aesthetics. That same year, Lee met A. Mary F. Robinson, who became a celebrated *fin-de-siècle* poet. Through Robinson, Lee met Mary Humphry Ward, Robert Browning, William Rossetti, and Walter Pater.

Lee's second book, *Belcaro: Being Essays on Sundry Æsthetical Questions* (1881)*,* was dedicated to Robinson and marks a significant shift in Lee's intellectual trajectory. In her preface, Lee pithily refers to her position as history expert, only to acknowledge, "it is natural : natural in mental growth that we are, to some extent, professorial and professorially self-important and engrossed, before becoming restlessly and sceptically studious : we may teach some things before we even know the desire of learning others. Thus I, from my small magisterial chair or stool of 18th century-expounder, have descended and humbly gone to school as a student of aesthetics."[9] *Belcaro,* David Coombs has declared, "evangelizes for the Aesthetic Movement, in particular for its vision of a direct, sensuous relation with art objects that bypasses the discursive mediations of historical or theoretical knowledge."[10] Pater's influence is

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[7] Colby, *Vernon Lee,* 8; Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 61.
[8] "Wherever the Pagets settled for a short stay—Florence, Padua, Bologna, Rome—[Violet] scoured the bookstalls and the archives of libraries for eighteenth-century materials: books, musical scores, libretti. The dust and neglect these had suffered had romantic appeal." Colby, *Vernon Lee,* 26.
[9] Vernon Lee, *Belcaro*, 5.
[10] David Coombs, *Reading with the Senses in Victorian Literature and Science*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 104-105.

undeniable, yet I read Lee as diverging quite meaningfully from Pater's brand of aestheticism. An essay contained in *Belcaro*, "Faustus and Helena: Notes on the Supernatural in Art," considers the idea of the supernatural and its reliance on partial formlessness in order to haunt: Such spectres are necessarily unembodied and require metaphysical contemplation, which Pater rejects in the Preface to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*.[11] Lee states, "the more complete the artistic work, the less remains of the ghost," and "the supernatural is always injured by artistic treatment, why therefore the confused images evoked in our mind by the mere threadbare tale of Faustus and Helena are superior in imaginative power to the picture carefully elaborated and shown us by Goethe."[12] Lee asserts that art has definite form, yet the ephemeral supernatural depicted in art relies on minimal *suggestion* of form, which provokes our own imagination to construct additional formal possibilities. This discussion is necessarily abstract: Lee muses on the impact of cultural archetypes rather than reverently adhering to the Paterian call to privilege individually materialist, and momentary, enjoyment. There is more emphasis on recalling formless memories and associations, both personal and cultural, in Lee's essay. Lee practices some of the concepts she theorizes—that ghosts exist as we recall vague, interminable memories and how unstable forms ignite our imaginations—when she later writes her supernatural tales.

The seven years after *Belcaro* were productive: Lee published two more essay collections focusing on aesthetic theory—1884's *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Mediæval in the Renaissance* was dedicated to Walter Pater, and 1887's *Juvenilia: Being a Second Series*

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[11] "And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the analysis and discrimination of [aesthetic objects], need not trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or its exact relation to truth or experience,—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him." Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.
[12] Lee, *Belcaro*, 94-96.

of Essays on Sundry Æsthetical Questions was for Carlo Placci, a friend who later betrayed her when unfairly accused of plagiarism, as well as two book-length philosophical dialogues, short stories, and a novel that caused great uproar, *Miss Brown*. In it, Lee purportedly satirizes high aestheticism's dedication to living without the constraints of a moral code. The *roman à clef*'s publication, Laurel Brake indicates, initiated a temporary break from Lee's correspondence with Pater and permanent transformation of Lee's friendships with Henry James, the novel's dedicatee, and Oscar Wilde.[13] Less than subtle allusions to real-life personalities advertently condemning aesthetes for their "hedonistic" lifestyles severely tarnished her social credibility with several leading figures in aesthetic thought.

Robinson and Lee maintained a romantic friendship until Robinson married James Darmesteter, a French scholar of religion and language. Upon Robinson's engagement in August of 1887, Lee suffered: She later refers to this period of about two years as being defined by "a gradual breakdown of [her] health," and filled with "the restlessness of that nervous breakdown."[14] Fortunately, Lee met Clementina 'Kit' Anstruther-Thomson, who would become her collaborator and lasting companion. Lee contributes a 112-page introduction to a posthumously published collection of Anstruther-Thomson's writings in which Lee memorializes Kit as an "exceptionally beautiful, strong, and beneficent creature," who devotedly nursed her to health.[15] Kit not only provided the companionship and affection Lee needed; she

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[13] "[T]he crude formal techniques of masking the originals of her *roman à clef* through transparent admixtures of names or initials, character traits, creative work, and physical features was guaranteed to offend almost everyone she knew in London." Laurel Brake, "Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle," in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, and Aesthetics*, ed. Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 45.

[14] Vernon Lee, "Introduction," in Vernon Lee and C. Anstruther-Thomson, *Art and Man: Essays & Fragments* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1924), 22.

[15] "It so happened that with my own recovery there coincided a beginning of hope in the case of my half-brother, who had been a nervous invalid for about fifteen years. And here again it was Kit who carried through the long, delicate and extremely difficult work of giving him the courage and pertinacity needful to…retrace the long and insensible steps of his malady back to comparative health and complete independence… Kit was once more helping to nurse." Ibid., 3, 17-18.

became a fellow worker and corporeal conduit through whom Lee was able to theorize aesthetic experience. A decade after the onset of her depression, in 1897, Lee published "Beauty and Ugliness" in the *Contemporary Review* with Anstruther-Thomson.[16]

"Beauty and Ugliness" was written in alignment with a deeply held conviction: Lee and Anstruther-Thomson were convinced of the inseparability between the mind and the body, specifically in matters of contemplating art. The writers sought to answer two questions: "*Why should a specific kind of* [bodily] *condition, either agreeable or disagreeable, accompany the recognition of those co-related qualities of form called respectively Beauty and Ugliness* ; and… *What is the process of perceiving Form, and what portions of our organism participate therein* ?"[17] They set out to show how observing aesthetic forms directly influences bodily conditions—posture, for example, or breathing patterns. Kit would observe aesthetic objects and Violet would record Kit's physical movements, which were then synthesized into general conclusions about art's ability to stimulate muscles and affect respiratory processes. Their publication was not well-received by many psychologists.

One of their problems was to assume that Anstruther-Thomson's reactions were indicative of universal experience. Another was their shortage of collective background knowledge: Appropriate differentiation between the varying interpretations of *Einfühlung* across their source materials was absent. They were unpleasantly critiqued by many of their readers, including Theodor Lipps, a major psychologist working on empathy in Munich. To their credit,

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[16] Before connecting with Anstruther-Thomson, Lee met Amy Levy—another *fin-de-siècle* poet—in Florence; this young poet dedicated and sent several love poems to "Miss Paget." Indeed, Vernon Lee played an outsized role in Levy's life, widening her social circle and reinforcing in Levy an enduring love for those of her own sex. Levy and Lee shared the experience of depression, with Levy tragically succumbing to the darkness in her 1890 suicide. For more on Amy Levy's biography and writings—as well as speculation positioning Lee as exploitative and possible contributor to Levy's death—see Linda Hunt Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

[17] Italics in original. Vernon Lee and C. Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty & Ugliness and Other Studies in Psychological Æsthetics* (London: John Lane, 1912), 160-161.

both Anstruther-Thomson and Lee kept learning. Clarifying footnotes abound in reprints of their essay: "It may be well to state that I was originally trained as a painter… I do not imagine that what is described in the text could be observed by persons not similarly trained, although I believe that a similar training would result in other persons becoming aware of similar facts.—C.A.-T. (1911)."[18] Lee's footnotes are far more apologetic: "I must apologise to all readers versed in psychology for this cocksureness of extreme ignorance—V.L. (1911)" and "Here again I can only humbly apologise. The only 'insufficiency' was in my own knowledge and modesty.—V.L. (1911)."[19] Teaching herself, in absence of formal university opportunities, was ever a priority for Lee.

After experiencing significant backlash for relying upon pseudoscientific conjecture in "Beauty and Ugliness," Lee continued to read physiology and psychology texts—and continued to be motivated to create an original, systematic method of aesthetical interpretation. Lee centers her psychological aesthetics around *Einfühlung* (translated as "feeling into," or "empathy"); it is a concept whose origin Benjamin Morgan determines is "a dissertation by the philosopher Robert Vischer, *On the Optical Sense of Form* (1873), which proposes that humans instinctively project themselves into the object they see."[20] In this brief description, Morgan highlights both instinct and projection, concepts are central to each iteration and interpretation of *Einfühlung*. I will return to each of these later, specifically as they relate to concepts central to present-day affect theory.

Lee was careful to rely upon her contemporaries' studies in mental science to directly inform her evolving aesthetic philosophy. In a letter to William James composed after "Beauty

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[18] Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty & Ugliness*, 159.
[19] Lee, *Beauty & Ugliness*, 162 and 168.
[20] Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 222.

and Ugliness" but before 1913's *The Beautiful*, Lee asks James, "[h]as not your *Psychology* read, re-read till it is almost falling to pieces, made an epoch in whatever philosophical thought I am capable of?"[21] Despite James's own indifference to aesthetics, Lee dwelled upon several points he makes in *The Principles of Psychology*.[22] In it, James states, "no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change."[23] This was official scientific corroboration for many of Lee's aesthetic ideas.

II. Vernon Lee's Motional Empathy

Before examining Lee's own conceptions of *Einfühlung*—translated by Lee as "empathy"—it is important to establish a baseline understanding of empathy as a concept, if only to show its ambiguous nature. The empathy of current colloquial language means something like, "the action of feeling like another person," or, even better, to use a cliché: "putting yourself into another's shoes." Susan Lanzoni depicts the word's somewhat misleading meaning in today's cultural imagination:

> As many understand it today, empathy is our capacity to grasp and understand the mental and emotional lives of others. It is variably deemed a trained skill, a talent, or an inborn ability and accorded a psychological and moral nature. Among its many definitions are: emotional resonance or contagion, motor mimicry, a complex cognitive and imaginative capacity, perspective taking, kinesthetic modeling, a firing of mirror neurons, concern for others, and sometimes, although rarely, aesthetic self-projection, its earliest meaning. But even this list does not exhaust its possible definitions!"[24]

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[21] Quoted from Susan Lanzoni's *Empathy: A History*. Violet Paget to William James, April 29, 1909, Il Palmerino San Gervasio, Florence in William James Papers (1842-1910), BMS Am 1092 (641), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[22] Interestingly James does refer (unbegrudgingly) to a Mr. Grant Allen and "his suggestive little work *Physiological Æsthetics*" in *Principles of Psychology*. James cites this work as the "only considerable attempt, in fact, that has been made to explain the *distribution* of our feelings." William James, *Principles of Psychology, Volume One* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), 144.

[23] James, *Principles of Psychology, Volume One*, 5.

[24] Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy*: A History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 3.

Indeed, there are multiple ways to interpret the word, and (as happened for Lee) our understandings of empathy continue to evolve. To paraphrase Lanzoni, empathy can be a form of emotional intelligence, affective resonance, sympathy, compassion, the act of mirroring, or a form of aesthetic engagement. Even if we refine our focus to consider only aesthetic empathy, we run into problems with trying to pin it down for definitional purposes: Do we consider all arts? Just visual art? Just literature? Suzanne Keen has written about empathy as it relates to literature specifically in *Empathy and the Novel*. In her introductory chapter, Keen settles on a working definition of empathy: "a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, [which] can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading."[25] Keen and Lanzoni both compare empathy with sympathy—stressing that sympathy is more like feeling pity for another—but even these distinctions' meanings can be setting-dependent: Confusingly, scientific literature sometimes refers to sympathy as "empathic concern."[26] For the purposes of this paper, when referring to current understandings of the two contested terms, I will assume the following: Today's empathy refers to a "sharing of affect" and blurring bounds between people, while sympathy refers to the process of recognizing another person's difficult circumstances as she maintains her distinctiveness.

Despite their definitional differences involving the positionality of the feeling subject to the feeling object, both empathy and sympathy involve *affective response* to (or with) an entity outside oneself; because of this commonality, it is crucial that we come to an understanding about what an affective response is. Many scholars participating in literary studies' "affective turn" have interpreted and theorized affect from varying perspectives, ranging from describing affects as "subjectively felt states of emotion" to "pre-individual bodily forces augmenting or

[25] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.
[26] Ibid.

diminishing a body's capacity to act."[27] As such, many literary critics identify emotion and affect separately. I offer a helpful generalization for understanding those thinkers who separate the two: Emotions are individualized responses, whereas affects are innately possessed responses which are evolutionarily engrained in human beings, collectively. In the 2nd Edition of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed adds an afterword in which she summarizes Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg's introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, indicating the following: Affect takes "us beyond conscious knowing and emotion is what allows movement, what enables us to go beyond a subject, even though 'us' that is somehow attuned to vital force relations is given here in words."[28] Rightfully so, Ahmed points to the learned ability required to theorize such concepts in the first place: *literacy*—both emotional and linguistic. Part of this literacy is the ability to perceive and sense at once; data from those abilities are in constant conversation with one another. Following Ahmed, I propose that it is impossible to separate, or artificially create a clear-cut dualism, between innate responses and those felt due to compounded experience. Because of this, in what follows I will account for their appositive link and use the terms "emotion" and "affect" interchangeably.

As noted when distinguishing between empathy and sympathy, much depends on the position of the subject experiencing an emotion in relation to a catalyst—those entities with whom we empathize or sympathize in the first place. Rita Felski has recently written about affect as it relates to "attachment" to art.[29] She considers the following: (1) how emotions are represented in art, (2) how art solicits emotion, and (3) "how we feel toward works of art," or

[27] Patricia T. Clough, "The Affective Turn" in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 206-225.
[28] Sara Ahmed, *The Politics of Emotion, 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 207.
[29] Rita Felski, *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020).

those *connecting* effects we experience when *interacting* with art.[30] Indeed, interaction with art is a type of *relationship*, even if that relationship is simply one's perceived spatial location relative to something, or someone, else.

While objects and persons are interpreted, we engage our bodies (both phenomenological and physical) to interact with a world in motion. Harmut Rosa suggests that the "phenomenal body is an irrevocable part of the subject or self, that a world exists for a given consciousness only through the body, and, conversely, that consciousness itself must be understood as bodily."[31] Rosa understands the body as being both the mediator between the self and the world as well as the means through which we each construct ourselves and the worlds we inhabit. He emphasizes the body as being a "resonant surface" in conversation with the world, interpreting it as "a *source of inspiration*" or a "*source of information*," depending upon one's participation and approach.[32] Vernon Lee, in her Cambridge introductory manual, studies relations between artwork and person and space at length—and does so by theorizing *Einfühlung* (which, from now on, I will refer to as Empathy).[33]

III. Remembering *Einfühlung*

The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics does more than introduce Empathy as a mode of aesthetic judgement: It introduces an entire system of aesthetic contemplation. To begin, Lee clarifies that her manual does not attempt to mold aesthetic preference—she only offers an interpretation of *how*, via "mental activities and habits," such inclinations are fostered. She does not universalize "the beautiful;" she theorizes how we get to

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[30] Ibid., 29-30.
[31] Many thanks to Rita Felski for telling me about this fascinating book. Rosa, *Resonance*, 83-84.
[32] Italics in original. Ibid., 84.
[33] There is a curious lack of information regarding Lee's involvement with the book series, *Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature*, in Colby's *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography*.

describing something *as* beautiful. In other words, she considers the human response to those objects which we apply *the adjective*, beautiful, and suggests that it "*implies on our part an attitude of satisfaction and preference…of a contemplative kind*."[34] This is not a preference based on any usefulness to us nor is it determined upon any conception of moral goodness, she is careful to point out. Further, aesthetic enjoyment does not demand "disinterested interest," which Lee dismisses "gratuitously identifying self-interest with the practical pursuit of advantages we have not yet got ; and overlooking the fact that such appreciation implies enjoyment and is so far the very reverse of disinterested."[35] Additionally for her, the attitude of contemplative satisfaction is "marked by a feeling, sometimes amounting to an *emotion*, of admiration."[36]

Lee homes in on the fact that we come to describe an aesthetic *thing* as beautiful because of specific *aspects* present in its embodiment. Further, she explains that those multiple aspects we mentally collect into *shapes* or *forms* may be perceived, by autonomous beings, as beautiful. Such shapes are "at any particular moment, embodied for [our] senses…and can be detached…and re-embodied…existing meanwhile in a curious potential schematic condition in our memory."[37] Memory and attitude are the vehicles by which we "distinguish *perception* from *sensation*"; as we attempt to grasp shapes through attentive engagement, first through sensation and then through perception, we are affected by not just "what is given simultaneously in the present, but, even more, between what has been given in an immediately proximate past, and what we expect to be given in an immediately proximate future ; both of which…necessitate the activity of memory."[38] Memories—those ideas which continually place us in relation to the

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[34] Italics in original. Lee, *The Beautiful*, 2-4.
[35] It is difficult to determine whether Lee indeed misinterprets the Kantian notion of disinterestedness or whether she is resolutely unconvinced of the chosen word's efficacy in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Lee, *The Beautiful*, 6.
[36] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 8.
[37] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 26.
[38] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 32-33.

past—are part and parcel of whomever is actively taking pleasure in those aspects and shapes we might come to identify as beautiful. One necessarily perceives, or obtains meaning, as they *relate*, or group, different sensations together into perceptions through "remembering and foreseeing."[39]

By using a metaphor curiously apt for the purposes of considering it alongside aesthetics, William James introduces memory as follows: "The chapter which lies before us deals with the way in which we paint the remote past, as it were, upon a canvas in our memory, and yet often imagine that we have direct vision of its depths."[40] He seems to engage with the metaphor partially because of a painting's existence as something which was created via action in the past yet remains extant and available for present and future interactions. He defines the "phenomenon of memory" as "*the knowledge of an event, or fact*, of which meantime we have not been thinking, *with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before*."[41] Primary to this idea is not just the existence of recurrent sensations but also the inclusion of what one associates with any image or event. Further, an acknowledgement of the highly variable, individualized interpretations and experiences that come with any created associations is considered. This necessitates an appreciation for the interplay between sensation and perception. Passive sensation and conscious perception do not exist independently when it comes to memory; and so, memories are retained because of the relations between these two things.

Despite its place as a critical component of Lee's system of aesthetic contemplation, memory's role in *Einfühlung* has been overlooked: This leads to potential misinterpretations. While Benjamin Morgan does refer to the existence of "material porousness between a person

[39] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 34.
[40] James, *Psychology*, 643.
[41] Italics in original. James, *Psychology*, 648.

and the object worlds he or she inhabits," he seems to jump to an overly simplified conclusion: "[Lee's] understanding of empathy is rooted in experiences that precede the social domain," calling such experiences "affective," but affective in a sense deemed separate from emotion. While calling upon Brian Massumi, Morgan writes, "*emotion* implies a 'sociolinguistic fixing,' of what an experience means, while *affect* implies an 'immediately embodied,' 'purely autonomic' reaction."[42]

My reading of Vernon Lee's understanding of Empathy is more akin to a method of experiencing affective resonance. To me, Empathy might be a means of explaining Harmut Rosa's stance: "physical and symbolic or meaning-laden relationships to the world cannot be cleanly separated from each other. One is not added to nor does it merely explain the other; rather our experience of and attitude toward the world is always shaped by the amalgamation of body and meaning."[43] Let us again look to Lee's own words for a more in-depth analysis.

To explain Empathy, Lee focuses on the language, or the "form of words," used to describe experiences of this mode of aesthetic appreciation.[44] I shall quote at length from what follows her opening statement, "*The mountain rises*":

> …[O]f course nobody imagines that the rock and the earth of the mountain is rising, or that the mountain is getting up or growing taller ! All we mean is that the mountain looks as if it were rising.
>
> The mountain *looks* ! Surely here is a case of putting the cart before the horse. No ; we cannot explain the mountain *rising* by the mountain *looking*, for the only *looking* in the business is *our* looking *at* the mountain. And if the Reader objects again that these are all *figures of speech*, I shall answer that Empathy is what explains why we employ figures of speech at all, and occasionally employ them, as in the case of this rising mountain, when we know perfectly well that the figure we have chosen expresses the exact reverse of the objective truth…
>
> For if the Reader remembers my chapter on shape perception, he will have no difficulty in answering why we should have a thought of rising when we look at a mountain, since we cannot look at the mountain…without lifting our glance,

[42] Morgan, *The Outward Mind*, 221-222.
[43] Rosa, *Resonance*, 89.
[44] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 61.

> raising our eye and probably our head and neck, all of which raising and lifting unites into a general awareness of something *rising*. The rising of which we are aware is going on in us. But, as the Reader will remember also, when we are engrossed by something outside ourselves, as we are engrossed in looking at the shape (for we can look at only the shape, not the substance) of that mountain we cease thinking about ourselves exactly in proportion as we are thinking of the mountain's shape. (61-63)

As a subject perceives shapes, there is potential to escape self-awareness; this contemplative process—feeling into—allows for the subject to evade an egoistical embodiment. Thus, despite being repetitively called an aesthetic "self-projection," this is not the projection of popular psychology, or the attribution of our own qualities onto others.[45] Instead, this is a projection of our own concentration completely into an aesthetic object in efforts to fully grasp it. In turning (or tuning) our attention entirely to something *outside* ourselves, we may cease to think about ourselves at all.[46] Lee clarifies this very point later on: "Empathy…depends upon a comparative or momentary abeyance of all thought of an ego."[47]

In the quoted passage above, Lee verbally engages Empathy by playing with words. Importantly, she appreciates the power of figurative language in everyday conversation. This is especially meaningful when thinking about the purpose of this text: It is meant to provide introduction to psychological aesthetics for a lay audience.[48] She spells out the fact that we *think* of an action, rather than recognize an object actually *doing* the action; this enables her to explain

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[45] Lanzoni, *Empathy: A History*, 3.
[46] Extensive attentional investment in the object of contemplation yields a "withdrawal" from one's selfhood. William James provides a helpful definition of attention: "It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought. Focalization, concentration, of consciousness are of its essence. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called *distraction*, and *Zerstreutheit* in German." James, *Principles of Psychology*, 403-404.
[47] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 67.
[48] The following sentences comprise the blurb on the back cover of *The Beautiful*'s 2011 paperback reissue: "Originally published during the early part of the twentieth century, the *Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature* were designed to provide concise introductions to a broad range of topics. They were written by experts for the general reader and combined a comprehensive approach to knowledge with an emphasis on accessibility."

the way figurative language works in curiously accurate terms. The specialized terminology she might use to apostrophize her reader is relegated secondary to her explanatory mission. This, I suggest, is due to Lee's understanding that each of her readers comes to the mountain, or any aesthetic object, with different "accumulations" of experience, both imagined and material.[49] Such accumulations are analogous to memories.

Since memory continually shapes—and is shaped by—perception and sensation, we might further consider how temporal placement affects aesthetic contemplation. Lee writes, "the perception of visible shapes, even that of audible ones, takes place *in time* and requires therefore the co-operation of *memory*. Now memory, paradoxical as it may sound, practically implies *expectation* : the use of the past, to so speak, is to become that visionary thing we call the *future*."[50] Memory shapes our ability to experience because our past anticipates our present—and so we develop expectations. Lee continues: "interplay of present, past and future is requisite for every kind of meaning, for every unit of thought."[51] This is very much in alignment with James's understanding of memory in terms of his psychological principles. Beauty is experienced, within Lee's framework, through active contemplation. Such experiences are not entirely universal; they depend upon, and are shaped by, individual memory. And I mean individual in an egalitarian sense: Unique life repertoires form and contribute to social experience. This point becomes increasingly important when contemplating the ethics of Empathy.

Lee uses the term "expectation" to refer to memory influenced anticipation. In order to map this onto a psychological process, I turn again toward William James—and specifically to

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[49] Lee is steadfast in believing that present experience coalesces with one's past: "Empathy, as I have tried to make clear to the Reader, is due not only to the movements we are actually making in the course of shape-perception…it is due at least as much to our accumulated and averaged past experience of movements of the same kind." Lee, *The Beautiful*, 72.
[50] Italics in original. Lee*, The Beautiful*, 41.
[51] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 41-42.

"habitual association," a concept which contributes to what he later confirms as "The Law of Contiguity." James claims the following: "[S]o far as association stands for a *cause*, it is between *processes in the brain*—it is these which, by being associated in certain ways, determine what successive objects shall be thought."[52] James attributed physical change for every thought alteration: These changes may be microscopic—involuntary constrictions in blood vessels, for example—but they are tied to mental shifts. Involved in every thought process is a literal movement of some kind; movements *relate* to thoughts. Empathic contemplation happens in a dynamic system, one which constantly iterates due to life processes and the relationships between them.

Well into *The Beautiful*, Lee characterizes her initial "rising mountain" example as overtly simple, done deliberately for instructional purposes. She states later:

> I have been speaking as if Empathy invested the shapes we look at with only one mode of activity at a time. This, which I have assumed for the simplicity of exposition, is undoubtedly true in the case either of extremely simple shapes requiring *few* and homogeneous perceptive activities… But…the *movement* with which Empathy invests shapes is a great deal more complex… Thus, the mountain rises, and does nothing but rise so long as we are taking stock only of the relation of its top with the plain, referring its lines solely to real or imaginary horizontals. But if, instead of our glance making a single swish upwards, we look at the two sides of the mountain successively and compare each with the other as well as with the plain, our impression (and our verbal description) will be that *one slope goes up while the other goes down*. When the empathic scheme of the mountain thus ceases to be mere rising and becomes *rising plus descending*, the two *movements* with which we have thus invested that shape will be felt as being interdependent…the movements of the eye, slight and sketchy in themselves, [will awaken] the composite dynamic memory of all our experience." (78-79)

Flexible, dynamic relationships between shapes and perceivers are foregrounded. The involved movements, those both physically performed by the eye and those imaginatively attributed to the mountain (due to the automatic involvement of associative memory) are complex; we bring our

[52] Italics in original. James, *Principles of Psychology*, 554.

person to each aesthetic shape. I would like to call attention to the word "interdependent" to further emphasize the multiple components and relationships present in any Empathic process. And I interpret this to be a social process: As memories are iterative, so must relations be between perceiver and object. A suggestive dialogue between perceiving subject and interpreted object occurs in Empathy.

This relationship between art and perceiver is necessarily cooperative: Art does not fully exist until someone interacts with it. Lee explicitly calls this a collaboration, writing, "art can do nothing without the collaboration of the beholder or listener."[53] Without external participation, art *does* nothing—a sensing, perceiving subject must conscientiously attend to the art and imaginatively attribute action "into" the art. Thus, Empathy is the means by which art realizes its potential.[54] I contend additionally that art, if felt into, has the capacity to change us as well.

IV. What Does Habit Have to Do With It?

Lee recognizes the subjective imagination and the habit building, or aesthetic priming, necessary to relationships with art. In doing so, she characterizes Empathic experience as far more than pre-social and instinctual. We intuitively Empathize *and* we learn to Empathize via training: In Lee's system—just as there is when theorizing affect—there is room to consider the individual and universal experience, concurrently. Lee writes, "Empathy explains not only the universally existing preferences with regard to shape, but also those particular degrees of liking which are matters of personal temperament and even of momentary mood."[55] Transient personal emotions, socially developed personality, and attributes common to human beings in general

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[53] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 128.
[54] Lee approaches literature like she does other artforms. In her essay "The Nature of the Writer," I contend that she considers Empathy ("feeling into") as it relates to literature: "The things which we write in our books, the Reader has to read into them. Of course all art depends as much upon memory as upon actuality ; it lives as much, so to speak, in our past as in our present." I will elaborate further thoughts about this idea later in this paper. Lee, *The Handling of Words*, 73.
[55] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 82.

(those shifts in thought processes which correlate with physiological change, for instance) *all* affect one's relationship with artistic forms.

The word "habit" brings with it some unfortunate connotations: Often, we seek to break "bad" ones and try to cultivate those which are "good;" and the word is associated with automatic, even mindless, behavior. Rather than place particular value judgements onto any habits, I would like to consider them simply as (like Lee herself does) repeated activities which yield results. In relation to habit, Lee writes, "[e]mpathy is, even more than mere perception, a question of our activities and therefore of our habits… Nothing is so routinist as imagination and emotion ; and empathy, which partakes of both, is therefore more dependent on familiarity than is the perception by which it is started."[56] Repeated exposure and familiarity, in this case, constitute states of habitual responsiveness; and so, in other words, habituation is a form of communication in that a person receives (and is changed by) interactions with external entities and forces.

Effective consideration of this habitual responsiveness is made possible by referring, again, to a Jamesian psychological principle. In his chapter entitled "Habit," James tells us that when "we look at living creatures from an outward point of view, one of the first things that strike us is that they are bundles of habits. In wild animals, the usual round of daily behavior seems a necessity implanted at birth ; in animals domesticated, and especially man, it seems, to a great extent, to be the result of education."[57] While observing an animal, we register the behaviors we see (as opposed to the intention behind the behavior or any microscopic activity that may enable it), which inspires conclusions about the entity. We categorize such behaviors, James says, as instinctual or educated/rational; and the extent to which animals' daily behavior

[56] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 134-135.
[57] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 104.

might be coaxed into change is determined not only by the so-called "domestication" potential of the animal but the type of physical neural configurations making up the contents of the brain.

Different habits' variable outcomes depend upon structural *plasticity,* or "the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once," with influence meaning those "outward forces or inward tensions" impressed or expressed upon these plastic structures.[58] The brain-matter communicates internally via pathways, creating neural networks; these networks, much like highways, enable traffic flow. Present-day neuroscience validates James's thinking on both habit and plasticity: Within the dynamic system that is the brain, the communicatory traffic actively traveling along pathways can be changed and reorganized in response to external environments and to the instinctual and rational goals of animals.[59]

Rationally catalyzed change in habitual activity requires the deliberate recognition of the behavior's relevance to the needs and desires of the animal in question. Essential to identifying relevance is *attention*. James provides simple yet profound insight: "*My experience is what I agree to attend to*. Only those items which I notice shape my mind… Interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade, background and foreground—intelligible perspective, in a word."[60] Of course, consciously attending to an activity is not the only reason for physical cognitive change; there exists much neuroactivity outside those mechanisms which respond to conscious control. Here, though, I am focusing on the human ability to "tak[e] possession by the

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[58] Ibid., 105, 104.

[59] Neuroplasticity, and the extent to which it remains active throughout one's lifespan, is constantly being studied; new information pertaining especially to overall brain structure (rather than it being limited to the cellular level of communication) is consistently being uncovered. Essential introductory information was provided to me by the following: David Eagleman and Jonathan Downar, *Brain and Behavior: A Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Additional information about neural activity as it relates specifically to literary studies may be found here: Christopher Comer and Ashley Taggart, *Brain, Mind, and the Narrative Imagination*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

[60] Italics in original. James, *Principles of Psychology*, 402.

mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought" as it relates to focusing on aesthetic objects.

I call attention to the aforementioned principles because they provide insight into the psychological aspects of Lee's aesthetic theory to which she does not directly refer in *The Beautiful;* her task was to address aesthetic preference "by the facts of mental science," but, again, specifically to her intended readership, which included those with general curiosity about aesthetic theory and not the specialist.[61] Reading James's *Psychology* alongside Lee's book allows us to identify the scientific origins of her own aestheticism.

The viability of Lee's framework in practice depends upon the quality of attention one brings to aesthetic experiences. The final chapters of *The Beautiful* more clearly address emotional states and how they relate to tuning:

> Æsthetic perception and especially æsthetic empathy, like other intellectual and emotional activities, are at the mercy of a hostile mental attitude, just as bodily activity is at the mercy of rigidity of the limbs. I do not hesitate to say that we are perpetually refusing to look at certain kinds of art because, for one reason or another, we are emotionally prepossessed against them. On the other hand, once the favourable emotional condition is supplied to us, often by means of words, our perceptive and empathic activities follow with twice the ease they would if the business had begun with them. (142-143)

Lee here interprets our emotional selves as responsive to verbal input, implying a sensitivity to linguistic priming. In doing so, Lee directly addresses the socio-linguistic elements crucial to a fully developed consideration of her unusual concept.

Aesthetic literacy may hinge upon an attitudinal flexibility; not only does this imply a necessary litheness, but it also connotes the ability to stretch. No matter how innately well-suited someone's physical facility might be for, say basketball or equine racing, they must tune their corporeal instruments. Similarly, possessing a capacity to be affected by information presented to

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[61] Lee, The Beautiful, v.

us does not guarantee an automatic literacy, aesthetic nor lingual. And this is a good thing. Only a robot can produce "perfect pitch," but how unfortunate it would be to find soulfully expressive voices extinct. Sensitizing oneself to subtle verbal expressions requires us to be able to shift emotional states in response. Fortunately, our brains are plastic; and so active learning supports our capacity to reach outside ourselves and step into our motional worlds.

V. Aesthetic Empathy's Relation to Reading

I have so far presented Vernon Lee's biography up until the publication of 1913's *The Beautiful* and have analyzed her understanding of Empathy alongside interpretations and theories offered by a few of our contemporary thinkers as well as historical psychological thought. I would now like to directly consider a question that may help to make this thesis substantially relevant to literary debate: What might Lee's aesthetic empathy do for us as literary critics?

Picking up from the idea that we may become primed for aesthetic contemplation via verbal stimulus, I would like to further investigate the extent to which this might play out in relation to an engagement with literature. To remind readers of the linguistic elements associated with Empathy, I quote Lee: "It is the explanation of the power of words, which, apart from any images they awaken, are often irresistibly evocative of emotion;" and "when any emotion has become habitual, it tends to be stored in what we call memory, and to be called forth not merely by the processes in which it originated, but also independently of the whole of them, or in answer to some common or equivalent factor."[62] She calls this memory-enabled process the "*storage and transfer of æsthetic emotion*."[63] Attentional investment into aesthetic interests activates empathic relations with what Lee calls the aspects and shapes in artworks; these relations are

[62] Lee, *The Beautiful*, 139.
[63] Italics in original. Ibid, 142.

affected by linguistic communication as well as the phenomenological remnants of motion and embodied feeling brought to the artwork from the observer's prior experience.

Lee has written much about literature as art, and she dedicates 1923's *The Handling of Words and other Studies in Literary Psychology* to scholarship about reading and writing. Throughout, she consistently refers to a collaboration—this time between the reader and writer—much like she does in *The Beautiful* with observer and object. The marked difference, though, is that the relation involves two human subjects (rather than a human subject and an aesthetic object). This, I believe, allows us to consider texts as points of direct mediation and sites of communication between two consciousnesses. The text is, in Rosa's words, a "resonant surface" where each of its readers perceives words collected onto pages with their singular interpretive apparatus, including their distinctive canvas of memory, the same one brought to any other aesthetic contemplation. And when reading, we might consider each word (or bundle of words) to be an *aspect*, which one actively collects into imaginative images and spaces, or *shapes*.

Lee takes up the subject of writing in the anthologized essay "On Style,"[64] primarily by focusing on the relationship central to literature's creation and sustained significance: "What interests me, what I have thought about, are the relations of the Writer and the Reader. All literary problems, all questions of form, logic, syntax, prosody, even of habit and tradition, appear to me to depend upon the question of Expression and Impression ; and Expression and Impression mean merely the Writer and Reader."[65] While I believe she mischaracterizes the actions of expression and impression by reductively mapping them onto the roles of reader and writer, Lee does rightly acknowledge the multiple participants necessary for writing to forward

[64] This essay is collected in the aforementioned anthology, 1923's *The Handling of Words and other Studies in Literary Psychology*.
[65] Lee, "On Style," in *The Handling of Words*, 35.

any meaning.[66] Texts without readers cannot relay any linguistic information, let alone spark anyone's imagination. There exists a collaboration between the text and the reader; and in effect, the text is offered agency once a reader attends to it.

In this same essay, Lee—with an idea I interpret to be flowering from an egalitarian spirit—explains "the mind of the Reader is not a blank, inert plate, but a living crowd of thoughts and feelings, which are existing on their own account and in a manner wholly different from that other living crowd of thoughts and feelings, the mind of the Writer."[67] Driving Lee's inquiry into literary endeavors is direct recognition of the unique nature of each contributor. Although she does seem to later elevate the writer to a level she considers to be superior in intellectual capability to the reader in significant ways, Lee does explicitly respect the experience and unique capacities of each contributor. In a sense, the concept of literary style depends upon this acknowledgement.

Lee defines the word "style" in two ways: The word refers both to the quality of writerly ideas and the techniques and patterns used for presenting the ideas. The former valence, Lee insists, is unteachable: "*Poeta nascitur.*"[68] The latter valence, however, may be cultivated through deliberate practice. She writes of the second aspect of style, "[i]t means such a manner of dividing and arranging a subject, of selecting words, as will convey the meaning of the Writer to the Reader with the least possible difference between the effect produced and that intended, and also with the least possible wear and tear of the Reader's capacity and goodwill."[69] She deems this acquirable portion of writerly style a "craft," or a "teachable practice explicable by

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[66] I call this role mapping reductive for a few reasons: (1) It removes the text itself from the collaboration, and (2) I believe the reader has the ability to impress meaning into the writer's text through the very act of interpretation.
[67] Ibid., 64.
[68] Ibid., 40.
[69] Lee, "On Style," in *The Handling of Words*, 40-41.

rational, scientific reasons."[70] One of these reasons is—unquestionably—habit. Repetitive activity, or consistently practicing the writerly craft, often results in more evocative writing.

Vernon Lee directly anticipates Hartmut Rosa's resonance metaphor: She compares the writing of a literary composition with building a piece of music. As a writer gathers, organizes, and cements her construction materials (words) to convey her emotions and ideas, a reader extracts meaning voluntarily and—at times—unwillingly. Lee explains her thinking on the subject:

> The Writer's materials are words, and it is by arranging these that he copies, so to speak, his own feelings and ideas. But these words, you must remember, are merely *signals* which call up the various items—visual, audible, tactile, emotional, and of a hundred different other sorts—which have been deposited by chance in the mind of the Reader. The words are what the Writer manipulates in the first instance, as the pianist manipulates in the first instance the keys of his instrument. But behind the keyboard of the piano is an arrangement of hammers and strings ; and behind the words are the contents of the Reader's memory ; and what makes the melody, the harmony, is the vibration of strings, the awakening of the impressions in the consciousness. The Writer is really playing upon the contents of the Reader's mind, as the pianist, although his fingers touch only the keyboard, is really playing the strings. And the response to the manipulation is due, in both cases, to the quality of what is at first not visible : the Reader's potential images and emotions, the string which can be made to vibrate. (44)

By "playing notes," the writer creates comprehensible melodies and harmonies in the form of plots, finely crafted sentences, and pleasing poetry. The so-called signals' efficacy relies upon the reader's invisible memory; and associations (both deliberate and unintentional) come with those memories. They are unavoidably present in any reading. Despite a writer's best attempts at clarity, the variety of images brought into being by the reader's imagination as a response to a

[70] Ibid., 41.

text is tied directly to the reader *as a whole person*.[71] The variety of images, therefore, is virtually infinite; each person relates and responds (or vibrates) to and with texts in unique ways.

Rosa elaborates on the sound metaphor in a manner that clarifies what I believe Lee is trying to explain; that is, resonating with a text results in distinctive responses. He writes, "two entities in relation, in a vibratory medium (or resonant space), mutually affect each other in such a way that they can be understood as responding to each other, at the same time each speaking with its own voice… Resonance is not to be confused either literally or figuratively with the concept of echoing… An echo lacks its own voice; it occurs in a way mechanically and without any variance."[72] A writer's words reverberate in a reader's consciousness, and their meanings are negotiated through each person's unique perspective.

Lee's Empathy becomes increasingly important to consider seriously as a mode of contemplating texts when we reflect upon verbs. Actions are recalled as potential movement, and the motional possibilities we automatically associate with linguistic markers of such activity are integral to imaginatively entering into the world of each text. Verbs become intellectually valuable to us as we recall experiences or compare elucidated actions to what we can understand. The acuity with which each reader interprets markers of movement varies, of course; sensitive

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[71] Lee addresses memory's influence upon reading literature in a later essay: "I have tried to show that the action of literature is different from that of real life, because the written word acts on a plane not of direct experience but of memory… For memory means experience submitted to the disintegration, the elimination and addition, the chemistry, so to speak, of our whole human organism, and of the accumulated items of experience which it has previously altered and integrated in the mind. Memory is not a storage, but a selection ; and the fact of recollection implies already a certain suitability to our character and habits. Memory is not a helter-skelter gathering together, since everything new becomes at once connected by similarity or significance with something old. In memory, therefore, the items of experience, thus diminished, enlarged, or fused, come to exist in different dimensions, to move with different weight and pace, obeying no longer the rhythm of the outside world, but that of the inner one, and taking their meaning and power not from an alien universe, but from the individual human soul." In calling memory a selection, Lee touches on the concept of attention; we must realize that, like James reminds us, our experience is largely based on what we allow it to be. Lee, "The Nature of the Writer," in *The Handling of Words*, 131.

[72] Rosa, *Resonance*, 167.

readers may more poignantly "feel" motions' residues.[73] Each emotional excitation caused by a verbal stimulus is the result of attentively sensing and perceiving, just like encounters with visual art.

By "feeling into" words presented to us, we are able to transcend the limits of our physical selves; and beyond this, we can become so interested in perceiving the images and motions represented by language that we can forget our egoistic selves entirely. Earlier in this paper, I referred to the action of *projecting* oneself into an artwork in such a way that indicates a recognition of something outside the self. Rather than attributing disowned characteristics of our personhood onto a character or recognizing our direct experience of, for example, a city depicted in a fiction book's world, when we participate in Lee's type of projection, our attention is being engaged and is penetrating a situation that exists apart from our physical reality. We imagine what is beyond the confines of what is literally seen and what we literally experience. So, our eye movements which scan the words across lines on a page—our saccades—are prerequisite, habitual activities that enable the recognition of an experience which is not entirely our own.

An instance of meaningful empathic reading, in the way I have attempted to describe, can enlighten us to the experience of another. And in doing so, texts can change us and our worldly perspectives. This might be easiest to achieve when a work is written in the first person; we honor the narrator's discrete existence as we attempt to imagine their own situations by recalling images and sensations familiar to us. In my future work, I would like to elaborate a theory of empathic reading which takes into account such concepts central to narratology. How might we

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[73] In a chapter called "Tolstoy's Embodied Reader," Elaine Auyoung writes about authors "asking readers to conceive of…ordinary moments when characters come into physical contact with their immediate surroundings," which prompts readers "to draw on a body of knowledge that is literally at their fingertips." She deftly concludes, via citation of cognitive research studies on language comprehension, that "there is nothing naïve about the notion that novelists engage their readers' motor memory by means of the concrete details they select." A full acknowledgement of *Einfühlung* is warranted here, yet mention of Empathy is not present. Elaine Auyoung, *The Feeling of Reading*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

"feel into" texts written in the third-person differently than we do second-person? Considering questions which examine the intricate constructions of literary texts alongside Lee's Empathy seems fertile ground for literary critics to further explore and theorize.

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