

the obligations that are left undone. Do not address me the way despots are addressed, and do not avoid me as the ill-tempered are treated. Do not approach me with an air of artificiality, and do not think that I find the truth offensive. I do not want you to revere me. He who finds listening to complaints difficult will surely find administration of justice even more so. Therefore, do not hesitate in telling the truth or in advising me on matters of justice. I am neither above fallibility nor am I immune from error in my conduct, unless God safeguards me from the self, over which He commands more control than I.

In his inaugural address, Khatami appealed to the judiciary and the executive to establish a society based on the rule of law, and he called on the judiciary to promote and to consolidate the principle of accountability. There was little in his speech about obedience to religion, but there was much about the rights of the people and the need for them to participate. In international affairs, Khatami emphasized the need for "a proud, prosperous, and independent Iran," and for a dialogue among civilizations.

Khatami's tone, and the substance of his reflections, have struck a responsive chord inside Iran. There is a widespread feeling in that country of over 60 million that the goals of the revolution need reviewing, and that, faced with manifest problems at home and abroad, a diversity of views must emerge. Khatami's intellectual appeal is reinforced by his personal manner: he does not hector or denounce, he chooses instead a calm, rational tone. And his modesty—he uses public transportation and visits schools without official pomp—has impressed many Iranians.

This is not to say that he has convinced all Iranians. There are those in the conservative camp who are determined to sabotage him, by overt and covert obstruction, and who see in Ali Khamene'i a possible counter to Khatami. And there are others, of secular orientation, who remain suspicious of anyone who has issued from the clerical camp, and remains a clergyman. The great issue confronting Khatami, and those who seek to assess his progress, is how far he can prevail over these oppositions.

It is certainly too soon to say; optimism would be as misguided as pessimism. In some respects Khatami resembles Gorbachev, who came to office in March 1985 signaling a clear break, but without the power to implement his intentions. It is worth recalling that it took Gorbachev until July 1987, over two years, to constitute a Central Committee of his choosing.

But the analogy with the former Soviet leader has its limits. Khatami's position is weaker than Gorbachev's, since the Iranian system is one with several centers of power, and is not liable to the kind of authoritarian reform that Gorbachev practiced. And Khatami's position is also stronger than Gorbachev's, in that he already enjoys the mandate of popular election, no major foreign commitments to renegotiate, and a constitution that, with reasonable reform, can provide the basis for the kind of Iran that he wants to see.

We will soon have a clearer reading of Khatami's position: elections for the influential Council of Experts will go ahead in October, local elections in 1999, parliamentary elections in 2000, and presidential elections, in which Khatami could run for a second term, in 2001. Like Gorbachev, he is a reformer who emerged from the existing regime, and like Gorbachev, he appears to harbor illusions about how far the tide of change can be stemmed. But Khatami has a political mandate, and a mass movement supporting him from below; and his country need not disintegrate or transform its constitutional system for his project to be realized.

Within Khatami's own thinking, there

Venus in Venice

BY ANNE HOLLANDER

Titian's Women by Rona Goffen

(Yale University Press, 342 pp., \$60)

When I was an overweight and anxious college freshman, I kept a small reproduction of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* over my desk. While struggling with the desperate unwieldiness of life, I found the picture an inspiration, a solace, a hope, a constant joy. For a start, it was the very apotheosis of a plump girl, intensely erotic and supremely beautiful; and then it was a glorious triumph of painting. Titian's technical mastery, conceptual genius, and sexual understanding had created a sublime subject and a sublime object. It hung above my books and papers representing the perfect synthesis of sex and love, art and thought, facts and magic, desire and science. I wanted to be Venus and I wanted to be her creator.

Venus's young face is sweetly intelli-

are questions that will remain unanswered and contradictions that will remain unresolved until he is put to the political test. He has supported the creation of political parties, but the how and the when of political change, the limits of the reform that he seeks, remain unclear. He supports greater public activity by women, but he has been silent on specific discriminations to which women are subjected, in dress and in law. He is open to Western ideas, but he has been critical of secular intellectuals and of secularism in general. He wishes to make a break with the dogma of the revolutionary past, yet he continues to appeal, in his own rationalist and independent rendering, to the legacy of Khomeini. His attitude to Western political thought is positive, but some may wonder whether the intensity of his admiration for the philosopher-king of Plato is really a liberal admiration.

And yet it is impossible any longer to doubt the reality of Khatami's liberalizing venture, and its significance for Iran, for the Middle East as a whole, and for a Muslim world torn between an indecisive modernism and an assertive fundamentalism. The outside world, Muslim and non-Muslim, is right to be a little mesmerized. •

gent as she lies naked in her bracelet and her earrings. She buries the fingers of one hand in her shadowy pubic fleece and those of the other in a small bunch of roses, and turns her head gently against the pillow to look sidelong into the viewer's eyes. Her hair is both tidy and careless, both dark and fair; her body expresses both vital sensuality and casual ease; her warm gaze is both electric and untroubled. Her form is harmonious, unmarred by any special erotic emphasis other than her own hand's calm pose. She breathes no whiff of depravity or abandon, of death and corruption under the velvet skin, but she is completely real.

Her empty dress is slung over a maid's shoulder. Her silky puppy is asleep on the bed, her room is in a sumptuous house. Her surroundings say that she is

rich; her peaceable curves, in tune with the universe, say she has found the love of her life. Her hand tells us that she is thinking of him. Her face tells us that she is looking at him. The picture says that mighty Aphrodite, who rules the world, is yours alone.

Titian was able to achieve this kind of balance again and again. Hardly any other painter managed to make the pagan deities—or the Christian saints, the Virgin and her son—seem so palpably at home in the modern world. Titian had his own personal way of rendering sacredness, Christian or pagan. He managed what seems a naturally random unity, the effect of life itself having brought about, for the sake of this unique revelation, the muted fusion and concord among the pictured elements. Much of this was due to his genius for delicately asymmetrical composition and for subtle facial and bodily expression, with which he could create a blend of the current and the transcendent that seemed to bathe visibly modern persons in the living air of a lost and holy time.

For Christian imagery, Titian's master Bellini had already begun creating some of this effect; but Titian in particular could do it with the sensuous universe of the ancient gods. How could he achieve it? First by being Venetian, and inheriting the distinctive Venetian tradition of painting. From Bellini and even more from his colleague Giorgione, Titian learned the secrets of the atmospheric method, the famous *colorito* that the painters of Venice opposed to the Florentine insistence on *disegno*. *Disegno* meant the controlled proportions, the clear drawing, and the contained modeling on which a Central Italian image depended for its authority, of which linear perspective was also a binding element.

In the Florentine scheme for painting, where sculpture always seemed the superior model, color was the handmaid of form, casting her warming tints over its cool structures. But Venetian painters made color the master, a mode of formal composition in itself. Its subtly layered arrangements—the *colorito*—alone created the proportions, the shapes and the spaces, the mobile light and shade, the drama and the details. Shifts of tone and tint gave Venetian pictures a breathing, immediate air; Florentine pictures aimed at a lucid beauty made of order and stability.

Classical themes went very well in the Florentine scheme, and learned patrons expected mythological paintings to display the self-conscious clarity, solidity, and linearity that they found in the sculptured remains of Classical art. Patrons

in sixteenth-century Venice and neighboring principalities, where actual remnants were rarer, were no less glad to commission visions of Classical antiquity, in the new humanist spirit. For their taste, however, new images reflecting the ancient world would have to seem unself-conscious, naturally sensual and atmospheric—that is, modern Venetian—without being stripped of their antique identity.

For mythological scenes, which he called his *poesie*, Titian surpassed the otherworldly Bellini and Giorgione, using the modern Venetian mode as if he were employing the fresh, instinctive methods of an antique painter rendering the nymphs from life. He would not convey an ancient theme simply by quoting in paint from surviving antiquities, most of them sculpture; all Titian's classical references were very carefully modified, as were his many references to the works of his contemporaries and his predecessors. He also avoided too-glaringly modern usages, whenever he suggested the artifacts and the costumes of his own time as elements in antique scenes. By this means, he could bring the sacred Venus into a modern bedroom like an impossible dream, her divinity tempered by normal circumstance, the room's actualities suddenly harmonized by her presence.

Rona Goffen's book deals only with Titian's secular and mythological women, stretching that a bit to include the conventionally errant and repentant Mary Magdalen, as a companion for Lucretia, the raped and suicidal Roman wife. Titian's other female Christian saints and his various remarkable Virgins are not part of this book, though I wonder why Goffen did not include the vivid *Woman Taken in Adultery* from Titian's Giorgionesque period. Goffen has written two books and many scholarly articles on Venetian painting, and on individual works by Titian and Bellini. Her new book brings some of the views that she has expounded elsewhere to bear on an overarching thesis about Titian's use of women as subjects for painting.

Goffen proposes Titian as a painterly champion of women, a Renaissance feminist expressing his partisanship through his art, the unique exception to a prevailing misogyny expressed through the art of others, as well as in a variety of writings, customs, laws, and everyday assumptions, many of which still prevail. She further proposes that Titian's strong empathy with women, stemming from a deep sense of identification with them, caused him always to render their

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sexuality as individual, subjective, and powerful, as primary and independent—Venus-like, you might say.

Goffen omits Titian's holy women because she presumes that there were constraints on his rendering of them; and she may think that Titian's sympathy with female sexuality does not appear in his pictures of saints or the Virgin, despite his singularly creative treatment of them all. She is more interested in those quasi-allegorical compositions in which Titian exercised complete imaginative freedom, such as the *Woman with a Mirror* or the *Three Ages of Man*, where a shadowy and somewhat inert male is often seen in a close amorous relation with a brilliantly rendered female, whom Goffen sees commanding the scene and dictating the erotic terms.

One of Goffen's apparent reasons for

odds with the intentional distortion that is the core of pornographic representation. Plenty of the hard stuff remains from the sixteenth century, to show the required effect at the time; and the soft version—exemplified by the luscious, nipple-exposing, black-eyed dames often rendered by Palma Vecchio, who are excessively blonde-haired and half-clad in excessively full and emphatically unfastened chemises—is also unmistakable.

These girls are not beautiful, nor are the paintings; but they are slick and sexy. Instead of instantly pleasing, such paintings and their subjects are instantly troubling, like any pornography, in part because they deliberately seek to avoid either serious pictorial harmony or a serious stake in natural reality. Through Palma's insistence on certain parts and not their sum, many of his pictures show

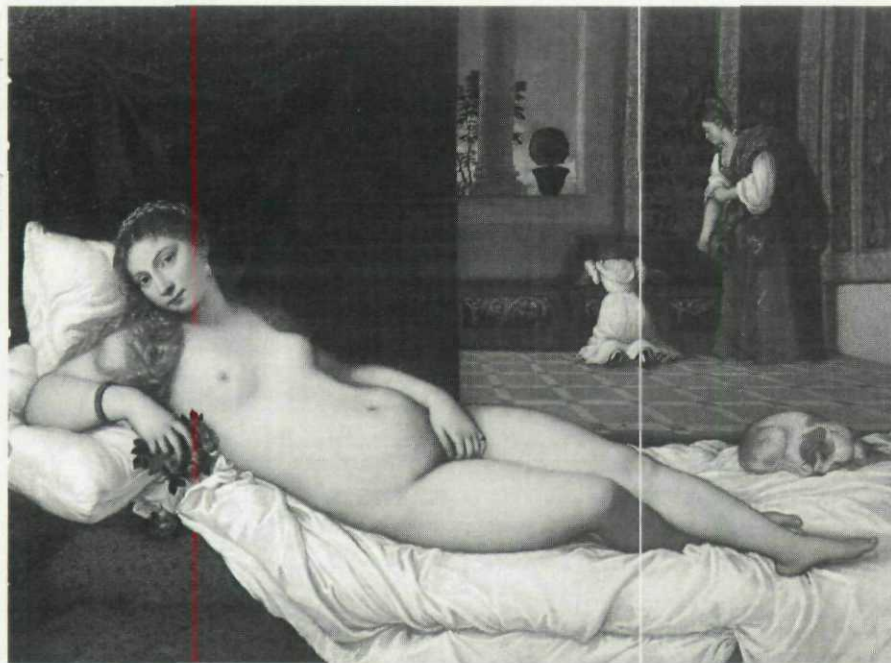
tory release and collapse, followed by total absence of lust and the need to rebuild from the beginning, perhaps with some crude pictorial help.

Titian's *Flora*, who bears the name of an ancient Roman courtesan as well as that of a minor Roman goddess, also wears a fully gathered, sliding-off chemise and a head of artificially blonde hair, and you can find one of her nipples if you look for it. In her portrait, however, Titian is clearly engaging with the larger erotic imagination that is sustained, increased, and deepened by gratification, not the one that is quickly fulfilled and exhausted. This painting, unlike so many Palma versions, has been carefully developed and modulated and brought to fruition as an example of perfect artistic and erotic equilibrium, a beautifully composed painting of a beautiful real woman.

The painting bears gazing at for a long time and repeatedly, to permit its slow power and its breathing presence to work on the feelings. We are not being shown a female image meant for instantaneous effect. *Flora*, moreover, is not Venus, who has everything and does everything in every way. This might even be intended, Goffen remarks, as an ideal Lady, here rendered as both an antique courtesan and an ever-fresh flower goddess. There is a subtle action in this picture that is missing from Palma's cruder renderings. With her body still facing us, *Flora* looks downward out of the frame as she begins to turn in the same direction; but she seems to hesitate just an instant, before holding out her bouquet to the invisible lover who is not one of us watchers.

Venetian law at the time was severe about excess in clothing, with particular restrictions on the kinds and especially the amounts of fabric used. Stiff fines were imposed on tailors as well as on their customers. An extra pinch of daring in Palma's sexy images must have come from the clearly illegal yardage that went into those fluffy undone chemises—nothing like the restrained slide of *Flora's* drape. Great Venetian ladies did wear elaborate and becoming clothes as necessary complements to their rank and beauty, and powerful families could perhaps discreetly flout the law. Paintings also show that rich ceremonial robes were publicly worn by men in Venetian government and other institutions; but to wear ostentatious clothing as a clear sign of private wealth was not done.

Venetian custom, as Goffen points out, also imposed a purdah-like behavior on the ladies of its first families, even though they were often the repositories of great fortunes and great names. Ladies rarely went out in the street. They



TITIAN, *VENUS OF URBINO*, 1538

writing this book was to express her impatience with a long tradition of writings, continued by some recent art historians, which insists that Titian's Venuses, together with his anonymous beauties such as *Flora*, *La Bella*, *Vanity*, and *Woman in a Fur Coat*, were intended as soft-core pornographic images, with the straightforward single aim of sexual arousal. Such an idea seems to have arisen years ago out of Titian's known friendship with the satirist Pietro Aretino, who wrote a lot of very explicit pornography along with much other coarse and scurrilous material that he was paid to produce.

Goffen is somewhat overheated in her defense of Titian against this charge, preaching largely to the converted or even beating a dead horse. The tempered beauty of the eroticism in Titian's anonymous women seems obviously at

themselves to be forthright sexual fantasies inciting to lust, not dreams of a consuming erotic love, the kind that moves the earth and perhaps the sun and other stars.

Goffen may believe, though she expresses this somewhat obliquely, that Titian's own imagination about sex was the kind often thought of as female; that he understood the sort of sexual desire that may possibly be linked to the capacity for overall corporeal arousal and the possibility of multiple orgasm, but which in any case is a physical desire that is always on tap, so to speak, and thus continually ready to blend with other experiences, including complex emotions, thoughts, and ideas. It can be contrasted with that sexual desire which is local and immediate, involving single-minded pursuit, concentrated action, hugely satisfac-

watched public festivals from the window or the balcony, and they certainly did not have their portraits painted. Many Venetian gentlemen did, but their wives were not portrayed to match, as they often were in all the other Italian cities.

Meanwhile, Venice was famous for its many highly visible courtesans, some wealthy, literate, and witty as well as beautiful, beautifully dressed, and beautifully housed. Booklets with engravings and descriptions of them were printed for the benefit of foreign visitors. To the dismay of many, their tastefully sumptuous clothes and their refined behavior made them indistinguishable from real ladies; and well-connected courtesans also got away with a certain number of illegal excesses of dress without paying the fines.

Did they have their portraits painted? They seem to have imitated ladies in this respect, too, at least in not letting their names be attached to any. Titian and Palma were only two of the many Venetian artists who painted nameless beauties wearing elaborate dresses, partial undress, and classical nudity; but Goffen hastens to tell us that there exists no documented and named portrait of any sixteenth-century Venetian courtesan—except one by Tintoretto, now lost, of the celebrated Veronica Franco. Of Titian's named female portrait subjects, all except the two of his own daughter were non-Venetian ladies.

Goffen is so anxious to keep Titian at a distance from dirty-mindedness that she plays down the likelihood that Flora and the Venus of Urbino and all his other Venuses and anonymous dressed-up beauties are portraits of specific courtesans or prostitutes, even though nobody knows which ones. If you define courtesan as harlot, then "pornography," or picturing whores, would be Titian's crime. And for Goffen, all pornography is nothing but an intolerable assault upon women, a form of rape. Since her main theme about Titian is his deep respect for women's sexuality, she can never read him as veering over even for a minute into any of the sixteenth-century sexual attitudes that she now anathematizes.

Goffen stresses instead Titian's preoccupation, and that of other Italian Renaissance painters, with the *paragone*. This denoted an esthetic competition or rivalry, borrowed from antiquity, testing which of the arts best represented Reality, or, if you preferred, Beauty—two aspects, one could say, of Truth. The *paragone* was a malleable idea, variously conceived as existing between Painting and Sculpture, between the Visual Arts and Literature, but also between Sight

and Touch or Sight and Hearing, and between the Ancients and the Moderns; and further, by extension, between *disegno* and *colorito*, between rational, sculptural, masculine Florence and sensual, painterly, feminine Venice.

The *paragone* could even precipitate out as a rivalry between Titian and Michelangelo, the two longest-lived titans of High Renaissance Italy. These two artists—apart from daring to render Heaven and Olympus as if they were right here, to bring immortal creatures to life and immortalize the living so you could not tell the difference—were both internationally famous, both the close friends of nobles, kings, and popes, both competing for the same clientele. Leonardo and Raphael, the earlier contenders, were dead and out of the running by 1520, when Michelangelo and Titian were just getting fully under way.

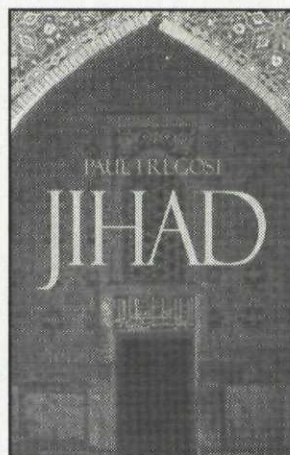
Yet every Italian Renaissance painter's constant rival was Apelles, the famous artist of Greek antiquity, who was the court painter and the friend of Alexander the Great. And here is where Goffen's account of Titian's beauties comes in. No work by Apelles survives, only descriptions and anecdotes. The descriptions all include lifelikeness, the painted grapes that the birds peck at, the painted person that almost speaks: these were what indicated to later ages how high the stakes were.

The pertinent anecdote was about Apelles's portrait, commissioned by his master, of Alexander's dazzling mistress Campaspe, with whom the king was besotted. Apelles outdid himself in painting her likeness, and Alexander, perceiving from the picture that the painter appreciated her more than he did, rewarded the artist by handing Campaspe over to him. This was considered an equitable exchange: Alexander seems to have found that he liked her better in the picture. (A lesson for the ages, indeed.) Campaspe's own emotions and behavior had no role in the story, because her character and her feelings came to life only in the portrait. Apelles thus deserved to have her, because he knew how to see her, and her true calling was posing for him.

In this suggestive tale Goffen locates the equivalence of a beautiful painting and a beautiful woman, as she interprets its later understanding among Renaissance painters and patrons. A beautiful Titian painting of a beautiful woman would show first of all how well the great modern Venetian outdid his ancient Greek rival; but it would further exemplify the creative beauty of art as an equivalent of the transforming power of love, both simultaneously dwelling in

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the beautifully pictured beauty of a woman. Patrons would seek to own the beautiful image of a nameless beauty as the quintessential example of Titian's creative genius. Although the model's beauty would be specific and individual—a speaking likeness, alive and compelling—its perfect fusion with the beauty of Titian's picture was what mattered to the patron, not her identity; and this presumably was what mattered to Titian, too.

Nudity and pointed references to antique goddesses were fine, but they were unnecessary. A beautiful modern dress was appropriate as a setting for a perfect woman in a perfect painting, to exemplify the potent sway of beauty as generated by art. Goffen neglects to say that strong feelings of lust were also appropriate, not only to any viewer of such a work, but also to its depicted subject and to its maker—in no way ruled out, and perhaps even intensified, by the larger forces invested in it.

Goffen is amazingly defensive about the idea that loose morals, suggested by their gentle air of erotic readiness, might be attributed to the women who posed for these masterpieces. She takes great pains to establish, with several well-supported examples, that a Renaissance owner of such a painting might honor it as a companion, using it as the repository of his abiding affection along with his ephemeral desires. Then she puzzlingly goes on to insist that he would not implicate the subject's feelings in his own; and she offers this as if it were a crucial matter—as if attributing lust to the subject would have been a way to despise her, and that no patron in the sixteenth century would do that. But that is just what she accuses us modern viewers of doing when she appears to be asking why an anonymous Venetian beauty must always be a courtesan. To which one might respond, why not? Especially if respectable ladies never posed in Venice.

Goffen points to the portrait of the young, blonde, and picture-perfect noblewoman Joanna of Aragon, painted in a low-necked red dress by Raphael and his pupil Giulio Romano. This painting might well have been taken for the picture of a courtesan, she says, if subject and artists were not thoroughly documented. She suggests the same of Titian's highly idealized portrait of Isabella d'Este in open-collared rich garb. She also points, somewhat resentfully, to Titian's many portraits of delicious but nameless young men with melting gazes: these paintings are not automatically assumed to represent men who sold their sexual favors.

Goffen appears to be forever fighting her art-historical enemies, whom she finds assuming that Titian's beauties were all courtesans and the pictures all the equivalent of Palma's most lurid efforts; and further assuming that courtesans were de facto considered degraded and immoral. She knows that Titian's patrons must have assumed his unnamed Venetian models were whores of some sort, since professional models did not exist. She also believes that such gentlemen were not disposed to despise the beautiful subjects of pictures for that reason: a susceptible look was considered a normal female trait and no disgrace. There is even a letter of Titian's saying he preferred his local *puttane* for his *poesie* to the models he might find in Ferrara. Nobody seemed to worry that the Virgins were probably also posed for by whores, with their susceptibility suitably muted.

Yet Goffen seems to fear that we have all bought the enemy line, and that we automatically despise anyone dubbed a courtesan. She forgets that some might think worse of those dubbed ladies. Maybe the models were all exceptionally pretty housemaids? This learned and serious study has an annoying incoherence, born of Goffen's periodic need to express the correct sort of feminist prudery. She must unnecessarily tell us again and again that sensuality does not preclude morality and that a Renaissance woman's virtue was thought to appear in her beauty; must point out that the gaze of the pictured beauty captures the viewer's, not the other way; and must repeatedly append not very potent quotes from Luce Irigaray ("Here the unconscious is speaking. And how could it be otherwise? Above all when it speaks of sexual difference"), whom she also invokes while ridiculously complaining that "the clitoris [is] suppressed or omitted" in standard nude art. One might ask why (and how, exactly) the clitoris should be included in nude art, when it is not visible on naked women.

Goffen also refers to the delicate gesture with which a male figure in Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* lifts one inch of a sleeping nymph's hem as an "attempted rape," and the man as a "villain." And she will repeatedly have it that Titian the feminist has carefully made his subjects' clothes enlarge and enhance the power of their bodies, not seeing that fashion was doing this for everybody at the time. The historical perspective that Goffen wants to preach to her readers escapes her when this particular fit comes over her, upsetting the balance of her interesting book.

Goffen points out that the woman

who posed for *Flora* also posed for both figures in the magnificent and mysterious *Sacred and Profane Love*, now known to have been commissioned as a marriage painting. There she is neither a courtesan nor a goddess. She is a bride: not the lady herself, who would not be portrayed in person, but the perfect beauty who stands for two aspects of the bride's being. One wears the wedding dress and the myrtle crown with sensual relish, holds the nuptial gift, and gazes alluringly at the bridegroom/viewer; the other, a draped nude holding a lifted lamp, gazes at her counterpart while lighting love's eternal fire. Together they expound the value—only lately prized in Venice, says Goffen—of the bride's fresh and steady conjugal lust. This had become a primary marital virtue in women, we are told, ever since contemporary medical science had deemed female orgasm necessary for conception, and thus for the dutiful perpetuation of dynasties.

The same value and virtue, Goffen explains, is being extolled in the peerless *Venus of Urbino*, plainly by the subject's own gesture. This vision is in fact another marriage picture, but this bride's role is being played by Venus herself, shown as if on her wedding night as she welcomes her approaching bridegroom. Meanwhile her maids stow her finery in one of her requisite twin marriage-chests, both prominent at the back of the room, and the dog in the foreground plays his part as the emblem of fidelity. We know that she really is Venus, too, because her pose imitates Giorgione's celebrated *Sleeping Venus* from a quarter of a century before, whose nearby Cupid identified her then.

The model for this Venus is the same woman who appears as Titian's *La Bella*, still gazing at us with her soft, intelligent eyes, and now wearing a precious dress of gold-embroidered blue to play the Ideal Beauty with all her finery on. The line traced by the two-inch edge of chemise showing above the neckline of this dress is a triumph of nuance, offering perhaps the greatest décolletage in all painting; and it is further set off by a plunging gold chain and the modish thin scarf with which Venetian women would soften the stiff and wide opening of a heavy dress.

Courtesans or fishwives, *Flora*/Bride and *Venus*/*Bella* show that their true calling was posing for Titian, in whatever contexts Titian wished to render them, some of which might well have been sacred. Of course, Goffen does not compare these two figures with Titian's saints and Virgins from the same decades in his career; but if we are permitted to

consider these crossover possibilities for a moment, it looks as if the model for Titian's nude and pensive *Venus Anadyomene* of about 1525 might well have posed for his noble *Pesaro Madonna* in the same year, and certainly received the same sympathetic treatment from the painter in each case. Beauty is its own excuse for being.

Some years after the bridal Venus, Titian began painting a string of supine Venuses along with versions of a seated Venus looking in a mirror. In all of these, says Goffen, he was engaging with the *paragone* of the senses, demonstrating the supremacy of Sight over Touch and Hearing. He shows Venus redoubling her power by meeting her own gaze in the glass, while one cupid holds up the mirror and another confirms it by gazing at her. The fur stroking Venus's skin, the caress that she gives herself, and the cupid's touch on her arm are all submitted to the mirror's generative glance, as if to show that the eye creates all sensory joy.

Each of the five lush recumbent Venuses lies nude on her couch, with a well-dressed musician at her feet who twists away from his instrument to stare intently at her crotch, or at her breasts as Cupid caresses them. The music continues; but she turns away her head to nuzzle Cupid or to receive a garland from his hand, to look at her dog or to gaze into space, indifferent to the avid stare that sets the musician's hands in motion, even unwilling to play the flute that she sometimes holds. Music cannot move her; but the sight of her strongly moves the music-maker. Titian made the first three of these paintings in the late 1540s and early 1550s, the last two in the late 1560s. In all of them, Venus wears earrings and twin bracelets, a pearl or a gold necklace, and well-dressed blonde hair; her bed is always draped in white linen and heavy silk and shaded by a swagged silk curtain.

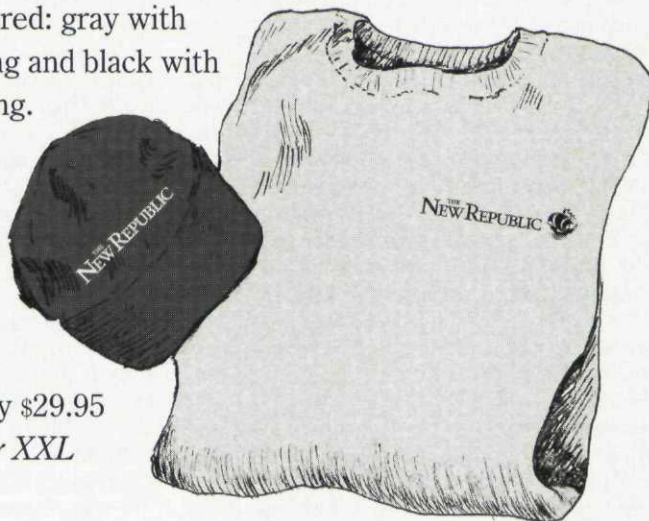
A short while later Titian painted his first *Rape of Lucretia*. In the sixth century before Christ, this virtuous and beautiful Roman wife's legendary rape by the Etruscan prince Sextus Tarquinius, together with her consequent public suicide against the protests of her husband, provoked an avenging Roman revolt against the Tarquins that ultimately established Rome's independence from Etruscan rule. Lucretia is thus the founding heroine of Roman power, not just a symbol of outraged conjugal faith. She is a constant subject in Renaissance art, sometimes nude, sometimes richly dressed, half-dressed, or classically draped, always turning a knife against herself. In the story, she

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publicly expresses her deep shame after the rape, and her need to kill herself right away lest she prove to be pregnant, or get used to the shame and stop feeling it, or lest people begin saying she had enjoyed the deed. Only her instant death will show Tarquin's crime as murderous, forcing instant harsh reprisals. She must give her dishonored life for the cause.

Yet Goffen has put Lucretia in the same chapter with the Magdalen, the one entitled "Presumed Guilty," because there were indeed doubts about the beautiful Lucretia's absolute chastity, and the usual suspicions of her share in the lust of her ravisher. Tarquin raped her by forcing a deal on her: either she submitted and nobody would ever know, or else he would kill her along with a stable-hand and put their bodies in bed together. He would then show her husband how his famously chaste wife had grossly dishonored him, while righteously boasting of discovering and killing the guilty couple. Lucretia submitted, but to pressure, not to force. Did her later shame include the memory of guilty pleasure?

Goffen is so outraged by this rape, and by such suggestions, and so convinced of Titian's outrage, that she cannot quite bring herself to observe that he, like many other painters, has built the doubts about Lucretia into his rendering of her. Goffen repeatedly reminds us of the sixteenth-century belief that women's sexual pleasure was much stronger than men's, but she cannot allow her feminist Titian to apply this notion, as so many did and still do, to the grim circumstances of real rape.

Goffen is right that Titian paints Lucretia's expression as pure terror, but she will not admit that he has carefully decked her as another lush nude Venus, complete with twin jeweled bracelets, earrings, pearl necklace, elegantly dressed golden hair, richly draped and curtained bed. There are no suggestions of the "torn away garments" that Goffen would like us to believe in—the gauzy scarf at her crotch is another of Venus's seductive appurtenances. It is Prince Tarquin's rich clothing that is disheveled, his sleeves shoved up, his stocking sliding down, his collar undone. As he lunges up the bed to thrust his knee between her thighs, he looks like her entranced musician at last driven mad by lust, abandoning his lute to draw his knife and force the enticing goddess to look at him for once.

Goffen's eye is deceiving her in one or two other places, notably in her first illustration of Titian's instinct for the female viewpoint, by contrast to his con-

temporaries. Goffen is impressed by the way Titian, in his early Paduan fresco of a modern-dress *Miracle of the Jealous Husband*, fills the panel with the extreme violence of an unjustly jealous husband's attack on his innocent wife. He holds her by the hair and stabs her repeatedly in the breast as she lies twisted at his feet with her skirt rucked up, in a landscape far from any witnesses. Already this is an outraged Titian, thinks Goffen, feeling the woman's abject terror for her life and physical pain more vividly than any other aspect of this tale, which recounts the several episodes in one of Saint Anthony's miracles.

Goffen wishes to contrast this panel with a relief sculpture of the same subject, made a few years later by Dentone and Cosini. This carving shows several anxious figures clustering around in classical costume, as the wife falls over, her head drops, and her husband's fierce hand yanks her upwards by the neck of her garment—but Goffen claims the sculptors have "omitted the deadly knife," suggesting that this husband offers milder violence and this wife is less threatened, even saying that this is not a "bloody drama" like the fresco. But it is. This woman's breast, too, is already stabbed, her blood already flows, and the deadly knife is right there, center stage, raised to strike again much as in Titian's version—even though the husband's arm and body are being pulled at by men who try to stop him, and two other people are there to break the lady's fall. Granted, this version is more theatrical and Titian's version is more cinematic; yet these scenes are equally

violent and attentive to the half-killed woman, though her draperies stay decorous in the stone version and there are other people about. But Goffen refuses to see the knife and the carved wound with its drops of marble blood, so that her fresco hero can get all the more credit.

Goffen candidly admits that there is very little evidence about Titian's own intimate relations with individual women. What remains, moreover, is irreproachable: a fact which makes quite easy a positive interpretation of all his painted ones. He lived with a woman named Cornelia, who had their first son in 1524 and became his wife after their second son's birth in 1525. She seems to have died unexpectedly, to Titian's known great sorrow, after the birth in about 1530 of their daughter Lavinia, whom Titian was also known to love very much.

Who was Cornelia? Did she ever pose for him, as Venus or Virgin? Nothing more is recorded about her. Titian never married again, and he had no recorded amorous liaisons with anybody else of either sex, though fictional beloveds were invented for him by later generations. His friend Aretino says that Titian loved flirting with women, kissing and fondling them, or admiring and entertaining them, but that he was no steady frequenter of brothels like Aretino himself. One must assume that the painter was really too busy.

ANNE HOLLANDER is a historian of art and dress and the author of *Seeing Through Clothes* (University of California Press).

The Tender Democrat

BY ROCHELLE GURSTEIN

Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy by Stephen L. Carter

(Basic Books, 338 pp., \$25)

Civility, or rather its absence, is a subject of great concern today. Journalists, politicians, social critics, professors, and ordinary Americans are worried. In 1996, *U.S. News & World Report* ran a cover story entitled "The American Uncivil Wars," and reported the results of a poll which since have become the common lore of commentators on civility: 89 percent of those ques-

tioned think that incivility is a serious problem, and 78 percent believe that the problem has worsened over the past decade. The respondents were asked, rather bizarrely, to rank the professions according to civility; lawyers, journalists, and politicians were placed lower than professional athletes. Since no definition of civility and no means of measuring its decline were provided, it is hard to know what to make of these results.

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