

# Re-dressing the balance: Winckelmann, Greek costume and the Ideal

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## Introduction

Cloaked in descriptive text, Johann Joachim Winckelmann's interest and knowledge in clothing have been overlooked in the fields of art history, historiography, and reception studies. This article seeks to unveil this lacuna. In exploring the extent to which clothing was integral to the development of Winckelmann's persona, intellectual approach, and affective sensibility, this article applies approaches more commonly employed in the field of fashion theory to Winckelmann's connoisseurial works on taste: *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek works in Painting and Sculpture* (*Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, 1755), and the *History of the Art of Antiquity* (*Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 1764).<sup>1</sup>

A brief exploration of Winckelmann's self-fashioning and engagement with contemporary fashion will form the opening section of the paper. It will suggest that clothing played a social role in the careful construction and self-promotion of Winckelmann's identity and thus his transformation from cobbler's son to one of the most influential men in Europe. Then it engages with the descriptive, object-based analysis of clothing found in the *History of the Art of Antiquity*. It will examine how the formal characteristics of antique clothing, and their accessories and ornaments were important indicators in identifying the origins of antique sculpture, and illustrative of the different historical styles and his teleological purpose to prove that Greek art was the best. Finally, it will engage with the emotional and aesthetic qualities he attributed to drapery. It will propose that for Winckelmann the throw and effect of antique drapery, when executed with elegance, could express extreme emotion, spur imagination, and manifest grace, one of the qualities that made up his concept of the Greek ideal. In the context of his desire to instruct contemporaries on the discernment of taste, drapery executed in the style of the Greeks proposed a counterbalance to the exaggerated drapery typical of Baroque Rome, and exemplified by the work of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. As Winckelmann sought to re-dress the balance between Baroque and Greek art, this paper aims to re-dress Winckelmann, integrating clothing into his historical, teleological, and aesthetic

<sup>1</sup> Michael Carter, *Being Prepared: Aspects of Dress and Dressing*. Sydney: Puncher & Wattmann, 2017, 116. For scholarship using psychoanalysis and queer theory, see Alex Potts, *Flesh and the ideal, Winckelmann and the origins of art history*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994 and Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* New York, N.Y.; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010.

process, and including draped as well as nude statues as his emblem of the Greek ideal.



Figure 1 Anton von Maron, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann*, 1768, oil on canvas, 136 cm x 99 cm, Weimar, Weimarer Stadtschloss, Weimarer Stadtschloss.

### Fashion and Self-Fashioning

The extravagant portrait of Johann Joachim Winckelmann painted by Anton von Maron, in 1768, the year of his death, (fig. 1), is a startling, exuberant, and complex mélange of colour, gesture, and fabric. As the rose-pink velvet of the fur-lined pelisse shimmers like silk in the morning light, the delicate ruff of white fur that frames his face swells, and builds into a cascade which – like a river – broadens, and garners energy, as it tumbles out of control onto the floor. The fashionable draped dressing-gown, or *banyan* envelops and almost swamps the shape and form of Winckelmann's body.<sup>2</sup> An antique bust of the Greek poet *Homer*, mounted on a stone plinth, rests in the sombre background to Winckelmann's left, and to his right

<sup>2</sup> These nightgowns or *robes de chambre* were more commonly known as *banyans*. Fashionable in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, they were loose, T-shaped gowns made of cotton, linen or silk and worn at home as a sort of dressing-gown or informal coat over shirt and breeches. They were usually worn with a soft turban-like cap. It was fashionable for men of an intellectual or philosophical bent to have their portraits painted while wearing banyans. Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothing and Society 1500–1914*, London: National Trust, 2009.

hovers the shadowy image of *Hermes*, taken from an engraved gem.<sup>3</sup> Almost submerged beneath the sumptuous folds of a golden turban, Winckelmann's dark eyes twinkle attentively out at the viewer.

Winckelmann's outstretched left hand invites the observer to join him in his private space as his right lightly holds a quill pen adding light annotations to his learned text. The image of the *Belvedere Antinous*, taken from the collection of his former employer Baron Philippe von Stosch, is placed on his desk in the foreground, and the bare torso of the image is wrapped in draped cloth so that it mirrors the styling of Winckelmann's own working ensemble.<sup>4</sup> The loose white chemise under his gown reveals an open neck and mimics the air of informality and styling found in portraits of contemporary men of letters.<sup>5</sup> Together with the racy red ribbon garter holding up his stockings, it brings a jaunty air of informality and ease to the portrait despite an air of awkwardness that haunts Winckelmann the man. Nonetheless, the theatricality and performativity of the image evokes the late Baroque portraits of aristocratic grand tourists by the famous Roman artists of his day, such as Pompeo Batoni.<sup>6</sup> It conveys not only a sense of Winckelmann's authority, scholarship, and presence as the man who became known as the father of art history, but also his love of luxurious fabric, engagement with contemporary fashion, and acute understanding of the potential clothing had for creating impact. Winckelmann had become a fashionista, an exuberant Orientalist dressing like the rich and influential, and yielding with full indulgence to the power of dress.

Although this exploration of the well-known and celebrated portrait by von Maron, completed only months before his violent and grisly murder in Trieste, demonstrates that Winckelmann's engagement with clothing was deep, multi-faceted, and sophisticated, there are contradictions embedded in this image.<sup>7</sup> First, Winckelmann himself professed a distain for fashion, or at least the restricted nature of eighteenth-century dress, and the constantly evolving change in styles that was at odds with his desire to capture and convey a sense of timeless beauty. In his *Thoughts on the imitation of Greek works*, Winckelmann complained about the tightly fitted breeches and the restrictive cut of a man's waistcoat and frock coat, typical of male contemporary fashion. For women, he compared the loose robes of the Spartan women with the 'present clothes, which squeeze and pinch us'.<sup>8</sup> Both portraits of

<sup>3</sup> Winckelmann admired Homer enormously. Katherine Harloe, 'Allusion and Ekphrasis in Winckelmann's Paris description of the Apollo Belvedere', *The Cambridge Classical Journal*, 53, 2007, 229-52.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Description Des Pierres Gravées Du Feu Baron De Stosch*. Florence: André Bonducci, 1760.

<sup>5</sup> Reimar F. Lacher, 'Die authentischen porträts Winckelmanns', in Martin Disselkamp and Fausto Testa (eds), *Winckelmann-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, Stuttgart: JB Metzler, 2017, 296-306, 301.

<sup>6</sup> Lacher, 'Die authentischen porträts Winckelmanns', 302.

<sup>7</sup> Winckelmann's engagement with the language of clothing fluctuated between a frustration with discomfort and a confident understanding and play with the power of dress. Klaus Schneider, *Natur, Körper, Kleider, Spiel: Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Studien Zu Körper Und Subjekt Im Späten 18. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994, 117.

<sup>8</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Thoughts on the imitation of Greek works in painting and the art of sculpture', in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology*,

Winckelmann painted in his lifetime – the von Maron painting and the 1764 portrait by the Swiss painter Angelica Kauffman painted just after the publication of the *History* – include social pointers, such as the carnelian signet ring, that indicate a sophisticated engagement with contemporary fashion, and an awareness of the social construction and meaning of dress.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, studies of Winckelmann's letters have shown that he was actively engaged in the commissioning process for both the Kauffmann and von Maron paintings, which extended to the choice and styling of clothes for each.<sup>10</sup> In the age of politeness, where polite manners and behaviours were entwined with the ownership of the right goods, wearing of the right clothes, and attendance at the right social events, dress, appearance, and adornment acted as vectors to project politeness onto the body.<sup>11</sup> Winckelmann's awareness of his own outward appearance and the manners and mores of 'polite' society in Rome has been traced by Klaus Schneider through a study of his correspondence with friends. Schneider explores the different roles Winckelmann played with clothes in Rome; the dress required by his position, the 'courtly' mask, the artist's cloak and the bourgeois uniform of the scholar – and both his attempt to socially structure the body and his concomitant desire to disorganise and undo social structures. It reveals the complex and sophisticated ways in which Winckelmann navigated the social issues surrounding clothes and his 'self-presentation' within Roman society.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, the attention Winckelmann paid to his self-fashioning in the portraits contrasted with the reality of his low-paid employment and the social

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*Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, David Carter, trans. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2013, 33.

<sup>9</sup> There are only five authenticated portraits of Winckelmann created during his lifetime. In addition to the portraits by Angelica Kauffmann and Anton von Maron, there was portrait by the Danish painter Peder Als, about which there is no information as to its composition, its iconography or its whereabouts; a profile drawing of Winckelmann by Giovanni Battista Casanova, and a wax cast by Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein. The portrait of him by Anton Raphael Mengs was painted posthumously, probably around 1778. Lacher, 'Die authentischen porträts Winckelmanns', 296-298. For a further exploration of Winckelmann's clothing in the portrait by Angelica Kauffmann, see Fiona Gatty, 'Winckelmann, Morrison and the aspirant gentleman', Cristina Neagu, Katherine Harloe and Amy Smith, eds. *Winckelmann and curiosity in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century gentleman's library*, Oxford: Christ Church Library, 2018, 88-104. See also Lacher, 'Die authentischen porträts Winckelmanns', 299.

<sup>10</sup> Winckelmann's agency, engagement and excitement in the projects also included complex plans for the replication and promotion of the images once complete. In the case of the von Maron portrait, Winckelmann also led the development of the allegorical programme with the artist. The von Maron portrait was probably finished after Winckelmann's death, and it has been suggested it was at that point the figure of Hermes was added as an allusion to his violent end. Lacher, 'Die authentischen porträts Winckelmanns', 299-302.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Withey, <https://dralun.wordpress.com/2016/01/27/technology-self-fashioning-and-politeness-in-eighteenth-century-britain>, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Schneider, *Natur, Körper, Kleider, Spiel*, 117, 132-133. At 120-121 Schneider also argues that Winckelmann's desire for sartorial freedom came from his desire to separate himself from German bourgeois society. This was the conclusion to which the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe also came about Winckelmann and his self-fashioning.

ambiguity of the austere 'uniform' of black clerical dress he wore on a daily basis around the Vatican.<sup>13</sup> Winckelmann allegedly had few clothes; the fur dressing gown in the von Maron portrait was one of his few personal items and he wore it when writing.<sup>14</sup> On his arrival in Rome he was advised by his friend Casanova to wear the simple 'Abbot' dress to fit in and to present a universal or neutral mask in the socially complex world of the city.

The collar is observed for the priests, doctors, notaries, public employees; even to the adventurers who from all sides come to Rome to look for you to live; to tell the truth, the dress of the abbot relieves you of not a few worries. One is thus less observed and less exposed to the investigations of detractors, one enters into the best conversations; consideration is required; it imposes itself on the common people and, what's more, it is easily found to make a fortune.<sup>15</sup>

Socially, the clerical costume resolved Winckelmann's anxiety in choosing the 'right' form of dress. In his comments in the *Thoughts on the imitation* on the way in which Spartan women did not have to worry about what to wear, there is the sense that he was aware of the complexities of dressing for each day, and had suffered from this conundrum.<sup>16</sup>

This brief exploration of Winckelmann's personal journey through his self-fashioning in the von Maron portrait points towards an intentional engagement with clothing that supported the projection of a fresh identity for his new surroundings and a sophisticated understanding of how 'tasteful' dress could contribute to this. It supports scholarship that charts Winckelmann's development of his own self-image whilst in Rome, the mythologizing of his own position, the self-promotion of his writings, and his transition from obscurity to one of the most celebrated scholars in Europe.<sup>17</sup> In illustrating the complexity of Winckelmann's self-fashioning, it also points to the potential richness of a deeper engagement with clothing in his written work.

### The historical description and form of clothing

Description is at the very essence of how we engage with material objects, how we explore their properties, colour, and shape, and how we map onto them a context and purpose. As a first step in the process of communicating observational data, the

<sup>13</sup> Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 46.

<sup>15</sup> 'Il collare si osserva ai curiali, ai medici, ai notai, agli impiegati pubblici; finanche ai venturieri che da tutte le parte concorrono a Roma a cercarvi a vivere, a dir il vero il vestir d'abbate esime da non poche inquietudini. Si e cosi meno osservato e meno esposto alle indagini dei detrattori, si entra nelle migliori conversazioni; si esigono de' riguardi s'impone al volgo e, quel che a più, si trova agevolmente da far fortuna'. My translation. Cf. Casanova 1,310 quoted in Schneider, *Natur, Körper, Kleider, Spiel*, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Potts, *Flesh and the ideal*, 188-201. Schneider, *Natur, Körper, Kleider, Spiel*, 117-144.

seemingly mundane reshaping of the object for an unseeing other recreates an image, whether the original artefact is a piece of clothing, a vessel, or an individual. Regarding items of clothing, one must take into consideration the objects themselves – the material, cut, and shape – but also the richness and complexities of how and why these objects, namely clothes, shape the body, or are shaped by the relationship of the fabric to the body. As such, the process of presenting the attention that Winckelmann paid to ancient textiles and dress can be as complex and challenging as an engagement with Winckelmann's descriptive text itself, fraught with the danger of becoming a mere chronology of 'what he wrote'.<sup>18</sup>

This section will look at the way in which Winckelmann's analysis of clothing served the teleological and historic purpose of the *History*. As he wrote in his chapter on Greek art, 'I shall speak first of the fabric; second of the different pieces, kinds, and forms of women's clothes; and third of its elegance and of other female finery and adornments'.<sup>19</sup> I will therefore provide a brief overview of the breadth and scope of his interest in antique clothing in order to benchmark the presence of antique dress in his texts, and to highlight the importance Winckelmann gave to clothing and clothed statues within the overall context of his *History* and his historical process. As illustrative of this I will provide an analysis of two of his many descriptive passages on clothing: Egyptian dress, and the sleeves found on the garments worn by Greek women.<sup>20</sup> My intention is that this will map the contrasting ways in which Winckelmann charted the difference in the style of antique dress, and illustrate the complexity and richness of his engagement with clothing and his depth of knowledge about the construction of garments. Behind the seemingly disparate and disconnected collection of observations on clothing found in the *History*, this section seeks to embed Winckelmann's study of antique dress within the broader historical and teleological narrative of the *History*.

At a fundamental level, costume was important to Winckelmann as a means of distinguishing between different statues in order to clearly identify their historical context and origins. At the beginning of the Preface to *History*, he wrote: 'A work is generally said to be Greek or Roman depending on its clothing or degree of excellence. A cloak attached at the left shoulder of a figure is said to show that it is Greek or that it was made in Greece'.<sup>21</sup> To ensure the accurate classification of antique statues, he stressed the importance of detailed observation in the drawing of clothed figures, explaining how in the drawing of clothed figures, 'attentive

<sup>18</sup> See Elisabeth Décultot's useful description of Winckelmann's process as a 'narratological' mix of rhetorical, poetic, and diegetic devices, all of which were linked to the use of language. Elisabeth Décultot, 'Winckelmann's model of art historiography and its reception in the late 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century', in *Doing humanities in nineteenth-century Germany*, Efraim Podoksik, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2019, 85-109.

<sup>19</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the art of antiquity*, Harry Francis Mallgrave, trans. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2006, 216.

<sup>20</sup> For the difference in Winckelmann's 'temperature' of text whilst writing about Egyptian and Greek statues see Aris Sarafianos' article, 'Convenient misunderstandings: Winckelmann's History of Art and the reception of meteorocultural models in Britain,' 16, in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 72.

observation and knowledge' were more important than fine sensitivity and feeling.<sup>22</sup> In this he distinguished the *History* from the body of antiquarian texts and treatises that illustrated the customs and clothing of ancient peoples with a broader historical narrative, context, and purpose.<sup>23</sup>

The investigation of this aspect of art is all the more important in a didactic book on the history of art given that previous treatises on ancient clothing had been more learned than instructive and specific, and thus an artist, having read them, would be less knowledgeable than before.<sup>24</sup>

Although he focused much of his attention on female clothing, Winckelmann cited practical reasons for this. He quoted the ancients to support how Greek men were in the habit of being unclothed whilst the Romans went into battle fully dressed, and moved the discussion of Greek male clothing to his chapter on Roman dress: 'I cannot present here an exhaustive study of antique clothing; instead, I will confine myself to female figures because most male figures in Greek art, even according to the testimony of the ancients, are unclothed'.<sup>25</sup> In a complex passage that explained why he spent more time discussing nude statues (because of the vast quantity and complexity of draped ones), Winckelmann indicated that clothing and clothed statues were an unambiguous way of illustrating any shift in style, and explained the different ways in which cultures had engaged with the relationship between clothing and the body.<sup>26</sup> He concluded this passage by describing, 'thus the drawing of clothed figures can with all justification be called an essential part of art'.<sup>27</sup>

A brief exploration of Winckelmann's process can be illustrated in his discussion of Egyptian dress. The section highlights his deep knowledge base, an intentional and systematic engagement with textiles and material, how he was alert to all the different phases and stages of a garment's creation, how it could encapsulate the subtle characteristics of a particular historical moment, and its purpose and its effect when worn. Winckelmann identified only two distinct periods of Egyptian art, which he designated simply as the earlier and the later styles, with a third for the imitations of Egyptian works by Greek artists.<sup>28</sup> Initially he provided the reader with a broad summary of Egyptian clothing and its origins, which he supported by referencing the work of ancient chroniclers. For the Egyptians, he identified the principal fabric used (linen) and the two principal items that made up their garments: the *calasiris*, with its gathered hem of folded cloth at the foot, and a white cloak. He then reinforced his observations with reference to

<sup>22</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 226.

<sup>23</sup> Décultot, *Winckelmann's model*, 99.

<sup>24</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 216.

<sup>25</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 216.

<sup>26</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 226-27.

<sup>27</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 227.

<sup>28</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 131. See also Décultot, *Winckelmann's model*, 97, for a deeper analysis of how Winckelmann aligned his stylistic narrative devices with the main lines of his historical development.

Herodotus.<sup>29</sup> This was followed by a detailed description of the clothing found on specific works of art that he had seen. He used, as exemplars, two statues on the Campidoglio in Rome.<sup>30</sup>

Winckelmann then conflated his description of Egyptian bodies and the unsophisticated style of their clothing with the lack of potential that Egyptian culture had for beauty, and the reasons why it was not able to 'attain the heights that it did among the Greeks'.<sup>31</sup> He replicated this descriptive and systematic engagement and the relationship between the physical shape of the body and the style of their clothing to a greater or lesser degree when analysing the art of the Persians, Phoenicians, and Etruscans. In each he conflated the simplicity or complexity (in the case of the Persians) of clothes with their lack of capacity for beauty.<sup>32</sup>

As with his analysis of Egyptian clothing, Winckelmann divided his chapter on Greek female clothing into three sections, starting the first section with a focus on fabric and textiles. From his observation of statues, he distinguished the different kinds of material used, which included wool, silk, and gold-enhanced cloth, and paid particular attention to the wet cloth used by artists to drape their models, so that the cloth would hold tight to the body. He conflated his visual observations with historic validation from ancient writers such as Herodotus and Thucydides as confirmation of the similarity of actual fabric used by Athenian women for clothing. He supported his argument by providing evidence that Roman women wore the same transparent cloth, and elided from both the effect in works of art of a lightness of cloth and transparency.<sup>33</sup>

From the section on textiles, he systematically analysed the different items of clothing that Greek women wore. He split these into three basic categories, 'the tunic, the robe and the cloak', describing their shapes as 'the simplest that can be imagined'.<sup>34</sup> In this way, clothing became part of what was 'natural' which in turn brought clothing firmly within the scope of the body, rather than something that sat outside, or remained distinct from it. Discussing the different historic styles of dress, he also integrated the concept of fashion or 'mode' as part of the historic identification of statues and one that enabled the connoisseur to distinguish, for example, between statues of divinities and those of Greek citizens:

In the earliest periods, women's attire was the same for all Greeks, that is, it was Doric. In later periods, the Ionians distinguished their attire

<sup>29</sup> 'With regard to clothing, we can observe that there are two garments on the three female statues cited above: a robe and a cloak. But this does not contradict Herodotus, who says that the women wear only a single piece of clothing, for he probably meant either their robe or their outer garment'. Winckelmann, *History*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 139.

<sup>31</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 217.

<sup>34</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 218.

from that of the others. Artists, however, seem to have adhered mainly to the earliest style of dress for their heroic and divine figures.<sup>35</sup>

Winckelmann began his section on tunics by referencing Greek statues as exemplars of the different periodic styles and the formal characteristics of particular items of clothing. For tunics he used the examples of the *Flora Farnese* and the *Youngest daughter of the Niobe* to describe the chiton or monopeplos that formed the base garment over which a cloak would normally be draped or clasped. The chiton was fastened at the shoulders by brooches called fibulae and, as Winckelmann went on to describe, it was also belted under the breasts or at the waist where it could hold up any excess fabric. In a complex and contrasting passage that explored the construction and different ways in which sleeves were fashioned from the simplicity of two long pieces of cloth, we can get a picture of the multiple ways in which Winckelmann was embedding this apparently simple description of female clothing into his historical process:<sup>36</sup>

First, he analysed the foundational construction of the garment, which consisted of 'two long pieces of cloth sewn together lengthwise and fastened together at the shoulders with one or more buttons'. Then he provided a contextual explanation that identified a specific regional variation of the fastening mentioning that 'on occasion, a sharp pin was used instead of a button, and the women of Argos and Aegina wore longer pins...than ...the women of Athens'. This would have supported the correct identification of a clothed figure, and possibly given it a context within his temporal chronology of styles. He provided the garment with a name, 'the so-called rectangular robe', and referenced the observations of the French classical scholar, Claude Saumaise, who was one of his sources on the linen used in Egypt and Greek garments.<sup>37</sup> He explained that these robes were worn by either 'divine figures or figures from the heroic period', and the way in which in practice they were worn (over the head).

Sleeves were constructed from this basic item of clothing, and in this he referenced the 'thigh-showers' worn by young Spartan women that he had described in the *Thoughts on the imitation*.<sup>38</sup> He then contrasted the loose and open 'robes of Spartan virgins' with the tightly fitted *karpotoi* sleeves worn by 'the elder of the two of the most beautiful daughters of the Niobe', (fig. 2), providing an explanation of the etymology of the word *karpotoi* after the Greek word for wrist and conflating the similarities with a sleeve commonly found in male statues. He also included in this description the workmanship and technical detail of the fastening.<sup>39</sup> He stated both historic and aesthetic reasons for his preference towards the cut of the sleeves in the statue of the *Second daughter of the Niobe*: first, because it more accurately reflected what Greek women wore, and secondly, because it did not

<sup>35</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 218.

<sup>36</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 219.

<sup>37</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 428.

<sup>38</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 219.

detract from the shape of the tunic itself as it was important that drapery enhanced the shape and the curve of the body underneath.



Figure 2 Unknown, *Second Daughter of the Niobe*, ca.300 BC, marble, Over life size, Florence, Galleria Uffizi, Galleria Uffizi.

Finally, in his ongoing narrative to instruct his readers on the importance of ‘Taste’, Winckelmann concluded his passage on sleeves with a comparison between antique Greek sleeves and his ongoing distaste of Bernini’s artwork, remarking that nowhere in antiquity could be found ‘sleeves that are wide and rolled up according to today’s manner ... , like those Bernini gave to the statue of *Saint Veronica* in Saint Peter’s in Rome’.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, he admired the work of the Baroque masters Carlo Maratta and Francesco Solimena as good examples of how drapery should be executed.<sup>41</sup> He also praised the work of the Flemish sculptor François Duquesnoy whose statues of *St. Andrew* and *St. Susanna* were seen as expressions of the Greek ideal, criticising those whose folds were so heavy and cumbersome they hid the form of the body underneath.<sup>42</sup>

This passage on sleeves in Greek clothing also illustrates the multiple ways in which Winckelmann used the word ‘style’ that went beyond an indication of a particular historical time and space, and the four different stylistic periods that made up his schemata of Greek history.<sup>43</sup> His patchwork

<sup>40</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 219.

<sup>41</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Estelle Lingo, *François Duquesnoy and the Greek Ideal*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, 181.

<sup>43</sup> These were, of course, the early style, powerful but hard; the grand or high style, achieved with Phidias, to which the *Niobe* group belonged; the beautiful style, which softened the high

approach to the stylistic analysis of antique clothing included the garment type, its cut, the technical features and construction, the relationship of the garment to the body when it was worn, its active aesthetic effect, pleasant or otherwise, its derivation, both geographic and historic, and the sense of someone or something 'being stylish'. Last, but not least was his repetitive antipathy to the contemporary fashion for the Baroque in Rome.

This meticulous attention to the construction and detail of clothing was also extended to Greek and Roman footwear, jewellery, hair accessories and hairstyles. In his mind, as well as assisting in the identification of statues, it also demonstrated the sophisticated understanding and approach the Greeks had to the cut, flow, and practical aspects of costume, and the important but often imperceptible nuances and adjustments that supported his broader teleological purpose to prove that Greek art was the best. Winckelmann's interest in costume was therefore built into his creation of a narrative and chronological history of art, and illustrative of the system within which he could set out his definition of ideal beauty and what he believed was the essence of art. As he concluded at the end of section on dress in the *Art of the Greeks*: 'Thus, the drawing of clothed figures can with all justification be called an essential part of art'.<sup>44</sup>

### **Imagination and the Ideal in the fold, expression, and grace of draperies**

This section will highlight the affective, emotional, and active qualities Winckelmann gave to clothing, and how clothing held an aesthetic purpose in his normative aim to encapsulate the essence of beauty. Winckelmann's descriptive engagement with clothing in the *History* was expansive; his interest in antique dress went beyond ethnographic study to encompass the role of clothing in determining social identity, the style and cut of the garment, and the stylistic period to which a statue belonged. He then integrated his observations and analysis with the broader teleological and historical purpose of the *History* to prove that Greek art and culture was the best. This of course was only one aspect of what he sought to determine in *History*, the other being to define the 'essence of Beauty'.<sup>45</sup> As a preliminary step in arguing for a revised evaluation of his concept of ideal beauty to include clothed as well as nude statues,<sup>46</sup> this section will focus on Winckelmann's interest in the fold of antique drapery, and how he attributed emotional and aesthetic qualities to the way in which fabric

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style by adding 'grace'; or 'loveliness' into which he placed the statue of the *Laokoon*; and finally the imitative style, when, as all ways of representing gods or heroes had been exhausted, artists had to fall back on imitating their predecessors and adding trivial elaborations. Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: the pursuit of happiness, 1680-1790*. London: Allen Lane, 2020, 474.

<sup>44</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 227.

<sup>45</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Fiona Gatty, *Ideal beauty in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French art and art criticism with special reference to the role of drapery and costume*, DPhil, University of Oxford, 2014.

was shaped or 'folded'. It will illustrate that as with the folds of skin on nude statues he used rhetoric and the metaphor of sensual imagery to engage with the expressive and imaginative effect of draperies, particularly their ability to embody 'grace'; one of the qualities that contributed to his concept of the ideal.<sup>47</sup> To support this vision he provided examples of statues from both antiquity and contemporary times in which he described draperies and the images themselves as 'beautiful'.

### The fold

In his treatises on taste, Winckelmann actively engaged with the aesthetic effect of the fold and the shape of drapery by placing drapery third in his categories of importance for the discernment of taste after Nature and Contour: 'By the word drapery is to be understood everything that art teaches us about clothing naked figures and about folded garments. The knowledge of this is, after that of beauty in nature and of noble contour, the third merit of the works of antiquity'.<sup>48</sup> In the *History*, in a section on fabric, Winckelmann had shared how he was able to distinguish the kind of textile on clothed statues, whether wool, linen, or silk, in part because of the way in which the draperies were hung and shaped.<sup>49</sup> He then combined the knowledge of fabric and their origins with the weight of their folds to identify statues and contextualise them within his stylistic periods. So, although Winckelmann's curiosity as to whether or not the ancients pressed or 'ironed' their clothes appears mundane, the process of folding, shaping and pressing clothes was integral to his understanding the intentional nature of the Greeks in shaping and folding their garments, and the effect of the folds themselves.<sup>50</sup> Ironing, after all, flattens the garments after its crinkling through washing and dyeing, either replacing smooth surfaces, or creating new edges and shapes and folds from which the 'pressed' garment emerges.<sup>51</sup>

Winckelmann analysed the shape of the fold as illustrative of different cultures. He specified how particular types of folds indicated distinct civilizations and historical periods. Egyptian folds ran in straight lines or slight curves, Etruscan gowns were arranged in small folds, which were also similar to early Greek folds and their styling. He then illustrated his analysis by describing how examples of the 'best period of art' could be found on an image of Pallas on coins of Alexander the Great, and that in the 'highest and most beautiful style, the folds fell more in curves...because variety was sought'.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond their significance as illustrative of historical styles, Winckelmann was interested in and explored the many ways in which these items of clothing were worn, and how they could be 'thrown' and swept using different techniques, or

<sup>47</sup> Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*.

<sup>48</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 41.

<sup>49</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 216-17.

<sup>50</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 223.

<sup>51</sup> Carter, *Being Prepared*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 223.

decorated with a variety of styles by accessories such as tassels.<sup>53</sup> One such example of his awareness of the shape and throw of fabric can be seen in his *Letter and Report on the discoveries at Herculaneum* where he illustrated how the effect of styling a garment in a particular way gave 'greater grace' to one of 'two figures of women, as big as life, (and) conspicuous for the beauty of their drapery':

In the court of the cabinet there is a mother of Nonius Balbus, as appears by a well-preserved inscription on the pedestal. Part of her gown, or mantle, is thrown over her head; and in order to cover it with the greater grace, is made to rise in a point over the forehead.<sup>54</sup>

In the *Thoughts on the imitation*, Winckelmann described the 'beautiful' statue of *Agrippina* as proof of the way contour was maintained in draped statues.<sup>55</sup> He also described the drapery of the statue of the *Three Vestals* as 'models of the 'sublimest drapery',<sup>56</sup> not only because they were one of the first discoveries at Herculaneum, but also because of the 'grand and elegant' manner of their 'folds ...with a fine sense of freedom and gentle harmony of the whole'.<sup>57</sup> With a rhetorical flourish and metaphor that evoked his description of the landscape of folds in the skin of the *Belvedere Torso*, he noted how the folds on the statue of the *Niobe*, 'broke like branches emanating from a stem, ...they all have a gentle curve'. He continued, 'On large gowns, we see that the artist gathered the folds in bunches, the great variety of which is in Niobe's cloak, the most beautiful gown from all antiquity, can serve as a model'.<sup>58</sup> Folds of material arranged tastefully, as well as folds of skin that covered rippling muscles were the trigger that spurred his imagination and incited effusive and flowery language.

Embedded within Winckelmann's engagement with the 'fold' were the active attributes of elegance, expression, and grace, which all contributed to the tasteful adjustment of fabric, and which were intrinsic to his definition of the essence of the Greek ideal. As examples, Winckelmann described the shapes and the fall of the cloak of the *Niobe* (fig. 3) and the elegant way in which the folds of her garment fell in an uninterrupted and perpendicular line. He expressed how these folds conveyed for him the perfect expression of both passion and movement, and he suggested that the sculptor had expressed these in a 'graceful' form so that they did not disturb the facial features or the overall harmony of the piece of sculpture which he described as both 'images of unparalleled beauty',<sup>59</sup> and as the

<sup>53</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 221-22.

<sup>54</sup> Carol C. Mattusch, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Letter and Report on the discoveries at Herculaneum*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011, 56.

<sup>55</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 41.

<sup>57</sup> Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the imitation*, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 223.

<sup>59</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 'Recalling the Observation of Works of Art', in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, David Carter, trans. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2013, 133.

manifestation of grace.<sup>60</sup> He noted that the throw of the cloth underneath the loins of the statue of the *Laocoön* also expressed a sense of elegance,<sup>61</sup> and he described the *Apollo Belvedere*'s draperies as another example of 'good taste and beauty',<sup>62</sup> creating a sense of balance in the sculpture as they hung elegantly across the shoulders of the nude form. The term 'elegance', also formed part of Winckelmann's enquiry into formal attributes of clothing: 'In elegance, which is the second point in our consideration of the drawing of clothed figures, lies much of note for style and periods. Elegance in clothing, which in antiquity belonged chiefly to women's clothing, in art resided especially in the fold'.<sup>63</sup>



Figure 3 Unknown, *Niobe*, ca. 300 BC, marble, Over life size, Florence, Galleria Uffizi, Galleria Uffizi.

Peripheral items of clothing such as ornaments and accessories, if they were handled with good taste, could also convey an effect and a sense of elegance.<sup>64</sup> This confluence of drapery as an expression of 'otherness' and a form of spirituality provides the opportunity to fully explore how the effect of drapery was important in an abstract and metaphorical sense for Winckelmann and therefore how the

<sup>60</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 236.

<sup>61</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 163.

<sup>62</sup> Winckelmann, 'Treatise on the capacity for sensitivity to the beautiful in art and the method of teaching it', in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, David Carter, trans. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2013, 283.

<sup>63</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 223.

<sup>64</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 216.

significance of costume and drapery went beyond any of the formal, imitative, and historic criteria that I have already presented as significant and central to the broader understanding of *Thoughts on the imitation* and the *History*. I will therefore propose that Winckelmann believed drapery could be an expression of grace.

## Grace

As with all attributes and concepts with which Winckelmann engaged, his concept of grace was multi-dimensional and highly complex, referencing different historical periods and using many different artistic examples. These different manifestations of grace can be divided into two main categories: grace as a way of analysing a stylistic form, as exemplified by the statue of the *Laocoön*,<sup>65</sup> and grace which embodied the spiritual qualities that led to his vision and definition of ideal beauty.

In providing instruction about works of art, grace is the most closely related to the senses and provides the most easily comprehensible proof to convince us of the superiority of ancient works over modern ones. And it is with this that one must begin to teach, before progressing to the high abstract concept of beauty.<sup>66</sup>

Winckelmann distinguished between the different types of grace: young, and old, and provided examples, such as the physical depictions of the *Three Graces*.<sup>67</sup> In his essay *On Grace*, he also attributed spiritual qualities to grace, describing it as ‘the harmony of agent and action....(and) a gift of heaven.’<sup>68</sup> This would have resonated with his interest in the nature of divinity, the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece and Rome, and his belief that the supreme or ideal beauty resided in God.<sup>69</sup> In this way his concept of grace radically differentiated itself from formalists such as Hogarth, whose line of beauty was only his ‘line of grace’, and to which no supernatural qualities were attached.<sup>70</sup> Because of the spiritual qualities that Winckelmann attributed to grace, and its relationship to ideal beauty, I will now explore the relationship between grace and drapery in greater detail.

Winckelmann’s concept of grace, its spiritual qualities, and historic derivation have been explored by Eduoard Pommier<sup>71</sup> and Katherine Harloe.<sup>72</sup> Harloe has investigated its linguistic development, and drawing on the work of early modern treatises on the art of painting by theorists such as Roger De Piles and

<sup>65</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 234.

<sup>66</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, ‘On Grace in Works of Art’, in *Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, David Carter, trans. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2013, 137.

<sup>67</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 112, 163, 220, 227, 236.

<sup>68</sup> Winckelmann, ‘On Grace’, 137.

<sup>69</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 195.

<sup>70</sup> William Hogarth, Ronald Paulson, *The analysis of beauty*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

<sup>71</sup> Edouard Pommier, *Winckelmann, inventeur de l’histoire de l’art*. Paris: Gallimard, 2003.

<sup>72</sup> Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*.

Jonathan Richardson, provided a context for the important part it played in Winckelmann's work. Other scholarly research has noted Winckelmann's reliance on French aesthetic theory,<sup>73</sup> and the mimetic resonance of Winckelmann's work on clothing with eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century French art theorists.<sup>74</sup>

In his essay *Recalling the Observation of Works of Art*, Winckelmann described how the charming aspects of beauty were 'matters of grace'.<sup>75</sup> In his essay *On Grace*, he gave as examples of 'grace' works of art from high antiquity and described how grace could be found in clothing, ornaments, and in the throw and shape of the fold:

Grace, in the incidental details, ornament, and clothing of ancient figures, is to be found, as in the figure itself, in what is closest to nature. In the very oldest works the folds below the belt hang almost vertically, just as they would fall naturally on a thin garment. With the development of art there came a search for variety, but the garment was always represented as being made of a light fabric, and the folds were not piled up or separated here and there but were bunched together as a group.<sup>76</sup>

Clothing and ornaments therefore played a significant role in conveying the spiritual and immaterial qualities of grace for Winckelmann. His oft-cited quotation: 'Grace in works of art is related only to the human figure and is to be found not only in what is essential, in its stance and gestures, but also in what is incidental, in ornament and clothing' has been used out of context to convey the idea that Winckelmann's concept of grace was only embodied in a masculine figure.<sup>77</sup> Yet the full sentence and context of his declaration of where grace could be found clearly incorporates both clothing and ornaments, and by implication female as well as male statues.<sup>78</sup> His definition of grace was therefore both the non-gendered shape of the body, the 'essential' starting point, but also the expressive movement of the body, and more specifically the objects such as drapery and ornaments, that illustrated such movement and emotion. All these qualities, when combined with taste, took the formal beauty of the human figure and transposed it to the ideal.

Winckelmann's association of grace with the expressive qualities of clothing was even more explicitly aligned in the passage anthropomorphising Grace with the sensuous qualities of a lightly dressed woman: 'Grace can also be extended to clothing, because for eons she, together with her sisters, had been clothed, and grace in clothing is a self-evident part of our concept when we imagine how we would like to see the Graces clothed. We would not dress them in formal clothes, but as we

<sup>73</sup> Martin Fontius, *Winckelmann und die französische Aufklärung*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Alice A. Donohue, *Greek Sculpture and the Problem of Description*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Claude-Henri Watelet, and Pierre Charles Levesque, *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture et gravure*, 5 vols. Paris: L. F. Prault, 1792.

<sup>75</sup> Winckelmann, 'Recalling the Observation of Works of Art', 132.

<sup>76</sup> Winckelmann, 'On Grace', 139.

<sup>77</sup> Winckelmann, 'On Grace', 137.

<sup>78</sup> See Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997, and others.

would wish to see a beautiful woman whom one loves, who has just risen from bed in a light wrap'.<sup>79</sup> In other passages, such as his descriptions of the *Niobe* and the *Laocoön*, the variations of pleats, and throws of material were able to express emotional and transcendent qualities such as grief and grace. In their ability to reveal and complement the contour of the body, clothing could express emotion with 'sedate grandeur' rather than distorting the features of the face and being detrimental to beauty.<sup>80</sup>

This section has demonstrated that drapery was a key part of Winckelmann's expressive vocabulary, and it was able to signify attitudes and attributes which were not possible without distorting facial features or when the body was undressed. The emotional content embedded in drapery meant that it must have had a role in his concept of beauty and should be regarded as aesthetically significant when seeking to understand and illustrate his vision of the ideal. Although, as Winckelmann stated in *History*, more clothed statues tended to be female, because the Greek habit to go about unclothed was a male not female custom, it also appears that the aesthetic importance that he attributed to clothing applied to both genders, male and female alike. In this respect drapery was a transgendered signifier of the expressive, moveable aspect of beauty that articulated and illustrated the other abstract qualities that he sought to define.

### **Conclusion: history and historiography**

Winckelmann debated at length the relationship between dress and nudity. He believed that nudity and an understanding of the human form was an essential component of art, but he believed that imitation in itself did not create the ideal; this was achieved through accurate imitation combined with imagination, taste and grace. In this schema costume and drapery had two functions; first, in combination with erudition to imitate this essential part of art, the drawing of clothed figures, accurately.<sup>81</sup> The second was to enhance Nature and to act as means of expressing emotion, grace, and beauty.

This paper has sought to re-dress Winckelmann by integrating his personal interest in clothing and self-fashioning into his historical process and broadening his definition of the Greek ideal by exploring the abstract, expressive and imaginative qualities clothing could embody. It points us towards a greater engagement with the multi-faceted ways in which antique clothing was illustrative of the historical and teleological aims of *History*, Winckelmann's purpose to prove that Greek art was the best, and his definition of ideal beauty. Analysing Winckelmann's interest in costume and drapery also is supported by the broader historical and art-historical context of eighteenth-century Rome. Although the system that Winckelmann developed to present a historical trajectory of the evolution of ancient art was

<sup>79</sup> Winckelmann, 'On Grace', 140.

<sup>80</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 223. See also Regis Michel, *Le Beau idéal: ou l'art du concept: 94<sup>e</sup> exposition du Cabinet des dessins, Musée du Louvre, 17 octobre-31 décembre 1989*. Musée du Louvre. Cabinet des dessins: Paris: ministère de la culture, de la communication, des grands travaux et du bicentenaire, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1989.

<sup>81</sup> Winckelmann, *History*, 227.

detailed and sophisticated, and his stress on the importance of form and contour a characteristic that set his work apart from the intellectual environment of a city dominated by the exuberance of Bernini's sculptural theatre, Winckelmann was still a man of his time. As demonstrated in the late Baroque exuberance of Anton von Maron's portrait of Winckelmann, the art of drapery dominated artistic life in Rome. Winckelmann rejected some of the excesses of Roman aesthetics, and specifically disliked the way in which the drapery of Bernini hid the form of the body underneath. He was instructing his readers on more tasteful ways in which to depict clothing in their work. His references in *History* and *Thoughts on the imitation* to the painters Francesco Solemena, Carlo Maratta, Gavin Hamilton, as well as Anton Raphael Mengs, Mengs's master Lorenzo Masucci, and the work of the Flemish sculptor François Duquesnoy, demonstrate that the Roman emphasis on drapery had to be the framework from within which Winckelmann developed the theory and approach of a more sophisticated balancing and relationship between the nude form and drapery, rather than the other way around.

This proposition can be demonstrated by the context of the intellectual debates prevalent between Rome and Paris in the early eighteenth century, and the relaxed mix of genres and exuberant use of drapery evident in the artwork of leading painters in Rome. Historically, between Paris and Rome there had been an ongoing debate amongst the *gens de lettres* throughout the eighteenth century. This intellectual debate known as the 'raging battle of Greek versus Roman supremacy' in which Piranesi and Le Roy were the main protagonists was centred on the French Academy in Rome in the 1760s around the time Winckelmann was writing. The theoretical debate surrounding it became increasingly petty and obtuse, focusing on questions of which architectural form had the most august derivation. In the artistic world of eighteenth-century Rome, the aesthetic preference was for the supremacy and 'grandeur' of the elaborate architectural forms characteristic of Roman and Etruscan culture, in contrast to the championing of Greek ideals of 'noble simplicity' in Winckelmann's writings. The importance attached to drapery in Roman artistic circles perhaps also explains why particular attention was given to Winckelmann's writings on the male nude figure when the *History* was first published. In the context of an environment where artistic talent and virtuosity was demonstrated by the skill that artists could demonstrate in drapery, Winckelmann's work had an impact because it was proposing something different, i.e. a style of clothing that allowed the nude form underneath to be evident and a re-balancing between the body and dress, which had been hitherto lost in Baroque art.<sup>82</sup>

More broadly, it is important to ask what the incorporation of Winckelmann's interest in fashion, clothing, antique dress means for the field of art historiography. Clothing paid such a large part in the formation of Winckelmann's own identity, the expression of who he was a person and who he aspired to be. It

<sup>82</sup> Gatty, *Ideal beauty in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French art*, 2014. For further exploration of the importance of the fold in Baroque art see Gilles Deleuze, *The fold: Leibniz and the baroque*. London: Continuum, 2006. The scholarship of Klaus Schneider also supports a deeper interrogation of Winckelmann's engagement with clothing in the context of Rome where he draws on the work of Roland Barthes and Georg Simmel, see Schneider, *Natur, Körper, Kleider, Spiel*, 117-145.

also paid an important role in illustrating his historical argument and proving that Greek art was the best. He was alert to its expressive aesthetic qualities and potential, and saw clothing as a physical way in which to embody immaterial qualities. Many of his aesthetic concepts were drawn from French aesthetic theory and many of these approaches to text and material can today be found within the field of fashion theory, a discipline whose voice has also traditionally been focused on a detailed object-centred approach often confined to the museum, and outside the traditional confines of academia.<sup>83</sup> This paper has hinted at how an engagement with fashion theory can expand our understanding of Winckelmann, the richness of his work on clothing and a re-balanced vision of the Greek ideal. Could it also encompass the possibility that one day Winckelmann might be described as the father of dress history?

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<sup>83</sup> Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.