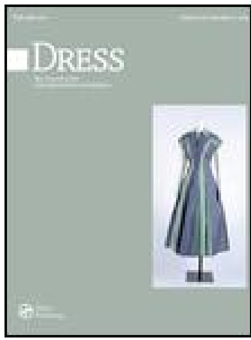

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The Re-Birth of Venus

Neoclassical Fashion and the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*

Anne Bissonnette and Sarah Nash

Dr. Bissonnette is an Associate Professor of Material Culture and Curatorship and is Curator of the Clothing and Textiles Collection at the University of Alberta. She joined forces with graduate students to co-curate the course-based 2013 exhibition, *The Re-Birth of Venus: Fashion and the* Venus Kallipygos, in the university's Human Ecology Gallery.

Sarah Nash is a Ph.D. student in Classical Archaeology in the Department of History and Classics, who enrolled in the class and became a co-curator of the exhibition. Her area of research is Roman material culture, mythology and issues of gender and sexuality.

This paper examines the place of the Aphrodite Kallipygos *statue in European aesthetics in the early modern period (ca. 1300–1800) and traces the impact it may have had on dress in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The study contextualizes the sculpture within the discipline of art history and the field of dress studies. It focuses on the unfitted tunic dress cinched below the bust, and on how some chemise dresses came to be worn in a new way in the 1790s. At this time new embodiment practices emerged in French fashion. A new columnar silhouette was on the rise that paid homage to the "natural body" seen in statuary, and cinching below the bust enhanced the delineation of individual breasts. Subsequently we witness the progressive lessening or elimination of voluminous underpinnings, allowing the controversial delineation of the lower body through clothes to take place, and the rise of a new erogenous zone, the buttocks, which were hallmarks of the* Aphrodite Kallipygos. *Through this article, the authors aim to demonstrate with visual and written sources that this statue was sufficiently known, admired, and copied to have had an effect on late-eighteenth-century dress behaviors.*

Keywords *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, classical statuary, neoclassicism, chemise dress, embodiment

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WHEN ENGLISH WRITER, connoisseur, and collector Horace Walpole described Marie-Antoinette in 1775, he judged her to be "a statue of beauty."[1] In 1787, after German writer and politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe saw Lady Emma Hamilton perform her "Attitudes"—an enactment of various classical figures—he wrote that all the antiquities could be found within her, and Walpole also quipped that Lord Hamilton had married his "Gallery of Statues."[2] As dress historian Diana de Marly notes about this period, "everybody was being appraised according to their resemblance to a work of classical art."[3] Ancient Greek and Roman aesthetics had inspired European art since the Renaissance, but interest in classical art intensified with the influx of artifacts from Herculaneum and Pompeii in the eighteenth century. In high fashion, appreciation for classical art and dress precipitated a series of paradigm shifts that affected the last two decades of the eighteenth century. This paper aims to focus more closely on the influence of one statue, the so-called *Aphrodite Kallipygos* (FIGURE 1), on the rise of the unfitted tunic dress cinched below the bust in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and on how this dress came to be worn in a new way that delineated the body, particularly the lower limbs and buttocks that were hallmarks of the statue. Through this study, a better understanding of neoclassicism in fashion may be gained.

An interdisciplinary approach will contextualize the sculpture within the discipline of art history and the field of dress studies. The article traces the impact *Aphrodite Kallipygos*' fame may have had on dress in Europe in the early modern period (ca. 1300–1800). This work will also explore the spread and ways of wearing the neoclassical tunic dress, a new garment type in late-eighteenth-century France, and, to a lesser degree, other parts of the world. The study presents a number of visuals and written references that appeared in the late-eighteenth and into the early-nineteenth century that provide evidence for the appreciation of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in the world of fashion at that time (FIGURE 2).

This paper does not claim that other works of art were not equally or more influential than the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in the development of neoclassical dress. Its hypothesis is, rather, that this statue was sufficiently known, admired, and copied to have an effect on late-eighteenth-century *dress behaviors*—practices that go beyond the adoption of specific articles of clothing, and also include hair, accessories, posture, and, in the case of this study, how garments are worn. We shall examine how voluminous underpinnings that had hidden the lower body for centuries were progressively cast off and replaced by undergarments that allowed body delineation. This enabled a new erogenous zone to surface in high fashion: the buttocks. While further studies are needed on the changes in mores that generated this neoclassical revolution, this article focuses on visual parallels in the world of fashion that recall the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*.

The Statue's Origins and Appearance in Europe during the Early Modern Period

The Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli's *Aphrodite Kallipygos*—literally "Aphrodite of the Beautiful Buttocks"—was reputedly discovered in the emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea* during the sixteenth century, and became one of the most renowned ancient sculptures up to the nineteenth century.[4] Nero's extraordinary landscaped villa featured numerous statues and, as we will see, was emulated in the early modern period in the grand estates and palace grounds where copies of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* stood. Classical scholars believe, based on the

1 Cited in Diana de Marly, *Fashion for Men: An Illustrated History* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 70.

2 Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 252–253.

3 de Marly, *Fashion for Men*, 70.

4 Klaus Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos—Ihre kunstarchäologische Stellung und Aspekte ihrer Rezeption," in *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikenrezeption: Zur Bedeutung von Raum und Kommunikation für die neuzeitliche Transformation der griechisch-römishen Antiken*, eds. Kathrin Schade, Detlef Rössler and Alfred Schäfer (Münster: Scriptorium, 2007), 223–224.

FIGURE 1 *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, first century BCE. Marble. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Italy, 6020. © 2015. Photo SCALA, Florence, courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali.

FIGURE 2 *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, Paris, France, 1809, plate 955. Pochoir copper engraving on paper. Photo © Anne Bissonnette of an artifact in the collection of the Palais Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, France.

torsion and the nudity of the female figure, that the bronze original could not date earlier than the fourth century BCE, and it is usually dated to the first century BCE.[5] It could have been an innovative piece from the Roman era, but is more likely a reproduction of an earlier Hellenistic bronze, a common practice in Roman civilization with its fascination for Greek Art and its obsession for the human form in all its perfection.

The *Aphrodite Kallipygos* statue is no longer considered a paragon of beauty nor heavily discussed in the art world today. It was nonetheless appreciated from the moment of its discovery in the sixteenth century. The seminude statue was assumed to be Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, fertility and sexual love. The statue could also have been interpreted in the early modern period as one of the two so-called "Beautiful-Buttocked" farmer's daughters from Syracuse, who, to settle a quarrel over whose buttocks were more beautiful, exhibited "the goods" to a passing stranger, a young man who fell in love with and married the winner. Called "*La Belle Victorieuse*" (The Beautiful Winner) or "*La Bergère Grecque*" (The Greek Shepherdess), in reference to the triumphant sister's exhibitionism, the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* may be a cult statue that memorialized their first encounter.[6] These different views blur the line between stone and flesh, divine and mortal, idealized beauty and a real-life woman behind that ideal. In the end, the statue's classification as Aphrodite (Venus in Roman mythology) became the most prevalent view, and the names *Aphrodite/Venus Kallipygos/Callipyge* endured.

In terms of appearance, the statue is conspicuously more provocative and exhibitionist than the cultic representations of Aphrodite/Venus from antiquity. Classical scholar Christine Havelock observes that, while its nudity casts the figure in the tradition of Praxiteles' fourth-century BCE *Knidian Aphrodite*—the first realistic and life-sized representation of the nude female form—any hints of modesty are absent in the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*. A defining feature of the *Knidian Aphrodite* and her successors is the placement of her hand over her pudenda in a manner which modestly conceals (and paradoxically draws attention to) her nudity.[7] The *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, by contrast, deliberately exposes herself by raising the hem of her floor-length tunic to show off most of her lower body—including the navel, genitalia and buttocks. Her sleeveless tunic or *chiton* (identified by the small vertical pleats at the neckline) clings to her body at the chest, yet slips from her shoulder to unveil her right breast to below the nipple.[8] The *chiton* reveals the goddess' body not only explicitly, but also implicitly. The cinching below the bust helps to delineate individual breasts. Close examination of

5 The first century BCE dating is generally accepted by classical scholars. See Christine Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek Art* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 98–101. For the statue as an ancient reproduction of a bronze original, see Margarete Bieber, *Ancient Copies: Contributions to the History of Greek and Roman Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 20–21; Gösta Säflund, *Aphrodite Kallipygos* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1963), 38–39. The most recent analysis of the statue by Parlasca traces back the conception of its prototype to early Hellenistic Asia Minor. Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 224–226.

6 Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 316–318. Athenaeus (*Deipnosiphistae* 12.544c–e) offers an account of the founding of a temple to *Aphrodite Kallipygos* at Syracuse; the same cult is also attested by Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* 2.39.2) in his denunciation of the various erotic manifestations of paganism.

7 Havelock, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, 98–99.

8 The tunic can be classified as a *chiton* sewn at the shoulders, pleated or gathered vertically at the neckline, and likely made of two rectangles of linen (front and back) sewn at the left side seam. It is, however, atypical in its opened right side. Potvin describes the chiton as "toujours cousu sur les côtés" ("always sewn on the sides"). Manon Potvin, *Plis et drapées dans la statuaire grecque*, in collaboration with Sophie Descamps-Lequime (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Service culturel action éducative, 1991), 30.

the statue suggests a different treatment of the cloth at the front and back bodice: at the front the cloth appears finer and less densely pleated over the breasts and clings closely to emphasize the anatomy. The rendering of cloth as if glued to the skin, a technique scholars call "wet drapery," was used by classical sculptors to focus on the body—even when dressed—in a way that would not have been possible in real life in a dry state, even with the finest pleated wool or linen woven textiles. Potential danger also lurks with the neckline's vertical pleats that defy gravity as they are magically held together without any mechanism to secure them. What gives the statue an especially erotic overtone is the figure's admiration of her own buttocks, which directs the viewer's gaze towards the shapely feature.[9]

The placement of the statue's head was not necessarily part of the original composition, since the statue was found in a fragmentary state without its head and underwent a series of extensive restorations up to the end of the eighteenth century.[10] The statue is, rather, an instance of "restoration as reception"—that is, the "restoration" was more a reflection of tastes when the statue was restored than a concerted effort to return the statue to its original form. The figure we see in Naples today is therefore a multi-authored creation, and discerning the influences of the various hands which have made the statue what it is now is no straightforward task. What is most important is that the mainstream interpretation of the statue as Aphrodite/Venus—and one who was, moreover, rather fond of her own buttocks—may be a construction of the early modern period. In any case, the figure's *anasyromenos* (revealing) attitude that exposes the genitalia undermines her modesty, and there remains the possibility that the statue actually represents a *hetaira* (courtesan). Overall, the modern restoration of the statue emphasized the immodesty and sensuality of the figure, making eroticized interpretations—whether as an immodest Aphrodite or *hetaira* (courtesan)—popular among an early modern viewership.[11]

Influence of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* to 1800

During the early modern period a limited number of ancient statues were accepted as masterpieces, based on the fame of the artist, the reputation of an artifact's owner, the prominence of a statue's display or its aesthetic achievement. The rise of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* to the status of masterpiece began when it became part of the illustrious Farnese Collection in Rome. The statue was first situated in the Palazzo Farnese in 1594, then in the Villa Farnesina by 1767, and, by 1802, it was displayed in the Museo degli Studi (now the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli), where it remains today.[12] Painters and sculptors incorporated many of the statue's iconic features in their own work. Early Italian artists referenced the statue lightly, such as in Domenico Brusasori's ca. 1550 "Death of Cleopatra" and Annibale Carracci's ca. 1600 "Hercules at the Crossroads Between Vice and Virtue." The artistic references to the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* would become more explicit over time and spread across geopolitical boundaries.[13] The statue became the object of universal admiration by the mid-seventeenth century—when diarist John Evelyn referred to it as "that so renowned piece of a Venus pulling up her smock, and looking backwards at her buttocks"—but was not without critics because of its perceived aesthetic and moral shortcomings, beginning in the eighteenth century with the "father of art history" Johann Joachim Winckelmann.[14] Haskell and Penny describe a wide dissemination of the statue through reproductions until the nineteenth century.[15]

9 Havelock, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, 99.

10 For some detailed analyses of the restoration of the statue in the early modern period, see Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 223; Säflund, *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, 15–21.

11 Ancient literary sources attest that the *anasyromenos* gesture could have sexual connotations. See Alciphron, *Letters of Courtesans* 4.14.4; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 12.544c–e). Rawson observes that the statue is featured in the Marquis de Sade's works about the virtues of buttocks and sodomy. Claude Julien Rawson, *God, Gulliver and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 125.

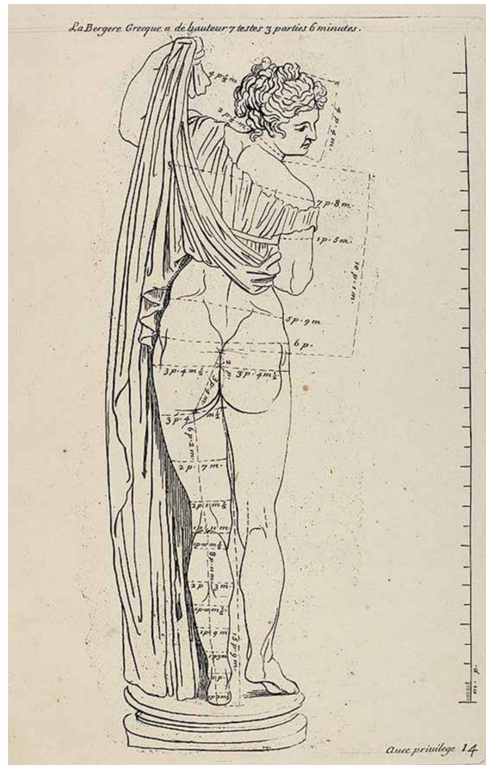
12 For ancient masterpieces, see Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, xiii–xiv. For chronology, see ibid., 316–317.

13 Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 228; Roberto Zapperi, "Annibale Carracci a Palazzo Farnese," *Bollettino d'Arte* 7, no. 2 (2009): 142–143.

14 John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E.S. de Beer (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 161–162; Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 317. For critics, see Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 318. For Winckelmann reference, see Havelock, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, X.

15 Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 316–318.

FIGURE 3 Illustration of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in Gérard Audan's *Les Proportions Du Corps Humain: Mesurées sur les plus belles Figures de l'Antiquité*, Paris, France, 1683, plate 14. Photo courtesy of Heidelberg University Library, http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/audran1683/0027, © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg. Reproduced as a cropped image under the Creative Commons License CC-BY-SA 3.0.



Images of the statue, in print, on objects, and as full-scale and miniature copies, may have contributed much more to her renown than the original work. Prints were the most convenient means of reproduction, and, in 1683, the bodily proportions of the statue were outlined as a guide for artists and copyists in Gérard Audran's book *Les Proportions Du Corps Humain: Mesurées sur les plus belles Figures de l'Antiquité* (FIGURE 3). More prestigious and coveted were the full-scale copies of the statue, which, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, were present in the art academies and courts of England, France, Germany, Sweden and Russia.[16] Significantly, the statue was mass-produced as bronze and ceramic miniatures during the eighteenth century as souvenirs of the Grand Tour, and the figure's effigy was found on Wedgwood tablets and cameos, contributing to its fame and dissemination as Aphrodite/Venus to the broader public.[17]

One notable eighteenth-century interpretation of the statue added an undergarment as a modesty element, which may have had an impact on paradigm shifts in dress behavior that occurred at the end of the century. Louis XIV commissioned François Barois to make a copy of the statue in the late-seventeenth century for the gardens at Versailles and had it moved to his leisure palace at Marly-le-Roi soon after.[18] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, sculptor Jean Thierry prudishly modified the statue by covering her buttocks with drapery (FIGURES 4 and 5). This modified Barois statue became one of the most important adaptations of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* and, by 1798, it was displayed in the now public gardens of the Tuileries Palace in Paris.[19] Concurrently, Parisian fashion plates began to be produced that showed women assuming *Aphrodite Kallipygos*-like postures, wearing gowns with non-voluminous underpinnings that delineate the buttocks (FIGURE 6).

In the modified Barois statue, the "covering" for the buttocks resembled a woman's shift, a linen undergarment worn next to the skin and also known as a "chemise." Although the shift would seem to obscure the defining feature of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, the classical focus on the body beneath the drapery was maintained because the chemise appears to be plastered to the buttocks. Interestingly, Thierry's sense of modesty did not apply to the statue's breasts: the right breast in Barois' version is fully, rather than partially exposed, and the garment is held in place with a harness over one shoulder. These sartorial changes in the Barois/Thierry statue may be indicative of the period's rampant classicizing that fused ancient and modern subjects and practices. The harnessed garment and exposed breast

16 For an overview of these reproductions, see Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique,* 88, 316–318. For other examples, see Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 227–230.

17 Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 317; Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 227.

18 Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 39, 317; Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 229; François Souchal, *French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Reign of Louis XIV* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1977), 32. The Joconde Database mentions that this sculpture was made at the *Académie de France* in Rome, moved to the Palace of Versailles before 1694 and requested for the Tuileries gardens in Paris on July 26, 1796, where it was placed in a niche in 1798. "Joconde Portail des collections des musées de France," under inventory number MR 1999, accessed December 16, 2013, http://www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/joconde_fr?ACTION=RETROUVER&FIELD_98=TOUT&VALUE_98=MR%201999&NUMBER=1&GRP=0&REQ=%28%28MR%201999%29%20%3aTOUT%20%29&USRNAME=nobody&USRPWD=4%24%2534P&SPEC=5&SYN=1&IMLY=&MAX1=1&MAX2=1&MAX3=100&DOM=All.

19 Barois' adaption must have been in the Tuileries by 1798 at the latest, since the statue appears in Aubin Louis Millin's *Description des Statues des Tuileries* of the same year. See Souchal, *French Sculptors*, 32.

FIGURES 4 and 5 François Barois (1656–1726), *Vénus callipyge*, made between 1683 and 1686 at the *Académie de France* in Rome. Marble. Drapery added by Jean Thierry (1669–1739) at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Musée du Louvre, France, M.R. 1999. Photo © bpk / RMN - Grand Palais / Jean-Gilles Berizzi.

may reference early modern depictions of other classical deities, such as the goddess Artemis/Diana (goddess of the hunt) whose gown is often held between her breasts by the strap of her quiver. Aphrodite/Venus and Artemis/Diana could thus be conflated in Barois' work as well as in other works such as Jean-Frederic Schall's *La comparaison*—also called *Baigneuses se comparant à la Venus Callipyge* (Bathers Comparing Themselves to Venus Callipyge) from the last quarter of the eighteenth century (FIGURE 7). Here, six women surround the statue of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in an outdoor bath scene emblematic of the surroundings where Artemis/Diana and nymphs were frequently depicted in the nude or, as in many early modern portraits, wearing a chemise. Schall's titillating allegorical painting conveys how Aphrodite's appreciation for her behind continued to be the source of great fascination for artists.

One woman in the painting is clad in a loose white sleeved tunic that could be either a *chiton* or a chemise among five other naked women.[20] Like the modified Barois statue that remains ostensibly naked despite her chemise-like covering at the buttocks, an eighteenth-century audience would have viewed the woman in the tunic as being as naked as her sisters because her chemise would have been "skin by proxy" at a time when water was feared, the general population rarely took baths, and a change of chemise was akin to cleaning one's body.[21] The conflation of *Aphrodite Kallipygos* and Diana at the bath may be explained as a

20 The link between the *chiton* and the shift may run deep. François Boucher says it emerges from the "*Camisia* antique" and Anne Hollander explains how "the loose, full and low-necked chemise...changed little for a millennium and a half, [and is] the one truly intimate feminine garment and an authentic survival from late antiquity." François Boucher, *Histoire du costume en Occident des origines à nos jours* (S.P.A.D.E.M., 1965; reprint, Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 445, and Anne Hollander, *Fabric of Vision: Dress and Drapery in Painting* (London: National Gallery and Yale University Press, 2002), 104.

21 For fear of water and bathing, see Alain Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social XVIIIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1982), 36, 43, 86, 209.

FIGURE 6 *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, Paris, France, 30 Thermidor, Year 7 (August 17, 1799), plate 148. Pochoir copper engraving on paper. Photo © Anne Bissonnette of an artifact in the collection of the Palais Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, France.

corresponding conflation of the chemise and nudity. The *raison d'être* of the neoclassical "chemise dress" could be its ability to convey conceptual nudity, and the famous *Aphrodite Kallipygos* may have inspired a newly delineated and revolutionary erogenous zone—the buttocks.

Clothing, the Body and the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*

In the eighteenth century a massive revival in allegorical portraiture produced works where certain qualities of a divine or mythological figure were bestowed on the sitter. While men's portraits tended to advertise their various political, military and professional roles, a woman's limited social role made her more suited to allegorical portraits, where she could be elevated to a mythical plane as a goddess, and hence released from the boundaries of contemporary social norms and dress.[22] The portrayal of real women as the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in statuary—and eventually in fashion—raises many questions as to how their contemporaries would have perceived them. The sitter would have been immortalized as the goddess of love and beauty, and one of the most admired classical masterpieces from antiquity. However, the sitter may also have been identified as a *hetaira* (courtesan) because of the erotic gesture and overtly sexualized attitude. When Thomas Rowlandson caricatured Lady Emma Hamilton's performance of her "Attitudes" at the turn of the nineteenth century, the artist chose the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* as his reference: his ribald print pushes the boundaries because she completely unveils herself, but the motif of admiring her own buttocks is unmistakable.[23] This caricature and other works provide extensive evidence for an eroticized reception of the statue amongst an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century viewership.[24] The flaunting of the body—the buttocks in some cases—became a leitmotiv that had an impact on neoclassical dress behavior first in art, and then in fashion.

The most explicit example of a living person being modeled after the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* is the portrait statue of Countess Ulla von Höpken, mistress of King Gustav III of Sweden, which the king commissioned from Johan Tobias Sergel in 1780.[25] Joining a real woman's head with the body of a Venus was an ancient Roman practice: the goddess's virtues of grace and fertility could be viewed as leading to the production of legitimate heirs in Rome.[26] But female nudity was problematic in patriarchal Roman society where modesty and chastity were paramount for respectable women, and the exposure of flesh was associated with slavery, prostitution or sexual violation.[27] Mores had perhaps not

22 Jessica Hughes, "The Return of Myth: Restoration as Reception in Eighteenth-Century Rome," *Classical Receptions Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 11.

23 For information about this print, see Jenkins and Sloan, *Vases and Volcanoes*, 302–303.

24 Parlasca notes that the motif was pornographized in contemporary visual culture. Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 229.

25 Ragnar Josephson, *Sergels Fantasi I* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1956), 285–290; Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 230; Säflund, *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, 12–14, 59–61. For Sergel statue, see "National Museum@," under inventory number NMSk 360, accessed July 26, 2014, http://emp-web-22.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=26740&viewType=detailView.

26 Eve D'Ambra, "The Calculus of Venus: Nude Portraits of Roman Women," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy*, ed. N.B. Kampen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), passim.

27 Larissa Bonfante, "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93, no. 4 (1989): 559–562.

FIGURE 7 Jean-Frédéric Schall (1752–1825), *La comparaison*, fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, France, R.F. 1961–75. Photo © bpk / RMN - Grand Palais / Michel Urtado.

changed much in the 1780s in Europe where Sergel's semi-nude statue of the countess immortalized for her beauty caused somewhat of a scandal.[28] Yet the sculptor's appropriation of classical aesthetics—the shared visual language of the elite—could also have had an ennobling effect on the countess.[29] These contradictions could also be at play in the

28 Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd & Erik Vihelm Montan, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustav III's hof* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1878), 139f.

29 D'Ambra, "The Calculus of Venus," 223; Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 230.

FIGURE 8 Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807), *Portrait of a Woman* (presumably of Duchess Esterhazi), 1795. Oil on canvas. Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, Hungary, 444. Jotsa Denis © 2015. Photo SCALA, Florence.

adoption of what was likely first conceived as immodest neoclassical dress.

The painter Angelica Kauffmann borrows heavily from the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*' composition and dress in her 1795 portrait (FIGURE 8).[30] The sitter's gown is not a "bedgown" with swooping drapery, nor a "timeless, imaginary dress," unachievable in

30 While the portrait is subtitled at times as "Presumably of Duchess Esterhazi," Parlasca identifies the sitter as an actress. Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 228.

structure yet loved by portraitists earlier in the century, but rather a very real, wearable gown.[31] It is very similar to the tunic of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, but a few alterations make it into a neoclassical archetype. Made in supple, white fabric cinched below the bust, the unfitted garment is gathered along its deep neckline. While it slips to expose the right shoulder, Kauffman uses the original placement of the shoulder seam on the right bicep to turn the statue's sleeveless gown into one with short sleeves.

The way the garment is worn is also modified. According to Parlasca, "the right breast being covered eliminated the problem of a lack of decency of the model."[32] Nevertheless, the garment could have attracted censure. By looking closely at how the garment was worn within the context of the period, we can understand the risqué nature of what is depicted. Although, as Joanne Entwistle writes, "[c]onventions of dress transform flesh into something recognizable and meaningful to a culture and are also the means by which bodies are made 'decent,'" transgressions can also be found in the dressed body.[33]

In neoclassical fashion, clothing and the body become inextricably linked. At the end of the eighteenth century, the rise of new types of women's neoclassical-inspired garments and how they were worn could make the body underneath implicitly visible. New transitional stays could provide a more naturalistic vision of the breasts and upper torso that garment styles and cinching modes helped to emphasize. Women did not expose their lower bodies literally, but underclothing, such as a non-quilted petticoat, could allow some delineation of this part of their anatomy. Petticoat bulk varied, and may not have been as daring as what is seen in the Kauffman portrait and in fashion plates several years later (FIGURE 6). The reference to the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in the Kauffman portrait was nevertheless extremely audacious as it suggested in the dressed figure the presence of the lower limbs, which had been hidden for hundreds of years. This new behavior changed the relationship between the body and dress and afforded greater "embodiment," as it made the body more tangible.[34] The daring character of the Kauffman portrait is clear when compared with Jacques-Louis David's far more modest ca. 1795 depiction of the French *citoyenne* Madame Pierre Sériziat in her white chemise dress.[35] Sériziat wears conventional stays and volumizing petticoat(s). A kerchief, covering her bosom, is tucked into a long-sleeved bodice joined at the natural waist to a full gathered skirt, with a wide green sash at the waist. Although the Kauffman and Sériziat paintings are contemporary, the relationship between dress and body is different: despite recalling the skin-by-proxy shift, Sériziat's gown and how it is worn was far more modest than what is depicted in the Kauffmann portrait.

This leads us to ask how and when body-conscious fashions rose to acceptability. Perhaps the revival of allegorical portraiture eased the introduction of the new "natural" female body delineated through dress beyond the artist's studio. Did body-revealing fashions reflect changing eighteenth-century mores or contribute to changing them? To understand the roots of the drastic and controversial paradigm shifts taking place in the worlds of fashion and morals in the late 1790s, a more extensive study is needed that connects art, fashion, culture and politics. This paper aims to set the stage by identifying the different factors that led to body-conscious fashions.

Changes in Body Delineation

Prior to the changes in silhouette in the late-eighteenth century, the upper body had been encased in stays (fully boned, unlike

31 For bedgowns and classicizing drapery, see Naomi E. A. Tarrant, "The Portrait, the Artist and the Costume Historian," *Dress* 22 (1995): 69–77. For "timeless imaginary dress," see Claudia Brush Kidwell, "Are Those Clothes Real? Transforming the Way Eighteenth-Century Portraits Are Studied," *Dress* 24 (1997): 3–15.

32 Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 228. Translation by Eva Guenther.

33 Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2000): 323–324.

34 Entwistle talks about dress as an "embodied practice" and a "situated bodily practice" and mentions the subversive possibilities of inappropriate dress behaviors that do not follow a culture's conventions. Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleshy Body," 324–325.

35 The Sériziat portrait was exhibited at the Paris "Salon des artistes français" of 1795 and likely dates close to this time judging from the age of her toddler son born in 1793. The David portrait of the sitter's husband, also at the same salon, presents an extremely fashionable individual. We may thus assume the same fashionability in his wife's dress. "Louvre," Madame Pierre Sériziat under inventory number R.F. 1282, accessed July 25, 2014, http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22505 and Pierre Sériziat, under inventory number R.F. 1281, accessed July 25, 2014, http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=22504.

a corset), that compressed and pushed up the flesh of the breasts, creating a conical upper body with accentuated waist. Stays, like petticoats, abstracted the body. Although the breasts were exposed above the neckline—which could be very low—they were not seen as separate entities as they were in ancient statuary like the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*. The lower body was not exposed at all, which could explain why, as in Barois's take on the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* (FIGURES 4 and 5), and until the end of the eighteenth century, lower body modesty may have been more highly prized than upper body modesty in high fashion.

With the change in fashion in the late-eighteenth century, breasts and lower body delineation through dress did not appear at the same time. A survey of the early years of the French *Journal des Dames et des Modes* (*JDM*) from 1797 to 1799 demonstrates that, by its inception in March 1797, "the first change in embodied practice is the wide acceptance of the classically inspired 'natural' breasts—depicted through dress as distinctive volumes and abandoning traditional eighteenth-century stays."[36] But lower body delineation through dress was slower to take effect. In 1799, the *JDM* illustrated and noted how some reputable women adopted an advanced breast exposure mode despite being slow to abandon the voluminous petticoats that prevented lower body delineation.[37]

In the 1795 Kauffmann portrait, breasts are depicted in a naturalistic manner with contouring below the bust, which was not possible in stays. The portrait is an early example of the neoclassical, columnal silhouette cinched below the bust. In addition to breast delineation, another risqué feature depicted in the portrait is the drastic lessening or absence of voluminous underpinnings, which allows some contouring of the lower body. These changes in the fashionable silhouette would have been acceptable in a classicized portrait, but would have been quite radical if worn in high fashion. The definition of decency may have been in transition at this time, but the sitter's clothing, within this setting and through her dress behavior, was likely viewed in the eroticized manner in which the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* was traditionally perceived in the early modern era. The presence of the sitter by what may be a dressing table and her proximity to an opened jewelry box are elements that add a sense of intimacy to the work and contribute to an eroticized interpretation by the artist.

By 1800 the acceptance of overall body delineation through dress was normalized in high fashion and the impropriety that was likely present in the Kauffmann portrait ceased to be at play.[38] Visual references to the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* increased for the last five years of the eighteenth century through engravings in fashion journals and portraits, as, for instance, the ca. 1800–1805 "Lady in the Mirror" portrait by Johann Friedrich August Tischbein.[39] Between the Kauffman and Tischbein portraits (i.e. from 1795 to 1800), immense changes in fashion and morals have taken place. That this drastic dress behavior became acceptable outside the world of art may be indicative of societal schisms.

The *Aphrodite Kallipygos*' presence and popularity in this continuum is no coincidence. Despite the fact that the women depicted in many fashion plates and portraits wore clothing that allowed a (hypothetical) vision of their newly delineated backsides hidden from view for centuries, numerous visuals presented a frontal view similar to Kauffmann's and Tischbein's work. Perhaps the front exposure lessened the moral shock and the educated viewer would nonetheless grasp the eroticized undertones implied. If so, this may have served to increase the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*' popularity. While the statue was much admired and

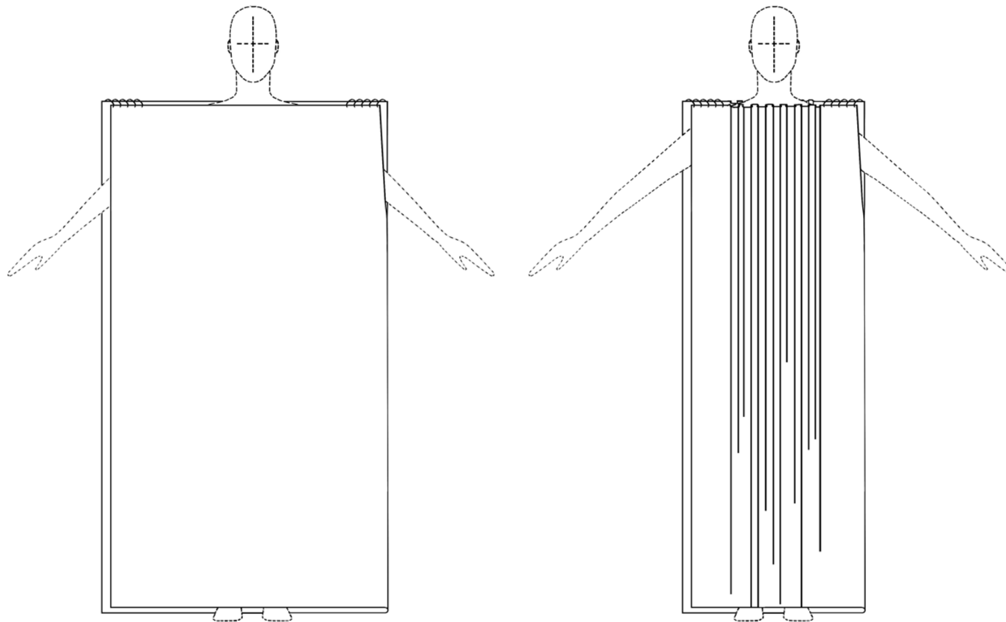
36 Anne Bissonnette, "*Dessiné d'après nature*: Renditions from Life in the *Journal des Dames et des Modes* 1798–1799," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2014): 16, accessed December 27, 2014, doi:10.1111/1754–0208.12205.

37 For plates with advanced breast exposure in the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, see 5 Pluviôse, Year 7 (January 24, 1799), plate 86 (with voluminous skirt that does not delineate the lower body), and 10 Prairial, Year 7 (May 29, 1799), plate 126 (with a narrower silhouette that still does not cling to the limbs at the lower body). For the editorial mention of honest women adopting this behavior, see *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, 25 Pluviôse, Year 7 (February 13, 1799), 453. Included in Annemarie Kleinert, *Le « Journal des Dames et des Modes » ou La Conquête de l'Europe Féminine (1797–1839)* (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2001), 22.

38 For normalization of the columnal silhouette in France by Year 8 (September 23, 1799–September 22, 1800), see Bissonnette, "*Dessiné d'après nature*," 20.

39 Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos," 228. A sketch of the portrait can be found at the Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (GK 849), Kassel, Germany, accessed July 27, 2014, available at http://malerei18jh.museum-kassel.de/28508/.

FIGURE 9 Drawing of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos'* unbelted tunic (without the effects of gravity).
© Anne Bissonnette.



copied in the early modern period and real women all across Europe wanted to emulate it in portraiture, a tension between prestige and erotic connotations was likely still playing out in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Parisian high fashion. The changes in dress behaviors between 1795 and 1800 pertain to what Entwistle and Wilson call "body dressing," a practice in which, as is evidenced in Graeco-Roman sculptures, a greater significance was placed on the body.[40] In this five-year span we encounter the emergence and pivotal presence of the "natural" body delineated through dress, a phenomenon that may be at the heart of a modern vision of fashion.

The Ancient Greek *Chiton* and the Late-Eighteenth-Century Chemise Dress

The *Aphrodite Kallipygos* statue may help us better understand the development of the chemise dress, a quintessential neoclassical fashion. How would a late-eighteenth-century audience have perceived the fabric and structure of the statue's *chiton* and the way the garment was worn? While many ancient Greek tunics were made out of wool, and this statue's garment has substantial folds or pleats with a rounded edge that may indicate the use of heavy wool material, the fabric clings over the breasts denoting a very fine weave structure or a different material, such as linen, traditionally used for the tubular *chiton* tunic (FIGURE 9).[41] This fabric choice would have resonated with eighteenth-century observers, since the loose linen tunic *par excellence* was the three-quarter-sleeve chemise that women wore every day as an undergarment.

The eighteenth-century linen chemise was typically white, as it was repeatedly washed and bleached, which could be said to resemble the garments in classical white marble statues. Like Graeco-Roman sculptures featuring garments that clung in strategic places, allowing the body to emerge through the cloth, the effect of the chemise being worn next to the skin and pressed against it by the stays

40 Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

41 Garland indicates that the use of lighter and finer linen, as well as wool, occurred in the middle of the sixth century BCE. He specifies the use of these lighter materials for *chitons*. Robert Garland, *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*, 2nd ed. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2009), 135–136. For the *chiton* as a linen tunic whose name, of semitic origin, designates precisely a garment "of linen," see Potvin, *Plis et drapées dans la statuaire grecque*, 30.

made it cling to the body whether or not sweat was involved. The eighteenth-century chemise could act as skin-by-proxy and, once stays were removed and the crumpled fabric momentarily stuck to the upper torso, the "natural" body seen in classical statuary with individual breasts and unaccentuated waist became visible. When an eighteenth-century audience looked at classical statuary, they could have identified it with their daily lived experience of wearing the chemise.

The structure of the eighteenth-century unfitted tunic gown that became an early chemise dress was reminiscent of both the chemise (as undergarment) and the ancient Greek *chiton*.[42] Like these two garments, the early tunic-style chemise dress was inserted over the head, hanging loosely from the shoulders, and adhered to the body only through external means. The tunic-style chemise dress prototype was likely made of fine cotton muslin that could cling to a cotton under dress.[43] Linen, even at its finest gauge and weave structure, would break at the folds rather than drape sinuously as in Graeco-Roman statuary. Like the chemise and *chiton*, the tunic-style chemise dress had a wide neck opening. The chemise typically had a deep round undecorated neckline. In the *chiton*, the cloth was gathered at the neckline and sewn in a set-length-band while, for the tunic-style chemise dress, a band, at times with ribbons at the center front slit, or a drawstring created the neckline finish. This prototype was brought to the world's attention by Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's 1781–1783 portraits of members of the French court, most notably Queen Marie Antoinette.

There are no surviving specimens of the unfitted tunic-style chemise dress, but other semi-fitted, fitted and hybrid chemise dresses exist.[44] Art and dress historians sometimes fuse a great variety of chemise dresses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into one a single style. But there was great diversity and structures in these gowns. Changes in embodiment practices were also central to understanding the progression of neoclassicism in fashion. Not all neoclassical gowns were as progressive in how they were worn, as in some 1782 Vigée-Lebrun portraits where members of Marie Antoinette's court were depicted in early tunic-style chemise dresses cinched below the bust that clearly show the abandonment of traditional conical stays.[45] Petticoat volumes also vary in the 1781–1783 Vigée-Lebrun series. It is likely that there was not one chemise dress at inception and that numerous hybrid styles linking tradition and transgression emerged. How chemise dresses evolved in structure, the subversive ways they could be worn to reveal the body, and their changing meaning and contexts of use should be studied further to better understand neoclassical dress and its links to ancient material culture, such as the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*.

The popular statue's *chiton*, cinched directly below the bust and providing contour for the breasts, is another notable feature of the sculpture, and one that has come to match our definition of neoclassical dress. In his research on classical influences in fashion, dress historian Harold Koda maintains that the belting of *chitons* and *peploi* directly under the bust was rarely done in ancient Greece, and that the "cinching-in with a belt, the zōnē," occurred "above the natural waistline," at the preferred mid-ribcage level.[46] Koda argues that the below-the-bust cinching in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was an exaggeration.[47] He describes the dress styles of the late-eighteenth century as "evocations rather than literal citations of ancient forms," this "[d]espite the heightened antiquarian interest and desire for scholarly rigor" of the period.[48] But, despite the late-eighteenth-century audience's preference for Greek dress and quite possibly for the high classical period (i.e. fifth

42 Boucher traces back the robe "*en chemise*" to Jaubert's 1778 *Dictionnaire*, includes chemise dresses as belonging to the category of "robes de simplicité" and describes them as "robes dites *en chemise* et *à la créole*," but many authors and later primary sources label these and other more complex gowns as "*chemises à la reine*" after the controversy surrounding Vigée-Lebrun's portrait of the Queen in this type of garment (also described as "en gaulle") exhibited at the 1783 Paris Salon. Boucher, *Histoire du costume en Occident des origines à nos jours*, 303.

43 A effective demonstration of the friction between cotton under dress and muslin overdress that results in a clinging effect was made by Alden O'Brien, "'Too scant upon the body and too full upon the Bosom:' Regency Styles in America" (paper presented at the Gadsby's Tavern Museum Costume Symposium, Alexandria, Virginia, September 27, 2013).

44 No unfitted tunic-style chemise dress consisting of two rectangular pieces of cloth sewn as the shoulders and sides exist. The closest thing is a ca. 1785 gown at the Manchester Art Gallery (artifact #1947.1714) where a shaped sleeve is the gown's only contact with the shoulder and the body of the dress is a modified rectangle opening at center front. For pattern, see Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes 1600–1930* (London: Faber, 1968), 98.

45 See for instance the difference in body delineation in the 1782 Vigée-Lebrun portraits of herself (replica at the National Gallery, London (NG1653)), Yolande-Martine-Gabrielle de Polastron, duchesse de Polignac (Wadsworth Atheneum (2002.13.1)) and Madame de Moreton, La Comtesse Moreton de Chabrillan (whereabouts unknown) compared with the more traditional ways of wearing the chemise dress in the 1782 portraits of Madame de Lamballe (Château de Versailles (V.2011.45)) and Marie-Joséphine de Savoie, Comtesse de Provence (Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon (MV 7532)).

46 For below-the-bust cinching as rare, see Harold Koda, *Goddess: The Classical Mode* (New Haven: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2003), 95. For zōnē above the natural waistline, see ibid., 89.

47 Koda, *Goddess,* 89.

48 Koda, *Goddess,* 13. This style came to be known as the "Empire waist." Koda points out that the "Empire waist" was structural (i.e. made of pieced components with a horizontal waist seam below the bust) rather than obtained through external cinching. Ibid., 89.

century BCE in Athens) when the mid-ribcage cinching was popular, they would have also been exposed to material culture from the classical world, both Greek and Roman.[49] First- and second-century depictions of Roman woman's tunics and *stolas* showed fastening under the bust with a plain cord, according to A. T. Croom.[50] The late-eighteenth-century audience would have been exposed to visual materials found in excavated cities like Pompeii that depicted real or imagined characters in garments belted below the bust.[51]

The *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in Fashion

Jacques-Louis David's portrait of *Madame Raymond de Verninac* (FIGURE 10) is often cited in studies of neoclassical dress. As a work of art, we cannot know if what David depicted was actually worn publicly or at all. However, the sitter's dress behavior is akin to that of the *citoyenne* Henri (FIGURE 11) depicted in the *JDM* at an actual outdoor event at the "Parc de Mousseaux" [sic] in Paris in July 1798.[52] Even if the dress behavior of David's sitter and the *citoyenne* Henri is peculiar at this point in time, the below-the-bust cinching of a sleeveless, columnal, tunic-style chemise dress resembles that of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*. This statue is only one example of an ancient sculpture dressed in a similar matter, but it was seen by Parisians publicly at the Tuileries by 1798 and could thus have been exactly quoted.

The *Aphrodite Kallipygos* as a well-known masterpiece is no more. Through research from outside the field of dress studies, the presence and popularity of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* statue in the early modern era can be assessed. The current paper may serve to revise the notion among dress historians that the neoclassical Empire waistline was, as Koda hypothesized, just "another convention of classicizing fashion," rather than an attempt to draw directly from ancient material culture.[53]

While many ancient statues appeared nude or partially clad, the illustrious *Aphrodite Kallipygos* was particularly known for her admiration of her backside. In the late-eighteenth century, as petticoat volumes were lessening to allow greater delineation of the lower body, the buttocks emerged as a new erogenous zone in high fashion. Indeed, fashion had caught up with *Aphrodite Kallipygos* around 1797 when fashion plates began to depict delineation of the lower limbs through dress.[54] Judging by the fair number of fashion plates showing body-contouring styles in the *Journal des Dames*'/*Journal des Dames et des Modes*' earliest issue (1797), it is reasonable to assume that French dress with a focus on the body could have occurred before the *JDM*'s introduction at a time when fashion periodicals were not as abundant or serialized due to Revolutionary chaos.[55] Of the twelve plates from the 1797 *JDM* where a woman's silhouette is visible, half the gowns depicted are close to columnal, but this does not necessarily lead to a delineation of the lower body. It may be that, even with a narrower silhouette, the subject was wearing a petticoat that has enough volume to obscure the limbs and buttocks. Appreciation for the body's overall proportions rooted in ancient practices was not uniformly accepted in the late-eighteenth century.[56]

Concurrent and possibly prior to the delineation of the lower limbs is the rise in popularity of the "*troussé*" gesture where the back train of the garment is draped over one arm (FIGURE 12).[57] This gesture helps to draw attention to the buttocks and back of the legs, regardless of the volume of the underpinnings. Between March 20, 1797 and September 21, 1798, 13.8% of all *JDM* plates depict standing women performing the "*troussé*," followed by 5.3% in plates between September 22, 1798 and September 22, 1799.[58] In his 1800 *New Picture of Paris*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier mentions how there is "[n]ot a *petite maîtresse*, not a *grisette*, who

49 For more on the precedence of Greek over Roman culture in the French mindset by 1794, and its reflection on fashion, see E. Claire Cage, "The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797–1804," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 196.

50 A. T. Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (Charleston, SC: Tempus Publishing Inc., 2000), 74, 78.

51 Croom mentions how Pompeian wall paintings may be copies of Hellenistic originals showing Hellenistic-style costume. Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, 16.

52 Regarding the *citoyenne* Henri, it is mentioned in the Journal's editorial that "*nous n'avons pas l'intention de donner son costume pour modèle de la nouvelle mode…*" (we do not intend to give her dress as the model of the latest fashion…). On the next page, the editor notes, for the record, that "*on ne s'est permis d'autre changement dans son costume, que d'ajouter une rose à son chapeau, cette rose étant devenue de [sic.] mode, dans l'intervalle du dessin à la gravure*" (we permitted ourselves no changes in her dress, but for the addition of a rose to her hat, this rose having become a fashion in the interval between the drawing to the engraving). *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, 25 Thermidor, Year VI (August 12, 1798), 7, 8. This is an interesting piece of information that is substantiated by other fashion plates printed between 1797 (the Journal's inception), and 1798, when this plate was published. During this time, only one other dress is sleeveless, which substantiates the editor's account that the style is not widely accepted. See *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, 1798, plate 4 and its dress description as sleeveless in *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, 9 Pluviose, Year VI (January 28, 1798), 8.

53 Koda, *Goddess*, 91.

54 To date, no English or French fashion plates prior to 1797 have been located that show leg delineation through the dress of a standing woman. The first English plate is unusual and more about the effects of high winds. See figures 134 and 135 in N. Heideloff's *Gallery of Fashion*, April 1, 1797. Close behind is the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, plate 2, published ca. April 4, 1797. Several other 1797 *JDM* plates follow this mode while no English fashion plates offer the same level of delineation.

55 The *Journal des Dames* changes its name to add "*et des Modes*" five months after its introduction in March 1797. See Kleinert, *Le «Journal des Dames et des Modes»*, 2, 16.

56 Bissonnette, "*Dessiné d'après nature*," 17.

57 "Trousser" is a contracted form of the verb "retrousser" (to roll up or lift).

58 After 1797, plates from the *JDM* switched from the Gregorian to the

FIGURE 10 Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), *Madame Raymond de Verninac*, 1798–1799. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, France, R.F. 1942–16. Photo © Anne Bissonnette.

Revolutionary calendar. To address this situation I have lumped my 1797 data with part of 1798, as they fuse within the new system. As such, we see 22.4% of plates from years 5 and 6 of the Revolutionary calendar (March 20, 1797–September 21, 1798) depicting women with lifted skirts (13/58 plates), and 13.8% of all plates have the gown draped over the arm (8/58 plates). Next we have 38.7% of plates from year 7 (September 22, 1798–September 22, 1799) depicting women with lifted skirts (29/75 plates). 5.3% of all plates have the gown draped over the arm (4/75 plates). By the portion of year 8 that falls in the Directoire (January 1, 1799–October 27, 1799), no plates depict a woman with a skirt portion draped on her arm.

59 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *New Picture of Paris*, II (Dublin, 1800), 163, quoted in Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-century Europe 1715–1789* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1984), 128–129.

does not decorate herself on Sunday with an Athenian muslin gown, and who does not draw up the pendant folds on the right arm, in order to drop into the form of some antique or at least equal Venus *aux belles fesses*."[59] Thus, by the time Mercier published his memoires, fashionistas in great number were using this classical gesture based on the

FIGURE 11 *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, Paris, France, 25 Thermidor, Year VI (August 12, 1798), supplementary plate 55. Pochoir copper engraving on paper. Photo © Anne Bissonnette of an artifact in the collection of the Designmuseum Danmark, Denmark.

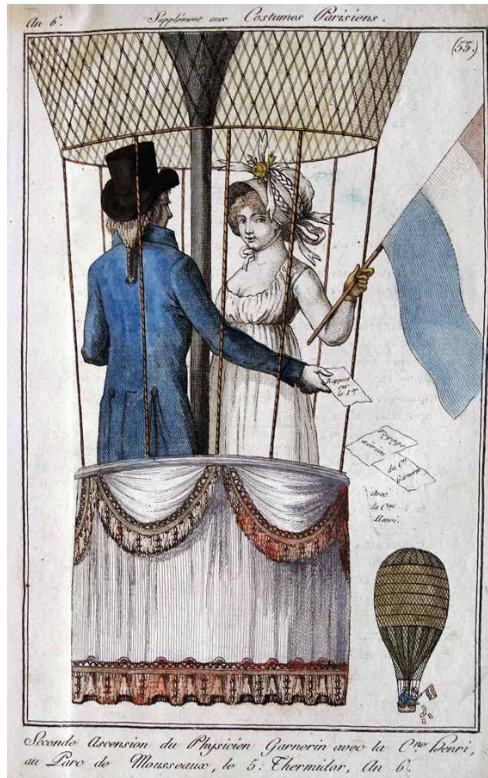
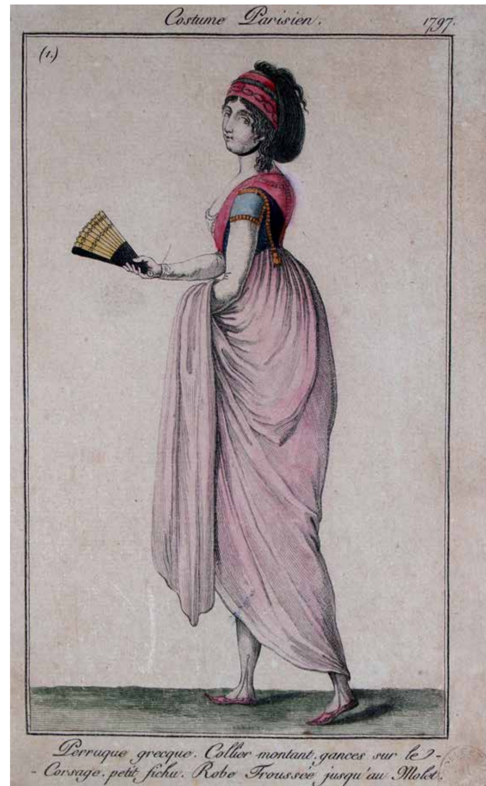


FIGURE 12 *Journal des Dames*, Paris, France, 1797 (ca. March 25), plate 1. Pochoir copper engraving on paper. Caption: "Perruque grecque. Collier montant gances sur le Corsage, petit fichu. Robe Troussée jusquàu Molet." Photo © Anne Bissonnette of an artifact in the collection of the Palais Galliera, Musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, France.



Aphrodite Kallipygos. This written source, like many visual sources presented in this paper, demonstrates the statue's influence in late-eighteenth-century dress.

Conclusion

Overall, this article evaluates the reception of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* beginning with its discovery in the sixteenth century, but with a particular focus on the late-eighteenth century, to demonstrate and contextualize the influence of the ancient statue on the radical paradigmatic shifts that occurred in 1790s fashion. Whatever the original composition and identity of the statue, in its "restored" state, it was overwhelmingly perceived as an exhibitionistic figure. Despite the goddess' immodest behavior—or perhaps on account of it—the statue became an object of admiration throughout Europe. The widespread reproduction of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* allowed the statue to enter popular consciousness, exemplified by François Barois' version (with its additional clinging under dress) that was eventually displayed in such a public setting as the Tuileries garden in 1798. That same year, the *citoyenne* Henri wore to a public outdoor event an unfitted, sleeveless, columnal, tunic-style chemise dress gathered at the neckline and cinched below the bust that resembled the dress behavior of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*. Shortly thereafter, Louis Sébastien Mercier

mentioned Parisian women's desire to resemble the "Venus *aux belles fesses*" by adopting the "*troussé*" gesture.

That the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* was considered worthy of emulation is supported by European art work in which real women were modeled after the statue. Not only was its pose copied in order to elevate the sitter to a mythical sphere and mold her into one of the most admired classical statues, but its dress behavior was also carefully observed in its structural and aesthetic details. To be identified with the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, however, seems to have been fraught with contradictions due to the tension between its aesthetic merit and risqué attitude. On the one hand, the female sitter or *fashionista* was made—or made herself—into a mythical paragon of beauty, while, on the other hand, her eroticized depiction would seem to undermine her modesty.

The sculpture of Countess von Höpken is exceptional for its simulation of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*' shameless, provocative, semi-nude attitude. Gustav III's 1780 commission of his mistress' portrait statue was an homage to her beauty and desirability, and spoke of his erudition within the shared visual language of a European elite. This classicizing enterprise may have conferred on the countess a gravitas that could also be said to have been sought out in neoclassical dress. However, despite noble goals, the invocation of the countess as the immodest *Aphrodite Kallipygos* was an overt celebration of her sexual desirability. The appropriation of classical aesthetics in the world of art was thus accompanied by a moral ambivalence that was likely to reoccur when new, progressive modes of dress developed in late-eighteenth-century Revolutionary France.

This paper has examined how ancient statuary influenced fashion. By the mid-1790s, ancient Greek-inspired dress practices were popular, yet new artifacts from ongoing excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii fueled European fascination for a wider antiquity. While fashionable women did not raise their gowns to expose their lower body as did the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, new embodiment practices emerged that progressively lessened or eliminated voluminous underpinnings, allowing the controversial delineation of the body through clothes. Exposure of skin was not the only way to be indecent. The new columnal silhouette paid homage to the "natural body" seen in statuary, and cinching below the bust, based on ancient material culture such as the well-known *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, enhanced the delineation of individual breasts. A change in the types of fabrics used in women's clothing allowed emulation of the clinging body-conscious drapery of ancient statues with their pleated *chitons*, which offered many parallels to an eighteenth-century woman's chemise and thus increased the ambiguous and scandalous nature of the new tunic-style chemise dress.

The popularity of the *Aphrodite Kallipygos*, and the clothing and dress behavior she exhibits, contributes to our understanding of neoclassical dress. In an attempt to emulate classical statuary's mastery of human anatomy, the delineation of breasts, legs and buttocks through the clothes may have raised issues of propriety, even if such embodiment practices are no longer viewed in the same light today. While the modeling of women after the *Aphrodite Kallipygos* in art and then fashion involved some modifications due to social constraints, each evocation recalled the statue's illustrious and sexualized connotations and pushed the boundaries of propriety. **DRESS**

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