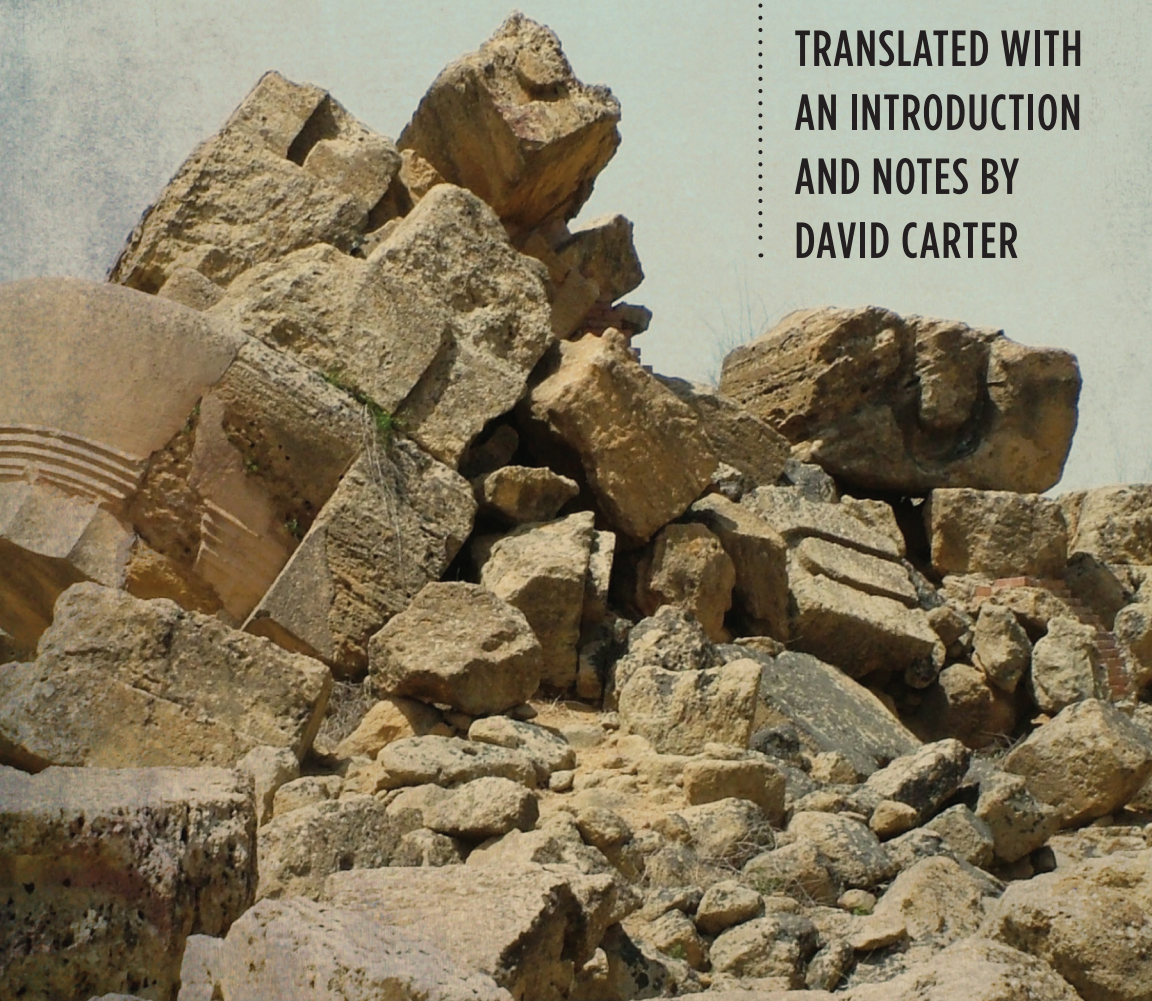
Johann Joachim Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY DAVID CARTER



Winckelmann on Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Johann Joachim Winckelmann

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Introduction

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68) has long been recognized as a founder of modern methodologies in the fields of art history and archaeology. He also contributed considerably to studies of classical Greek architecture, and applied empirically derived categories of style to the analysis of classical works of art and architecture. He was also one of the first to undertake detailed empirical examinations of artifacts and describe them precisely in a way that enabled reasoned conclusions to be drawn and theories to be advanced about ancient societies and their cultures.[1]

The present volume provides a selection of Winckelmann's essays ordered thematically, allowing the reader to discover his approaches to the study of classical Greek art, sculpture, and architecture as well as to his methodology in analyzing artifacts found at the site of the town of Herculaneum, buried, along with Pompeii and Stabiae, by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. The essays have been newly translated for this edition and are preceded in this introduction by a brief account of his life and works, including consideration of the circumstances of his murder, together with a consideration of some of the major influences of his writings. This account is followed by an assessment of his influence on his contemporaries and subsequent writers and artists. At the end of this introduction more detailed information is provided on the organization of the present volume and the principles that were followed in the translation and editing process.

Childhood and School

Johann Joachim Winckelmann was an only child, born on December 9, 1717, to the shoemaker Martin Winckelmann and his wife Anna Maria in the town of Stendal in an area known as the Altmark, now in the state of Saxony-Anhalt. The family lived in a very small thatched house, which was provided by his mother's side of the family. It consisted of basically one room, which served as living room, workplace, and display area for his father's goods. The parents probably slept in a small alcove and young Johann Joachim may have had his own small sleeping area.

Although their circumstances were very poor, Winckelmann's parents were determined to ensure that their son received a good education. After attending the primary school (*Grundschule*) from the age of five, it seems that he was accepted into the secondary level school, equivalent to

a grammar school (*Lateinschule*), when he was nine years old. In order to cover the costs of his studies Winckelmann's parents managed to get him into a special choir known as a "Kurrende" (from Latin "currere" meaning "to run around"). It was a traveling choir made up of poor pupils, who received some payment for their services. They were led by one of the older pupils and received payment for performing at weddings, funerals, and other events. In this way they could afford to pay for their schoolbooks and did not have to pay for their tuition. Winckelmann was also very much helped by the support of the headmaster of the school, Esaias Wilhelm Tappert, who in 1732 appointed him his own personal assistant although he was only fifteen at the time. Tappert was almost totally blind and needed constant help. One of Winckelmann's main duties was to read aloud to him, and he was also put in charge of the school library, which enabled him to pursue his own reading extensively.

It became clear that Winckelmann had a gift for languages and was developing a love of books, so, in March 1735, when Winckelmann was only seventeen, Tappert arranged for him to attend the Cöllnisches Gymnasium in Berlin. Fortunately Tappert knew the headmaster of the Gymnasium, Friedrich Bake, very well, and Winckelmann was provided with accommodation in Bake's house, where he was also put in charge of the headmaster's own children. Winckelmann received a broader general education, including some natural science. He was particularly attracted to the course on Greek taught by the assistant headmaster, Christian Tobias. Despite his enthusiasm for this subject, it was not sufficient to earn him a favorable report when he left the Gymnasium in the autumn of 1736 to return to Stendal. The Rector described him in his report as "restless and inconstant." But Winckelmann did not let this deter him, and had himself registered at the Salzweder Gymnasium in order to perfect his knowledge of Greek. Here he was able to obtain the post of a teaching assistant. Little is known, however, about Winckelmann's activities in the next two years, before he went to university. A recent biographer, Wolfgang von Wangenheim, has indicated in his account of Winckelmann's life, entitled *Der verworfene Stein*, that nothing is known about his last days at school, about his relationships with his parents and friends during that time, nor about his whole period of puberty and confirmation.[2]

Student and Teacher

In April 1738, Winckelmann registered at the University of Halle as a student of theology. This was not out of any strong religious commitment. The theology faculty was the only one that was supported by both the state and the church and allowed children of poor families to attend without the necessity of paying student fees. It has been possible to determine which courses Winckelmann followed in Halle. Apart from courses

related to his theological studies he also attended lectures by a man who undoubtedly had great influence on his developing interest in the arts: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–62). Baumgarten was a philosopher who redefined the concept of aesthetics in a way in which we still use it today. Previously the term "aesthetic" had the general meaning of "relating to sensibility" or "responding to the stimulation of the senses," but for Baumgarten aesthetics came to mean the study of good and bad taste, and was related to the judgment of what was beautiful. Good taste was the ability to judge what was beautiful by intuition and not through analysis by the intellect. Baumgarten hoped to develop nevertheless a science of aesthetics, the deduction of principles of both natural and artistic beauty based on a sense of good taste. His theories were very influential, though later they were strongly criticized by Immanuel Kant. One reason Winckelmann admired Baumgarten's lectures was the wealth of literary knowledge they revealed. As he was already developing a strong interest in ancient cultures, he also attended the lectures of the philologist and medical expert Johann Heinrich Schulze (1687–1744). Schulze lectured on Greek and Roman antiquities, using illustrations from ancient coins. Numismatics was also to become an area of Winckelmann's own expertise. When he finally left the university, in February 1740, it was with a report that described him as a student of average ability.

In the spring of 1740 he acquired a post in the service of a military man, the Colonel Georg Arnold von Grollmann in Osterburg, at that time a small town with a military barracks. His main duty was to teach history and philosophy to Grollmann's eldest son. During this period Winckelmann also studied English, French, and Italian.

In May 1741 he entered the University of Jena, with the intention of studying geometry, medicine, and modern languages. He pursued his studies in medicine with considerable enthusiasm, though he soon lost interest in mathematics. He gave up his studies after barely a year without formally completing them.

In the spring of 1742 Winckelmann took another post as private tutor to Peter Lamprecht, the eldest son of the head clerk of the cathedral chapter in Hadmersleben, Christian Lamprecht, with the aim of preparing the boy for university. Winckelmann developed a strong affection for the boy, which was clearly homosexual in nature on Winckelmann's side. The boy was fond of his teacher, too, though he could not return the affection with the same intensity. Winckelmann obtained the post of headmaster in the grammar school in Seehausen. Here, apart from his administrative duties, Winckelmann taught geography, logic, history, and the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages.

By this time, however, Winckelmann was feeling disenchanted with the cultural limitations of living in provincial circumstances. He sustained himself with his reading of whatever works of Greek literature he could

lay his hands on. Apart from his love for Homer, which dated from his school days, he also read works by Sophocles, Plato, Xenophon, and others, acquiring in the process an extensive knowledge of the history and culture of antiquity that would be indispensible to him in his later research. He studied long hours while also preparing his teaching for the school and for the young Lamprecht, whom he continued to tutor. For several years he continued thus, nursing the desire to leave Seehausen, until finally, in 1748, he was offered a post that enabled him to escape.

Schloss Nöthnitz and Dresden

The Reichsgraf Heinrich von Bünau had invited Winckelmann to take up the post of librarian at his castle, Schloss Nöthnitz, near Dresden. Winckelmann took up his duties there in September 1748. The library had one of the largest private collections in Germany. Bünau had transferred the library from Dresden to Nöthnitz in 1740, and had had it all catalogued at that time. It contained valuable editions from many countries of works of literature and natural science together with a large collection of journals. The prime task given to Winckelmann was collecting material for Bünau's planned extensive history of the German emperors. Apart from giving him the opportunity to learn about the methods of historical research, it also enabled Winckelmann to study many French and English works and volumes of engravings of ancient cultural objects.

While working for the Reichsgraf he was also able to visit the collection of paintings in the Dresden Gemäldegallerie, which held about 1,500 works at the time, most of them Italian from the seventeenth century. During this period he started writing his impressions of some of these paintings. The work was never completed but was published posthumously under the title *Description of the Most Excellent Paintings in the Dresden Gallery*. It is included in the present volume. In 1755 Winckelmann's first and very influential work was published, the *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and the Art of Sculpture*. Only fifty-odd copies were printed at first, but the next year, as word about it spread, it became necessary to run to a second printing. On this occasion Winckelmann took the opportunity of dealing with his critics in a unique way. In the second printing he included an attack on his work composed by himself under the title *Open Letter on Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and the Art of Sculpture*. This was followed, in the second printing, by a counter-attack also composed by himself, with the title *Explanation of Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and the Art of Sculpture; and Response to the Open Letter on these Thoughts*. All three essays are included as the first items in the present collection, followed by a short fragmentary piece he wrote sometime later during the

period 1756/57 entitled *More Mature Thoughts on the Imitation of the Ancients with Respect to Drawing and the Art of Sculpture.*

Dresden was at that time a major center for the arts and scholarship, and through his position as librarian in Schloss Nöthnitz Winckelmann came into contact with many leading cultural figures. Among them was the painter Adam Friedrich Oeser, with whom Winckelmann developed a close and lifelong friendship. Oeser became an influential figure, being appointed director of the Academy of Drawing, Painting, and Architecture in 1764 and finally Court Painter. When Winckelmann left the service of Bünau in October 1754, he moved to Dresden and lived with his friend. He learned much from Oeser: refining his artistic vision, broadening his understanding of artistic theory, as well as improving his skills as a draftsman.

Winckelmann was also able to study the collection of objects in the Dresden collection of Antiquities (Dresdner Antikensammlung), but not in the best circumstances. Not much care had been taken to display them to their best advantage: at first they were all put in the large garden of the main building, and then spread temporarily through four different pavilions. Winckelmann was later to describe many of the works as being "packed together like herrings" (in *Treatise on the Capacity for Sensitivity to the Beautiful in Art, and the Method of Teaching It*, of 1763, also included in the present volume).

Rome and Naples

Winckelmann had long desired to visit Rome, and his opportunity came when he met, at some time between 1748 and 1754 during his stay in Nöchnitz, the papal nuncio Count Alberigo Archinto, who was about to return to Rome to take up the post of governor of Rome. The nuncio was enthusiastic about converting Protestants to Catholicism, and for some time Winckelmann himself had been toying with the idea of adopting the Catholic faith. Little is certain about his motivation for the change, but there was considerable pressure on him to be converted. The members of the Saxon court at Dresden and its ruler King Augustus (1696–1763) were either all born Catholics or converts. And both the Jesuit priest Father Leo Rauch, who was royal confessor of the court chapel, and the papal nuncio assured him that only as a Catholic could he gain access to the antiquities stored in Rome. After a considerable struggle with his conscience, Winckelmann finally realized that it was the only way forward for him. He left it till the last minute and converted just before Archinto was about to leave for Rome in the summer of 1754. The nuncio wanted Winckelmann to follow him to Rome immediately, but Winckelmann delayed his departure several times, finally setting off in September 1755.

The journey took eight weeks, and he finally arrived in Rome on November 18, 1755. His plan initially was to stay for two years, financed by a grant from Augustus, who had been persuaded to help him by Leo Rauch. With the help of the Dresden painter and administrator Christian Dietrich, Winckelmann made contact with Anton Raphael Mengs, who had gone to Rome in 1752 in his capacity as painter to the Saxon court. Mengs found Winckelmann accommodation in the Palazzo Zuccari, which was a center for many foreign artists. The friendship with Mengs was to become very important for Winckelmann during his first years in Rome. At the time Mengs was highly regarded as an artist in the developing classical style, though his reputation has not survived.

Winckelmann soon made contact with other prominent artists working in the city, including Angelica Kauffman (her preferred spelling of her name), the Swiss-born artist, who was later, in 1764, to paint one of the most famous portraits of Winckelmann. And through his acquaintanceship with the prelate Michelangelo Giacomelli he managed to get to know many scholars in Rome.

In 1756 the Seven Years War broke out, and one of the consequences was that Dresden was occupied by the Prussians. This led Winckelmann to fear that his allowance from the King of Saxony might be discontinued, so he started to seek other sources of income. Archinto had now become Cardinal Secretary of State, and Winckelmann offered him his services as librarian. Archinto not only gave him the job, but also provided him with a comfortable five-room apartment in the Palazzo Cancelleria. This facilitated Winckelmann's contacts with Roman academia, and he was able to gain access to the most substantial libraries, including that of the Collegio Romano, which contained a large collection of works relating to antiquarian studies. During this period in Rome he was also able to study the collections of art and antiquities in many Roman villas belonging to illustrious families, such as those of the Medici, the Borghese, and the Negroni, Mattei, and Ludovisi. He also undertook trips to the Villa Hadriana and to Tivoli.

For some time Winckelmann had wanted to go and view the collection of gems owned by the Baron Philippe von Stosch in Florence, who wanted Winckelmann to publish something about his collection. When the baron died in 1757, his nephew, Heinrich Wilhelm Muzell-Stosch, invited Winckelmann to come to Florence to draw up a catalogue of the collection, with the aim of selling it. Thus it came about that Winckelmann spent the period from September 1758 till April 1759 in Florence. Through this one work, *Description of the Engraved Stones of the Former Baron Stosch* (published in French, 1760), Winckelmann was to set new standards for research into the history of antique precious stones: he described them very precisely, organized them according to their style, and provided interpretations of the mythological motifs engraved on them.

Baron von Stosch had been instrumental in securing Winckelmann's future: he had recommended him to Cardinal Alessandro Albani, a well-known expert in antiquities, and when Archinto died, the cardinal offered Winckelmann the post of librarian in his own service. When he returned to Rome, Winckelmann moved into a suite of four rooms in the cardinal's palace at the Quattro Fontane. His main duty was the supervision of the library, which had been partly founded by Albani's uncle, Pope Clement XI. Winckelmann was lucky to find in the cardinal an enthusiastic supporter of all his research interests.

Thus, while in Rome he was able to undertake many research trips. He was especially interested in the archaeological excavations in the Kingdom of Naples, and between 1758 and 1767 he visited the area four times, to view the excavations of the towns destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79: Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabae. He spent lengthy stays there from February to May 1758, from January to February 1762, and from February to March 1764. His last visit there took place in the autumn of 1767. After his second trip in 1762 he gathered all his thoughts and observations together in his *Open Letter on the Herculanean Discoveries*, which is included in full in the present volume. In 1758 he had already written a lengthy study on ancient scripts found at Herculaneum, entitled *Report on the Ancient Herculanean Scripts.* These two works helped to spread knowledge about the towns buried by Vesuvius, and established a methodology for the description of excavations.

He was also developing an interest in ancient Greek architecture. In his first visit to Naples in 1758 he had visited the temples at Paestum, which are among the earliest and best-preserved Greek temples in Italy. On his observations made during this visit he based his descriptions of ancient Greek temple architecture and its development, presented at length in the essay *Remarks on the Architecture of the Ancients*, completed after his second visit in 1762. In the present volume is included the first version of this study, entitled *Preliminary Report on Remarks on the Architecture of the Ancients.* During this period Winckelmann also visited Agrigento in Sicily and wrote a description of the temples there. This essay, *Remarks on the Architecture of the Old Temples of Agrigento in Sicily*, completed in 1759, is also included in the present volume. 1759 proved to be a very productive year for him, and other essays of that year are also included in this volume: *Recalling the Observation of Works of Art*, *On Grace in Works of Art*, and *Description of the Torso in the Belvedere in Rome.*

Probably Winckelmann's highest accomplishment in terms of social status occurred in the spring of 1763. On March 30, 1763, the President of All Antiquities In and Around Rome, Abbate Ridolfino Venuti, died. Cardinal Albani proposed that Winckelmann take over his responsibilities under the title of Papal Antiquarian. He was appointed on April 11,

and with the post came considerable power and influence. Any export of antiquities required his authorization, and any site where new archaeological finds were made had to be reported to him via two assessors who worked for him. He also had the responsibility of acting as guide to the antiquities of Rome for any person of importance visiting the city. As there was little income attached to the appointment, Albani managed to arrange for Winckelmann to combine his responsibilities with a post in the Vatican Library, as Scrittore Teutonica (Library Scribe Responsible for German Language). In the following year he was appointed in addition to a similar post for Greek language. This post resulted in him now having to keep regular working hours in the library: every day except Thursdays and Sundays, from 9:00 a.m. till midday. It was in the same year, 1763, that his essay entitled *Treatise on the Capacity for Sensitivity to the Beautiful in Art, and the Method of Teaching It* appeared, which is also included in the present volume. In 1764 he published his more extensive study of Herculaneum, entitled *Report on the Latest Herculanean Excavations.*

Homoerotic Sensibility

All the evidence indicates that Winckelmann was homosexual, though some of the earlier accounts of his life pass over this fact in silence or explain away the language of many of his letters as typical of the flowery declarations of affection between males of the period. It was an essential part of Winckelmann's sensibility, however, and must be taken into account when considering his views on the culture and art of Greek antiquity. He argued that the young, naked male body was for the Greeks the supreme embodiment of their ideals of both natural and artistic beauty. This was undoubtedly the case, and, though some might argue that his own inclinations biased his interpretations, one can more plausibly assert that, on the contrary, they helped to right the balance. Before Winckelmann the homoerotic aspects of classical Greek art had been played down too much. His homoerotic sensibility thus enabled him to perceive the beauty of the male nude more clearly and to describe it evocatively. The interrelationship between Winckelmann's homosexuality and his theories of art has been explored extensively by two authors in recent years: Alex Potts in his book *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (1994), and Wolfgang von Wangenstein in his book *Der verworfene Stein: Winckelmann's Leben* (2005). I am indebted to both these authors for their insights.

Winckelmann was clearly aware of his sexual inclinations from at least his mid-twenties, if not earlier. He recalled in a letter to Stosch in 1765 that he had felt his first real love and friendship in his relationship to his pupil, Peter Lamprecht, when he took up his post as tutor to him in Seehausen in 1743.[3] Strong affection for the young men he came to know

at various times in his life is also reflected in the dedications of his works. It was not so common at the time to dedicate a work with such fulsome expressions of affection to a friend. In the dedication for his *Treatise on the Capacity for Sensitivity to the Beautiful in Art . . .* of 1763 his sense of loss at the departure of the dedicatee, a nobleman from Latvia, Friedrich Rheinhold von Berg, is expressed unequivocally. Potts describes the dedication as "almost a love poem," and argues that "his disquisition on beauty had in large part been inspired by Berg."[4] That the dedication was not just a conventional expression of devotion is confirmed by a letter to another of Winckelmann's correspondents. In August of 1763 he wrote to a young Swiss friend, Leonhard Usteri: "I fell in love, and how, with a young Latvian and promised him the best of all letters."[5]

It is known from Winckelmann's correspondence that he also indulged occasionally in sexual adventures of a more casual nature, but he kept a clear distinction in his mind between the idealized friendships he maintained with the young noblemen of his acquaintance and such casual affairs. He wrote openly of the latter to certain of his friends whom he knew he could trust, such as a Dr. Bianconi at the Saxon court, to whom he described his experience of submitting to anal intercourse.[6] And it seems that Cardinal Albani was generally tolerant of Winckelmann's sexual adventures. To another friend Winckelmann wrote of how he often regaled Albani with stories of his "amours."[7]

There is one remarkable source for Winckelmann's sexual indulgence with younger men of a lower class: Casanova's autobiography. Giacomo Girolamo Casanova de Seingalt, to give him his full name, wrote his *Story of My Life* (*Histoire de ma vie*) in French between 1789 and 1792. It must of course remain doubtful to what extent Casanova's account, particularly in its description of details and reporting of dialogue, can be relied on. Certain only are the impressions left in Casanova's mind. He met Winckelmann in Rome in 1761 and one day went to see him in his study, obviously unannounced. As he entered he saw Winckelmann withdrawing quickly from close proximity to a young boy. In Casanova's account, he gave Winckelmann every opportunity to pretend that nothing untoward had happened, but Winckelmann insisted on justifying himself, claiming that as he was researching the culture and manners of the ancient Greeks, he should experience the kind of love that they had praised so much. Casanova concludes by saying that Winckelmann declared his experiment to have been a failure and that women were clearly preferable in every respect.[8] Given the openness about his sexuality in letters to certain friends and even to the cardinal, it is difficult to believe that Winckelmann was seriously worried about the libertine spreading rumors about him.

The fact that Winckelmann had one close relationship to a woman should not be passed over without comment. It was with the wife of one of his friends. His relationship to the painter Anton Raphael Mengs

was close but complicated. In 1765 Mengs was fulfilling his obligations as court painter in Madrid, and early in that year his wife Margherita returned to Rome alone after visiting her husband in Spain. Mengs had asked Winckelmann to look after his wife for him in his absence, and an affair developed between the two. He wrote of the affair to his old friend H. D. Berendis: "I fell in love then for the very first time with someone of the female sex."[9] In a letter to Stosch however, in which he described the affair, he reassured his friend that male friendship was still his highest goal.[10]

Murder in Trieste

The official police reports and trial documents concerning the events surrounding Winckelmann's death have been recovered and published in both Italian and German. Full details are provided in the bibliography. For convenience they are referred to here as the "murder trial documents" (*Mordakte*).

How did he come to be in Trieste in any case? Somehow the yearning had arisen to see old friends in his homeland again, and he had also been receiving invitations from various German academic institutions. In March of 1768 he wrote to friends back in Germany that he would be seeing them soon. And in his last letter from Rome he wrote to Stosch outlining his planned itinerary. His intention was to visit Venice, Verona, Augsburg, Munich, Vienna, and Prague, probably Dresden, and certainly Leipzig and Dessau. He asked his friend to join him at that point so that they could travel on to Braunschweig and Göttingen together. Berlin and Hannover were also included in the itinerary. Specific individuals he wanted to visit were the old friend he had lived with in Dresden, Adam Friedrich Oeser, in Leipzig now, and Christian Gottlob Heyne in Göttingen, who was interested in establishing archaeology as a scientific discipline in German universities. Winckelmann's plan was to be in Switzerland by the autumn, and from there he would return to Italy. He set off in the morning of April 10, 1768, in the company of the sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, who was taking some examples of antiquities and a catalogue with him, in the hope of making some sales.

The first part of the journey went well enough. The two friends visited various collections in Bologna, Venice, and Verona. But as they were traveling through the Tyrolean Alps, Winckelmann became ill and depressed. Cavaceppi wrote an account of the journey, which he included in a published version of his catalogue a year later.[11] He wrote that his friend seemed to develop a real horror of the mountains, and wanted to return to Rome. But he managed to persuade him to continue their journey as far as Regensburg. Winckelmann was still determined to turn back and persuaded Cavaceppi to accompany him to Vienna, where he was

received by the Austrian empress, Maria-Theresia. The Austrian chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, offered him a highly distinguished post, but although he was showered with gifts, he declined. After the two friends visited the library and various art collections, Winckelmann decided they should go their separate ways. He had developed a fever and decided that he should travel back to Rome as soon as possible. It was in Vienna that he wrote the last letters to his friends. Then he traveled to Trieste, from where he planned to take a ship to Ancona and thence to travel overland to Rome. But the departure of the ship was delayed for several days. The rest of the story we know from the "murder trial documents."

Winckelmann arrived in Trieste on Wednesday, June 1, 1768, by coach from Ljubljana and took a room in what was at that time the only hotel in the town, the Osteria Grande. No one in the city knew who he was, and he signed himself in as "Signor Giovanni." He was given room 10, with a view of the harbor. At dinner he got to know the man in the room next to him, a certain Francesco Arcangeli from Venice. Over the following week, during which Winckelmann had to stay there due to the delay of his ship's departure, the two were seen frequently together. Finally Winckelmann was informed that the ship for Ancona would sail the next day, Wednesday, June 9, so he settled his bill and prepared to leave. On that morning, just before 10 a.m., the waiter, Andreas Harthaber, heard a noise in a room on the first floor and what sounded like something heavy falling on the floor. He opened the door to Winckelmann's room to find him on the floor with Arcangeli kneeling beside him, his hands on Winckelmann's chest. The Italian immediately rushed past Harthaber and out of the room. Winckelmann, with blood gushing from his chest, cried out in Italian "Look, look, what he's done to me!" The waiter and a maid ran off in search of help. The servant of another guest noticed a tight cord around Winckelmann's neck and loosened it. A doctor finally arrived and attempted to stem the flow of blood. As it became clear that he was dying, a capuchin monk gave him the last rites. He was sufficiently conscious to be able to give an account to the city recorder, in the absence of the state prosecutor, of what had happened to him. He had shown Arcangeli some valuable coins, including one given him by the Austrian empress, and when Arcangeli discovered that Winckelmann was about to depart he had come again that morning, asking to see the coins again. Upon being shown the coins he had put the noose around Winckelmann's neck and stabbed him several times. After completing his account of what had happened, Winckelmann then dictated a will, leaving various items to friends, a gift for the hotel servant, and some money to help the poor in Trieste, with the rest going to Cardinal Albani. Finally, after losing much more blood, Winckelmann died at about 4:00 p.m.

The murder weapons were soon found, and Arcangeli did not escape very far. Some soldiers stopped him on the way to Llubljana, suspecting

him of being a spy, as he had no travel documents. When the authorities in Trieste heard about this, he was arrested and sent back there. During his trial, details emerged about Arcangeli's background: he was thirty-eight years old and had been a cook for a count in Vienna, from whom he had stolen money, and for this he was put in prison. There had been a general amnesty and he had been set free, but under the condition that he never set foot again on Austrian soil. He went first to Venice and then to Trieste (although it then belonged to Austria), where he took the hotel room next to Winckelmann. Despite his protests that he had acted in self-defense, it was clear from the evidence (the bloody knife was found in Winckelmann's room but its sheath in Arcangeli's own) that it was premeditated murder. There was also evidence that he had begged money of a priest and, not long before the deed, also from a hotel maid. Finally, on July 18, he was condemned to death on a "breaking wheel" (a punishment that involved being stretched and beaten to death while tied to a wheel).

Von Wangenheim reviews the various theories about the murder (a Jesuit conspiracy, the reaction of a young man being seduced, etc.).[12] It seems to the present writer that the most likely version remains that given in the "murder trial documents": it was a pathetic attempt at robbery that went horribly wrong. Many legends have grown up around Winckelmann's murder, so that the basic facts should be clarified. It is highly unlikely that it was in response to a seduction attempt by Winckelmann. Winckelmann was an admirer of the highest ideals of male beauty embodied in Greek sculptures of young men, and Arcangeli was a coarse thirty-eight-year-old, with a roughly shaped figure and an ugly turned-up nose.

Winckelmann had achieved so much when he died tragically thus in his fifty-first year, and there must be speculation about what more he might have achieved had he lived. Yet his influence was only just beginning.

Major Works

Winckelmann's magnum opus and most extensive work was the *History of the Art of Antiquity*, which first appeared in 1764. A glance at its contents pages reveals the extraordinary scope of the work. Its lasting value lies not so much in its historical details as in Winckelmann's overall scheme representing the changes and developments of style in the history of art. He traced the history of art through the different styles that predominated in any given period, with particular emphasis of course on the Greek art of antiquity. He described the individual characteristics of each style very specifically and accurately, enabling any given work to be placed at a precise point in his scheme. His descriptions of individual works are written in powerful and evocative language, but based on very close and accurate

observation. Notable in this respect are his descriptions of the Laocoon Group and the Belvedere Torso.

Winckelmann made modifications to this major work throughout the rest of his life. In 1767 he published the essay *Remarks on the History of the Art of Antiquity*, which was intended to be in preparation for his revised second edition of the *History*, but this did not appear until after his death. And in 1766 he had also written a piece entitled *Essay on Allegory, especially in Relation to Art.*

Another extensive work by Winckelmann, which is now not so well known, is one with an Italian title, the *Monumenti antichi inediti, spiegati ed illustrati* (*Unpublished ancient monuments, explained and illustrated*), published in 1767. The work was produced with the financial support of Cardinal Albani and some other friends, and Winckelmann prepared it for printing and covered the printing costs himself. In this work Winckelmann not only described in detail, with many illustrations, hitherto unknown ancient works and monuments, but also provided interpretations of them relating them to their mythological associations. This was a new method at the time.

Winckelmann's Influences on Art, Art History, and Archaeology

While the rapid development in modern scientific methodology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has meant that the practical innovations introduced by Winckelmann in the field of archaeological research have been long surpassed, he is still revered for having inaugurated an approach to archaeological investigation that required the preservation of found objects together with an account of the contexts in which they were found. Thus the highly respected British archaeologist, Colin Renfrew, is still able to refer to Winckelmann, in the sixth edition (2012) of the extensive practical manual he wrote together with Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*, as "the father of Classical archaeology."[13]

There is more extensive recognition of Winckelmann's contribution to art history. The director of the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London, Eric Fernie, has evaluated Winckelmann's contributions to both art history and archaeology in his critical anthology *Art History and Its Methods* (1999).[14] Fernie justifies calling Winckelmann the father of archaeology "for his catalogue of antique gems and for the control which he introduced into the conduct of excavations" (68). And for him Winckelmann was responsible for introducing the first real innovations in methodology in art history since Vasari, who had primarily only recounted the lives of artists. Winckelmann developed what was essentially cultural history, "that is, the use of all relevant sources of information to place the arts in the context of the cultures which produced them" (12).

Especially prestigious support for the description of Winckelmann as the father of modern art history is to be found in the 2001 volume *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome*, by Mary Beard and John Henderson, part of the Oxford History of Art series.[15] Beard and Henderson describe Winckelmann as "the first, most people would say, to embark on a systematic study not just of art, but of the *history* of art; the first indeed to coin the now inescapable phrase 'history of art.'" Winckelmann is responsible "for setting in place a chronological schema for plotting ancient art *as a development*; and for identifying the main stages or *periods* of that development" (68). With reference particularly to Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity*, the authors point out that art historians still make reference to the style periods he defined: the Older Style, the High (or Sublime) Style, the Beautiful Style, and finally the Style of the Imitators. Although subsequent writers may have used different names for the periods, they have respected Winckelmann's divisions. The Oxford History of Art series itself still utilizes Winckelmann's chronological stages for the volumes covering classical art. The authors also express respect for Winckelmann's scholarly methodology, which, they admit, has been criticized by some writers over the years. They praise the facts that he was much more obsessively concerned with documenting evidence and that he was "much more provisional, much more open-ended" (70) than he has often been given credit for. The authors describe Winckelmann's *Monumenti antichi inediti* (usually known in English as the *Unpublished Antiquities*) as "a vastly learned and daringly radical organization of the chief works to be found in the half-dozen prize collections of sculpture in Rome with a sensible arrangement by subject matter" (70).

Beard and Henderson also stress the importance of understanding Winckelmann's methodologies in their historical context. It was not just a question of reflecting on a ready-ordered collection of materials. He had first to sort out the jumbled mass of sculpture and other works to be found in the museums of his day. A large number of the artifacts had also been wrongly identified and provided with misleading labels. Winckelmann provided "an effective framework for classifying and explaining the monuments" (70). A major breakthrough in his thought that conditioned his subsequent systematization of classical art was the realization that "the subject matter of sculpture from Rome was drawn substantially from Greek mythology" (70). This led Winckelmann also to the concept of imitation, *Nachahmung*, as he used it in the first essay in the present volume. The sculptors of ancient Rome had adopted what Beard and Henderson call an "aesthetic of imitation" (70). Lest this concept of imitation be misunderstood as implying unimaginative "copying" of Greek originals, Beard and Henderson suggest, ingeniously, that it has more in common with our contemporary

usage of the concept of "postmodernism," involving a respect for the achievements of the past, but adapting them to the cultural context of the present. The distinction between Winckelmann's concept of imitation and mere "copying" is discussed also in Hellmut Sichtermann's introduction to the *Kleine Schriften* (xxvi–xxvii).[16] Sichtermann also warns the reader, however, that Winckelmann was not always consistent in his usage of the term (*KS*, xxxvi).

Winckelmann based most of his judgments of ancient Greek art on Roman copies, but the judgments should not be dismissed on these grounds. It is important to consider the historical context of his studies. There was at that time little knowledge of original classical Greek sculpture, because so few remains had been discovered. It is due to his dependence on consideration of Roman copies, however, that fault can be found with some of his datings of individual works. He put some statues at far too early a date and failed to recognize some of the few genuine early Greek works that were to be found in Rome at the time.

It is against this background that one should consider how one particular piece of sculpture came to have such a strong influence on aesthetic theory from the moment it was discovered, but particularly from the time of Winckelmann's reflections on it. The work in question is a huge ancient marble sculpture that has survived almost intact, and depicts a muscular old man struggling in the coils of a serpent, which is also entwining two younger men, one on each side of the central figure. It is known as the Laocoon, after a Trojan priest who was killed, along with his sons, by two sea-serpents, just before the sack of Troy by the Greeks hidden in the wooden horse. The sculpture was probably created in BC 1 by the artists Hagesandros, Polydoros, and Athenodorus of Rhodes. At some point in its history it had been taken to Rome. Since its discovery there in 1506 it had been endlessly written about and frequently copied. Its importance in art history is that it was regarded for a long time as one of the few works of sculpture that could be identified with certainty. In his essay on imitation (the first in the present volume) Winckelmann reveals that he was particularly fascinated by the contrasting feelings evoked in us when we observe the sculpture: we admire the physical beauty of the body of Laocoon but are at the same time moved by his suffering. He also contrasts the expression of the scene in the sculpture with the description of it by the poet Virgil. These comments alone sparked off a whole debate among Winckelmann's contemporaries about the relationship between art and literature in general, and the visual arts and poetry in particular. The issues were taken up especially by Goethe and the dramatist and critic G. E. Lessing, among others. Winckelmann's influence on German literature and thought will be considered subsequently.

Another aspect of Winckelmann's writings is taken up by Beard and Henderson in the third chapter of their book, and is summed up in the

chapter's title: "Sensuality, Sexuality and the Love of Art." The authors remind the reader that Winckelmann was taken up in the latter part of the twentieth century by some commentators as one of the first to open up gay perspectives on aesthetic theory. They also point out that Winckelmann has been criticized for allowing homoeroticism to predominate in considerations of the classical ideal of beauty. Although it is exaggerating to say that he allows it to predominate, it is certainly true to say that he foregrounds the subject of male beauty in discussions of classical art. There is one example of supreme male beauty that Winckelmann was clearly justified in waxing lyrical about (as he does in the essay on imitation): one of the many statues depicting Antinous, the teenage youth adored by the Emperor Hadrian. The images of the youth, made before or after he died in a tragic accident, were clearly conceived to capture his erotic charm for the emperor. In the words of Beard and Henderson: "it is a very clear case of the projection of desire into marble; of fixing an erotic charge in stone" (107).

One scholar has explored the ways in which the love of Greek classical art, as inspired by Winckelmann's writings, became institutionalized in German culture: Suzanne L. Marchand, in her study *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (2003).[17] Marchand examines the fact that Graecophilia became the prime passion of many writers and artists in Germany, and the ideal of imitating Greek art, in Winckelmann's sense, was sanctioned as the official architectural style for state-funded cultural institutions. This led to such large-scale cultural endeavors as the acquisition of the Pergamon Altar. The preference of the Prussian government for classical style in its public architecture also facilitated the rise to fame of the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Schinkel's classicism is exemplified by several famous buildings in Berlin, such as the Neue Wache, the Schauspielhaus, and the Altes Museum.

Tracing the influence of Winckelmann on various individual artists would require an extensive study and is beyond the scope of the present work. It is worth citing one example, however, of a famous artist who was influenced directly and considerably by Winckelmann's work. In histories of art Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) is usually identified as being a representative of the neoclassical style. Winckelmann was already dead when David went to Italy in 1775 to study various artists and visit Pompeii, but he met Winckelmann's friend Mengs there, who introduced him to Winckelmann's works. David's debt to Winckelmann is explored extensively by Alex Potts in his book *Flesh and the Ideal*. According to Potts, the influence is clearly evident at a stage of development in David's art when "bodily beauty and sensuality start taking precedence over the austere muscularity of his earlier . . . style" (225).

Winckelmann's Influence on German Literature and Thought

Some mention has already been made of the spread of philhellenism in Germany under the influence of Winckelmann's writings. He was particularly influential on a number of literary figures and theorists. One famous study by a British scholar of German literature is devoted to this very theme. It is *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* by E. M. Butler, first published in 1935 but reprinted many times because of its respected status.[18] While there is still much to admire in Butler's book, some reservations concerning its methodology and style must be made from a modern perspective. The general implication of the book (indicated by the use of the word "tyranny" in the title) is that the influence of Greek culture was predominantly restrictive. Writers are frequently described as attempting to impose Greek ideals onto recalcitrant Germanic traditions, and only the writers that illustrate that trend are considered. Butler put herself inside the minds of the writers she was considering and imagined their struggles, but from the outset she made it clear that she intended to provide no sources for her assertions and quotations. Butler presents the character of Winckelmann in a particularly unfavorable light, verging on the homophobic, but it cannot be denied that she does reveal how extensive Winckelmann's influence was, and I have taken some cues from her in my own reflections.

In Germany one of the earliest leading writers to sing Winckelmann's praises was Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). It is known that he read Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* many times,[19] and while admiring greatly the extent of Winckelmann's achievement, he came eventually to criticize the priority he gave to the Greeks in the matter of aesthetic ideals. What he admired in Winckelmann was his emphasis on understanding art from its own intrinsic principles rather than through rationally imposed schemes.[20] Despite his own strict Christian principles therefore, it seems that Herder tolerated Winckelmann's particular sensitivity to male beauty because it enabled him to understand Greek culture more clearly. In 1767 Herder reviewed Winckelmann's magnum opus anonymously, praising his passionate style but also noting how he had focused on the role of male friendship in the Greek cultural ideal.[21] After Winckelmann's death, Herder was also one of the first to eulogize Winckelmann, in his *Hymn of Praise to My Countryman Johann Winckelmann on the News of His Murder*. Ten years later, on the anniversary of Winckelmann's death, he would include this, with a few alterations, in a work entitled *Memorial to Johann Winckelmann*. At times Herder addresses Winckelmann in very personal terms: "You stretched your arm out into the distance, to find friendship, the Greek friendship that you desired."[22]

Some time after Winckelmann's death, the critic and dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was considering going to Rome. Many naturally assumed that he had been inspired to take this step by reading Winckelmann, but Lessing himself, while admitting his great admiration for the man, denied that there was any connection: "But do you know what really makes me angry? That everyone to whom I say 'I'm going on a journey to Rome' immediately mentions Winckelmann. What has Winckelmann, and the plan that Winckelmann developed for himself in Italy, to do with my journey? No one can value the man more highly than I do, but nevertheless I wouldn't like to be Winckelmann, just as I often don't like being Lessing!"[23]

Winckelmann had especially influenced Lessing's work on aesthetics, *Laocoon, or the Boundaries between Painting and Poetry* (1766). The existence of the sculpture known as Laoocon had been long known to Lessing, but it was Winckelmann's remarks in the essay on imitation that inspired him to develop his own theory in relation to it. Lessing's alternative title indicates the main focus of the argument in his work. Though he took a work of sculpture as his starting point, his interest was in the limitations of the visual arts in general with regard to the expression of emotions. For Lessing the visual arts can only show things coexistent in space, while poetry can present them consecutively in time.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was much more explicit than Herder in arguing for the close relationship between Winckelmann's sexuality and his understanding of Greek art. If Winckelmann had continued his journey back to Germany and not gone to Trieste he would have met up again with his old friend Oeser in Leipzig and almost certainly would have met up with the eighteen-year-old Goethe, who was taking drawing lessons with him at the time. Von Wangenheim has pointed out that in his autobiography, *Poetry and Truth*, written more than four decades later, Goethe was to recall how devastated he had been by the news of Winckelmann's death.[24] Five years before writing his autobiography Goethe wrote an extensive essay on Winckelmann entitled *Winckelmann and His Century*.[25] It was conceived as part of a general project together with other like-minded writers to preserve some of the ideas and works that were going out of fashion with the rise of the Romantic movement. The ostensible occasion, or excuse, for the essay was that Winckelmann's letters had come into Goethe's hands. H. D. Berendis, a close friend of Winckelmann's, had died and left Winckelmann's correspondence to the Duchess of Saxony and Weimar, who had passed them on to Goethe with the request that they should be published.[26]

In his essay Goethe dwells first on how Winckelmann had had to fight against unfavorable circumstances to achieve his goals. He was successful because he devoted his whole being to pursuing them. For Goethe, Winckelmann embodied the very virtues of the ancient Greeks

themselves, holding fast to what was "immediate, true, and real" (*WJ*, 99). In the essay Goethe admits that the conversion became necessary for Winckelmann to gain access to authorities in the Catholic church who would allow him to study the treasures in their possession: according to Goethe, Winckelmann wore his Catholicism as a "disguising cloak" (*Maskenkleid*, *WJ*, 106). Then Goethe stresses how important male friendship is in understanding Winckelmann the man and his work: "Winckelmann felt himself born to a friendship of this kind, and not only capable of it, but also in need of it at the highest level" (*WJ*, 102). He praises Winckelmann's emphasis on learning to appreciate art through direct experience of it and through the experience of beauty in nature, and he praises also Winckelmann's contention that the highest ideal is the combination of friendship with ideal beauty: "If the needs of friendship and of beauty are nourished by the same object, then the happiness and gratitude of mankind seems to exceed all limits" (*WJ*, 103–4). Admirable in Winckelmann's approach to art for Goethe is also the fact that he never considered a work in isolation from its full historical and cultural context. Winckelmann emphasized that works of art came not only from "different kinds of artists but also from different times, that one must take into consideration all aspects of the location, the period, and the accomplishments of the individual at the same time . . ." (*WJ*, 110). Goethe also appreciated what Winckelmann had contributed to archaeological knowledge, in his writings on Herculaneum in particular, and his contribution to knowledge about precious stones in his catalogue of the Stosch collection. He shows himself to have been very much aware of an aspect of Winckelmann's writing that provides a challenge to translators and editors: he was constantly adding to and changing his texts. For Goethe this was a quality that kept Winckelmann's work fresh and exciting, and which he missed after Winckelmann's death, because, if he had lived, "he would have re-written things again and again and always worked remote things and his newest experiences into his writings" (*WJ*, 118). In some further reflections on Winckelmann's character Goethe brings out his simplicity and innocence combined with a passion for honesty. "Winckelmann was so completely the kind of person who is honest with himself and with others" (*WJ*, 123). Finally, Goethe focuses on the central restlessness and unease in Winckelmann's character, which expressed itself in his constant longing for his absent friends, and which ultimately, in an aborted attempt to visit them again, resulted in his death.

Apart from his essay on Winckelmann, it is clear that Goethe was influenced for the rest of his life by his discovery of the culture of ancient Greece. Butler provides an evocative and perceptive account of this in chapter 4 of her book. There are the examples of Goethe's poems on Greek heroes and gods, such as Prometheus, Heracles, and Chronos, and of his play *Iphigenia*, as well as the projects for plays, such as *Achilleis*,

Euphrosyne, and *Nausicaa*, and of course the inclusion of the figure of Helena in *Faust II*.

The influence of Greek culture on the writer Friedrich Schiller was mediated through his study of Lessing's *Laocoon* and his acquaintance with the works of Goethe, especially *Iphigenia*. Butler points out that in his essay on *Pathos* of 1793 Schiller includes Winckelmann's description of the Laocoon sculpture from the latter's *History of the Art of Antiquity*. She adds that in the essay *On Grace and Dignity* of 1793 he also included another quotation from the same work by Winckelmann on the concept of grace, as well as some of Winckelmann's descriptions of statues, such as the *Belevedere Apollo* and the so-called *Borghese Gladiator*.

The poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) was more extensively interested in the gods of Greek mythology and ancient Greek literature than many of his contemporaries were. He idolized Schiller, and most of his early poetry was clearly written in imitation of the older man's work. One of the theses he had to present for his master's degree was greatly indebted to the ideas of Winckelmann. Its title was "Description of the History of the Fine Arts among the Greeks." In this he outlines Winckelmann's ideas in the *History of the Art of Antiquity*, repeating many of his arguments verbatim.[27]

As well as reflecting on Winckelmann's influence on Goethe, Schiller, and Herder, Butler traces the reverberations of the enthusiasm for ancient Greek culture throughout the nineteenth century, and includes some reflections on Heinrich Heine's satirical depiction of the gods of Greece as ghosts who had left Olympus and were now wandering unrecognized in the world.[28]

Other writers who are mentioned by Butler as maintaining interest in Winckelmann's vision of ancient Greece include the Austrian Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872) and the Swiss Carl Spitteler (1845–1924). Noteworthy as versions of Greek sources are Grillparzer's plays *Sappho* (1881), *The Golden Fleece* (a trilogy, 1879), and *The Waves of the Sea and of Love* (1831), which is a version of the legend of Hero and Leander. Spitteler, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920, is now mainly known for his modernized versions of Greek myths: the 2-volume epic *Prometheus and Epimetheus* (1881) and *Olympic Spring* (1905). His writings do not owe a direct debt to Winckelmann but provide clear evidence of the continuing relevance of Greek culture in German-speaking lands. Influences of Winckelmann's concept of imitation have also been traced in the ideas of Stefan George (1868–1933).[29]

Winckelmann's Influence on Walter Pater

Winckelmann's writings exerted indisputable influence on the English critic Walter Pater (1839–94), famous especially for his writings on the