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NOTE

This contribution is part of a larger dialogue of three articles and one responding piece that form the current issue of *JOLCEL*. The other contributions are “The Future of Winckelmann’s Classical Form: Walter Pater and Frederic Leighton” by Elizabeth Prettejohn (pp. 33–56) and “Winckelmann in Nineveh: Assyrian Remains at the Age of Classics” by Yannick Le Pape (pp. 58–78). The response piece is “Bodily Exclusions? Winckelmann’s Victims and the Paradox of Form” by Rosa M. Rodríguez Porto (pp. 80–87).

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“Two Styles More Opposed”: Harriet Hosmer’s Classicisms between Winckelmann and Bernini*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Harriet Hosmer (1830–1908) positioned two early busts, *Daphne* (1853/4) and *Medusa* (1854) in opposition to Gianlorenzo Bernini’s works of the same subject through careful deployment of Winckelmannian principles. It engages with the first English translation of Winckelmann’s *History of the Art of Antiquity* by Giles Henry Lodge in 1850, as well as the rich body of antique material available to Hosmer in Rome. It problematises art historical approaches to Hosmer’s work that emphasise biographically-led readings over object-led interpretations informed by contemporary translations, discourses of originality, and display practices. It demonstrates the conflicting position of Bernini in the middle and late nineteenth century as the “Prince of Degenerate Sculpture”, and shows that Winckelmann’s victimisation of Bernini led to his poor reputation. Bernini’s reputation as skilled but degenerate provided the foil for Hosmer to reclaim these subjects, demonstrate her correct understanding of classical principles and citation, and prove her superiority. Ultimately, however, the two artists will be shown to have more similarities than differences in their use of classical references; only access to Winckelmann’s writings separates their reception in the nineteenth century.

* *Acknowledgements:* This article develops a chapter from my unpublished doctoral thesis at the University of York, submitted in 2018. I have presented some of the material at the British Association for Victorian Studies annual conference in 2017, and part of it at the Winckelmann’s Victims conference in 2018. I have been grateful for the critical feedback from readers over the course of its development, particularly Prof. Liz Prettejohn and Prof. Jason Edwards as my doctoral supervisors. I am grateful also for financial support from the Terra Foundation for American Art in 2015, which allowed me to conduct archival and site research in the United States, and the Henry Moore Institute where I was Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the time of presenting and then writing this article in 2018–19.

Harriet Hosmer's *Daphne* (fig. 1) and *Medusa* (fig. 2) represent the first professional ideal sculptures by an American woman. The pair of busts were Hosmer's debut into the professional art world in Italy, Britain, and America. They announced her sophisticated grasp of aesthetic discourse and antique references, skill in carving, and artistic ingenuity. The works fit into a larger category of nineteenth-century Anglo-American ideal busts, but far from being generic "ideal" figures,¹ the busts reveal an erudite interplay of antique references and discursive modes. As a thematically related pendant pair, the different expressive and stylistic elements in Hosmer's sculptures produced a dynamic series of complements and comparisons between two fully realized individual works of art. This paper triangulates these busts, as a pair, between two giants of art history: the eighteenth-century German art historian/critic Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Italian Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, a triangulation which required Hosmer, and by extension modern scholars, to work between texts, translations, and visual media simultaneously. I propose Hosmer's busts may be read as performances of Winckelmann in opposition to Bernini—setting herself up as the embodiment of a rival school of classicism. It treats Winckelmann's text, primarily via Giles Henry Lodge's 1850 abridged translation of Book IV as *History of Ancient Art Among the*



Figure 1: Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, *Daphne*, 1853/4, marble, 69.9 x 49.8 x 31.8 cm (27 1/2 x 19 5/8 x 12 1/2 in.), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1973.133.



Figure 2: Harriet Goodhue Hosmer, *Medusa*, 1854, marble, 69.22 x 53.34 x 24.13 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2003.125, photo by Minneapolis Institute of Art.

¹ 'Ideal' sculpture is broadly conceived as "allegorical, classical, Biblical, or literary," primarily the female nude (far outnumbering male nudes); works were frequently conceived of as pairs or pendants, which "involved not only an aesthetic balance of form, but a comparison or contrast of emotional and philosophic content of the two separate units of the sculpture meant to be understood and enjoyed singly, and yet losing its ultimate message unless both halves were seen and related, one to the other." Gerdtz, *American Neo-Classic Sculpture*, 20–21.

Greeks, as a practical guide to antique sculpture and the formation of modern taste.²

By performing close readings of the mythological and sculptural references in Hosmer's busts, drawing on intertextual approaches from classical receptions and literary studies,³ I offer new readings of Hosmer's busts by examining, and taking seriously, her engagement with antique precedents. I re-orientate the study of mid-century neoclassical sculpture towards a fuller engagement with classicism as an international, cosmopolitan language of form, invested with scholarly erudition and enriched by the encounter with antique objects. I suggest that Hosmer's works reveal a familiarity with Winckelmann's text, especially the construction of discursive modes and his chronologies and criticisms, which informed her selection of effective antique references, although Hosmer did not reference Winckelmann, Lodge, or even many antique works of art in her extant correspondence. She selected these classical citations not for their popularity or wider role in the consciousness of an art-viewing public, but for their allusive, thematic, or iconographic relevance to her subjects, which demonstrates a further awareness of her mythic subjects and the wide range of material available in Rome.⁴ Her apparent use of Winckelmann is framed by Bernini's reception in Anglo-American criticism in the period around Hosmer's work. His status in the nineteenth century offered her the opportunity to set up an artistic rivalry that she was sure to win between herself as a Winckelmannian, correctly classical sculptor and Bernini as the anti-classical degenerate, a victim of Winckelmannian norms and exclusions. Hosmer topped Bernini in her performance of classicism and citation, which may have allowed her to simultaneously demonstrate her superior grasp of classicism and conventions, while also—by claiming his subjects for her own—developing a subtle edge to her artistic persona, without overtly branding herself as outside the bounds of artistic propriety. Hosmer's practice was demonstrative of the larger intellectual project of nineteenth-century neoclassicism, and his article offers not only new sources for her early busts but a broader demonstration of how mid-nineteenth-century American sculptors related to, appropriated, and performed their individual classicisms.

1 You were myth-taken: re-evaluating victimhood narratives in Hosmer's Ovidian busts

Harriet Goodhue Hosmer was born October 9, 1830, to a middle-class family outside Boston.⁵ Having lost her mother and three siblings to tuberculosis by the

² Winckelmann, translated and edited by Lodge, *History of Ancient Art Among the Greeks*, hereafter Lodge, 1850; translated from Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*.

³ This draws especially on Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext*.

⁴ On allusion and intertext, see especially Hinds, 1–16; see also Prettejohn's provocation in the introduction to *Modern Painters* regarding resemblance, allusion, and upon whom the responsibility for recognising or producing meaning from these potential references, especially points 2, 4, 5, and 12. Prettejohn, *Modern Painters*, 5–6.

⁵ For Hosmer's correspondence, see Carr, *Harriet Hosmer, Letters and Memories*; the best modern biography is Culkin, *Harriet Hosmer*.

age of twelve, young Harriet was raised with her physician father's belief that strong bodies prevented consumption and was allowed to run free and wild in Watertown. By sixteen, she had grown into such an unholy terror that she was shipped off to a liberal girls' school in the backwoods of Massachusetts. After leaving school, she attended medical lectures in St Louis and took art lessons in Boston, before moving to Rome in 1852 for better access to models, training, and materials. There she studied under John Gibson RA, and by 1853, she progressed from copying antique models to developing her own figures. She would go on to be one of the most successful American sculptors in Rome by any measure—at one point even selling sculptures directly to the Prince of Wales from her studio. She died in penury in 1908, and today her sculptures are held in numerous public and private collections in America and Britain.

Hosmer's highly-publicized life was full of moments that exemplify an American narrative of success through grit, determination, and good old-fashioned gumption: moonlit horseback adventures and train shenanigans, attending medical school with a pistol tucked in her belt (having grown up with a "spirited horse, a dog, and a gun"⁶), moving to Rome more-or-less unannounced in the company of an actress to become John Gibson's first student,⁷ upsetting the Roman community by riding unaccompanied (at full tilt) along the Corso and in the campagna. Her professional and personal reputation was one of chaste high spirits and a touch of charming wildness; she wore masculine clothes and had short hair. Her adventures included convincing Elizabeth Barrett Browning to cross dress in order to sneak into a monastery for some illicit, gender-bending art appreciation, a shenanigan foiled by Barrett Browning's nerves and Robert Browning's fear of controversy.⁸ She never married legally but had romantic and probably sexual relationships with women throughout her life, including with Louisa Baring, Lady Ashburton, for whom Hosmer produced numerous works, and in relation to whom Hosmer called herself "*sposa*" and "hubby."⁹

Because Hosmer's biography is so exciting, in a *This Girl Can, Well-Behaved Women Rarely Make History* way, it is not surprising that modern scholarship has privileged biographically led readings of her work. I have written elsewhere how a scholarly preoccupation with Hosmer's sexuality and sex life, and a focus on feminist psychoanalysis, have caused myths and rumours to persist as truth and to hinder new art historical research.¹⁰ While biography is an unquestionably vital part of art historical research and critical interpretation, because artists develop their individual characters and artistic vocabularies through their life experiences, later scholars often read the work of women artists through their life events, gender, or sexual orientation. What is key here is the difference between *biography*, that is, the history of a person's life and context, from which historians can develop arguments around access to material, professional networks, commissions, and so on, and *biographically led interpretation*, readings of a work or oeuvre which

⁶ Carr, *Letters and Memories*, 1.

⁷ Culkin, *Cultural Biography*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ Culkin, *Cultural Biography*, 117–22; Vicinus, "Laocoöning in Rome," 353–66.

¹⁰ Gustin, "Corps a corps," 824–53.

takes the artist's life as the primary source of meaning or intellectual content. These later readings often fail to account for or examine exactly the kinds of the wider literary, artistic, and historic *milieux* of the artists which critical biography offers, and do not give women credit for their intellectual and artistic work. Instead, these reproduce biological or gender-essentialist constructions, or draw on stereotypes of oppression, exceptional characters, and before-their-time gender politics. This is not to remotely suggest that biographical art history, particularly in a feminist context where much work remains to be done on restoring women's biographies and contributions to the public awareness, is not valuable. This article relies on the archival and contextual work conducted by primarily biographical historians, particularly given the Hosmer archive is not replete with manuscript evidence for her artistic choices, processes, or intellectual development.¹¹ Therefore, the biographical work done by Culkin and Sherwood provides the historical basis for the less-well-documented visual and critical arguments developed herein.

Hosmer's *biography* provides evidence for what she could have seen in Rome, who she could speak to, and when objects were produced. By contrast, biographically led interpretation includes Dolly Sherwood suggesting that Hosmer made the busts discussed here to process her terror of sex because she never married or had children.¹² This is nonsense, as Hosmer enacted lesbian marriage ceremonies with her partners and wrote erotic letters to Louisa Baring, Lady Ashburton throughout their relationship; she just was not interested in marrying a man. Kate Culkin comments that

Harriet began to explore the themes of female power and female victimisation...Her sympathetic portrayal of Medusa critiques ways in which women were punished and judged for any sexual behavior. Her Daphne's submissiveness...emphasized that in turning to her father for help, the huntress allowed another to determine her fate.¹³

However, Culkin further notes that while proclaiming celibacy (and complaining about her friend's engagement), Hosmer was still engaging in sexual and romantic relationships with women, which she suggests these busts also celebrated.¹⁴ Most recently Melissa Dabakis's *Sisterhood of Sculptors* argues that the *Medusa* presents Hosmer's self-identification as a "mannish woman," her lesbian desire, and that

¹¹ I was able to visit Hosmer Papers at the Schlesinger Library in 2015 thanks to a Terra Foundation for American Art Research Travel Grant, and during the COVID-19 pandemic have been very grateful for the efforts of the librarians in scanning materials that would be otherwise inaccessible.

¹² "It is not difficult to understand her attraction to the free-spirited Daphne; Hatty realised that a romantic involvement or matrimony could put an end to her ambitions for a career as a sculptor. Searching for her identification with Medusa is a quest far more arcane...At the root of Hosmer's fascination with Medusa may have lurked a fear of sexuality and its consequences...Her instinctive way of compensating for these subliminal terrors may have been her recreation of these two figures, resuscitated in wholeness and the purity of marble." Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer*, 87. Sherwood also questions Hosmer's affiliation to the neoclassical aesthetic, describing it as "oddly alien to her nature," and wonders why "one so vivacious and animated wish to represent in her works the Greek ideals of repose and serenity," at 63.

¹³ Culkin, *Cultural Biography*, 35–37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

the pair of works displays her commitment to a subversive proto-feminism,¹⁵ while only briefly referring to potential visual connections or the thought process behind Hosmer's artistic choices. William Gerdts' 1978 "The Medusa of Harriet Hosmer" is the only extended examination of the work itself and the available visual and literary sources from which Hosmer might have been working.¹⁶ These primarily biographical interpretations, which enact feminist and psychoanalytic readings of Medusa based on those by Hélène Cixous and Sigmund Freud,¹⁷ fail to properly explore the myth in the wider art historical and sculptural histories of the Medusa, nor do they seriously engage with the majority of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which is far longer than these two episodes.

The subjects Hosmer chose for her first professional works come from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,¹⁸ but the Daphne and Medusa stories are not next to each other in the text (Books I and IV respectively) and are not presented together elsewhere in sculptural history to suggest them as a natural pendant pair. Previous scholarship has presented them as a natural pair because of the theme of the victimized woman,¹⁹ but this is common enough in both Ovid and nineteenth century art as to be largely meaningless as a unique joining principle.²⁰ Instead, consider those characteristics that the episodes she chose have in common—both Medusa and Daphne transform because of the actions of a deity associated with the arts, Minerva and Apollo respectively, and their transformations lead directly to a proliferation of sculptural materials: stone for Medusa, wood for Daphne.²¹ Importantly, no major sculptor apart from Bernini had previously depicted *both* of these subjects—meaning that Hosmer was setting herself up in direct competition with him, and no other. She could therefore metamorphose not only her raw sculptural materials into finished works, but also transform the mythological subjects from Bernini's property into her own. Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* (fig. 3) and *Head of Medusa* (fig. 4) were both readily available to her; the Villa Borghese is a fifteen- or twenty-minute walk from her home in Via Gregoriana, Rome, while the Capitoline Gallery was a little further, approximately half an hour or fifteen minutes on horseback. These repositories of not only Bernini's works, but

¹⁵ It also associates the bust with a door knocker on a residence Hosmer lived in, describing it as "depicting the head of Medusa whose hair showed only the first suggestion of turning to snakes," and a key moment of artistic self-fashioning. However, this door knocker is widely distributed in Rome and in Britain, has been in production since the eighteenth century, and is a vegetal figure like a Ceres or Bacchante, not any sort of Medusa or Gorgon. There is no evidence that Hosmer had anything to do with the knocker's installation. Dabakis, *A Sisterhood of Sculptors*, 51–54.

¹⁶ Gerdts, "The Medusa of Harriet Hosmer," 96–107.

¹⁷ Dabakis, *Sisterhood*, 53; Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 875–93; Freud, "Das Medusenhaupt," 105–6.

¹⁸ Latin text and translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (hereafter *Met.*) taken from the 1916 Loeb edition by Frank Justus Miller (see bibliography).

¹⁹ Culkin, *Cultural Biography*, 36; Dabakis, *Sisterhood*, 49–50; Fryd, "The 'Ghosting' of Incest and Female Relations," 292–309.

²⁰ See especially Gerdts, *American Neo-classic Sculpture*; Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*. On violence and the body in the *Metamorphoses*, see Segal, "Ovid's Metamorphic Bodies," 9–41.

²¹ On Bernini and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Warwick, *Bernini: Art as Theatre*, 84–85, 103–5; Barolsky, "Ovid, Bernini, and the Art of Petrification"; Wilkins, "Bernini and Ovid."



Figure 3: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, ca. 1622–25, marble, 243 cm (96 in), Galleria Borghese, inv. CV, photo by author.



Figure 4: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Head of Medusa*, ca. 1635, marble, 52 x 60 x 36 cm (20.4 x 23.6 x 14 in.), Capitoline Museum, MC1166, photo by author, courtesy of Roma Capitale – Sovrintendenza

ancient sculpture of the highest order, provided the visual material that Hosmer studied and refigured in her busts. We shall return to these in more depth shortly. The Daphne myth is not immediately adjacent to the Medusa episode, nor is it not connected through similar characters, scenes, or contiguous narrative. It takes place in Book I of the *Metamorphoses*, with Apollo and Cupid as the instigators of the action.²² Apollo, boasting about his prowess with arms and general mightiness, irritates Cupid into shooting him with a golden arrow to inflame his lust for Daphne—who he has shot in turn with a deadening lead arrow. Apollo chases poor Daphne through the Attic woodlands, shouting after her about how great he is, doesn't she know who his father is, and he's so good at the lyre!²³ Even if she had not already declared that she was avoiding the chains of matrimony, and had not been further made immune to his manly charms, it's hard to imagine anyone actually being charmed into a casual woodland shag by being chased and screamed at by a complete stranger. She prays to her father, the river god Peneus, to be saved from this raving pervert chasing her through the forest shouting about his healing fingers—a line which has surely never worked. In the moment of greatest narrative tension, Daphne is overcome and transformed into a laurel tree, outreached fingers to limbs and leaves, toes digging into the soil as roots, soft flesh into firm, unyielding, splintery wood. Apollo, finally catching up to her, is very sad: he embraces her now-barky figure and tries to get a leg over despite her

²² *Met.* I.451–567.

²³ *Met.* 1.512–18.

woodenness and lack of amorous response—apparently Cupid’s dart overpowers any concerns about chafing. Even as an immobile tree, Daphne rejects him— “But even the wood shrank from his kisses”²⁴—and in perverse homage, Apollo decides to wear her limbs as a crown.

Daphne’s bound arms and distressing stillness suggest the rooted and muted nymph after her arboreal ordeal, rather than highlighting the violence, visual drama, and magical effects of her transformation.²⁵ That does not mean, however, that the violent content of the myth is “not encoded” in the bust, as Dabakis would have it:²⁶ the title and iconographic elements point to these directly and it is expected that the educated viewer would know not only the story, but also the Bernini work against which Hosmer was contrasting herself. Hosmer’s *Daphne* is caught in the sturdy twining branches of the laurel garland: bound up in herself, and in the symbol appropriated by the god responsible for her transformation. Where the sharp edges of the leaves caress the soft underside of Daphne’s breasts, the softly-rasped skin of the stone gives the effect of gooseflesh, her nipples peaking in an unclassical naturalism that suggests the coolness of a breeze that rustles the leaves and ruffles the perfect waves of her bound-up hair. The fruiting branches’ swollen berries echo and emphasize the shocking eroticism in their shape and shine, which to a too-attentive gaze may even recall the bulbous swags on the Ephesian Diana. The earthy wooden bindings, with their clumped and ripening fruits and shivering shimmering leaves, hold the nymph’s soft limbs rigidly against her trunk; only the rippling waves of Daphne’s hair beneath her ribbon recall the river where she frolicked freely under the protection of her father-god, slipping with the current and as she pleased. The modelled skin lacks the licked-wet sheen to which marble can be lovingly polished²⁷— Daphne’s flesh is smooth, soft, but dry even to the eye, like the wood peeking through the heat-cracked bark of Apollo’s tree in summer.

Ovid’s version of the Medusa myth is developed in Book IV,²⁸ although this is only one of the multiple antique versions of the myth and artistic traditions.²⁹ Though the Gorgon head was utilized throughout the Perseus narratives, her transformation from mortal woman to apotropaic emblem is only explained at the very end, in twenty lines. Where Daphne had been textually allowed to speak for herself, Perseus narrates Medusa’s story in the past tense. He tells the audience at his wedding to Andromeda that Medusa was once the priestess of Minerva, especially noted for her beautiful hair. Neptune raped her in Minerva’s temple while Minerva averted her gaze from the assault. Afterwards, Minerva punished Medusa for the violation of the sacred precinct by transforming her into the snaky, sculpting monster, then sending Perseus to kill her. He brought her now-magical head to Minerva for her to use as a weapon. The Gorgoneion appears throughout

²⁴ *Met.* I.556.

²⁵ Dabakis notes that this work “combined a sensuous naturalism with the geometric clarity of the fifth-century B.C.E. classical ideal...The face, however, inspired by Greek Severe-style sculpture, stands in sharp contrast to the naturalism of the rest of the body.” *Sisterhood*, 49.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁷ On neoclassical sculptural surfaces, see especially Ferando, “The Deceptive Surface.”

²⁸ *Met.* IV.783–803.

²⁹ See especially Wilks, *Medusa*; Garber and Vickers, eds., *The Medusa Reader*.

Greco-Roman art as an apotropaic device on armor, sarcophagi, and buildings. Medusa's wings are an iconographic holdover from the older, more monstrous "pot" Gorgon, and are not wholly necessary to a recognition of Medusa. Medusas or Gorgoneions are particularly numerous and varied.³⁰ Major pieces to which Hosmer had access, apart from the aforementioned Bernini, included Canova's *Perseus and Medusa*, the first version of which stood the Vatican, and variations of the Rondanini Medusa, which had been removed to Berlin well before Hosmer's arrival in Rome. There were also decorative and architectural examples—one Gorgoneion even appears embedded in the wall of Canova's studio in Rome.

One hundred and sixty-odd years after its original creation, Hosmer's *Medusa* retains its arresting quality: I found it difficult, upon seeing the work for the first time, to refrain from touching the marble. The stone is not quite the sugary whiteness of Seravezza or freshly cut Parian but in the carved flesh of the shoulder and bust, seems to absorb warmth and light like a densely woven velvet and becomes fleshier compared to the glinting polish of the hairband and sandy desert-adder scales of the lowly serpents. Medusa's meltingly soft upward gaze refuses to meet the eye of the beholder—perhaps for their safety— and joined with the graceful twist of the neck to turn her cheek towards us, goes towards the application of the beautiful style. Here is not an unthinking and frozen terror in the face of gruesome death, or a hardness which can be felt more than described. Nor is Hosmer's *Medusa* the personified battlefield shriek or monstrous medallion of the ancient world,³¹ the multiple, morbid mask of Canova's *Perseus*,³² or Cellini's bulbous, dribbling trophy.³³ Despite being a harbinger of death by petrification, the *Medusa's* materiality and narrative marmoreality is submerged under the velvety fleshiness of the surface, the soft throat and gently downturned lips: the beauty of the figure and the beauty of the expression are as intimately tangled up in each as the snakes below her breasts. Her suffering is transformed from horrific if mundane physical pain to an elevated plane of experience, beyond mortal ken but made tolerable to human sight, watchable when the horror should make us look away—approachable through the supreme physical charms of the work. The graceful forms and sensual charms of the *Medusa*, the pleasing fleshiness of the arms and the breasts, the luxurious if snake-laden hair, the attractively parted lips, invite the touches and caresses of the viewer despite the risk—or because of it.

These narratives are not sufficiently unique as 'victim' episodes within the *Metamorphoses* to be inherently paired together, even as proto-feminist statements. They are, as noted, three books apart in the text; it is worth noting also that the myths leading up to the Perseus episode are Juno transforming the Theban women into birds, then Cadmus and Harmonia. The former involves the

³⁰ Cima, "Imago Medusae."

³¹ Feldman, "Gorgo and the Origins of Fear," 484–94; Belson, "The Medusa Rondanini," 373–78.

³² Culkin suggests Canova's *Perseus* as a competitor for Hosmer, but I disagree with this reading; she is not competing with Canova but aligning herself with him through shared classical principles, *Cultural Biography*, 35–37. On the Medusa within Canova's *Triumphant Perseus*, see especially Boucher, "Head of Medusa," 62–63; O. Raggio, "Canova's Triumphant Perseus," 204–12; on the Bassano del Grappa version of the Medusa in copper and alternative antique points of references, see Gustin, "Canova's Copper Head of Medusa," 916–23.

³³ Cole, "Cellini's Blood."

transformation of women by a goddess, and the latter involves snakes, and are therefore related to Medusa either thematically or iconographically. Closely following the Medusa episode, the Muse Calliope sings of the rape of Proserpina, again thematically relevant, and in textual proximity. By noting this, it becomes clear Hosmer's underlying principle of pairing Daphne and Medusa was not sexual assault or female victimization, but the sculptural themes which associated her with the *bête noire* of nineteenth century taste, Bernini. These narratives, likewise, are not sufficient in and of themselves to explain the difference in affect between Hosmer's two busts, nor to fully explain the selection of antique prototypes and references. Previous scholarship has loosely gestured towards Hosmer's citation of classical Athenian sculpture and Bernini's *Medusa*,³⁴ but not explored why, and how, the young sculptor might have constructed these contrasting images of Ovidian subjects, let alone why these subjects. We will therefore turn to the primary text through which Hosmer was most likely familiar with various modes of classical ideal sculpture.

2 Winckelmann, Lodge, and the question of style

It is essential to ascertain not only to which antique prototypes Hosmer was referring, but to determine what her selection criteria were, and what those have to do with her subject. To answer those questions, we turn to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*. Winckelmann's writings were highly influential for the development of what is now called neoclassical sculpture,³⁵ and he is often given credit for essentially founding art history (especially classical art history) as an academic discipline.³⁶ The Lodge translations (partial in 1850, see fig. 5, and complete in 1872, with another edition in 1880³⁷) were the only English translations of Winckelmann's *History* before the twenty-first century but it is not unlikely that Hosmer had access to or awareness of the 1850 edition before commencing the *Daphne* and *Medusa*. Lodge was active in Boston, a member of prominent Brahmin family, and Hosmer, as a graduate of the well-connected Sedgwick School,³⁸ a regular visitor to the Boston Athenaeum, and a practising art student, may well have been aware of his translation work even before she left for Rome in 1852. By reframing Hosmer's works in this light, we can ask seriously what artists in the nineteenth century could *do* with Winckelmann's writings, and how the impact of these texts might be seen in the finished works of art. Unfortunately, Hosmer did not write her letters with future art historians in mind, and barely discussed her visual or critical materials nor her

³⁴ Dabakis, *Sisterhood*, 49–50.

³⁵ See also Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 21; on nineteenth-century sculpture and German aesthetic thought, see MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects*; on ideal beauty, the antique, and modern sculpture, see Ferrari, "The Sculptor, the Duke, and Queer Art," 230.

³⁶ On Winckelmann's predecessors and the question of Winckelmann's 'invention' of art history, see Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, 105–15; Potts, 72–81.

³⁷ Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, translated by Lodge. Further citations given from the 1880 edition, as Lodge 1880.

³⁸ Culkin, *Cultural Biography*, 9–15.

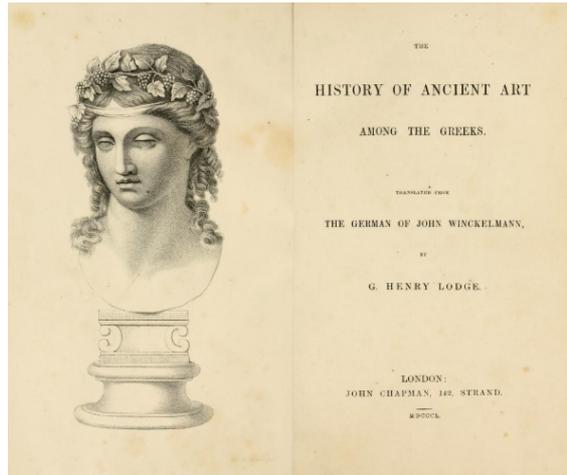


Figure 5: Frontispiece and title page of Winckelmann, trans. Lodge, 1850, photo by Getty Research Institute.

design process, let alone her reading list, and leaves us with only circumstantial evidence and our observational skills to connect dots rather than specific references to Winckelmann or Lodge.³⁹ This absence of manuscript evidence, however, should not discourage us from pursuing new readings and interpretative strategies, particularly where such approaches might open up wider critical avenues. Furthermore, a biography of Gibson, to which Hosmer contributed material and which purports to largely reproduce Gibson's own writings, makes repeated reference to Winckelmann's theories and histories of art as a touchstone for his practice, which suggests that she was at least circumstantially exposed to Winckelmann's ideas under Gibson's tutelage;⁴⁰ indeed, a passage from the 1850 edition is (with minor discrepancies) reproduced in *Life of John Gibson*. We should therefore use the visual evidence from her finished works—the close attention to which allows for the development of a set of comparanda from which she could have drawn on the balance of availability, similarity, and appropriateness in subject or situation—and the presumption that a serious young artist was at least broadly familiar with a major underlying discourse for their chosen profession, particularly by an author who influenced her beloved teacher.

³⁹ By way of demonstrating how frustratingly vague Hosmer was about her visual sources, in her Beatrice Cenci, she made no contemporary mention of the so-called Guido Reni painting to which she clearly referred, but only discussed it many years later in passing in a newspaper interview. See Gustin, "Corps a corps."

⁴⁰ Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson*, 210. The most direct and extensive discussion of Winckelmann from the volume is an uncited quote from Lodge 1850, 48, no. 29. "The following passage from Winckelmann was always in my mind. 'The forms of a beautiful body are determined by lines the centre of which is always changing, and which, if continued, would never describe circles. They are consequently more simple, but also more complex than a circle which, however large or small it may be, always has the same centre, and either includes others or is included in others. This diversity was sought after by the Greeks in works of all kinds, and their discernment of its beauty led them to introduce the same system even into the forms of their utensils and vases, the easy and elegant outline of which is drawn after the same rule, that is by a line the centre of which must be found by means of several circles. Thus all these works have an elliptical figure, and therein consists their beauty. The greater unity here is in the junction of the forms and in the flowing of one out of another, the greater is the beauty of the whole.'"

Lodge's first translation presents the sections of the *Geschichte* that covers Greek art, Books VI and V, with an abridged text. Lodge noted in his introduction that his translation was "encouraged, besides, by the growing love of art in this country, stimulated as it has been by a few admirable works from the hands of native artists," and because

it presents a systematic exposition of the principals by which the author supposed the Greek artists to have been governed in the conception and conformation of those works which still stand the noblest creations of artistic genius, and about which the students and the lovers of beauty, grace, and majesty still gather with admiration and reverence.⁴¹

The volume was produced as a primer to introduce Americans to antique sculpture and inculcate good taste. Though substantially reduced in scope from Winckelmann's original text, which covers art from Egypt to the Late Antique, Lodge's translation highlighted the portions most relevant to the growing field of American sculpture: the nude. By presenting a scholarly text that explained the attributes, qualities, and types of the antique examples the artists were studying, Lodge prepared his American audience to properly appreciate the new works being displayed in their cities and the antiques they saw in reproduction or on tour in Italy. It was available on both sides of the Atlantic and accessible to interested readers in a range of social classes and roles.⁴² The elevation of modern art through study and imitation of antiquity was further something to be desired, and that in many respects the sculpture of the modern age (i.e., Winckelmann's day, but continuing into Lodge's time with his translation), had surpassed that of earlier generations through "a more attentive study of antiquity," and that "our artists, having been required to make copies of antique works, have consequently been more confined to an imitation of the style of the ancients, whereas prior to this time... the style of Algardi and Bernini was regarded as the evangelical law."⁴³

The text is heavily annotated with notes from the "German edition" and comments from Lodge, with further examples, translations, and information, especially regarding Winckelmann's errors of chronology or new discoveries. This made it an ideal primer for a young sculptor developing her aesthetic principles far from the actual material of antiquity, or for the art lover looking to improve his understanding of historic art. Lodge's annotations occasionally contradicted Winckelmann with new information, but were aimed at explicating his more obscure or counterintuitive comments, suggesting that Lodge intended Winckelmann's text to be taken primarily at face value. As it has been widely noted, the star sculptures within Winckelmann's *Geschichte* were overthrown from their fame within fifty years—that is, well before Lodge began his translation. Many of his chronologies and attributions were overturned or corrected by new scholarship

⁴¹ Lodge 1850, pref. NP.

⁴² For example, the Royal Academy of Arts' copy was once owned by John Russell Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces of British India. Royal Academy of Arts Library Catalogue, RA Collection: Book, 06/1846.

⁴³ Lodge, 1850, 179–80.

and new discoveries.⁴⁴ The removal of the Parthenon marbles from the Acropolis to London brought Greek original sculptures to the British, the Aegina sculptures to Berlin, and the Nike of Samothrace to Paris; the Apollo Belvedere was shown to be Hellenistic and new additions to the canon of Greek sculptors (admittedly, via marble copies of bronze works) included the Discobolus of Myron in 1781, the Apoxyomenos of Lysippus in 1849, and in 1863 the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, just to name a very few. Prettejohn notes that Walter Pater's discussion of Winckelmann in *The Renaissance* cites Winckelmann's lack of access to true Greek sculptures, and his use of Roman copies and imitations "left in Winckelmann's actual results much that a more privileged criticism can correct."⁴⁵ However, Prettejohn notes that "The experienced reader of Pater will hear the irony in the phrase 'actual results'."⁴⁶ Despite his errors and inability to foresee what had yet to be excavated, Winckelmann's wider didactic project still offered valuable insights for artists and audiences.

Winckelmann's systematic categorizations and explanations of antique sculpture and paintings, with descriptions of each part of the body, the conformations of different deities and personages, and the best examples of each type or personage, were paired with the effusive ekphrastic passages that conveyed the power of antique art. These drew not only from close observation of the works, but the study of ancient literary texts, numismatic evidence, and earlier critical histories like Vasari and Caylus, to produce systematic theories of causation as well as the visual analyses and histories of development in style.⁴⁷ Even in Lodge's somewhat stodgy and reduced text—the Campbell's Condensed Soup edition of Winckelmann—the aesthetic fervour Winckelmann felt for antique sculpture comes through in passages describing the "most beautiful spring-time of youth"⁴⁸ in images of Apollo or calling the Laocoön "a miracle."⁴⁹ Winckelmann's combination of evocative descriptions and painstaking formal, archaeological, and textual analyses of the works to construct a coherent history of ancient art made this text a useful handbook for artists—if an artist wanted to know, for instance, where to look for the finest example of female hands, or how *not* to pose a heroic male figure (lest he look effeminate), Lodge's translation had them covered.

Winckelmann ordained that sculpture should aspire to the serenity and self-containment of the best Greek sculptures, which was depicted through the finest modelling and refined contours, without jarring or incoherent, undignified gesture or forms. Subtlety of contour and expression, and elevated spirit or concept, were the order of excellence, not necessarily virtuosic demonstrations of mechanical skill bereft of internal sensibility. *Expression* included both action and its more

⁴⁴ On the broad question of Winckelmann's inaccuracies and his relevance today, see Potts, "Introduction," 4–6. On near-contemporary responses to Winckelmann's chronologies and scholarship see Harloe, *Winckelmann*, 170–87; on the intersection of reception of Winckelmann's historical structures, new archaeological and classical studies, and modern art's relationship to antiquity, Potts, *Flesh*, 29–32.

⁴⁵ Prettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture*, 10–11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁷ Harloe, *Winckelmann*, 105–30; Potts, "Introduction," 16–28.

⁴⁸ Lodge, 1850, 81.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

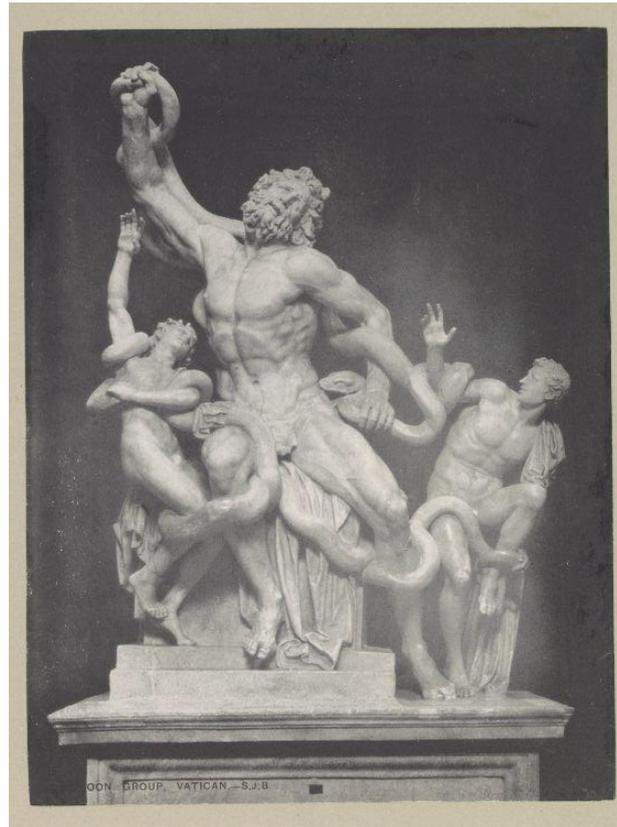


Figure 6: *Laocoön*, ca. 40-30 BCE, marble, 208 cm x 163 cm x 112 cm, Musei Vaticani, inv. 1059, photo by Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-F-2001-7-362-8.

limited form, and “changes the features of the face, and the posture, and consequently alters those forms which constitute beauty. The greater the change, the more unfavorable it is to beauty.”⁵⁰ An over-exuberance of any expression, positive or negative, would distort the features too far to be beautiful. The phrase, “*eine edle Einfalt, und eine stille Größe*,” from Winckelmann’s earlier *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*,⁵¹ sums this up tidily: the noble simplicity and quiet grandeur of antique sculpture was the aspiration (that this described a work as contorted and emotive as the *Laocoön* of the Vatican is a matter for another text entirely) (fig. 6).⁵² To understand the thought process behind Hosmer’s selection of antique sources that might allow her to produce modern works conforming to these standards of beauty, we must understand Winckelmann’s theory of high and beautiful styles in art. Hosmer may not have considered her works in these explicit terms, but we will see that her aesthetic argument demonstrates her familiarity with and use of the concepts.

Lodge’s translation emphasizes the high style’s suppression of facial expression in the face of death and unimaginable terror. He notes that Winckelmann is

⁵⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁵¹ Winckelmann, trans. Heyer and Norton, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*; Prettejohn, *Modernity*, 13.

⁵² Potts, *Flesh*, 138–39.

not making excuses for an ancient artist's deficiency in modelling human individuality, the softness of flesh, or momentary vagaries of expression. Instead,

A state such as this, in which sensation and reflection cease, and which resembles apathy, does not disturb a limb or a feature, and thus enabled the great artist to represent in this instant the highest beauty just as he has represented it; for Niobe and her daughters are beautiful according to the highest conceptions of beauty.⁵³

The abridged 1850 translation does not include Winckelmann's more explicit explanations of the character of the high style versus the beautiful or its chronological development.⁵⁴ As previously discussed, though, there is every possibility that Hosmer, training in Boston at this same moment, may have been in contact with Lodge, or been apprised of his work by her teachers, and had the opportunity to discuss the untranslated text. Furthermore, she had, by the time she started *Daphne*, been studying sculpture under John Gibson in Rome for a year; this meant not only practicing her modelling skills but spending time embedded in a studio environment with a senior sculptor who also incorporated Winckelmannian precepts into his practice. Anna Frasca Rath has demonstrated how Gibson integrated Winckelmann's ideas around imitation into his sculpture, following *his* teacher Canova;⁵⁵ it is unlikely that these ideas were never part of Hosmer's studio education, even if not in explicit terms, and as noted earlier Hosmer contributed autograph material to Eastlake's *Life of John Gibson* wherein Winckelmann is discussed repeatedly. Gibson may not have read aloud from Winckelmann to her or set her passages to read as homework but from experience as a student in active studios, these kinds of discussions happen as part of the daily practice and critique around a work in progress, a teaching environment which is not necessarily conducive to producing written records but which leaves visual traces on the developing work.

The high style is characterized by a hardness of contour that Winckelmann had associated with the severe style that preceded it. This "is a hardness more easily felt than described. We might wish to see in the face a certain grace which it would receive through more roundness and softness." The *Niobe and her Daughters* were considered "indisputable works of the high [grand] style."⁵⁶ (fig. 7) According to Winckelmann, the

fundamental principle of the high [grand] style was, as it appears, to represent the countenance and attitude of the gods and heroes as free from emotion, and not agitated by inward perturbation, in an equilibrium of feeling, and with a peaceful, always

⁵³ Lodge 1850, 164.

⁵⁴ It is worth noting that in the 1872/80 translations, Lodge translated Winckelmann's "*der höhe Stil*" (Winckelmann 1776, 470) as "the grand style," (Lodge 1880, vol 2, 135). *Höhe* is most commonly translated as "high" today, as opposed to Lodge's "grand" which connotes grandiosity, massive scale, richness or sumptuousness, and social elevation, rather than the intellectual or spiritual elevation Winckelmann described. This probably draws on Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* rather than Winckelmann's definitions, and I will continue to use "high" to describe the discursive style Winckelmann outlined. Reynolds, "Discourse XV."

⁵⁵ Rath, *John Gibson & Antonio Canova*, 75–78.

⁵⁶ Lodge 1880, 2:132.

even state of mind [...] it demands a lofty understanding to express this significant and speaking stillness of the soul.⁵⁷



Figure 7: *Niobe and her daughter*, ca. early 3rd c BCE, marble, 47.5 x 45.5 x 177 cm, Uffizi Museum, Florence, photo by Rijksmuseum, RP-F-00-8143.

By contrast, the beautiful style (*der schöne Stil*)⁵⁸ had “a more sensual charm,” and was deployed to “make grandeur more companionable, as it were, through an engaging desire to please.”⁵⁹ The beautiful style was more accessible, charming, and physical; it allowed a greater range and depth of emotive expression: “The variety and greater diversity of expression in the beautiful style did not detract from its harmony and grandeur.”⁶⁰ It was also considered a newer, younger development in art, opposed to the stylistically older high style, though works in both modes could be produced simultaneously; in the 1850 edition, Lodge particularly notes that a work of the “later style” like the *Apollino* of the Uffizi has a “flowing softness,” compared to a “severe and punctilious treatment.”⁶¹ The beautiful style accounted for a more sensually, recognizably human element in sculpture. Charm, grace, and physical attractiveness were the products of a Praxitelian revolution; works such as the *Aphrodite of Cnidos*, or a later discovery like the *Apoxyomenos*

⁵⁷ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁸ Winckelmann 1776, 475.

⁵⁹ Lodge 1880, 2:137.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁶¹ Lodge, 1850, 82.

of Lysippus all embodied this new naturalism. They were still highly idealised and elevated, of course, but with a more approachable, human beauty.

The high is not merely *older* art, though in Winckelmann's original construction of chronology and style he positioned it as the earlier style. To consider all severe or early classical works, before the supposed intervention/invention of Praxiteles's grace, as examples of the high style would contradict the positivist angle that Winckelmann put on the lack of softness and modulations of form and surface in works in the high style. The style's rigid contours and hard surfaces, after all, could not be ascribed to a failure if Winckelmann's point about the ideological and spiritual superiority of the high style was going to stand. The rigidity and hardness, any awkwardness of pose or carving, had to be consciously chosen aesthetic qualities in service to the elevated idea of the artist and the work. As Lodge's explanatory footnote comments,

It seems as if he wished to defend the artist of Niobe and her daughters merely by an ingenious explanation, or praise him conditionally, and tacitly concede the justice of the matter-of-fact objection usually made by incompetent judges, that the work is deficient in force of expression. But we maintain that it needs for its defence no such display of elaborate reasons. We must simply acknowledge what is obvious—that the artist's conception of his figures is raised far above the level of common nature.⁶²

That is, the high style must be consciously chosen to express the idea of sublimity beyond common human experience; it is not the absence of skill. Winckelmann's construction further privileges the Greek original, which is a key part in why he could only name two objects in Rome at the time that might be rightly called works in the high style. However, when separated from the chronological requirements and looked at as a set of formal and expressive conditions that signal 'early' and 'intellectual'—mirroring the beautiful style's signalling of 'emotional' and 'later', the high style can be used to explore works from later periods, especially consciously archaizing works from any period.

Because Winckelmann could only name two works—the *Niobe* of the Uffizi and the *Athena Albani*, which was partially illustrated in Lodge—that he would consider original examples of Greek sculpture in the high style,⁶³ artists looking to emulate the style had few concrete options to consult for visual references. Niobe's stony transformation made her somewhat more relevant to Daphne's story than the *Athena Albani*, but the stone element ties her more closely to Medusa. More importantly, Daphne was transformed so she could remain ever-virgin, unlike Niobe's fabled and ultimately fatal fecundity.⁶⁴ The *Athena* also resonates more with the *Medusa*, since Minerva was the one who transformed Medusa into the marble-maker in the first place. Moreover, neither work was readily accessible to Hosmer while she was working; the *Niobe* was in Florence, and the *Albani* collection was not a public museum. Hosmer had to use her powers of reasoning to identify a new corpus of material—high or severe in style, figures who rejected

⁶² Lodge, 1850, 164.

⁶³ Lodge, 1880, 1:132.

⁶⁴ *Met.* VI.302–12.



Figure 8: *Wounded Amazon of the Mattei type*, ca. 1st c CE, marble, 197cm, Musei Capitolini, Rome, inv. S733, photo by author, courtesy of Roma Capitale – Sovrintendenza Beni Culturali.

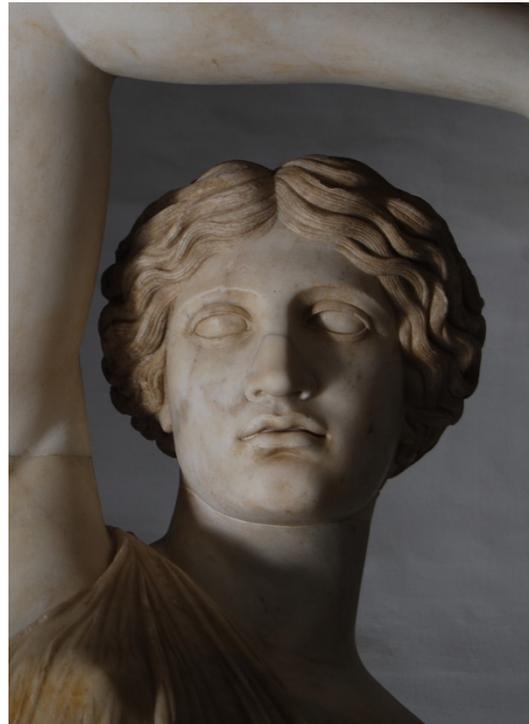


Figure 9: Detail of head (fig. 8), photograph by author, courtesy of Roma Capitale – Sovrintendenza Beni Culturali.

the world of men, historically or narratively early (compared to the *Medusa's* Roman references), fatal. Looking again at the finished bust, and thinking of what is held in the collections Hosmer visited to see the Bernini *Apollo and Daphne* or *Medusa*, we get an answer—the *Wounded Amazons*.⁶⁵ While the works in question were known Roman copies with extensive restorations, this was not really a problem; Hosmer seems to have preferred Roman sculptures over available Greek originals, probably because they were largely more complete works and more readily accessible. Furthermore, even by Hosmer's day, objects Winckelmann had dated or named had shifted in reputation or period, so viewing his categories of high and beautiful more as a discursive method or framework for *relative* age or style rather than a wholly factual chronology eliminates the need for chronological, archaeological accuracy.

The *Wounded Amazons* exist in substantial numbers around Rome, in a variety of types; most relevant for this is the Capitoline Mattei-type Wounded Amazon in the Sala del Galata (Figs. 8–9), only a very short distance from the Bernini *Medusa* downstairs. That these sculptures were repaired with non-pertinent heads and modern additions was largely irrelevant, as their general conception and

⁶⁵ The *Wounded Amazons* feature heavily in Carel Vosmaer's novel *The Amazon* (published 1880, English version 1884); see Prettejohn, "Seeing and Making Art in Rome," 286–303.

relative stylistic ages was the key factor—not the wholeness or originality of these particular examples. These statues, described in Pliny as the products of a competition between the best sculptors, were displayed on the temple precinct at Ephesus.⁶⁶ The (questionable) dating of the original models to a group of Greek artists in the fifth century BCE (mostly),⁶⁷ provides further justification for Hosmer's use of the model despite the knowledge that all of the extant sculptures were later Roman copies with extensive restoration and therefore not purely high works. Not only were the works early in artistic origin, but their story is also 'historically' early: the last Amazon of importance, per Diodorus Siculus, was Penthesilea, who died in the Trojan War.⁶⁸ In drawing on the hair and faces of these works, Hosmer activated an intertext between her and the Amazons, investing her work with the narrative and artistic weight of their historic interpretations. The serenity and restraint in the face of abject terror and death for *Daphne* and the Amazons contrasts with the gravity-defying hair, reaching limbs, and violent transformation of Bernini's *Daphne*.

The beautiful style, by contrast, is both easier to recognise and elaborate upon, and in Hosmer's pair is seen in the *Medusa*. The beautiful style was exemplified by the *Laocoön*, in which Alex Potts notes that "the figure's beauty might at some level intensify, rather than displace, the psychic resonances of its struggle."⁶⁹ However, its diversity of facial expression, pose, and emphasis on charm, beauty, and a more human sensuality, and the 'newer' relative age, meant that the range of material from which Hosmer could draw was much wider. While scholars like Dabakis, Culkin, and Sherwood have argued against a close relationship between Hosmer and Bernini's heads, and instead suggested the Canova *Medusa* as the nearest sister for Hosmer's bust, there are other, more closely related objects in Rome, as well as a wide array of fragmentary, architectural, and funerary contexts. At the Capitoline Museums, where the Bernini *Medusa* is held, Hosmer would have encountered Hellenistic works such as the so-called Head of Alexander the Great, next to the Mattei Amazon in the Sala del Galata, with its upward-twisting neck, melting gaze, and flowing hair. This may especially please those who prefer a biographical reading, as Alexander was famous (like Hosmer) for his same-sex lovers, and the masculine subject fits the mannish woman interpretation. The fragmentary *Medusa Ludovisi*, now called a *Sleeping Fury*, in the Palazzo Altemps, shows little formal similarity with Hosmer's bust, but emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the Medusa myth and image. It also furthers the association with the dynamic later sculpture of the beautiful style.

We may even look to architectural and armorial elements: the Gorgoneion boss of armour and Minerva's aegis, and in the arrangement of the snakes at Medusa's brow, to the Gorgon antefix or palmette or even the ouroboros. The Gorgoneion, as an antefix, was frequently used as an apotropaic device, while the palmette was a common decorative element. On images of armour, the Gorgoneion

⁶⁶ Ridgeway, "A Story of Five Amazons," 1–17.

⁶⁷ Recall Dabakis's comment that Hosmer's *Daphne* looked to "fifth-century B.C.E. classical ideals," 49—these would fit the bill, but she makes no specific reference to these or any other possible examples.

⁶⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, trans. G. Booth, 138.

⁶⁹ Potts, *Flesh*, 136.



Figure 10: *Head of a woman with snakes in her hair*, Roman, ca. 1st c CE, marble, 60 cm (23.6 in). Galleria Borghese, Rome, inv 73, photo by author.

Figure 11: Detail of fig. 10, side rear view.

Figure 12: Detail of fig. 2. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

performed the same role as on Minerva’s aegis, a protective element and a symbol of power. The palmette-like arrangement may derive from these as well,⁷⁰ or from the prevalence of this form on grave markers in nineteenth-century cemeteries, which would underscore the deathliness and marmoreality of the subject, as well as the beautiful style’s diversity of expression and references. Nineteenth-century funerary monuments were heavily informed by classical prototypes, including the popular reproductions of Scipio Barbatus’ sarcophagus, the original of which is in the Vatican, temple-form mausoleums, and a wide array of classical iconographies and models on a smaller scale. To be briefly biographical once more, Hosmer may have spent a great deal of time in Mount Auburn cemetery as a child and young woman, due to both her family history (dead mother and siblings); its proximity to her home (approximately two and a half miles); and its cultural role in mid-century America (one of the most popular tourist destinations and outdoor museum).⁷¹ This cemetery, as well as the Cimitero Acattolico in Rome, were filled with images of ouroboroses and palmettes on marble headstones. These may have given Hosmer the form of Medusa’s snaky tiara—the palmette as an emblem on tiaras even has classical and neoclassical precedents, including the monumental Roman Ludovisi Juno, Canova’s *Bust of Peace*, and a bust of Marie-Louise of Austria by Luigi Pizzi in the Museo Correr. This orderly arrangement of snakes therefore would support additional subtle resonances to her wider project. Rather than seeing this as a psychoanalytic connection between Hosmer’s developing psyche, sex, and death, I propose this as part of the development of Hosmer’s visual

⁷⁰ On the palmette in the nineteenth century decorative discourse, see especially Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 31–36, pl. XVI, XVIII–XXI; Olin, “Self-Representation.”

⁷¹ On Mount Auburn’s visual field, see Giguere, “Variety there must be”; Dimmick, “Thomas Crawford’s Monument.” It is worth noting Hosmer is buried at Mount Auburn, and the cemetery holds two of her relief sculptures in their collection.

vocabulary from a young age, wherein she may have had her first exposure to explicitly classicising art and architecture in a familiar environment.

But if we look at the other major Bernini site, the Galleria Borghese, we see a work which I believe is of great importance to Hosmer's bust, and which has never been identified in relation to it: the head of a woman with snakes in her hair (figs. 10–11). It is only three rooms away from the *Apollo and Daphne*; the head, according to the one published catalogue entry I have been able to find on it, was in the Borghese collection by 1607. It was originally attached to a full figure known as "The Spinner," and it is unknown when the head was detached from the body. The face has been reworked; the head has been identified at times as Hygiea or a follower of Dionysus.⁷² This Roman work, with the square knot of snakes on her brow and the low, loose bundle of hair at the nape of her neck, recalls in iconography and in detail Hosmer's bust (fig. 12). Late, fragmentary, and obscure, this object must be slotted into the available schema of imagery for her *Medusa*. For Hosmer, looking to antiquity for references and for formal solutions, this snaky tangling would have been not only suggestive but inspirational: we see these square-knotted serpents under the breasts of her *Medusa*, and the echoes again in the wriggling snakelets which tangle into the tendrils at the temples. Unlike the medallion Medusas of Canova and of architectural details, here the snake-haired woman is presented in three dimensions, at eye-level, and in close proximity to highlights of antiquity and to her opponent, Bernini. It is Roman, therefore 'late,' uncommon and therefore an original point of comparison, and still more classical than Bernini. By smoothly integrating these multiple, minor, and fragmentary, works like the Borghese head and architectural details into a visually unified work, Hosmer was producing her own brand of accretive classicism, wherein the individual reference points were subsumed into the overall whole. Whether or not a viewer recognised one or any of these citations was less important than the cumulative effect—which was a recognisable Hosmerian beauty, in a fleshy classicising mode, in contrast to the chillier *Daphne*.

The two sculptures that Winckelmann named as original works in the high style, as data points, are insufficient for an artist like Hosmer, developing work in the different modes. In order to expand the data set, as it were, Hosmer had to perform a type of Winckelmannian research and conjecture to identify material that might not be Greek 'originals,' but which conformed to the temporal and formal characteristics of Winckelmann's styles: older, harder, and emotionally suppressed, versus younger, softer and more sensual, more emotionally expressive. These modes of classic style contrast with the prototypical anti-classic sculptor, Bernini—an artist of such outsize influence and reputation that when Quatremère de Quincy felt the need to critique Canova's *Cupid and Psyche* for slipping off the correct path of the truth, simplicity, and purity of the antique, he described it as a risk of becoming "*un Bernin antique*"⁷³—that is, an antique Bernini. Hosmer's deployment of Winckelmann's styles in her own work is therefore a statement of

⁷² Moreno and Viacava, *I marmi antichi della Galleria Borghese*.

⁷³ Quatremère de Quincy, *Canova et ses ouvrages*, 49; Pavanello, "Amore e Psiche che si Abbracciano," cat. 122, 236.

superiority against Bernini: she correctly walks the path of antique imitation and citation, where Bernini represents the road of error, vulgarity, and anti-classicism. We turn at last to the Prince of Degenerate Sculptors, to understand why the young Hosmer set herself so clearly in competition with him.

3 "Bogs and pools": Bernini in the nineteenth century

It is time to consider Bernini's reception in the nineteenth century, as his reputation as a corrupting, talented-but-degenerate outsize influence offered him up Hosmer's rival, and to consider Hosmer's selected antique sources as her ammunition in her rivalry with him.⁷⁴ This will ultimately suggest that not only did the two artists have more in common in their relationship to antiquity than not, but that Hosmer developed her work using critical material poor Gian Lorenzo had no access to—Winckelmann's *Geschichte*. Furthermore, Bernini's reputation as an anti-classical sculptor, as well as biographical parallels—they were of an age when both made their *Daphnes*—suggested this contest; Hosmer could exhibit her range, command of visual sources and erudition in selecting them, and superiority over the "Prince of Degenerate Sculpture."⁷⁵

To understand Bernini's status as the *bête noire* of nineteenth-century sculpture criticism, we return first to Lodge's translation of Winckelmann: Bernini was "utterly corrupted...by a vulgar flattery of the coarse and uncultivated, in attempting to render everything more intelligible to them." Michelangelo contemplated lofty beauty, but

The very course which led Michel Angelo to impassable places and steep cliffs, plunged Bernini, on the contrary, into bogs and pools; for he sought to dignify, as it were, by exaggeration, forms of the most ordinary kind [...] Yet this artist long held undisputed sway, and homage is paid to him even now.⁷⁶

Another text published in Boston in 1850 makes the anti-classical nature of Bernini's reputation clear:

But it would be difficult to conceive [...] two styles more opposed to each other than that adopted by the sculptors of this age, and that of the great artists of antiquity. In one, the pervading principle was simplicity and expression, united with beautiful and appropriate form; in the other, simplicity was of all things most studiously avoided.⁷⁷

In 1864 Sir Richard Westmacott, RA, declared, "it would have been better for this art if Bernini had never lived,"⁷⁸ developing ideas from British sculptor and draughtsman John Flaxman, RA. Flaxman (in a remarkable understatement) said Bernini had "adequate talents," but rapid success at an early age corrupted his

⁷⁴ Relevant Bernini literature includes di Gioia, ed., *La Medusa di Gian Lorenzo Bernini*; Posèq, "On Physiognomic Communication in Bernini"; Wittkower, *Bernini*; Mormando, trans., *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*; Petersson, *Bernini and the Excesses of Art*.

⁷⁵ "The Crystal Palace," 336.

⁷⁶ Lodge 1850, 36.

⁷⁷ T.C., *Sculpture*, 165.

⁷⁸ Westmacott, *Handbook of Sculpture*, 314.

artistic development, and consequently, “the Pope [Urban VIII] and the Sculptor carried all before them, in their time, and sent out a baleful influence, which corrupted public taste for upwards of one hundred years afterwards.”⁷⁹ The straightforward “prince of degenerate sculpture” is an appellation that needs no elaboration, though, unsurprisingly, the author provides quite a bit of it:

But there is no mistaking him who accelerated the speed [of the decline of art] with all the weight of a ready hand, a prolific fancy, and a long life. Bernini was the prince of degenerate sculpture. To him belongs the fatal distinction of proving that this stern and haughty art, which the ancients had scrupulously enthroned... that this haughty art could, not undextrously, be so degraded as to win the commonest eye, and to tickle the most frivolous fancy.⁸⁰

Not only did Bernini train a generation of sculptors himself, but his works continued to be set as exams or training exercises for several generations following his death—meaning his loathsome legacy lingered.⁸¹

The nineteenth-century criticisms of the *Apollo and Daphne* (and Bernini in general) were consistent: “se giustamente si critica come manieralo, e mancante di verità, si ammira nulladimeno pei meccanismo del lavoro,”⁸² or

A dire il vero non credo che meglio potesse esprimersi ristante della metamorfosi, ma non v'è sublimità di concetto: la forma e le mosse sono volgari, non convenienti ad un nume: e mentre da un canto si ammira il meccanismo dell' arte, dall'altro deplorasi la mancanza del gusto.⁸³

Another text calls his work “not the creations of inspiration, but of a heated jejune fantasy,” the *Apollo and Daphne* “equally destitute of natural truth and artistic inspiration,” and his lasting impact on sculpture the introduction of “a tasteless, unnatural, affected style, which robbed it of all its sublimity and its charms.”⁸⁴

Bernini's reputation as a precocious, masterfully talented but ultimately tasteless or corrupt artist suggests why Hosmer positioned herself in opposition to him through her subjects. Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* was an early work, with authors in the nineteenth century giving his age as 18 when he produced it, though current scholarship places it closer to 24–25. It still stands in the room for which it was originally sculpted (and which is named after it), though now it is centrally located to allow circumambulation.⁸⁵ Eager to display her own technical skill and

⁷⁹ Flaxman and Westmacott, *The Lectures on Sculpture*, 278–80.

⁸⁰ “The Crystal Palace,” 336.

⁸¹ See Pestili, “On Bernini's Reputed Unpopularity,” and the critical reappraisals of his reputation by Andrea Bacchi and Anne-Lise Desmas (333–48), Lucia Simonato (349–56), and Evonne Levy (357–67), in *Bernini*, eds. Bacchi and Coliva.

⁸² “[I]f justly criticized as mannered and wanting in truth it is admired for the perfection of the work,” Vasi, *Itinerario istruttivo di Roma*, 253.

⁸³ “Actually, I do not think he could better express the instant of metamorphosis, but there is no concept of sublimity: the shapes and the moves are vulgar, not conventional for a god: and while on the one hand you can admire the mechanical art, on the other you deplore the lack of taste,” in Nibby, *Monumenti scelti della Villa Borghese*, 83.

⁸⁴ Heck, *Iconographic Encyclopaedia of Science, Literature, and Art*, 54–55.

⁸⁵ González-Palacios, “The Stanza di Apollo e Dafne in the Villa Borghese.”

her good taste, Hosmer reclaimed subjects from Bernini and refashioned them through the application of Winckelmannian precepts. By doing so, she set herself and her personal style in direct competition with the precocious bogeyman of sculpture—claiming the mantle for herself of a sculptural wunderkind. The Capitoline *Head of Medusa*, though not an early work by Bernini, was nonetheless a display of virtuosic carving and emotional affect; like Hosmer's *Daphne* and *Medusa*, Bernini's works show the variations possible within an artist's oeuvre even when working in the same medium and from the same source material.

In her *Daphne*, Hosmer suppresses the drama and violence of the Ovidian narrative, in opposition to Bernini's emphasis on the chase and effects of transformation. The distressing stillness of her Daphne, its utter rigidity despite the appearance of tender flesh, is characteristic of its Winckelmannian high beauty: "Stillness is the state most appropriate to beauty, just as it is to the sea [...] for the idea of lofty beauty cannot be conceived otherwise than when the soul is wrapt in quiet meditation, and abstracted from all individuality of shape." The gracefulness and refinement of the features do not detract from the work's qualification as a high piece because these qualities were aesthetic requirements for a successful sculpture in the middle nineteenth century, and because they are a major element of Hosmer's personal style. The transformation is also suppressed—no special effects wizardry here—and the work demands from its viewer previous knowledge of the narrative to produce the correct response. Rather than "a vulgar flattery of the coarse and uncultivated" audience through cheap emotive tricks and pantomime narrative that attempted "to render everything intelligible to them"⁸⁶ as Bernini did, Hosmer's *Daphne* sublimates terror and elevates the figure to a Niobe-like sublimity—that Bernini has been accused of lacking.

Bernini's *Medusa* of the Capitoline has often been discarded as a touchstone for Hosmer's work, but the roundness and softness—fleshiness—of Hosmer's Gorgon has more in common with the Bernini head than it does any other modern sculpture—certainly more than with the Canova *Medusa* in any of its versions. Hosmer's *Medusa*'s expression, though on a nineteenth-century neoclassical face, is as pathetic and dramatic as Bernini's, *not* substantially less so: the expressive pain of the Laocoön, not Niobe's suppressed suffering.⁸⁷ The detail of the snakes, too, is related; both exhibit a degree of naturalism, though the snakes on Bernini's *Medusa* are more baroquely beefy and have an attitude of their own, distinct from the face they frame—one seems to smirk over her brow, meeting the viewer's gaze more than she does. The expressive features of Hosmer's *Medusa*, far from rejecting Bernini's interpretation of the subject, refine the Baroquely swirling snakes into daintily squirming snakelets in an ouroboros-palmette crown, and the fleecy locks into an elegant coiffure which again seems to derive closely from the Borghese head discussed above. Neither Bernini nor Hosmer's depiction shows the Gorgon decapitated, unlike Canova's or the armorial gorgoneion, but both show beautiful, humane women in distress. The humanity of the monstrous Medusa is underscored not only by her narrative—in Ovid's text a transfigured mortal, rather

⁸⁶ Lodge 1850, 35–36.

⁸⁷ Lavin, "Bernini's Bust of the Medusa: an Awful Pun;" Haughey, "Bernini's Medusa and the History of Art," 76–86, 154.

than a nymph like Daphne—but also the possibility that Bernini's *Medusa* may have been based on his mistress, Costanza Piccolomini.⁸⁸ And it is important to note that the setting of the bust reinforces its affiliation with Rome the city with crests, inlays, and framing devices. The Bernini *Medusa* becomes emblematic of the marmoreal Rome of Augustus, and the imaginary petrified, permanence of the city as a playground for artists interested in antiquity. The *Medusa's* 'younger' stylistic age is enhanced by the Capitoline *Medusa's* position within the museum, which emphasises its Roman-ness; its plinth and the marble plaque behind it are emblazoned with SPQR. This setting associates the bust and the figure of Medusa more broadly with Rome as an ancient empire and the contemporary city where Hosmer lived and worked—unlike the *Daphne*, which highlights Grecian art, art history, and legends.

Furthermore, despite the low critical opinion of Bernini's taste, no one questioned his technical brilliance in producing sculpture. It is not hard to believe that it was the level of his material proficiency that led to the excoriating commentary, because he was seen to have not only wasted his own talent on vulgarities and degradations of art, but also dragged others down with him. Winckelmann decried Bernini as having corrupted art by "a vulgar flattery of the coarse and uncultivated, in attempting to render everything more intelligible to them," while Lodge was at pains to explain that Winckelmann is not being unjustly harsh, or comparing them to the pinnacles of modern art. Rather, he was measuring them against the "highest idea of beautiful form derived from the best examples of antiquity."⁸⁹ That is, however, a self-contradictory statement, as the best examples of antiquity were also the models for the pinnacles of modern art from Winckelmann's time well through Hosmer's—Anglo-American tourists still flocked to see the *Apollo Belvedere* in Rome, even though they had the Parthenon sculptures—genuine Greek originals!—in London.⁹⁰ Bernini's biography describes his fondness for the Belvedere Hermes, saying that "when he was very young he used to draw from the antique a great deal, and in the first figure he undertook, whenever in doubt over some question, he would go off to consult the Antinous as his oracle."⁹¹ The biography also mentioned the Pasquino and Belvedere Torso (his two favorite works of antiquity), the Apollo Belvedere, and Laocoön; the Apollo in particular was "measured" as part of his formal research for an unspecified sculpture.⁹² Perhaps it was the *Apollo and Daphne*, where the head, drapery, and even sandals of the handsy deity evoke those of his more reserved ancestor in the Vatican Museums.⁹³ Bernini's supposed rejection of classical style was a different interpretation, not a rejection. In order to set Bernini up to fail against the Winckelmannian schema, Hosmer—and critics—had to ignore that Bernini wrote about studying

⁸⁸ Avery, *Bernini: Genius of the Baroque*, 92; McPhee, *Bernini's Beloved*, 10–11; McPhee, "Bust of Costanza Piccolomini (Bonarelli)," 246–47, cat. VII.3, ill.

⁸⁹ Lodge, 1850, 35.

⁹⁰ Even as late as 1839–43, American sculptor Thomas Crawford was using the Apollo Belvedere as a reference point for his *Orpheus*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; see Dimmick, "Thomas Crawford's Orpheus."

⁹¹ Bernini, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 101, n. 29; 31; 283.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 283.

⁹³ Warwick, *Bernini*, 85–86.

the ancients, that he restored fragmentary antiquities, and that his sculptures were displayed cheek to chiselled cheek with their classical ancestors.

As for Bernini's classicism: scholars today recognize Bernini's *David* at the Galleria Borghese as an erudite reworking of the Borghese Gladiator, now at the Louvre, and at the time considered "the most illustrious ancient sculpture in the Borghese collection."⁹⁴ Minozzi notes that "Bernini reworked his study of the ancient model and transformed it in accordance with the needs of the narrative,"⁹⁵ just as I have argued Hosmer was doing with her selected references. Bernini was also producing amalgamations of the most beautiful parts of disparate sculptures, further supporting an affiliation that Hosmer would not have been happy about, as she, too, accumulated references and assembled or blended them into a unified work. Bernini seems to have selected not only for reputation, but thematic relevance: the Borghese Gladiator is a martial figure like David, and is refined to suit the narrative moment he illustrated—just like Hosmer selected the *Wounded Amazons* as virginal, deathly women, and reworked them in accordance with her sculptural needs. Bernini is also supposed to have noted that while the Pasquino and Belvedere Torso were more perfect stylistically than the Laocoön, the Laocoön was more complete—and thus more useful. Similarly, Hosmer never seems to have drawn on the genuinely Greek sculptures from the Parthenon but repeatedly referred to complete or restored Roman works—demonstrating that both sculptors had a keen sense of utility over strict adherence to the ideologically or discursively better works of antiquity. Both sculptors engaged with antique prototypes according to their artistic needs, adapting their sources to suit their aesthetic and stylistic modes; these are beginning to be recognised and reconsidered as informative, productive areas for research or viewing pleasure within Bernini and Hosmer's oeuvres.

4 Conclusion

What is clear is that Bernini was not rejecting classical antiquity, but that instead, Winckelmann, Hosmer, et.al, denied his *mode* of classicism. At most, it might be argued that his idiosyncratic mode of classical referencing was less literal than some nineteenth-century sculptors'—and those literal sculptors *do not* include Hosmer, whose classicism was imitative in the most Winckelmannian sense of the word, developed through training and intellectual engagement rather than rote copying. Rather, Bernini's anti-classical reputation is the product of his Winckelmannian victimization, and his differing artistic goals. The critical diatribes against Bernini made it possible to construct an antagonistic rivalry with the long-dead, and with an entirely different mode of sculpture. Bernini's so-called failures became Hosmer's ammunition against him, and these failures may have been a major factor in Hosmer's choice of subjects and references to reclaim and rehabilitate from Bernini's corrupting legacy. Her use of 'relevant' references for these subjects creates an intertextual depth and richness of interpretative

⁹⁴ Marina Minozzi, "David," in Bacchi and Coliva, *Bernini*, 170–74.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

possibilities for the educated audiences who viewed her work in Rome and in her patrons' homes, just as Bernini's use of antique citations had enriched his work in the seventeenth century.

Framing Hosmer's busts of *Daphne* and *Medusa*, her first professional works, as the ammunition in an artistic competition with Bernini prioritizes her authorial intent and erudition as a serious neoclassical sculptor, rather than starting from the position that her work is, at either a conscious or subconscious level, autobiographical. Hosmer's modern interpretation of ancient myths, which only Bernini had also produced in sculpture, and in close physical proximity to not only her studio but to the ancient works she was referencing, makes her competition with Bernini clear. Both Hosmer and Bernini were fully invested in their own period's version of antiquity, but Hosmer set herself up on Team Winckelmann, as it were, in order to be victorious over the degenerate and degenerating Bernini. Her use of the high and beautiful styles underscores not only her skill in sculpting a range of emotional expressions, but also her alignment with a modern understanding of good art through Winckelmann's legacy.

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