INTRODUCTION

Greek dress seems very familiar because it is all around us. Ancient Greek dress pervades our visual culture, from Hollywood movies and television to commercial advertising.[1] The Western art historical canon is populated with figures wearing "antique" garments, from Rubens to Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (Figure 0.1). Fashion design has referenced ancient Greek dress since the early nineteenth century, and such borrowings remain popular among contemporary designers, as showcased in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2003 exhibition "Goddess: The Classical Mode" (Figure 0.2).[2] Few question the accuracy of such representations, which are designed to meet our expectations of what Greek dress looked like. But what do we really know about Greek dress, and how do we know it?

Despite popular interest in ancient Greek dress, it has received comparatively little scholarly attention compared to other aspects of visual and material culture. No single-authored monograph on the subject has appeared in the English language for more than a century. Yet many important observations about Greek dress have been published in studies of Greek art, archaeology, literature, religion, technology, social history, and especially gender and sexuality studies. One goal of the present volume is to synthesize the diverse scholarship on ancient Greek dress and make it accessible across the various subfields within classical studies and related disciplines. The basic organizing principle of this book is borrowed from contemporary dress theory, which views dress as an embodied social practice by means of which individuals and groups construct identity. The structure of the book, with the body as the foundation for multiple layers of various dress practices, presents Greek dress as a coherent system of nonverbal communication. Such an approach brings a much-needed theoretical framework to the material and allows ancient Greek dress to become part of the larger scholarly discourse within dress studies. My primary aim is to demonstrate the profound significance of dress in ancient Greek society: I argue that dress was the primary means by which individuals negotiated identity and the only way in which some highly charged social constructs could be communicated – especially gender, status, and ethnicity.

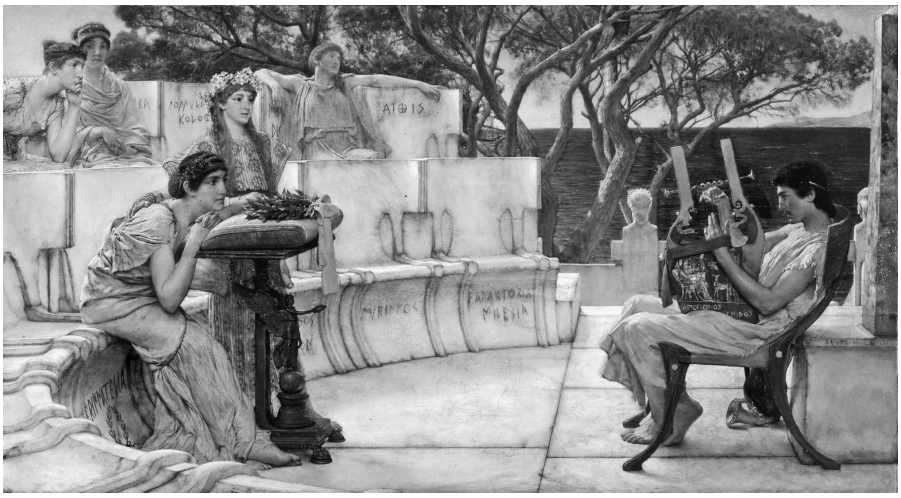

FIGURE 0.1. *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1881. ©The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 37.159.

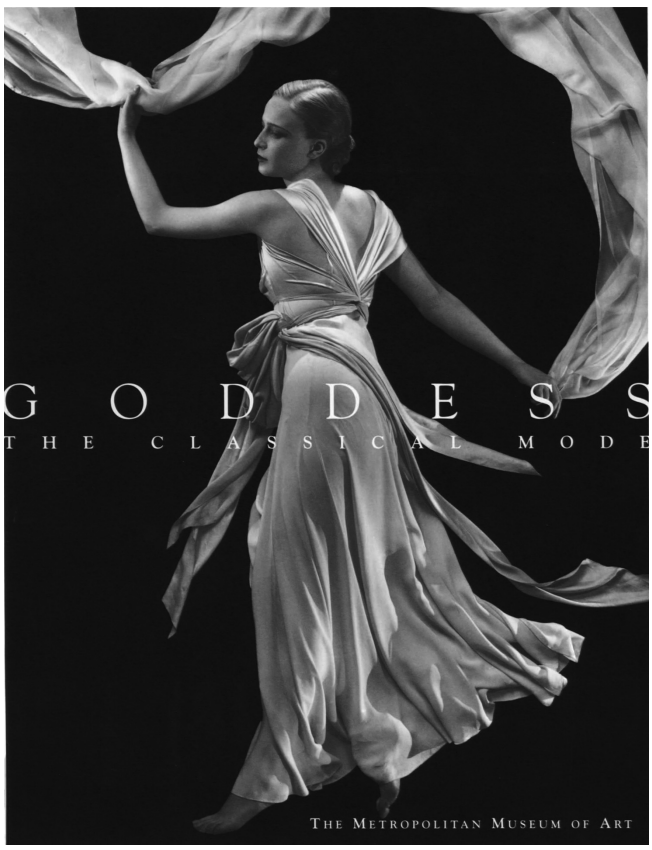

FIGURE 0.2. Front cover of *Goddess: The Classical Mode*, by Harold Koda, published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2003. ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Cover incorporates Madeleine Vionnet, French (1876–1975). Evening pajamas of white silk crepe with matching scarves, 1931. Copyright ©2009 Condé Nast. From *Vogue Magazine*. All rights reserved. Photograph by George Hoyningen-Huene. Reprinted by permission.

To situate my study, I begin with a historiography of the scholarship on ancient Greek dress. Such a long view is necessary to identify the biases and misperceptions that have determined our understanding of the material. I then present an overview of contemporary dress theory and the means by which dress functions as a means of nonverbal communication. Although dress theory generally assumes a living community, I argue that it can be fruitfully applied to the ancient evidence, allowing us to recover the social significance of dress practices that would otherwise be lost to us.

The second chapter introduces Greek conceptions of human bodies in mythology, philosophy, and medicine. A basic hierarchy of bodies follows: ideal bodies (boys, military trainees, and adult citizens); indeterminate bodies (pre-pubescent girls, virgin maidens, and married women); and non-ideal bodies (older adults, sex workers, servants and slaves, barbarians, and the disabled). This chapter ends with a discussion of how modern theoretical perspectives on the body can help us understand ancient Greek bodies, in particular the phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, and Judith Butler's notion of gender as performance. The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Greek conception of human bodies was fundamentally different from our own; hence, the meanings associated with the dressed body were unique to Greek society.

The first "layer" of dress on the body takes the form of body modifications, the subject of Chapter 3. Temporary modifications to the body, including the prescriptions of diet, exercise, and bathing known as the *diaita*, as well as the use of perfumes and cosmetics, and transformations of cephalic and body-hair, were generally understood as elite practices. Permanent body modifications, including wounds and scars, surgical transformations of the body including prosthetics and piercing, as well as tattooing, scarification, circumcision, and head binding, were identified with non-elites, especially foreigners. In this chapter I demonstrate that the repeated performance of temporary modifications to the body allowed elites to constantly reaffirm their identities, while permanent body modifications marked foreigners as perpetually outside Greek society.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of Greek garments, from the textiles themselves to the various types of undergarments, overgarments, and foreign imports that have been identified by scholars. While recent scientific analyses have enhanced our knowledge about fibers, dyes, and means of production, the conventional typologies of garments have been subjected to increased scrutiny. Although it might not be possible (or desirable) to abandon the traditional nomenclature for garments, it is important that we recognize the tenuous nature of many identifications. In this chapter, I argue that a preoccupation with the identification of garments has diverted scholarly attention away from other aspects of dress such as body modification and accessories; and arguments

over typology do little to advance our understanding of the phenomenology of garments and their social functions.

Chapter 5 includes all other articles of dress, including garment fasteners such as pins and buttons, belts, jewelry, headgear (including veils), footwear, and various handheld accessories such as mirrors and walking sticks. Unlike garments, many of these objects survive archaeologically, often in association with the bodies of deceased individuals, giving important information about the functions of accessories and their social meanings. Because many accessories are made of metal and other precious materials, they are often indicators of wealth and status – especially for women.

The following chapter considers the body itself as a form of dress. Taking Larissa Bonfante's concept of "nudity as a costume" as a starting point, I trace the critical perspectives on undress in classics, art history, and sociology, and explore the different meanings associated with male and female "undress." I argue that, for the elite, male undress always refers on some level to athletic nudity, while female undress is associated with the desirability of the fertile female body. This section includes an excursus on the Aphrodite of Knidos, which holds a central place in the discourse on nudity and nakedness, both ancient and modern. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of partial undress and bodily display, including diaphanous or transparent garments, and underscores the dynamic relationship between the body and dress.

The final chapter synthesizes the findings of the preceding chapters in the specific social contexts of dressed individuals, from birth to death – or swaddling clothes to burial shrouds. Here, the social meanings attached to dress are clearly articulated, for boys and girls, men and women, in coming of age rituals, the military, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth. I then discuss the myriad functions of dress in religion and ritual, including prescriptions and proscriptions of dress in Greek sanctuaries, the dress of religious officials, articles of dress as cultic objects, and ritual dress practices; a special section on the Panathenaia demonstrates the special significance of dress in the central ritual of the Athenian sacred calendar. I briefly address the legal issues surrounding dress, which are particularly concerned with the regulation of dress practices in death and mourning, both for the deceased and the bereaved. The structure of this chapter helps to connect ancient Greek dress practices with our own, and demonstrates that all societies use dress as a means of socialization and to negotiate identity throughout the individual life-course.

This study is intended to be accessible to a broad readership, including trained classicists as well as nonspecialists, especially students and experts in dress studies. Greek terms have been transliterated according to generally

accepted conventions, and ancient texts are cited in translation.[3] Extensive knowledge of ancient Greek culture among readers is not assumed; references to further reading are provided throughout. While classicists will not need such signposts as a guide to the discipline, these readings should aid students and scholars in other fields.

The subject of ancient Greek dress is too expansive to be addressed adequately in a single volume. The present study is generally limited to dress of the Archaic and Classical periods, roughly 600–323 BCE, though some earlier and later material is included when relevant. My rationale for these parameters is based on the available evidence: prior to the sixth century, the visual, archaeological, and literary sources are relatively sketchy and difficult to reconcile; the evidence for Greek dress in the Hellenistic and later periods, though more abundant, is extraordinarily complex as a result of the dramatic social changes following the conquest of Alexander. It is an accident of history that much of the evidence from the Archaic and Classical periods derives from Athens and the surrounding countryside of Attica. I have taken care to note the origin of my sources and not to assume that the Athenian evidence reflects Panhellenic practices in general. Because my intent is to reconstruct the dress codes of actual communities, I have focused on the evidence for the dress of "real" people. Hence, the dress of divinities and other mythological figures is considered only as it helps to elucidate constructions of human identities. Finally, I have made only occasional reference to Homeric dress, which seems to follow different conventions from those of the Archaic and Classical periods, and for which the visual evidence is debatable.[4]

The evidence on which this study is based is threefold: visual, textual, and archaeological. Following is a brief overview of the types of sources used, the information we can gain from them, and their limitations.

VISUAL EVIDENCE

Because dress is first and foremost (though not exclusively) a visual medium, the artistic evidence is especially important for reconstructing ancient Greek dress. Unfortunately, the visual sources are often misleading. Because the ancient coding community is not accessible to us as a check, we must approach the visual evidence with caution. On the one hand, artists took liberties in their depictions of garments and accessories; their interests were more often aesthetic than ethnographic, and we should not expect to read the visual sources as documentary evidence of actual practices. But while images are often simplified and idealized, repeated patterns may reflect actual features of dress, ideological constructions, or both.

Large-scale sculpture in the round has traditionally been the most fruitful for the study of ancient Greek dress. Indeed, the study of ancient Greek dress has been largely dependent on the study of monumental sculpture, and vice versa. The development of Greek sculpture in the Archaic period can be traced through the series of *kouroi* (youths) (e.g., Figure 2.4) and *korai* (maidens) (e.g., Figures 4.14, 5.8), free-standing sculptures that served as grave markers and were dedicated as votives in sanctuaries. While the *kouroi* are mostly nude, the *korai* display a dizzying array of garments, hairstyles, jewelry, and footwear that seems to reflect actual styles that were worn in life. By the Classical period, *kouroi* and *korai* were abandoned in favor of more naturalistic, though idealized, renderings of males and females, human and divine (e.g., Figures 2.5, 6.4). Similar developments can be seen in architectural sculpture, which becomes increasingly important in the fifth century BCE with the construction of major temples at Olympia (Figures 4.6, 6.5), Athens (Figure 6.8), and Bassae (Figure 6.6). In the late fifth and fourth centuries, funerary sculpture regains popularity in the form of *stelai* with idealized figures carved in relief (e.g., Figures 3.15, 4.22). Votive *stelai* (e.g., Figure 7.10) generally depict the dedicators in the presence of divinities.

The larger scale of such works allows for a fair amount of detail in the rendering of garments and accessories. Unfortunately, such details cannot always be trusted. Sculptors often took liberties in the rendering of the dress or may not have understood how certain elements were constructed. Experiments in reconstructing ancient garments have proved, for example, that the diagonal *himatia* worn by many *korai* are impossible to replicate in reality. In addition, the original polychromy of marble statues is now largely lost, as are the metal attachments that replicated jewelry and headgear.[5] Finally, we cannot be sure that Greek sculptors were replicating contemporary styles, especially on mythological or divine figures.

Dressed individuals are represented on Greek vases throughout the Archaic and Classical periods. Ceramic vessels were used for a range of purposes but were especially important for the *symposion*, a ritual in celebration of Dionysos in which elite men would gather to drink wine, recite poetry, and enjoy the entertainments of musicians and *hetairai* (female companions) (e.g., Figure 6.1). In the sixth century, vases were decorated primarily using the black-figure technique, in which the figures were rendered in silhouette and the details incised with a sharp tool (e.g., Figure 5.3); other colors could be added, especially white and purple. Around 525 BCE, the red-figure technique was invented, which allowed for more subtle details to be painted in the reserved space of the figure (e.g., Figure 3.2). The white-ground technique used red, yellow, blue, and black pigments to create a polychromed

effect (e.g., Figure 2.1), though the colors tend not to preserve well as they were applied after firing.

The evidence for dress on Greek vases is complex. Although the diversity of dress styles discernible on vases makes them difficult to categorize, such complexity may better reflect the realities of Greek dress. Many details are hard to decipher, given the small scale of the figures and the limitations of the pictorial medium.[6] It is often difficult to determine whether the imagery is mythological, or should be considered "generic."[7] Finally, although Greek vases were produced primarily in Athens and Attica during this period, many were exported to Etruria, where they were deposited in Etruscan tombs. We cannot be sure in every case whether the imagery reflects Athenian society or was created to appeal to an Etruscan clientele.[8] On the other hand, since most vases show figures as part of a narrative, they give important evidence for the social contexts of Greek dress.

Another important category of visual evidence is the broad range of small-scale figurines in bronze (e.g., Figure 5.15) and terra cotta (e.g., Figure 6.3), which were dedicated in sanctuaries and buried in graves. While many of these were mass produced in stock molds, it has been suggested that the figurines best reflect the dress of actual individuals.[9]

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Dress is mentioned in Greek literature from the earliest periods. Although Homeric dress is outside the parameters of this study, the lyric poetry of Hesiod, dating to the seventh century BCE, is essential to the Greek conception of the dressed female body. Likewise, Greek philosophers and medical writers of the fifth and fourth centuries, especially Aristotle and the Hippocratics, explain distinctions between male and female bodies and the appropriate regimens for each sex.

The most important literary source for the present study is Aristophanes, whose comedies were first produced in Athens in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE.[10] Because comedy reflects everyday life more than other literary genres, it is a rich source for actual Greek dress practices. But the texts cannot always be taken at face value: many details are lost to us that would have been easily comprehensible to ancient viewers, especially with the aid of stage costumes and props. And we cannot be sure in many cases whether dress is serving a comedic function and therefore does not reflect reality. Finally, although Aristophanes mentions many types of garments and accessories, it is often difficult to identify them in the visual sources, so their appearance is lost to us.

Other prose writers of the Classical period, especially Herodotus (fifth century BCE) and Xenophon (late fourth to mid-third century BCE), provide important observations on dress, and especially the differences between Greek and foreign practices. Theophrastus (mid- fourth to early third century BCE) gives pertinent information about the materials used for perfumes and cosmetics, for example. Although the Roman sources are often rich, I have tried to limit the evidence to the Greek periods as much as possible.

A final category of textual evidence is the epigraphic sources. Especially important are the so-called Brauronion clothing catalogues, inscribed *stelai* recording dedications of garments to Artemis at her sanctuary at Brauron, in rural Attica.[11] Inscriptions are also essential for reconstructing prescriptions and proscriptions of dress in Greek sanctuaries.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The archaeological evidence for ancient Greek dress is in many ways the most important; yet it is the most understudied.[12] Artifacts such as jewelry and cosmetic implements provide our only physical connection to the dressed individual in antiquity. And yet, it is difficult to interpret a single object, or the dress of a single individual, in isolation. The meanings of dress practices can be deciphered only in the repetition of patterns. It is perhaps for this reason that scholars of ancient Greek dress have not extensively utilized the archaeological evidence, which often remains buried in disparate excavation reports.[13]

Archaeological evidence for dress is generally found in two very different contexts: sanctuaries and graves. Objects dedicated in sanctuaries are usually those with inherent value such as metal jewelry (e.g., Figures 5.10 and 5.11), dress fasteners (e.g., Figure 5.1), and mirrors (e.g., Figure 5.22).[14] It is unclear in most cases whether these objects were dedicated because of their function as dress accessories, or for the value of the metal. In addition, some of these objects may have been heirlooms when they were dedicated, which complicates chronologies. A more extensive range of artifacts has been recovered from funerary contexts (e.g., Figure 5.2), including pigments used for cosmetics (e.g., Figure 3.6), perfume pots (e.g., Figure 3.5) – even fragments of textiles. A particular advantage of the funerary evidence is that it is often possible to learn the sex of the dressed individual and where on the body specific articles were worn. Unfortunately, we cannot know in most cases whether objects recovered from the grave reflect those worn in life. Finally, the desirability of such artifacts for collectors means that many dress accessories are without known context.

While each category of evidence is limited in its own way, taken together, the evidence for ancient Greek dress is extraordinarily rich. The challenge for the modern researcher is to piece together the disparate sources as coherently as possible, while allowing for lacunae. Because certain aspects of ancient Greek dress are unrecoverable, a conventional history of ancient Greek dress is not possible. But the theoretical models provided by modern dress studies allow us to analyze the evidence in a new way, providing fresh insights into some very old material.

1

ANCIENT GREEK DRESS AND MODERN DRESS THEORY

This chapter is not about ancient Greek dress per se but rather the study of Greek dress from antiquity to today. Such a broad chronological overview is necessary to demonstrate how we know what we *think* we know about Greek dress – and what we do not know. I have deliberately focused on the scholars and publications that have been most influential in the development of the field.[1] In many ways, our understanding of dress follows the broader trajectory of the discipline of classical studies. On the other hand, I argue that the conventional feminine associations of dress rendered it an unpopular topic for serious academic study. While Greek dress has enjoyed increased scholarly interest in recent years, few have taken into account the important developments in the burgeoning field of dress studies. The second part of this chapter provides an overview of the basic theoretical principles underlying contemporary dress theory and outlines a new approach to ancient Greek dress that is the basis for this study.

A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT GREEK DRESS

Ancient Greek dress has captured the interest of scholars, writers, and artists since antiquity. Many authors of the archaic and classical periods provide what might be considered "firsthand" observations on dress. Later Greek and Roman authors refer to these early works in their own writings, sometimes citing passages verbatim but often interpreting the texts within their own