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The Ideal of Lucretia in Augustan Latin Poetry

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Ideal of Lucretia

in Augustan Latin Poetry

by

Alison Ferguson Waters

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Abstract

This study concerns the figure of Lucretia as she is presented by the Roman historian Livy in the first book of *Ab Urbe Condita*, where she is intended as an example of virtue, particularly in terms of her attention to woolworking. To find evidence for this ideal and how it was regarded at the time, in this study a survey is made of woolworking references in the contemporary Augustan poets Vergil, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Other extant versions of the Lucretia legend do not mention woolworking; Livy appears to have added Lucretia's devotion to wool, a tradition in keeping with Augustan propaganda. Woolworking has come to be thought of as a praiseworthy concern of Roman *matronae*, with Lucretia often cited as an example. Evidence for the laborious nature of the task makes it seem unlikely that high status *matronae* would willingly work wool. The poets studied here do not in general present woolworking in a positive way. References to wool, especially those of Ovid, are more humorous than respectful. In the *Heroides* Ovid presents the task as a laborious reality. He also casts doubt on the possibility of distinguishing *matronae* by ideal costume. Ovid appears to suggest a possible "new" woman, neither *matrona* nor *meretrix*. A return to the ideal is seen in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Here, after civil upheaval, Dido with her gold weaving is presented as the opposite of the desired Roman *matrona* who, like Lucretia, is associated with plain wool. Such wool by its nature is in keeping with the surroundings found by Aeneas at his true destination, Pallanteum. The ideal *matrona* with her wool and costume seems implicit in the *Aeneid*, though she might well remain an ideal rather than a reality in Augustan society.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Lucretia and her Wool; Versions of her Story and its Influence	12
Appendix 1 to Chapter One: A Possible Etruscan Lucretia.....	57
Appendix 2 to Chapter One: A Woolworking Simile in <i>Aeneid 8</i>	61
Chapter Two: Elegiac Girls Working Wool; and the Motif of the Returning Husband	68
Chapter Three: Myth and Reality in Ovid's <i>Heroides</i> ; Examples of Negative References to Woolworking and Costume	121
Chapter Four: Ovid Puts a Different Spin On It; Corinna in the <i>Amores</i>	173
Chapter Five: Aeneas in Carthage; Caught in Dido's Web	226
Appendix 1 to Chapter Five: Ill-omened Fabulous Textiles, Dangerous Cloaks	270
Appendix 2 to Chapter Five: Some Literary and Archaeological Evidence for Elaborate Textiles	272
Conclusion	275
Bibliography	278
Appendix: Woolworking and Costume; Ovid's Humorous Treatment of Achilles Contrasted With Other Versions of the Same Episode.....	302

Introduction

This introduction is divided into three parts. Part 1 outlines the argument of the thesis concerning the ideal of *matrona*. Part 2 contains necessary technical information about woolworking. Part 3 notes some aspects that need to be considered regarding costume.

Part 1. Content of the chapters

The central concern of this thesis is with wool, especially in its relation to the Augustan *matrona*. The ideal *matrona* is Lucretia, as she is presented by Livy in the first book of *Ab Urbe Condita*. This depiction of Lucretia is in line with Augustan ideology, especially the fact that woolworking was favoured by Augustus as a traditional activity to be encouraged. Suetonius mentions that Augustus wished his daughter and the other women of his household to be acquainted with woolworking. It comes as no surprise that Livy appears to have introduced woolworking into the Lucretia story in response to the Augustan propaganda agenda; woolworking is not present in other extant versions of the legend, notably missing from Livy's contemporary, Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Lucretia is represented in versions other than Livy's as a virtuous wife, but in Livy's depiction of her it is very much her devotion to woolworking that is identified with her virtue: she is *dedita lanae*. Lucretia's association is with plain wool, unadorned, as it is spun from the prepared fleece; her wool bears a connection to the significance of wool in Roman religion, where, for example, woollen fillets bind the heads of sacrificial victims to indicate their purity. For Augustus, as a religious reformer, this connection with Lucretia's wool would have been attractive. It is Livy's depiction of the woolworking Lucretia as an *exemplum* to be imitated that sets her up as the ideal Augustan *matrona*, but his view of virtuous woolworking was not necessarily that of other writers. A main intention of this thesis is

to look at a variety of Roman poets to see how they view both woolworking and its connection to Lucretia, and thus indirectly the apparent propaganda of Augustus.

The situation changes with these poets; their attitude to woolworking as a virtue to be praised and respected does not agree with the picture presented by Livy. Most striking in this regard is Ovid, who, like Livy, also treats the Lucretia legend (in *Fasti* 2) and tells the story at more length and in humorous detail; the woolworking processes are all present (not mentioned in Livy), every item is named, with Lucretia urging on the work. Ovid upends the tradition and presents a Lucretia who resembles an elegiac *puella*. Vergil, in his early work, the *Georgics*, appears to have an attitude not unlike Ovid's. He makes the distinction between the farm wife and the high status woman. The farm wife spins and weaves, labouring over the tasks, since she must. But the high status *matrona* appears humorously treated, taking the form of a goddess working wool underwater, an impossible situation. Later in *Aeneid* 8 Vergil uses the same low status woman spinning as an ironic comparison with Vulcan, the God who must rise early, like the poor widow, to fashion armour for Aeneas. The work of the low status spinner is not enviable. Why should a high status woman be involved in this task?

In the work of the early elegiac poets Propertius and Tibullus (Chapter Two), the Lucretia figure is again found to be apparent, but not parodied as in Ovid's version. In these poets she lends her virtuous aspect to the elegiac *puella*, her direct opposite, and the result is a contradiction in terms. With Propertius and Tibullus, Lucretia and her woolworking return in situations where she now resembles Penelope – who is herself a Lucretia figure - the faithful wife working wool until the unexpected return of her husband. Both Cynthia and Delia, the elegiac *pueriae* of Propertius and Tibullus respectively, are depicted in such a situation, awaiting the return of the poet/lover. In this situation they are both seen, by means of this Penelope

parallel, to be associated with Lucretia's virtue as they supposedly work wool while they are waiting. Propertius (1.3) has the poet/lover return drunk to Cynthia, who claims she was having to fill in the time while waiting by doing something – what? – with purple wool. It is unlikely on every count that she has actually done any spinning or weaving, and the effect can only be unbelievable and hence humorous. With Tibullus, the Penelope association is picked up in a confused way, where the elegiac *puella* Delia, awaiting the poet's return, is seen to be seated amongst the woolworkers, virtuous like Penelope and Lucretia. The association here makes for a confused paradox, as Tibullus does not appear to be treating the scene other than seriously. Nevertheless as he shows in his second book of elegies, he is well aware of the reality of woolworking and its laborious nature. He idealises the country women who weave because they must, in their agricultural setting. Thus he does not have a clear picture of woolworking and its contemporary significance when it is being carried out by women who are “demi-mondaines”. But the paradigm of the woolworker as seen in Lucretia and Penelope is given its most extensive treatment –not unexpectedly – by Ovid, in the *Heroides* (Chapter Three).

Lucretia was treated humorously by Ovid in *Fasti* 2 by means of exaggeration of her commitment to her wool (Chapter One). In *Heroides* 1 the opposite method is applied and Penelope appears as a woolworker who does not seriously involve herself in her task. Like the *puella* Cynthia, Penelope speaks slightly of her task as a time-filler. The scope and value of her woolworking is understated. She is seen in this first *Heroides* epistle to recall the model of Lucretia, awaiting her husband's return; but Penelope is not *dedita lanae* (Livy's phrase). Both Penelope and the other woolworking heroines in the *Heroides* all display the negative aspect of this task. It is either hard and unpleasant work (epistles 3 and 10) or it is a source of humour at the expense of heroic figures like Hercules (epistle 9). Nowhere is it associated with virtue as

with Livy's Lucretia. These heroines – Penelope, Briseis, Deianira and Ariadne – are not treated heroically, but rather in a manner either humorous or somewhat belittling.

In the material covered so far a negative picture emerges of women's relationship with the Lucretia and Penelope ideal – this especially in the poetry of Ovid, where the viability of the Augustan model seems to be questioned (Chapters One and Three). But there is also the possibility of a positive vision of the place in life for Roman women, and this more positive outlook appears in the person of Corinna and her lack of traditional costume in Ovid's *Amores*. Corinna appears in *Amores* 1.5, and she is naked. She is seen in Chapter Four of this thesis in relation to the other elegiac *puellae* – Cynthia and Delia – who both recalled Lucretia and also Penelope in various ways. Corinna does not dress like those *puellae* – nor like an ideal *matrona* – since she is naked, and therefore she fits neither model of the Roman woman (*matrona* or *meretrix*) as favoured by Augustan ideology. She does not work wool and thus is not seen in terms of Lucretia or Penelope. She might be identified with the “new” woman whom Ovid addresses in *Ars Amatoria* 3, where he gives advice to women about clothing and pastimes. In a comparison of Corinna with Cynthia and Delia it becomes apparent how Ovid, still within the elegiac context like Propertius and Tibullus, is presenting a new possibility. This woman has abandoned the whole ideal – both traditional clothing and virtuous woolworking. But this vision of a “new” woman was not shared by other poets. In Vergil's *Aeneid* 4 the Lucretia figure returns, and her wool and her virtue are again seen as of positive value with regard to Roman women and their life.

It is in the episode of Dido and Aeneas that the figure of Lucretia as ideal *matrona* makes a significant return (Chapter Five). This is especially apparent in the costuming of both Dido and Aeneas, and in the elaborate gold textiles that are a repeated feature of this episode. These

costumes and textiles by their ornate nature not only form a strong contrast to Lucretia's wool, but Dido's own weaving also is in itself most elaborate, including gold thread. Thus the clothing that she produces for Aeneas is entirely out of keeping with his destined mission and calls to mind Antony's adoption of Oriental dress and moral laxity. Dido's weaving, unlike Penelope's, is not done in order to ensure fidelity to a husband – in fact her weaving for Aeneas compromises her sworn fidelity to her dead husband Sychaeus. Aeneas' arrival at Carthage can be compared with two other arrivals. The arrival of Sextus Tarquinius in Livy Book 1 finds Lucretia occupied with her wool – very different from the luxury that Aeneas finds at Carthage. But Sextus has found amongst the royal wives – Livy's contrast to Lucretia – a scene very like what meets Aeneas at Carthage. Then there is the arrival of Aeneas at Pallanteum, where the scene is very different: small hut, animal skins, wool and grass.

Although Aeneas finds that Dido has worked wool (like Penelope, and as the *puella* Cynthia claimed to have done), this is not Lucretia's wool. Dido is identified as a weaver of gold textiles, in direct opposition to Livy's Lucretia. Dido is seen as a threat to Aeneas and the Roman Empire; she is seen in terms of her textiles, the cloak she makes for Aeneas represents his departure from his mission. As Vergil presents Dido she is the anti-type to Lucretia, who must thus be seen as the ideal once more for Roman womanhood, as Livy depicted her. It is suggested here that for Vergil, who had lived through the years of civil upheaval, an attempt by Augustus to re-establish traditional customs and way of life was probably suitable if not necessary. Lucretia would thus remain an *exemplum* as Livy had intended.

Part 2. The process of woolworking

Since Lucretia as an ideal is so closely associated with woolworking, it is important here to look at how wool was made and who in fact was involved in making it.

The basic material of Roman textiles was wool, from which the standard garments, *toga* and *tunica*, were woven. The word *lana* (wool) could simply be a synonym for clothing.¹ As well as its everyday use in clothing, wool figures significantly in Roman religion.² Its use with sacrificial victims indicated purity, and it was wool which similarly protected the purity of the *matrona*, who was ideally dressed in woollen garments. She also, ideally, concerned herself with making wool, in particular the process of spinning; this task would bring her closest to wool in its “purest” form, not far removed from the original fleece. The idea that Roman *matronae* were spinning wool has been accepted as a reality. A standard translation of Livy’s first book (for Penguin Classics) describes the scene when the virtuous wife Lucretia is found in her house: “but there, in the hall of her house, surrounded by her busy maid-servants, she was still hard at work by lamplight upon her spinning” (2002, 100). But Livy’s Latin, which describes her as *deditam lanae*, does not indicate any physical involvement; it is more probable that as a high status woman she rather supervised the work.

Spinning was an arduous task. It apparently involved exclusively female labour. In discussing woolworking as a gender symbol in Rome, Larsson Loven claims as a generalisation that “to connect a man to wool spinning would be either a mockery or a disgrace” (Larsson Loven 2007, 232)³. It was male workers, however, who prepared the wool for spinning. These were possibly the *lanarii*, (sometimes specified as *lanarii purgatores* (*CIL* 5.4501), probably

¹ As for example Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.207 *lana tarentino violas imitata veneno*.

² Jakob Pley: *De Lanae in Antiquorum Ritibus* (1911). The religious significance of wool is discussed at length with many references from ancient authors. This work is a reprint from the University of Michigan Library.

³ Examples of such mockery: Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* 1.689-696; *Heroides* 9; Juvenal’s *Satire* 2.54-56.

wool combers), whose professional titles appear in epitaphs; but “in none of these categories [of *lanarii*] do women seem to have been involved” (Larsson Loven 1998, 74). Those who mainly performed the labour of spinning were the *quasillariae*, female slaves. Such slaves were of a very low order. They are commemorated in some minimal inscriptions which record no information but their name and occupation, for example *CIL* 9849, where three words appear: *melis aproniae quasillaria*. The status of these *quasillariae* is apparent from some literary references: *quasillarias familiaeque sordidissimam partem* (*Satyricon* 132), (“The spinners, the very dregs of the slaves”); *pressumque quasillo scortum* ([*Tibullus*] 3.12.3-4), (“The prostitute loaded with a wool basket”). The task performed by these women is described below.

Spinning

Before a thread could be produced by spinning, the fleece had to be cleaned and combed. When this was ready, the next process, spinning the thread, was done by hand with a distaff (*colus*) and spindle (*fusus*). The distaff was grasped in the left hand. It was basically a short stick, forked or slit in order to hold the prepared amount of fleece, which was fixed on to it. The *quasillaria* was given a certain amount of wool to spin, which was weighed out as her allotted *pensum*. She could be punished by means of increasing this *pensum* (*Propertius* 3.15.15). The spinner with her fingers drew out and twisted fibres from the distaff into a thread, which she fastened to the end of the spindle. The spindle consisted of a narrow rod, thickened at the lower end to hold the spindle-whorl. The spindle-whorl added momentum to the rotation of the spindle, and it was by skilful management of this rotation that the thread was drawn out. To perform this action successfully the hand holding the distaff must be raised well above the spindle, which is constantly manipulated by the other hand. Representations of ancient spinners

show them standing at their work (Wilson, 1938, 15). To stand in this position at this task for any great length of time would have been exhausting, especially if given no respite by a stern overseer who might well have been either another slave or an ex-slave. Epitaphs mention *lanipendae* (e.g. *CIL* 6.9496-98). It has been suggested that *lanipendae* possibly fulfilled this function as a deputy for the Roman *matrona* (Larsson Loven 1998, 75). What sort of health problems from such labour might be imagined, but one result is very likely to have been damage to teeth, which were used as a “third hand”. Such damage, presumed from spinning, has been documented in ancient female skeletons (Liston, 2012, 134).⁴ The hands also must have suffered. Soranus advises that a midwife should abstain from any woolworking which would harden her hands (*Gynaecology* Book 1.11.4). Ovid, who observed the reality of spinning, saw how the spindle was turned by a hard thumb – *pollice duro* (*Med.Fac.* 14). After the thread was obtained, the next process was weaving.

Weaving

Weaving was not, in general, done by Roman women; there is more evidence for *textores*, male weavers (Larsson Loven 1998, 75). One *staminaria* (possible female weaver) is mentioned in the inscriptions (*CIL* 4.1507); if she is the same Amarillis from *CIL* 4.1510, she was also *fellatrix*, which says something about her position in society. The loom originally in use for weaving at Rome was the warp-weighted loom, which to judge from ancient illustrations needed workers to be standing. It is often seen with two weavers at once, and when a loom of this kind was found in Scandinavia in the nineteen fifties, two workers together demonstrated its

⁴ There is a detailed description of spinning in Catullus 64. The Fates, who are the spinners here, bite their thread – as actual spinners must have done: *atque ita decerpens aequabat semper opus dens* (64.315).

use (Hoffmann 1964, 46). A single worker at this loom must walk back and forth. The principle involved is that the warp threads are held taut by loom weights, and the weft threads are passed between these warp threads and then beaten upwards. This loom thus represented quite hard work, and it is unlikely that a high status Augustan *matrona* would be working at a loom of this kind – even though it might still be displayed in the atrium of the house with textile in process. Such a loom was destroyed in riots after the death of Clodius in 52BC, as reported by Asconius (*Pro Milone*, 13). The other principal loom in use was the vertical two beam loom, which Seneca thought a more refined instrument (Epistle 90.20). Work at this loom would have been less arduous: weavers could sit, and could beat the weft down, whereas they stood at the traditional warp-weighted loom and had to beat upwards (Wild, 1970, 71). When there is evidence that ready made clothing was available (for example, *CIL* 6.9972-76), it is unlikely that any of the work with wool that has been described here would have been carried out by a high status *matrona*. It is suggested here that it is a romantic rather than realistic idea that the Augustan *matrona* was herself occupied with any of the tasks involved in woolworking. The following chapters of this thesis look at the ideal of the Augustan *matrona* –as exemplified by Lucretia – and the attitudes to this ideal as seen in contemporary Latin poetry.

But before proceeding further, some more explanation is needed: who in fact is the *matrona* referred to in this thesis, and by what garments is she supposed to be distinguished?

Part 3. The *matrona* and her costume

Since it is assumed in this thesis that Livy's Lucretia was meant as an *exemplum*, then her behaviour might be understood as a model for contemporary Roman women. These would be, in particular, those whose position resembled Lucretia's in that they were freeborn

married women of sufficient social status to be mistress of their own household. These are the women who are understood here by the term *matrona*.⁵ As for the *matrona*'s costume, the garments traditionally associated with her – like other items of ancient dress – have recently been a topic of scholarly interest (Sebesta 2001, Edmonson and Keith 2008, Olson 2008 are some examples). Sebesta in particular provides a description of the costume of the *matrona*: *stola* (a long garment from shoulders to ankles), *palla* (a cloak), and *vittae* (woollen bands binding the hair). This is the “standard” costume of the *matrona* which will be referred to in this thesis – bearing in mind, however, that this may be the description of a costume that was more an ideal than a reality. Olson (2008) suggests that the artistic evidence does not support popularity of the *stola* (31), and that ancient references to women's clothing are very much prescriptive (41). Fantham (2008) similarly finds a lack of artistic evidence for the *vittae*.⁶ Nevertheless there are references to *stola*, and especially to *vittae*, in contemporary Augustan poetry, and it is with these poets – Vergil, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid – and their attitude to the *matrona* and her virtue, that this thesis is primarily concerned.

⁵ Aulus Gellius, recounting a discussion about the term *matrona*, offered the following description: “‘matronam’ dictam esse proprie quae in matrimonium cum viro convenisset, quoad in eo matrimonio maneret, etiamsi liberi nondum nati forent” (*Noctes Atticae* XVIII.VI.8). While Livy in his account of Lucretia does not use the term *matrona*, he does use this term elsewhere of women who were of sufficient status to offer their gold jewellery when there was not enough gold in the treasury to pay off the Gauls, who had besieged Rome: “cum in publico deesset aurum ex quo summa pactae mercedis Gallis conficeret, a matronis conlatum acceperat ut sacro auro abstineretur” (*Ab Urbe Condita* 5.50.7).

⁶ If the wearing of *stola* and *vittae* was an essential aspect of the ideal Augustan *matrona*, then one would expect the wife and daughter of Augustus to set an example. Although Bartman (*Portraits of Livia* 1999) suggests that for Livia the *stola* was an important “attribute”, she finds that “the number of portraits of Livia that render the *stola* is not numerically large” (42). As for *vittae*, Fantham (2008, 166) asks: “Can you see a *vitta* on her [Livia's] official portraits?” and suspects that, as for *vittae*, “Augustus had lost that battle” (168).

Another similar “battle” Augustus might have been involved in concerned his daughter Julia. Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 11.5.5) reports that Augustus was one day not pleased with Julia's dress: she was clothed in a “suggestive” manner (*licentiore vestitu*). She might have sensed his disapproval, since next day she wore more modest clothing, her explanation being “hodie enim me patris oculis ornavi, heri viri”. But Augustus himself – according to Macrobius again – was not perhaps so restrained as he might have wanted it thought (for example the homespun garments reported by Suetonius: *Aug.* 73). Macrobius tells of Augustus complaining about the Tyrian purple textile he had bought – it was not bright enough.

The *matrona*'s costume is part of the ideal looked at in the following chapters, where it is found that the poet whose mention of these garments is often referred to as an indication of their existence is, in fact, the poet who undercuts their supposed value as indications of status. This poet is (of course) Ovid. His lines at *Ars Amatoria* 1.31-2 mention *stola* and *vittae* as the characteristic dress of the respectable *matronae* who, he warns, should not read his poem.⁷ At the time when Ovid wrote this, the *matronae* in question were, perhaps, not readily identified by *stola* and *vittae*; the poet was, quite likely, aware of this fact.

⁷ *este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes.* In fact it is the clothing being addressed, not the *matronae*.

Chapter One

Lucretia and her Wool, Versions of her Story and its Influence

Introduction

A major focus of this chapter is Lucretia, both as she appears in Livy and in other writers who recount her story. In Livy's version she is seen as a virtuous *matrona* devoted to her wool.

In this chapter there are two aspects to the treatment of Lucretia. First Livy's account is discussed, and then seen in comparison with the versions by several other writers; neither of the Greek historians (who recount basically the same events as Livy) includes wool in the story.

As a contrast to Livy, Ovid's version (in *Fasti* 2) is looked at next. Ovid's version is important in the context of this thesis as a whole, and also relates to the second aspect of how Lucretia is dealt with in this chapter. This second aspect is Lucretia's connection (after Livy) with the idea of woolworking as a virtuous occupation for *matronae*.¹ Ovid's Lucretia represents an answer to what he perhaps sees as an unrealistic ideal. This aspect of Lucretia – Livy's depiction of her as virtuous *matrona* with her wool – has shaped much later opinion about Roman *matronae* and wool.² In the last part of this chapter several scenes from Vergil's *Georgics* are discussed. These poems date from the same decade as Livy's first book, but do not present wool as a virtuous task for a high status *matrona*; rather the task emerges as laborious and of low status, and the high-born woolworker is even a source of humour in an underwater scene. There are two appendices to this chapter. The first presents a possible visual version of Lucretia's story. The second discusses a simile in *Aeneid* 8 where working wool is seen as a low grade necessary task, unlike Livy's "ideal" with Lucretia.

¹ Ovid's Lucretia story is a clear instance of his humorous treatment of woolworking and of the "ideal" represented by Livy's Lucretia; in later chapters of this thesis woolworking references from Ovid's poetry are seen to represent this task either humorously or else realistically as laborious and unpleasant.

² For example Ogilvie's comments on Livy 1.57.9 (1965, 222).

* * * *

In 27-25BC, Livy published the first book of his history, *Ab Urbe Condita*. In the final chapters of this book he tells the story of the end of rule by kings, and the beginning of the Republic with two consuls. In the course of this story, he describes the final act of arrogant tyranny on the part of the ruling Tarquins, the rape of Lucretia by the king's nephew Sextus. This is the crime that spurs Brutus into action, and leads to the actual expulsion of the king (Book 1, 57-9). Lucretia is thus a key figure in this very significant episode in Book 1, but her fame has come to depend probably more on another aspect of Livy's depiction of her rather than just her role in that event. What Livy did was to add something to the already existing legend of Lucretia: he told the story in the form of a plan by her husband and his companions to find what their wives were doing in their men's absence, and presented her as the one wife to be found virtuously occupied. The particular virtue which she exhibited was devotion to woolworking, since she was found thus busy amongst her women late at night. This chapter aims to show, by looking at other accounts of the Lucretia legend, that, as a result, woolworking became identified with virtue³ more precisely than had been the case before Livy's version of the story appeared.

At the time when Livy wrote his first book, the “Old Roman” traditions favoured by Augustan propaganda would have included woolworking as an activity to be encouraged amongst contemporary *matronae*. Lucretia’s position when found by her husband could be seen as a model that Augustan *matronae* might note well: she is working late at night – *nocte sera* –

³ Whether or not Livy was consciously creating in Lucretia a model of behaviour which supported contemporary Augustan ideals, his success in terms of propaganda for woolworking as a virtue has been quite remarkable in its impact; although writers who were his contemporaries do not seem, on the whole, to have been greatly impressed with the virtuous nature of the task as an activity for *matronae*, modern editors and commentators appear to have been quite strongly influenced by Livy, almost unfailingly citing Lucretia as an example of a good *matrona*’s duty. Her name appears almost without exception when comment needs to be made about any woolworking scene in Latin poetry; often the irony or humour of these scenes is not taken into account, and the serious moral character of Livy’s Lucretia is implied as being recalled by the activities that the poet is describing.

and by lamplight – *lucubrantes*. She sits amongst her women – *sedentem* – instead of simply passing by to check that they are working. Above all she is devoted to the task – *deditam lanae*. (1.57.9)

Livy's Lucretia fitted the Augustan ideal very well. Her virtuous connection with wool itself can be seen also as playing on the significance of wool in Roman religion. Lucretia's wool is unadorned, spun from the fleece. Woollen fillets were an integral part of the sacrifice of victims in religious ceremony, since the head of the victim was bound with these fillets.⁴ Such a close association of wool with religious ceremony represents an added attraction in terms of contemporary ideology, since Augustus was well known to desire religious reform.

A further concern of Augustus was the regulation of costume and its social implications,⁵ and here wool is again important. In the traditional dress of the Roman *matrona* wool was ideally a key component.⁶ Thus Lucretia and her woolworking present a model well in keeping with various aspects of Augustan ideology. (As a result of this concern with woolworking, not only Lucretia but also Penelope become figures of interest. It is Lucretia with whom this chapter is dealing; Penelope will be seen in the later chapters which treat the elegiac poets.) The possible influence of Lucretia and the Augustan woolworking ideal on two poets – Ovid and Vergil – is looked at in the present chapter; the particular poems to be treated here are Ovid's *Fasti* 2, Vergil's *Georgics* and in an appendix, some lines from *Aeneid* 8. But first there is a comparison of Livy's Lucretia with other versions of her story. The main suggestion to be made here is that, despite the idea that the virtuous woolworking *matrona* was a strong Roman tradition, it is really

⁴ saepe in honore deum medio stans hostia ad aram
lanae dum nivea circumdatur infula vitta
inter cunctantis cecidit moribunda ministros
(*Georgics* 3 486-9)

⁵ McGinn (1998) Chapter 5 discusses clothing in this context.

⁶ Sebesta and Bonfante (2001) 46-53, for the *matrona's* ideal dress.

Livy's Lucretia who is the first (extant) and most effective representation of such an ideal. And therefore Livy's account of her story, the influence this has had, and the different versions of the story by other writers, are discussed in this chapter.

Livy's story of Lucretia

Livy's story is set in the time of the kings of Rome, during the reign of Tarquinius, the unpopular last king. At this time the town of Ardea is under siege, and the young princes – including the king's nephew Sextus Tarquinius – are filling in time in their camp during this operation. They begin to discuss their wives, and Collatinus claims that his wife Lucretia excels all the others. The suggestion is made that the young men visit their wives unexpectedly in order to see what they are doing in their husbands' absence, and they leave at once in haste to do this.⁷ They find the royal wives wasting time feasting, but when they reach the house of Lucretia late at night the scene is very different. Lucretia is seated in the centre of her house amongst her spinning women: she is "devoted" to her wool, *deditam lanae* (57.9). Her virtue is thus clear to see. The arrival of the husbands is described thus by Livy; this image of the virtuous woolworking *matrona* is Livy's own:

Quo cum primis se intendentibus tenebris pervenissent, pergunt inde Collatiam, ubi Lucretiam haudquaquam ut regias nurus, quas in convivio luxuque cum aequalibus viderant tempus terentes, sed nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inveniunt. Muliebris certaminis laus penes Lucretiam fuit.

"Arriving there at early dusk, they thence proceeded to Collatia, where Lucretia was discovered very differently employed from the daughters-in-law of the king. These they had seen at a luxurious banquet, whiling away the time with their young friends; but Lucretia, though it was late at night, was busily engaged upon her wool, while her maidens toiled about her in the lamplight as she sat in the hall of her house. The prize of this contest in womanly virtues fell to Lucretia."

⁷ This situation recalls the similar course of events in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus (like Collatinus) returns unexpectedly and finds that his wife Penelope has preserved her fidelity by means of woolworking.

And since Lucretia belongs in one of the stories that Livy says, in his preface, have been handed down since well before the city was founded, and whose authenticity he cannot affirm – which stories indeed are *poeticis magis decora fabulis*, more suited to the stuff of poetry – it is appropriate that there seems to have been a poet's version earlier. Accius wrote what was probably a *fabula praetexta* on the subject of Brutus, the legendary first consul after the expulsion of the Tarquins (Conte 1994, 105). Of the fragments remaining, there is a line attributed to Lucretia: “Nocte intempesta nostram devenit domum” (*Remains of Old Latin* Vol II, 562-3) “In the middle of the night he came into our home.” The basic legend that Livy recounts tells how Sextus Tarquinus, son of the King of the Romans at the time, came to the house of Lucretia, a married woman, by whose beauty he had previously been much affected, and raped her, having overcome her resistance with threats of killing her and disgracing her with the claim that she had committed adultery with a slave.

Although we can say nothing of Accius' ideological slant, the line from Accius does however fit with Livy's treatment of the story, since it indicates a more dramatic arrival of Sextus, in keeping with a work intended for performance. Livy's version does in fact move with a dramatic swiftness of “scenes”⁸: his narrative is “so strikingly dramatic as to have aroused speculation about an actual theatrical source” (Donaldson 1982, 5).⁹ The narrative readily falls into scenes. The first is in the camp at Ardea, where Collatinus was dining amongst the young princes who passed their time thus during the siege: *otium*

⁸ “the drama of Lucretia... with its succession of scenes filled with pathos, is justly famous” (Conte 1994, 372).

⁹ Donaldson does not say whose speculation. But recently T.P. Wiseman has suggested (2009) that a drama might have been produced “not long after the Ides of March”, which had as subject the end of the monarchy, and presented the earlier Brutus (Lucius) in a way “deliberately reminiscent” of the later Brutus; Wiseman speculates that Livy could have been influenced by seeing this drama. “Even after Philippi, its message might have been welcome in the period from 40 to 36, when Sextus Pompeius was popular in Rome for sheltering people who had escaped the proscriptions. Livy was in his twenties then.” (209)

conviviis comisationibusque inter se terebant. The background is thus set for the swift developments which follow. First the discussion of wives, quickly becoming a “contest” – *certamine accenso.* With Collatinus’ suggestion (that they solve the question) the narrative moves suddenly into direct speech; the sense of immediacy is increased as all agree – *Age sane!* – and they speed on horseback: *citatis equis.* The next scene is that of the royal wives – but the speed of the whole “drama” is emphasised by the fact that the description of the wives is contained as a contrast within the description of Lucretia herself. The other wives waste time – *tempus terentes* – in banqueting, *in convivio luxuque.*¹⁰ But the narrative pauses as the young men find Lucretia. They have now entered her house, and the scene is one of calm industry as she and her female slaves sit at their woolworking, *in medio aedium* – in the centre of the house where she, Lucretia, has dutifully remained, rather than go off partying like the other wives.¹¹ The description of this scene within the house is detailed: it is late at night – *nocte sera*; lamplight is thus necessary for the women to work – *lucubrantes ancillas*; Lucretia sits amongst them – *sedentem*; she devotes all her attention to the task of supervising her women – *deditam lanae.*¹² In this description it can be seen “how deeply embedded visual imagery was in ancient conceptions of narrative style” (Feldherr 1998, 4).

Lucretia’s reputation has persisted to the present; she is typically described, for example, by P.G. Walsh (1961, 91): “the ideal spouse, faithfully labouring at her domestic chores until

¹⁰ Alan Watson (1975, 35n.22) notes “A touch of conscious or unconscious irony” in the scene with the royal wives. “Presumably these ladies – who seem to be Etruscan – were drinking wine (as one can assume *convivium* implies) which, as we know, was conduct meriting death at Rome.”

¹¹ The sudden “invasion” of the young men (especially including Sextus Tarquinius) into this scene of domestic virtue might recall the invasion of the house of Lepidus after the death of Clodius (as described by Asconius – Ascon.43C) where Cornelia’s loom – symbolic of that same domestic virtue – was destroyed.

¹² Livy does not indicate any physical involvement, on Lucretia’s part, in the process of spinning. Ovid, however, in his version of the story (which is discussed later in this chapter), has Lucretia dropping her wool as she waits anxiously for her husband.

dusk, offering hospitality, defending her chastity to the last, and committing suicide after she has been violated". Later mentions of Livy's Lucretia contain similar descriptions: "In fact, it is as a model of domestic femininity that [Lucretia] enters Livy's story, since she is the winner of the contest of female virtue, and it is as one that she insists on the necessity of her death, since she refuses to remain alive as a precedent for other women." (Kristina Milnor 2009, 282). "The myth of Lucretia exemplifies many Roman virtues: it stresses the supreme womanly virtues of *pudicitia* and *castitas*; its heroine is a woman who held lineage and family to be more important than her personal interests; it allows a woman to exhibit the Roman virtues of bravery and determination; it demonstrates that her role in preserving the family from shame was a vital one; it ties her moral qualities to the establishment of the Roman state." (Phyllis Culham 2004, 139).

The main focus in this chapter, however, is Lucretia's virtue (for Livy) as seen in her woolworking.¹³

Livy's depiction has been very successful; it has almost achieved the status of a truth universally acknowledged that the activity of woolworking was not just a literary but a real and constant feature of the Roman woman's life. The epitaph of Claudia, for example, dating from the second century BC, is often quoted as an illustration of what was valued in a wife such as Lucretia, summed up as *domum servavit, lanam fecit* (*CIL* 1.2.1211). She looked after the house,

¹³ Suzanne Dixon comments about the virtue of woolworking: "In Livy's account of the founding myth of the Republic, the noble Lucretia's diligence in working after sunset with her female slaves is equated with her chastity, although the male onlookers in his account seem to draw no conclusions about the sexual virtue and allure of the slaves." It is in fact the slaves (who are unlikely to be "chaste") who actually perform the real tasks of woolworking, and who are – by the nature of the unpleasant work – considered of very lowly status. (The processes of woolworking and the status of the workers are treated in the introduction to this thesis.) Suzanne Dixon mentions Lucretia's woolworking, but in general Livy's addition of woolworking to the Lucretia legend is not seen as significant or even mentioned. Livy's Lucretia story has mostly been seen in a political context, where her rape is seen as "a pivotal turning point" in early Roman history. "The narrative is laden with historical and political as well as ethical significance" (Langlands 2006, 85). Some examples of the treatment of the rape itself in a political context are Joplin (1990), Joshel (1992), Calhoon (1997), Feldherr (1998, 194-203), Langlands (2006, 85-96). The rape in a legal context is discussed in detail by Moses (1993), more generally by Dixon (2001, 45-55) and with regard to certain details by Watson (1975, 35). For Lucretia as an *exemplum* in Livy, Chaplin (2000, 1-2). An account of the legend in general, and its various appearances later than Livy, is in Donaldson (1982).

and she “made” wool – and although it is easy to take *fecit* literally, it most likely means she “caused wool to be made”, probably by supervising those who made it.¹⁴ The activity of woolworking, as this epitaph indicates, is associated with the more virtuous and praiseworthy behaviour of earlier times, such as Livy states in his preface that he will illustrate by examples:

Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri

“What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that you behold the lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument”

Lucretia is such an example, and one to follow. Augustus – as mentioned above – would have found favour with such an *exemplum*. This intention of Livy sits well with Augustus’ desire to appear conventional while filling a rôle which was not conventional, and thus to value traditional ideas of approved behaviour. According to Suetonius, Augustus had the women of his household acquainted with the processes of spinning and weaving, and even wore for preference the clothing made in his own household: *Filiam et neptes ita instituit, ut etiam lanificio assuefaceret* “in educating his daughter and his granddaughters he even made them aware of the processes of woolworking”. (Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 74). How far Julia and the other members of the Imperial household may have actually involved themselves with supervising woolworking, and how reliable Suetonius is to be taken as a source of this information, it remains that Augustus would have wished to indicate his approval of such a custom being maintained in his own family. It had been a necessity in former times to produce textiles in the home, and could be seen as a tradition from the earlier way of Roman life that Livy, for example, saw as a more praiseworthy one.

¹⁴ This is also what Livy’s Lucretia is most probably doing with more devotion to the task. Livy’s description *deditam lanae* of Lucretia actually identifies her with the wool much more than the term *fecit* might do.

Livy's Lucretia, as noted above, made her appearance with the publication of Book 1 of *Ab Urbe Condita* in 27-25 BC (Walsh 1961, 8). Augustus, with the Restoration of the Republic in 27, was looking to moral and religious reform, and Livy seems to have created Lucretia as a *matrona* who exhibits traditional ideology.¹⁵ In contrast to the royal wives, she is dutiful and especially virtuously devoted to her woolworking – which activity as we shall see is Livy's addition to the picture. It is in her woolworking that she differs most markedly from her depiction in other extant versions of the story.¹⁶

The other extant accounts roughly contemporaneous with Livy's, by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Diodorus Siculus, make no mention of woolworking, and each differs from Livy's version in other ways as well. Diodorus Siculus composed his *World History* between 60 and 30 BC. Fragments of the tenth book survive, in which Diodorus gives a rather brief summary of the actual events in the story.¹⁷ All in one chapter, he first explains who Sextus was: "Sextus, the son of Lucius Tarquinius, the King of the Romans", and then, without any mention of a prior visit, states simply that this Sextus "stopped at the home of Lucius Tarquinius, a cousin of the King, whose wife was Lucretia, a woman of great beauty and virtuous character." There appears to be no mention of any contest of wifely virtue, which aspect of the story as told by Livy adds so significantly to the picture of Lucretia, nor is there any mention by Diodorus of any sort of activity that she might be engaged in which could illustrate the fact that she is stated to be "virtuous in character". This version, by Diodorus, implies that her virtue was an accepted part of the legend; since it pre-dates Livy's, this account by the Greek historian is evidence of a

¹⁵ "Another important element joining Livy to the princeps was the Augustan policy of restoring ancient moral and religious values, which naturally was dear to the historian from Padua. Nonetheless, as has already been said, Livy's agreement with the regime did not translate itself into an unconditional celebration." (Conte 1994. 370)

¹⁶ Examples are the prose versions of Diodorus Siculus and of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, which respectively pre-date and post-date Livy's account. These versions are described below.

¹⁷ The following quotations are from the Loeb translation of Diodorus, Fragments of Book x.19. 6-20. pp87-91.

character already existing and suitable to be invested with whatever particular kind of virtuous behaviour Livy might choose. What Livy did choose was the devotion to woolworking, a virtue most apposite to the current ideas that Augustus wished to foster. The Greek version goes on to narrate how, since Lucretia's husband was absent, Sextus "left his bed-room during the night and set out to the wife who was sleeping in a certain chamber". There are no passionate feelings of desire on the part of Sextus, nor any statement of what his motivation might be – presumably it is taken for granted that such an opportunity, with husband absent, is not one to miss – and after all the lady is "of great beauty". Nor does he waste time in any gentler persuasive tactics: "he announced that he had a slave all ready for slaughter, and that he would slay her together with slave, as having been taken in adultery and having received at the hand of her husband's nearest of kin the punishment she deserved." Diodorus adds to his version promises of wealth and power made by Sextus, benefits that Lucretia will gain from him by compliance. But she is too virtuous to be swayed by these, and "fearing that men would in truth believe that she had been slain because of adultery, [she] made no outcry at the time."¹⁸ There is no other statement of her feelings – this rather dry account lacks the emotion of Livy's. She summons her kinsmen next day, calls for revenge on Sextus, and kills herself as it was not "proper for the victim of a deed of such wanton insolence to look upon the sun." This is all summarily narrated.

What Diodorus seems interested in is the praiseworthy nature of her action of suicide, and also the relation of the whole episode to considerations of custom and law. He follows his somewhat factual account of the action of the story with a discussion, at greater length, of its social implications – the slant more Greek in interest, perhaps, than Roman. There are necessary reservations with regard to those parts of the text of Diodorus, such as this section from Book X,

¹⁸ Lucretia is represented both here and by Livy as virtuous, but was such a reputation so fragile that her husband and father, in her opinion and that of the two historians, would have believed the adultery story of Sextus?

which exist in fragmentary form, and depend in certain instances on excerpts taken by a Byzantine excerptor and thus preserved. The argument put forward about Lucretia's suicide may thus have been modified, but it seems that the general tone indicates an interest not in her personal experience, and not in any political outcomes from her death, but rather in the fact that she herself judged her situation as unlawful and acted according to law, as a result of an unlawful action against her.¹⁹ This is an emphasis quite different from that given to the story by Livy, who is concerned much more with Lucretia as a person as well as an excellent *exemplum* – and much more also, of course, with the political results of Sextus' action.

Diodorus begins his discussion of the story by claiming that Lucretia's choice was noble and needs to be recorded as such, and concludes:

αἰσχρὸν εἶναι νομίζουσα τῶν ἄλλων εἰπεῖν τινα διότι ζῶντος τοῦ κατὰ νόμους
συμβιοῦντος ἀνδρὸς ἐτέρου παρανόμως ἐπειράθη, καὶ καθ' οὐδὲν τοῖς πράξασι
θάνατον τιθέασι τὸ πρόστιμον, τοῦτο παθοῦσαν τὸν πλείω χρόνον φιλοψυχειν

(Diodorus Siculus, Fragments of Book X. 20.4.)

“she considered it to be shameful that anyone could say that while her husband, to whom she was wedded in accordance with the *laws*, was still living, she had had relations with another man, contrary to the *laws*, and shameful also that she who had been involved in an act for which the *laws* decree the penalty of death upon the guilty should cling to life any longer.”²⁰ (italics mine)

¹⁹ The versions of the Lucretia legend by both Diodorus and Dionysius are compared with Livy's version by Diana C. Moses in her article “Livy's Lucretia and the Validity of Coerced Consent” (in Laiou 1993, 39-81). She notes that Diodorus' version “goes on at great length about the ‘nobility’ of Lucretia’s ‘choice’; the author’s concern, however, is not about whether Lucretia consented (he seems to assume she did not but that her slanderers would have contended otherwise) but about her being able to maintain her reputation as a wife who meticulously followed the rules and hence to be a shining example for future women. And although the author worries about other, less innocent women’s behaviour and Lucretia’s reputation, he does not combine these concerns, as will be seen Livy does, into a concern that if Lucretia lives she will provide a precedent for allowing women who are shameless to live; her usefulness as a precedent in the Diodorus commentary is to virtuous women and as a friendly, inspirational point for comparison” (43n.23).

²⁰ C.H. Oldfather, translating this section of Diodorus in the Loeb edition, suggests that the Byzantine excerptor of Diodorus' text “undoubtedly” took liberties with the Greek original. (Diodorus of Sicily, Vol IV, 90) Nevertheless matters of custom and law would probably be of interest to a historian accustomed to Greek ideas.

Her virtue is thus in her thoughts and intentions, and there is no mention of the way she spends her time, no mention of woolworking – or any other task. The praise granted her by Diodorus is, emphatically, based on her decision to take her own life. Livy on the other hand is much more interested in Lucretia as a character, and in the kinds of virtue she exhibits – especially remaining dutifully at home with her woolworking, when she might have behaved otherwise. Livy's concern with Lucretia is in keeping with his interest in the depiction of female characters in Book 1 of his history, such as those of Tanaquil and Tullia – the latter an example to be shunned as strongly as Lucretia is to be admired. Unlike Diodorus, Livy presents a Lucretia in whom not only her concern about what is “lawful” in her situation, but her general character and domestic virtues, provide an example that might be imitated: *quod imitere capias* (*Praefatio*:10).

What is new in Livy's story

Livy's innovation is seen clearly when compared with the Greek accounts of the story: there is no contest of the wives in the Greek versions, so that there is no dramatic discovery of Lucretia in her home, and more significantly no other wives with whose conduct she can be contrasted. Livy has not generally been seen to be innovative in his use of the situation where the husband/lover discovers the wife/mistress, not expecting his return, occupied with woolworking. Ogilvie in his commentary on Book 1 of Livy claims that “the scene is pure New Comedy again, already familiar from Terence and perhaps actually staged by Menander”²¹ (Ogilvie: note on 1.57.9) In what way then is Livy doing something different here? The Terence reference bears looking at: it occurs at *Heauton Timorumenos* 275, where the girl Antiphila is found busy with wool. Before this point in the play, the father Menedemus has been so critical

²¹ The claim that “the scene is pure New Comedy” is here based on only one reference, that from Terence.

of his son's liaison with the daughter of a poor woman that the son has left home. The father explains how he had reproached the son: "hem, tibine haec diutius licere speras facere me vivo patre amicam ut habeas prope iam uxoris loco?" (lines 102-4)

"So sir," I would say, "do you think you're to be allowed such liberties any longer in your father's lifetime, and almost as good as marry a mistress?"

Meanwhile the son, Clinia, has returned home from serving in the army and is anxious that his girl, Antiphila, has been ruined in his absence.

"sed vereor ne mulier me absente hic corrupta sit.
concurrunt multa opinionem hanc quae mihi animo exaugeant:
occasio, locus, aetas, mater quoius sub imperiost mala,
quoi nil iam praeter pretium dulcest" (231-4)

"I'm afraid, I'm afraid that while I have been away she has fallen. Many things concur to confirm this impression in my mind, the opportunity, the place, her age, the wickedness of the mother under whose control she is and who has no palate for anything but cash."

The girl, who much later in the play is found not to be of low status at all, and in fact free to marry Clinia, is at this earlier stage thought to be poor and of low status – if not a prostitute. Such is Clinia's fear when the slave Syrus tells him that the girl has been found to be busy at woolworking in the company of an old woman and a little maid-servant, with every indication of poverty, and with no knowledge that anyone was coming to visit her. This is the New Comedy situation that appears to be the familiar one behind Livy's scene of the discovery of the wives.

In Terence, the slave Syrus describes the scene:

iam primum omnium,
ubi ventum ad aedis est, Dromo pultat fores;
anus quaedam prodit; haec ubi aperit ostium,
continuo hic se intro conicit, ego consequor;
anus foribus obdit pessulum, ad lanam reddit.
hic sciri potuit aut nusquam alibi, Clinia,
quo studio vitam suam te absente exegerit,
ubi de improviso interventum mulieri.
nam ea res dedit tum existumandi copiam

cottidianae vitae consuetudinem,
 quae quoiusque ingenium ut sit declarat maxume.
 texentem telam studiose ipsam offendimus,
 mediocriter vestitam veste lugubri
 – eius anuis causa opinor quae erat mortua –
 sine auro; (275-88)

“Well then to start with; when we came to the house, Dromo he knocks at the door. Out comes an old woman. The moment she opened the door, in went Dromo full tilt and I after him. The old woman shoots the bolt and goes back to her spinning. That’s where one could find out, if there’s any spot at all where one could find out, what way she’s been spending her life in your absence, I mean by breaking in on her unawares. Why, this way we had the means of reckoning her everyday life, and it’s that that best tells what a person’s character is. When we came in on her she was busying herself at the loom; she was poorly dressed and in mourning, I suppose for the old woman who was dead, and not a trinket on her.”

Syrus goes on to assure Clinia that the girl’s feelings towards him have not changed:

ubi dicimus redisse te et rogare uti
 veniret ad te, mulier telam desinit
 continuou et lacrumis opplet os totum sibi,
 ut facile scias desiderio id fieri tuo. (304-7)

“As soon as we told her you were back and inviting her to come to you, the lady drops her thread in a moment and covers her whole face with tears; you could easily tell it was all from her longing for you.”

There is an important difference here between Livy’s woolworking scene and that of Terence. It deserves especial emphasis as it demonstrates just how innovative Livy actually is. In Livy, the young men arrive unexpectedly to find Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus, late at night amongst the woolworkers. The other royal wives, of similar social standing to Lucretia, apparently do not consider such a task suitable to their position, and Livy shows them wasting their time accordingly. But Lucretia is also – like them – a high status woman and a *matrona*; as such she contrasts strongly not only with those royal wives but also particularly with Antiphila in the Terence play, who is simply a low status girl.

The girl Antiphila in the Terence play would surely not have been found woolworking – actually at the loom – if she had been of high status, but the fact that she was thus occupied means that within the limits of her poverty and social position she is virtuous. Livy's idea here is to apply this situation of the unexpected arrival to a woman of high status, a *matrona* and wife of a royal cousin. She sees it as her duty to oversee this traditional task, she does not spurn it or take advantage of superior status to waste time with luxurious dinner parties. And here too Livy adds a new aspect: the competition of the wives, so that different wives are found unawares, and quite different occupations discovered.²² The situation as Livy treats it is thus not “pure” New Comedy, although it is a situation that may be familiar from that area. What this familiarity does is provide an atmosphere of a time in the past when woolworking was traditional in the home, and although the Lucretia story is set in a legendary past anyway, she is also meant to be an ideal Roman *matrona* for Livy's contemporaries. She does not appear in this way in the other Greek version of her story, that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

Lucretia as presented by Dionysius

The other Greek prose version of the Lucretia story is by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. It differs from Livy's in some significant ways, which are explained below. This version is similarly lacking in any reference to woolworking, which cannot be from want of space to mention it, since his narration of the story covers twenty chapters of Book IV of the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius. This work began to appear in 7 BC; it originally consisted of twenty books of which the first ten survive. Since Dionysius lived and taught at Rome for many years during the period from 30 BC, he could have been aware of Augustus' ideas and actions, and

²² The other instance of this sort of scene, in Tibullus 1.3, which Ogilvie mentions, is again quite different from Livy: Delia is of low status, not a *matrona* like Lucretia.

might perhaps have read at least the first books of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, which began to be published 27-25 BC.²³ One major difference in the version produced by Dionysius from that of Livy is that Dionysius has no interest in creating a Lucretia who will suit apparent Augustan ideology: she is the virtuous and beautiful woman as presented by Diodorus, but her virtue seems mainly to serve the purpose of emphasising the terrible nature of the crime committed by Sextus. For Dionysius, Lucretia is much less of a person in her own right, than she is for Livy, this despite the fact that he introduces her more fully than Livy does: "his (Collatinus') wife, who was a Roman woman, the daughter of Lucretius, a man of distinction" (Book 4.64.4). But he nowhere names her as Lucretia; she is identified simply as a wife and a daughter. It is in fact the husband whose wife she is who appears to interest Dionysius more (along with the villain Sextus of course) as he begins his story. Because he has already mentioned the fact that Sextus, son of the King, "ruined a married woman" (4.63.1), there will be no dramatic surprise as in Livy when the rape occurs. Dionysius fills in all the details of the background: the siege of Ardea, the relationship of Collatinus to Sextus Tarquinius; here he mentions Fabius Pictor, the earlier historian, as an authority:

τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα Φάβιος μὲν νίὸν εἶναι φησιν Ἡγερίου, περὶ οὗ δεδήλωκα πρότερον,
ὅτι Ταρκυνίῳ τῷ προτέρῳ βασιλεύσαντι Ῥωμαίων ἀδελφόπαις ἦν καὶ Κολλατείας
ἡγεμῶν ἀποδειχθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ πόλει διατριβῆς αὐτός τε Κολλατῖνος
ἐκλήθη καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις ἀφ' ἔσυτοῦ τὴν αὐτὴν κατέλιπεν ἐπίκλησιν

Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.64.3

"This man is said by Fabius to have been the son of Egerius, who, as I have shown earlier, was the nephew of Tarquinius the first Roman king of that name, and having

²³ "It is exciting to remember that Dionysius was roughly contemporary with Horace, Virgil, Ovid and Livy, although we do not know if he ever met them. In recent literature, the importance of Dionysius' contacts with Greek and Roman intellectuals in Augustan Rome has been firmly established. It has been pointed out that Dionysius was part of a 'network' of intellectuals, who exchanged their ideas on language and literature." De Jonge, 2008, 26.

been appointed Governor of Collatia, was not only himself called Collatinus from his living there, but also left the same surname to his posterity.” (4.64.3)

It seems important to Dionysius to prove his opinion that both Sextus and Collatinus are grandsons of Egerius: “But, for my part, I am persuaded that he too was a grandson of Egerius, inasmuch as he was of the same age as the sons of Tarquinius, as Fabius and the other historians have recorded; for the chronology confirms me in this opinion.” (4.64.3-4) Such detailed interest in the family connections of Collatinus contrasts markedly with the dramatic build-up to the main action in Livy’s version; with Dionysius there is no mention at this point of any contest of wives, nor of any plan for an unexpected arrival on the part of husbands who wish to find for themselves how their wives occupy their time. When finally he comes to the mention of Lucretia she is introduced as the wife of the Collatinus whose ancestry was being discussed. Sextus had apparently seen her often at his kinsman’s house but now he was actually lodged there, and since Collatinus was away, he tried to seduce her: “he had already long entertained this desire, whenever he visited his kinsman, and he thought he now had a favourable opportunity.” (4.64.4-5) The situation is again much more dramatic in Livy, where Sextus, seized with desire on seeing Lucretia – for the first time, most likely – goes away and plots to return later alone.

Sex. Tarquinium mala libido Lucretiae per vim stuprandae capit (57.11)
“Sextus Tarquinius was seized with a wicked desire to debauch Lucretia by force.”

When he comes to the scene of the rape, Dionysius recounts the same basic facts as in Livy; he has Sextus ascertain that all are asleep, and then come to Lucretia’s room, but Dionysius does not give Sextus the short sharp warning in direct speech that heightens the drama in Livy:

Tace Lucretia, inquit, Sextus Tarquinius sum; ferrum in manu est; moriere, si emiseris vocem. (58.3)

“Be still, Lucretia! I am Sextus Tarquinius. My sword is in my hand. Utter a sound, and you die!”

Dionysius simply reports that Sextus threatened to kill her, and then, as if Sextus had all the time in the world to issue conditions based on possible alternatives (is this a Greek Sextus?): “death with dishonour or life with happiness”, the would-be seducer launches into a long speech about the advantages Lucretia might gain by submitting to his will. He is the King’s son and she will be rich and powerful: various nations are enumerated as his future subjects. The other alternative is death and the shame of apparent adultery with a slave. This second alternative is described at length. Whereas Livy reports that Sextus made the adultery-with-slave threat, and that this threat at once overcame Lucretia’s resistance, Dionysius not only has the threat described at length in direct speech, but goes on to report that Sextus continued repeating his two alternatives. The inherent drama in the rape situation, so exploited by Livy, is lost in the Greek version in long speeches and explanations. Although Dionysius is one for detail when he wants it, there is no detail from Lucretia’s point of view of Sextus’ night time invasion of her sleep, only her fear of future shame. She seems able to act more from rational thought than from shock or terror, and unlike Livy’s Lucretia who sends for her father and husband, this Lucretia with purposeful intent “got into her carriage in all haste, dressed in black raiment under which she had a dagger concealed, and set out for Rome” (4.66.1). When she comes to her father’s house she does not, like Livy’s Lucretia, explain what the nature of her outrage was, but in a forceful speech demands that her kinsmen take revenge: “Consult with them in what manner you will avenge both me and yourself.” After this she stabs herself without explaining, as Livy’s Lucretia does, why she does this. Of the extant versions of the story so far discussed, the one line which remains as a trace of what Accius wrote seems more in keeping with Livy’s than either of those

of the Greek historians since, as noted above, the swift movement of events in sequence is so dramatic in Livy and could easily be imagined as an actual performance. But it is Lucretia's woolworking which is really striking in Livy's version.

Woolworking as a virtue in Livy's version

Livy has been very influential in his identification of woolworking as a virtue in his version of the Lucretia story (she is often cited in this connection), and the effectiveness of his treatment of the basic events must have played no small part in this influence.²⁴ Livy's initial presentation of Lucretia focuses solely and strikingly on this one aspect: her woolworking:

Lucretiam ... nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inveniunt.

“They found Lucretia, late at night, devoted to the wool, amongst her maid servants by lamplight seated in the central part of the house.”

As well as those versions dating from approximately the same period as Livy's, there are later ones by ancient writers: Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, Florus, and Dio Cassius, in that order.²⁵ None of these versions mentions woolworking with the exception of Dio Cassius, who appears to be using Livy as a source. All are concerned – if at all with Lucretia as an important figure – with her virtue in committing suicide and thus preserving her sexual faithfulness to her husband. There is no doubt that this is also of great importance in Livy's story:

“ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplico non libero; nec ulla deinde in pudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet.” (1.58.10-11)

²⁴ Had Dionysius, for example, included any mention of woolworking in connection with Lucretia, it is doubtful whether it would have been noticed amongst the other sorts of details that are characteristic of his treatment of the episode. Dionysius is concerned above all to present Brutus as his main focus.

²⁵ Valerius Maximus published circa AD 31-32; Plutarch AD 45-120; Florus published circa AD 115; Dio Cassius AD 163.

“though I acquit myself of the sin, I do not absolve myself from punishment; nor in time to come shall ever unchaste woman live through the example of Lucretia”.

But the virtue of woolworking, which characterises our first sight of her, is at least also of prime importance. Particularly striking at her first appearance is the use of the words *deditam lanae* – especially *lanae*. The actual wool word itself is not common in literary references to the activity – it is usually, in poetry (and Livy here is almost poetry, even by his own admission) designated by means of the equipment used: spindles, distaffs, looms, and of course Minerva goddess of weaving herself. It would seem, then, in the light of all these extant versions of the story by ancient authors, that the woolworking appears only in the story by Livy. Since in the versions of the story that are approximately contemporary with Livy Lucretia is depicted as a most virtuous married woman – “of great beauty and virtuous in character” (Diodorus); “who excelled all the Roman women in beauty as well as in virtue” (Dionysius) – why, if woolworking was synonymous with womanly virtue, was she not said to be engaged in it? These two are Greek historians, admittedly, but their concern is with a Roman subject, they write at the time of Augustus, and they have in their own cultural background a Homeric example in Penelope of a Greek wife who was virtuous and remained so by means of woolworking. For neither of these authors could the omission be said to be due to any concern for economy of detail in their style of writing. Nevertheless, in his commentary on the relevant chapters of Livy’s Book 1, Ogilvie claims that “the connexion of female virtue and wool-making owes nothing to any play or poem. In Greece, and particularly in Rome, the ideal of the *maman au foyer*, however optimistic, was deeply rooted”, and he goes on to give some references, both literary and epigraphical, to strengthen his claim that woolworking was thus valued, and to indicate what he calls “the intellectual background, where the concept of *pudicitia* was typified by *lanificium*, which

Augustus tried to animate by making his family spin ... and which Livy took advantage of for the presentation of Lucretia. Certainly Livy is not making deliberate propaganda for Augustus' moral reforms which were in any case later than this book. Both are reacting to the same ethos.”²⁶

Ogilvie's references do not support his claim

It is worthwhile to look at the references Ogilvie gives, since they have had such a strong influence on the belief (still current) that woolworking was firmly established as a virtue for *matronae* before Livy wrote.²⁷ For the ideal of the woman remaining in the house, he lists several ancient Greek sources; Euripides, Herodas, Menander and Theocritus, all of whom, several centuries before Livy, at the points indicated in their various plays or poems, reflect aspects of such an ideal.²⁸ This is at some long distance from early Augustan Rome. Closer to Livy's own time of writing are Cicero's implications about desirable behaviour on the part of Roman *matronae* in his speech *Pro Caelio*; Cicero already seems to be appealing to old-fashioned ideas, and one wonders how much of the behaviour he implied as being desirable was

²⁶ A *Commentary on Livy Books 1-5*; note on 1.57.9.

²⁷ In her recent discussion of Livy's *Lucretia*, Rebecca Langlands (2006, 87) refers to Ogilvie's notes and references concerning woolworking, as support for her statement that Lucretia's spinning was the “archetypal virtuous work of the *matrona*”. Langlands sees the simile at *Aeneid* 8, 407-13 (discussed in an appendix to the present chapter) as a “charming ancient illustration” of this virtue (rather than one used in a demeaning way) and mentions the “common epitaph for a wife: *domum servavit, lanam fecit*” (this epitaph occurs once only).

²⁸ The Greek references given by Ogilvie can hardly be said to indicate much about Roman women staying at home. Also, Lucretia's main virtue for Livy was her woolworking, and there is no mention of woolworking in any of the Greek references except Theocritus *Idyll* 28 (about a distaff) which does not in any case mention “staying at home”. According to the Menander fragment (Kassel-Austin F815, previously 59K) “the house door has been set as the limit of the house for a free woman”. (This translation kindly provided by Dr Sebastiana Nervegna.) The Herodas mime (1.37) simply asks a girl why she is “keeping her seat warm”, and Headlam in his note interprets this as a criticism of her for “doing too religiously what it was a maxim that a Greek woman should do – stay inside”. The *Troades* reference (649) is from a speech of Andromache, claiming that she stayed in the house as she should do. But in fact Ogilvie is dealing in his long note with two separate virtues: staying home is one, woolworking is another. It is woolworking that Livy emphasises; the Roman references given by Ogilvie (which are discussed in the present chapter) are not persuasive enough to support a claim that woolworking was a firmly established virtue for *matronae* already when Livy wrote. Nevertheless, Ogilvie's references in his note on Livy 1.57.9 have been frequently cited as evidence of a strong woolworking tradition at Rome, of which Livy's *Lucretia* is the chief model.

to be found in reality.²⁹ One reference given by Ogilvie is from Plutarch, and this, advising wives to stay at home (*Moralia* 139C), dates from about a century later and is advice rather than a statement of fact.³⁰ Perhaps it is all wishful thinking? This thought does come sometimes to mind with regard to the other area of evidence for virtuous woolworking, the epigraphical inscriptions. Ogilvie mentions those cited in an article by Gordon Williams (JRS 48 1958), which discusses “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals”. Williams, in turn, is referring to epitaphs collected by Lattimore in “Themes in Greek and Roman Epitaphs” (1942). Certain of these epitaphs tend to appear frequently when woolworking is at issue, especially that of Claudia who *domum servavit, lanam fecit* and also the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*. The epitaphs collected by Lattimore, for example, appear to date from periods of time widely spaced, and similarly different areas of the Empire. The usefulness or otherwise of certain inscriptions is touched on in the introduction to this thesis, but the main concern from now on is with the literary references to woolworking, especially as might bear upon Livy’s Lucretia and the significance of his depiction of her.

The literary references given by Ogilvie as examples of *pudicitia* being typified by *lanificium* are from Ovid and Vitruvius; Ovid’s description of the ruddy faced matron from the time of old King Tatius (*Medicamina Faciei* 11ff) cannot be taken as a serious indication of a virtuous ideal so much as a humorous jibe at the unsophisticated life of those *matronae* who

²⁹ For example Cicero’s criticisms of Clodia in *Pro Caelio* 33.10, 33, 34.

³⁰ In the *Pro Caelio*, Cicero does not mention woolworking as a virtue, although he has a perfect opportunity to do so. When he adopts the *persona* of the old Appius Claudius to berate Clodia (14.34) he compares her behaviour with that of her female Claudian forbears who, in the past, maintained the worthy character of the family: *domestica laus, gloria muliebri*, great female worth and “glory”, are called upon by the old ancestor of Clodia. He asks why Clodia has not been inspired by these past virtues. But Cicero, in the role of Appius Claudius, gives no details of the *domestica laus* – certainly not duties such as woolworking. Similarly Sallust, in his portrait of Sempronius – one of Catiline’s associates (*In Catilinam* 25) – never mentions woolworking amongst the virtues which this woman fails to value. It is *decus atque pudicitia* (honour and modesty) that are lacking. As for Plutarch’s advice, it comes long after Livy’s first book appeared (Plutarch’s dates AD c.45-120). Such advice can hardly reflect an attitude current when Livy created his Lucretia. It does, however, agree with what Lucretia was doing when discovered: “a virtuous woman ought to ... stay in the house and hide herself when her husband is away”. (*Moralia* 139.9)

happened to be unfortunate enough not to live in the sophisticated Rome he so enjoyed.

Assiduum duro pollice nebat opus – “she span assiduously with hardened thumb” – certainly describes the activity of woolworking, but hardly in a very positive way. The Vitruvius reference (6.7.2) is from a description of a house in the Greek style, where there are *oeci magni* – large rooms in which *matres familiarum cum lanificis habent sessionem* “the *matres familiarum* are present with the woolworkers”. This is a picture very much in keeping with Livy’s description of the scene in which Lucretia is discovered with her woolworkers. But it does not necessarily indicate that this was a custom at the time when Vitruvius, also an Augustan author, was writing. (Approximately from 33BC into the twenties: von Albrecht, 880.) In this section of his work he is writing about houses that are a desirable ideal, and which are being used in ways that fulfil this ideal.³¹ This in fact is the point here, that the room with the *matrona* present with her woolworkers is an ideal; and this is of course what Ogilvie is saying, but he implies that Livy is really only describing a situation firmly established in current ways of thinking if not in practice. The references he gives are all really to do with an ideal, even, as in the Ovid reference, if it is one to be made fun of. Livy is depicting this ideal as a real situation, and strikingly so, since although Lucretia belongs in an ancient legend, she also belongs very much as an example to be noted and imitated in Livy’s own time. His first book (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1) is entirely concerned with such ancient legends, all of which in some way indicate moral choices for his own contemporaries. Concerning this particular legend, however – that of Lucretia – Livy’s is not the only version from a Roman author. There is another as told by Ovid in *Fasti*

³¹ “His (Vitruvius’) main purpose was to provide Augustus and all intelligent readers (1.1.18) with clear directives for their building enterprises. He wrote therefore as an expert, but not so much from the student’s as the theorist’s point of view. He explains *how buildings should be*, not how they in fact were in each individual case. His poems aim to assign a higher value to architecture as a form of art. Both in technique and art Vitruvius applies strict standards, which in his time must have created a *conservative impression*. He passionately rejects the modern wall painting of the day and criticizes technical innovations.” (von Albrecht 1997, 882) (italics mine)

Book 2, apparently following that of Livy, but presenting a Lucretia who is very different from Livy's exemplary *matrona*. It is suggested here that Ovid's version of the legend, like a parody of Livy's, hints at the scant likelihood of finding *matronae* like Livy's Lucretia in contemporary Rome.

Ovid's Lucretia

Ovid, the only extant Roman poet to tell the story of Lucretia (Lee 1953, 107-118), does so in *Fasti* Book 2 (721-852) and appears to follow Livy's account, including the spinning. Ovid's version, as we shall see, reads very like a parody of Livy's. The *matrona* and her woolworking here are treated with humorous exaggeration rather than the respect with which Augustan ideology favoured such a tradition. Whereas the economy of expression and swift movement of Livy's story are important aspects of its effectiveness, as well as the use of minimal direct speech until the slightly longer complaint of Lucretia herself, Ovid's version of the encounter between Sextus and Lucretia is fuller and concentrates on certain features of the story with more detail and at greater length. In particular – and to humorous effect – the woolworking itself is emphasised. The fact that it is composed in elegiac metre is important in determining the nature of Ovid's version. It is because of the character of the elegiac couplet, where a sense unit is often confined within two lines, that the narrative here does not move with the dramatic swiftness of Livy's. Ovid's version is more like a description, even a picture. Although obviously based on Livy's version (some almost identical wording, looked at below), Ovid's story does not give the same detailed account of the events leading to the rape; the capture of Gabii, the portents that appeared to the king, the character and actions of Brutus are all fully dealt with by Livy. These events, as a necessary prelude to the rape episode, appear in

much less detail before Ovid moves to the part of the story which he expands considerably. He is especially brief about Brutus, merely saying that

Brutus erat stulti sapiens imitator, ut esset
tutus ab insidiis, dire Superbe, tuis
(717-18)

“the prudent Brutus feigned to be a fool, in order that from thy snares, Tarquin the Proud, dread king, he might be safe.”

Once he has come to the scene where the young men are drinking together, Ovid’s version becomes as fully detailed as Livy’s and is clearly very closely following it: Livy: *suam quisque laudare* (all refs from 57.5-7), Ovid: *quisque suam laudat* “each praised his wife”; Livy: *certamine accenso*, Ovid: *certamina crescunt* (731) “the rivalry grew hot”; Livy: *Collatinus negat verbis opus*, Ovid: *non opus est verbis* (734) “there is no need for words”. Because the action is less of a continuum at this point – a quick succession of praising wives, leaping on to horses, arriving at the palace, finding the party in progress, galloping back to Lucretia – the elegiac metre does not seem to slow the narrative, and in fact makes it more like Livy’s. But when the young men arrive at Lucretia’s house the whole episode comes to a pause, almost to a sort of tableau. Ovid, known for humour, is here dealing with a tragedy; but the fact that “wit was endemic in his nature”, and that “he could not help committing some acts of irony and wit” (Fantham 1995, 42-59) does appear in his version of the Lucretia story, both in his treatment of Lucretia herself and especially of her woolworking. Recent studies of the *Fasti* version of the legend do not take account of Ovid’s humour.

Comparisons of Ovid's version with Livy

Two recent studies compare Ovid's treatment of the Lucretia episode with Livy's: Fox (1996) and Murgatroyd (2005). Both studies point out significant differences between the two versions; Murgatroyd concentrates on the tragic and emotional in the *Fasti* story, and Fox on the elegiac nature of Ovid's treatment as opposed to Livy's more serious historical interpretation. There are two areas, however, where it is possible to look more closely at a comparison: the elegiac characteristics of Ovid's story, especially with regard to Lucretia herself, still offer some further interesting aspects, and also apart from this, there is the fact that neither of the two studies makes more than the most passing reference (if at all) to the images of woolworking. To begin with Fox: he sees Ovid lacking any detailed explanation of certain historical events which precede the rape in Livy's version, creating "a sense of parody rather than of mystery" by the "obscurity" that results (211). This parody Fox says is dependent on Ovid's relationship with Livy, "since the events can be disentangled only when read in conjunction with the historian". For Fox, the whole episode is "worked over to suit its elegiac context", and since the erotic nature of elegiac poetry is recalled here, "Ovid undermines the outrage" of Livy's Lucretia story (212). Fox sees two important erotic elegiac components of Ovid's version: the depiction of Lucretia in terms reminiscent of an elegiac girl, and the behaviour of Sextus which resembles that of the elegiac lover. There is no doubt that Ovid's Lucretia is described at various points in ways that recall Ovid's own elegiac descriptions – and also those of Propertius, whose Cynthia is the elegiac girl par excellence. Ovid's Lucretia is pale-skinned and golden-haired:

forma placet niveusque color flavique capilli
 (763)
 "her figure pleased him, and that pale colouring and fair hair."

So too is Cynthia:

nec me tam facies, quamvis sit candida, cepit
 lilia non domina sunt magis alba mea
 (2.3 9-10)

“nor is it so much her face that ensnared me, though it is fair,
 lilies are not whiter than my mistress.”

and she also has golden hair: *fulva comast* (2.2.5). But the Lucretia of the *Fasti* is, ostensibly, a *matrona*. When we see her first she is seated on what must be the marriage bed (*torum*) in the centre of the house – which is where this bed was situated³² – and she proceeds to complain of her anxiety for her absent husband.³³ Fox states that her position as a *matrona* is compromised “by the elegiac tradition of picturing the mistress as a *materfamilias*” (212). This seems an odd statement to make, when what Ovid is doing is placing his Lucretia in exactly the same situation when she is first encountered – engaged in woolworking with her women – as Livy’s Lucretia was placed, and Livy’s Lucretia is surely the epitome of the respectable *matrona*. In this connection Fox refers in a footnote to the scene in Tibullus 1.3 where the poet hopes to find Delia, his mistress, engaged in woolworking with other spinning women when he makes an unexpected appearance; the lines (1.3.83-94) in which Tibullus imagines this scene are often referred to in editions of other Latin poets as a good example of a woolworking scene.

³² Note on Catullus 64.47-8 D.F.S. Thomson 2003.

³³ It is the appealing nature of Ovid’s Lucretia, seen as *nupta pudica* (794), that is emphasised both in the other recent comparison, by Murgatroyd, of Ovid’s and Livy’s versions of the story, and also in an article by Lee (1953) entitled “Ovid’s ‘Lucretia’”, where her soft voice, her concern for her husband and delight at his arrival form “a delightful picture” (111). Murgatroyd points out how Ovid emphasises Lucretia’s character: “Ovid goes for a much stronger impact on the emotions in his version [than Livy does]” (191), and he thinks that Ovid builds up a sense of foreboding (at 2.711-720) and adds many ironical touches which precede the rape, and that there is no lack of a sense of outrage in this version of the story. He dismisses Fox’s claim that an erotic elegiac element in Ovid’s treatment undermines outrage at the “brutal rape” (197 n.47), but he himself does not make any reference to any similarities that Lucretia bears to the elegiac girl. He sees her depicted here as “more gentle and tender … in place of the austere (old Roman) matron of Livy” (197). And yet it is her resemblance to an elegiac girl that is very much a part of this gentle tenderness. Murgatroyd recognises that “Ovid cannot resist being flippant even in connection with someone like Lucretia” (200), but the humour – just “a little” – that he mentions, occurring at the beginning and end of Ovid’s version, consists of playful touches, treating certain features of Livy’s version in a rather “facetious” way by under- or over-emphasising them somehow. But this wit which was “endemic in his nature” (Fantham 1995 as quoted above) meant that “he could not help committing some acts of irony and wit”, and whether it is intentional or not, his Lucretia is very much the sort of *puella* he has been accustomed to create elsewhere, and as a *matrona* she does not really fit Augustan ideology in the way that Livy’s Lucretia does.

At tu casta, precor, maneas sanctique pudoris
assideat custos semper anus.
haec tibi fabellas referat positaque lucerna
deducat plena stamina longa colu,
ac circa, gravibus pensis affixa, puella
paulatim somno fessa remittat opus.
tunc veniam subito nec quisquam nuntiet ante
sed videar caelo issus adessse tibi.
tunc mihi, qualis eris, longos turbata capillos,
obvia nudato, Delia, curre pede.

Tibullus 1.3.83-92

“But, Delia, I beg that you stay true. Let the old duenna sit always beside you to guard your honour with constant care. She shall tell you stories and when the lamp is in place she shall draw out the long thread from the full distaff, while around her the girls intent on heavy tasks gradually, exhausted, sleepily let fall their work. Then suddenly I shall come and no one give warning of me, but I will seem to be sent from heaven to be with you. Then just as you are, Delia, long hair in disorder, barefoot, run to meet me.”

For Fox this scene in Tibullus 1.3 seems to be some proof of a “tradition” of the mistress being pictured as a *materfamilias*. In fact this is really the only such scene, and it represents a situation where two such totally opposing roles – the mistress and the *matrona* – are so merged, that it approaches pure fantasy; even in their delight in their mistresses, other poets are more “realistic”. A further instance of elegiac similarity for Fox is a resemblance between Lucretia’s complaints about her missing husband and the behaviour of the women in Ovid’s *Heroides* who are separated from loved ones, for example Penelope, who in *Heroides* 1 fears for Ulixes. But these heroines are not the girls of love elegy; it is to the elegiac *puella*, in fact, that Ovid’s Lucretia bears much more of a resemblance. (She is more like a *matrona* resembling a *puella* than the other way around.) Fox does mention one aspect of Lucretia here that is a feature of some of Ovid’s elegiac *puellae* – her tears, which in this episode are tears of *pudicitia*. These tears, along with some closer resemblances to elegiac girls, are treated next.³⁴

³⁴ Ovid’s version of Lucretia in *Fasti* 2 is discussed by Francesco Corsaro (1983), where he compares it with Livy’s version, noting that Ovid’s Lucretia is presented as “piu femminile”, and that her effect on Sextus is thus more

Lucretia as elegiac *puella*

How then does Ovid's Lucretia remind us of an elegiac *puella*, and thus seem at odds with a "genuine" *matrona*? As she is seen first, she has all the appearance of a *matrona* – even Livy's Lucretia – since she is sitting at her marriage bed with baskets of wool before her, and is surrounded by her women who are drawing the thread from their allotted weight of wool in order to spin it. Even the light is dim, since the work is going on into the night.

inde cito passu petitur Lucretia, cuius
ante torum calathi lanaque mollis erat
lumen ad exiguum famulae data pensa trahebant. (741-3)

"Thence they galloped to Lucretia, before whose bed were baskets full of soft wool. By a dim light the handmaids were spinning their allotted stints of yarn."

Immediately after this, however, she begins to speak:

inter quas tenui sic ait illa sono (744)

"Amongst them the lady spoke on accents soft."

The word *tenui* used to describe her voice is one that is associated with elegy in various ways. Ovid describes Elegy (*Elegia*) personified as having *vestis tenuissima* (a thin, light robe) at *Amores* 3.1.9, and of course the elegiac mistresses of both Propertius and Tibullus had already been clothed thus (Tibullus 2.3.53; Propertius 1.2.2. – both *tenues vestes*). Closer to the context here is the tone to be used by the maidservant whom Ovid's lover at *Ars Amatoria* 1.369 says can be persuaded to collude with him in urging her mistress to cheat on her husband.

psychologically detailed. For Ovid's treatment of rapes more generally, see for example, Mary Beard (1999), Amy Richlin (1992). Julia Hejduk (2011) sees Ovid's Lucretia described "with the standard vocabulary of neoteric poetics"; she comments that Lucretia's tragedy is also magnified by being the only heroine raped in the *Fasti* who is given "such a speech beforehand", where she fears for Collatinus.

Et secum tenui suspirans murmure dicat:
 “At puto, non poteras ipsa referre vicem.”

“And let her say, sighing softly to herself, ‘but, I suppose you could not yourself pay him back in kind.’ ”

At once the similarly evocative word *mollis* in a previous line of our first view of Lucretia (742) comes to notice, innocently used of the wool, but also very apt here to describe Lucretia herself. But it is when her husband arrives, however, that Ovid’s Lucretia begins even more to resemble an elegiac *puella*.

It is in her behaviour, not simply her appearance, that the Lucretia of the *Fasti* becomes more *puella* than *matrona*. Before her husband’s arrival, she starts to speak, complaining of her anxiety about him at the siege of Ardea, and she is urging her women to hurry with the cloak that is being made for him. This is all very like a good *matrona*, but the one she resembles most here is not Livy’s Lucretia, but Propertius’ elegiac Arethusa, who in his Book 4 elegy 3 is similarly busy with a cloak for the husband about whose safety she has fears in his military absence. But Ovid’s Lucretia has not long to lament, as her husband arrives – unexpectedly as in Livy’s story. Just before he enters, however, she has begun to weep, and has buried her face in her lap: *desinit in lacrimas* “she ended weeping”. When Ovid then describes her tears as becoming: *hoc ipsum decuit: lacrimae decuere pudicam* (767) “the gesture was becoming; becoming too her modest tears”, there is a reminder here of the way in which the emotions of the Sabine girls, who were about to suffer a less violent experience than Lucretia’s, were similarly described: *et potuit multas ipse decere timor* (*Ars Amatoria* 1.126) “and to many their very fear had power to lend grace”. The treatment of the Rape of the Sabines in *Ars Amatoria* 1 (89-134) is playful if not flippant; it is the work thought to be a possible cause of Ovid’s exile, and it is approximately contemporaneous with the *Fasti*, which it is thought Ovid was working on soon after completing

Ars Amatoria in AD 1 (Fantham 1998, “The Fasti in its Historical Context” [introduction to her edition of *Fasti Book IV*]). Already earlier at *Amores* 2 .4.11-12 and at 2.5 43-4 the *puella* in question has been seen as attractive with downcast gaze: *oculos in humum deiecta modestos* “modest eyes fixed on the ground” *terram spectare decebat; maesta erat in vultu – maesta decenter erat* “to keep them (eyes) on the ground was becoming; there was grief in her face – grief made her comely”. How tragic an impression is being made as Ovid writes here of Lucretia’s tragedy, when he seems unable to write about attractive women in any other way than he has always done?

Sympathy for Lucretia

Nevertheless Ovid is much more concerned here with the pathos of the situation than with the political aspects which figure so largely in Livy’s account, and when he comes to his description of the violence of the rape, he emphasises Lucretia’s fear and helplessness at much greater length than Livy, and is clearly intending to evoke sympathy for her. Whereas Livy’s Lucretia wakes in fear: *pavida ex somno* (1.58.3) “in affright the woman started out of her sleep”, Ovid’s *nupta pudica* (794) “virtuous spouse” reacts thus:

illa nihil: neque enim vocem viresque loquendi
aut aliquid toto pectore mentis habet,
sed tremit, ut quondam stabulis deprensa relicta
parva sub infesto cum iacet agna lupo.
quid faciat? pugnet? vincetur femina pugnans.
clamet? at in dextra, qui vetet, ensis erat.
effugiat? positis urgentur pectora palmis,
tunc primum externa pectora tacta manu.

(797-804)

“She answered never a word. Voice and power of speech and thought itself fled from her breast. But she trembled, as trembles a little lamb that, caught straying from the

fold, lies low under a ravening wolf. What could she do? Should she struggle? In a struggle a woman will always be worsted. Should she cry out? But in his clutch was a sword to silence her. Should she fly? His hands pressed heavy on her breast, the breast that till then had never known the touch of stranger hand.”

It is a sympathetic picture (though flashily rhetorical with all the staccato clauses and contrasts), despite the slight echo of the mistress Corinna of *Amores* 1.5 of whom the question *pugnet?* might similarly be asked, and with the same pointlessness – she of course wished not to win. There follow the violent actions of Sextus, whom Livy in contradictory word-play describes as *hostis pro hospite* (58.8) “hostility for hospitality” but whom the love elegist Ovid in a similar sort of antithesis describes as *amans hostis* (805) “lover foe”.

Finally, after she has fallen dying at her father’s feet, there is the rather ghoulish description of her eyes and hair seeming to move. Ovid is fond of girls’ hair; at the start of his career in love elegy he laments his lack of a girl with attractive hair:

nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta,
aut puer aut longas compta puella comas
(*Amores* 1.1 19-20)

“And yet I have no matter suited to lighter numbers – neither a boy, nor a maiden with long and well-kept locks.”

He soon has one, however, as when Corinna makes her entrance at *Amores* 1.5 she has hair that is divided by her white neck: *Candida dividua colla tegente coma* (1.5.10) Lucretia, however, seems to move her eyes and hair in death:

illa iacens ad verba oculos sine lumine movit
visaque concussa dicta probare coma. (845-6)

“At these words, even as she lay, she moved her lightless eyes and seemed by the stirring of her hair to ratify the speech.”

Lucretia is at last borne out to her funeral:

fertur in exsequias animi matrona virilis (847)

“They bore her to burial, that matron of manly courage.”

This is the first time Ovid has used the term *matrona* of Lucretia. He has been obliged to make her a *matrona* both because of the original legend he is working with, and also, because he is following Livy, he must have her engaged in woolworking; she must at least seem to fit in with current Augustan ideology at his own time of writing. Perhaps she can be called a matrona after her death? But until this point in his version of the story she has not borne much of a resemblance to a *matrona* as typified by Livy’s Lucretia, but rather, in many ways, has called to mind the *puerilla* of elegy. Elegiac girl and traditional *matrona* do not mix, and appear both in the social and literary context to be mutually opposed. Ovid himself, early in the first book of *Ars Amatoria*, makes a distinction between those who may and may not read his projected work in safety.

Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes (A.A.1 31-2)

“Keep far away, ye slender fillets, emblems of modesty, and the long skirt that hides the feet in its folds.”

The *vittae tenues* in particular are a characteristic feature of the ideal dress of the *matrona* (Sebesta 2001, 50) and she is clearly being distinguished here from the girls who may legitimately, so says the poet, both read his work and be the focus of his strategies. And yet despite this the only thing that really characterises the Lucretia of *Fasti* 2 as a *matrona*, up until her death, is the fact that she is actually married and that she is engaged with wool – otherwise she might just as well be an elegiac girl. It is rather as if at the end of his story Ovid has quickly to assert that she is really, after all, a *matrona*, and that her spirit is *virilis* (She must surely be the

least “manly” *matrona* that one is likely to find). That this qualification is necessary on Ovid’s part is fairly obvious when we look at the way she has been presented earlier.

As stated above, her tears as she finishes speaking of her husband are said to be attractive, and as seen already (*Amores* 2.5 43-4) unhappiness increases the attraction of the *puella*. Tears also have dubious associations; at *Amores* 1.8 83-4 the old *lena* Dipsas advises the poet’s girl:

quin etiam discant oculi lacrimare coacti,
et faciant udas illa vel ille genas (83-4)

“Nay, even let your eyes learn to drop tears at command,
and let one or other cause you wet cheeks.”

Sextus aroused by the (elegiac) beauty of Lucretia

It is immediately after this that Sextus becomes inflamed with passion, and it is her appearance that affects him first. We are not given any details by Livy of his Lucretia’s appearance; he merely states that her beauty as well as chastity aroused Sextus: “cum forma tum spectata castitas incitat” (57.11). Ovid’s Lucretia appears thus to Sextus:

forma placet niveusque color flavique capilli
 quique aderat nulla factus ab arte decor;
verba placent et vox, et quod corrumpere non est,
 quoque minor spes est, hoc magis ille cupid (763-6)

“Her figure pleased him, and that snowy hue, that yellow hair, and artless grace; pleasing too, her words and voice and virtue incorruptible, and the less hope he had, the hotter his desire.”

When Sextus returns to the camp with the other young men, he recalls how Lucretia appeared. He lists in his mind what are essentially attributes of the elegiac *puella* (with one exception, noted shortly):

sic sedit, sic culta fuit, sic stamina nevit,
 iniectae collo sic iacuere comae
 hos habuit voltus, haec illi verba fuerunt,
 hic color, haec facies, hic decor oris erat (771-4)

“Thus she sat, thus she dressed, thus she spun the yarn, thus her tresses lay fallen on her neck; that was her look, these were her words, that was her colour, that her form, and that her lovely face.”

The enumeration of Lucretia’s attributes is reminiscent the way in which Corinna’s charms are listed in *Amores* 1.5, but since Lucretia is clothed, the only one shared with Corinna is the hair falling on the neck (1.5.10) – which of course is not at all how a *matrona* was supposed to look. In describing the ideal costume of the *matrona*, Sebesta notes: “hair bound with *vittae* was so distinctive a style that by itself it signified the married woman” (Sebesta and Bonfante 2001, 49). These *vittae*, woollen fillets, protected the woman in the way that “sacrificial woollen bands indicated that an animal was dedicated to the gods and was pure”. And Ovid knew very well about *vittae* as he made plain when, as already mentioned, he warned those who wore fillets not to read his work. (The girls he addresses in *Ars Amatoria* 3 lack the distinction of the fillets: *quamvis vittae careatis honore* (483) – “although you lack the ‘honour’ of the fillet”.) The memory of how Lucretia appeared when he saw her, how she spoke and acted, is what stirs Sextus into his plan of violent action; there is no more mention of her incorruptibility being the spur. It is really her appeal in terms of elegiac *puella* that has been effective.³⁵ The incongruity of Ovid’s Lucretia being presented officially as a *matrona* and yet having such a strong resemblance to the elegiac girl does not seem to have been stressed in comments on the *Fasti* version. P.M. Keegan (article in Herbert-Brown 2002), concentrating on

³⁵ It would be impossible not to notice the elegiac features of Ovid’s Lucretia, and they have been remarked upon by a number of commentators. For Fox (1996) her erotic appeal destroys the outrage that Livy’s account emphasises. Newlands (1995) recognises Lucretia’s “elegiac posture”, and thinks that it makes “psychologically plausible the passion of the king’s son Sextus Tarquinius” (149), but she also quotes the opinion of Michael Pokrowskij (from 1902) that Ovid’s version of the Lucretia story is nothing but a collection of conventional erotic themes, and she disagrees with this. Lee (1953) notes the “tender and feminine” aspect of Ovid’s Lucretia (117) but does not indicate her similarities to an elegiac girl.

another aspect of Ovid's Lucretia – her speech and her silence, but not her *puella* qualities, as are the concern here – comments: “nothing new under the elegiac sun” (149).

There is, in fact, something new. It is not Ovid's presentation of Lucretia who recalls a *puella*; this may not have been deliberate, as it was clearly in Ovid's nature to “commit some acts of irony and wit”, as has already been mentioned. And he might have got away with it, although Augustus probably would have found it offensive. What is “new” and what does seem to be deliberate is Ovid's real insistence in his version of the story on woolworking. Whereas a *matrona* who resembles a *puella* might just be able to be accepted, incongruous though she is, a *matrona* whose story clearly follows Livy's account of the virtuous Lucretia, devoted to wool, becomes harder to take seriously when she not only resembles a *puella* but also appears to be inordinately keen on woolworking – in fact to an exaggerated degree. The image we have of her as she is first presented is more than just “zealous domesticity” (Keegan 147) – it is overzealous. Not only is she surrounded by every possible object and activity that has to do with woolworking: *calathi* “wool baskets”, *lana mollis* “soft wool” and *famulae* “women servants” who are drawing off their allotted tasks, *data pensa trahebant*, (all this in the space of two lines, 743-4), but she also at once begins to cry out urgently to the women that they must hurry with the cloak that is being made; *nunc, nunc properate, puellae!* – “Haste now, haste, girls!” What we have here is a regular production line in the area of woolworking, from start to finish. The only thing missing is the preparation of the original fleece. The weights of wool have been handed out, the women are putting wool on to distaffs and presumably then on to spindles and thus spinning thread; but there must also be a loom nearby, either part of the cloak is on it being woven, or else the cloak, already finished, is being stitched together – yet another operation.

What a busy scene the young men find, all being carried out in a dim light – which must be very difficult. But this is not all. When Lucretia ends her anxious complaints about her husband's absence and begins to weep, she drops the thread she is holding: *intentaque fila remittit* (755). Surely she also is not actually drawing the wool from a *pensum*, and thus performing the onerous task of a *quasillaria*? She must have been doing so, when Sextus recalls how she looked, he says: *sic stamina nevit* – “thus she spun the yarn”; *nevitat*, from a verb meaning to spin, means just that. Livy's Lucretia would surely not have done so, and although she is similarly in the company of her spinning women working by lamplight, Livy simply states that she is devoted to the wool – *deditam lanae* – presumably dutifully supervising rather than spoiling her hands and lessening her dignity as a *matrona*. But Ovid's *matrona*, devoted to her wool with what seems parodic excess, is actually performing the action which was reserved for low-status slaves. In his Lucretia story Ovid outdoes other humorous references to woolworking found in Roman poets such as Vergil and Propertius.

If Ovid's is a parody,³⁶ however, it is more than simply an exaggeration of woolworking for humorous effect. Woolworking had been featured as a source of humour in Roman poetry before Ovid, notably in Vergil's *Georgics* and even *Aeneid*. (These references from Vergil are looked at later in this chapter and in an appendix.) And there is an instance of a humorous woolworking scene from Propertius which even resembles the Lucretia story in that the girl is visited unexpectedly so that her activities might be discovered. This poem is elegy 6 in Propertius' third book, published about 25-23 BC (Richardson). This elegy is discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Ovid and his interested audience would have known of all these previous poems. But Ovid has chosen to treat – specifically – the woolworking of Livy's Lucretia as a source of humour, even following Livy's story closely. In this he undercuts not only Livy's

³⁶ Noted as such by Fox (211).

exemplum of the virtuous woolworking *matrona*, but also the Augustan ideology which saw such an *exemplum* as an ideal. Propertius' poem (3.6) is more cautious in its treatment of a politically sensitive tradition, but the poet still feels free to use woolworking with humour.³⁷

Whereas Ovid's story treats the Lucretia legend explicitly, Vergil had already described a scene where a high status woman and her woolworkers are seen in a humorous light. This scene is in *Georgics* 4 where the goddess Cyrene and her spinners work underwater. But there are also in the *Georgics* references to the farm wife and her wool; as distinct from the high status woman, the farm wife works wool as she must do, according to old custom.

³⁷ A woolworking scene which bears comparison with Ovid's Lucretia comes from Terence's comedy *Heauton Timorumenos*, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. This scene features the girl Antiphila as a praiseworthy woolworker. These lines from Terence (275-307) are often referred to as an example of a woolworking scene, especially of the type where the lover-husband returns unexpectedly to find his mistress/wife thus occupied (e.g. Ogilvie on Livy 1.57, Maltby on Tibullus 1.3). In the Terence play the slave Syrus gives an account to his master Clinia of the activities he saw in the mistress' house: she was busy with her servants working wool (and doing it personally), and she left off her work and began to weep at talk of her lover. Interesting, however, in relation to Ovid's use of woolworking in the Lucretia episode of *Fasti* 2, is Terence's description of how Antiphila stops working and weeps.

ubi dicimus redisse te et rogare uti
veniret ad te, mulier telam desinit
continuo et lacrimis opplet os totum sibi
ut facile scias desiderio id fieri tuo (304-7)

“As soon as we told her you were back and inviting her
to come to you, the lady drops her thread in a moment and
covers her whole face with tears; you could easily tell it was
all from her longing for you.”

This is Ovid's description of Lucretia's similar behaviour:

desinit in lacrimas intentaque fila remittit,
in gremio voltum depositque suum. (755-6)

“She ended weeping, dropped the stretched yarn,
and buried her face in her lap.”

In both scenes the weeping is caused by emotion about the husband or lover, and a woman actually busy with woolworking drops her work, her face covered with tears; even the same word *desinit* describes the woman's action. This is not to suggest that Ovid had this passage from Terence in mind when he wrote his scene, but the fact that the original scene originates in comedy is interesting here; who knows if Ovid had not appreciated the wit in that particular scene? Whatever was the case, it does seem that Ovid means his exaggeration of the woolworking virtue of Lucretia to be humorous, even a parody of Livy, and that it is another example of something he has written which, whether he intends it or not, may be found offensive. It looks as though Lucretia the paragon is being made fun of by Ovid in her most virtuous aspect.

Vergil's woolworking scenes

The reason why these references in Vergil's *Georgics* will be discussed here is as follows. Livy's version of the Lucretia legend presents a high status *matrona* devoted to her wool, and identifies this devotion with her virtue. Much subsequent scholarly opinion is based on Livy's Lucretia, claiming that she represents not just an ideal, but an established tradition with regard to high status *matronae* in terms of attitudes to woolworking and to those who were thought to perform the task. Part of the purpose of looking at Livy's Lucretia in this chapter is to see what evidence might be found for the existence of such an established tradition in poetry contemporary with Livy's story. The *Georgics* of Vergil were chosen for this reason. It will be suggested here that Vergil's spinning and weaving scenes in the *Georgics* depict woolworking as a necessarily low status task, and that one scene in fact features what appears to be a parody of the task performed by a high status *matrona* – implying perhaps that Lucretia does not represent a much-respected tradition.

Ovid's Lucretia – discussed above as one of the versions of the story – could be seen to represent, by means of parody, the improbability of such virtuous woolworking *matronae* being found in contemporary Rome.

Vergil's *Georgics*, completed by 29 BC (Thomas 1988, 1) date from the years just preceding the publication of Livy's first book. In *Georgics* 1 there are two references to woolworking, where the scene described is clearly a traditional one. This is an agricultural, less sophisticated setting; "old Roman" traditions – such as woolworking – are to be found here with the farm wives and their spinning women. This first book treats the farmer's tasks (43-203) and then his calendar of when these tasks should be done, followed by relevant weather signs (204-

463). The farmer's wife also has her tasks, and one of them is woolworking. There is a time recommended for preparing the loom for the process of weaving:

septima post decimam felix et ponere vitem
et prensos domitare boves et licia telae addere (284-6)

“the seventeenth is lucky for planting the vine, for yoking and breaking in oxen, and for adding the leashes to the warp.”

This having been done, on winter evenings the farmer's wife can work at the loom:

interea longum cantu solata laborem arguto
coniunx percurrit pectine telas (293-4)

“his wife the while solaces with song her long toil, runs the shrill shuttle through the web.”

The woolworking seems to be a regular night-time occupation, since the girls preparing the wool for spinning by lamplight are accustomed to be made aware of stormy weather by the sputtering of their lamps:

ne nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae
nescivere hiemem, testa cum ardente viderent
scintillare oleum et putris concrescere fungos (390-3)

“even at night, maidens that spin their tasks have not failed to mark a storm as they saw the oil sputter in the blazing lamp, and a mouldy fungus gather on the wick”³⁸

In these references the task of woolworking is being done by women who because of their social status are obliged to do it, and it is a task that is long and arduous (*longum laborem*), often done in difficult conditions by lamplight. There is no particular implication of virtue here – these women are performing a task that is a necessity. They and their task belong to the agricultural way of life whose older and less luxurious ways were in tune with the moral reforms of Augustus, and in this sense can be said to illustrate an ideal. In Book 4 of the *Georgics*,

³⁸ The girls are not actually spinning at this point; “carpentes” indicates that they are drawing lengths suitable for spinning from their *pensa*, or allotted weights of wool. The same applies at Georgics 4.335.

however, the relevant scene does not occur in an agricultural setting, but in a mythical one. The situation is at once unreal and bizarre, since the action takes place underwater, but the woolworking looks much like what was being done in Livy's story of Lucretia.

Vergil's scene occurs in the epyllion of Book 4. This section of the fourth book tells the story of Aristaeus, a farmer who has lost his bees, and has to find a way of restoring the swarm. Aristaeus complains of his loss while standing near the bank of the sacred river beneath which his mother, Cyrene, dwells in underwater chambers; she is a water nymph. He is heard by Cyrene, who causes the water of the river to convey her son down to where she dwells, so that she can help and advise him. But when she first hears his voice, she is sitting with her attendant nymphs far beneath the surface of the river, and they are all busy preparing wool for spinning, while one of their number sings tales of the amorous adventures of the gods.

At mater sonitum thalamo sub fluminis alti
sensit. eam circum Milesia vellera nymphae
carpebant hyali saturo fucata colore (333-5)

"But his mother heard the cry from her bower beneath the river's depths, about her the nymphs were spinning fleeces from Miletus, dyed with rich glassy hue."

Carmine quo captae dum fusis mollia pensa
devolvunt, iterum maternas impulit auris
luctus Aristaei (348-50)

"And while, charmed by the strain, they unrolled the soft coils from their spindles, again the wail of Aristaeus smote upon his mother's ear."

Vergil's episode with Cyrene recalls the scene in *Iliad* (18.35ff) where the sea goddess Thetis hears her son Achilles complaining; she sits beneath the sea and the other sea goddesses crowd about her, but unlike Vergil's nymphs, none is engaged in any woolworking. In his edition of the *Georgics* (1988), Richard Thomas remarks about Vergil's scene at lines 4.334-5 "It is not clear why these nymphs are engaged in wool-working." In an earlier edition of Book 4 (1967),

H. Huxley was closer to the point: “anachronistic mention of the valued wool of Miletus is calculated to raise a smile” (note on 4.334-5), and he continues with this comment: “the picture reminds us of a Roman lady spinning with her handmaids”, and he cites Lucretia as an example. Whether Vergil at the time of composing *Georgics* 4 had heard or read the Lucretia episode in Livy’s first book, we cannot know, although the two works are roughly contemporaneous. What is fairly certain, however, is that Vergil wants the picture of Cyrene and the nymphs engaged in woolworking to be, for his audience, a sort of ludic image of the high status lady (represented by Cyrene) working with her women – not a low status woman as he has pictured more realistically in *Georgics* 1. He did not have to use woolworking imagery here, as it was sufficiently startling to have Aristaeus descend to underwater chambers and be welcomed by his mother and her nymphs with towels to dry his hands after washing them, and feasts on tables near to burning altars. But the nymph Cyrene is discovered, just as Lucretia is discovered supervising the woolworking, and this activity makes the whole episode just that much more fantastic – Vergil is being playful, this is his “ludic voice” (Toohey 1996).³⁹ It is interesting that he chooses the image of woolworking to heighten the ludic effect; although there is no specific mention of her, it almost seems that here is a parody of Livy’s Lucretia.

If woolworking was regarded at the time as the desirably virtuous ideal for high status women that it appears to be in the case of Lucretia, would Vergil have used it in this strangely humorous episode?⁴⁰ For it is the woolworking here that adds the final bizarre touch: not only is

³⁹ In 1898 Page remarks in a note on lines 333-47 of *Georgics* 4: “It was common in the heroic age for ladies to sit spinning with their attendants.” Page does not give any references as examples of this. Whether Livy intended his Lucretia episode as propaganda for his own time or not, it seems to have had an influential effect on Page (and other later editors) since even if they do not cite Livy, that is probably what they have in mind.

⁴⁰ Textile work is hard labour, and perhaps because this hard labour has traditionally been done by low status women, there attaches a certain similarly low regard if not contempt to the labourers. It is still downgraded as an art form, and it is still a way of downgrading a woman intellectually to associate her with textile work. When Margaret Thatcher became the first female Prime Minister in Britain, some cynic remarked that she and the Queen could now “compare their crochet work” during their official meetings.

the whole scene happening under water, where we are not even sure that the chamber is not actually itself a water-filled space, but the nymphs are all engaged in working wool – (for which, incidentally, what use could they have?) To this startling incongruity there is added another less obvious one: the nymphs are performing the task of the spinning-girls, the *quasillariae* who are female slaves of a very low order, who along with their task are regarded with pity, or more frequently contempt or derision. These were often “sexually available” women. (The status of the *quasillaria* has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, and further references from the elegiac poets in a later chapter will make this still more clear.) Vergil’s own references in *Georgics* 1 to the rural woolworkers have already made it quite plain that this is certainly not a pleasurable task: even the nymphs underwater are telling stories to alleviate its tedium (line 345). Thus the underwater scene is not a serious representation of woolworking, not a picture intended to show a morally desirable activity; woolworking is instead being used to intensify the playful incongruity of the episode.

Woolwork determined by status

The idea has been expressed (as discussed earlier in this chapter) that Livy’s Lucretia represents an established tradition concerning woolworking by similarly high status *matronae*.

As for Ovid’s version of the story, his Lucretia undercuts Livy’s by exaggerating her woolworking and presenting her as more *puella* than *matrona*; his version does not support the idea of a tradition held in high regard. In Vergil’s *Georgics*, closer in time to Livy’s Lucretia, there is similarly no apparent evidence for a tradition of high status *matronae* working wool.

In the *Georgics*, the task of woolworking is seen as a labour for the (low status) farm wife (1.284-6; 293-4; 390-3). The task is presented as a traditional and necessary one similar to the

labours of the farmer. A worker of similar humble status and her necessary task appear in the Vulcan simile in *Aeneid* 8 (this simile is discussed in Appendix II). In this later work the hard reality of the task and the worker is still clearly apparent. But by contrast the bizarre scene in the earlier *Georgics* 4 (33-5) involves no humble worker but a high status woman (a goddess no less) with her woolworking maidens underwater. Could some sort of parallel be seen here? A high status woman and her woolworkers busy underwater is not a situation one would expect to find. Was a high status Roman *matrona* similarly occupied, by her own choice (in her own house on dry land of course), more easily found? Perhaps, at the time when Livy created his Lucretia, her example was much needed. Were high status women really taking any notice of the current ideology which promoted such traditional values and activities as woolworking? Often, and not just in the past, the socially approved ideal of woman is not the reality.⁴¹

Conclusion

It appears that Livy added woolworking to his version of the Lucretia legend, and identified Lucretia's virtue with this task. Despite modern opinion to the contrary, woolworking by high status Roman *matronae* does not seem to have been a custom greatly observed – this although Augustan ideology and also Livy's *exemplum* in the figure of Lucretia both encouraged the activity. The most basic task of woolworking was – and is – spinning, tedious and laborious. This task was performed by slaves or by women of low status for whom it was a necessity. The

⁴¹ The idea that women should be virtuously occupied with textile work – especially those women who do not need to do so financially – has long persisted. Ovid in particular may have seen to what degree this activity was genuinely practised in Augustan Rome, but Jane Austen certainly saw how genuine it was circa 1814, when she wrote *Mansfield Park*. The scene in that novel when Sir Thomas Bertram returns home unexpectedly is much like that same favoured scene in Latin poetry: he will find out what happens in his household in his absence. Everyone is much alarmed, having been engaged (like Livy's royal wives) in ways he would not approve, but Lady Bertram is not at all disturbed. "She had no anxieties for anybody to cloud *her* pleasure; her own time had been irreproachably spent during his absence; she had done a great deal of carpet work and made many yards of fringe."

situation of such women is clearly shown in the first book of Vergil's *Georgics*, which dates from much the same years as Livy's first book. The farm wives of the *Georgics* must work wool, just as the poor woman (in Vergil's later work, *Aeneid* 8) is obliged to spin before daylight. But the idea of a high status *matrona* devoted to wool, such as that represented by Lucretia, was not convincing enough at the time to prevent Vergil from creating what is almost a parody of Livy: in *Georgics* 4 women spin underwater.

Ovid, however, does not seem to have hesitated to create such a parody. The Lucretia story in *Fasti* 2 is made humorous by the pointed exaggeration of every aspect of woolworking. Ovid's Lucretia actually performs with her own hands the slave's task of spinning. Yet by contrast in this same work (*Fasti* 4) Ovid presents a "real" woolworker, a poor countrywoman (*parca colona* 692) like the farm wife from *Georgics* 1:

et tamen assiduis exercet bracchia telis
adversusque minas frigoris arma parat (*Fasti* 4 699-700)

"And yet she diligently employed her hands at the loom,
and armed herself against the threats of winter."

The virtuous woolworking *matrona*, such as represented by Livy, does not appear to any positive effect in Vergil's *Georgics*, which as noted are roughly contemporary with Livy's first book. The early elegiac poets Tibullus and Propertius were also writing during these same years (30-20 BC). Both these poets depict woolworking scenes in several of their elegies, and both in some way imagine their elegiac mistress as a Lucretia or Penelope figure. These poets, their mistresses, and their respective treatments of woolworking are the subject of the next chapter. In general, the elegiac mistresses of these poets are no more convincing as woolworkers in the manner of Lucretia than Vergil's goddess Cybele was convincing when she worked underwater.

Appendix 1 to Chapter One

A possible Etruscan Lucretia

This chapter has looked at several versions of the Lucretia story. There is another possible version, suggested in an article by Jocelyn Penny Small in the *American Journal of Archaeology* in 1976 (349-360).⁴² If this is a version of the same legend, then it depicts a very different Lucretia, a woman who is not virtuous and is in fact an adulteress.

Jocelyn Small examines three Etruscan urns, belonging to the late Hellenistic period – she believes they date to “the last period of the production of urns during the first century BC” (357). These urns had been thought, possibly though doubtfully, to illustrate a scene from Euripides’ *Melanippe Desmotis*, but seem more likely to be depicting the death of Lucretia – the only extant representation of this scene in classical art. Jocelyn Small sees urns of this kind as important in that they depict scenes from Etruscan-Roman legends, since “the two peoples frequently interacted and shared many traditions” (349). She believes that there would have been both a Roman and an Etruscan version of stories that involved both peoples, and refers to the story of the Etruscan Lars Porsenna, whose attempts to restore Rome to the Tarquins were unsuccessful according to the Roman version of events, whereas it appears from “actual evidence and modern historians” that he captured Rome; the implication is that the Romans preferred versions of such stories more favourable to themselves. She concludes that the legend of Lucretia’s suicide is portrayed on the urns in question and, from her examination of the available evidence, is most likely an Etruscan version of the event, and also that what is revealed is a

⁴² Dr Lisa Hughes expresses reservations about the Etruscan urns discussed by Jocelyn Small. She thinks the “Lucretia” urn is “very Roman with strong Etruscan undercurrents in terms of style. Small does not address the fact that Volterra was likely a municipium at the time the urns were created.” There is also the question of the C19 line drawings in the article: Dr Hughes wonders “how much more embellishment there actually is”.

situation that the Romans would not have found acceptable. “As the Romans drastically altered the tradition surrounding Lars Porsenna, so did they change the legend about Lucretia” (359).

Small comes to this conclusion partly as a result of a study of Etruscan urns of this kind, which study showed that the artisans who made them “had a specific vocabulary which was understood by the Etruscan purchaser” (360), and that this vocabulary of specific kinds of actions by the figures on the urn was often used to depict scenes of “stopped revenge”, where the action is shown just at the point where some character is about to be killed, but the killing will not take place. An example of this sort of scene is that of Paris being recognised by his brothers, and Venus preventing them from killing him; there are urns which depict this scene, and others with scenes of similar dramatic “stopped revenge”, situations recognisable from other myths. The urns Jocelyn Small is discussing belong, she believes, in this category, and they illustrate a situation in which Lucretia has committed suicide, while her husband and Brutus prevent her father Lucretius from killing the seducer Sextus Tarquinius, who is seen escaping from the scene. Small explains that all the protagonists are Etruscans except Lucretia and her father, and in fact all Tarquins, so that the urns show a pro-Etruscan version of the story. And in this version Lucretia is not virtuous; she has committed adultery with Sextus Tarquinius.

By analysing the various figures and their relationships as shown on the urns, Small concludes that Lucretia is being depicted as a woman (such as Phaedra or Dido) who wanted the handsome young man to whom she was not married (359), and committed suicide when he abandoned her. He escaped with the help of Venus (who is also represented in the scene), and at the same time Collatinus and Brutus, blaming Lucretia for the whole situation, prevented Lucretius from exacting revenge. The figure of Lucretia is “not demurely draped as a matron

should be” (359), but her body is revealed – which as Small points out is the way the adulterous Helen is portrayed on Etruscan urns.

A comparable version of another Roman myth could lend support here. In a subsequent study (1982) of Etrusco-Roman myths, Jocelyn Small traces the transformation of the figure of Cacus from the youthful Etruscan seer Cacu to the villainous monster Cacus as described in *Aeneid* 8.⁴³ The transformation of this particular myth, from Cacu to Cacus, is no less dramatic than the transformation – if Jocelyn Small is correct in her theory – of Lucretia the adulteress into Lucretia the virtuous woolworking *matrona*. As is apparent from the versions presented by Diodorus Siculus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, an Etruscan Lucretia had already become a chaste Roman wife, whose virtue was identified by Livy with the woolworking which he added to her story. Lucretia is, however, not the only mythical figure for whom woolworking is associated with virtue. The other figure is Penelope, whose virtuous reputation is inseparable from woolworking. About Penelope, also, there is an alternative, non-virtuous story such as the one which Small thinks exists for Lucretia. But Penelope, for the Romans, became a “marvellous ... *exemplum* for feminine virtue”. (Jacobson, 1974)⁴⁴ A change so much for the better in Penelope’s reputation might lend support to the idea of a similarly favourable “revision” of an early story of a non-virtuous Lucretia.

⁴³ Midway between the two extremes, Cacu and Cacus, Small finds that the early annalist Gnaeus Gellius (second century BC) already portrayed Cacus as a villain, associated with augury, who seized land to which he was not entitled, and was killed by Hercules (5). The basic events of the story later used by Vergil were thus known. Small points out that Augustus, wishing to establish augury under his own control, with Apollo and the temple in that god’s honour as its focus, could not allow “a private independent seer” (103), especially since Cacus traditionally lived on the Capitoline hill and was thus “virtually on Augustus’ doorstep”. The character of Cacus could more readily be blackened because he was already in earlier legend a thief, and thus Vergil, “aware of contemporary political needs, yet still desirous of preserving the past, skilfully worked within these constraints to fashion an account which served Augustus but did not violate tradition” (108). Cacus was moved by Vergil from the Capitoline to the Aventine, and was made into a truly dreadful man-eating monster, with no hint of any connection with augury.

⁴⁴ Penelope and her woolworking appear in an unfavourable light in Ovid’s *Heroides* 1. The *Heroides* are the subject of Chapter 3 of this thesis, where Jacobson’s (1974) ideas about Penelope (and other heroines) are mentioned more fully.

There are various indications of there being another Penelope; the story was known to the Roman poets (e.g. Horace *Satires* 2.5.81-3), and to Cicero (*de Natura Deorum* 3.56). The story has variations, but basically depicts Penelope as unfaithful to Ulysses, an adulteress with one or many partners depending on the version of the legend.⁴⁵ Servius specifies that the god Hermes had taken the form of a goat, so that the offspring of his union with Penelope was thus only half human in form. Connection with a goat is even worse than with the suitors, who were at least human in form. Stories of an adulterous Penelope were obviously known, since although the references are relatively slight, they are widely spread. Nevertheless she has not survived as an adulteress, but as a paragon of fidelity.

It was thus the virtuous story of both Penelope and Lucretia which prevailed for the Roman audience, and for both figures their virtue was associated with woolworking. Certainly this association suited the traditional ideas favoured by Augustan ideology, and there was also – as mentioned at the start of this chapter – the connection of wool both with Roman religion and with the dress of the “pure” *matrona*. Since such associations with wool existed, for Livy’s audience a story with a woolworking Lucretia might well become the preferred version of the legend. The actual addition of the wool to the story could even be the persuasive factor in making Lucretia such a suitable *exemplum* for Livy.

The story of each of these figures – Penelope and Lucretia – involves a situation where a wife is found to be virtuous by a husband who returns unexpectedly. In both cases the virtue is

⁴⁵ Apollodorus (7.38-40) reports that in one version Penelope is said to have given birth to Pan (Cicero also reported this), and that the father was Hermes; she had been already driven away by Ulysses because of adultery with Antinous. In a further version, Penelope is said to have been killed by Ulysses because she had been seduced by Amphinomus, one of the suitors. Pausanias (8.12.5-7) mentions a site that is thought to be Penelope’s grave, in the place where she died after being driven from home by Ulysses who, on his return, had found her with lovers. In Lycophron (*Alexandra* 769-794), Ulysses returns home to find his wealth and goods destroyed by “wife-stealers”, Penelope having spent her time in luxurious adultery with her suitors. Servius (on *Aeneid* 2.44) also claims that Penelope was mother of Pan by Hermes, and that when Ulysses found the “monster” child on his return, he fled from home and resumed his wandering.

connected with woolworking. Various versions of this sort of scene recur in Roman poetry, but the associated woolworking is not always identified with virtue in a serious way, as will be seen in the following chapters dealing with the elegiac poets.

Appendix 2 to Chapter One

A woolworking simile in *Aeneid* 8

There is a simile in *Aeneid* 8 where the task of spinning is clearly seen to belong to those of low status who are obliged to perform the task. As such this task can be used in a humorous comparison.

Just as water nymphs might be humorously cast as *quasillariae* in *Georgics* 4, so the god Vulcan might be likened to a humble spinning woman in a similarly bizarre comparison. This occurs in *Aeneid* 8, where the labours of Vulcan are belittled by being likened to the demeaning task of spinning, performed as a necessity by a poor woman. Spinning provides the humour in this scene by its very nature as an arduous and undesirable task, one to be carried out by those obliged to do so by force of circumstance.⁴⁶ At the mid point of Book 8 of the *Aeneid*, the Goddess Venus, mother of Aeneas, fearing for her son who has reached his destined territory but is threatened with war from hostile local tribes, asks her husband the god Vulcan to make armour which she can give to Aeneas for his safety. Vulcan, unwilling at first, is persuaded by the sexual charms of Venus, after which he makes a very early start on the task, and labours in his forge beneath Mount Aetna to produce the wonderful armour only he can fashion. Venus makes her request:

ergo eadem supplex venio et sanctum mihi numen
arma rogo, genetrix nato te filia Nerei,

⁴⁶ The force of circumstance in Vulcan's case is hardly flattering: he succumbs instantly to the persuasion of his adulterous wife.

te potuit lacrimis Tithonia flectere coniunx
aspice qui coeant populi, quae moenia clausis
ferrum acuant portis in me excidiumque meorum.
dixerat et niveis hinc atque hinc diva lacertis
cunctantem amplexu molli fovet. (382-8)

“ ‘Therefore I, who never asked before, come a suppliant, and ask arms of the deity I revere, a mother for her son. Thee the daughter of Nereus, thee the spouse of Tithonus, could sway with tears. Lo! what nations are mustering, what cities with closed gates whet the sword against me and the lives of my people!’ The Goddess ceased, and, as he falters, throws her snowy arms round about him and fondles him in soft embrace.”

When Vulcan leaves his bed very early in the morning to begin his promised work, he is compared to a wife rising before dawn to stir her fire and begin, with her women, the task of woolworking by lamplight:

inde ubi prima quies medio iam noctis abactae
curriculo expulerat somnum, cum femina primum
cui tolerare colo vitam tenuique Minerva
impositum, cinerem et sopitos suscitat ignis noctem
addens operi, famulasque ad lumina longo
exercet penso, castum ut servare cubile
coniugis et possit parvos educere natos:
haud secus ignipotens nec tempore segnior illo
mollibus e stratis opera ad fabrilia surgit. (407-15)

“Then, so soon as repose had banished sleep, in the mid career of now waning night, what time a housewife, whose task it is to eke out life with her distaff and Minerva’s humble toil, awakes the embers and slumbering fire, adding night to her day’s work, and keeps her handmaids toiling by lamplight at the long task, that she may preserve chaste her husband’s bed, and rear her little sons: even so, and not more slothful at that hour, the Lord of Fire rises from his soft couch to the work of his smith.”

Commenting on this simile in an edition of *Aeneid* 8 in 1975, Eden wrote “spinning as a morally commendable feminine activity had no necessary connection with social status: it is done both by the noble Lucretia (Ovid *Fasti* 2.741ff) and by the slave girl who says on her epitaph *gravitatem officio et lanificio praestiti* ‘I displayed great worth both in my household duties and

in my woolworking' (Bücheler, *Carmina Epigraphica* 63.4)." Leaving aside Ovid's *Lucretia*, whose activities cannot be taken at face value in *Fasti* 2 (as has been seen earlier in this chapter), the present simile in *Aeneid* 8 is certainly not a straightforward depiction of a "commendable feminine activity". Also from an edition of 1975, Gransden's comment is: "nothing could be more Roman than Virgil's picture of the chaste Roman matron or widow, an *univira* and the anti-type of Dido and Cleopatra in her devotion to home and family. The passage comes from the "still centre" of the most Augustan book of the *Aeneid* ... and perhaps reflects the importance attached by Augustus to his moral and matrimonial legislation." Apart from the doubtful existence of the *univira* in real life, the position of this simile in *Aeneid* 8, which may well be at the centre of the book, is in a context that casts some doubt on its being associated with Augustus' moral legislation.⁴⁷ To put it plainly, Venus is asking her husband to make armour for her son, who is not Vulcan's son, but the product of her adultery with Anchises. In his commentary (1977, note on 408ff) Fordyce remarks that the simile of the woolworking woman is "curiously inappropriate in the context". That it is inappropriate is because it is a woolworking image being used once more for ludic effect. The scene has been noted as having deliberately "funny aspects" (Lyne 1987); simply making a comparison between the god Vulcan obeying his wife and rushing to his forge and a poor working woman is humorous in itself, and comparing, by implication, his divine craftsmanship to the lowly task of spinning is equally so. The god Vulcan does not emerge well from this episode in any case, as his readiness to obey his wife is only a result of his being taken in by her artful seduction; he was unwilling, originally, and can hardly have been impressed by her rather tactless words *genetrix nato* "a mother for her son". He has succumbed to her physical persuasions. The situation is summed up in an article by J. Smolenaars (2004, 103): "The image of the mighty god Vulcan, seduced and deceived by his

⁴⁷ For example, the *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, 18BC.

own wife, is even further tarnished when we witness him rushing down to his forge early in the morning, after an apparently satisfactory night”.

No one in fact emerges very well from this episode (370-415). This includes Venus herself, supposed ancestress of the Roman race and also of Augustus. Her former adultery is brought to the fore as she pleads for her son, and her methods of seduction are transparently calculated. And when Vergil moves on to the simile of the woman lighting her fire to start the woolworking, the situation is not improved. The points of comparison between Vulcan and this woman are rather incongruous: she rises early as does he, she stirs up a fire: *cinerem sopitos suscitat ignis* “awakes the embers and slumbering fire” as he also takes fire: *ille repente accepit solitam flamمام* “at once he caught the wonted flame”; then she sets her servant girls to work: *familias ad lumina longo exercet penso* “keeps her handmaids toiling by lamplight at the long task”, as Vulcan also urges his workers: *arma acri facienda viro ... praecipitate moras* “arms for a brave warrior must ye make ... fling off delay!” The work being undertaken by both parties, Vulcan and the woman, could be seen as noble enterprises in each case, were it not for the inherent humour in the whole episode; even the reasons for the respective tasks that are being undertaken are at odds: Vulcan will provide armour to ensure that Aeneas is safe, which of course is necessary for Aeneas to go on to fulfil his destiny, whereas the poor woman labours to remain faithful to her husband – *castum ut servare cubile coniugis* – while Vulcan’s marriage can scarcely be seen as similarly respectable. The humour in this episode has been noted by Lyne: “the scene has and is meant to have its funny aspects” (1987) as well as by Smolenaars (2004). Apart from the humour here, what clearly emerges is the fact that spinning in particular is hard work and unpleasant; it is the task of low status workers – slaves and the poor – and as

such can be used as a demeaning comparison. The likening of the poor woman and her task to Vulcan has its humorous impact because of her low status. Lucretia is not disparaged here.

Vergil's woolworker here is not a woman of high status, but one who is obliged to be working as she does; she is no noble Lucretia, and Vergil is not suggesting a role model for high status women as Livy is doing. The woolworking in this episode seems to be used as an incongruous image, as in the underwater scene in *Georgics* 4, to increase the ludic effect.⁴⁸ And there is another aspect to Vergil's use of this simile, which adds another negative note. There are two similes from the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius that Vergil appears to have in mind at this point. The first, from Book 3, 291-98, compares Medea's passion for Jason, after she has been pierced by the arrow of Eros, to the fire springing up from a small burning brand when new kindling is placed on it; the fire is being kindled by a poor woman who must work wool in order to live, and she must work at night, needing the light of the fire.

ώς δὲ γυνὴ μαλερῷ περὶ κάρφεα χεύατο δαλῷ
 χερνῆτις, τῇπερ ταλασήια ἔργα μέμηλεν,
 ὃς κεν ὑπωρόφιον νύκτωρ σέλας ἐντύναιτο, ἔγχι
 μάλ' ἐγρομένη: τὸ δ' ἀθέσφατον ἐξ ὄλιγοιο
 δαλοῦ ἀνεγρόμενον σὺν κάρφεα πάντ' ἀμαθύνει: 295
 τοῖος ὑπὸ κραδίῃ εἰλυμένος αἴθετο λάθρη
 οὖλος "Ἐρως: ἀπαλὰς δὲ μετετρωπᾶτο παρειὰς
 ἐς χλόον, ἄλλοτ' ἔρευθος, ἀκηδείησι νόοιο.

(Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 3.291-98)

⁴⁸ In contrast to this scene are those at *Georgics* 1 (293-4; 390-3) where in the farmer's household woolworking is depicted as simply a necessary labour; here in the Vulcan-Venus episode the term “Minerva” for the task at hand (409) elevates it and adds even further to the general incongruity, as does the conjunction of the terms *tenui* and *Minerva*, if one understands *tenui* as “humble”.

“And as a poor woman heaps dry twigs round a blazing brand – a daughter of toil, whose task is the spinning of wool, that she may kindle a blaze at night beneath her roof, when she has awoken very early – and the flame waxing wondrously great from the small brand consumes all the twigs together; so coiling round her heart, burnt secretly love the destroyer; and the hue of her soft cheeks went and came, now pale, now red, in her soul’s distraction.”

The other simile is from Book 4, 1062-67; here Medea’s sleepless and anxious thoughts when she fears that she may be returned to her cruel father are compared to the whirling spindle and sleepless worries of a woman labouring at working wool at night to support her children.

οἶον ὅτε κλωστῆρα γυνὴ ταλαιργὸς ἐλίσσει
 ἔννυχίη: τῇ δ’ ἀμφὶ κινύρεται ὄρφανὰ τέκνα
 χηροσύνῃ πόσιος: σταλάει δ’ ὑπὸ δάκρυ παρειὰς
 μνωομένης, οἴη μιν ἐπὶ σμυγερὴ λάβεν αἴσα: 1065
 ᾥς τῆς ἱκμαίνοντο παρηίδες: ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ
 ὀξείης εἰλεῖτο πεπαρμένον ἀμφ’ ὀδύνησιν.

(Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4.1062-67)

“Even as when a toiling woman turns her spindle through the night, and round her whimper her orphan children, for she is a widow, and down her cheeks fall the tears, as she thinks on how dreary a lot has caught her; so Medea’s cheeks were wet; and her heart within her was in agony, pierced with sharp pain.”

This simile in *Argonautica* 4 just precedes Medea’s wedding to Jason, and the fact that the woolworking woman to whom she is compared is a widow weeping in her loss and weariness looks forward grimly to the outcome of Medea’s own marriage. Both similes emphasise the unhappy lot of a woman who has no choice but to labour beyond daylight hours at woolworking, and both depict a woman very different from a high status Roman *matrona*. Both thus resemble

Vergil's simile and in all three similes the situation is a miserable one. It cannot be seen as a situation being recommended; the principal feature is necessity rather than virtue. To see this picture in terms of Gransden's comment: "nothing could be more Roman than Virgil's picture of the chaste Roman matron or widow, an *univira* ... in her devotion to home and family" is not to take account of its context – (the humour of the Vulcan-Venus scene) – and the fact that Vergil's picture is basically an image from Hellenistic epic (and even from as far back as *Iliad* 12 433-5 where a woolworking woman weighs out her wool, again to support her children). This has virtually become a standard image in the literature of the time, certainly lacking the impact of Livy's innovative picture of Lucretia, where a noble woman devotes herself to woolworking when she could – as her noble relatives do – spend her time quite otherwise, since she is not bound by necessity as a low status woman would be. Thus from the Vulcan simile in *Aeneid* 8, and from the *Georgics* references discussed earlier, two aspects of woolworking emerge, and two kinds of woolworkers.

Chapter Two

Elegiac Girls Working Wool, and the Motif of the Returning Husband

Introduction

This chapter looks at the poets Propertius and Tibullus, both of whom depict their elegiac *puellae* (Cynthia and Delia respectively) as woolworkers. There is a dual purpose in looking at these depictions. One aim here – as in Chapter One – is to see what attitude to woolworking is apparent in these elegiac scenes: in other words, did Livy’s Lucretia represent an ideal for which value and respect was reflected in contemporary writers? Since both Cynthia and Delia are to be found as woolworkers, not only Lucretia but especially Penelope is relevant here, since the situation of both these *puellae* involves the motif of the “returning husband.”¹ Both Cynthia and Delia fail to represent a positive image of woolworking in keeping with Livy’s Lucretia. As courtesans, both are incongruous in such a setting; Delia’s situation is especially so, while Cynthia’s claims about wool are humorously unlikely. Nevertheless, Cynthia and Delia with their wool each in some way call to mind Lucretia as *matrona*. The Augustan *matrona* was traditionally distinguished by her dress,² but neither of these *puellae* is dressed in the ideal costume of the *matrona*. A similarly negative picture appears at the end of this chapter with Ovid’s Penelope (*Heroides* 1). She complains of her man and her wool more like a *puella* than a virtuous wife. As for woolworking itself, Tibullus’ detailed knowledge of the processes involved is also looked at here; his romanticised picture of Delia thus seems the more incongruous. In fact what is seen here is that both Cynthia and Delia, as courtesans at best, are each placed in a paradoxical situation: the *meretrix* cannot be a virtuous *matrona*. The

¹ The motif of the “returning husband” necessitates Penelope’s mention in the present chapter. In Chapter Three on woolworking in the *Heroides* Penelope, with a different focus, is discussed in terms of her woolworking rather than as a *puella*.

² The ideal costume was described in the Introduction to this thesis.

exemplary devotion to wool as displayed by Livy's Lucretia is not treated with due respect by the poets featured in this chapter.

* * * * *

Cynthia and Delia, elegiac mistresses of the poets Propertius and Tibullus respectively, are unlikely virtuous woolworkers. Nevertheless, in the first book of elegies published by each of these poets – and in the third elegy in each case – Cynthia and Delia are to be found, each one supposedly engaged in some sort of woolworking. Cynthia appears to have been doing something with purple wool (so she claims), to fill in time at night while she waited for the poet's arrival:

Nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum (1.3.41)

“for now I was beguiling sleep with purple thread”

What could she have been doing? Similarly Delia, while awaiting her lover's return, is pictured sitting late at night amongst woolworkers, her companion spinning the thread:

deducat plena stamina longa colu (12.3.86)

“let her draw out the long threads from the full distaff”

Part of the purpose here is to look at what it was that Cynthia might have done with purple thread, and how such a claim as she was making came to appear in this poem, since woolworking of some sort is implied. And since there is no doubt that genuine woolworking is intended in Tibullus 1.3, the question might be asked: how well does a courtesan/mistress like Delia fit into this scene? Both poems (Propertius 1.3 and Tibullus 1.3) will be looked at from the point of view of the woolworking references, in order to establish a possible purpose for these references. Since Propertius' first book dates from 29 or early 28BC (Baker 2000, Richardson

1977, Hubbard 1974), and Tibullus' first book from 27-26BC (Maltby 2002), Propertius and Cynthia will be treated first.

Cynthia and woolworking in Propertius 1.3: could the poet marry her?

The identification of woolworking with the preservation of female virtue is exemplified above all by Penelope who, while waiting for Ulysses' return, wove a cloth as a means of remaining faithful to him. In Propertius' elegy 1.3 Cynthia claims to have done something with thread while she waited for her lover, and this has led scholars to note a connection between her situation and that of Penelope.³ Propertius was to praise Penelope for her *falsa Minerva* (crafty weaving)

Penelope poterat bis denos salva per annos
vivere, tam multis femina digna procis;
coniugium falsa poterat differre Minerva,
nocturno solvens texta diurna dolo (2.9 3-6).

“Penelope was able to keep her honour intact for twice ten years, a woman well meriting that multitude of suitors; her crafty loom enabled her to put off the hour of marriage, undoing the day’s weaving in nightly deceit.”

While Cynthia's supposed woolworking is on a much smaller scale, her activity is, like Penelope's, an example of *falsa Minerva*; she makes a claim – hardly likely to be true – that she has been reduced to working wool at night (*nocturno dolo?*) in her unhappiness at her lover's absence, but her claim looks very like a ploy to make her lover feel remorse. She is not convincing as a virtuous woolworker.

In elegy 1.3 the poet describes how he arrives late at night, and drunk, to find Cynthia asleep; she, on awakening, expresses her distress that he has appeared so late, complaining that

³ Lyne 1970, Hodge and Buttimore 1977, Fedeli 1980, Dunn 1985, Noonan 1991, Tatham 2000, Miller 2002. Penelope, however, is married to Ulysses, and preserves her marriage by her woolworking. Cynthia is doing no such thing, and the poet/lover does not come “home” like Ulysses.

she has had to try various activities, including woolworking, in an attempt to stay awake – all of which finally failed. This elegy is, of course, a version of the type of situation where a woman is found to have been woolworking as a means of preserving her fidelity when unexpectedly discovered.⁴ But it is the respective nature of each of the two players here – the poet/lover and Cynthia – which produces what is effectively a parody of that sort of scene.

The couple involved in the “original” scene of this kind, Ulysses and Penelope, are actually husband and wife. The humour in Propertius’ poem depends largely on the fact that, although placed here in a situation in some ways resembling marriage,⁵ both the poet and Cynthia, because of their respective positions in society, were in no way able to be married to each other. Assuming that Propertius wishes to personify himself as the lover/poet in this elegy, then he and Cynthia exist in separate areas of a social structure which identified certain professions as needing to be “set off from the community of respectable citizens” (McGinn 1998, 69). One such profession was that of prostitute, and this is the most likely one in the case of Cynthia, whose luxurious tastes and apparently expensive lifestyle indicate that she was a higher class of prostitute, an independent courtesan.

Her situation, which of itself precludes marriage to her lover,⁶ requires further discussion; but first and more straightforward is the position of Propertius the poet/lover – at least as he presents himself. In the final poem in his Book 1 he indicates that he had family origins in Umbria (1.22 90-100), and in Book 4 he will elaborate on the loss of his family estates in war (4.1. 129-30); he has social antecedents of a respectably high level. Even before

⁴ Thus the girl is discovered at Terence *Heaut.* 285.

⁵ Lyne 1970, Hodge & Buttimore 1977, Harrison 1994, Tatham 2000.

⁶ As a courtesan, Cynthia would be *infamis*; the poet could not marry her; concerning *infamia*: “etiam eam, quae sine quaestu palam se prostituerit, debuisse his connumerari. Non solum autem ea quae facit, verum ea quae fecit, etsi facere desiit, lege notatur.” (even a woman who openly practises prostitution but accepts no money should be included in this category. The law brands with *infamia* not just the woman who practises prostitution but also anyone who has done so in the past, even though she no longer behaves in this way.) (translation Alan Watson). *The Digest of Justinian* (eds. Mommsen and Krueger), Vol I (1985) XXIII2.43

Augustus' marriage legislation of 18BC (*Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus*), which prevented freeborn Romans such as Propertius from marrying prostitutes and courtesans,⁷ the poet – publishing Book 1 in 28-27BC – would have been unable to marry Cynthia because of the social degradation involved. This degradation would have been even more so for him as a high status Roman male. McGinn (1998, 85-91), in discussing the possibilities that existed for marriage between partners belonging to differing social classifications “before Augustus”, comments: “Unions with prostitutes, if shameful for freedmen, would be even more so for *ingenui*” (87). There is even the possibility that there was an earlier law,⁸ “a prototype of the marriage law dating to 28BC, but whether this measure in fact anticipated the Augustan marriage legislation ... is uncertain” (McGinn 1998, 71). The mention of a law having been repealed occurs in elegy 7 of Book 2 of Propertius:

gavisa est certe sublatam Cynthia legem,
qua quondam edicta flemus uterque diu
ni nos divideret (2.7 1-3)

“How she must have rejoiced, Cynthia, at the repeal of that law, whose erstwhile issuance caused us to weep for many an hour in case it parted us!”

Whether such a law was introduced and repealed would not, however, have made a great deal of difference to the poet’s situation with respect to the social stigma and disgrace that would have ensued had he married Cynthia. Of course if the law had included any implication that he was obliged to marry, then he would have been glad of its removal, since he would have had to choose a wife from his own social level, and certainly not Cynthia.

⁷ In order to stabilise marriage the Augustan legislation permitted only freeborn women as marriage partners for a Roman male such as Propertius, who from all known indications (e.g. elegy 4.1) appears to be of acceptably high social status, favoured by the close associate of Augustus, Maecenas. (Prop. 2.1.17). He may “have married and had children” later in life (Butler 1905).

⁸ Badian (1985) 82-98; Syme (1960) 443.

It is assumed here that in the elegy under discussion (1.3) Cynthia can be taken as a real enough representative of actual courtesans of the time (Lyne 1980 Ch.1; James 2003, 37, 260).⁹

An example of such a courtesan, who was flourishing some twenty years or so before Propertius published his first book, is Volumnia Cytheris, the mime actress who was given the name Lycoris by the elegiac poet Gallus. In some lines from his now lost elegies which were found on a papyrus in 1978, Lycoris was celebrated; she is the one who will be famous – “nota Lycoris erit” – claims Ovid, along with Gallus her poet lover (*Amores* 1.15 29-30). She was mistress not only of Gallus; her other claim to fame is her association with Mark Antony. This connection is well attested, and is always seen as one of the indications of Antony’s shameful and outrageous behaviour (e.g. Cicero, *Philippic* 2.24-58; Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 9 7-9). Cytheris (her stage name), as she was known to Cicero and Plutarch who commented on her appearances with Antony, seems to have had qualities that enabled her to pursue quite an extensive career: “thanks to her grace and beauty she became one of the most popular courtesans in Rome” (Traina 2001, 89.). But she was still a courtesan, and in her case an actress as well, and those who practised either of these professions stood “at the core of the Roman concept of *infamia*”. Apart from not being classed as respectable citizens, they were as well denied certain legal rights (McGinn, 68-69). Legally there seems to have been no real distinction made between “degrees”

⁹ In this chapter Cynthia is thought to be a real woman such as existed at the time. But she has been seen as a “poetic fiction” (James 2003), a “written woman” (Wyke 1989), and as a possible representation of Propertius’ elegiac program (McNamee 1993, Keith 2008). Propertius may well be representing himself in a similar way; Griffin (1985, 32) suggests ‘Propertius’ presentation of himself in poetry as a lover – romantic, reckless and obsessed – is closely related to the figure in history of Mark Antony. That historical figure is itself to be seen in a long tradition of great lovers of pleasure, in which the actual lives of real men can be seen to be shaped and coloured by the influence of ‘literature’.” Veyne (1988): “the amorous poet is not a social type. He is a literary genre personified.” (Baker 2000), however, sees Propertius writing “personal love elegy”, as a result of “the devotion of his life and art to love and love-poetry.”

of prostitutes: the more “upmarket” ones like Cytheris may have enjoyed a successful career but were still technically *infames* (McGinn, 347).¹⁰

When Plutarch is enumerating some of the reasons why Antony was not acceptable to decent and worthy men, not even his drunkenness, feasting and debauchery with women seem as bad as his association with mimes and actors, who had great influence with him. The one who evokes particular opprobrium is the mime Cytheris, “a great favourite, whom he took about with him in a litter on his visits to the cities, and her litter was followed by as many attendants as that of his mother.” (Plut. *Ant.* 9.8). Cicero describes Antony’s progress as if in a triumph, preceded by lictors, and “in their midst a female mime was carried in an open litter”; Antony’s mother “set in the rear attended on her vicious son’s mistress as though she were a daughter-in-law” (Cicero, *Philippic* 2.24-58). In fact when Cicero with much sarcasm wishes to mention the most honourable thing Antony has done, it is to have “divorced” his mime actress Cytheris (*Philippic* 2.28 69-70). The very impossibility of Antony’s having actually previously married her – even if he were a single man – makes this jibe the more pointed.

Does Cynthia’s dress, also, mean she cannot be a *matrona*?

Cynthia’s probable status as a courtesan precludes her marriage to the poet, but there is also the question of her dress. Her costume is one of the striking features of Cynthia as described by Propertius, and it consists of clothing quite opposed to the traditional dress of the *matrona*. Roman costume has lately become a focus of scholarly attention, in particular with relation to social conditions and customs.¹¹ In a climate of Augustan moral reform, concern

¹⁰ *infamia* was incurred by actors: “qui artis ludicrae pronuntiandive causa in scaenam prodierit” (one who has appeared on the stage to act or recite). Mommsen and Krueger op.cit. Vol I, 1112.1, on those who incur *infamia*.

¹¹ For recent studies of Roman women’s costume and Roman costume in general, Olson (2002, 2006, 2008); Edmondson and Keith (2008).

about women's dress seems to have been of interest (McGinn, 154). In general, evidence emerges of a concern to separate the classifications that comprised Roman society by means of an appropriate costume for each particular group.

With regard to Cynthia, the matter of dress is thus of special interest. Cynthia is of course a delicate beauty with golden hair (2.2 5-6) and she also seems to have made it her custom to wear flimsy garments of Coan silk. The first elegy of Propertius' first book is devoted rather to himself and his sufferings than to Cynthia, but she makes her entrance in the second elegy, walking in elegantly clad in her sheer dress:

Quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo
et tenues Coa veste movere sinus (1.2 1-2)

"What avails it, my love, to step out with the latest hair-style and to swing a sheer skirt of Coan silk?"

Garments made of this material apparently left little to the imagination of the viewer.

When Horace recommends a freedwoman as being easier of access than a *matrona*, he makes a point of describing the dress of each one: the long *stola* and *palla* of the *matrona* hide everything, whereas the freedwoman , certainly here a prostitute, reveals virtually all in her silk robe:

Cois tibi paene videre est
ut nudam, ne crure malo, ne sit pede turpi (*Satires* 1.2 101-2)

"In her Coan silk you may see her, almost as if naked, so that she may not have a poor leg, an unsightly foot."

The elegy where Cynthia makes her silk-clad entrance takes the form of a complaint on the part of the poet about her use of these garments and other "unnatural" items of ornament such as Oriental perfume; he claims that she is beautiful in her own right and in fact spoils

her beauty with these accessories. Nevertheless it seems that despite his protests he finds the Coan silk dress not only attractive but also a source of inspiration for his poetry:

non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo:
ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.
sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi,
totum de Coa veste volumen erit (2.1 3-6)

“It is not Calliope, not Apollo that puts these songs in my mind: the sweetheart herself creates the inspiration. If I have seen her step forth dazzling in Coan silks, a whole book will emerge from the Coan garment.”

Maybe in the earlier elegy he is not really unhappy about Cynthia’s use of luxurious items, but is anxious about what they cost – does he have to pay for them perhaps? Cynthia is obviously able to indulge her taste for luxury; is she following a course of action such as that recommended by the bawd Acanthis (Book 4.5) whom the poet overhears advising his girl how to extract the maximum in money and gifts from various lovers? Coan silk figures prominently in the bawd’s catalogue of desirable gifts (4.5 21-28). In fact she says that if a poet simply offers verses instead, he is of no value:

qui versus, Coae dederit nec munera vestis,
istius tibi sit surda sine aere lyra. (4.5 57-8)

“Whoever brings verses and not gifts of Coan silk, consider his penniless lyre to be without a tune.”

Quite apart from her other expensive items, Cynthia’s silk dress did not come cheap. “The most expensive and highly regarded of the textile fibres known to the ancient world was silk. It was available only in limited quantities, but was greatly in demand, because it possessed the unique quality of sheen.” (Wild, 10) (Hence Cynthia could be described as “fulgentem” – gleaming – when she wore it.) Unless Propertius had very considerable riches at his disposal, he

could not have provided Cynthia with all her luxuries including her silk – as well as pay for what appears (in elegy 1.3) to be her own place of residence. What is much more likely is that she had – and still had, probably, at the time of her association with the poet – other rich lovers. This alone, but especially when her various accomplishments (1.2.29; 1.4.15; 1.3.42) are also considered, makes her one of the girls whom Sharon James describes: “A woman of this description – educated, intelligent, elegant, charming, independent, sexually active independent of marriage, and perpetually demanding expensive gifts – can reliably be accounted for, given Rome’s class structures, only as a member of the courtesan class” (James, 37).

There is more to Cynthia’s mode of dress than a consideration of its price. As Propertius was to note in a later elegy concerning Coan garments, a person dressed in them risked being perceived as of doubtful sexual morality:

indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella?

“Clothe me in silks, and I will become a none too prudish girl.” (Propertius 4.2.23)

In fact the matter of dress in general was of contemporary concern: “the question of appropriate dress for women was thought to be a problem of some urgency in the Augustan period. It was one of the topics treated by the Emperor in a discourse he held before the senate on the general theme of control of female sexual behaviour just before the adultery statue was passed” (McGinn, 154). This adultery law, *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, brought in shortly after the marriage law of 18BC, set forth “expressly or by implication, certain categories of women with whom sexual relations might be enjoyed without fear of prosecution” (McGinn, 144) – and these were certainly not the “respectable women”, married or unmarried, whose status as contrasted with that of the *meretrix* “was deeply rooted in Roman ideas about social status and sexual morality” (McGinn, 152). The problem was how to keep these two kinds of women

somehow separate, so that one could be clearly distinguished from the other, and it is here that modes of dress take on special significance.¹² The dress associated with respectability for women was the *stola*, the long garment which Horace complained hindered his view; *stola* and *vittae*, the bands which bound the *matrona*'s hair, constituted the ideal costume of the chaste married woman (Sebesta, 2001, 49). On the other hand the prostitute – and also the woman convicted of adultery after the Augustan law took effect – was meant to wear the toga. That a common prostitute was thought of as clad in a toga is clear from the way Horace refers to such women, who are to be preferred because they are easier to approach:

Atque etiam melius persaepe togatae est (Sat 1.2.82)

“often the advantage is with the strumpet.”¹³

¹² The difficulty of determining a woman's status in terms of her various degrees of “availability” has been a continuing problem, long after Roman males were troubled by it. Jane Austen's quiet satire has Tom Bertram in “Mansfield Park” complaining that “one does not know what to do” because one cannot tell by a girl's dress if she is “out” (approachable) or “not out”. He reports his mistake with one girl: “Miss Augusta ought not to have been noticed for the next six months”. The problem took an odd turn in 1830's Paris where prostitutes were “advertising” by means of dress, and thus causing offence. Legislation “complicated matters considerably by insisting that all women resemble one another.” (Clayson: *Painted Love*, 1991, 56)

¹³ Whether such prostitutes actually wore the toga at the time when Horace and Propertius were writing may be unlikely, since it would tend to conceal (like the *stola* of the *matrona*) what could otherwise be advertised. Whatever the case, it is clear that there was a strong desire to differentiate between women who were available and those who were not, since the consequences would be most unpleasant for an elite Roman male who got it wrong. Nevertheless, as Sharon James points out, his anxieties were not necessarily ended when he found a legally available courtesan and began a relationship with her. “Both comedy and elegy demonstrate the powerful influence of the courtesan on Roman men as well as their household bank accounts; the male anxieties she engenders are everywhere to be seen on the Roman comic stage, and in the texts of love elegy.” (James 2006 242) Already in his first book Propertius the poet/lover complains of Cynthia's absences, unreliability and even *perfidia* (15.2) (elegies 8, 11, 13 and 15). The old idea, later much modified, that the poems of the love elegists represented some genuine biographical information, may not be too wrong with regard to certain areas of their actual experience. Thus the poets' expressed concern about the uncertain fidelity of their mistresses may have had its real-life equivalent, and another concern for Roman males might have been how to be sure about the status of a particular woman. The marriage and adultery laws of Augustus were enacted in a context of “widespread contemporary concern with the state of Roman society, especially its foundation, the family” (McGinn, 187). The lover/poet such as Propertius represents himself to be would have to tread carefully, and also accept the difficulties involved in remaining free of marriage and yet still enjoying sexual liaisons. Provided that *matronae* dressed “respectably” he should have been able to distinguish them, but whether they always did is of course not certain. In an article on Roman women's clothing, Kelly Olson notes, citing a statement from the Augustan lawyer Labeo, that although *matronae* and whores were “ideally sartorially distinct”, such may not always have been the case, and in fact she sees a combination of *stola*, *palla* and *vittae* as “by no means ubiquitous in portrait busts, statues, and reliefs” (Olson, 2002). Despite this, however, it would seem not only from the Coan silk dresses and the perfumes and jewels but

Despite Cynthia's obvious status as a courtesan, the situation depicted in elegy 1.3 does have some possible resemblance to a marriage. Insofar as Cynthia has been waiting for the poet/lover's return, her situation might be seen in some way to resemble that of Lucretia or Penelope who were found by returning husbands. And Cynthia when discovered claims the "virtue" of woolworking which rightly belongs to a *matrona* like Lucretia. The poet, heavily drunk, drags his feet back to Cynthia late at night, and apparently has a relationship with her that precludes his having to deal with a doorkeeper (as elegiac lovers often did), since he can gain entry to where she is sleeping.¹⁴

ebria cum multo traherem vestigia Baccho
et quaterent sera nocte facem pueri (9-10)

"when I came dragging footsteps unsteadyed by much wine and the slaves were shaking their dying torches in the far-gone night."

She, on waking, refers to the bed on which she presumably lies, and to his possible infidelity.

She claims his night-time absence as rightly having belonged to her:

tandem te nostro referens iniuria lecto
alterius clausis expulit e foribus? (35-6)

"Has another's scorn then at last brought you to my bed (our bed?), expelling you from doors closed in your face?

The juxtaposition of *te* and *nostro* (*nostro lecto*) seems to indicate that a mutual interest in the bed is being implied.

namque ubi longa meae consumpti tempora noctis? (37)

"for where have you spent the long hours of the night that was due to me?"

also from indications of her lifestyle (especially her association with other lovers, as in 2.16), that Cynthia does not represent a respectable married *matrona* – on that score Propertius should be safe.

¹⁴ Richardson 1977; Lyne 1970; Baker 2000.

Despite any resemblances, there is no way in which this scene can represent a marriage.

Nevertheless one study of the poem in particular (Lyne 1970), does see the situation in terms of a marriage. In her complaints she has been seen to “assume wifely rights”, and to act “like any irrational, hasty spouse who suspiciously accuses her husband” (62). Cynthia’s complaints have not always been seen as harsh abuse. “Hostility is only one element in Cynthia’s response. Her stance throughout is one of aggressive fidelity. The fidelity of course is used as a weapon, but it is her constant theme” (Hodge & Buttimore, 96, 2002). There is also the example of Catullus’ Lesbia whose hostile words about the poet were seen otherwise:

Lesbia me dicit simper male nec tacet unquam
de me : Lesbia me dispeream nisi amat (92:1-2)

“Lesbia always speaks ill of me, and is always talking about me. May I perish if Lesbia does not love me.”

Since the poem falls into two main parts, the poet’s arrival and his contemplation of the sleeping Cynthia, followed by her complaints on awakening, her reproofs have been seen as a revelation of her real character as opposed to the sleeping ideal, and in Lyne’s words (76) “*meae noctis*, given the tone of speech, is the expression of a domineering wife of terrible reality”. But she is not a wife, and the poet is not a husband; and the humour of their possible resemblance to husband and wife takes more subtle forms than that of “wifely” complaints from a courtesan.

Humour is created by the poet’s possible connection with some mythological characters whom he calls to mind in the first part of the elegy. As he looks at his sleeping mistress, beautiful in her gentle repose (*mollem quietem* 7), he compares her to various heroines of myth, and thus implicitly compares himself to the gods or heroes who according to legend were the ones to look upon these beauties. These heroes and gods are the future “husbands” of the

heroines mentioned. The first heroine is Ariadne, who slept as Theseus sailed away and left her abandoned:

qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina
languida desertis Cnosia litoribus (1-2)

“like the maid of Cnossus as in a swoon she lay on the deserted shore when Theseus’ ship sailed away.”

The one who saw her there this instance was not Theseus,¹⁵ of course, but Bacchus (as in Catullus 64), who seeing Ariadne took her to be his bride. But the poet’s connection with Bacchus here is not as a husband, future or otherwise, but as a man suffering *multo Baccho*, from too much wine. Nor can he claim any heroic deed such as that of Perseus, who saw and rescued Andromeda, and then married her; she is the next heroine mentioned. These heroic affiliations can only seem ridiculous here, as the supremely unheroic poet/lover stumbles in, hesitating in his partly drunken state to awaken the girl. Added, then, to the more heavy-handed humour of his having drunk too much, is this vague association with several mythical heroes. He goes on to bumble about and in a rather maudlin way (a bit like slapstick humour), tries to put apples in the girl’s hands and garlands on her head; the apples fall off anyway (l 21.6).

As already mentioned, the “background” scene behind this elegy of Propertius is the unexpected arrival of the husband/lover, who finds what his wife/mistress has been doing in his absence, and one example of this scene which Propertius would have known is that Ulysses and Penelope.¹⁶ Thus there is another figure from myth relevant here, with whom he compares incongruously to say the least. The humour is increased by the fact that his return is not in fact

¹⁵ For discussion of the mythological references, in particular Curran (1966), Dunn (1985).

¹⁶ As already noted, Cynthia is frequently seen in this poem as recalling Penelope (Lyne 1970, Hodge & Buttmore 1977, Dunn 1985, Noonan 1991, Tatham 2000, Miller 2002); she is “Penelope to his Odysseus” (Hodge & Buttmore, 97).

unexpected; it has been awaited with much unhappy expectation. And what he finds completes the picture and clearly shows what a humorous parody of the “homecoming” scene this elegy really is.

Cynthia, for a start, is asleep. She has not been doing anything virtuous into the night like Lucretia. And when she wakes up she does not show much delight in the poet’s return; he receives a very poor welcome, most unlike that of Penelope, who, once she is sure it is Ulysses, does not chide him for his (very much longer) absence. But it is Cynthia’s rather brief enumeration of her time-filling activities that adds the final – and possibly best – aspect of the humour of the poem. In between quietly complaining about the poet’s absence, she has tried the consolatory powers first of some sort of activity with wool, and then with her music.

nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum,
rursus et Orpheae carmine, fessa, lyrae;
interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar
externo longas saepe in amore moras (41-4)

“for now I was beguiling sleep with crimson thread, and now in my weariness my music of Orpheus’ lyre; and sometimes, all forlorn, I softly complained to myself of the long time spent by you in another’s embrace.”

The question of what Cynthia could possibly have been doing with crimson thread does not seem to have excited much interest, and when it has, it seems to have been taken seriously. Richardson (1976) thinks that “probably she [Cynthia] means spinning rather than weaving, since it is late in the evening and artificial light was poor in Rome” (156). Harrison (1994) suggests “perhaps she is making herself clothes to please men other than the poet” (23). The likelihood of either of these activities is remote, as will be seen. More to the point is Baker’s comment (2000): “note the irony of Cynthia, as known to us even thus far in the book, engaged in spinning”(82). Several commentators have noted a connection here with Penelope. Lyne

(1970) notes that “we are probably here meant to be reminded of Penelope, arch time-killer and spouse *par excellence*”(62), but he does not indicate how this connection is a humorous one depending on Cynthia’s actual social status; he is more interested in her “over-hasty, suspicious, irrational” nature than her profession. In his comment on this poem as a whole, Miller (2002) remarks: “It begins with a series of comparisons between Cynthia and three mythological figures and ends with a recollection of Penelope, the ever-faithful wife who proved herself not only a match for the suitors but also Odysseus himself” (170). Miller sees this Penelope connection as part of a reversal of power relations, as Cynthia takes the upper hand, but he also does not point out the humour of the courtesan being likened to Penelope.

The characteristic of Penelope which both Lyne and Miller do, in fact, implicitly mention is her cleverness – almost cunning. This cleverness, as well as her fidelity, are aspects of Penelope for which she became best known, despite alternative versions of her story: “Penelope’s positive characterisation as a circumspect, prudent and faithful wife prevails, qualities for which she was to become a byword” (Brill’s *New Pauly*, with references). The cleverness and the fidelity are the two characteristics which Propertius noted himself (as noted above, in elegies 2.6 23-4; 2.9 3-6). The fact that Cynthia uses a claim to woolworking as an indication of how she unhappily yet admirably spent the time while she waited for the poet, can be seen as a clever way of scoring a point against him and making him feel remorseful – and in this she might recall Penelope’s cleverness. But the main effect of any connection with Penelope here must depend on the reputation Penelope had for fidelity as a high status wife: Cynthia enjoys no such status, cannot marry the poet, and presumably lives professionally by means of relationships with other men. This makes the connection humorous if not ridiculous.

There remains the question of what it was that Cynthia was doing with purple thread, since she gives no details. She certainly was not doing something useful and dutiful like supervising spinning women as Lucretia was found to be occupied. In her efforts to remain awake while waiting for the poet, she first tried woolwork, so she says. At once it is apparent that this was simply something done to cheat sleep – “*fallebam ... somnum*” – and not dutiful work. She would have been either spinning or weaving, which were two very different activities. She would be most unlikely to be spinning, since this was menial labour performed by the slave girls, the *quasillariae* who ranked lowest, even in slave status (discussed in the Introduction to the thesis). Extra amounts of wool for spinning were given as a punishment to these women. Would Cynthia of the *longae manus* (2.2.5), the long tapering fingers, have spoiled her hands with spinning? Quite apart from its degraded status, spinning was a very arduous task (which accounts for its degraded status in fact). Cynthia’s description of her time-filling activities indicates that she tried now this, now that, and gave not a lot of concentration or time to either one; first thread, then music. If she did actually try spinning she would have very soon stopped, and in any case the hours of waiting for her lover cannot have been so many in number that she could have spent much time on either activity. A further consideration about spinning is that the thread, *purpureo stamine*, which she mentions would have had to be prepared from the fleece: washed, dyed, combed, wound on to a distaff before being spun on the spindle. These operations would have to be done by slaves, and Cynthia would have to possess a household where there were enough slaves to do such work. It is possible but unlikely, as such an establishment is really that of a *matrona* such as Lucretia (in Livy Book 1). The fact that the thread was purple means that it was indeed expensive, if it was similar to the purple dyed wool that Pliny reports at 1000 denarii a pound in AD63 (9.137). This would not have been the sort of wool with which to

while away time idly and in a casual manner. If Cynthia had bought the wool ready for spinning it would have been even more expensive; she would have needed many sessions with rich praetors (2.16) to pay for such luxury.

Weaving the purple wool is an even more unlikely activity that she might have engaged in. It was an activity of a much more substantial nature, requiring time and effort and specialised equipment, not something lightly undertaken simply to pass the time in the desultory way that Cynthia appears to have done in the poet's absence. If she had a loom in her house (assuming it to be her house) it would have been one of the two types used in Rome at the time (discussed in Chapter One). The older type, such as Lucretia must have had, was hard work with the weaver standing. The newer type was not much easier, and to work at either would have been a task for slaves. The delicate Cynthia would not labour in this way, and nor would a freeborn *matrona*. If she really were a respectable *matrona* and this situation did represent a real marriage, such as that of Penelope and Ulysses or Lucretia and Collatinus, her activity with wool would be the supervision of the slaves who were actually doing it. There is no way in which either spinning or weaving could have been what Cynthia was supposedly doing. Both Propertius and his contemporary audience would have known this, despite modern editors' conjectures about which of the two activities she was actually engaged in. And it is this knowledge on the part of the poet and his readers which reveals Cynthia as the unreliable character she proves to be in later elegies. There has not been a reversal of power relations (Miller 2002) at the end of this poem: even in his drunken state the poet would have known her woolworking claim was totally false. She could not appear virtuous on that account, despite her complaints.

The Odysseus/Penelope connection is relevant to elegy 1.3 mainly because it was already such a well-known example of the unexpected arrival of the husband to find a virtuous

wife, and thus provides a humorous contrast with the arrival of a drunk non-husband to find his mistress, the opposite of a virtuous wife, claiming unconvincingly to have been engaged in a worthy activity and giving him no welcome. Yet the connection is made between Cynthia and Penelope, for example: “Cynthia is thus transformed from sleeping Maenad to the icon of wifely fidelity” (Miller, 174); “and the fierce Maenad becomes instead a Penelope waiting for Odysseus” (Dunn, 248).¹⁷

How then can Cynthia be likened to that Penelope who was seen by the Romans of Propertius’ time as the model of a faithful wife, and characterised repeatedly in *Odyssey* in terms of her clever guile, stressed in relation to her weaving? This description of how she began to weave occurs in Book 2 (lines 93-5) and is repeated in Book 4 (128-30):

ἡ δὲ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήτιξε:
στησαμένη μέγαν ἴστὸν ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὕφαινε,
λεπτὸν καὶ περίμετρον: ἔφαρ δ' ἡμῖν μετέειπε:

Odyssey 2.93-5

“instead she contrived in her heart this guileful thing also: she set up in her halls a great web and fell to weaving. Fine of thread was the web and very wide, and straightway she spoke among us.”

When Penelope speaks herself of her weaving, she also stresses this same sort of guile.

οἱ δὲ γάμον σπεύδουσιν: Ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους τολυπεύω.

Odyssey 19.137

“They are anxious for marriage, and I wind a skein of wiles.”

The significant term is *dolos* in each of these passages.

¹⁷ For discussion of the mythological references, in particular Curran (1966), Dunn (1985).

It is her cunning in using the weaving as a method of delaying events and thus preserving her virtue that is seen as important. Cynthia does appear to resemble Penelope in a way, but it is not because she is claiming to do something with thread. It is because she too is being a bit clever – or so she thinks perhaps – in making the poet believe she has been virtuously occupied, while waiting for him. The poet saw her at first as Ariadne (l3: 1-2), and although Ariadne led Theseus to safety with a thread, it is with a thread that Cynthia *misleads* the poet; she is not the virtuous woolworker that she suggests.

It is Cynthia's unlikely claim about woolworking that forms a humorous climax to this poem. In the way of much successful humour, this touch (the wool reference) is just added subtly at the end of the poem, when all the obvious and more slapstick sort of action has subsided into Cynthia's complaint, which in itself is a nice contrast with Penelope's courtesy on the return of Odysseus. Whatever virtue attached to woolworking in this early Augustan climate, the activity is certainly not meant to be seen in a serious light in this poem. And as was seen in Chapter One, with Ovid's Lucretia the treatment of woolworking became even less serious and in fact appeared to parody Livy. Elegy 1.3, however, is not the only poem in which Propertius makes use of a woolmaking reference in a humorous way. In elegy 6 of the third book of Propertius, the *puella* is found in a situation which in some ways resembles that of Lucretia.¹⁸

A *puella* found unexpectedly (like Lucretia?)

In this poem (3.6) the poet purports to have a conversation with Lygdamus, most likely a slave who has been sent to the house of the poet's mistress, and can report on her activities there. The poet suggests the scene witnessed by Lygdamus:

¹⁸ She in fact resembles Ovid's Lucretia even more than Livy's in that she weeps over her wool (3.16.17) – did Ovid perhaps know of this poem?

sicin eram incomptis vidisti flere capillis?
 illius ex oculis multa cadebat aqua?
 nec speculum in strato vidisti, Lygdamus, lecto
 scriniaque ad lecti clausa iacere pedes,
 ac maestam teneris vestem pendere lacertis?
 ornabat niveas nullane gemma manus?
 tristis erat domus, et tristes sua pensa ministrae
 carpebant, medio nebat et ipsa loco,
 umidaque impressa siccabat lumina lana,
 rettulit et querulo iurgia nostra sono ? (3.6 :9-18)

So you saw your mistress weeping and with hair awry, a flood of tears streaming from her eyes? And on the bedcovers you saw no mirror, Lygdamus, and at the foot of the bed her toilet-box lying locked? So her dress hung forlornly from her delicate arms, and no jewel adorned her snow-white hands? So the house was sad, and sad the maidservants as they picked their wool, she spinning in their midst, and she pressed the wool to her eyes to dry them as she poured forth reproaches of me in plaintive tone?

The mistress here may be Cynthia, but is in any case an elegiac girl with delicate arms and white hands, and hair unbound. She also like Ovid's Lucretia is seated on a bed, and is spinning with her women – *nebat et ipsa* – and in her unhappiness (about her lover?) she too begins to weep (in floods of tears). She is pictured like a *matrona* with her women, and in fact in his edition of Propertius, Richardson comments: "The picture of the women of the household gathered about their mistress, all engaged in spinning, no man present, is strongly reminiscent of the picture of Lucretia as she was found by the young noblemen of Rome on their surprise visit from the camp at Antium, the only virtuous wife among them all." It is quite possible that this same picture was in the mind of Propertius, too, and that he is humorously contrasting his mistress, no virtuous *matrona*, with Livy's paragon. Propertius' girl goes one step further than Ovid's with her spinning (which she would not be doing anyway as a *matrona*) – in the midst of her tears she actually dries her eyes on the wool. This really is humorous, and is meant to be since it is an over-statement of the *puella*'s engagement with the wool – almost as if she is

overdoing her supposed position as *matrona*. But it is not generally recognised as such – this comment for example takes it seriously: “she was spinning, not weaving, as her gesture of drying her eyes with the wool in 17 shows” (Richardson). The irony is of course that she is put by Propertius into the setting of a high status woman who should not be spinning, whereas, probably being as the poet’s mistress a non-free woman, she may well have had to supplement her income with woolworkinig.

Propertius’ third book of elegies, published 25-22BC (Richardson, Camps), although later than the first two books, still pre-dates Augustus’ marriage and adultery legislation of 18BC, but this third book dates from much the same years as Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita 1* (27-25BC Walsh), where the Lucretia story is featured. Livy’s identification of woolworking with female virtue in the person of Lucretia, a high status *matrona*, is in line with current Augustan ideology, in terms of which traditional customs like woolworking were to be recommended. To judge from the two poems of Propertius being discussed, however (1.3 and 3.6) – and also from some scenes in Vergil (in *Aeneid 8* and *Georgics 4*, discussed in Chapter One) – woolworking was not regarded as an activity that was so highly respected that it might not be treated in a humorous way. In both elegy 1.3 and 3.6 Propertius places his mistress in the position of a *matrona*, and in 3.6, possibly associates her by means of woolworking with Lucretia. In both poems he makes use of the incongruity of the association for humorous effect. Although Ovid (as often) would take the humour rather too far with his own version of the Lucretia story in *Fasti 2*, Propertius was on safer ground, since he made it so absolutely clear that his mistress was not a *matrona*; her lifestyle and clothing were those of a courtesan, so that the whole situation of her being cast in the possible role of a *matrona* was a fantasy, not to be taken seriously. In any case Propertius and Vergil at least, when writing at the same time as

Livy, did not feel themselves prevented from treating woolworking with humour. The picture is not so clear with Tibullus.

Tibullus and woolworking

In both poems of Propertius so far treated, the *puella* is depicted as working wool in the absence of a lover whose return is awaited.¹⁹ The third example of the returning lover/husband scene to look at here is by Tibullus, and is in the third elegy of his first book, which is dated 27-26BC (by Maltby). Propertius' publication of his first book is thought to be 29-28BC (Richardson). Both poets place their woolworking scenes in the third elegy of their first book. It is possible that the same position in the same book is not a coincidence. Publication dates are not necessarily an indication of which poet composed his elegy 1.3 first, as readings and performances of the poems may have taken place at times beforehand. So it may be that one of the two, at least, has the work of the other in mind. Could Tibullus be presenting a more respectable picture of woolworking, more in line with current Augustan ideology, as an "answer" to Propertius' rather light-hearted treatment?

Elegy 1.3 of Tibullus has been often referred to by editors and commentators when they want a scene that depicts woolworking, usually as a virtuous activity.²⁰ And many of the comments about this elegy make the connection between the poet and Odysseus, with Delia as a Penelope figure.²¹ The *Odyssey* connection is obvious, as the elegy begins with the poet's lament that he must remain in Phaeacia – the land where Odysseus was shipwrecked (in *Odyssey* 6) – as he is too ill to continue the military expedition on which he was proceeding with Messalla. In his unhappiness he thinks of his mistress Delia whom he has left behind, and at the

¹⁹ As was Penelope's situation in the *Odyssey*.

²⁰ e.g. Ogilvie on Livy 1.57.9 (1965), Le Bonniec on Fasti 2 (1969), Kenney on Heroides 19 (1996)

²¹ e.g. Putnam 1973; Bright 1978; Murgatroyd 1980; Ball 1983; Lee 1990; Lee-Stecum 1998; Maltby 2002.

end of the poem imagines a blissful reunion with her. He would return to her unexpectedly, as Odysseus did with Penelope, and he would find her in the care of an old woman, sitting late at night in the lamplight among the women spinning wool – the woolworking preserving her fidelity, as with Penelope.

At tu casta, precor, maneas sanctique pudoris
assideat custos sedula semper anus.
haec tibi fabellas referat positaque lucerna
deducat plena stamina longa colu,
ac circa, gravibus pensis affixa, puella
paulatim somno fessa remittat opus.
tunc veniam subito nec quisquam nuntiet ante
sed videar caelo missus adesse tibi.
tunc mihi, qualis eris, longos turbata capillos,
obvia nudato, Delia, curre pede. (1.3.83-92)

“But you, I pray, continue chaste. Let the aged dame sit ever by your side to keep your honour true. She shall tell you stories when the lamp is in its place, as she draws the long yarn from the loaded distaff, while all around the maids bend over the toilsome task till sleep steals upon them and the work drops from the tired hand. Then of a sudden let me come, and no one first bring the news of me; but let me seem to you as dropped from heaven. Then, just as you are, with long hair all disordered and feet unsandalled, run to meet me, Delia.”

Commentators on this elegy have noted the ironic nature of a connection made between Delia and Penelope. Bright (1978) and Ball (1983) both mention this, mainly from a consideration of the fact that Delia is, in this same poem, both “his urban mistress” and “his mythical Penelope” (Ball, 64). The irony here would depend on the assumed characteristics of the elegiac mistress; “we should not forget that Delia as presented in the elegies generally is a somewhat unreliable creature”, (Bright, 32), whereas “the mainstream of tradition uses Penelope as an *exemplum* of conjugal fidelity at all periods”. Both these commentators then speculate that perhaps it is the alternative legend of Penelope that Tibullus may have had in the back of his mind – the legend that she was in fact seriously unfaithful to Odysseus, the birth of Pan possibly

being as a result of this. This other tradition, attested in ancient authors such as Theopompus and Apollodorus,²² was known to the Roman poets: as Ball (62) points out, Horace refers to a corruptible Penelope in *Satires* 2.5.81-3, comparing her to a hound which has once tasted fatty meat; she is faithful if not given a taste of luxury.

But this elegy 1.3 of Tibullus, as Lee-Stecum (1998) notes, presents several ideals, or ideal situations, and thus it is not likely that the Penelope connection is meant to be a negative one. This is so not only because Penelope's main reputation is for fidelity, but also because of her famous association with woolworking, and woolworking is presented positively by Tibullus. The elegy begins with the poet isolated in illness – which is of course not ideal – but proceeds then to a description of Delia's devotion to him, both in wishing him to remain with her and in performing observances to the goddess Isis, presumably on his behalf (1.3.1-34). The next section of the poem praises the ideal world of the Golden Age before any military endeavours were undertaken (35-36); then the ideal afterworld of true lovers such as the poet himself, contrasted with the hell of the untrue (which the poet need not fear) (57-82). The final ideal is the scene where Delia is imagined among the woolworkers (83-94). However appropriate or otherwise it is to find Delia in this setting, it is clear that Tibullus is imagining a much desired situation: the whole scene is described in a series of verbs in the subjunctive mood implying a wished-for outcome: *tu ... maneas, assideat ... anus, puella ... remittat opus, nec quisquam nuntiet ante, videar ... adesse tibi Aurora ... Luciferum ... portet*. Although the association of his mistress Cynthia with woolworking does seem deliberately humorous on the part of Propertius, humour does not seem to be intended by Tibullus when he pictures Delia this way, despite the reader perceiving the paradox in the association.

²² Theopompus F Gr H 115 F354; Apollod. Epit. 7,38. ref. *Brill's New Pauly : Penelope*.

That the Odysseus/Penelope connection is present in this elegy is not doubted, but there is also even the possibility (as noted by Lee-Stecum 1998, 126-9) that Tibullus might have known of Livy's Lucretia, who appeared in Book 1 of *Ab Urbe Condita* (27-25BC), and was presented as the ideal virtuous *matrona* devoted to her wool in her husband's absence. (Livy's Lucretia is discussed in Chapter One.) Maltby, however, (2002, 58) claims that it is the woolworking scene in Terence which has been of influence to Tibullus. "The final scene of the poem in which Tibullus imagines his return to find his mistress at home spinning, although epic in theme, takes as its model a scene in comedy (Terence *Heaut.* 275-307 after Menander). It is impossible to tell whether Tibullus worked from the original Greek or from the Latin version. This theme of the lover returning home to find his mistress spinning, touched upon in Prop.1.3, is given a fuller treatment later by Prop. at 3.6.15-17." Maltby's comment makes no mention of the humour intended by Propertius in elegies 1.3 and 3.6 (which does link them to Terence), nor of the lack of humour in the Tibullan poem. Probably because commentators in general are not familiar with woolworking processes and equipment, the actual use and importance of the woolworking imagery in all three elegies mentioned is overlooked. But it is this imagery of woolworking which is one of the significant aspects of Tibullus 1.3 – and in fact of certain other Tibullan elegies – although it tends to be no more closely noted by commentators than is Propertius' obvious use of the same sort of imagery, albeit in his case for a different purpose. The poets themselves, especially Tibullus, knew what processes they were writing about.

It is Livy's Lucretia story which is seen as an important influence on Tibullus 1.3 by Lee-Stecum (1998, 126-9), who notes that the two authors possibly published first books at much the same time.²³ But for him it is the differences between Livy's and the poet's treatment of the

²³ He refers to Ogilvie (1970) who states: "Internal evidence from the first five books indicates that they were completed between 27 and 25BC (2)." Tibullus' first book is dated 27-26BC by Maltby.

scene which are of most significance: “Read against Livy’s realisation of the Lucretia story, the contradictions within the poet’s ideal become even more apparent” (127). Lee-Stecum seems at first to see a parallel between Livy’s scene and the one at the end of Tibullus’ elegy, but finds that the Tibullan lover’s role resembles that of Livy’s villain, Tarquinius, more than it resembles the role of the husband Collatinus: “if the details of this passage are compared more closely to those of the Lucretia story, he is type-cast in the role of Tarquin” (128). Delia also is found wanting: “the poet’s ideal demands that she be cast as Lucretia. But, when read against the Livian realisation of the story, it is the other wives, whom the returning soldiers discover at dinner-parties with friends, who most resemble what might be the expected behaviour of an elegiac mistress” (128).

Lee-Stecum sees the Tibullan lover in 1.3 returning to Delia with a similar sexual intention to that of Tarquinius in Livy, and sees Delia’s virtue being tested like Lucretia’s by the nature of the situation in which she will be found. The “other wives” in Livy, as Lee-Stecum says, are certainly shown to exhibit the sort of abandon more usual in a courtesan, but it is in this way that they act as a foil to Lucretia. In the Tibullan poem, however, the poet seems unaware of anything odd about the scene he presents, since Delia as pictured amongst the spinners late at night can certainly be likened to Livy’s Lucretia. But the arrival which the poet/lover imagines for himself does not imply any “Tarquinian” violence; instead his mistress runs to meet him on bare feet. (Delia is, however, still the “unreliable” mistress who needs the old woman (84) as *custos*, something Lucretia would never need).

Delia’s role in poem 1.3 is, nevertheless, that of elegiac mistress, and as such she is certainly no less incongruous in the situation of a *matrona* than the Cynthia of Propertius would be. But is she really meant to be seen in the role of a *matrona* such as Lucretia? It is hardly

likely that the poet meant this scene to appear ironic and incongruous to the point of being humorous. What then is happening here? On one aspect of this scene in elegy 1.3 modern editors mainly agree²⁴: they see it as an ideal example of a woolworking scene, similar to those found in the various other references that they proceed to list – usually the same ones. If what is wanted is a scene representative of domestic woolworking, Tibullus 1.3 does not provide a good example; even despite its being a fantasy, the presence of the courtesan Delia in the scene remains incongruous. The poet/lover may well wish her to be a *matrona*, but she cannot be. Although editors imply that the references they give represent basically the same situation, there are significant differences, as can be seen from comparing some of those often mentioned. A number of these – from Vergil, Terence etc – were discussed in Chapter One.

Where then are the serious scenes of high status *matronae*, not low status or mythological figures, occupied in woolworking, with virtue rather than necessity implied? Ovid's Lucretia at *Fasti* 2.725ff looks too much like a parody, and his brief description of the *matrona* of the past (*Medicamina Faciei* 13-14) with ruddy face and hardened hands, is even worse. Propertius 4.3, with Arethusa, comes close, and will be looked at elsewhere. There remains Livy's Lucretia, who is really the only example of a high status woman occupied with woolworking from choice rather than necessity, her dedication to woolworking (in Livy's words *deditam lanae*) being identified as a virtue. In this way Livy's scene differs from all the others, although it is usually cited along with the rest; Livy has here invented the freeborn *matrona*, virtuous in her occupation with wool.²⁵

²⁴ Smith 1918; Murgatroyd 1980: Lee 1990: Maltby 2002.

²⁵ The Lucretia story, including Livy's version, is discussed at length in Chapter One. That it was not a pleasant option for a freeborn *matrona* to follow this example of woolworking becomes clearer from some of the current opinions and descriptions of the task, and in this regard the poets include some useful references which indicate the unpleasant nature of the work. A number of these were dealt with in detail in Chapter One, but a reference from *Georgics* 1 – contemporary with the first books of Livy, Tibullus and Propertius – leaves no doubt about the tedious and lengthy nature of weaving.

Tibullus' scene in elegy 1.3 appears odd if compared with Livy's virtuous *matrona*, but it is only a possibility that Tibullus knew of Livy's Lucretia; however, he might well have been influenced by the respect accorded to woolworking as a traditional activity in the current Augustan climate of moral reform. The scene in elegy 1.3 recalls both Penelope and Lucretia in that it is a "returning husband" situation. But – as noted – it is difficult to take Tibullus 1.3 as an ideal example of a woolworking scene – especially one representing "the activity *par excellence* of the chaste Roman matron" (Maltby 2002, 210), mainly because of the incongruity of the picture as presented. The poet's apparent unawareness makes the scene even more odd when, in later elegies, he reveals a detailed knowledge of the actual processes and the workers involved with wool. Though seen in an idealised pastoral setting, the spinners and weavers of elegy 2.1 are much more convincing than Delia. It is relevant, then, to look at the evidence in Tibullus' elegies – his use of language in particular – for his interest in the area of woolworking in general. Nowhere, however, are any high status *matronae* to be found amongst his workers.

Tibullus and the language of woolworking

Tibullus' two books of elegies contain more references to woolworking than are found in the elegiac works of either Propertius or Ovid, and whereas Propertius (1.3, 3.6), Ovid (in *Fasti* 2) and even Vergil (in *Georgics* 4) make use of such references for humorous effect, Tibullus does not appear to do this. He clearly has an interest in woolworking, which fits well with the characteristic concerns that have been noted in his work in general. As Murgatroyd

interea longum cantu solata labore
arguto coniunx percurrit pectine telas (293-4)

"his wife the while solaces with song her long toil, runs the shrill shuttle through the web"

(The unpleasant nature of the task, as indicated in such references, is not generally mentioned by editors, who usually see depictions of woolworking in Roman poetry as, for example: "A characteristically Roman picture of domesticity" [Kenney 1996 on *Heroides* 19.37-8]).

(1980) points out: “he [Tibullus] seems to hold a number of sentiments in common with Augustus … his praise of rustic life fits in with Augustus’ concern for agriculture” (11). Maltby (2002) notes “Tibullus’ preference for the moral simplicity of an earlier agricultural age” (53). As well, Maltby has detailed the examples of Tibullus’ considerable interest in technical language (1999): “His language is, on occasion, capable of considerable elaboration and variety … One area in which this variety is displayed is in the use of technical vocabulary” (231). The woolworking terminology used by Tibullus is evidence of this interest, as Maltby shows by examining these particular terms, especially as they occur in elegy 1.6.77-80. But there seems to be more than just an interest in the technical vocabulary; Tibullus appears to value the activity itself, most likely for its close association with the rural past that he also values.

While the scene in elegy 1.3 (with Delia) already contains more technical words to do with spinning than are usually found in other comparable references from elegiac poetry, elegy 1.6 briefly covers the whole woolworking operation, from cleaning the fleece to setting up the warp threads on the loom, using the relevant terminology for each task. The spinning words from elegy 1.3, *deducat plena stamina longa colu* (86) and *gravibus pensis* (87), refer first to the process of drawing out the long threads (*stamina longa*) from the full distaff (*plena colu*), then to the heavy weights of wool (*gravibus pensis*) which the girls must work. In his discussion of this language, Maltby finds the best parallel for this passage at Catullus 64.311-13:

laeva colum molli lana retinebat amictum,
dextera tum leviter deducens fila supinis
formabat digitis.

“The left hand held the distaff clothed with soft wool; then the right hand lightly drawing out the threads with upturned fingers shaped them.”

It is in fact on this same passage from Catullus 64 that Wild, in his standard work on Roman textile production (1970), bases his account of the process of spinning.²⁶ Tibullus, although he finds such a scene appealing, is not unaware of the nature of the work:

puella paulatim somno fessa remittat opus (87-8)

“the maid bends over the toilsome task till sleep steals upon them and the work drops from the tired hand”

It is significant that the woolworking passage in Tibullus 1.3 is seen as a parallel to those lines in Catullus 64 which, for Wild, best typify the process of spinning. Catullus is describing spinning carried out by the Fates, who are doing this in a poem which deals entirely with mythological subject matter. Similarly, there are very detailed descriptions of both spinning and weaving in *Metamorphoses* 6, where Ovid tells the tale of Arachne who engages in a weaving contest with Pallas, the goddess who invented the art (Met.6.18-23; 54-8). These descriptions are comparably noteworthy for their detail and use of correct terminology, and they are similar to the passage in Catullus 64 in that their context is an entirely mythological one. Although Tibullus’ scene with Delia is in essence a fantasy expressed in a wishful subjunctive, insofar as it is not a mythological story, it is a situation that might exist in real life. Tibullus is the only one of the elegiac poets to apply correct technical terms, in a detailed description of woolworking, to a situation that is not a mythological one. This would indicate that his interest is not just in the technical terms themselves, but in the activity they describe; he is attracted to the custom and process of woolworking, which accords so well with his general obvious liking for the traditional rural way of life.

²⁶ “My account is based on a detailed passage in Catullus’ *Marriage of Peleus and Thetis*, supplemented by first-hand information collected by modern observers among the peasants of Italy and Egypt” (35). Wild also refers to Tibullus 2.3.63 in connection with the *pensum*, or weight of wool.

As mentioned above, however, he is aware of the arduous nature of woolworking, and in elegy 1.6 he describes the woman who has not been faithful to any lover, and must, when grown old, labour at her woolworking, presumably in order to live. Maltby suggests as Tibullus' possible inspiration an anonymous Greek epigram (A.P. 6.283): "She who formerly boasted of her wealthy lovers and never bowed the knee to Nemesis, the dread goddess, now weaves on a poor loom cloth she is paid for. Late in the day hath Athene despoiled Cypris." The idea of the ageing mistress was not new, and others used it (e.g. Horace *Odes* 1.25). Propertius similarly warns Cynthia about how terrible her old age will be, as payment for her deception:

at te celatis aetas gravis urgeat annis,
et veniat formae ruga sinistra tuae! (3.25.11-12)

"May old age oppress you with the burden of the years you have dissembled, and may ugly wrinkles come upon your beauty."

Propertius concentrates on the woman's loss of beauty, and makes no mention of woolworking; Ovid's emphasis is the same when some years later he makes use of this theme in *Ars Amatoria* 3, warning an unwilling girl that there will come a time when she is no longer sought out:

tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,
frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus,
nec tua frangetur nocturna ianua rixa (A.A.3.69-71)

"That day will come when you, who now shut out your lovers, will lie, a cold and lonely old woman, through the night; nor will your door be broken in a nightly brawl."

It is only Tibullus who looks back to the old tradition of woolworking to find a way of warning a faithless girl, and in doing so – because he knows about woolworking and is interested in it – he describes all the laborious tasks:

at quae fida fuit nulli, post victa senecta
ducit inops tremula stamina torta manu,
firmaque conductis adnectit licia telis,
tractaque de niveo vellere ducta putat (1.6.77-80)

“But she whom no one has found true, thereafter poor and bowed with age draws out the twisted yarn with shaking hand and for hire fastens firm the leashes to the loom and pulls and cleans the handfuls of snowy wool.”

Each of the woolworking terms in the passage quoted above is examined by Maltby in his article on Tibullus’ technical language (1999), and he concludes that most of them are rarely found in Roman authors, especially rarely in verse. The term *licia* (leashes) is used in this way only by Vergil (*Georgics* 1.285-6) of an old-style country wife setting up the loom (*licia telae addere*), the verb *adnecto* (connect) occurs only twice otherwise, in neither place to do with woolworking. That Tibullus uses this verb *adnecto* for this purpose (Vergil uses *addo*, “add”), and also the verb *puto* in its literal sense “clean” – rarely found – indicates that Tibullus understands the process and knows how to describe it. He is not taking his description from some technical treatise, but using words, in ways not necessarily found elsewhere, to express his meaning. It is not simply the case that “Tibullus once again departs from the norms of elegiac diction to display his taste for technical language” (Maltby 1999, 243). Maltby’s thorough search has found no other writer capable of putting together such a description, using the correct terminology and covering the whole process, and displaying more than just a taste for these terms but an understanding of them as well.

The picture that the scene in elegy 1.6 (77-80) presents is a grim one, because unlike the domestic scene such as is imagined in Livy 1.57 with Lucretia, where there are numerous woolworkers, here there is only the one woman to carry out every task, and she is not strong enough to cope. This is the truly negative aspect of woolworking, despite its rustic appeal: it requires, preferably, many workers. Within its elegiac framework, elegy 1.6 is a “realistic” picture – more so than the scene with Delia in 1.3, and also more “realistic” than Livy’s picture

of Lucretia, who belongs in an idealised past. The weaver in 1.6 is not a high status *matrona* and she carries out this task because she is obliged to do so. In the first elegy of his second book, where Tibullus celebrates the country and its gods: *Rura cano rurisque deos*; the sheep and their wool, mentioned along with the many features of rural life that are presented here, provide much work for the country women:

rure etiam teneris curam exhibitura puellis
 molle gerit tergo lucida vellus ovis;
 hinc et femineus labor est, hinc pensa colusque,
 fusus et apposito pollice versat opus,
 atque aliqua assidue textrix operata Minervae
 cantat et a pulso tela sonat latere (2.1.61-66)

“of the country too is the sheep that will before long make trouble for gentle girls with the soft fleece it wears upon its glistening back. Thence comes the toil of women’s hands, the weighed wool and the distaff, and the spindle that twists its work ‘twixt thumb and finger; and weaving women in unremitting service to Minerva sing while the loom clatters as the clay weights swing.”

The passage quoted above is a detailed description of a process, and indicates both interest in and knowledge of woolworking on the part of the poet. It describes first the spinning, then the weaving on the loom, complete with the sound of the loom-weights hitting each other. Such details are seen by Maltby as Tibullus “clearly displaying his *doctrina* by intentionally accumulating rare and technical words in Alexandrian fashion” (246). He points out that *textrix* (female weaver) occurs here for the first time, and that spindles (*fusus*) are mentioned otherwise most often in the context of spinning Fates. But Tibullus as well as “displaying *doctrina*” is describing a scene he values, and a detail such as the clattering loom-weights indicates that he knows it well, and has very likely observed it. In fact his use of the term *later*, a triangular weight of baked clay used to keep the warp tight, is very rare, as Murgatroyd (1994) points out in a note on this passage, adding also with regard to the sound they make: “no other ancient author

refers to such an occurrence and elsewhere sound with regard to the process of weaving is generally caused by the shuttle.” According to this same editor, the term *textrix* here is not only appearing for the first time, but was “subsequently rare and was not used by other Augustans”. For all his keen interest, however, Tibullus also knows that the process is hard work; but in this passage it is shared and the weavers sing at their task to alleviate it.

All of these descriptions show an ongoing interest in the tradition of woolworking on the part of Tibullus, and also a respect for both the workers and the process. If he had known of Livy’s Lucretia, the faithful *matrona* devoted to her wool, the story might have struck a chord with the concern and respect for the old custom of woolworking that can be seen in his poetry. But there is another aspect of this possibility: had Tibullus known of Livy’s Lucretia, her very status as a *matrona* might have brought to his attention the fact that he was himself putting Delia, a courtesan, in the position of a *matrona* in elegy 1.3. The incongruity of Delia’s position – of which Tibullus seems to be largely unaware – would then have become apparent. And apart from this thought, there is the fact that the relevant dates (Tibullus 1 27BC – Maltby, Livy 1 27-25BC – Ogilvie) make the Lucretia association uncertain. But there are other, earlier connections with woolworkers that have been made for elegy 1.3.

Penelope has been seen as a relevant figure (Maltby 2002, Murgatroyd 1980), as has the girl in Terence’s play *Heauton Timorumenos* (275ff). This scene in Terence, according to Maltby (2002, 58) is the one which the woolworking section of 1.3 “takes as its model.” With regard to Penelope, while the situation presented in Tibullus 1.3 definitely resembles that of Penelope and Ulysses, Penelope’s chief reputation is for fidelity, her woolworking being a means to this end. By contrast, the presentation of Delia in 1.3 emphasises woolworking in particular, whereas her fidelity is obviously not something that the poet can rely upon, and he can refer to it

only in terms of a wish: *at tu casta, precor, maneas* (83). The Terence connection, although presenting a scene in which a girl is found faithfully working wool, would not sit well with the positive image of Delia that Tibullus seems to want to create: the girl in the Terence scene is of presumed low status and works in a very impoverished setting. Tibullus does not want to associate Delia with such a scene and seems rather to want her elevated above what is in fact her real status. Even the Penelope story is not entirely without unfortunate connections, since, as already mentioned, her “alternative” reputation as an adulteress (Jacobson 1974) would have been known to Roman writers. But does Delia need to be associated with some virtuous figure like Lucretia or Penelope? (Assuming that Tibullus even knew the Livy story). It is possible that, sympathising with rural traditions and thus with the respect accorded to them in the current Augustan climate of moral reform, Tibullus could lend a certain respectability to Delia by placing her in a woolworking setting.

As a further positive association, Tibullus introduces an old woman into the picture as a *custos*, a sort of guardian figure sitting with Delia, recounting *fabellas* to the woolworkers. Maltby comments: “The old woman, companion and adviser of a mistress, is a traditional figure of New Comedy and love elegy, though not always in the role of the guardian of her mistress’ virtue” (note on 1.3.84). Certainly the old women “advisers” who are depicted so negatively by the other two elegiac poets – the bawds Acanthis (Propertius 4.5) and Dipsas (Ovid *Amores* 1.8) – add no air of respectability to the mistresses they address. In line with his desire to create a respectable scene for Delia, Tibullus makes the old companion into a woman whose influence is for the better.²⁷

²⁷ Tibullus presents the *lena* Phryne in elegy 2.6 negatively, but the mistress in Book 2 is Nemesis, who unlike Delia does not figure in any respectable rural fantasies; rather she is presented as clad in gold-threaded silk, a sophisticated city girl fond of great luxuries (2.3.51-62). And when Delia takes a rich lover, then the unnamed *callida lena* is to blame (1.5.47-8).

In the following discussion of woolworking scenes in the poets Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, it will be shown that woolworking is not portrayed as the virtuous activity which Livy had depicted with his exemplary Lucretia. Tibullus' woolworking scene (1.3) forms a second of such scenes published within the same approximately five year period (28-24BC), the other two being first by Propertius, then Livy. All appear at a time when Augustus wished to promote traditional customs, and similarly at a time when clothing could be bought ready made²⁸ and the processes involved in woolworking were seen as unpleasant tasks, the work of slaves. Maltby notes that

Furthermore, Tibullus' desire to imagine ideal situations in which Delia plays a major part is not limited to presenting her in the position of a *matrona* amongst woolworkers. Elegy 1.5 confirms his intention to represent her in respectable guise, this time as an "elegant courtesan-turned-farmer's-wife" in the words of Sharon James (2003 33) who thinks that "the audience must have been quite amused at this vision." Here, along with subjunctives as in 1.3, a series of future tenses depicts similarly wished-for events:

rura colam, frugumque aderit mea Delia custos,
area dum messes sole calente teret;
aut mihi servabit plenis in lintribus uvas
pressaque veloci candida musta pede.
consuescit numerare pecus; consuescit amantis
garrulus in dominae ludere verna sinu.
illa deo sciet agricolae pro vitibus uvam,
pro segete spicas, pro grege ferre dapem.
illa regat cunctos, illi sint omnia curae,
at iuvet in tota me nihil esse domo.
huc veniet Messalla meus, cui dulcia poma
Delia selectis detrahat arboribus,
et tantum venerata virum, hunc sedula curet,
huic paret atque epulas ipsa ministra gerat. (1.5.21-34)

"In the country, I said, I will live. My Delia shall be there, to keep watch upon the grain, while the threshing-floor winnows the harvest in the blazing sun; or she shall watch the grapes in the brimming troughs when the quick feet tread the gleaming must. She shall learn to count the flock; she shall teach the prattling serf-child to play on a loving mistress' lap. To the god that tends the country she will know what gifts to offer – for vines a cluster, spiked ears for cornfield, drink offering for flock. All folk shall she direct, and all things be her care. I shall love to be but a cipher in the house. Hither shall come my own Messalla. From chosen trees shall Delia pull him down sweet fruit. In homage to his greatness she shall give him zealous tendance, and prepare and carry him the repast, herself his waiting-maid."

It does not seem that Tibullus intended any humour; immediately after this description of Delia in 1.5 he has the words "haec mihi fingebam" ("I used to dream" – the title of Bright's 1978 study of Tibullus). Both this and the woolworking scene in 1.3 are "dreams," but there is a slight nod in 1.3 in the direction of a more realistic situation: he will not send any message ahead to announce his arrival (*nec quisquam nuntiet ante 89*); Delia will need to be careful that she is found waiting for him in a faithful manner. As a courtesan she probably needs such a warning.

²⁸ J.P. Wild is sure of this (in a private email).

Propertius 1 “would have been available to Tibullus” (55), and also thinks the possibility cannot be excluded that “either author could have heard the other’s work at private readings before the publication date” (56). It is tempting to think that Tibullus, valuing woolworking and respecting the tradition it represented, saw how it had been depicted in Propertius 1.3, where it was treated casually as an unlikely activity that Cynthia might have toyed with; his own elegy 1.3 could then present woolworking in a more serious light. But as would have been clear to Propertius’ readers, mistresses – especially elegant ones like Cynthia – just did not involve themselves in virtuous woolworking. And although she may be meant to seem more respectable by the woolworking connection, Delia was still a mistress, and Tibullus’ readers were very likely the same ones who were reading Propertius. Sharon James remarked that Delia’s “country wife” role might have amused Tibullus’ audience; the incongruity of her role as a virtuous woolworker might have had a similar effect on readers. What then of Cynthia in Propertius 1.3, where the poet arrives drunk to find her claiming to have been making wool? She is also incongruous as a woolworker, but in her case it is the incongruity that is meant to be perceived; it is her unlikely involvement with purple thread that provides part of the humour of the poem. The first two elegies in Book 1 have made her status as a silk-clad courtesan as distinct from a stola-clad *matrona* fairly clear, and it seems safe to assume that she is not seriously being placed in the position of a *matrona* in elegy 1.3. Livy’s woolworking scene provides the most definitive statement of the idea, reinforced by its powerful dramatic presentation with the story of the banishment of tyrant kings and the beginning of the republic. For all her brief appearance, Livy’s Lucretia is a striking figure, and an irreproachable example of a *matrona*. It is “safe” for Propertius to create the sort of humour in elegy 1.3 and also in elegy 3.6, with reference to a

much respected activity if the situation is clearly seen to be impossible anyway, because of the character and status of the girl.

Nevertheless Delia is a courtesan at best, one of those women classed as *infames*; does she not taint the virtuous activity with her involvement? This despite the obvious sympathy Tibullus has with the rural life and its traditions, so much in keeping with current Augustan ideology? Yet the poet seems to want Delia to appear in a positive light. This is, really, the other side of the coin from the method of attacking the character of a *matrona* by associating her with the actions and character of a *meretrix*, such as Sallust had done with Sempronia (*Bellum Catilinae* 25.1-5) and Cicero had done with Clodia (*Pro Caelio* 49). On the other hand, it is in fact Propertius who, by using humour, keeps the *matrona* and the *meretrix* separate – which is very much how they should be according to the current social milieu. The ridiculousness, if any, of the business with wool in Propertius’ elegy 1.3, reflects not so much on woolworking itself or even on Penelope, but on his construct of Cynthia, for her pretension.²⁹

Ovid’s Penelope

Penelope’s reputation for woolworking and fidelity has been connected with Delia and Cynthia but for Ovid, as will be seen here, Penelope is neither a willing woolworker nor a happily faithful wife. Her resemblance to Delia and Cynthia is a distant one in the scenes discussed above, but is, if anything, much closer when she appears in her own right as a major figure in Ovid’s *Heroides*, since here she exhibits characteristics of an elegiac *puella*. This is not

²⁹ If Cynthia is a creation of the poet, so might his own persona be, as he dissociates himself from the more serious lifestyle which he may well have later adopted – that of married father of children, as suggested by Butler (1905,6) – in the enjoyment of his youthful pursuits. Cicero claimed young men should be allowed such pleasures: *datur enim concessu omnium huic aliqui ludus aetati ... ut nullius vitam labefactant, nullius domum evertant ... faciles et tolerabiles haberi solent* (*Pro Caelio* 28). Propertius the lover/poet does not involve himself with a *matrona* and thus cause problems by “breaking the rules,” and he makes this plain by his depiction of Cynthia as a courtesan. If woolworking is associated with virtuous *matronae*, Cynthia’s idle unconvincing toying with purple thread – even if she did so much as that – removes the thought of any association for her with a *matrona*.

surprising. As seen in Chapter One, Lucretia (that other famous woolworker) also took on the character of an elegiac *puella* in Ovid's version of her story.

Penelope is the first in line of Ovid's literary heroines who write letters to their absent husbands or lovers; her letter is to Ulysses, whom she believes to be still absent although many others have returned from the Trojan War. Dating of the *Heroides* and the *Amores*, both assumed to be early works, is uncertain; the first collection of five books of *Amores*, thought to date from 25BC, may pre-date the first collection of *Heroides*, issued in 15BC. (These dates are given with a warning of their speculative nature by Hardie [2002]). If the *Amores* are the earliest work, Ovid was already writing in elegiac mode before the *Heroides*; certainly Penelope in the first epistle comes to resemble an elegiac woman – though not so thoroughly as Lucretia was to do in *Fasti* 2.

Since the elegiac connection here has been noted (e.g. Jacobson 1974; Knox 1996), Penelope may be looked at in relation to the other elegiac *puellae*. Penelope's first words to Ulysses make this connection clear:

Haec tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulixē

“These words your Penelope sends to you, O Ulysses, slow of return that you are”

The term *lentus* “forms a standard component in the elegists' arsenal of reproachful epithets for the less amorous partner in a love affair” (Knox, 88).³⁰ Her implication is that Ulysses could return if he really wished to do so, and that, unlike the Greek girls (*puellis*, 3) whose men have come home, she must still wait alone. She goes on to describe her lonely waiting, which she would not need to suffer if the war had never happened:

³⁰ For example: *a pereat, si quis lentus amare potest!* (Propertius 1.6.12)

non ego deserto iacuissem frigida lecto,
 nec quererer tardos ire relicta dies;
 nec mihi quaerenti spatirosam fallere noctem
 lassaret viduas pendula tela manus. (7-10)

“Then had I not lain cold in my deserted bed, nor would now be left alone complaining of slowly passing days; nor would the hanging web be wearying now my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.”

Ovid’s elegiac lover from *Amores* 1.2 spends similarly unhappy nights in a bed, alone:

et vacuus somno noctem, quam longam, peregi (1.2.3)

“I pass the long, long night untouched by sleep.”

And at the end of her letter, Penelope complains of the fact that when Ulysses finally does return, she will, after twenty years, be an old woman:

Certe ego, quae fueram te discedente puella,
 protinus ut venias, facta videbor anus (115-116)

“As for myself, who when you left my side was but a girl, though you should come straightway, I surely shall seem grown an aged woman.”

Knox (111) notes that *puella* and *anus* “stand in pointed contrast at line-end”, and these two lines are “an ironic reference” to Propertius 2.9.8, *illum expectando facta remansit anus* (“she became an old woman waiting for him”). Old age, in elegiac terms, is the least suitable for love. (e.g. Tibullus 1.1.71-2; 1.8.41-2). Ovid has Penelope contrast her youth as *puella* – the term often used for the elegiac mistress – with *anus*; the old woman is often a negative figure in elegy. (Propertius’ reference is itself, though supposedly to a faithful Penelope, not without irony: her fidelity was made possible by *falsa Minerva*, deception and trickery by means of weaving.) But whether Penelope is seen here more as a *puella* than *matrona* is not the main

point; what is important here is that she regards her woolwork as tiresome and demeaning – most unlike Lucretia.

Penelope's letter supposedly recounts events that have happened while Ulysses was away. This letter that she is writing will be given, as she claims that she regularly gives such letters (line 62), to any stranger who comes to her shores, just in case he might meet Ulysses and can pass her letter on. By comparing such references in her letter with events in the *Odyssey* Duncan Kennedy has concluded that, ironically, the stranger to whom she will give the present letter is actually Ulysses himself, who has reached Ithaca and is disguised as a beggar (Kennedy 2006). Various other comparisons have been made between the Homeric account and Penelope's letter and have led to certain differences being found with regard to events, so that Ovid has even been thought careless (Palmer 1898). Jacobson would have Penelope as deliberately tricky as well as being sex-starved, and he suggests that Ovid has the “alternative” Penelope in mind, the adulterous wife whom Ulysses finds on his return and drives out. This version, as mentioned earlier, was known to the Roman poets. The question is asked by Farrell (1998): “Do we believe the story of Penelope, a woman writing as a witness and a participant about her experiences in a personal, first-person narrative; or do we convict her of falsehood, finding in favour of the more authoritative, third-person, male-narrated account of Homer?” (327). His answer is that we should “preferably suspend judgment altogether.”

Differences between Penelope's letter and the Homeric account may be an indication that Ovid is allowing Penelope to express a version of events that can be seen as “her side of the story.” Cast in elegiac mode, (as Ovid usually casts women, even the Sabine girls when they are snatched on Romulus' orders – *Ars Amatoria* 1), she complains as an elegiac lover would complain of an uncompliant mistress, but in her case a husband whom she suspects of

unwillingness to return. Twenty years is, after all, a very long time for someone as cunningly clever as Ulysses to be absent from a home he really wanted to return to, and Ovid might have thought so too; it was after only half that time that Ulysses thought of a clever way into the impregnable city of Troy. Rather than the adulterous Penelope that Jacobson suspects Ovid to have in mind, she may still be the model of fidelity that she had become in legend for the Romans: “Throughout Greek literature passing references to Penelope centre on her virtuous devotion. It is in this mould that the Romans finally froze – or should we say embalmed her. No longer subject for literary development, she proved a marvellous and acquiescent *exemplum* for feminine virtue” (Jacobson, 246). But Jacobson thinks that she did undergo literary development in *Heroides* 1, and that Ovid turned the “traditional Penelope” into “her opposite” (247).

It need not be so radical as that, however. She seems more like the Penelope who has, after all, remained faithful, but is now simply tired of making the effort to remain so, and feeling a justifiable desire to complain about a husband who has still – when the war is well and truly over – not returned to her; a Penelope who is just “fed up”.

Penelope’s faithfulness, however, cannot be separated from her other claim to fame: the means by which she maintained her status as Ulysses’ wife, which was her weaving. Ovid could not ignore this major aspect of her reputation, and in fact did not, although his treatment of it has drawn some criticism. Penelope writes of her woolworking thus, complaining that she would not have to languish alone if Ulysses were not absent, nor spend her nights with her weaving:

nec mihi quaerenti spatiosam fallere noctem
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus (9-10).

“nor would the hanging web be wearying now my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.”

This is seen as too brief a mention: “It is strange that Ovid did not make more use of the story of Penelope’s web” (Palmer 1898); “[Ovid’s] departure from tradition … is most strongly marked in his failure to mention the undoing by night of the web Penelope wove by day” (Baca 1969). Jacobson sees Ovid’s brief reference as a “clever irony”, and thinks that the purpose is to have Penelope conceal her act of guile from Ulysses because she does not want to confirm her absolute faithfulness and devotion to him (264). This may well be part of Ovid’s intention in treating Penelope’s woolworking as he does, but there is more to it than that, as will be seen.

Jacobson, however, goes on to see an elegiac connection here for Ovid’s readers: he thinks that the “lonely girl whiling away time at the loom while her lover is away is familiar from Latin literature.” He gives only one reference: Propertius 1.3.41, where Cynthia claims to have done something with purple wool. Apart from this being only one reference (and in the work of the elegiac poets this is actually the only one which really fits, since in neither Tibullus 1.3 nor Propertius 3.6 is the girl who is associated with wool consciously waiting for her lover) it is unlike Ovid to be using woolworking to associate Penelope with an elegiac woman in this way; he is the only one of the three elegiac poets who does not associate his elegiac mistress (Corinna) with woolworking. The comparison cited by Jacobson takes no account of the context in which Cynthia’s purple wool occurs: the reference is not meant to be taken seriously, and the effect is humorous. Admittedly Propertius 1.3 treats a similar situation as *Heroides* 1 – as Jacobson points out – and the words Ovid gives to Penelope are very like Cynthia’s:

nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum (Propertius 1.3.41)

“For now I was beguiling sleep with purple thread”

spatiosam fallere noctem (*Heroides* 1.9)

“beguile the hours of spacious night”

The operative verb is *fallere* in both references. It is quite possible that Ovid had Propertius 1.3 in mind, just as he might have done with Propertius 3.6 when he re-told the Lucretia story in *Fasti* 2; his Lucretia drops the thread and dissolves in tears as Propertius' mistress does in 3.6.

Certainly the Cynthia of elegy 1.3 and Penelope of *Heroides* 1 both refer to their woolworking in what would be, in comedy, a “throw-away line”. If Ovid had any comparison in mind, it would be an ironic one in that Cynthia has obviously done nothing with the wool, whereas Penelope is supposed to have spent years on it – and yet she refers to it in the same offhand way as Cynthia does. Ovid’s treatment of woolworking in *Heroides* 1, although very much underplayed compared with his exaggerated description of it in *Fasti* 2 with Lucretia (in Chapter One), can nevertheless be similarly seen as being indicative of his general attitude to woolworking as a woman’s activity: after all, underplaying is one way of creating irony, exaggerating is another.³¹ And if the *Amores* had already been written before *Heroides* 1, Ovid’s one previous reference to woolworking – in *Amores* 1.13.12-4 – is certainly not a positive one.

The sunrise is not welcome:

tu, cum feminei possint cessare labores,
lanificam revocas ad sua pensa manum

“It is you, when women might cease from toil, who call back to its task the hand that works the wool.”

Unlike Propertius and Tibullus, Ovid never associates his elegiac mistress with woolworking; he does not see it as an activity that might add respectability to Corinna, as

³¹ And yet in this woolworking reference in *Heroides* 1 there is also ironic exaggeration: Ovid would have known quite well that whatever may have been her concern with wool at night, whether weaving or unpulling, Penelope as a high status woman would not in fact be wearying her own “widowed hands” (*viduas manus*); she would be supervising slave women, one of whom would tell the suitors what was happening.

Tibullus does with Delia, and his negative view of it would preclude an association that might degrade Corinna's status, even though she is a courtesan. Ovid sees woolworking in a negative light, unlike the virtuous aspect it is given by Livy. Therefore his Penelope will not be a willing and virtuous woolworker.

In fact Jacobson's statement that references to woolworking evoke an elegiac context – an idea that has also been put forward in relation to Ovid's *Lucretia* (by Fox 1996) – seems to be the opposite of what is really happening when the elegiac poets treat this activity. Tibullus and Propertius see it as the activity of *matronae* and either use it to humorous effect as Propertius does by associating it unconvincingly with Cynthia, or else use it as a virtue that might make an imagined scene even more like an ideal, as in Tibullus' case. Livy's *Lucretia*, the ideal *matrona*, herself has no elegiac aspect.

Nevertheless almost always when there is any mention of woolworking in the elegiac poets, Livy's *Lucretia* and her attendant attribute of woolworking virtue is mentioned in editorial notes. Thus Knox (1996) comments on Penelope's reference to her task in *Heroides* 1 (where he believes that any statement of her reason for doing it is deliberately withheld): “A Roman sensibility would instantly have responded to this depiction of a faithful wife at her loom, a scene which typified for them all the essential feminine virtues; see Ogilvie's comments on Livy's portrayal of Lucretia at 1.57.7” (Knox, 91). But Penelope in *Heroides* 1 is not a typical depiction of a “faithful wife at her loom” so much as a bored, disgruntled one, filling in the weary time with this particular activity – apparently not from choice or even necessity. (It is modern editors who are more likely to respond in the way implied in Knox's comment). Ogilvie's notes and the references that he gives in his commentary on Livy 1.57.7 do not in fact necessarily prove anything about “a Roman sensibility” at Livy's time of writing his Book 1; if her virtue had

already been so highly valued Livy would not have needed to make such a model *exemplum* of Lucretia.

Ovid does not see woolworking in terms of its being an obligatory virtue for a *matrona*, and if he wished to evoke a response such as Knox suggests, it would be with irony; Knox does see a hint of this, noting that “there is perhaps also a touch of irony in using this verb [fallere]: Penelope’s weaving is still a trick, but one used only to while away the time” (91). This is the whole point in fact; as Farrell (1999, 325-6) also comments: “the motif of deception is present here in the phrase *fallere noctem* (9), but in a denatured form: it is only the boredom of her lonely evenings that Penelope means to deceive or beguile, not the suitors”.

The second mention of wool in *Heroides* 1 is also significant: Penelope here imagines Ulysses as lover of another woman, describing to her the wife he has left behind:

forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,
quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes (77-8)

“It may be you even tell how rustic a wife you have, one fit only to dress fine wool.”

It is very pointed that Ovid should have Penelope suggest, with resentment, that she is thought of mainly in terms of her expertise with wool, since this is largely how she actually has always been thought of, both then and now. She and Lucretia are the two great virtuous woolworkers in literature that Ovid would have known, and both prove to be good (if not irresistible) subjects for him to treat with reference to this particular virtue. Whereas Ovid’s Penelope regards her wool (which traditionally signifies her fidelity) with contempt, Ovid’s Lucretia on the other hand pays exaggerated attention to the production of wool in her house: she is excessively *dedita lanae* (although Ovid does not actually use Livy’s words).

In his references to woolworking situations which can be taken as applying to mortal women, far from representing woolworking as a praiseworthy pastime, Ovid has really nothing positive to say about it. The reference in *Amores* 1.13, mentioned above, has the woolworkers last in a long list of those various workers for whom the sun's rising represents a most unwelcome return to hard work; these are the only women in the list, their task as unpleasant as any male tasks that the poet can think of. McKeown (1989) notes that these lines represent “a perversion” of Tibullus 2.1.9, which is: *lanificam pensis imposuisse manum*, where the woolworker is not to set her hand to the wool on the occasion of a sacred rural festival. Ovid’s line is: *lanificam revocas ad sua pensa manum* (24) where the sun calls the woman back to work. “Whereas Tibullus bids the spinning women to rest from their work in order to honour the deity, Ovid criticises the deity for depriving them of their rest” (McKeown, 352). An echo is also suggested by McKeown of Tibullus 2.1.63: *hinc et femineus labor est, hinc pensa colusque* (thence comes the toil of women’s hands, the weighed wool and the distaff). Ovid thinks of *feminei labores* (23) in a very different way from the respectful – even reverent – tone in which Tibullus describes the rural festival, a feature of the agricultural way of life that he idealises in elegy 2.1.

Ovid’s other references to woolworking outside of his clearly mythological uses of it in the *Metamorphoses* are even more negative. In *Medicamina Faciei*, which is thought to be his earliest attempt at didactic elegy (Watson 2001), Ovid refers to the traditional woolworking *matrona* of former times in what looks like the most negative reference to woolworking in Roman poetry – certainly far more negative than either Propertius or Tibullus. Even in Tibullus’ description of the old courtesan who must work wool to live (1.6 77-80) he does not deride the task in deriding the worker, and his details of the task evoke a certain sympathy for her. Ovid, in

Medicamina, is contrasting the delicate girls (*teneras puellas* 17) of his own time with the Sabine *matronae* in the time of King Tatius (who were honoured by Horace for their strict and honourable lives, in Odes 3.6). Ovid explains that these women of old cultivated the fields rather than themselves, and worked their wool:

cum matrona, premens altum rubicunda sedile,
assiduum duro pollice nebat opus (13-14)

“when the matron, sitting rubicund in her high seat, span assiduously with hardened thumb.”

She was an unattractive, red-faced, hardened *matrona*. Who would want to be like her?

Further in negative vein, the woman who was concerned about her wool was anathema to Ovid’s *praceptor amoris* in *Ars Amatoria* 2. He says he hates the kind of woman who is not genuinely responsive to his lovemaking:

Odi quae praebet, quia sit praebere necesse,
siccaque de lana cogitat ipsa sua (A.A.2 685-6)

“I hate her who gives because she must, and who, herself unmoved, is thinking of her wool.”

Cogitat implies that she is really thinking hard about it – planning some piece of work perhaps? It is not made explicit, but the strong implication in these lines is that woolworking appeals to dull and sexually cold women, those praiseworthy *matronae* who always do the right thing – like Lucretia, a model of unassailable (and off-putting) virtue. (How wearying all this virtue is – as is implied also in Penelope’s letter.)

But what is happening here? If, as Livy would have it (and also Augustus, according to Suetonius) woolworking was a praiseworthy and particular concern for *matronae*, can this be a

matrona who is thinking about her wool instead of responding sexually? How can the Ovidian poet/lover here be involved in this way with a *matrona*? He has made it plain in his first book of *Ars Amatoria* that *matronae* are in no way his concern (A.A. 1 31-2); how can he even be thinking of discussing their relative sexual merits here? Yet that is what it looks like. In his commentary on *Ars Amatoria* 2, Markus Janka (1997) remarks about these lines (685-6) that “thinking about her wool” is a way of saying she is “caught up in her household duties as *matrona*”, which he thinks can then be “interpreted figuratively” as meaning that she is “cold and without feeling” (476). That is one way out of the problem, but considering Ovid’s general attitude to woolworking, this is probably not a “figurative” use of wool, but an actual reference to the virtuous activity so recommended amongst current Augustan ideals – this one not seen as an ideal by Ovid. And although it is clear that he does not think the old-fashioned, staid women who involve themselves with wool are desirable sexual partners, he has run something of a risk by implying that he has had experience of their lack of responsiveness. All this makes his later protestation of innocence in *Tristia* 2 (where he almost quotes the words of his earlier disclaimer³²) sound less convincing: *nil nisi legitimum concessaque furta canemus* (*Tristia* 2, 249) (I shall sing of nought but what is lawful, of loves which men allow). On the other hand, the woman concerned could be a *quasillaria* (and the fastidious Ovidian lover might be reduced to this), since it would be politically quite dangerous to be so open about involvement with a *matrona*. But if she really is not a *matrona*, the woolworking reference remains a teasing Ovidian touch, since Ovid’s negative attitude to woolworking was, then, already obvious in *Heroides* 1 – which is his particular treatment of the Penelope/Ulysses story that has been said to underlie the scenes that were discussed above, in the third elegy from the first book of each of

³² He has actually strengthened his earlier claim, which was *nos venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus* (A.A.1 33) (“of safe love-making do I sing, and permitted secrecy”).

Tibullus and Propertius. In *Heroides* 1, both of Penelope's claims to virtuous fame are being undermined; still apparently remaining faithful to Ulysses, she is very resentful of the fact that she has had to do so; she does not present a picture of a happily faithful wife, faithful from natural virtue. Worse still, Ovid makes her seem to have made use of her famous woolworking only to fill in time, and to have a low regard for it at that. He also has her claim that sorting and managing wool – a menial task – may be all she is reputed to be good at. (Might her wool make her, in the end, a *rustica coniunx* [77], as Ulysses could even now be describing her – like the ruddy *matrona* of Sabine times?)

A final word here about woolworking might come from another elegiac poet, one who ought to know what she is talking about; Sulpicia, as a young high status woman herself, would, according to Livy's implicit recommendation in the Lucretia story, be pleased to exhibit her virtue by concerning herself with woolworking. Her attitude to the activity as a whole may be inferred from the reference she makes to it in the elegy ([Tibullus] 4.10) where she complains of the unfaithfulness of her lover Cerinthus:

Gratum est securus multum quod iam tibi de me
permittis, subito ne male inepta cadam.
sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo
scortum quam Servi filia Sulpicia.
solliciti sunt pro nobis quibus illa dolori est
ne cedam ignoto maxima causa toro.

"It is a pleasant thought that now in your unconcern you allow yourself so much at my expense, that I may not trip in some unhappy fit of folly. For you toga and strumpet loaded with wool-basket may be worthier of your preference than Sulpicia, Servius' daughter. But they are distressed on my behalf, to whom this is the greatest cause of pain, that I may yield my place to an ignoble rival."

Wishing to insult both Cerinthus and her supposed rival, Sulpicia equates the other woman with the most degrading profession she can think of: not simply a prostitute – signified by the mention of the toga, which prostitutes were supposed to wear – but a woolworker,

signified by the mention of the wool-basket (*quasillum*) with which she was burdened. Spinner (*quasillaria*) and prostitute (*scortum*) are here one and the same, and to associate with such a woman, as Cerinthus has apparently done, is to be involved in a contemptible relationship (*ignoto toro*).

It is not likely that Sulpicia would willingly have much to do with *quasillariae*, even in a supervisory capacity. She is, quite possibly, a fair representative of the high status young women who were, perhaps, not so sympathetically inclined to listen to Livy as to Ovid, despite the fact that Livy's *exemplum* in the person of Lucretia was much more in line with what they should aspire to as good Augustan *matronae*.

Conclusion

From the poems of Propertius and Tibullus looked at in this chapter, it appears that woolworking was not necessarily seen by these poets as the virtuous activity of high status *matronae* and respected as such. This is despite the fact that Livy, in line with contemporary Augustan ideology which favoured woolworking, portrayed Lucretia as the ideal *matrona* devoted to her wool. Instead, woolworking could be seen as a source of humour by Propertius, and later especially by Ovid. Tibullus even clouds the issue by presenting a *meretrix* in a situation resembling that of a *matrona* like Lucretia, apparently neither intending humour nor realising the oddity of the scene. Tibullus himself (though unintentionally it seems) by his own detailed descriptions of woolworking adds to the oddity of Delia's scene. This is because he depicts the workers who actually produce wool not as high status *matronae*, but as farm wives and daughters as in Vergil's *Georgics*.

Tibullus is not alone in depicting the production of wool as hard work. As seen in this chapter (and Chapter One), Ovid's references to wool have been consistently negative, usually by means of humour. But Ovid also, like Tibullus, was well aware of the laborious and unpleasant nature of the tasks involved in woolmaking, and this is what emerges from his references to wool and its workers in the *Heroides* epistles, which are treated in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Myth and Reality in Ovid's *Heroides*

Examples of negative references to woolworking and costume.

Introduction

Until now in this thesis the focus has been mainly on woolworking, and how it relates to the image of the ideal Augustan *matrona*. In looking at the references in contemporary poetry, two figures were seen as being related to this ideal: the faithful wife Penelope from *Odyssey*, and in particular the exemplary Lucretia from Livy's first book. For both these heroines their virtue was identified with their wool – Lucretia's image especially in keeping with Augustan ideology which favoured old traditions. Of the poets so far treated,¹ however, none presents any positive picture of a high status *matrona* devoted to wool. Ovid (in *Fasti* 2) in fact parodies Livy's story. In the present chapter, which treats some of the *Heroides* epistles, Ovid continues to undercut the ideal of woolworking – and also, importantly, the ideal of costume.

The present chapter now looks also at another significant aspect of the ideal Augustan *matrona*: her costume. As well as her virtue in making wool, there was her virtue in wearing it. It is the actual costume of the *matrona* – as well as her *lanificium* – which is of concern here. The purpose is to look at how both costume and woolworking are treated in certain *Heroides* epistles, where Ovid appears to question the viability of these two aspects of the ideal *matrona*. The dress of the Augustan *matrona* was specific and was meant to distinguish her socially and morally, its woollen content protecting her purity (Sebesta 2001, 48-49). Similarly, and also in line with Augustan ideology, her virtue was meant to be identified by her woolworking.² But

¹ Vergil, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, a possible exception being Propertius 4.3.

² Wool's traditional significance in Roman religion, perceived as being both indicative and protective of purity, is seen especially by its use in binding the head of sacrificial victims (*Aeneid* II, 154-6). Priests covered their head

Ovid shows in *Heroides* 9 that costume is unreliable, and in *Heroides* 1, 3 and 10 that woolworking is no task for a high status *matrona*, since it is laborious and demeaning.

This chapter comes to the conclusion that each of the *Heroides* epistles discussed here (1, 3, 9, 10) represents in some way a reversal of expectations concerning the ideal Augustan *matrona*: that she could (and should) be distinguished by a specific costume, and that she should be concerned with woolworking. As for woolworking, it is regarded with complaining resentment by the high status Penelope (1), and is seen humorously as a ridiculous task for the brawny Hercules (9). But the high-born Ariadne (10) rejects it outright as beneath her status – (and comes loudly awake to do so, unlike the traditional image of her as a sleeping heroine). Briseis also (3) dreads spinning as a slave’s task reserved for her – she fears its harsh reality. Despite Livy’s presentation of Lucretia as an example to follow, the high status Augustan *matrona* most likely knowing (like Ariadne and Briseis) what woolworking really entailed, would not greatly wish to become *dedita lanae* (devoted to wool) like Livy’s heroine.

As for costume, the other aspect of the ideal *matrona*, the failure of costume to distinguish status – or even gender – is a key idea in the story of Hercules and Omphale (9), to which Deianira refers in her letter to Hercules. There is no possible way of seeing Hercules as a woman just because he is dressed in Omphale’s clothing – and perhaps it was no more possible for a Roman male to be sure that all respectable *matronae* were dressed in regulation *stola* and *vittae* and were thus “off limits”.

Women’s costume was of contemporary concern to Augustus (McGinn 1998, 154) as a possible means of establishing the important separation of *matrona* and *meretrix*. Similarly woolworking was favoured by Augustan ideology as a praiseworthy tradition for *matronae* – but

with wool (Pley 1911, 48-49; Livy 1.32). According to Pliny the Elder (HN 29.30) “lanis auctoritatem veteres Romani etiam religiosam habuere.” As a result of this intrinsic value of wool, the *matrona*’s purity and virtue were both protected by the wool she wore, and identified by the wool she worked.

in reality it was the *quasillariae*, lowest female slaves, who performed this task. It is suggested here that in *Heroides* epistles 1, 3, 9 and 10 Ovid has taken stories already known to contain references to woolworking and/or costume, and by his treatment of these aspects of the particular story has indicated the unreliability of costume and the truly harsh and also menial nature of *lanificium*.

* * * * *

All the epistles mentioned above appear in the first collection of *Heroides*, which is thought to be a very early work (the dating is discussed below). Ovid's references to woolworking elsewhere in his work have so far been seen to be nowhere very positive, and this proves to be the case in the *Heroides* also. Although he is dealing with mythical and literary heroines in the *Heroides*, Ovid is in fact in several of these epistles depicting a particular aspect of his society that his contemporaries would have observed: the laborious and unappealing nature of woolworking, and the working conditions of those involved, especially the spinning women. This was despite the value placed on woolworking in Augustan ideology. The tone of Ovid's depictions is in strong contrast with that of Livy's picture of Lucretia, the ideal *matrona* devoted to her wool.

The iconic status of Lucretia as a virtuous woolworker begins with Livy's account of her story in *Ab Urbe Condita* 1, published 27-25BC. (Livy's version is discussed in Chapter One.) Lucretia is one of the heroines in this first book, where Livy recounts the legends and myths of early Rome which in his preface he likens to the stuff of poetry. But she is meant to be seen as a positive *exemplum* by Livy's contemporaries, a figure from the past whose character and actions are to be imitated. In her case, it is made quite plain that her devotion to woolworking, which she is found supervising late into the night, is a prime virtue of which Augustan *matronae* should

take note. Ovid, however, in *Fasti* 2, depicted a different Lucretia.³ His version follows Livy's story and undercuts the original with its exaggerated humour, presenting Lucretia as a *puella* more than a *matrona*, and overly concerned with her wool. Just as Livy's Lucretia was a heroine from poetic legend, so too are the supposed writers of the epistles that form Ovid's *Heroides*, since all these heroines have some basis in other literary or poetic works.⁴ The dating of the first *Heroides* collection is uncertain,⁵ but even if the early *Heroides* epistles were composed at the same time as the *Amores*, as some think possible, they would still be unlikely to pre-date Livy's first book. Recent opinions (Conte 1994, Hardie 2002) suggest (with reservations) publication of the *Amores* in 15BC, about ten years later. As a result, Ovid was quite likely aware of Livy's Lucretia at the time of writing the first *Heroides* collection. Ovid, however, does not state any purpose, as Livy does, in choosing certain figures from legend; what the epistles appear to show is "the other side of the story," the experiences and emotions of heroines who have been known chiefly in terms of their relationship to the heroes of the legends concerned. The first figure he chooses is Penelope, heroine of what was probably the epic best known to his audience, the *Odyssey* of Homer. But Ovid's Penelope, although famous for her weaving in the Homeric story, receives no such implied praise for this activity from Ovid. Livy might have intended his early Augustan audience to take heed of the idealised picture of devotion to wool in the person of Lucretia, but Ovid in the *Heroides* presents a much more "realistic" picture of woolworking, more in keeping, it would seem, with the actual experience of his contemporary readers. His

³ Ovid's Lucretia was looked at in Chapter 1.

⁴ Their origins are discussed by Peter Knox, *The Heroides: Elegiac Voices* in Brill's Companion to Ovid (2002).

⁵ McKeown thinks the *Heroides* might have been composed at the same time as the *Amores* (1987, 74-89), and Knox sees this as possible (2002, 119-120). Jacobson thinks they came after the *Amores* (1974, 3-11).

Penelope is the first of several figures in the *Heroides* whose woolworking is presented in a negative light.⁶

Penelope

The Penelope of *Heroides* 1, seen in Chapter Two as resembling an elegiac *puella* awaiting her husband's return, will instead be looked at here chiefly in terms of her status as a high-born woolworker and her attitude to her task. At first sight, Penelope would appear to be a good “match” for Lucretia, since traditionally the virtues of both heroines were fidelity and an involvement in woolworking. But the Penelope of *Heroides* 1 does not share Lucretia's exemplary attitude either to her wool or to her husband. She loses no time in expressing her resentment of both: Ulysses is addressed as *lentus* in the first line, implying that he is unwilling to return home, and she goes on to make a slighting reference to work at the loom as a wearying activity, useful only as a way of passing nights which would be spent otherwise, one assumes, if Ulysses were present as he should be,

nec mihi quaerenti spatirosam fallere noctem
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus (9-10)

“nor now would the hanging web be wearying my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.”

This is the only reference in this epistle to the activity that established her fidelity in Homer's account of her, where she used the weaving to trick the suitors and keep them waiting.

Barchiesi, commenting on these lines in *Heroides* 1, notes that Penelope's loom was “proverbiale anche a Roma,” but that Ovid's mention of it here does not have the traditional significance: “la variazione consiste nel nominarla incidentalmente e con una *suggestio falsi*”

⁶ Contemporary evidence (as discussed in the Introduction to the thesis) for who was doing the woolworking in Rome at the time, and the processes involved, would imply that Ovid's depictions of an unpleasant and demeaning task may be quite accurate indications of the real situation.

(1991, 70).⁷ Quoting Palmer's surprise (1898) that Ovid made so little use of Penelope's weaving, Barchiesi gives what he sees as an explanation for why Ovid did this. He thinks that because Penelope is writing "un'epistola elegiaca d'amore" to Ulysses, she is here, *not* "l'accorta eroina capace d'inganni," the heroine clever at trickery as in Homer. Her loom in *Heroides* 1 "serve solo, letteralmente, a ingannare il tempo."

This explanation accords well with the elegiac nature of *Heroides* 1, but there remains an element of surprise in the loom reference – not the same sort of surprise as Palmer's, but surprise – even a sort of shock – all the same. Should Penelope, the proverbially virtuous weaver, even though she is presented here as an elegiac heroine – be so dismissive, so slighting, of her woolworking? Elsewhere, Ovid keeps to the traditional representation of her woolworking:

durant, vatis opus, Troiani fama laboris
tarda nocturno tela retexta dolo. (*Amores* 3.9.29-30)

"The poems of the bard, the renown of the toils of Troy, and the delaying web unwoven with nightly trickery, these remain."

But despite this, in what appears to be his first work in elegiac mode other than the actual love elegies of the *Amores*, Ovid chooses for his first epistle a heroine famous in Homeric epic for weaving, and has her make a minimal and resentful reference to that activity. Although there was a precedent for elegiac mistresses to be depicted as woolworkers (e.g. Cynthia, Delia – see Chapter Two), Ovid never presented Corinna in such a scene. Perhaps he did not see woolworking as an activity that lent virtue, so much as a tedious task like Penelope's. Propertius' mistress Cynthia claimed she had "beguiled sleep" with wool (Prop. 1.3.410) – *fallebam somnum*. Penelope's similar expression, *fallere noctem*, recalls Cynthia's, but any

⁷ Ovid mentions that replies were written to his *Heroides* epistles (*Amores* 2.18.27-34). His contemporary Sabinus may or may not be the author of the reply from Ulysses to Penelope (printed in *Poetae Minores*, Classiques Garnier, 1931). Sabinus (or whoever) missed the point of Ovid's loom reference in *Heroides* 1, where Ovid makes no mention of Penelope's traditional cleverness with her tricky weaving. Sabinus, however, makes sure to mention it: *pacta quoque es thalamo, nisi mendax tela moratur et coeptum revokes callida semper opus* (53-4).

closer connection with Cynthia, a courtesan of doubtful “fidelity”, would not be to Penelope’s advantage.⁸ She is already depicted rather negatively as a resentful wife, complaining in elegiac mode – this is bad enough, without also resembling an elegiac mistress.

Ovid’s Penelope is treated in Chapter Two above, but here the particular interest is in the fact that, like Lucretia, she represents a heroine who is freeborn and high status. As such her attitude to her husband and her wifely duties (if woolworking is one of them, as Livy’s Lucretia would indicate) is not what might be hoped for amongst *matronae* in the period when Ovid was writing. Augustus’ program of social reform encouraged much more traditional attitudes – such as those of Lucretia.

Ovid’s Penelope, apparently faithful to Ulysses although resentfully so, is not so sure that he in his turn is maintaining marital fidelity:

haec ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est,
esse peregrino captus amore potes,
forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,
quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes. (75-78)

“While I live on in foolish fear of things like these, you may be captive to a stranger love – such are the desires of you men! It may be you tell how rustic a wife you have – one fit only to dress fine wool;” or (as suggested by Knox) “the sort of wife who objects to coarseness only in wool” (Knox 1996 104).

She imagines here that Ulysses might call her *rustica*, Ovid’s “favourite epithet for describing the lack of sophistication that he especially criticises in women.” (Knox 104)⁹ This sort of use of *rusticus*, favoured by Ovid, is at odds with the value placed by Augustan ideology in agricultural traditions. What Penelope seems to mean is that she might be called *rustica* by Ulysses in a

⁸ Cynthia and her supposed woolworking, in Propertius 1.3, were discussed in Chapter 2.

⁹ In *Amores* 2, any girl who is sophisticated enough to be ready for a liaison with the poet/lover is, happily, not *rustica*.

*sive procax aliqua est, capior, quia rustica non est
spemque dat in molli mobilis esse toro* (2.4.13-14).

The maid Cypassis is praised for not being too *rustica* to enjoy sex with the poet/lover: *comere sed solas digna, Cypassi, deas, / et mihi iucundo non rustica cognita furto* (2.8.2-3)

rather contemptuous way partly because of her expertise with wool. This indicates again, as in her loom reference, a resentful and negative attitude on her part to woolworking, since she makes it a possible ground for Ulysses to regard her with contempt. But despite the epithet being used negatively here, there are positive connotations elsewhere of the *rusticus*.

Some positive connotations of the term *rusticus* are looked at here. The word *rusticus* is associated with the character and customs of an earlier, simpler and by implication more praiseworthy way of life.¹⁰ Thus, for example, Horace compares current morals with the stricter probity of Sabine parents and their offspring:

non his iuventus orta parentibus
infecit aequor sanguine punico

Pyrrhumque et ingentem cecidit
Antiochum Hannibalemque dirum;

sed rusticorum mascula militum
proles, Sabellis docta legionibus
versare glaebas et severae
matris ad arbitrium recisos
portare fustes (Odes 3.6.33-41)

“not such the sires of whom were sprung the youth that dyed the sea with Punic blood, and struck down Pyrrhus and great Antiochus and Hannibal, the dire; but a manly brood of rustic (*rusticorum*) soldiers, taught to turn the clods with Sabine hoe, and at a strict mother’s bidding to bring cut firewood.”

For Ovid, however, the *rusticitas* of those same Sabines was to be rejected: Sabine women, he says, preferred to cultivate the land rather than attend to their own appearance:

forsitan antiquae Tatio sub rege Sabinae
maluerint, quam se, rura paterna coli (Medicamina Faciei 11-12)

¹⁰ The positive value of the traditional rural life is implicit in Vergil's description of the country wife weaving at night (*Georgics* 1.293-4). But a really clear identification of a *rusticus* – a country man working his own land – with an honest and laudable character to match his way of life, is in the figure of Cincinnatus in Livy Book 3 (26.1-12). Cincinnatus embodies Roman ideal virtues (Ogilvie calls him *homo vere Romanus*, 436); for Livy he is *spes unica imperii populi Romani* (26.8). When the messengers find him to ask him to be dictator, he is engaged in some rural task: *id quod constat, agresti intentus*. Ovid's negative use of *rustica* is in line with his stated preference (in *Ars 3* for example) for a more cultured and sophisticated way of life: *prisca iuvent alios* (A.A.3.121) let old-style things please others (not me).

“The Sabine women of old under King Tatius would perhaps have wished to cultivate their paternal acres rather than themselves.”

The bawd Dipsas in *Amores* 1.8 has something to say about these Sabine women, and something negative to say also about *rusticitas* and by implication about Penelope as well. Dipsas thinks that Sabine women (whom she describes as *immundae*) probably did not offer themselves to more than one man (1.8.39-40), and that such a custom is definitely outdated now, since in present times if a girl is *casta*, it is only because nobody has asked her (43). In that case, says Dipsas, the girl herself should ask – if *rusticitas* does not prevent her (44). Dipsas goes on to mention Penelope as an example of a woman who “sized up” her prospective lovers:

Penelope iuvenum vires temptabat in arcu;
qui latus argueret corneus arcus erat
(47-8)

“Penelope was making trial of the young men’s prowess with the bow ; the bow was of horn that proved their strength.”¹¹

Is this the Penelope Ovid has in mind when he comes to create her letter in the *Heroides*? – one who contradicts not only her traditional reputation for devoted woolworking, but also her reputation for fidelity?

It is significant that Ovid makes the Penelope of *Heroides* 1 imply that expertise in wool might be scornfully seen as *rusticitas*. Penelope, along with Lucretia, was the most notable and praiseworthy woolworker in legend. But Ovid here has Penelope, a high status *matrona* like Lucretia, exhibiting a negative attitude to woolworking – something which Livy had presented as

¹¹ The bow itself, and its “horny” frame, “provide two different types of metaphors, both with reference to the male organ” (Adams 1982 21). The Penelope of *Heroides* 1 sounds from her letter as if she might like to take a similar interest in young men – after all, Ulysses is probably lingering somewhere with another woman. This is dangerous ground for a respectable *matrona*: the suggestion that Clodia had her gardens near the river to watch young men swimming was strong disapprobation from Cicero (*Pro Caelio* 36).

a virtuous activity in Lucretia, and which was virtuous for Penelope herself in her Homeric persona. In expressing her thought that Ulysses might describe her as *rustica coniunx* (77), Penelope is in fact rejecting the image of herself as a wife concerned with wool.¹² For Penelope such a concern with wool is beneath her status – and it might well be implied here by Ovid that the Augustan *matrona* had a similar attitude, despite Livy's Lucretia and contemporary ideology. But Penelope is only the first of several heroines in this collection of epistles to present woolworking in a negative light. In epistle 3, the task of *lanificium* is presented as it really is, as the slaves in Ovid's Rome knew it to be.

Briseis (*Heroides* 3) – a Roman *quasillaria*

In *Heroides* 3 Ovid presents a picture of woolworking very different from the romanticised imaginings of Tibullus (for example 1.3) and the humorous scenes of Propertius (1.3, 3.6). At no stage does either of these poets hint at the real conditions in which woolworking was carried out in their own time. Ovid emphasises the low status of the slaves, their harsh task, and their fear of physical punishment. The picture in *Heroides* 3 is in direct contrast to the idealised depiction of Lucretia by Livy, with its implications that Lucretia was an *exemplum* for Augustan *matronae*. In *Heroides* 3, the harsh and unpleasant nature of the task of spinning wool as a slave is described by Briseis, who sees this as her future life in the palace of Achilles. Briseis is the captive who was taken from Achilles by Agamemnon. (*Iliad* 1.345-7). She appears briefly in several books of the *Iliad*, once only given speech, this in a scene where she expresses her grief at the death of Patroclus, who had some time previously tried to comfort her (*Iliad* 19.295-300). Apart from her emotion in this speech, in which she tells of her grief for

¹² It was just such a *rustica coniunx* that Ovid described when he contrasted the *teneras pueras* of his own Rome with the unsophisticated *matrona rubicunda* of Sabine times, to her disadvantage (*Medicamina Faciei*, 11-14). In *Heroides* 1 he presents Penelope agreeing with these sentiments.

her lost home and family as well as for Patroclus, not much other information is given about her in the *Iliad*. She is beautiful (19.282) and she is unwilling when she is taken from Achilles by Agamemnon (1.348). She has been carried off from her home by Achilles, as a spoil of warfare (2.689-90).

She is described by Jacobson (1974, 12) as a Homeric heroine of “small repute,” unlike the “illustrious” Penelope. Jacobson believes, however, that for this epistle of the *Heroides* there is not a problem about lost sources, and in his article on Briseis he demonstrates how Ovid drew “heavily and directly on the *Iliad*” in *Heroides* 3. Jacobson discusses the possibility that Briseis might have appeared in some works of Greek drama now fragmentary or lost, concluding that this is unlikely. Nevertheless he speculates that there could have been some source known by Quintus of Smyrna, “a non-Homeric Briseis episode in which she was seen mourning Achilles” (17). Such a possible source might have been known to Propertius, who in elegy 2.9 cites Briseis along with Penelope as examples of fidelity:

nec non exanimem amplectens Briseis Achillem
candida vesana verberat ora manu ;
et dominum lavit maerens captiva cruentem
appositum flavis in Simoente vadis,
foedavitque comas, et tanti corpus Achilli
maximaque in parva sustulit ossa manu.
(2.9.9-14)

“Briseis, too, holding the lifeless Achilles beat her fair cheeks with frantic hand, the mourning captive washing her bleeding lord as he lay beside the sandy shoals of the Simois; she soiled her hair and in her small hand took up the body of the huge Achilles and his giant bones.”

Propertius’ picture of Briseis shows her as being already seen in a sympathetic light, and agrees with Ovid’s in its depiction of her as displaying strong emotion.¹³

¹³ There are some verbal similarities between Propertius 2.9 and some *Heroides* epistles. In this same elegy Propertius mentions Penelope and Deidamia as well as Briseis. Penelope is described in Prop.2.9 as growing old

The point at which Ovid's Briseis writes to Achilles is when she believes he will depart from Troy and return home, probably leaving her behind. She begs to be taken with him and expresses her willingness to go as his slave. She would be of value in this capacity, she says, since she is ready to work wool:

victorem captiva sequar, non nupta maritum;
est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus.
inter Achaeiadas longe pulcherrima matres
in thalamos coniunx ibit eatque tuos,
digna nurus socero, Iovis Aeginaeque nepote,
cuique senex Nereus prosocer esse velit.
nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus,
et minuent plenas stamina nostra colos.

(69-76)

"As captive let me follow my captor, not as wife my wedded lord ; I have a ready hand to prepare the wool. The most beauteous by far among the women of Achaea will come to the marriage chamber as your bride – and may she come, - a bride worthy of her lord's father, the grandchild of Jove and Aegina, and one whom ancient Nereus would welcome as his grandson's bride. As for me, I shall be a lowly slave of yours and spin off the given tasks, and the full distaff shall grow slender at the drawing of my threads."

Homer's Briseis is not exclusively mentioned as having skill at woolworking. Such skill could possibly be inferred from the fact that she joins seven other women who have what is, most likely, the ability to work wool; might she thus be thought to share their knowledge of wool? When Agamemnon first mentions the gifts that he will send to Achilles to appease him, he lists gold, valuable vessels, and horses, and also "seven women skilled in blameless work" *Iliad* (9.128) – which would probably be woolworking. When these gifts are brought, Briseis makes up the eighth of the seven women: "they were seven, and the eighth was fair-cheeked Briseis" (19.246). Thus, it is not specifically stated that Briseis is skilled in wool. She is, after all, of high status (2.689-91), and would not necessarily have been physically involved in

waiting for Ulysses: *illum exspectando facta remansit anus* (8); in *Heroides* 1 Penelope complains: *protinus ut venias facta videbar anus* (116). Deidamia in Prop.2.9 sleeps in a "widowed bed" – *viduo toro* (16), a "coupling" of Penelope's *deserto lecto* (7) and *viduas manus* (10) in *Heroides* 1.

woolworking. She might have supervised the process, however, in her father's household. By introducing the woolworking here, Ovid is adding something to the information provided by the *Iliad*, which is thought to be his major (if not only) source for Briseis.

Barchiesi (1992) as well as Jacobson, who have both written studies of *Heroides* 3, comment on Ovid's reliance on the *Iliad* in his depiction of Briseis, and both these scholars think that there was probably no other source that Ovid might have used. Thus Barchiesi: "si può dire che nessuno spunto dell'*Iliade* sia rimasto inerte nella composizione della lettera" (185); and he notes "l'importanza di Omero come fonte primaria" and "la tendenza di Ovidio a recuperare, senza mediazioni, la parola diretta del modello" (186). Barchiesi comments on the elegiac quality of the epistle: but it is a complaint here not from a poet/*amator*, rather from a *puella* herself. And in his note on line 75 of the epistle Barchiesi notices another sort of reversal: a difference here from what he sees as a traditional motif: "secondo un tradizionale motivo patetico, di una donna ridotta a schiava di guerra si dovrebbe dire quanto sia inadatta, impreperata agli umili lavori che ora si vedrà assegnare." (225) But Briseis expresses willingness to serve, rather than complaining of unpreparedness.

Barchiesi gives several references by women from Greek sources of complaints about their future servitude. In *Iliad* 6 (456-65) Hector imagines Andromache as a slave working at the loom "for others," no longer her own mistress. Similarly (from Euripides' *Trojan Women* 489-97) Hecuba foresees lowly tasks ahead for her, now a slave instead of a queen. Polyxena, also (*Hecabe* 354-66) tells how as a slave she would have to weave at the loom.¹⁴ And as for Medea, though she is not facing the fate of a slave, her departure from home (*Argonautica* 4.35-39) is

¹⁴ These references, apart from anything else, show high status women in an ancient Greek traditional setting who are *not* physically involved in woolwork – for them it will become an unaccustomed task. Their previous involvement, if any, would have been supervisory. This is despite frequent references (e.g. in Ogilvie on Lucretia, as discussed in Chapter 1) to woolworking as a sign of female virtue both in Greece and Rome, with Penelope and Lucretia as high status examples.

likened to that of a “captured woman, torn away from a wealthy house,” who will experience servitude at the “harsh hands of a mistress.”¹⁵ But there is another reference, not mentioned by Barchiesi, which displays this same theme – this time from Ovid himself. This is the lament of Hecuba (*Metamorphoses* 13.508-13) who dreads the future as a spinning slave for Penelope:

in cursuque meus dolor est: modo maxima rerum,
tot generis natisque potens nuribus viroque
nunc trahor exul, inops, tumulis avulsa meorum,
Penelopae munus, quae me data pensa trahentem
matribus ostendens Ithacis ‘haec Hectoris illa est
clara parens, haec est,’ dicet, ‘Priameia coniunx.’

(Met. 13.508-13)

“My woes still run their course. But late on the pinnacle of fame, strong in my many sons, my daughters, and my husband, now, exiled, penniless, torn from the tombs of my loved ones, I am dragged away as prize for Penelope. And as I sit spinning my allotted task of wool, she will point me out to the dames of Ithaca and say: “This woman is Hector’s noble mother, this is Priam’s queen.”

This reference from the *Metamorphoses* makes Ovid’s reversal of the “unwilling slave” motif even more noticeable in the case of Briseis. But he may be doing it on purpose in order to intensify Briseis’ willingness to follow Achilles at all costs. She is depicted here, in Jacobson’s words, as being “dependent” on Achilles as “her one source of security”, so that “she will gladly go as a slave” (37). But another factor is that her position in *Heroides* 3 is also the elegiac one of the complaining lover, which in this case represents a reversal of the usual situation where the elegiac lover is male. “Briseide è certamente una voce elegiaca: non sapremmo definire altrimenti la premessa dell’epistola, che ne annuncia il contenuto come lamento rivolto alla persona amata (*querela elegiaca, insomma*)” (Barchiesi, 28). The *servitium amoris* of the elegists is here not just a literary motif, but is very real : “la degradazione simbolica dell’amante elegiaco è sostituita da una soggezione concreta e brutale” (Barchiesi, 27). The details of this

¹⁵ Translation by Peter Green.

degradation are made plain by Briseis who is truly willing to serve, not simply to fantasise about it as Ovid's poet/lover did in (for example) *Amores* 1.2, 1.3, 1.6.

Thus Ovid not only makes Briseis willing (*apta*) to undertake laborious spinning – which high status heroines traditionally dread – he also has her describe the wretched situation which must have been that of contemporary spinning slave-girls: “una vita non solo da ancilla ma da *quasillaria* di infimo ordine” (Barchiesi, 225). And as well as the conditions in which she will work (that is, those of slavery), Briseis describes the processes involved. Whether she has worked wool herself (which is unlikely) or has seen it being done while supervising the task, she is able to give a detailed description of woolworking. Before the wool is spun, it must be prepared by being freed of any knots or irregularities.¹⁶ Briseis might well be referring to this process when she claims to have hands ready to “soften” (*mollire*) the wool: *est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus* (70). She then goes on to describe the actual spinning: *data pensa trahemus, et minuent plenas stamina nostra colos* (75-6). This is the task of drawing down the thread from the wool that has been wound on to the distaff; as the spindle whirls, the thread on it increases in volume and the wool on the distaff becomes less.

It is significant for the present purpose – which is to look at Ovid's negative representations of woolworking – that Briseis presents a most unpleasant picture of the circumstances in which the woolworking tasks would be carried out. The conditions would be those of slavery, and thus Briseis would be numbered amongst the *humiles famulae* (75) – the lowly women slaves – whose task was spinning. These are the *quasillariae* of Augustan Rome,¹⁷ whose status was that of the lowest slaves. In Briseis' depiction of her imagined future at the court of Achilles, spinning is equated with slavery of the most wretched kind. Whereas in

¹⁶ The relevant process, akin to carding or combing, is described in the Introduction to the thesis.

¹⁷ *quasillariae* are discussed in detail in the Introduction to the thesis.

the brief description of the seven women sent as tribute by Agamemnon to Achilles (*Iliad* 19.245), their skill in wool is seen as a positive value, there is no such positive aspect to Briseis' future "skill" in the picture of herself that Ovid makes her present. Her woolworking, she sees, will be a degrading activity – such as Ovid's audience no doubt knew this activity to be, from their own observation. And further "convincing" detail is added to the picture by Briseis' anxious reference to the harshness of the mistress for whom she will be working as a slave:

exagitet ne me tantum tua, deprecor, uxor –
quae mihi nescio quo non erit aequa modo –
neve meos coram scindi patiare capillos
(77-79)

"Only let not your lady be harsh with me, I pray – for in some way I feel she will not be kind – and suffer her not to tear my hair before your eyes."

This sort of possible treatment of a slave-girl is not poetic fantasy, but a grim Roman reality. "Neither sex nor age protected slaves from corporal punishment, ... because house servants, in particular female slaves, lived in such intimacy with their masters, they were especially visible targets for punishment" (Saller 1991, 159). Saller mentions as an example the slave-girl in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, ("which offers such vivid scenes of imperial life") who knows and dreads her mistress' readiness to administer a beating: *reputans dominae meae mores ... meque verberare saevissime consuevit* (*Golden Ass* 3.16): "knowing the custom of my mistress ... she has been accustomed to beat me most cruelly." Ovid himself, when stressing the beauty of Corinna's hair (before she spoiled it), points out that the hair was so easy to manage that Corinna did not become angry with her slave hairdresser. This meant unusual good fortune for the slave, who was thus not punished: *ornatrix tuto corpore semper erat* (*Amores* 1.14.15) – (the hairdresser's person was always safe). She was not subjected to the apparently common fate of having hair-pins stuck in her arms, since Corinna, happy about her hair, did not do this:

nec umquam bracchia derepta saucia fecit acu (17-18) – “she never wounded the girl’s arms with a snatched-up pin”. Compared with the evidence for the treatment of slaves where professional torturers (*tortores*) were hired by masters (Saller 159), the hair-tearing imagined by Briseis is, relatively, not very severe.

Briseis imagines a situation where she might be at the mercy of Achilles’ future wife, who would not only as the mistress of the household be keen for slaves to fulfil their tasks, but would also be jealous of Briseis because of her previous association with Achilles. This supposed future wife – since the scene is imagined in a legendary Greek setting – might herself supervise the spinning slaves. But despite Livy’s ideal picture of Lucretia, it is not very likely that Roman *matronae* of Ovid’s time would have given much attention to such a task. They might well have passed this duty on to others, and in fact there are funerary inscriptions for slaves or freedwomen designated as *lanipendae* (e.g. *CIL* 6.9496-8). Lena Larsson Loven mentions these *lanipendae* in an article on professions involving wool (1998), and writes of them that “they seem mostly to have been employed in large households and their task was to weigh out the daily amount of wool to be spun by the spinners, and to supervise the operation of wool manufacture” (75). Slaves or ex-slaves in this position might well have been harder task-mistresses than the *matrona* – whose involvement, if any, would be unlikely to be enthusiastic. Thus Briseis’ description of her future treatment at the hands of a mistress could very well resemble that of the *quasillaria* of Ovid’s own time, a spinning girl whose *lanipenda* was a freedwoman or perhaps still a slave herself.

Briseis’ depiction of her future as a spinning slave strikes a chord in its resemblance to what real life experience would have been for a slave of this kind. It is suggested here that Ovid is implying a strong contrast between real life experience and the Augustan ideal of the *matrona*

with her wool. In a footnote to his chapter on Briseis, Jacobson notes the “reality” of the situation: “what seems like a *topos* or mere rhetoric … abruptly comes to life when we pause and realize that this is of course a statement of fact. Briseis is *captiva* to Achilles’ *victor*” (1974, 35). So she is, but she is also describing the laborious task of the spinning slaves whom Ovid and his audience would have well known to exist. In the same footnote Jacobson mentions other references which express an idea of servitude that is similar to Briseis’ imagined future. One of these references is to a fragment of Euripides (132N², which also happens to be quoted by Fordyce in connection with Ariadne at Catullus 64.160; this will be discussed later in this chapter). This fragment: “take me, stranger, whether you want a servant or a wife or a slave,” (which Fordyce thinks is spoken by Andromeda), is seen by Jacobson as an indication that Briseis’ expression in *Heroides* 3 of her willingness to serve Achilles is already an old “*topos*”, since the idea was expressed by Euripides long before Ovid. But Briseis’ depiction of her future is much more powerful than this, and much closer to Ovid’s contemporary reality. As Barchiesi comments: “ma talora i poeti romani preferiscono valorizzare un tratto che ha implicazioni più realistiche” (26).¹⁸

There is another reference relevant here – where a heroine refuses a menial task – but it is not so harsh a task as woolworking. This refusal occurs in *Iliad* 3, where Helen is being urged to return to Paris (3.383-412). It is the goddess Aphrodite, disguised as an old woman who worked wool for Helen in Sparta, who urges her, but Helen is not willing. She does not want to “prepare that man’s bed” (411). This task, she says, would be a shameful one for her; she appears to

¹⁸ R. Lyne, commenting on the passage in *Ciris* in which the heroine expresses willingness to work wool as a slave (*Ciris* 443-6), mentions the similar willingness of Briseis in *Heroides* 3. Lyne refers to the Euripides fragment and also to Ariadne in Catullus 64, and dismisses all with the comment: “rejected lovers conventionally utter such sentiments” (1978, 283). Briseis’ situation, as presented by Ovid, is much more immediate than that. Perhaps for Lyne it is only the male elegiac lover for whom it is permissible to complain about his adverse circumstances? When Cynthia complains of her lover’s failure to spend promised time with her (Propertius 1.3.35-46) Lyne sees her words as “the expression of a domineering wife of terrible reality.”

regard it with disdain (410). Such a task might seem menial, but Briseis' wool-spinning would be very much more so, and Ovid's expression of it, in Briseis' words, is more than a "standard" type of "topos". In the person of Briseis Ovid is making another very negative reference to woolworking. Does he have in mind the tasks of contemporary woolworkers, whose activities Augustus would encourage Roman *matronae* to be concerned with? – the *matronae* whom Livy "encourages" in the person of Lucretia?¹⁹

In the epistles treated so far – *Heroides* 1 and 3 – Ovid's concern has been to present views of woolworking which contrast strongly with that exemplified by Livy's Lucretia. Penelope has scorned her wool, and Briseis has dreaded its harsh reality. The next epistle treated here, the ninth, still features woolworking, this time as a source of humour. But also in epistle 9 the question of costume appears. Here Ovid is able to indicate in the person of Hercules, dressed as a woman, the unreliability of costume as an indication of status (or gender), and thus undercut the Augustan ideal of the respectable *matrona* distinguished by her standard garments, woollen *stola* and *vittae*.

***Heroides* 9: Hercules the elegiac *amator/puella*, spinning in women's dress**

In the ninth epistle, Ovid makes much fun both of woolworking and costume, by exploiting the mythical story in which Hercules, subservient to Omphale, dresses in female

¹⁹ Jacobson, like Barchiesi (noted above), claims that Briseis is based by Ovid directly on her character in the *Iliad*: "Ovid had virgin soil to sow, little standing between him and Homer," but "he utilizes (one might say, exhausts) every event, every remark in the *Iliad* which bears, even indirectly, on Briseis" (22-3). Since there is no mention in the *Iliad* of Achilles' sojourn amongst the maidens at the court of Lycomedes on Scyros, Ovid does not make Briseis refer to it at all. As has been pointed out, *Heroides* 3 contains "details which can only have been known to Briseis from a reading of Homer and no other known source" (Knox 2002, 128). Such a detail is her knowledge of the story of Meleager (*Her.* 3.91-93), which "can only have been heard by Briseis (*audita*) in a reading of Homer" (Knox 1996, 19). Had Briseis known of the Scyros episode she could have taunted Achilles with it, had she so wished. But elsewhere (in *Ars Amatoria* 1), Ovid himself taunts Achilles, and refers to the Scyros episode, where both woolworking and women's dress can be treated humorously since the usually warlike Achilles dresses as a girl and has to learn spinning. Ovid's treatment of Achilles in *Ars Amatoria* 1 is discussed in an appendix to this thesis.

clothing and spins wool. The situation is almost ridiculous in which the mighty Hercules is bursting out of a dress and fumbling with spinning. Ovid makes the most of this picture (and does so again when he tells the same episode in *Fasti* 2). This is an already existing story that can be used to indicate both the questionable idea of assigning virtue to woolworking and also the unreliable nature of costume – and it is suggested that this is in fact what Ovid is doing with this Hercules story.

According to one legend, Hercules was bought by Queen Omphale as a slave, and was dressed by her as a woman and made to work wool, while she herself wore Hercules' clothing. Here is a legend which Ovid could exploit – one even better than that of Achilles. In this one, roles are reversed, expected status becomes the unexpected: it is a story readily available to be used as an illustration of the unreliability of external appearance – and by implication, the unreliability of attempts to regulate “appropriate” dress and even “appropriate” activities (such as woolworking). What is more, such an unheroic episode in Hercules’ life could not possibly pass without mention by Ovid, especially in a letter supposedly written to Hercules by Deianira, the wife whom he has deserted. Reference to this episode with Omphale forms a major part of *Heroides* 9, Deianira’s letter.

Deianira begins to write at the point in Hercules’ story where he is absent, and is about to receive the garment that she has sent to him – the poisoned garment will destroy him, although at this stage she seems to be unaware of this result. At the end of her letter she hears word that the poison has killed Hercules, and she is about to kill herself. Her complaints throughout the letter are of Hercules’ unfaithfulness, his subservience to other women. His status in fact is that of *servus amoris*, a standard role in elegy. But his subservience as *servus amoris* is to another woman, not to Deianira, and she sees it as shameful in such a heroic figure. It is especially

shameful that Hercules – not just an elegiac slave – is in actual fact a real slave. Omphale has bought him, dressed him as a woman, and made him work wool. It is suggested here that the emphasis in *Heroides* 9 on these two aspects of Hercules' servitude – dress and spinning – is in line with a rejection by Ovid of the attitudes to both dress and woolworking that were held concerning contemporary Roman women. What follows is a reading of *Heroides* 9 in this light. The picture of Hercules attempting to spin wool is ridiculous. But it is more than just a picture completely in contrast with Livy's image of the virtuous Lucretia and her wool. The nature of the picture of Hercules seems even to hint at a similarly unrealistic (if not ridiculous?) ideal of high status Augustan *matronae* working wool. After all, even Hercules had to be reduced to slave status before he would undertake this task.

The following are the sections of *Heroides* 9 which describe the dress of Hercules and Omphale, and Hercules' task of woolworking.

una, recens crimen, referetur adultera nobis,
 unde ego sum Lydo facta noverca Lamo.
 Maeandros, terris totiens errator in isdem,
 qui lassas in se saepe retorquet aquas,
 vidit in Herculeo suspensa monilia collo
 illo, cui caelum sarcina parva fuit.
 non puduit fortis auro cohibere lacertos,
 et solidis gemmas opposuisse toris ?
 nempe sub his animam pestis Nemeaea lacertis
 edidit, unde umerus tegmina laevus habet !
 ausus es hirsutos mitra redimire capillos !
 aptior Herculeae populus alba comae.
 nec te Maeonia lascivae more puellae
 incingi zona dedecuisse putas ?
 non tibi succurrit crudi Diomedis imago,
 efferus humana qui dape pavit equas ?
 si te vidisset cultu Busiris in isto,
 huic victo victo nempe pudendus eras.
 detrahat Antaeus duro redimicula collo,
 ne pigeat molli succubuisse viro.
 Inter Ioniacas calathum tenuisse puellas

diceris et dominae pertimuisse minas.
 non fugis, Alcide, victricem mille laborum
 rasilibus calathis inposuisse manum,
 crassaque robusto deducis pollice fila,
 aequaque famosae pensa rependis erae ?
 a, quotiens digitis dum torques stamina duris,
 praevalidae fusos conminuere manus !
 ante pedes dominae
 factaque narrabas dissimulanda tibi –

Heroides 9 : 52-84)

“But there is one love – a fresh offence of which I have heard – a love by which I am made stepmother to Lydian Lamus. The Meander, so many times wandering in the same lands, who often turns back upon themselves his wearied waters, has seen hanging from the neck of Hercules – the neck which found the heavens only a slight burden – jewelled chains! Did you feel no shame to bind those strong arms with gold, and to place precious stones on those solid muscles? To think that it was these arms that crushed the life from that curse, the Nemean lion, whose skin now covers your shaggy hair with a woman’s head band! More suitable for the hair of Hercules would be the white poplar. And do you not think that you have brought disgrace on yourself by wearing the Maeonian girdle like a wanton girl? Did there not come to your mind the image of harsh Diomedes, fiercely feeding his mares on human meat? If Busiris had seen you dressed that way, he, whom you defeated, would have found you, as his conqueror, a source of shame. Antaeus would tear off the bands from your hard neck, lest he feel shame at having succumbed to an effeminate man. You are said to have held a wool basket among the girls of Ionia, and to have feared your mistress’ threats. Do you not shrink, Alcides, from placing on the smooth wool basket the hand that conquered a thousand harsh tasks? Do you draw out the coarse threads with your strong thumb, and return an equal weight of wool to your infamous mistress? Ah, how often while you twist the threads with your hard fingers, have your over-strong hands crushed the spindle! Before the feet of your mistress ... you were relating deeds of yours which should now not be revealed.”

Hercules’ elaborate clothing – although he is a slave – is described further and Omphale herself wears the costume that by rights is his:

Haec tu Sidonio potes insignitus amictu
 dicere ? non cultu lingua retenta silet ?
 se quoque nympha tuis ornavit Iardanis armis
 et tulit a capto nota tropaea viro.

(101-104)

“Can you tell of these deeds, decked out in a Sidonian gown ? Is your tongue not silent, restrained by your dress? The nymph daughter of Iardanus has even dressed herself up in your arms, and has appropriated famous trophies from her captured hero.”

When Deianira turns to consider Hercules’ new mistress – Iole – she sees the woman’s clothing as reminiscent of what Hercules had worn:

ingreditur late lato spectabilis auro
qualiter in Phrygia tu quoque cultus eras
(127-8)

“She proceeds forth from afar, splendid in plentiful gold, just as you also were arrayed when in Phrygia.”

Thus Hercules in his luxurious female attire not only humorously recalls an elegiac *puella* (such as Cynthia), he also exemplifies the unreliability of any idea – such as Augustus appeared to have – that clothing might distinguish status. Hercules is unsuitable as a spinner – perhaps the high status Augustan *matrona* did not consider herself much more fitted to this task, despite the ideal of Lucretia.

Ovid’s possible sources and influences for Hercules

It is suggested here that Ovid has taken a story which was known already from other sources, and put his own emphasis on this legend. There have been various discussions of Ovid’s possible sources for *Heroides* 9. Some of these will be summarised here – mainly for the purpose of looking at these “sources” to see whether any of them make much of Hercules as a humorous female woolworker. Although there was an earlier tradition of Hercules being seen in a humorous way (Galinsky 1972, 141), nevertheless the costume and the woolworking in particular seem to be especially emphasised by Ovid. The Hercules of *Heroides* 9 is out of keeping with the “Roman Hercules” who – according to Galinsky – was identified with

Augustus. Ovid's Hercules is not heroic, he is a slave to a woman, and he appears ridiculous in his application to woolworking, the virtuous task of Lucretia (a figure also parodied by Ovid).

It is difficult to establish sources for *Heroides* 9. Jacobson mentions the "superabundance of mythic deviations" concerning Hercules and Deianira, and "our inability to relate them to specific sources" (236). But both he and Casali (1995) agree that Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is of basic importance: "the evidence is beyond contradiction that at the back of this letter stands the *Trachiniae*" (Jacobson, 237). Casali goes so far as to say "l'epistola di Deianira è una riscrittura della *Trachiniae* di Sofocle" (11), adding that a failure to realise this fact leads to a misunderstanding of the letter, resulting in doubts of its authenticity. A notable doubter is D. Vessey, who expressed "considerable doubt" in an article "Notes on Ovid *Heroides* 9" (1969).

Arguing against Vessey's doubts, Casali ("Tragic Irony in Ovid, *Heroides* 9 and 11", 1995) stresses that Deianira's letter is an "elegiac rewriting" of the *Trachiniae*. In this letter, it is by means of "intertextual anticipation" (found elsewhere in the *Heroides*, says Casali), that the ironic fact of the future destruction of Hercules by Deianira is understood, even as she herself complains of his destruction by *Amor* in the persons of Omphale and Iole. Thus the motive is that of *victor victus*, which is elegiac in nature; Casali sees this motive as a sign of Ovid's authorship (505). This elegiac aspect of *Heroides* 9 is emphasised immediately Casali points out, by what he sees as an allusion to Propertius 3.11.1. In his elegy 3.11 Propertius defends the subservient lover's position:

Quid mirare, meam si versat femina vitam
et trahit addictum sub sua iura virum,
criminaque ignavi capit is mihi turpia fingis
quod nequeam fracto rumpere vincla iugo ?
(3.11.1-4)

“Why wonder that a woman governs my life, and hauls off a man in bondage to her power? Why do you frame shameful charges of cowardice against me because I cannot burst my bonds and break the yoke?”

In this same elegy Propertius actually mentions Hercules, but here Hercules is used as an illustration of the power of a woman – Omphale – to subdue a hero: *vicit victorem* (16). This, for Propertius, validates the poet’s own supposed situation, and Hercules, who even worked wool for Omphale (20), is not at all seen in a bad light.

Deianira’s letter opens with the same idea, that of a victorious male now subdued by a woman, but here it is seen negatively:

Gratulor Oechaliam titulis accedere nostris;
victorem victae succubuisse queror.
(1-2)

“I render thanks that Oechalia has been added to the list of our honours; but that the victor has yielded to the vanquished, I complain.”

Elegy here appears to contradict elegy, as Deianira uses the elegiac term *queror* to complain of a lover who is actually engaged in the elegiac *servitium amoris* which was, in elegiac tradition, defended by Propertius and Tibullus. (What then is she complaining of?) Casali thinks that Propertius 3.11 may be alluded to in Deianira’s words *victorem victae* (1995, 12). But this is not the only characteristic feature of elegy which appears in a “reversed” way. Hercules is not just dressed as a woman – he wears the luxurious garments of an elegiac *puella*, and he also works wool. The elegiac *pueriae* of Propertius and Tibullus – Cynthia and Nemesis – are fabulously dressed, and both Cynthia and Delia are associated with woolworking. The woolworking Hercules is in fact the closest Ovid comes to presenting an elegiac *puella* in the style of Delia or even Cynthia, that *puella* par excellence. Ovid’s own elegiac *puella*, Corinna, never works wool, and is never presented wearing luxurious dress – her main appearance is in no dress at all. But

Hercules in *Heroides* 9 does both. The incongruity which was already apparent in the scenes where elegiac *puellae* like Cynthia and Delia were supposed to work wool is even more intensified in the picture of luxuriously dressed Hercules busy spinning. What is meant by such pointed reversals?

The first collection of *Heroides* by their very nature are reversals of expectation, in that the elegiac complainants are all women. But it becomes clear that there are numerous other reversals within the epistles. It is suggested here that the incongruities and reversals in *Heroides* 9 in particular – especially with regard to woolworking and dress – draw attention to both of these things for a purpose. The emphasis on the inappropriateness of the costume and the woolworking hints at the unreliability of appearances – as with Achilles in *Ars* 1. This is one way of drawing attention, by implication, to the unrealistic and probably unworkable Augustan ideas about the classification of women and the roles they were ideally meant to play. And there is, despite the tragic nature of Deianira's letter, also implied humour in the incongruity of Hercules' appearance. Ovid treats woolworking with this same sort of implied humour (and lack of respect – not implied but real) in *Ars* 1 with Achilles and in *Fasti* 2 with Lucretia.²⁰ And of course there is the added incongruity in Hercules' appearance as the slave of Omphale, in that his dress in no way resembles what might be expected of a spinning slave.

But Ovid's is not the only depiction of Hercules in the role of Omphale's slave. Nor was Hercules' character “stable”; apart from his time as a slave he was also, in his role of much-praised hero, favoured as an ancestor by Mark Antony, and he was even associated (by Horace) with Augustus. A brief look at some of Hercules' appearances at the time indicates something of

²⁰ Another and very different way of treating woolworking is to indicate its harsh reality, as with Briseis in *Heroides* 3. Briseis, an elegiac *serva amoris*, is in reality a genuine slave; she is unlike other elegiac women (e.g. Cynthia and Delia) whose involvement with wool is fanciful. Her woolworking is to be convincingly awful, and Ovid had no illusions about the processes involved.

his importance in the general area of literature and visual art. The fact that Hercules was such a familiar figure also shows how the use of this “hero” in *Heroides* 9 makes Ovid’s emphasis on costume and spinning even more noticeable for his audience. Knowing of Hercules’ other famously heroic roles, they would perceive the marked incongruity of his appearance in *Heroides* 9. They might even have noted how the Augustan ideals of costume and woolworking for *matronae* were being undercut in this Hercules figure who – like those same ideals – was favoured in contemporary ideology.

Hercules in contemporary art and literature

Two main areas of the treatment of Hercules will be looked at here, both as a comparison with Ovid’s treatment and also for the light they might throw on what Ovid was possibly doing in *Heroides* 9. In the visual arts area it will be seen here that Hercules was depicted dressed as a woman, even with wool. This “instability of gender” (Kampen) discussed below perhaps opens the possibility of instability of costume also. The second aspect looked at here is Hercules as he figures in the Augustan poets Vergil and Horace, where he is a hero identified with Aeneas and Augustus; thus Ovid is clearly undercutting the contemporary literary version with his own “written” Hercules.

In her letter Deianira makes much of the fact that Hercules dresses as a woman, and also that Omphale exchanges clothing with him. There is evidence that it was quite a popular tradition in the area of visual arts to represent Hercules dressed as a woman and Omphale with lion-skin and club. Various examples of paintings, sculpture and pottery are described by Natalie Kampen (“Omphale and the Instability of Gender”, 1996). In particular she mentions an Augustan Arretine bowl which offers “a mixture of mockery and pathos” (fig.97a, 97b, 236)

with regard to the subdued Hercules, and also a Greco-Roman sculpted group (fig.98, 237) which shows “an abased Hercules and a coy or aloof Omphale”. In this statuette Hercules not only wears female clothing but also holds what appears to be a *pensum* (weight of wool) and possibly a distaff or spindle. Hercules wears here a long, draped garment, thin enough to cling to his body. It will not cover Hercules’ bulk, falling off one shoulder. Rather than the modest dress of a *matrona*, this garment is more like the costume of an elegiac *puella* – which role in fact Hercules plays here with respect to Omphale. Natalie Kampen traces the “cross-dressing” motif in this legend further; from its persistence it was clearly a popular aspect of the myth. Her interest, as her article states, is in the idea of “instability of gender”, as seen in the exchange of clothing. For Ovid, however, the interest was also, very likely, in the myth’s revelation of the “instability” of any idea that status could be reliably distinguished by means of costume. The exchange of clothing between Hercules and Omphale being apparently fairly familiar in visual art, Ovid could make much of this in *Heroides* 9 without too great a risk of causing offence by an irreverent treatment of a traditionally respected hero.

The visual representation of Hercules and Omphale, however, was not always only at Hercules’ expense. For example, the same Arretine bowl that Natalie Kampen describes (236-7) is discussed by Paul Zanker (1990, 58-9) as an instance of “the use of mythological models to attack Antony”, the Hercules and Omphale couple being an allusion to Antony and Cleopatra. On this bowl Hercules has a suitably “lascivious expression” and Omphale “wields the hero’s club”, and has a huge wine cup offered to her (fig.45a and b, 58-9). In fact Antony did seriously favour a connection for himself with Hercules. Commenting on this feature of Antony, Galinsky notes “although Antony looks like a good example on the stage of life of the braggart sham-Herakles of comedy, he was apparently quite serious about his presumed Herculean ancestry”

(1972, 141). The comic tradition referred to by Galinsky is mentioned by Jacobson, who writes that Hercules was already “by the late fifth century becoming in the Greek mind a suitable figure for comic treatment” (237). Along with the visual portrayals of Hercules’ cross-dressing, this already existing comic treatment of Hercules would also have stood Ovid in good stead as he described the very unheroic Hercules of *Heroides* 9. But this “sham-Herakles” would not have been the one desired by Antony as an ancestor. The heroic Hercules, the protector, the willing bearer of burdens was associated instead, in contemporary poetry, with Augustus. Such a literary association would not have been lost on Ovid. It would have been risky for such a connection to be made for the Hercules of *Heroides* 9. Nevertheless Ovid’s “written” Hercules, although, perhaps, not so out of keeping with the visual representations, does not at all agree with the Hercules of the poets favoured by Augustus, Vergil and Horace.²¹

²¹ In his discussion of the “Roman Hercules” (1972, 138ff) Galinsky explains how Vergil and Horace made the association of Hercules with Augustus, although “there is no indication that Augustus promoted his connection with Herakles” (139). Galinsky describes how it becomes apparent in the *Aeneid* that Hercules was the “inspirational model” for Aeneas, and suggests that Vergil was “motivated by an existing identification of Augustus with Herakles”. Thus Vergil (says Galinsky) cast Aeneas “in the image of Herakles” also, and by so doing, hinted at the deification of Augustus (138). In particular the lengthy treatment of the Cacus and Hercules story in *Aeneid* 8 can be seen to suggest a strong affinity between Hercules and Aeneas; at *Aeneid* 8.362-5, with Evander’s welcome to Aeneas, Vergil “frankly identifies Aeneas with Herakles”.

Horace also links Hercules with Augustus:

"It was by such merits that Pollux and roving Hercules strove and reached the starry citadels, among whom Augustus will recline and sip nectar with youthful lips."

And Horace alludes to Hercules when he addresses Augustus as sole bearer of the many “burdens” which are his concerns:

Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus
(Epistles 2.1.1)

“Seeing that you alone carry the weight of so many great charges.”

Why the Omphale episode is important in *Heroides* 9

In discussing *Heroides* 9, Galinsky complains of its “prolixity, which is more Ovid’s fault than Deianira’s” (157). She is a “jealous shrew”. Galinsky approves of the fact that Sophocles mentioned only in the briefest way (*Trachiniae* 247-50) that Hercules had served Omphale, and disapprovingly notes that “this story occupies more than one third of Ovid’s poem, doubtless because of its topicality in elegiac poetry”.²² But it is the elegiac “topicality” of this story which is especially important in *Heroides* 9.

The basic elegiac theme, as in the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus, is that of a male lover subservient to his mistress. The Omphale legend is particularly suited to *Heroides* 9, where there is an emphasis on reversal of expectation, and where elegy appears to work against elegy. The mistress in this legend is a real mistress, the lover a real slave. And Deianira’s letter constitutes an elegiacally programmatic *querela*, complaining against the also programmatic tenet of *servitium amoris*. In this case it is not *servitium* on the part of the complainant, which is the usual thing, but on the part of the object of the complaint – Hercules. And what is more it is *servitium* to another “mistress” altogether. One “standard” aspect of elegy is complaining about another “standard” aspect. As well as this, *Heroides* 9 overturns the expected positive depiction of the elegiac *puella* in terms of her fabulous dress – Cynthia, Nemesis – and her woolworking – Delia, and possibly Cynthia in 3.6 – by having a muscle-bound hero dressed in luxury female garments, spoiling wool with rough hands.

The most that Ovid’s Hercules carries is a wool-basket (73), and Deianira sees him as defeated and shamed. In her complaint she refers at length to the Omphale episode. This has been seen as a flaw in *Heroides* 9, and criticised strongly. But as suggested here, it can be seen as an example of one of the ways in which Ovid draws attention to woolworking and costume, both of which he saw as “ideals” that were problematic at the time.

²² The elegiac “topicality” of the Omphale legend, according to Galinsky, seems to be based on reference to it in Propertius 4.9, which he discusses along with his remarks on Ovid’s treatment of Hercules. (154-7)

Both costume and woolworking are associated with the elegiac *puella* and also with the high status Roman woman. But how to establish any sort of consistent pattern of what is appropriate to each – *puella* and *matrona*? If the elegiac *puella* is thought of as having her origins in the courtesan (as for example Sharon James thinks), does her elegant Coan silk elevate her status above that of *infamis*? And why would she spin, which is clearly slaves' work? – or is it, rather, supposed to be the concern of the *matrona*, as encouraged by Livy (and Augustan ideology)? The prostitute was supposed to wear a toga (McGinn), the *matrona* a *stola*. What each one wore in actual fact might well have been a different story,²³ and perhaps it was no easier to meet a clearly defined *matrona* outside her house than it was to find her busy with woolworking in it? Ovid's emphasis on exchange of dress and inappropriate tasks in *Heroides* 9, by means of the Omphale story, presents an exaggerated confusion of roles, but the picture hints at the pointlessness of expecting that total stability can be achieved. The Omphale story is certainly not a flaw in the epistle.

But not only Galinsky finds Deianira's complaint excessive – especially her mention of woolworking and dress. It is all found to be so totally unsatisfactory and poorly composed that in his 1969 article on *Heroides* 9, Vessey expresses the opinion that the epistle could not have been Ovid's work at all.²⁴ He is particularly critical of what he calls the "Omphale ecphrasis", describing it as a "clumsy contrivance to bring in an enumeration of the Labours" (352). He calls the references to clothing and spinning "an absurdity", "astounding banality", stating that

²³ There are discussions about women's dress in *Roman Dress & The Fabrics of Roman Culture*, 2008.

²⁴ Not only Vessey, but also Courtney (*BICS* 12, 1965, 62-66) has argued that *Heroides* 9 is not the work of Ovid. The controversy continues, with Courtney's 1997 article "Ovidian and Non-Ovidian *Heroides* Again" (*The Classical Journal*, Vol.93, No.2, 157-166), where he refutes Casali's claims that *Heroides* 9 is the work of Ovid, and also adduces other arguments in support of his own case. Casali, in his edition of *Heroides* 9, expresses no doubts about Ovid's authorship, and Jacobson in his chapter on *Heroides* 9 counters virtually all of Vessey's arguments. It is assumed here in the present chapter that Ovid is the author of *Heroides* 9.

“lines more ludicrous can scarcely be imagined” when Deianira describes the wool being spoilt by Hercules’ hard hands:

a, quotiens digitis dum torques stamina duris
praevalidae fusos comminuere manus !
(79-80)

“Ah, how often while with hard hands you twisted the thread, have your hands, being too strong, crushed the spindle!”

But these lines might not be so “ludicrous”. Deianira is not saying that Hercules’ *hands* are too *hard*, but too *strong*. It is with *digitis duris* – hard *fingers* – that he twists the thread, and as Ovid well knew, hardened fingers were actually what spinners ended by having (*Medicamina Faciei* 14). Hercules’ *hard* fingers are thus quite suitable for the job, which (along with his dress) is a further point of incongruity in his favour.

It is the inclusion in *Heroides* 9 of the Omphale story that enables Ovid to treat both woolworking and costume; this legend about Hercules’ time as Omphale’s slave is an ideal vehicle for Ovid’s humour at the expense of both these topics, both of which he sees as questionable for the *matrona*. Yet the Omphale story has been seen as an unsatisfactory inclusion. In his article on *Heroides* 9, Vessey (1969) sees the section of *Heroides* 9 dealing with Omphale as “the most glaring structural blemish” in the poem, and he calls it a “long, inorganic digression” (352). Apart from its structural unsuitability, this section finds disfavour with Vessey because he sees humour in it: “the scene all too soon descends to the comic. The poet is ... patently unaware of the need for keeping a fitting tone for this theme.” The “depths of rhetorical absurdity” are reached. Most of this criticism seems based on the fact that Hercules’ female dress is mentioned a number of times – e.g. *ausus es hirsutos mitra redimire capillos* (63), *haec tu Sidonio potes insignitus amictu dicere?* (101) – and also on the mention of the woolworking which Hercules carried out amongst the women. Vessey concludes that

“despite the exemplar of the *Trachiniae*, the author of *Heroides* 9 has been incapable of exploiting the tragic situation offered by his story” (354).

Why need it be entirely tragic? Apart from the fact that there are many possible sources, including a strong comic tradition, that Ovid could have drawn on for *Heroides* 9, perhaps he had every intention of introducing humour of his own into the Omphale episode. The costume and the woolworking as applied to Hercules are certainly incongruous and humour could be seen to be intended. Similarly, in *Ars* 1 the humour seems obvious in the case of the spinning Achilles, and later in *Fasti* 2 the exaggeration of Lucretia’s busy devotion to wool is hard to miss (Chapter One). In general, Ovid does not refer to woolworking with the respect that might be thought due to the value placed on it in contemporary Augustan ideology. Hercules’ inappropriate task of spinning is emphasised in *Heroides* 9 and it also features in almost the same words in the brief reference made to the Omphale story in *Ars Amatoria* 2. The *praeceptor* in *Ars* 2 cites Hercules as a model of subservience to his mistress: his unenviable task at her command was spinning:

Ille, fatigata praebendo monstra neverca
qui meruit caelum, quod prior ipse tulit,
inter Ionicas calathum tenuisse puellas
creditur, et lanas excoluisse rudes.
Paruit imperio dominae Tirynthius heros :
i nunc et dubita ferre, quod ille tulit.

(A.A.2.217-22)

“He who won the heaven which first he bore himself, when his stepmother was wearied of sending monsters, is believed to have held a wool-basket among Ionian maidens, and to have spun to a fine thread the rough wool. The Tirynthian hero obeyed a mistress’ command: go, shrink from enduring what he endured!”

(It is not specifically stated, of course, but the slavery as a spinner which Hercules endured was his next great ordeal; he had only just finished with his stepmother’s “unnatural” *monstra*, and now this “unnatural” task of spinning!)

Other extant literary references to the Omphale story do not emphasise the spinning or its shameful inappropriateness. Hercules' task is not mentioned in the *Trachiniae*, and nor does either Diodorus (4.31.4-8) or Apollodorus (*The Library*, 2.6.2-3) mention it, both of whom briefly recount the main outline of the legend. Propertius, referring twice to the Omphale episode, does mention the spinning both times: 3.11.17-20; 4.9.47-50. In neither of these two elegies is Hercules' spinning emphasised or seen as a source of humour at his expense. In elegy 3.11 Hercules' apparent willingness to spin is a measure of his mistress' power over him; the poet is in the same situation in that his own mistress is similarly the one "in charge". Hercules in 3.11 is thus doing what the elegiac slave/lover should rightly do: be subservient. In elegy 4.9, which has been seen as a comical treatment of Hercules (Galinsky, 156), the hero is cast as "the lover shut out" as he tries to enter a women's shrine. He boasts that he has once had to act as a woman, dressing as such and completing his daily *pensum* of wool.²⁵

The unreliability of costume in *Heroides* 9 and *Fasti* 2

Apart from spinning, the other major aspect of Ovid's treatment of Hercules in *Heroides* 9 is his costume, which is not only female dress but also delicate and luxurious – a great contrast with Hercules' usual lion's skin. None of the treatments of the story outlined above mentions Hercules' exchange of clothing with Omphale, which is a main feature of Deianira's letter to her husband. With his interest in costume – how well it might suit its wearer,

²⁵ *et manibus duris apta puella fui* (4.9.50) What with his hard hands, Hercules was good (*apta*) at being a spinning *puella* – all the spinners had hardened hands, from the wool, so he fitted in well.

and how it might not be reliable as a status indicator²⁶ – Ovid was not going to use this story of costume confusion only once. He returned to the Hercules and Omphale legend in *Fasti* 2 (303-58), and made the unreliability of costume into the whole point of the story about the god Faunus. This section of *Fasti* 2 treats the rites of that particular god, and purports to explain why Faunus prefers anyone attending his rites to come naked. The story could be seen as a very convenient one to illustrate the uncertainty of costume as an indication of the status of the wearer – which, it is suggested here, is what this story is in fact doing: the inference to be drawn is that efforts in Ovid’s Rome to establish status and regulate it by dress – especially for women – were not going to work. Since the story in *Fasti* 2 is the same basic legend as appears in *Heroides* 9, it is looked at here, the purpose being to show how it provides a further indication of what Ovid seems to be doing with costume in particular – that is, illustrating its unreliability as a means of distinguishing status (and even possibly gender).

The story of Faunus (*Fasti* 2: 303-58)

Before the action begins, it is made clear that this will be a humorous account of why Faunus does not like clothing (or “covering”: *velamina*).

sed cur praecipue fugiat velamina Faunus
traditur antiqui fabula plena ioci (303-4)

“But to explain why Faunus should particularly eschew the use of clothing/covering, there is a very humorous old tale that is handed down.”

Again Ovid can make use of a legend that already exists (*traditur*), in order to apply his own emphasis to it. The story starts with Hercules and Omphale together; Omphale in her fabulous costume – she is *aurato conspicienda sinu* – attracts the amorous attention of Faunus.

²⁶ Ovid’s interest in suiting costume to wearer is seen in his advice to women in *Ars* 3 (especially on colours, 169-192), and his concern about the regulation of status by clothing is seen in his presentation of the naked Corinna (*Amores* 1.5). Both these concerns are discussed in Chapter 4.

Hercules and Omphale are preparing to attend a festival in honour of Bacchus. Omphale dresses Hercules in her own clothing, and much is made of the fact that her garments are not only delicate, but are too small for him. Did anyone other than Ovid exploit the humour of this fact, when illustrating the clothing exchange? In her descriptions of the visual representations of the exchange, Natalie Kampen (1996) makes no mention of Hercules' new clothes being humorously too small. But the garment Hercules wears in the statue which she describes (237, fig.98) clearly does not fit his large frame; it is even possibly damaged by his attempts to put it on. In Ovid's description Hercules bursts the bracelets and sandals and has to undo the girdle:

ventre minor zona est; tunicarum vincla relaxat,
ut posset magnas exseruisse manus.
fregerat armillas non illa ad bracchia factas,
scindebant magni vincula parva pedes. (321-24)

"For his belly the girdle was too small ; he undid the clasps of the tunics to thrust out his big hands. He had broken the bracelets, not made for those arms; his big feet split the little shoes."

Omphale herself puts on Hercules' lion skin and takes up the club.

During the night, while these two are chastely sleeping in preparation for next day's festival, the god Faunus creeps into the cave intent on sex with Omphale. Of course he is misled, in the darkness, by the soft material of the garment which he believes Omphale is wearing, and instead attempts to achieve his purpose with the sleeping figure who proves to be the hirsute Hercules. The result is, as Ovid says:

veste deus lusus fallentes lumina vestes
non amat et nudos ad sua sacra vocat.
(357-8)

"Thus tricked by clothing, the god does not love clothing that deceives the eye, and he bids those coming to his rites to come naked."

Did Ovid himself some years earlier come to a conclusion similar to that of the god Faunus, preferring nakedness to possibly deceptive clothing? When presenting his elegiac mistress Corinna, Ovid found it suitable to introduce her naked, since female clothing at the time might be deceptive. If her costume complied with either of the “dress codes” that contemporary Roman women were meant to adhere to, she might be seen as conforming to one or the other of the “types” – *matrona* or *meretrix*. And Ovid might have intended her to be something that was neither, since the woman whom he addresses in *Ars Amatoria* 3 with advice on clothing and hairstyles appears to be neither. As suggested in Chapter Four, Corinna could be the forerunner of this woman being addressed in *Ars* 3.

The god Faunus became a laughing-stock in Ovid’s story, because he was deceived by clothing. But a worse fate than that of being laughed at might have befallen a high status Roman male who, seeking a sexual liaison, was similarly deceived by clothing, and became involved with a *matrona*. And could he be sure beforehand? – was it possible to establish women’s status by attempting to regulate their dress, as Augustus apparently wished?²⁷ For the elite Roman male a reversal of expectations of this kind, concerning dress, could well be disastrous.

Reversals of expectations in *Heroides* 9

While the reversal of expectations concerning clothing is the focus of the *Fasti* episode, it is only one aspect of the various reversals found in *Heroides* 9. The Omphale episode is itself an immediate changing of gender roles: the figure in the woman’s dress, busy spinning, is male. But as noted already, the whole epistle – though elegiac in form – overturns some basic aspects of elegiac practice. These may be summarised as follows:

²⁷ The situation concerning dress and the *matrona* is treated at length by McGinn (1998), especially Chapter 5.

1. The writer of the *querela* is here a woman, and the unreliable object of the complaint is male.
2. It is here not the writer who is in the position of *servus amoris*, but the object of her complaint. And he is also a *real* slave, owned by a real mistress.
3. The object of an elegiac *querela*, in the poems of Tibullus and Propertius, is an expensively clad *puella*. Here this role is filled by the expensively clad Hercules, who also spins – as elegiac *puellae* sometimes do.
4. Last but not least – Deianira refers to Jupiter’s disapproval of Hercules’ infidelity (9-10); Hercules was born of Jupiter’s own infidelity.

The principal “reversal” here is, of course, in the figure of Hercules – his dress and his spinning. The elegiac *puella* (e.g. Delia, Cynthia) is incongruous in her role of woolworker/*matrona*; Hercules is even more incongruous as *puella*/woolworker/*matrona*. Was it just as incongruous, in the modern sophisticated Rome that Ovid describes in *Ars 3* (113-128), to expect high status *matronae* to dress according to outdated custom, and – above all – to devote themselves to woolworking?²⁸ Is it feasible to keep such rigid expectations, and not suppose that they will quite likely be reversed?

Ariadne – the textile comes to life

Reversals in terms of “appropriate” dress and the task of woolworking have been apparent in the *Heroides* epistles treated so far; how then does the Ariadne letter add to a tendency to reverse expectations? The Ariadne of *Heroides* 10 in fact represents one of the most significant of these reversals amongst the epistles seen here, since she is a figure very unlike her other known appearances. Her most striking characteristic here is her absolute rejection of

²⁸ Becoming, like Lucretia, *deditae lanae*.

woolworking as a slave's task which is far beneath her as a high status heroine. This rejection is seen as "a bit surprising" by Peter Knox in his edition of *Heroides* (1996) – as will be mentioned below – but it is surprising only insofar as all the references to wool (and costume) in these epistles are rejections of the expected "ideal" for women of respectable status in Augustan Rome. It is suggested that, knowing the real, harsh nature of woolworking, and also knowing that textiles could be bought ready made, Ovid was aware that the ideal of a woolworking *matrona* was an unrealistic expectation. In order to appreciate Ovid's Ariadne and her strikingly different character from her other – visual and literary – appearances, two major studies of *Heroides* 10 are discussed below. Neither of these studies finds any importance in Ariadne's rejection of woolworking.

The tenth epistle of the *Heroides* is from Ariadne to Theseus. She has woken up on the island of Naxos to find that Theseus – whom she accompanied when he sailed away from Crete after killing the Minotaur – had already departed, leaving her behind. It will be suggested here that Ovid, in line with the reversals apparent already in previous epistles, presents an Ariadne who clearly differs in various ways from her more "traditional" image – differing both from her common appearance in the visual arts, and also from her image as created by Catullus in his poem 64. It will be shown that Ariadne's behaviour and attitudes as revealed in epistle 10 indicate a figure who is no longer static (as is expected, since in so many other depictions, especially visual, she is seen as unmoving), but is a figure who comes alive.²⁹ Nor is Ovid's Ariadne a replica of the figure described by Catullus in poem 64, although it is Catullus' poem

²⁹ In *Amores* 1, possibly composed later, the figure of Corinna similarly (but in a different way) does not comply with expectations that might have arisen from the depictions of (for example) Cynthia and Delia. Corinna does not wear fabulous clothes – she wears nothing; she does not wait about for her lover, but comes boldly to his room to find him.

which has been regarded as Ovid's "source". But Ovid was doing something different from Catullus; Ovid's Ariadne is not a figure on a textile.

Two major studies of *Heroides* 10 tend to the opinion that Catullus 64 was Ovid's source: Jacobson (1974) and Verducci (1985).

Jacobson does see that Ovid is making Ariadne move, but he does not ask why. He states his position: it is "routine, if not totally reasonable" to relate *Heroides* 10 to Catullus 64; Palmer (1898) and Anderson (1896) saw it as Ovid's source. Jacobson talks of other possible versions of the Ariadne/Theseus story which Ovid was probably aware of, but we know little of them. He sees it as fruitful to compare epistle 10 with 64, since the basic details of the story are the same. This similarity between the two poems becomes more significant when the variations mentioned by Plutarch are taken into account. Section 20 of Plutarch's life of Theseus begins: "There are many other stories about these matters, and also about Ariadne, but they do not agree at all" (Perrin [1967] 41).

Jacobson goes on to compare *Heroides* 10 with 64, somewhat to Ovid's disadvantage, thinking that Ovid "knew, used, and felt compelled to strive against Catullus," and that Ovid had a "compulsion to prove superior to Catullus" (219-20). Jacobson does point out, however, that Ovid was attempting something different from Catullus; he thinks that Ovid's interest is to set the scene, to create a feeling of spaciousness and solitude, the barrenness and sterility of the island where Ariadne is left alone. As for Ariadne herself, Jacobson does notice the emphasis on her physical activity in *Heroides* 10 – how she sends signals with her hands – *iactatae late signa dedere manus* (40) ("I sent you signals, waving my hands about wildly") – and how she wanders about with hair flying – *aut ego diffusis erravi sola capillis* (47) ("or I have wandered about alone with hair flying"). In a footnote he "wonders whether the bizarre description of Ariadne

standing on the shore, shouting, waving arms, raising ‘semaphores’ (37-42) is a deliberate antithesis of Catullus’ heroine who perforce must stand on the shore watching Theseus sail away and do nothing whatsoever (61-67)” (217-18).

This “antithesis”, it is suggested here, is just what Ovid intends: to present an Ariadne who *moves*. Ovid’s Ariadne is strikingly alive compared to the figure in Catullus 64, the point being that she asserts her status, the injustice of her abandonment, her rejection of slavery and spinning. Catullus’ Ariadne, as she is described on the textile, is perfectly still – as Jacobson says. She is standing motionless, the woven textile portraying her with the waves at her feet, unaware that her clothing has fallen from her body.

quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis
saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu
prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis
non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram
non contecta levi velatum pectus amictu
non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas
omnia quae toto delapsa et corpore passim
ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.

(64.60-67)

“Him from afar, there on the wrack-strewn beach, eyes agonised, Minos’ daughter, a stony bacchant, watches, ah, watches in breaking waves of grief unbounded, lost the fine-woven net from her golden tresses, lost the light garment veiling her torso, lost the rounded breast-band that gathered her milk-white bosom – all of them, slipped from her body every which way, now at her feet had become the salty ripples’ playthings.”
(translation by Peter Green)

At this point in poem 64 Catullus “digresses” (as he says, line 116) to tell the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. When Catullus returns to the deserted Ariadne (124), he is no longer describing her as she appears on the textile. He is reporting what the legend tells – the significant word here is *perhibent* (so they say). The legend tells how she reacted in grief at her desertion, how she climbed a hill to look out to sea, how she uttered her long lament. Thus, at the point in poem 64 where Catullus’ motionless Ariadne might begin to move, the narrative,

when it returns to her, changes to being *reported* speech after the word *perhibent*. Previously, in the textile description, though she was standing still, Ariadne was described with finite verbs: *visit* (55) *se cernat* (57) *prospicit* (61,62) *pendebat* (70). But the movements that she might later have made are now expressed by the infinitives of the reported legend: *fudisse* (125) *conscendere* (126) *procurrere* (128). And even her speech, though quoted in the poem, is what she is *reported* to have said: *dixisse* (130). The Ariadne of Catullus does not actually speak for herself – everything is described, reported, not quoted. She is still a figure on a textile. But Ovid's Ariadne actually speaks, and roundly rejects her future as a slave. As for her “speech” in Catullus, Godwin (1995), in his commentary on poem 64, notes that Ariadne's lament in that poem has “no possible source in the tapestry being described” (note on lines 132-201). He goes on to explain that this ecphrasis, the description of the textile in 64, has a “narrative/temporal” aspect as well as a “visual/spatial” one. Catullus is thus describing a static Ariadne – this is the visual/spatial aspect – and then also relating how she was said to move and speak – the narrative/temporal aspect. But Ovid takes all this much further in *Heroides* 10. He presents an Ariadne who most definitely moves about – and tells us so herself. She also utters her long and desperate lament in her own words – not in a quoted speech as is given by Catullus. The Ariadne of Catullus is, however, already more alive than her many visual-art representations usually are (as will be discussed below). But Ovid's Ariadne is even very much more alive again than the heroine of 64. In what way, then, do both of these portrayals of Ariadne (64 and *Heroides* 10) differ from what might have been expected? There is another aspect of the “expected” Ariadne – her appearance in the visual tradition. And here Ovid's heroine is again very different.

Within the “literary” legend of Ariadne and Theseus there were variations which, as Plutarch said, “do not agree.” But amongst the surviving visual representations of Ariadne there

is a considerable amount of agreement. “One of the best known images of a woman in Greek and Roman art is that of the sleeping Ariadne” (McNally 1985, 152). Sheila McNally, in her article “Images of Sleep in Greek and Early Roman Art”³⁰, briefly traces the probable evolution of Ariadne from a goddess figure to a mortal, and describes continuing examples of the sleeping Ariadne in various vase paintings and sculptures over several centuries up to the period of Campanian wall paintings. McNally finds that the “sleeping Ariadne” is one of two sleeping figures with the longest-lasting popularity (the other a maenad), and that such images of Ariadne probably date from 480 BC (161). In her article she includes photographs of some typical vase paintings; several show Theseus departing or about to do so (fig.4, 5, 7), several show Dionysos arriving (6b, 7), and in all of them Ariadne sleeps or is at least recumbent.

Depictions of Ariadne were recorded by ancient writers, who noted that she was shown sleeping. A painting found in what was at the time an ancient sanctuary of Dionysos was described by Pausanias in the second century AD: “Ariadne asleep and Theseus putting to sea and Dionysos coming to carry off Ariadne” (Pausanias 1.20.2). Philostratus the Younger (third century AD), apparently interested in the ways that painters might have portrayed the characters in the Theseus/Ariadne legend, describes a certain painting: “I do not need to say that it is Theseus you see there on the ship, and Dionysos yonder on the land, nor will I assume you to be ignorant and call your attention to the woman on the rocks, lying there in gentle slumber” (*Imagines* 1.15). It is assumed by Philostratus that the scene is so common as to be well known. As for the Campanian wall paintings, of those extant in Pompeii Ariadne is “the single most popular individual subject in Pompeii” (Fredrick 1995, 272). Fredrick lists three types of painting of Ariadne in Pompeii: sleeping and deserted by Theseus; watching Theseus depart; sleeping and discovered by Dionysos.

³⁰ *Classical Antiquity* 4.2, 1985.

The image of the sleeping Ariadne is thought by T.B.L. Webster (1966) to be associated with her original identification as a sleeping goddess, who will awaken from her winter sleep in the spring (23). Whatever her origin in myth, she clearly continued to be connected with sleep. Thus the Ariadne of Catullus 64 represents something new, since here she is *not* asleep. And despite being described, motionless, as if on a textile – a visual artefact – she is *awake*.³¹ It is Catullus 64, in fact, which Florence Verducci sees as a definitive treatment of Ariadne, to the disadvantage of Ovid's heroine in *Heroides* 10. But Ovid's Ariadne is very different from Catullus' heroine – it is her lively activity and loud complaint that characterises her reversal of expected behaviour – and it is this difference that Verducci does not like.

Ovid's Ariadne is anything but asleep. He presents a heroine who thinks and speaks for herself. There is no mention of Dionysos coming to rescue her: if Ovid's Ariadne survives it will be by her own efforts. In the first lines of *Heroides* 10 she is wide awake and complaining. And she is not the compliant Ariadne of Catullus, who would be willing to serve Theseus as his slave. This is one of the major differences between Ovid's heroine and that of Catullus: in *Heroides* 10 a self-assertive Ariadne rejects slavery outright. And the slave's task that she especially rejects is the task of spinning.

Florence Verducci (1985) finds Ovid's treatment of Ariadne guilty of “comic excess”, and sees it as almost a travesty of Catullus 64. It is Ariadne's activity and movement that Verducci objects to, as opposed to the restraint shown by Catullus. Examining *Heroides* 10 section by section, she wonders: “did Ovid set out, we might ask, to parody Catullus?” Her conclusion is that, for Ovid, Catullus' Ariadne “stood at the limits of pathos” and in *Heroides* 10

³¹ Poem 64 of Catullus – as already noted – has both visual and narrative elements, and in the narrative element Ariadne, it is said, moves – she “comes alive”. Perhaps 64 combines what might have been two separate features of such a work – the written narrative, which was performed orally in conjunction with the visual representation, which consisted of a painting or a textile. Such a possibility has been suggested in connection with French *chansons de geste*. The Bayeux Tapestry might even be a survivor of such performance possibilities.

he is “toppling her into selfish bathos.” Ariadne’s situation had become in Ovid’s time “an outworn tradition, a narcotic”; significant here is the sentimentality of the many visual representations, which had become so common as to be a sort of visual cliché: the pathetic girl abandoned in sleep. Is this perhaps why Ovid wakes her up?

These are the relevant lines of the two poems.

i) From Ovid:

Tantum ne religer dura captiva catena
neve traham serva grandia pensa manu
(*Heroides* 10. 89-90)

“(But I care not,) if I am not left captive in harsh bonds, and not compelled to spin the heavy weight of wool with a slave’s hand.”

ii) From Catullus:

attamen in vestras potuisti ducere sedes
quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore
candida permulcens liquidis vestigia lymphis
purpureave tuum consternens veste cubile. (64.160-163)

“You still could have brought me to your ancestral home, to be your slave, to serve you with adoration, washing your white-soled feet in crystal water, or spreading and dressing your bed with purple coverlet.” (translation by Peter Green)

Ovid’s Ariadne proudly recalls her own family connections: *cui pater est Minos* (91), whereas the Ariadne of 64 is willing to lose any identity of her own in Theseus’ home: *vestras sedes*. But an obvious difference between the two references to slavery is that Catullus’ heroine does not mention spinning. In a poem where textile imagery is paramount – Ariadne appears on a textile, and the Fates go through all the processes of spinning as they tell their prophecies – it is significant that Ariadne does not mention spinning when she enumerates the servile tasks she might perform. And here is a major mark of difference between the Ariadne of Ovid and that of Catullus, pointing again to how Ovid is using an established legend to include a negative reference to woolworking.

The tasks that Ariadne of 64 claims she might carry out are servile tasks, but they still carry a poetic resonance. The washing of feet recalls the faithful Eurycleia, the purple textile is a common feature of fabulous descriptions. Ariadne's tasks, as well as having this echo of something more grand, contain no mention of spinning. This is because spinning, in poem 64, is not the degrading task of a mortal, who is also a slave – even if she does happen to be Ariadne. It is the Fates who do the woolworking in this poem. Important here in any comparison of the two poems (64 and *Heroides* 10) is the considerable difference between Ovid's use of woolworking imagery, and that of Catullus. Ovid's use of such references is on the whole “realistic” and usually negative. Catullus does not use any woolworking references other than in 64, and in this poem the spinning of the Fates – which is described in accurate detail – is elevated to an artistic, literary function which removes it from any “realistic” aspect. The arduous and wretched task of the spinning slave does not belong in this poem: the Ariadne of 64 does not mention it. But Ovid's Ariadne knows full well how dreadful the task is for the spinner. And whether – as Verducci thinks – Ovid was attempting to parody or even “disfigure” Catullus, the point remains that Ovid's Ariadne moves out of the textile (or the painting) and actively describes her own present plight; she is “alive” in a way Catullus' heroine and the Ariadnes of visual art are not “alive”. And as she moves out of the textile and the painting, she becomes a high status heroine actively objecting to the idea that someone like her should be obliged to work wool with “slave's hands” (*serva manu* 90) – just as, perhaps, a high status Augustan *matrona* might object? – for it was a slave's task. There is another extant poem which features Ariadne, the Dionysiaca of Nonnus, thought by some scholars to be related to *Heroides* 10. It is looked at below – again as a contrast to Ovid's version, since the Ariadne in Nonnus' poem is not contradictory; she is willing to work wool.

This poem further highlights Ovid's different treatment of Ariadne, who is not willing.

Another version of the legend: the *Dionysiaca*

The *Dionysiaca* is an epic treating the birth and life of Dionysos, and it was composed by Nonnus in the 5th century AD. It has been seen as having a possible connection with *Heroides* 10. It is relevant here as well since in this poem Ariadne also speaks of her future woolworking. The suggestion has been made that Catullus, Ovid and Nonnus might all have been influenced by a previous Hellenistic model of the same story (Fordyce 1961, Thomson 1998). In the light of this possibility, how does Ovid's Ariadne compare not only with that of Catullus but also with that of Nonnus? The point of reference here is her attitude to her future task as a slave.

In book 47 of the *Dionysiaca*, Ariadne wakes from sleep and utters a long lament. She expresses the wish to be reunited with Theseus, claiming that she would be willing to serve him and also his bride. She would prepare his bed, carry water for him to wash, and – of special interest here – she asserts her willingness to weave at the loom: “I will ply the rattling loom” (394). This passage in the *Dionysiaca* (390-96) has been compared with the similar statements made by Ariadne in Catullus 64, and it has been noted that Ovid's Ariadne does not make such a claim (Knox 1996).

What then are the similarities and differences between these claims made by Ariadne in the three poems in question, and how do they indicate that Ovid is doing something different with this heroine? In both Nonnus and Catullus, Ariadne expresses willingness to serve. But Catullus' Ariadne does not mention woolworking at all. Nonnus' Ariadne, possibly in line with earlier female figures in poetry (such as the women skilled in textile work who were offered to Achilles – *Iliad* 9.128) says what is expected of a “traditional” Ancient Greek maiden: she will

weave. But Ovid's Ariadne will have none of being a slave, and above all she expresses dread of being obliged to work at spinning: *neve traham serva grandia pensa manu* (90). Even allowing for the fact that Nonnus seems to adhere to tradition in depicting Ariadne as a willing weaver, there is nevertheless a considerable difference between the weaving that she would do, and the spinning that Ovid's heroine rejects. All ancient woolworking was tiring and laborious, but weaving was probably preferable to spinning which was by far the worst task of all. Ovid knew this, and Ariadne's rejection of spinning in *Heroides* 10 is one more example of the negative references to woolworking found in his poetry.

The differences are significant between the claims concerning slavery made by Ariadne in the three relevant poems. Most striking is the rejection by Ovid's Ariadne of spinning as a slave. Her rejection has been noted – but without any comment on her dread of spinning as distinct from slavery itself. Peter Knox (1996) in his edition of select *Heroides* epistles remarks on the similarities between the versions of Catullus, Ovid and Nonnus: “the corresponding part of Nonnus' version of Ariadne's complaint (*Dion.* 47.390-5) bears a very strong resemblance to Catullus, suggesting that both knew an earlier work in which this figured prominently. O's reader is thus a bit surprised to hear that Ariadne abhors servitude” (249). In a later article (1998) Knox discusses more fully the possibility of an earlier original of the Ariadne story known to Catullus, Ovid and Nonnus. Noting again that Ovid's Ariadne objects to slavery, he adds that her objection is even more striking against the background of a “relatively common” acceptance of slavery by abandoned women in Hellenistic narratives. Knox suggests that Ovid might be “playing off not only Ariadne's declaration in Catullus 64, but also an early work in which the same motif figured” (81) – the motif being acceptance of slavery. Knox thinks that the

passage in Nonnus (47.390-6) where Ariadne claims that she will weave at the loom is a further indication that Ovid's Ariadne is in sharp contrast with the "earlier tradition" (81).

It seems to be a break with some sort of "tradition" that Ovid's Ariadne makes when she rejects the slave's task of spinning – but what tradition? One consideration is the "tradition" suggested by Knox; as Lyne says of Scylla in the *Ciris* when she claims that she will spin amongst the slaves (443-6): "rejected lovers conventionally utter such sentiments." But Ariadne in *Heroides* 10 does not. And if this is unexpected in such a narrative, then it is yet another reversal of expectations in the *Heroides* epistles treated in this chapter. But might there be the hint of a rejection of another "tradition", one encouraged by Augustan ideology in Ovid's time – namely that of high status women being associated with woolworking as a praiseworthy activity? Ovid's Ariadne instantly calls upon her high status in rejecting the slave's task of spinning (91-2). Jacobson (217) sees this as ridiculous in the circumstances, and assumes it to be a joke. But it is Ariadne's high status which makes her reject the idea even more than she might otherwise do. What then is the possible further significance of this break with expectation?

The *Heroides* (first collection) was presumably being composed in a climate of the revival of traditional ideas and customs in line with Augustan ideology.³² Livy's first book, published 27-25 BC (Walsh), had presented the high status Lucretia as a model of virtue "devoted to her wool" – dutifully sitting late at night with the spinning women. This image has had a lasting impact. Although modern commentators might quote "*domum servavit, lanam fecit*" ("she remained in the house, she made wool") as an indication that woolworking was a positive value with regard to *matronae*, it is not obvious that Ovid necessarily shared that view. His attitude to woolworking was possibly more realistic, and his representation of the views of

³² The first *Heroides* "cannot be shown to be earlier than 13BC" – White, P. (2002), "Ovid and the Augustan Milieu," *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (10).

Penelope and Ariadne (for example) are perhaps more like the views of *matronae* at the time: Penelope dismissive, Ariadne loudly rejecting the task. There is one further reference to spinning in the *Heroides*, where the attitude expressed agrees with that of Penelope. It comes from Hero's letter to Leander (*Heroides* 19) and indicates an attitude to spinning which regards the task as a time-filler for boredom rather than a virtuous activity.

A reference in *Heroides* 19

Ariadne's reference to spinning is not the last such negative one in the *Heroides*. In epistle 19 there is another, which is expressed in words very similar to those used by Penelope in *Heroides* 1. Penelope dismisses her woolworking as something to help her get through the night: *spatiosam fallere noctem* (1.9) ("to beguile the hours of spacious night"). In epistle 19 (Hero to Leander) Hero regards her woolworking similarly: *feminea tardas fallimus arte moras* (38) ("with women's skill we beguile the slow hours of waiting"). If the later *Heroides* were – as some think – the last things Ovid wrote, then woolworking remained consistently for him a task to be seen in a rather negative light. E.J. Kenney (1999) thinks that *Heroides* 16-21 "never received the poet's final revision and were given to the world only after his death" (413). Stephen Harrison also³³ suggests that 16-21 might be Ovid's last work; he sees a "parallel" between Leander's desire to "cross the water" and Ovid's desire to cross it, returning to Rome from exile. Both Ovid and Leander were prevented by a greater power – one the weather, the other Augustus.

³³ In an ASCS conference lecture, Sydney, February 2009.

Conclusions

The *Heroides* epistles discussed in this chapter (1, 3, 9, 10) present a recurrence of reversals of expectations – all being in some way possibly seen as expectations connected with women’s role as envisaged by Augustan ideology. The regulation of status by dress, and the encouragement of woolworking as a concern for *matronae* are two such expectations. Penelope in epistle 1 is not seen as the traditional virtuous wife but a disgruntled, complaining one who resents her husband and her weaving. Briseis (epistle 3) presents an unpleasantly realistic picture of woolworking for a harsh mistress. With Deianira (epistle 9) the idea that clothing can provide reliable indications of status is entirely undercut in the persons of Hercules and Omphale. The task of spinning again appears negatively, a source of humour and incongruity as an occupation for Hercules. In epistle 10, Ariadne contradicts various characteristics that had become associated with her. She does not sleep or appear motionless on a textile, but moves and speaks and asserts her high birth as a reason for her strong rejection of the slave’s task of spinning.

Of the *Heroides* epistles treated in this chapter, each one contains a depiction of spinning or weaving which is much at odds with any idealistic picture of these same tasks. There is no hint of a busily virtuous *matrona dedita lanae*, or of a “characteristically Roman picture of domesticity” (which was what E.J. Kenney [1996] thought was present in *Heroides* 19.37-8). But it is not only expectations pertaining to contemporary society that are being reversed in the epistles treated here. There are some literary ones as well. The *Heroides* are seen as elegies (e.g. Knox 1995), and their audience might thus entertain certain expectations concerning elegiac practice. Some expected features in this area are also overturned in these epistles, most notably the fact that in each epistle the complaining writer is a woman instead of the expected

elegiac male, and she complains of an unreliable husband/lover, not the usual fickle elegiac mistress. But the main expectations overturned in these epistles are those concerning certain social practices – those ideas about women’s dress and the “virtuous” task of woolworking for *matronae*. It is suggested here that for Ovid these ideas were problematic; dress was unreliable, and woolworking was for slaves, not high born *matronae*.

Chapter Four

Ovid Puts a Different Spin On It:

Corinna in the Amores

Introduction

A basic aim of this chapter is to look at what both “types” of Augustan women – *matrona* and *meretrix* – were wearing, and were said to be wearing. Of interest here are the descriptions of elegiac *puellae* by Propertius and Tibullus, the references to *matronae* by Ovid and also the findings of some modern scholars¹ who have studied Roman costume. This information is relevant here since it is suggested in this chapter that Ovid’s Corinna appears naked in *Amores* 1 as a rejection of “type-casting” by costume, and also appears as a forerunner of a “new woman” who is being addressed in *Ars Amatoria* 3.² It is suggested that Ovid’s interest in women’s costume (as seen in *Ars* 3) is in line with what appears to be a contemporary unwillingness to conform to the “ideal” – and the chapter concludes with evidence to the effect that women did in fact seem unwilling to conform in their dress.

As a result of the ideas outlined above, a main purpose of this chapter is to look at Ovid’s presentation in the *Amores* of his elegiac *puella* Corinna, and to compare Corinna with the presentation by Propertius and Tibullus of the elegiac *puellae* Cynthia, Delia and Nemesis. The reason for this comparison is to explore further a suggestion already made in the previous chapter. This was that Ovid apparently had concerns about the viability of two ideals – woolworking and costume – which in Augustan ideology were applied to the *matrona*. In the

¹ For example Elaine Fantham, Kelly Olson.

² The “third” possibility, between *matrona* and *meretrix*, is suggested by Roy Gibson as the woman whom Ovid addresses in *Ars Amatoria* 3 (Gibson 2007, 8): “What middle way can there be between *matrona* and *meretrix*? Ancient thought knows no such woman ... yet I suggest that in this *Ars* passage [3.299-306] we see once more a binary polarity contested by a triadic model – only now the triad involves morals and status and not just poetic practices.”

previous chapter (Three), Ovid's heroines from *Heroides* epistles 1, 3, 9 and 10 were looked at in terms of their involvement with one or both of these Augustan ideals of woolworking and costume. With each heroine Ovid appeared to undercut these ideals: woolworking was seen in its harsh reality, and costume seen as an unreliable means of identification. The figure of Corinna goes further than this; she conforms to neither ideal. She is presented in an elegiac context, but wears no elaborate dress like Cynthia or Nemesis. Whereas the elegiac Cynthia and Delia are both said to work wool, and thus retain a connection to the praiseworthy Lucretia and Penelope, Corinna bears no relation to these mythical representatives of the virtuous ideal of woolworking: she works no wool.

The present chapter looks, then, at Corinna's situation in two main ways, both involving how she "fits in". First she is seen in terms of the contemporary elegies of Propertius and Tibullus, where elegiac *puellae* appear. Then she is looked at in terms of how – as a real woman at the time – she would relate to her social context; here the Augustan adultery laws are relevant. She will be seen to conform neither in costume nor behaviour, and both this fact and what emerges as her apparently ambiguous social position look towards the woman of *Ars* 3 who similarly does not fit either of the desired categories for Augustan women.

* * * * *

Corinna, the elegiac mistress of Ovid, does not engage in woolworking. Both Cynthia and Delia, elegiac mistresses of Propertius and Tibullus respectively, are each depicted in at least one woolworking scene. Cynthia claims to have been woolworking while awaiting her lover at elegy 1.3.41, and though she is not named in elegy 3.6, she is probably the *puella* who sits spinning unhappily (16-17) after a lovers' quarrel. As for Delia, she is the example *par excellence* of the *puella* found virtuously occupied with woolworking when Tibullus imagines

her, in elegy 1.3 (83-92), awaiting his arrival from distant military service.³ But Corinna never appears in such a scene. A comparison of the way Ovid presents Corinna with the way Cynthia and Delia are presented shows how she differs from each of them in terms of her status as an elegiac mistress.

Both Corinna and Cynthia, in various aspects of their dress and manner, have been seen rather as representations of elegiac poetry itself than as descriptions of possible “real” mistresses (e.g. Hinds 2006, Wyke 2002, Keith 1994). This aspect of Corinna (as elegiac verse) will be considered only briefly here. But first she needs to be seen in terms of her immediate presentation – that is, the way in which Ovid introduces her as the sort of mistress figure who, like Cynthia and Delia, might occupy a position in contemporary Roman society approximating to that of an actual courtesan/mistress such as Antony’s Lycoris.⁴ Though the elegiac *puella* can be identified with elegiac technique, nevertheless “Ovid endows *puellae* with the physical, sartorial and moral characteristics of flesh-and-blood women” (Keith 1994, 39). What then, in terms of these characteristics – the first two in particular – is the impression given of Corinna the mistress as opposed to the other two principal elegiac mistresses, Cynthia and Delia?

How the “relationship” begins

In the first poem of *Amores* 1 there is no mention of Corinna. “From the very opening of the first book of *Amores*, it is *Ovidius poeta* who dominates the elegies” (Boyd 2006, 205). *Amores* 1.1 consists of Ovid’s statement of his subject matter: not *arma* (which is how *Aeneid* 1

³ Propertius 1.3, Tibullus 1.3 are treated in detail in Chapter 2; Propertius 3.6 in Chapter 2.

⁴ Lycoris is discussed in Chapter 2 in connection with Cynthia. Alison Keith (2008) sees the elegiac *puella* Cynthia in terms of a representation of elegiac practice. “For example, Propertius’ use of *forma* to denote Cynthia’s physical appearance invites metaliterary interpretation since the term is drawn from the critical register where it refers to style of composition”. For the purposes of this chapter, however, Cynthia – like Delia, Nemesis and Corinna – is looked at in terms of her dress and accomplishments as a possible courtesan figure.

begins) but *Amor*. Yet this kind of poetry, which he will now write, does not take its inspiration from some mistress by whom he has already been captivated, as Propertius states his position to be in his first elegy: *Cynthia .. me cepit* (1.1.1) “Cynthia took me captive”. Instead, Ovid claims he has no “matter” yet to write about:

nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta,
Aut puer aut longas compta puella comas
(1.1.19-20)

“and yet I have no matter suited to lighter rhythms – neither a boy, nor a girl with long and well-dressed hair”.

The implication is that, whether boy or girl (and if a girl, Ovid’s great interest in women’s hair makes an appearance) the poet will need someone to be *materia*; the “person” who provides this *materia* is thus objectified from the start. Even Tibullus, who begins his first elegy with lengthy illustrations of how dear he holds rural life, is much more generous than Ovid: *mea Delia* appears towards the end of the poem (57), and is already the mistress (*dominam* 46) by whom he is held – *me retinet* (55) – and who is the focus of his desire.

Ovid’s second elegy is still centred on the poet himself, now a captive of *Amor*, in whose triumph he will feature. There is no mention as yet as to who is the *materia*; his focus is on himself and his situation does not depend on any boy or girl. In elegy 3, however, the *praedata* *puella* appears in the first line, unnamed. She is hardly the predator, rather the prey; she is present only to offer matter for poems:

te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe:
provenient causa carmina digna sua. (1.3.19-20)

“offer yourself to me as fertile matter for my poems : poems will come forth worthy of their inspiration”

Io, Leda and Europa, women who have been celebrated in poetry, are named as encouragement to the *puella* – but all three were victims of Jupiter, and their “fame” would scarcely make up for

their unhappy fate. Is this a hint of the selfish use to which the *puella* will be put? – these women from myth have been “used” twice: first as *materia* for Jupiter, and then for the relevant poets. “Calling the *puella* his *materia* turns the woman into a dehumanised commodity, little more than a vehicle for the amator to display his talents” (Greene 1998, 76). But as this chapter will attempt to show, she may well go on to serve as *materia* for the poet to foreshadow, quite early in his poetic output, a different kind of elegiac *puella* from those created by Propertius and Tibullus – one who does not conform to the elegiac pattern of *meretrix* (like Delia and Cynthia) or the socially acceptable *matrona* clad in a *stola*.

In elegy 4 the *puella* is present – but not actually with the poet. She is at a party with her *vir* – who may be husband or just current “man” (Miller 2004, 169-183).⁵ Rather than being himself in her power (she who was seen as the *praedata puella* in elegy 3), the poet here represents her in the power of another man, as the “property” of the *vir*, who has the right to touch her (6) – as he the poet can hardly forbear to do:

vix a te videor posse tenere manus (10)

“I seem hardly able to keep my hands off you”⁶

But the lover apparently does not have to restrain himself for long.

In elegy 5 Corinna is named at last and revealed in all her splendour – revealed as Cynthia and Delia never appear: quite naked, with details given of each aspect of her naked body.⁷ This is how she is described:

⁵ The emphatic *vir tuus* (your man/husband?) as the first two words of the elegy indicate her status at once.

⁶ In fact the poet/lover outlines all the possible ways in which he can still have contact with her – but she is not his to control. As an introduction to the *puella* this elegy is a good example of the whole situation being seen entirely from the poet/lover’s point of view, expressing little but his desire for sexual contact. We find out nothing about the *puella*’s appearance or wishes.

⁷ Twice Propertius refers to Cynthia as naked (2.1.13-14) or semi-naked (2.15.5-6), when he is recalling sexual encounters with her, but nowhere are naked details of her body described.

ecce, Corinna venit tunica velata recincta,
 candida dividua colla tegente coma,
 qualiter in thalamos formosa Sameramis isse
 dicitur et multis Lais amata viris.
 deripui tunicam ; nec multum rara nocebatur,
 pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi ;
 quae, cum ita pugnaret tamquam quae vincere nollet,
 victa est non aegre proditione sua.
 ut stetit ante oculos posito velamine nostros,
 in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit :
 quos umeros, quales vidi tetigique lacertos!
 forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi !
 quam castigato planus sub pectore venter !
 quantum et quale latus! quam iuvenale femur!
 singula quid referam ? nil non laudabile vidi,
 et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum.
 cetera quis nescit ? lassi requievimus ambo.
 proveniant medii sic mihi saepe dies.

(*Amores* 1.5. 9-26)

“When lo! Corinna comes, draped in a tunic without a girdle, with her divided hair falling over a fair, white neck – such it is said was the famed Semiramis as she passed into the bedchamber, and also Lais, beloved of many men. I tore away the tunic – it was thin, and did not cause much trouble; but still she struggled to be covered by the tunic. While she struggled thus, as one would who did not wish to succeed, she was overcome without difficulty by her own betrayal. As she stood before my eyes with her dress laid aside, nowhere in the whole of her body was there any flaw. What shoulders, what arms did I see and touch! How suited to caresses was the shape of her breasts! How flat her stomach beneath the faultless bosom! How long and fine her side! What a youthful thigh! Why should I recall each detail? I saw nothing unworthy of praise, and I clasped her unclothed body to mine.”

Alison Keith thinks that Corinna’s appearance in the half-light at the beginning of elegy 1.5, having already been described as “a quasi-divine epiphany”, is one of a number of resemblances between Corinna and *Elegia*, the goddess whom the poet meets in *Amores* 3.1. Keith also thinks that Corinna, in fact, “herself may be said to embody the stylistic principles of elegiac verse” (1994, 32). One significant aspect of Keith’s argument concerns Corinna’s dress, which she sees as representing the nature of elegiac verse (30). That this is not necessarily so, will be seen as Corinna’s dress is discussed further on in this chapter, where her dress is seen to

be virtually non-existent and certainly non-specific, so that she does not conform to the dress of either *matrona* or *meretrix*. First, however, there are other aspects of Corinna's appearance in 1.5 which indicate her special nature as the important *puella* in the *Amores*.

Compared with the first appearances of Cynthia or Delia, Corinna's is very different. She is not the same sort of elegiac mistress as either Cynthia or Delia. She could, in fact, be seen as a precursor of the “woman who is intermediate between *matrona* and *meretrix*” (Gibson 2007, 87) – the woman who, Gibson thinks, is implied by Ovid’s advice in *Ars Amatoria* 3, advice which is directed at women who belong in neither of those categories. Gibson sees Ovid here as offering a “middle way” – “a triadic model” – a woman who is something other than either of those who represent the standard polarities: *matrona* or whore (86). In an attempt to find how this idea of a “new woman” might be relevant to Corinna, it is necessary to look in detail at how she is presented, with reference to two questions in particular: why is she naked? And what was she wearing before she was naked? By way of approaching these questions, a comparison is needed here between the presentation of Corinna and that of elegiac mistresses Cynthia, Delia and Nemesis. In this comparison, one main feature to be looked at will be how the mistresses are – or are not – clothed. But to begin with, what role does each one play as she is first presented?

Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis and Corinna: a comparison of their introduction and appearance

Corinna makes her first named entrance in elegy 5 of *Amores* 1. She has been seen in this elegy to be a non-active figure. “The inertness of the image of Corinna standing, expressed by the phrase *ut stetit* (thus she stood), suggests a statuelike quality” (Greene 1998, 81). “Corinna’s body … displays a perfection realizable only in a work of art such as a marble

statue” (Keith 1994, 31). She may look as perfect as a statue, but she is by no means inert. Her role here, like Lesbia’s in Catullus 68, is an active one; Corinna in fact boldly initiates the action in elegy 1.5 by coming apparently of her own accord to visit the poet/lover; there is no indication that he was expecting her arrival – his *ecce* in line 9 could indicate his surprise. This, the first poem in which Corinna is named and is described as being present, is very different from the poems in which Cynthia and especially Delia are first represented as being present.

Cynthia and Delia

Cynthia is described in elegies 1.1 and 1.2 of Propertius in some detail, but she does not appear “in person” until elegy 1.3. In this elegy she is at once seen by the poet/lover as he enters the room. He is drunk and arriving late, and as Cynthia lies sleeping he compares her beauty to various heroines of myth: *languida ... Cnosia* (Ariadne, line 2), Andromeda (line 4) *assiduis Edonis fessa choreis* – “A Bacchante exhausted from the dance”. Thus in our first sight of her she does not initiate the action, unlike Corinna who does take the initiative herself. It is Cynthia even more than Corinna who is like a work of art here, and there is the possibility that the poet had in mind paintings of some of these heroines (e.g. Breed 2003, Miller 2002, Curran 1966). Miller suggests that since there are numerous ancient paintings of sleeping nymphs and maenads being approached by “a satyr, Pan or Priapus with sexual intent” (171), this could well have been a source for Propertius. In his article on Propertius 1.3 Curran comments: “There is a certain static quality about the world of the heroines, which is only in part owing to the fact that they are all recumbent. They have the stability, permanence, and immutability of works of art, whether or not Propertius had particular paintings or statues in mind” (194-5). When Cynthia wakes up in elegy 1.3 she is allowed to speak for herself (35-46), and she complains of her lover’s absence.

It is he who was expected to come to her – which he did, albeit late – not she to him; Cynthia is represented in Propertius' *Monobiblos* as a *puella* with a character of her own, and in this elegy she expresses her sense of what is due to her:

namque ubi longa meae consumpti tempora noctis
languidus exactis, ei mihi, sideribus ? (37-8)

“Where otherwise did you spend long hours of a night that was my night (just look at you!) all limp with the stars starting to wane?”

Cynthia is not the girl to make the first move, as Corinna boldly does.

Tibullus introduces Delia as an “active participant” in the scene in his elegy 1.3, where he situates her as being present amongst woolworkers, awaiting his return, working into the night. Earlier in this poem Tibullus has recalled Delia in a “chaste” situation, by describing how she fulfilled the rites of Isis, which entailed sleeping apart from him (*puro secubuisse toro* 26). The setting amongst woolworkers also represents a “chaste” situation:

at tu casta, precor, maneas sanctique pudoris
assideat custos sedula semper anus (83-4)

“but you, I pray, continue chaste. Let the old woman always sit by your side, guarding your honour.”

Delia’s early representation by the poet is thus in strong contrast to Corinna’s highly erotic introduction in *Amores* 1.5. Delia in this first appearance, amongst the woolworkers, is elusive, since the whole scene is a dream-like imagining on the part of the poet/lover. Her presence here if (as most likely) she is a courtesan, is incongruous in this setting suggestive of a praiseworthy and arduous activity such as spinning, and this incongruity adds to the unconvincing nature of our first view of her. She certainly does not make the impact that Corinna makes, nor does she emerge with any definite character, as Cynthia does. These are early impressions. The possible social status of these mistresses needs to be looked at to see how Corinna might fit in socially.

The legal situation where Augustan laws sought to define the status of “available” women are relevant here.

Status of Cynthia, Delia, Corinna

It seems fairly safe to see Propertius depicting Cynthia as a courtesan. She is someone whom he apparently cannot marry, her situation making this not possible for him as a high status male. Thus he rejoices to find that he is not obliged by law to marry, since this would separate him from Cynthia:

gavisa est certe sublatam Cynthia legem
qua quondam edicta flemus uterque diu,
ni nos divideret (2.7.1-3)

“How Cynthia must have rejoiced at the repeal of that law whose past issuance caused us both to weep at length, in case it divided us.”⁸

Cynthia herself, with a liking for luxury (elegy 1.2), appears to enjoy the lifestyle of a courtesan, holidaying in Baiae⁹ (elegy 1.11) and going off with a rich praetor when it suits her, since he can probably pay her very well (elegy 2.16). The status of Delia and Corinna is not so clear, since quite early on (in elegy 1.2 for Delia, 1.4 for Corinna) the *puella* appears to be in the control not of the poet but of a man whose status is ambiguous.

Before Corinna makes her first named entrance, the poet has already described his anxious presence at a dinner-party which his *puella* – presumably Corinna – was also attending (elegy 1.4). In the first line of this elegy the *puella*’s status is at once made uncertain. Is she *matrona* or *meretrix*? The first two words – *vir tuus* – can be interpreted as “your husband” or “your (current) man”. There has been speculation about the companion with whom the *puella* is

⁸ This reference to a law is discussed in Chapter 2.

⁹ Sojourns in Baiae were seen by Cicero as strong enough implications that Clodia was a *meretrix*; he used the “accusation” about Baiae several times against her (*Pro Caelio* 35, 39, 47, 49).

attending the party, and thus about her status, but there has been no agreement. “There is, then a division of scholarly opinion” is how Miller sums up his brief survey of the differing opinions about Corinna (170). For example, Gordon Williams’ opinion (1970, 112) is that “Ovid imagined his Corinna as a respectable woman and married.” (Elegy 1.5 might cast doubt on “respectable” in Williams’ sense of the word?) McKeown in his commentary on elegy 1.4 thinks that though the *vir* might be a husband figure, “it is not certain, however, that the relationship is adulterous” (1989, 76-77). Miller’s own opinion is that the term *vir* is ambiguous: if “husband” then the relationship in the *Amores* is adulterous, and Ovid is “deliberately flouting Augustus’ moral reform”. The term *vir*, he thinks, “provides Ovid with plausible deniability, allowing him to appear both subversive and submissive at the same time”. Miller notes that the term *vir*, along with *maritus* and *uxor*, have been seen as “merely metaphors for stable long-term relationships”, so that if Corinna is a *meretrix* she may simply be living with a man who is supporting her. But the early mention of a *vir* in *Amores I* – before Corinna is even named – obviously clouds the issue. Might Ovid be creating this ambiguity for another reason: that he actually wants his *puella* here to be neither *matrona* nor *meretrix*?

The third possibility that comes to mind is that Corinna represents a freedwoman. McKeown thinks that to consider her as a freedwoman and unmarried “seems to accord best with such little information as Ovid gives elsewhere about his mistress” and adds that “a liaison with a freedwoman, whether married or not, was unlikely to attract strong censure” (1989, 78). The status of freedwoman for Corinna may not be so “safe” as it seems, however, depending on certain provisions of Augustan law at the time when Ovid was writing the *Amores*.

The *Lex Iulia* on adultery

The initial composition of the *Amores* is thought to date from 25BC, with the second edition appearing 12-7BC (Hardie 2002) or 1BC (Conte 1994). In this period the Augustan laws were passed whose purpose was moral and social reform, in particular the *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* of 18BC. This law sought to define the status of women who were legally available for sexual liaisons on the part of high status males.¹⁰ In his commentary on *Ars Amatoria* 3 (2004), Roy Gibson looks at the analysis by McGinn (1998) of which women were exempted from the *Lex Iulia* – that is, those with whom it was legal, not an act of adultery – to have a sexual liaison, extra-marital or otherwise (Gibson 2004, 25-36). He finds McGinn's analysis indicating that prostitutes and *lenae*¹¹ were certainly exempt, but that the position of freedwomen was not clear. According to Gibson, this uncertainty is relevant to Ovid's advice in *Ars Amatoria* 3, where neither *matronae* nor *meretrices* are specifically defined as his intended audience. These were the two categories into which the law sought to divide women, but Ovid, says Gibson, blurs this distinction and thus “directly contravenes the spirit of moral reform expressed in the *Lex Iulia*” (35). So who is the woman being addressed in *Ars* 3? – is she the one whom Gibson calls the “intermediate between *matrona* and *meretrix*”? Was she a freedwoman?

It appears that the *Lex Iulia* technically offered the status of *matrona* to freedwomen since they were not explicitly exempted as were prostitutes and *lenae*, (thus Gibson interprets McGinn's analysis), but this situation would not have been acceptable to the “established urban elite” (Gibson 31). When Ovid in his famous disclaimer excludes *matronae* from the audience

¹⁰ The following discussion includes Roy Gibson's interpretation of aspects of the *Lex Iulia*.

¹¹ And McGinn adds (201) most likely actresses and foreign women not married to Roman citizens

of his *Ars Amatoria* (at Ars 1.31),¹² is he excluding only the symbolic *matronae* and not excluding the freedwomen who might also aspire to that status, but who would not be acceptable as such to the elite? If the woman intended as Ovid's audience was a freedwoman, she might then seem to present a risk, since she was not technically exempt from the Julian law. This was what Gibson sees as Ovid's bold intention. In a context of "juristic uncertainty" about the Julian Law's exclusions, Ovid is "shifting the responsibility for constructing the legal boundaries ... on to the reader" (Gibson 30). But had Ovid already presented such a woman as might be his intended audience for the *Ars*, one who was risky and of ambiguous status, in Corinna?

To see in what way Corinna might represent a "new" woman, she needs to be seen in the context of the other elegiac mistresses: how she differs from them in her initial presentation has already been noted in part, but there is also the question of dress. How does Corinna compare here with the other mistresses? And how might she be seen in the context of dress in general? – since it was apparently by means of dress that the opposing categories of *matrona* and *meretrix* were meant to be distinguished.¹³

The dress of *matrona* and *meretrix* – preserving the fabric of society

The *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* of 18BC attempted a definitive separation of *matrona* and *meretrix*. These two categories were already clearly regarded as opposites. In *Adelphoe* of Terence (160BC Conte 1994) the *senex* Demea is incredulous that these two incompatible kinds of women could be housed together by his brother Micio:

¹² este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
quaeque tegit medios, instita longa, pedes
(Keep away, thin fillets, sign of modesty,
And the long garment that covers the mid instep of the feet)

¹³ The question of women's clothing is dealt with in Chapter 3 with relevance to Cynthia and her dress, which is a major feature of how she is presented by Propertius.

meretrix et materfamilias una in domo? (747)

“a *meretrix* and a *matrona* together in one house?”

Much closer to the actual time of the Julian law, Horace sees the two as equally incompatible in Epistle 18 (20BC Conte):

ut matrona meretici dispar erit atque
discolor, infido scurrae distabit amicus (3-4)

“as *matrona* and *meretrix* will differ in temper and tone, so will the friend be distinct from the faithless parasite”

The means by which the Julian law intended to separate *matrona* and *meretrix* was that of their respective mode of dress, so that they might easily be distinguished in public (McGinn, 154ff). “In classical Antiquity, you were what you wore”,¹⁴ the *meretrix* was now legally required to wear the *toga*, whereas the *matrona* was, ideally, to continue to wear the *stola* and the other items of dress that had apparently always signified her status (Sebesta 2001, 45-53).¹⁵

The dress of the *matrona*, as described by Sebesta, differs slightly from that of the *materfamilias*;¹⁶ the latter was to be distinguished by a special hairstyle, the *tutulus*, where the hair was piled high on the head and bound with *vittae*, woollen fillets. The *vittae* were particularly significant: “hair bound with *vittae* was so distinctive a style that by itself it signified the married woman” (49). The *matrona* and *materfamilias* both wore the long garment known as the *stola*, and the rectangular mantle, or *palla*. The *vittae* had religious significance since it was woollen bands that bound the head of a victim intended for sacrifice: they indicated that the animal was pure and was dedicated to the gods (49). Thus in *Aeneid* 2 Sinon, claiming he was chosen for sacrifice by the Greeks, said he had his head bound with *vittae*: *et circum*

¹⁴ And not much has changed. At the G20 conference on the world monetary crisis, held in London in March 2009, the effigy of a banker – identified by his suit – was burned by protesters; bankers were warned to “dress down”.

¹⁵ As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the costumes described here are more likely to be an ideal rather than garments frequently worn.

¹⁶ A number of sources point to an identical meaning for *matrona* and *materfamilias* (McGinn, 150).

tempora vittae (2.133) (and *vittae* around the temples).¹⁷ The *tunica*, basic undergarment for *matronae*, needed to have another garment worn over it, both for modesty and warmth, and this was the *stola*; married women were entitled to wear the *stola*, and freedwomen married to Roman citizens gained this right also.¹⁸ The *stola* covered the *matrona* from the shoulders, where it was suspended by straps as far as the mid-step.¹⁹ The *palla*, or cloak, was worn over the *stola* for outdoors – made of wool or lighter material as needed. The dress of the *matrona* was thus distinctive and totally unlike the toga of the *meretrix*.

The toga appears to have been a designated costume for the *meretrix* before it was made legally so by the Lex Iulia. Cicero mentions the prostitute's toga in his second *Philippic* against Antony (43BC Conte) where he is accusing Antony of being the *meretrix* of Curio:

Sumpsisti virile, quem statim muliebrem togam reddidisti. Primo vulgare scortum; certa flagitii merces nec ea parva; sed cito Curio intervenit, qui te a meretricio quaestu abduxit et, tamquam stolam dedisset, in matrimonio stabili et certo conlocavit (*Philippics* 2.18.44)

“You assumed a man’s toga, and at once turned it into a prostitute’s. At first you were a common prostitute, the fee for your infamies was fixed, nor was it small; but Curio quickly turned up, who withdrew you from your meretricious traffic, and as if he had given you a stola, he established you in an enduring and stable marriage.”²⁰

¹⁷ Servius comments on this line 133: *vittae quibus victimae coronabantur*.

¹⁸ Sebesta notes this fact (p.49) and mentions that there is a reference from Macrobius that appears to indicate this (she does not quote it). Macrobius’ words are: ita ut libertinae quoque, quae *longa veste* uterentur, in eam rem pecuniam subministrarent (1.6.13-14) (the passage deals with a collection of cash to which freedwomen who wore the “long gown” might contribute.)

¹⁹ The word *instita* is thought by some scholars (e.g. K. Olson 2008, pp30-1) to indicate some sort of flounce or extra horizontal panel added to a garment. But Margrete Bieber (1977 p.23) believes that the *instita* are the straps by which the garment is suspended. Sebesta (1994) agrees with this.

²⁰ Apart from his contention that Curio made an honest woman of Antony with a *stola*, Cicero criticises Antony’s clothing elsewhere as part of his general criticism of the man. These outbursts against Antony’s dress (discussed at length in Sebesta and Bonfante, 133-45) are an indication not only of what the traditional modes of dress actually were, but also of the value placed on adhering to such traditions: it was clearly a powerful method of attacking character to describe a lack of concern for “correct” clothing. For example, Antony’s clothing and footwear provoke Cicero’s outrage at *Philippics* 2.76, where Cicero contrasts his own correctly attired return from Narbo with that of Antony, who wore unsuitable shoes – *gallicae* – and a *lacerna*, a cloak, instead of the *toga* and *calcei* which was the correct dress for a dignified Roman senator, and which Cicero himself had worn. The *gallica* was a sort of sandal (109) and the *lacerna* a cloak that could be worn over a toga (229), but Antony was possibly wearing a *lacerna* alone. Augustus (Suetonius 40) banned the wearing of the *lacerna* in the forum, since it hid the toga: men must appear *positis lacernis*. Cicero’s outrage at Antony’s cloak and sandals is extreme: *ex omnibus omnibus flagitiis nullum turpius vidi, nullum audivi*.

There is another reference to what appears to be a toga-clad prostitute at Horace *Satires* 1.2.63, where the poet is contrasting *ancilla togata* with *matrona*; although *ancilla* usually denotes a slave-girl, the context indicates that Horace is talking about a prostitute here. But a definite connection between a low-grade prostitute (*scortum*) and the toga which she wears is made in Sulpicia's poem berating Cerinthus for his faithlessness – he has been frequenting just such a prostitute, who is a *quasillaria* into the bargain:

sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo
scortum quam Servi filia Sulpici
([Tibullus] 4.10.3-4)

“for you toga and prostitute loaded with woolbasket may be more worthy of your preference than Sulpicia, Servius' daughter”

It is clear that *meretrix* and *matrona* were traditionally assigned very different modes of dress. How then do Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis and Corinna compare in terms of dress with these established modes? None of these *puellae* conforms to the established modes – Corinna least of all of course. Cynthia's elaborate dress is described below; it is far from resembling the dress of the ideal *matrona*.

Cynthia, a material girl

Cynthia, mistress of Propertius, of all the elegiac *puellae* is the one whose appearance is presented by the poet in the most visual detail – this despite claims (e.g. by Keith 1994) that the naked Corinna receives the fullest description of any mistress. Cynthia is represented as a faultless beauty, possessing charm of manner and attributes as well as accomplishments, all this along with her various physical attractions. She has golden hair and tapering hands: *fulva coma est longaeque manus* (2.2.5); she walks with the grace of a goddess: *Iove digna soror* (2.2.6); her complexion is like lilies and roses bathed in milk; *lilia non domina sint magis alba mea ... utque rosae puro lacte natant folia* (2.3.10-12). Her speech is charming: *unica ... gratia verbis*

(1.2.29); she is able to play the lyre exquisitely, and compose songs at least as great as those of Corinna the poet (2.3.22-3). (Though she shares the poet's name Ovid's Corinna is not granted this sort of equal literary talent, and nor does such a specifically detailed image emerge of her as we have of Cynthia.) But it is Cynthia's dress that is her most striking aspect.

Propertius and silk

Cynthia's favoured garment is one made from the fabulous Coan silk, expensive and shimmering, and very revealing of the body, either because it clung and moved with the wearer, or because it was semi-transparent – probably both. Propertius addresses her in elegy 1.2, claiming that she has no need of such a garment to enhance her beauty, but clearly delighting in the image:

Quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo
et tenues Coa veste movere sinus (1.2.1-2)

“What is the use of stepping out, my darling, with glamorous hair-do, and setting Coan silk gown of fine folds on the move?”

The poet claims that love shuns one who uses artifice: *Amor ... non amat artificem* (1.2.8) Nevertheless in his descriptions of Cynthia he does not appear to agree with this sentiment, since he enjoys the adornment.

So much visual detail is given in general in Propertius' depiction of Cynthia that apart from having been seen as a “written” creation (Wyke 2002), she might also be seen as a “painted” one. Alison Sharrock (1991, 40) notes that in elegy 1.2 Propertius tells Cynthia not to paint herself – but then proceeds to “paint” her in words. And the poet is clearly delighted by describing the luxuries associated with Cynthia, especially her dress: when she gleams in silk: *quando Arabo lucet bombyce puella* (2.3.15) or when as she moves he sees the silk shimmer:

illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi (2.1.5). It is almost as if Cynthia were a vehicle for the poet to express his interest and pleasure in the luxurious items that he associates with her: perfumes and ornaments (e.g. in 1.2) as well as the silk; Propertius seems to have a special interest in silk.

Apart from Propertius, Coan silk is mentioned by other poets of the period.²¹ Horace claims it is revealing: *Cois tibi paene videre est ut nudam* (Satires 1.2.101-2) (in her Coan silk you may see her, almost as if naked). Tibullus clothes Nemesis in silk, and mentions it also in a list of luxuries which he deplores, since they encourage greed in girls: *vestes quas femina Coa/texuit* (2.3.57-8) (fine garments which Coan women have woven); *et Coa ... vestis* (2.4.29). Ovid tells his pupils to admire the girl if she is wearing Coan silk – or whatever else she is wearing, in fact – as this will please her: *sive erit in Cois, Coa decere puta* (*Ars Amatoria* 2.298) (or if she is in Coan, then find the Coan style becoming). What these other poets mention each time is the Coan type of silk, using the words *Coa* or *Cois*, but Propertius uses several other words denoting silk. As well as those derived from *Cos* (*Cous* = Coan, *Coa* = Coan garments OLD), Propertius uses the less common words *serica* and *bombyx* for silk. *Bombyce* (quoted above from elegy 2.13) is actually the first use of the word in Latin (Richardson 1977 in a note on 2.13.15). *Bombyx* is the technical name of a moth from which silk was produced in ancient China (Wild 1970, 11). Silk was imported from China: “the frontier policy of Rome from Augustus to Trajan was directed, in large part, by the desire to circumvent Parthia and gain direct

²¹ The association of Coan silk garments with girls who are not too “hard to get” is made by Propertius himself, in a speech he gives to the statue Vertumnus: *indue me Cois, fiam nono dura puella* (4.2.23) (clothe me in Coan silk garments, and I shall become an “available” girl). But this connection was possibly made earlier, in a remark that referred to the famous Clodia who, Cicero implied, was to all intents and purposes a *meretrix*. Quintilian (8.6.53), in discussing *allegoria*, mentions how Caelius as an orator described Clodia: *ut Caelius “quadrantariam Clytemnestram” et “in triclinio Coam, in cubiculo nolam.”* (Caelius referred to her as a threepenny Clytemnestra, and as a *Coa* and a *nola*). What Caelius seems to have meant was that she appeared willing for sex when in the dining room (*coeo?*) but once in the bedroom she was not so amenable (*nolo*). Part of his pun in calling her *Coa* might be from the verb *coeo* (*coitus*) but part also might be that she wore provocative Coan silk as a “come-on”.

control of raw silk, silk yarn, and garments from China” (Sebesta, 71). The word *serica* for silk or silk garments is also derived from *Seres*, the inhabitants of China (OLD).

Propertius uses *serica* for the fabric covering of a sort of chariot that Cynthia drives, off to some assignation with the chariot’s owner, the poet thinks:

serica nam taceo vulsi carpenta nepotis (4.8.223)

“I say nothing of the smooth-skinned spendthrift’s silk-hung trap.”

But the word *serica* appeared already in the first book of Propertius’ elegies, to describe gorgeous textiles which are of no help to a young man who cannot sleep, since he is suffering the pangs of love:

quid relevant variis serica textilibus? (1.14.22)

“of what use his silks of varied texture?”

The textiles here sound like a sort of silk damask, of varied weave and colours, possibly the *polymita* mentioned by Pliny (N.H.8.196). As well as these more exotic references, Propertius also mentions the better-known Coan silk a significant number of times. Apart from those references mentioned above, which describe Cynthia’s dress (e.g. in 1.2, 2.1) Coan silk is given prominence by the *lena* Acanthis (elegy 4.5) as one of the luxuries that a *puella* might extract from a rich lover. The elaborate luxury of the textile is here matched by the elaborate language used to describe it. Also mentioned by the *lena* are the very exotic gold figures which could be cut from much older textiles and applied to more current ones for decoration.

Eurypylisve placet Coae textura Minervae,
sectaque ab Attalicis putria signa toris (4.5.23-4)

“or you like the Eurypylean weave of Coan silk and fragile figures cut from Attalid bed covers”²²

²² With regard to the *Attalis toris*: Pliny (NH 8.96) states that King Attalus invented *aurum intexere*, the in-weaving of gold (gold thread presumably). If the figures (*signa*) were in-woven they would not be able to be cut out of the textile, it would unravel. They were more likely embroidered by means of couched-down gold thread (as was the

Nowhere in the elegies of Tibullus or Ovid are textiles described with such complex detail, nor do they figure nearly so prominently as they do throughout the elegies of Propertius.²³

Perhaps Propertius was interested in silk itself, and the fact that there were different silks, imported both from Cos and from China, both representing great luxury. Or else it was the exotic words and the language itself that interested him. In any case, his references to expensive luxuries and exotic silks are conspicuous, and on this basis a contrasting comparison could be made between Propertius and Tibullus. The sophisticated luxury of Propertius' verbal pictures might be contrasted with the detailed pastoral descriptions of Tibullus who, for his part, appeared in both books of elegies to take an interest in wool and woolworking (discussed in Chapter Two). The opposition of luxurious silk textiles to simpler woollen ones with their religious associations of purity leads back to an opposition of *meretrix* to *matrona*.

Propertius by clearly identifying Cynthia with silk (rather than wool) makes it plain that (in terms of accepted dress codes) she is a *meretrix* rather than a *matrona* – admittedly an upmarket *meretrix*, a courtesan. His emphasis on her delicacy of appearance and expensive, gorgeous ornamentation also makes it highly improbable that she would have had anything to do with the hard task of woolworking, so that the brief references in elegies 1.3 and 3.6 to her activity of this sort cannot be meant to be serious. (These elegies are discussed in Chapters Two and Three.) The ivory fingers (*digitis eburnis* 2.1.9) with which she strikes her lyre would soon be very rough, red and most unlike the colour of ivory if she worked wool.

usual practice in medieval ecclesiastical embroidery), since Pliny also notes that *acu facere* was invented in Asia as well. The figures could then be cut out and applied elsewhere.

²³ Cynthia in her silk garments has been seen to represent elegiac poetic practice: “Even Cynthia’s clothing assists the identification of elegiac *puella* with elegiac practice, since *Cous* is used elsewhere in the Propertian corpus to signal the Hellenistic poet Philitas” (Wyke 2002, 149-50). Nevertheless, despite his interest in presenting Cynthia as a personification of elegiac practice, Propertius also has a definite and independent interest in silk, luxurious textiles and goods, and the visual imagery he can create with them.

But if she is a *meretrix*, she is certainly one who would be very unlikely indeed to wear the toga. She is not the sort of low-class prostitute who lives in a foul brothel (*olenti in fornice*) like the women whom, Horace says, some men prefer (*Satires* 1.2.30). And neither is Tibullus' Delia one of those women, and nor is she said to wear a toga. As presented by Tibullus, Delia appears in a late night scene of woolworking, where her implied virtue – that of a *matrona* like Lucretia – is incongruous: she is no *matrona*.

Delia (as presented by Tibullus) – a web of pretence

As to Delia's supposed status, Maltby (2002, 44-5) thinks she must be a freedwoman, and probably not married. In elegy 1.2 her *vir* is mentioned, where she is imagined as communicating with the poet/lover, in the presence of this other man, by means of eloquent nods of the head:

illa viro coram nutus conferre loquaces (1.2.21)

“in the presence of the husband(?) / man(?) to exchange eloquent nods”

In elegy 1.6 both she and the man she is presumably living with are each described as *coniunx* (1.6.15,33), which term usually denotes a marriage partner, but Maltby thinks it likely that “she is to be thought of as the man’s concubine, her status is likely to be that of a *libertina*”. Maltby believes Book 1 of the elegies was published late 27 or early 26 BC (40), which is several years before the *Lex Iulia* of 18 BC where, as mentioned above, “permissible” sexual partners were designated by means of their exemption from this law; might it be that liaisons with freedwomen, married or otherwise, did not at this stage cause problems for elite males? The exemptions from the *Lex Iulia*, though later than this elegy of Tibullus, however, may not have included married

freedwomen,²⁴ so that if Delia's *vir* was a husband, things might have been getting difficult for the lover. If, on the other hand, Delia is intended as a *meretrix*, she is not presented as a low-status toga-clad whore, but more likely as a courtesan, the apparent status of Cynthia. But Delia does not seem to be very freely available to the poet/lover.

Almost every reference to Delia in the first book of the elegies is in the setting of a wished-for imagining on the part of the lover. In elegy 1.1 she is presumably the mistress with whom he wishes he might lie at night, safe from the cold and rain:

quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem
et dominam tenero continuisse sinu!
(1.1.45-6)

“how pleasant, lying and hearing the harsh winds, and holding my mistress in tender embrace”

She is, in the same elegy, *mea Delia* (57), whose company the poet prefers to any glory he may achieve. But in the same poem she is being urged to be more willing towards him (*iungamus amores* (69) – let us unite in love), and in the next elegy, 1.2, the poet laments bitterly how he is shut out from her, as she is apparently living with another man – live-in lover? – whom he designates as her *coniunx* (43). She is urged to trick this other man by stealing out at night, opening the locked door with something like a bent hairpin (17-18). The poet even resorts to magic in his efforts to win her (*saga*, 44 – a sort of magic-worker). Again he returns to the dream scenario of living with Delia in the country and sleeping happily on bare ground provided that she is in his arms (75-6). Delia has been classed as another elegiac mistress along with Cynthia, Nemesis and even Corinna,²⁵ but despite certain similarities, the image of Delia presented by Tibullus differs from those other mistresses in various ways. To start with, what is her initial appearance “in person”?

²⁴ As discussed above with regard to Ovid.

²⁵ e.g. outlined in Wyke 2002, Ch.1.

There is a marked contrast between Cynthia and Delia here. Cynthia is introduced “in person” by Propertius in elegy 1.3, and Delia makes a similar appearance in elegy 1.3 of Tibullus. But she is there as already noted, only in the poet’s imagination. He is thinking in a dream-like way of the scene that might occur on his return from military service, that he might find Delia amongst the woolworkers late at night, and she might rush to greet him. This introduction to Delia as a “person” thus contrasts with the introduction of Cynthia (and especially with that of Corinna). This can be seen by taking a brief look again at Cynthia’s first “personal appearance”.

Elegy 1.3 of Propertius is purportedly an account by the poet/lover of an episode in which he arrived late and drunk to his mistress Cynthia and found her asleep. He describes what look like realistic details of his state at the time.

ebria cum multo traherem vestigia Baccho (1.3.9)

“I came dragging footsteps unsteadied by much wine.”

He continues his description of the episode with a detailed account of his efforts to approach Cynthia, fearful of her anger:

non tamen ausus eram dominae turbare quietem (17)

“yet I did not dare disturb my mistress’ rest”

then describes his attempts to give gifts (24), his anxiety that she has had other lovers (30). The progressive accumulation of this detail leads to the awakening of Cynthia as an ending to the small-scale dramatic presentation, and the fact that she actually speaks greatly increases the impact she makes here. By the end of elegy 1.3 a comprehensive picture of Cynthia has emerged: in elegy 1 her captivating power over her lover, in elegy 2 her beauty, dress, elegance, and finally in elegy 3 her own words – managing as she speaks to indicate her accomplishments,

such as music (42), as well as expressing her feelings towards her lover. Her status has also been foreshadowed, in that we have seen quite early on that she dresses beautifully and expensively in silk, while there is clearly no hint of *vittae* or *stola*, the signs of a *matrona*. Thus the picture of Cynthia is given a certain “reality” by Propertius; Delia, however, is a much vaguer figure.

In elegy 1.3 of Tibullus, before the lover’s imagined encounter with Delia, the poet mentions her involvement in the rites of Isis (23). This goddess, according to the elegiac poets, was apparently favoured by prostitutes; she is mentioned in connection with both Cynthia and Corinna also (*Amores* 1.8.74; Propertius 2.33.2). This favour by prostitutes (McKeown 1989, 240; Maltby 2002, 191) is another hint as to Delia’s status (other indications have been discussed above). But when Tibullus pictures Delia in the final section of the elegy (83-94), she presents a puzzling picture. She is apparently amongst woolworkers, but what is her role? There are really only two possibilities. She could be a higher status woman, supervising the work – quite possibly a *matrona*. If she is just one of the workers, she would be a low-status spinning-girl (*quasillaria*). Neither will suit here. But Tibullus is using the scene to enhance his depiction of Delia: the woolworking is a praiseworthy activity.

Comparisons of Delia with Penelope have been made for this scene, and even with Lucretia (both discussed in Chapter Two). Delia could perhaps be seen as engaged in woolworking as a means of preserving her fidelity, which was of course how Penelope managed for some time to keep suitors at bay. But the likelihood of a similar fidelity on the part of Delia, to judge from indications in earlier elegies, is not great. The scene (at 1.3.83-94), late at night with lamps lit, is also very like the scene where Lucretia sits with her women (Livy 1.57). There is no certainty Tibullus knew of this scene, which in any case presents Lucretia as the model of

virtue for a high-born *matrona* – and Delia, certainly not a freeborn *matrona*, is much more likely a *courtesan*. So where does the positive aspect of woolworking as praiseworthy in this scene come from?

Contemporary representations of the dutiful nature of woolworking are found in *Georgics 1*, as mentioned above (detailed in Chapter One). It was seen as the good rural housewife's task. But Delia here, if meant to be a housewife, is a wayward one – she needs the old woman to guard her:

assideat custos sedula semper anus (84)

“let the old woman sit always as your constant guardian”

The whole process, with much wool to work – *plena colu* (86) – and stories to keep the mind from other thoughts (of another lover?) will go on late into the night. That this situation is an ideal is emphasised by the poet's mention of no warning being given to Delia of his arrival (89), since an ideal Delia would need none. In a “real” situation Delia as a courtesan would need such a warning so that she could be found waiting in an appropriate way. Thus Delia is incongruous here, since she is obviously not a rural housewife; the other possible role, *quasillaria*, is the lowest status slave: for Sulpicia [Tibullus] 4.10) *scortum* and *quasillaria* are one and the same, and both despised. Tibullus seems unlikely to want Delia to be seen in that role. But what then of her physical appearance in this scene, apart from her supposed occupation? – since this is one of the few times such a glimpse of her is afforded.

She has none of the trappings of a *matrona* here. As she is imagined running to greet her lover, her long hair is in disarray – *longos turbata capillos* – and she is barefoot – *nudato ... pede*. If she wore a long garment such as the *stola* her bare feet would not be so obvious, nor

could she run so readily, as one of the features of such a garment was the fact that it covered – and impeded – the feet. Horace typifies the *stola* in this way:

substuta talos tegat instita veste (*Satires* 1.2.29)

“the ankles hidden by the dress suspended from its straps”

and Ovid, in his famous disclaimer, agrees:

quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes
(*Ars Amatoria* 1.32)

“you who, lengthened by straps, cover the middle of the foot”

Tibullus himself is at pains to indicate this feature of the *stola* in elegy 6. In this elegy – after another imagined scene with Delia as his companion/wife living with him on his farm, picking apples (elegy 5) – the poet makes it clear that Delia is not a *matrona*. In his address to Delia’s mother, who has aided him in his attempts to be with his mistress, the poet asks

sit modo casta doce, quamvis non vitta ligatos
impeditat crines nec stola longa pedes (6.67-8)

“only teach her to be faithful, though no *vitta* confines her hair by binding it, nor does a long *stola* confine her feet”

Despite the fact that she is not a *matrona*, owing fidelity to her husband, nevertheless he would have her faithful to himself. Thus although at no point do we really see what Delia is actually wearing, it is clearly not the *stola*. But she does not (or so it seems) wear the silk favoured by Cynthia, despite the fact that she is similarly physically beautiful:

... facie tenerisque lacertis
devovet et flavis nostra puella comis (1.5.43-4)

“she bewitches with face and soft arms, my girl, and with golden hair.”

Maltby sees pathos in the use of *nostra* here; Delia’s charms have the power to captivate, as do Cynthia’s, but Tibullus as lover does not seem to share the opportunities to enjoy such beauty

that Propertius has. The impression given by the first book of elegies of Tibullus is one of dreams and wishes mostly unfulfilled.

The poet presents Delia as both more and less than an elegiac mistress; he presumably knows of Cynthia as an example of this sort of *puella*,²⁶ but what he imagines is a less sophisticated, more amenable figure, more like a wife than a mistress – a *puella* who favours traditional values, such as farming and woolworking. If she, like Cynthia, might be thought of as a “written woman”, she does not quite conform to the delicate silk-clad mistress figure who can be seen as personifying elegiac poetry. Nor does she really conform to this description: “luxurious dress and rich adornment are the conventional hallmarks of the elegiac mistress, who is more frequently rebuked for her love of luxury and greed for gifts than celebrated for the simplicity of her personal style” (Keith 2008, 194). But Tibullus does present a mistress who fits this description: she is Nemesis, who is introduced in his second book. And whereas he wished to associate Delia with the country, Nemesis is apparently a city girl.

Nemesis and luxury

Nemesis, despite being a city girl, has been taken off to the country, perhaps by some rich lover. Elegy 2.3 laments the fact:

Rura, meam, Cornute, tenant villaequa puellam (2.3.1)

“The countryside and country villas hold my girl, Cornutus.”

Nevertheless the poet would labour in the country if he could be with her (5-6). This girl, however, is one who wants rich gifts, and she is the one who will wear the most expensive garment – not just Coan silk, but silk with gold woven into it. This fabric is not another example

²⁶ Propertius 1, 28 BC, Tibullus 1, 27 BC (approximately for each) (Maltby 2002).

of the poet's imagination, as textiles incorporating real gold thread have been found dating from quite early in the Roman period (Sebesta, 2001, 66,68).

Pliny has a note on the introduction of gold woven into textiles, which practice he says comes from Asia (N.H.8.196). Thus clad, Nemesis will be seen in the streets of Rome:

ut mea luxuria Nemesis fluat utque per urbem
incedat donis conspicienda meis.
illa gerat vestis tenues quas femina Coa
texuit, auratas dispositaque vias (2.3.55-8)

"let my Nemesis float in luxury and step out through the city, clearly to be seen in gifts of mine. Let her wear the fine garments which Coan women wove, and into which they placed golden paths."

Nor should Nemesis want for any other expensive textiles, such as those dyed with purple and scarlet:

illi selectos certent praebere colores
Africa puniceum purpureumque Tyros (2.3.61-2)

"let them vie to offer choice colours – Africa with scarlet, Tyre with purple."

Tibullus has not associated Delia with this sort of extravagant luxury. And extravagant is the word for such things – since it is the lover who has to provide them if he is to keep a girl like Nemesis. In elegy 2.4 he complains of this, and wishes evil on those who deal in such goods:

O pereat quicumque legit viridesque smaragdos
et niveam Tyrio murice tingit ovem !
hic dat avaritiae causas et Coa puellis
vestis et Rubro lucida concha Mari (2.4.27-30).

"let anyone perish who gathers green emeralds, and dyes the snowy fleece with Tyrian murex. He gives reasons – as do Coan garments – to girls for avarice, as do the gleaming pearls from the Red Sea."

Just as the wool that the courtesan Cynthia toyed with was purple (Prop. 1.3.41), so the wool that might delight Nemesis has lost its white purity and been dyed. As well as the wool/silk contrast of textiles already noted, here is the contrast between white and purple wool; the white, undyed

“pure” wool is the common wool for spinning such as Delia was imagined doing, whereas the purple (having lost its “purity”) is associated with Nemesis. It is pointed out that this passage in Tibullus 2.4 is an example of a “denunciation of wealth and luxury”, which was a “rhetorical commonplace in Hellenistic and Latin literature” (Maltby, 2002, 140). But it also serves as a strong identification of Nemesis with luxury, and especially with luxurious textiles. At this point she is being described in language reminiscent of that used by Propertius to describe Cynthia. She even outdoes Cynthia in her ostentatious (albeit imagined) progress through the city. Cynthia walks in a more stately way – the words used for her walk all indicate this: *procedere*, *moveare sinus* (moving the folds of her dress, 1.2. 1-2), *incedere* (2.1.5), *incedit vel Iove digna soror* (moving like Juno 2.2.6). But Nemesis not only walks, she *flows – fluat* (55), and she is *conspicienda* – certainly worthy of being looked at. In fact the descriptions of her dress and the luxury textiles on offer to her both bear more looking at in themselves.

The silk garment worn by Nemesis is described as having *auratae viae*, stripes of gold woven into it. Maltby notes that the only other instance of this use of *viae* is in Servius’ explanation of *virgatis sagulis* (striped cloaks) in *Aeneid* 8.660 as *quae habebant in virgarum modum deductas vias* (409). The metaphor is also observed as such by Maltby, who sees *vias* as a good example of Tibullus’ “occasional penchant for technical language”. But it is also more than that. Nemesis is presented as a mistress who differs from Delia in significant ways. First of all, when she is introduced and named in elegy 2.3, she is in the country – but not entirely from choice, as it is the country estates which “hold” her (*tenent*). She is likely there in the company of a rich rival of the poet, who lures her with luxuries; such attachment to luxuries the poet attacks (39-40), but he will provide them to get his mistress back (51-62). Nemesis, the mistress of *Elegies* 2, is really a city girl. “Delia is the presiding spirit of that countryside as Nemesis is

the city personified” (Bright 1978, 114). The progress this *puella* will make is *per urbem*, and her dress will have *viae – streets* – woven into it as she walks those city *streets*. The poet’s fondest imaginings of Delia on the other hand were of living with her in the country, especially such scenes as in 1.5 where she plays with the slave children and picks apples, or in 1.3 where she is involved in woolworking late at night like a rural housewife. But the place for Nemesis is in Rome, from which she goes only because tempted by *praeda* – “booty” or “loot” – from another lover. A further difference from Delia is of course in her clothing.

There is no description of Delia’s clothing, other than that she is not wearing the traditional garments of a *matrona* (1.6.67-8). But Nemesis is described in emphatic terms as wearing fabulous silk, as well as being offered gorgeously dyed textiles. The opposition here is between silk and expensive textiles on the one hand, and wool on the other. Delia may not be said to be actually wearing wool, but in her first “personal” appearance (elegy 1.3) she is intimately associated with it. And since there is plenty of it where she is sitting amongst the spinners (they have to work late to get through it, and they are exhausted from the task; the distaff is “full”), it is fair to assume that they are working plain wool, not wool expensively dyed. The wool which tempts girls like Nemesis is dyed purple: *et niveam Tyrio murices tingit ovem* (1.4.28) – its purity has been “adulterated” – does it thus better suit the courtesan? (she who is, after all, *infamis*?) Similarly the wool that Cynthia claims to have worked (Propertius 1.3.41) was distinctively *purpureo stamine*. Actual clothing and textiles as such have not in general been seen as an important aspect of the presentation of elegiac mistresses, except perhaps insofar as their dress might accord with the nature of elegiac poetry (e.g. Wyke, 2002). But the way

these mistresses are dressed and with what textiles they are associated is a key feature of their depiction, as can be seen with Delia, Cynthia and Nemesis.²⁷

Delia tends in general to get more publicity than Nemesis, but of the elegiac mistresses other than Corinna, Delia is the odd one out. Cynthia and Nemesis both seem to be presented as courtesans dressed in silk, fond of luxurious goods and ready to go off with another (rich) lover (e.g. Cynthia in Propertius 2.16). But while Delia also will do this (e.g. 1.6.5-6) her status seems at first less certain than that of the other two, since her “other man” is designated by the ambiguous *vir* (1.6.8) and *coniunx* (1.2.43). Delia, imagined spinning and gathering apples, appears to be an attempt on the part of the poet to “domesticate” a mistress – something that will not work. She is not and cannot be a *matrona*, but the poet clearly wants her to be like one in various ways. For example he wants the fidelity of a *matrona* from her: *sit modo casta doce* (teach that she be faithful).²⁸ And he also wants her to be like the rustic wives whose task of woolworking he describes in such detail in the first elegy of Book 2, where he celebrates the rural festivals and traditions which he seems to value so much:

hinc et femineus labor est, hinc pensa colusque
fusus et apposito pollice versat opus,
atque aliqua assidue textrix operata Minervae
cantat et a pulso tela sonat latere (2.1.63-6)

“thence comes the toil of women’s hands, the weighed wool and the distaff, and the spindle that twists its work between thumb and finger; and weaving women in unremitting service to Minerva sing while the loom clatters as the clay weights swing.”

²⁷ A recent article touching on the clothing of the elegiac mistress/*puello* is: Alison Keith, *Sartorial Elegance and Poetic Finesse in the Sulpician Corpus*, in Edmondson and Keith (2008).

²⁸ Gordon Williams (1983) who sees all the elegiac *pueræ* as women “of respectable status and married” (112), thinks that in elegy 1.6.67-8 “the request to teach the girl to be chaste is in relation to Tibullus himself, and, he adds, ‘though she is not married to me’. His meaning is ‘teach her to behave as if she were married to me’.” (111) Williams adds that Ovid took Delia to be married (*Tristia* 2, 457-66). But Ovid in exile would have wanted earlier poets to seem to have written poems just as morally “risky” as his own.

The thread and the distaff (as in 1.3.86) form an ideal setting for Delia in the poet's "dream", but Delia fits here no better than she fits the role of the faithful *matrona*. She is incongruous in the settings in which the poet places her. In a climate of increasing concern about moral reform, expressed definitively some years further on in the Augustan marriage and adultery laws (18 BC), might the placing of a courtesan in such respectable domestic scenes (even though imaginary) have begun to seem not only incongruous but possibly not entirely safe? In any case, in his second book of elegies Tibullus leaves no doubt about the status of his mistress Nemesis, and she is never seen in any situation where she might approximate to a *matrona*. She wears the right silk clothing and never involves herself in any tasks of rustic housewives. The poet has no need to make it plain that with Nemesis he is not imagining an affair with a *matrona* (nor marrying a courtesan), as he had to clarify the situation with Delia by specifying her lack of *stola* and *vitta*. Nemesis is very clearly the courtesan that she is meant to be, apparently choosing lovers at will. As she is presented, she looks forward to Ovid's *puella*, who also does not engage in any "wifely" activities. But since Ovid does not dress his *puella* in the extravagant silks worn by Nemesis, what then does she wear?

Corinna: not a stitch on

The striking feature about Corinna's first named entrance in *Amores* 1.5 is that she is, after a brief moment, wearing nothing at all. This is of course in marked contrast to the other elegiac mistresses, especially Cynthia and Nemesis, who are largely characterised by their fabulous garments. Corinna is thus not introduced in the clothing that has been associated with elegiac mistresses (who are, most likely, courtesans), but nor is she introduced in any other sort of dress that might indicate a particular status – and certainly not in the garments of a *matrona*.

What will be suggested here is that Ovid, by presenting Corinna clothed neither in the dress of a *meretrix* nor in that of *matrona*, is presenting a woman who is neither of these, but is in fact the forerunner of his “third possibility”, the woman whom he will address in *Ars Amatoria* 3. As noted earlier in this chapter, an attempt to regulate dress was a significant aspect of Augustan concern for social reform, especially with regard to women, where the polarities of *matrona* and *meretrix* were to be kept recognisably separate. Presenting a naked woman and so rejecting both modes of dress can be seen as rejecting those polarities also. Nor is Corinna the sort of *puerilla*, like Cynthia or Delia, who would wait late into the night, even supposedly working wool, until the lover arrives. Corinna herself makes the first move by coming to meet her lover, in the broad daylight – *aestus erat*, the poet needs the shutters half closed to exclude the strong light. This *puerilla* is at once very different from the others, and her significance here is more than just as a figure representing elegy.

It is in fact that role, however – as an embodiment of elegy – that Corinna has been described. It has in recent years been shown that Ovid’s *puellae* in the *Amores* are representative of elegiac poetics (Keith, 1994, Wyke, 1989, 2002). In her article on *Amores* 1.5, Alison Keith sees that the fabric of Corinna’s briefly worn garment resembles that of the dress of *Elegia*, the personification of elegy in *Amores* 3.1. Keith also thinks that Corinna’s “bodily perfection corresponds to the stylistic refinement privileged throughout the *Amores*” (31). This whole aspect of elegiac representation in the *Amores* is basically outside the area of discussion in this chapter, since the main concern here is to compare the presentation of Corinna with that of the other elegiac mistresses, in terms of status and dress, to see how and why Corinna differs from them. In this present discussion it is assumed that the mistresses, as well as being literary creations, are based – as Sharon James claims for the *docta puerilla* – on women “evidenced in

Roman history" (James 2003, 35), and are often presented in situations with "realistic" detail. But since clothing (or lack of it) is the main feature being treated here with regard to Corinna, any significance of her briefly worn tunic needs to be considered. In terms of what is being suggested here about Corinna as being neither *matrona* nor *meretrix*, the tunic's real significance is that it is very quickly removed. But what does it look like before it is removed? Alison Keith, as mentioned above, sees Corinna's tunic as resembling the garment worn by *Elegia* in *Amores* 3.1.

When Corinna enters in elegy 1.5, she appears thus:

ecce, Corinna venit tunica velata recincta (9)

"look, Corinna comes, dressed in an unbelted tunic."

And as it is torn off, the tunic is described:

deripui tunicam; nec multum rara nocebant
pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa tegi (13-14)

"I tore away the tunic, and yet it was fine (?), and scarcely spoilt things,
but still she struggled to cover herself with the tunic."

Alison Keith sees Corinna's tunic as being "raiment of the most exquisite material", of the same type as *Elegia* wears in *Amores* 3.1, where *Elegia*'s garment is described as *vestis tenuissima* (3.1.9). Corinna's tunic is described by Ovid as *rara*, which Keith interprets as "exquisite", taking *rarus* as a synonym for *tenuis* (OLD *rarus* 6). Both *rarus* and *tenuis*, she points out, are "consistently applied to the finely-crafted poetry the Latin elegists championed" (p.30). Aside from the use of these words to describe poetic practice, however, they perhaps differ when applied to textiles, at least by Ovid. At this point it will be relevant to look briefly at how the elegiac poets usually described the garments worn by their mistresses – and also if possible what kinds of garments they are describing – to see how Corinna's tunic relates to them. The aim here

is to see that Corinna's *tunica*, when compared with the dress of other elegiac *puellae*, is so much less substantial – in fact, virtually not there at all. A look at some of Ovid's uses of the word *rarus* tends to confirm this impression. Corinna thus differs very significantly from Cynthia, the elegantly dressed *puella* par excellence. Corinna is Ovid's own heroine, unlike the already existing heroines who featured in his *Heroides* epistles. With those existing heroines Ovid was able to emphasise certain aspects of their story in order to cast a negative light on both woolworking and costume. With Corinna, however, he can go to the much further length of presenting a heroine who not only does not work wool, but does not wear the dress of either “type” of woman and in fact, when her flimsy *tunica* is at once torn off, is quite naked.

tenuis or rarus?

The adjective *tenuis* is the one usually chosen by Propertius and Tibullus to describe the luxury silk garments worn by their elegiac mistresses. Thus Propertius describes Cynthia's dress: *tenuis Coa veste movere sinus* (1.2.1) (moving the folds of a fine Coan garment), and Tibullus describes that of Nemesis: *illa gerat vestes tenues quas femina Coa texuit* (2.3.57) (let her wear fine garments which Coan women have woven). When Ovid encounters *Elegia* (*Amores* 3.1.7) she, being a goddess of course, outdoes mere mortals, and her particular garment is not just *tenuis*, but *tenuissima*:²⁹ *forma decens, vestis tenuissima* (3.1.9) (attractive figure, finest garment). Ovid tends to use the adjective *tenuis* when describing garments of fine-woven material.

²⁹ Exaggeration can be an expression of humour in Ovid. In this elegy (3.1) at the start of his third book of *Amores* (Propertius and Tibullus having published several books of elegies already), is *Elegia*'s extremely fine dress a hint that the possibilities of this sort of elegy have become extended (attenuated?) to such a point that there is not much more that can be done with it?

In *Ars Amatoria* 3, when warning against lovers who are not genuine, the *praeceptor* tells his audience to be wary of a very fine-spun toga – such garments are perhaps effeminate? – since the lover in question might wear jewellery also: *nec toga decipiatur filo tenuissima* (A.A.3:445), (don't let a toga of finest material deceive you). Telling the story of Procris (A.A.3:685-746), Ovid describes the unhappy wife wrenching off her garment in distress: *tenues a pectore vestes/rumpit* (A.A.3:707) (she wrenched the fine garment from her breast). In the Pyramus and Thisbe tale (*Metamorphoses* 4.55-166) the lion tears Thisbe's garment with bloody mouth: *ore cruentato tenues laniavit amictus* (104). And although *tenuis* is not used to describe Corinna's particular tunic in *Amores* 1.5, Ovid does use *tenuis*, for a reason, at *Fasti* 2.319 to describe the tunics given to Hercules by Omphale, the princess to whom Hercules was bound in slavery; in these tunics he was dressed as a woman. The adjective *tenuis* here emphasises the delicate feminine nature of the dress, which was so little suited to Hercules (and humorous details are added about how girdle and sandals were too small for him).

dat tenuis tunicas Gaetulo murices tinctas (A.A.3.319)

“she gave fine-woven tunics dyed with Gaetulian purple”

The tunic itself is neither status nor gender specific, as will be discussed below. But the luxurious nature of the textile provided by Omphale requires to be described as *tenuis*, and to be seen as dyed purple as well.³⁰ Corinna's tunic (*Amores* 1.5), on the other hand, is described only as *rara*.

The adjective *rarus* in its basic meaning is usually applied to something which has some sort of open structure, its parts separated in some way (OLD *rarus* 1). It can apply to “elements widely spaced”; in the case of fabric to one that is “loosely woven” – this last meaning is the one that could be implied concerning Corinna's tunic. Thus for example McKeown assumes the

³⁰ Gaetulian dye is mentioned by Pliny (N.H.9.27) as the best African purple.

tunic to be “thin” (1989, 113). He quotes Nonius who cites the reference from Plautus (*Epidicus* 230) where *tunicam rallam* is opposed to *tunicam spissam*, thin versus thick, (*rallus = rarulus*, Lewis & Short). Corinna’s tunic quite probably was thin, but this does not necessarily imply that it was of luxurious quality. She would hardly be wearing a thick tunic when the day was so hot (*aestus erat*). It could have been simply a cotton tunic, not expensive³¹ (Sebesta, 2001, 72, 217).

What the word *rara* here might imply as well as “thin” is that the tunic did not cover her completely, but only “here and there”. As a result, when it was torn off, the poet says: *nec multum rara nocebat* (13). For this phrase McKeown suggests (quoting Huntingford) two possible meanings: “the poet had little difficulty in tearing off the *tunica* because it was thin, or the *tunica*, being thin, did not much mar the vision of Corinna’s nakedness.” (113) It could be that the tunic just did not hide much of her nakedness anyway, if *rara* were taken to mean that she was only covered in some areas. After all, her tunic was unbelted, *tunica velata recincta* (9), and was probably as a result hanging loosely. It might have slipped off somewhat at the neck, since the poet had a very good view of this part of her body as she entered his room: *candida dividua colla tegente coma* (10) (her hair parted and covering her white neck).³² At least two current translations of *Amores* 1.5 do not actually supply an English word for *rara* in line 13: “I grabbed the dress; it didn’t hide much” (Guy Lee, 1968); “I tore the dress off her – not that it

³¹ If the poet/lover is in the usual sort of relationship with Corinna as a courtesan – the relationship where expensive gifts are required by the girl, such as Propertius and especially Tibullus seem to need to supply – would the poet/lover be so keen to risk destroying an expensive “exquisite” garment by tearing it off? – *deripui* is a strong action – since then he might have to replace it? And even if she is not the usual courtesan and the relationship is on some other footing, this stingy poet who wants to offer poems instead of gifts (*Amores* 1.10) would not like to pay to replace a *very* expensive garment. “Silk remained so expensive that the silk merchants of Rome and other towns primarily sold it in the form of thread which was interwoven with other kinds of thread. These *serica* or *subserica* (silk mixture) garments still were costly enough.” (Sebesta, 71)

³² Representations in sculpture of women wearing a tunic show the garment looking already very loose around the neck area. It is held together on the shoulders, but on the sculpted figure which is used to illustrate the female *tunica* in Sebesta (1994, fig.13.5, 218), the garment looks ready to slip off the shoulders if the wearer is not careful. An unbelted *tunica* would be even more likely to do this.

really hid much” (Peter Green, 1982). Both the translations leave it undecided as to whether the tunic was somewhat transparent, or else was covering Corinna only in part.

Whatever the case, it seems less likely that Ovid means Corinna’s tunic to be thought very luxurious, since he tends to use the adjective *tenuis* to express the idea of luxury fabric in clothing. As for *rarus*, Ovid uses this adjective a number of times where the separation of parts or elements is implied. McKeown, when interpreting the word *rara* in *Amores* 1.5, refers to another of Ovid’s uses of *rarus*. McKeown sees *rara*, describing Corinna’s tunic, as meaning “loosely woven”, and to illustrate this he quotes *Fasti* 3.820 where the process of weaving is described: *rarum pectine densem opus* (she pushes the separated threads together with a comb).³³ In the story concerned, Pallas is teaching the process of weaving; but the threads being pushed up – *rarum opus* – are not yet part of a fabric. They are just loose threads, so the meaning is not “loosely woven” but “threads still far apart”. This is a technical argument, but Ovid understood the process and had detailed knowledge of weaving processes and terminology (as is seen especially in *Metamorphoses* 6 with Arachne), and would use such terms in an informed way.

Some of Ovid’s other uses of *rarus* have a clearer implication of “parts separated”, for example describing an oak with widespread branches: *quercus rarissima ramis* (Met. 7.622), or scattered houses which once stood on the site of Rome: *et paucae pecudes et casa rara fuit* (*Fasti* 5.94) (and a few sheep, and here and there a cottage). But apart from the word *rara* as applied to Corinna’s tunic, and what it might signify, there is the tunic itself. What significance does Corinna’s *tunica* have in *Amores* 1.5, and what sort of information is available about this item of clothing?

³³ In weaving on a loom, the weft threads are pushed up tight with a comb (*pecten*); these threads are interwoven with the already separated warp threads. The process of weaving on a loom is explained fully in the Introduction.

The *tunica*

The tunic was “the basic garment for both men and women” (Sebesta, 2001, 221). It was commonly worn belted, and consisted of two basic rectangles of cloth, or one rectangle folded, being cut and sewn appropriately. The tunic was a universal garment and was non-gender, non-status specific. In the *Amores* collection, Corinna is not presented wearing fabulous clothing like the mistresses Cynthia and Nemesis. She is said to wear a *tunica* in elegy 1.5 and also in 1.7; in 1.5 it is torn off at once, and in 1.7 the poet says he should have torn it off, since this would have been better, he thinks, than striking the girl as he did:

nonne satis fuerat ...

aut tunicam a summa diducere turpiter ora
ad medium? (mediae zona tulisset opem) (1.7.45-8)

“would it not have been enough to rip apart her tunic from top edge to middle? (her belt would have come to the rescue at the middle)”

Otherwise, despite the poet’s frequent interest in her hair (1.5.10, 1.7.39, 49, the whole of 1.14), he does not indicate what she wore. Even when the *lena* is advising her at length (1.8) on the need to extract gifts from rich lovers, there is no mention of silk garments such as Acanthis, the old woman in Propertius’ elegy 4.5, urges the *puella* to ask for (4.5, 23, 57). Instead Corinna wears the basic *tunica*, and in the elegy where we (literally) see most of her, she hardly has it on for long. Where else, then, does the *tunica* appear in relation to either the other elegiac mistresses, or the women in Ovid’s poetry? The *tunica* is the only garment specifically stated as being worn by Corinna, whereas Cynthia and Nemesis in particular wear very luxurious clothing. Since, when she is clothed at all, Corinna does not wear silk or purple, it is suggested here that her dress – and especially lack of it – could represent one meaningful way in which she might indicate a “third possibility” for women. But Corinna is not the only one to wear a *tunica* – Cynthia also wears one in certain circumstances.

Cynthia's tunica

Propertius appears to make a distinction concerning Cynthia's garments: when the Coan silk dress that she wears so characteristically is designated by any clothing terminology, it is *vestis*:

sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere vidi
totum de Coa veste volumen erit (2.1.5-6)

"if I have seen her stepping forth gleaming in Coan silk, a whole book will come from the Coan garment."

Similarly, when Acanthis tells the *puella* what her lover should offer, she says one who gives poetry and not a silk garment is useless:

qui versus, Coae dederit nec munera vestis (4.5.57)

"one who has brought verses and not a gift of a Coan silk garment."

Vestis is a fairly general word for a garment, so we do not find out much about the form of Cynthia's dress – except that we assume it is not a *matrona's stola*. What is apparently intended in these references to *vestis* is a daytime garment. Similarly the *puella* – probably Cynthia – who is to be found by Lygdamus with the spinning girls (elegy 3.6) is wearing a *vestis* (13) which hangs forlornly on her as she sits on her bed. The garment worn by Cynthia which is specifically named is the *tunica*, and she is found to be wearing it at night.

In elegy 2.15 the poet complains that Cynthia goes to bed clothed instead of naked:

quod si pertendens animo vestita cubaris
scissa veste meas experiere manus (2.15.16-17)

"but if you persist in going to bed clothed, you will, with your garment ripped, experience the strength/violence (?) of my hands."

The *vestis* here is specified as a *tunica*:

interdum tunica duxit operta moram (6)

“sometimes she caused delay, covered with her tunic.”

In elegy 2.29 the poet remembers seeing Cynthia in bed wearing her tunic – an expensive purple one:

non illa mihi formosior umquam
visa, neque ostrina cum fuit in tunica
ibat et hinc castae narratum somnia Vestae. (2.29.25-7)

“never had she seemed to me more beautiful, even when she wore her crimson tunic,
and was off to tell her dreams to chaste Vesta.”

That the *tunica* was commonly bedtime wear is also apparent from Ovid’s use of the term.

Ovid’s tunics

It is significant that Ovid’s elegiac women wear the *tunica* rather than the elegant silk of a *puella* like Cynthia. This neutral garment exists as a third possibility between the dress of *matrona* and *meretrix*, as Corinna might exist as a third possibility between these two categories of women. It is not only Corinna whom Ovid clothes in an unbelted tunic. The poet seems quite attracted to this sort of dress, mostly described in identical words, for elegiac women. When he tells the story of Ariadne (A.A.1.525-564), Ovid describes the heroine as she finds on awakening that Theseus has left her:

utque erat e somno tunica velata recincta
nuda pedem, croceas inreligata comas (A.A.1.529-30)

“just as she came from sleep, clad in an ungirt tunic, with yellow hair unbound”

Another heroine awakened in alarm and fleeing danger is Anna, sister of Dido, whose tale is at

Fasti 3.523-656:

cumque metu rapitur tunica velata recincta currit (645-6)

“and as soon as terror seized her, she ran, clad in her ungirt tunic.”

In the third book of *Amores*, there is a scene of unsuccessful lovemaking (3.7), in which the *puer* finally gives up on her lover and leaps out of bed:

nec mora, desiluit tunica velata soluta (3.7.81)

“without delay, she leapt out, wrapped in her ungirdled tunic.”

In all these instances it is apparent that the *tunica* was worn for sleep (or at least in bed).

Amores 3.1 contains another reference to the *tunica* of Corinna herself, similarly worn at night.

The goddess *Elegia* explains here how it is her own teaching that has enabled Corinna to escape from her bed at night to meet her lover:

per me decepto didicit custode Corinna...
delabique toro tunica velata soluta (3.1.49,51)

“through me Corinna has learned to elude her guard ... and slip away from her bed in an ungirdled tunic.”

Is it this bedtime apparel in which Corinna appears in the poet’s room in *Amores* 1.5? Whatever sort of *tunica* Corinna wore, the tunic does not seem to be a garment Ovid thinks worthy of being described in much detail. In fact in one reference, the *tunica* appears to be the least interesting garment in a series of possible modes of dress. (Or interesting in another way because it is minimal.)

At one point in *Ars Amatoria* 2, the *praeceptor* is advising his pupils that they should always show how impressed they are by the beauty of their mistress. In whatever she is wearing, she should be praised as being highly attractive. Thus in a list of possible modes of dress, the tunic is contrasted with more fabulous attire:

sive erit in Tyriis, Tyrios laudabis amictus:
sive erit in Cois, Coa decere puta.

Aurata est? ipso tibi sit pretiosior auro;
 gausapa si sumpsit, gausapa sumpta proba.
 Astiterit tunicata, “moves incendia”, clama,
 sed timida, caveat frigora, voce roga (A.A.2.297-302)

“If she be in Tyrian attire, then praise her Tyrian gown ; or in Coan silk, then find the Coan silk becoming. Is her garment golden? Let her be to you more precious than gold itself; if she wear heavy wool, then approve the wool she wears. Should she stand there in her tunic, cry out: “You inflame me!” but with timid voice beg her to mind the cold.”

There is a contrast made here between several sorts of luxurious garments (297-9) on the one hand, and the woollen garment and the tunic on the other (300-302). The luxury garments are familiar from earlier elegiac poets, but no earlier elegiac *puella* was seen wearing a *gausapa* (300), which would probably be one of the least elegant things she could wear. *Gausapa* is a term denoting either the fabric or the garment made from it. The fabric was heavy wool. Pliny mentions this fabric when discussing the felting of wool, which he says was done by the Gauls (N.H.8.192-3). He says of *gausapae*, by which he means heavy cloaks: *gausapae patris mei memoria coepere, amphimallia nostra* (N.H.8.193) “frieze (i.e. coarse wool) cloaks began within my father’s memory and cloaks with hair on both sides within my own.” This sort of woollen fabric, says Pliny, if treated with vinegar, will withstand the sword: *etiam ferro resistunt.*³⁴

Such cloaks, no doubt appreciated by Roman soldiers, were later scorned by Martial (*Epigrams* 1.53). In a series of comparisons between desirable and undesirable goods he claims:

sic interpositus villo contaminat uncto
 urbica Lingonicus Tyrianthina bardocucullus (1.53.4-5)

“so a Lingonian overcoat put among city tyrianthines (i.e. a cloth twice dyed, violet and Tyrian purple – OLD) contaminates them with its greasy wool.”

³⁴ “Caesar’s army padded their armour with felt when facing Pompey’s archers” (Sebesta, 1994, 75, n.57); Lillian Wilson mentions “a kind of woollen cloth, known as *gausapa*, had a long hairy nap and was originally used for warm coverings and for heavy cloaks” (Wilson, 1938, 66). A true test of the lover’s strength of purpose to find these garments attractive.

The *Lingones* were a Gallic tribe, and the *bardocucullus* a Gallic overcoat (OLD). Martial is contrasting the sophisticated “city” garments made from Tyrian purple cloth with the heavy, rough woollen cloak, made from *gausapa*. The woollen garment that Ovid had in mind at *Ars* 2.300 is not necessarily so thick and hairy as the one Martial scorns, but it does seem that if Ovid’s *puella* is wearing a *gausapa* the lover would have to make something of an effort to praise it. And last and simplest of all, the *puella* might be wearing a tunic (301).

Here is another contrast: either she is wrapped up in heavy wool, or else hardly covered at all, so that Ovid with his usual delight in humorous overstatement can have the lover warn her about the cold. The tunic, since for Ovid’s *puellae* it is mainly bedtime wear, is obviously the most arousing garment of all. The lover is urged to indicate the fact in a loud voice (302). Apart from its ability to excite the lover – since it does not cover much flesh – the tunic is clearly the least significant garment in the list in terms of the composition of its fabric, being neither luxury silk nor heavy wool. In fact the less the garment matters, the easier it is to concentrate on the girl herself. And in Corinna’s case in elegy 1.5, the less time she spends in the tunic, the easier it is to see her as a woman not defined by any mode of dress.

Some possible conclusions about Corinna

The conclusion suggested here is that Ovid has chosen for Corinna the least significant garment for the least amount of time. If Corinna does represent elegiac practice (as Keith suggests), she does not do it by her dress. She is presented as a cultured *puella*, like Cynthia, but when her pastimes are noted (*Amores* 2.11) they do not include any suggestion of “domestic” activities, such as the woolworking of Delia and even Cynthia. The lover urges Corinna thus to pass her time:

tutius est fovisse torum, legisse libellos
 thereiciam digitis increpusse lyram (2.11.31-2)

“the safer course was fondly to keep to your couch, to read your books,
 to sound with your fingers the Thracian lyre.”

Just as Corinna’s lack of status-specific dress looks forward to the women addressed in *Ars Amatoria* 3, so the lover’s encouragement of Corinna’s more cultured pastimes looks forward to the various skills and accomplishments urged in *Ars* 3 upon those same women. The audience of *Ars* 3 are told that, as well as learning how to hide blemishes (251-90) and move elegantly (291-310), they should also acquire skill in music (311-28) and in the recitation of poetry (329-48). In the matter of dress (169-92), they are urged to choose colours that suit their complexions, and they are definitely to be dissuaded from luxurious, expensive garments (169-70). It is “tasteful restraint” and moderation (Gibson 2004, 147) that is the guiding principle. The garments these women should wear are not actually specified except as to colour, and also as to the fact that they are wool – *lana* (1878), (not *gausapa*). But these women do not wear *vittae*, the fillets binding the hair (which Ovid himself knew were ideally symbolic of respectable girls and women, as in his warning at *Ars* 1.31 to such women not to read his work). All sorts of hairstyles (135-68) are recommended, all precluding *vittae*. These women are assumed as having the freedom to study all these accomplishments, to choose all these clothes and hairstyles; a sort of “new way” seems to be indicated for them. Was Corinna, who by her lack of role-specific dress is presented as neither *matrona* nor *meretrix*, a hint of this? – and how is all this connected with the task of woolworking, which is where we began?

Woolworking and Ovid

Woolworking, as exemplified by Livy's *Lucretia* (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.57, 27-25 BC) was an activity imbued with the virtue of the rural housewife of old tradition. For the Augustan *matrona*, in an age when such traditions were encouraged as part of social reform, woolworking would ideally be regarded as a means of exhibiting her respectability and honourable status.³⁵ Ovid's attitude to woolworking, however, is nowhere seen as positive. This has been evident in previous chapters: his *Lucretia* was treated humorously, his heroines from the *Heroides* epistles faced harsh reality with their wool. Along with much of the older, traditionally revered material that he implicitly condemns at *Ars* 3.107-128 – where new, cultivated Rome is glorified – woolworking would be classed amongst those things from former times that might please “other people”: *prisca iuvent alios* (121).

At *Ars* 3.205-6, Ovid mentions a *libellus* on which he has spent much effort:

est mihi, quo dixi vestrae medicamina formae,
parvus, sed cura grande, libellus, opus.

“I have a small book, but a large work in terms of the effort involved, in which I have told of the cosmetics that will make you beautiful.”

From the way he speaks of it here, the *Medicamina Faciei* was written before *Ars* 3. In this *libellus* on cosmetics, Ovid does not yet condemn his audience for wishing to dress in luxurious fabrics: *vultis inaurata corpore veste tegi ... nec tamen indignum* (18/23). (you wish your bodies to be covered in a garment decorated with gold ... nor is that a fault); but he will recommend moderation in *Ars* 3. His mention of elaborate dress in the *Medicamina* is part of his general theme here that the girls of modern Rome are now more delicate and cultivated than in the unsophisticated past:

³⁵ There is little evidence of this from surviving inscriptions. From 45,000 inscriptions Dr Hanne Sigismund Nielsen found eleven which mentioned woolworking.

at vestrae matres teneras peperere pueras (17)

“your mothers have borne delicate girls.”

He appears to include *matronae* in his cosmetic advice, mentioning *mariti* (line 25), which might have been dangerous, since cosmetics were associated with immorality (Watson, 2001, 464); but he goes on to explain that all women take pleasure in their appearance and this does not necessarily involve *impudicitia* (29-32). But the particular *matronae* whom Ovid does strongly reject in the *Medicamina* are the Sabine women, who were traditionally revered for their unsophisticated probity (e.g. in Horace *Odes* 3.6). These Sabine *matronae*, intended to be scorned by the “modern” Roman women Ovid is addressing, are presented engaged in woolworking, and the activity itself receives equal scorn. Nowhere in the works of any of the Latin elegiac poets is woolworking presented in such an unattractive way:

cum matrona, premens altum rubicunda sedile,
assiduum duro pollice nebat opus (12-13).

“when the matron, sitting red-faced in her high seat, was spinning assiduously with hardened thumb.”

But Ovid has indicated in works most probably earlier than this one, that woolworking was not something to be much revered. These references are found in *Amores* 1.13, and in the first epistle of the *Heroides*. Concerning the *Amores*, McKeown’s opinion is that Ovid could have begun writing the first book(s) of the *Amores* in 26-25 BC, and that it – or they – could have been published in 22-21 BC (1987, 75). In *Amores* 1.13 the lover unhappily complains that dawn’s arrival will put an end to his time in bed with his mistress. Dawn is unwelcome to many, amongst whom are women who would be able to rest from their laborious woolworking, but now must return to it:

tu, cum feminei possint cessare labores,
lanificam revocas ad sua pensa manum. (23-4)

“you, when women might cease from their toil, call back to its task the hand that works the wool.”

The weight of wool that each woman must spin, *sua pensa*, always awaits them. The reference in *Heroides* 1 involves Penelope, whose traditional character of the faithful wife is not treated in this epistle with much respect.

The first *Heroides* collection is also thought to be an early work, published 15 BC (Conte 1994, Hardie 2002). In her letter to Ulysses (*Heroides* 1), Penelope refers to her woolworking only briefly. For her it is just a means of filling in time. In the Homeric story her weaving played a major part in her preservation of fidelity to Ulysses, but here she regards it as merely a way of getting through the nights while Ulysses is absent, and it is resented:

nec mihi quaerenti spatirosam fallere noctem
lassaret viduas pendula tela manus (9-10)

“nor would the hanging web now be wearying my widowed hands as I seek to beguile the hours of spacious night.”

It is not surprising that Corinna is never a woolworker. She is in striking contrast to Delia, whose status Tibullus elevates by associating her with woolworking, which he saw as a praiseworthy, even virtuous, activity from the rural past.

Yet there is another woman, in an elegy by Propertius which is approximately contemporary with Ovid’s first *Heroides* collection; this woman does fulfil the ideal woolworking role that Tibullus would have wished for Delia, and that Ovid rejected for Corinna. She is Arethusa in Propertius’ third elegy of Book 4.

Ovid and Propertius: a possibility

It has been suggested by Stephen Harrison in a paper on the dating of works by Ovid (ASCS Conference, Sydney 2009), that contrary to the usual assumption that Ovid’s *Heroides*

were probably influenced by the Arethusa letter (Prop. 4.3), the *Heroides* might have been, instead, an influence on Propertius. While the first *Heroides* are thought to have been published 15 BC, Propertius *Elegies* Book 4 was, according to Hutchinson (2006, 2) “not … before 16 BC”. Harrison thinks that Propertius would have been interested in what the younger poet Ovid was doing, and could well have heard or seen some of the epistles from the *Heroides*. The idea of a poem in the form of a letter from a woman to her lover/husband might have then appealed to him. Assuming that this is a possibility, an interesting course of events might follow: Propertius presents a Roman woman pictured as a dutiful *matrona* willingly and eagerly supervising the weaving of military cloaks for an absent husband, and writing to tell him so. This picture is in strong contrast to the negative one of the unwilling and resentful Penelope of *Heroides* 1, which epistle represents a somewhat disrespectful treatment of the legend of the virtuous Penelope (whom Propertius had himself praised – e.g. in *Elegies* 2.9, 3.13). But Ovid does not let this pass, because later when he writes *Fasti* 2 and recounts the Lucretia story (721-852), he presents a virtuous Roman *matrona* and exaggerates the woolworking aspect of the scene to the point of humour, even outdoing Arethusa’s dutiful activity. Lucretia is, after all, the epitome of woolworking virtue.

Arethusa’s claims are quite pointed:

texitur haec castris quarta lacerna tuis (4.3.18)

“this is the fourth cloak being woven for your warfare”

She herself is working into the night to see that all these cloaks are finished:

noctibus hibernis castrensis pensa labore
et Tyria in chlamydas vellera secta tuas (4.3.33-4)

“on winter nights I work on wool for your wear in camp, and on Tyrian fleece/wool ? cut for your cloaks”.³⁶

The words *castrenia pensa* are seen by Hutchinson as a “surprising combination”, but it is the term *pensa* here that is unusual, because occurring in a positive context. It commonly indicates an unwelcome amount of wool to be spun, so that the woolworkers must work late and are exhausted (e.g. *Georgics* 1.293, 390; Tibullus 1.3.11), or else an extra *pensum* can be given as a punishment (e.g. Propertius 3.15.115; 4.7.43-4). The effect of *pensa* in elegy 4.3 is to emphasise Arethusa’s devotion. As for her activity in organising the making of cloaks, Hutchinson comments: “this traditional occupation of the faithful woman” is “the archetypal activity of the good wife”, and he cites Penelope and Lucretia, and also the favourite inscription “*domum servavit, lanam fecit*”.³⁷ As to Lucretia, although Livy appears to have added woolworking to her story when he used it at the end of his first book, since other extant versions do not mention it (see Chapter Two), there is no indication of what sort of woollen article was being prepared under her supervision. It might have been *castrenia pensa*, but Livy does not say so.

It is interesting then that when Ovid re-tells her story he has Lucretia cry out urgently:

mittenda est domino (nunc, nunc properate pueriae!)
quam primum nostra facta lacerna manu (*Fasti* 2, 745-6)

“haste now, haste girls ! The cloak we have made with our own hands must be at once sent to your master.”

³⁶ Line 34 has variant readings, discussed by Hutchinson (108): he thinks *lecta* would be better than *secta*, and would indicate specially chosen wool; he prefers *tuas* to the reading *suo* (I sew), which he says “would involve an odd procedure”. Why? If *secta* and *suo* are accepted, the meaning would be that Arethusa is supervising the sewing (*suo*) of a length (*secta?*) of woven wool to make the cloaks for her husband Lycotas. This is not necessarily an odd procedure, since even if made from only one rectangle of woollen fabric, the *chlamys* would be hemmed. But it could also be made with corners cut off the rectangle, then certainly needing hemming. (Sebesta, 2001, 233).

³⁷ Propertius might have meant Arethusa to be seen as a very virtuous wife because she is involved in woolworking, or he might also have meant her to be seen as something of a “corrective” to the resentful Penelope of *Heroides* 1 – these are possibilities, not certainties. What is a certainty, however, is that Livy’s Lucretia and also that famous inscription exert a strong influence on modern editors.

Could this be a rather exaggerated “answer” to Propertius 4.3 and Arethusa’s construction of military cloaks? In both poems the process of construction of cloaks appears to start from the spinning of wool and end with the garment, but in Ovid’s every detail of the process is given to the point of exaggeration. Apart from these two poems (Propertius 4.3 and *Fasti* 2) there is no reference in contemporary Latin poetry to any military cloaks being constructed by wives at home for absent husbands at war. The similarity between the woolworking scenes in the two poems is very noticeable.

This possibility of such a relationship between those poems of Propertius and Ovid is just a suggestion. But if it had any basis in fact, it would indicate still more clearly Ovid’s attitude to woolworking, especially by freeborn women: that it was something not to be taken too seriously or revered, and in fact was an activity that was out of date and no longer relevant in the new Rome that he so much enjoyed (e.g. *Ars* 3.113-128).

Finally: what were women *really* wearing?

There is one more point to be made here in connection with Ovid’s references to dress (or the lack thereof), which is relevant when thinking about what his attitude might have been to the contemporary Augustan division of women into *matrona* or *meretrix*. At *Ars* 1.31-2 he is, apparently, carefully specifying those persons to whom his poem is definitely not addressed:

este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris
quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes.

“stay far away, slender fillets, emblem of modesty, and the long skirt that hides the feet in its folds.”

By the description of the clothing in these lines, he presumably refers to *matronae*, since the *vittae* and the long *stola* were supposedly the traditional costume of the respectable married

woman. But by the time when Ovid was writing the *Ars* 1 – approximately 2 BC – AD2, certainly well after the Augustan legislation of 18 BC (see Chapter Three) – who was wearing this traditional costume?

In her article “Covering the Head at Rome” (2008), Elaine Fantham writes: “look for *vittae* and they are very hard to find in any female statue or portrait head. Had they become simply a convention remembered and respected but no longer observed?” Even Livia, she finds, is never seen with *vittae*; dismissing the argument that they were painted on and have disappeared, she asks why highly skilled sculptors never represented them in three dimensions (166-7). Kelly Olson (2008) expresses a similar opinion in her study of Roman women’s dress: “many of the details of female dress in the literary sources are prescriptive: the discourse on clothing often specified an ideal moral system, not necessarily social practice” (11). She finds a “disjunction between the literary and artistic evidence”. As she sums it up (25), the everyday dress of the *matrona*, according to the written record, was, supposedly, long tunic, *stola*, and *palla* (mantle), with hair bound in fillets. Such a costume, presumably of wool if tradition were adhered to, would be cumbersome and also hot at times, and hair bound with fillets precludes most hairstyles. Why would a *matrona* keep to this costume if she could choose from the luxurious textiles and garments which had become available, such as Coan silk, or the lighter cottons and linens also in favour? (Sebesta, 2001, 70) She might alter the style as well as the fabric of her dress, to feel more comfortable as well as fashionable, and to move more freely. “The last century of the republic saw an even greater sophistication in the use of clothing, dyes, and luxury fabrics for social display” (Sebesta, 2001, 68). How seriously would Ovid’s contemporaries have taken his warning in *Ars Amatoria* 1? And how seriously was it intended?

It seems likely that Ovid rejected both the division of women by distinctive dress into *matrona* or *meretrix*, and also rejected the respect granted to woolworking as a praiseworthy activity for women of contemporary Rome. Perhaps the early appearance of Corinna, wearing neither type of costume and never associating herself with woolworking, was a hint of his rejection of those current social ideals.

Chapter Five

Aeneas in Carthage : Caught in Dido's Web

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to look in particular at the role of elaborate textiles in the Dido episode of the *Aeneid*. This thesis so far has been concerned with wool, and the virtue associated with it in Augustan ideology in terms of the *matrona*, who, ideally, both made wool and wore it. The exemplary *matrona* was Livy's Lucretia. Evidence for the attitude of contemporary poets to this ideal has been looked at in the previous chapters. The present chapter now looks at textiles of a very different kind from Lucretia's plain wool. These are the fabulous and luxurious fabrics that Aeneas finds with Dido at Carthage. It is suggested here that these gold-woven textiles are identified with Dido and the danger that she represents to Aeneas and his destined task.¹ Not only unsuitable as a foreign queen to be wife to Aeneas, she is also the opposite of the ideal *matrona* whose virtue is identified with her plain wool. The implication in this chapter is that Vergil might have seen such an ideal (as in Lucretia) as suitable if not necessary in a time of recovery after the major civil upheaval which he had lived through.

As well as offering a contrast to this ideal, Dido, with her fabulous cloth, represents the *luxuria* which Livy himself saw as such an integral reason for the moral decline of his contemporary Romans, which he lamented in the Preface to his work. Dido's costume, her palace and furnishings are consistently described in terms of purple and gold. The attitude to purple and its use was not straightforward in the reign of Augustus. As Reinhold (1970, 48) summarises the situation, there was some basic opposition between purple as a luxury and purple in religious and state use. In the present chapter, Dido's fabulous textiles are seen to be

¹ Dido is generally seen as a threat to Aeneas, for example Cairns (1989, 50-51), Reed (2007, 85-86), Ross (2007, 17) and even as his outright seducer Horsfall (1995, 125). I have not found Dido identified with her textiles as opposed to plain wool.

examples of purple as the sort of luxury that was perceived not only as morally reprehensible in itself, but also as a feature of the Eastern way of life, effeminate and degenerate when compared with Roman ideals such as the *paupertas* and *parsimonia* mentioned by Livy (*Praefatio* 10). It is at Carthage that Aeneas wears one of the two purple garments that appear on his actual person in the *Aeneid*. This one is Dido's gift, a luxury cloak, but there was a purple textile used earlier for religious purposes as a head covering (*Aeneid* 3.545). This contrast, mentioned below, further emphasises how “out of place” Aeneas has become at Carthage.

The main contrast, however, to be made in this chapter is the opposition between the plain wool that is associated with virtue and the wool that has been made into elaborate textiles – especially by the addition of gold. Dido is surrounded by gold-threaded textiles and weaves them with her own hands. These fabrics identify her, just as plain wool identifies Lucretia.

The chapter is divided into sections. The first section treats the arrival of Aeneas in Carthage and contrasts it with two other arrivals: one is Aeneas' own encounter with Evander at Pallanteum (8.97ff), and the other is the arrival of Sextus Tarquinius at the house of Lucretia, as told by Livy (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.57). Following these comparisons is a discussion of Dido herself, especially her connection with luxury textiles, weaving, and textile imagery. At the end of the chapter there are two appendices: i) the appearance of ill-omened luxury textiles – especially cloaks – in myth and literature, ii) evidence, archaeological and literary, for elaborate textiles.

* * * * *

Dido: elaborate cloth, not plain wool

After Dido is made by Venus to fall in love with Aeneas (1.90-128), she no longer represents the sort of hostile threat to Aeneas that Venus feared. But his resulting stay in

Carthage exposes him to other sorts of danger, and these are not simply the diverting of his fated purpose. While ever he is in Carthage he is in close association with Dido, and is subject to her influence – as Mercury says, he becomes *uxorius* (4.266). Assuming that Aeneas is in some way to be identified with Augustus and preferred Augustan ideology,² then Dido as a foreign woman surrounded with fabulous luxury is – in a Roman context – no more possible as a wife for Aeneas than the queen of Egypt was a suitable wife for Antony.³ The fact that Cleopatra did marry Antony was a significant factor in his downfall, and this recent history of Antony and Cleopatra has been seen to resemble the Dido and Aeneas story. “Virgil’s Dido owes much to the historical Cleopatra. This is one of several ways in which Aeneas’ experiences anticipate the great events and dangers of Rome’s history” (Pelling, 1988, 17).⁴

If Dido can be seen to “owe much” to Cleopatra, then Aeneas also, in his behaviour at Carthage, recalls the scenes of Antony’s reprehensible conduct in Egypt as reported by ancient authors. Antony adopted the local dress and style of life: “sometimes carried an Oriental dagger in his belt, wore clothes which were completely alien to Roman custom” (Cassius Dio 50.5); and “he wore the square Greek garment instead of his native Roman one” (Appian 5.12). As Antony adopted foreign (Eastern) dress, so too did Aeneas (4.261-4), with the implication of a slackened

² As discussed for example by R.J. Tarrant “Poetry and Power, Virgil’s poetry in Contemporary Context” in Martindale (1997).

³ Ancient writers expressed their opinion clearly about the unsuitability of the match between Antony and Cleopatra. Plutarch (Antony 28-29) described Antony’s foolish behaviour encouraged by Cleopatra: she was the “final and crowning mischief” for him. Dio Cassius (50.5), Appian (5, 10-11) both emphasised Antony’s forgetfulness of his duties as a Roman general, and his “enslavement” to Cleopatra. Florus (2.21,11) condemned Antony’s descent into luxury “in regio sinu” – the lap of the queen(?) – and described him in terms very similar to the depiction of Aeneas as found by Mercury at Carthage: “aureum in manu baculum, in latere aeinaces, purpurea vestis ingentibus obstricta gemmis” (2.21.11,3).

⁴ Dido has been seen in terms of the historical Cleopatra both as a similar figure and also as an unrelated one. Pease (1935, 24-8), Quinn (1968, 55), Camps (1969, 29-30), discuss comparisons; Syed (2005, 177-193) treats Cleopatra and Vergil’s Dido in detail: “Cleopatra and the Politics of Gendered Ethnicity”. Austin, in his introduction to Aeneid 1 (1971), sees Dido as totally unlike Cleopatra – she has no “deviousness or self-seeking or seductive wiles”. Poschl (1970, 189) sees Aeneas’ cloak as a possible “echo of Antony and Cleopatra”, but otherwise “Dido has nothing in common with the Egyptian queen.” Cairns (1989, 57) on the other hand states “It is well understood that Virgil to some extent modelled Dido upon Cleopatra.”

moral purpose. It is Dido who – like Cleopatra for Antony – provides the luxury for Aeneas, and this luxury quite pointedly takes the frequent form of fabulous textiles. In fact it is suggested here that in *Aeneid* 1 and 4 Dido is herself closely identified with luxury textiles, and that these textiles in turn are identified with the danger and ill-omen which is inherent in the whole Dido and Aeneas episode.

But why is it that elaborate textiles should be capable of such negative associations? The reason suggested here is that virtue and purity – such as that of Lucretia and the ideal Roman *matrona* – is associated with wool which remains much closer to its natural state and has not been “adulterated” by being made into elaborate textiles, especially those with added gold. This “plain” wool is what Lucretia and her women were making, and is the basic material of the sacred fillets worn by priests.⁵ Fancy textiles were criticised in a social context,⁶ and as well as this they very often carried negative value in myth.⁷ Thus Dido, so closely associated with this fancy cloth, bears scant resemblance to the ideal Augustan *matrona*, who is in fact typified by her connection with the morally desirable, much simpler wool. Dido’s luxury becomes even more pointed when she is seen in comparison with the virtuous *matrona* par excellence, Livy’s

⁵ fillets on priests are mentioned – for example:

sacerdotes casti...
omnibus his nivea cinguntur tempora vitta
(*Aeneid* 6.661...665)

Cererisque sacerdos
Ampycus albenti velatus tempora vitta
(*Metamorphoses* 5.109-10)

Servius comments at *Aeneid* 8.128, where Aeneas offers boughs decked with fillets (*vitta comptos ... ramos*) to Evander: *Oves, unde Lana, e qua vittae*.

These fillets were not always white; the religious use of purple meant that they might be dyed: Festus notes priests whose hair was bound with purple: *vitta purpurea innexa crinibus* (quoted by Pley 1911, 89).

⁶ This disapprobation is evident in Lucretius and remains evident in one of Jerome’s letters:

nec calidae citius decedunt corpore febres / textilibus si in picturis ostroque rubenti / iacteris, quam si
in plebeia veste cubandum est.
(*de Rerum Natura* 2.34-6)

quas eunuchorum greges saepiunt et in quarum vestibus adtenuata in filum metalla texuntur
(Jerome, Letter 22.16)

in fact Jerome is criticising a garment that sounds very much like the cloak Aeneas wears in Carthage.

⁷ Appendix i) at end of chapter.

Lucretia.⁸ Aeneas comes, then, to Carthage, to a queen who is surrounded with luxury and golden cloth. Aeneas' entry into Dido's palace, where she is found amongst such elaborate textiles, is very different from the entry of Sextus Tarquinius into Lucretia's house, where instead of such luxury, Lucretia is found amongst her women working plain wool. There follows a comparison of these two very different "arrivals".

Aeneas and Sextus Tarquinius: two arrivals – Aeneas at Carthage, Sextus at Lucretia's house

After reaching Dido's city and at last meeting the queen herself, Aeneas is made welcome by her and is led into her palace (1.631-2). Dido has a feast prepared for him, and at once he finds himself in great luxury, where fabulous textiles are in the very midst of the scene –

at domus interior regali splendida luxu
instruitur, mediisque parant convivia tectis:
arte laboratae vestes ostroque superbo,
ingens argentum mensis, caelataque in auro
fortia facta patrum, series longissima rerum
per tot ducta viros antiqua ab origine gentis.

(Aeneid 1.637-642)

"But the palace within is laid out with the splendour of princely pomp, and amid the halls they prepare a banquet. Coverlets there are, skilfully worked and of royal purple; on the tables is massive silver plate, and in gold are graven the doughty deeds of her sires, a long, long course of exploits traced through many a hero from the early dawn of the race."

For Vergil's contemporaries (and modern readers) this description would call to mind the sumptuous palace of Peleus in poem 64 of Catullus, where the fabulous textile is actually the climactic point of the description:

⁸ Neither a faithful wife – (despite her assertion "ille meos, primus qui me sibi iunxit, amores/abstulit; ille habeat secum servetque sepulcro" 4.28-9) – nor a virtuous one who is *dedita lanae* (like Lucretia), Dido is just the sort of woman to divert Aeneas' moral purpose – just what he does not need at this point in his journey.

ipsius at sedes, quacumque opulenta recessit
 regia, fulgenti splendent auro atque argento.
 candet ebur soliis, collucent pocula mensae,
 tota domus gaudet regali splendida gaza
 pulvinar vero divae geniale locatur
 sedibus in mediis, Indo quod dente politum
 tincta tegit roseo conchylii purpure fuco.

(64.42-49)

“But Peleus’ own abodes, so far as inward stretched the wealthy palace, shine with glittering gold and silver. White gleams the ivory of the thrones, bright are the cups on the table; the whole house is joyous and gorgeous with royal treasure. Here the royal marriage bed is being set for the goddess in the midst of the palace, smoothly fashioned of Indian tusk, covered with purple tinged with the rosy stain of the shell.”

But this splendid setting – with its *pulvinar geniale* covered by probably the most elaborate textile ever described in Latin poetry – like the rich scene in Dido’s palace, is also a prelude to tragic events to come. In Catullus’ poem the Fates foretell the dreadful destruction of lives at Troy (343-371). Trojan mothers will lament the *egregias virtutes claraque facta* (348-9) (“surpassing achievements and renowned deeds”) of Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis whose marriage bed was in the centre of the gorgeous palace.⁹ Dido’s rich feast, superficially joyful like the scene in Catullus, is one of only two such descriptions in the *Aeneid*. The banquet in Book 1 has a more sinister “companion piece” later in Book 6. Dido herself makes her last appearance in the 6th Book, fleeing from Aeneas (450-5). Her feast is echoed in one of the

⁹ As for Catullus’ description of this luxury, “there is no doubt about the contempt which Catullus’ contemporary Epicureans would have felt – see the sneering mockery of precisely this sort of wealth at Lucretius 2.20-36”: (Godwin, 1995, 142). Perhaps Vergil’s audience might have had ambivalent feelings about Dido’s splendour. Certainly it was uncomfortably reminiscent of Cleopatra’s Eastern luxury, and also at odds with the much more restrained style of life that Augustus apparently favoured. Christopher Nappa (2007, 382-6) compares Dido’s situation and that of Ariadne in Catullus 64, and also compares the two banquet scenes quoted above.

D.F.S. Thomson (1997, on Catullus 64.46) also notes the similarities between these two scenes. In his comment on the description of the underworld feast (*Aeneid* 6.603-6), Austin mentions the scene in Catullus 64 (42-9) where the thrones gleam bright: *fulgenti ... ebur soliis* (43-4) as do the couches in the underworld: *lucent genialibus altis/aurea fulcra toris* (603-4). As well, Austin compares the scene in *Aeneid* 6 with its “regal” luxury, *regifico luxu* (6.605), with the setting of Dido’s feast in *Aeneid* 1: *at domus interior regali splendida luxu* (1.637). As has been noted, Dido’s feast scene in *Aeneid* 1 and that of Peleus in Catullus 64 are similar in their evocation of gleaming luxury. There are no other similar scenes in either the *Aeneid* or the poems of Catullus except the underworld feast scene in *Aeneid* 6. What is clearly missing from the underworld scene is the mention of fabulous textiles, which are a feature of both the other scenes.

punishments in that place: the hungry victim is kept from a sumptuous banquet by the Furies.

Although Aeneas is only told of it by the Sybil, there is no doubt about the suffering that this second luxury feast entails:

lucent genialibus altis
aurea fulcra toris, epulaeque ante ora paratae
regifico luxu ; Furiarum maxima iuxta
accubat et manibus prohibet contingere mensas
(6.604-6)

“High festal couches gleam with frames of gold, and before their eyes is spread a banquet in royal splendour. Yet reclining close by, the eldest Fury stays their hands from touching the tables.”

There are no elaborate textiles mentioned in the underworld feast scene, although they figure prominently in Dido’s banquet in Book 1. This would perhaps strengthen the suggestion that Dido is identified by her connection with these fabrics, and that they are thus complicit in the captivation of Aeneas.

These “captivating” textiles are instantly apparent when Aeneas and his men first gather for Dido’s feast. They find the queen reclining in the midst of her gold couches and purple cloth:

cum venit, aulaeis iam se regina superbis
aurea composuit sponda mediamque locavit,
iam pater Aeneas et iam Troiana iuventus
conveniunt, stratoque super discumbitur ostro.¹⁰
(1.697-700)

“As he enters, the queen has already, amid royal hangings, laid herself on a golden couch, and taken her place in their midst. Now father Aeneas, now the Trojan youth gather, and the guests recline on coverlets of purple.”

Aeneas on his arrival in Carthage is thus immediately made aware of the fabulous luxury in which Dido is living, a main feature being the rich fabrics that are everywhere in her palace. She is at once associated with fabrics which are the very opposite of the plain wool which Sextus

¹⁰ The hint of Antony and Cleopatra is a noticeable one. When Cleopatra came to Antony, preparatory to the feast she gave for him, she also “reclined beneath a canopy of cloth of gold”, and when Antony came to her feast “he found the preparations made to receive him magnificent beyond words.” (Plut.Ant.26)

Tarquinius finds in Lucretia's house – the wool which Livy clearly identifies with Lucretia's virtue.

Sextus Tarquinius and his arrival at Lucretia's house

As Aeneas was made welcome by Dido in her home, so was Sextus Tarquinius made welcome when he arrived with Collatinus at the home of Lucretia. Collatinus, wishing to prove the virtue of his wife Lucretia, brought his companions – including Sextus – to his house late at night:

Quo cum primis se intendentibus tenebris pervenissent, pergunt inde Collatiam, ubi Lucretiam haudquaquam ut regias nurus, quas in convivio luxuque cum aequalibus viderant tempus terentes, sed nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inveniunt. Muliebris certaminis laus penes Lucretiam fuit.

(Livy 1.57)

“Arriving there at early dusk, they thence proceeded to Collatia, where Lucretia was discovered very differently employed from the daughters-in-law of the king. These they had seen at a luxurious banquet, whiling away the time with their young friends ; but Lucretia, though it was late at night, was busily engaged upon her wool, while her maidens toiled about her in the lamplight as she sat in the hall of her house. The prize of this contest in womanly virtues fell to Lucretia.”

This passage from Livy bears close comparison with the description of the scene in Dido's house (*Aeneid* 1.637-642) quoted above. What Sextus Tarquinius found in Lucretia's house was most unlike the luxurious array that met the eyes of Aeneas. Both scenes, however, are alike in that they take place in a central part of the dwelling: the *domus interior* is where Dido's feast is spread, in fact well within the house: *mediis tectis*. Sextus similarly finds himself in *medio aedium*. Both scenes also feature textiles – and here it is the difference between the two that is significant. Sextus sees Lucretia, surrounded by her women, *deditam lanae*. Both she and her women are working into the night; they are not relaxing in any way, let alone feasting. Lucretia is *inter lucubrantes ancillas*. What they are doing – since Lucretia is sitting (*sedentem*)

in their midst – is spinning.¹¹ They are working with wool in its unadulterated state, pulling out wool from a *pensum* (weight of wool from the fleece), winding it on a distaff and drawing down a thread with a spindle.¹² This action connects the spinner closely with “plain” wool (much more closely than does weaving). As she spins, she is herself associated with the wool’s innate virtue. Livy identifies Lucretia with virtue by means of her devotion to her wool, and he presents her as an *exemplum* to be imitated. And whether or not Livy intended this, Lucretia appears to be the ideal model of the Augustan *matrona*. Lucretia, found here in her house by Sextus devoted to her wool, presents a complete contrast with Dido, who was found by Aeneas in her palace lying on a gold-worked couch amongst fabulous textile hangings;

aulaeis iam se regina superbis
aurea composit sponda (1.697-8)

In these two lines of the poem the queen (*regina*) and her action of positioning herself (*composit*) are placed, respectively, between the hangings (*aulaeis ... superbis*) and the gold couch (*aurea ... sponda*). She is “enclosed” by these textiles.

The production of elaborate textiles such as those described at Carthage began, in the first place, with spinning – the task which occupied Lucretia and her women. To be *dedita lanae* like Lucretia¹³ would in itself be praiseworthy, since the task requires laborious effort. Complex labour of a skilful kind was also required to produce the intricate textiles – of a very different

¹¹ Why spinning rather than weaving? Lucretia is seated amongst her women, in lamplight – such a scene, involving spinners, is a sort of ‘given’, and is imagined elsewhere in Latin poetry a number of times – e.g. Tibullus 1.3.83-90; *Georgics* 1.390-2; even *Aeneid* 8.407-13.

Weaving (if any realism is intended) would require more light. But as well as this, the ancient tradition of spinning – and the implements required, the distaff and spindle – come in for special mention by Pliny. According to Pliny, Varro claims to have seen the distaff and spindle of the early queen Tanaquil preserved in the temple of Sancus. This obvious value placed upon spinning, Pliny believes, has resulted in the custom of young brides carrying a full distaff and a spindle at their wedding. (N.H.8.74) There is thus a special quality attached to the activity of spinning.

¹² The process of spinning is described in the Introduction to this thesis.

¹³ Lucretia herself as a freeborn *matrona* would scarcely be physically involved in spinning, but her supervision of the task, done by her women late into the night, is laborious enough in itself.

nature from Lucretia's wool – which Vergil describes as appearing in Dido's home. The syntax of the words describing some of these coverings is intricate in itself. Both the skill (*arte*) and the purple (*ostro*) are supreme (*superbo*). The word order encloses the cloths (*vestes*) within this skill, and emphasises their colour as well as their intricacy by the placement of *ostro* next to *vestes*:

Arte laboratae vestes ostroque superbo.
(1.639)

“Cloths worked with (superb) art and with superb purple.”

Archaeological and literary evidence for textiles of this kind would indicate that they very often had some illustrative quality, and were perhaps inwoven with gold.¹⁴ Such cloths are quite out of keeping with Lucretia's wool, and thus out of keeping with the preferred model of the Augustan *matrona* and her household. Dido, identified by her rich textiles just as Lucretia is identified by her wool, thus presents a dangerous influence. But the comparison of Dido's feast with Livy's story does not end here.

What Aeneas sees when he looks at Dido's tables is a feast described in terms of its royal luxury and richness: *regali ... luxu* (1.637), *convivia* (1.639). It is in fact just such a scene (described in almost the same words) as met the eyes of Sextus Tarquinius when he and Collatinus visited the royal daughters-in-law. These women, like Dido, are also royal: *regias nurus*. There is also a luxurious feast: *convivio luxuque* (Livy 1.57.9). The princesses were engaged in a worthless activity, presented by Livy as a strong negative contrast to Lucretia's woolworking. Aeneas, after shipwreck and deprivation, would deserve such a welcome as Dido provides, but its enticements are obvious. The activities in Dido's palace are thus much more

¹⁴

i) Elizabeth Barber's chapter “And Penelope?” in *Prehistoric Textiles* (1992) discusses figured textiles.
ii) Gold textiles are discussed in an appendix to the present chapter.

like those of Livy's worthless royal daughters-in-law than those of Lucretia and her women. If Lucretia and her household represent an ideal, then Dido is its opposite.

The second arrival to be compared with Dido's welcome to Aeneas is the later arrival of Aeneas himself at Pallanteum (Book 8). But since this comparison involves coverings – some in the form of clothing – it is relevant here to look first at the clothing of Dido and Aeneas at Carthage. The clothing of both Dido and Aeneas is significant, since it indicates not only the luxury at Carthage but also the effect this luxury has on Aeneas – especially in the form of the elaborate cloak he wears.

Dido's clothing indicates her unsuitability and her susceptibility to luxury fabrics

Since the suggestion here is that the threat to Aeneas posed by Dido is closely identified by her association with rich textiles, then her clothing and her interest in these fabrics need to be looked at with this in mind.

In a note on *Aeneid* 4.136-9, where Dido is dressed for the hunt with Aeneas, Pease comments: “through all this account Roman forms of dress are ascribed to Dido.” But Dido’s dress, when it is finally described, is not in fact Roman. When she first appears, and Aeneas – though himself hidden – sees her approaching with her accompanying courtiers, it is significant that there is no description of her dress. She is compared to the goddess Diana, she moves joyfully amongst her people, she is of surpassing beauty – but there is no mention of any beautiful clothing. Similarly when Aeneas emerges from his cloud, now made handsome by Venus, there is no indication of any equally handsome dress.

restituit Aeneas claraque in luce refusit
os umerosque deo similis (1.588-9)

“Aeneas stood forth, gleaming in the clear light, god-like in face and shoulders.”

This would strengthen the present suggestion that elaborate textiles, being identified with the threat to Aeneas, make their appearance slightly later when the threat is becoming evident. The first hint of danger is Dido's feast. Dido's dress, however, is not described until Book 4, and only once; this is when she goes hunting with Aeneas and seeks shelter with him in the same cave, driven by the storm. Her costume is fabulous:

tandem progreditur magna stipante caterva,
Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo.
cui pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum,
aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem.

(4.136-39)

“At last she comes forth, attended by a mighty throng, and clad in a Sidonian robe with a figured border. Her quiver is of gold, her tresses are knotted into gold, golden is the clasp to fasten her purple cloak.”

Dido's main garment is described as Sidonian, indicating that it is Tyrian purple. This was the most sought-after and expensive purple.¹⁵ The border of Dido's *chlamys* is decorated with what was most likely an inwoven coloured pattern. Gold is everywhere apparent. But her cloak itself is very un-Roman. The *chlamys* was basically a Greek military cloak: “soldiers are dressed like this when they are not wearing their armour, and so are huntsmen and sometimes travellers” (Geddes, 1987, 312). It is not a woman's garment. Throughout the *Aeneid* the *chlamys* is mentioned as a male garment.¹⁶ One of its wearers is Pallas, the young man entrusted to Aeneas' care who will die at the hands of Turnus. Pallas echoes Dido in his rich (and ill-omened?) dress:

¹⁵ Purple in general was prized, but this one was special; of purple, Pliny states *Tyri praecipuus hic Asiae* (NH9.60.127) – “the best Asiatic purple is at Tyre.”

¹⁶ at 5.250; 8.588; 9.582; 11.775.

“*Chlamys* is a Greek word, always used by Vergil in contexts of luxurious brilliance or foreignness” – Hardie (1994), Note on 9.582.

inde alii Troiae proceres, ipse agmine Pallas
 in medio, chlamyde et pictis conspectus in armis
 (8.587-8)

“Then other princes of Troy, Pallas himself at the column’s centre, conspicuous in his cloak and decorated armour.”¹⁷

The costume that Dido wears to go hunting ends by being her “wedding” attire, since Juno and Venus arrange a supernatural “marriage ceremony” in the form of a violent storm. Aeneas and Dido, sheltering in a cave, thus appear to become husband and wife. What Dido’s dress here lacks – as does her “wedding” in general – is unadorned wool (the sort of wool associated with Lucretia). Both bride and *matrona*, according to Roman custom, were traditionally closely associated with wool both in costume and ceremony.¹⁸ The bride’s plain *tunica recta* was woven by herself, the *matrona*’s woollen *stola* modestly covered her as far as the feet.¹⁹ Both bride and *matrona* were traditionally protected by *vittae*, white woollen bands worn on the head. These were also an indication of the purity of the wearer (as they indicated the purity of sacrificial animals which were similarly adorned with *vittae*). Wool was “endowed with an apotropaic and ritual significance” (Sebesta, 2001, 47). But instead of such woollen bands, Dido’s hair is fastened with gold: *crines nodantur in aurum* (139). The word *nodantur* literally means “are knotted”; Dido’s hair might well be held in place by knotted bands of a gold-woven textile, the very opposite of plain wool.

There was one other custom which involved plain wool and which was important in the Roman wedding ceremony. When the bride reached her new husband’s home she decorated the

¹⁷ Pallas will have an even closer connection to Dido when his funeral cover is a cloak which she had made for Aeneas (11.72-5). (This cloak also will be looked at shortly.)

¹⁸ Bride and *matrona*: the costumes are described in *The World of Roman Costume* (Sebesta and Bonfante, 2002) Chapters 2 and 3. “The Costume of the Roman Bride”, “Symbolism in the Costume of the Roman Woman”.

¹⁹ According to some illustrations and descriptions (e.g. fig 150 in Boucher, 1987) the *chlamys* such as Dido was wearing might even reach only so far as the knees.

threshold with woollen *vittae*.²⁰ It was apparently only special circumstances – like war, for example – which might prevent this custom, if a marriage scene in Lucan can be taken as evidence; Cato and Marcia marry in *tempora ... aliena toris* (a time unsuitable for marriage):

festa coronato non pendent limine serta
infulaque in geminos discurrit candida postes
(Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 2.354-5)

“no festal garlands, no wreath, hung from the lintel
No white fillet ran this way and that to each post of the door.”

Although this custom could hardly be observed in the case of Dido’s “wedding”, there is another ritual involving plain wool which she does (later) perform – and this is in fact the one and only time when she is represented as being associated with “pure” wool. It is significant that this ritual which she carries out has nothing to do with Aeneas. It relates, instead, to her dead first husband Sychaeus, to whom she had set up a shrine. It is this *templum* that she decorates with white wool:²¹

praeterea fuit in tectis de marmore templum
coniugis antiqui, miro quod honore colebat,
velleribus niveis et festa fronde revinctum
(4.457-9)

“There was in the palace a marble shrine to her former husband, which she cherished in wondrous honour, wreathing it with snow white fleeces and festal foliage.”

Whereas her association with Aeneas was typified by luxury textiles, her original (and true?) marriage is connected – even after her husband’s death – with virtue-bearing plain wool. In a sort of reversal of the wedding custom, Dido thus decorates with wool the place where her first husband symbolically remains.

²⁰ Servius notes: “moris enim fuerat ut nubentes puellae, simul venissent ad limen mariti, postes antequam ingredierentur ornarent laneis vittis” (*Aeneid* 4.458).

²¹ Of the words expressing “white”, “Virgile préfère *albus*” (André, 1949, 387) but *niveus* has a special value in *Aeneid* 4.459). André notes “La blancheur de la neige évoquait la pureté” (40).

Otherwise, Dido appears to have little interest in plain wool. In fact it is her predilection for elaborate stuffs that is a large part of her undoing. For Aeneas, Dido's luxury is a major distraction, but Aeneas himself presents her with items which, for her, are even more fatal. These are the items that Aeneas sends Achates to fetch from his ship, just as the Trojans are about to enjoy Dido's feast. In the meantime, of course, Venus has arranged the substitution of Cupid for Aeneas' son Ascanius; Cupid will both charm Dido and also infect her with his arrow. The gifts that Aeneas has brought are rich indeed:

munera praeterea, Iliacis erepta ruinis,
ferre iubet. pallam signis auroque rigentem,
et circumtextum croceo velamen acantho,
ornatus Argivae Helenae, quos illa Mycenis,
Pergama cum peteret inconcessosque hymenaeos
extulerat, matris Ledae mirabile donum ;
praeterea sceptrum, Ilione quod gesserat olim,
maxima natarum Priami, colloque monile
bacatum et duplicem gemmis auroque coronam.
haec celerans iter ad navis tendebat Achates.

(1.647-56)

“Presents, too, snatched from the wreck of Ilium, he bids him bring, a mantle stiff with figures wrought in gold, and a veil fringed with yellow acanthus, once worn by Argive Helen when she sailed for Pergamos and her unlawful marriage – she had brought them from Mycenae, the wondrous gift of her mother Leda – also the sceptre, which Ilione, Priam’s eldest daughter, once had borne, a necklace, too, hung with pearls, and a coronet with double circlet of jewels and gold. Speeding these commands, Achates bent his way towards the ships.”

Austin (1971) comments on these lines: “Virgil makes Aeneas seem extraordinarily insensitive, and the sinister character of the gift is further underlined in *inconcessos hymenaeos*”, and he adds “Aeneas’ gifts to Dido could scarcely have been charged with more ominous associations.”

If elaborate textiles often bear negative associations, then these gifts are surely more ill-omened than most. The fabulous cloak and robe belonged to Helen of Sparta, whose marriage to Paris was not only “unlawful” (*inconcessos*), but brought disaster. Dido is not the “lawful” wife

intended for Aeneas, and her attempt to be his wife will also end badly – though this time (unlike Helen) with her own ruin. Even the coronet and sceptre belonged to the ill-fated daughter of Priam who, according to legend, killed both her husband and herself (Austin). The garments described here could hardly be more elaborate or expensive. The *palla*, a large cloak, was a garment worn by women. Helen's *palla* had figures worked in gold thread – either inwoven or else couched down on the original fabric.²² Either process would make the garment stiff (*rigentem*) if there were a considerable number of figures. The *velamen*, basically any sort of body covering – it could be a sort of scarf or veil – was bordered with acanthus leaves which again were probably inwoven. The thread for these acanthus leaves was a deep yellow colour, *croceo* – dyed a saffron colour using the crocus plant. The dye from this plant was used to colour “the most characteristic element of Roman bridal costume” (La Follette, 2001), which was the veil or *flammeum*. “As its name indicates, the bridal veil (*flammeum*) was ‘flame-coloured’, an intense orange-yellow. This dye was made from the stamens of the crocus” (Sebesta, 1997 33n).²³ This was also the colour of the Greek bridal veil; when the bride was dressed, “over all a special *krokos*²⁴ coloured veil” was placed (Cleland et al 2007). Karen Hersch comments : “It may be that here Virgil expected his readers to recognize in these gifts the wedding finery of Helen – the *velamen* with its yellow leaves may be meant to evoke the image of a Greek bridal veil, or a *flammeum* – and therefore serve to both foreshadow and doom the “wedding” of Dido and Aeneas” (2010, 104). Certainly Helen's *velamen* is the closest item Dido appears to possess that could be associated with a traditional wedding.

²² Pliny states *aurum intexere in eadem Asia invenit Attalus rex*, also that *acu facere id Phryges invenerunt*, meaning decorating fabrics using a needle (NH8.196).

²³ Clothing dyed with crocus:

vobis picta croco et fulgenti murice vestis
(Aeneid 9.614).

²⁴ Pliny (NH 2.46)

These gifts from Aeneas to Dido are exactly what Venus needs for her plan to influence Dido in favour of Aeneas.²⁵ Venus' plan depends just as much on these gifts as it depends on Cupid. Dido will be equally influenced by both. Venus decides what is to be done:

At Cytherea novas artis, nova pectore versat
consilia, ut faciem mutatus et ora Cupido
pro dulci Ascanio veniat, donisque furentem
incendat reginam atque ossibus implicit ignem.

(1.657-660)

“But the Cytherean revolves in her breast new wiles, new schemes ; how Cupid, changed in face and form, may come in the stead of sweet Ascanius, and by his *gifts* kindle the queen to madness and send the flame into her very marrow.” (emphasis mine)

When Cupid (as Ascanius) arrives amongst the splendour of Dido's feast, he bears the rich textiles that once were Helen's; everyone marvels at the gifts, and the queen is captivated :

mirantur dona Aeneae, mirantur Iulum
flagrantisque dei voltus simulataque verba
pallamque et pictum croceo velamen acantho.
praecipue infelix, pesti devota futurae,
expleri mentem nequit ardescitque tuendo
Phoenissa, et pariter puero donisque movetur.

(1.709-714)

“They marvel at the gifts of Aeneas, marvel at Iulus, at the god's glowing looks and well-feigned words, at the cloak and robe, decorated with saffron acanthus. Above all, the unhappy Phoenician, doomed to impending ruin, cannot satiate her soul, but takes fire as she gazes, *thrilled alike by the boy and by the gifts.*” (emphasis mine)

In this passage it is the elaborate textiles that are again emphasised for their importance in the whole scheme, and Dido – already surrounded by her own luxury fabrics – cannot resist them. But Dido is not alone in being captivated by such fabulous clothes. When Jupiter at last sends Mercury with orders for Aeneas to remember his destiny and leave Carthage, the Trojan hero is found dressed in Eastern splendour. He wears the gorgeous garments provided by Dido, an indication that he has succumbed to the luxury and enticements of both the queen and her city.

²⁵ Perhaps Aeneas' “insensitivity” (Austin) in giving these items is part of Venus' plan?

His splendid cloak is clearly identified with the dangerous situation in which he is found. His cloak, Tyrian purple interwoven with gold, is looked at next.

Aeneas' Clothing – cloak at Carthage, lion skin at Troy

In his article “What does Aeneas Look Like?” (1985) Mark Griffith concludes that, unlike Homer’s epic heroes, Aeneas is never really described in detail by Vergil in terms of his physical appearance. “The inner man is fixed, if not assertive, of character and purpose; the outer man is no more than he has to be, the sum of the perceptions of others” (316). In fact we “have to paint our own picture, or pictures” of Aeneas. There is one point in the poem, however, where a most striking visual “picture” of Aeneas’ appearance is provided by Vergil. This is when he is found by Mercury in Carthage:

ut primum alatis tetigit magalia plantis
Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta novantem
conspicit. Atque illi stellatus iaspide fulva
ensis erat, Tyrioque ardebat murice laena
demissa ex umeris, dives quae munera Dido
fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro.

(4.259-64)

“So soon as with winged feet he reached the huts, he sees Aeneas founding towers and building new houses. And his sword was starred with yellow jasper, and a cloak hung from his shoulders ablaze with Tyrian purple – a gift that wealthy Dido had wrought, interweaving the web with thread of gold.”

Here it is clear to see not only what Aeneas is doing, but especially what he is wearing. This is the only time in the *Aeneid* when we are actually given a detailed picture of his clothing; the one other occasion when any sort of garment (not armour) is mentioned is at the point in the

narrative where he is setting out from ruined Troy, carrying his father.²⁶ Vergil has Aeneas explain how he lifts his father on to his shoulders, which are clad in a lion's skin:

haec fatus latos umeros subiectaque colla
veste super fulvique insternor pelle leonis
succedoque oneri

(2.721-3)

“So I spoke, and over my broad shoulders and bowed neck I spread the cover of a tawny lion's pelt, and I stoop to the burden.”

These two descriptions of Aeneas' clothing (the only two) – lion's skin and fabulous cloak – could not present more of a contrast. And it is a contrast both of the two garments and also of the two situations in which Aeneas is involved. When he is truly most *pius*, rescuing his father, son, and the *penates*, he wears the lion's skin. A likely association here is with Hercules, the heroic figure whose exploits Evander would describe to Aeneas upon the latter's arrival at Pallanteum; Hercules traditionally wore the Nemean lion's skin as a sign of his victory in having killed it. Thus clad, Aeneas' shoulders – the same ones Dido would admire (4.11)²⁷ – are put to worthy use to support Anchises. At Carthage, on the other hand, these shoulders serve merely to support a fancy – and useless – garment, which would render any physical tasks difficult. This cloak and the jewelled sword which Aeneas also wears are both, as Dryden puts it, “for ornament not use”. The jewelled sword itself, by its colour, provides a further contrasting echo with Aeneas' earlier *pietas*: sword and lion's skin are both *fulvus*, tawny yellow. Later on, after

²⁶ Aeneas and his companions cover their heads with purple cloth when they pray to Pallas, as they have been directed to do by Helenus (*Aeneid* 3.405; 545). But this is scarcely a description of the clothing of Aeneas in particular. *et capita ante aras Phrygio velamur amictu* (545).

²⁷ Dido tells Anna how she feels about Aeneas, and exclaims:

quem sese ore ferens, quam forti pectore et armis! (4.11)

Austin notes “*armis* is a well-known ambiguity” – is it arms (as in shoulders) or arms (as in weapons)? Austin decides on shoulders. But might there not be some point to this ambiguity? Aeneas is now, in Carthage with Dido, about to abandon any use of either shoulders or weapons for any virtuous purpose. Strong shoulders are not needed from which to hang a luxury cloak.

Aeneas has reached Pallanteum (where he is meant to be, unlike Carthage where he is not meant to be), his shoulders again bear an honourable burden, one meant for “use, not ornament”:

talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis
miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet,
attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum.
(8.729-31)

“Such sights he admires on the shield of Vulcan, his mother’s gift, and, though he knows not the deeds, he rejoices in their portraiture, uplifting on his shoulder the fame and fortunes of his children’s children.”

At this point Aeneas has received his armour from Venus; the sword – *fatiferum ensim* (621) – is no longer simply ornamental, and instead of the gold-woven textile made by Dido, he has a golden shield “woven” by Vulcan – *enarrabile textum* (625). The contrasting parallel is clear.

Aeneas’ splendid clothing in Carthage, however, calls to mind Mark Antony clothed in foreign dress, captivated by Cleopatra’s luxury, and – in Roman eyes – diverted from honour and duty. The only occasion when Aeneas’ actual clothing is described is when he, himself, is similarly diverted from his duty, and the clothing thus pictured is made from luxurious woven fabric. Such textiles, it seems, are identified with threat and ill-omen throughout the Dido and Aeneas episode.²⁸ But Aeneas’ fabulous cloak is significant in itself, and needs to be looked at more closely.

Aeneas’ cloak, woven with gold by Dido

Aeneas is clothed in the ultimate of splendid textiles: a *laena* – long cloak – flashing with Tyrian purple, inwoven with gold. The significance of Aeneas’ *laena* is emphasised by the fact that this is the single appearance of this garment in the *Aeneid* – here in this once-only

²⁸ Textiles of this sort are in fact almost always associated with ill-omen throughout the whole *Aeneid*: appendix to this chapter.

description of Aeneas' clothing. The *laena* itself was an important garment. Both Cicero and Servius mention it as a ritual cloak worn in religious ceremony.²⁹ Thus Servius comments on *Aeneid* 4.262 (Aeneas' *laena*): *laena genus est ... proprie toga duplex, amictus auguralis...in qua flamines sacrificant infibulati.* “The *laena* is ... in particular a double toga, an augurial vestment...in which *flamines* make sacrifices, wearing it fastened with a clasp.”³⁰ It was a substantial garment, twice the size of the toga (Bonfante-Warren 1973), which would preclude much physical activity on the part of the wearer. To be physically inactive is quite uncharacteristic of Aeneas. Similarly, its size would mean that, in the case of Aeneas' *laena*, there is a great deal of expensive purple textile and costly gold thread involved. The purple dye itself deserves special mention.

This is Tyrian purple, the most expensive and best of the purple dyes. This dye was obtained from shellfish, as Pliny explains (N.H.9.125-142). Pliny quotes Cornelius Nepos who remembers that the double-dyed Tyrian purple could not even be obtained for a thousand denarii

²⁹ The religious aspect of the *laena* is significant here. Aeneas in Carthage is wearing a purple garment of the kind worn by priests when sacrificing – but he is not involved in any such activity. Instead he is ignoring his sacred task, beguiled by Dido and her luxury. But he has previously worn a purple garment – or at least covered his head with it – for the “right” reason. This was when, having reached Buthrotum, he met Helenus and Andromache (*Aeneid* 3.293-7). He was advised by Helenus to sacrifice to the gods when he had arrived safely at his next destination, and to cover his head:

purpureo velare comas adopertus amictu
(3.405).

Aeneas did this:

et capita ante aras Phrygio velamur amictu
(3.545)

The contrast between his use of this garment and his appearance in the *laena* at Carthage is an indication of how far he has forgotten his destined task. Not only has Aeneas been led astray, but the garment which was associated with religious purpose has become an item of luxurious excess.

³⁰

- i) Latin quoted in *De Lanae in Antiquorum Ritibus Usu*: Jakob Pley (1911) 48
- ii) Cicero mentions an occasion when M. Popilius (359 BC) performed a public sacrifice as *flamen Carmentalis, cum laena*. His *laena* appeared to lend him significant extra authority as he settled a dispute between the people and the patricians: *Laena amictus ... seditionem ... cum auctoritate ... sedavit* (*Brutus* 56).
- iii) In a chapter on the reconstruction of Roman clothing (in Sebesta and Bonfante, 2001) Norma Goldman notes: “the *laena*, a priestly mantle, is often referred to as *duplex* ... [this] could mean that the garment was double or doubled over, or perhaps made of two pieces of cloth” (229)

per pound: *diphaba Tyria, quae in libras denariis mille non poterat emi* (9.137). Vitruvius praised this purple as the best and most pleasing of all, having *Carissimam et excellentissimam...suavitatem.* (*de Architectura* 7.13). In Vergil's description, the cloak *blazes* with purple: *Tyrioque ardebat murice.* The gold inwoven would add to this display; thread of silk or linen was used as a core, around which fine gold strip was twisted (Giner 2001). This was then interwoven with the purple warp of the fabric – by Dido's own hands, if this is the same garment at 11.74-5: *ipsa suis quondam manibus Sidonia Dido fecerat.*

Whether or not the association of the *laena* with Roman religion is meant to be of importance here, the religious connection has been seen as “isolating” Aeneas. Discussing Aeneas' *laena*, Henry Bender (2001) notes that the *laena* is “standard religious dress of the Augustan age as exemplified by certain figures on the *Ara Pacis*” (151). He thinks that since this garment had special religious significance, Vergil uses it “as an effective symbol of Aeneas' disorientation. The garment isolates Aeneas uniquely and dramatizes the extent to which he has mentally departed from his mission.” (150) But there is more to Aeneas' cloak than its connection with the religious *laena*. Vergil clearly emphasises the fabulous nature of this textile, even specifying the Tyrian dye and the technique by which gold was inwoven (4.264), and he repeats this same line (about what appears to be the same garment) at 11.74: *fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro,* “(Dido) had made, and had interwoven the web with thin gold.”

It is the splendid, complex, rich nature of this textile that “isolates” Aeneas – quite apart from the garment's religious connection. Its splendour isolates him physically from the simpler and useful garments (and more practical armour) needed in his journey, and it isolates him morally from the difficult but dutiful task that he should be pursuing, his fated mission. The

more luxurious the textile of this substantial, all-enveloping *laena*, the more it signifies the dangerous, ill-omened situation in which Aeneas is found by Mercury.³¹

It is in fact the purple dye of Aeneas' cloak that calls to mind another situation somewhat similar to his own, involving Romans who were also diverted from their moral purpose. This episode is the subject of *Ode 3.5* of Horace. After defeat by the Parthians in 53 BC, the soldiers of Crassus capitulated and went on living amongst the barbarian enemy, even marrying foreign wives. The moral weakness of the life these soldiers were leading was not unlike that of Aeneas at Carthage "married" to Dido. Horace deplores the life chosen by the former soldiers of Crassus:

milesne Crassi coniuge barbara
turpis maritus vixit et hostium –
pro cura inversique mores ! –
consenuit sacerorum in armis,

sub rege Medo Marsus et Apulus,
anciliorum et nominis et togae
oblitus aeternaeque Vestae,
incolumi Iove et urbe Roma ?
(Odes 3.5.5-12)

"Did Crassus' troops live in base wedlock with barbarian wives and (alas, our sunken state and our altered ways!) grow old in service of the foes whose daughters they had wedded – Marsian and Apulian submissive to a Parthian king, forgetful of the sacred shields, the Roman name, the toga, and the eternal Vesta, while Jove's temples and the city Rome remained unharmed?"

These soldiers, like Aeneas, have "forgotten the toga". And as Horace expresses the pointlessness of ransoming these soldiers, he compares the loss of their *vera virtus* to the loss of the original colour of wool once it has been dyed:

auro repensu scilicet acrior
miles redibit. flagitio additis
damnum: neque amissos colores

³¹ Of Aeneas in his cloak: "The appearance of Aeneas is all Tyrian, not at all Trojan (or Roman)." (Pease, 1967, 261). "Aeneas has now put on clothes that represent the wealth and culture of an alien people." (Henry, 1977, 36).

lana refert medicato fuco,
 nec vera virtus, cum semel excidit
 curat reponi deterioribus.

(3.5.25-30)

“Redeemed by gold, of course, our soldiers will renew the battle with greater bravery!
 To shame you are adding loss ; the wool once dyed never regains the hue it once has lost,
 nor does true courage, when once it has vanished care to be restored to the degenerate.”

The original, unadulterated state of the wool is irrevocably changed, “poisoned”, when it is dyed – *medicatus* can mean this.³² Although Quinn (1980) in a note on these lines asks “who would want to un-dye wool?”, yet wool in its undyed state, as discussed already in this chapter, was associated with virtue. The basic Roman toga was white wool (Stone 2002);³³ purple-dyed textiles, in general, were seen and criticized as undesirable luxury.³⁴ The native worth of the captured Roman soldiers in Horace’s ode has been contaminated by the “dye” of an easier foreign barbarian life (which it is so much harder to resist). Similarly, Aeneas in Carthage has temporarily lost his own *vera virtus*, and has been “poisoned” with foreign luxury, the most obvious sign of this being his fabulous clothing. It is only while Aeneas is at Carthage that he is surrounded by such luxury. And he is not meant to remain there, although he has to be moved on by no less a force than Jupiter. When he arrives at Pallanteum, where he really is meant to be, his surroundings are very different, and are in direct contrast to the luxury at Carthage – especially with regard to “textiles”.

³² The mushroom that might have killed Claudius was *boletum medicatum* (Suetonius, Claudius 44).

³³ “The toga was generally woven from wool” (13) “The normal toga of the average male citizen was called *pura* to describe its natural colour (likely an off-white or grayish hue)” (15). Shelley Stone, *The Toga*, in Sebesta and Bonfante (2001). The plain toga was *toga pura*. Cicero refers to the coming of age of his son, when he was given the plain toga to wear, as *togam puram dare* – for example in a letter to Atticus (9.19) *ego meo Ciceroni ... togam puram dedi*. The plain toga might not have been very white – Livy records a bill to prevent candidates from “whitening” their togas in order to canvass for votes (*Ab Urbe Condita* 4.25.13).

³⁴ Vergil’s praise of the farmer’s life in *Georgics II* (458-74) contains the line: *alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno* (461) (their white wool is not stained with Assyrian dye). *Assyrium Venenum* = “Tyrian purple” (Lewis and Short). Similarly, *venenum* can mean “poison” (Lewis and Short)

Aeneas' arrival at Pallanteum

Aeneas' arrival and stay in Pallanteum forms a contrasting parallel to his stay in Carthage. If, as suggested, elaborate textiles are largely identified with what is wrong for Aeneas at Carthage, then their absence at Pallanteum is significant. Dido's palace and city, her life and its luxurious accompaniments, are strongly opposed to the much simpler, non-luxurious life and surroundings of Evander at Pallanteum – which, after all, is to be seen both physically and ideologically as the earliest beginnings of Rome.

When Aeneas arrives at Pallanteum, he is in a position similar to his status on arrival at Carthage: he is without resources and seeks help. In both places he is welcomed by the local ruler and help is provided; and the first indication of his welcome in each case is an invitation to a feast.³⁵ But even before Aeneas meets the rulers who will welcome him, he has already seen the domain which they rule. At Carthage Aeneas marvels at the massive city taking shape:

miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,
miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum
(1.421-2)

“Aeneas marvels at the massive buildings, mere huts once; marvels at the gates, the din and paved high-roads.”

But Pallanteum consists of scattered houses, with one main building:

cum muros arcemque procul ac rara domorum
tecta vident, quae nunc Romana potentia caelo
aequavit, tum res inopes Evandrus habebat.
(8.98-100)

“When afar they see walls and a citadel, and scattered house-roofs, which today Rome's empire has exalted to Heaven, but then Evander ruled, a scant domain.”

³⁵ Dido's words welcoming Aeneas at Carthage (1.571) are almost identical to Evander's at Pallanteum (8.171)
auxilio tutos dimittam opibusque iuvabo (1.571)

auxilio laetos dimittam opibusque iuvabo (8.171)

The parallels have been noted – Gransden (1976), Fordyce (1977), both noting 8.171; Powell (2008, 155) on similarity of treatment.

Later, when Aeneas is being led to Evander's home, it is through the rough woodland which then occupied the area: *silvestris horrida dumis* (348), “bristling with woodland thickets”. They reach a house which is the extreme opposite of Dido's palace: surrounded by grazing cattle, it is a small dwelling whose “couches” are foliage and animal skins. Aeneas is welcomed into the house of poor Evander – *pauperis Evandri* (360):

dixit et angusti subter fastigia tecti
ingentem Aenean duxit stratisque locavit
effultum foliis et pelle Libystidis ursae
(8.366-8)

“He said, and beneath the roof of his lowly dwelling led great Aeneas, and laid him on a couch of strewn leaves and the skin of a Libyan bear.”

Pallanteum is a small settlement, not rich or powerful; the people and their *pauper senatus*, “humble senate”, are found by Aeneas, offering sacrifice to Hercules. After the initial greetings, Evander at once orders the feast: *dapes iubet reponi* (175). Here there are no purple covered couches, no gold-woven textiles. Aeneas' companions are seated on the grass ; Aeneas himself has a lion's skin (as he wore at Troy) and a wooden “throne”:

Haec ubi dicta, dapes iubet et sublata reponi
pocula gramineoque viros locat ipse sedili
praecipuumque toro et villosi pelle leonis
accipit Aenean solioque invitat acerno.
(8.175-8)³⁶

“This said, he orders the repast and cups, already removed, to be replaced, and with his own hand ranges the guests on the grassy seat, and chief in honour he welcomes Aeneas to the cushion of a shaggy lion's hide, and invites him to a maple throne.”

It has been pointed out that the lion's skin appears in scenes especially identified with Aeneas' *pietas*, the most obvious one being his flight from Troy carrying Anchises (Galinsky,

³⁶ At this feast, it is the “gift of Ceres” – the bread – which is made with careful work: *dona laboratae Cereris* (8.181), whereas it was the couch covers at Dido's feast that were described in this way: *arte laboratae vestes* (1.639). Labour for a worthier cause?

1969, 21-2). Galinsky and Gransden (1992) both see Aeneas' lion's skin as associating him with Hercules : "in the Hercules-Cacus episode in *Aeneid* 8, this identification of Aeneas and Hercules is worked out in detail." (Galinsky, 22) At the conclusion of this episode, when Aeneas, having been aided by Evander, is about to set out with his allies to meet his enemies, the lion's skin appears once more, spread on the back of his specially chosen horse : *ducunt exortem Aeneae, quem fulva leonis / pellis obit totum* (8.552-3). "for Aeneas they led forth a chosen steed, all caparisoned in a tawny lion's skin."

But lion's skins have a further significance at Pallanteum apart from the connections with *pietas* and Hercules, mentioned above. The skins of lions and other animals are what represent textiles in the furnishings and clothing at Pallanteum. Here they are the equivalent of Dido's luxury fabrics but they are also opposite in significance: they represent virtue, as does Lucretia's plain wool. Animal skins appear as a feature of each aspect of Aeneas' stay with Evander. "The simple furnishings of a pastoral king" (Gransden on 8.177) – and clothing as well – by their very nature these "fabrics" represent the virtue that Evander recommends to Aeneas: to scorn wealth, and not disdain poverty (8.364-5). In the same way as Evander's furnishings and clothing have positive value, so can Dido's textiles be seen to represent what is of negative value and to be avoided; they are the riches to be spurned: *aude contemnere opes* (8.364).

As mentioned above, animal skins feature at every stage of Aeneas' time in Pallanteum. Their first appearance is at the feast, where Aeneas is seated on a lion's skin: *villoso pelle leonis* (8.177). When he sleeps in Evander's house he lies on the skin of a Libyan bear: *pelle Libystidis ursae* (8.368). And when he departs from Pallanteum on his destined journey, a lion's skin covers the back of his horse: *fulva leonis pellis* (8.552). But animal skins at Pallanteum not only represent a contrast with the rich coverings at Carthage – there is also the question of clothing.

At Carthage, the most significant mention of actual clothing is Aeneas' cloak, since it is the only detailed description of Aeneas' clothing anywhere in the *Aeneid*, and the garment and armour thus depicted are quite out of character with a hero *quo iustior alter / nec pietate fuit, nec bello maior et armis* (1.544-5) (than whom was none more righteous in goodness, or greater in war and deeds of arms). At Pallanteum, it is not Aeneas himself who appears in clothing that presents a contrast to the fabulous cloak made by Dido. It is Evander instead who does this, as he dresses in the morning, preparing to meet with Aeneas and explain what assistance can be given to the Trojans.

Evander's clothing – a panther's skin

Evander wakes in his modest home, and begins to dress:

Evandrum ex humili tecto lux suscitat alma
et matutini volucrum sub culmine cantus.
consurgit senior tunicaque inducitur artus
et Tyrrhena pedum circumdat vincula plantis ;
tum lateri atque umeris Tegeaeum subligat ensem,
demissa ab laeva panthaea terga retorquens.
nec non et gemini custodes limine ab alto
praecedunt gressumque canes comitantur erilem.

(8.455-61)

“the kindly light and the morning songs of birds beneath the eaves roused Evander from his humble home. The old man rises, clothes his limbs in a tunic, and wraps his feet in Tyrrhenian sandals. Then to his side and shoulders he buckles his Tegean sword, twisting back the panther’s hide that fell from the left. Moreover, two guardian dogs go before from the lofty threshold, and attend their master’s steps.”

The “Homeric pattern” of this description has been noted (Gransden 1992, Fordyce 1977)³⁷ with the suggestion that “in his heroic simplicity Evander is perhaps an anti-type of Aeneas in his finery at Dido’s court” (Gransden). This does seem to be the case here, but it is the detailed nature of the contrast between Evander and Aeneas that is of concern in the present

³⁷ For example: *Iliad* 2.42ff; *Odyssey* 2.2ff; scenes of dressing and putting on armour.

chapter; there is more here than merely simplicity as opposed to luxury. Evander's clothing is, indeed, simple: the tunic is the most basic item of ancient Roman costume. Henry Bender (2001) describes it as "the standard garment of both sexes", and notes that, at Evander's morning meeting with Aeneas he wears the tunic, a garment which "characterizes the simplicity and sternness of the Romans-to-be" (148). These "future Romans" are of course Evander's people. Evander's sword is not described as a jewelled ornament like that of Aeneas at Carthage: "*Tegeaeus is Arcadius, and Evander is Arcadian*" (Fordyce). He does not appear to wear any luxury items, but again there is mention of the skin of an animal, this time a panther.³⁸ Once more where a possibly elaborate woven textile might be featured, there is the basic animal skin instead. Despite its being a panther rather than a lion, there is still the suggestion here of the *pietas* of Aeneas when he wore the lion's skin leaving Troy, and also a suggestion of the beneficent strength of Hercules, with whom the lion's skin was associated. Above all, in terms of "fabric", animal hide is perhaps the strongest possible contrast to an elaborate textile and thus more like plain wool. The final point of contrast, however, is the echo here of Aeneas' cloak, which was *demissa ex umeris* (4.263). Evander twists back the panther's skin so that it also hangs down in that way: *demissa ab laeva pantherae terga retorquens* (460).³⁹

Whereas the danger of Aeneas' situation at Carthage might be identified with the great array of fabulous textiles which he encountered there (even being enveloped in such a cloak), the positive value of his stay in Pallanteum could be similarly identified with the animal skins featured there, basic in their unadorned simplicity. It is suggested here that the contrast between

³⁸ Could it be that the panther, with its spotted pelt, is the "natural equivalent" of the *laboratae vestes* at Dido's court? This was a chief characteristic of the panther:

tigrium pantherarumque maculas (Pliny NH 7.7); *pictarum fera corpora pantherarum* (Ovid Met-3.669).

³⁹ There is an echo here also of Hercules: *tegimen torquens immane leonis* (Aeneid 7.666).

the two kinds of coverings strengthens the idea that elaborate textiles bear negative associations and ill-omen in the *Aeneid*, as they often do in myth and other ancient literature.

But in the Dido and Aeneas episode in the *Aeneid*, there is more to Dido's involvement with woven cloths than her possession of elaborate examples of such items. Both before and during her time with Aeneas, she is characterised not only in terms of her relationship with "real" fabrics (as discussed earlier), but also with the processes of textile production, and the threads involved in weaving and spinning – and knotting. Dido's "textile involvement" has two aspects here. One is her own apparent skill at weaving; the other is her character and actions described in textile imagery.

Dido's other web: her clever use of thread to establish her city

Writing of Dido's efforts to retain Aeneas at Carthage, Raymond Starr (2011) compares her situation with that of Penelope, as well as with other weaving women, in the *Odyssey*. His discussion centres on the advice given to Dido by her sister in *Aeneid* 4: *causasque innecte morandi* (4.51), which he interprets as "weave causes of delay". Starr sees weaving in the *Odyssey* as being connected with "times of domestic instability" for the weaving women, and that various women are each in some way trying to control the identity of Odysseus in relation to herself.⁴⁰ Thus Dido might similarly be seen to be using *actual* weaving to "create the Aeneas she wants".⁴¹ Starr adds that since weaving can also be a "common metaphor for intellectual activity", Dido might here be urged (by Anna) to use her intelligence to find ways of holding Aeneas. There are clearly similarities between Dido's situation and Penelope's. Both wish for delay, and both are connected with weaving. But apart from these obvious comparisons, the

⁴⁰ For example, Helen and Andromache are weaving at critical times; Calypso, Circe and Nausicaa provide clothing for Odysseus.

⁴¹ As discussed above, Dido's textiles are certainly effective in this way.

whole area of ideas connected with weaving (spinning and knotting) is significant with relation to Dido and Aeneas at Carthage. Dido is said literally to weave, but there are also various metaphorical uses of textile techniques describing her actions.

First of all, *innectere* does not necessarily mean “weaving”. It can – if meant literally – be more general in the sense of connecting, joining, even knotting.⁴² There is more to say about *innectere* shortly; but long before she is given Anna’s advice about reasons for delay, Dido – according to legend – showed herself to be very clever with thread.

When Aeneas lands in Carthage he is ignorant of the place and its inhabitants, and his mother Venus appears to him in disguise and explains where he is, and who is the ruler of this land. Dido is the queen and she has fled from Tyre where her brother murdered her husband. (*Aeneid* 1.338-68) When she arrived in the present land Dido bought ground for a city:

mercatique solum, facti de nomine Byrsam,
taurino quantum possent circumdare tergo.
(1.367-8)

“They bought ground – Byrsa they called it therefrom – as much as they could encompass with a bull’s hide.”

Austin (1971) notes at 1.367 that, according to Servius, Dido had the bull’s hide cut into thin threads in order to enclose twenty *stadia*. To look again at *innectere*: in a metaphorical sense of “contrive”, *causasque innecte morandi* could certainly be suitable advice to give to such a cunningly clever woman – urging her to “devise” some delays. Pease (1967) suggests that Vergil “coined” *innectere*.⁴³ He notes that later Latin authors used this same verb when there

⁴² Thus Vergil uses the word in the basic sense:

- i) Aeneas ties on gloves of equal weight before the boxing match between Entellus and Dares: *et paribus palmas amborum innexuit armas* (5.425)
- ii) Evander has his hair covered with poplar leaves, connected to his hair and to one another in a sort of “festoon”. *Herculea bicolor cum populus umbra velavitque comas foliisque innexa pependit* (8.276-7)

⁴³ i) The verb itself, according to Pease in a note on 4.51, is “a word perhaps coined by Vergil”. He explains: “The verb ... implies the *craft* by which Dido is to *bind* Aeneas by a sense of obligation” (emphasis mine: even in

was the idea of some delay being “devised”. Later use would have weakened the force of *innectere* in this sense. If Vergil’s is the first use of it in this way, indicating contrivance, then it has an impact of its own which is in keeping with the significantly frequent use of textile imagery in the Dido and Aeneas episode. Parts of the verb *innectere* also appear elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, however, with negative connotations in both its literal and its metaphorical sense. Three of these occurrences are in contexts that are quite sinister. These are discussed below, the point being that this textile technique – knotting – can have negative significance.

When Aeneas is being conducted through the underworld by the Sybil (Book 6), he hears the cries of those being punished, and fearfully asks what were the crimes committed and what were the penalties being enacted. The Sybil explains the various punishments; she mentions the action of those who have “entangled” a client in some sort of dishonest or criminal dealings:

hic quibus invisi fratres, dum vita manebat,
pulsatusve parens, et fraus *innexa clienti* (my emphasis)
(6.608-9)

“Here were they who in lifetime hated their brethren, or struck a parent, and entangled a client in wrong.”

This is a crime against *pietas*. As Austin (1986) in a note on these lines explains, quoting Servius, the patron was as a father to the client: *patroni quasi patres, tantundem est clientem quantum filium fallere*. It was as if a son were being betrayed. The same verb, *innectere*, is used in the description of one of the agents of divine punishment, the Fury Allecto, sent by Juno to madden the wife of Latinus (Book 7). Having achieved this purpose, Allecto devises a disguise as a priestess to stir Turnus to action. (In this guise she fails to persuade him and reverts to her

explaining textile imagery, textile imagery is used.) Pease cites various later Latin authors who used the word *innectere*, all in its metaphorical sense of “contrive”, “devise”, and all with some idea of delay involved.

ii) Austin (1986) in a note on *Aeneid* 6.609, comments that “Virgil first uses *innectere* in poetry”.

original form to do so.) But her fraudulent disguise had included the olive spray of the priestess; here indeed this olive spray is an example of “contrived” deceit:

et frontem obscenam rugis arat, induit albos
cum vitta crinis, tum ramum *innectit* olivae
(7.417-18)

“She furrows her sinister brow with wrinkles, assumes white hair and fillet, next entwines them with an olive spray.”

One further use of *innectere* occurs in the depiction of a situation that represented one of the greatest threats to the descendants of Aeneas. When Aeneas receives the shield that his mother Venus has requested from Vulcan, he is amazed at its workmanship (Book 8). He sees on it many scenes which depict future events for his people, although he does not know this at the time. One scene in particular shows the Gauls about to attack the Roman citadel. They are seen lurking in the darkness; their alien barbarian costume appears to emphasise their threat:

Galli per dumos aderant arcemque tenebant
defensi tenebris et dono noctis opacae;
aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis,
virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla
auro *innectuntur*.
(8.657-61)

“The Gauls were near amid the thickets, laying hold of the fort, shielded by darkness, and the boon of shadowy night. Golden are their locks and golden their dress; they glitter in striped cloaks, and their milk-white necks are entwined with gold.”

Anna’s words – *causasque innecte morandi* – thus contain the metaphorical use of a verb whose literal meaning involves a process with thread. This is the first example of several in the Carthage episode where thoughts and actions on Dido’s part, which could be seen as “crafty” or deceitful in some way, are expressed by means of textile imagery. Some further examples of such textile terms will be considered shortly.

But first – it is not only metaphorical knots that are associated with Dido. In the one and only description of her clothing in the *Aeneid*, her hair and her *chlamys* are both described by means of verbs whose basic meaning is “to knot”: *crines nodantur in aurum* (139) “hair ‘knotted’ in gold”; *aurea purpuream subnectit fibula vestem* (140) “a gold clasp buckled together her purple cloak”. And there is yet a further aspect to knots which might be briefly looked at. Dido’s “knotting” of delays is suggested as a means of keeping Aeneas with her now that she has fallen in love with him. “Knotting” is of particular interest here, since knots are strongly associated in ancient tradition with love-charms. The love-magic of knots had featured in one of Vergil’s *Eclogues*, composed (presumably) well before the *Aeneid*.⁴⁴ In *Eclogue 8*, there is an “incantation” meant to draw Daphnis back from the city. The singer desiring his return chants:

ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnim.
necte tribus nodis ternos, Amarylli, colores
necte, Amarylli, modo et ‘Veneris’ dic ‘vincula necto’.
(*Eclogue 8.76-78*)

“Bring Daphnis home from town, bring him, my songs! Knot, Amaryllis, knot three colours in three knots; knot them, Amaryllis, and say ‘Chains of love I knot’.”⁴⁵

The idea is thus inherent – especially in this instance of *innectere* and the process of “knotting” – that there is a way of achieving compliance from a possibly unwilling subject. This is what Dido does by “knotting delays” for Aeneas. There are some further instances of her behaviour which are represented by textile imagery, and these are discussed below. Dido has been persuaded by Anna’s arguments about the wisdom of alliance with Aeneas (4.31-53). In

⁴⁴ *Eclogues* 42BC; *Aeneid* begun 29BC (Conte, 1994).

⁴⁵ *Eclogue 8* is seen as being greatly influenced by Theocritus (Coleman 1977), in particular *Idyll 2*, where the singer attempts to recall her lover by chanting spells. There do not appear to be any “knots” in this *Idyll* – the magic seems to involve a wheel of some kind.

fact Anna has succeeded in overcoming Dido's anxiety that she should remain faithful to Sychaeus. The result is the "unfastening" of Dido's *pudor*:

his dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore
spemque dedit dubiae menti solvitque pudorem
(4.54-5)

"with these words she fanned into flame the queen's love-kindled heart, put hope in her wavering mind, and untied the bonds of shame."

The primary meaning of *solvare* is to untie or unfasten a cord.⁴⁶ In his discussion of Dido's *culpa*, Niall Rudd (1990) notes that the unfastening of *pudor* is a "quasi sexual unfastening of the bride's belt";⁴⁷ thus Catullus: *zonam solvere virgineam* (67.28). The groom was to untie this belt after the wedding; " 'the beginning of marriage is the unloosing of the belt'"⁴⁸ The image of the cord untied thus represents Dido's attitude and behaviour now that she finds herself crazed with passionate love. She is not only "unting" her connection with Sychaeus (as former husband), she is also "unting" any scruples about making herself more available in her relationship with Aeneas (as future husband?). But a more complex process with thread – that of weaving – forms the next such image used to describe her attitude to what is a further development between herself and Aeneas – the false marriage. The term used in this instance is *praetexit* (4.172).

After the mock wedding ceremony in the cave with Aeneas (4.160-170), Dido no longer sees her relationship with Aeneas as *furtivus*:

nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem;
coniugum vocat; hoc praetexit nomine culpam
(4.171-2)

⁴⁶ Thus *solve zonam* (Plautus, Truculentus 954), with this meaning still current in *nullo solvente catenas*, (Ovid Met. 3.700).

⁴⁷ The Roman bride traditionally wore a *zona* (belt) "that may have included complicated knot work" (*nodus Herculaneum*). Hersch, 2010, 71. The knot of Hercules was thought to have protective qualities for the wearer. Heckenbach, 1911, 104-5.

⁴⁸ (Festus 63: *Cinxiae Iunonis nomen sanctum habebatur in nuptiis, quod initio coniugii solutio erat cinguli, quo nova nupta erat cincta.*)

“Now Dido no longer dreams of a secret love; she calls it marriage; with that name she covers over her blame.”

It is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss what constitutes Dido’s *culpa*.⁴⁹ Niall Rudd in his article on her *culpa* thinks that Vergil (in line 172) “is not describing her feelings but condemning her conduct” (154), and that “this is the only line in which Vergil makes such a definite judgement.” If this is so, Vergil is using an image from textile processes to condemn Dido’s conduct: the way she deals with her *culpa* is by “weaving in front” of it, which is the basic meaning of *praetexere*.⁵⁰ But this is only metaphorical weaving, whereas Dido is pointedly represented by Vergil as performing the physical task of actually weaving cloth; she herself has woven Aeneas’ fabulous cloak.

Dido’s weaving: negative associations

When Aeneas is discovered by Mercury, he is wearing the cloak that Dido had made for him. It could be thought that, being a high status woman – a queen – Dido had not personally made this cloak, and had merely supervised the weaving. What seems to be the same cloak, however, appears again later in the *Aeneid*; it is used by Aeneas to cover the body of the young man Pallas, who had been killed by Turnus (*Aeneid* 11.72-77). At this point, Aeneas has two cloaks that Dido had given him at Carthage, both similarly woven with gold, and he chooses either one or both (this is not clear) as a funeral covering. Describing these cloaks, Vergil leaves no doubt that it was Dido who made them, using her own hands, and that she happily did so:

⁴⁹ Niall Rudd: *Dido’s Culpa*, in *Oxford Readings in Vergil’s Aeneid* ed. S.J. Harrison (1990). Kenneth Quinn: *Virgil’s Aeneid* (1968) Book Four, 135-150. Both discuss Dido’s *culpa* at length.

⁵⁰ There is a visual ambiguity here also: Dido is “covering over” her *culpa*; *praetexit* is both present tense of *praetexere*, and past tense of *praetegere* to “cover in front”. Since the line contains *vocat*, it is present tense that operates here.

tum geminas vestis auroque ostroque rigentis
 extulit Aeneas, quas illi laeta laborum
 ipsa suis quondam manibus Sidonia Dido
 fecerat et tenui telas discreverat auro
 (11.72-75)

“Then Aeneas brought forth two robes, stiff with gold and purple, which Sidonian Dido, delighting in the toil, had once herself with her own hands wrought for him, interweaving the web with threads of gold.”

The inweaving of the gold into the fabric is emphasised by the repetition of the same line of verse which was used to describe the process earlier, at Carthage: *Dido / fecerat et tenui telas discreverat auro* (4.264; 11.75).

In his article “Weaving Delays: Dido and Penelope in Vergil, *Aeneid* IV, 50-53”, Raymond Starr writes: “Weaving was traditionally women’s work in antiquity both in life and in the epic tradition, and Augustus himself emphasised weaving as symbolic of moral, family-based activity. So Anna’s recommendation that Dido ‘weave causes of delay’ emphasises the on-going tension between Dido as powerful queen and Dido as woman, specifically as a potential marriage partner” (913). With reference to the first of these statements: weaving does appear to have been “traditionally” women’s work in antiquity, especially in epic, and that is the likely reason why, as Starr says, Augustus encouraged it as a “traditional” activity.⁵¹ In his next statement Starr seems to be saying that Dido’s ability to weave should have positive value in relation to her position as potential marriage partner for Aeneas. But despite women’s attention to weaving being favoured in Augustan ideology, Dido’s ability in that area could have no positive bearing on her position. In fact it would be negative, since she is weaving gold thread, the very opposite of plain wool. She is very far from a suitable marriage partner for Aeneas, and nothing can change that. In Roman eyes she is an Eastern queen surrounded by luxury; she calls to mind

⁵¹ It is suggested in this thesis that the reason why Augustus did feel some need to encourage woolworking was because it was not necessarily happening very much (if at all) amongst contemporary *matronae*.

Cleopatra. She is, moreover, the anti-type of Lucretia. And as for Dido's textile skills – the point here is actually *what* she is weaving, rather than the fact that she weaves at all.

Dido's weaving: *texta varia, femina varia*

The ideal Augustan *matrona*, although her story is set in a mythical past, is Livy's Lucretia. She is found late at night *dedita lanae* – devoted to her wool (*Ab Urbe Condita* 1.57.9). This *lana*, being worked by her women, is plain wool, and Lucretia's virtue is identified with it, as already noted. As for the cloth which Dido weaves for Aeneas' cloak, Vergil does not specify its basic nature; instead he emphasises both the blazing Tyrian dye and the gold woven into the fabric. This textile is no longer “pure” wool (even if wool, silk originating from the East would be more likely). Whatever its basic nature this cloth has been “contaminated” and has become a fabulous textile with inwoven gold similar to others which, in the *Aeneid*, are often connected with ill-fortune. Some examples of these will be looked at shortly, but first there is more to say about the nature of gold woven into cloth.

When gold is woven into a fabric what it basically forms is a stripe.⁵² Gold-woven garments are not usually specifically described as “striped” by Latin poets. There are three instances where stripes are clearly specified. One is when the poet Tibullus typifies the greed and extravagance of the girl Nemesis by means of her gold-woven garment:

illa gerat vestes tenues quas femina Coa
texuit, auratas dispositaque vias
(Tibullus 2.3.57-8)

⁵² There is a history of stripes: “L’Etoffe du Diable”, Michel Pastoureau – translated as “The Devil’s Cloth” (2001) – in which the association of striped cloth with doubt, misfortune and even with evil is examined in detail. Pastoureau suggests that even cloth of two or more different colours has been traditionally associated with what is suspect or dangerous. Certainly the Latin *varius*, already with a possible pejorative sense of “unreliable”, becomes the Old French *vair* with a much stronger negative meaning of “changeable and false”.

“She shall wear fine silks which a woman of Cos has woven, and in which she has placed paths of gold.”

More sinister are the two other instances of striped garments, since both refer to Gauls.

Propertius describes a Gaul staining his striped clothing with his own blood: *illi virgatas maculanti sanguine bracas* (4.10.43) “he stains his striped trousers with his own blood”. But much more threatening was the mention of Gauls with striped cloaks which appeared in *Aeneid* 8 on the shield of Aeneas, cited previously here. In this scene the Gauls lurk in the darkness, preparing to attack the Roman citadel under cover of night:

Galli per dumos aderant arcemque tenebant
defensi tenebris et dono noctis opacae:
aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis,
virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla
auro innectuntur, duo quisque Alpina coruscant
gaesa manu, scutis protecti corpora longis
(8.657-62)

“The Gauls were near amid the thickets, laying hold of the fort, shielded by darkness, and the boon of shadowy night. Golden are their locks and golden their raiment; they glitter in striped cloaks, and their milk-white necks are entwined with gold; two Alpine pikes each brandishes in hand, and long shields guard their limbs.”

Their cloaks are definitely striped – *virgatis* – and gold is repeated in the description of their appearance: *aurea ... aurea*.⁵³

In his study of striped cloth, Pastoureau (2001) mentions the Latin word *varius*, deciding that it can be used to describe any patterned cloth, including stripes (106). The cloaks that Dido had woven for Aeneas could be described using the word *varius*, with their gold “stripes”. The same word could apply to her furnishings at Carthage, where intricately woven (*laboratae*) purple cloths covered the couches; even more could *varius* describe her hunting attire, the *chlamys* which had a figured border. Certainly the word would apply to the textiles which

⁵³ Gold is similarly emphasised in the description of Dido’s clothing in Book 4 (136-9) – she is a threat to Rome of a different kind.

Aeneas brought to her, such as the garment patterned with acanthus leaves (1.649). *Varius* is a term that can indicate the existence of different colours; Catullus describes the figures woven on the bed-cover of Peleus and Thetis with a version of this word:

haec priscis hominum variata figuris
heroum mira virtutes indicat arte
(64.50-51)

“This coverlet, decorated in colours with antique human figures, portrays in marvellous art the brave deeds of heroes.”

In such contexts *varius* appears to have a meaning that is straightforward enough, but the negative aspect of variation is uncertainty and even untrustworthiness.⁵⁴ Thus Sallust could use this word when describing the character of Catilina:

Animus audax, subdolus, varius, cuius rei lubet simulator ac dissimulator
(Bellum Catilinae 5.4)

“His mind was reckless, cunning, treacherous, capable of any form of pretence or concealment.”

Both meanings of *varius* could be implied in the description of Antony and his forces as depicted on the shield of Aeneas:

hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis (8.685)

“here Antonius with barbaric might and varied arms.”

So Dido’s fabulous textiles, as they threaten Aeneas with the temptation of remaining in Carthage in luxury, could be described as *texta varia* in the unreliable and dangerous sense of the word *varius*. And in fact it is with this same word that Mercury warns Aeneas about Dido. Aeneas, having not yet left Carthage, is urged by Mercury to leave before the untrustworthy

⁵⁴ multi-coloured: *varias – plumas* (Horace, *Ars Poetica* 2); changeable: *varius incertusque agitabat* (Sallust, *Jugurtha* 74.1)

queen might burn his ships to prevent his departure: *varium et mutabile semper / femina* (4.569-70) “a fickle and changeable thing, always, is woman.”

Finally then, as she emerges in relation to Aeneas and his destiny, Dido in her rich setting is indeed *femina varia*.

Gold textiles in the Aeneid

There are other references to gold-woven textiles in the *Aeneid*, apart from Aeneas’ cloak, which clearly bear negative force since they are associated with grief and suffering. When Aeneas and his fellow survivors from Troy reach Buthrotum (Book 3), they find that Helenus, Priam’s son, has established a settlement there. Aeneas meets Andromache, widow of Hector, now wife of Helenus. She lives in grief for her loss of Hector and her son, and she has suffered as a slave to Pyrrhus the son of Achilles. Aeneas’ son Ascanius reminds her painfully of her own lost son; as the Trojans depart she brings gifts for them – especially for Ascanius – of elaborate textiles.

nec minus Andromache, digressu maesta supremo
fert picturatas auri subtemine vestis
et Phrygiam Ascanio chlamydem, nec cedit honori
textilibus onerat donis ac talia fatur:
‘accipe et haec, manuum tibi quae monumenta mearum
sint, puer, et longum Andromache testentur amorem
coniugis Hectoreae. cape dona extrema tuorum
O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago.
sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat,
et nunc aequali tecum pubesceret aevo.’ (*Aeneid* 3.482-491)

“Andromache too, sad at the last parting, brings robes figured with inwoven gold, and for Ascanius a Phrygian cloak, nor does she fail in courtesy, but loads him with gifts from the loom, and thus speaks: ‘take these too, my child, to be memorials of my handiwork and witnesses of the abiding love of Andromache, Hector’s wife. Take these last gifts of

your kin, O sole surviving image of my Astyanax! Such was he in eyes, in hands, and face: even now would his youth be ripening in equal years with yours.””

Andromache’s gifts consist of *picturatas vestes* (figured cloths), with a weft thread of gold: *subtemine auri*.⁵⁵ They resemble Aeneas’ cloak with their inwoven gold, and despite their decorative appearance, there is nothing joyful about these textiles, since they are given to Ascanius, who remains the “last image” of Astyanax – and thus of Troy.

Much later in Aeneas’ journey, he is finally involved in warfare with the Latins and Turnus, leader of the Rutulians (Book 10). Pallas, son of Evander, had been entrusted to Aeneas’ care, and when Turnus kills Pallas, Aeneas seems to lose control. In this state he kills Lausus, another young man, who had attempted to save his own father (10.794-832) The death of the young Lausus is made even more poignant by the mention of the tunic that his mother had made for him, which is pierced by Aeneas’ sword; this tunic was also gold-woven:

transiit et parmam mucro, levia arma minacis
et tunicam, molli mater quam neverat auro
implevit sinum sanguis ; tum vita per auras
concessit maesta ad Manis corpusque reliquit
(10.817-20)

“The point pierced the shield – frail arms for one so threatening – and the tunic his mother had woven for him with pliant gold; blood filled his breast, then through the air the life fled sorrowing to the Shades, and left the body.”

The mention of the mother of Lausus increases the pathos of this scene. The gold tunic has not been of any help to him; *sinum* could indicate the tunic itself which fills with blood.

Finally there is the episode (mentioned above) of Pallas’ funeral (11.59-99) where Aeneas covers the body of the young man with a gold-woven cloak given by Dido at Carthage. This is the last reference to Dido in the *Aeneid*, and in this scene she is once more – and finally –

⁵⁵ The gold thread (weft) is woven horizontally through the vertical warp threads. The process of weaving is outlined in the introductory chapter. *picturatas* might be a word coined by Vergil (R. Williams 1962, note on 3.483).

identified by her connection with elaborate textiles. She was identified in this way throughout her time with Aeneas at Carthage, and in this last reference she is even more closely connected than before with the actual process of weaving in the gold thread: *suis manibus* (11.74):

ipsa suis quondam manibus Sidonia Dido
fecerat et tenui telas discreverat auro
(11.74-5)

Dido is separated from pure wool and its inherent virtue⁵⁶ by the elaborate nature of her cloths; she is as unlikely – and even as impossible – a wife for Aeneas as the silk-clad *puellae* of the elegiac poets were impossible wives for their poet/lovers.

Conclusion to this chapter

Elaborate gold textiles must have been luxury possessions in Vergil’s time. Whether or not the details given by Suetonius about Augustus’ moderate personal habits are to be much relied upon, nevertheless it would appear that the princeps wanted to be seen as restrained in his tastes. It is unlikely that he would have wanted to display a preference for gold textiles – overt disapproval of them would have been more typical. This chapter suggests that in a climate of “reform” such as existed at the time when Vergil was writing, when there was a perceived need to re-establish traditions and stabilise society, older customs such as woolworking were recognised as valuable. In such a climate overt luxury was disapproved, and one of the examples of this was certainly elaborate textiles. Augustus instituted moral reforms to protect marriage and, by implication, the purity of *matrona*, who was even by tradition to dress in wool and, ideally, be involved in woolworking. Her virtue was associated with wool. Thus Dido’s

⁵⁶ Wool as seen with Lucretia.

constant identification with luxury cloth – and the insistence on her actually weaving gold thread – sets her apart as a most unsuitable wife for an Augustan hero.

Although other poets at the time (Propertius, Tibullus, and especially Ovid) did not see the ideal of Lucretia as realistically applicable to contemporary *matronae*, this ideal does appear to be supported by the unsuitability – and threat – of Dido, who is its very opposite.

Appendix 1 to Chapter Five – ill-omened fabulous textiles, dangerous cloaks

Several ill-omened cloaks appear in myth. The story of Deianira and Hercules appears in Hyginus (*Fabulae* XXXVI), also Apollodorus (The Library 11.VII.7), and forms the major tragic sequence in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. When Hercules is about to bring home a new mistress, his wife Deianira sends a cloak to him which, she thinks, bears a love-charm. Instead, (unknown to her) it is imbued with poison, and Hercules dies terribly. The situation is similar in Euripides' play *Medea*. Jason, already husband of Medea, has chosen a new wife, the princess Glauce. Medea sends an elaborate garment to Glauce, which burns the new bride to death since it has been infected with poison by Medea's magic skills.

In Apollonius' poem *Argonautica*, the hero Jason wears an extremely elaborate cloak (*Argonautica* 1.721-68), which has a number of scenes realistically woven into it, and has a blazing purple border. Although not immediately fatal like other mythical cloaks, it is this cloak which seems to influence both Hypsipyle and later Medea to the ultimate benefit of neither: Hypsipyle deserted though probably pregnant, Medea in great danger after aiding Jason against her father and assisting in the murder of her brother. “Jason does not need to *do* anything to seduce Hypsipyle or Medea; he simply shows up in his splendid cloak, looking like a star, and any eligible woman in sight runs after him” (Peter Green 1990, 208). There is a more fatal textile, however, in *Argonautica* Book 4, where Jason and Medea kill her brother Apsyrtos. The brother is lured to the place of murder by the gift of a fabulous purple robe which Hypsipyle had originally given to Jason, once the wedding coverlet of Bacchus and Ariadne.

Ariadne herself was depicted on another fabulous cloth, the marriage bed cover of Peleus and Thetis in Catullus' poem 64. This cover, and the pictorial cloth woven by Arachne in Ovid's

Metamorphoses 6, are the two most elaborately described mythical textiles in classical Latin poetry. There is no doubt about the ill-omen that attaches to both of these. Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis, will wreak immense slaughter: the river Scamander will choke with the dead. As for Arachne's cloth, the more elaborate it is, the more disastrous are the consequences for her, as Minerva, overcome by rage and jealousy, reduces her to an insect.

Amongst the Bible stories in the Old Testament there is the tale of Joseph (*Genesis* 37) whose “coat of many colours” – as the King James version describes it – was an unfortunate gift to Joseph from his father. The garment further provoked the jealousy of his brothers who sold him as a slave. The “coat” is described as *tunica polymita* in the Vulgate, and this term, according to J.P. Wild (1967) indicates a cloth “with tapestry-woven decoration in many colours.”

The last word here might be Ovid's (as it often is). For him, a cloak can have a use which, pleasant at the time, might end by being just as dangerous – though in a different way – as those deadly mythical garments:

saepe mihi dominaeque meae properata voluptas
veste sub iniecta dulce peregit opus
(*Amores* 1.4.47-8)

“Often for me and my mistress a hasty passion has reached its joyful consummation beneath a cape thrown over us.”

Appendix 2 to Chapter Five. Some literary and archaeological evidence for elaborate textiles (some with negative associations)

The sort of elaborate textiles described in the *Aeneid* are not poetic fantasy. There is much evidence for their existence, such as that presented here.

i) Literary

Elizabeth Barber (1991) writing of textiles in Ancient Greece, concludes that “large and elaborate pictorial cloths were not unknown”. She thinks that “they were stored in temple treasuries” and that “they came from both the Greek and barbarian worlds”. She cites the *peplos* woven for Athena as such a cloth. The *peplos* of Athena was a textile made at regular intervals to dress the statue of Athena which stood in the Erechtheum on the Acropolis at Athens. The presentation of this garment is illustrated on the marble frieze around the Parthenon (Barber 1991, 361).

A reference by Plutarch (*Demetrius* 10.5, 12.3) gives details of an actual *peplos*, which had an image of Demetrius woven into it to honour him as saviour of the city of Athens, which he entered in triumph in 307 BC. The same *peplos* and the same event is reported by Diodorus (20.46). Apparently this was an ill-fated textile like those in myth, since during the procession a squall tore it apart. Demetrius had no better fortune with another luxury garment, apparently seen as ill-omened by his successors. Plutarch describes it: “there was one cloak which was long in the weaving for him, a magnificent work, on which were represented the world and the heavenly bodies; this was left behind half-finished when the reversal of his fortunes came, and no succeeding king of Macedonia ventured to use it, although not a few of them were given to pomp and luxury” (*Demetrius* 41.5).

A ceremony featuring such elaborate cloths was reported by Athenaeus (5.196-7). He gives an account of a procession arranged by Ptolemy Philadelphus, which would have taken

place in the lifetime of Apollonius Rhodius, the poet whose hero Jason wore such a fabulous cloak. Ptolemy's celebration included a pavilion draped with woven textiles, and there were "tunics of cloth of gold and most beautiful military cloaks, some having portraits of the kings woven into them, others depicting subjects taken from mythology."

As for textiles worked with gold, such as the cloak which Vergil described Aeneas wearing at Carthage, these are attested by Pliny as having their origin in Asia: *aurum intexere in eadem Asia invenit Attalus rex, unde nomen Attalicis.* (N.H.8.196) ("Also in Asia King Attalus established the weaving of gold in textiles, hence the name 'Attalic' given to them.") Gold-woven cloth of this kind appears as part of an event (if it can be called that) much closer to Vergil's own time than the ill-fated cloak and procession of Demetrius. But in this later "event" a similar taste for fabulous cloth brings no better fortune to the man who acquired it.

In 70 BC Cicero prosecuted Verres, the ex-governor of Sicily, who had considerably misused his position of authority there during the years 73-71. Verres, amongst other unpleasant attributes, appears to have had an insatiable desire to collect luxury items, by force when necessary. Such were the textiles that had belonged to a certain Heius, according to Cicero: *Verum haec emisse te dicis. Quid? illa Attalica tota Sicilia nomine ab eodem Heio peripetasmata emere oblitus es? Licuit eodom modo, ut signa.* (In Verrem 2.4.27) ("Well, you tell us you bought these statues from Heius. What then of his gold-worked tapestries, renowned throughout Sicily? Did you forget to buy them? – just as you "bought" the statues?")

Such textiles (like those Vergil described) certainly existed and were not poetic elaboration, as evidence from archaeological excavations further proves.

ii) A sample of archaeological evidence

In a report entitled “Recent Discoveries of Gold Textiles from Augustan Age Gadir (Cadiz)” (2001), Carmen Alfaro Giner details textiles found in 1998. Several tombs were being excavated. “In the principal tomb, Tomb 25, and in Tomb 25a, gold textiles were found – in very small quantities, but of great historical value because the tombs were clearly dated to the Augustan period (between the end of first century BC and the beginning of AD1)” (77). During the excavation the gold threads were examined and found to be extremely fine. “All that is left of the two groups of textiles from Tombs 25 and 25a, are the elements of gold tapestry which were woven simultaneously with the ground material (which may have been linen, silk or wool), the gold representing the decorative element” (79).

The author of this article refers to gold textiles from another Roman burial in Mulva, Seville. This find was described by her in a paper in 1999 (published in NESAT VII, 2005), where she concludes that “fabrics made with gold thread were already in use during the Hellenistic period”, and “there have been more finds in burials of the late Republican and Imperial Roman periods, from the first century BC to the fourth and fifth centuries AD, by which time their use had become relatively common.” (4)

With regard to Pliny’s information on gold textiles (quoted above), Carmen Giner notes: “The term *aurum intexere* is usually translated as embroidery with gold. We think a more logical interpretation would be: ‘woven into the actual material’, which we can observe in most gold textiles to have survived from the classical world.” (2001, 83)

Conclusion

This study has attempted to look at the Augustan *matrona* and her connection with wool. The idea that Roman *matronae* were occupied with woolworking has been a persistent one, supported mainly by two examples in the written record – one by the historian Livy, the other an epitaph from the second century BC. Livy’s story of Lucretia (1.57), the wife found by her husband and his companions late at night, sitting with her women at their wool, has many times been used as a reference when any scene in Latin poetry features woolworking. The implication has usually been that Lucretia, working wool, (which Livy does not actually say she was doing), is a perfect example of the Roman *matrona* at home. The other “evidence”, an epitaph containing the words *lanam fecit* (*CIL* 6.15346) – which is in fact the only epitaph with these same words – has similarly often been cited as a typical description of the duty of the good *matrona*. Livy’s depiction of Lucretia, most likely in response to Augustan ideology, has had possibly more influence among modern scholars than it had among Livy’s own contemporaries. Lucretia was intended by Livy to be an example to be imitated: she was the “ideal” *matrona*, whose concern with wool was well suited to the kinds of traditional customs that Augustus wished to re-establish. She is not alone, however, in being seen as a paragon of woolworking virtue – the other major literary figure here is Penelope. Contemporary Augustan poets recall both Lucretia and Penelope, either by name or by creating situations that are associated with these heroines. Part of the purpose of this study has been to look at the attitudes of these poets to the ideal represented by these two mythical heroines, which ideal – especially in the case of Lucretia – was one that was favoured by Augustus. The poet who most clearly did not see the ideal as viable in contemporary society was Ovid, who parodied Livy’s Lucretia.

Chapter One concluded that in his story of Lucretia, Livy appears to have introduced the woolworking scene. The story was known, but other extant versions do not mention Lucretia's wool. In his early work Vergil was seen to regard the task of making wool as belonging to the farm wife of agricultural tradition. He even created humour at the expense of a high status woman who worked wool under water. But Ovid's humour at the expense of Lucretia (*Fasti* 2), was much more obvious, presenting an elegiac Lucretia whose devotion to wool was much exaggerated.

The second chapter treated Propertius and Tibullus, elegiac poets, as they depicted their elegiac *puellae* in woolworking scenes. These scenes made play both with Penelope awaiting her husband's return as well as with Lucretia and her wool. The Cynthia of Propertius was seen as a courtesan pretending to the virtue of a *matrona* with unconvincing claims about purple wool. With Delia, the *puella* of Tibullus, it seemed that the poet seriously – and incongruously – depicted his *puella* as a *matrona*.

The third chapter was a survey of the references to woolwork in Ovid's *Heroides*, and found that these references were uniformly negative. From these epistles, and from his parody of Lucretia, it appeared that Ovid, understanding the reality of woolwork, could not see the Lucretia ideal as a workable one for contemporary *matronae*.

The next chapter (Four) suggested that Ovid presented a woman who was a “third possibility” – neither *meretrix* nor *matrona*, the only two categories apparently available in the current moral climate. This woman, Ovid's *puella* Corinna, was dressed like neither “type” – she was naked, and nor did she work wool like the other *puellae*. This woman, not dressed at all, challenged the idea of a division of women into the two categories, *matrona* and *meretrix*, each supposedly costumed accordingly.

The final chapter (Five), however, attempted to show that, although Ovid might have thought that the favoured ideal for *matronae* would not work, nevertheless the stress of recent events made any change to “new” ideas about women in society difficult to suggest. After great upheaval, such as the Roman state had recently been through, an attempt at the restoration of traditional ideals seemed the way to promote stability. Ovid had not seen the worst of the upheavals that preceded the advent of Augustus with his reforms. Vergil had lived through it all.

In this last chapter, Dido is seen as a threat to Aeneas in a new way. She is the anti-type to the ideal of Lucretia – an ideal which, for Vergil, might now have seemed more attractive after times of great stress. Dido, weaving gold cloth, represented the dangerous opposite of Lucretia’s plain wool; the varied patterning and Eastern luxury of her textiles were identified with her own unsuitability as a wife for Aeneas. She too was *varia*, like her textiles; like her, their shades of dark as well as light were not immediately perceived.

In conclusion, it appears that Livy’s ideal of Lucretia and her wool, (and the faithful woolworker Penelope), prevailed over the more negative views expressed by the elegiac poets, especially Ovid – even if in real life this ideal did not greatly affect the behaviour of contemporary *matronae*.

The connection of women with textile work is an ancient one, but it is not necessarily associated with moral probity. This happened with the Emperor Augustus, and it continues to be associated with women and their moral standing for the next nineteen hundred and fifty years. The Roman *matrona* occupies only one place, one stage on a long and continuing association of women with textiles. It is an ancient and value-free connection, and Elizabeth Barber makes its antiquity very plain in the title of her historical study: *Women’s Work, the First 20,000 Years* (1995). The implements needed for spinning and weaving are amongst the oldest archaeological

finds connected with the production of articles for use by humans. These activities – especially spinning – were early on associated with women. There seems little stress in the archaeological record on the morality of women's connection with textiles. Elizabeth Barber sees this as an activity that suited women as it could be carried out at the same time as caring for children. Ancient Greek vase paintings depict women spinning and also weaving apparently as a common activity. This traditional Greek background of textile work, as well as references to woolmaking occurring both in contemporary Greek theatre and also in Roman drama, has possibly encouraged the idea that it was a common occupation for the ideal Roman woman also. Certainly Ogilvie seems to express this idea in his notes about Livy's *Lucretia* (1965). But the connection with virtue as I am stressing is another thing again. As for the view that textile work is not only a woman's duty but is also morally commendable – if this idea was not begun by Livy and Augustus, then it certainly coincides with remarkably long-lasting similar opinions about women's activities in Western culture.

There has been an ongoing tradition combining women's textile work and morality. During the medieval and early modern centuries high status women were consistently associated with textile work, the implication being that it was the occupation most suited to them, if not their "duty". Girls of lesser status sang their "chansons d' histoire", story songs, as they worked at cloth of a probably more utilitarian nature, just as the spinning girls of Roman poetry were said to tell their stories while working. Thus Tibullus surrounded Delia with such girls (Elegy 1.3). The nineteenth century represents a high point in the dutiful and virtuous: girls and women – other than the "servant class" – were urged constantly by publications aimed at providing them with patterns for all sorts of textile work. It was the repeated theme and conviction of the authors of such publications that this work, quite apart from keeping hands and

mind from straying to questionable activities, was a task that was morally desirable in itself. Such an opinion was generally accepted. I would like to suggest that it is this background in particular, the nineteenth century preoccupation (especially in Britain) with textile work as a worthy, if not Godly, duty for well-born women, that lies behind the persistent idea amongst modern scholars and editors that Roman women were all busy virtuously spinning like Lucretia – the fact being of course that Livy never says she is spinning. An interesting point is made by Rozsika Parker in her book *The Subversive Stitch* (1989). She claims of textile work in the modern era that it “evokes the stereotype of the virgin in opposition to the whore”. If we were to equate Parker’s notion of the ethical status of the virgin with the ethical probity of the ideal Roman *matrona*, then surely her statement applies equally well to the Augustan ideal of the Roman *matrona* as discussed in this thesis – a woman ideally identified with her probity and her wool.

The influence of nineteenth century opinion and practice is one factor, but there is also the lack of knowledge amongst modern editos and scholars. They have not been involved in textile work themselves and often have romanticised views about spinning and weaving which do not agree with the harsh nature of these tasks for ancient workers. Later technology has made textile work very different from the labour involved in ancient Rome. Perhaps surprisingly, most female scholars of the past thirty years or so have not made a point of contradicting the idea of the spinning Roman *matrona*. For these scholars textile work continues to be romanticised, an unrealistic emblem of the probity of the Roman *matrona*.

The idea that it was a highly respected task for the *matrona* to work wool does not in general agree with the attitudes to woolworking which can be inferred from contemporary Roman poets. These poets were not influenced by nineteenth century thought, and probably also

knew well what was entailed in spinning and weaving, and were able to see these tasks for what they were – this is especially true of Ovid and Tibullus. It is these attitudes and opinions of the poets about the *matrona* and her wool that this thesis has sought to discover, by looking closely at their references to woolworking, most of which have been found to be unfavourable. The picture of the freeborn Roman *matrona* working wool is an unrealistic one; woolmaking was the task of slaves. It is hoped that this information might prove useful in future research and teaching involving the study of elite women in Rome.

This thesis began with Lucretia, and she should make her final appearance here. Her story has recurred in various forms since she was depicted by Livy, but there is one particular representation of Lucretia that seems oddly ironic. At Hardwick Hall in England, the sixteenth century Countess of Shrewsbury – who admired Lucretia and gave her daughter that name – had many elaborate textiles made. The most valuable of these were a number illustrating ancient heroines. One piece, intricately constructed of remnants of earlier gold textiles from the opus anglicanum, depicts Lucretia supported on either side by her virtues: Chastity and – novel for this thesis but not unexpected – Liberality. Thus she remains identified with textiles, but here they contain elaborate gold thread – such as those associated with Dido by Vergil – rather than the plain wool to which Lucretia devoted herself in Livy's story, and which Augustus so admired.

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Appendix

Woolworking and costume; Ovid's humorous treatment of Achilles contrasted with other versions of the same episode.

This thesis has mainly been concerned with the attitude of contemporary Roman poets to the ideal of the *matrona* as typified by Livy's Lucretia and her wool. References to this ideal from Ovid in particular have been seen as uniformly negative, indicating that this poet did not appear to see the Lucretia ideal as viable in present society. The following appendix is a further illustration of Ovid's use of an existing myth in order to treat woolworking in a humorous way, as he did for example in *Fasti* 2 (discussed in Chapter One). Ovid's emphasis on humour becomes clear in the comparison outlined here of his use of the Achilles on Scyros myth (in A.A. 1) with other treatments of the same story.

In *Ars Amatoria* 1, when the *praeceptor* is encouraging his pupils to use force in obtaining favours from girls, Achilles appears as an example of a lover who successfully did so. The lines in question refer to the legend of Achilles' time on the island of Scyros, where his mother Thetis placed him amongst the girls in order to keep him safe from the Trojan War. The *praeceptor* introduces his subject:

fabula nota quidem, sed non indigna referri
Scyrias Haemonio iuncta puella viro (A.A.1.681-2)

“Well known, yet not undeserving of mention, is the tale of the Scyrian maid and her Thessalian lover.”

After briefly outlining the preparations for the Trojan War, the *praeceptor* begins to chide Achilles who – despite his successful rape of Deidamia – assumed the unnatural and unsuitable attire and tasks of the girls.

turpe, nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset, Achilles
veste virum longa dissimulatus erat.
quid facis, Aeacide? non sunt tua munera lanae;
tu titulos alia Palladis arte petas.
quid tibi cum calathis ? clipeo manus apta ferendo est :
pensa quid in dextra, qua cadet Hector, habes ?
reice succinctos operosa stamine fusos !

(A.A.1.689-96)

“Basely, had he not so far yielded to his mother’s prayers, Achilles had disguised his manhood in a woman’s dress. What are you doing, Aeacides? wools are not your business; by another art of Pallas you should seek fame. What have you to do with wool baskets? Your arm is suited to bear a shield. Why are you holding a weight of wool in the hand by which Hector will die? Cast away the spindle wound about with its laborious thread!”

Achilles does drop his distaff and spindle, however, in favour of the weapons which clever Ulysses places in front of him, and he thus reveals his true nature.

fortia nam posita sumpserat arma colo (702)

“for having put aside the distaff, he had taken up strong weapons.”

In these lines Ovid places much emphasis on Achilles’ involvement with woolworking.

The relevant vocabulary is present in quantity: *lanae*, *calathis*, *pensa*, *succinctos fusos*, *operoso stamine*, *posito colo*. And nor is the point missed that this is a laborious task – *operoso*. That the Scyros story was well known is mentioned by Ovid – *fabula nota* (681) – and this is attested by the evidence for the legend in extant literature and also in visual art, both surviving and recorded examples.¹ But that Ovid’s interest places especial emphasis on the woolworking done by Achilles is apparent from a comparison of his account of the story with other remaining versions,

¹ An example in Pompeii from *Casa dei Dioscuri*: (Maiuri, *Roman Painting* 1953, 73); recorded paintings by Polygnotus and Athenion; Pausanias 1.22.6; Pliny N.H.35.134, Philostratus Junior *Imagines* 1.

including the visual examples, since a favourite theme was the “recognition scene” in which Achilles was discovered by Ulysses,² rather than a scene simply depicting Achilles’ feminine activities.

The main extant literary references before Ovid’s time are found in a poem thought to be by Bion (fl. probably c100BC), and also in fragments of a play by Euripides, *the Scyrians*. Closer to the date of *Ars Amatoria* 1 are some brief references to the story in two odes by Horace: 2.5 and 1.8. (The Euripides fragment consists only of a few lines and is subject to interpretation.)³ These references, which would have been known to Ovid, do not lay any special emphasis on Achilles’ spinning. The story of Achilles hidden on Scyros is reported by both Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca* 3.13.8) and Hyginus (*Fabulae* 96), the latter adding the details of Achilles’ discovery by Ulysses. The story, though ignored by Homer, was well enough known for Tiberius to have reputedly amused himself by asking the *grammatici* “*quod Achilli nomen inter virgines fuisset*” (what was Achilles’ name when with the girls?) (Suetonius: *Tiberius* 70.3). But the major extant treatment of the legend is the unfinished *Achilleid* of Statius, composed towards the end of the first century BC.

Many if not all of the earlier references to the Scyros legend would have been known to Statius, including Ovid’s own. But although Statius had far greater scope available – he was writing an epic – he did not make as pointed an emphasis on Achilles’ woolworking as Ovid had done in just fourteen lines of *Ars Amatoria* 1. And Statius certainly did not treat it humorously. As Dilke in his introduction to the *Achilleid* notes, Statius knew of Ovid’s treatment of the story; Dilke calls it “a passage whose brutality Statius is careful to avoid, although he imitates much of its language” (11). Might Statius have been more careful than Ovid about using woolworking as

² Dilke in his introduction to the *Achilleid* (1954) discusses the popularity of this scene, with references.

³ The fragment is discussed in F. Jouan, *Euripide et les Légendes des Chants Cypriens* (1966) 204-222.

a source of humour, even though the legend already contained its inappropriate application to Achilles? Might this have been because the emperor Domitian, like Augustus earlier on, was in favour of re-establishing traditional “old Roman” values, such as woolworking? That Domitian saw woolworking as an important tradition at the time when Statius was working on the *Achilleid* is evidenced by the frieze on the Forum Transitorium in Rome. This forum was erected by Domitian in the last two decades of the first century AD (D’Ambra 1993, 3), and the surviving frieze on it depicts spinning and weaving. Eve D’Ambra in her study of the forum describes it thus: “the women shown weaving and spinning under Minerva’s tutelage are models of virtue” (51). “The woolworking motif serves as a *topos* for the devout matron, the guardian of traditional society” (104).

Ovid emerges as much more daring than Statius. He makes use of legends (*Ars I*) where woolworking is involved, both here and elsewhere in his work, and he does not hesitate to show it – especially spinning – in a negative light, either as incongruously humorous, or else as realistically unpleasant. Domitian’s choice of woolworking for a frieze on the Forum Transitorium in fact indicates how daring Ovid really was in his references to woolworking. Domitian was “attempting to revive traditional modes of behaviour”, in his role of “restorer of the city and the piety of its citizens” (D’Ambra, 5), and the Forum Transitorium was part of this attempt. His efforts included re-enacting the Augustan marriage laws (5). The frieze on his forum depicts the punishment of reckless behaviour (in the person of Arachne) as well as the virtuous woolworkers, and as such presents for the citizens of his time “models of exemplary behaviour and deterrent cases of reckless conduct” (104). This was just what Livy had done a century before, when he stated in his preface that he was presenting models to imitate or reject. And one of Livy’s most powerful positive examples was Lucretia “devoted to wool” (*deditam*

lanae 1.57.9). Statius could not fail to have been aware of the encouragement of “ancient values” at the time he was writing. And though Ovid, earlier on, must have been similarly aware of the fact that current Augustan ideology promoted these same traditional values, his version of Lucretia’s story (in *Fasti* 2) fails to treat her with the reverence accorded her by Livy.⁴

Though Statius is not concerned explicitly with woolworking, in his treatment of the Scyros episode he does refer to Achilles’ spinning. As already mentioned, Statius would, like Ovid, most likely have known any earlier versions of the story. He knew Ovid’s as well. But as for the woolworking, Statius’ treatment of it resembles that of Bion’s early poem much more than it resembles Ovid’s. In the absence of many extant literary versions of the story before Ovid’s time, we cannot know how “standard” Bion’s treatment of it might be. But since Statius agrees more with that early poem it is at least a possibility that Ovid’s version is something of a departure from other treatments in emphasising the humour of Achilles’ apparently willing woolworking.

Statius makes it quite plain from the start that the initiative for the concealment of Achilles as a girl comes from his mother Thetis. She has some difficulty in persuading her son to put on women’s clothing (1.252-74). He agrees only because he is attracted to Deidamia (1.301-3). His pursuit of Deidamia is not at all approved of in the *Achilleid* as it is by Ovid’s *praceptor* in *Ars* 1. Whereas Ovid’s *praceptor* points to Achilles as a fine example of a lover using violence, Statius describes Achilles’ manoeuvres thus:

blandeque novas nil tale timenti
admovet insidias: illam sequiturque premitque
improbus, illam oculis iterum iterumque resumit.
(1.567-9)

“and in winning manner sets new traps for the unsuspecting girl, pursuing her, besetting her, the rogue, making eyes at her again and yet again.”

⁴ Ovid’s Lucretia is discussed in Chapter One.

Statius' Achilles engages more in Bacchic dancing (1.603-8) than in woolworking, but he is not criticised or mocked by the poet for either activity: rather he is made to "come to his senses" and contrast these activities with the manly pastimes that should be occupying him just as they are now occupying Patroclus (1.632-3). He is ashamed and says so:

ast ego pampineis diffundere bracchia thyrsis
et tenuare colus (pudet haec taedetque fateri)
iam scio.

(1.634-6)

"while I now know how to spread my arms with wands of vine and spin thread (shame and disgust to confess it!)"

And he is also ashamed of his feminine pretence in general, but not just because of its demeaning nature. It has also obliged him to conceal his passion for Deidamia (1.636-9); the Bacchic revels allow a sufficient extravagance of violent activity for him to accomplish his desire – and perhaps in such an atmosphere, an excuse for force? (1.640-46)

By contrast Ovid's is a really humorous treatment of Achilles in *Ars 1*, chiding him for his shameful adoption of women's dress and pastimes, and it nods only briefly at Thetis' role in the episode: *nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset* (689) (except that he had so far given in to his mother's prayers). The incongruity of the situation is summed up in the line

pensa quid in dextra, qua cadet Hector, habes? (694)

"why do you hold the weight of wool in the hand by which Hector will die?"

Statius would make a less striking contrast, separated by ten lines between *tela Mavortia* (627) and *colus* (635) (weapons and distaff). We cannot know if lost visual art or lost literary references portrayed a spinning Achilles as a popular theme. But it is clear that Ovid's treatment

definitely emphasises the spinning, and he exploits it to the full as a source of humour. He even points out that Pallas is the divinity associated with both skills, that of war as well as weaving (691-2); surely Achilles has got it wrong – or else Pallas has?

Achilles does not emerge well here from his association with woolworking, despite his exemplary use of force on the girl. But nor does woolworking emerge well, either. This episode in *Ars 1* is in line with what can be seen from various other woolworking references in Ovid's poetry.⁵ Spinning and weaving are not treated at all by this poet with the respect due to an activity encouraged by the program of moral reform at the time when he was writing. This particular reference (*Ars 1*) to woolworking is quite irreverent seen in the light of Livy's idealisation of it in his first book.

There are, as already noted, extant references to the Scyros legend, earlier than Ovid's, which do not make a main point of Achilles' woolworking. These may be looked at briefly here – in particular Bion's poem which in twenty lines of the existing fragment (Ovid uses fourteen) covers the story and, unlike Ovid, makes a point of Achilles' avoidance of the war, which is also a main emphasis for Statius. Bion's poem also makes minimal mention of Achilles' spinning.

Bion's poem (lines 12-32) describes Achilles dressed as a girl and hiding amongst the daughters of Lycomedes, preparing to seduce Deidamia. There is no mention of his mother Thetis organising his concealment – the plan appears to be his own. It is “only Achilles” (15) who hides instead of going to war. The poem emphasises his seduction of Deidamia and ends abruptly with his persuasive request (no violence) that he sleep with her. His feminine dress is not described, and his woolworking seems only to be part of his seduction effort. Having “learned wool instead of arms” (16) he helps Deidamia at weaving: he often pushed up the warp

⁵ As discussed elsewhere, Chapters Three and Four.

for her and praised the intricate fabric she wove (24).⁶ It is thus Deidamia's woolworking which is more important here than that of Achilles. It is not for his woolworking or even for his dress that Achilles is to be chastised here, but – by strong implication – for his avoidance of the war. It is the love-interest that is paramount, and the story is the “tale of love” (5) that Myrson tells to Lycidas at the latter's request (1-3).

More contemporary with Ovid's poem are the brief references to Achilles on Scyros that are found in Horace's Odes 1.8 and 2.5. In Ode 1.8 the poet asks the girl Lydia why she is causing the young man Sybaris to be so involved in love that he stays away from the Campus Martius and manly exercise. In the final lines he likens the young man to Achilles who was hidden by Thetis to avoid Troy:

Quid latet, ut marinae
filium dicunt Thetidis sub lacrimosa Troiae
funera, ne virilis
cultus in caedem et Lycias proriperet catervas? (1.8.13-16)

“Why does he skulk, as they say the son of sea-born Thetis did, when the time of Troy's tearful destruction drew near, for fear that the clothing of men should hurry him to slaughter and the Lydian bands?”

The implication according to Nisbet and Hubbard (1970, 109) is that Lydia is hiding Sybaris as Thetis hid Achilles. Thus neither Sybaris nor Achilles is being chastised for avoiding military activity: they are both complying with some sort of feminine persuasion. Ovid is not so generous, laying the blame more definitely on Achilles.

In Ode 2.5 the reference is less definite, but when Horace describes the beauty of Gyges he claims that the hair and face of this young man, were he amongst a crowd of girls, would make an observer unsure as to his sex:

⁶ In the edition of *Ars Amatoria* 1 by Hollis the final lines (from line 10) of Bion's poem are printed as Appendix V, Greek with English prose translation. The poem also appears in J.M. Edmonds, *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, Heinemann (1912).

quem si puellarum insereres choro
 mire sagacis falleret hospites
 discrimen obscurum solutis
 crinibus ambiguosque vultu

(2.5.21-24)

“should you put him in a band of maidens, those who did not know him would, for all their insight, fail to note his difference from the rest, disguised by his flowing locks and his girl-boy face.”

“Horace is alluding to the disguise of Achilles on Scyros” (Nisbet and Hubbard, 91). But no criticism of Achilles is implied by Horace. (In fact Ulysses was not deceived when he went to seek out Achilles for war, so the disguise did not really work anyway.) Of these extant literary references (Bion, Statius, Horace) Ovid’s is the most critical of Achilles, and his criticism emphasises the humorous and shameful prospect of Achilles busy with woolworking. Ovid’s contemporaries might have been so accustomed to the low status of *quasillariae* that they did not always realise how demeaning a task these women performed. But when it was Achilles who was spinning, the lowly nature of his work contrasted so strongly with his status that the point could not be missed.

As Nisbet and Hubbard note (discussing Ode 1.8), Achilles at Lycomedes’ court was a popular subject for painting. Dilke (1954, 11) remarks that the “recognition scene”, when Ulysses finds Achilles, was “a favourite theme among the Pompeian fresco-painters.” Pausanias mentions a painting by Polygnotos (Book 1.6): “Achilles in Scyros living among the young girls, the story painted by Polygnotos.” Homer did well, Pausanias implies, to leave that story out of the *Iliad*. Pliny (N.H. 35.134) mentions a painting: *Achillem virginis habitu occultatem dependente Ulike* – Achilles being discovered. Ovid is thus making use – as he says (*fabula nota*) – of a well-known legend, but adding his own emphasis.

Nevertheless, despite revealing Achilles' shameful behaviour, Ovid does indicate that Thetis had something to do with it (689). Statius, however, puts much more blame on Thetis. She does some strong persuading in the *Achilleid*, and one of her arguments when attempting to make Achilles dress as a girl concerns Hercules: she refers to the story of Hercules and Omphale.