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TEXTILE WORK IN SHARED DOMESTIC SPACES IN THE ROMAN HOUSE: THE EVIDENCE FROM LATIN POETRY

Abstract: This paper examines the engagement with the materiality of textiles and textile crafts in Roman poetry. Through close readings of Ausonius' *Epigrams* and Silius Italicus' epic on the Punic war, informed by archaeological evidence and reconstructions of ancient weaving, the paper demonstrates that male Roman authors display significant knowledge of the practicalities of contemporary textile work and its range of sensory experiences. The paper explains the basis for this knowledge by drawing on archaeological evidence for shared use of domestic space, but in contrast to previous studies on shared space utilisation and crafts, emphasis is placed on the childhood experiences both of male and female children in elite households. The paper proposes that training undertaken by girls of such families impacts considerably on male members of the household and underpins the technical knowledge displayed in literary descriptions of textile work.

Keywords: shared domestic space, ancient textile crafts, sensory experience, Roman childhood

Roman poets reveal considerable tacit knowledge of textile production through stylistic features mirroring craft processes in their texts, both in relation to pattern creation and in relation to working rhythms and the soundscapes of weaving. This paper will provide two examples of such literary engagement with the materialities of ancient textile work, discussing briefly Ausonius' *Epigram* 28 (Aus. *Epigr.* 4th century CE) and a short passage from Silius Italicus' *Punic War* (Sil. *Pun*.7.79-83, 1st century CE). This raises the question of how authors of Roman poetry (with few exceptions male members of the elite) gained sufficient familiarity with textile work for it to influence their work. Drawing on recent archaeological and historical discussion of shared use of domestic space, the main part of the paper proposes that, in addition to any textile work undertaken by adults in the household, the training in textile work taking place in shared spaces of the Roman house played a large part in spreading knowledge of tools, working processes and the soundscape of weaving among non-weavers of the upper classes.[1]

As part of a larger project on literary (and especially poetic) engagement with the materialities of textile crafts, all poetic passages that distinguish individual work elements of weaving were collected based on identification of mentions of looms and weaving tools in Latin poetic sources. Stylistic features in the identified passages were then compared with the working processes of ancient weaving, using audio- and video recordings of experimental weaving reconstructions at the Centre for Textile Research (CTR) in Copenhagen and the Centre for Historical-Archaeological Research and Communication at Lejre.[2] This showed that poetic sound play that alludes to the sounds associated with the weaver's work is a common if not ubiquitous feature of weaving descriptions: it occurs in more than twenty poetic weaving passages.[3]

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[2] Öhrman 2017, sets out how detailed philological analysis of sound-mimicking features in poetry is underpinned by experimental archaeology.

[3] Sounds of weaving are mentioned explicitly in Latin on several occasions, cf. Lucretius *De rerum natura* 5.1353; Vergilius *Georgica* 1.294; *Aeneis* 7.14; Macrobius *Saturnalia* 5.12.7.5; *Codex Iustinianus* 11.9.4; Claudianus *Carmina Minora* Appendix. 5.45. This has generally been explored only in a passage-specific context,

These descriptions differ in level of detail and length, but they are well divided chronologically from the late Republic into Late Antiquity, thus indicating a consistent mode of literary engagement with the soundscape of weaving.[4]

Longer descriptions may trace each weaving sound in turn, but short descriptions also frequently draw on audience awareness of sounds and working rhythms of weaving: allusions to the key soundmarks of weaving add liveliness to a quickly sketched scene. In an epigram by the late 4th century CE poet Ausonius celebrating the exquisite textile work of his wife Sabina (Aus. *Epigr*. 28), weaving is described in a single line, yet with surprising effectiveness.

siue probas Tyrio textam subtemine uestem 1
seu placet inscripti commoditas tituli, 2
ipsius hoc dominae concinnat utrumque uenustas; 3
has geminas artes una Sabina colit. 4

Aus. *Epigr*. 28

Whether you prize cloth woven with Tyrian weft, or prefer the aptness of an inscribed motto, the charming skill of this lady alone brings them both together: these twin arts are practised by the same Sabina.

The word *textam* ("woven") is the first indication that Ausonius is concerned with Sabina's weaving specifically and weaving-based sound play supports this. As it stands immediately after a pronounced rhythmical pause (the penthemimeral caesura), *textam* gains in emphasis. The word transposes the sounds arising from shed change into words: the clanking plosive combination of t, x, and t mimics the noise of heddle rods being moved and rested against the loom frame. Experimental reconstructions of weaving on both the warp-weighted and the two-beam loom show that the clanking sounds of wooden loom parts moving against each other are the most distinctive soundmarks of weaving. It signposts a more detailed engagement with Sabina's work on the loom in the last half of the line.

Once alerted to the presence of craft-based sound play in the epigram, an interested reader may discover other similar effects: the initial plosives (p, and b) in *probas* ("you prize") allude to the dull beating of the weft, appropriately placed just before the shed change alluded to in *textam*. After the shed change brought to mind in the middle of the line, the initial sibilance of *subtemine* mirrors the tactile experience of inserting new weft. The word's triple sequence of close vowels (e, i, e) aptly describes the pricking of a pin beater settling the new weft thread into place. On closer examination, the sounds combined in the line are peculiarly well suited to the soundscape of weaving: beats, thunks and swishing threads; but even to a general audience, the allusion to a key soundmark of weaving created by *textam* is sufficient to support Ausonius' image of Sabina as an expert weaver.

A passage from Silius Italicus' epic on the second Punic war illustrates two other modes of literary engagement with the practicalities of weaving: literary manipulation of textile terminology and the use of various patterning techniques to evoke fundamental principles of weaving as well as of pattern creation. In the seventh book of the *Punica* (7.78-83), the women of Rome seek to ward off the threat posed by Hannibal's plundering in Italy by offering a sacrificial robe to Juno. Their wealth and commitment is indicated by the gold decorations adorning the gift and Silius elicits our sympathy for the women by depicting them clearly as wool-working *matronae*. The episode is reminiscent of the women of Troy and their robe for Athena in *Iliad* 6.284 ff; it is imbued by literary history hinting at failure and pointing forwards to defeats to follow: the battle of Cannae is the focus of the next three books.[5]

There is an additional, subtle illustration of the weaving undertaken by the women, contributing to the emphasis Littlewood sees in the devotion shown by making this offering by hand.[6] The passage reads as follows:

'Huc ades, o regina deum, gens casta precamur 78
et ferimus, digno quaecumque est nomine, turba 79
Ausonidum pulchrumque et, acu et subtemine fuluo 80
quod nostrae neuere manus, uenerabile donum. 81
ac dum decrescit matrum metus, hoc tibi, diua, 82
interea uelamen erit. si pellere nostris 83

Sil. *Pun*. 7.78-83

Be with us, your chaste people, oh queen of the gods, we beg. We, each of us noble in name, a crowd of Roman women, bring a beautiful and worthy gift, made by our hands, with weaving pin and glowing weft. And while as mothers our fears grow less, this will be a garment for you. If you drive from us...

There may be aspects of craft-based sound-play related to inwoven decorations centred on *acu* ("weaving pin") and *subtemine* ("weft") in line 80. The cluster of close vowels in *et acu et*, continued in *subtemine*, corresponds to the scratching generated by weaving pins used to fit differently coloured

cf. esp. Kissel 1980. On references to sounds arising from weaving in Greek literature see Restani 1995, 93-108; Tuck 2006, 539-550; Tuck 2009, 151-159; Heath 2011, 69-104; Nosch 2014, 91-102

[4] Cf. esp. Lucretius *De rerum natura* 5.1353; Vergilius *Georgica* 1.285-286; *Ciris* 179; Tibullus *Elegiae* 1.6.79; 2.1.65-66; Ovidius *Metamorphoses* 4.275; 6.576-577; Ovidius *Fasti* 3.819-820; Lucanus *De bello ciuili* 10.142-143; Silius Italicus *Punica* 14.656-660; Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 1.427-432; Iuuenalis *Saturae* 9.30; Ausonius *Epistulae* 22.14-16; *Epigrammata* 28.1-2; Prudentius *Hamartigenia* 291-292; Claudianus *De Raptu Proserpinae* 1.275-276; Claudianus *Carmina* 1.224-225; 8.594-595; *Carmina Minora* 46.8-10; 14-15; 48.2; *Carmina Minora* Appendix. 5.44-48; Symphosius *Aenigmata* 17.2; Sidonius Apollinaris 15.154-161.

[5] On intertextuality here, Littlewood 2011, 63-65.

[6] Littlewood 2011, 65.

weft into the weave, whether the pattern is created in tapestry weaving or as horizontal stripes.[7]

However, the metrical structure of the passage shows the text's engagement with the materiality of the described gift more clearly. The four lines most closely focused on the garment and its design are bracketed by two metrically identical lines with alternating dactyls and spondees throughout (lines 80 and 83).[8] The possibility of viewing Silius' metrical sequencing as an allusion to weaving praxis rests on the importance of alternation as a key principle of all weaving. In the most basic weave, the tabby, weft threads go alternatingly over and under the warp. As the weaver works, she must also consistently alter the settings of the loom between at least two positions, and insert the weft first from one side, then the other. While lines of alternating dactyls and spondees are not uncommon in hexameter poetry, it is worth noting that not only do the hexameter's components themselves inherently emphasise alternation (i.e. between heavy and light syllables, and between dactylic or spondaic realisation of the individual metrical foot) but nowhere is that alternation brought more to the fore than in a line consisting entirely of alternating dactyls and spondees. Just as the weaver uses basic effects of alternation to accomplish advanced patterns, Silius uses basic effects of sequencing to pattern the robe offered to Juno.

This shows an awareness of both weaving principles and of how patterns are built into a weave. The word *neo* (*neuere* in our text) is an example of a multi-purpose textile term, which is most often used for spinning, but on occasion for weaving and sewing as well.[9] The polyvalence of the term allows Silius to refer to the creation (i.e. spinning, weaving) and the patterning of cloth. In the four lines comprising Silius' metrical pattern, we move from *subtemen* ("weft") to *uelamen* ("garment"). Silius and his ideal reader may see the robe offered to Juno as representing both a complex work process and as a finished finely decorated object. Silius' use of sequential metrical patterning in our passage is not an isolated phenomenon. Similar metrical patterning occurs in several passages on weaving or textile artefacts, e.g. Sil. *Pun*. 14.556-660, Ov. *Met*. 4.32-39 and Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.259-265. The presence of such patterns in poetic passages describing weaving or woven objects reveals considerable tacit knowledge of principles of weaving and pattern creation.

As these passages from Silius Italicus and Ausonius demonstrate by connecting virtuous wives with weaving, wool-work is the most enduring symbol of uxorial virtue in Roman antiquity, celebrated in literature, funerary epigraphy and iconography. Yet scholars have sometimes regarded references to skills in textile production among elite women and indeed in elite homes as primarily symbolic,[10] particularly in view of increased importance of extra-domestic textile production and comments on the desirability of, e.g. imported textile goods.[11] However, as I hope to have shown above, literary analysis supported by an experimental and/or experiential approach suggests that elite male authors did hold significant knowledge of weaving processes and occasionally brought it to play in their texts. Furthermore, for such references to weaving technology to enhance the audience's experience, the readership, male or female, must have been able to draw on a similar level of experience. The aim in the main part of this paper is to tease out possible contexts in which such experience of textile work could have been gained by authors of a gender and class not generally expected to undertake such work themselves.

Public spaces such as markets and craft workshops must have offered male members of the elite one point of exposure to textile work in progress: poetic references to textile work undertaken by professionals feature mimicking of sounds and rhythm (e.g. Juv. 9.30), showing that authors do engage with the sensory experience of these environments. However, detailed descriptions in Latin poetry of the weaver's work are strikingly often set in domestic environments[12] and it is likely that this correlates to the experience of our authors.

It is reasonable to assume that the sharing of domestic space between those involved in textile work and those engaged in other pursuits accounts for the main part of the exposure of elite males to textile crafts. Asconius famously places the loom in the *atrium*[13] and studies like Penelope Allison's work on the material culture of houses in Pompeii have provided archaeological evidence for shared occupation of this

[7] The line is commonly taken as referring to embroidery, cf. Spaltenstein 1990, 448; Littlewood 2011, 65. However, evidence for this decorative technique is relatively limited in the Roman period: woven patterns, including tapestry woven insets, appear to have been far more common, cf. Dross-Krüpe and Paetz 2014, 221-223.

[8] The two lines placed within this bracket are not identical, but both have slow, spondaic openings, which gives a sense of unity. The pattern of triple spondees in the first half of Sil. *Pun*. 7.82 also occurs in 7.77, where the robe (*palla*) offered to Juno is first mentioned.

[9] Of spinning alone, e.g.: Plautus *Mercator* 518; Tibullus *Elegiae* 1.7.1. Of spinning, weaving and completion of a garment, e.g.: Vergilius *Aeneis* 10.818; Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 571; Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.224.

[10] E.g. Sebesta 1997, 529-541; Rawson 2003, 197; Larsson Lovén 2007, 232-233; Hersch 2010, 122-135; Larsson Lovén 2013, 123.

[11] Colum. 12 *praef.* 9-10 is often cited as evidence for a decline in domestic textile work undertaken by women of the elite (e.g. Larsson Lovén 2013, 123), but should be viewed in the context of topical condemnations of an all-too luxurious lifestyle. For a critical examination of the increased trade in textiles during the Empire in combination with continued domestic textile manufacture see Flohr 2014, 1-15. For Roman Britain, cf. Wild 2002, 27-32.

[12] Cf. e.g. Vergilius *Georgica* 1.285-286; Tibullus *Elegiae* 2.1.63-66; Ovidius *Metamorphoses* 6.576-577; Statius *Thebais* 11.401-402; Ausonius *Epistulae* 22.14-16; Aus. *Epigr*. 27; Claudianus *Carmina* 1.255-256.

[13] Asconius *Pro Milone* 43. Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 3.155 also places Proserpine's loom in the *atrium*.

space: she has shown that (female) textile work had a place here as much as the business of the *dominus*.[14] Artefact distribution alone does not reveal what members of the household were engaged in this work or to what extent the *atrium* (or any other room) was used for different purposes simultaneously or at different times,[15] yet we must consider whether the direct involvement of elite women in textile work in such shared domestic spaces underpins the literary engagement with the practicalities of textile crafts.

A growing body of work on the seeming paradox between the domestic and more private nature of female virtue and the need for public recognition thereof in late antique and Christian settings connects the multifunctionality of spaces within the Roman house to the effective display of the *matrona* and her textile work.[16] Along with poetic celebrations of textile work undertaken by married women of the elite (such as Ausonius' *Epigram* 28, discussed above)[17] as well as the representation of the ideal wool-working woman in funerary art and epigraphy,[18] this supports the notion that elite wives undertook at least some textile work and that they did so where they could be observed by male members of the same class.

However, too sharp a focus on the textile activity of wives among the Roman elite, particularly when accessed through the adult male narrative voice of poems like Ausonius' *Epigram* 28, skews our view of the totality of textile work undertaken in elite homes. Firstly, it obscures from view any textile work undertaken by other members of elite households, such as slaves or freedmen. Scholars like Treggiari, Larsson Lovén and Holleran have discussed the variety of textile work, often highly specialised, among these groups in relation to elite and imperial households and it is not my concern here.[19] Instead, I want to highlight another important textile activity that must also have taken place in elite homes, which I suspect contributed significantly to elite male understanding of textile production: that of girls in elite families *learning* to spin and weave. The remainder of this paper explores what training in textile work young female members of the elite were expected to undertake and when it would take place. I will argue that the placement in shared domestic spaces and the long duration of textile training activities aimed at elite girls contributed substantially to the exposure to such work by other elite members of their household, particularly children.

The transition of a woman from her childhood home to her own household upon marriage provides a *terminus ante quem* for the acquisition of skills in textile work. Tradition clearly demanded that brides among the elite should know how to spin and weave at the time of their wedding: in addition to literary descriptions such as the poems discussed above, the emphasis on expertise in textile work in late antique wedding poems as well as the inclusion of symbolic textile tools in wedding ceremonies[20] highlights this as an established ideal. For example, the *Epithalamium Laurentii et Mariae* (transmitted with the works of Claudian, *Carm. Min. App*. 5) celebrates at length and with considerable detail the expertise in spinning and weaving held by an elite bride.[21]

However, the evidence for girls' training in textile work and at what age such training commenced is limited. It is possible that a girl's training in making textiles would begin so early that it was virtually indistinguishable from play.[22] Literary sources place playing children in the *atrium*, one of the spaces most likely to be shared by different users – including those engaged in textile work.[23] It is likely that children playing in this space also drew on spare tools and equipment of those spinning and weaving for their own entertainment. In her contribution to the *Oxford Handbook on Roman Childhood*, Harlow comments on this potential overlap between play and textile making: "small spindle whorls would fit neatly into little hands and can be rolled or spun, loom weights have potential as building bricks, and both make good noises when knocked together."[24]

For more structured training in textile work in elite households, we may first draw on Ovid's statement in the *Fasti* (3.817-820) that girls learn to prepare wool and weave while still young (*tenerae puellae*, *Fast*. 3.815), and that boys, unsurprisingly, do not appear to participate directly in this activity although they, too, are involved in worship of the goddess

[14] Allison 2007, 348-349; Clarke 2013, 347 and, especially, Allison 2009, 15-19. The *atrium*, of course, is but one potential, multi-functional location within different versions of elite homes. Cf. also Dickmann 2011, 53-72 for the importance of overlap in space use between slaves and free members of the household.

[15] Allison 2009; Nevett 2010, 95-118 emphasises the importance of time and seasonality for better understanding the evidence of multifunctional rooms and spaces.

[16] Cooper 2007; Wilkinson 2015

[17] Esp. Aus. *Epigr*. 27; Claud. *Carm. Min*. App. 5.

[18] On spinning implements in female funerary contexts in the Roman Empire, Cottica 2007. Cf. also Larsson Lovén 2007.

[19] Treggiari 1975; Holleran 2013, 314-315; Larsson Lovén 2016.

[20] Plinius maior *Naturalis Historia* 8.194; Plutarchos *Moralia* 271-272; Larsson Lovén 2007, 230; Hersch 2010, 123; Larsson Lovén 2013, 121; Hersch 2014, 107-109 rightly notes that however tempting, the assumption that the bride should weave her own *tunica recta* in preparation for the wedding is a misreading of Festus 212L and 364L: nothing in Festus' text ties the weaving of this garment, woven on the warp-weighted loom, specifically to the bride herself.

[21] On weaving in Claud. *Carm. Min.* App. 5, cf. Öhrman 2017, 281-282. Cf. also Sidonius *Carmina* 15 and Harich-Schwarzbauer 2013, 169-173.

[22] The notion of very early engagement with textile tools, including through play, matches a longstanding, pre-Roman tradition of including textile tools as grave goods for children and young adults, cf. Cottica 2007.

[23] Huntley 2017, 145 suggests the *atrium* is the only interior location specified in relation to playing children, cf. Lucretius *De rerum natura* 4.401-404; Vergilius *Aeneis* 8.379. In terms of archaeological evidence, Laurence suggests that the use of *putealia* (wellheads) to prevent objects falling into the water cisterns should also be related to the presence of children in the *atrium*, cf. Laurence 2017, 28-29.

[24] Harlow 2013, 323-324.

Minerva. Suetonius' comment that on the *princeps'* instruction, the daughters of Augustus' family learned to spin and weave (*Aug*. 64) points in the same direction. While their tutors are not identified, the claim that Augustus wore clothing made by his sister, wife, daughters and nieces (Suet. *Aug*. 73) conjures up an image of the women of the imperial household engaged in textile production together. These passages are readily interpreted in the context of the Augustan agenda of moral restoration,[25] but also reflect female working patterns. Together, they suggest that the settings for textile work in elite households were multi-generational, allowing the transmission of craft knowledge from older female members of the family to a younger generation.[26]

Two letters of Jerome to Christian parents offer more details. In his letter to the noble woman Laeta, he says that her young daughter Paula should:

> *discat et lanam facere, tenere colum, ponere in gremio calatum, rotare fusum, stamina pollice ducere. spernat bombycum telas, serum uellera, et aurum in fila lentescens. talia uestimenta paret, quibus pellatur frigus, non quibus corpora uestita nudendentur.*
>
> Hier. *Epist*. 107.10

> *She should also learn to make wool, hold the spindle, put the wool-basket on her lap, twist the spindle-whorl, and pull out the thread with her thumb. She should shun the weave of bombyx, the threads of silk, and the soft gold threads. Such garments should she prepare that keep the chill away, not such that expose the body while clothed.*

The section on wool-work seems to be instructions for when Paula is slightly older (cf. *Epist*. 107.7) but does not specify her age.[27] The passage does not detail from whom she should learn textile crafts, but we may compare the phrasing in Jerome's letter to Gaudentius (*Epist*. 128). This letter, too, advises that the young girl Pacatulas should begin to practice spinning at a stage where she has not yet learned clear enunciation and while she is still small enough to sit on her mother's lap (*Epist*. 128.1). Interestingly, the letter displays a clear awareness that such a young child will not be able to produce any real yarn:

> *…et tenero temptet pollice fila deducere, rumpat saepe stamina, ut aliquando non rumpat…*
>
> Hier. *Epist*. 128.1

> *…she should also try to draw out the thread with her little thumb, and she should break the thread many times, so that one day, she will not break it…*

Both letters suggest the direct involvement of parents and extended family[28] as well as a range of attendants and tutors in the upbringing and supervision of girl children. Jerome's letter to the adult Demetrias recommends that she should participate in and supervise the spinning and weaving of household women (*Epist*. 130.15), making it likely that Paula and Pacatulas, too, were to undertake and learn textile crafts in a communal environment. Wilkinson stresses that Demetrias' wool-work is undertaken in a setting distinct from her most private environment, the *cubiculum*, associated rather with prayer and contemplation. The assumption that Jerome envisioned these activities taking place in shared domestic space like the *atrium* is readily made.[29]

Jerome blends the old Roman ideal of the wool-working woman with that of Christian asceticism in a manner that we can also use to throw light on what elite women did weave: young Paula should avoid luxurious materials like silk and gold thread, materials that Ausonius hinted that Sabina would use so expertly,[30] and materials, too, that are repeatedly mentioned in weaving passages in Claudian's poems.[31] The emphasis in these texts on matrons weaving with luxurious supplies suggests that even as the *matrona*'s virtuous work might have been deliberately put on display in the *atrium*, so also was the wealth represented simply by the materials she used. That display is clearly not desirable in an ascetic context and so these materials are to be avoided, but Jerome's rejection of luxurious materials for Paula may also be read in a more pragmatic way: expensive materials should not be wasted on the beginner. The practical clothes of sturdy fabric mentioned in the letter to Laeta meet both the ascetic ideals of Jerome and the requirements of a – thus far – less accomplished spinner and weaver.

Even in late antique mythological epic, the acquisition of skills in weaving precedes marriage: in Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*, young Prosperpine excels as a weaver even as the god of the underworld makes ready to abduct her and make her his wife. Interestingly, Claudian's description of how Ceres returns to find the palace and Prosperpine's loom abandoned ties together the concepts of impending marriage, girls' training in textile production, and the loom's location in the *atrium*:

> *…desolata pererrat*
> *atria, semirutas confuso stamina telas*
> *atque interruptas agnoscit pectinis artes.*

[25] Milnor 2005, 82-84.

[26] The frieze of the Minerva temple in the Forum Transitorium offers another representation of all-female, multi-generational settings for textile production, similarly alluding to the transmission of craft knowledge. Cf. D'Ambra 1993, 51.

[27] Cf. also Gregorius of Nyssa *Vita Macrinae* 3-4, stating that Macrina had acquired considerable skill in wool-work by the age of twelve.

[28] E.g. Hier. *Epist*. 107.9; cf. Katz 2007, 120-121.

[29] Wilkinson 2015, 70-73.

[30] On Aus. *Epigr*. 27-29; Kay 2001, 134-137.

[31] E.g. Claudianus *Carmina* 1.178-182; 8.600-601; *Carmina Minora* 48; *Carm. Min*. App. 5.47. Cf. also Hildebrandt 2016.

...
adtritosque manu radios proiectaque pensa
cunctaque uirgineo sparsa oblectamina ludo
ceu natam pressat gremio;

...wandering through deserted halls, she recognised the half-ruined warp with its disordered threads and the interrupted work of the pin beater... she clasps to her bosom, as if it were her child, the hand-worn pins, the cast aside wool, all the toys scattered in childish play.

Proserpine's act of weaving and the cosmic motif of her weave (described in an elaborate ecphrasis in *Rapt. Pros.* 1.246-275) are strongly shaped by their literary context and function on multiple levels.[32] Here, my concern is the emphasis placed on the amount of practice in weaving and spinning a young girl would need to undertake before her marriage. Claudian describes Prosperpine's tools as worn by the grip of her hands at work (*adtritosque manu* in *Rapt. Pros.* 3.161). *Radii* ('weaving pins') would be made of metal, bone, or wood,[33] with bone and wooden *radii* especially likely to exhibit use-wear traces such as colour shifts after extensive use.[34] At the same time, Proserpine's textile tools are described as *oblectamina* (translated as 'toys' above, but referring broadly to delightful objects) used in 'childish play' (*uirgineus ludus* in *Rapt. Pros.* 3.162). Slightly later, the nurse set to watch over Proserpine during Ceres' absence states that the loom provided Proserpine with work (*labor*, *Rapt. Pros.* 3.204), yet her occupation is described as 'careful play' (*cauti…ludi, Rapt. Pros.* 3.206). Ceres' grief over the abduction of her child prompts a description of Proserpine as more child-like than she has appeared in previous books,[35] but the passage nonetheless makes clear the connection between play, extensive textile work, and female progression into adulthood.

Discussion

Literary sources tend to display textile work and training in textile skills as taking place within all-female groups of individuals, sometimes including implicit allusions to inter-generational transmission of craft knowledge between women. Yet the sources also show that textile work was likely to be undertaken in domestic locations such as the *atrium* also used by others for a range of activities, including representation and children's play. While women involved in or learning textile work may therefore primarily have engaged with other members of the same textile-making group, their work would still be visible (or indeed audible) to other members of the household in a manner that allowed for display of the domestic virtue of female members of the family.

It is furthermore likely that even if domestic textile work undertaken by elite women was felt to be as old-fashioned in some contexts, girls still under the eye of nurses, tutors, and parents would be held to a more conservative standard. The chronological spread combined with the class bias of the three examples discussed above demonstrates that the availability of and/or supposed preference for commercially produced or imported textiles among adult women of the elite exerted little influence on the extent of such training delivered to female children. The reference to Proserpine's tools as worn and the repeated tries of Pacatulas to spin a thread without breaking it also makes clear that each girl would undertake training in textile production over a long period, allowing for others in the household to be exposed to such training efforts over substantial periods of time.

The characterisation of Proserpine's *nutrix* as both a child-minder and a companion for the young weaving woman also links the supervision of children more closely to textile work in progress. I have already noted that the shared space of the *atrium* was used both for textile work and as a play area for children, in addition to the representational functions filled by this space. As argued above, the overlap between work and play in this space is likely to have facilitated the first steps of a girl's acquisition of skills in textile production. However, it also provides an important opportunity for an understanding of textile production to develop through play among male children. In early childhood, separation based on gender was less prominent: among the Roman elite, male and female children shared aspects of early play and education.[36] Such shared experiences are likely to foster a degree of awareness even of gendered activities such as wool-work. Furthermore, a child overseen by adults also involved in (or indeed teaching others) textile crafts is as likely to have been male as female. The extent of time spent by girls learning to spin and weave also means that coincidence in age between male and female children in a household is not a requirement for an understanding of textile work to spread to male children from girls' training in these traditionally female tasks:[37] the toddler reaching for a loom weight or a spindle to use as an impromptu toy might

[32] Gruzelier 1993, 146; Gineste 2000; Klebs 2016.

[33] For the translation of *radius* as 'weaving pin', cf. Flemestad et al. 2017, 263-264. Cf. e.g. Prevosti 2013, 4 for easily accessible and illustrated discussion of examples from the Roman period.

[34] For use-wear traces on Roman weft-beating tools, cf. Gostencnik 2010, 78-91; Cheval 2011, 145-146.

[35] Cf. also Gruzelier 1993, 258; Parkes 2015, 481-383.

[36] E.g. Hemelrijk 1999, 20-30 on formal education. Harlow 2013, 323-329; Dolansky 2017, 118-130 on evidence for both gendered and gender-neutral toys and on iconography of mixed-sex groups of playing children; Katz 2007; Vuolanto 2013, 594-595 notes that even in conservative Christian homes, girl children would have contacts with children of both genders in the household. However, many activities also prepared children for specifically gendered roles in adult life, as also discussed by e.g. in the papers by Vuolanto (e.g. 587-588) and Dolansky mentioned above.

[37] In Aasgard's thought-provoking exploration of children's experience of 5th century CE Constantinople, the fictional Constans is aware of his sister's training in textile crafts, Aasgard 2015, 147-148.

be either girl or boy, still playing while older girls are taught traditional tasks.

The direct proximity to workers, tools and equipment allowed to children during supervised play[38] offers a better explanation for the sensory experience of textile work expressed by male authors than encounters in adult life. For example, based on the tendency of children to explore their environment through touch,[39] a child playing by a weaver's feet is far more likely than an adult male to have reached up to touch warp or weft, gaining the sensory experience that later comes to underpin the representation of the movement of weft and warp threads against the weaver's hand through sibilant and rhotic sounds as seen in Ausonius' epigram on Sabina's weaving. Similarly, the presence of young male children during the instruction of girls learning to perform task associated with textile production also provides a stronger explanation for their understanding of necessary work elements as well as textile terminology as these are far more likely to be explicitly stated during instruction than during the focused work of an already accomplished craftswoman like Sabina.

Studying the way in which male authors display awareness of strongly gendered craft processes like weaving in their texts allows us to re-emphasise how people in shared spaces interacted with each other and with each other's work. In this paper, I have argued that sensory experiences of textile work in childhood are especially important for shaping the literary and stylistic expression in poetic descriptions of such work. Authors would, of course, continue to add to their awareness of the sensory experience of textile work over time, merging boyhood impressions with the experience of the adult male.[40] The curiosity of small boys on girls and women working wool in shared spaces in the Roman household rarely finds literary expression. The adult male gaze on the young bride or settled *matrona* engaged in the same occupation in the same spaces, however, does: evaluating, approving, proud, or possessive, as in the case of Ausonius' celebration of Sabina's work. Thus, their texts draw on – and evoke in their readership – experiences both past and present.

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[38] On the supervision required in the *atrium*, cf. Huntley 2017, 144-147.

[39] Jerome draws on the tactile exploration of children in his learning programme for Paula, cf. Hier. *Epist*. 107.4. Cf. Wiedemann 1989, 147-149; Harlow 2013, 325

[40] Cf. Hamilakis 2014, 118-119 on the cumulative nature of sensory experience.

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Streszczenie

Wytwarzanie tkanin we wspólnie użytkowanych pomieszczeniach domu rzymskiego. Świadectwa z poezji rzymskiej

Przedmiotem artykułu są rozważania nad materialnością tekstyliów i produkcji włókienniczej uchwytną w poezji rzymskiej. Poprzez uważną lekturę *Epigramatów* Ausoniusza i eposu Siliusza Italikusa o wojnie punickiej, zestawioną z pozostałościami archeologicznymi i rekonstrukcjami tkactwa antycznego, autorka wykazuje, że rzymscy autorzy (mężczyźni) dysponowali znaczną wiedzą o praktycznej stronie włókiennictwa i doznaniach zmysłowych towarzyszących wytwarzaniu tkanin. Na podstawie źródeł archeologicznych autorka wyjaśnia, że podstawę tej wiedzy stanowiło wspólne użytkowanie przestrzeni domowej i wrażenia dzieci: dziewczynek i chłopców wspólnie dorastających w domach elit. Proces uczenia dziewczynek miał także istotny wpływ na chłopców i mężczyzn w rodzinie, co może wyjaśniać ich wiedzę techniczną, ujawnianą w literackich opisach prac włókienniczych.