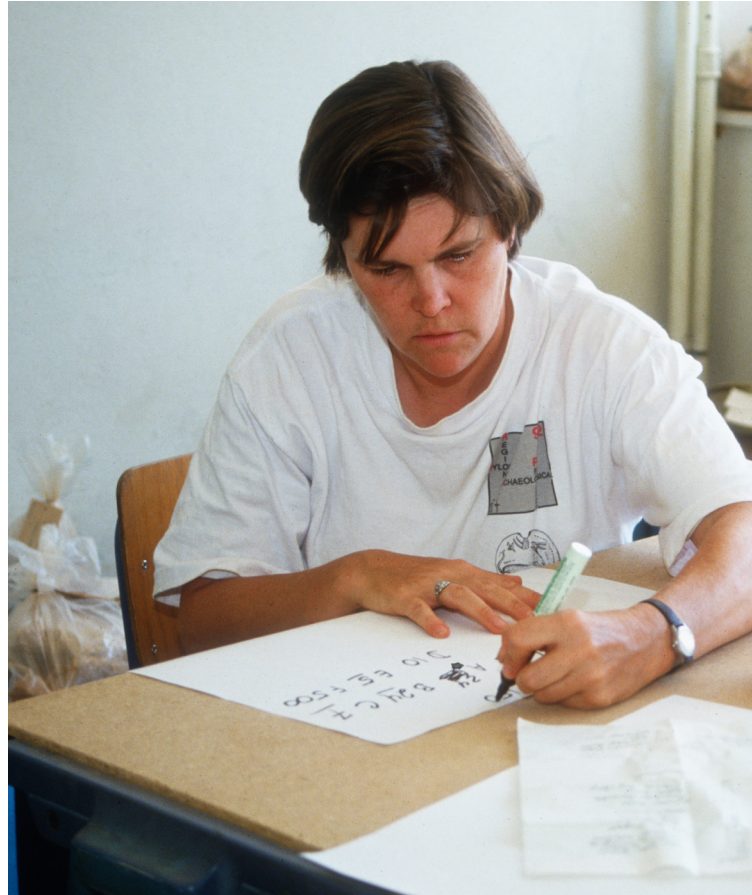


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KE-RA-ME-JA

Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine



Cynthia in the Hora School House. Courtesy Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati and the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project.

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KE-RA-ME-JA

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edited by

Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James



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Preface

Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James

The title of this volume, *ke-ra-me-ja*, is a woman's name that appears only once in the extant Mycenaean documentation, on Knossos Ap 639, a catalog of named women. We chose it because it means "potter" (Κεράμεια, from Greek κέραμος, "potter's clay") and combines two major strands of Cynthia Shelmerdine's many scholarly pursuits: Mycenaean ceramics and Linear B texts. It thereby signals her pioneering use of archaeological and textual data in a sophisticated and integrated way.

Like Cynthia, it is also one of a kind. The intellectual content of the essays presented to her in this volume demonstrate not only that her research has had a wide-ranging influence, but also that it is a model of scholarship to be emulated. The fact that the authors contributed in the first place is a testament to her warm and generous friendship. We hope that the papers in this volume both pay tribute to her past work and prove fruitful to Cynthia in her many continuing endeavors.



Biography of Cynthia W. Shelmerdine

Susan Shelmerdine

Cynthia Shelmerdine credits much of her early interest in archaeology to Emily and Cornelius Vermeule who became neighbors (and fellow dog walkers) during her junior year of high school. She followed this interest to Bryn Mawr College where, when she began Greek in her sophomore year, she realized ancient Greece was her true passion. After graduating with a degree in Greek from Bryn Mawr, she studied for two years at Cambridge University as a Marshall Scholar and began to combine her interests in archaeology and Greek in work on Linear B. From Cambridge, she went on to Harvard University where she earned her Ph.D. in Classical Philology in 1977 with a dissertation that grew out of work she had done on Late Helladic pottery from Nichoria with the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition during the summers of 1972–1975. This early background attests to her firm belief in taking

an interdisciplinary approach to the study of early Greek history and signals three common threads in her scholarly work: Greek, Linear B, and Mycenaean pottery. Cynthia joined the Department of Classics at the University of Texas in 1977, teaching “all things Greek, from language to archaeology,” serving twice as Department Chair, and becoming the Robert M. Armstrong Centennial Professor of Classics in 2002, before retiring with emerita status in 2008 to continue her travels and her work on Mycenaean Greece. She returned to England in 2009 as a Visiting Associate at Oxford University and Official Visitor at Cambridge University and, in 2011, as Peter Warren Visiting Professor at Bristol University.

In addition to writing a teaching commentary on Thucydides VI and an elementary Greek textbook, Cynthia has published extensively on Pylos and the evidence of the Linear B tablets for

understanding Mycenaean society. Her ability to draw out the big picture from details and data in the tablets is well illustrated in this work, as it is in *The Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age* (2008), to which she contributed and also edited. Cynthia has continued to apply her expertise in Mycenaean pottery as a codirector of the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, in charge of museum operations and Bronze Age ceramics (1991–1996), and again as a ceramics

and historical expert for the Iklaina Archaeological Project (1999–present). Along the way, she has enjoyed sharing her love of ancient Greece and the Aegean Bronze Age with a wide audience as a regular lecturer and tour leader for the Archaeological Institute of America. As this volume suggests, however, it is her interest in and her work with students that she has enjoyed the most and that continues to fuel her passion for bringing Mycenaean society to the light of a new day.



Bibliography of Cynthia W. Shelmerdine

Degrees

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations for periodicals in the reference lists of the chapters follow the conventions of the *American Journal of Archaeology* 111 (2007), pp. 14–34.

A	Akones “mound”	CR	Crete
AR	Arkalochori	DA	Dark Age
ARM	Armeni	dat.	dative
ASCSA	The American School of Classical Studies at Athens	diam.	diameter
ca.	approximately	dim.	dimensions
CAP	Cambridge Amphora Project	EDS	energy dispersive X-ray spectrography
Chem.	chemical group	EH	Early Helladic
CHIC	Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscription- um Cretae	EM	Early Minoan
cm	centimeter	EPG	Early Protogeometric
comp.	composite (measurement restored on the basis of one or more overlapping but nonjoining fragments)	est.	estimated
		fem.	feminine
		FM	Furumark motif number
		fr.	fragment
		FS	Furumark shape number

g	grams	MY	Mycenae
GC-MS	gas chromatography-mass spectrometry	Myc.	Mycenaean
h.	height	N	Nikitopoulou tomb group (Tourkokivouro)
ha	hectare	no.	number
HARP	Hora Apotheke Reorganization Project	nom.	nominative
HM	Heraklion Museum	pers. comm.	personal communication
Hom.	Homeric/Homer	pers. obs.	personal observation
HT	Hagia Triada	PG	Protogeometric
ICP-MS	inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry	PH	Phaistos
IKAP	Iklaina Archaeological Project	PIXE	particle induced X-ray emission
INAA	instrumental neutron activation analysis	PK	Palaikastro
IO	Juktas	pl.	plural
kg	kilograms	PN	place name
KH	Chania	POR	Poros Herakleiou
km	kilometers	PR	Prassa
KN	Knossos	PRAP	Pylos Regional Archaeological Project
KO	Kophinas	pres.	preserved
L	Lambropoulos/Lakkoules group	PY	Pylos
L.	length	Py/GC-MS	pyrolysis/gas chromatography-mass spectrometry
<i>lat. inf.</i>	<i>latus inferius</i>	RCT	Room of the Chariot Tablets, Knossos
LC	Late Cycladic	rest.	restored (measurement restored despite missing segments of profile)
LD	Lustrous Decorated	RLWM	Red Lustrous Wheelmade
LH	Late Helladic	SEM	scanning electron microscope
LM	Late Minoan	sg.	singular
m	meters	SY	Syme
M	tombs excavated by UMME at Nichoria	T	Tsagdi group
masc.	masculine	TH	Thebes
m asl	meters above sea level	th.	thickness
max.	maximum	TRO	Troy
MC	Middle Cycladic	UMME	University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition
mcg	micrograms	v	verso
MGUA(s)	“Minoan Goddess(es) with Upraised Arms”	V	Veves
MH	Middle Helladic	WAE/ICP or ICP-AES	inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometry
ml	milliliters	XRD	X-ray diffraction
MM	Middle Minoan	XRF	X-ray fluorescence
MN	man’s name	ZA	Zakros



Voicing the Loom: Women, Weaving, and Plotting

Marie-Louise Nosch

Textile production is something of a blind spot on the cultural and economic map of ancient Greece.* Textiles and matters of textile production are often overlooked and neglected in classical scholarship, even though we know that they were a vital part of a producing, consuming, trading, and living society of the past (Forbes 1956). Here I will argue that the making of cloth created a background rhythm of female life in ancient Greece that is both visual and audible if one knows where to see and hear it.

Mycenaean epigraphical scholarship, in contrast to other specializations, has emphasized the study of textile production because more than half of all Linear B tablets deal with textile production in terms of raw resources—flax and wool—and the monitoring of the palaces' textile workers and textile production (Killen 1984). This abundance of documentation has encouraged the view that Mycenaean textile production was purely a matter of

industry, however, characterized by standardized production, targets, rations, and textile workers of slave status. We tend to forget that the craft of weaving in most cultures was culturally embedded into cosmological and mythological narratives. This was probably also the case in the Mycenaean period, despite the silence of the tablets in this regard. It should be noted, furthermore, that the rich textile terminology in the Linear B tablets is deeply rooted in a living language and not in terms invented for strictly bureaucratic reasons (Mallory and Adams 2006, 230–238; Del Frego, Nosch, and

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Rougemont 2010). Terms for textiles, tools, techniques, and clothes existed long before the Linear B administration was established, and the terminology continued to undergo semantic shifts, eventually becoming part of the evolving Greek dialects of the first millennium B.C. (Barber 1991).

In Homeric studies textile production has received less attention, presumably due to its secondary importance to the poet. “The Homeric epics are not a reliable guide to the culture and habits of Mycenaean Greeks, but it is sometimes possible to work the other way, and to show from Late Bronze Age data that an object or practice in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* does accurately reflect that period,” writes Cynthia Shelmerdine (1995, 99). Therefore, with our rich Mycenaean data on textile production, it is my aim to work in the opposite direction and show how in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* textiles and weaving played a vital role both in society and in epic narrative.

Scholars have long recognized that textiles, textile production, and costumes are described in a rich vocabulary in ancient Greece. In 1967, *Archaeologia Homerica* published an entire volume on *Kleidung, Haar- und Barttracht* by Spyridon Marinatos (1967). Similarly, in *Prehistoric Textiles* (1991), Elizabeth Barber set Aegean costume and textile production into a cultural historical framework of the second and first millennia B.C. For the Classical-period household, the division into a female and a male domain expressed in the opposition between the Greek divinities Hestia and Hermes was the theme of a seminal paper by Jean-Pierre Vernant (1963). Hestia is female, centered in the home, stable, inert, and ancient; Hermes is male, outgoing, dynamic, mobile, and young. Textile production is

associated with the domain of Hestia and thus localized in this stable, domestic environment.

However, in the investigation of the pre-classical and classical past, textiles degrade and disappear in Greece, and women remain silent and invisible in the sources. It is therefore possible to concur with Averil Cameron’s statement that it “might seem then that for a true understanding of ancient women we must turn to other kinds of material, especially non-literary evidence” (Cameron 1989, 8). I believe that it is necessary to combine several types of sources and methods to understand women and textiles and their significance in ancient societies beyond the Linear B tablets.

“The old and far-from-lively field of scholarship on Greek dress has in recent years been given a new lease of life by the study of clothes as a means of non-verbal communication,” writes Hans van Wees (2005, 1). In particular, the German historian Beate Wagner-Hasel has set a new research agenda by reviewing textiles as a gender-specific means of communication and as a means of communication integral to ancient economy and society (Wagner-Hasel 2000, 2006).

In Shelmerdine’s 1995 tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule, she emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the earliest stage of Greek history (Shelmerdine 1995, 99). I will follow her recommendation and her path in this survey of how women, plotting, and textiles are interwoven in language. However, my approach will not be of the precise and methodical kind that is characteristic of Cynthia Shelmerdine’s scholarship. Instead I will seize this opportunity to explore a less clear-cut area of research and to zigzag between ages and methods.

Weaving, Sewing, and Plotting

There is a close semantic as well as technological relationship between weaving and narrative (McIntosh Snyder 1981; Wagner-Hasel 2006). The verb *hyphainein* is already employed in two ways in the works of Homer: (1) “to weave”; (2) “to piece together in the mind, contrive, devise, and develop” (Cunliffe 1963, 402; Chantraine 2009, 1123). Martin West even sees this semantic convergence of weaving and composing (poetry) as one of the

strongest testimonies of a common Indo-European epic tradition (West 1973, 179; 2007, 35–38). Other scholars have also emphasized the relationship between weaving and composing in Homer’s epics (Nagy 2002) and the nexus of language, the female, weaving, and the construction of truth (Bergren 2008).

In the *Iliad*, Andromache (6.456) and Helen (3.125) weave fabrics, as do Calypso (5.62) and

Circe (10.220–223, 226–228, 254–255) in the *Odyssey*. However, the Homeric weaver par excellence is Penelope (*Od.* 2.94, 104; 5.517; 19.149; 24.129–140):

στησαμένη μέγαν ἰστὸν ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ὕφαινε
She set up in her halls a great web, and fell to weaving (*Od.* 24.129)

Penelope explains her reasons for weaving to her suitors (*Od.* 24.131–137, see also 19.141–147):

κοῦροι ἐμοὶ μνηστῆρες, ἐπεὶ θάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
μίμνεντ' ἐπειγόμενοι τὸν ἐμὸν γάμον, εἰς ὃ κε φᾶρος
ἐκτελέσω, μή μοι μεταμῶνια νήματ' ὀληται,
Λαέρτη ἦρωϊ ταφήϊον, εἰς ὅτε κέν μιν
μοῖρ' ὀλοῖ καθέλησι τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο,
μή τίς μοι κατὰ δῆμον Ἀχαιϊάδων νεμεσήσῃ,
αἶ κεν ἄτερ σπείρου κεῖται πολλὰ κτεατίσσαις.
Young men, my suitors, since noble Odysseus is
dead, be patient, though eager for my marriage,
until I finish this robe—I would not have my spinning
go to waste—a shroud for the hero Laertes
against the time when the fell fate of pitiless death
shall strike him down; for fear any of the Achae-
an women in the land should cast blame upon me,
if he were to lie without a shroud, who had won
great possessions.

The verb ὑφαίνω also occurs frequently with the sense to plan, piece together in the mind, contrive, and devise. For example, in the *Iliad* (3.212), Menelaos and Odysseus are described as able orators, weaving their words:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ μύθους καὶ μῆδεα πᾶσιν ὕφαινον
But when they began to weave the web of words
and of devices in the presence of all

Another example occurs when King Proetus plots against Bellerophon (*Il.* 6.187). The use of the verb also in this secondary sense is very common in Homer (*Il.* 3.212, 7.324, 9.93; *Od.* 4.678, 5.356, 9.422, 19.139), both by male and female protagonists.

This usage is common in Greek, as discussed by Rüdiger Schmitt in his analysis of Indo-European poetry and poetic language (Schmitt 1967, 300). Composing songs is expressed as weaving hymns, and this metaphor can also be found in other Indo-European languages, for example in Vedic expressions (Schmitt 1967, 300). Some scholars even suggest that *hymnos* and *hyphaino* have a common origin, although this remains very uncertain (Diehl 1940; Patzer 1952, 322–323; Nagy 2002, 71;

West 2007, 37; Chantraine 2009, 1116; Beekes 2010, 1531). West lists as a primary sign of continuity in Indo-European poetry the common use of “weaving” as a metaphor for the poet’s craft (West 1973, 179). This is paralleled in modern French, where the verb *tramer* corresponds to *hyphainein*, meaning both “to weave” and “to contrive or plan,” *trame* being the French term for weft.

In the dialogue between Odysseus, returned in disguise as a stranger, and his wife, Penelope (*Od.* 19.137), she describes her ruse and how she has cheated the suitors by employing yet another textile expression that is valid in both Greek and English:

ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους τολυπεύω
And I wind a skein of wiles

The primary sense of *τολυπεύω* is to wind up either thread or wool bundles prepared for spinning, but its sense of plotting is very common.

The Greeks also employ yet another textile technical term for composing poetry and songs, namely *ρόπτειν*, “sewing,” from which the verbal agent *ράψωδος*, “rhapsode,” derives. Already in Homer, the verb *ρόπτειν* can have the sense of sewing and stitching, as well as devising, contriving, planning, and plotting (Patzner 1952; Cunliffe 1963, 354). Patches of bulls’ hides are stitched together inside the shield of Sarpedon (*Il.* 12.296), but in other instances the verb can mean to devise evil and to plot (*Il.* 18.367; *Od.* 3.118, 16.423).

Poems and thoughts are “woven” or “sewn” together to express their meanings, and poetry was primarily expressed through singing in the past. Anthony Tuck has demonstrated how singing and weaving belong together in *mythos*, especially for technical reasons: songs serve as mnemonic devices that would presumably help the weavers remember when to change the shed and where to pass the weft, thus assisting them in executing complex patterns (Tuck 2006).

The technical terms for a text running from left to right and then from right to left on the following line is *βουστροφηδόν*, which derives from *βούς/bous*, “ox,” and the verb *στρέφειν/strephein*, “to turn.” It refers to the pattern made by the plowing ox in the fields going back and forth (Woodhead 1981, 26). It is the same route as the weft threads (*πίνη*) going into the warp system from left to right and from right to left, a **πινοστροφηδόν* of a fabric.

In fact, in Akkadian the term *šakāku* has the meaning “to harrow,” but also “to thread,” “to pull back and forth(?),” “to tighten,” “to string,” “to form a row(?),” and “to be strung (with gems)” (Reiner, ed., 1989, 113–116). Cécile Michel and Klaas Veenhof (2010, 214 n. 18) further suggest that the term could also be translated as “to weave.” Thus, Akkadian may connect weaving and the action of harrowing a field by their similar zigzag movement back and forth.

There may also be cognitive affinities between the rhythmic action of weaving and the highly developed Greek lyric metric traditions. The basic rhythmic structure of a fabric is the binding system, such as tabby or twill. The metric system of Greek lyrics divides all syllables into long (–) and short (˘) syllables. The syllables are combined in

feet, which can be compared to the textile rapport. The basic metric feet of an iamb (˘ –) or a trochee (– ˘) recalls the basic tabby binding of weft threads going over and under the warp threads (˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ – ˘ –). Another binding is the twill, such as the 2/1 twill in which the rapport is composed of weft threads that pass over one and under two warp threads (– ˘ ˘). This pattern recalls the dactyls that constitute the basic elements of the Homeric hexameter.

Yet another common aspect of metrical structures and weaving was put forward by Tuck, who suggested that over the years the development of metrics may have been influenced by the number sequences of weaving communicated rhythmically through singing (Tuck 2006, 2009).

Weaving on the Loom and Playing Music on the Lyre

The verb *krekein* means “to weave” and also “to play an instrument.” It is thus yet another example of a verb for weaving that was subject to semantic extension. In the case of *krekein* it seems that the common semantic field between weaving and playing music is the manipulation of strings: the term is employed for playing music on the lyre strings and also for the act of introducing the shuttle with weft yarn into the shed of the fabric. Although the verb *krekein* is not attested either in Homer or in Linear B, it belongs to a widely attested root found in other Indo-European languages (Mallory and Adams 2006, 232).

Another striking parallel between weaving and playing music may be found in the tools for weaving and for playing music. As Ellen Harlitzius-Klück rightly points out, there is a tactile parallel between the horizontal, oscillating movement of weaving and the action of playing the lyre (Harlitzius-Klück 2004, 104–105). In addition to the similar movements, stringed instruments and hand looms share technology: they consist of wooden frames onto which strings/threads are fixed with a certain tension.

The harp is attested in Cycladic art already in the Early Bronze Age. In Late Bronze Age Aegean iconography, it is found on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus and in a Pylos fresco (Younger

2007). The term lyre is attested in Bronze Age texts via the occupational term in the dual form *ru-ra-ta-e*, “lyre players,” who are recorded on a Linear B tablet from Thebes (TH Av 106.7) together with individual men and also another professional designation, *ka-na-pe-we*, “textile fullers.” The term lyre, however, does not occur in Homer or Hesiod (Maas and McIntosh Snyder 1989, 80), although there are 21 occurrences in Homer of another stringed instrument, the *phorminx*. The strings of the *phorminx* were made of sheep gut (*Od.* 21.408), while the strings of the hand loom are made of textile fiber. The rich iconographic evidence illustrates very well the affinities in terms of technology and construction between the hand loom and the lyre. In several cases, it can be difficult to decide whether a depiction illustrates weaving on a hand loom or playing music on a lyre. This suggests that the artisans either regarded the matter with indifference or that they may well have been conscious of, and perhaps expressed, this play upon meanings. In any case, as much as the two stringed instruments, loom and lyre, were similar, it remains important to note the gender division in use in both epics and iconography: women weave and men play the lyre (Younger 2007).

The Latin names for the parts of the lyre are similar to the names of the loom. Sarah Pomeroy has

observed that the Romans named the parts of the lyre by analogy with the parts of the loom, for example, *jugum*, *stamina*, and *pecten* (Pomeroy 1978, 19). Likewise, in the first millennium, the Greek name for the horns of a lyre is *ktéis*, and this is also the term for the comb used for weaving or for carding, according to Pierre Chantraine (2009, 568).

What is forgotten knowledge today is that looms and weaving make characteristic noises. These sounds must have been familiar to all members of an ancient household. When the heddle bars are pulled back and forth and the shed is changed, rhythmic thumping sounds occur. They are followed by the sound of beating the weft threads into the fabric with the weaving sword. This is accompanied by the clinking sounds from the impact of the loom weights, made of fired clay or stone. The weaver orchestrates these rhythms and sounds.

Thus, we must imagine a domestic acoustical landscape composed of familiar weaving sounds. These are the sounds Iphigenia recalls when she thinks about her home and childhood. She regrets that she will never again hear the sound of the *histos kalliphthonges*, “beautifully sounding loom” (Eur. *IT* 208–225).

In experimental tests conducted at the Danish National Research Foundation’s Center for Textile Research, the weaving process was analyzed. In a 2/2 twill weave of ca. 16 threads per cm, it took

on average 20 minutes to weave eight wefts. This would mean that the weaver changed the shed approximately every two to three minutes (Mårtensson, Nosch, and Andersson Strand, forthcoming). In a tabby weave of 10–12 threads per cm, one weaver wove approximately 30 wefts per hour and thus changed the shed every two minutes (Andersson et al. 2008). These experimental tests of weaving yielded clothing-quality textiles. Thus, for coarser textiles and coarser threads, and in more open fabrics with fewer threads per cm, a weaver would be able to change the shed more often, because when the warp threads are spaced farther apart it is easier and faster to change the shed. During the experiments, the sounds of weaving were unmistakable.

Harlizius-Klück, hand weaver, philologist, and mathematician, sees weaving and braiding as the prototypes of geometric and arithmetic applications (Harlizius-Klück 2004, 130). In this respect, there is again the association with music that is considered by ancient scholars to be an element of mathematical thinking. We could therefore view weaving and music as two applications of mathematics, or, alternatively, assume that mathematics derives from the basic knowledge of music and textile technology (Harlizius-Klück 2004). This is also supported by Tuck’s interpretation of songs as mnemonic devices for complex weaving (Tuck 2006).

The Textile Identities of Homer’s Weaving Women

Helen and Andromache wove tapestry weaves. In some ways, the two women chose themes that reflected their own identity in the epics: Andromache weaves colorful floral patterns (*Il.* 22.440–441), while Helen depicts her vision of warrior scenes from the Trojan War (*Il.* 3.125–128):

τὴν δ’ εὖρ’ ἐν μεγάρῳ· ἦ δὲ μέγαν ἰστὸν ὕφαινε
δίπλακα πορφύρεην, πολέας δ’ ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους
Τρώων θ’ ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
οὓς ἔθεν εἴνεκ’ ἔπασχον ὑπ’ Ἄρηος παλαμάων.
She found Helen in the hall, where she was weaving
a great purple web of double fold on which
she was embroidering many battles of the horse-
taming Trojans and the bronze-clad Achaeans,
which for her sake had endured at the hands of
Ares.

Murray’s translation of “embroidery” is highly unlikely; what is referred to is rather the technology of patterned weave used on the warp-weighted loom.

Some scholars have even suggested interpreting the etymology of the weaving heroines’ names with textile connotations, but this issue is still debated. Harlizius-Klück (2004, 143–144) suggests that the name of Penelope contains the element *pene* “weft” and that her name means “the one who abandons the weft.” This interpretation was already put forward in the 19th-century *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen* by Pape and Benseler (1863–1870, 1193; see also von Kamptz 1982, 275–276); however, Chantraine (2009, 865) rejects this construction and only accepts the

association with the bird name *penelops*, a kind of duck. The Classical Greek terms for warp (στήμων) and weft (πήνη) are not attested in Linear B.

Interestingly, another female protagonist, Circe, also has a name with a meaning that could either be related to a bird's name or a textile term. According

to Chantraine (2009, 513), Circe comes from κίρκος, which is a variety of falcon. Harlizius-Klück (2004, 112), in contrast, suggests that Circe's name could be related to *kerkis* (κερκίς), "shuttle," a fundamental tool for weaving.

The Web of Female Textile Communication: The Voice of the Shuttle

Textiles have been interpreted as a specific means of female communication, invisible to and inaudible to men. Nausicaa, desiring to marry Odysseus, dresses him in a specially chosen garment. Then she sends him to her mother, the queen Arete. The queen immediately understands her daughter's message of love, desire, and marriage because she recognizes the textiles made by herself (*Od.* 7.233–235). Moreover, in Greek mythology, the narrative brings connections between weaving and plotting to light. Philomela, after the rape by her sister Procne's husband Tereus, is silenced and her tongue cut out. Using a narrative of tapestry weaving, she tells her story to her sister, as reported by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Philomela's tapestry is inscribed in another weaving tradition of female narratives: Arachne's weaving in her competition with Athena narrates the love and sexual encounters between male gods and female humans in the myth (Harlizius-Klück 2004, 23–24).

Aristotle noted how Sophocles, in a lost piece on the topic of Philomela and Tereus, employs the poetic expression "the voice of the shuttle," ἡ τῆς κερκίδος φωνή (*Poet.* 1454^b). Particularly in American feminist scholarship, "the voice of the shuttle" has become emblematic of the suppressed female voices in classical and contemporary literature (Klindienst Joplin 2002; Harlizius-Klück 2004, 145–146). For example, in the myth of Philomela, the "safe feminine, domestic craft—weaving" is interpreted as being "a new means of resistance" (Klindienst Joplin 2002, 260).

Maria Pantelia (1993) has suggested viewing fabrics with figurative decorations as the means for women to acquire a voice and express their stories and realities in opposition to the words of the men, who could raise their voices in Homeric society. Thus, figurative weaving became women's

only way to express their version of the truth, and it was perhaps even their means of manifesting a domestic upheaval. Women would have taken tapestry weaving as their canvas, because it was the only available means of expression to them. This is certainly in accordance with the situation seen in the epics. As Ann Bergren states, exploring the connection between women, language, and weaving: "the semiotic activity peculiar to women throughout Greek tradition is not linguistic. Greek women do not speak, they weave" (Bergren 2008, 15).

From the voice of the oppressed gender, tapestry and weaving therefore became the female tool—or even weapon—in the struggle for truth, in writing history and passing on messages. Classical philologist Martin Steinrück emphasizes this secret female textile language in the epic works. The erotic favor of a woman toward a man can be expressed by a textile gift, for instance, Circe, Calypso, and Nausikaa, who love Odysseus and express their sometimes obsessive love through the gift of a garment (Steinrück 2003, 37–38).

Philomela communicates via *grammata*, according to Apollodoros (*Bibl.* 3.14.8), to denounce her brother-in-law's crime. *Grammata* can mean both written messages or designs, patterns, and figurative ornamentation. These *grammata*, however, are only understandable to women. It seems that women exercised an exclusive control over textile qualities that only they could assess and understand. The Homeric male community had to trust a woman's quality control because part of the household's intrinsic status depended on her judgment.

Another type of female control is the social control exerted by women on textile production and consumption: Penelope emphasizes how she fears the reaction of other Greek women if she fails to finish Laertes's shroud (*Od.* 24.136). Moreover, as

Steinrück points out, Odysseus, to his wife's satisfaction, describes how other women had admired his clothes during his travels:

The scene that Odysseus invents in the *Odyssey* to please Penelope is revealing (Hom. *Od.* 19.232–235): when he arrived in Crete, the women of the palace surrounded him, not to admire him, but to analyze the type of cloth that he wore and which

Penelope had made for him. His wife, hearing this discourse, is satisfied. Odysseus would not have told this story if he did not know that husbands were a kind of “living billboard” for a female audience; the women exchanged by their clothes a kind of dialogue, unappreciated by the men who wear these clothes. (Steinrück 2003, 38, translated from the original French)

Textiles and Status

According to Hans van Wees (2005, 9 and n. 43), Helen and Andromache weave peploi; Barber, however, interprets their *oeuvres* as wall hangings (1991, 358–382; 1994, 153, 211), which would be consistent with the narrative aspects of their textiles.

Penelope weaves—and unravels—for three years, and it is only in the beginning of the fourth year that the suitors discover her actions. This suggests, first of all, that textile production is time consuming, and second, that the shroud of King Laertes was clearly an expert task consisting of very laborious textile techniques. The dynastic link between Penelope and Laertes also made this a personal task that could not be assigned to any other women or to slave labor. Finally, this magnificent textile is emblematic of Penelope's elite status, wealth, and technical skill. “The scope and size of great wealth is symbolized by Penelope in a dramatic fashion: through her skill at weaving. Penelope uses weaving as a ruse to forestall the suitors but it is clear that she is an expert at the loom in creating physical as well as intellectual products,” concludes Carol Thomas (1988, 261).

Clearly an abundance of textiles is emblematic of elite households; the textiles assure and consolidate the household's wealth in the present, as well as the household's past history. Textiles also illustrate the commitment toward guests and display the connection to the wife's family, which has contributed to the most visual part of the dowry, the textiles. The greater the number of textiles, the greater the wealth that is signified. The abundance of clothes equals elite life, as demonstrated by the royal family on the island of the Phaeacians for whom: “the feast, the lyre, and

dances are always close to our hearts, and changes of clothes, hot baths and siestas” (*Od.* 8.248). It is worth noting that the ability to change clothes and the luxury of having more than one set of clothes convey the Homeric notion of an ideal life. This also explains why the Trojan women are Τρώαδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους, “Trojan women with trailing robes” (*Il.* 6.442), illustrating the abundance of cloth in their clothing.

Thomas (1988, 262–263) also sees weaving as both an exceptional skill and a sign of elite status and prosperity:

. . . the possession of goods was the means to and mark of status, that is, exceptional position. Just so, the skill of weaving was needed only in exceptional households. In the list of weavers of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Penelope is joined by Helen, Andromache, Calypso and the nymphs. This is no demeaning ability; in fact, it belongs to the mighty not the lowly of society. These women are able to weave and create woven raiments that often are stored as treasures such as the Phaeacian gifts to Odysseus surely were. Of course, some weaving was directed at production of practical items, such as the shroud for Laertes. However, raiments could be stored, “impractically” on the shelves in chambers to be given in gift exchange at a later point in time.

Here it is clear that Thomas sees weaving as a particular skill for elite women producing fabrics and textiles of exceptional value, which could be used in gift exchange and which would generally increase the status of the household. The value of weaving, according to Thomas, is thus not so much to produce the day-to-day, practical, and yet essential items for a household but to produce valuable items in the sense of a lasting investment

with an internationally recognized exchange value. It is, however, rather unlikely that the skill of weaving was needed only in exceptional households. This ability was probably practiced in every household where the constant need for bedding, clothing, sacks, and coverings had to be met.

Weaving and textile manufacture in general are very time consuming and require organized and constant labor and numerous craft workers. This is evident in the A series of Linear B tablets, recording hundreds of women and children who were assigned to textile work groups (Killen 1984; Nosch 2001, 2003). Despite the difference in scale between Mycenaean and Homeric societies, it is clear that the basic length of time taken to produce a given textile was the same in the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. It is also reasonable to assume that female labor, cheap but skilled, was required in the Early Iron Age in order to meet the demand for textiles—a requirement that in elite households went well beyond the capacities of the mistress of the house alone. She would need permanent slave and child labor to clothe the household members well and furnish the house elegantly. The labor force could come from captive slaves from wars. Indeed, Hector regrets that if the Trojans lose the war, Andromache will be

forced to go to Argos as a slave and weave for another woman (*Il.* 6.456):

καί κεν ἐν Ἄργει ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἰστὸν ὑφαίνοις
Then perhaps in Argos will you ply the loom at
another woman's bidding

However, textiles conveyed other messages as well. Dyes, colors, and patterns testified to the long-distance networks in which an elite Homeric family acted and the available resources at its disposal:

Clothes are not only the mark of economic power monopolized by women, but they also indicate international relations with other families or women in other cities and countries. Thus the connection between cities and clothing is an extremely important point and one of the recurrent themes in Sappho. This theme is not only a sign of internationalism, but masculine texts and captions consider this connection like a sort of inter-female language that men do not understand. (Steinrück 2003, 37–38, translated from the original French)

Textiles—and also the women who were the producers of textiles, as observed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1976)—were exchanged within international networks between groups. The Homeric epics demonstrate how the circulation of objects, textiles in particular, played an important role in the process of social valorization in Early Iron Age societies.

Discussion and Conclusion

With this knowledge of linguistic and technological links between weaving, plotting, playing music, and sewing, it is worth reviewing the extent to which such connections can be seen in iconographical evidence as well. It is also important to discern when these fields became associated with each other in the first place. Textile technology and its language are the same in the Bronze Age as in the Iron Age (Desrosiers 2010; Michel and Nosch, eds., 2010), although the nature of the documentation, such as palace lists and inventories, does not allow us to investigate Mycenaean metaphors. But Aegean Bronze Age iconography, as for example on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus, shows the similarities between looms and musical instruments. Unfortunately, despite the rich documentation of Aegean texts and images, we still cannot hear their music and poetry, hear the sweet-sounding loom,

feel and touch the fabrics, or see the exquisite tapestry weaves. However, this does not mean that they did not exist. We know that the Aegean population had the technology for weaving and playing music. In fact, Bronze Age iconography strongly suggests the existence of an epic universe that has come down to us in the form of the Homeric poems (Morris 1989). Furthermore, the analysis of the various Greek poetic traditions of the first millennium B.C. suggests there are common origins dating back to the Late Bronze Age (West 1973). On the basis of the widespread use of certain phrases concerning fame and pride, along with the joint concept of weaving and composing, some scholars have suggested a continued Indo-European epic tradition (Schmitt 1967; West 1973; 2007, 35–38). Gregory Nagy sees strong connections between the weaving of fabrics and the construction of epics

and suggests that the festival of the *Panathenaia* was an occasion in which weaving and the reciting of Homer met. Every four years, Athens hosted the ritual in which the climax combined the presentation of a peplos to Athena and the performance of the Homeric epic (Nagy 2002). The goddess Athena indeed incorporated epic fame and the craft of weaving: Martin P. Nilsson, in his study of Athena, concludes:

As a city goddess, she guarded over all the occupations of the populace, not so much of agriculture, which was already richly provided with patron deities, but more often of those that had arrived with a more advanced culture and which therefore had to find their own divine patrons, i.e., the arts and crafts. Moreover, since she was a woman, it was only natural that she especially patronized female craftsmanship. (Nilsson 1921, 20, translated from the original German)

It seems likely that the epic tradition of diligent female heroines singing before a loom is not only a mundane reflection of an Iron Age woman's daily life but also stems from an ancient narrative universe in which women designed and described their destiny through weaving.

There are several etymological connections in Greek between the verbs for weaving, sewing, and

the verbs' secondary senses of plotting and devising. In other languages, similar parallels could be put forward, but a comprehensive analysis of all such elements would be impossible within the constraints of the present investigation. Traces today can be seen in "text" and "textile," the etymology of "text" being Latin, *textus*, meaning "that which is woven."

Shelmerdine's emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the earliest stage of Greek history has guided this survey. It seems to me that we can see the interweaving of women, plotting, music, and textiles most clearly in two specific areas: language and technology. The lyre and the hand loom are so similar in their construction that we sometimes fail to see the difference. Textile production and lyre playing seem to be reconcilable activities. The strong connection between music, narrating, singing, sewing, and weaving in European languages suggests that the cluster belongs to a common ancient pool of metaphors and maxims, one which is still very much alive and productive today despite our modern distance from any textile crafts. It is thus tempting to suggest that weaving, story telling, sewing, and singing belong to this series of common metaphors shared by the Indo-European languages.

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