DRESS TO TRANSGRESS: CROSS-DRESSING AS CHARACTERIZATION IN ROMAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
Dress to Transgress: Cross-Dressing as Characterization in Roman Literature

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My dissertation contrasts the ideal and transgressive dress of Roman women as understood within literary texts. Since much scholarship has focused on ideal dress of women, I begin with a discussion of these ideal garments as they align with ancient ideas of morality. I incorporate fashion theory into a discussion of ancient dress to draw a connection between physicality of garments and ancient gender roles.

After two chapters on ideal dress, this dissertation then focuses on dress considered transgressive by male authors. The fourth chapter discusses women’s dress as it becomes transgressive when adopted by men that were labeled *effeminati*. The remaining three chapters focus on feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing. In these are instances where Roman women were dressed in masculine clothing by authors.

This project contributes to Roman literary and gender studies because it elucidates how cross-dressing women comment upon female agency and the limitations of such as granted by male authors. It divides instances of female transvestism into different contexts associated with marital status, military dress, and ritual. Using a mosaicist approach, I provide a close reading of sources on women’s clothing in genres ranging
from satire to historical texts, in a period spanning from the second century BCE to the late second century CE. I then explain the ancient attitudes towards dress through an examination of the text’s genre and context of the clothing description.

The findings of this research illustrate how authors use clothing descriptions to characterize the behavior and morality of women, whether to force dress to match behavior, or condemn behavior that did not align with perceived expectations of dress. I argue that this form of gendered cross-dressing allowed ancient authors to create foils to male characters whose behavior was also considered unsuitable for their gender. This examination of male authors shaping perceptions of ancient women is important to scholarship in the fields of Classics, as well as to discussions of representation and men “creating” women within modern media. Through garment descriptions we gain a better insight into how gender roles for men and women could be visually represented and socially enforced.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is centered on the ideal clothing of Roman women and deviation from this ideal through some form of cross-dressing. It examines the dress of women in literary texts, the fabrics and colors of women’s clothing, and cases of cross-dressing women. It also analyzes dress and its intersection with notions of status, sexual desirability, gender, punishment, and religious practice. After juxtaposing evidence of ideal dress for women with accounts of their nonconformity to this ideal, we are able to get closer to the motivations behind the clothing worn and depicted in our material and literary evidence. Knowledge of female dress considered deviant will also help us understand the symbolism and motivations behind clothing choices of men and women that were not considered transgressive.

While there are several surveys on women’s clothing in Rome,1 and brief discussions on women dressing (or desiring to dress) as men,2 there has yet to be a book-length study on feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing and the reasons for it.3 With my proposed study, I focus on the transgressive dress of women by looking first at their ideal clothing.4 Along with the study of the garments themselves, I look at the

1 The first studies to spark interest in women’s clothing are Wilson (1938) and Sebesta and Bonfante, eds. (1994); a general, yet thorough, introduction to the field of Roman clothing is Croom (2000); the first monograph focused on female clothing is Olson (2008). While Olson’s work gives a comprehensive look at typical female dress and adornment in Rome, her discussions on women who do not conform to ideals of dress is largely restricted to prostitutes wearing togas. This is the larger focus of her article, Olson (2002), where she compares the dress of a matron and a prostitute.
2 There is mention of female cross-dressing in Raval (2002); a section on women desiring to cross-dress is in Debrohun (2003); another chapter with literary cross-dressing is Xinyue (2017).
3 In comparison, discussions of masculine-to-feminine gendered cross-dressing are found much more in both modern discourse on cross-dressing and in classical scholarship. It appears, to list just a few examples, in Campanile, Carfà-Uhink, and Facella, eds. (2017); Gold (2003); Cyrino (1998); Lindheim (1998); Lei Tao (1995); Loraux (1990) and Delcourt (1961).
4 I only give an outline of ideal women’s clothing, since there already exists a large number of sources on the topic (see footnote 1 and bibliography for the major sources).
fabrics and dyes used, and where these come from. The importation of fabrics and large cost of dyed garments are key to many ancient complaints that female adornment draws wealth away from the Empire. Following a discussion of the semiotics of dress, I then examine how women’s ideal garments were adapted by men. Such examination reinforces a close connection between clothing and morality. I then look at our evidence for women whose dress deviated from the ideal for reasons of punishment (for the adulteress), advertisement (of the sex worker), authority (for women rulers), practicality (for warriors), or occasion (for religious ritual). Throughout, I apply several theoretical frameworks concerning fashion, gender, and the body, such as Butler’s theory of performativity and Entwistle’s notion that dress is an embodied practice. Using these theoretical frameworks will lead to several conclusions, one being that the ideal clothing of Roman women was physically and sometimes mentally restrictive. Transgressive dress, on the other hand, could in some cases lead to freedom of movement and thought.

**Terminology**

Because this dissertation focuses specifically on women dressing in garments typically associated with men, it is first important to define the terms related to dressing the body. Dress can be defined as a form of covering up the body while simultaneously creating meaning and identity for the clothed individual. Fashion theorists Joanne Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins defines dress as “an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings.” This definition includes accessories along with garments, and assumes interactions between people in order for dress to be interpreted. Clothing does more than just offer

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warmth and protection from the cold: its role is to package the body for public presentation and interpretation. Dress is an intimate act, where a person makes deliberate choices in preparing their body for the social world and its understanding of gender.

In such study it is also crucial to distinguish between the terms sex and gender, since the two are often confused. Sex here refers to biological categories, male, female, and intersex. It is a category assigned at birth, but medical procedures can now alter a person’s sexual presentation. Gender is closely related to sex as it is a culturally and socially defined presentation of sex that is imposed on a body within any given context. Gender is not a fixed category, and its interpretation depends upon the social and cultural norms of each specific society. As Newman explains, gender “precedes and is what constructs the meaning given to both sexual or “bodily” differences and the social experiences of these differences.” In other words, gender creates the social interpretation of the biological. Clothing is an important signal of gender and can either confirm or confuse perceptions of a person’s sex. When we wear clothing we express our gender, leading sometimes to confusion when sex and gender do not neatly coincide with our choice of dress.

It is this confusion of perceptions that I am interested in: when dress does not align with perceived sex, causing a rift between the two categories and confusion or

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7 Entwistle (2000b) 7. Entwistle is especially concerned with the link between fashion and the body, see also Entwistle (2000a) 323-347.
9 See Butler (1990) 7-13 for a discussion of culture restricting gender, sex, and sexuality. See also Alsop et al. (2002) 94-113.
11 For a clear and concise discussion of the terms gender, sex, and sexuality: Ormand (2009).
discomfort for the viewer. This rift occurs with cross-dressing or transvestism. Cross-dressing is the use of clothing to disrupt gender boundaries that connect gender to perceived sex. As Garber writes, someone who cross-dresses is within a space of possibility, neither male nor female but a disturbance to the gender binary. I believe, however, that in the ancient world, the function of cross-dressing is often to enforce the gender binary that is so strictly delineated. However, as Cornwall writes, with terminology such as ‘cross-dressing,’ ‘masculinity,’ or ‘femininity,’ there is often an implied idea of the gender binary. In my discussion of ancient cross-dressing, I elucidate instances where clothing crosses perceived lines of acceptability for ancient writers. By using such terms I do not am to reinforce a modern binary. I instead use them to understand ideas of how gender was conceptualized in the ancient world. To fully understand the significance of dress in Rome, I extend the term cross-dressing to encompass those whose dress is not only inappropriate for their sex, but also their social status. Roman society had only few written laws on clothing that we are aware of, but there were insignia and clothing restricted to people of a certain social status. Like women who crossed gender boundaries, people crossing such boundaries of status-specific dress were often condemned by authors.

Although cross-dressing is closely related to the term transvestism, recent sociological and gender theorists distinguish the term transvestite from cross-dresser in

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12 This discomfort is discussed in Butler (1988) 527.
15 We have no surviving laws on clothing, but there are some mentions of clothing in the Digest: 34.2.23.2 describes different types of clothing that women wear and men cannot wear without censure, 34.2.25.10 lists women’s adornment and its purpose in making a woman more attractive, 47.10.15.15 describes different punishments for harassing a matron in the clothing of an enslaved woman or sew worker; Suet. Aug. 40 recounts that Augustus required all men in the forum and its neighborhood to wear a toga. For clothing insignia related to different statuses, see Reinhold (1971) and Olson (2002).
that the former often desires to alter their gender presentation, and sometimes even derives pleasure from doing so.\textsuperscript{16} Clothing choices of both must be treated separately from notions of sex and sexuality: a person can cross-dress, but this does not alter their sex or sexual orientation. However, many ancient authors do not make this same distinction, attributing behavior that crossed gender boundaries to wearers of clothing that did so. This then establishes a cultural norm of behaviors and clothing appropriate to different gender.

I avoid the term transvestite for several reasons. First, I do not use the term because of its modern fetishistic associations. This does not appear in our sources from the ancient world, although Dio’s account of Elagabalus comes very close, since we are told he desired to wear women’s clothing and undergo a sex change.\textsuperscript{17} The term transvestite in modern fashion theory is also reserved for men because women can easily wear male clothing, and often do so without the same reproach or feelings of arousal.\textsuperscript{18} Women in the ancient world were not able to wear men’s clothing as easily as modern women, but there are still no accounts of women who were aroused through their masculine attire. The term ‘transvestite’ thus does not accurately represent any of the women that will be the focus of this project, and I avoid such labeling for people who had little agency over descriptions of their clothed body in literature. Since literary scholarship often uses the terms cross-dressing and transvestism interchangeably, I sometimes use the term transvestism to remain consistent with previous scholarship in


\textsuperscript{17}Cass. Dio 80. Of course, this account should be treated as unsubstantiated detail rather than motivations indicated by the emperor himself.

\textsuperscript{18}Woodhouse (1989) 18.
using the literal definition of “changing clothing” that derives from the word’s Latin roots.

Using cross-dressing and transvestism in this sense allows for a broader interpretation of switching clothing; it can simply refer to women who take on the insignia of men without desiring to pass as one. This type of cross-dressing is relevant to women I discuss such as those dressed in armor: they do not necessarily wear clothing considered masculine, but they take up symbols of masculine virility. Cross-dressing can also refer to women whose clothing does not reflect their status, such as Tacitus’s description of the empress Messalina wielding the thyrsus of a maenad. Within the terms cross-dressing and transvestism, there is also the category of women warriors such as the Amazons, who wear armor more for its practicality in battle than because of its associations with men and masculinity.

Methodology

This dissertation requires proficiency in reading many genres of Latin literature in order to create a personal archive on women’s dress. I gather sources on women’s clothing from literary evidence across genres, employing what Olson calls the mosaicist approach. Due to a scarcity of evidence, the mosaicist approach enables me to recognize patterns that appear in sources on dress, perceive developments that occur in attitudes towards certain garments, and avoid biases present when using single genres as evidence.

In order to avoid the disadvantages of this approach, I close read and critique each source. First, I read my sources in their original language, whether in Latin or Ancient

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Greek. In my close reading of each text, I pay special attention to descriptions of the
dressed female body, taking note not only of the garments that are named, but also the
descriptions of the clothing, the woman wearing it, and her function within the narrative.
I then give context for each source and acknowledge their limitations as pieces of
historical evidence, critiquing them through an understanding of genre and context. Even
if literary accounts of cross-dressing women do not represent historical occurrences of
transvestism, I use these accounts to determine the causes for such representations, and
the implications these depictions have on male expectations of women.

**Need for and Significance of Study**

This study aims to fill the gap in scholarship on women cross-dressing in Rome.
Numerous scholars have written about ancient men who cross-dress in different contexts,
such as in the contexts of drama, rites of passage ceremonies, mythological accounts, and
accounts of emperors who were said to cross-dress. These studies largely focus on
Greek accounts where cross-dressing occurs, but there are also references to Roman men
who dress as women. Accounts of women who cross-dress are rarer still in antiquity, and
are rarely discussed in scholarship on ancient cross-dressing. My study, unlike previous
work on ancient cross-dressing, focuses on women who wear clothing that was typically
reserved for men. Most existing case studies are short articles or chapters on one instance
of such occurrence in the ancient world. I examine several instances of cross-dressing

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20 For general sources on male cross-dressing: Davies and Llewellyn-Jones (2017) 90-92, eds. Campanile,
Carlà-Uhink, and Facella (2017); Bullough and Bullough (1993); for sources on cross-dressing in drama:
Gold (2003); Zeitlin (1996); Delcourt (1961); for mythological cross-dressing: Cyrino (1998); Lindheim
21 Studies that include any mention of female cross-dressing include: Raggi (2016), Xinyue (2016),
Debrohun (2003), Olson (2002), Raval (2002), Wheeler (1997), Bullough and Bullough (1993), and
Delcourt (1961).
women in order to detail the situations and causes of why women dressed as men in Rome, and to determine how their clothing exchange differs from that of men.

Through this study, I will be able to give a more detailed account of women’s dress than have previous scholars. I do so by looking at women’s dress in relation to their status, morality, and piety. Descriptions of female rulers, women in armor, and women in togas, are colored by notions of ideal dress for the respectable Roman woman. Understanding descriptions of deviant women will give us a fuller knowledge of clothing in Rome. Current scholarship on female clothing focuses on the dress of the matrona and possible dress of the sex worker.²² It does not consider clothing of other deviant women and instances of cross-dressing. Sebesta and Croom look more generally at the clothing of Roman women and the basics of what they likely wore. Olson’s account is a more in-depth look at the dress of Roman women and its intersection with sexuality, status, and power. She and Dixon focus their discussion of transgressive women’s dress on the adulteress and sex worker.²³ There is still need for a discussion of women’s clothing that encompasses more instances of dress that deviated from the ideal.

Current scholarship on cross-dressing women is also scarce, particularly in comparison to other instances of cross-dressing in the ancient world. Delcourt provides one of the earliest discussions on cross-dressing women in antiquity by looking at cross-dressing saints. Her monograph Hermaphrodite focuses on the intersex god Hermaphroditus/Hermaphrodite, and other masculine figures that cross-dress, with few mentions throughout of women who do the same. Raval looks at cross-dressing in Ovid as a way of explaining why masculine-to-feminine occurrences of it were more common.

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²² I say ‘possible’ because there is much debate surrounding the clothing of prostitutes, see McGinn (2014) and (1998), Strong (2016), and Olson (2008).
in Rome than the reverse. To explain this phenomenon, she writes that masculinity is provisional and constantly needs to be achieved and affirmed. Debrohun similarly examines cross-dressing within the work of a single author. She looks at two women desiring armor in Propertius book 4 as the inversion of an *exclusus amator*, trapped inside but desiring to get out. Most recent is the work of Xinyue, who studies the metaphorical dressing of Clodia alongside the representation of Dido as a *bellatrix*. Although each of these treatments of cross-dressing women provide helpful accounts of specific instances, I hope to explore these different occurrences as a group, along with other mentions of transgressive dress. Doing so will give a fuller and more complex picture of when, why, and how women are presented in clothing unsuitable for their gender.

Previous scholarship related to this proposed study also makes little use of scholarship by fashion theorists on why we wear clothes and what clothing can signify. Gold and Raval are the only two treatments of cross-dressing in Rome that incorporate theoretical work in their studies, both using the writings of Butler and Garber. My study relies on Butler’s theory of performativity and Garber’s ideas of the cross-dresser, as well as the writings of Woodhouse, Roach and Eicher, Rouse, Mauss, and Entwistle. Garber notes that cross-dressers do not fall into either category of male or female: rather than subvert the gender binary in our ancient sources, they serve to reinforce it. Woodhouse provides a clear distinction between the cross-dresser and transvestite, a distinction that Garber fails to draw. When looking at the ancient cross-dresser, it is important not to confuse the two terms: one links eroticism to dress (as discussed earlier) while the other

term is neutral, encompassing multiple meanings. Roach and Eicher look at the different meanings communicated by personal adornment, an approach that is particularly useful when looking at women’s clothing in the ancient world, although one must remember the cultural differences when applying modern theory to ancient sources. Rouse rejects the idea that people wear clothes because of modesty, suggesting that men and women wear clothing that will provoke interest from those they are attracted to. Mauss describes techniques of the body, which are actions and movements that are culturally specific and learned. Entwistle’s account of the role and function of fashion as a bodily practice is also important to my study since she examines the role of dress in the creation and interpretation of gender. When a Roman woman dresses as a man or takes on insignia that are not suited for her status, she creates her own interpretation of gender that can be received in different ways.

In short, there is need for a comprehensive study on Roman dress that looks at the fabrics and form of traditional women’s garments, alongside accounts where women are not dressed as they should be for their gender or status. This study will be a thorough look at women’s clothing and cross-dressers, relying heavily on fashion and gender theory.

Limitations

One of the major issues with writing a dissertation on clothing in the ancient world is the fact that there are so few surviving textiles. We have few garments that survive from provinces such as Egypt, but many of these are from the later Empire (around 4th century CE). During this time, the influx of travel leads to more diverse garments appearing in Rome. Since I necessarily look largely at the clothing of women as
represented in art and literature, some of my evidence does not line up with these surviving garments. It is thus necessary that I stress my dissertation is an examination of clothing from written and visual sources, rather than from material culture.\textsuperscript{27}

The next limitation that I face comes with examining the visual evidence for clothing, which I do briefly in chapter one. Since surviving images of women are often of deities or are commemorations of elite women, the clothing portrayed will not necessarily represent what most women of the time wore. The clothing chosen for a statue or other image of a clothed female body will serve to represent symbolically first the respectability and status of the woman pictured and only secondarily indicate possible drapery or clothing that was actually worn at the time. These images are still useful, however, in showing how the ideal body would be covered up. Moreover, there are times when it is difficult to determine a woman’s social status, such as when we see images of a woman naked and/or in a scene of intercourse.\textsuperscript{28} Nudity was oftentimes used in funerary portraits as a divine costume for an elite woman, and certain objects accompanying a woman on a tomb can indicate either respectable status or the woman’s profession as a sex worker.\textsuperscript{29} This difficulty will be mitigated by a focus more on the clothed body and the status revealed by clothing, rather than examining the status of nude figures.

Drapery can also be exaggerated and unreflective of fabrics that were used—here I refer specifically to statues whose drapery clings to the body in ways that commonly used fabrics (such as wool) would not. As a result, we see images of women whose body

\textsuperscript{27} The idea that clothing can be divided into these different categories appears in Barthes (1990). He divides garments into three types: image-clothing, written clothing, and real clothing.

\textsuperscript{28} Strong (2016) 118-141 devotes a chapter to this difficulty: “Can you know a Meretrix when you see one?”

\textsuperscript{29} For the idea of nudity as a costume, see D’Ambra (1996). Strong (2016) 139-140 discusses this ambiguity particularly in the tomb of Ulpia Epigone.
is revealed much more than was deemed acceptable for the Roman *matrona*.\(^{30}\) For the modern viewer it can be difficult to determine the status indicated by the clothing (or lack of clothing) in an ancient image. Images can thus only provide a limited view of clothing worn in Rome; I use them instead to determine what clothing an ideal Roman woman would wear and how image-clothing can portray the morality and respectability of its wearer.

In determining what clothing women wore, evidence of written clothing provides a large, yet in some ways problematic, body of evidence. Since there are no sumptuary laws on dress from this period, or any legal sources documenting acceptable clothing for different genders and statuses, much evidence on clothing comes from male authors describing fictional women.\(^{31}\) Even descriptions of historical women are tainted by the authors’ own biases on the woman presented. In ancient sources, clothing reflected status and morality; clothed women provide a range of possibility for female respectability and morality, but not necessarily a range of fashion choices that women were to (or did, in fact) emulate. Mentions of a specific type of clothing could thus be symbolic and not a representation of real clothing worn.

**Delimitations and Scope**

Since Roman dress changes over time and place, it is important to set the following parameters for this study. The period I focus on spans from the late Republic, 1\(^{st}\) century BCE, to early Christian authors of the 3\(^{rd}\) century CE. Though spanning a large amount of time, the sources are few enough to allow for a detailed discussion of

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\(^{30}\) Harlow (2012).

\(^{31}\) See Dixon (2001) 3-15 for a discussion of trends in studying literary representations of Roman women, and especially 6-7 on the possibility of multiple realities for women in texts that have a rhetorical function and are written by, for, and about men.
transgressive dress during this period. I start with evidence from the late Republic since it is at this time when we know for certain that women wore clothing distinct from men, and clothing becomes an important signifier of both gender and status.\(^{32}\) Although it may be the case that men’s and women’s garments develop and become distinct before this time, the term *stola* only appears as an item of women’s clothing by mid-first century BCE.\(^{33}\) Likewise, Coan silk was produced as early as the 3rd century BCE, yet it only appears in literature during the time of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians.\(^{34}\) The 1st century BCE also gives us our earliest evidence of transgressive women wearing togas. It is thus the best starting point for a dissertation on transgressive female dress. The 3rd century CE provides a natural end point for this study because it allows for inclusion of many Christian polemicists on Roman dress, but exclude major changes in dress that occur during this period.

I limit the location I study to Italy, since a majority of the authors mentioned describe clothing of respectable and infamous Roman women. However, I do not restrict my evidence solely to Roman women, since I look at Fayum portraits and discuss Amazons and foreign queens. However, most of my evidence is focused on Roman instances of cross-dressing women and episodes of female cross-dressing that are prevalent in the Roman imagination, such as Amazonian women and the myth of Hercules and Omphale. I do not focus on Greek instances of cross-dressing, although there are numerous episodes of men and women wearing the clothing not typically associated with their gender. Some mention of Greek women dressing as men will appear

\(^{32}\) Both Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 342.20 L and Varro, *Ling.* 5.132-133 mention a *ricinium* as an early garment for women that closely resembled the toga, but there is no other mention of it.

\(^{33}\) Wilson (1938) 156.

\(^{34}\) Goldman (2013) 44; Sebesta (1994b) 69.
as parallel examples throughout but will not be subject to the same analysis and interpretation given to Roman examples. Greek examples of cross-dressing women occur for different reasons than Roman examples and would thus distract from my true subject of study. My focus is specifically on Roman women and how their morality is reflected in clothing. I supplement this focus through examining men wearing clothing considered ideal for women in order to show that ideal clothing was specific to context and gender presentation.

In addition to excluding Greek sources from the focus material of this dissertation, I only briefly examine instances of men dressing as women in antiquity. These occurrences are far more prevalent than the opposite, and often happen for different reasons compared to women’s gender cross-dressing. For example, ritualistic masculine-to-feminine cross-dressing seen in Greek sources is scarcely present in Roman literature. Several emperors, such as Augustus, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian, assimilate themselves to goddesses for a number of reasons. The project could not thoroughly cover every instance of masculine-to-feminine cross-dressing as well as focus on the opposite. Both in studies of ancient cross-dressing and discussions of current transvestism, emphasis is placed on masculine-to-feminine clothing exchanges. Rather than adding to this body of literature, I intend to focus on the opposite occurrences, which are less frequent and as a result, rather neglected in scholarship. These few instances of feminine-to-masculine cross-dressing tell us much about gender roles and their reflection in Roman dress.
Chapter Outline

The first chapter is a review of our knowledge on Roman clothing and the nature of our sources. It begins with an examination of the ancient sources on women’s dress, then major scholarly sources written on the subject. Following this section is a review of modern theorists and their contributions to thoughts on clothing and the dressed body. Finally, since the remainder of this dissertation focuses on clothing in literary texts, the first chapter ends with observations on how material culture has contributed to our knowledge of women’s dress.

The second chapter describes the different garments that authors attributed to ideal Roman women, from birth to adulthood. Here I examine the different types of garments worn, alongside discussion of the symbolism behind them. The remainder of this chapter then focus on the practicalities of garments worn. Here I discuss how women’s clothing, particularly for public appearances, could make them uncomfortable and restrict their movements. I use Mauss’s concept of techniques of the body to suggest that like many cultures, Romans must have learned (whether from family or through experience) how to move and gesture when wearing their untailored clothing.

In the third chapter, I discuss mentions of different dye techniques, fabrics, and colors of clothing. Understanding these components of Roman dress informs us of the wearer’s gender and status. I examine Roman literary texts in order to trace the symbolism of each component of dress and the changes in perceptions of dress over my period of study.

I then use the information from chapters two and three to examine how women’s dress is adapted for use by men. In the fourth chapter, I analyze different elements of
men’s dress that are considered feminine and lead to men being labeled as an *effeminatus.*

This chapter pivots my study from ideal dress to transgressive through surveying both the
dress of an *effeminatus* and that of men who were considered cross-dressers. This section
on masculine-to-feminine transvestism, with a discussion of motivations and attitudes
towards it, provides an important reference point for my remaining chapters on women
who were described as wearing men’s garments.

My fifth chapter focuses on instances where the clothing of Roman women
reflects, or is made to reflect, their actual behavior, rather than the behavior expected
from gender norms. This chapter draws connection between dress and marital status,
arguing that the formation or breakdown of a marriage led authors to represent this status
change through clothing.

The sixth chapter covers historical and literary women who are in some way tied
to battle. I look at women who dress themselves in armor or are dressed in armor by men.
I argue that these women were not considered as transgressive in their behavior as
women who wear armor for martial purposes, since it is often their love for a soldier that
motivates their desire to wear armor. In most descriptions of the female warrior, her sex
is emphasized and is the cause of her failure on the battlefield. Despite comparisons to
the goddess Artemis, the mortal warrior is always described in terms of her beauty rather
than her prowess.

The seventh chapter is devoted to gender-crossing dress in religious contexts. In
this chapter, I briefly give mention to cross-dressing in Greek rites and their functions,
before examining the Roman occurrences we have of such rites. These include marriage
rites, sacrifices made to Mutunus Tutunus, and the Compitalia, where cross-dressing is
associated, as is often the case in Greek rites, with a transitional period. After this final chapter is the conclusion, which briefly synthesizes and summarizes the findings of previous chapters and discusses promising paths for further research.
CHAPTER 1: A Study of Women’s Dress in Antiquity: Ancient Sources, Modern Theory, Visual Evidence

“Clothes too, which began in foolishest love of Ornament, what have they not become! Increased Security and pleasurable Heat soon followed: but what of these?”

-Sartor Resartus, Thomas Carlyle

Before examining women’s dress and cross-dressing in Roman literature, it is important first to give a brief summary of our evidence on the clothing of Roman women, starting with ancient texts then shifting toward modern scholarship. After first investigating the ancient texts on clothing, I will discuss previous scholarship on women’s dress, provide an overview of the different theoretical texts that will be relevant to this study, and finally offer a survey understanding of the clothed body in the ancient world. I will close this chapter with an examination of different forms of visual evidence on women’s dress, and explore what these sources can tell us about the clothing of Roman women. By first understanding how we know what we know on Roman dress, we can then better understand how Roman clothing was perceived in ancient literature, and how it has been interpreted by modern scholars. This general understanding of Roman dress provides crucial insight on how and why certain garments, colors, fabrics, and accessories were considered transgressive and deviations from what was acceptable.

Ancient Texts

There are few writings on clothing from antiquity, and even fewer of these works survive for us. Several scattered references to feminine clothing exist in Roman literature.

35 Much of the scholarship mentioned here is also discussed in Lee (2015) 10-32, who focuses on Greek dress and Gherchanoc and Huet (2007) 3-30, who examine both Greek and Roman dress. In this chapter, I focus specifically on the clothing of Roman women and add more recent bibliography to these earlier works. Edmondson and Keith (2009) 1-18 follow a similar format to mine in the introduction to their edition on Roman dress, but their focus is on both men and women’s clothing.
from the writings of Catullus, Ovid, Martial and other writers that we will later discuss. These brief references to dress provide us with much knowledge on female clothing, but it is necessary to be cautious of this information gleaned from literary sources because authors can easily skew information based on the genre of their text, context of the dressed body, and purpose for describing it. The major ancient source discussing different garments of Roman clothing was written by the grammarian Marcus Verrius Flaccus. His lexicography, titled *de Verborum Significatu*, was written during the time of Augustus, and then epitomized by the grammarian Festus in the late second century CE before it was abridged and summarized in the eighth century CE by Paul the Deacon. Festus’s epitome is an important source on dress and transvestism examined in this study.

The first ancient source that we know of focused solely on Roman clothing was written by Suetonius in the second century CE and titled *de Genere Vestium*. The work survives only in quotations, and was a major source for Servius’s commentary on the *Aeneid*. From later in the century we have the writings of Tertullian on different Roman garments. Tertullian was a Christian apologist whose polemical writings on the veil and women’s adornment (*de Velandis Virginibus* and *de Cultu Feminarum*) are the only surviving texts from antiquity that focus solely on the clothing of women. Around this time, the Christian writer Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus* also details the different kinds of adornment and clothing that he deemed acceptable for women he considered chaste and those he considered immoral. The final ancient work on Roman clothing that must be mentioned is the late antique *Etymologies* by Isidore of Seville. Written in the seventh century, Isidore’s *Etymologies* compiles information from earlier sources on

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Roman clothing, and even has a brief discussion dedicated specifically to female garments (19.25).

It is important to note the limitations of these ancient sources. As they are all written by men, their view of women’s dress is removed from the bodily experience of garments. Even further, like the texts of Catullus, Ovid, and Martial, even a lexicography or sourcebook can be motivated by bias or based upon distorted accounts. Christian sources are especially partial since their motivations for describing clothing derive from a strict sense of morality and modesty. These sources are critical of pagan dress and practices, proscribing specific dress to align with their own values.

**Early Scholarship on Ancient Dress**

The field of clothing studies is still relatively young in modern scholarship. Once thought of as a trivial subject of study, the importance of clothing has been recognized by recent scientific studies and popular news outlets.38 Interest in ancient clothing first arose in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when neo-classicism was at its height. During this time, two French publications examine clothing of ancient Greeks and Romans. The first was published by Michel Dandré Bardon in 1722, titled *Costume des anciens peuples, a l’usage des artistes, Les usages religieux, civils, domestiques & militaires des Grecs, des Romains, des Israelites, & des Hébreux, des Egyptiens, des Perses, des Scythes, des Amazones, des Parthes, des Daces, des Sarmates & autres peuples tant orientaux qu’occidentaux &c.* Dandré Bardon’s work is a collection of engravings from ancient sculptures and vases with little explanatory text and no sources listed for the drawings. The next publication, from 1776, was written by André Corneille

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38 Adam and Galinsky’s 2012 publication “Enclothed cognition,” explains the impact of clothing on its wearer and has led to articles in such publications as the New York Times, Forbes, Psychology Today, and Scientific American.
Lens and titled *Le costume; ou, Essai sur les habillements et les usages de plusieurs peuples de l’antiquité, prouvé par les monuments*. Created for a general audience, both of these works sparked interest in ancient clothing, though they have limited academic value for modern studies on dress.

The most popular source produced on ancient clothing during this time was Thomas Hope’s *Costume of the Ancients*. First published in 1809, Hope’s work consisted of 112 drawings of ancient images from his own collection or drawn from observing other collections. A majority of these images were drawn by him and engraved by H. Moses. Since the book was a success, Hope was credited with creating the neo-classical style of dress. Unlike Dandré Bardon, Hope cites the sources for many of his plates, though not all of them. The first edition, however, contains no text. Nevertheless, it was so popular that two nearly identical subsequent editions were published in 1812 and 1875, with each of these later editions dividing the original work into two volumes and expanding to include an introduction and 321 total plates. Hope’s introduction focuses more on Greek than Roman clothing, but his work is still foundational to the study of Roman women’s dress since it popularized the subject of ancient dress in both study and in fashion.

Following Hope’s popularization of Greek and Roman dress, Leone Alexandre Heuzey’s 1922 study *Histoire du costume antique d’après des études sur le modéle vivant* reconstructed ancient garments from vases and sculpture onto contemporary models. While his work focuses on Greek clothing, considering only the toga among the

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41 Tarrant (2001) 172-180 argues that Hope popularized Greek fashion for women of his time but did not popularize Roman fashions. Tarrant posits that this is because the drapery of Roman clothing is more cumbersome and complex than that of Greek garments.
Roman garments, Heuzey’s reconstruction work and details on ancient drapery are still valuable to subsequent writings on women’s dress.

Encyclopedias have also made integral contributions to early studies of ancient dress. The *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*, edited by Charles Victor Daremberg and Edmond Saglio and often referred to as Daremberg and Saglio, has several entries dedicated to items of clothing. This reference work is published in French in the late 19th century. Another major encyclopedia important to clothing studies, published in the early 20th century, is *Das Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*. With entries such as *effeminatus*, *farbe*, *Mode und Tracht*, *Bedeutung*, and *Luxuskritik*, the *RAC* (as it is often cited) provides crucial insights and compilation of sources that have been integral to this study.

**Towards Modern Scholarship on Ancient Dress**

After Hope and Heuzey, the next major writing focused on women’s dress is Wilson’s 1938 monograph titled *The Clothing of the Ancient Romans*. In this monograph, Wilson lays out a typology of Roman clothing and includes a section on both the clothing of the bride and that of other Roman women. Though focused on a broad overview of garments, Wilson’s works continues to be a key source when discussing clothing of the Romans.\(^4^2\) She is also a pioneer in experimental archaeology. Using Johns Hopkins students to model reconstructed garments, Wilson provides a framework for future dress reconstructions.

Writing decades after Wilson, the next scholar to produce major contributions to the study of Roman dress was Larissa Bonfante. Her 1975 monograph *Etruscan Dress*,

\(^4^2\) Wilson’s 1924 monograph *The Roman Toga* is another text crucial to the study of Roman clothing, though focusing instead on male dress and the toga more specifically.
along with its second edition in 2003, is a thorough account of Etruscan clothing and its reflection of social status. Bonfante also details the aspects of Etruscan dress that influenced Roman clothing, making this work crucial to understanding the origin of Roman garments and their meaning as status symbols.

Starting in the 1990s, interest in ancient women’s dress increased even further. In 1992, Birgit Ingrid Scholz wrote Untersuchungen zur Tracht der römischen matrona focused specifically on the garment of the stola. Scholz uses both literary and archaeological evidence to determine the appearance of the stola and its symbolism when worn by a matrona. Her study is valuable to both my discussion of ideal clothing worn by Roman matronae, and the iconography of the femina stolata.

In the year after Scholz’s study, Nicole Boëls-Janssen published La vie religieuse des matrones dans la Rome archaïque, which focuses on women’s clothing in Roman rituals. Boëls-Janssen relies on several earlier literary accounts and pays careful attention to the clothing of the bride and the matrona in ritual, two categories of women that I examine closely in this study.

One of the major publications on different aspects of Roman clothing is the collection of essays edited by Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante in 1994 titled The World of Roman Costume. This volume is the product of a 1988 seminar at the American Academy in Rome titled “The Religious, Social, and Political Significance of Roman Dress.” This seminal collection of essays on Roman clothing is divided into four sections, including sections on Roman garments, clothing within various literary sources, and garment reconstructions. The chapter by Sebesta on the symbolism of Roman women’s clothing, and La Follette’s chapter on the dress of Roman brides, are especially
useful to the study of women’s dress because they establish typologies of clothing and discuss the symbolism behind specific garments. Sebesta’s later studies on women’s clothing in 1997 and 2005 are also key contributions to the field of clothing studies. In the first, she argues that there is a connection between the symbolic significance of women’s dress and the wellbeing of the state as a whole.\footnote{Sebesta (1997) 529-541.} In her 2005 publication on the \textit{toga praetexta}, Sebesta carefully outlines the apotropaic nature of this garment and its role in childhood and rituals. Sebesta’s scholarship, especially in \textit{The World of Roman Costume}, has substantially advanced the field of clothing studies and its understanding of women’s dress, and is a crucial source in my discussion of the different colors and garments that women wore.

Following Sebesta and Bonfante’s publication, there was an increase in studies on different aspects of Roman clothing. Alexandra Croom’s monograph \textit{Roman Clothing and Fashion} is another essential source on the clothing of Roman women. In her typology of garments, she devotes an entire chapter to women’s dress and even looks at the clothing of women in the provinces. Croom does not, however, go into further detail on the significance and meaning behind certain garments, but instead describes garments and their appearance. I employ her findings to give an overview of key garments worn and descriptions of these garments.

\textbf{Semiotics of Dress}

To expand upon Croom’s chapter on dress, Kelly Olson’s work builds upon Croom’s descriptions of Roman clothing and gives further detail on the ability of different garments to reflect status, wealth, and gender. Her chief contribution to the
scholarship of women’s dress is her 2008 monograph *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-presentation and Society*. Olson’s work is the first monograph in English that focuses solely on the clothing of Roman women, and because of this, it is crucial to my study of ideal women’s dress. She uses both literary and artistic evidence to describe the different garments worn and the attitudes towards them expressed by ancient male writers. Along with this publication, Olson has made several significant contributions to the study of women’s dress through her articles on the clothing of the sex worker, Roman undergarments, mourning clothing, and the clothing of young girls.\(^\text{44}\) In each of these articles, Olson uses evidence from ancient sources to understand the attitudes towards clothing and the different meanings behind certain garments.

In the same year that Olson’s monograph on women’s dress was published, Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith edited *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*. This volume is the result of a seminar on Roman clothing that was held in Toronto. The text contains an introduction that gives a useful overview to the field of ancient clothing studies, and the volume includes a section of chapters focused specifically on women’s clothing. These four chapters, by Kelly Olson, Elaine Fantham, Leslie Shumka, and Alison Keith, each look at different elements of women’s garments in various texts and stages of a woman’s life.\(^\text{45}\) Olson’s chapter explores the dress of Roman girls as separate from that of Roman boys, but often similar to garments worn by their mothers. Fantham studies the Roman *vittae*, which are well-attested in literary

\(^{44}\) These articles include: “Matrona and Whore: The Clothing of Women in Roman Antiquity” (2002), “Roman Underwear Revisited” (2003), “*Insignia Lugentium*: Female Mourning Garments in Roman Antiquity” (2007), and “The Appearance of the Young Roman Girl” (2009).

\(^{45}\) These papers include: Kelly Olson’s “The Appearance of the Young Roman Girl,” Elaine Fantham’s “Covering the Head at Rome: Ritual and Gender,” Leslie Shumka’s “Designing Women: The Representation of Women’s Toiletries on Funerary Monuments in Roman Italy,” and Alison Keith’s “Sartorial Elegance and Poetic Finesse in the Sulpician Corpus.”
sources but absent in many artistic media. Shumka discusses the iconography contained within *mundus muliebris* reliefs as a means of self-expression for the deceased. In the last chapter of this section, Keith examines female dress through the poetry of Sulpicia. The focus of each paper is useful to this study as they contribute to our understanding of women’s dress in art, poetry, and ritual contexts.

**Ritual Dress**

Ritual clothing is another branch of clothing studies that has been further explored by scholars. Boels’s article “*Le statut religieux de la Flaminica Dialis*” surveys the clothing of the *flaminica* and the meaning of each piece of dress. Mary Beard also contributes to our knowledge on ritual dress in her examination of the clothing of Vestals in her 1980 article “The Status of Vestal Virgins.” Decades later, Lovén examines both the clothing of Vestals and *flaminicae* in her article on the clothing of priests and priestesses. Karen Klaiber Hersch approaches ritual dress by focusing on the clothing of the Roman bride in her 2010 monograph *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity*. Her insights on the ritual of marriage and its relation to dress and Mutinus Titinus are important throughout this study, since marriage often dictated what was appropriate for women to wear. Scholars have approached the study of Roman ritual dress largely by focusing on the clothing associated with a single ritual or priestess. The exception of this approach is by Vassiliki Panoussi, whose 2019 monograph examines women’s role in ritual as recorded by literary accounts. While she has useful insights on gendered cross-dressing of rites within the *Achilleid*, there is an overall minimal focus on

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46 Beard revised this article in 1995: “Re-reading (Vestal) Virginity.” Several scholars have responded to Beard’s claims on the liminal status of Vestals, including Staples (1998), Martini (2004), and Wildfang (2006).

ritual dress.

Scholarship on clothing during the period of early Christianity is also important for the study of Roman women’s dress. With more ancient evidence on attitudes towards dress written by Christian authors, these sources offer a new lens of understanding the dress of ancient Roman women. In 2011, two influential volumes were published on the topic. One major source on Christian dress, written by Carly Daniel-Hughes, is titled *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection*. Daniel-Hughes examines ritual clothing worn by women and attitudes towards Roman clothing in the writings of Christian authors. Kristi Upson-Saia’s monograph, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority*, discusses the relationship in literature between clothing and its function as a form of characterization. Upson-Saia’s fourth chapter examines cross-dressing saints and their portrayal by different authors. Like Daniel-Hughes, Upson-Saia pays careful attention to attitudes of writers towards certain garments. Her use of fashion theory on Christian dress adds further knowledge to the importance of dress and the body on the creation of status distinctions.

**Sensational Dress**

Aside from contributions to dress studies focused on typologies and semiotics of dress, another set of contributions in the field derives from the sensory experience of dress. By referencing ‘sensational dress,’ I refer to both the physicality of clothing and garments considered sensational or transgressive for various reasons. Several short pieces on the dress of Roman women have greatly expanded our knowledge of material culture and how it must have felt to wear a Roman garment. Glenys Davies’s piece “Gender and Body Language in Roman Art” has greatly influenced the way we think about gendered
movement and the physical positions of sculpture. She argues that sculptures of men are more imposing in stature because they physically take up a lot of space. Statues of women are the opposite: they have submissive body language, with limbs turned inward towards the body and often focused on fiddling with their draped garments. Mary Harlow likewise details the physicality of women’s dress through reconstruction work. In her article, “Dressing to Please Themselves: Clothing Choices for Roman Women,” Harlow discusses the sensation of walking with so many layers of wool, and whether Roman women would want to emulate the fashions present in artwork surrounding them. Lovén later discusses Roman dress and sculpture in her chapter “Roman Art: What Can it Tell us About Dress and Textiles?” These different approaches to clothing studies and material culture have enhanced our knowledge of dress in visual representations and the body’s experience within certain garments.

In addition to these publications above that either describe garments or explain the symbolism behind them, there are several pieces that focus on the status reflected by certain garments. For example, Dixon focuses her chapter on the clothing of the adulteress, arguing that the toga was a metonymy for sex worker rather than required dress for the adulteress. Strong also studies the clothing of sex workers in a chapter of her 2016 monograph Prostitutes and Matrons in the Roman World. Like Dixon, she does not believe that sex workers wore a toga. To assert this, she examines evidence from literature, sarcophagi, and frescoes from Pompeii. Since the Roman toga was a central status symbol for the Roman man, allowing sex workers to wear a toga would alter the

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52 Strong (2016) 118-141.
emblematic meaning of the garment and obscure the connection between clothing and status. My study builds upon these discussions by examining women in togas as a form of cross-dressing regardless of the probable fiction of such accounts.

The most recent contribution to Roman clothing in antiquity shifts to a focus on ‘sensational’ not as concerned primarily with the senses, but instead to a concern with scandalous or transgressive garments. Such focus appears in the volume edited by Domitilla Campanile, Filippo Carlà-Uhink, and Margherita Facella titled *TransAntiquity: Cross-dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World*. This volume, published in 2017, largely concentrates on the different contexts and implications of women’s clothing worn by men, but the chapters of Tommasi and Xinyue look further at women in literature who dress in male clothing. Tommasi studies women in the hagiographic tradition that are praised for dressing as men, but ultimately achieve sainthood as women. Xinyue compares Cicero’s portrayal of Clodia in his *Pro Caelio* to Vergil’s description of Camilla in the *Aeneid*, arguing that both authors reinforce the subordination of women and mock their attempt to pass as men through their failure to successfully perform actions restricted to men. *TransAntiquity* is a significant contribution to the study of Roman women’s dress because, like the pieces by Dixon and Strong (and other scholars writing about women wearing togas), this volume examines exceptional cases of women who do not dress in the idealized clothing seen in frescoes, sarcophagi, and many literary works. My study will contribute to the discussions of these select chapters to create a comprehensive view of women transgressing gender boundaries through dress.

Despite the shift in recent scholarship from a focus on the appearance of clothing

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53 For further discussion of women wearing the toga, implications of such dress, and further scholarship on the topic, see chapter 5.
to a study of its symbolic signifiers, much work still needs to be done. For instance, there has yet to be a comprehensive study of the clothing worn by Roman women in rituals. Furthermore, there has not been a thorough treatment of the different types of women’s dress considered transgressive by ancient writers— an absence in scholarship that this current project will rectify. This study will also rectify the absence of fashion theory from most discussions of ancient dress, thus bringing the body back into discussion of ancient clothing.\textsuperscript{54}

**Fashion Theory**

Fashion theory has transformed into a legitimate field of study since the publication of Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, quoted at the start of this chapter.\textsuperscript{55} Although it was fictional work, *Sartor Resartus* contains many insights on dress that would be expounded in later decades by historians and sociologists. In this section, I will discuss major texts in the field of fashion theory as they are related to the study of cross-dressing Roman women. With these theoretical frameworks in mind, we can then thoroughly examine the portrayals and clothing of ideal and transgressive Roman women in subsequent chapters.

After Carlyle’s sardonic views on dress expressed through the protagonist of his fictional work, the economist Thorstein Veblen’s 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* further developed the field of fashion theory. Even though he is heavily influenced by modern patterns of consumption, he has many useful insights on the fashion styles preferred by wealthy classes. In a chapter specifically devoted to the dress of the leisure

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\textsuperscript{54} With the exception of Upson-Saia (2011), and few minor pieces on dress that incorporate fashion theory but are not mentioned here, such as Gold (2003) and Raval (2002).

\textsuperscript{55} Carter (2003) 2 calls Carlyle’s text the founding work that “prefigures the discourse on dress.”
class, Veblen writes that clothing of people who have wealth is typically spotless, thus suggesting leisure and showing no evidence of manual labor.\textsuperscript{56} In a similar way, Romans of lower classes would either wear wool in various shades of its natural color, or dark colors that were easier to clean and required less maintenance.\textsuperscript{57} Black garments were especially common among both the poor and mourners.\textsuperscript{58} Veblen also writes that expensive clothing which stifled movement was valuable as a means of indicating that its wearer is wealthy, or in the case of some women, that the wearer’s husband could be wealthy.\textsuperscript{59} An inability to move with ease was an indication that the wearer did not perform manual labor. The dress of the \textit{matrona} was likewise restrictive and thus could not be worn by working women. Despite these insights on elite fashions that are worth considering in connection to Roman dress, much of Veblen’s work is too closely aimed towards American consumerism of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century and is now outdated.

In agreement with Carlyle’s statement at the opening of this chapter, Flugel confirmed what he believed to be the purpose of clothing in his 1976 monograph \textit{The Psychology of Clothes}. Flugel’s work on clothing is psychoanalytical and focused on clothing’s sexual significance. According to Flugel, clothing served three main purposes: decoration, modesty, and protection. In his Freudian analysis of dress, he points out that protection was probably not the primary reason behind clothing, since humans had origins in warmer regions and minimal clothing used by indigenous tribes have demonstrated that clothing is not essential in colder climates.\textsuperscript{60} Decoration then, he

\begin{enumerate}
\item Veblen (1899) 170.
\item Cf. Flohr (2013) 83, who writes that there was no connection between textile production and fuller in Italy.
\item Croom (2000) 23, Olson (2004-2005) 91-104 on the use of dark clothing by both people who were poor and mourners.
\item Veblen (1899) 171, 180.
\item Flugel (1930) 16.
\end{enumerate}
asserts, is the primary reason that we wear clothing, as proven, he argues, by the sexual suggestiveness of certain clothing features. This idea of clothing used for decoration and attraction is later developed by Elizabeth Rouse, who argues that modesty was never a reason why men and women wore clothing, and that instead, the reason developed out of the habit of wearing garments. Rouse also writes that men and women wear clothing for different purposes: since men choose partners based on attraction, women’s clothing is sex-conscious. Women, according to Rouse, choose partners based on their ability to provide, so men’s clothing is instead class-conscious. This analysis assumes heterosexuality, and that dress is motivated by finding a partner, when such is not always the case.

For Roman women, I posit that each of these Flugel’s reasons for dress is relevant; women are expected to cover most of their body in public to preserve modesty and protect themselves from male gaze and harassment. Garment choices were also motivated by decoration, demonstrated by the large amount of luxury dyes and fabrics that were imported. By establishing the different purposes of clothing, Flugel paves the way for further research on the different messages communicated by dress.

After Flugel’s work on the purpose of clothing, fashion theory shifted to a focus on how to comprehend the symbolism attached to clothing. To this end, Roland Barthes creates a system of dress in his 1967 work titled The Fashion System. He divides clothing into the categories of image clothing, written clothing, and real clothing. Image clothing refers to images of clothing, such as artistic representations or photographs, while written

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61 Rouse (2007) 122-125
62 Of course, Flugel referred to a protection against the elements, while I refer here to protection from unwanted gaze and potential bodily harm.
63 Barthes (1990) 3-4.
clothing is any written description of garments, and real clothing refers to physical items of clothing. Both image clothing and written clothing are further removed from real clothing, but Barthes believes that image clothing “provides a stencil of a real garment” by sharing both the form and colors of the real garment.\textsuperscript{64} Unfortunately, our evidence from the ancient world is mostly limited to image and written clothing. Even though we have few real garments that survive in their entirety, our limited knowledge of their context makes them inadequate as comprehensive sources on the real clothing worn by women. This scarcity of whole garments is significant since it limits us largely to the study of image and written clothing. This dissertation is largely a study of written clothing, which Barthes would argue is the furthest from real garments. Despite this distancing from physical garments, written clothing is crucial to understanding the anxieties and perceptions that male authors had towards women’s dress and adornment.

Barthes’ structuralist approach to clothing paved the way for Alison Lurie’s study \textit{The Language of Clothes}. In her work, Lurie discusses the semiotics of dress and equates clothing with language through comparisons of dress elements to components of language. Her writing looks at the different political and historical influences on fashion to then recount different meanings behind clothing. She writes that the basic function of clothing is to distinguish between the sexes and thus ensure the survival of our species. This idea has since been refuted as overly simplistic, and the concept of clothing as language has been contested by Grant McCracken, who asserted that clothing is not read in the same linear fashion that we understand language.\textsuperscript{65} Instead, different elements of clothing should be read simultaneously in order to fully grasp the message created and

\textsuperscript{64} Barthes (1990) 4.
displayed by an outfit. Current fashion studies have strayed from the idea of dress as a form of language; however, Lurie’s views have led us to current beliefs of clothing as a means of nonverbal communication, a belief that I rely heavily on when arguing that dress was used as a form of characterization.

At around the same time as Veblen’s work on clothing and consumption, French theorists became interested in phenomenological approaches to dress and the body. The first of these is the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who produced a theory he called “techniques of the body.” This theory refers to the learned or culturally specific movements that can influence one’s ability to wear certain clothing. These movements could be specific to a person’s gender, class, or culture, and are learned either from others in that society or by experience. Mauss describes the importance of the social world to creating habitus, which more precisely than a habit or custom, refers to an ‘acquired ability’ or ‘faculty.’ In other words, the habitus of the body consisted of certain movements that were achieved through learning and practicing.

The next thinker to stress the importance of the body is Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He is the leading philosopher on embodiment and its importance on our perceptions. His work entitled Phenomenology of Perception argues for a primacy of perception, which has several different meanings. It refers to the idea that we first encounter reality through perception, making it the first and foundational activity before others. However, Merleau-Ponty argues, the body is the medium through which we perceive the world. Since it is fixed within space, perceptions are thus limited by the body’s place and time. The body perceives through its specific social context, making it vital to understand a

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66 Mauss (1973) 73.
67 Merleau-Ponty (1945) 83-84.
person’s physical experience in order to evaluate their perceptions. Situated bodily experiences make perception meaningful. When looking at the dress of Roman women, I assert that understanding their experience as clothed beings will bring us towards knowledge of how their clothing impacted the way they perceived their world, and how they were perceived by it.

These concepts of *habitus* and primacy of perception become further developed in the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He adapts the term *habitus* used by Mauss in order to refer to a way of being, influenced by the amount of capital that a person has when they enter different spaces. Bourdieu writes of symbolic capital, which divides into several different types of capital (or assets): social capital that refers to friends and networks, economic capital that refers to wealth, and cultural capital that refers to non-monetary resources influencing social mobility. A person’s *habitus* is based upon the context in which they are socialized in terms of their gender, society, and social status. When entering different spaces, one’s *habitus* directs the manner in which they conduct their behavior. The people of a certain place will then evaluate the newcomer’s behavior based on the customs of that space. Unlike Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu accounts for a change in space, as well as the fixed practices and perceptions that follow a person into different settings. In this system, an individual has more agency through certain choices; for instance, clothing can create different class identities in various settings. In the case of Roman women, clothing can distinctly reflect their status through specific colors and garments worn. Later chapters in this study will discuss cases of women’s dress that are negatively perceived by viewers of this dress and by the writer. The notion of cultural capital, and the importance of a bodied individual influenced by different

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68 Bourdieu (1977) 72-95.
constructs (of gender, status, etc.), is a valuable tool for understanding the complex system of dress in relation to the body and perception.

The importance of the body was ultimately brought to the forefront of dress studies in the writings of Joanne Entwistle. She writes of “dress as an embodied practice” to refer to a theory of fashion that accounts for the body as well as its garments.\textsuperscript{69} Entwistle notes that many previous sociological studies focus on either clothing or the body, without realizing that the two work together to give meaning to each other. According to Entwistle, bodies are given identities and made social through clothing.\textsuperscript{70} Bourdieu previously touched upon this importance of clothing in the creation of cultural capital, but did not fully elaborate on the different means by which dress gives meaning to the experience of the body.\textsuperscript{71} Entwistle’s account of the role and function of fashion as a bodily practice is applicable to the study of ancient clothing because it examines the role of dress together with the body in the creation and interpretation of gender, class, and other markers of identity reflected in garments. For the woman dressed in men’s garments, the body and its clothing project different messages that conflict with what was acceptable within their society. Since, as Entwistle writes, dress is often discussed in terms of morality and thought to reflect morality, subsequent chapters will look at the moral assumptions attached to women whose bodies and clothing convey different messages.\textsuperscript{72}

In addition to the contribution of embodiment theory to modern fashion theory, ideas on performativity have also added to the field of fashion studies. The American

\textsuperscript{69} Entwistle (2000b) 323-347.
\textsuperscript{70} Entwistle (2000a) 7.
\textsuperscript{71} Entwistle (2000a) 50, where the author cites Bourdieu in a discussion of high-quality clothing and the taste of the upper class.
\textsuperscript{72} Entwistle (2000a) 8.
sociologist Erving Goffman was the pioneer in performativity studies with his 1959 publication of *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman created the dramaturgical analysis approach, which describes social interactions as theatrical performances. People can then be considered actors, since they perform their identities during social interactions. In this approach, identity and gender are constructions, and communication occurs through the dressed body.

Goffman’s dramaturgical analysis was a precursor to Judith Butler’s theory of gender and performativity. Although these theories are often conflated, and both discuss performance, Butler looks at gender as an outward construct that must be repeated, whereas Goffman views identity as a performance that can disguise an interior self. To Butler, gender is a performative act that requires iterability. When men or women do not perform their gender correctly and dress in drag, they are punished by their society. Butler’s ideas on the performance of gender are useful in consideration of ancient Romans who were labeled as cross-dressers. These women in men’s dress perform their gender incorrectly based upon their perceived sex. As Butler notes, people can enjoy watching a cross-dresser onstage but feel “fear, rage, even violence” when sitting next to one on the bus. Similarly, cross-dressing in religious contexts and mythological accounts put distance between the reader or observer and the transgression, whereas historical cases of cross-dressing women, which this study largely focuses on, are treated with discomfort and condemnation by authors.

Also crucial to the study of fashion theory are the writings of 20th century

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73 Goffman (1959) 8.
74 Butler (1988) 522, 528.
thinkers Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins (formerly Mary Ellen Roach) and Joanne Eicher. Roach and Eicher’s 1965 edited volume *Dress, Adornment, and the Social Order* consists of many short essays on the intersection between clothing and society. Their volume covers topics such as the origins of dress, dress of the individual, and dress within social organizations. Even though some essays focus specifically on dress in modernity, this volume has some insights on ancient ritual clothing and sumptuary laws. In the introduction of the text, Roach and Eicher define the term “dress” as both an act of covering the body, and as apparel worn by men and women. They add to this definition in their later work *Dress and Identity*, where they define dress as mentioned in the introduction: “an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body.” This definition, which I employ in my study, is gender neutral, free from value judgments (unlike the words adornment and ornament), and can encompass all the sensory aspects of clothing (unlike the terms appearance and apparel). This new definition of dress is an important step towards unbiased and comprehensive distinctions.

Published shortly after *Dress and Identity*, Roach-Higgins and Eicher’s chapter “Definition and Classification of Dress: Implications for Analysis of Gender Roles” focuses on dressing for a specific gender. They argue that families dress their infants in gendered clothing because they are concerned with the child attracting a partner later in life and the continuation of their family line. Children then grow up experimenting with clothing and learning how to dress for certain social situations. Through gendered clothing, the authors write, children begin to internalize their gender roles and thus their

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78 Roach and Eicher (1965) 1.
80 See Lee (2015) 21 for a further discussion of the usefulness of the term “dress.”
part within the social structure. Roach-Higgins and Eicher’s scholarship provides a valuable framework for writing about the clothed body and understanding how gendered clothing has been vital to the socialization of each individual.

Finally, in this study on ancient female cross-dressing, one cannot overlook scholars whose research focuses on transgressive clothing and cross-dressing. Two major scholars on dress and transvestism are Cavallaro and Warwick. Their book *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress, and Body* carefully describes the ability of dress to act both as a creator of boundaries and a destroyer of them. As such, dress can distinguish between the self and other in a society, while also grouping together those that are similarly dressed. In ancient Rome, certain garments distinguished between genders, social classes, and ethnicity. Dress created boundaries and groups, but often these boundaries were destroyed by those whose dress did not reflect their identity.

Throughout this study, I use the term cross-dresser to refer to anyone whose clothing was considered to overstep these boundaries established within their society. In dress scholarship and sociological studies, the term cross-dresser refers more precisely to a person whose clothing does not reflect societal expectations of dress for their sex. Marjorie Garber describes this connection between clothing and gender in her study *Vested Interests*. She writes that those who cross-dress are neither male nor female, but instead a disruption to this binary. In her study on transvestism, Annie Woodhouse provides a clear distinction between the terms cross-dresser and transvestite, a division that Garber fails to draw. It is important not to confuse the two terms, as I noted in the introduction, since transvestism connotes eroticized dress, while cross-dressing is a more

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82 Cavallaro and Warwick (1998) xvii, xxi.
neutral term, encompassing multiple meanings such as wearing items of dress that did not align with one’s perceived identity. This study will primarily use the term “cross-dressing,” but for the sake of variety and consistency with previous literary scholarship, the term transvestism will also appear as purely a technical term deriving from its Latin roots *trans* and *vestes*. I avoid labeling figures as cross-dressers because oftentimes dress as described in texts is used as a characterization and not reflective of any reality. Both Garber and Woodhouse make significant contributions to the study of transgressive clothing, but it is Woodhouse’s attention to semantics that makes her study an especially useful framework for understanding cross-dressing.

Dress studies have come a long way since the influential *Sartor Resartus*. From economic to psychoanalytical, as well as sociological approaches to dress and the body, theoretical works can complement studies of ancient dress through an elucidation of symbolism, performance, and boundaries that can be established by garments.

In order to complete the picture of current sources on Roman clothing and the nature of these sources, the remaining section of this chapter will focus on the different types of archaeological evidence, in addition to the contributions they make to our knowledge of the clothing of Roman women. Starting with textile remains, then looking at the portrayal of women in different material evidence, we can then construct an image of the idealized Roman woman as constructed by ancient sources. Due to the scarcity of surviving materials (textiles in particular), it is important to remember that our knowledge on clothing based upon material culture is limited. Nevertheless, visual items are crucial to our knowledge Roman clothing.84

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Textiles

We are fortunate to have found many textile fragments in the recent years, although their value in this study is limited in several ways. Despite the thousands of ancient textiles discovered thus far, many of these finds are distributed throughout Roman territory and found outside of Italy. These textile fragments cannot tell us exactly what the ideal or historical Roman woman wore, but they do give us an approximation of what fabrics and colors were available. Many of these textiles were found as small scraps, thus making it difficult to picture their original context or if they belong to an article of clothing at all. It is only within dry climates such as Egypt that we have found full garments.

Moreover, the context in which these garments were found often does not reveal who wore the garment and for what occasions it was used. For example, it can be difficult to determine the gender of the wearer when a piece of clothing is found. Evidence from graves can better determine the gender of a garment’s wearer. At the same time, it is possible that textile evidence from funerary contexts is indicative of ceremonial dress rather than customary clothing. Nevertheless, as Lisa Cougle points out, certain grave items indicate that they had been used and mended, making it likely that these items were used before their grave contexts. Cougle also notes that funerary textiles will likely present the ideology of a burying group rather than the buried individual, since the group may bury the deceased in clothing they deemed gender-appropriate, in addition to burying the deceased outside of their community to reflect what was perceived as

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85 Major find spots for textile remains include Mons Claudianus, Quseir al-Qadim, ‘Abu Sha’ar, and Masada. Egypt, and especially Mons Claudianus, are major sources for our textile remains.
87 Cougle (2009) 57.
transgressions.  

Information gleaned from textiles is limited because clothing is a situated bodily practice. The term “situated bodily practice” is used by the sociologist Joanne Entwistle to assert that the body and its surroundings greatly influence dress. While full garments have been excavated, the bodies on which these garments were worn have largely decayed. This means that we can no longer determine how clothing presents and conceals the wearer’s body through different methods of draping. Much experimental archaeology has aimed to rectify this through reproductions of garments and estimates of proportions from statues. Experimental archaeology has been valuable in reminding us of the body’s importance in dress and the impact that dress can have in movement. Certain discoveries have also reminded us of the body’s importance. For example, discoveries of pins reveal to us the manner in which a garment was worn. Not only do pins suggest a means of forming drapery patterns, but these finds also indicate where on the body a garment would be tailored for either the purpose of adornment or ease of movement. When studying either pins or textile fragments, it is important to remember what has been lost over time—that is, the loss of context (the body) requires us to largely conjecture about the fit and folds of a draped garment.

Despite these limitations, much information is gained from the major archaeological sites where textiles are found. One of the most important sites that provides us with textiles from antiquity is the Imperial Roman quarry site of Mons  

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89 Entwistle (2000b) 323-347.
90 For example see Wilson (1938), Goldman (1994), and Morgan (2017) 94-142.
Claudianus in Egypt. This well-preserved dump site has yielded nearly 50,000 textiles that can be dated to the first and third centuries CE. Most of these textiles were made of wool or plant fibers, though some pieces were made of goat hair. At the Mons Claudianus site, three nearly-complete tunics and one complete baby tunic have been found. These tunics are invaluable for the information they tell us on the colors and weaves of tunics. For instance, the large number of white textiles found in the area suggested that the color was widely worn, especially by men, since Mons Claudianus was the site of a garrison. The presence of children’s clothing and shoes found at the site indicate that the military base was not a site that was strictly reserved for men.

Elsewhere in the Empire, different patterns of fabrics were found. Wild writes that in Roman Britain, tartan was found, as well as herringbone twill with a check pattern. He also writes about check fabric found in Vindolanda. Gleba writes that fragments of gold thread were found in Great Britain within a woman’s sarcophagus. These threads and gold textiles were found near the woman's thigh bones, wrists, and ribs, indicating that gold threads might have decorated her clothing. The thread, according to Gleba, was very thin and had an organic core possibly made of silk. In a grave in Italy, there is evidence of textiles made of pure gold on the body of a woman, though this is likely a shroud since a hairnet (reticulum) was the only exclusively female garment that could be entirely of

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91 Scholarship on this site include Jørgensen (2010, 2005), Mannering (2006 and 2000), and Mannering and Jørgensen (2001).
93 Mannering (2000) 283-290. Fragments of 200 tunics and 46 mantles were also found.
95 For a discussion of women at the camps, see chapter six.
97 Gleba (2008) 64.
These finds describe the variations of fabric that are found in different parts of the empire. Gold threads indicate that women’s clothing could be decorated with gold in some way, a detail which is not recorded in literary sources but would likely upset the moralist writers mentioned earlier and discussed further in later parts of this study.

Archeological evidence teaches us much about the appearance and composition of ancient clothing. First, these remains are of real clothing that people wore. While most of our evidence is from the outskirts of the Empire, it must be stressed that textile finds give us a vivid picture of what ancient clothing looked and felt like. Even though the vibrance of original colors may have faded, and fabrics may have thinned, the patterns and colors of these garments indicate the prevalence of undyed wool and clavi. Furthermore, we know that textiles were precious materials because of the numerous textiles found with some sort of mending. About a third of the tunics found at Mons Claudianus have been mended in some way.

Archeological evidence also teaches us how garments were created. Thanks to the work of Granger-Taylor, we now know that garments were constructed in one piece on the loom with often little to no tailoring to fit a specific body. Such was the case even for sleeved garments. The shape of a garment, as well its decorations, were determined while the garment was still on the loom. This then indicates that despite the lack of tailored or fitted clothing, garments were still made with drapery and dimensions targeted towards a specific wearer.

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98 Gleba (2008) 68.
100 Mannering (2006) 12. Granted, the textiles of this site were largely from enslaved and middle-class male laborers, for whom textiles were likely more precious because of their cost.
Mummy Portraits

Mummy portraits, or Fayum mummy portraits, are paintings of busts on wooden planks that were fixed onto Egyptian mummies from the Roman period, from the 1st century BCE to about the 3rd century CE. These paintings, about 900 of which survive, were found along the Nile, many from the necropolis of Fayum. The figures painted are those of men, women, and children that are depicted as wealthy through their adornment. Because of Egypt’s dry climate, these portraits maintain their vibrant colors. Even though these portraits are of Egyptians and are thus evidence of dress from Roman provinces, these portraits are a valuable source of evidence for Roman dress because they demonstrate an adoption of Graeco-Roman culture. In other words, despite their findspot, the garments are Roman items of clothing for the upper classes. As Borg points out, the quintessential Roman garment of the toga, was absent from these portraits. Thus while the garments worn are recognizably Roman, the absence of a toga reminds us that the wearers of these garments are non-citizens.

The Fayum portraits tell us much about the appearance and approximate colors of women’s clothing. They demonstrate that white was a much more common color choice for wealthy men than it was for wealthy women. While men in these portraits wear mostly white tunics, women wear many different hues, with red being the most common (See Images 1 and 2 for examples of a typical man and woman mummy portraits). This finding aligns well with literary sources, in which white clothing is rare for women to

104 Hoesch (2000).
wear.\textsuperscript{109}

These portraits also inform us of the prevalence of \textit{clavi} on both men and women’s clothing.\textsuperscript{110} In many portraits, women’s tunics bear red, green, or even gold \textit{clavi}. \textit{Clavi} on women’s tunics are not attested in literature, whereas men’s \textit{clavi} represented specific distinctions of status.\textsuperscript{111} As Harlow notes, \textit{clavi} are present in textiles, mummy portraits, and wall paintings of both men and women.\textsuperscript{112} Their absence in literature is puzzling, but without images of women that survived in different media and material culture, our image of the female tunic would be incomplete.

\textbf{Frescoes}\textsuperscript{113}

Many frescoes found in Pompeii and Herculaneum are of the clothed female body and can give us a further understanding of women’s dress and perceptions of it.\textsuperscript{114} These frescoes are largely from the first century CE before the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, and were found in public baths, brothels, and private homes. Depicting mythological, pornographic, and portrait images, frescoes are another critical source on the color and appearance of women’s dress.

Women’s representation in frescoes is unique because many of the frescoes discovered were from private homes. Since these images were made for the consumption of a few people in private, rather than visible by many onlookers, frescoes could depict a more personalized image of a woman that contrasts with the heavily clothed honorific

\textsuperscript{109} For literary discussion of references to women wearing white, see chapters 3 and 7.
\textsuperscript{110} For the colors of garments in portraits, see Olson (2017) 20. Cf. Wilson (1938) 152.
\textsuperscript{111} Harlow (2014) 14. See also Jørgensen (2010).
\textsuperscript{112} Harlow (2014) 14. See also Jørgensen (2010).
\textsuperscript{113} For scholarship on frescoes, see Levin-Richardson (2019), Clarke (2007) and (1998), and Guillaud (1990).
\textsuperscript{114} I do not include here discussion of pornographic frescoes, as these are often images of a nude female body rather than the clothed body. For discussion of these frescoes see for example Myerowitz (1992) and Clark (1998).
statues found in public.\textsuperscript{115} Frescoes from homes could have even been commissioned by the materfamilias and include women that she herself could identify with.\textsuperscript{116} There is a possibility that the presentation of painted women, along with their clothing, could have been directly influenced by a Roman woman herself.

The clothing on frescoes, like those on mosaics, can give us a sense of the colors worn by women and of clothing that was in vogue at the time of painting. Since colors on both have faded over time, we only have a limited sense of the exact hues worn. Images 3, 4, and 5 show different examples of the clothing colors possible on frescoes. In each image, women wear light shades such as lavender, light blue, yellow, red, and light green. In image 3, a Pompeiian woman is posed beside her husband with a stylus. She wears a red tunic and palla, without any visible indication of a stola. Red is attested by Scholz and Bartman as a popular color for women’s clothing, suggesting that this image may come close to reality of women’s dress.\textsuperscript{117}

Image 4 from the Villa of the Mysteries shows women clothed to varying degrees- the figure on the far left with a veil on her head is the bride or initiate. She is covered by the most fabric, which is indicated by the many folds of her floor-length tunic. The seated female priestess is nearly the same size as the bride and wears a thin tunic and a cloak draped over her left shoulder. The woman on the right, likely an initiate, carries a tray as offering and wears much less fabric than the bride. She is clothed in a tunic that is less voluminous than the bride’s, and has a purple cloak tied at her waist. The white tunic of the priestess and initiate are fitting since the scene is a religious ritual, and

\textsuperscript{115} Bergman (2018) 144.
\textsuperscript{116} See Clark (1998) 103-107 for the idea that a female viewer of a painting can identify with the painted subject. However, as Clark stresses, frescoes do not directly reflect reality.
white was a common fabric in ritual practice because of its association with cleanliness.\textsuperscript{118}

Despite these distinctions between other images of women and frescoes meant for private consumption, the clothing in frescoes do not wholly replicate reality. This is because many scenes are based upon mythology, with either representations of Greek clothing or a semi-nude figure. For example, in the Aldobrandini wedding fresco (image 5), two divinities have an exposed torso and are only covered by a multi-colored cloak.\textsuperscript{119} Clothing of divinities often held little connection to real clothing worn. The depiction of a bride in white garments and the bride’s covered head reflected reality and would be recognizable to viewers, though the absence of a yellow or orange \textit{flammeum} contradicts literary evidence of bridal garments.\textsuperscript{120}

**Sculpture**

Unlike frescoes in private homes, sculptures were usually created to be seen by the public. Sculptures of the clothed female body give us a sense of how garments looked to Romans in terms of the amount of fabric worn and used to create certain items.\textsuperscript{121} Sculptures also give us an idea of how Roman clothing was draped and how it rested on the body, with details of drapery suggesting the thickness and weight of different fabrics worn.\textsuperscript{122} The three-dimensional portrayal of clothing within sculptures can help us recreate garments, allowing for further understanding of how Roman women may have

\textsuperscript{118} For a connection between white clothing and ritual, see chapter 7.
\textsuperscript{119} For more on this fresco, see Kilpatrick (2002). See also Von Blanckenhagen and Green (1975) 83-98.
\textsuperscript{120} See chapter 2 for further discussion of bridal garments.
\textsuperscript{121} Wilson (1938) 162-163 gives measurements for the recreation of the \textit{stola} and \textit{palla} based on evidence from statues.
\textsuperscript{122} Lindner (2006) 71, for example, points out that the drapery lines on a statue from Frosinone that distinguish the thick \textit{palla} from the lightweight tunic.
felt in their clothing and how they moved when wearing such garments.\textsuperscript{123} They may also reveal what clothing was in style for Roman women, giving a female viewer fashions to emulate both in terms of garments worn and clothing colors.\textsuperscript{124}

Sculptures on sarcophagi are another resource for gazing at ancient images of the clothed body. There are many women portrayed on sarcophagi, often with their full body displayed and wearing artistically draped garments. In image 6, a woman reclines on a sarcophagus lid with the bust of a prominent family member. Her \textit{palla} is draped over her shoulders, but purposefully leaves visible her belted \textit{stola} to indicate her respectability and status. Many sarcophagi contain mythological scenes and thus do not reflect real garments that were worn, since figures are either partially nude or dressed in the Greek \textit{peplos}. Sarcophagi are especially useful in their representation of bridal garments. Most examples of these garments, aside from the Aldobrandini wedding fresco mentioned above, were on sarcophagi. For an example of a wedding scene on a sarcophagus, see image 7, where the bride wears an ankle-length tunic and her bridal veil rests atop her head, while partially revealing the bride’s hairstyle.

Despite much loss of polychromy, recent work has been done to discover traces of color on ancient sculpture.\textsuperscript{125} These traces of color give us some sense of typical clothing colors for women. For example, Bartman writes that the \textit{stola} was either red or purple.\textsuperscript{126} Lindner notes that a sculpture from Frosinone supports this idea, since it shows traces of red on the \textit{palla}. However, in a small sample of polychromy from other sculptures, an

\textsuperscript{123} See also Harlow (2012) 37-45 on using the chador from Iran as a comparison to clothing worn by Roman women.
\textsuperscript{124} Loven (2015) 274-275 writes that images from statues “may have given women without the benefit of full-length mirrors an idea of what the dressed body looked like.”
\textsuperscript{125} Bryns et al. (2017), Østergaard (2008) 40-61.
\textsuperscript{126} Bartman (1999) 41. Scholz (1992) 26 also writes that the \textit{stola} was red.
orangish red color was found on the *palla*, as well as a yellowish color on a *stola*.\textsuperscript{127} There is not yet a systematic grouping of different colors found on the clothing of sculptures, and as Linder notes, the color palette of sculptures was limited largely to primary colors in contrast to the bright garments found on frescoes.\textsuperscript{128}

Despite the knowledge that can be gained from the study of sculpture, there are still many limitations. For example, as Wilson points out, drapery of sculptures is artistic and does not necessarily reflect reality.\textsuperscript{129} Even though it is possible to use sculpted drapery to determine the weight of a fabric, the folds of garments are stylized and do not duplicate real folds of drapery. Additionally, Harlow distinguishes between a public and private wardrobe, since clothing choices for sculptures were limited in comparison to the variety of clothing seen in literature.\textsuperscript{130} Garments on sculptures thus represented a small sample of what could be worn by wealthy women. These sculptures of elite women were often dressed in a lot of fabric to make them appear more authoritative and larger in stature, while also indicating modesty through an avoidance of an unwanted gaze. Since statues are created to be observed, tension between this purpose and the need to display modesty is mitigated by portraying women who fidget while on display. Clothing depicted on sculptures was then part of a public wardrobe of elite women and a symbol of modesty, meant to be interpreted as respectability by viewers, whereas clothing mentioned in literature is often criticized by the author describing it.\textsuperscript{131}

Roman sculptures often cannot inform us of customary dress seen in Rome since

\textsuperscript{127} Lindner (2006) 46n4.  
\textsuperscript{128} Lindner (2006) 46n4.  
\textsuperscript{129} Wilson (1924) 24.  
\textsuperscript{130} Harlow (2014) 13.  
\textsuperscript{131} Davies (2008) 210-211 writes that statues of women wrapped in heavy drapery serve as role models rather than reflections of a specific woman’s ideals. See also Kleiner (2000) 48 on subversive women and empresses dressed in numerous heavy garments to signal their *pudicitia*. 

many statues are copies of a Hellenistic original, mass-produced and distributed with only heads that differ from one another. The major example of these mass-produced sculptures are the large and small Herculaneum women (see images 8 and 9), which were originally produced in late 4th century BCE Greece, and replicated in several parts of the empire to honor local elites. About 200 of these sculpture types are known, with each woman wrapped in a mantle and wearing a long crinkly tunic underneath. The lack of variation in the clothing of these sculpture types remind us that there is only so much we can learn from the clothing of sculptures.

Overall, these carved garments allow us to distinguish between different garments that indicated the gender and social status of its wearer. Even though most women commemorated with sculptures were those of a higher status, heavy fabric that was elegantly draped represented an especially wealthy woman. The elaborate drapery in sculptures of women is reflective of expensive fabrics. For an example of this type of drapery, see image 10, where the woman wears a stola above her tunic, both of which are unbelted. Her posture is open and broad, similar to a male togatus sculpture and to images of Livia, whose feminine garments contrast with her masculine poses. This stance indicates her importance and power. It is the direct opposite of the pudicitia pose.

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132 Trimble (2011) 6-7, 56.
135 Davies (2005) 123.
137 See Kleiner (2000) 51-52 on the contrast between Livia’s clothing and divine hairstyle. See also Lindner (2006) 51 and Bartman (1999) 47 on the masculine gestures and poses of Livia. According to Suetonius (Calig. 23.2), Gaius called Livia a Ulysses in a stola (Ulixem stolatum), which was a reference to her cleverness rather than a criticism of her behavior.
at image 11, where the woman draws her limbs inward. The woman of image 10 is instead fully covered with a lightweight tunic and heavier *palla*, yet drapery clings to her body to emphasize her breasts and torso. The woman in the *pudicitia* pose is not at all eroticized, since her fringed mantle covers her torso and head. In her article on gendered body language, Davies compares the body language of male and female sculptures. She observes that in sculptures of men, their posture reflects power and dominance. Sculptures of women, on the other hand, have more narrow postures and depict women grasping at their garments as if they uncomfortable with their clothing or with being in public. Davies also notes that women of lower status bow their heads or appear smaller. The women in images 10 and 11 display opposite characteristics in body language and interactions with their clothing: the former is at ease and does not appear to hold her garments together, while the latter averts her gaze and keeps her arms close to her covered body. The sculpture type of the latter statue was duplicated many times in Rome, and became what Lindner called an “off the rack” sculpture type often used by private women.

Of course, sculptures of the *pudicitia* type were not strictly indicative of a lower-class woman, since they were a symbol of modesty that women were praised for. A sculpture of this type commemorated a woman and modeled what was considered proper behavior for other women to see. Another type of image that contrasts with the *pudicitia* type is image 12, which is a funerary sculpture of a woman as the goddess Ceres. The woman’s tunic slides off one shoulder and exposes her left breast. Since this is a funerary

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141 Lindner (2006) 50 notes that Livia avoided these statue types, as they were often used in the Republic for funerary sculptures of freedwomen.
image that was likely displayed in a family mausoleum, the figure does not need to be completely covered and to display the same values as public images. Indeed, the purpose of sculptures can vary, and is often reflected in the figure’s clothing. For example, the erotic funerary sculpture of image 12, with clothing that clings to the body as if it is wet, is meant to idealize the body of the woman assimilated to a goddess. D’Ambra points out the balance between modesty and eroticism in female statues, where a public image, such as image 10, can have erotic qualities as a means of emphasizing the subject’s fertility, without overemphasizing its sexuality, as the sculpture in image 12 does.\textsuperscript{142}

Clothing seen on sculptures of Roman women do not signify nearly as many garments as appear in literature, but their depictions of acceptable public and commemorative dress are reflective of expected morality and pudicitia of a woman. Just as the pudicitia type uses her palla to hide her body, the Roman woman is expected to feel uneasy in public and cover her body with voluminous garments.

\textbf{Numismatics}

Although coins are a much smaller medium that previous artistic works mentioned, they are surprisingly detailed in their depictions of dress. Like our remains of sculptures, coins are not able to include fabric colors. Despite this limitation, they are useful in representing draped garments on the body. In image 13, the obverse of a coin portrays a bust of Faustina the Younger wearing what is likely to be a stola because of the v-shaped neckline characteristic of this garment. On the reverse, Venus is holding an apple and has a palla draped over her left arm. It is also possible that the pronounced neckline indicates a stola, though a necklace may be more likely. Since the clothing of

\textsuperscript{142} Lindner (2006) 72, see also D’Ambra (1996) 219-232.
mythological figures did not exactly resemble human clothing, it would also be unusual for her to wear this garment that was reserved for married *matronae*. The drapery of her *palla*, which encircles her right hip and rests on her left arm, leaves her right arm completely free. Her left arm, however, is restricted to a hovering position and cannot move any lower than already shown, or the garment will fall. Coins can then be a source for how garments were draped over the body, and how this drapery could impact movement.

Similar to the sarcophagus of the woman who displays her *stola* prominently at image 6, the garment is also emphasized on many of the female busts on coinage. For examples of this, see the busts of Poppaea Sabina and Domitia at images 14 and 15. The neckline is especially emphasized in image 14 of the tetradrachm minted in Egypt. Here, Poppaea Sabina appears on the reverse, with her torso turned towards the viewer and the garment’s neckline distinctly visible. If this necklace were meant to indicate a *stola*, the close attention given to a Roman garment on an Egyptian coin shows that there was both understanding of its significance, and that there was a desire to imitate the clothing of female busts that appear on Roman coinage. Image 15 is of a bust of Domitia on the obverse of a coin minted in Rome. Her features and hairstyle appear very similar to that of Poppaea, indicating a desire for continuity after the year of four emperors. However, unlike the bust of Poppaea in image 14, only the neckline of Domitia’s garment appears on the coin, revealing how important it was that the empress appear clothed and perceived as modest. Often male busts on coinage do not include clothing (although there are exceptions to this). The inclusion of the v-shaped neckline, whether by chance of the

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143 For earlier examples of the *stola* on Roman coinage, see Sydenham 748, coins of Livia (ex. *RIC I* 43, *RIC I* 46).
angle displayed or to indicate the characteristic neckline of the *stola*, reveals the necessity for ensuring the female body is covered and suggests the *stola*’s importance as a status symbol.

Besides the *stola*, another garment typically worn by women on coinage is the gap-sleeved tunic. This tunic, also called the Ionic *chiton*, could be fastened either by buttons or fabric. It appears on the obverse of a coin of either Acca Laurentia or Diana Nemorensis at image 16.\textsuperscript{144} Here, the tunic is identified by the two circular fastenings connecting the shoulder seams of the garment. The large number of vertical lines coming down from the shoulder seams indicate thinness of the fabric and crinkles of its drapery. The rounded neckline of this image is also an important feature in distinguishing it from the neckline of the *stola*. Garments on coins thus varied, with even minimal details giving hints of drapery and fabric thickness.

Because coins offered little space to represent garments, images of clothing on coins offer only select details. These images reveal how garments could be worn and draped, such as Venus’s *palla* in image 13. In addition, the presence of a v-shaped neckline can indicate whether a woman wears a *stola*, as seen in images 13, 14, and 15. Finally, numerous lines struck on coinage can suggest the thinness of a fabric and a large amount of drapery.

**Epigraphy**

The final category of items that can tell us about women’s dress is epigraphy. Unlike the other types of evidence discussed earlier, epigraphic evidence of clothing would be considered written clothing, meaning that we gain information on garments

\textsuperscript{144} Sydenham believes her to be Acca Larentia, while Crawford thinks she is Diana Nemorensis. Denarius - Sydenham I 148 - Crawford 486/1.
through words rather than physical garments or artistic representations of them. As a form of written clothing, epigraphy does not give us visual information on the colors or patterns of a fabric, and instead demands that a reader interpret a description to construct their own visuals. Epigraphy also does not reveal information on the drapery of garments. However, the presence of certain garments in epigraphical texts can tell us what was said about clothing, as well as reveal which items were especially important to the image of a Roman woman.

The terms *palla* and *stola* appear several times on funerary monuments to women. The word *palla* is attested on four monuments, with the garment described as a long covering reaching the feet of the deceased woman.\(^{145}\) The *stola* appears more frequently in the epigraphic record. Of its twenty appearances, thirteen of these are instances where a woman is specifically labelled as a *femina stolata*.\(^{146}\) For a clear example of the title *femina stolata* on a tombstone, see image 17. Labeling a woman as one who wears a *stola* indicates that she was in a *iustum matrimonium* and thus a proper Roman *matrona*. The label was such a common indication of a woman’s status that it was sometimes abbreviated to just the term *stolata*. On one epitaph, the woman’s status as a *matrona* was emphasized through an alteration of the title to the form *matrona stolata*.\(^{147}\) With this title on the epitaph, the garment plays an important role in identifying the free and marital status of the deceased woman. I use the term ‘free’ rather than ‘freeborn’ since liberate women were allowed to wear the *stola* starting in the late Republic. Like the visible presence of the garment on Roman coinage, the *stola* is a crucial aspect to the identity of

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\(^{145}\) CIL 08, 15539; CIL 06, 10969; ICUR-02, 04120; Pais 00732.

\(^{146}\) See Holtheide (1980) 128-130 for discussion of this title.

\(^{147}\) AE 1956, 00077.
a Roman woman. Its frequent presence on epitaphs stresses its importance in understanding the role of the garment in fashioning the public image of Roman women.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have discussed the many ways that we have acquired our current knowledge on the topic of women’s dress, starting from the ancient sources that have either survived, been lost to us, or epitomized. I then focused on theoretical works concerning clothing and the body, as well as what these texts can contribute to this study and our knowledge on women’s dress in Rome. Finally, I turned towards material culture in the remains of this chapter. I hope to have shown here that despite what seems to be minimal evidence from literature and material culture, there is a wealth of ancient evidence on women’s dress. Focusing on literary evidence alongside modern scholarship and theoretical works related to ancient dress, the following chapters will piece together ancient attitudes towards women’s dress in alignment with behavior. By dividing garments into what was considered ideal and transgressive, and the different contexts of each, I will demonstrate that dress was used to mirror behavior and construct women that were foils to men considered effeminate.
CHAPTER 2: Garments and Movement of the Ideal Roman Woman

“munditiae et ornatus et cultus, haec feminarum insignia sunt, his gaudent et gloriantur”

-Livy 34.7.9

The quote above was taken from Livy’s account of the debate on the repeal of the lex Oppia. This law, enacted in 215 BCE soon after the Roman loss at Cannae in the second Punic War, was a sumptuary law that restricted both women’s wealth and their displays of it.148 Livy recounts the debate on the law’s repeal in 195 BCE, with Cato the Elder arguing for the law and Lucius Valerius Flaccus here speaking for its repeal. Livy, through Valerius Flaccus, stresses the importance of elegance, adornment, and refinement in the lives of Roman women. Unlike men, who are able to take delight and honors from participation in civic life, Roman women (especially during the time of the Republic) were largely kept away from public life. Since they could not attain the same titles or insignia granted to men, Lucius Valerius argues that refinement of appearance takes on a new importance in their lives.149

Cultivation and adornment together form what Romans called mundus muliebris. The Digest defines this term as that which makes a woman more elegant.150 This notion of a ‘woman’s sphere’ then places a gender on adornment and refinement, restricting Roman thought on how men and women reflect upon the formation of their identity through self-presentation. However, as Ria Berg states, ancients had a female-centered focus on objects of refinement such as jewelry and adornments made of precious

149 See also Plin. HN 33.40 for the connection between women’s adornment the status symbols of men. See also Upson-Saia (2011) 21 for a discussion of how both sides of the lex Oppia debate disparage women for indulgent dress while simultaneously solidifying “men’s positions of power.”
150 Dig. 34.2.25.10: Mundus muliberis est, quo mulier mundior fit. See also Berg (2002) 15, where she classifies ornatmenta and mundus muliebris as instruments used to adorn the body.
materials. This focus is complicated by the fact that men also used these items, and women were often discouraged from doing so, or were criticized when using them.\footnote{Berg (2002) 17.} This contrast between the different attitudes towards men’s and women’s use of munditia, and its importance for both, is a key issue that will arise in many of the sources discussed throughout this study.

I begin this chapter with a mention of the *lex Oppia* in order to stress the role of clothing and adornment in creating the identity of a Roman woman. In what follows, I examine the written and visual clothing of Roman women. The first part of this chapter focuses on a vocabulary of clothing terms related to Roman women. I then outline the different garments worn at each period of their lives, focusing specifically on the garments of childhood and motherhood that signified the woman’s status to those around her.\footnote{Only brief discussion of bridal clothing appears here, since this is the subject taken up again in the fifth and seventh chapters. See Sebesta and Hersch (2010), Bonfante (1994) and La Follette (1994) of the bibliography for scholarship on the topic. I focus this chapter on major articles of clothing that are well attested. I do not aim to be comprehensive here by including provincial and seldomly-attested garments, as detailed discussions of Roman women’s clothing occur in Olson (2008), Croom (2000), Sebesta and Bonfante eds. (1994), and Wilson (1938). For discussions on undergarments such as the *supparus* and the *strophium*, see Olson (2008) 15-16, 52-53 and (2003) 201-205. While also constituting a large aspect of female adornment, I do not focus on hairstyles of Roman women. An overview of hairstyles can be found in Harlow (2017) and Croom (2000) 54-65.} Following this section is a discussion of the clothed body, and how women’s dress influenced how they moved within public spaces. This leads to a closing section on assumptions of feminine virtue and morality based upon dress.

Through an analysis of the main garments said to have been worn by Roman women, we can form an image of the ideal clothed body according to our sources. This chapter focuses on ideal women’s clothing, since so often the ideal, rather than the realistic, is portrayed and commemorated. This discussion of clothing largely focuses on the dress of the *matrona*, although she is not always depicted in clothing corresponding to
her status. Many of these deviations from prescribed garments, of both *matronae* and other women, will be discussed in chapters four through six. Here I will trace the ideal dress of the free-born Roman woman, beginning with childhood and proceeding to the garments of the married *matrona*.

**Clothing of Freeborn Roman Girls**

Once out of swaddling bands, the most basic item of clothing for any Roman child was the tunic. This garment was worn throughout the life of any Roman—male or female, citizen or non-citizen.  

A simple tunic consisted of two pieces of cloth sewn together, with slits left open for the arms and neck. In artistic representations of Roman girls in tunics, the garment would reach their feet, just as the tunics of their mothers did. However, it is hard to imagine in reality that a young girl would be able to move freely in this trailing garment. While the wearing of long tunics would allow girls to become accustomed to the voluminous robes of their adulthood, images of tunic-clad girls often depict belted tunics. A belt could produce a large fold in the garment, which would allow a girl to wear the same garment as she continued to grow. These tunics largely resembled those of adults, but ancient sources give no indication that children’s tunics carry further implications on status and gender, as is the case with tunics worn by adults.

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153 Natalie Kampen (1981) says of the tunic that it is “status-free in the sense that any woman may wear a *tunica*” (55). See also Olson (2017) 13-16 and (2008) 15 and on how tunic variations can indicate status, rank, and gender.

154 Olson (2008) 15. See image 18 for an example of a Roman girl in a long tunic.

155 For belts in general see Croom (2000) 87-89; for girls wearing belted tunics, see 121.

156 Croom (2000) 121 discusses this toga with a large fold for girls.

157 The section on the Roman *matrona*’s clothing later in this chapter will further examine the distinction between status and class in connection to the female tunic.
In most cases, the tunic was the only visible item of clothing worn by a child. On special occasions, upper class citizen children would wear the *toga praetexta*, which is a purple-bordered garment also worn by Roman magistrates and certain priests.\(^{158}\) This garment, which served as a mark of citizenship for freeborn children, was not habitual dress since a toga consisted of several yards of fabric. The toga would drape over one arm, restricting the movement of a child. Although the *toga praetexta* is well attested for citizen boys, there are a few visual and literary attestations of girls wearing this garment.\(^{159}\)

Notably, the North and South frieze of the Ara Pacis depict boys and girls wearing the *toga praetexta* (see images 19 and 20). In each of these depictions, the toga is identified by its fold called an *umbo*. In the South frieze, the garment is further identified as a toga through its curved hem. Because this frieze depicts the imperial family in a procession, the choice of a *toga praetexta* for boys and girls emphasizes their status and fit the tone of the ceremony. It also recalls past traditions, since girls wearing the *toga praetexta* are a relic of when all genders were able to wear the toga without censure.\(^{160}\)

Another depiction of a young girl in a *toga praetexta* appears in a 1\(^{st}\) century BCE statue of a girl besides her freedwoman mother (image 18). While her mother wears a *stola* as a display of the garment that she can now wear as a freedwoman, the curved hem...

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\(^{158}\) Instances in which women wore the *toga praetexta* will be discussed in chapter seven.

\(^{159}\) Literary attestations of girls in the *togapraetexta* include Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.113; Prop. 4.11.33-34; Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 282-4L; Am. *Adv. nat.* 2.67. For more on girls wearing the *toga praetexta*, see Gabelmann (1985) 520-521; for all the visual representations of a praetextate girl, see Götte (1990) 80-82. See also Sebesta (1994a) 46-47. Olson (2008) 15, 17 and George (2001) 184-5 note that images of girls often depict them in Greek clothing rather than in a *toga praetexta*. Both argue that this is done to “communicate [parents’] sophisticated tastes to the viewer, much like the possession of Greek or Greek-inspired art;” Olson (2008) 17. This idea is especially interesting because citizen boys seem to have been depicted in their *togae praetextae* to indicate their status, while depictions of girls seem merely to have been works of art. However, in some sculptures, girls are depicted in Greek dress because the artwork is a Roman copy of a Greek original.

\(^{160}\) Rothe (2019) 40.
of the young girl’s garment, and the umbo in which she rests her arm, indicates that she wears a toga.\textsuperscript{161} Her praetextate garment is also meant to highlight her status, indicating that she is a freeborn girl. Clothing representations of young girls do not usually differ from that of adult women; funerary sculptures will often depict a young girl in a \textit{palla} and \textit{stola} as a poignant reminder that she has never attained these garments while alive.\textsuperscript{162}

In image 18, the girl’s \textit{toga praetexta} emphasizes both her status as a freeborn girl and her parent’s preference for Roman clothing and culture.\textsuperscript{163} Despite the toga’s association with promiscuity when worn by an adult woman (an idea that will be discussed further in chapter four), the garment was a symbol of freeborn and senatorial status when worn by a young girl.\textsuperscript{164}

Both children and adults wearing the \textit{toga praetexta} are designated as inviolable, meaning that they are considered pure and cannot be sexualized or exposed to any obscenity. Cicero remarks at several points in his speech \textit{In Verrem} that Verres commits outrages by exposing a praetextate son to his own base deeds.\textsuperscript{165} Writing approximately a century after Cicero’s death, Quintilian confirms the sacredness of the garment when he swears by its purple border as a band “by which we [Romans] make sacred and venerable the weakness of childhood.”\textsuperscript{166} Like Cicero, Quintilian believes that children are especially vulnerable, and the praetextate toga signals the wearer’s weakness to others as an indication that the child needed shielding from corruption.

\textsuperscript{161} For a discussion on the connection between this funerary monument and the representation of elite children on the \textit{Ara Pacis Augustae}, see George (2001) 183-186. Olson (2008) 28-31 argues that freedwomen married to freeborn citizen men were permitted the right to wear the \textit{stola}. Through depicting the mother in this garment, the monument emphasizes the woman’s marital status.

\textsuperscript{162} Olson (2009) 147-150.

\textsuperscript{163} Olson (2009) 145.

\textsuperscript{164} Togate women will be further discussed in chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{165} Cic. \textit{Verr.} 2.3.159, 2.5.81, 2.5.137.

\textsuperscript{166} Quint. \textit{Inst.} 340.13: \textit{quo infirmitatem pueritiae sacram facimus ac venerabilem}. 
Interestingly, the grammarian Festus (282L), reverses this idea of the vulnerable child and places inviolability on the garment itself. In his description of boys taunting a bride as she travels to her husband’s home, the boys first put aside their toga praetexta, and then shout obscenities at the bride. In Festus’s account, which is an abridged lexicography, the focus is on the garment rather than the child; to Festus it is the garment, and not a characteristic of its wearer, that requires shielding and a protection from obscenities. The removal of the praetexta in this description by Festus allows these boys to behave crassly. In the case of Festus and the two previous authors, the garment is associated with childhood and symbolizes sacred incorruptibility.167

This inviolable status of the praetextate child is largely indicated by the material of the garment and the color of its border.168 As Sebesta writes, the color purple was used to “protect those who are seen as particularly helpless and defenseless against evil forces.”169 The 1st century CE satirist Persius alludes to this idea when he refers to the toga praetexta in terms of its color and its role of protecting himself during his youth.170 Although many literary sources refer to the praetextate boy, the apotropaic associations with the color purple further suggest that men and women wore this garment as a form of protection during childhood.171

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167 For an extensive study on the inviolability of the toga praetexta, see Sebesta (2005) 113-120.
168 While the toga itself is Roman because of its shape, the purple border of the toga praetexta was derived from Etruscan garments. See Wilson (1924) 18-19. It is uncertain whether this border held the same apotropaic significance for its Etruscan wearers. See also Bonfante (1975) for the Etruscan toga and see in chapter three for religious associations with the color purple.
169 Sebesta (1994a) 47. See also Olson (2009) 141 for the apotropaic significance of the toga praetexta.
170 Pers. 5.30: cum primum pavido custos mihi purpura cessit.
171 For the apotropaic powers of the color purple, see Sebesta (2005) 113-120 and (1994a) 46-53. For more on the symbolism behind the color purple, see chapter three.
Clothing of the Bride

Unlike boys, who gave up their *toga praetexta* and *bulla* for the *tunica recta* in a ceremony called the *Liberalia*, there is little evidence that Roman girls participated in a rite of passage ceremony separate from their wedding. For this reason, a Roman girl would likely wear her *toga praetexta* on special occasions (not in everyday life) up until her wedding ceremony. Propertius suggests this is the case in Book 4 of his elegies, when the ghost of Cornelia describes her marriage and recalls her life with her husband Paullus. She recounts to him a time when her “praetexta yielded to wedding torches.”172 Unlike Propertius’s lover Cynthia, who dominates most of his corpus, in this elegy Cornelia describes her noble lineage, faithfulness in marriage, and her life lived without reproach. She is very much an idealized figure, which suggests that descriptions of her clothing can represent upper-class Roman women who also ceased to wear the *toga praetexta* before marriage.

Arnobius, writing in the late third and early fourth century CE, opposes this idea of wearing the garment until marriage. Instead, he suggests a separate rite of passage ceremony for girls when he questions if Romans bring small togas of young girls to the temple of Fortuna Virginalis.173 Arnobius, however, was an early Christian apologist from North Africa, asking this question to show that many old customs in Rome are now obsolete. This means that while the practice may have happened earlier in Roman history, the custom discontinued at some point before the late third century. The disagreement between these sources, however, suggests that if there was a ceremony for the purpose of

172 Prop. 4.11.33: *...facibus cessit praetexta maritis.*  
relinquishing girlhood garments, it either occurred very close in time to the marriage ceremony (and Cornelia married at a young age), or this ceremony would have been obsolete as early as the time Propertius writes.

It is at the time of the marriage ceremony when the *puella* then takes up a set of ritually significant garments to indicate a transition to adulthood and her new status as a *matrona*. On the dress of the Roman bride, Hersch aptly observes: “if clothing makes the ritual, then the clothing of the wedding proclaimed to onlookers that the wedding was a religious ritual for the woman and a party for the man.” In other words, each item of dress worn by the bride holds religious symbolism and is well-attested by several ancient authors. Olson writes that the ideal appearance of a Roman woman was influenced by religion. Such is true especially for the Roman bride; both the garments and colors she wore held religious significance and reaffirmed perceptions of her chastity. In contrast to her clothing, wedding attire for the groom is little attested and does not appear to have held any symbolic importance in the ritual.

Much has already been written on Roman bridal clothing and the symbolism behind each item worn. Nevertheless, a brief summary of bridal garments is worthwhile. This will allow for a full understanding of how a woman’s image is

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174 It is important here to remember that the *toga praetexta* was reserved for wealthy citizen children and on special occasions. It was not for daily use by the majority of children or manual laborers, whose daily movements would have been hampered by the untailored garments. One must also remember that the wealthy citizen daughter would likely marry at an early age, around the same time as a boy’s participation in the Liberalia festival.


177 In what I have found to be the only description of a groom’s clothing in literature, Plautus describes the groom in *Casina* 1.8.10 as “candidatus,” referring to the whiteness of the garment. See Flohr (2013) 60 on *candidus* as shining. Hersch (2010) 69 believes that this description does not differentiate between attire of the groom and his dining clothes, indicating that the groom’s clothing was not significant to the marriage ritual. References to bridal attire appear, to name just a few sources, in Plin. *HN* 8.194, 10.148; Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 82L, 364L; Catull. 61.160; and Luc. *Phars.* 2.362-3.

constructed through dress, and how dress is used to alter the identity of a Roman girl from that of a *puella* to a *matrona*. Here again, I stress that the clothing discussed is that of elite women. There is little evidence of traditional marriage customs and attire for women who belonged to a lower status. Furthermore, the garments that will be discussed here are the traditional bridal garments mentioned by numerous sources. It is important to remember that clothing can vary as different trends in dress arise, so there will likely be a discrepancy in the dress of different Roman brides throughout the Republic and across the Empire.

The main bridal garment was the *tunica recta*. It was given its name because it was woven by the bride herself on a warp-weighted or upright loom. According to Pliny the Elder, the first *tunica recta* was woven during the regal period by the Etruscan queen Tanaquil, wife of Tarquinius Priscus. However, it is likely that Pliny did not have evidence for this, and instead decided to date the first *tunica recta* to the regal period in order to provide an ancient origin for modern rituals. Nevertheless, the desire to attribute an early date to the garment emphasizes its importance during Pliny’s time. Wilson writes that this garment would be constructed in one piece and with only one seam at the side of it. The tunic was at least 2 meters wide, much wider than the typical Roman tunic. Like the *toga praetexta*, it was also protective in its color and material: the garment was white and made of wool, both the color and fabric associated with religious sanctity and

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179 This brief summary will focus on the garments themselves that were worn, namely the *tunica recta*, the *flammeum*, and the *vittae*. It will not look at the hairnet (*reticulum luteum*), the bridal coiffure (*seni crines*), or the knotted belt (*cingulum* with a *nodus Herculaneus*). For further discussion on these elements of bridal attire, see the sources above, particularly Hersch (2010) 69-114 and La Follette (1994) 54-64.


182 Wilson (1938) 58.

183 La Follette (1994) 55.
spotlessness. Festus writes that the bride put on the *tunica recta* (*albis rectis textis*) and yellow hairnet (*reticulis luteis*) before she went to bed on the night before her wedding (364L). He also tells us that boys wear this garment before assuming the *toga virilis*, thus drawing a connection between the *liberalia* festival celebrated by boys and the wedding ceremony as a rite of passage for the bride.

The next garment worn by brides during their wedding is the veil, *flammeum*. The veil was the most important aspect of the bride’s costume, surviving into the late fourth century CE as demonstrated by Claudian’s description of Serena in a *flammeum* (*Stilicho* 1.84). At the same time, it is possible that Claudian describes her in this garment because of its symbolic significance in literature, despite the garment’s possible disuse during his time. La Follette notes that the name for the veil derives from *flamma*, suggesting that the veil could serve as a symbol for the flame of the hearth, which the bride would tend to in her new home. Festus says that the veil was initially worn daily by the Flaminica Dialis, wife of the Flamen Dialis and priestess of Jupiter. Since she is married to the Flamen by a *confarreatio* marriage, the two cannot divorce. This veil was then a good omen, symbolizing constancy and a long marriage for its wearer.

Like the *tunica recta* and *toga praetexta*, the bridal veil also held apotropaic functions in its fabric and color. The veil was made from a woolen fabric, the same fabric

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185 Gallia (2014) 229: “It seems more likely that the tunica recta marked the transition into adulthood that was common to both, even as the normative expectations of Roman gender roles required that this rite of passage operated quite differently for males and females.”
186 La Follette (1994) 56.
187 For *confarreatio* marriages, especially that of the Flamen and Flaminica Dialis, see Treggiari (2002) 21-24.
used for many garments associated with ritual. The color of the *flammeum* is thought to be a yellowish-orange, though some ancient sources differ on its exact hue. Pliny describes the flammeum as *luteum*, a color he uses to refer to the yolk of an egg (*HN* 10.148). Catullus and Lucan also describe an orange-yellow *flammeum*. While the scholia on Juvenal describe the *flammeum* as red to conceal the blushing of the bride (6.225), the scholia’s later date and dramatically different description of the color raises the possibility that the veil fell into disuse at some point, and its color was not seen firsthand. Festus likens the veil’s color to that of lightning, which can be either white or yellow (*telum fulminis*, 82L). It is likely that given our evidence, the veil was a yellowish-orange color, but could almost appear red in its most vibrant state.

Sebesta asserts that the dye was made from saffron, which derived from the stamen of crocus flowers. She points out that saffron was used to promote menstrual and reproductive cycles, and that the color of the veil could then be linked to a woman’s role in society of bearing children. Boëls similarly links the veil’s color to fertility when suggesting its connection to the mothers of Romulus and Servius Tullus, both children who were conceived by a spark from their hearth. The bridal veil thus held associations with fire, early kings of Rome, and women’s roles in society.

Many surviving depictions of marriage scenes display the bride with half of her face covered by the *flammeum* in order to protect her modesty (see images 5 and 7). This

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189 *RAC s.v. kleidung II (Bedeutung)* 21 notes that wool is ritually impure. While this is considered true in some texts (as will be discussed in chapter seven), wool was still present in many rites.
190 Catull. 61.8-10, 68.133; Luc. *Phars.* 2.360-364. Tib. 2.2.18 refers to marriage bonds that are *flava*, possible alluding to the yellow flammeum. Cf. Bradley (2009) 6, who writes that Tibullus’s *flava* may be a corruption in the text, since the yellow of the marriage ceremony was *luteum*, the exact color term Pliny used to describe the *flammeum*.
192 Boëls (1973) 81. See also Boëls-Janssen (1993) 133-134.
is in contrast to literary references of the *flammeum* where the veil covers the bride’s head entirely, such as in Petronius’s *Satyricon*.\(^{193}\) Beneath this veil, the bride wore a crown and a woolen band known as a *vitta*, which encircled the hair and was also worn by freeborn girls and the *materfamilias*. While literary sources differentiated between *vittae* of brides and of maidens, they were considered a sign of *pudor* when worn by all women.\(^{194}\) We have no evidence of the visual distinction between these different hairbands, but literary sources indicate that they were reserved for freeborn women and particularly forbidden from use by the *meretrix*.\(^{195}\)

**Clothing of the Roman Matrona**

Following the marriage ceremony, the bride would then transition into life as an adult woman, regardless of the age at which she married.\(^{196}\) There were certain garments that a Roman woman wore regardless of her status, while other items serve as a visible sign of high rank. I do not discuss undergarments such as the *fascia/strophium*, or the *supparum*, since these pieces are not outwardly visible signs of a woman’s identity.\(^{197}\) Instead, I focus here on the general garments of a Roman woman and then examine items specifically worn by the often-idealized *matrona*.

A fitting starting point for a discussion on women’s garments is in a comedy written in the late third century BCE by Plautus. Although he does not refer specifically to clothing of the *matrona*, Plautus comments on and criticizes the constant changes in

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\(^{194}\) For distinction between bridal and virginal *vittae*, see Verg. *Aen.* 2.168, Prop. 4.11.34, and Valerius Flaccus *Argon*. VIII.6. Juvenal alludes to *vittae* as a symbol of *pudor* when he writes that few wives are worthy to wear them: *paucae adeo Cereris uittas contingere dignae* (6.50).

\(^{195}\) For *vittae* as a sign of a freeborn women and banned for the *meretrix*, see Tib. 1.6.67; Plaut. *Mil.* 789; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.31-34, *Tr.* 2.247-250, and Rem. *Am.* 386.

\(^{196}\) For marriage age of a Roman girl, see Treggiari (1991) 39-43.

\(^{197}\) For these, see Olson (2008) 15-16, 52-53 and Olson (2003) 201-205.
women’s fashion. In his comedy *Epidicus*, the title character describes to Periphianes the female love interest of the latter’s son, who wears a garment that was *impluviatu*s.198 When Periphianes is confused by this term, thinking that a woman wears an *impluvium* about her, Epidicus rants about the many new terms that women create to describe their clothing. He says:

Quid istuc tam mirabile est?  
quasi non fundis exornatae multae incitant per vias.  
45
at tributus quom imperatus est, negant pendi potis:  
ilis quibus tributus maior pendiur, pendi potest.  
quid istae, quae vesti quotannis nomina inveniunt nova?  
tunicam rallam, tunicam spissam, linteolum caesiciunm,  
indusiatam, patagiatam, caltulam aut crocotulam,  
50
subparum aut subnimium, ricam, basilicium aut exucicium,  
cumatile aut plumatile, carinum aut cerinum—gerrae maxumae.  
cani quoque etiam ademptumst nomen.  
(Plaut. *Epidicus* 44-53)

Why is that so strange? As if there weren’t many women walking through the streets wearing entire estates. But when the taxes are levied, the men say they can’t pay; but they can pay those women who are paid higher taxes. What about those women who find new names for their dresses every year? The sheer tunic, the thick tunic, the small embroidered apron, the outer dress, the bordered dress, the marigold or the saffron dress, the mini-shawl or…the maxi-shawl, the hooded dress, the queen’s or the foreign dress, the water-colored or the dishwater-colored dress, the nut-brown or the waxen dress—complete nonsense! One name’s even been taken from a dog.199

Here, Plautus writes that women’s clothing is as costly as an estate and reveals their vast sums of wealth to those around them. Epidicus scoffs at the large number of names that women create for their clothing each year, and begins to list some of these names, which are derived from either the type of garment (such as a thin tunic or *tunica ralla*) or the color of the garment. To Epidicus, these novelties in women’s dress were nonsense, and

198 The exact definition of this term is unclear, but there is speculation that it refers to a garment that was shaped like an *impluvium* and had a square border (OLD s.v *impluviatu*s).
199 Translation from the 2011 Loeb edition.
women have taken naming so far that they even name clothing after a dog. The garments listed in this passage were likely new and in vogue during Plautus’s time, since many of the terms used are now hard for us to define. It is also possible that Plautus made up some names of garments to mock what Epidicus considers nonsense. Plautus’s negative attitude in this passage towards women’s dress and its constant changes is a sentiment that will frequently be repeated by subsequent writers.

The most immediately visible garment of a Roman woman was her tunic. While this garment was the basic form of clothing worn by both men and women, it had the ability to reflect the gender and social status of its wearer. A woman’s tunic consisted of a wide piece of cloth, with sleeves that covered much of the wearer’s arms. This wide tunic was common for women up until the third century CE, when form-fitting tunics with long sleeves became more common. The gap-sleeved tunic (calasis), which resembled an Ionic chiton, was another common tunic that exposed a woman’s shoulders through spaces between button fastenings. Unless a woman had to perform manual labor, her tunic was floor length and belted at the waist.

The tunic suggested the gender of its wearer through its length and width. As mentioned, the female tunic was wider than its male counterpart. The garment was also longer than the male tunic, since Gellius notes that it was acceptable only for women to wear long-sleeved and full-flowing tunics. Juvenal also indicates that women wore longer tunics than men when he tells a masculine woman to dress as a man by hiking up her tunic: crure tenus medio tunicas succingere debet (6.446). As far as other aspects of its appearance, Cleland, Davies, and Llewellyn-Jones note that female tunics varied more

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200 Morgan (2017) 16.
in color and texture than male tunics, and often had a different colored border at each end. Fayum portraits often depict women in such clavate tunics, with some women even wearing tunics that had gold stripes to indicate a large amount of wealth.

Tunics also have the ability to reflect the status of its wearer. Just as certain colors and fabrics can indicate wealth, the length of the tunic will also determine whether its wearer is of higher or lower status. Enslaved and working women wore shorter tunics, since a floor-length garment would hamper their movement. Tunics of enslaved people were often unbelted to reflect their lower, servile status, though in some cases, a belt would also prevent the tunic from impeding on manual labor. Style of tunic further marked the identity of its wearer: whereas young girls were often depicted wearing a calasis in order to display the Hellenizing taste of their parents, the ordinary tunic became a badge of Romanitas in artistic depictions of women. Representations of a girl in a tunic was then a means of displaying a link to Roman customs and culture.

The major garment worn by a Roman matrona, which became the insignia for a woman of this status, was the stola. This garment was sleeveless and reached down to a woman’s ankles, as Horace describes in satire 1.2 (ad talos stola demissa, 99). Commonly referred to as vestis longa because of its length, the stola had a v-shaped neckline that helped identify the garment when the rest of it was covered by a palla. According to Scholz, the stola was usually red in color and had a border analogous to

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202 Cleland et al. (2007) 201.
203 For more on the significance of the belt and its ties to status, see Olson (2014) 16 and Croom (2000) 34-35. See also Morgan (2017) 16, who discusses images of workers wearing belted tunics, which can suggest that enslaved persons and laborers also wore belted tunics to prevent fabric from interfering with their work.
204 See Olson (2008) 17 and George (2001) 185, who discuss the use of the tunic and calasis in Roman art.
205 Scholz (1992) 28 on the importance of the neckline in the identification of the stola in artwork.
praetextate garments, but evidence of polychromy on sculpture shows traces of yellow and orange as well.\(^\text{206}\)

The garment had many wrinkles, which led Martial to use it in mocking the wrinkled face of an old woman (\textit{rugosiorem cum geras stola frontem}, 3.93.4). Vitruvius, in a comparison of a female figure to the temple of Diana, equates the fluting of an ionic column with the wrinkles of a \textit{matrona's stola} (\textit{truncoque toto strias uti stolarum rugas matronali}, 4.1.7). The fabric of the \textit{stola} was then likely to be of a lightweight material to produce such draping.\(^\text{207}\) It also needed to be voluminous to create such folds. Since fabric was costly in antiquity, these wrinkled garments were a sign of wealth. This symbol of wealth was usually displayed on top of a long-sleeved tunic and belted beneath the breast.\(^\text{208}\)

The \textit{stola} was fastened onto each shoulder by straps of ribbon or cord that connected the front and back of the garment. Sebesta and Scholz call these straps \textit{institae} (see Image 21 for a sketch of these straps).\(^\text{209}\) These straps are sometimes visibly carved on statues and busts but could have been painted on instead (see image 22 for a carved example). Olson has more recently argued that the \textit{institae} should instead be understood as a border along the hem of the \textit{stola}.\(^\text{210}\) Horace and Ovid are the only two writers to refer to the \textit{instita} as connected to the \textit{stola}, and since they both refer to the garment’s

\(^{206}\) Scholz (1992) 26. Bartman (1999) 41 also writes that the \textit{stola} was red, or purple on rare occasions. However, neither author gives evidence that the \textit{stola} was mostly dyed these colors. According to Nonius, Varro does mentions a \textit{stola holoporphyro}, but Nonius writes that this description comes from a section on the corruption of wealth (\textit{περὶ φθορᾶς κόσμου}), which does not necessarily mean that this type of \textit{stola} was commonplace (Non. 862L: \textit{mulieres, aliam cerneres cum stola holoporphyro}). Cf. Lindner (2006) 46n7, who gives some examples of polychromy on sculpture that contradicts the view of a red \textit{stola}. See also Olson (2008) 30.

\(^{207}\) See Wilson (1924) 45 on the thinness of wool used. While it can be difficult to imagine, a wide piece of this thin wool fabric would easily create such wrinkles, especially when belted.

\(^{208}\) Croom (2000) 76 on the \textit{stola} and its sleeve length.


\(^{210}\) Olson (2008) 30. Blanck (1997) and Wilson (1938) 156 have both previously argued that the \textit{institae} was a border.
length, Olson argues that the term was thus related to the length of the *stola*.\(^{211}\)

Porphyrio’s comments more than a century later support this definition of *institae* by defining them as the part sewn onto the bottom of the garment.\(^{212}\) Even though this border is not visible on material evidence, it is possible that it could have been painted onto statues. As Olson points out, *institae* would serve as a status symbol for women, especially when their *palla* covered their hair and the straps of the *stola* were not visible.\(^{213}\)

Whatever these straps were called in antiquity, they were placed slightly further than shoulder-width apart in order that the extra fabric at the neckline create a V-shaped neckline that made the garment recognizable. If a woman covered her head, the neckline would be the only visible sign that she was wearing this status symbol.\(^{214}\) This V-shaped neckline also allowed for women to show off their tunic underneath their *stola*.

The term *stola* was first used to refer to the garment worn by Roman *matronae* in the mid first century BCE.\(^{215}\) Ennius used the term in his *Tragoedia* to refer to the Greek στολὴ that was worn by both men and women.\(^{216}\) Then, in the second century BCE, Afranius alludes to the *stola* as a garment specifically worn women, although he does not refer to the garment by name. He instead refers to a *vestis longa* in a juxtaposition of the garment with its *meretrix* wearer (Afr. 133 ap. Non. 541M). After Afranius, Varro is the

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\(^{211}\) Petron. *Sat.* 20.4.1; Scrib. Larg. 47.14, 133.10; and Stat. *Theb.* 7.654 all refer to *institae* as bandages. For *institae* on women’s clothing: Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.29: *subsuta talos tegat instita vesie* and Ov. *Ars am.* 1.32 (also *Tr.* 2.248): *quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes.*

\(^{212}\) Porphyrio *Scholia on Hor.* 1.2.28: *Hae enim stola utuntur ad imos pedes demissa, cuius imam partem ambit instita adsuta.*

\(^{213}\) Olson (2008) 30-31. Understanding *institae* as the bottom part of a *stola* then aligns with Scholz’s idea that the garment had a border functioning like that of the *toga praetexta* (26).

\(^{214}\) Scholz (1992) 28. Croom (2000) 76 writes that sculpted folds of the *stola* suggest that the garment was woven or cut to form this neckline.

\(^{215}\) Wilson (1938) 56.

\(^{216}\) Enn. *Tragoediae* v.281, 282, 386, and 396.
next author to mention the garment in the first century BCE in his *Menippean Satires* (120, 166, 229), calling the garment by its name and referring to it explicitly as a women’s robe.\(^{217}\) The term *vestis longa* was then used by subsequent writers to refer to the *stola* as a garment solely worn by women of a certain status.\(^{218}\)

Just as the *toga praetexta* and bridal attire reflected the inviolable position of its wearer, the *stola* signified a stable marriage, *ingenuitas*, and *pudor*. For an example of attitudes towards this garment, in the second of his *Philippics*, Cicero compares Antony’s station to that of a woman, and uses garments to indicate Antony’s status. When, according to Cicero, Curio restores Antony, it is as if he was placed in a fixed marriage and given a *stola*.\(^{219}\) This reference to the *stola* connects the garment to respectability and marriage, since Antony is only able to wear it when Curio brings him back to a respectable state comparable to marriage. Ovid makes this same connection between marriage, respectability, and the *stola* decades later, when describing the intended audience for his amatory poetry. He directly addresses women wearing the *stola*, telling them to remain far from the influences of his poetry in order that he not corrupt the respectability of those who wore the *insigne pudoris*.\(^{220}\)

At around the late second century CE, Tertullian writes *de Pallio* to encourage Christians to wear the *pallium* of philosophers rather than the toga of Romans. While denouncing the symbolic dress of the Roman male, he bewails the fact that women have ceased wearing the *stola* and claims that they do so in order to easily display their body

\(^{217}\) Scholz (1992) 13-19 further discusses early references to the *stola*.


\(^{219}\) Cic. *Phil.* 2: *tamquam stolam dedisset, in matrimonio stabili et certo collocavit*. See chapter five for a further discussion of this passage and the *toga muliebris*.

\(^{220}\) Ov. *Ars am.* 1.31-32 (also Tr. 2.247-248): *Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris, / quaeque tegis mediost instita longa pedes*. The *instita longa*, like the *vestis longa*, is a reference to the *stola*. 
and practice prostitution. In his complaint, he cites a law by the augur Lentulus, stating that women who appear in public without a *stola* will be punished as if they had committed adultery. Tertullian believes that these women have abandoned the robes that were symbols and guards of their worth. ²²¹ Around 200 CE, the *stola* became a status symbol of a woman that was both *ingenua* and *honesta*, without indicating the woman’s marital status. By Tertullian’s time in the late second and early third century, the garment fell into disuse, though still appearing in the honorary title “*femina stolata*” on several inscriptions. ²²²

The last major article of clothing frequently worn by a Roman *matrona* was the *palla*. With archaeological remains dating to the late third century CE, it was worn long after the *stola* was abandoned. ²²³ This garment was the female equivalent of the *pallium* that was worn by men. Wilson notes that at some point the names of the two garments combined, since they both referred to a mantle and were derived from the same word; Varro derives the word *palla* from the word *palam*, since it is worn outside and openly (*palam*) visible (Ling. 5.131: *unum quod foris ac pallam*). ²²⁴

The *palla* was made in a variety of colors and was worn as both a form of protection from the outdoor elements and as a means of covering a woman’s hair for modesty. It could be draped around the body in the manner of a toga, worn over both shoulders, or placed over the head as a veil. ²²⁵ Similar to the toga, it did not require pins to hold it in place; instead, it relied on drapery and the wearer’s hand to keep it from

²²¹ Tert. *De pall. 4.9.2*: *indices custodesque dignitatis.* ²²² For the decline of the *stola*, see Scholz (1992) 11-18. For the phrase *femina stolata*, see Holtheide (1980) 128-130, who writes that this title was associated with women of the equestrian class in a time when the garment itself was no longer worn. See also chapter 1 for *femina stolata* on funerary monuments. ²²³ Scholz (1992) 12. ²²⁴ Wilson (1938) 149. Cf. the late ⁷th century derivation in Isidore’s *Origines*, 19.25.2, which derives the word *palla* from πάλλειν (“to sway”) because of the ripples and movement of the drapery. ²²⁵ Olson (2008) 33 and Cleland *et al.* (2007) 136.
unraveling.\textsuperscript{226} The rectangular shape of the \textit{palla} made it distinguishable from the curved hem of the toga. According to the fourth century grammarian Nonius, the \textit{palla pulla} was reserved for mourners, indicating that the \textit{palla} was not characteristically dark-colored (549.32L). On the opposite end of the color spectrum, a white \textit{palla} was only worn by Vestal virgins.\textsuperscript{227} While the garment was initially plain or had a simple border, the \textit{palla} of the third century and later had more complex decorations and roundels.\textsuperscript{228}

Although both the \textit{palla} and \textit{pallium} were equivalent to the Greek \textit{himation}, only the \textit{pallium} was stressed as a garment that symbolized an allegiance with Greek culture, rather than Roman.\textsuperscript{229} The \textit{palla} instead reflected the high status of its wearer. Since the garment is draped, women often used one hand to support it. This then made the garment an item of the leisure class and impractical for use during manual labor. Several authors also indicate that the \textit{palla} was a garment for respectable women. For example, Nonius calls it the garment worn by an \textit{honesta mulier} (862L). Since the \textit{palla} covered women’s heads, it was also considered a symbol of modesty and a protector of their dignity.\textsuperscript{230} It is for this reason that Gaius Sulpicius Gallus was said to have divorced his wife. Valerius Maximus records this incident in his section on marital severity. He writes that the consul’s reason for divorce was that his wife left the house without a veil, and that the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{226}] Olson (2008) 33. Wilson (1924) 48 states that the toga may have later been secured by a pin. The \textit{calasis} and Greek \textit{chiton} were both pinned at the shoulders.
\item[\textsuperscript{227}] Scholz (1992) 101.
\item[\textsuperscript{228}] Cleland \textit{et al.} (2007) 136.
\item[\textsuperscript{229}] The \textit{pallium} was worn by philosophers and Christians. For a description of the garment’s use by these groups, see Tertullian’s \textit{de Pallio}, which is the author’s apologia for wearing the \textit{pallium} and an exhortation for other Christians to do so. There are several instances of Romans that were condemned for wearing the \textit{pallium} rather than the toga. For these examples, see Cleland \textit{et al.} (2007) 137. For the symbolism of the Pallium, see also Olson (2014) 422–448 and Brennan (2008) 257–270. See also Rothe (2019) 148 for the idea that despite the garment’s popularity, it never reached the same level of symbolism enjoyed by the toga.
\item[\textsuperscript{230}] See Olson (2008) 34–45 on the requirement of women to veil their heads when in public. Although veiling was likely not required of them, particularly in later times when hairstyles of elite women became too elaborate to rest under the \textit{palla}, veiling was a way that women could avoid public attention.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
law appoints only his eyes to be the judge of her beauty.\textsuperscript{231} While the placement of this anecdote suggests this was a harsh and uncommon punishment, it also demonstrates that by veiling her head with the \textit{palla}, a woman was able to protect herself from the male gaze and suspicions against her reputation.\textsuperscript{232}

These are the major garments that would be worn by a Roman \textit{matrona} from childhood to adulthood. While there are several other choices of clothing for women in the Empire, these specific items of clothing are important for their symbolism and ability to be recognized by ancient Roman observers.

When studying these garments and their ability to shed light on the identity of their wearer, it is also essential to understand the context in which they were allowed to be worn. For example, the \textit{Historia Augusta} tells us that Alexander Severus allegedly prevented women from wearing a \textit{paenula}, which was a cloak worn by laborers and soldiers.\textsuperscript{233} However, it was considered acceptable for women to wear this cloak on travels, making the garment appropriate only within the context of traveling.\textsuperscript{234} Although the \textit{Historia Augusta} should not be treated as a factual source, its mentions of dress tell us of Roman attitudes towards garments, luxury, and masculinity. While there was a concern for women wearing garments that did not align with their status, such concern was outweighed by the practicality the garment provided during travels.

In addition to examining the context in which certain garments are allowed or condemned, understanding the context of texts themselves is crucial to determining

\textsuperscript{231} Val. Max. 6.3.10: '\textit{lex enim inquit tibi meos tantum praefinit oculos, quibus formam tuam adprobes}'.
\textsuperscript{233} SHA Alex. Sev. 27.4. For the \textit{paenula} and its association with class, see Cleland \textit{et al.} (2007) 135. For further discussion of this passage, see Harlow (2005) 151.
\textsuperscript{234} Allowing the cloak on travels was likely a matter of practicality, since the garment was thicker than the \textit{palla}. 
attitudes towards dress, since in many cases genre and historical context influence what is written about clothing. For example, the *Historia Augusta* uses dress to characterize emperors as either good or bad. In the case of Alexander Severus’s dress in the *Historia Augusta*, the 4th century text often portrays the emperor as wearing clothing fit for his gender and modest for his status. In other words, his dress may not necessarily reflect reality, but instead it can serve as propaganda. This is especially true when considering the contrast in dress between him and his predecessor Elagabalus, who was known for expensive garments and feminine fabrics. The text uses dress to present the former emperor as fit for the role, and the latter emperor as unsuited for it. Context is here important because it reminds us of the biased nature of sources on dress. In the case of these two emperors, descriptions of clothing function as a form of characterization rather than a reflection of reality.

Context also becomes important when looking at the clothing of those described as cross-dressers, as I will discuss in chapters five through seven. This is because oftentimes they do not wear outrageous pieces of dress, but instead, their clothing is unsuitable for the context of their own gender or status.

**Conclusions: Dress and Movement**

I end this chapter with some observations on the importance of clothing in the creation of identity and bodily experiences. Thus far, this chapter has looked at the different types of garments worn by Roman women because these garments influenced how they interacted with the world. As Harlow writes, “understanding how a garment is made, and from what type of material, is key to understanding the manner in which it
might be worn and how it might be experienced on the body." Since the next chapters focus on women who do not wear clothing appropriate for their gender, this chapter focused on the different aspects of women’s clothing to show how they were typically intended to experience the world dressed in their prescribed garments.

As can be observed by viewing the ideal Roman woman and studying her clothing, her movement was physically restricted by the floor length garments covering her body (namely, the *stola* and *palla*). Harlow points out that these long garments layered atop one another have the potential to frequently bunch up and shift, requiring a woman to always focus at least some of her attention on her dress when walking, and take small steps to avoid tripping. A respectable Roman woman was completely covered in public, which would thus limit her ability to move with ease and comfort. This aligns with the views we see by male writers in Roman literature, that a proper Roman woman is one who remains indoors. Outside of the home, the woman’s garments would serve as a marker of her familial status. Her limited movements would indicate her wealth, since she does not wear clothing that would allow her to perform manual labor.

Despite the potential difficulties in movement that the dress of the *matrona* may have presented, it is likely that these women were instead accustomed to wearing and moving in many layers. Harlow makes this point after a trip to Iran where she observed women wearing the chador, which required one hand to keep it closed at all times. She notes that women were able to do so even while carrying shopping bags and small

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236 Berg (2002) 32n83 cites the restrictive language used in mentions of the *vitta* and *stola* in Tib. 1.6.67: *quamvis non vitta ligatos / impediat crines nec stola longa pedes*.
children.\textsuperscript{238} Likewise, a Roman woman who has worn a long tunic and mantle for most of her life will have grown accustomed to managing the drapery of her garments while moving about.\textsuperscript{239} The idea of becoming habituated to garments is reminiscent of Mauss’s techniques of the body, which refers to the idea that each person trains their body for certain gestures and movements based upon their culture, gender, or even class.\textsuperscript{240} For example, girls today often practice wearing high heels and reach adulthood with the ability to walk in them, whereas boys are taught different skills.\textsuperscript{241} In a similar manner, Roman men and women must have learned (whether through family members or experience) how to comfortably walk in their draped garments. According to Mauss, society trains the body based upon a person’s status and gender. In terms of the Roman woman dressed as a \textit{matrona}, her movements were influenced by her drapery, but not necessarily hindered by it.

Speech, movements, postures, and gestures are all able to convey pieces of information.\textsuperscript{242} We know that there were certain manners of walking that were considered either manly or effeminate. For instance, Macrobius writes in a collection of jests that Cicero’s son-in-law had a soft step (\textit{mollius}), while his daughter walked swiftly (\textit{concitatus}).\textsuperscript{243} Macrobius then writes that Cicero tells his daughter to walk like her husband. Even though Macrobius, writing in the early 4\textsuperscript{th} century CE, tells this anecdote as a joke, it is here significant because it describes gendered manners of walking that resonated in both Cicero’s time and his own. This same idea appears in the second

\textsuperscript{238} Harlow (2007) 37.
\textsuperscript{239} Davies and Llewellyn-Jones (2017) 49-70. See also Olson (2017) 24 and Wilson (1924) 49.
\textsuperscript{240} Mauss (1973).
\textsuperscript{241} Entwistle (2000a) 14.
\textsuperscript{242} Entwistle (2000a) 51.
\textsuperscript{243} Macrob. \textit{Sat.} 2.3.16: \textit{Cicero, inquam, cum Piso gener eius mollius incederet, filia autem concitatus, ait filiae: Ambula tamquam vir.} See also Corbeil (2004) 71-72 for female gestures.
century CE text *Paedagogus*, where Clement of Alexandria prescribes certain items of clothing and behavior for Christian men and women. In book 3, he cites the words of Anacreon to describe a manner of walking which was to be prohibited for Christians because he thought it resembled movement of a sex worker. Movement of the body was as important as dress in identifying a person’s status and morality.

Movement and dress worked together to create a specific illusion of the body’s silhouette. Ovid describes these movements in his *Ars Amatoria*, where he recommends certain manners of dress for women. He suggests that a slender woman wear clothing that hangs loosely from her shoulders, creating the illusion of a fuller body as she walks. In a few lines following this, Ovid specifically spells out proper and improper gait for a woman:

Discite femineo corpora ferre gradu.  
Est et in incessu pars non temnenda decoris:  
Allicit ignotos ille fugatque viros.  
Haec movet arte latus, tunicisque fluentibus auras  
Accipit, expansos fertque superba pedes:  
Illæ velut coniunx Umbri rubicunda mariti  
Ambulat, ingentes varica fertque gradus.  
Sed sit, ut in multis, modus hic quoque: rusticus alter  
Motus, concessus mollior alter erit.  

(Ov. *Ars am.* 3.298-306)

Now learn how to walk with a feminine step.  
Even in walking there is an elegance not to be scorned,  
Alluring and driving off unknown men.  
One woman moves her side with skill,  
Catching the breeze with her streaming tunics,  
Proud, she bears her measured step.  
Another, like an Umbrian’s ruddy spouse walks,  
Strides with feet spread and bearing huge steps.  
But let there be, as in many things, here too a mean:  
The one shows too rough a gait, the other too delicate.

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244 For this description of an exaggerated walk of the *meretrix*, see Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.11.69.2.  
In this section, he advises women not to walk in a masculine manner, but instead to move their hips to allow their clothing to catch the breeze. It is again the flowing garment that adds to the femininity of the movement described. Opposite this delicate movement is the gait of the Umbrian wife, whom Ovid describes as *varica* and taking huge steps. In the final line of this excerpt, the word *mollior* recalls the word used to describe Piso’s movement. Perhaps Tullia and the Umbrian woman walk too speedily, with their legs extending too far against the drapery intended to conceal their bodies. A swift walking pace would then expose the outline of their legs, while disturbing elegant folds of their garments. Movement was thus tied closely with clothing and behavior, the nexus of which will be examined further in subsequent chapters.

**Clothing and Morality**

The psychologist John Flugel lists three main purposes of wearing clothing: decoration, modesty, and protection from the elements. While Flugel believes that the primary reason for wearing clothing was decoration, I posit that the clothing of Roman women reflects each of these reasons. While decoration is an important aspect of dress that allows women to display their status and conform to gender norms, we have seen in literature that there is also the anxiety of protecting the modesty of the Roman *matrona*. This anxiety is marked by the voluminous garments that would restrict a woman in the public sphere. Joan Kelly remarks that a separation of domestic and public realms creates more pronounced sexual inequalities and the demand for female chastity and prostitution. Such is the case for Roman women whose roles were largely removed

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246 Flugel (1976) 16.  
from the public sphere, with their primary role of producing citizen children requiring them to be morally chaste.

The importance of modesty in women’s clothing finally brings us to the question of morality. As Entwistle writes, “dress is a matter of morality,” and when dressed inappropriately, “we feel ourselves open to social condemnation.” Language surrounding clothing is often the language of morality, since we describe garments as correct, good, or faultless. The clothing we wear is often thought to reflect our own morality, but in the case of Roman women, whose morality is reflected by the garments worn? Is it the husband’s morality, for allowing his wife to purchase and wear any clothing that deviated from the norms of respectability? Or is the woman herself at fault, for choosing inappropriate clothing? These questions are tied to the idea of how much agency women had in choosing their own clothing. In the case of literary sources, which will serve as the majority of our evidence, it is the author who chooses to dress his female characters. His clothing choices, as we will see, serve to characterize the wearer and outwardly reflect her morality, thus making her reproachable for any clothing that appears to be inappropriate.

At first glance this may appear to be a circular argument, where our morality impacts clothing choices and clothing choices reflect our morality. However, it is important to stress here that in literary depictions of women’s clothing, it is difficult to determine if the woman herself chooses a garment as a reflection of her own morality. In

248 Entwistle (2000a) 8.
249 Entwistle (2000a) 9.
250 See Upson-Saia (2011) 19 for a discussion of the tension between women wearing expensive garments to display the status of male relatives and criticisms against overindulgent dress as connected to Rome’s moral decline.
251 For clothing as characterization, see especially Harlow (2005), 143-153. See also Campanile, Carlà-Uhink, and Facella (2016).
the following chapters I instead focus on the male authors who make deliberate clothing choices when representing women. By using clothing that was transgressive in some way, authors are indicating their own perception of a wearer’s morality, using clothing as an outward signal of character. Such focus is then outside of this circular notion of clothing choices and morality, instead concentrating on how authors use clothing to reflect their own perceptions of a woman’s morality.

From the clothing chosen for women by Roman writers, we learn that *matronae* were expected to wear a *stola* and *palla* over their tunics. Much of their bodies should be covered by these long garments, since *matronae* were thought to be distinguished from other women in their virtue and *pudicitia*. The modesty of a *matrona* was a sign of moral prosperity for Romans, and the strict proscriptions of what garments, fabrics, and colors that a *matrona* should wear demonstrates the male anxiety over female chastity. The following chapters will further explore unsuitable dress of women and its connection to morality. As we have started to see through an examination of different garments, fabrics, and works of art, clothing has a unique and underexplored ability to project characteristics of its wearer while simultaneously expressing male anxieties of female respectability.

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252 For the connection between modesty in female clothing morality in Rome, and the Sebesta (1997) 531.
CHAPTER 3: Fabrics and Dyes of Garments

"elige certos:/Nam non conveniens omnibus omnis erit."

-Ov. Ars am. 3.187-188

The verses above are a passage from the Ars Amatoria discussed in detail below. Here, Ovid tells his (presumably) female readers to choose their clothing wisely, since not every color will suit every complexion. Fortunately for his reader, clothing that was available in Rome was produced in a variety of fabrics and colors. In order to get a complete picture of the clothing of Roman women, this chapter focuses on the different fabrics worn, the colors of these fabrics, and the symbolic associations with each. After this detailed account of what clothing looked like and the symbolism behind certain garments, the following chapters will be dedicated to deviations from these garments.

There were numerous different fabrics, of varied qualities and weights, used to make clothing throughout Italy and the Roman provinces. The two most common fabrics were wool and linen, but silk, cotton, and goat-hair fabrics also existed. Additional materials used to create apparel were rabbit hair, mollusk filaments, leather, fur, and felt. In what follows, I will focus on the three major fabrics used to create women’s clothing: wool, linen, and silk.

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253 Edict of Diocletian 25-28, listing three different qualities of fabrics, textures, and places of origin.
254 See Edict of Diocletian 19.73a–73c and Varro, Rust. 3.3.1–3, 8–10 on rabbit fibers. See Tert. De pall. 3.6 on mollusk filaments, as well as Wild (2010) 469 on rabbit fur and mollusk filaments. Marzano (2013) calls these mollusk filaments “sea silk,” and writes that one pound of spun sea silk required 6 pounds of filaments (169). For detailed discussion of sea silk, see Enegren and Meo (2017). For more on these fabrics, see also Croom (2000) 20; Barber (1991) 2-32; and Forbes (1964) 90-93, 58-64.
Wool

Wool was the most common fabric used to create clothing, and in depictions of a clothed body, the fabric represented would most likely be wool. Woolen textiles were warm, crease resistant, and able to regain their shape after wearing. Wool was also more water repellant than other fabrics and was used for that reason to make felt cloaks and shoes. Unlike linen and silk, wool absorbed dyes well, creating vibrant-colored clothing. Romans preferred to dye their fleece rather than the textile, and preferred white wool in order to absorb other dyes better. Sheep from different regions produced fleece of different hues: pure white wool was found in Northern Italy, while Spain was known for its sheep with tawny and black wool.

Fleeces from Pollentia, Tarentum, and Liguria were pullus in color, a dark brown or black shade that was specifically connected to mourning and poverty. Since it was expensive to launder clothing, people of lower statuses wore undyed, dark wool to reduce the visibility of stains. Dark wool was also connected to those awaiting trial. In the case of the latter and those who were mourning, both categories referring to men of the upper class, pullus garments were worn for self-abasement and as an indication that the

258 Wild (2010) 476: “Wool was most commonly dyed in the fleece to ensure maximum uptake of dyestuff... Flax, on the other hand, was dyed in the hank, as cross-sections of yarns sometimes reveal.” Sebesta (1994b) 66; Wild (1970) 10.
260 See Juv. 3.147-153 on the dirty toga ("toga sordidula") as a source of ridicule. Sebesta (1994b) 66. Through this use of undyed wool by people of lower statuses, pullus also became a reference to poverty (see Calp. Ecl. 7.26 and Quint. Inst. 5.10.71).
wearer was not focused on their appearance.\textsuperscript{263} This was indicated by wearing colors typically reserved for poorer people.\textsuperscript{264} Fleeces that were \textit{pullus} did not accept dye too well, but were preferred for the creation of mourning garments, rather than dyeing fleece black.\textsuperscript{265}

Wool was commonly worn in Roman ritual, though it was considered ritually impure in Greek rites because of its association with surplus and animal skin.\textsuperscript{266} It was the most popular fabric for clothing due to the relative ease at which sheep were reared, wool’s ability to absorb color, and its warmth.

\textbf{Linen}

The second material that was frequently used for Roman apparel was linen. Made from the fibers of the flax plant, linen was both flexible and strong.\textsuperscript{267} It was especially useful for making sails, as Pliny notes when he credits flax sails with their role in bringing the Empire together.\textsuperscript{268} Linen was neither as soft as wool nor as popular; it was naturally grayish brown in color, but could be bleached by the sun to a color that was near white.\textsuperscript{269} Unlike wool or other types of animal fleece, the plant fibers did not accept colors well.\textsuperscript{270} For this reason, linen garments were most often kept at their natural color

\begin{footnotes}
\item[263] Goldman (2013) 65 writes that \textit{pullus} refers to grey or black.
\item[264] This theory is posited by Croom (2000) 23 in connection to those awaiting trial. See Bradley (2002) 20-44 for the paradox and taboos associated with the \textit{fullonica} and cleaning garments in the Roman world. For scholarship on fulling and cleanliness, see Olson (2017) 91-105.
\item[266] \textit{RAC} s.v. \textit{Kleidung II} (\textit{Bedeutung}) 21; Plut. \textit{De Is. et Os.} 4: \textit{περίσσωμα δὲ τροφῆς καὶ σκύβαλον οὐδὲν ἄγνυν οὐδὲ καθαρὸν ἐστιν: ἐκ δὲ περιττωμάτων ἔρια καὶ λάχναι καὶ τρίχες καὶ ὀνυχες ἀναφύονται καὶ βλαστάνουσα} (“No surplus left over from food and no excrementitious matter is pure and clean; and it is from forms of surplus that wool, fur, hair, and nails originate and grow”). A further discussion of fabric, color, and ritual will appear in chapter seven.
\item[268] Plin. \textit{HN} 19.1.3: \textit{quodve miraculum maius, herbam esse quae admoveat Aegyptum Italiae in tantum} (“or what is more wonderful, that this is the plant which brings Egypt in close proximity to Italy”).
\item[269] Plin. \textit{HN} 19.2.9, Sebesta (1994b) 66.
\item[270] Croom (2000) 23.
\end{footnotes}
or bleached, but rarely dyed.\textsuperscript{271} Whiter linen was valued more than the fabric at its natural grayish brown color, thus the fabric was often bleached. Pliny writes that during his time, Faventine linen was preferred for its whiteness.\textsuperscript{272}

According to Pliny, linen was grown in sandy soils. It was sown in the spring and then harvested soon after in the summertime.\textsuperscript{273} Romans purchased woven linen primarily from the Etruscans or Egyptians, although linen was produced in several other parts of the Empire. With a growth in use by the late Republic, the Italian cities of Faenza, Retovium, and Latium began to produce linen. The linen of Syracuse was prized as well, allowing Verres to extort much of the province’s profits for himself.\textsuperscript{274} Egyptian linen was especially a luxury by the second century CE; yet, Pliny writes that Egyptian linen was not very sturdy and was later replaced in its esteem items by linen from Cilicia and Syria.\textsuperscript{275}

Pliny writes that linen fabric was especially valued as a luxury by some families. For example, he says that Gallic women believed there was no cloth more beautiful than linen.\textsuperscript{276} Because of this perception of the fabric’s beauty by enemies, and possibly because of the perception of linen as a luxury fabric, he writes women of the \textit{gens} Atilii did not wear linen clothing.\textsuperscript{277} Nevertheless, apart from the Atilii refraining from linen garments, there are no records that others were discouraged from wearing the fabric, unlike the next fabric to be discussed.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{271} In addition to bleaching by the sun, linen was bleached by boiling it with sodium carbonate and sodium bicarbonate. See Wild (2010) 476.
\item \textsuperscript{272} Plin. \textit{HN} 19.2.9.
\item \textsuperscript{273} Plin. \textit{HN} 19.2.7. For the production of linen textiles, see Wild (2010) 468.
\item \textsuperscript{274} Cic. \textit{Verr.} 2.5.146; Sebesta (1994b) 70-72.
\item \textsuperscript{275} Plin. \textit{HN} 19.2.14-15; Sebesta (1994b) 72.
\item \textsuperscript{276} Plin. \textit{HN} 19.2.8; \textit{nec pulchriorum aliam vestem eorum feminae novere}.
\item \textsuperscript{277} Varro ap. Plin. \textit{HN} 19.8.
\end{itemize}
Silk

Silk did not reach Italy until the time of Augustus. The fabric was a prized luxury item, spun and woven from short fibers of raw silk produced by the *bombyx mori* silkworm. Silk fabric was smooth and had few irregularities; it was durable, lightweight, and had a sheen that was able to reflect both light and warmth. Initially, silk was imported from China through India, and then new routes were created during the Parthian Wars in order that Romans evade Parthia and gain easier access to the material. Since silk was very expensive, Romans cut costs by purchasing the fibers in raw form and weaving it into fabric themselves. Despite the establishment of new trade routes, and the act of purchasing raw material to weave garments domestically, silk was still very expensive. Because of this, silk fibers were typically interwoven with either linen or wool to form what was called a “half silk,” or *subsericum* garment.

Garments of silk were often considered transparent by ancient authors. This transparency was likely perceived because silk garments were thin and form-fitting, revealing the wearer’s shape underneath the fabric more than any heavily draped garment would have done. Harlow points out that silk clothing was fitted to the body to reduce fabric costs, thus outlining its wearer’s figure. The fitted nature of fine silk garments created a pattern of drapery more gentle than heavier folds of wool or linen would have done.

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278 Wild (2010) 469 writes that this silk moth was likely the *pachypasa otus*. For the dating of early silk production on Kos to the 4th century BCE, see Hildebrandt (2013) 58.
279 Wild (2010) 469.
281 For the Silk trade, see *Periplus Maris Erythraei* 39, 49, 56, and 64. See also Finlayson (2002) 1-11 on silk trade through Palmyra; Sebesta (1994b) 71; and Charlesworth (1974) 62, 105, 110.
282 Croom (2000) 20; Sebesta (1994b) 71. McLaughlin (2016) 18 writes that the use of silk filaments made bulky garments more bearable for use in the summertime. Forbes (1964) 56 divides half-silk materials into the categories of *subsericon* (with a silk warp) and *tromosericon* (with a silk waft).
283 Harlow (2004) 212, see also Olson (2008) 14 on the weave of Coan silk, and the possibility that authors exaggerated the transparency of this thin material.
produce, also leading to the idea of transparency. However, adjectives used to describe silk emphasize both its thinness (tenuis) and ability to make its wearer appear to be naked (nudam). These words suggest transparency based upon the thinness of the fabric, rather than just that the fitted nature of silk clothing outlined the wearer’s figure.

Silk was used by both men and women but according to Olson, was “the fabric most closely associated with women in antiquity.” The type of silk on women that received special attention was Coan silk. This fabric was created by silkworms on the Greek island of Cos: these were the only silkworms in the Mediterranean region. The fabric was produced as early as the third century BCE, but only appears in the writings of Augustan and Julio-Claudian poets. Strangely, Coan silk was no longer mentioned after the time of the Julio-Claudians.

Coan silk was an expensive luxury fabric, like its counterparts of subsericum and holosericus, yet it was particularly known for its transparency. Pliny the Elder writes that Pamphile, a woman from the island of Cos, was the first woman to create silk from the fibers of these silkworms. He remarks sarcastically that she “ought not to be deprived of the glory of having discovered the art of making garments which, while they cover a woman, at the same time they reveal her naked charms.”

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284 For nudus in connection with silk: Hor. Sat. 1.2.101; Sen. Ben. 7.9.5; Plin. HN 11.26. For tenuis in connection with silk, see Tib. 2.3.53-54; Prop. 1.2.2; Apul. Met. 10.31.
286 Goldman (2013) 44.
288 Sometimes transparency was preferred for silk garments: in the Pharsalia, Lucan writes that Cleopatra wears silk woven in the East, but with threads pulled apart in Egypt (i.e., to make the fabric less opaque, 10.142-143). This description both associates Cleopatra with foreign luxuries, which were common for Roman women to indulge in, and makes her clothing appear even more scandalous. Not only was silk clothing scorned by moralists, but Lucan’s example suggests that Egyptians made the fabric even more revealing by pulling apart its threads.
289 Plin. HN 11.26: non fraudanda gloria exocigitatae rationis, ut denudet feminas vestis. Tibullus (2.3.53-54) mentions garments woven by a Coan woman, which is possibly a reference to Pamphile. For further
Seneca the Younger similarly criticizes the translucent fabric, saying that silk garments can hardly be considered clothing, since “they offer nothing that could give protection to the body or provide any modesty.” He continues with the statement that “a woman who wears these silks can hardly say with a clear conscience that she is not stark naked.” In other words, he condemns usage of this fabric because it is a threat to the modesty that a respectable woman was expected to display. When praising his own mother’s aversion to cosmetics and adornment in his consolation letter to her, Seneca writes that his mother "… never liked clothes which showed the figure as plainly as though it were naked: … [her] greatest glory has been modesty.” Again, the idea of modesty tied to female dress is important in understanding this negative attitude towards silk clothing. According to both Pliny and Seneca, silk garments are unusual because they do not fit the proper function of women’s clothing as a protector of the body and of modesty.

While Pliny and Seneca denounce Coan silk, several poets approve of the fabric’s diaphanous weave because it allows them to view more of the female body. Writing during early in the Augustan age, Horace remarks on the virtues of Coan silk in his Satirae. Here, he compares the matrona with the meretrix, stating that only the face of the matrona is visible, while the rest of her body is protected by the people surrounding her (Sat. 1.2.98: custodes, lectica, ciniflones, parasitae) and her floor-length garments (99: ad talos stola demissa et circumdata palla). On the other hand, the body of the meretrix is more exposed:

… nil obstat: cosi tibi paene videre est

discussion of Pamphile, see also Forbes (1964) 52, and 50-58 for an overview of silk and Coan silk in antiquity.

Sen. Ben. 7.9.5: …defendi aut corpus aut denique pudor possit.
Sen. Helv. 16.4: maximum decus visa est pudicitia.
For the use of silk as immoral, see Hildebrandt (2013) 58.
ut nudam, ne crure malo, ne sit pede turpi;
metiri possis oculo latus.      (Sat. 1.2.101-103)

The other throws no obstacle in your way; through Coan silk you may see her, almost as if she was naked; that she has neither a bad leg, nor a disagreeable foot, you may survey her form perfectly with your eye.

For Horace, the wearer of Coan silk is a woman of low respectability in Roman society. From the excerpt above, it is likely that a matrona wearing the fabric would risks her reputation of pudicitia. Horace writes that the meretrix is practically naked through her clothing, allowing interested men to carefully examine her body for any imperfections. Unlike Seneca and Pliny, he is not directly critical of women wearing the fabric, since he compares the ideal clothing of two very different women. While he believes the matrona should be covered in long garments to protect her pudicitia, the meretrix should display her body as if it were an item that she is selling. Horace’s tone here, like most of his satire, is playful mockery. He does not condemn use of the transparent fabric, but instead pokes fun at the drastic differences in dress expectations for women placed into each of these labels.

In a similar manner, the elegiac poets praise the use of Coan silk when it is worn by their love interest. Tibullus is the first elegist to mention the fabric, expressing the hope that his love interest, Nemesis, may appear conspicuous in his gifts of Coan silk.293 By gifting Nemesis this expensive garment, she is both displaying her body and the poet’s wealth to any onlookers. In his next poem, since he laments the fact that Nemesis is demanding of him, Tibullus condemns Coan silk as the cause of greed for girls.294 Working within the convention of elegiac poetry, the poet takes on the persona of a poor lover trying to please a greedy mistress. Her greed is demonstrated by her request of silk

293 Tib. 2.3.53-54.
294 Tib. 2.4.29-30.
fabric, which he wishes he can give her in the first example and complains that she expects it in the next poem.

Writing a few years after Tibullus, Propertius mentions Coan silk on three separate occasions in his poetry. He writes that his poetry takes its nature from his mistress Cynthia, and if she wears Coan silk, then his book will be of Coan silk. Here, he uses the fabric more broadly to refer to an earlier elegist from Kos. In the case of both Tibullus’ Nemesis and Propertius’s Cynthia wearing Coan silk, these women are likely not matronae or respectable women. This status then makes their use of the fabric appropriate. For Propertius, the fabric is associated with women. This is demonstrated by the god Vertumnus, who says that he can transform into both a man and a woman. In Coan silk he will become a non dura puella (4.2.23), both implying a complete transformation from his current form as a statue, and suggesting that he will become a more compliant elegiac puella than Cynthia. The poet thus uses the fabric more broadly than Tibullus. Moving beyond elegiac conventions of unfulfilled love and a greedy mistress, Propertius writes about the fabric to mention a predecessor from the island known for the fabric, and to subvert gender norms and characteristics attributed to the elegiac love interest.

Also writing during the Augustan age, Ovid plays upon the idea of luxurious gifts

\[295\] Prop. 1.2.2, 2.1.5-6, 4.2.3, and 4.5.23.
\[296\] Prop. 2.1.5-6: *sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere cogis, hac totum e Coa veste volumen erit*. On this verse and the metapoetic connection between Coan silk and the famous poet Philitas, see Keith (2008) 92. Also see Wyke, (2002) 149-152: “Even Cynthia’s clothing assists the identification of elegiac puella with elegiac practice, since *Cois* is used elsewhere in the Propertian corpus to signal the Hellenistic poet Philetas. Just as Elegia is adorned in a Callimachean delicacy, so Cynthia is decked in the poetic discourse of Philetas.”
\[298\] Dee (1974) 51. For dura connected to the elegiac puella in Propertius’ poetry: 1.17.16, 2.1.78, 2.22b.2, 3.5.2.
given from the elegiac poet to his *puella*, writing that a man should always approve of the clothing that his beloved wears. In the *Ars Amatoria*, he advises his male reader to compliment his beloved’s silk clothing and believe it to be suitable, with the implicit reminder that the luxurious fabric was much-criticized by moralists and was, in fact, frequently considered unsuitable.\(^\text{299}\) While the status of the elegiac *puella* in Ovid and the two previous elegists is ambiguous, mentions of Coan silk were intended to reveal her low respectability and make the poet’s devotion to his love interest even more surprising.

Altogether, the difficulty in attaining silk fabric, as well as its high cost, only increased its appeal. Worn by women of different social classes, the fabric blurred boundaries between respectability and immorality. The transparency of the fabric led to its erotic connotations and associations with the elegiac *puella*.\(^\text{300}\) When worn by both men and women, the fabric was a symbol of low morals, wealth, and overindulgence.

Since silk was imported from the East,\(^\text{301}\) the purchasing and wearing of the fabric meant that Roman wealth was being transferred to the provinces. Tacitus records such a complaint made by Tiberius in an address to the Senate. He writes:

\[
\text{quid enim primum prohibere et priscum ad morem recidere adgrediari? villarumne infinita spatio? familiarum numerum et nationes? argenti et auri pondus? aeris tabularumque miracula? promiscas viris et feminis vestis atque illa feminarum propria, quis lapidum causa pecuniae nostrae ad externas aut hostilis gentis transfreruntur?} \quad \text{(Tac. Ann. 3.53)}
\]

For what am I first to begin with restraining and cutting down to the old standard? The vast dimensions of country houses? The number of enslaved people of every nationality? The masses of silver and gold? The marvels in bronze and painting? The apparel worn indiscriminately by men and women,

\(^{299}\) Ov. *Ars am.* 2.298: *Sive erit in Cois, Coa decere puta.*

\(^{300}\) For the erotic connotations of women wearing Coan silk, see Lefebvre (2012) 19,88, 145, 170-171; Olson (2002) 20-22; and Maltby (2002) 2.3.53-54n.

\(^{301}\) For example, Prop. 2.3.15 describes silk from Arabia: *Arabio lucet bombyce puella*. MacMullen (1964) 451 on the weakened spirit connected with luxurious clothing from the East.
or that peculiar luxury of women which, for the sake of jewels, diverts our wealth to strange or hostile nations?

Here Tiberius makes several complaints on the decaying values of Romans, focusing specifically on the overabundance of wealth acquired and displayed by people of his time. Since Tiberius inherited the empire after the period of stability brought by Augustus, he then focused inward on displays of wealth. He criticizes first the large houses and the number of enslaved people owned, then mentions the precious metals and artwork acquired by wealthy Romans. He ends his list of luxuries with what he considers are the two most offensive vices: the usage of certain clothing by men and women (a complaint we will further examine in a later chapter), and the diversion of Roman luxury to both foreign and hostile nations.

Interestingly, even though both men and women spend money on foreign luxuries, he refers explicitly to women’s luxury (*illa feminarum propria*) that spreads Roman (and sometimes Roman male) wealth to foreign people. This focus on women spending money on foreign luxuries can in part be due to the fact that women *in potestate* or *cum manu* marriages would be spending money that came from male family members or spouses. When Roman men spend money on foreign luxury items, moralists and critics are more concerned with these men acting too feminine through their love of luxury. Livy blames the army for bringing luxury to Rome from Asia, making luxury also hated because it came from the East.\(^{302}\)

Seneca makes a similar complaint against women’s desire for foreign wares about two decades after the end of Tiberius’s reign. When describing silk clothing that scarcely hides the female figure, he complains that these garments are imported at a great cost to

\(^{302}\) 39.6.7.
merchants, in order that Roman matrons (*matronae nostrae*) may reveal as much of their body in public as they do in private.\textsuperscript{303} The specific mention of *matronae* is notable, since it suggests that they frequently wore the fabric. Female adornment such as luxurious garments and dyes were thus seen anti-Roman to moralist writers since they placed wealth in enemy territories.\textsuperscript{304}

It is important to note that these complaints, while they are critical of women’s preoccupation with adornment, ultimately originate from contact with non-Romans. While authors complain about women buying these luxuries, they are still considered better than non-Romans that are producing and distributing these items.\textsuperscript{305} Such is also the case in the late Republic as described by Lucretius, who laments that estates were lost in exchange for luxury goods.\textsuperscript{306} His use of territories as adjectives associated with these luxuries (Babylonian, Sicyonian, and Cean) puts special emphasis and criticism on the non-Romans themselves who distribute these items.

**Dyes and Colors of Clothing**\textsuperscript{307}

In addition to material, colors of clothing can also indicate the wearer’s gender, sexuality, and status. During the regal period, clothing often remained the natural color of the sheep’s wool (such as white, dark brown, reddish brown, or black).\textsuperscript{308} It was likely that during this time, clothing of lower-class Romans was made from undyed wool.

\textsuperscript{303} Sen. *Ben.* 7.9: *Hae ingenti summa ab ignotis etiam ad commercium gentibus accersuntur, ut matronae nostrae ne adulteris quidem plus sui in cubiculo, quam in publico ostendant*.

\textsuperscript{304} For a discussion of female adornment as anti-Roman, see Olson (2008) 88.

\textsuperscript{305} For this idea, see Upson-Saia (2011) 25.

\textsuperscript{306} *Lucr.* 4.1124-1130.

\textsuperscript{307} By dye, I refer to a substance that alters the hue of fabrics. Ancient dyes were often organic and sourced from fruits, berries, flowers, and plant roots.

\textsuperscript{308} Sebesta (1994b) 65.
Throughout Roman history, undyed wool garments were common for men to wear.\textsuperscript{309} Later Republican writers tend to view the regal period as a golden age before the time of luxury and dyed wool, so many ancient sources are biased towards portraying the regal period as a time when people were uncorrupted by the desire for luxury dyed goods, whether this is factual or not. During the regal period, wealthy Romans and kings could afford dyes from the Etruscans, but general interest in dyed clothing by the larger population increased only later into the regal period and throughout the Republic.\textsuperscript{310} As Rome expanded and became an Empire, the importation of dyestuff from various places increased and led to more possible clothing colors. Importation of clothing, coupled with developing technology, led to changing aesthetics in late antiquity.\textsuperscript{311} Completely patterned garments were predominantly worn by the very wealthy or generals during their triumph.\textsuperscript{312} This association was likely due to the extra effort needed to weave a patterned textile, which would thus increase the cost of such garments.

Aside from these changes in the color and pattern of garments that indicated wealth, the colors of fabrics themselves were also symbolic. Before examining the colors that women wore and the perceived meanings behind each color, it is first important to note a few caveats. To begin with, color in the ancient world was not an exact science. Methods of dyeing fabric were not controlled by exact measurements of thermometers

\textsuperscript{309} Olson (2017) 23, 107, 108, 113. There are still exceptions to this designation in moralist writings from Republican times to early Christianity, where even poor men and women wear colors reserved for wealthier people. For discussion within the works of Ammianus Marcellinus, see MacMullen (1964) 435-455.
\textsuperscript{310} In Plut. \textit{Vit. Num.} 17, Numa is credited with creating the first college of dyers, allowing for a widespread use of colors to slowly increase from this time. Sebesta (1994b) 66.
\textsuperscript{311} For late antique Roman clothing see MacMullen (1964) and Morgan (2017), who focuses on lower and middle class clothing.
\textsuperscript{312} Croom (2000) 88. Patterned tunics were also associated with wealth partly because a specific type of patterned tunic, called the \textit{tunica palmata}, was worn by a general during his triumph.
and time. Furthermore, we only have a limited knowledge about the preparation of dyes. One of our earliest ancient sources recording dye techniques was written in the second century BCE, by the Egyptian dyer and alchemist Bolos of Mendes. Little is known about this figure outside of his connection to alchemy, though his treatise on dyeing entitled *Baphika* later became a major source of information for Pliny’s section on dyestuff. Before these writings, techniques were kept secret and passed down from fathers to sons, or to apprentices. Treatises were often still obscure and inexact in their recipes. This imprecision in the dyeing process would lead different dyers to produce a variation of colors when using the same ingredients, resulting in more color variations than we read about in literature. Using alchemical texts as a source for dyes gives Pliny’s own text imprecision when used as a source for dye recipes.

Furthermore, colors in literature can be difficult to understand because of the challenge of using words to describe the many variants between certain hues. Writers were able to circumvent this difficulty through using comparisons to hues found in nature, but difficulty still remains for the reader in understanding colors apart from the biased descriptions and comparisons made in different literary works. Nevertheless, as most of our evidence on colors come from literary sources, it is important to remember the value in these writings as a resource on contemporary opinions on colors, rather than factual and detached descriptions.

313 Forbes (1964) 100.
315 Sebesta (1994b) 73.
Feminine Colors

The colors worn by women are best described in Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*. In Book 3 of the poem, Ovid advises women on hairstyles that they can wear to make themselves more attractive to men. Following this section, he mentions different color possibilities of clothing and gives advice on the colors most flattering on different women.\(^\text{319}\) Despite the length of this passage, it is worth quoting in its entirety:

Quid de veste loquar? Nec vos, segmenta, requiro
   Nec te, quae Tyrio murice, lana, rubes. 170
Cum tot prodierint pretio leviore colores,
   Quis furor est census corpore ferre suos!
Aeris, ecce, color, tum cum sine nubibus aer,
   Nec tepidus pluvias concitat auster aquas:
Ecce, tibi similis, quae quondam Phrixon et Hellen 175
   Diceris Inois eripuisse dolis;
Hic undas imitatur, habet quoque nomen ab undis:
   Crediderim nymphas hac ego veste tegi.
Ille crocum simulat: croceo velatur amictu,
   Roscida luciferos cum dea iungit equos: 180
Hic Paphias myrtos, hic purpureas amethystos,
   Albentesve rosas, Threiciamve gruem;
Nec glandes, Amarylli, tuae, nec amygdala desunt;
   Et sua velleribus nomina cera dedit.
Quot nova terra parit flores, cum vere tepenti 185
   Vitis agit gemmas pigraque fugit hiemps,
Lana tot aut plures sucos bibit; elige certos:
   Nam non conveniens omnibus omnis erit.
Pulla decent niveas: Briseida pulla decebant:
   Cum rapta est, pulla tum quoque veste fuit. 190
Alba decent fuscas: albis, Cephei, placebas:
   Sic tibi vestitae pressa Seriphos erat. (Ov. *Ars am.* 3.169-192)

What to say about dress? Don’t ask for brocade,
or wools dyed purple with Tyrian murex.
With so many cheaper colors having appeared,
it’s crazy to bear your fortune on your back!
See, the sky’s color, when the sky’s without a cloud,
no warm south-westerly threatening heavy rain.

See, what to you, you’ll say, looks similar to that fleece, on which Phrixus and Helle once escaped fierce Ino: this resembles the waves, and also takes its name from the waves: I might have thought the sea-nymphs clothed with this veil. That’s like saffron-flowers: dressed in saffron robes, the dew-wet goddess yokes her shining horses: this, Paphian myrtle: this, purple amethyst, dawn roses, and the Thracian crane’s grey. Your chestnuts are not lacking, Amaryllis, and almonds: and wax gives its name to various wools. As many as the flowers the new world, in warm spring, bears when vine-buds wake, and dark winter vanishes, as many or more dyes the wool drinks: choose, decisively: since all are not suitable for everyone. dark-grey suits snow-white skin: dark-grey suited Briseis: when she was carried off, then she also wore dark-grey. White suits the dark: you looked pleasing, Andromeda, in white: so dressed, the island of Seriphos was ruled by you.

Ovid first marks the transition from discussing hairstyles to clothing by asking the rhetorical question that he will soon answer: what should I say about clothes? Then, he commands a potential woman reader to not ask for expensive trimmings on her clothing or wool dyed an expensive shade. Since there are now many cheaper colors that she could wear, he thinks it madness that a woman should wear such expensive clothing and carry her wealth (suos census) on her person, a sentiment that echoes the section of Plautus’s Epidicus quoted in the previous chapter. That section from Plautus’s play tells us colors that were fashionable for women of his time, such as sea blue (cumatile) and saffron (crocotula). About two centuries later, Ovid too is interested in colors that were associated with women’s clothing. He tells his reader that woolen garments absorb as many different colors as are found in nature, and that she should choose her clothing colors carefully. The passage mentions colors that were considered flattering on a woman, considering both the price of the dye and the woman’s skin tone. He notes that

320 TLL s.v. cumatilis IV. 1378 lists three other references to the word, from Non. p.548, Titin. Comm. 11.4, and Comm. Instr. 1.10.3. TLL s.v. crocotula 4.1215 lists only one reference to the word in Non. p. 548.
colors do not suit every skin tone, and he uses mythological examples of both Briseis and Andromeda to claim that dark garments suit light skin, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{321}

This section serves several purposes in our discussion of Roman dyes. First, it tells us what dyes have come into the market during Ovid’s time (\textit{tot prodierint pretio leviore colores}, 171). It also shows his disdain for expensive clothing and his rejection of luxury dyes.\textsuperscript{322} Ovid’s role in this text is that of an instructor. In this book of the \textit{Ars Amatoria}, he aims to make women more pleasing to men, thus telling us how a man thought a woman should dress, rather than giving concrete examples of the colors she wore. This disdain for luxury dyes stems from both the view of luxury as anti-Roman and the elegiac convention of avoiding such display of wealth in favor of simplicity. The \textit{praecceptor amoris} was typically not a wealthy man, so encouragements to avoid wealth was advice that would make a love interest more attainable to the poet.

Further in the passage above, Ovid mentions colors that mirror hues found in nature, such as the blue of a cloudless sky and a yellow that resembles saffron colored flowers. Ovid rarely uses names of the colors that he refers to; instead, he relies on color comparisons found in the natural world. These comparisons distract the viewer’s attention away from the woman herself and onto the natural world and the realm of mythology.\textsuperscript{323} The reader is advised to choose colors that counterfeit nature and directly contrast with her skin tone.\textsuperscript{324}

\textsuperscript{321} For Ovid as a \textit{praecceptor}, see Downing (1999) 235. In this section, Ovid advises women to pick colors that will suit their skin tone and make them seem more desirable to men.

\textsuperscript{322} See the above discussion of luxury as Anti-Roman, and Olson (2008) 88. See also Downing (1999) 239 for Ovid’s preference for imitation as connected to the rejection of luxury.

\textsuperscript{323} Bradley (2009) 186. See also Gibson (2003) 170-171 on the significance to these mythological references.

\textsuperscript{324} See Bradley (2009) 186 and Downing (1999) 235, 240 on these colors as imitations of nature and foils to the reader’s natural color.
The excerpt above from *Ars Amatoria* mentions some of the colors that were worn by women and considered feminine. Specifically, the colors violet (*amethystos, amethystinus, ianthinus, and violaceus*) and saffron (*crocum*) are colors that were often associated with women or effeminate men.\(^{325}\)

Such perception held further into the empire and is described by Martial. In his epigrams, he mentions twice that violet was a color suitable for women, in addition to the color scarlet (*coccineus*). In the first instance, he writes about a man that tries to conceal his effeminacy by denouncing colors associated with women and effeminates, such as scarlet and violet.\(^{326}\)

In Martial’s second mention of scarlet and violet as colors associated with women, he writes that a man gifts an adulteress with robes of these colors, even though they are unsuitable for an adulteress.\(^{327}\)

Martial’s *Epigrams* are an especially useful context for understanding attitudes towards different colors in Rome during this time, since his poetry mocks men and women who fall outside societal standards. Color, then, was a way to visibly show who deviated from these norms. According to Casartelli, bright colors were typically suited for women and men considered effeminate; she states that if sober colors represented moral seriousness, bright colors signaled effeminacy or corruption.\(^{328}\)

It is possibly for this reason that another bright color, yellow (*luteus, flavus, or galbinus* in Latin), was also associated with women or effeminate men.\(^{329}\)

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\(^{325}\) See Llewellyn-Jones (2005) 57 for further discussion of saffron as a feminine color in Greek literature.

\(^{326}\) Mart. 1.96.6-7: *qui coccinatos non putat viros esse / amethystinasque mulierum vocat vestes.* On the color violet in Latin literature, see André (1949) 195-197. See also Olson (2008) 12 on the color violet as feminine.

\(^{327}\) Mart. 2.39. See Williams (2004) 43-44 for the idea that these bright robes contrast with the dark toga that was fitting for an adulteress to wear. According to the note in Porphyrio and Ps-Acro on Horace’s *Sat.* 1.2.62, the adulteress was forced to wear a dark toga as an indication of her transgression. The following chapter will devote more attention to togate women.

\(^{328}\) Of course, there are exceptions to this, such as the bright white of the *toga candida.* Casartelli (1998) 121.

\(^{329}\) Goldman (2013) 57.
the yellow color *luteus* was considered feminine because it was the color of the bride’s *flammeum*. The *luteum* dye was produced from either saffron or the weld plant (*resda luteola*), while most other yellow hues came from the madder plant or centaury. Pliny states that this orange-yellow color, which he compares to the color of an egg yolk, was a color especially valued and restricted to women because it was the color of their veil. Through this association between *luteus* and the *flammeum*, the color was considered acceptable only for women to wear.

There were, however, distinctions of status marked between the different shades of yellow worn. For instance, the color *galbinus*, a greenish-yellow shade, was a hue that often indicated people of a lower status. According to Pliny, *galbinus* was named after the oriole (*galgulus*), since the hue matched the plumage of the bird. Fortunata appears in the *Satyricon* with a belt described as *galbinus*. Previous scholars believe that the choice of *galbinus* suggests a fondness of new colors within the Satyricon: rather than use the more common term *flavus*, Petronius instead chooses the term of *galbinus* to indicate the freedwoman’s affinity towards newness. Gloyn, however, argues that this use of

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330 Sebesta (1994b) 66.
332 Yellow was so important to marriage that Tibullus equates marriage with *flava vincula* (Tib. 2.2.18).
334 Plin. *HN* 30.28; See also André (1949) 149.
336 Goldman (2013) 77: “the color *galbinus*… was introduced to the Roman world during the early Empire.” On *galbinus*, see also Plin. *HN* 30.96 and André (1949) 148-140. On the new colors that were favored by the wealthy, see Sebesta (1994b) 70. For scholarship on colors in Petronius, see Goldman (2013) 71-84, Grant (2004), 244-247.
galbinus is in line with the color’s association with lower classes, and that colors worn by
Fortunata lessen her status, while the colors associated with Trimalchio elevate his
status.337

Purple

While violet, scarlet, and all shades of yellow were colors restricted for use by
women and effeminate men, there were certain colors that women would not normally
wear. Of course, our knowledge of these colors is limited to descriptions from literary
sources and the attitudes of authors towards certain colors on women. This attitude was
also based on historical events occurring at the time when an author was writing. For
example, the lex Oppia included a ban on women wearing the color purple. Decreed in
the midst of the Second Punic war and after Rome’s massive defeat in the Battle of
Cannae, the lex Oppia was a set of sumptuary laws that restricted both wealth and the
display of it by women.338 Wearing luxurious clothing was thought to be unsuitable in the
wake of such a huge defeat, thus motivating the law to set the following restrictions.
Under the law, women were not allowed to enter the city by carriage, possess more than
one semuncia of gold, or wear a garment of various colors.339 Livy records the debate
over the law’s repeal, including its prohibition on women wearing purple garments. In
Livy’s account, Lucius Valerius Flaccus promotes the repeal of the law and asks his
audience: “shall women and women alone be forbidden the use of purple? And when
you, a man, are allowed to have purple on your outer garment, will you not permit your

339 Livy 34.1.3. For the term versicolor, see Goldman (2013) 135-141. As Culham (1982) 236 writes, Livy
does not give the exact wording of the law, making it difficult to understand what he means by the term
versicolor.
wife to own a purple cloak, and will the trappings of your horse be more splendid than the dress of your wife?” In other words, he points out that men and their horses can wear purple, while women cannot. Even though it was a luxury color that many Romans thought to be unfitting for women, especially during wartime, the repeal was necessary to keep harmony between the men and women. Soon after this debate, the law was successfully repealed. However, this did not prevent the spread of negative attitudes towards women wearing purple by moralist writers.

In poetry, many male writers discourage women from wearing certain shade of purple because of their costliness and association with power. Status associations with the color led male authors to consider it inappropriate for women to wear these colors. In the passage quoted earlier from Ovid’s Ars Amatoria, the poet discusses the colors he considers suitable for women’s clothing and immediately discourages women from wearing purple, since he believes that there are cheaper alternatives available.

Approximately one century earlier in the works of Plautus, purple was also seen as an unsuitable color for women to wear because of its expense. In the comedy Mostellaria, Scapha advises her mistress Philematium against perfumes, makeup, and gold. Of purple garments, she tells her mistress that a beautiful woman is more beautiful without any clothing than with purple garments. The purpose of this scene is to invoke humor from the juxtaposition of Philematium’s interaction with her attendant and the reaction of Philolaches, her eavesdropping love interest who has recently bought her freedom. Since Plautus writes around the time of the lex Oppia repeal, this line may even remind spectators that the law recently considered purple an unsuitable color for women to wear.

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340 Livy 34.7.2-3.
341 Ov. Ars am. 3.169-170.
342 Plaut. Mostell. 289: pulchramulier nuda erit quam purpurata pulchrior.
because such display of luxury was inappropriate amidst wartime losses. Scapha then tells her mistress not to adorn her natural beauty with anything but an agreeable attitude, a sentiment frequently seen in writers that are against female adornment.\textsuperscript{343} Since there was such a great cost tied to women’s adornment and to wearing the color purple (Plautus refers to the general hue of \textit{purpura}), the hue was not thought to be suitable for women.

Less than three centuries later, Juvenal similarly writes of the color purple appearing in a context that he considers unfitting for the color’s cost and status associations. In his sixth satire against marriage and women, he describes different types of women that he considers as acting inappropriately for their gender. One of the categories he mentions is the female gladiator. Although she will be discussed at length in chapter six, it is worth looking at the verse used to introduce the \textit{gladiatrix}: “who does not know of the Tyrian cloak and the wrestling oil for women’s use?”\textsuperscript{344} These lines indicate that the female gladiator is immediately identified by her clothing. Not only does she wear an \textit{endromis}, which is a cloak typically worn by athletes, but her cloak is the color of Tyrian purple.\textsuperscript{345} Due to the high cost of producing this shade of purple, Juvenal considers this description even more surprising and blameworthy for a female athlete to cover her sweating body in a color that was so costly. Like Plautus’s description, Juvenal’s portrayal of a female gladiator in purple is meant to shock the reader and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{343} Plaut. \textit{Mostell.} 290-292: postenequiquam exornata est bene, si morata est male. / pulchrum ornatum turpes mores peius caeno conlinunt. / nam si pulchra est, nimis ornata est. For discussion of the attitudes towards female adornment, see Wyke (1994) 134-151 and Olson (2008) 80-95.
\item \textsuperscript{344} Juv. 6.246-247: \textit{endromidas Tyrias et femineum ceroma} / quis nescit. See Courtney (1980) 250 on the \textit{endromidas}.
\item \textsuperscript{345} Watson and Watson (2014) 151 write that the \textit{endromidas Tyrias} is an oxymoron “suggestive of extravagance that is out of place, underscoring the woman’s high social status.”
\end{itemize}
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invoke disapproval at mismanaged wealth. Purple was unlike yellow in that it was not as acceptable a color for women’s clothing.  

White

White is another color that was not customarily worn by women, except in ritual contexts. White clothing was commonly created by leaving the sheep’s wool undyed. This fleece would not be pure white, despite sheep breeding that aimed to create white fleece. Nevertheless, undyed white wool was described as both albus and candidus. When attempting to produce white linen, the fabric was left in the sun to brighten. Garments in other fabrics were also bleached to produce a more brilliant white. In other words, white garments did not symbolize a purity or default garment color because it was a created color. As Croom notes, candidus was whiter than albus. This hue could be achieved by rootlet juice, sulphur, or chalk. Roman men running for public office would use chalk to make their togas a gleaming white. This type of toga, called the toga candida, was meant to help the political candidate stand out in a crowd. Casartelli gives a further reasoning for the white toga of the candidate: she connects the garment’s color to the supposed purity of its wearer’s intentions in political aspirations.

While it was more common for men to wear white garments (either the toga candida or the toga virilis), women usually wore the color only in ritual contexts. For example, the tunica recta worn by the bride was white, a color that Sebesta says, “was

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346 This nevertheless does not prevent women from wearing the color, and even with a ban on the color from later emperors, there is still record of its use by both men and women.
347 For more Latin terms meaning white, see Bradley (2009) 29 and André (1949) 25-42.
348 Bradley (2002) 29n70: "whiteness as stainlessness could only be achieved by literally staining clothes white." See also Cleland (2017) 26, 31.
351 Cf. Sebesta (1997) 531, who writes that the stola was usually white.
associated with the gods, consecration, and purity.”  

As discussed in the section of chapter two on bridal clothing, the wedding was a religious ceremony for the bride, an idea that was reflected in many aspects of her costume. In addition to her wedding day, white clothing was also mentioned for women in association with the cult of Isis. When describing initiation into the cult, Apuleius several times mentions clothing that is *candidus*.  

Since white clothing was unsoiled and without stain, it was the most suitable color to wear in ritual.

Ovid is the only writer to contradict the idea that women’s use of white clothing was reserved for ritual contexts. In his section on colors that are suitable for women to wear (quoted in its entirety above), he closes his discussion of garments with the statement: “White suits the dark: you looked pleasing, Andromeda, in white, / so dressed, the island of Seriphos was ruled by you.”  

In this section, Ovid encourages women of darker complexion to wear white clothing. Then, he specifically addresses Andromeda and complements her appearance in white clothing while ruling the Greek island of Seriphos. While it is an unusual color for Ovid to encourage women to wear, he does not address the *matrona* in his work, and can thus suggest subversive clothing to his readers of less-respectable statuses.  

Additionally, when suggesting white for dark complexions he mentions Andromeda, a non-Roman woman from Greek mythology. This indicates that he likely suggests this color for non-Roman women, since Roman women would

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353 Apul. *Met.* 11.9, 11.10, and 11.15. Clothing of initiates is described as white linen (11.10: *candido linteamine*) to suit the ritual context. See earlier in this chapter on the significance of linen in ritual.
354 Further discussion of white clothing in ritual will appear in the final chapter on ritual dress. For the importance of white in ritual because of its cleanliness, see Celand (2017) 31.
356 Ov. *Ars am.* 1.31-32: *Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,/ quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes.*
likely not have the same dark complexion as the Aethiopian princess.

Ovid’s next mention of a woman wearing white clothing is in the *Amores*. He writes that he watches chariot racing with his love interest and describes dust from the races strewn on her white clothing (41: *alba vestis*), then directly tells the dust to leave his beloved’s snow-white body (42: *niveo corpore*). The mention of her white skin notably indicates that she does not follow his advice above on how white was suitable for those with darker complexions, but it does conjure an image of her white clothing as a part of the woman herself through matching her skin tone. It is also possible that the mention of white skin indicates her status, since her skin was not tan from performing manual labor outside of the domestic sphere. In these lines, the woman in white clothing is not named. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether she is foreign or Roman. Nevertheless, she is still not considered a respectable Roman *matrona* because of her attendance at the games with a man that is not her husband. Her white clothing is both a sign of wealth because the maintenance it requires, and as discussed earlier, characteristically un-Roman.

Purple and white were both colors that evoked a high status. Because of this, they were also not clothing colors that were considered appropriate for respectable women to wear. White was specifically associated with cleanliness and divinity, and since women held an inferior position to men, the color was used much less in their clothing than in men’s clothing.

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357 Ov. *Am.* 3.2.
358 However, purple was the most common color found in archaeological textiles at Mons Claudianus, which was not a wealthy community. See Bender Jorgensen (2004) 257 and Morgan (2017) 26.
359 See Maier *Kleidung II (Bedeutung)* RAC 21 on the color white and purity in the works of Plato and Plutarch.
In addition to men wearing purple and white more than women, certain hues were reserved for Roman men. For example, the *coccum* berry produced a shade of red (*coccus*) that was reserved for imperial military cloaks. Because of the color’s expense and status associations, Trimalchio wears a red *pallium* in the *Satyricon*. Certain shades of red held an apotropaic function and were used in funerary cult, while a shade such as *cerasinus* that was worn by Fortunata was instead associated with lower classes. Scarlet and purple were similar to each other in antiquity as both shades were likened to the color of blood. Similar to purple, scarlet is thought to protect youth against evil. Because of this apotropaic association, Quintilian suggests that the color not be worn by elderly people. Nonetheless, red was an important color that was largely associated with the army, though Croom differentiates between officers wearing red and common soldiers wearing white. The shade of red worn by women was thought to reflect a lower status, rather than the elevated shade worn by the Roman army.

**Dyes and Social Status**

For both men and women, certain colors reflected a lower status and poverty. As mentioned previously, colors worn by Fortunata in the *Satyricon* are thought to be colors worn by people of the lower classes. These colors, such as cherry red (*cerasinus*) or

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360 Plin. *HN* 22.3. See also Olson (2017) 77 and 79 for discussion of the military cloak (*paludamentum*) and 112 for the hue *coccinus*.  
361 Petron. *Sat.* 32.2. See Gloyn (2012) 265 for the elevation of Trimalchio’s status through the clothing he wore.  
364 Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.21. These colors are also associated with wealth, so the alternative advice here is that expensive and luxury dyes are not fit for the elderly to wear. See also Sebesta (1994a) 47.  
365 Croom (2000) 27. Goldman (2013) 32 says the color was used by generals. For a catalogue of colors used in military clothing, see Sumner (2009) 119-159.
greenish yellow (*galbinus*) were introduced during the time of Petronius and would appear garish on the newly rich freedwoman. They were cheaper versions that were mocked in comparison to more expensive hues such as *croceus* and *coccus*.

On the other end of the color spectrum, the most common colors worn by poorer Romans were those of undyed wool, such as dark grey, brown, and black. While these shades were referred to as *pullus*, *obsoletus*, and *sordes* to reference clothing of poorer Romans, undyed wool was commonly worn by most Roman men. This means that to an extent, clothing shade was accompanied by perception of status (whether through worn out garments or personal judgments) to lead to a labeling of clothing that was *pullus*. The term *pullus* was related to the verb *pallere* and the action of discoloring, while other terms for black included *ater*, which resembled a dull and opaque black, and *niger*, which was a glossier black. For women and men alike, dark clothing indicated that there was little care in appearance either because of an inability to do so or because of a period of mourning.

While undyed wool signaled that the wearer was of a lower status, wearing purple garments were an indication of wealth and luxury in the ancient world. There were several different shades of purple used in antiquity, with recipes for the same shade varying greatly among different dyers. Goldman notes that there were at least 7 different purple dyes used. Purple hues could be produced by berries, such as the

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369 Vitruvius writes that shades also varied by the region of shellfish (*De arch.* 7.13.1); For Vitruvius’s steps to producing dye, see *De arch.* 7.13.3. See also Rowland and Howe (1999), and Forbes (1964) 117-118.
370 Goldman (2013) 27.
bilberry or whortleberry. Ps-Democritus gives a recipe for dyeing wool purple with seaweed, lakcha, and rhubarb. The shade of purple called *hysginum* was made from the eggs of the *kermococcus vermilio* insect that was found in oak bushes of the near East.

Most often, though, purple dyes were obtained from different marine creatures. The most prized shade of purple was from the murex. The color *puniceus/phoenicius* was created from a whelk (*buccinum undatum*), which is a marine gastropod that lived in the sea near the Phoenician coast. *Purpura* was likewise created by crushing up marine creatures, but the shellfish used for this color were instead found in the Mediterranean.

The *buccinum* and *murex* shellfish were both crushed by the thousands to create an ounce of *purpura* dye.

Out of all these different hues produced, the most valued color was Tyrian purple. Pliny writes that this shade is especially valued because it had a blackish hue at first sight and was the color of congealed blood when held up to the light. Purple

371 Sebesta (1994b) 66.
373 Sebesta (1994b) 69.
374 Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 5.15 writes that fishermen would crush the animal and its shell while it is still alive, because if it dies beforehand, it will emit its dyestuff prematurely. He then goes into further detail on where and when the murex can be found, its appearance, and the quality of its dyestuff. If the shellfish were large enough, juice could be extracted without killing the animal from a white vein that was visible once the shell was removed. See Susmann (2015) 101n5 for further details on this method of extraction. However, large and small creatures were often crushed together (Plin. *HN* 9.60). For the production of purple dye, see also Marzano (2013) 145. For production sites, see Susmann (2015) 89-103.
375 Sebesta (1994b) 67. *Puniceus* and *phoenicius* are also terms used for scarlet, thus further demonstrating the connection between these two shades in antiquity.
376 Scholars vary on their estimates of the required shellfish needed to yield dyestuff. See Marzano (2013) 157-158 on quantifying dye production. Elliot (2008) 177 writes that 250,000 shellfish were required to produce an ounce of dye. Croom (2000) 26 writes that 10,000 shellfish were needed to produce one gram of dye. Casartelli (1998) 113 writes that 10,000 to 12,000 shellfish were needed to dye 100 grams of wool. In his experimental dyeing experiment, Friedländer (2006) uses 12,000 shellfish to produce 1.5 grams of dye, though Susmann (2015) 93-95 discusses the limitations to such experimental approaches to reproducing the dye.
377 Marzano (2013) 144 on the dating of Tyrian purple produced in Tyre to as early as 1000 BCE.
378 Plin. *HN* 9.62. For the significance of red as apotropaic, see Wunderlich (2011) and Elliot (2008) 177. Alfaro Giner (2013) 81 writes that this blackish hue and its association with blood likely derives from the color that blood would dry on a garment after battle wounds were inflicted.
dyestuff could also produce a reddish color, but Pliny notes that this shade is inferior to scarlet or purple hues that were blackish, since these shades were associated with blood and life.\textsuperscript{379} The color may also be valued because of its impermanence. Pliny begins his section on Tyrian purple right after his discussion of pearls, comparing the value of pearls to that of purple-dyed garments which will fade over time.\textsuperscript{380} Since luxury garments are not as durable as precious metals and stones, the ability to spend money on a perishable object was indicative of the purchaser’s wealth.

While descriptions of this color can vary, it was known for making fabrics stiff and causing them to smell unpleasant. In the \textit{Historia Augusta} of Severus Alexander, written in approximately the fourth century CE, the author writes that the emperor would avoid linen that was \textit{purpura}, since linen was a soft fabric and purple dye would make garments rough.\textsuperscript{381} This anecdotal evidence was intended to portray the emperor as avoiding luxury for the sake of comfort and practicality. In addition, creating a rough texture, purple-dyed garments were known to emit an unpleasant stench. Since the dye was made from crushed and boiled shellfish, it caused fabrics to smell of rotting fish.\textsuperscript{382} Pliny wonders at the dye’s importance as a status symbol despite its offensive odor (\textit{virus grave}).\textsuperscript{383} Strabo writes that Tyre was an unpleasant city to live in because of the many dyers’ houses.\textsuperscript{384} Martial also mentions the odor of purple dyed garments in two separate epigrams about women who smell unpleasant.\textsuperscript{385} By writing that these women smell worse than the dyed garments, he conveys the severity of their body odor. Yet, despite

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{379} Sebesta (1994a) 47. See Stocks (2015) 178 on the shade of purple associated with lifeblood.
\item \textsuperscript{380} Plin. \textit{HN} 9.60.
\item \textsuperscript{381} SHA \textit{Alex. Sev.} 40.
\item \textsuperscript{382} Goldman (2013) 29. Goldman writes that because of this odor, manufacturing plants were located in undesirable parts of the city. See also Marzano (2013) 147.
\item \textsuperscript{383} Plin. \textit{HN} 9.60.
\item \textsuperscript{384} Strabo, \textit{Geography} calls the city δυσδιάγωγος at 16.2.23.
\item \textsuperscript{385} Mart. 4.4.6 and 9.62.1-4.
\end{itemize}
the stiffness or smell of purple dyed fabrics mentioned by each of these authors from different time periods, these garments continued to be highly valued and expensive.\footnote{According to Pliny (HN 9.64), Cornelius Nepos said that in his youth, violet (\textit{violacea purpura}) was in esteem and would cost one hundred denarii per pound. The new shade of purple that replaced violet in its desirability was twice-dyed Tyrian purple (\textit{dibapha Tyria}), which, Nepos said, cannot be bought for even one thousand denarii per pound. In the Edict of Maximum Prices, twice-dyed Tyrian purple silk was the most expensive item listed, with its price at 150,000 denarii per pound (24.1.1a), in comparison to the price of gold at 72,000 denarii per pound (30.1.1a).}

Whether present in poetry or history, the color is important in revealing the economic status of its wearer. According to Pliny and Plutarch, purple garments were present as early as the time of Romulus, who is said to have worn the color himself.\footnote{Plin. HN 9.63 writes that Romulus wore a \textit{trabea} with purple on it. Plut. \textit{Vit. Rom.} 14 and 26 depict Romulus in both a purple tunic and a \textit{toga praetexta}. See Sebesta (1994b) And Reinhold (1970) 38–39, who reminds us that there is no real evidence of these kings wearing purple, and that these details may instead be attributed to the regal period by annalists and antiquarians.} At the same time, this mention of purple may be a retroactive imposition meant to bestow a current status symbol onto earlier Romans. Restrictions on purple clothing were even said to have appeared in the Twelve Tables, where according to Cicero, it was decreed that only a small purple tunic was allowed at funerals, thus meant to restrict displays of wealth during times of mourning.\footnote{Cic. \textit{Leg.} 2.59. See also Reinhold (1970) 40, who reminds us that the text of the Twelve tables is too corrupt to know for certain if this law was truly recorded in it. In addition to citing this as statute 10.3 from Cicero’s text, Crawford (1996) also cites Festus, \textit{Gloss. Lat.} 342L and Non. 14. 542.} Later in the regal period, women were granted the right to wear purple after Veturia and Volumnia convinced Coriolanus to cease his attack on Rome. Here, the mother and wife of the general became involved in conflict by making appeals to him, dissuading him from attacking Rome. As a reward for saving the city from conflict, women were then allowed to wear the expensive color reserved for those of a high status.\footnote{For the story of Coriolanus, see Livy 2.40, Plut. \textit{Vit. Cor.} 33-37, and Dion. Hal. \textit{Ant. Rom.} 8.38-55. Val. \textit{Max.} 5.2.1 writes that these events led to the right of Roman women to wear purple. See also Casartelli (1998) 118.}
In addition to purple-dyed clothing serving as a major sign of luxury, it was also a status symbol. In one of his epigrams, Martial writes of a poet who disrespects both women and men of a higher rank. He describes men and women through their clothing worn, calling the insulting poet a despiser of the *stola* and of purple.\(^{390}\) This statement notably separates women from any association with the color which, for men, takes on the significance that the *stola* has for women.\(^{391}\)

Despite the color’s presence in the clothing of children, and magistrates, and wealthy women, purple was subject to more regulations than any other color in Roman history. Caesar places restrictions on the color in the first century BCE, forbidding all people from being clothed in purple (*conchyliatus*) unless they fit his criteria of age and status. Later, Nero forbade Romans from wearing the colors amethyst or Tyrian purple (*amethystini ac Tyrii coloris*). When catching sight of a *matrona* wearing purple in the audience of his recital, the emperor had the woman stripped on the spot of both her clothing and property.\(^{392}\) Elite Romans, and especially emperors, faced concern over the loss of their status symbol. For this reason, Susmann argues that after an expansion of murex dye production sites in the mid-3rd century BCE, the 3rd century CE saw a decrease in the amount of production sites.\(^{393}\) She argues that this decrease was due to less need for these sites after restrictions on wearing the color. There was thus a long struggle for elites to set restrictions on the use of purple dye.\(^{394}\) It was difficult to truly restrict use of

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\(^{390}\) Mart. 10.5.1: *Quisquis stolaeve purpuraeve contemtor.*


\(^{393}\) Susmann (2011) 51-66.

the color as there was never a complete prohibition against wearing all shades of purple, though the decrease in murex dye production sites would have aided in maintaining the color’s significance as a status symbol.\footnote{See Croom (2000) 26 for the idea that there was never a ban on all shades of purple, and Napoli (2004) 123 for the ineffectiveness of attempts to limit the use of purple dyes.}

In his book dedicated to the symbolism of the color purple in antiquity, Reinhold writes that in the first century BCE there was “tension between moralizing and nationalistic hostility to purple” and the dramatic increase in use of the color.\footnote{Reinhold (1970) 43. See also Bradley (2009) 197.} Since purple dyes were extracted from shellfish found along the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, purchasing these dyed garments meant that wealth was dispersed into territories outside of Rome. This naturally upset moralist writers and authors, who criticized the foreignness of purple dye. Lucretius is one author that considered purple a foreign luxury, calling purple robes barbaric.\footnote{Lucr. 2.500-501.} Around this time, Tibullus too brings attention to the foreignness of purple-dyed clothing in his poetry. He tells different lands to compete to offer his mistress the best dyes, mentioning Africa and Tyre more specifically as major producers of luxurious dyestuff.\footnote{Tib. 2.3.57-58.} Just like luxurious fabrics discussed previously, expensive dyes were seen as anti-Roman because they represented foreign extravagance rather than the austerity valued in Rome’s past.

**Criticisms of Dyed Clothing**

Garments in expensive dye colors were also criticized because they were said to imitate the beauty of nature. This sentiment was most notably expressed in the writings of Pliny. In the first instance of this, Pliny describes the various shades of purple as
alterations of nature’s own adulterations, comparing the dyeing of fabrics to the staining of tortoise shells or creating alloys. After this, he specifically criticizes the color *amethystus* since its name referred to an herb used to ward off intoxication, yet the dye color was “drunk” since it soaked up Tyrian dye to form another adulteration. The use of the term *adultero* is especially significant because it reveals Pliny’s attitude that dyes are a falsification created from nature. This section of the text refers to alchemy through a criticism of changing materials. By focusing on colors that were associated with wealth, Pliny uses alchemy to criticize the fixation of wealthy on materials that were degraded from their original form found in nature.

Pliny continues with this idea of dyes as imitations in his discussion of dyes that compete with the natural hues of flowers. In this section, he discusses principal colors of Roman clothing and the flowers from which they derive their tint. He blames luxury for the rivalry between nature and production, stating that expensive fabrics challenge the beauty of flowers, and that the two rival each other for mastery. Pliny’s language surrounding dyes is largely unfavorable and focused on imitation. To him, dyes reflect human luxury and the desire to unnaturally reproduce the beauty found in nature. His negative attitude towards the unnaturality of dyestuff directly contrasts with Ovid’s advice on the colors that women should wear in the *Ars Amatoria* at lines 3.169-192. Each of the colors that Ovid advises women to wear is a color that specifically imitates a

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400 Plin. *HN* 21.22: “luxury … has even gone so far as to challenge, in her fabrics, those flowers which are more particularly recommended by the beauty of their tints…. Nature and luxury may enter the lists to vie for the mastery.” See also Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 88.
401 Bradley (2009) 188 writes that in general, clothing dyes “are steeped in language of imitation and deception.” Casartelli (1998) 123 also discusses the negative connotations of dyeing words, such as *mentiri* and *adultero*.
402 For further discussion of this section of the poem, see earlier in this chapter.
hue found in nature. While Ovid encourages women to imitate colors found in the natural world, Pliny rejects dye colors because they compete with colors found in nature.

Pliny even criticizes dyes by claiming that they gave women the means of attracting a lover and made seducers more appealing to married women.\(^{403}\) Although this statement only reflects his own opinion and disdain for dyed garments, he shows that dyes could be considered anti-Roman because they went against nature through contributing to the breakdown of Roman families. Wallace-Hadrill and Healy write that the function of science in Pliny’s *Natural History* is to teach man the proper use of nature to reverse moral decay in Rome.\(^{404}\) Man’s misuse of nature is a theme through the text, and according to Pliny, a misuse of nature leads to many vices such as those I have discussed here. While ancient critics of dyes do not seem to be concerned about the destruction of nature that was associated with dyes, producing dyestuff also meant a breakdown in nature by killing (or pulverizing) elements of the natural world in order to produce an unnatural substance. This substance would in turn lead to other vices that were associated with luxury, a criticism that appears several times in Pliny’s writings.\(^{405}\)

Criticisms against dyed clothing also appear in golden age imagery recorded by late Republican and early imperial writers. According to Casartelli, dyed wool was thought to have lost its original purity.\(^{406}\) In Lucretius’s *de Rerum Natura*, the poet contrasts the animal hides worn by early men with the purple and gold garments worn by

\(^{403}\) Plin. *HN* 22.3: “and all this for the purpose of finding the means whereby some mother of a family may appear more charming in the eyes of her paramour, or the seducer may make himself more captivating to the wife of another man.”


\(^{405}\) Wallace-Hadrill (1990) 86 writes of Pliny’s writing on the subject: “…Nature supplies, unasked and ungrudgingly, everything man needs, but that man, blinded by *luxuria*, abuses nature and turns it into the tool of his own destruction.”

\(^{406}\) Casartelli (1998) 122 writes that dyed garments were an emblem of splendor in the imperial age, when many new dye colors were produced and widely distributed.
men of his time. He idealizes the past, and says that these luxury items occupy the lives of men and make them weary by wars. While previous men fought for protection and survival, the men in Lucretius’s time (around the late first century BCE) were filled with envy and desire for luxury items. His near-contemporary, Tibullus also criticizes contemporary luxury items, writing that whoever collects emeralds or dyes fleece Tyrian purple should perish. Both Tibullus and Lucretius speak against the usage of Tyrian dye and associate this color with greed. Written slightly later, in his fourth Eclogue Vergil similarly considers dyed wool to be tainted. Here, he describes a golden age where wool is not able to falsify different colors. The term *mentiri* particularly demonstrates Vergil’s bucolic attitude towards dyed wool. In the *Georgics*, Vergil describes another idyllic scene void of modern luxuries and dyed wool. Here, he describes dye as Assyrian *venenum*, a word that often means poison. By describing dye as such, Vergil, like Lucretius and Tibullus, is nostalgic for a time before modern luxuries have invaded the natural world.

**Conclusions**

By the late Empire, the range of acceptable fabric patterns and colors began to change. For instance, in the third century CE, it was common for wool to be twice dyed, and mantles were decorated with purple and white roundels. In the 4th century, roundels and patches depicted elaborate figures, rather than just patterns. By the 5th century CE, wealthy men were wearing clothing with woven patterns covering the entire fabric, and

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407 Lucr. 5.1423-1424: *tunc igitur pelles, nunc aurum et purpura curis / exercent hominum vitam belloque fatigant.*
408 Tib. 2.4.27-28: *o pereat quicumque legit viridesque smaragdos / et niveam Tyrio murice tingit ovem.*
411 MacMullen (1964) 449.
most women wore tunics with stripes down the front and back of the garment.\textsuperscript{412} This striped tunic is also prevalent in many Fayum portraits, where the tunic is dyed one single color with the exception of a stripe in a contrasting color. As garment production techniques advanced, making colors cheaper and stripes easier to produce, variations developed from the garments described in this chapter.

Although colorful fabrics were reportedly as old as the first kings of Rome, dyed clothing typically suggested luxury and some degree of wealth. Most Romans wore wool in its natural color, with some exceptions. Literary sources tell us that the ideal woman could wear a vast range of colors, but would refrain from purple clothing, certain shades of red, and white outside of ritual contexts. In the case of wearing dyed garments, color was heavily symbolic and could indicate the gender, status, and even morality of its wearer.

Overall, fabric and color choices of garments were motivated by economic and aesthetic factors. Garments reflected the economic status of their wearer, alongside choices of personal taste that could have been influenced in part by images and other women that the wearer would observe. At the same time as dress can reflect these personal circumstances and agency, the women discussed in this chapter are “written” women. This means that their choices are limited by what authors choose to write. It is also important that all of these women are written by male authors. These authors use dress to characterize women and outwardly reveal their own opinions of a woman’s adherence to societal norms imposed upon women. In other words, while I have delineated strict categories of dress here, these categories are constructed and imposed by male authors onto the women they write about. When they mention a woman whom they

\textsuperscript{412} Croom (2000) 85, 88 and MacMullen (1964) 447.
consider overstepping boundaries of womanhood, they use clothing as a means of indicating that. Dress as a means of characterization was then a way of understanding morality through the lens of these writers.

Morality was so closely tied to representations of the dressed body. In the next chapter, I explore how these notions of dress as a form of characterization and reflection of morality could be deployed by male writers onto male subjects. In these cases, colors and fabrics determined to what extent these subjects followed societal norms ascribed to masculinity. It is through this next analysis, and the remaining chapters discussing the dress of women who strayed from societal norms, that we will then form conclusions concerning dress and deviations from societal expectations.
CHAPTER 4: The Effeminatus and the Adaption of Women’s dress

Thelyn viderat in toga spadonem,  
Damnatum Numa dixit esse moecham.  
- Mart. 10.52

The epigram above exemplifies the reasons why, in a study of women’s dress, it
is necessary to briefly examine the dress of men that were considered effeminate. The
eunuch of this poem, named after the ancient Greek word for female, is seen
wearing a
toga. Martial jokes here that the eunuch, wearing this garment common for both Roman
male citizens and adulteresses, should be interpreted as the latter rather than the
former. While the next chapter will focus on the significance of women wearing the
toga, this specific poem demonstrates the provisional nature of Roman masculinity. Since
the eunuch was not able to father an offspring, Martial asserts through his joking
interpretation of their dress and name that they should be considered a woman rather than
man. At the same time, Martial does not associate the eunuch with just any woman, but
instead he uses clothing to associate Thelys with an adulteress. Like a eunuch, an
adulteress has a gender presentation that does not align with societal expectations for
them.

This chapter focuses on men who subvert gender expectations and are considered
effeminate for doing so. Authors use status symbols typically reserved for women and
alter them to reflect the subversions of these men. They demonstrate how even acceptable
garments for women to wear could be considered transgressive clothing when worn by

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413 For bibliography of effeminacy in the ancient world, see especially Williams (2010), McDonnell (2006),
and Gleason (1995). For sources on effeminate clothing in the ancient world, see Davies and Llewelyn-
(2005), and Lindheim (1998).
414 “After he saw the eunuch Thelys wearing a toga, Numa said that (s)he was a convicted adulteress.”
415 There is much debate on whether or not the adulteress actually wore a toga (as perhaps suggested in this
poem). See chapter five for further discussion of these women, who likely only wear the garment within
literary occurrences to reflect their sexual openness.
men. Looking at the dress of effeminate men and their use of female garments gives us a better picture of how Romans understood the relationship between clothing and gender. In examining how authors construct effeminacy, we will see how women’s garments can be altered to create symbols of transgression. Effeminate dress reveals the constructed nature of masculinity and the lower status ascribed to women and associated with femininity.

**Latin Terminology**

Broadly speaking, an effeminate man is one who has traits that are associated with women. While this term is often derogatory in English, I use it solely in reference to men that are called by the term *effeminatus* in Latin texts or having traits and behaviors associated with effeminacy according to Roman authors. These traits can refer to certain mannerisms such as gait, voice, or gestures. It can also refer to a man wearing a style of dress typically associated with women. Like androgyny, which refers to an amalgamation of masculine and feminine elements in dress and mannerisms, the effeminate man’s use of women’s dress prevents them from falling neatly into a gender binary as understood in Roman society. Unlike an androgynous person, whose gender is undetectable, effeminate men are still recognizable as men, but their behavior and dress do not correspond to those expected to align with men. In this section, I discuss clothing of effeminate men as a combination of dress elements considered feminine and garments associated with men. Often resembling clothing of women in certain characteristics, effeminate men are not considered cross-dressers since often they still wear male garments. In this section I outline the different elements of dress used to create the

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Roman concept of the *effeminatus*. By using features of dress reserved for women, these men reject traditional notions of Roman masculinity and face mockery for their association with women.

There are several terms that the Romans used to refer to an effeminate man. The most direct translation of effeminate is the Latin word *effeminatus*. Deriving from the verb *effemino*, which can also mean “to enervate,” *effeminatus* always held negative connotations. The word derives from the verb meaning “to make feminine.” This extended meaning of the word demonstrates that femininity was looked down upon, especially for anyone who was not already feminine. The words *mollis* and *delicatus* were also used to refer to someone who was effeminate, with *mollis* being used as an insult and *delicatus* used to refer to an enslaved boy who was the passive partner of penetrative acts. *Cinaedus* is another term frequently associated with effeminate men, though it can refer to either a man who deviated from gender norms or more specifically to a man participating in certain sex acts. This term is often used as a slur, and was associated more with gender liminality than with sexual acts.

**Characteristics of Effeminati**

There are numerous different acts or mannerisms could result in a man being labeled as an *effeminatus*, such as being a passive sexual partner, full-body depilation, frequent smiling, sneezing, and exaggerated hip movements. The clothing of

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417 *OLD* s.v. *effemino*.
418 Olson describes a man that is *effeminatus* or *mollis* as one who “does not embody traditional masculine looks.” Olson (2017) 135.
419 See Adams (1982) 123 on *cinaedi*, and 194, where he writes that the term initially referred to a dancer.
420 For further discussion of the term, see Surtees and Dyer (2020) 17 and Penrose Jr. (2020) 35.
421 Strabo 14.1.41 describes dialects and mannerisms (“ὁ ἄλλος τῆς ἡθοποιίας”) that were popular among *cinaedi*. For a full list of effeminate characteristics and mannerisms, see *RAC* s.v. *effeminatus* esp. 635-638, 647-649. See also Williams (2010) 125-159. Olson argues for a distinction between the *cinaedus*,
effeminate men would further present their bodies as transgressive and associate them with femininity. In general, clothing that signaled effeminacy included some aspect of female dress but was not necessarily restricted to garments worn by women. Tertullian describes this manner of dress as that which “estranges [a man] from nature and modesty (natura et modestia), deserves sharply fixing gazes, pointing fingers, and exposing nods.” In other words, he believes that effeminate clothing is worthy of criticism because it is against both nature and modesty. Since it oversteps societal norms, Tertullian suggests societal shaming as a punishment for gender deviant dress. In what follows, I enumerate the different elements of women’s dress that were adopted by men to signal men that were labeled as effeminate.

**Clothing and Sexuality**

In the case of women who wore men’s garments, there were no accusations or criticism against the woman’s sexual preference. This is because to assume a woman’s masculine dress altered her sexuality would mean that she would become the penetrator in sexual acts. Instead of giving gendered cross-dressing women this active role, the next chapter will demonstrate that heterosexuality remained, but sexual appetite of these women was enhanced beyond what was considered modest for a woman. The use of men’s clothing was thus considered a source of blame, reflecting modesty rather than sexual preference. Thus, for cross-dressing women represented in Roman literature, there

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who was the passive partner in sexual acts, and the figure she calls a Roman dandy, a man who cultivated his dress and appearance. Since Roman authors do not make this distinction in their writing and often accuse the dandy of passivity, I do not stress this distinction here and instead focus on the clothing of the figures described in literature. For Olson’s description of the Roman dandy, see Olson (2014) 202-205, and (2017) 145-149. For movement and gestures associated with *cinaedi*, see Corbeil (2004) 120-123 and Gleason (1995) 64-67, 83.


was little connection between clothing and sexual orientation represented by male authors.

This was not the case for men wearing women’s clothing or adapting features of women’s dress. By wearing garments that deviated from what was socially accepted for them, the wearer’s status as a man came into question, as did his active role of penetration in sexual acts. While active penetrator roles were reserved for men, passive sexual roles were open to those that did not comply with the standard role associated with masculinity. For this reason, any form of dress that did not conform to the societal standard for men resulted in accusations of effeminacy.

**Clothing and Effeminacy**

Typical clothing worn by men include a short-sleeved tunic and cloak. Citizen men would wear the toga, a cloak of Greek and Etruscan origin which had a curved hem and sometimes a bordering stripe, depending on the status of the man. The toga would drape over the left shoulder and wrap around the body, allowing the curved hem to be visible when facing the wearer. Men’s garments were often made of undyed wool with little ornamentation.

In contrast, clothing that was considered effeminate was often labeled as luxurious. This is because expensive items such as silk fabric and costly dyes (discussed below) were often associated with women, who were criticized for diverting Roman wealth abroad. For men to do the same and display their wealth through wearing

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424 See Dover (1989) for further discussion.
425 For the appearance of the toga, see Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.139-149. For scholarship on the Roman toga, see especially Rothe (2019), Goette (1990), and Wilson (1924). See especially Rothe (2019) 17-19 on the origins of the toga.
426 See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Roman attitudes towards luxury garments.
expensive foreign items then called into question their masculinity. Luxury garments suggested a man that challenged Roman traditional masculine values of self-control, austerity, and sturdiness.

In terms of fabric feel, soft fabrics are associated with women, and as a result, men wearing them were considered effeminate. Fabrics such as silk that were called mollis led to accusations that a man’s character is also mollis, whereas men of sturdy disposition and morality are instead described as wearing coarse clothing.\footnote{For example, Tertullian contrasts the coarse wrap that Cleomachus initially wears with the thin and loose garments he exchanges them for when he falls in love with a cinaedus (De pall. 4.4.1, also Strabo 14.1.41). See also Hunink (2005) 205.} Since it is important for the orator to have neat attire as he presents himself to others, this concern for appearance sometimes leads to accusations of softness and effeminacy.\footnote{For the clothing of the orator, see Quint. Inst. 11.137-149. For careful appearance associated with effeminacy, see Williams (2010) 142.} Aulus Gellius, for example, writes that the orators Demosthenes and Hortensius wore clothing that resulted in such accusations. Rivals of Demosthenes are said to have criticized his use of soft clothing (malakoi chitoniskoi) and his carefully groomed appearance, considering his attention towards his looks as evidence of passivity.

Neatness in appearance was also a source of criticism. A useful figure to think about here is the dandy, who paid close attention to their appearance and were often accused of effeminacy.\footnote{For the dandy figure, see Olson (2017) 145-149.} One such example is Hortensius, whom Gellius criticized for neatness (munditia) in appearance and a carefully arranged toga.\footnote{Gell. NA 1.5. For elegant dress as effeminate, see Williams (2010) 142 and RAC 629.} Gellius writes that Lucius Torquatus called Hortensius ‘Dionysia,’ after a well-known dancing girl. In other words, Torquatus equates Hortensius with a woman due to his grooming habits. In the cases of both these orators, soft clothing and a care for appearance leads others to accuse
them of effeminacy.\footnote{Quint. \textit{Inst.} 11.3.137 states that too much care or neglect in one’s appearance was reprehensible.} A concern for the body and its adornment is typically associated with women; thus, by men having a certain level of refinement (though no level is ever specified), they were considered dandies and associated with effeminacy.

Just as women are criticized for wearing silk fabrics, men wearing these fabrics are also censured and labeled as effeminate because of the fabric’s transparency, cost, and softness.\footnote{Out of these three characteristics, women were criticized for wearing the fabric because of its transparency and cost. Soft fabrics were, in fact, considered suitable for women. See chapter three for further discussion of women wearing silk.} Since clothing is often used to reveal someone’s character, softness signaled someone who was thought to lack mental or physical toughness. Transparency, like ungirt garments, suggest a man exposed and open to attack. Because of its cost and connection to effeminacy, the emperors Tiberius and, later, Tacitus forbade men from wearing silk.\footnote{Tac. \textit{Ann.} 2.33: \textit{ne vestis serica viros foedaret}; this prohibition is also mentioned in Cass. Dio 57.15. For Tiberius’s restriction on the fabric as a means of the members of the senate controlling one another, see Hildebrandt (2013) 59. SHA \textit{Tacitus} 10.4: \textit{holosericam vestem viris omnibus interdixit.}} Nevertheless, its use by several emperors proves the ban difficult to enforce. For example, Suetonius writes that Gaius wore both women’s garments and silk clothing.\footnote{Suet. \textit{Calig.} 52. Gaius’s clothing choices are especially noteworthy in Suetonius’s biography, since the author writes that he transgresses several dress norms by stating that he neither follows conventions of dress for citizens, men, nor even humans. See Gurley (1993) 186-187 for discussion of this passage. See also McLaughlin (2016) 18 for Tiberius’s ban on silk and its use by subsequent emperors. Hildebrandt (2013) 61 points out that \textit{subsericum} garments allowed emperors to wear clothing fit for their status while also avoiding criticism associated with luxury.} Within the \textit{Historia Augusta}, the use or avoidance of silk clothing enabled the reader to distinguish between respected and so-called bad emperors.\footnote{For the significance of dress in the \textit{Historia Augusta}, see Rothe (2019) 114-116 and Harlow (2005) 143-153.} Elagabalus was also known for his affinity for feminine style of dress and was even said to have desired to become a woman; thus his dress was meant to align with this gender identification.\footnote{Cass. Dio 80.16.4-7 and Varner (2008) 200-201.} In the \textit{Historia Augusta}, he is labeled as the first Roman to wear a garment made
completely from silk (*holosericus*). Following his reign, Severus Alexander was then praised in the for his simplicity of dress and aversion to silk. By the time of Aurelian, silk was so expensive that a pound of it was worth a pound of gold. Thus, emperors described as wearing silk were considered bad rulers because the ruinous cost of the fabric and its connection to foreign luxury.

Not only does silk fabric reveal the decadence of an emperor, but when worn by any Roman man, it signaled a connection to femininity. Pliny supports this connection between silk fabric and women’s clothing in his condemnation of men wearing the fabric. He writes:

>nec puduit has vestes usurpare etiam viros levitatem propter aestivam: in tantum a lorica gerenda discessere mores, ut oneri sit etiam vestis. assyria tamen bombyce adhuc feminis cedimus. (Plin. *HN* 11.27)

Nor do even men feel ashamed to make use of these garments because of their lightness for the summer: for, so greatly have customs dissipated from wearing a cuirass that a garment even is too heavy. Yet the produce of the Assyrian silkworm, we have thus far yielded to women only.

Here Pliny suggests that men should avoid wearing silk, despite the coolness that the fabric provides in the summertime. The fabric’s ability to compromise a man’s claim to masculinity, according to Pliny, is more important than the comfort provided by the garment. He laments that men of his day have softened, since those of the past wore armor without complaints, while men of his own time consider regular clothing too heavy.

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437 This is attested in *SHA Heliogab.* 26. Garments made completely of silk were prohibited approximately two centuries later in the *Cod. Theod.* (15.9.1), but Elagabalus gave *holosericam* robes as gifts (*SHA Heliogab.* 29). A contemporary to Elagabalus, Herodian writes that the emperor hated Greek and Roman garments since they were made of wool, and only approved of Syrian cloth (*Hdn.* 5.5.4), which was less coarse.

438 *SHA Alex. Sev.* 40.

439 For silk trade in antiquity, see McLaughlin (2017), Hildebrandt (2017) and chapter three of this dissertation.

440 For the connection between luxury and effeminacy, see Olson (2017) 135-165 and Anthony Corbeil (1997) 119-122.
to wear. This statement recalls Juvenal’s comment in Satire six on the gladiatrix, who
complains that silk garments are too coarse for her skin.\footnote{Juv. 6.259-260. See chapter six for further discussion of the \textit{gladiatrix}.} In both cases, the weight of
armor contrasts with that of clothing. While Juvenal considers the \textit{gladiatrix} to be
hypocritical for bearing armor but complaining at the weight of silk, Pliny bemoans that
men of his time find garments to be too heavy, and probably could not even wear a
cuirass. Pliny ends this section with a remark that men have at least not adopted Coan
silk, an especially thin silk fabric, for their own use yet, thus far leaving that fabric to
women.\footnote{Dalley (1991) 121.} He considered silk too luxurious for regular use by men, and since he
discourages extravagance, he believes the fabric a source of shame even when used for
comfort in hot weather. The delicate fabric was in direct opposition to the toughness that
was expected of the Roman male.\footnote{For further discussions of Roman masculinity, see for example McDonnell (2016), Williams (1999), and
Gleason (1995). For discussion of masculinity and clothing see Olson (2017), Vout (1996) 204-220, and
Stone (1994) 13-45.}

\textbf{Bodily Exposure and Effeminacy}

A visible marker of a man considered effeminate is his loose and unbelted
clothing. This is because an unbelted tunic was often synonymous with the unarmed man
who was defenseless against attacks. Such connection is evident in Greek with the
meaning of \textit{γυμνός} as both naked and unarmed. A possible Latin parallel can be found in
the verb \textit{discingo}, which references an ungird man and an effeminate one. Juvenal
(8.120) uses the verb to describe Marius’s victory over Africans. Livy (27.13) and
Suetonius (\textit{Aug.} 24) use the term in reference to generals who punish their soldiers by
forcing them to stand outside his tent in an ungirt tunic. Since skill in warfare was a significant was important to a Graeco-Roman construction of masculinity, loose and unbelted tunics signified a body open to penetration and loose morals that deviated from acceptable masculinity.

Loose garments could also hamper easy movements, so belted garments signaled that a man was prepared for any action. According to Cassius Dio, Julius Caesar was said to have worn loose clothing, which then caused Lucius Cornelius Sulla to warn against the “ill-girt boy.” Suetonius also described Julius Caesar as caring too much about his appearance: he writes that Caesar trims his hair, along with plucking and shaving it. Similarly, Seneca describes Maecenas as wearing a loose flowing tunic, and connects the dress of Maecenas to his lax morals. An unarmed man is one that can be penetrated and defeated in battle; thus, an absence of a belt and loose clothing associated him with passivity and effeminacy.

Silk clothing and other garments that were created through a loose weave were associated with effeminate men because of their revealing nature. Just like the nude male body that was often considered shameful outside of select contexts, a man with minimal or transparent clothing exposed his body, and by extension his character, to personal attack. A loosely woven fabric, just as a loosely girt tunic, exposes much of the male body, leaving it unarmed and open to assault. Transparent togas were referred to as

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444 For further discussion of the belt and its connection to effeminacy, see Olson (2017) 16, 143-144 and Schmitt-Pantel (1977) 1064.
446 Cass. Dio 43.43.4.
447 Suet. Iul. 45.
449 For scholarship on negative attitudes towards male nudity in Rome, see Hallett (2005), esp. pgs. 61-101. See also Cordier (2005) for an anthropological approach to the topic.
multicus, tenuis, vitreus, or perlucidus, loosely woven with silk, wool, or linen.\footnote{For further Latin usage of the word \textit{multicus} see Schol. Juv. \textit{Sat.} 2.66, Tert. \textit{ Pall.} 4.4, and Petron. 30. For \textit{tenuis} in relation to clothing, see Verg. \textit{Aen.} 8.33, Tib. 2.3.53, Ov. \textit{Ars} 3.445, Juv. \textit{Sat.} 6.259, and Apul. \textit{Met.} 10.31. For \textit{vitreus}, see Tac. \textit{Ann.} 3.29, Suet. \textit{Cl.} 1.1, Ov. \textit{Am.} 2.9.48, Apul. \textit{Met.} 5.30. For usage of \textit{perlucidus} to refer to garments, see Hor. \textit{Sat.} 1.2.101, Sen. \textit{Benef.} 1.3.3 and Sen. \textit{Contr.} 4.7.1, Val. Max. 6.9.1, Hist. Aug. \textit{Car.} 20.5.} In Juvenal’s criticism of an orator wearing a soft and transparent garment, he imagines the orator saying in defense that he is blazing in the July heat (\textit{sed Iulius ardet, / aestuo}, 2.70-71). This reply recalls Pliny’s earlier criticisms of such complaint. Juvenal writes that the orator should appear nude in court, since madness is less shameful than transparent garments (\textit{nudus agas: minus est insania turpis}, 71). In this line, his disgust at the use of silk in the courtroom suggests that any sign of femininity, luxury, or bodily exposure was unsuitable for the male-dominated space of the courtroom and masculine profession of oratory. Context and gender-appropriate garments are more important to Juvenal than comfort and bodily exposure. Transparent clothing was then connected with bodily exposure and shamefulness, both of which were associated with effeminacy rather than masculinity.

While the exposed male body was an indication of a man with an effeminate style who was considered open to passivity, a man whose body was covered with too much clothing was also the subject of reproach. Garments that had long-sleeves and reached the floor, like transparent garments, were only considered acceptable for women to wear. The second century Christian writer Clement of Alexandria draws a connection between effeminacy and long garments when describing clothing that trails the ground, “impeding walking and sweeping the ground like a broom.”\footnote{Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Paedagogus} 2.11.} Trailing garments thus collected dust and made walking more difficult. Since men were expected to partake in activity within
the public sphere, trailing garments were considered blameworthy as they would hamper ease of movement in public.

In an earlier instance of men condemned for wearing long garments, Cicero describes Catiline and his followers as effeminate men through their combed hair, carefully groomed beards (or lack thereof), and long-sleeved tunics reaching the ankles. Cicero compares the voluminous garments of these men to the sails of ships, declaring that their width prevents them from being classified as togas. By noting the departure of these garments from the typical man’s toga, Cicero effectively presents Catiline and his associates as men whose dress and concern for appearance likens them to women. Their crimes against the state then mirror their transgression of unsuitable clothing for their gender. For both Cicero and Clement of Alexandria, a male body enveloped by garments associated the wearer with a woman’s nature and restricted movement.

Aulus Gellius also describes the long-sleeved tunic and the stigma attached to its use by men. He calls these tunics *chiridotae* and writes that they were only acceptable for women to wear, since the garment hides the wearer’s arms and legs: *feminisque solis vestem longe lateque diffusam decere existimaverunt ad ulnas cruraque adversus oculos protegenda*. As opposed to transparent garments and their resulting exposure, long garments provided too much protection and concealment the male body, leading the wearer to face reproach because of this concealment. In this section of Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*, the author writes that Publius Africanus accused the orator Sulpicius Gallus of effeminacy due to Gallus’s use of a tunic with sleeves reaching his hands (“*quod tunicis

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452 Cic. *Cat.* 2.22: *quos pexo capillo nitidos aut inberbis aut bene barbatos videtis, manicatis et talaribus tunicis velis amictos, non togis.*

Gellius uses the adjective *delicatus* to describe Sulpicius Gallus as an effeminate man before quoting Africanus on the different signs of effeminacy. To add to the parallels between clothing and effeminacy, Gellius quotes Vergil on attitudes towards men wearing long-sleeved tunics, noting that the word *manicae* functions as an insult to the appearance of the Trojans. Gellius informs us that the long-sleeved tunic was a cause of censure for men, and would lead to accusations of effeminacy and assumptions concerning a sexual preference for passivity. The appropriate protective dress for men was instead armor, which prohibited penetration from enemy weapons. By using clothing to hide their body instead, men associate themselves with women and their use of voluminous garments to protect from the penetrative male gaze and attacks on their *pudicitia*.

**Colors and Effeminacy**

Aside from the style of a garment or the manner in which it was worn, color was an important signifier of clothing considered effeminate for men. Casartelli states: “if sober colors represented moral seriousness, bright colors signaled effeminacy or corruption.” In other words, bright colors were typically suited for women and effeminate men. Of course, there are exceptions to this, such as the bright white of the toga *candida*, which allowed the wearer to stand out but did not signal effeminacy.

One of the major colors associated with effeminacy was violet. This color was linked with effeminate men due to the color’s expense, perception as a luxury item, and

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by extension of these two qualities, association with women. Several mentions of colors tied to effeminacy occur in epigram, where authors use detailed descriptions of dress to insult the appearance and character of their opponents. For instance, Martial twice associates shades of purple with effeminacy in epigrams describing effeminate men. In the first instance, he writes of a man who denies accusations of effeminacy when the man denounces the colors scarlet and violet due to their association with women and such men. In the next instance, Martial assures his addressee that he need not worry about a man who spends much time near the addressee’s wife, since that man is effeminate. Conflating the man’s style of dress with sexual preference, Martial lists characteristics of effeminate men, such as their perfume, shaved legs, and purple clothing (“perlucidus ostro”). Here it is the luxury color ostro in conjunction with the transparency of the garment (marked by perlucidus) that leads to a portrait of an effeminate man. By careful grooming and wearing purple clothing, the man that Martial describes has characteristics associating him with women, thus making it appropriate to label him as an effeminatus. On the other hand, men did wear the color on praetextate garments to reflect their status. Such usage of the color did not incur censure because it reflected status and civic duty. However, certain shades such as amethystinus or ostrum, especially in conjunction with mannerisms deemed suitable for women, left men open to censure and label as an effeminate man.

While there were certain shades of purple that men were encouraged to wear, such as the purple found on the border of the toga praetexta, only women could wear shades of

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459 For purple as a symbol of luxury in opposition to Roman values of simplicitas and moderatio, see Bradley (2009) 197-200.
460 Mart. 1.96.6-7: quicoccinatos non putat viros esse / amethystinasque mulierum vocat vestes.
461 Mart. 12.38.3.
yellow without censure. The color was distinctly considered unmasculine due to its ritual significance for women. For instance, as Pliny states, the color was associated with women through its use on their bridal veils.\textsuperscript{462} Due to ties to women’s rite of passage ceremonies, men who wore yellow were considered effeminate and passive.\textsuperscript{463} Nero’s lover Sporus is one example of a passive man wearing yellow. In Suetonius’s account of Sporus’s marriage to Nero, he is described as wearing the \textit{flammeum}.\textsuperscript{464} Martial also ties the \textit{flammeum} to effeminacy when discussing its use during a marriage between two men in one of his epigrams.\textsuperscript{465} In addition to the color worn by men to indicated passivity in these two examples, yellow was also worn by eunuchs and initiates to the cult of Isis in Apuleius’s \textit{Metamorphosis}.\textsuperscript{466} He describes Galli (eunuchs of Cybele) in saffron robes, a shade of yellow that was considered particularly feminine in antiquity.\textsuperscript{467} This perception of saffron influences Cicero’s description of Clodius, the notorious cross-dresser who infiltrated the \textit{Bona Dea} festival. Clodius’s attire is labeled as \textit{crocata}, a saffron shade that likens him to eunuchs and a wearer of women’s ritual garments.\textsuperscript{468} In Cicero’s description of Clodius in a saffron robe, a mitra, women’s sandals, and a breast-band, Clodius not only wears colors associated with women, as eunuchs do, but he wears garments and accessories reserved for women, and is said to have adopted the voice and

\textsuperscript{462} See Plin. \textit{HN} 21.22 on the color’s association with women, as well as chapter three for a further discussion of the color.
\textsuperscript{463} See chapter two for complete discussion of bridal garments and the wedding ceremony as a rite of passage ritual for women.
\textsuperscript{464} Suet. \textit{Ner.} 28. According to Dio Chrys. \textit{Or.} 21.7, Sporus also wore his hair as a woman did, and regularly wore women’s clothing.
\textsuperscript{465} Mart. 12.42.1-3.
\textsuperscript{466} Goldman (2013) 57, 60, 62; Apul. \textit{Met.} 8.27. See also 11.3 and 11.8 for other instances of these eunuchs wearing saffron robes.
\textsuperscript{467} For the color saffron and its association with women, see Benda-Weber (2014) 132-134. Here, Benda-Weber also notes the connection between saffron and eastern luxury, which was another indication of effeminacy. See chapter three for further discussion of the color saffron and its association with femininity.
\textsuperscript{468} Cic. \textit{Har. Resp.} 44. See also Heskel (1994) 139-140.
walk of a woman. While the clothing description may have been appropriate if the garment were truly the color worn in this context, Clodius’s gender marks him as an intruder into the festival, and Cicero’s mention of saffron robes then serves as a means of politically slandering Clodius through an attack of his masculinity.

More often, when men are depicted as wearing yellow, their clothing shade is classified as *galbinus*. This color was a shift from the saffron dye common in women’s dress; instead, *galbinus* appears only in association with effeminate men, with the exception of Fortunata in the *Satyricon*. This color appears in one instance of Martial’s poetry, where he characterizes a man as effeminate to his friend Maternus by saying that he has *galbinos mores* (1.96.8). This assimilation of color to morality demonstrates how garments are closely tied to the wearer’s identity. Martial’s phrase also suggests that in order for his remark to be understood by readers the hue had to have strong connections to effeminacy. Juvenal also describes effeminate men wearing yellow clothing, one wearing the color *croceus*, and the other *galbinus*. Both authors, writing at approximately the same time, frequently use accusations of passivity as part of their invectives against opponents. They purposefully describe men in yellow clothing to indicate effeminacy and a morality they considered reprehensible. Since effeminacy often led to accusations of passivity, dress associated with effeminacy was thought to also reflect the wearer’s morality. For a Roman man to assume a passive position in sexual

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470 For accusations of effeminacy as a tool for political slander see RAC s.v. effeminatus 625-6.
471 Petron. Sat. 67.4.1. For this description as a commentary on Fortunata’s status and poor taste, see Gazzari (2019) 81, Gloyn (2012) 265, and Grant (2004) 244.
472 See Gazzarri (2019) for further discussion of the color *galbinus*. See especially pgs. 98-102 for the color’s association with *cinaedi*.
473 Juv. 2.97 and 6.387.
acts meant that they were degrading themselves and leading to questions against their morality and status as men.

From these elements of dress that were associated with effeminacy, it is clear that effeminate men adapted certain aspects of female clothing, but not necessarily the garments themselves. Clothing tied to effeminacy was thus distinct and separate from instances of cross-dressing. This is because garments worn could still be men’s garments, but they had features which were typically associated with women’s dress, such as silk or transparent fabric, saffron-dyed garments, or long-sleeved tunics. These features added onto men’s garments, and the embodied result of a man wearing what was perceived to be feminized garments, resulted in ridicule. The dress of an effeminate man need not have been women’s clothing in order for him to incur censure. Like instances of women wearing men’s garments, it is dress in conjunction with behavior that was often condemned by Roman authors. In every case, men were censured for wearing clothing that was considered feminine through features such as fabric, color, length, and drapery of a garment.

**Masculine-to-Feminine Gendered Cross-dressing**\(^\text{474}\)

When men do wear women’s clothing in Latin literature, often they are forced to do so for reasons of humiliation. In one such instance of imposing women’s clothing on a man, Plutarch reports that after the death of Crassus, the Parthians forced a captive resembling him to wear women’s clothing and ride on a horse in a mock triumph.\(^\text{475}\)

Orators often describe opponents in feminine dress to humiliate them, and generals were

\(^{474}\) For male cross-dressing in Rome, Campanile, Carlà-Uhink, and Facella, eds. (2017); Gold (2003); Raval (2002); Cyrino (1998); Lindheim (1998); Leitao (1995); Loraux (1990); and Delcourt (1961).

said to have made men stand in front of their tents all day in women’s clothing if they performed poorly in war.\textsuperscript{476} Since public life and warfare were crucial to the Roman understanding of what it means to be a man, failure to perform these actions with the right attire led to censure by ancient writers.\textsuperscript{477}

Criticism of effeminate dress derived not only from a failure to perform the societal roles prescribed to men, but also from association with women. For instance, Aristotle classifies women as deformed men (ὁσπερ ἄρρεν ἐστὶ πεπιηρωμένον).\textsuperscript{478} With this in mind, men who adapted elements of women’s dress were similar to women in that they were both distinctly not men. This category then produces a hierarchy with men at the top, and below them anyone else who is not male and correctly performing a man’s societal role.

Accusations of effeminacy, cross-dressing, and sexual preferences are all elements that, within ancient sources, characterize an emperor as a poor ruler: writers describe sexually passive emperors through either women’s clothing or garments with feminine aspects to them (mentioned above). Suetonius describes Gaius as wearing clothing that is more fit for a woman; the \textit{Historia} Augusta portrays Elagabalus in women’s dress when meeting with sex workers.\textsuperscript{479} Dio (80.11) writes that Elagabalus

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\textsuperscript{476} For accusations from rival orators concerning effeminacy, see Gell. \textit{NA} 1.5 and Aeschin. \textit{In Tim.} 1.131. See also Dyck (2001) and Heskel (1994) for dress used as a form of humiliation in Cicero’s oratory. For the punishment of soldiers, see Val. Max. 2.7.9; Livy 27.13.9, 35.1.7; Suet. \textit{Aug.} 24.2. See also Olson (2017) 16.
\textsuperscript{477} Brisson (2002) 63: “a man who refuses to bear arms or who is cowardly in warfare rejects the virility associated with his sex and passes over to the side of women.”
\textsuperscript{478} Arist. \textit{Gen. an.} 737a 27-28.
\textsuperscript{479} Suet. \textit{Calig.} 52. See also Joseph. \textit{AJ} 19.30. Suetonius also writes that Gaius transgressed several boundaries of dress beyond gender boundaries. For further discussion of emperors blurring boundaries between mortal divine dress, see Varner (2008) 185-205 and Garland (1995) 45-58. See also Heslin (2005) 231-232, in which he argues that accounts of cross-dressing emperors may likely have been a distortion of ritual practice. In this case, accounts of these emperors cross-dressing support my view that dress was used as a form of criticism and characterization. SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 26.5.
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desired to undergo a sex change, though there is no evidence that this happened.\textsuperscript{480} In these cases, clothing serves as a literary device signaling the outward reflection of the emperor’s character and their effectiveness as a ruler.\textsuperscript{481} It is difficult to determine the wearer’s attitude towards dress beyond these biased descriptions. In the case of these two emperors, authors link a concern for appearance to incompetence, since too much concern for the superficial meant not enough focus was directed on the Empire.\textsuperscript{482}

In contrast to clothing that led to ridicule, there were certain contexts in which cross-dressing was acceptable, namely contexts related to religious rites and rituals. For instance, Plutarch writes that priests of Hercules at Kos wore women’s dress when making sacrifices in order to honor Hercules’s period of cross-dressing while in servitude to the Lydian Queen Omphale. The two were said to have exchanged garments, with Omphale wearing his lion skin, and Hercules wearing the queen’s peplos.\textsuperscript{483} Tacitus also described priests in women’s attire in his Germania.\textsuperscript{484} Although both Plutarch and Tacitus mention these cross-dressing practices as foreign customs, they directed no criticism at these forms of transvestism since they are attached to religious rites.\textsuperscript{485}

\textsuperscript{480} Cass. Dio 80.11. For Dio’s treatment of Elagabalus as a criticism of Roman values, see Rantala (2020) 118-128.
\textsuperscript{482} Cf. Juv. 2.99-103. Here, Juvenal describes a man who uses a mirror before going to war, comparing him to the emperor Otho when accusing the man of placing concern for personal appearance above fighting for his fatherland.
\textsuperscript{483} Plut. Quaest. Graec. et Rom. 304. The story of Hercules and Omphale, and a description of their clothing exchange, appears as early as the mid-5th century BCE, in the plays by Kritinos and Ion (both titled Omphale). It then appears in the works of Propertius (3.1.17), Diodorus Siculus (4.31), Ovid (Her. 9.73, 101; Fast. 2.305-311), Seneca (HF 465-76), Statius (Theb. 10.646-649), Plut. (Comp. of Demetr. et Ant. 3.3), Lucian (Dialogues of the gods 13.2), Ps-Apollodorus (2.6.3-4, 2.7.8), and Fulgentius (Myth. 2.2).
\textsuperscript{484} Tac. Germ. 43.
\textsuperscript{485} Granted, Tacitus’s approach makes this type of rebuke less fitting within the context of his text. Nevertheless, the lack of censure towards this use of female dress is notable. For more on ritualistic cross-dressing, see Campanile et al. (2016) 83-134, Roscoe (1996) 195-230, and Leitao (1995) 130-163. See also chapter seven.
Conclusions

Just as women were censured for wearing certain items of clothing such as purple or silk garments, men faced the same criticisms. As Overing points out, cultural and social rules would constrain women and men alike and were not only limited to controlling women.⁴⁸⁶ Both were restricted in what clothing was deemed acceptable for use, albeit for different reasons. Luxury was condemned for men and women, but expensive fabrics and garments were especially reprehensible when worn by men, since luxurious clothing was considered suitable (though still blameworthy) only for women and foreigners. In acquiring both silk and purple-dyed garments, writers complain that Roman wealth was dispersed outside of the city and was thus considered anti-Roman.⁴⁸⁷ Effeminate men either adapted elements of women’s dress such as transparent clothing, or cross-dressed by wearing women’s garments as did Publius Clodius, Elagabalus, and other Roman men. Ritual cross-dressing of priests indicates that wearing women’s dress was acceptable in certain contexts, while in others it was condemned.

Attitudes towards effeminacy by many authors reflects their perceptions of sexuality and gender expectations. The use of feminine clothing when describing passive men suggests that passivity was equated with effeminacy.⁴⁸⁸ Since masculinity required constant performance before men defaulted to judgements of effeminacy, clothing offered a clear symbol for the public and for readers to determine which men did not properly inhabit their gender roles.⁴⁸⁹ In Martial’s epigram at the introduction of this

⁴⁸⁶ Overing (1986) 140-141.
⁴⁸⁷ For the idea of wealth as anti-Roman and more on silk imports, see Chapter three.
⁴⁸⁸ Williams (2010) 164.
chapter, the humor rests upon the notion that a eunuch is more female than male, since they do not perform typical male roles of penetration, procreation, and warfare.

Martial’s epigram can lead us to further hypotheses regarding clothing and genre. Moreso than instances of feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing, accusations of effeminacy and a man’s choice of garments appear within invective literature: both Martial and Juvenal criticize opponents in their works by insulting their dress. Here, as with cross-dressing women, transvestism is employed as a form of characterization. Court speeches also use an effeminate manner of dressing to insult opponents, and Christian literature, though appearing minimally here, employ clothing as a literary device serving to comment upon the wearer’s character. This use of dress within different genres becomes important in recognizing the limitation of sources; these sources do not describe historical dress so much as inform us of attitudes towards certain dress.

Clothing features that were considered effeminate inform us of how the body and its movements contribute to Roman understandings of gender roles. For instance, women were expected to cover their body in public, but men were criticized for doing so since long garments hampered movement in public spaces. This suggests to us that men were expected to be to be more active than women in public and required more ease of movement. For both men and women, wearing loose and unbelted clothing was unbecoming to the wearer. For women, this is because the belt holds garments of a respectable woman in place and protects her pudor. For men, an unbelted tunic was reflective of the unarmed man, open to attack and exposure while being unable to defend himself without his garments obstructing his movements. The proper defensive dress for

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490 Schmitt-Pantal (1977) 1063.
a man was armor, and thus wearing long garments indicated a deviation from men’s roles as warriors and a perception of concealment.

We have seen here that men who dressed as women were criticized for appearing too feminine. Conversely, the following chapters will show that women dressing as men were not praised for trying to become more masculine, but instead were condemned for trying to escape their femininity. Each case shows the negative attitudes authors held towards femininity. Notions of power and superiority were closely tied to gender, and since gender was reflected by the clothing worn, any misalignment between clothing and gender was a source of blame. These elements of women’s dress adapted and worn by men contrast effeminate dress with female transgressive dress. Both were condemned, but the former due to men reducing in status, while the latter due to attempts of women trying to avoid being ascribed a lower status.
CHAPTER 5: Transgressive Women and Traditional Roles: Using Clothing to Characterize Respectability and Marital Status

“Si genus sublime dicendi parvis in causis, pressum limatumque grandibus, laetum tristibus, lene asperis, minax supplicibus, summissum concitatis, trux atque violentum iucundis adhibeamus? ut monilibus et margaritis ac veste longa, quae sunt ornamenta feminarum, deformentur viri, nec habitus triumphalis, quo nihil excogitari potest augustius, feminas deceat.”

- Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.3

The quotation above is from the Quintilian’s discussion of the importance of proper speech delivery. Here, Quintilian says that a well-written speech will not be effective if it is delivered cheerfully when its subject calls for sadness, or if speech delivery is too gentle when the subject requires harshness, and so forth. In the quoted section above, Quintilian compares these incongruities between content and its delivery to a woman wearing triumphal garb. Since triumphs were reserved for victorious generals, a title held strictly by men, triumphal clothing on a woman was inappropriate dress for both her status and gender. In this chapter, I will discuss clothing as a means of communication of status and gender, and then I will examine what cross-dressing communicated and how it was received. I then discuss specific cases where women are dressed in a manner that does not appropriately reflect their status and/or gender.

In studying these cases of cross-dressing women, I discuss the importance of marriage as an institution that regulates female dress. The ritual of a wedding marks the

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491 Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.3: “What use is it if we employ a lofty tone in cases of great moment, a cheerful tone when our matter calls for sadness, a gentle tone when it demands vehemence, threatening language when supplication, and submissive when energy is required, or fierceness and violence when our theme is one that asks for charm? Such incongruities are as unbecoming as it is for men to wear necklaces and pearls and flowing raiment which are the natural adornments of women, or for women to robe themselves in the garb of triumph, than which there can be conceived no more majestic raiment.”

492 Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.3.

493 See the introductory chapter for my definition of the term cross-dressing that encapsulates those that are dressed inappropriately not only for their gender but also their status.
transition for a woman of high status from the dress of childhood to that of adulthood.494 Before marriage, girls and boys from wealthy families would wear the same type of toga on ceremonial occasions.495 After the wedding ceremony, women then had to wear clothing that distinguished them from their male counterparts. As will become evident in this chapter, marriage (in addition to puberty, which usually occurred around the same time) transforms transgressive dress and behavior into what was considered acceptable. Conversely, the breakdown of a marriage or lack of a respectable marriage for a Roman woman was connected to deviant dress. Since devotion and faithfulness were the mark of a good wife, a woman’s marital status was tied to her morality (but notably, the same is not true for her husband).496 As mentioned in the second chapter, authors often reflect a woman’s morality through the clothing that she wears. It is thus no wonder that a woman’s behavior in a marriage is presented through garment descriptions.

**Clothing, Status, and Gender**

Before examining some cases where women were not dressed as they should have been for their status or gender, I want to first emphasize the importance of dress in revealing the identity of its wearer. Clothing can reveal the status of its wearer through several components of a garment’s construction. As mentioned in the previous chapters, certain colors and fabrics in antiquity were restricted to certain classes and were so expensive that they could only be afforded by men and women of the elite. Even simple garments were expensive for the average Roman. Rothe writes that the average worker, if

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494 See the section in Chapter two on the clothing of the bride and the possibility of a rite of passage ritual for girls similar to that of the Liberalia for boys. Girls of lower classes would not wear the toga praetexta, nor would a woman of lower status wear the stola and palla of a wealthy woman who was able to avoid manual labor. For the clothing of lower-class girls and women, see Morgan (2017).
495 See the section titled “Clothing of Freeborn Roman Girls” in Chapter two.
496 See Treggiari (2002) 205-228 on different Graeco-Roman theories on marriage and what constitutes a good wife.
earning around 50 denarii a day, would need to work about 40 days to be able to afford a simple cloak.\textsuperscript{497} For an extremely class-conscious society, it was important that dress publicly demarcated one’s social rank and status. The previous chapters detail several criticisms (by upper class authors) on issues of dress not properly reflecting rank and status.

In addition to status, clothing is a means of wordlessly communicating one’s gender to the world. As Woodhouse writes, “we announce our sex when we dress according to conventions of gender.”\textsuperscript{498} In other words, we are expected to align our dress with garments that are prescribed for our gender presentation. In fact, gender is so heavily aligned with our perceptions of dress that, as Entwistle points out, many bathroom signs only distinguish gender through the clothing worn by figures on the bathroom door.\textsuperscript{499}

Even in antiquity, clothing was so intertwined with the concept of gender and identity that attitudes towards cross-dressing were seldom positive. Since clothing was thought to correspond with gender, and gender identity, wearing clothing that did not properly align with one’s sex was an indication to others of unusual sexual behavior.\textsuperscript{500} For instance, colors of a garment, fabric transparency, and even manner of drapery was prescribed for different genders. When a person’s sex did not correspond to the gendered clothing worn, the wearer faced reproach. At the same time, it is important to note that there exist common garments (\textit{communia}), which are used by men and women without censure, such as two forms of outerwear, a \textit{penula} and \textit{pallium}.\textsuperscript{501} These garments

\textsuperscript{498} Woodhouse (1989) 144.
\textsuperscript{499} Entwistle (2000a) 141.
\textsuperscript{500} Krenkel (2016) 474.
\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Dig.} 34.2.23.2 Ulp. 44 ad sab.: \textit{communia sunt, quibus promiscui utitur mulier cum viro, veluti si eiusmodi penula palliumve est et reliqua huiusmodi, quibus sine reprehensione vel vir vel uxor utatur.}
indicate that despite many instances of censure for inappropriate clothing, there were still some gender-neutral items of dress that were unidentifiable as masculine or feminine.

**Graeco-Roman Attitudes Towards Cross-dressing**

When discussing Roman attitudes towards cross-dressing, it is important first to recount briefly the major ideas behind and examples of cross-dressing that have influenced Roman ideology. Namely, many Greek instances of transvestism in rite-of-passage rituals, mythological figures, and drama, have all influenced Roman conceptions of cross-dressing.\footnote{For cross-dressing in Greek rites of passage rituals and drama, see Facella (2017) 108-120, Ormand (2003), Leitao (1995), Bullough and Bullough (1993) 23-44, Zeitlin (1981), and Crawley (1902). I will further discuss rites of passage in my final chapter, when I examine ritual transvestism of Roman women.} According to Brisson, many rite-of-passage ceremonies involve cross-dressing to acknowledge both the masculine and feminine elements within people and nature.\footnote{Brisson (2002). See also Ackroyd (1979). This idea will be further explored in the final chapter.} The mythological heroes Hercules, Theseus, and Achilles all wore women’s clothing at some point in their adventures. Even deities were associated with cross-dressing: Dionysus was known as the god of cross-dressing, since he was reared as a girl early in his life.\footnote{Ps. Apollod. Bibliotheca 3.28. An example of cross-dressing characters in drama include Pentheus from the *Bacchae*, Mnésilochus in *Thesmophoriazusae*, and the women at the start of the *Ecclesiazusae*. See Delcourt (1961) 25 on the effeminacy of Dionysus in the *Bacchae*.} It is perhaps due to his dual masculine and feminine identities that many surviving plays include cross-dressing. The duality of masculine and feminine identity thus had a significant role in the storytelling and ritual of ancient Greek society.\footnote{See Bullough and Bullough (1993) 23-44 on the different reasons and contexts for transvestism in the Greek world.}

In addition to this role in ritual and mythology, transvestism was sometimes thought to bring women closer to an ideal standard of beauty. Krenkel writes that the rationale behind women’s gendered cross-dressing in Graeco-Roman literature lies in the
idea that male writers considered ideal beauty as that which combined a feminine and masculine appearance.\textsuperscript{506} Dio Chrysostom expresses this idea when he writes: “the most beautiful figure among males was the effeminate, but among the females, on the other hand, the opposite.”\textsuperscript{507} In other words, a feminine appearance was considered attractive in boys, since adapting elements of women’s dress made them most appealing to certain men, as in the example of Nero and Sporus discussed below. For women, Dio Chrysostom suggests that a masculine appearance was the ideal. His views here are oversimplified, as men and women whose appearance did not align with their perceived gender were ridiculed for it.\textsuperscript{508}

Writing during the rule of Domitian, Dio Chrysostom uses Sporus as an example of a young boy who was castrated in order to remain attractive to the former emperor.\textsuperscript{509} This same mix of masculine and feminine elements of appearance was used to attract men in other parts of the empire, as well as in Rome. In a poem from the \textit{Palatine Anthology}, a woman named Dorcion wears men’s clothing and partakes in male activities. In the poem, her look of desire indicates that her appearance is fashioned in such a way so that she can attract a man.\textsuperscript{510} Clothing thus allowed women to (at least partly) assume an ambiguous identity that was neither completely masculine nor completely feminine. In these cases, assuming male elements of dress allowed women to attract men.

\textsuperscript{506} Krenkel 468.  
\textsuperscript{507} Dio Chrys. \textit{Or.} 21.3.  
\textsuperscript{508} The previous chapter examines men ridiculed for a feminine appearance, and these next three chapters discuss instances of women condemned for trying to appear masculine.  
\textsuperscript{509} Dio Chrys. \textit{Or.} 21.6. He ignores here, however, that the emperor’s tastes were distinctly different from the norm. For example, see Suet. \textit{Ner.} 28.1 and Garland (1995).  
\textsuperscript{510} \textit{Palatine Anthology} 12.161: “Dorcion, who loves to sport with the young men, knows how to cast, like a tender boy, the swift dart of Cypris the Popular, flashing desire from her eye, and over her shoulders . . . with her \textit{petasus}, her \textit{chlamys} showed her naked thigh.”
Despite this notion of ideal beauty as an amalgam of masculinity and femininity, attitudes towards transvestism in Rome were not viewed as achieving some standard of beauty because the cross-dresser instead represented transgressions of strict gender boundaries. For instance, in contrast to the cloak and mantle that could be worn by either men or women according to the Digest, Tacitus writes that in the 1st century CE Tiberius made an address to the Senate on growing luxury and inflated prices of goods. Here, Tiberius notes the ineffectiveness of sumptuary laws in Rome, listing as one of the present vices clothing worn indiscriminately by both men and women. From this statement, we can speculate that there may not have been a clear distinction between the garments of men and women, but a desire for such a distinction. This statement also suggests that clothing not corresponding to a wearer’s perceived gender was a cause of censure. This passage gives a basic idea of the attitude towards cross-dressing during the Empire from a legal standpoint—that is, while wearing certain garments does not attract any criticism, wearing others would result in censure.

**Cross-dressing and Early Christianity**

During early Christianity there are even more sources proscribing best dress practices. Authors give specific details of how to avoid luxuries and material possessions. Clothing was then still an important means of communicating austerity, but instead of displaying wealth and status, writers encourage followers of Christianity to avoid these displays in favor of more simple garments. In addition to these suggestions for clothing,

511 Tac. Ann. 3.53: *promiscas viris et feminis vestis.*
512 Given Tiberius’s recent ban on silk (see Tac. Ann. 2.33 and Cass. Dio 57.15), it is likely that here Tiberius is specifically criticizing the use of silk garments by men. For more on men wearing silk, see chapter four.
513 For more on Greek cross-dressing, see Krenkel (2016) and Bullough and Bullough (1993) 23-44.
writers discussed in this section are explicit in their condemnation of cross-dressing, though this condemnation becomes more complicated when discussing cross-dressing women.

Clement of Alexandria writes the *Paedagogus* in the late 2nd century CE, aiming to instruct Christians on the best mode of living. In this text, he says that the purpose of clothing was to protect the body from the cold, and for this reason, men and women should wear the same garments.514 Such view was in line with early Christian values of austerity and avoidance of ostentatious dress. It aligns with Flugel’s notion of dress serving the purpose of modesty and protection, while denouncing what he considers the primary function of dress: a form of decoration.515

St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in the late fourth century CE, explicitly details a different attitude towards transvestism based upon Mosaic law and the roles ascribed to men and women. These comments on cross-dressing appear in his letter to Irenaeus, a layman about whom we know little. While Ambrose writes later than many of the authors that appear in this chapter, it is worth spending time to understand this letter because it is one of our only sources from antiquity that explicitly states attitudes towards cross-dressing women.

Ambrose frames his letter as a response to a question Irenaeus received on why the law against cross-dressing men and women was so severe. The Mosaic Law on cross-dressing that Ambrose cites at the start of his letter reads: “the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for all that

514 Clement of Alexandria *Paedagogus* 2.1.1.
515 Flugel (1930) 16.
do so are an abomination unto the Lord.” His first explanation for the severity of this law is that cross-dressing goes against nature. Ambrose writes “Nature clothes each sex in their proper raiment,” leaving him unsure of why anyone would want their gender to be misinterpreted. He then states that the “habits, complexion, gestures, gait, strength and voice” of men and women are all different. As mentioned in previous chapters, clothing is just one factor that comprises the outward identity of an individual. Here Ambrose states that these elements of a person’s appearance and mannerisms are different between men and women. He believes that nature hates incongruities, so a misalignment of dress and these other forms of self-presentation will displease Nature.

To support these differences in genders as fundamental to the essence of creatures, Ambrose then draws comparisons from the animal world. He writes that there are clear distinctions in the strength, noises made, and appearances of male and female animals to show that Nature makes clear physiognomic distinction between sexes. Since animals do not change the form given to them, he claims that humans should not desire to do the same.

Following the example of animals not desiring to change given qualities, Ambrose then picks up the issue at hand of men and women dressing in clothing that did not align with their sex. He writes that there was a Greek custom in which women sometimes wore a shorter tunic that was typically used by men, but that this use of a male tunic should be considered acceptable since women “imitate the nature of the worthier

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516 Deuteronomy 22.5 quoted in Ambrose, Epistolae 69.1. For context on this law, see also Bullough and Bullough (1993) 40.
517 Ambrose, Epistolae 69.2.
518 69.3.
sex.\textsuperscript{519} Accepting cross-dressing goes against the Mosaic law stated at the start of the letter but aligns with his own belief of female inferiority. This is particularly evident when he discusses men wearing women’s garments. According to Ambrose, men who do so are condemned because they assume the appearance of the inferior sex. He also writes that male-to-female transvestism was considered holy in pagan temples, therefore Christian law considers each man wearing women’s clothing an abomination.

Next, Ambrose stresses that gender-appropriate behavior is more important than gender-appropriate clothing. He says that women are to be silent in churches and defer to their husbands. Ambrose considers it shameful if a man behaves as women should, though he does not detail the specific differences he sees in male and female behavior. He concludes his letter with a mention of effeminate enslaved men, writing that chastity is lost when the distinction of sexes is not preserved.

The attitude towards cross-dressing presented in this letter is that such activity was acceptable for women, but not for men. This allowance, notably, was made for pagan women, distancing the practice from Christians. To Ambrose, cross-dressing men were considered a disgrace for three reasons: their incongruity with nature, connection to pagan rituals, and his notion of the female sex as inferior.\textsuperscript{520} He considers female cross-dressing unacceptable only because it went against the sex assigned to a woman “by Nature.” At the same time, he writes that it was acceptable for Greek women to wear male tunics, since by allowing women to dress as men, he believes that they imitate the superior sex. Nevertheless, instead of condemning women who wear male garments, he

\textsuperscript{519} 69.4.

\textsuperscript{520} Interestingly, Ambrose does not connect cross-dressing women to pagan rituals. Although more rituals involve men cross-dressing men than women, several rituals do require women to wear men’s clothing. Discussion of these rituals will appear in the final chapter.
writes that it is instead men’s behavior that women should not adopt. In other words, Ambrose believes that by dressing like men, women rightly aspire to imitate the nature “the superior sex.” Yet, when women decide to imitate men through behavior rather than just through appearance, this becomes unacceptable.

Ambrose writes in the 4th century CE during a period where there was a proliferation of cross-dressing female saint narratives.521 These narratives lead Bullough and Bullough to believe that female transvestism was acceptable during this period because it signaled a break from women’s previous lives and allowed them to gain a status that they could only achieve as men.522 In fact, both Ambrose and Jerome express the idea that becoming a saint would allow a woman to renounce her sex and be considered a man.523 Female saints, however, are only considered men for a brief period of time, always revealing their true sex by the end of the narrative.524 It is crucial to understand these saints as part of literary accounts, where transcending their gender was considered praiseworthy. Were these transformations to occur in reality, these women will likely face the condemnation that the cross-dressing women in this chapter face.

The use of masculine clothing by women in antiquity was unable to truly elevate a woman’s status. As will become evident in the remaining chapters, the use of men’s dress

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521 For cross-dressing female saints, see especially Upson Saia (2011) 137-165 and Hotchkiss (1996).
522 Bullough and Bullough (1993) 24 and (1974) 1385. See also Upson-Saia (2011) 101, where she writes that virtue was understood in masculine terms, thus requiring these saint portrayals to be masculinized in order to gain reverence.
523 Jer. Ep. libri 16 col. 567: “As long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called a man.” Also see Ambrose, Expositionis in evangelii secundum Lucum libri 10 n.161: “she who does not believe is a woman and should be designated by the name of her sex, whereas she who believes progresses to perfect manhood…” For further discussion of this idea, see Bullough and Bullough (1993) 50-51.
524 Even when disguised as men, they are still referenced as women. See Tommasi (2016) 121-134 and Upson-Saia (2011) 83-100 for further discussion of this idea.
only emphasizes the femininity of those wearing such clothing, presenting the woman as inescapably female.525

**Literary Cross-dressing**

While we do not have such explicit attitudes towards cross-dressing in earlier pagan texts, many of the issues discussed in these Christian texts are relevant for discussion here. For instance, in much of earlier pagan Roman literature, women who crossed gender boundaries were paradoxically not praised for their imitation of what was considered the superior sex. Instead, they faced reproach from authors and sometimes from those around them. Unlike Christian writers, who say that women could reach a state of “perfect manhood” through imitation of men (as Ambrose writes in his letter), earlier cross-dressing women were unable to reach the status of men.526 They were not considered men because of their dress, nor did the incongruity between their dress and gender allow for them to be fully considered a woman.

In what follows I will discuss the literary attitudes towards cross dressing rather than the ideas put forth by law or religious practice (which will be the topic of the final chapter). Cross-dressing women in literature may not reflect the reality of clothing for women in the Roman world. Instead, authors dress women as men in order to characterize their behavior and reveal their own attitude towards what they consider transgressive behavior for a woman. As an example of how authors create a woman’s transvestism to compliment transgressive behavior, I turn first to Juvenal’s sixth satire.

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525 This was not the case for men, whose feminine clothing allowed for a gender that did not align with their sex.
526 Ambrose (1887, bk. 15, col. 1938). See also Jerome (1884, bk. 16, col. 567) and Bullough and Bullough (1974). This attainment of a higher status is only in theory, since in many stories that depict cross-dressing female saints, women reveal their disguise and only achieve sainthood as women. Their male disguise is then only a means of accomplishing certain tasks barred from women at the time. For more on this idea, see Tommasi (2016) 129.
where he sarcastically suggests that a woman who acts like a man should also dress as one:

illa tamen gravior, quae cum discumbere coepit
laudat Vergilium, periturae ignoscit Elissae,
committit vates et comparat, inde Maronem
atque alia parte in trutina suspendit Homerum.
cedunt grammatici, vincuntur rhetores, omnis
turba tacet, nec causidicus nec praeco loquetur,
altera nec mulier. Verborum tanta cadit Vis,
tot pariter pelves ac tintinnabula dicas
pulsari. iam nemo tubas, nemo aera fatiget:
una laboranti poterit succurrere Lunae.
inponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis;
nam quae docta nimis cupit et facunda videri
crure tenus medio tunicas succingere debet,
caedere Siluano porcum, quadrante lavari. (Juv. 6.434-447)

But she is still worse, who as soon as she reclined at a table praised Vergil,
pardoned Dido as she was dying, matches and compares the poets, then she hangs
Vergil in one part of the scale and Homer in another part. The grammarians yield
to her, the rhetoricians are conquered, and the whole crowd is silent: no pleader,
no auctioneer can speak, nor another woman. So great a force of words falls that
you might say all the pots and bells were being struck. Let no one tire the trumpet
or clash a cymbal any longer: one woman will be able to aid the laboring moon!
Even the wise place an end to good things; for she desires to seem too wise and
eloquent, she ought to gird her tunics up to the knees, to sacrifice a pig to
Silvanus, and to take a public bath.

In this sixth satire of Juvenal against marriage and on the vices of women, this excerpt
ends a list of the different types of women that Juvenal abhors. Still worse than the
woman from the previous section who frequents the baths, exercises, and drinks
excessively, is the woman here who is too concerned with appearing wise and eloquent.
She is well-educated and holds discussions on Vergil and Homer, comparing the two
poets to each other. Grammarians and rhetoricians yield to her as she talks with such
energy and volume that prevents even a pleader or auctioneer from speaking. According
to Juvenal, she is the worst woman because she is too educated, and her eagerness to
appear wise is not only inappropriate for her sex, but it demonstrates her lack of restraint and her interference in activities that were typically reserved for men.  

Especially interesting is Juvenal’s reaction to this behavior in the last two lines of this section. He writes that because of this woman’s masculine behavior, she should dress like a man, partake in male rites, and take a public bath among men.  

Dressing as a man would entail wearing the male tunic, which was belted at the waist rather than below the bust. Men would gather extra fabric above their belts in order to shorten the tunic for ease of movement. Girding the tunic above the knee, as was common for men to do, would then leave much of the legs exposed, whereas women’s tunics were always floor-length in order to cover the body and thus preserve modesty. To Juvenal, since this woman’s actions are not appropriate for her gender, he remarks that she should match her actions and education with male ritual and clothing. Doing so would not make her behavior more tolerable, and Juvenal certainly would not approve were she to take his advice; instead, this suggestion indicates that less discordance between actions and dress would be more suitable. Thus, while cross-dressing was considered subversive, Juvenal’s belief that this well-educated and vocal woman should dress as a man is a sarcastic suggestion as to how she can better perform the gender that she imitates.

This is not the only instance where Juvenal toys with the idea of women wearing the clothing of men. In another brief instance, he describes a girl who watches her boyfriend race his chariot on the Via Flaminia. Juvenal describes her as wearing a lacerna ("lacernatae amicae"), with the direct reference to her dress signaling its

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528 Cf. Watson and Watson (2014) 220-221 on the rites of Silvanus and potential female devotees. Watson and Watson also note here that quadrans refers to the as that was the admission fee for men to enter the baths, while the fee for women was higher.
importance. It is, in fact, noteworthy that she is described in this type of cloak, since this is the only attestation of a woman wearing a *lacerna*. This cloak was typically worn by men on top of their togas, especially on long journeys or during inclement weather. It is also a garment commonly worn by soldiers.

Commentators have explained this use of a *lacerna* by attempting to map it onto modern cultural references. Braund writes that this woman wears the cloak because she “evidently thinks it fashionable to look ‘butch,’” ascribing the modern concept of butch identity and its use of masculine dress to ancient women. Braund assumes here that Juvenal describes the woman with this clothing to reflect the woman’s own choice and belief of what is fashionable. Meanwhile, Courtney explains this appearance of the *lacerna* by writing: “either [her boyfriend] has put his cloak around her to protect her from the dust, or (which seems more pointed) this ‘fast woman’ has dressed as a man.”

From the text itself, there is no reason to believe that the boy gives his cloak to his girlfriend, other than the fact that it is a garment normally worn by men. A boy giving his cloak to his girlfriend for protection is another modern idea with little connection to the text or the ancient world. Courtney’s label of the woman as promiscuous is speculation based upon an idea that women in men’s clothing act as men and are the opposite of a modest Roman woman. Such is the case with the previous example, where Juvenal

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529 Juv. 1.60-62: *dum pervolat axe citato / Flaminiam puer Automedon? nam lora tenebat/ipse, lacernatae cum se lactaret amicae.* (”…while the boy swiftly flies by on his chariot, an Automedon on the Flaminian Way? For he himself was holding the reins, while he shows himself off to his girlfriend wearing a *lacerna*”).
530 Perhaps this one attestation is why Cleland *et al.* (2007) 108 mistakenly believe that it is a garment worn by both men and women.
532 For instance, Prop. 3.12.7 and 4.3.18; Mart. 8.10.1. See also Braund (1996) 90 on the use of *lacernae* by soldiers.
533 Braund (1996) 90.
534 Courtney (1980) 80.
expects an overly educated and immodest women to match clothing with her behavior. By clothing this woman in a men’s cloak, Juvenal describes her as a woman who somehow does not match the characterization of an ideal and respectable Roman woman. Nevertheless, “fast” is a description based only on speculation. It is unknown as to exactly how this woman’s behavior would match her clothing but perhaps her presence in the chariot race, as if she is a warrior in battle, might indicate her deviancy and result in an avoidance of clothing her in female dress.

In some cases, women were presented as men in order to demonstrate the deviancy of those who require the wearer to dress as such. For instance, Suetonius writes that Augustus tries to restrain the lawless behavior of actors, giving a specific example of what he considers licentia of three different actors. One of these men, named Stephanio, was an actor who was whipped with rods through three theaters because a matrona acts as his servant. It is especially important to note that the woman who serves the actor is not just a matrona, but one that has her hair shorn in a manner that gives her the appearance of a boy (“in puerilem habitum”).535 The word habitus that Suetonius uses can also frequently refer to clothing, though it is more likely here that reference is made to appearance in general because of the matrona’s short hair. Thus, the boyish appearance of the matrona in this case is not a characterization of the woman herself, but instead represents the actor’s disregard of status, as he is waited upon by a woman of higher status than himself.

In this instance of a woman resembling a man, her appearance is attributed to her connection with an actor. Actors and actresses in Rome were often of lower status and

535 Suet. Aug. 45.4.
little-esteemed by Roman elite.\textsuperscript{536} In contrast to the status of actors is that of the \textit{matrona}. This term suggests a woman of a high social status, chastity, and often marriage. For a \textit{matrona} to thus attend to an actor is already unusual. Since the \textit{matrona} has the appearance of a boy (\textit{in puerilem habitum}), the actor’s position of power over her is even less acceptable. Rather than punish the \textit{matrona} for her appearance or attribute her boyish look to her own preference, her servitude to Stephanio leads to the actor’s punishment. He has morally corrupted a Roman \textit{matrona}, an action considered especially reprehensible considering that Roman law viewed women as the weaker sex and thus, more vulnerable.\textsuperscript{537} Her male appearance is then not meant to reflect her own behavior, but the licentiousness of the actor whom she serves.

It is possible that Stephanio’s preference for a boyish-looking female servant hearkens back to the notion that ideal beauty combined both masculine and feminine elements, such as the women in the Muslim world mentioned previously. Like the \textit{matrona} here, these women have short haircuts and were said to have resembled a boy. They also wear men’s clothing to make them appear even more androgynous. While the \textit{matrona} likely only wears her hair short, the description of her as having a boyish appearance (rather than a masculine one), suggests that she still resembled an object of attraction for a Roman man. Nevertheless, what is important here is that this \textit{matrona} is only described with such an appearance to emphasize the boldness of Stephanio and justify Augustus’s punishment of him. Literary cross-dressing was thus not only a tool of

\textsuperscript{536} For the status of actors, see Duncan (2006), Starks (2004), Easterling and Hall (2002), Edwards (1997), and Ghiron-Bistagne (1976).

\textsuperscript{537} For laws protecting the weakness of women, see Gai. \textit{Inst.} I.144, I.190; Ulp. I.1; \textit{Cod. Theod.} 12.1.137.1.9; 9.14.3.2.4; D.16.1.2.2; and Evans Grubbs (2002) 51-60.
characterization for wearers of transgressive clothing, but also a means of describing and condemning those who dress others in clothing that questions gender boundaries.

**Dress and Marriage Formation**

Representations of clothing in literature might reflect the behavior of those wearing them or of the men dressing the wearers of such clothes; they might also reflect marital status. So, for example, a woman in a marriage that was legitimate in the eyes of Roman law (that is, a woman in a *iustum matrimonium*) was often depicted as wearing the proper clothing for her gender. A legitimate Roman marriage was tied to a woman’s morality and chastity, and since authors describe clothing as a means of revealing a woman’s morality, clothing that transgressed gender boundaries could indicate deviant behavior within a marriage, or behavior that was to be corrected by marriage. This section will explore the extent to which transgressive clothing was tied to marital status. Since marriage was a ritual that required its own set of garments, it is not too surprising that acts signifying a change in marital status or a breakdown of a marriage will then result in the wearing of different clothing.

As discussed in the second chapter, bridal clothing marks a transition between the clothing of childhood and adulthood. During special occasions, Roman girls were allowed to wear the *toga praetexta* like their male counterparts. They gave up this right after they wore the *tunica recta* and *flammeum* of the marriage ceremony, and instead would wear the *stola* and *palla* of a married woman for the remainder of their lives, though there was some variation in garment styles and a large variety of colors worn.  

Clothing was able to outwardly project a gender identity on its wearer. Such is the

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538 See chapters two and seven for a more detailed description of the married woman’s clothing.
case for Iphis in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, where clothing assists in the character’s initial transvestism, and implicitly reifies her transformed gender identity. In the transformation myth of Iphis from Book Nine, Iphis’s transition from marriageable to married is connected to a change in clothing. In Ovid’s account of the myth, a poor Cretan man named Ligdus warns his pregnant wife Telethusa that they will have to kill their child if it is a girl. Ligdus tells her that he orders this command unwillingly because he believes girls to be more burdensome to care for and does not think that she would able to help the family as much because “fortune denies strength to girls.”539 After this conversation with her husband, Isis appears to Telethusa in a dream, and tells the pregnant woman to betray her husband’s orders by raising the child regardless of its sex (“tollere quicquid erit,” 699). When Telethusa gave birth to a girl, she obeyed the goddess’s command by raising the child as a boy. Ligdus named the child after his grandfather Iphis, a name which sounds remarkably similar to Isis, and which pleases Telethusa because, as Ovid tells us, the name is fitting for both boys and girls.540

Ovid describes the child as having the *cultus* of a boy and an appearance that was *formosus* whether it belonged to either a boy or girl. It is important to notice Ovid’s use of the masculine adjective *formosus*, indicating an acknowledgement of the child’s presentation as a boy. *Cultus* too is significant as it refers to the dress of Iphis, and it is the only mention of clothing at the start of the story. Despite the small number of references to dress, clothing is a crucial piece of Iphis’s disguise since the character’s appearance resembles that of either a boy or girl. Though Ovid situates the tale in Crete, it is unlikely that he imagines his characters wearing Cretan dress because of later

540 See Wheeler (1997), especially 193-196 on the meaning of names in the myth and the significance of the name Iphis.
reference to Roman *vittae*. In the case of garments for Roman children, tunic length helped to distinguish between boys and girls. In other words, Iphis would pass childhood dressed as a boy, with clothing that is shorter than typical a girl’s tunic and shows slightly more of the child’s body than a girl’s tunic would have revealed. Despite a disguise that exposes a bit more of the child’s body, physiognomy does not reveal the child’s true sex. Instead, Iphis’s identity is only at risk when set to marry a girl.

At the age of thirteen, Ligdus betroths Iphis to Ianthe, a young girl who grew up with Iphis and matches her in beauty. Ovid writes that the two love each other, but Iphis feels ashamed of her love for another girl, calling her passion *prodigiosa*. She compares her love to that of another Cretan woman named Pasiphaë, whose passion for a bull Iphis considers less unnatural than her own lust after a member of the same sex. Ovid positions the story of Iphis at the end of this book, after the story of Byblis, a girl who has unrequited love for her twin brother. By ordering the stories as such, Ovid presents Iphis’s perceived transgressions as worse than both the incest of Byblis and the bestiality of Pasiphaë, since these two scenarios still involve love between a male and female.

Telethusa meanwhile delays the marriage day by feigning illness or bad omens. Finally, when one day remained before the proposed marriage, Telethusa removes the

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541 For a girl’s tunic reaching her feet, see chapter two.
542 See Leunissen (2018) 753-753 for further discussion of Graeco-Roman ideas of physiognomy. See also Upson-Saia (2011) 30 on the relationship between physiognomy and dress in Roman literature. It is likely that Ovid uses Iphis’s outward appearance to mirror inner character, which would thus make the child’s biological sex indetectable. Foxhall and Salmon (1998) 149 counter by pointing out how physical appearances could be deceiving rather than revealing someone’s inner nature. For this idea, see also Gleason (1995).
543 Ov. *Met.* 9. 727. For the complications of translating *prodigiosa* in these lines, see Franklin (2018).
544 For the significance of the framing of the Iphis myth, see Kamen (2012) 21-23. Kamen notes that in the story of Byblis, the title character remarks that neither nature nor the gods forbid incest - it is only human society that does so. For Iphis, nature itself forbids her love (*at non vult natura, potentior omnibus isitis, / quae mihi sola nocet*, 758-759). Ormand (2005) 93 describes the speech as excessive and amusing coming from a thirteen-year-old.
Vittae from her own and Iphis’s hair. Vittae were hairbands worn by Roman women as a symbol of chastity, and by girls during marriage or other religious occasions. The mention of vittae reminds us that Roman clothing is used in the tale; its presence at this point in the story is bizarre, since Iphis is still presumably in disguise as a boy, and Roman boys did not wear vittae. It is possible that Ovid has Iphis wear these fillets in order to stress the immediacy of the upcoming marriage ceremony, or he forgot that Iphis has not yet transformed. The marriage finally occurs after Telethusa prays to Isis, who then transforms Iphis’s gender. As the mother and child leave the temple, Iphis transforms through longer strides, a darker face, different hair, and altered features. Ovid tells us that Iphis appears to have more vigor than a woman would have. This change in physiognomy does not reveal to us whether Iphis has transitioned to a male, but that the character’s social gender has instead changed in a way that would allow for the marriage to occur.

Though not stated explicitly, the removal of Iphis’s vittae is also crucial to the gender transformation in this story. Whether Ovid mentions them by mistake or deliberately, they remind the reader of Iphis’s need for gender transition to have an acceptable marriage. The approaching marriage signals a time of transition in the narrative, and it is through both prayer to the goddess and the removal of this feminine symbol of marriage that Iphis can further assume a gender that corresponds with one that has been performed since birth. The removal of vittae then initiate the start of transition that become actualized by the goddess.

545 Ov. Met. 9.770-772: at illa / crinalem capiti vittam nataeque sibique / detrahit. For vittae, see above, Chapter two.
546 Such inconsistencies are not unheard of in Roman epic. For more on this idea, see O’Han (2006).
547 For Iphis’s transition as one of social gender rather than biological sex, see Begum-Lees (2020) 106-117 and Ormand (2009).
It is likely that Iphis falls in love with Ianthe in part because of her male *habitus*. In other words, Ovid represents Iphis as fully adopting a masculine role not only through clothing and potentially other mannerisms, but also by presenting Iphis at the brink of marriage and fulfilment of a male’s societal role of producing offspring. The transformation is necessary to undo the dilemma created by the male disguise. Dress, and *habitus* in general, thus influences the character’s sexuality and societal role.

This plot of a same-sex love and marriage is unique to Ovid’s telling of the myth; another version of tale survives in the *Μεταμορφώσεων Συναγωγή*. This collection of transformations was written by Antoninus Liberalis, a grammarian likely from the 2nd century CE who summarizes this story from Nicander’s *Heteroeumena*. This version of the story, still set in Crete, tells of a woman named Galatea who raises her female child Leucippus as a boy. She does so in order that her husband Lamprus may not expose the child, as the husband also threatens to do in Ovid’s version of the tale. As the child grows older and more beautiful, the author notes that it becomes impossible to hide their true sex. Galatea prays to Leto, who is said to have transformed the child into a boy. In this account, Leucippus removed a *peplos* (a girl’s garment) before becoming a boy. Antoninus Liberalis then explains this story as the origin of the Ekdysia festival, which was thought to require boys to lie down beside a statue of Leucippus before a marriage. Such inconsistency in the mention of the *peplos* recalls Ovid’s mention of *vittae* before Iphis’s transition, since both characters would have been in disguise of a boy before the

549 Delcourt (1961) 5 imagines that in this festival, boys took off feminine clothing and donned garments of their own sex. Leitao (1995) also connects this festival to a rite of passage for boys, where they remove their clothing as a graduation from the *agela*. He believes that because Leucippus cross-dresses, the boys must have worn a *peplos* at this ceremony, Heslin (2005) 207-209 instead writes that Leitao’s assumption was based upon an inconsistency in Antoninus Liberalis’s summary. Second, Heslin notes that a marriage ritual that required sleeping before a statue in the temple of Leto would have only been logical for a woman to do.
point of transition. Although the reason for transformation differs in each story, an article of clothing is what initiates each transformation.

In Ovid’s account of this myth, marriage plays an important role in transitioning Iphis. According to Wheeler: “the feminine beauty of Iphis is not a threat to her disguise (as in Antoninus Liberalis) but reflects the culturally constructed femininity of boys who have not yet entered manhood.” In other words, Ovid’s account does not place the same importance on appearance revealing sex. Instead, cultural restrictions play that role. It is only because of betrothal and love for Ianthe that Iphis can no longer remain in disguise, since the character believes that nature forbids the union between two girls ("non vult natura," 758). In an article on cross-dressing in the Ovidian corpus, Raval expresses this idea by arguing for the performativity of gender, and the simultaneous need for a gender binary based upon sex within the Roman institution of marriage. She writes: “while Ovid valorizes performance over anatomy in his account of Iphis, he also emphasizes the way in which the social institution of marriage with its reproductive telos limits gender performances.” In other words, the ability of Iphis to appear as a boy through clothing and mannerisms demonstrates performativity rather than anatomy in presenting gender. However, since the purpose of marriage was to create offspring, it was necessary that this performance end in order that the marriage between Iphis and Ianthe take place.

Iphis’s cross-dressing is not a reflection of deviant behavior but instead a disguise used to stay alive. Only Iphis and Telethusa are aware of the masculine dress that allows the child to pass as a boy. In the following chapter of women wearing armor, we will see

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materials typically reserved for men that are used to disguise women. Like those women, the intention of Iphis’s disguise is important, as well as the impermanence of it. Iphis’s disguise is acceptable for its function in survival, and the betrothal is a reminder that Iphis cannot remain disguised forever, since Roman marriages were only legitimate between a husband and wife. The myth of Iphis is thus a good example of how the Roman institution of marriage structured society through the enforcement of gender roles. Clothing was connected to marriage by ensuring that gender differences were enforced and distinguishable. Women’s change in clothing signaled the beginning of a marriage, and since Iphis’s role in the marriage did not match costume worn, Iphis was required to remove *vittae* and transform appearance further in order to perform the societally accepted role of a man. In other words, clothing and gender performance did not match that of Iphis’s sex at birth, thus requiring a transformation in order for the marriage to take place.

**Dress and the Breakdown of Marriage**

Similar to clothing’s ability to enforce gender boundaries necessary for marriage, wearing clothing that did not properly reflect one’s gender and status was an indication of a breakdown in marriage. This connection was due to a loss of respectability, which then resulted in divorce. Such is the case of Valeria Messalina in Tacitus’s account. Tacitus writes about 50 years after the empress’s death, recounting Messalina’s marriage to her lover Silius (while still married to Claudius). In his description of their celebration, Tacitus compares the empress to a maenad wielding a thyrsis. Messalina marries Silius,

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552 Ulp. 5.3: *Conubium est uxor iure ducendae facultas.*
according to Tacitus, for the sake of committing greater transgressions.\textsuperscript{553} With him, she celebrates all the rites of a marriage (\textit{cuncta nuptiarum sollemnia celebrat}, 11.26), thus dissolving her former marriage to the emperor.\textsuperscript{554} While Claudius remains at Ostia deciding a course of action, Tacitus describes Messalina celebrating a mimic vintage season shortly after these marriage rites. The full passage reads:

\begin{quote}
\begin{align*}
at Messalina non alias solutor luxu, adulto autumno simulacrum vindemiae per domum celebrabat. urgeri prela, fluere lacus; et feminae pellibus accinctae adsultabant ut sacrificantes vel insanientes Bacchae; ipsa crine fluxo thyrsus quatiens, iuxtaque Silius hedera vinctus, gerere cothurnos, iacere caput, strepente circum procaci choro. \\
\text{(Tac. Ann. 11.31)}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

Messalina meanwhile, more extravagant than ever, in mid-autumn was celebrating a representation of the vintage in her home. The wine presses were trodden, the vats overflowed, and women girt with skins were dancing as though sacrificing or raving bacchantes. Messalina with flowing hair shook the thyrsus, and Silius beside her, crowned with ivy, wearing buskin boots, cast his head to the roar of some wanton chorus.

In this description of Messalina at the height of her debauchery (\textit{luxu}), Tacitus transforms her into a maenad with flowing hair and wielding a thyrsus, while he describes the women surrounding her as wearing animal hides and compares them to bacchantes.\textsuperscript{555} This description of her dress is not what one might initially consider cross-dressing, but the comparisons to a maenad, especially with loose hair rather than the typical coiffure of an empress, do not accurately reflect her position.\textsuperscript{556} Furthermore, her

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{553} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 11.26: \textit{nomen tamen matrimonii concupivit ob magnitudinem infamiae e cuius apud prodigos novissima voluptas est.}
\item \textsuperscript{554} Claudius is informed of Messalina’s marriage as well as his own divorce by Narcissus: \textit{‘an discidium’ inquit ‘tuum nosti?’} (11.30). For later examples of laws against polygamy, see Justinian’s \textit{Institutes} 1.10.6-7.
\item \textsuperscript{555} See Henrichs (1987) 157n113 on the parallels between Tacitus’s account of Messalina and poetic descriptions of maenadism in Catullus, Vergil, and Ovid. See Corbeil (2004) 36, 71-73 on unbound hair is an attribute of cult worship and mourning for women.
\item \textsuperscript{556} Henrichs (1978) 159 compares this description of the empress to a maenad with that of her great-grandfather Mark Antony, who emulated Dionysus. Messalina’s representation as a maenad is not the only instance of an upper-class woman taking part in Dionysiac worship—much of Euripides’ \textit{Bacchae} centers
decisive action and sexual promiscuity in Tacitus’s account present the empress as a more masculine foil to the feminized Claudius, who is depicted as indecisive and vulnerable. Tacitus presents the empress as a reflection of her deeds, matching her appearance to her profligacy. The illicit marriage and resulting divorce from the emperor are then reflected in descriptions of her appearance and comparisons to raving bacchantes.

The remaining sections of *Annales* Book XI continue to present Messalina as outside of her husband’s control. Tacitus shifts narrative focus between Claudius and the empress in these scenes leading up to Messalina’s death. Claudius allows members of the court to decide a course of action for him, remaining passive throughout the situation. The empress is only killed by the persistence of the imperial freedman Narcissus. In contrast, Messalina, when she hears that her husband is approaching, is active and determined to save her own life. Just as her comparison to maenad, the emasculation of the emperor further adds to Messalina’s distortion of how an empress should present herself.

It is likely that Tacitus’s account is based upon the *Commentarii* of Agrippina the Younger, whom Tacitus used as a source. The *commentarii* are now lost to us, but Tacitus (*Ann. 4.53*) acknowledges it as one of his sources for the *Annales*, describing the

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around the daughters of Cadmus worshipping Dionysus, who at the start of the play says that he forces these women to assume appropriate dress for his rites. Their dress is then fitting in this play, which is instead focused on Pentheus’s denial of the god, subsequent cross-dressing, and then downfall. More fitting of a comparison to Messalina is instead Livy’s account of the Bacchanalia and its suppression. He writes that married women wore the dress of bacchants with their hair scattered (*matronas Baccharum habitu criniibus passis*, 39.13.12). Like Tacitus’s portrayal of Messalina, the *matronae* of Livy’s account have their hair loose (see Corbeil [1997] 71 and 83 on the significance of unbound hair of *matronae*). Bacchic rites caused anxieties for Romans because, among other reasons, they caused *matronae* to behave in manners that were typically considered inappropriate for them.


558 For this idea, see Brennan (2015) 360, 365.
commentarii as a record of her life and incidents of her house. As Claudius’s fourth wife, it is no surprise that Agrippina would ruin the reputation of the previous empress in order to bring favor to herself and her son.

Writing around the same time as Tacitus, Juvenal provides us with an equally defamatory picture of the empress. In Satire 6, he describes Messalina as sneaking away from Claudius to commit adultery in a brothel. Juvenal calls the empress *meretrix Augusta* and describes her as wearing a *nocturnus cucullus* (6.118). The mention of this hood is especially important to the image of Messalina as a cross-dresser, since other authors connect this hood to men of lower classes.559

Juvenal’s next reference to the empress focuses on her marriage to Silius, the event that was also described by Tacitus. Juvenal sympathizes with Silius, whom he describes as both most handsome and pitiable, being forced into this marriage in order to stall his inevitable end.560 By presenting Silius as vulnerable to the desires of the empress, the young man is effeminized while Messalina is presented as the dominant, masculine partner. Following such description of Silius, Juvenal represents Messalina in this Satire as ready for the marriage with a small *flammeum* and a nuptial bed of Tyrian purple.561 His description of the veil and bridal couch indicate her desire for a traditional wedding. However, the diminutive form of *flammeum* and the color of the couch instead belittle

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559 Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.9 writes that an enslaved person should be equipped with a hooded cloak (*sagis cucullis*) for protection against the elements, connecting the garment to lower classes as well as to men. See also Mart. 5.14.6, Juv. 3.170, and 8.145 on other uses of the hood by men. See also Olson (2017) 69, which notes that the *cucullus* was often used for concealment and disguise.

560 Juv. 10.331-333: *optimus hic et fomonsissimus idem/ gentis patriciae rapitur miser extinguedus Messalinae oculis.* Cf. Tac. Ann. 11.2, where Tacitus presents Silius as a handsome youth trapped by the advances of the empress.

561 Juv. 10.333-334: *dudum sedet illa parato/ flammeolo Tyriusque palam genialis.*
this desire and connote extravagance. \textsuperscript{562} Since her marriage to Silius is not legal, she cannot wear a traditional bridal veil. We cannot consider the use of this veil as transvestism in the traditional sense but given the gender reversals in the portrayal of Messalina and Silius, as well as the idea that Messalina is crossing boundaries of acceptability for her gender and status, the mention of this veil is another means of pointedly commenting upon her character.

Messalina’s behavior remains unusual for an empress, but Juvenal’s representation of her appearance before her marriage, and Tacitus’s description of her after the marriage, are especially striking in matching her adultery to her atypical dress. \textsuperscript{563} Because of the breakdown of her marriage through adulteries and attempt at remarriage, her representation then devolves far from what is expected for her status.

\textbf{Sexual Openness and Masculine Clothing}

If a woman pursued a sexual relationship outside of her marriage, authors used clothing to comment upon this behavior. Since authors use clothing as a signal of morality, wearing a toga was another indication of woman’s sexual habit outside of her marriage. The two groups of women who are said to have worn this garment are sex workers and adulteresses. Both were barred from a legitimate \textit{iustum matrimonium} because of the \textit{infamia} incurred for soliciting sex outside of a marriage. Before Augustan legislation, sex workers could marry freeborn citizens, who would then incur \textit{infamia} and be barred from participating in certain legal activities. With Augustus’s moral legislation,

\textsuperscript{562} See chapter three for ancient attitudes towards Tyrian purple, especially when worn by women. Although her status as empress would allow for the wearing of such color, Juvenal makes it clear that Messalina’s behavior is ill-suited to her status and clothing.

\textsuperscript{563} Messalina’s representation in ancient sources is not wholly unique. Outside of the scope of this dissertation is Theodora, the 6\textsuperscript{th} century CE empress whom Procopius describes as wearing clothing fit for an enslaved woman. For more on Theodora, and her clothing matching her behavior in Procopius’s account, see Procop. \textit{Historia Arcana} 9.8-9.10, Potter (2015), and Starks (2004) 228-229.
he then banned freeborn citizens from marrying sex workers. Augustan legislation also forced husbands to divorce wives who have committed adultery or else face a charge of *lenocinium*, indicating that these laws equated the adulteress and the sex worker. Both the sex worker and adulteress were thus outside of the system of a *iustum matrimonium*. Because of this commonality and the fact that Augustan legislation treated the convicted adulteress similar to a sex worker, both women were presented as wearing togas within literary sources. For each of these women, the toga was a sign of their sexual openness and having partners outside of marriage. Gallia notes that since the toga was less restrictive than the floor-length stola, this freedom of movement provided by the garment could then symbolize sexual freedom for the wearer. In this section, I do not focus on the historicity of women in these garments, since this argument has been taken up recently by several scholars that will be mentioned throughout this section. The truth of whether or not women wore the toga for licentiousness matters less here than the fact that authors used the garment as a symbol for a sex worker and adulteress.

When examining the dress of the sex worker, it is first important to observe that they were not permitted to wear the insignia and clothing of Roman *matronae*, such as the *stola* and *vittae*. This idea comes up in writers of different time periods and genres, including Plautus, Tibullus, Ovid, and Martial. Martial most explicitly writes that the

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564 For more on this idea, see McGinn (1998), and especially Gardner (1991) 129, who mentions cases where women would declare themselves as prostitutes to evade punishment for adultery.

565 McGinn (1998) first observes that examples of the adulteress dressing in a toga appear only after Augustan legislation equates these women with prostitutes.

566 Gallia (2014) 231.

567 For the debate on whether prostitutes or adulteresses actually wore the toga, see Dixon (2015), McGinn (2014) and (1998), and Olson (2008) and (2002), with the current consensus being that the toga was a symbol rather than representation of real clothing worn by the *meretrix* and adulteress.

568 Plaut. *Mil. 789* mentions disguising a *meretrix* as a *matrona* by making her wear *vittae*. Tibullus writes that he hopes his mistress is chaste, even if she does not wear the *stola* or *vittae* (signs of chastity, 1.6.67-
stola and vittae are in direct opposition to the sex worker when he asks “quis Floralia uestit et stolatum / permittit meretricibus pudorem?” (1.35). Here, he makes the analogy that just as the Floralia involved nudity of stage actresses, the meretrix was barred from the stola since it was a sign of modesty. While literary evidence includes mentions of sex workers in various garments, it is difficult to identify one through surviving visual evidence. I thus focus here on the literary examples of the women in togas, rather than dubious visual depictions.

Although the stola and vitta were prohibited from use by the meretrix, certain authors write of the meretrix wearing a toga. Literary examples of women in togas all appear within the context of invective. Genre is important here because it indicates authorial bias: describing women as wearing a toga is an effective means of mockery and indication of a woman’s behavior.

Our first clear source of this connection between the meretrix and the toga is made by Cicero in the 2nd Philippic, quoting his now famous phrase from de Officiis: cedant arma togae (1.22). In the Philippiics, Cicero uses the toga in this phrase to represent Cytheris, the mime actress whom Antony was involved with before his

68). Ovid mentions both when he says that his writings are not for women wearing these signs of pudor (Ars am. 1.31-41, Rem. am. 386, and Tr. 2.247-250).
569 See Olson (2008) 47-51 on the clothing of the prostitute in literature and Strong (2016) 118-141 on the possibility of identifying the prostitute in material culture. Images of togate women are also rare: Plin. HN 34.28-29 and Livy 2.13 describe an equestrian statue of Cloelia wearing a toga, though no statue survives. Bonfante (1975) 49-50 discusses the similarity of this statue to Etruscans wearing a tebenna, suggesting that Cloelia’s wearing of the toga was not a mark of transgression (as it became in later times) or an honor (as Pliny suggests), but instead it was in line with other equestrian statues of Rome’s early history. Gallia (2014) 233 instead poses the idea that Cloelia was wearing the toga because she is represented as a youth, though I believe this is the most unlikely theory considering Pliny’s attitude towards her wearing the garment. Rothe (2019) 41 posits that this toga could be a relic from the time when women also wore the toga. The sole surviving ancient depiction of a togate adult woman is a statue from Carlisle, England. Goette (1990) 81 writes that this seated togata was likely a deity, while Sebesta and Bonfante (1994) 7 write that the statue is of provincial character and likely misrepresents the Roman symbol of the toga. 570 In fact, Varro (ap. Non. 541 M) writes that the toga was once worn by men and women. See also Rothe (2019) 21, Sebesta (2005), and Olson (2002) 409n36 on the toga used by men and women in Rome’s early history.
relationship with Cleopatra. He mockingly calls Cytheris Antony’s wife and suggests that Antony yielded to Cytheris’s will. By calling her a mime wife (mima uxor) and referring to her by the garment of the toga, Cicero contrasts her status as a sex worker with that of a legitimate wife.

Later within the *Philippics*, Cicero writes that Antony’s behavior was disgraceful when first attaining the toga virilis at the start of manhood. As a result, he immediately exchanged it for a toga muliebris, which Cicero defines as the dress of a common prostitute (vulgare scortum). Cicero then says that Curio transformed Antony from a meretrix into a respectable woman, thus allowing Antony to wear the stola that was forbidden to sex workers. In this instance where Cicero connects the toga to sex workers, the stola contrasts with the toga to emphasize the difference between the respectability and status represented by each garment and wearer.

Horace picks up this opposition between the toga and *matrona* when he compares the *matrona* with the meretrix, saying that the former is covered by a long stola and palla that conceal her beauty, while the latter is almost naked in her Coan silk. In these lines (1.2.63, 82), Horace uses *togata* as a substantive (1.2.63, 82) to describe the sex worker as a reflection of her morals.

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572 See Starks (2004) 82n44 on the wit of this passage.
573 Cic. Phil. 2.44. See Ramsey (2003) 227 for commentary on this passage.
575 Hor. Sat. 1.2.97-102: multae tibi tum officient res, / custodes, lectica, ciniflones, parasitae, / ad talos stola demissa et circumdata palla, / plurima, quae invideant pure adparere tibi rem. / altera, nil obstat: / cois tibi paene videre est.
576 While this passage contrasts two opposites, the *matrona* and *meretrix*, 3rd century commentators write that this section refers to adulterers forced to wear a toga (Porphyrio schol. Hor. Sat. 1.2.63: *togatae autem in publicum procedere cogebantur feminae adulterii admissi convictae*). Pseudo Acro mentions a *toga pullis* for adulteresses, to associate them with the prostitute and distinguish them from matronae (Acro Schol. Hor. Sat. 1.2.63: *matronae, quae ob adulterium a maritis repudiabant, togam accipiebant sublata stola proppter ignominiam; toga autem meretrici apta. Ita enim solesbant prostrare cum solis pullis togis, ut discernentur a matronis*). Interestingly, though well beyond my scope here, the 16th commentator
not contradict himself by saying that the sex worker’s body is easily visible in Coan silk. Unlike Coan silk, the toga was a form of outerwear that was not sheer and form-fitting, and would make the body of the *meretrix* as covered and inaccessible as that of the *matrona*. *Togata* is thus used to characterize the sexual openness of the *meretrix*, rather than describe the clothing she would wear.

The final mention of a toga worn by sex workers appears in the third book from the Tibullan corpus. Here, Sulpicia proudly claims her lineage and contrasts herself with a *scortum* through the mention of the toga. She says: *Sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo / scortum quam Serui filia Sulpicia.* In these lines, she uses the toga to associate the *scortum* with sexual immorality, contrasting herself and her noble family to a *scortum* and the items associated with one. Since the *stola* could not have been worn by a meretrix, Sulpicia points out the clothing of this woman was a means of signaling low status and sexual openness outside of marriage that many upper-class writers considered deviant for a woman.

When worn by men or children, the toga was a symbol of high status and a mark of the Roman citizen. For men especially, the toga was a mark of distinction. It is for this reason that the garment appears in the *Aeneid*, when Jupiter prophesizes to Venus in book one. When naming Aeneas’s future descendants as Romans, he uses the appositional phrases “masters of the world” and “the toga-clad race,” highlighting the importance of

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Cruquius writes on this passage that the *meretrix* wore the *tога pullа* while the adulteress, to distinguish themselves from *meretrices* and *matronae* (it is unclear whether by choice or force), wore a *tога alба*. For more on these passages, see Dixon (2015) 304, Olson (2002) 394-408, McGinn (1998) 165-166, and Scholz (1992) 23-25.

577 Tib. 3.16.3-4. See Keith (2008) 192-201 for further analysis of this passage.
the garment as a mark of Roman identity, though it is only representative of a select group of the population.578

Such distinction attached to the toga, as we’ve seen, vanishes when the garment appears on women in literature. Rather than modeling the reality of garments worn by women, togas were a symbolic representation of the sex worker’s morality. It would make little sense if women actually wore the garment, since it covered up most of the body. This would leave little on display for the view of potential customers.

Attitudes towards women in togas can possibly be understood through perceptions of women as inferior to men. Aristotle provides the best example of this when he describes females as deformed males.579 Regardless of whether or not this sentiment supports the notion of a one-sex body in antiquity, as Laqueur argues, it is important here that the female was considered inferior to male. Preventing matronae from wearing the toga without censure was then a means of indicating that the national garment would be unacceptable on a woman’s body.

Like the meretrix, Roman writers also connect the adulteress to the toga. The first author to do so is Martial, who uses the colloquial term moecha to refer to the adulteress. In an epigram mentioning a togate adulteress, Martial jokes that a eunuch named Thelys wears a toga because he is a condemned adulteress rather than because he is a man (“Thelyn viderat in toga spadonem, / Damnatam Numa dixit esse moecham”).580 The use of the judicial term damnata suggests a conviction by law, indicating that the mocha in

578 Verg. Aen. 1.282: …Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam. See Servius, de Aen. 1.282, which states that the toga was worn by men and women.
579 Arist. Gen. an. 737a 27-28. For discussion of Aristotle and the one-sex body, see King (2013) 31-48 and Laqueur (1992) 149-152. King counters Laqueur’s arguments of the one sex body in antiquity by pointing to Laqueur’s limited scope of authors and the fact that ideas of dual sexed bodies also existed in antiquity.
580 Mart. 10.52. See chapter four for further discussion of this section.
this context was a woman convicted of adultery. This does not give evidence, though, that the adulteress was forced to wear the garment.

Juvenal also uses the verb *damno* in connection with the toga and the *moecha* in one of his satires. He writes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{est moecha Fabulla;} \\
\text{damnetur, si uis, etiam Carfinia: talem} \\
\text{non sumet damnata togam,} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Juv. 2.68-70)

Fabulla is an adulteress; let her be condemned. If you like, let Carfinia also be condemned: guilty as she is, she won’t dress in a toga.

Elsewhere in the poem, Juvenal says that Carfinia pleads in court. Because she performed this activity that was restricted for men, Juvenal mentions her alongside Fabulla, who also performed an activity only acceptable for men when seeking a sexual partner outside of marriage. Juvenal writes that both women should wear a toga because of their male behavior.\textsuperscript{581}

At times, it is not always clear whether an author refers to a togate *meretrix* or adulteress. Dixon notes that the use of *moecha* can signify either an adulteress or a sexually immoral woman in general, adding to the idea that the toga is a symbol for women considered licentious.\textsuperscript{582} In a poem about a *moecha*, Martial tells the addressee not to give vibrant clothing in expensive colors to a woman, but to instead give her a gift that she deserves: a toga.\textsuperscript{583} He does not specify the woman’s status or indicate that the woman had to wear a toga, just that she deserved to wear one because of her behavior. In another epigram, Martial writes that a detractor’s mother wears a toga, while his father

\textsuperscript{581} McGinn (1998) 164.  
\textsuperscript{582} Dixon (2014) 302.  
\textsuperscript{583} Mart. 2.39: *Coccina famosae donas et ianthina moechae: Vis dare quae meruitmunera, mitte togam.*
shaves before a mirror. In this comparison, the woman’s status is not entirely clear. As Olson argues, in the mind of the author, the sex worker and the adulteress were of the same immoral character. Whatever the status of these women, whether they be a moecha or a meretrix, the reader’s response at the invective should be the same, eliciting laughter at the absurdity of a woman of questionable repute wearing the toga.

Both the sex worker and adulteress seek sexual partners outside of a marriage. The sex worker, as the opposite of a matrona, was presented in literature as distinct from the matrona in respect to clothing, even if such distinction did not exist within visual representations or in everyday life. The adulteress similarly was distanced from the respectability authors grant to a matrona because she sought sexual relationships outside of her marriage. Although not explicitly stated, once there was a breakdown in marriage because of her infidelity, an adulteress ought not to wear the stola. The toga was then not a symbol of women who acted as men and gained the privilege of wearing this citizen male garment, but rather an indication of women who grasped at sexual freedom outside of marriage that was permissible to men.

Conclusions

Marriage is a ritual requiring female initiates to discontinue use of their former garments, wear specific garments during the ceremony, and change their clothing after the ceremony. Since marital status was closely connected to morality for women in

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584 Mart. 6.64.4-5: *sed patris ad speculum tonsimatrísque togatae/filius, et possit sponsam te sponsa vocare.*
586 See Olson (2008) 51 for the likely similarities in the actual dress of *matronae* and *meretrices.*
587 Davies (2005) 128 writes that making the toga a garment that only (adult) prostitutes and adulteresses wore, “ensure[d] that it could not be worn by mature women with a spiration to power.” In other words, women wearing the toga was an outward sign of transgression, rather than their usurpation of a status symbol.
Rome, the dress of a married woman was an outward reflection of respectability. It is for this reason that when a woman (especially a married woman) behaved in a manner that was opposite of what was expected for her gender, authors then dress her in clothing that is more suited for men. Such is the case for the women in this chapter. Since gender was reflected in clothing, many male authors used garments as a means of characterizing women’s behavior that did not align well with her gender.

In reality, however, clothing was not such a simple means of identification. It is for this reason that in the *Digest* we find a law associating punishment with dress. It reads:

> Si quis virgines appellasset, si tamen ancillari veste vestitas, minus peccare videtur: multo minus, si meretricia veste feminae, non matrum familiarum vestitae fuissent. si igitur non matronali habitu femina fuerit et quis eam appellavit vel ei comitem abduxit, iniuriarum tenetur. *(Dig. 47.10.15.15; Ulp. 77)*

If someone accosts maidens, even those in an enslaved person’s garb, his offense is regarded as venial, even more so if the women be in sex worker’s dress and not that of a *materfamilias*. Still if the woman is not in the dress of a matron and someone accost her or abduct her attendant, he will be liable to the action for insult.

Ulpian includes this law in a section of his *Edicts* concerning those who disturb a woman’s *pueritia*. Though he does not give specific details for the clothing prescribed for women of different statuses, the law lays out different anxieties associated with dressing properly. This law suggests that there were different garments worn by women of different statuses. This is not surprising, since Roman society was extremely class conscious. Thick and voluminous garments of the *matrona* would theoretically protect a woman through prohibiting an unwanted gaze, and they would offer protection

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588 See McGinn (1998) 331-334 for further context on this law.
because these were prescribed garments that signaled her status. However, this law also suggests that women did not always wear these different garments and were given less protection from harassment when they failed to do so. The word referring to such harassment, *appello*, is defined later in the *Digest* as speech that called into question someone’s chastity.⁵⁸⁹ These sections then suggest that if a woman’s dress did not reflect her status, her harasser would face a lesser punishment. The specific mention of a maiden dressed as an enslaved girl and a *materfamilias* dressed as sex workers expresses a potential anxiety at the inability to draw distinctions between women of different statuses, as well as a warning to women who fail to make such distinctions clear through their dress. While clothing was meant to indicate status to the viewer, such was not always the case.

At the same time as reinforcing norms by using the toga as a mark of shame for women, cross-dressing throws these same gender norms into confusion. As Simone de Beauvoir says, “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman.”⁵⁹⁰ Gender is a situation rather than fact, and constructed through cultural compulsion that is separate from sex.⁵⁹¹ Cultural expectations in Roman literature required that a *matrona* wore a *stola*, while women outside of this category were not granted this mark of *pudor*. Gender then, is created through a series of acts and compulsion from the environment to act, react, and relate to people in a certain way. Krenkel writes that the cross-dresser was dominated by a compulsion to accept what he considers the role ascribed to the opposite sex, both physically and socially.⁵⁹² The opposite is true for the literary women in this chapter,

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⁵⁸⁹ D. 47.10.15.22: *qui sermone pudicitiam adtemptat.*
⁵⁹⁰ Beauvoir (1973) 301.
where masculine behavior leads to authors dressing them in men’s clothing.

In addition to using men’s dress to signal a woman with masculine behavior, writers would use cross-dressing women to contrast their behavior with that of effeminate men. This relationship of complementarity reduces these women to literary tools used to characterize effeminate men. Such is the occurrence in myth when Omphale switches clothing with Heracles and in satire when Juvenal describes a woman girding her tunic at the knee. It also occurs in historical narrative such as representations of Messalina that contrast her action with Claudius’s indecision, and in epigram when Martial describes the parents of his detractor. Many examples of cross-dressing in the coming chapters will lead back to the used of complementarity.\(^{593}\)

Ultimately, dress and the body work together to form identity. In Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Iphis is born a girl but dresses and presents herself as a boy. It is not only her actions or body that allow her to pass as a boy, but her clothing also plays a crucial role in giving new meaning to her body and presenting her gender to the outside world. Similarly, Tacitus presents Messalina as a maenad to reflect the behavior he considers irrational and his disapproval at her use of her body. Juvenal’s mention of the empress’s clothing aim to reflect similar thoughts on her behavior. Togate women also use their body in a manner that prevented authors from granting them the clothing of their sex. Cross-dressing women and women challenged to wear the toga demonstrate that a woman’s identity was established through an identification of her perceived sex in combination with her clothing. These women also indicate how marital status was reflected through clothing. Since certain garments were only permitted to married

\(^{593}\) For Omphale’s cross dressing, see Ov. Fast. 2.347-358.
women, dress was a crucial aspect of identity formation. In the case of the women in this chapter, transvestism was a literary device used by authors to characterize women as acting outside of the role prescribed to them by their gender, and in some cases, marital status.
CHAPTER 6: Female Warriors and Male Dominance

“Quem praestare potest mulier galeata pudorem, / quae fugit a sexu?”

- Juv. 6.252-253

The quote above is from Juvenal’s sixth *Satire*, notorious for directing its vitriol at the different types of women in Rome. In the lines above, Juvenal focuses his rage on women who wear armor to fight in the arena. I begin this study on the armed woman with this line because it perfectly encapsulates the attitudes of male authors towards women who wore armor to partake in combat. According to Juvenal in the lines above, women who fight in the arena abandon their *pudor* and thus try to escape the nature of their sex. In these lines, he connects modesty to femininity, suggesting that a woman displaying immodest behavior did not accurately perform her gender and should thus not be called a woman. Since the women that Juvenal discusses above is covered by a helmet (*galeata*) rather than the veil, he questions gender and respectability of this woman whose body was exposed. However, as I discuss later, the rest of Juvenal’s critique of women wearing armor demonstrate that context in which the dress was worn is more offensive than the armor itself.

In this chapter, I will explore the different situations of women in Roman literature who willingly wore armor, were forced to do so, or fantasized about doing so. Using Roach and Eicher’s definition of dress as both apparel and accessories that cover the body, I consider armor a form of dress.\textsuperscript{594} Because armor and warfare were most commonly reserved for men in antiquity, women equipped with the accessories of warfare were then cross-dressers who usurped these forms of male dress.

\textsuperscript{594} To reiterate from earlier, Roach and Eicher (1965) 1: “dress as assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings.”
In this chapter, I argue that women who cross-dressed by means of wearing armor were not considered transgressive by authors describing them, so long as their armor was merely a costume associated with an amatory purpose. In other words, women who donned armor as a disguise to meet their love interests were not criticized by the authors describing them. In contrast to these women, those wearing armor for practical purposes and gladiatorial matches are censured, as authors considered these women to spurn their gender and status. As Luc Brisson writes, “to be a man was to be a warrior, and to be a woman was to be a wife and mother. To reject one’s role, to challenge it or play it badly, led to more or less ironical doubts being cast upon one’s possession of the biological sex that was traditionally associated with that role.” In other words, the female warrior in antiquity rejected an acceptable gender identity and instead adopted a role instead associated with men, leading her to face jokes and criticisms. The idea of a female warrior entertained Roman men, though not enough to describe the armed woman in the same contexts where authors portray men wearing armor, such as battle scenes. The armed woman in Roman literature is instead a novelty, appearing in amatory scenes and scenes of combat within the gladiatorial arena.

The idea of a female warrior in the Roman literary imagination can be traced back to the goddesses Minerva and Diana, known also by their Greek names Athena and Artemis. As the goddess of warfare, statues, coinage, and other visual representations of Minerva present the goddesses with the accessories required for battle—a helmet, spear, and shield. The deity Roma, representing the personification of the city, was inspired by

595 Brisson (2002) 41. Brisson then goes on to connect this inversion of roles to initiation ceremonies, where men cross-dress and women wear armor. While this may be closer to accurate when describing Greek rituals such as that of Athena Tritogeneia (Aesch. Eum. 292; Paus. 1.14.6; Brisson 63), where girls wear hoplite armor, such statement does not accurately account for female transvestism within Roman ritual. See chapter seven for further discussion of these rites.
images of Minerva and was depicted as helmeted on Roman coinage to exemplify military prowess. Both were female deities representing masculine qualities of military prowess. Surtees and Dyer note that Athena/Minerva “assumes the normative presentation and comportment of a man” in her embodiment of military valor, despite identifying as a female goddess. Both she and Roma represent a paradox in their gender identity and embodiment of masculine values. However, both deities are presented as non-transgressive women, with Roma on the one hand being distinctly feminine through representing personified strength of a city, and Athena through her conservative Greek women’s dress. Athena is most frequently represented in a Greek peplos, recalling her tie with her city of Athens, where young girls would weave a peplos for the goddess during the Panathenaic Festival. Since she is more specifically the goddess of strategic warfare, and not physical battles, there is no need for her to wear shorter, more practical garments that will aid in her movement. Her garments instead cover her body as a reminder that she is a virginal goddess.

The opposite is true for Diana, the goddess of the hunt, who was instead represented with a bow and quiver. Since Diana used this equipment for hunting, she needed more practical (i.e. shorter) garments that would not hamper her movement.

596 Surtees and Dyer (2020) 8.
597 See Llewellyn-Jones (2001) on the changes in Athena’s dress during different stages of Greek history, especially 244-245 for the discussion of Athena’s thick and masculine clothing as a form of physical protection and a protection of her modesty. Roman depictions of the goddess drew inspiration from Greek examples and should not be treated separately, especially since Romans also depict the goddess in her signature Greek peplos. According to Graeco-Roman mythology, the goddess was born from the head of Zeus. Because of this birth from a male figure, the goddess’s connection to masculinity makes her usage of armor less transgressive.
598 For discussion of the goddess’s appearance in Greek literature, see Parisinou (2002) 55-72.
599 Callimachus Hymn 3.225 addresses Artemis as the tunic-wearing goddess (χιτώνι’). Parisinou (2002) 56. Llewellyn-Jones (2001) 245 notes this contrast in the amount of exposed skin in representations of these two virginal goddesses. He writes that while Athena was born with armor and appears reluctant to display her body (such as when she changes quickly in Hom. II. 8.385-389 and 5.734-737), Artemis frequently bathes and reveals her body to her nymph companions.
For this reason, even though the goddess is depicted in a long tunic (especially on Greek vases), many statues (both Greek and Roman) also present her in a *peplos* or *chiton* that rests just above her knees, with the garment’s extra fabric wrapped at the waist to enhance her mobility when hunting.\(^{600}\)

While the clothing of these two goddesses was typical Greek garments, with alterations made for practicality in Diana’s case, portrayal of these goddesses with weapons and armor reflected their personal attributes. Such dress was uncommon for women.\(^{601}\) The virginal status of Minerva and Diana is also noteworthy, since their refusal of marriage works together with women’s clothing to assert their femininity, despite their use of weapons associated with warfare and hunting.\(^{602}\) These representations of armed goddesses thus became an important inspiration for later depictions of women hunting and wearing armor – male authors would present women in armor yet include key details and attributes that remind the reader of her sex and the incongruity between her sex and dress.

Another influence on the Roman concept of female warriors was the myth of Amazonian women developed in the Greek world. The Amazons were a race of women that pursued what authors considered to be male activities, such as hunting and

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\(^{600}\) Artemis’s ankle length tunic appears on a black figure oinochoe from the 7\(^{th}\) century (*LIMC*) 2 Artemis 633 no.109a. Fig. 634, p. 11,451. For discussions of the goddess in both the ankle-length tunic and short *peplos* or *chiton*, see Parisinou (2002) 57-58.

\(^{601}\) For further discussion of the differences and dress of these two goddesses, see Surtees and Dyer (2020) 8-10.

\(^{602}\) Cf. Brisson (2002) 63: “for a girl, rejecting marriage was equivalent to renouncing femininity and being pushed to the side of warfare, as is illustrated by the example of Athena and the Amazons, who beneath their warrior equipment did nevertheless remain women.” Rather than focus on these figures rejecting marriage, I find the virginal status of these women a means of reasserting their femininity. Although they are ignoring societal roles as mothers and wives, emphasis on their virginity is a clear reminder that despite their use of armor and masculine pursuits, these figures are distinctly women.
fighting. These women lived apart from men, meeting with them to procreate and, in some accounts, mutilating any male child that they give birth to. Some writers claim that their name derives from a form of self-mutilation, stating that they seared off one breast of girls and thus creating the name ‘Amazon’ from ἄνευ μαζοῦ. However, artworks depicting Amazon women always depict both breasts intact, though one breast is often exposed while the other is concealed. Dress of Amazon women in vase paintings resembled that of foreign men, creating further gender ambiguity in the Greek imagination. Because they performed activities typically restricted for men, were said to have seared off a breast, and in some accounts wore men’s clothing, Amazons challenged what it meant to be a woman in the Greek world.

The earliest account of Amazons is recorded by Homer, writing that Amazons lived during the time of the Trojan war and the heroic age. It is at this time when authors describe their encounters with mythical heroes such as Achilles, Hercules, and Theseus. In each of these encounters and conflicts with male warriors, the Amazon is unsuccessful. The female warrior, though presented as a formidable adversary, is never able to defeat her male rival. In the case of Achilles and Penthesilea

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603 For a selection of ancient depictions of Amazon women in Greek accounts, see Hom. Il. 3.182-190; Hdt. IV.110-117; Diod. Sic. 3.52-55, 4.16, 4.28; Arr. Anab. VII.13.3-6; Strab. XI,v.1-2; Lys. 2.4. For scholarship on Amazons, see Mayor (2014), de Angelis (1998), Blok (1995), and Tyrell (1984).

604 Mimnermus fr. 21, Diogen. 2.2.1, and Hippoc. Art. 53.1-53.5. See Mayor (2014) 155-158.

605 For the idea of Amazons searing their breast to allow them to draw back their bowstring unhampered, see Hellanikus 4 f107; Hippoc. Aer. 17; Just. Epit. 2.4; Diod. Sic. 2.45.3; and Strab. 11.5.1. Honoratus In Vergillii Aeneidos Libros 1.490 gives another derivation of their name from ἄνευ μαζοῦ, to indicate that they formed communities without any men. In reality, the word Amazon likely originates from an Iranian “hamazan” meaning “one fighting together” (Chantaine 69 s.v. ἄμαζον. See also Bonfante (1983) 151-153.

606 For depictions of Artemis and other huntresses also revealing one breast, see Parisinou (2002) 60-61, where she argues that this dress of Amazons and huntresses depict “wild” girls before marriage and outside of male control.


608 Homer, Iliad 3.182-190; 6.175-190.
femininity is even emphasized as the two fall in love while dying.\footnote{The story of Achilles and Penthesilea appears in the epic \textit{Aethiopis}, Hyg. \textit{Fab.} 112. Verg. \textit{Aen.} 1.495. Quint. Smyrn. \textit{Posthomerica}, and several Greek vase paintings. See Mayor (2014) 292-304.}

Most sources write that Amazons lived in Asia Minor, southeast of the Black Sea.\footnote{Hom. \textit{Il.} 3.186-189; 6.186; Her. IV.110-117. See also Blok (1995) 83 and Carlier Detienne (1979) 381-405.} Diodorus Siculus locates an earlier race of Amazons in North Africa.\footnote{Diod. Sic. 3.52-55.} In either case, Amazonian women were said to be from distant lands that were far removed from the Greek world. This imagined distance is because Amazons held prominent roles in their societies, which was drastically different than the roles of women in Greek society.\footnote{For an overview on the role of women in the Greek world, see Pomeroy (1995).} In many ways, Amazon women were a representation of Greek social anxieties since their societies functioned successfully without the presence of men. Discussions of Amazon women carry the underlying message of female self-sufficiency, contrasting with women’s roles within much of the Greek world.\footnote{For discussion of Amazons and their relationship to matriarchy and patriarchy, see Tyrell (1984) 28-63.}

To solidify the notion of warrior women as Other, accounts of Amazons place them in distant lands to allow their physical separateness from Greece to match the ideological distances between the two.

Even though Amazons have appeared in many different works of Greek literature and art, there did not exist at any point in time a group of women called Amazons. However, recent archaeological evidence proves that there was a group of female warriors in the region that was known as Scythia.\footnote{Khudaverdyan et al. (2019) 119-128.} The myth of Amazonian women was created by Greeks as a means of actualizing a fear of female power and self-autonomy.\footnote{For this claim that stories of Amazonian women were not based upon a real race of warrior women who lived around the time of the Trojan War, see Tyrell (1984) 23-25. Cf. Mayor (2014), who believe that Amazons in literature represented a real group of women. I do not go as far as Beard does, when saying: “the underlying point of the Amazon myth was that it was the duty of men to save civilization from the rule of women” (2017) 62.}

Even when helping their male allies in the \textit{Iliad} or interacting with male heroes, the
femininity of Amazons is always emphasized, separating them from male heroes and in some way impeding upon their success. As Delcourt writes of Amazons, “it is the woman who dies in these stories and the disguise is no more than an episode in the life of her adversary.”616 In other words, the armed Amazon often served as an obstacle to the hero, with little attention paid to her own story.

After the creation of this myth of female warriors by Greek authors, Roman authors soon followed this example. Amazons became as popular in Roman literature as they were in Greek literature, with Roman writers describing lands that were inhabited by Amazons, and certain items associated with them.617 Unlike Amazons in Greek art, Roman representations of Amazons resembled those of Diana: one breast bare, a tunic falling above the knees, and a quiver loaded with arrows. This representation that emphasizes the Amazon’s femininity differs from images in Greek depictions, where the Amazon often is portrayed in either Persian garments or in the armor of a Greek warrior.618

The most notable adaptation of Amazon women in Roman literature is in Vergil’s *Aeneid*. In his first mention of Amazons, Vergil describes Aeneas admiring the doors to the Temple of Juno in Carthage (1.464-493). The last scene depicted on these doors is that of Penthesilea, leader of Amazon women, guiding other Amazons into battle against the Greeks. Vergil writes that these Amazons had crescent shields (1.490).

616 Delcourt (1961) 11.
617 Authors describing the lands inhabited by Amazons: Sall. *Hist.* 3.73.1’ Curt. 6.4.17, 6.5.24-25; Pomponius Mela *De Chorographia* 1.88-116 Plin. *HN* 6.10.4-5; Honoratus, *In Vergilii Aeneidos Libros* 11.659.2-5. For mentions of items associated with Amazons such as their crescent shield and axe, see Verg. *Aen.* 5.311; Sen. *Ag.* 217-218, 736; Stat. *Theb.* 4.394, *Sihv.* 5.1.131; Plin. *HN* 7.201.5; Mart. 9.101.5.
618 For a detailed discussion of Amazons in Greek art, see Veness (2002) 95-110, who argues that even around the time of the Persian wars and representations of Amazons as Persians, emphasis was on Amazons as female warriors, rather than on their ability to stand in for the Greek enemy in artwork. For a detailed account of scholarship on Amazons, see Blok (1995) 21-143.
“lunatis...pellis”), a description which aligns with their depictions on Greek vases (see image 23). These shields were used by Persians, emphasizing the foreignness of these warriors to a Roman audience. Penthesilea stands out among her companions in a golden girdle tied beneath bare breasts (1.492). Vergil mentions this detail of her exposed body to contrast with her appearance in battle, then ends the ecphrasis by describing the Amazon leader as a female warrior and maiden who dares to fight alongside men (493: bellatrix, audetque uiris concurrere uirgo). The enjambment of bellatrix, as well as its contrast with the word virgo that ends the line, emphasizes the oddity of her presence on the battlefield while also connecting the Amazon warrior to the virginal warriors Artemis and Minerva. This line also prepares for the introduction of Dido immediately after this section, since like Penthesilea, Dido also becomes important in the narrative of the Trojans and is similarly a woman who ruled without a male partner.

The next occurrence of Amazon women in the Aeneid appears with the story of Camilla. She is first introduced in book VII alongside Turnus and Virbius, suggesting her importance to the narrative. When introducing her as the leader of the Volscians, Vergil stress the fact that she is a bellatrix trained in the arts of war rather than weaving. By describing her as a female warrior, Vergil connects Camilla to the earlier mention of Amazon Penthesilea. He even calls her an Amazon (2.648), then compares her to one in a simile that directly mentions Penthesilea (2.659-663), making the connection between these women even more explicit. Just as Amazon women, Camilla challenges ancient gender expectations and notions of female domesticity.

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619 Verg. Aen. 7.805-807: bellatrix, non illa colo calathisve Minervae / femineas adsueta manus, sed proelia virgo / dura pati cursuque pedum praevertere ventos.
Despite these comparisons to Amazon women, Vergil does not present Camilla as foreign but instead emphasizes her gender. He writes that both men and women admire Camilla, and Diana later tells Opis that many mothers wanted Camilla as a daughter-in-law. Book VII then ends with a description of Camilla’s attire that both portrays her as a warrior and emphasizes her femininity, such as her purple garment and golden pin, which contrast with her Lycian quiver and staff fixed with a spearhead. Although similar to an Amazon by virtue of being a bellatrix, Camilla’s integration and admiration by other Etruscans, as well as the feminine elements of her dress, separate her from the distinctly foreign portrayals of Amazons.

Camilla’s childhood, recounted in Book XI, further distinguishes her from Amazon women because of her devotion to Diana. While watching the battle from above, Diana laments to her companion Opis that Camilla, who is dearer to her than other followers, takes up her arms in vain. Diana then describes how Camilla became her devotee as an infant: when her father, King Metabus, was driven out of his land, he escaped Volscian soldiers by devoting Camilla’s life to Diana. After their escape, the two lived in the wild; Metabus nursed Camilla on milk from mares and wild beasts, and when she began to walk, he gave her a lance and a bow. Unlike Amazon women, who seclude themselves from the civilizations of men by choice, Metabus dressed Camilla in a tiger’s pelt and trained her to wield weapons. Her devotion to Diana distinguished her from

\[\text{\textsuperscript{620}}\text{Verg. Aen. 7.812-813 and 11.581-582.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{621}}\text{Verg. Aen. 7.814-817. Cf. 11.576-577 where Diana states that Camilla wears a tiger’s hide rather than a palla or golden hair pin. It is perhaps her youth that creates a sense of wildness, as well as a separation from the world of men, that motivates her portrayal in animal skin rather than female dress. See Parisinou (2002) 60-61 for similar motivations behind Greek depictions of a huntress in animal hides. Since Vergil depicts Camilla among men, he alters this attire to emphasize her gender. See also Boyd (1992) 213-234 on this passage.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{622}}\text{Verg. Aen. 11.536-537: \ldots nostris nequequam cingitur armis / cara mihi ante alias\ldots Camilla uses a bow and arrow, equipment used by Diana but for the purposes of hunting. This is why Diana laments that these ill-suited weapons were used in vain.}\]
Amazons who wielded arms for both hunting and warfare, whereas the goddess and her devotees used weapons solely for hunting.623 Camilla then grew up with an interest in hunting rather than marriage, an idea that Vergil several times mentions through the use of virgo to refer to the venatrix.624 Because of her upbringing, having been suckled by mares and beasts under the care of her father, Camilla is far-removed from motherhood. The reader is constantly reminded that Camilla is a virgin, and as such, she differs from Amazon women who would sometimes fight alongside men, but mostly used them to procreate.625 Camilla transcends gender expectations only through the help of a male figure who made her a devotee to Diana and a venatrix.626

Despite this important distinction that Camilla was neither foreigner nor treated as an outsider by other men and women, her death is as inevitable as that of an Amazon against Greek heroes. Once she catches sight of Chloreus, whose armor and ornate decorations were in gold, purple, and saffron, Camilla pursues him blindly and heedlessly. Vergil writes that her pursuit and upcoming death is due to a woman’s love of rewards and spoils.627 By asserting her motivation was connected to these colors that were typically associated with women’s luxuriousness, rather than a warrior’s love for

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623 The mythical Atalanta was also a devotee of the goddess. Like Diana, she does not partake in warfare, but uses a bow and arrow to hunt. She swears an oath of virginity to the goddess and remains uninterested in marriage. In his description of the Caktonian boar hunt in the Metamorphoses, Ovid describes her appearance as ambiguous both because her mix of weapons and adornments, as well as her face that he describes as maidenly for a boy, and boyish for a maiden (8.322-323: ...facies, quam dicere vere / virgineam in puero, puerilem in virgine possis).
624 Turnus calls Camilla a virgo at 11.508. Vergil calls her an aspera virgo at 11.664, and later refers to her as a virgo at 11.676. Opis also addresses Camilla as such at 11.841. Vergil’s description of Venus dressed as a huntress also emphasizes that her disguise was of a virgo and venatrix (1.314-320).
625 See Boels (1973) 93 for the idea that virgins are the only females that can have a favorable influence over war.
626 Verg. Aen. 11.780.
627 Verg. Aen. 11.768-782. For discussion of Camilla’s death, see Reed (2009) 24 and Horsfall (2003) 410-419 on these lines.
plunder, her death was blamed on her gender rather than skill as a warrior and desire for war spoils. Similar to Amazon women who function as a foil to Greek society and must die to assert its dominance, Camilla’s death was necessary to the creation of Aeneas’ Rome.  

Inspired by the Greek historical accounts of Amazon women, the myth of these warrior women also persisted in historical narratives written during the Roman Empire. In particular, accounts of the life of Alexander the Great from this period mention an encounter he has with the Amazon queen Thalestris, who proposes that the two leaders have a child that will be as strong as them both. Curtius Rufus gives the most detailed description of the clothing and weapons worn by Amazon women in this encounter. As Thalestris approaches Alexander, she holds two javelins in her right hand. The author pays special attention to the clothing of the Amazons accompanying the queen, noting that their dress does not cover their bodies entirely. Curtius Rufus then describes their left breast as uncovered and intact, in order that they might use it to nurse their children, a detail that is important here as Thalestris is interested in begetting a child of the conqueror. Their right breast, however, is seared off in order to facilitate the stretching of their bows and brandishing of javelins, a description that aligns with earlier etymologies of Amazons as women who have only one breast. When describing the garments worn by Amazons, Curtius Rufus writes that these women gather the folds of their clothing into a knot just above their knees. This modification of dress deemed appropriate for Roman

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628 See Fratantuono (2006) 29-43 for further discussion of this idea.
629 These accounts include Curt. 6.5.25-32; Diod. Sic. 17.77.1-3; Strabo 11.5.4; Plut. Vit. Alex. 46.
630 Curt. 6.5: vestis non toto Amazonum corpori obductur.
631 While there are no Greek depictions of this knotted robe, Roman sculptures portray the huntress as sometimes wearing a robe that is knotted.
women allows the author to credibly dress Amazons in the long robes that were both suitable, yet practical for hunting and warfare.

Curtius Rufus’s account, written in the 1st century CE, includes detailed descriptions of Alexander’s encounter with Amazon women for several reasons. As Baynham notes, the interaction places Alexander on the same mythopoetic level as Heracles and Achilles, since both of these heroes also had encounters with Amazon women.632 Second, because each leader is described as strong and worthy of each other, their union represents a reconciliation between “conqueror” and “barbarian.”633 Unlike Vergil’s Camilla, a warrior woman who is distinctly feminine and ultimately unsuitable for battle, Thalestris here is an equal to Alexander and remains in control of their encounter by sizing him up, refusing to accompany him in his wars, and establishing conditions on who will keep the child. While Thalestris presents herself as equal to Alexander, Curtius Rufus’s close attention to the clothing of other Amazons sexualizes her rather than presents her as a warrior. Thalestris is dressed for practicality in a manner that emphasizes both gender and prowess. This work inspired a popular genre of Alexander Romance in the Middle Ages, and the depiction of female power represented by mythical Amazons added to the novelty and exaggeration of this historical account.

Arms and Elegy

Beyond these accounts of Amazons or Amazon-like women, whose costume sets them apart from traditional Greek and Roman women, many literary examples of Roman women in armor depict them wielding weapons, or desiring to do so, in order to meet their love interest in military camps. Such women are not criticized by authors, since

these women use male accessories to reinforce gender roles: displaying their devotion to lovers. This trope of women wearing armor as a disguise was present in both literary narratives and historical accounts in the early empire, serving perhaps as a form of protest against laws forbidding soldiers to marry. 634

Amatory connections between love and warfare, a motif that inspired the mythical extramarital affair between Venus and Mars, were especially present in Roman elegy. Propertius and Ovid particularly make this connection clear in their poetry. Propertius does so in his elegy about Spartan women, when he praises Spartans for allowing women to exercise nude among men. In his descriptions of women performing various exercises such as boxing and discus throwing, he mentions a woman who fixes a sword to her “snow-white” side and covers her “virginal head” with “hollow bronze.” 635 He then compares these women to warlike Amazons and to Helen, both of whom were said to have carried weapons with their chest bare. The description of snowy-white skin for a warrior does not reflect the reality of soldiers spending much time in the sun and instead emphasizes the woman’s gender. 636 This description, as well as the detail of the “virginal” head, emphasizes that this is a fantasy of the author. Propertius’s interest in these comparisons between women exercising and mythological figures derives from a desire to be closer to his own love interest and view her nude body. He reveals this desire in a final comparison between Spartan and Roman customs: whereas Spartan lovers are forbidden from remaining apart, Propertius’s love interest is surrounded by others that

634 For this law, attributed to Augustus, see Phang (2001) 115-136.
635 Prop. 3.14.13-15, 19: ...niveum latus ense revincit, virgineumque cavo protegit aere caput, / qualis Amazonidum nudatis bellica mammis... / inter quos Helene nudis capere arma papillis. For discussion of this passage as a spoof, see Newman (2006) 345.
636 Cf. Ar. Eccl. 384-388, where Chremes comments on the pale skin of the disguised women. Since women were largely expected to be indoors, Aristophanes’ comment suggests their skin should be paler. This also corresponds to the white skin of women in vase paintings.
prevent the two from interacting in public. He uses the imagery of Spartan women in armor and Amazon women to express his own desires: the wearing of armor in this poem is thus only important in that it displays the female body for the speaker’s viewing pleasure.

**Love as Warfare in Ovid**

Ovid also mentions armed women in his amatory poetry. He does so in order to further the motif of love as warfare that appears in the *Amores*. While the first poem of the *Amores* recounts how Ovid has deliberately put aside the subject of warfare, it comes up several times within an amatory context. In one of these instances, he compares a woman’s abortion of her fetus to warfare. He starts off the poem by saying that girls are free from the necessities of warfare, writing that a girl does not have to fight or follow an army, yet this separation from warfare is useless since she endures wounds from her own weapons. Ovid calls a girl’s hands *caecas* (4) since she is inexperienced in using arms, and says that she uses invasive weapons and harsh poisons to harm her fetus (*subiectis…telis / dira venena*, 27-28). In this poem, the *puella* mentioned is neither experienced in using weapons, nor is she interested in using them against others. Her only goal is to perform an abortion on herself. Ovid’s mention of weapons and warfare in association with women places his love interest in the military sphere while emphasizing that she is out of place in it.

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637 Ovid explicitly sets aside warfare in *Am. 1.1.28*, stating: *ferrea cum vestris bella valetemodis!* The theme of love as warfare appears most explicitly in poems 1.2, 1.9, 2.12, and 2.14. See Oliensis (2019) 100-149 for discussion of love as warfare in the *Amores*, and Turpin (2016) 121-126 for the theme within poem 1.9.

638 *Am. 2.14.1-3.*
Ovid continues to combine amatory situations with warfare in the *Ars Amatoria*. In the third book of this poem, he fashions himself as a *praeeceptor amoris* who prepares women for battle. In the previous two books, Ovid has taught men how to find, win over, and retain women. By this third book, he writes that it is time for him to instruct girls on the same topics, framing his discussion in military language:

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Arma dedi Danais in Amazonas; arma supersunt,
Quae tibi dem et turmae, Penthesilea, tuae.
Ite in bella pares; vincant, quibus alma Dione
Faverit et toto qui volat orbe puer.
Non erat armatis aequum concurrere nudas;
Sic etiam vobis vincere turpe, viri.  (Ars am. 3.1-6)
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I gave arms to the Greeks against the Amazons; arms remain, which I give to you and your troop, Penthesilea. Go to battles as equals; may they win, those who blessed Dione and her boy, who flies over the whole Earth, cherish. It was not just for armed men to clash with exposed girls; such a thing would be shameful, men, even if you were to win.

In this start of the third book, Ovid compares Greeks to men that he has already instructed in the art of warfare at earlier sections of his poem. He then says it is time for him to arm Amazons, thus drawing a parallel between women reading his work and Amazon warriors. He writes that his aim in doing so is to equip girls just as he has done men, since it would not be fair for men to battle and win against girls who are not as equally equipped. His use of warfare imagery and comparison of Roman women to Amazons again depicts a woman in armor, but her target is a love interest rather than a product of one, as in the case of the fetus in the previous poem. While the women described in this poem are currently unarmed, the mention of Amazons equates them with skilled and formidable opponents.

Later in this same book, Ovid clarifies that the kinds of warfare he will teach women are playful loves:
Nil nisi lascivi per me discuntur amores;
Femina praecepiam quo sit amanda modo.
Femina nec flammas nec saevos excutit arcus;
Parcius haec video tela nocere viris.  
(Ars am. 3.27-30)

Nothing except playful passions is learned from me; I’ll instruct women on how to be loved. A woman shakes off neither flames nor savage bows; I see these weapons harm men less often.

Here, like in the section quoted from the *Amores*, Ovid limits the capabilities of women in warfare by stating they are not able to shake off weapons that men are seldomly harmed by. He specifically teaches women how to become passive objects of love, as noted by the passive participle *Amanda*. Thus, the subject of elegiac poetry wields weapons to attain men and fulfill their desires. Just as Amazons traditionally lost to Greeks, these weapons cannot ultimately defeat men. However, when intending to use their weapons to injure rather than incite desire, as is the case of the girl harming her fetus in *Amores* 2, weapons of the elegiac *puella* are sharp, and her hands are inexperienced. In other words, it is not only the *puella*’s gender that makes weapons unsuitable, but her body is not also fit to wield them.

**Armor for Amatory Purposes**

Depictions of women wearing armor persist in cases where they desire to accompany their love interest on military campaigns. In some instances of this, women still remain at home, but desire to be alongside their love interest and only fantasize about wearing armor. In others, women use armor to disguise themselves as men and accompany their lovers on campaigns. In both cases, the woman’s goal typically remains unsuccessful either because she does not act on her desire, or she is punished for doing so.
The first instance of a woman describing herself in armor comes from the fourth book of Propertius’s elegies, where the speaker of poem 4.3 inserts herself into the life of her love interest’s military camp. Debrohun notes that this poem includes an extra level of cross-dressing because it is the first in which Propertius assumes a female voice.\textsuperscript{639} The poem is framed as a letter from Arethusa to a man named Lycotas. Arethusa begins the letter with a lament at Lycotas’s long absence. She demonstrates her knowledge of his travels and enemies by describing both the different places he visits and features of that place, such as the armed horses of Sericus, wintry Geta, and a painted chariot in Britain.\textsuperscript{640} Arethusa further associates herself with military activity when she tells her husband that she has woven a fourth \textit{lacerna} for his camps (18, “\textit{castris...tuis}”). She again mentions labor that she performs for the camps as she discusses her spinning work for them: \textit{noctibus hibernis castrensia pensa laboro} (33). The use of the adjective \textit{castrensia} and the verb \textit{laboro} associates her with work of the camps, even though spinning was considered women’s domestic work. By stating that she weaves cloaks for his camps and does work pertaining to the camps, she considers her labor a contribution to the army as a whole, rather than domestic work that she undertakes for her partner alone. When mentioning her wool-work done for the camps, she also shares the knowledge she has acquired about her husband’s campaigns, such as the territories he must conquer and the climates that will impact his journey.\textsuperscript{641} Arethusa thus positions herself as a participant on her love interest’s expeditions, instead of an outsider.

While Arethusa does not put on her own armor to join her lover at the military camps, she compares herself to women that do so and distances herself from her own

\textsuperscript{639} Debrohun (2003) 186.
\textsuperscript{640} Prop. 4.3.8-9.
\textsuperscript{641} Prop. 4.35-40.
items of adornment. She calls Hippolyte fortunate, since the Amazon queen was able to
wield armor and wear a helmet. Arethusa then laments in her letter:

Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis!
essem militiae sarcina fida tuae,
nec me tardarent Scythiae iuga…

If only the camps had been open to Roman girls! I would have been a
trusty burden to your campaign. Nor would the ridges of Scythia delay me…

Here, she laments that the Roman camps are not open to women, since she would have
been a faithful companion (or literally, a burden) to Lycotas. She also tells him, in case
this would be his concern, that she would not slow others down. By comparing herself
first to an armed Amazon then to the soldier’s pack (sarcina), Arethusa aligns herself
with weapons of war to then creates scenarios where she would be serviceable on
campaigns. This mention of soldier’s equipment contrasts with her current state of dress,
as she herself notes. Arethusa questions why, instead of accompanying her love interest,
she instead remains at home wearing purple garments and crystals on her hands.642 She
mentions two different shades of purple (ostro and purpura) to emphasize her extreme
wealth and luxury and contrast these with her desire to wear armor and accompany her
lover on campaigns. The desire she describes in the section above is not to participate in a
war or display any military prowess, but to prove she can keep up with other soldiers in
order to reunite with her lover.

At the same time that she amplifies her value to her husband’s military camp,
Arethusa feminizes Lycotas by questioning his skills as a soldier and his mental fortitude
when bearing their separation. First, she asks him whether his armor fits properly or
harms his body. This question of whether his armor is suited to his body recalls Ovid’s

642 Prop. 4.3.51-52.
discussion of a woman inexperienced in using weapons at *Amores* 2.14. Arethusa feminizes her husband by questioning his body’s suitability for wielding arms. She describes his shoulders as soft and his hands as unwarlike (23–24, *teneros…imbellis*) before then relishing in the fact that his weapons will leave marks on his body instead of an extramarital partner. She then says that she heard he has gotten thin and hopes that this is from desire from her. Her concern is not about his well-being, but instead his fidelity.

Following this line, Arethusa further connects herself to warfare through a mention of armor. She writes that at night, she kisses the arms he left behind. This detail indicates not only how much she has missed Lycotas, but also further associates her with weaponry, conflating *militia amoris* with *militia*. In this poem, Propertius’s speaker imagines herself cross-dressing when she fantasizes about wearing armor for the purpose of accompanying her love interest, whom she describes as unwarlike. Juxtaposing her descriptions of Lycotas with her own use of armor thus creates a gender reversal between the two characters that appears almost humorous to Roman readers. These readers would view the woman’s desire to be a warrior as laughable as Lycotas’ unwarlike nature that she describes.

Following this poem is another one where Propertius associates a woman with armor and Amazons. This poem is about the legendary woman named Tarpeia, the Vestal Virgin who was said to have betrayed Rome to the Sabines because she was bribed with gold. In Propertius’s poem, her love of Tatius motivates her to betray Romans, rather than fearing her husband’s death.

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643 Debrohun (2003) 186 notes that her concerns are more so that of a jealous mistress than a *matrona* fearing her husband’s death.
644 Debrohun (2003) 188.
645 For further description of her betrayal, see Livy 1.11.
than her love of gold. She mentions the beauty of Sabine arms (32, “...formosa oculis arma Sabina meis”) and writes that the *toga picta* befits Tatius, rather than the motherless Romulus.646 Her desire for Tatius causes her loyalty to shift, as is reflected in her admiration of Sabine armor and statement that Tatius is more worthy of the *toga picta*.

Tarpeia fantasizes an address to Tatius that closely inserts herself into the warfare between Romans and Sabines. She states that she will be able to dissolve the battle line, and that a treaty will be made when she receives the *palla* of a married woman.647 Through the mention of brides and the invocation of the wedding god Hymnæus, Tarpeia uses imagery of marriage to insert herself into warfare. As a Vestal, both warfare and marriage are foreign territory for her. She writes that her bed will soften Tatius’s arms (62: *vestra meus molliet arma torus*), meaning that the marriage will resolve conflict and bring peace. The synchesis of this line closely ties her to the warfare, and though she does not herself fight of have armor of her own, she places herself as an important figure in the conflict. Unlike Arethusa of the previous poem, Tarpeia does not want the conflict to continue with herself as a participant. Instead, she sees her involvement leading to peace.

Propertius then compares Tarpeia to an Amazon woman, and places armor onto her. He describes her as running with her chest bare along the Thermodon river, the site at which Amazons founded Themiscyra. During the Parilia festival, Tarpeia opens the city’s gates to Tatius, who rewards her by burial beneath the armor of his companions. Propertius calls this armor a dowry that was fit for her services, recalling her earlier desire for marriage as a form of resolving conflict. Tarpeia is crushed by the armor

646 Prop. 4.4.53-54: *te togapictadecet, non quem sine matris honore / nutrit inhumanae dura papilla lupae*. The *toga picta* was a purple toga embroidered with gold that was typically worn by victorious Roman generals.
647 Prop. 4.4.59-60: *commissas acies ego possum soluere: nuptae / vos medium palla foedus inite mea*. 
thrown onto her. She does not willingly fantasize about using armor to join her lover as Arethusa does, but instead hopes for marriage and the *palla* and is instead given armor and death. The use of armor in this story reasserts Tarpeia’s position as an outsider to marriage and warfare, despite her self-motivated desire to resolve conflict between the Romans and Sabines.

Nearly half a century later, Statius continues this representation of women wearing armor because of a desire to accompany a lover in battle. His first depiction of his trope is from *Silvae* 5.1.648 This poem is a consolation to his dedicatee Flavius Abascantus on the death of his wife Priscilla. After first praising Flavius for his dedication to Priscilla, Statius then lauds the woman and her loyalty towards her husband. He writes that she was so dedicated to him that she would have willingly confronted the dangers of the elements and armies for her husband.649 Statius then writes that Priscilla handled her husband’s promotion to the title of *ab epistulis* well, remaining both modest and supportive of his successes. When describing her acts of devotion to Flavius, Statius says that these are small things, and she would have endured more for him. He writes:

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\text{...tecum gelidas comes illa per arctos}
\text{Sarmaticasque hiemes Histrumque et pallida Rheni}
\text{frigora, tecum omnes animo durata per aestus}
\text{et, si castra darent, vellet gestare pharetras,}
\text{vellet Amazonia latus intercludere pelta;}
\text{dum te pulverea bellorum nube videret}
\text{Caesarei prope fulmen equi divinaque tela}
\text{vibrantem et magnae sparsum sudoribus hastae. (Silv. 5.1.127-134)}
\]

\[
\text{...a companion with you through the cold north and wintry Sarmatia,}
\text{Histria and the pale cold of the Rhine, enduring in her mind all the heat of summer with you. and if the camps were allowing it, she would willingly wield quivers, enclose her side with an Amazonian shield, if only she were seeing you in a dusty cloud of war beside the thunderbolt of Caesar’s}
\]

horse, brandishing his divine javelins and sprinkled with sweat from his great spear.

In this passage, Priscilla’s devotion to her husband would lead to her enduring extreme weather and taking up arms of an Amazon to accompany him on the battlefield. Statius mentions Priscilla using a quiver and Amazonian shield since these are the weapons closely associated with female warriors. He uses the subjunctive mood to indicate that she would wield armor, were the camps to allow it. In other words, her desire to wear armor is only to accompany her husband, and she does not act on this desire solely out of obedience to camp restrictions.

The literary trope of women desiring to take up arms was also given mythological precedents. For example, Statius mentions how Penelope would have gladly went to Ilium to be with Ulysses. The implicit idea within this trope is that only custom holds these women back from joining their lovers at camp, not the woman’s willingness. In the Achilleid, Statius also describes Deidamia asking Achilles to take her to Troy with him. When Achilles’ identity was discovered and he was going to depart to Troy, his love interest on the island, Deidamia, tells Achilles that since he performed as a woman on Skyros by wielding a thyrsus and other items sacred to Bacchus, she should just as well be able to perform a masculine role among the troops by wielding the standards. Deidamia, like Propertius’s depiction of women devoted to their love interest, was expected to ask to join her husband in a demonstration of their devotion. As part of this

650 See also Gibson (2006) 124-125 on the translation of these lines.
651 Stat. Silv. 3.5.46-47: isset ad Iliacas—quid enim deterret amantes?—/ Penelope gavisa demos, si pasus Ulixes.
652 Such a request is reminiscent of Marcia at Lucan Pharsalia 2.38: damihi castra sequi. Marcia asks Cato if she could follow the army to share in his dangers and troubles.
trope, their request is not fulfilled because Romans did not consider women to be suitable for warfare. The desire of these women to cross-dress by taking up arms in these cases is thus not subversive or transgressive, because these hopes remain unfulfilled, and are motivated by upholding their image of devotion to their partner rather than an intention to fight.

In contrast to Deidamia’s request to become a standard bearer, a masculine disguise was also mentioned for women who wished to join their husbands in exile.⁶⁵⁴ In Ovid’s *Epistulae ex Ponto*, he tells his wife not to take up an Amazonian axe or wield a crescent shield on her delicate hand.⁶⁵⁵ Ovid’s mention of this trope and the equipment of Amazons is in line with other depictions of the trope used to represent his wife’s devotion and dutifulness. She herself does not speak in his letter; instead, he anticipates her desire to follow him into exile. The mention of the Amazon axe and shield recalls this literary trope, while also using armor that was associated with women, since Amazons were pointedly feminine.⁶⁵⁶ This armor would serve no true purpose in Ovid’s situation of exile, further supporting the idea that this was only a trope used to characterize a partner.

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⁶⁵⁴ The use of transvestism as a form of disguise is rather common for women in Greek literature, such as the instance of the Minyans in Herodotus (4.146.2-4) exchanging clothing with their husbands so they may escape captivity. Hyginus’s account of the 4th century Greek physician Agnodice writes that the woman disguised herself as a man in order to learn medicine (a practice which was forbidden to women during her time). Although Hyginus wrote in Latin, his work attempts to provide an explanation for female physicians in Greece. The most notable use of cross-dressing as a form of disguise for women in Greek literature occurs in Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*. In his play, along with these other examples of women using disguises, male dress is employed as a means of accomplishing some task. While the Minyans use it to save husbands, Agnodice uses male dress to learn medicine, and the women in Aristophanes’ play wear their husband’s clothing to gain majority in the assembly, since they feel that they can govern better. Women using masculine dress in these latter two cases do so to gain privileges that were typically reserved for men. This amatory purpose for their disguise, appearing in the examples discussed above and in the myth of Procris and Cephalus (Hyginus 189 and Ant. Lib. Met. 41.4), demonstrates the restrictions that Roman authors place on women.

⁶⁵⁵ Ov. Pont. 3.1.95-96: *Nec tibi Amazonia est pro me sumenda securis / aut excisa leui pelta gerenda manu.*

⁶⁵⁶ Armor of Amazons was also Eastern, both because of the foreignness of these women and the association of Eastern goods to luxury and femininity. Dressing wives or love interests as Amazons was thus in line with the woman’s gender presentation.
In another instance of a woman adapting her dress to join her husband in exile, Apuleius describes Plotina, whom he calls a woman of rare faith and singular female virtue, abandoning a life of luxury, cutting her hair, and taking up masculine dress (“in masculinam faciem reformato habita”). In her male disguise, she was able to escape the notice of soldiers and join her husband with what Apuleius labels as the spirit of a man (ingenio masculo). Apuleius’s version of the trope is the only instance where a woman successfully dons armor to accompany her love interest. Her disguise leads to a description of her masculine nature, which is unusual when compared with Roman sources which use this desire for armor to feminize the woman.

**Historical Precedents**

This trope was not only relegated to fictional works—both Tacitus and Plutarch describe the wife of Calvisius Sabinus using armor as a disguise to enter the camps. Her motivation for doing so, however, influences her portrayal. Tacitus writes that the wife of Calvisius (who remains unnamed in both his account and Plutarch’s) had an evil desire of seeing the site of the camps. Because of this desire, Tacitus says that she entered the camps at night in soldier’s garb, making trial of guards and other soldiers by licentiousness, and then committing adultery in the general’s quarters. Tacitus writes that Titus Vinius was punished for being her accomplice. Plutarch’s account of the woman’s disguise asserts that Vinius brought her into the camp in a soldier’s disguise for

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658 It is possibly because Apuleius is writing in a later period that he alters this trope.
659 Dio describes the same incident but places it in the reign of Gaius rather than Galba, and names Cornelia as Calvisius Sabinus’s wife. In Dio’s account, there is no mention of Titus Vinius and Calvisius Sabinus is indicted with his wife because she watched over the guards and soldiers (59.18.4). There is no mention of her adultery in Dio’s account. For discussion of this incident in context with the ban on wives at the camps, see Phang (2001) 126-127, 294 and 369.
660 Tac. *Hist.* 1.48. See also Phang (2001) 126-127, and 294 on this passage.
the purpose of adultery. Although only Tacitus places the woman in control of her actions and disguise, both authors condemn the woman’s behavior as licentious (*lascivia* in Tacitus and *ἀκόλαστος* in Pliny). This is because her motives for the disguise in both accounts were actions that contrasted with those of a virtuous Roman woman. Unlike the women asking to join their lover in literary accounts (though not succeeding in doing so), Calvisius Sabinus’s wife desired instead to unite with an illicit lover. Her transgressions thus cause authors to condemn her behavior, while praising the unfulfilled desires of literary women.

Women wearing armor to enter military camps was a sign of dedication because this desire was often only a verbal sign of faithfulness rather than a subversion of gender roles. In fact, asking to join their lover during a campaign was in line with gender roles that expected women to remain devoted to their husbands. In reality, however, during the times that these writers were active, women were not allowed on campaigns and marriages of soldiers were not formally recognized. It was not until Septimius Severus that soldiers were allowed to marry, though in all likelihood, wives and other women were not physically barred from military camps. These literary depictions of women wanting to don armor to join husbands could then be a means of gently mocking the

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662 Cassius Dio is the earliest reference to this prohibition, stating that Claudius granted to soldiers the rights of men who were married: 60.24.3: τοῖς τε στρατευομένοις, ἐπειδὴ γυναίκας οὺκ ἔδυναν τὸ γε τῶν νόμων ἐχαίν, τὰ τῶν γεγαμηκότων. This marriage ban was first attributed to Augustus, who was said to have only allowed legates to visit wives during the winter (*Suet. Aug.* 24). For further discussion of this ban and the ancient sources associated with it, see Phang (2001) 16-114. See also the speech of Caecina Severus in Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.33), where he enumerates the reasons why women should not be allowed to travel with magistrates to the provinces.
663 Herodian (3.8.5) writes that this ban, among other reforms to the army, weakened the discipline of soldiers. Septimius Severus’s alteration of the law came decades after Faustina Minor, wife of Marcus Aurelius, gained the title of *mater castrorum* for accompanying the emperor to the camps. After her acceptance of this title, Severan women, particularly Septimius Severus’s wife Julia Domna, are awarded this title. For more on the title *mater castrorum*, see Langford (2013). For evidence on women living in military camps, see Greene (2013) 369-390, (2012) 105-114, Allison (2011) 161-182, and Phang (2001) 142-161.
woman’s desire to circumvent the law, while also reinforcing the proper place of these wives.

One of the major arguments that authors had against women in camps was their desire for power. Tacitus gives an example of such in his description of Piso’s wife Plancia, who attended cavalry exercises, strutted among soldiers, and commanded centurions.”664 According to Dio, Fulvia similarly commanded soldiers, much to the outrage of Octavian. Dio writes that Fulvia even armed herself with a sword when giving commands.”665 Another notable display of power from a woman in a military setting occurs much later when Agrippina appears beside Claudius at a mock naval battle. Tacitus describes Claudius wearing the military cloak (paludamentum) and says that Agrippina was not far off in splendor, wearing a golden chlamys.”666 Not only is her cloak a Greek garment, but it was one that was typically reserved for men. The costliness of gold thread also makes her choice of garment an outrageous display of status that was typically condemned by male writers. The fact that she wears this cloak at a mock battle is even more excessive since such splendor was ill-suited for the occasion. This cloak was so notable that both Pliny and Cassius Dio also mention it.”667 Pliny describes the fabric of the garment as “sine alia materia” to emphasize the uniqueness and extravagance of this wholly gold textile. Unlike Tacitus and Dio, Pliny calls the garment a paludamentum, which is similar to the chlamys but is a distinctly Roman garment that was typically worn by men. Authors such as Tacitus believed that by performing actions

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664 Tac. Ann. 2.55.
666 Tac. Ann. 12.56.
such as commanding centurions, or by usurping male dress, women would become tempted to gain more power than was considered acceptable for them.

Accordingly, the women who only wish to accompany their husbands on their military campaigns but do not act upon this desire are portrayed positively. Meanwhile, the wife of Calvisius Sabinus, who not only snuck into camps, but did so for the purposes of committing *adulteria*, was condemned. The intention of cross-dressing, as well as whether or not the action was carried out, is then directly related to the attitude authors have towards these women. Women using male disguises usually only appear in texts about Roman women who desire to meet their love interest: their masculine dress exists in these accounts so they may serve the men around them and represent a symbol of their faithfulness.

**Emperors Dressing Concubines in Armor**

While women desiring to wear armor in literary works was a trope employed in amatory scenes, historical accounts use the armed woman as a means of commenting upon the character of the man who is the focus of the narrative. As a reflection of the man who dresses them in armor, these women become literary devices only present to serve as direct contrast to the gender transgressions of the men who place armor upon them. The instances I will discuss here are examples of women who are dressed in armor by an emperor. Each one who was said to have dressed women as such also transgressed gender norms through his own garb, which was another stratagem used in literary works to signal bad emperors.⁶⁶⁸

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⁶⁶⁸ For Further discussion of cross-dressing emperors, see the chapter 4 as well as Varner (2008) and Icks (2016).
The first emperor that was said to have dressed a woman in armor is the emperor Gaius. In his biography of the emperor, Suetonius describes what he considers to be Gaius’s base actions when forming a marriage, acting as husband, and dissolving a marriage. After describing Gaius’s two previous marriages and divorces, Suetonius then introduces his third wife, Caesonia, who remained a concubine right until she bore a child for the emperor. According to Suetonius, Caesonia was neither attractive nor young and already had three children from a previous marriage. Suet. Calig. 25: Caesoniam neque facie insigni neque aetate integra matremque iam ex alio viro trium filiarum. Suetonius calls Caesonia a woman of depraved luxury and lewdness, yet Gaius loved her ardently. He describes Gaius’s treatment of Caesonia when he writes that the emperor displayed her nude to his friends and decked in military uniform to the soldiers riding beside him. To emphasize this unusual habit, Suetonius describes each piece of military uniform that the emperor used to decorate his companion: a chlamys, light shield, and helmet (chlamyde peltaque et galea). Like Agrippina’s use of the chlamys, the garment here is mentioned among a shield and helmet because the chlamys was a military cloak. Thus, each item signals that the wearer is associated with the military. Suetonius presents these items as inappropriate for Caesonia in an anecdote meant to surprise the reader concerning the emperor’s behavior, emphasizing that Gaius is the one who is to blame for her masculine dress.

Suetonius describes Nero using armor in a similar manner. When he finds out that Galba led a revolt against him in Hispania around early 68 CE, Suetonius writes that Nero believed an expedition was necessary, and unseated both consuls at the time to take their place as sole consul. According to the biographer, Nero intended to approach the

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669 Suet. Calig. 25: Caesoniam neque facie insigni neque aetate integra matremque iam ex alio viro trium filiarum.
enemy soldiers unarmed and weeping to dissuade them from their rebellion. After this surrender, he would then sing epinicia in honor of his victory. To add to this unwarlike image of the emperor, Nero’s preparations for the campaign demonstrate an interest in theater and performance. Suetonius notes that Nero’s first priority was selecting carriages to transport his theatrical instruments. Then, he arranged to have the hair of his accompanying concubines cut into a masculine style (ad virile modum), and then furnished them with the axes and shields of Amazons. Instead of preparing himself for the expedition by putting armor onto his own body, he instead puts armor onto the bodies of his concubines. Champlin notes that Nero arms his concubines in order to “reference to Hercules’ own expedition against, and conquest of, the Amazons.” While a parallel to Hercules would present the emperor as heroic, the concern for theatricality instead undercuts this performance. His unwarlike nature and focus on entertainment equipment contrast with the arming and masculine appearance given to his concubines. The use of Amazonian equipment in conjunction with the masculine hairstyle given to these women further confuses their gender presentation. On the one hand, Amazons were distinctly feminine, and the Romans tied their Eastern weapons to femininity. On the other hand, the use of armor by these non-mythical women, and their masculine haircut created ambiguity in their gender presentation. It is possible that Suetonius presents these women’s dress as ambiguous to contrast with the emperor’s own gender inversions.

According to the Historia Augusta, Commodus continues this use of Amazonian weapons to adorn his own concubine. Though of questionable reputability and likely influenced by the episode in Suetonius’s account, the author of the biography explains

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671 Suet. Ner. 43.2.
672 Suet. Ner. 44.1.
that one of the emperor’s honorific titles was ‘Amazonius.’ Commodus received this title because he enjoyed dressing his concubine Marcia, who held great influence over him, as an Amazon: *pictam in Amazone diligebat.* The use of *picta,* rather than a description of the weapons Marcia carries, treats the dress of a female warrior as a costume. The author states that because of her, Commodus himself wanted to enter the gladiatorial arena in the dress of an Amazon (though there is no historical record of him actually doing so). The emperor’s nickname of ‘Amazonius’ suggests not only Marcia’s influence over the emperor, but also the significance of this costume. Women wearing the armor of Amazons were not explicitly adopting male status symbols, though women’s use of armor was inherently a form of cross-dressing, since armor outside of mythological depictions was typically reserved for men. Commodus’s desire to enter the arena as an Amazon presents a direct parallel to the gender inversion ascribed to Marcia.

Mentions of emperors dressing women in armor are interesting not because of their historical veracity (since they are likely fabricated events), but because of their characterization of emperors. Varner argues that gender-fluid representations of the emperor was a deliberate way “to communicate to Roman audiences the transcendent position and power of the Emperor.” Carlà-Uhink similarly writes that such clothing choices are due to the divine status of the emperor, allowing him to change both his own gender and that of others. It is possible, then, to see these descriptions of women in armor as a reflection of the emperor’s power rather than just a reflection of

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674 SHA *Comm.* 11.9.
675 SHA *Comm.* 11.9: *propter quam et ipse Amazonico habitu in harenam Romanam procedere voluit.* For the emperor’s high regard for Marcia and his treatment of the concubine as if she were his wife, see Hdn. 16.4. For a description of the conspiracy, see SHA *Comm.* 17. See Cass. Dio 73.22.4-5 and Hdn. 1.17.2-12 on the emperor’s death at the hands of Marcia, Laetus, and Eclectus. For scholarship on the role Marcia played in the death of Commodus, see Strong (2016) 86-93.
677 Carlà-Uhink (2016) 23.
transgressions. Garland instead argues that emperors are represented as having monstrous
taste, and attributes this to a desire for novelty in a shrinking world. With this in mind,
we can also understand these emperors as possibly dressing women in armor for novelty
and entertainment. Unlike many of the previous women discussed, whose use of armor or
male dress reflected their own character, these women are only briefly mentioned in
narratives that focus on the emperor. Each of the emperors who dressed up their
concubines were notoriously described as ‘bad’ emperors, known for their cruelty and
focus on entertainment, rather than the typical concerns of rulers. The habit of forcing
women to wear armor is ascribed to these ‘bad’ emperors, rather than the entire group,
because it aligns with discussions of how these emperors have subverted traditional
Graeco-Roman notions of masculinity. Forcing women to don armor is only one of the
many cruelties enacted by such men. Through their misappropriation of armor,
biographers present Gaius, Nero, and Commodus as poor leaders, who instead of placing
armor on their own bodies to defend the empire, instead place it on women for the
purposes of their own entertainment.

In addition to characterizing these emperors as cruel, the use of armor is another
way that biographers feminize such men. Each of these emperors was said to have
crossed gender boundaries. Gaius reportedly wore a wig and stola at night to commit
adultery; and wore clothing and fabrics associated with women: sericatus, cycladatus,
socco muliebri, cultus Veneris. According to Tacitus, Nero used women’s clothing by

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679 For examples of Gaius’s cruelty, see 26-32 of Suetonius’s biography. For Nero’s cruelties, see Suet. Ner. 26-29. See SHA Comm. 1.9 and 15.6-7 for examples of Commodus’s cruel behavior.
680 Suet. Calig. 11. See chapter four for further discussion of Gaius’s transvestism. See also Carlà-Uhink (2016) 21 for the connection to Caligula’s dress as Venus to his lineage.
wearing the *flammeum* in his marriage to Pythagoras.\(^{681}\) Suetonius and Dio both comment on the feminine robes that Nero wears when describing his unusual dress habits.\(^{682}\) In the *Historia Augusta*, Commodus wears women’s dress both when he enters the arena and when he sits in the theater or amphitheater.\(^{683}\) Each of these emperors allegedly had an interest in transvestism; by dressing women in armor, biographers demonstrate that this interest was not only restricted to their own person. The contrast between concubine in armor and emperor in women’s garments at separate points of the text further effeminizes the emperor.

Dressing concubines (or potentially wives, in the case of Caesonia) in armor was a form of costume modeling. In other words, we should not consider these weapons as tools but instead a form of dress whose function was to suggestively cover the body. Armor was a costume for these women, an item of dress for the purpose of attraction rather than practicality and everyday use. As fashion theorist Ruel Macaraeg notes in his study on armor and costume modeling, armor was able to “…add violent masculine prowess to otherwise idealized standard of feminine beauty.”\(^{684}\) Macaraeg’s statement recalls that made by Dio Chrisostom mentioned in chapter four, which considers the ideal form of beauty that which combined masculine and feminine elements.\(^{685}\) In Macaraeg’s assessment of women wearing armor, he believes that it allows women to take on symbols of masculine power to alter their femininity. However, this usurpation of masculine symbols of power was limited, since there are no representations of women in

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\(^{681}\) Tac. *Ann.* 15.37.

\(^{682}\) Suet. *Ner.* 51; Cass. Dio 63.13. Both note that the emperor wore an ungirt tunic, which was a sign of effeminacy. See also chapter four for more on the meaning of an ungirt tunic. See also Schmitt-Pantel (1977) 1064 and Olson (2017) 16.

\(^{683}\) SHA *Comm.* 9.6 and 13.4. See also Varner (2008) 185-205 for further discussion of cross-dressing emperors.

\(^{684}\) Macaraeg (2007) 57.

\(^{685}\) Dio Chrys. *Or.* 21.3. For further discussion on this sentiment, see chapter four.
a cuirass. Such armor, which was an exaggeration of the male physique, was associated with military valor and prowess. Women wearing armor were not associated with military skill and thus often given armor of Amazons, which was associated with Eastern luxury rather than the hypermasculine cuirass that would misalign with feminine motivations for dress.

With the idea of costume modeling, these women would then embody an ideal femininity that was paradoxically heightened, rather than undermined, by male status symbols. Macaraeg ascribes a sense of power granted to these women through the use of male status symbols. Although the examples given do not attach agency to these women, costume modeling is a useful way to think about how authors perceive the attraction of gender-crossing emperors. It is likely that emperors dress these women in armor to heighten attraction towards them. Authors thus associated dress with sex and sexuality, manipulating clothing of these women to suggest that these cross-dressing emperors are attracted to an amalgam of the masculine and feminine.

By forcing women to wear armor, and in two of these cases the armor of the mythical Amazonian women, authors require them to display their body for the entertainment of the emperors. Gaius, Nero, and Commodus are each known for their inclination towards theatricality through their cross-dressing and interest in spectacle. Suetonius writes that Gaius was passionate about theatrical dancing and singing, allegedly going so far as to whip anyone who would make a noise when his favorite dancer was performing. Similarly, Nero’s interest in spectacle led him to recite his own

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poetry in the theater and take part in athletic games at Greece. Finally, the Historia Augusta records Commodus’s interest in certain spectacles through his skills in dancing, singing, and performing as a gladiator, all of which were activities that the authors states were not fit for an emperor. Dressing women up in armor and as Amazons was another means for biographers to demonstrate each emperor’s interest in theatricality and spectacle. Just as these spectacles were not fitting for an emperor, forcing a woman to partake in cross-dressing was equally outrageous behavior. The women in each of these examples does not appear to have a choice in her dress, thus her use of armor poorly reflects on the emperor rather than on herself.

Female Gladiator

Female gladiators are another example of women that were forced to wear armor for the emperor’s entertainment. However, in the case of these women, their costume is for public entertainment rather than for the enjoyment of the emperor alone. While there is no surviving word for a female gladiator in antiquity, several authors make note of female combatants in the arena. Our earliest surviving use of the word gladiatrix appears in the Scholia Vetera on Juvenal. Here, the word is equated with meretrix: nam vere vult esse gladiatrix, quae meretrix. This association with a meretrix suggests the lower status of these women and the sexual openness associated with other performers such as actresses.

688 SHA Comm. 1.8: iam in his artifex, quae stationis imperatoriae non erant, ut calices fingeret, saltaret, cantaret, stibilaret, scurrarn deniqueet gladiatorem perfectum ostenderet.
689 Literary references to female gladiators occur in Juv. 6.246-267; Mart. Spect. 6a and 6b; Tac. Ann. 15.32. Suet. Ner. 11 and Dom. 4.1; Cass. Dio 62.17.3, 63.3.1, 66.25.1, 67.8.4; and Stat. Silv. 1.6.51-64.
690 Scholia Vetera 6.251.
The earliest recorded instance of an emperor having female gladiators is Nero: Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio all mention this, perhaps alluding to the novelty of this act at the time.\textsuperscript{691} Tacitus comments that the emperor had noblewomen fight in the arena as gladiators.\textsuperscript{692} Suetonius reports that aged \textit{matronae} took part in the games of the \textit{Ludi Juvenales} in 59 CE alongside older men of consular rank.\textsuperscript{693} Suetonius’s use of “\textit{quoque}” here is intended to elicit surprise at the participation of aged elites at such events. Nero held these games to commemorate the first shaving of his beard. To commemorate such and even would then associate the gender inversions of performers with transvestism occurring in the rite of passage ceremonies. These ceremonies often included reversals of gender and status, but given Nero’s own interest in spectacles, novelty, and gender reversals, the presence of female gladiators could instead reflect his own tastes.

In a description of Nero’s gladiatorial games, Tacitus condemns the emperor’s use of women in the arena. He writes that the emperor holds games that are as magnificent as games of the past; however, he then describes how the grandeur of these games are limited because noblewomen chose to “defile themselves by taking part in them.”\textsuperscript{694} Just as actors and actresses held a lower status despite any fame and public favor they may attain, the role of the gladiator was one that was considered unfitting for women. Tacitus especially looks down upon female gladiators because; as a man of senatorial rank, any

\textsuperscript{691} It may be possible that this lack of evidence of female gladiators before Nero points to him being the first emperor to include them in the arena. However, it is also possible that these authors would have noted if his was the first occurrence of such spectacles.

\textsuperscript{692} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.32.

\textsuperscript{693} Suet. \textit{Ner.} 11: \textit{Iuvenalibus senes quoque consulares anusque matronas recept ad lusum}. Tacitus (\textit{Ann.} 14.15) expresses disgust at these games since they allowed people of any rank and age to perform on stage. While he does not specifically describe female gladiators here, he does mention noble women at these games who took part in acts he considered vile. Cassius Dio (61.19.2) mentions Aelia Catella, a wealthy and aged woman from a noble family, who dances at these games. Syme (1989) 309 writes that she is assumed to be the daughter of Sextus Aelius Catus, who dances at the Juvenalia of 59 CE at the age of 80.

\textsuperscript{694} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 15.32: \textit{spectacula gladiatorum idem annus habuit parim magnificentia ac priora; sed feminarum inlustrium senatorumque plures per arenam foedati sunt}. 
type of performance would have been debasing for noblemen and especially noblewomen.

Dio’s discussion of Nero’s female gladiators likely alludes to the same gladiatorial matches as Tacitus does, and Dio in addition includes reports of matches that feature people of certain ethnicities. When Dio describes the inclusion of noblewomen in Nero’s spectacles, he specifies that Nero holds these extravagant games in honor of Agrippina. During these games, he describes matches he considers to be “most disgraceful and most shocking” because they include men and women of both equestrian and senatorial status. Later, Dio mentions that the emperor for one day of matches had used only Ethiopian men, women, and children. Like male prisoners of war that were captured and forced to fight in the arena, the same fate was a possibility for women. The description of ethnicity in this example, as well as the variety of age and genders of opponents, adds to the strangeness of the emperor’s spectacles.

**Literary Representations**

There are also allusions to female gladiators in Latin literature. Juvenal details the clothing of female gladiators in his *Satires*, further supporting the presence of noblewomen as combatants. In his first satire, as Juvenal begins to list the ills in society that compel him to write, he mentions a woman who fights beasts in the arena (a *venatrix*). His description of the beast hunter reads: *Mevia Tuscum / figat aprum et nuda teneat venabula mamma* (1.22-23). Here, Juvenal explicitly names the *venatrix*. Courney points out that the mention of a name is an indication that it would have been

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695 Cass. Dio 62.17.3: ἐκεῖνο δὲ δὴ καὶ αἰσχρόν καὶ δεινότατον ἀμα ἐγένετο, ὅτι καὶ ἀνδρεῖς καὶ γυναικές οὐχ ὡς τοῦ ἱππικοῦ ἄλλα καὶ τοῦ βουλευτικοῦ ἁζιώματος ἐς τὴν ὁρχήστραν καὶ ἐς τὸν ἰππόδρομον τὸ τε θέατρον τὸ κυνηγετικὸν ἐσῆλθον ὡσπερ οἱ ἀτιμώτατοι.

696 Cass. Dio 63.3.1.
recognizable to Juvenal’s audience.\textsuperscript{697} She holds spears (\textit{venabula}) and hunts with her breasts bared, in an image reminiscent of Amazon women.\textsuperscript{698} Juvenal indicates that noblewomen also appeared as beast hunters, doing so in the character of Amazons by leaving their chest unprotected and holding spears in their hands.

Juvenal’s second mention of noblewomen fighting in the arena provides even further condemnation of the actions and dress of a \textit{gladiatrix}. This section occurs in his sixth \textit{Satire}, where he describes what he believes to be the numerous evils of women in an attempt to dissuade his friend Postumus from marriage. Before introducing the faults of female gladiators, Juvenal describes the combative nature of women who enjoy tormenting their husbands, learn troublesome behavior from their mothers, and cause legal disputes.\textsuperscript{699} He then gives the longest description of female gladiators in Rome, which reads as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
endromidas Tyrias et femineum ceroma 
quem nescit, vel quis non vidit vulnera pali,
quam cavat adsiduis rudibus scutoque lacesit
atque omnis implet numeros dignissima prorsus
Florali matrona tuba, nisi si quid in illo
pectore plus agitat veraeque paratur harenae?
quem praestare potest mulier galeata pudorem,
quae fuit a sexu? vires amat. haec tamen ipsa
vir nollet fieri; nam quantula nostra voluptas!
qua decus, rerum si coniugis auctio fiat,
balteus et manicae et cristae crurisque sinistri
dimidium tegimen! vel si diversa movebit
proelia, tu felix ocreas vendente puella.
hae sunt quae tenui sudant in cyclade, quorum
delicias et panniculus bombycinus urit.
aspice quo fremitu monstratos perferat ictus
et quanto galeae curvetur pondere, quanta
poplitibus sedeat quam denso fascia libro,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{697} Courtney (1980) 71. Courtney uses this logic to assert that Mevia was thus a noblewoman, though there is no indication of such in the text itself.

\textsuperscript{698} See above section of this chapter for a discussion of Amazon women exposing their chest.

\textsuperscript{699} Juv. 6.206-245.
et ride positis scaphium cum sumitur armis.
dicite uos, neptes Lepidi caeciue Metelli  
Gurgitis aut Fabii, quae ludia sumpserit umquam 
hos habitus? quando ad palum gemat uxor Asyli?  
(Juv. 6.246-267)

Who doesn’t know about the sports-wraps of Tyrian purple and
The female wrestling ring, or who hasn’t seen the wounds of the
Training-post, whittled away by constant sword-blows; she
Assails it with her shield. The matrona goes through all the practice
maneuvers,
Entirely ready for the fights at the Floralia, unless she is planning
Something more in that breast of hers and is preparing herself for the real
arena.
How can you call her modest, a helmeted woman who shuns
Her own sex? She loves violence, even still she’d not
Want to become a man; our pleasure is so little!
What a fine sight, if there were auction of the wife’s paraphernalia,
There would be a sword-belt, arm guards, crests, and the half-greave
For the left leg! Or if she sets in motion a different kind of battle,
Lucky you when she sells off her greaves.
These are the girls who sweat in the thinnest robe, whose
Delicate skins are chafed by the thinnest silk cloth.
See how she shouts when she executes the thrusts shown to her
And how heavy the helmet is that she bends beneath, see how
Great the bandage of how thick bark that sits on her knees.
And laugh when she takes to a women’s chamber-pot, fully armed!
Granddaughters of Lepidus, or blind Metellus, or Fabius
Maximus Gurges, what gladiator’s wife ever wore stuff
Like this? When did Asylus’s wife grunt at the training-post?

Juvenal’s condemnation of female gladiators begins with a mention of their dress.

Specifically, he describes a Tyrian purple *endromis* worn by these women, a garment that
immediately signals he is writing about an athlete, since this garment was a cloak
commonly worn by athletes after exercising. The inclusion of the color purple both
indicates the high status of this woman and the strangeness of her appearance in the
arena. Like the previous authors mentioned, Juvenal condemns noblewomen for

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700 Cleland et.al. (2007) 57 s.v. *endromides/endromis*; Olson (2017) 71. For example, see Mart. 4.19 for the garment in association with athletic activity.
701 For larger discussion on the color Tyrian purple, see chapter 3. Plut. *Mor.* 554b describes those in the arena wearing gold tunics and purple mantles, but he describes these garments as costumes worn by
entering the arena. He does so here by mentioning the luxury dye used on a garment meant to cover the sweaty body of the athlete.

Juvenal mentions the armor used by female gladiators to mock and criticize their preparation for the arena and their desire to perform a role typically reserved for men. He describes their use of a *rudis* (249), which was a staff used by training gladiators and soldiers. The word can also mean unskilled or clumsy, as a slight jab at the ability of these women. He uses words such as *vulnera* and *lacessit* (248-249) to describe these women wielding the staff and shield, yet these wounds are directed at a stationary object (the *palum*) rather than an enemy. Juvenal then mocks these women by writing that their training has prepared them either for mock battles at the Floralia or a fight in the real arena, for which reason Juvenal calls her a *mulier galatea* who betrays her sex (252). This accusation is especially pointed, since it suggests that the abandonment of traditional women’s roles and a usurpation of armor and combat calls into question the woman’s sex. The name *mulier galatea* is meant to be an oxymoron, just like the juxtaposition of *Floralia* and *matrona* two lines above. Continuing these contrasts between gladiators and women, Juvenal remarks that these female combatants love violence yet do not want to become men. In other words, they wish to perform actions he believes to be more criminal during matches, bursting into flames at the end of a match (ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲν ἐνιοὶ ἰδαφέρωσι παιδαρίων, ἃ τοῖς κακούργοις ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις θεώμεναι πολλὰκα ἐν γιτώσι διαρχύσοις καὶ χλαμηδόις ἀλοιφογονίς ἐσπαραγωμένους καὶ πυρρίζουσας ἀγαθαί καὶ τέθημεν ὡς μακαρίας ἀχρόοι κεντούμενοι καὶ μαστιγούμενοι καὶ πῦρ ἀνέντες). See also Coleman (1990) 44-73 on the extravagant costumes within the arena.

According to the *Scholia Vetra* 250, during the Floralia festival, nude *meretrices* had mock fights with armed gladiators (“*meretrices nudatis corporibus per varias arces ludendi discurrunt, et armis certant gladiatoris atque pugnant*”). While there is no other evidence of these mock combats, this may be the event that Juvenal alludes to.

For further discussion of this idea, Brisson (2002) 148: “to reject one’s role, to challenge it or to play it inadequately, led to questioning of one’s possession of the biological sex traditionally associated with one’s social role.”

The *floralia* was a festival that featured performances by nude actresses and prostitutes. Authors often contrast the actresses at the Floralia and their lack of clothing with the fully clothed *matrona*. For more on the Floralia, see Val. Max. 2.10.8 and Mart. Book 1 Prologue.
suitable for men, yet their pursuit of pleasure (and the notion that women experience more of it) make them want to remain women. His portrait of the female gladiator thus serves to ridicule their skill while also condemning their gender performance.

After puzzling over this misalignment with gender and action, Juvenal then returns his focus to the armor of these noblewomen. He amuses himself at the idea of a husband selling his wife’s gladiatorial equipment in an *auctio*. In the first set of armor mentioned in lines 256–257, he describes the costume of a *murmillo*: a sword belt, arm guards, crests, and half-greaves. This description of specific equipment then raises the possibility that women were not only entering the arena, but that they were doing so in the costume of male gladiators. Juvenal continues with his description of the female gladiator’s equipment by describing a different costume for the female gladiator that includes *ocreae*, referring to the greaves worn by gladiators fighting as a *Thraex* or *hoplomachus.* Juvenal places the costume of male gladiators on these women to highlight the oddity of their desire for an activity that was restricted to men.

Juvenal then contrasts these pieces of armor with the delicate clothing worn by these women to further demonstrate their unusual gender performance. He writes that the same women who cover their bodies in armor and wear heavy gladiatorial equipment are ones who also sweat in thin garments (259). These same women, Juvenal writes, consider silk too rough and complain that it chafes their skin. He then contrasts complaints against delicate fabrics with the heavy helmets and thick layers of sports wraps that these women wore. Finally, he remarks at the contrast made by these female gladiators using a women’s chamber pot and their full armor. In a culmination of complaints against

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705 See Watson and Watson (2014) 153 for further discussion of the gladiatorial equipment described.  
706 For the word *scaphium* referring to a woman’s urinal, see Whitehouse (1995) 133-135.
female gladiators, Juvenal mentions his biggest gripe with them: women from Rome’s most eminent families that he names were entering the arena, while the wives of gladiators (ludia) would not even stoop so low. The gladiatrix in Juvenal’s account seems to hover between implicit gender and status boundaries—not fully crossing either boundary but criticized for blurring them.

Juvenal’s description of the gladiatrix’s dress is our most detailed portrait of the costume worn by these women. His account indicates that women wore some of the same costumes as male gladiators and exposed their breasts in the arena. For a matrona to reveal this part of her body was especially unusual. Juvenal pays such close attention to the costume of female gladiators not only because they are exposing their bodies, but also because their use of heavy armor is a stark contrast to the delicate fabrics frequently worn by wealthy women. This contrast between thin clothing and heavy armor also results in a change of behavior, such as the grunting of these women, marked by fremitus (261). This sound, typically associated with crowds or noises of the natural world, here treats the woman as a subhuman creature. Nevertheless, the change in costume is just that—despite the accusation that these women flee from their own sex in pursuit of combat, these women still bow under the weight of their helmets and use a women’s chamber pot, indicating that they have not fully, according to Juvenal, escaped the nature of their sex.

Visual Representations

Portrayals of female gladiators could support Juvenal’s description of these women wearing the costume of male gladiators. The first potential depiction is a statue of

707 See Watson and Watson (2014) 154 for further description of these noble families that Juvenal mentions.
708 This recalls the description of a female orator, Afrania, as barking (latratibus) in Val. Max. 8.3.2. For attitudes towards female orators, see Deminion (2020) 197-208, esp. 203-204.
a gladiatrix, whom Manas argues stands in a victory pose holding a sica, the curved dagger of thraex gladiators (see image 24). This 1st century CE statue does not represent the figure with a helmet, shield, and greaves that were also worn by the Thraex. Both the helmet and shield could have been set aside so that spectators could closer observe the victorious combatant. The absence of a helmet may also allow for the woman’s decorated hair to be visible. In addition to the sica, the woman’s only form of dress is a loincloth. Like Juvenal’s portrayal of female gladiators, the gladiator of this statue is topless. Her lack of a helmet and protective covering was possibly a way for the artist to emphasize the sex of the combatant, just as Juvenal’s representation of dress function to highlight the sex of the gladiatrix. While it is possible that this figure is a gladiatrix, most scholars instead believe that the figure is holding a strigil and is some sort of performer, but not necessarily a gladiator.

The only other surviving artistic depiction associated with the gladiatrix from antiquity represents two women wearing the armor of a provocator gladiator (image 25). This 2nd century CE marble relief from Halicarnassus, about 26 by 31 inches, depicts each woman with greaves, arm guards, a sword, shield, and loincloth. The only indication of their gender is the names ‘Amazon’ and ‘Achillia,’ the character names of these performers, written in Greek at the bottom of the relief. These names suggest that the two performers reenacted the mythological scene of Achilles falling in love with the

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711 For discussion of this relief, see Barrow and Silk (2018) 138-152, Brunet (2013) 478-491, McCullough (2008) 197-209, Murray (2003), and Coleman (2000) 487-500. Often mentioned alongside female gladiators is the grave excavated on Dover Street in London. While the grave does not include depictions of female gladiators, its contents indicate that the deceased was wealthy, but of a status that prevented her burial within the cemetery. Grave contents link the deceased woman to gladiatorial games, though this does not necessitate her identity as a gladiator. For more on this gravesite, see Murray (2003) and Zoll (2002).
Amazon Penthesilea. At the top of the relief is an indication of missio for these two gladiators, indicating that they were discharged after a draw. As Coleman notes, commemorating this specific fight suggests that these two combatants were skillful and taken seriously enough to warrant such a relief.\footnote{Coleman (2000) 499. See also Murray (2003).} This relief could also indicate the rarity of such fights and outcomes, without necessarily indicating that the female gladiator was a figure that attained the same fame and adoration from the crowd as male gladiators achieved.\footnote{For the status of male gladiators, and the seeming paradox between their fame and infamia, see Knapp (2011) 265-289.}

In contrast to those visual commemorations to female combatants, many literary sources treat the gladiatrix not as a respected figure, but as a unique spectacle. In Petronius’s *Satyricon*, the centonarius named Echion tells of spectacles put on by a figured named Titus, whom he considers creative and hot-headed.\footnote{Petron. *Sat. 45*: *Et Titus noster magnum animum habet et est caldicerebrius.*} Echion says that Titus included an essedaria for his games (that is, a woman who fights from a chariot). By noting the gender of the fighter, and remarking that there is only one essedaria, Petronius suggests that the rarity of such figure adds to the unusualness and enjoyment of the spectacle. Such treatment of female gladiators did not present them as attractive or more appealing because of their presence in the arena. Authors such as Petronius instead mention these women to point out their unusual presence fighting within the arena.

**Historical Accounts of the Gladiatrix**

Nero’s use of female gladiators was also a means of showcasing a unique spectacle; they reflected the emperor’s own interest in the next new thrill. His use of them is comparable to that of the emperor Titus, whose female gladiators appear in the opening
of his new amphitheater. In 80 CE, Martial published his Liber Spectaculorum to commemorate the games Titus held in celebration of the Colosseum’s opening, dedicating two poems specifically to the female combatants.  

In this second poem, Martial describes a female bestiarius who was victorious in the arena against a lion. Martial marvels that such a feat was accomplished by a woman, but focuses praise on Titus as the host of these games. Since these poems are in honor of the emperor’s games, Martial does not criticize Titus’s use of female gladiators but instead considers them a unique spectacle. It is also possible that Martial does not condemn these women because their status differs from that of the women Juvenal criticizes. While Martial does not explicitly state their status, Dio mentions the same games of Titus and emphasizes that these female gladiators were of lower status. If a noblewoman chose to enter the arena, she would compromise her status and incur infamia that was relegated to gladiators and other performers. By including performers in the arena who were already of a lower status, Titus would not be complicit in compromising the esteem of noblewomen and would instead be praised, as he is in the works of Martial and Dio, for holding spectacles with novelty performers of an appropriate status.

Following Titus and the opening of the Flavian amphitheater, Domitian was said to have continued this interest in spectacles. Suetonius writes that Domitian held combats between women as well as men, recounting this as if female gladiators were an unusual occurrence. He writes that Domitian held matches with female combatants at

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716 Mart. Spect. 6b: 3-4: nam post tua munera, Caesar, / hoc iam femineo Marte fatemur agi.
718 Suet. Dom. 4.1.
torchlight, and according to Dio, made women fight against dwarves.\footnote{Cass. Dio 67.8.4. See Brunet (2013) and especially (2004) 145-170, where he argues that women never fought dwarves in the arena. Cf. Duke (1955) 223-224, who believes that the two could have fought instead as boxers.} Statius, a contemporary of Domitian, comments on the inclusion of women and dwarves in the arena, writing that female gladiators are unused to the sword yet assume shameless masculinity (improbus viriles) in order to fight: he considers their actions an assumption of masculinity that was ill-suited for women. Statius then compares the women to Amazons in heat, mocking their eagerness in the arena, stating that both Father Mars and bloody Virtue laugh at these spectacles.\footnote{Stat. Silv. 1.6.51-64.} The pairing of women and dwarves, while considered an inaccurate account, was again a means for authors to present emperors as hosts to unique games through inclusion of marginalized figures.\footnote{Brunet (2004) 145-170.} As Krenkel writes of female gladiators, “gender equality was a mere thrill in Rome.”\footnote{Krenkel (2016) 472.} In a quest for the newest form of spectacle, both Titus and Domitian follow Nero’s lead in bringing women into the arena.

Evidence of female gladiators becomes scarcer as prohibitions against their presence increased. In 46 BCE, there was a ban only against senators fighting in the arena. This ban was then revised and extended in 11 CE to include women of the senatorial class less than twenty years old, and then reiterated in the 22CE Senatus Consultum Larinum, which held with it the penalty of infamia.\footnote{See Levick (1983) for a translation, commentary, and discussion of this decree. See also Barrow and Silk (2018) 142 for discussion of this decree.} However, women who have already incurred infamia for adultery, those seeking fame of the arena, and emperors who desired to put on an unusual spectacle with these women, would not necessarily be deterred by the ban. By 200 CE, it was not only senatorial women who were banned from
participating in gladiatorial games, but all women. Dio recounts this ban by Septimius Severus, who observed games with female combatants. Dio writes that these women contended against each other fiercely. Because this juxtaposition between women and warfare was such an odd sight to male spectators, men began to taunt and jeer at women who did not even fight in the arena. To counteract this, Septimius Severus’s ban prevented single combat among women of any origin. Like previous bans, this was not entirely enforced, since an inscription likely from the third century CE mentions female gladiators at Ostia. Despite the difficulties of enforcing these bans, they are valuable through their indication of attitudes towards female gladiators. The context behind Septimius Severus’s ban is particularly important for revealing how the games impacted treatment of women who did not even compete.

Both literary representations of female gladiators, historical accounts, and senatorial decrees condemn female combatants from the senatorial class. By partaking in an activity that was typically reserved for men, and by displaying their body in costume that would typically leave their chest exposed, male writers believed that these women would compromise their respectability. Like actresses and other performers of lower status, the role of the gladiator was one that could bring fame from an audience, but shame from authors and lawmakers. While these accounts discussing female gladiators are biased through the author’s high status and thus their typical disdain for the games, these accounts are useful for their descriptions of the female gladiator’s costume and their treatment as exciting spectacle.

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724 Cass. Dio 76.16.1.
Conclusions

Instances of women wearing, or desiring to wear, armor in Roman literature present a departure from the portrayals of Amazon women from Greek literature. While the mythical race of Amazons was initially borne from male anxieties of female power, Roman depictions appear to be an adaptation of these portrayals. From the death of Camilla through a love of spoils to the women who desire to accompany a love interest on military campaigns, and the dressing of concubines in the costume of Amazons, Roman literature gives little agency to the armed woman. This changes with the inclusion of female gladiators, where epigraphic and artistic evidence counter the disapproval of them found in legal, historical, and literary accounts.

This removal of fear for the female warrior is partly due to the time period in which these literary accounts appear. Apart from Vergil’s representation of Camilla, which is more closely tied to its Greek predecessors, literary accounts of these women appear well into the imperial period. During this time, Rome has seen many powerful women closely tied to the emperor, such as Livia or Agrippina. Having a powerful woman then was not entirely unheard of during this time, and thus female warriors were often sexualized and mocked in order to combat any anxieties about women in positions of power.

At the same time, these representations do not express the same anxieties because in each of these narratives, women are not truly in power. Women wanting to follow a lover to battle often do not succeed in doing so; they are often used as a literary trope by authors who want to depict a devoted wife. The one woman who does succeeds in entering the camps, the wife of Calvisius Sabinus, is not in line with the literary trope of a
devoted wife but a reversal of it, since she infiltrates camps to commit adultery. Plutarch and Tacitus both describe her actions and write that she has an accomplice, leaving her unnamed and without complete autonomy in these accounts. Similarly, when emperors dress concubines as Amazons, they are the ones controlling the dress of these women, who likely have little choice in the matter. Even discussions on female gladiators are framed around the emperors who allow women in the arena. When authors focus instead on the *gladiatrix* herself, as Juvenal and Statius do in their poetry, they mock the woman for desiring to perform actions that are not suited for her sex. Women wearing armor were more a reflection of men in power, who misused that power by forcing women to dress and act as men.

Descriptions of women in armor was a means by which authors could indicate behavior that was inappropriate. Such is the case for female gladiators according to Juvenal, whose presence in the arena and dress resulted in grunting and comfort with heavy weaponry. The contrast between dress and gender also allowed authors to suggest behavior that they did consider appropriate for women. For instance, despite their dress, women using armor for amatory purposes behaved in line with what was expected of women. This chapter demonstrates that male anxieties of powerful women could be managed by controlling the narrative of these women.

This is not to say that the Romans no longer had a fear of strong women; this fear still existed but was instead transferred to other women who threatened the Empire in some way. There were several women who posed a threat to Rome. Although authors give no description of these women in armor, they are reminiscent of the female warrior. For example, the concubine of Mithridates VI, Hypsicratea, was companion to
Mithridates during the battles of the three Mithridatic wars. The king of Pontus even called his concubine by the male version of her name. Other examples of foreign women appearing in the militaristic setting include the Iceni tribe leader Boudicca and the Palmyrene queen Zenobia. Boudicca leads an uprising against Rome after her deceased husband’s will was ignored and his property taken by Romans. Dio describes her in a variegated chiton, chlamys, and torque (στρεπτόν) in a passage that emphasizes her femininity while also dressing her in the typically masculine garment of a chlamys. Writers contrast her warlike actions to that of Nero, emperor at the time. Zenobia faces similar treatment in literary accounts, having conquered Egypt and several Roman provinces until she was defeated by the emperor Aurelian. In description of the emperor’s triumph within the Historia Augusta, Zenobia appears to be the triumphator as a means of effeminizing Aurelian himself. In the case of these women, it is the threat of the foreigner coupled with the discomfort at a female enemy that produces these representations of a dangerous woman. Despite the threat that they pose, these women are always defeated. Representing them as powerful allows authors to make Rome appear stronger when defeating such an enemy.

The armed woman, like other women in previous chapters, is a literary tool employed by male authors to describe the men around such women. Only seldomly

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726 Some ancient sources consider Hypsicratea the wife of Mithridates. For example, Val. Max. IV.6.2 includes her in a discussion of conjugal love, writing that she accustomed herself to a horse and weapons because of her love for Mithridates. Plutarch (Vit. Pomp. 32) describes her as a concubine in Persian dress and with a manly spirit, in contrast to his feminine portrayal of Mithridates. In 2005, archaeologists discovered a funerary monument that uses the masculine form of her name, Hypsicrates. For sources on Hypsicratea, see Facella (2017) 115; Mayor (2009) 310, 355-357, 366-367, 374; and Konstan (2002) 6-7. For further discussion and bibliography on the inscription, see Gabelko (2013).


728 Cassius 62.2.

729 For this idea, see Icks (2017) 72-78.

drawing influence from the armed goddesses Athena and Artemis, Roman authors instead employ mythological figures of Amazon women to represent a parody of the female warrior. The armed women that they present are not skilled and formidable opponents unless they are enemies, in which case, presenting a powerful woman was a means of making Rome appear stronger upon the enemies’ defeat. Authors present these women as abandoning their sex when motivation for dress stems outside of amatory purposes. Despite their subversive dress, the use of armor was little more than costume modeling and a reflection of the men surrounding them.
Chapter 7: “Transgressive” clothing of Sacred Spaces in the Graeco-Roman World

“..."συνεξαίρεται δὲ καὶ πολὺς γέλως καὶ γώναια μετ’ ἀνδρῶν ἱεται καὶ ὑποδεῖται καὶ ζώννυται παρὰ τὸ οἰκεῖον: συγχωρεῖ δὲ ὁ κῶμος καὶ γυναικὶ ἀνδρίζεσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ θῆλυν ἐνδύναι στολὴν καὶ θῆλυ βαίνειν."”

- Philostr. Imag. 1.2

The excerpt above comes from a description of a komos scene in Philostratus’s Imagines. Here, women and men are pictured taking part in revelry together by wearing clothing that does not align with their perceived gender. Along with this clothing exchange, women imitate men. This is marked by the verb ἀνδρίζεσθαι, which literally means “to behave or make into a man.” In parallel to women’s imitation of men, men mock the gait of women. This mockery or imitation adds to the laughter among participants. Philostratus does not criticize or condemn the characters of this scene, nor does he suggest that their dress was used in any way that would reflect upon their character. Instead, he explains their cross-dressing as tied to the ritual of a komos. These processions that were associated with drunkenness and revelry likely also included the wearing of masks and costumes. Such form of cross-dressing, considered permissible and necessary elements of ritual occasions, will be the focus of this chapter.

Just as clothing can signify the gender, identity, status, and perceived morality of its wearer when described within Graeco-Roman texts, ritual clothing was an especially valuable signifier of identity in antiquity. I use the term “ritual” here to refer to a set of actions performed regularly, often as part of a ceremony. Ritual dress refers to

731 Philostr. Imag. 1.2: “Loud laughter arises and women come with men, wearing sandals and dressed contrary to what is suitable: for the revel allows women to dress like a man and men to put on a stola and walk like a woman.”

732 For other references to the term in the Roman era, see also Ach. Tat. 2.10.1 and 4.1.2. Here the term refers to a man initiating sex with a woman rather than a mimicry of behavior considered masculine.

733 For reference to wearing masks during a komos, see Aesch. On the Embassy 19.287.

734 See Oxford dictionary s.v “ritual” for the definition that I use here.
garments which are prescribed during these actions and serves to differentiate such actions from everyday life. For example, Roman priests would cover their heads during sacrifice, thus modifying their dress to signal the importance of their actions. In texts describing rituals, dress was then a means of visually signaling the occasion.

Ritual cross-dressing differs from the other forms that I have mentioned largely because of attitudes towards the cross-dressing. In other words, previous chapters have argued that authors contrast transgressive women with the men surrounding them, and place women in men’s dress to ascribe a certain behavior to them. Dress was used in alignment with behavior that did not conform to gender norms. In this chapter, I argue that instead of being used to characterize the wearer, ritual cross-dressing reflected the deity that was associated with the ritual and its prescribed attire. It is for this reason that the word “transgressive” in the title now appears in quotation marks—ritual clothing has separate considerations of what is considered transgressive, as evidenced by dress sanctions. Within the context of ritual, traditional notions of transgressive dress did not apply, and wearers were not condemned because ritual practices demand special manners of dress. As associated with deities, cross-dressing allowed participants to become closer to the divine by transcending gender boundaries that blur during times of ritual. This chapter argues that ritual cross-dressing serves to enforce gender norms in everyday society by allowing a temporary reprieve from them within the bounds controlled by ritual practice. These rites also indicate the dual nature of many divinities. Through close examination of ritual colors and fabrics, instances of transvestism associated with brides, dress reserved for certain priestesses, and inversions of men’s and women’s dress, cross-dressing within Roman ritual allowed for temporary transcending of boundaries.

735 For the androgyny of divinity, see Eliade (1965) 102-110.
but this brief respite functioned to enforce boundaries of dress and gender roles. Ultimately, since many of these rituals occur during periods of transition, a change in dress also functioned to indicate change in a person’s life or nature.

Literature on classical instances of ritual transvestism has largely focused on Greek rites, giving special attention to the rite of passage ceremonies for adolescent boys. One such example is the Oschophoria festival, which was a vintage celebration held in Athens during early autumn. During the festival, which was associated with the Theseus myth, two boys would dress in women’s garments and bear a vine-branch from a temple of Dionysus in Athens to a temple of Athena Skiras. In a discussion of the Oschophoria festival, David Leitao enumerates the different reasons for the prevalence of cross-dressing in Greek rite of passage ceremonies, dividing each approach into structural and psychological categories. According to Leitao, the former approach searches for meaning within ritual acts themselves, often separating the ritual too far from its context. The latter, in general, focuses instead on finding a psychological rationale for ritual transvestism by paying close attention to the relationship between the boy and his mother. However, such focus overlooks the fact that men are also involved in and preside over these festivals. This chapter is influenced largely by the structuralist approach through an examination of components of each ritual. However, to avoid the pitfall of this approach by treating the ritual within a cultural vacuum, I also contextualize each case of ritual transvestism.

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736 Such ceremonies include the Ekdysia and Oschophoria. For scholarship on these ceremonies, see Leitao (1995) and Heslin (2005).
739 Leitao (1995) 137-139.
Greek versus Roman Ritual Dress

Similar to Greek instances of initiatory cross-dressing rites, dress played a key role in the transition from childhood to adulthood for Romans. Boys and girls would exchange their *toga praetexta* for garments that signified their transition to an adult. Initiatory transvestism discussed in this chapter both complicates and supports previous arguments on Roman occurrences of feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing. In this chapter, we will discuss only one rite of passage ceremony which involves transvestism that occurred during the time of marriage for a Roman woman. As Hersch notes on the Roman wedding, “if clothing makes the ritual, then the clothing of the wedding proclaimed to onlookers that the wedding was a religious ritual for the woman and a party for the man.” In other words, clothing was a significant part of ritual and indicated that the wedding ceremony was an initiation rite for brides. Van Gennep supports this idea in his study on rites of passage. He notes that marriage is a rite of passage since it involves a transition from one social category to another, and requires that at least one spouse change families. Since chapters two and five discuss the clothing of the bride, this chapter will instead focus on garments worn before the ceremony that were typically associated with men.

Unlike the Greek world, there are less recorded instances of ritual transvestism in Roman society. This is due to several reasons. For one, Romans were more status-conscious than Greeks, and masculinity more contingent for Romans, resulting in fewer sanctioned inversions of typical dress. Additionally, the prevalence of transvestism

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742 See Reinhold (1970) for a discussion of the status-conscious nature of Roman society. See also Olson (2002) 389-393 for the connection between clothing and social hierarchies. Clothing did not hold the same
within Greek drama and as a trope for mythological heroes led to more frequent instances of transvestism within Greek literature. While the Romans adopted some cross-dressing myths from Greeks, such as Hercules’ exchange of clothing with the Lydian Queen Omphale, and Achilles’ disguise as a woman on Skyros, instances of ritual transvestism within Roman literature focus on women also using ritual dress associated with men, or exchanging garments with them. Cross-dressing women within Roman ritual is not attached to mythological heroes or etiological accounts, as is prevalent with Greek examples of the same occurrence.

Another reason that cross-dressing is less frequent in Roman rites is the presence of male and female roles of the same priesthood. Unlike Greek priesthoods, which typically had only a priest or priestess presiding over rites, there were several Roman priesthoods in which there was a married man and woman presiding over rites. Examples of these are the flamen dialis and the flaminica dialis dedicated to Jupiter and the rex sacrorum and regina sacrorum. Rites associated with the flamen Dialis in particular required both masculine and feminine elements. This is evidenced by the need for the flamen Dialis, and his parents, to have a confarreatio marriage. With this type of marriage ceremony, divorce in the form of diffarreatio was rare and forbidden for the association with status in Greek society. For discussion of masculinity and its provisional nature, see Williams (2010), McDonnell (2006), Connell (2005), Raval (2002), and Gleason (1995). For examples of cross-dressing within Greek drama, see Euripides Bacchae, Aristophanes’ Thesmophoriazusae and Ecclesiazusae. On the topic of cross-dressing within Greek drama, see Ormand (2003) and Zeitlin (1996). For discussion of transvestism in mythological texts, see Eppinger (2016), Llewellyn-Jones (2005), Heslin (2005), Lindheim (1998), and Cyrino (1998). Such examples in Greek ritual include Spartan brides dressing in male attire and shaving their heads (Plut. Vit. Lyc. 15.3) and brides at Argos wearing beards on their wedding night (Plut. Mor. 425). Plutarch also mentions that the Hybristika was a festival of clothing exchange that commemorated Telesilla and other Argive women who defended their city against Spartans (Mor. 245E). See Bullough an Bullough (1993) 26, Graf (1984) 247, Elia de (1965) 112, and Delcourt (1961) 12. See Glinister (2001) 132, who first mentions the prevalence of male and female branches of priesthoods. It is my own assertion that these priesthoods lead to less cross-dressing than we see in Greek ritual.
flamen Dialis. Were the flaminica to die, the flamen Dialis was to resign from his post.\textsuperscript{746} These marriage requirements, as well as the need for the flaminica to perform certain tasks in ritual, meant that her role was essential to the priesthood. These cases where a couple holds the title of priest and priestess demonstrate that some rituals required both a masculine and feminine element to them.

Male and female co-priests were also present within imperial cult. Titles of flamen and flaminica were used for the priest and priestess who would tend to the worship of the current emperor and empress, or to their deified predecessors. Unlike the flamen Dialis and his wife, these imperial priestesses were elected separate from flamines, and the two were not necessarily married.\textsuperscript{747} Furthermore, some sites only show record of having a flamen who tended to the emperor’s worship rather than both priesthoods to worship him alongside his female relatives. While these priesthoods were parallel, Hemelrijk notes that there was less emphasis on the worship of the emperor’s female relatives and thus more record of flamines than flaminicae.\textsuperscript{748} Like the earlier flamen Dialis and flaminica, tending to imperial cult required both men and women. However, unlike the earlier priesthood, the pairing between these priests as a married couple tending to the same cult was not necessary.

Presence of men and women within ritual also occurred in early Christianity. As Kateusz writes, some Christian communities allowed for co-priests of men and women. She points out that there is evidence of a co-priesthood of Mary and Jesus from as early as the 3rd century CE, and that during this time period a Christian sect in Greece also had

\textsuperscript{748} Hemelrijk (2005) 161.
co-priests. While there is no explicit mention or evidence of such co-priesthoods in Rome, it is worth considering how early Christian writers would understand the male and female roles in Roman ritual. Meeks argues that a unification of opposites within Christianity ritual was necessary for salvation. In other words, both male and female priests were needed for ritual practice. Within Roman ritual, these roles were instead required for proper worship of certain deities.

Luc Brisson, a French structuralist who writes of androgyny in the Graeco-Roman world, states that primordial beings were “endowed simultaneously with both sexes,” since, he argues, they existed before the break between male and female occurred. While he received criticism for basing some of his beliefs on Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium*, he provides a useful framework for beginning to think about androgyny in ritual. Brisson believes that within ancient ritual, primordial beings were by necessity androgynous since they must be all-encompassing. Through this lens, it becomes clearer that masculine and feminine elements were needed within certain rites.

Marie Delcourt supports the need for masculinity and femininity in ancient ritual. Though focusing primarily on Greek religion, she uses a psychoanalytic approach to religion and myth when writing about intersex figures in antiquity, stating that a combination of masculinity and femininity leads to an increased fertility, with “each sex receiving something of the powers of the other.” For Brisson and Delcourt, both of whom write about a dual-sexed being, a combination of male and female hold ritual significance because androgyny gets a person closer to divinity. Greek priests would

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750 Meeks (1974) 165-166.
752 Delcourt (1961) 16.
embody masculine and feminine elements by wearing women’s dress, or women would embody these elements through masculine dress. For Roman participants of rituals, such transvestism was not always necessary because they had both a priest and priestess to embody the masculinity and femininity needed to approach certain gods.

**Overview of Ritual Garments**

These key differences between transvestism within Greek and Roman literature leads to Roman rituals that use transvestism sparingly, paying careful attention instead to fabrics and colors of garments that I discuss in this section. Here I focus specifically on garments, leaving aside ritual shoes and fillets for separate study. For Greek rituals, linen was the most common fabric worn because of its perceived cleanliness. Since it was made from plant fibers rather than from a byproduct of animals, initiates and participants wore linen garments because of its cleanliness. There are even instances of linen being used in Greek rituals over wool garments. One example of this appears in the dress restrictions found in a long inscription dating to the Hellenistic period. This inscription pertains to the inauguration of the Mysteries of the Great Gods of Andania at Messenia and is the longest proscription of women’s dress for any Greek festival. Linen garments are also worn by Greek men during ritual occasions, as is seen in Euripides’ *Bacchae* when Dionysus has Pentheus wear linen garments to observe Bacchic rites.

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753 Delcourt (1961) 39 discusses priests as intermediaries between masculine and feminine elements of heaven and earth.

754 For scholarship on the shoes worn and superstition involving sacrificial leather, see Burriss (1972) 78-80. For discussion of the woolen fillets worn by female initiates and ritual participants, see Fantham (2008) 158-171.


Such perception of linen as a pure fabric fit for ritual was not prevalent in Roman rites. According to Servius, linen was not worn in Roman ritual. Specifically referencing fetials and the *pater patratus*, Servius asserts that it was *contra morem* for these priests to wear linen, and that the fabric was foreign to Roman rites ("a Romano rito alienum est"). In addition to these statements on the rarity of linen garments in Roman ritual, Servius writes that whenever the *flaminica* happened to wear garments with linen woven in, an expiatory sacrifice needed to be performed. This example demonstrates both the rarity of linen used within ritual and the aversion towards the fabric worn by living people within ritual contexts. For Romans, linen was instead more commonly used for funeral shrouds. One example of this occurs in Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses*, where a linen shroud is used to wrap a corpse that was thrown into the ocean. Linen was thus not noted for its purity within Roman religion. The need for expiation after the *flaminica* wore the fabric demonstrates the different perceptions of the fabric and the importance of proper dress within ritual.

Rather than linen garments, wool was the most common material worn in Roman rituals, with the *toga praetexta* being the usual garment that was worn by men and some women participating in rituals. This purple-bordered toga was made of wool, a fabric which easily held dye in comparison to linen. While wool fabric itself had some apotropaic significance, the purple stripe of the praetexta was thought to protect the wearer from any evil spirits. The color’s association with blood made the stripe especially protective and important to ritual practice. Wool fillets were also common during

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757 Servius *ad Aeneid* 12.120.
759 On the purple bordered toga as apotropaic, see Olson (2009) 141 and Sebesta (2005) 115-117. See also Armstrong (1917) 23, arguing that purple was tied to ritual because of its connection to blood.
rituals. Ritual fabric thus did not typically differ from the everyday wool garments of Romans, though the purple border of garments marked wearers as inviolable.

It is perhaps because of the praetexta’s apotropaic nature that it was sometimes granted as an honorific garment to women. Varro describes one such example in the context of the Ludi Apollinares, where freed and enslaved women were given the *toga praetexta* after saving their enslavers. To commemorate their actions, these women were then allowed to wear the garment during the rites of Juno Caprotina, where freedwomen and enslaved women sacrificed and fought mock battles with fig-tree branches. Another instance of the *toga praetexta* appearing as an honorary garment is present in descriptions of an equestrian statue of Cloelia recorded by Livy and Pliny. Pliny writes that both the garment and equestrian statue are a high honor for women. Like the use of the praetexta by senators and priests, the garment could either be granted to women for honorary purposes after service to the state or for use in ritual practice.

While linen was rarely used within Roman rites, the fabric could still be worn during rites of foreign deities. Such is the case with worshippers of Isis. Within *Metamorphoses*, the author specifically describes cult initiates wearing white linen, using the terms *candor* and *candidus* to reference the spotless purity of the garment. Apuleius also uses the term *sacratus* when referring to linen robes of

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763 Plin. *HN* 34.28-29 and Livy 2.13. See also chapter five for further discussion of this statue.
764 Cf. Bonfante (1975) 49-50, who writes that this garment may have instead been the Etruscan *tebenna*, which was the model for the *toga praetexta*.
765 Apul. *Met.* 11.10. This likely indicates that the fabric was bleached by the sun rather than dyed white, which was less common for linen fabric. See chapter three for further discussion of linen. See also Ov. *Am.* 2.13.23 for wearing *candidus* garments for worship of Isis.
initiates, further attaching a ritual importance to the fabric.\textsuperscript{766} As a potential initiate of Isis himself, Apuleius calls linen the purest covering.\textsuperscript{767} This association of linen with ritual is because the fabric was thought to be pure, as opposed to wool which was an animal product. In a discussion of priests within the cult of Isis, Plutarch states several reasons why priests were thought to wear linen. Denying previous notions that priests revere sheep or that the color of flax in bloom resembles a heavenly color, Plutarch instead asserts that abstaining from wool during rituals was largely due to an avoidance of surplus materials in favor of cleanliness, and since flax grows from the earth, it supplies plain and clean garments that are less likely to breed lice.\textsuperscript{768} He writes that in contrast to linen, wool was impure because it is made from the refuse (περιττόμα) of animals.\textsuperscript{769}

In terms of fabric color, white was the most common fabric worn during ritual occasions. White garments were used for formal occasions because of their association with cleanliness.\textsuperscript{770} According to Loven and Sebesta, white fabric symbolized purity that was suitable for communicating with the gods.\textsuperscript{771} Such perception of white as a pure fabric becomes prominent during the period of early Christianity, when Clement of Alexandria describes white clothing as clean and truthful.\textsuperscript{772} This perception of white as truthful is because white garments could not easily hide stains. The toga candidus, which was worn by political candidates, was a bright white tunic meant for candidates to stand

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\textsuperscript{766} Apul.\textit{Met.} 11.27.
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\textsuperscript{767} Apul.\textit{Apol.} 56. For the possibility that Apuleius is an initiate to the cult of Isis, see \textit{Apol.} 55.8 and \textit{Met.} 11.23, though it must be stressed that the latter is a fictional account. See also Bowden (2010) 178-179.
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\textsuperscript{768} Plut. \textit{De Is. et Os.} 4.
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\textsuperscript{769} Plut. \textit{De Is. et Os.} 4. See RAC s.v. \textit{Kleidung II} p.21 for additional sources on the purity of linen and impurity of wool for ritual practice, and p.33 for women wearing white linen at festivals.
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\textsuperscript{770} See Cleland (2017) 43 for the idea of white clothing as “visibly spotless” rather than a function of purity of colorlessness.
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\textsuperscript{771} See Loven (2017) 140 and Sebesta (1994a) 48 on the association with purity. See also Wild (2002) 22: “Roman taste demanded that clothing was clean, neatly (and visibly) pressed, and for formal occasions pure white.”
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\textsuperscript{772} Clement of Alexandria \textit{Paedagogus} 3.11.
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out in public. Such toga did not have the same perception of truthfulness to our modern sensibilities because they were whitened with chalk. In terms of Roman dress, white clothing was associated with senators, priests, Vestals, and brides, all people whose roles held ritual significance. White fabric is used especially in descriptions of celestial gods, as Acro writes in his commentary on Horace’s *Odes*. They were specifically used during worship of Ceres, using the word *candida* to refer to these garments. Ovid speculates that these robes are meant to match the color of harvest as it ripens.

In his *Roman Questions*, Plutarch discusses the appeal of white robes in mourning by writing that these garments were most suitable because they are the simplest garments that are uncontaminated by dye. Since there was an aversion to luxury garments by many writers and emperors, undyed wool was considered least offensive during ritual. These garments would then not be a bright white, as often *candidus* has been interpreted to mean, but an off-white color at best.

Decades later, the Christian writer Tertullian describes clothing associated with different pagan rituals. He accuses people of becoming initiates to certain gods because the garments that initiates wear, indicating that there was a connection between certain deities and garments worn by initiates. Such garments, according to Tertullian, would have been visually appealing to onlookers because of their bright colors. These vibrant garments (in *candida* and *purpura*) were a direct contrast to the austere and plain

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773 Acro on Hor. *Carm.* 3.8.6: See also Armstrong (1917) 36 for discussion of white garments as regularly used in the worship of heavenly deities and *RAC Kleidung* II.
776 See chapter three for further discussion of luxury and criticism towards luxury.
778 Tert. *De pall.* 4.10.2: *Cum ob cultum omnium candidatum et ob notam vittae et privilegium galeri Cereri initiantur; cum ob diversam affectionem tenebricae vestis et tetrici super caput velleris in Bellonae montes fugantur; cum latioris purpurae ambitio et Galatici ruboris superiectio Saturnum commendat.*
garments Christian writers encouraged followers to wear.\textsuperscript{779} Tertullian’s criticisms were likely then an attack excessive luxury of pagans since these brightly colored garments were costly.

Due to their inability to hide stains and the expense of keeping garments clean, white was generally not a common fabric in the ancient world. Within the literary record, white garments were a rarity for women outside of ritual occasion.\textsuperscript{780} As far as I have come across, there is no artistic record of women in white garments, save for a small number of Fayum portraits in which a woman wears a white tunic, and it is important here to remember that geographic location could influence these dress representations. While it is possible that many women outside of the elite would wear garments of undyed wool that could come close to the color white, wool was expensive to clean, and thus brighter garments were more likely reserved for wealthier people.

Overall, authors pay just as much attention to the fabrics and colors of garments worn by female participants of rituals as male participants. This is because like male participants, women hold significant roles within Roman religion; in some cases, they hold roles that are direct counterpart to male roles, suggesting that both a masculine and feminine element is needed for certain practices. Special attention was paid to garments in order to ensure that participants do not offend deities through items that were too expensive or flashy, shifting attention away from the ritual and onto an individual. For women especially, it was imperative that they wear the right garments since their morality was thought to reflect civic wellbeing.\textsuperscript{781} A good example of this is seen with

\textsuperscript{779} See Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Paedagogus} 3.2-3, 7, 11 for the dress that he denounces and those that he recommends for Christians.
\textsuperscript{780} Olson (2008) 120n7.
\textsuperscript{781} See Sebesta (1997) 529-541 for this idea.
the punishment faced by Vestals who were unchaste. The seriousness of this punishment, live burial, is thought to match the severity of their offense. Chastity was important to the identity and role of a Vestal Virgin, and incorrectly performing such a religious role necessitated strict punishment in order to appease gods and maintain their satisfaction with the state.

**Cross-dressing and Wedding Rituals**

During Roman wedding rites, there are two instances where women wear garments considered masculine. These moments are particularly significant parts of the wedding ceremony, since instances of transvestism were rare within Roman weddings. The first of these instances occurs before the wedding itself, when women wear the *tunica recta*. It is the only other occasion within Roman ritual that women wear white clothing, aside from the worship of Isis and Ceres. According to Festus, the night before her wedding ceremony, the bride would don this white *tunica recta*. Named after the loom on which it was woven, Festus describes these garments (*vestimenta*) as *virilia*. It is unclear exactly why Festus considers the bridal garment masculine, though there are several possibilities. According to Hersch, Festus uses this adjective in order to draw a connection between the *tunica recta* and the right of passage ceremony where boys would assume the *toga virilis*. Pliny writes that a young soldier or recruit would wear

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782 For instances of Vestals punished by live burial, see Livy 8.15 and 22.57. See also Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.67.1.
784 Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 143L: *appellantur vestimenta virilia*. See also 342L: *appellantur vestimenta virilia quae patres liberis suis conficienda currant ominis causa, ita usurpata quod a stantibus et in altitudinem texuntur.*
785 Hersch (2010)108-109. See also Dolansky (2008) 50 for discussion of boys wearing the *tunica recta* before the *toga virilis.*
the garment, further linking the bride to initiation rituals.\textsuperscript{786} According to Davies and Llewellyn-Jones, the \textit{tunica recta} was a garment of initiation, worn both by boys about to assume the \textit{toga virilis}, and by brides before their wedding ceremony.\textsuperscript{787} According to Pliny, the first \textit{tunica recta} was made by Tanaquil, wife of Tarquinius Priscus.\textsuperscript{788} This information connects the garment to Rome’s past and adds to its significance. Through Festus’s use of the term \textit{virilia}, the garment is connected to another transitional period.\textsuperscript{789} For the Roman bride the garment was a transition towards union with a man, thus the garment could be labeled as \textit{virilia} because it linked women with masculinity. In Pliny’s instance of the garment worn by a recruit or boy assuming the \textit{toga virilis}, the garment marked the boy as distinctly not \textit{virilia}. It signaled that the boy would soon earn this label but was currently transitioning towards it.

The next instance of cross-dressing during the wedding ritual occurs when the bride makes sacrifices to the phallic deity Mutinus Titinus.\textsuperscript{790} According to Palmer, the name Mutinus is connected to \textit{mutto} and \textit{mutinum}, both words referring to the phallus.\textsuperscript{791} The name Titinus can also be connected to an Italic fertility cult.\textsuperscript{792} The deity’s name then suggests that it is the god of fertility, making the brides’ sacrifice to the god unsurprising in the context of the wedding ceremony as brides seek a productive marriage.\textsuperscript{793} The

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{786} Plin. \textit{HN} 8.194.
\textsuperscript{787} Cleland \textit{et al.} (2007) 202 s.v. \textit{tunica recta}. They wrote that the garment was probably “made of wool, possibly linen.” The speculation of linen likely derives from the fabric’s prevalence within Greek ritual. However, as mentioned earlier, the fabric did not hold the same significance within Roman ritual practice.
\textsuperscript{788} Plin. \textit{HN} 8.74.
\textsuperscript{791} Palmer (1974) 187,190.
\textsuperscript{792} Palmer (1974) 191.
\textsuperscript{793} Palmer (1974) 193: “There can be little doubt that Mutinus Titinus was a god of fertility.”
\end{footnotesize}
deity’s association with marriage and brides does not occur before the writings of Tertullian, and is the focus of Christian writers.\footnote{Hersch (2010) 272.}

According to Christian writers Lactantius, Arnobius, and Augustine, brides were compelled to sit on the lap of a statue of the deity because this act was thought to be auspicious.\footnote{For a discussion of women sitting on the deity’s lap, see Tert. \textit{Apol.} 25.3, \textit{Ad nat.} 2.17.3, August. \textit{De civ.} \textit{D.} 6.9 and 7.24, Paul 155M/143L, 142 For mention of this act as auspicious, see Arn. \textit{Adv. gent.} 4.7, 4.11. See Palmer (1974) 189, Boëls-Janssen (1993) 102, and Sebesta (2005) 119.} Lactantius is the first writer to interpret this act. He writes that brides do so in order to give their virginity to the god.\footnote{Lact. \textit{Div. inst.} 1.20.30.} Augustine and Arnobius write more explicitly that brides sit on the phallus of the god, though it should be noted that sources on these practices are all Christian writers who are commenting on a pagan practice.\footnote{August. \textit{De civ.} \textit{D.} 4.11, 6.9; Am. \textit{Adv. gent.} 4.7, 4.11.} Our accounts of this ritual are thus biased, situated within Christian contexts that criticize pagan rituals. If this act was a part of the marriage ceremony for brides, since it can likely instead be a creation of Christian authors, it solidifies the marriage ceremony as a ritual for women. This component of the marriage ritual could be a rite-of-passage ceremony that initiated women into the sexual and procreative aspects of marriage.

While the presence of this fertility god is unsurprising during marriage rites, the bride’s choice of dress when sacrificing to the god is unusual. Though not Christian, Festus writes at approximately the same time as Tertullian in the late second century CE. He states that a bride made sacrifices to the deity while veiled and wearing the \textit{toga praetexta}.\footnote{Festus, \textit{Gloss. Lat.} 143L.} Aside from children, the \textit{toga praetexta} was worn by men in political office or holding religious roles. It is possible that women wore this toga during sacrifice to Mutinus Titinus because this was the garment of citizen children. Performing such an act
while wearing the toga could then mark the end of childhood, though it would be unusual for this sacrifice and mock-penetrative act to occur with the bride was still wearing her childhood garments, especially since children wearing these garments were to be shielded from even hearing obscenities.\textsuperscript{799} Hersch instead explains this act as a homeopathic ritual meant to promote fertility or protect any children that a woman may already have.\textsuperscript{800} The use of the word *matrona* to describe ritual participants, as she points out, would then be especially noteworthy as one of two uses of the word in Latin literature to refer to a bride, though the word may be used as a descriptor of the bride in her future capacity as a mother and wife (or current capacity, in the case of women remarrying). Hersch’s speculation suggests that brides wore the *toga praetexta* during this ritual, though it was not necessarily their childhood toga.

Festus writes that women would make sacrifices to the deity while veiled ("*velatae*") with the *toga praetexta*. On this mention of a veil, Hersch explains that brides cover only their heads with the toga to distinguish them from women “of ill-repute” who also wore a toga.\textsuperscript{801} Here, she relies on the limited literary evidence that we have discussed in chapter five which suggests that both sex workers and adulteresses wore a toga. What is instead important to note here is the religious significance of the praetexta because of its purple border, and the Roman custom of covering the head during a sacrifice.\textsuperscript{802} The *toga praetexta* was then not a transgressive item of dress when worn in the context of these sacrifices, though the act of sacrificing itself was typically reserved

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\textsuperscript{799} See Chapter two for further discussion of this idea.
\textsuperscript{800} Hersch (2010) 269.
\textsuperscript{801} Hersch (2010) 269.
\textsuperscript{802} For further discussion of the toga’s ritual significance, see chapter two.
The reversal of actors performing the sacrifice, in combination with dress that was unusual for a woman after childhood, indicates a form of cross-dressing, though it is important to stress that in the context of ritual, these instances of gender reversals were not transgressive acts.

Vestals are another example of women who held a unique position regarding their marital status and could wear the toga. Many scholars have discussed the clothing of Vestals, detailing the significance of their *suffibulum, infula, vittae, and stola*. Here I focus instead on an instance where Festus writes that Vestals wore a toga when making sacrifices. Although he does not specify which toga Vestals would wear, it is reasonable to believe that they wore the *toga praetexta*, since it was the garment worn by priests during sacrifices. Their use of a toga for sacrifice further differentiated their dress from that of other women, since they were neither dressed as *matronae* or in the toga that was associated with *meretrices*. This toga was suitable for ritual and sacrifice, making their dress here not transgressive as it instead aligned with their role of performing sacrifices.

Boëls-Janssen and Sebesta further support the idea that the *toga praetexta* is especially significant when worn by women, though the significance does not derive

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803 There are instances, however, that women do cover their heads during ritual, such as during the marriage ceremony as depicted on many sarcophagi. Nevertheless, this example is not a moment of sacrifice.
804 For the idea that Vestal garments signaled they were perpetually on the brink between identity as a virgin and a bride, see Beard (1980) and (1995), Staples (1998), Martini (2004), Leach (1976), Wildfang (2006) 12–13, and Hersch (2010) 75–76. Scholz (1992) 10 writes that the tunica and *palla* of Vestals differ from those of Roman *matronae* in their white color, indicating both that white was not a customary color for women to wear, and later writing that Vestals wore the color because it represented cleanliness that was suited to approaching the divine. For this connection between white garments and purity, as well as further discussion on garments worn by Vestals, see Loven (2017) 140.
806 Cf. Varro, *Ling.* 6.2.1, who writes that the pontifex maximus had to wear a *suffibulum* at the sacrifice to Ops in the Opiconsivia. See Glinister (2011) for further discussion of this ritual transvestism, and Cleland *et al.* (2007) 183-184. for further detail on the *suffibulum*. 
from biased authorial accounts, as have instances of transvestism in earlier chapters. According to Boëls-Janssen, women would wear a *toga praetexta* when they had to approach the male sex, whether it be for the purpose of worshipping gods or for marital unions. This theory seems conceivable and would mean that the garment held significance for men, women, and gods. Its apotropaic border made the garment appropriate to wear during ritual, even when it was no longer fitting for a woman to wear a toga after her childhood praetexta. Sebesta interprets women’s use of a praetexta as a garment that not only connected them to men, but to divinities. Since the garment was associated with protection and reserved for citizen children, senators, and men associated with ritual, women wearing the garment then received the same protection that was only given to certain men after adulthood. These men held significant roles in the eyes of the state, thus women wearing the praetexta were given the same level of importance. In the case of women wearing the garment during the sacrifices of Mutinus Titinus, the importance of these women derived from their ability to bear children. Sacrificing to this god was a method of ensuring fertility and completing their civic duty. For Vestals, the use of the *toga praetexta* signaled their role within state religion. The garment was thus a signal of women who performed civic duties for the good of the state.

**Salian Virgins and Military Dress**

Like the *tunica recta* and *toga praetexta* worn by brides, the dress associated with ritual was acceptable within its context even when the same garments would have been considered transgressive outside of the occasion. Such is the case for Salian virgins, who are said to have worn a military cloak and the cap associated with the *Salii*, a group of

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808 Sebesta (2005) 117.
male priests devoted to Mars. Festus gives us the only surviving account of these
priestesses:

Salias uirgines Cincius ait esse conducticias quae ad Salios adhibeantur
cum apicibus paludatas; quas Aelius Stilo scripsit sacrificium facere in
Regia cum pontifice, paludatas cum apicibus in modum Saliorum. (Festus,
Gloss. Lat. 439L)

Cincius says that the Saliae are virgins who are assembled, wearing the
apex and paludamentum, to assist the Salii, and Aelius Stilo has written
that they perform a sacrifice in the Regia with the pontifex, wearing a
paludamentum with an apex in the manner of the Salii.  

Using the writings of first century BCE antiquarian Cincius Alimentus as a source, Festus
describes the garb of these women and their purpose of assisting the Salii. Then, citing
Aelius Stilo from the second century BCE, Festus records the actions of these priestesses,
the priests they assisted, and the location of their sacrifice. Important to both accounts is
the mention of the priestess’ dress. Both authors describe them as paludatus and wearing
the apex of Salii priests.

In the first description given of the priestesses, Festus writes that they were
conducticias. This word is particularly difficult to translate: most scholars take it to mean
“hired,” and thus argue that these women were of lower status because of this hired
position. However, there is no indication that these girls were of a lower status. It would
be unusual for priestesses who had a central role in the state religion to be from a lower
status. The mention of their virginity is especially telling of their elite status.  

I instead
side with Glinister, who argues that the word should instead mean “assembled,” referring

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809 Adapted from Glinister (2011) 117. I adapt this particular translation because I follow one of Glinister’s
two key points of interpretation, as discussed below.
810 Glinister (2011) 118.
to the fact that these priestesses gathered together for sacrifice. This word, Glinister notes, can also be used to describe the assembling of troops, which is fitting when recalling that Saliae gathered to sacrifice to Mars. The use of this word facilitates in the comparison between the maidens and soldiers, with conducticias referring directly to these armed women.

The dress of these priestesses is a form of ritual transvestism because they wear accessories of Salian priests. One indication of their dress is the adjective paludatus, a rare word which can allude to the military cloak called a paludamentum, or can mean “armed or equipped” as Glinister argues. The priestesses are equipped in the same way that Salian priests were (“in modum Saliorum”). If we follow what Livy records of Salian dress, this means that the priestesses also wore a tunica picta (embroidered tunic) and a bronze breastplate. Since a breastplate was a sculpted hypermasculine form not seen on any of the female warriors discussed in the previous chapter, it seems unlikely that Saliae wore such equipment. If we instead follow the description of garments in Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s account, Salii wore a metal guard around their waist called a μύτρη (not to be confused with the Eastern headband of the same name). Dionysius also writes that the Salii wore a tunica picta, and adds that they wore a trabea on top of this. Wearing a trabea would give these priests high esteem, since the garment was also worn by kings, priests, and later equites and emperors. Aside from these garments, Dionysius notes that the Salii equip themselves with a sword hanging from their belt, a

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812 For mention of Salian virgins cross-dressing, see Torelli (1984), Versnel (1992), Habinck (2005), Glinister (2011) and DiLuzio (2016).
813 See Glinister (2011) 109, where she cites Veranius (Festus, Gloss. Lat. 298 11 L) on the meaning of paludatae in the Augural books as “armed and equipped.”
814 Livy 1.20.4.
815 Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 2.70.2-3.
816 Verg. Aen. 7.612 for the mention of the trabea and its significance. See also Cleland et al. (2007) 197.
spear or staff in their right arm, and a light shield in their left arm. They were entrusted with twelve slim shields called *ancilia* kept in the Temple of Mars, with one that was said to have fallen from the sky. Were the Salian priestess to adopt this dress, they would be well-equipped with both weapons and elaborate garments of high-ranking men. I instead believe that these priestesses wore the paludamentum, which would have been less unusual than a woman wearing a cuirass or trabea. If we recall from the previous chapter, Pliny writes that Agrippina wore a gold paludamentum at a mock naval battle. Thus a paludamentum was unusual for a woman to wear, but not completely unheard of.

Agrippina’s use of the garment would have been especially bold as a means of usurping a status symbol that was granted to women only in this priestess role and combining this ritual garment with a display of wealth. For Saliae, wearing the male cloak was a means of connecting them to the priests they sacrificed alongside, and to the god to whom they sacrificed.

If we understand *paludatus* as a reference to the military cloak, then the mention of dressing in the fashion of the *Salii (in modum Saliorum)* could then refer directly to the apex worn by these priests. The apex was a cone-shaped cap with a wooden stick at the top, worn by both Salii and Flamines. Sometimes just this stick was called an apex, and other times the word referred to the entire cap, which was fitted to the head and had earflaps. The cap was made from leather of a sacrificial animal. A thread of wool

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817 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.70.3. See also Siebert (1999) 128 for discussion of the staff.
818 Livy 1.20. Safeguarding this shield (the 11 other copies were made to conceal the original) was said to have ensured prosperity for Romans.
819 Plin. *HN* 33.63.4.
wrapped around the wooden stick at the top of the cap. Since the apex was only associated with priests, the possibility that Salian priestesses wore the cap suggest transvestism as part of their ritual practice.

The use of the apex by these priestesses, and their potential use of a military cloak, indicates that they assume male dress in order to present themselves as counterparts to Salian priests. Just as the Flamen Dialis was paired with the flaminica, Saliae would have been pair with Salii. As mentioned earlier, it was believed that cross-dressing occurred in rites that needed both a masculine and feminine element to approach the divine. For Greek rituals this often involved cross-dressing, while for Roman rituals, there were instead priests and priestesses. In the case of Saliae, these priestesses served as a pair to the priests, with dress used to further emphasize this connection.

From Festus’s text, both Versnel and Tommasi associate the Saliae with the Compitalia. Although Festus does not associate a specific festival with these priestesses, connection to the Compitalia likely derives from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who states that the festival of the Salii occurred in March. This festival was celebrated in honor of Lares Compitales a few days after the Saturnalia. According to the first century CE commentator Asconius, the freedmen attendants of the festival, magistri vicorum, were allowed to wear the toga praetexta. Inversions were thus common during this agrarian festival, as Saliae wore military dress and the apex, and freedmen wore the praetexta

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822 Glinister (2011) 109. See also Siebert (1999) 121. A clear image of the apex appears on the reverse of Caesar’s coins (Crawford 443/1).
823 Versnel (1992) 158 is the first to connect the Salian priestesses with the Compitalia. Habineck (2005) 17-18 uses this association to argue that the sacrifice was part of a rite of passage ceremony because it occurred at the start of a new year, right before the Liberalia. See also Tommasi (2016) 123, who uses Festus’s text above to state that the Salian virgins sacrificed during the Compitalia. Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 2.70.2.
824 For the dating of this festival, see Flower (2017) 162-165.
825 Asc. 7.
permitted only to children, priests, and senators. Because the festival marked the end of the year and came after the Saturnalia, inversions at this time provided small reprieve to strict social order.

Just as they were paired to Salii, the context of rituals emphasized the need for both priests and virgin priestesses. Rites of these priests and priestesses were dedicated to Mars. This explains the military attire worn by the and Saliae as a costume in imitation of the deity they were aligned with. In addition, it provides explanation for the virginity of Saliae. According to Boels, married women were opposed to warfare, while virgins were the only category of women who could have a favorable influence over war.\textsuperscript{826} Diluzio adds to this that as virgins, the Saliae “symbolized the object of their sacrifices: the inviolability of the city and the strength of its military.\textsuperscript{827} In other words, like Vestals, whose virginity was considered a public concern for the success of Rome, Saliae were symbols of an impenetrable state. Furthermore, as Brisson notes, there is “complementarity between warfare and marriage,” meaning that men and women are defined by their societal roles and institutional practices. The fact that these virgins abstain from marriage and took up military equipment for the god of warfare defines their role outside of women’s typical societal roles, though as it is for the good of the state and intended to accompany priests, their cross-dressing is not criticized or condemned.\textsuperscript{828}

\textsuperscript{826} Boels (1973) 93. See also Glinister (2011) 131.
\textsuperscript{827} DiLuzio (2016) 79-85.
\textsuperscript{828} Brisson (2002) 63. These women are not the first to arm themselves for ritual practice in the ancient world. In Ancient Greece, for the rites of Athena tritogeneia, a girl dressed up in hoplite armor and drove in a chariot, and then two groups of girls would fight each other. For this ritual, see Pausanias 1.14.6 and Herodotus 4.180. See also Delcourt (1961) 5-27.
Clothing Exchanges between Men and Women

In addition to cross-dressing that was used to align a priestess with priests in the same ritual, there are occasions where male and female participants of rites would exchange clothing. One such ritual occurred on Cyprus, where men would wear women’s dress and women would wear men’s dress when sacrificing to Aphroditus. This was a bearded form of Aphrodite and was a counter to worship of a bald Venus in Italy. 829 Macrobius mentions Aphroditus in a section of the Saturnalia where he discusses a scribal mistake leading to a description of Venus as a “god” rather than “goddess.” After pointing out how this error shows up in different texts, he then mentions a form of Aphroditus that blurs the lines between the categories of gods and goddesses. He writes that this goddess has the body and clothing of a woman, but also the scepter and nature (cum sceptro ac natura) of a man. 830 Macrobius uses the present tense when describing Aphroditus, suggesting the continuation of the cult into the Roman era. The word natura here can refer to either character or physical features such as a person’s genitals. 831 Through this description, and whatever the exact meaning of the word, it is evident that the deity was a blend of both male and female characteristics.

As the divinity of love, Aphroditus was the embodiment of female and male, and the procreative nature of each. It is then clear why, as a divinity that had male and female characteristics, Aphrodite was paired with another sexually ambiguous god, Hermes, and

829 Eliade (1965) 109. Kaster (2011) notes that this bearded form of Aphrodite was distinct from Hermaphroditus, the offspring of Aphrodite and Hermes who was never represented with a beard. Mentions of the deity also appear in Hesych. A.8773, where the early Hellenistic writer Paion describes the goddess represented as a man, and the 6th century CE writer Lydus, states that there was a bearded Aphrodite worshipped in Pamphylia (Mens. 4.64).
830 Macrobi. Sat. 3.8.2-3. See Delcourt (1961) 24 on this section.
831 OLD s.v. Natura, esp. 1, 2, and 15.
gave birth to Hermaphroditus. According to Diodorus Siculus, the deity had the body of a woman and the energy/vigor (ἀρρενωπὸν καὶ δραστικόν) of a man. Aphrodite, Hermes, and their offspring thus each blended the elements of masculinity and femininity together in their own personhood and worship. For Aphrodite, it was her worship as either bearded or bald, as noted above, that demonstrates her crossing of gender boundaries. For Hermes, it was in his depiction as a feminine youth and the artistic representations of him with a pronounced phallus on herm statues. Hermes represents a permeability of boundaries through these herm statues and as the messenger god who crosses between boundaries of human and divine, of the living and dead. The child of these deities, Hermaphrodite, is able to do the same. The deity that Macrobius discusses is distinctly not Hermaphroditus, who was never represented with a beard, but instead who resembled a woman through a feminine hairstyle and breasts, while also having a phallus.

Brisson points out that Aphrodite and Hermes were often worshipped together in places that incorporated cross-dressing into initiation ritual. For example, at Samos there

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832 For mention of Hermaphroditus’s parentage, see Cic. Nat. D. 3. 21 – 23 and Pseudo-Hyg. Fab. 271. This deity’s parentage is also mentioned by Ov. Met. 4.288-291 and Diod. Sic. 4.6.5. Ovid writes that after fusing with the nymph Salmaulis, Hermaphroditus “seemed to have no sex and yet to have both” (4.379), indicating the gender ambiguity of the deity. Diodorus writes that some people consider those that are intersex as monsters who could foretell the future. This attribution of divine powers onto intersex people is not restricted to Hermaphrodites, nor to Graeco-Romans alone. Figures such as Tiresias or the Enarees were said to have been both women and men, having a dual nature and a connection to the divine realm. For discussion of Tiresias and the Enarees, see especially Loraux (2016) and Golden and Toohey eds. (2003) 351-369.

833 Diod. Sic. 4.6.5. See Brisson (2002) 169-179n35 for some evidence on the cult of Hermaphroditus in the Greek world, though as he notes at p.56, this evidence is not conclusive.

834 Brisson (2002) 53-54 on the linguistic connection between Hermes and Herms.

835 For depictions of the sleeping Hermaphroditus statue type, see LIMC 5,2:190 – 198. For discussion of Hermaphroditus in art, see Ashede (2020) 81-94. This type of representation is related to depictions of Omphale, who was also depicted in this reclining position, though with Hercules’ lion skin. Interestingly, Hercules appears in cross-dressing rituals, but Omphale does not. For the cross-dressing of Hercules, see especially the writing of Byzantine antiquarian Lydus, who describes male initiates of his rites as wearing women’s robes (de Mensibus 4.67). See also Cyrino (1998) 207-241 and Loraux (1990) 21-52.
was a joint sanctuary for Hermes and Aphrodite, and at Argos, where brides wore a beard on their wedding night, there were statues of both deities in the temple of Apollo Lykeios.\footnote{See Brisson (2002) 169n34 for further detail. See also Plut. \textit{Mor.} 254e-f for discussion of brides in Argos wearing beards on their wedding night.} This joint worship is seen within the Greek world, as is the case of Aphroditus mentioned by Macrobius. Nevertheless, these cults and clothing exchanges reflect the idea that a blending of masculinity and femininity was present within certain divinities and their worshippers. While deities themselves could have attributes of different genders, this was reflected in participants through an exchange of clothing.

\textbf{Garments of Inversion}

In addition to the rites of Aphroditus at Cyprus, Saturnalia was another festival during the Roman period that demanded the worshippers to cross-dress. The Saturnalia was a Roman festival held during December in honor of Saturn. The festival consisted of a sacrifice, public feast, and gift exchanges. It was especially known for the different inversions of social norms that took place, such as greater freedoms granted to enslaved people and the allowance of public gambling.\footnote{On attitudes towards gambling outside of this festival, see Suet. \textit{Aug.} 71, Mart. 4.14, 5.84, 11.6, 14.1.} During the festival, distinctions between enslavers and enslaved people were blurred, as enslavers would dine with their enslaved people.\footnote{Macro. \textit{Sat.} 1.7.37. See Dolansky (2011) 493, Versnel (1992) 149, and Bradley (1979) 111-118 on the relationship between enslavers and enslaved people during this festival.}

As a deity associated with the wheat harvest, this festival was connected to agriculture.\footnote{Versnel (1992) 143. See also Dolansky (2011) 495-497 on the origins of the festival.} The Saturnalia was held during winter solstice on the day that Saturn’s temple was founded, but because of the festival’s popularity, it was unofficially extended...
to more than a week long. Like the Compitalia festival that occurred at the start of the new year, agrarian festivals often involved transvestism and rites of passage. This is possibly because the changing seasons were made to align with changes of a person’s life. During the Saturnalia, the bonds on the statue of Saturn were loosened, aligning with the reprieve of social order.

One of the means by which the social hierarchy was temporarily equalized was through the garments that were worn. During the Saturnalia, enslaved people and citizens were allowed to wear the freedman’s cap. This felt cap, which usually enforced a distinction between freedmen and citizens, then became a means of blurring the social status as part of the festivities. Another item of clothing that assisted in blurring boundaries was a Greek robe called the synthesis. Typically consisting of a colorful tunic and cloak, the synthesis was appropriate only for dinner wear. Clothing was an important aspect to the Saturnalia, and garments that crossed status boundaries were a means of indicating the festival’s reversal of social norms. Wearing the pilleus and synthesis thus took away markers of Roman citizen status, possibly to give reprieve of the normal social order while also reinforcing it by designating such break in status.

There is little evidence of women’s participation within the Saturnalia, though there is a similar event designated for women at the start of the year. Evidence of dress in the Saturnalia focused on the garments of men that signaled citizen status. Although there is no evidence that women participated in these garment exchanges, the inversions that

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840 Versnel (1992) 146.
843 Mart. 6.24 writes that in an inversion of the typical Saturnalian dress, he wore a toga instead of a synthesis. For the synthesis at the Saturnalia, see also Mart. 14.1 and Sen. Ep. 18. Suet. Ner. 51 condemns the emperor for wearing the synthesis outside of its accepted contexts.
women took part in at the Matronalia could suggest similar usage of clothing to represent a change in status. This festival, dating before 153 BCE and the establishment of a new year on January 1st, was similar to the Compitalia in that it was a new year’s celebration that occurred at the start of March. According to Macrobius, at this festival women served dinner to enslaved people. Here it is possible that women wore clothing unreflective of their social status, just as men were said to have done during the Saturnalia. It is unknown how far the inversions of this festival would extend, and if they involved an exchange of garments. If women did exchange clothing, their status would instead be marked by an absence of certain garments such as the stola and palla, thus removing their outward signs of matrona status, which would be odd in a festival name after this status.

It is important here to consider Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque, and how garments are crucial to inversion rituals. Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin coins the term “carnivalesque” to refer to a reversal of hierarchies and a combination of deity worship with comic subversions. Bakhtin argued for a universal spirit during these times of subversion, allowing for the participation of people from any social status. For the ritual of Aphroditus at Cyprus, exchanging garments was a means of temporarily subverting the social order to come closer to divine androgyny. Hierarchies were not a significant element of the ritual, nor were reversals presented in a comic nature. However, in terms of the Saturnalia, the reversals of status could have a comic aspect to them. Such suspension of the social order was done through undermining of class stratifications. By wearing clothing associated with freedmen and removing the garments

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844 Macrobr. Sat. 1.12.7.
845 Bakhtin (1965) 6.
846 Bakhtin (1965) 7.
of citizenship, dress of the Saturnalia reflected the equalizing nature of the festival. There is less subversion as Bakhtin argues for, and more egalitarian elements that provide temporary reprieve and outlets for frustration at the dominant social order.\textsuperscript{847} Overall, garments worn during festivals of inversion were not a means of subverting social statuses, but instead temporarily equalizing different strata of society.\textsuperscript{848}

\textbf{Conclusions}

In the rituals discussed within this chapter, women’s choice of dress was not limited to characterization by author, but instead to the context of a certain ritual. Choices of their dress are transferred, to an extent, from the author to the demands of ritual practice. The rites described in this chapter indicate that there was a masculine and feminine element required in certain rituals. Such is the reason why certain priesthoods have a corresponding priestess, as is the case for the flamen Dialis and the flaminica, in addition to Salii and Saliae. For the Saliae, dress was an important means of associating themselves with Salii and worship of the god Mars. Masculine and feminine elements were also present during rights that involved approaching the divinity. An example of this can be the use of the male toga praetexta worn by women making sacrifices to a fertility god, Mutinus Titinus, as attested in Christian polemical writings. Since this sacrifice was said to have occurred during the time of a woman’s wedding, the use of the praetexta could mark the transition of a girl into adulthood just as the typically male garment allowed women to combine both masculinity and femininity into their appearance in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{847} Versnel (1992) 157. \\
\textsuperscript{848} As Dolansky (2011) points out, this equalization was only limited to male participants, but that “power structures based upon gender and age appear to have remained intact” (498).}
worship of a fertility deity. Encompassing elements of these two genders was an indication of the needed elements for procreation.

In addition to the duality of masculinity and femininity, ritual transvestism was also present during periods of transition. For instance, the bride wore the *tunica recta* either on or before her wedding. This garment was considered masculine and worn by boys before their rite of passage ceremony. By wearing this tunic, brides were outwardly presenting themselves as transitioning from a child to adult.

Ritual transvestism was also prevalent during periods of transition during the Roman calendar year. Both the end of the year and its beginning were marked by festivals of transvestism. At the Saturnalia festival taking place at the winter solstice, markers of free and citizen status were temporarily set aside for the Greek *synthesis*. At the Compitalia, occurring a short time after the Saturnalia and at the start of a new year, it is likely that Salian priestesses take up armor and the apex associated with priests. The turning point of the year thus brought festivals of transition. These transitions involved changes of dress to reflect the changing time.

In a ritual context, cross-dressing that mirrored the gender-crossing nature of certain deities was tolerated and even supported. Such duality of masculinity and femininity is present for the clothing exchanges that took place on Cyprus in honor of the bearded form of Aphrodite attested by the 5th century CE writer Macrobius. Reversals of typical garments brought with these clothing exchanges temporary reprieve of strict hierarchies and gender boundaries, as well as a time to channel frustration for these hierarchies. Ultimately, ritual cross-dressing reinforces and perpetuates the social order through this temporary reprieve. These are the sole areas within Roman society where
gender and status-crossing dress was not condemned, as they served to reinforce, rather than question, societal boundaries.
CONCLUSION

I have presented here several ways in which strict clothing rules described by Roman writers were often broken. The goals of this dissertation were to detail the garments that were prescribed to Roman women alongside an examination of how women’s dress was considered perverse when worn by men, and how women themselves were considered transgressive when not wearing these garments.

In this dissertation, I have shown that despite a sufficient amount of explicitly written laws proscribing garments for different identities, descriptions of incorrect dress demonstrate how important it was to dress in garments considered appropriate. Appropriate garments were important because they were the means by which a person’s identity was on display. From the manner in which garments were draped on the body to the colors and fabric choices themselves, clothing was a means of communicating gender, status, sexuality, and ethnicity. In such a class-conscious society, garment choices were crucial to maintaining the social order.

Throughout this dissertation, I have pointed out that much of what was considered appropriate or inappropriate is based on opinions of writers that were usually biased. Mentions of clothing often had a specific agenda behind them, whether authors decided that women were acting beyond what was appropriate for their gender, or that the absence of certain garments suggested that a woman had low respectability. In many cases I have examined here, mentions of dress functioned as more than just descriptors of a woman’s physical appearance: they reflected male anxieties at women who posed a threat to their power.

Despite this importance placed on appropriate dress to delineate boundaries,
writers often complain of women wearing garments that did not reflect their gender and status. These instances that I consider cross-dressing appear in texts for reasons such as characterization, disguise, parody, and ritual practice.

In my first chapter, I presented an overview of our different ancient and modern sources on the dress of Roman women. This included ancient literary and material evidence of the dressed female body, alongside modern scholarship on Roman women’s dress and modern fashion theory.

In my next two chapters I focus on the semiotics of dress, looking specifically at the garments typically worn by women. Through an examination of different elements of dress such as fabrics and dyes, I discuss the sensations associate with wearing these garments. I argue that women’s dress was physically restrictive and that garments had the ability to control women’s movements within public spaces. At the same time, using Mauss’s techniques of the body I demonstrate that women are likely more accustomed to moving in these garments than we would initially expect, contrary to numerous sculptures depicting women fidgeting with their clothing.

My fourth chapter pivots the dissertation to an examination of transgressive dress. In this chapter, I investigate how women’s dress could be considered transgressive when worn by men. Looking at both masculine-to-feminine cross-dressing and dress that was considered effeminate, I argue here that masculinity was provisional and dependent upon constant demonstration through one’s *habitus*. When men deviate from clear expressions of masculinity through dress that is borrowed or adapted from women, their sex and sexuality are ridiculed for mocking the sex that was considered inferior.

The final three chapters form the bulk of my argument by focusing on texts that
include instances of women in dress that was instead associated with men. These chapters are divided into different contexts of women’s cross-dressing, including instances associated with a woman’s marital status, the context of warfare, and ritual dress.

From these final chapters on feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing, my study develops the following conclusions. First, dress was used as a form of characterization for women. Many of our sources representing the clothed body do so in order to describe someone’s appearance as outwardly depicting inner characteristics. Just as we use the language of morality to reference clothing, descriptions of women’s appearance should also be read through the lens of authorial bias and the larger context of a text.

When clothing was not used to comment on a woman’s behavior, representations of women dressed in men’s clothing allowed authors to use their dress to comment upon the behavior of men surrounding them. In other words, women dressed in men’s clothing served as a foil to men whose actions were considered suitable for women. This is often the case for men who are the focus of the narrative, especially emperors or other men in positions of power. Authors considered such feminine dress and actions especially reprehensible for men in leadership positions. Cross-dressing women then became a literary device to inform the reader on a man’s character. Such complementarity and reciprocal cross-dressing were again based upon authorial bias rather than historical reality.

In cases where representations of cross-dressing served to characterize the wearer herself, authors present women who try to be men in some way but fail at doing so. These women are presented as seeking to achieve the status of men but are condemned for such
an attempt. The women I have examined in this study wear men’s clothing to represent sexual freedom, elevated public status, and societal roles that were usually reserved for men.

In examples throughout my study of women who attempt to assume a man’s role and dress, authors mock these women. Such is the case particularly for the women wearing armor discussed in chapter six. They are perceived almost as a parody of men due to their misalignment with dress and gender identity. For many authors, describing women in men’s dress was a way to condemn behavior that was inappropriate for their gender.

In this study, I also argue that marital status is closely tied to the clothing that women wore. Such is especially true for the women in chapter five, where either the formation of a marriage or its dissolution result in an author representing women in certain garments. This is also true in chapter seven as we examine the garments associated with the marriage ritual. Since marriage was an important period in a woman’s life that reflected her status and role in Roman society, specific garments were necessary to outwardly indicate the wearer’s change in identity.

Finally, by examining instances of ritual cross-dressing, I argue that wearing men’s dress allowed women to appeal to certain divinities with ambiguous gender representations. A combination of masculine and feminine elements was necessary for certain rituals, such as initiations and fertility practices. Cross-dressing also provided reprieve from gender boundaries that was limited to certain festival days, such as the Saturnalia. Ritual transvestism is slightly less confined to authorial bias, demonstrating that setting played an important role in considering what dress is appropriate.
This study aims to bring cross-dressing women to the forefront of scholarship on transgressive dress. Since most studies on cross-dressing in the Graeco-Roman world have focused on men, both mythological and historical, my study will become a valuable resource to future scholars examining Roman literary transvestism.

Since transgressive dress informs us of gender norms, this study contributes to scholarship not only on ancient cross-dressing, but also to studies of ancient gender norms and ideal dress of Roman men and women. It is also valuable to general studies on cross-dressing because the ancient world can serve as a predecessor and point of comparison to more modern examples of cross-dressing.

This study is also important to the field of women’s and gender studies. By examining how gender was constructed and altered through dress, how clothing of genders reinforced structures of power, and how appearance served as a measure to evaluate gender performance, my project has significant implications for current conceptions of gender and power. Using the past as a distancing tool illuminates the present situation of men disseminating images of women. To put it differently, an examination of how men portray ancient women serves as a lens in understanding contemporary issues of perception and representation in male-dominated forms of media today.

Through this dissertation, I have aimed to pivot ancient dress studies into new directions which I anticipate will be helpful to future scholars. One such direction is to a study of clothing as an embodied practice. Future scholars can use this study on dress and movement in an examination of artistic evidence to further investigate how dress impacts movement. Experimental archaeology can also contribute to our knowledge on dress and
movement. While some experimental archaeology has been done, there is still need for these studies that center on the bodily experience and movement allowed by dress. Knowledge of this will expand the boundaries of clothing studies and lead to new findings on related to lived experiences of people from Graeco-Roman antiquity.

Another direction I have begun to explore in this dissertation is the connection between women’s dress and marital status. Further study dedicated to dress and marriage is needed to solidify connections I have begun to make here between the dissolution of a marriage and change in clothing. Since marriage is an important step towards women filling their expected societal role, it follows that special dress is needed for such an occasion. I have mentioned how adultery, sex work, and the specific example of Messalina can show that new dress was needed to reflect the dissolution of a marriage, and I anticipate that future research can add to these claims by examining evidence beyond my scope of literary texts.

Future works can also be done to compare instances of cross-dressing between literature from Greece, Rome, and other regions of the ancient world. I have limited my scope here to the dress of Roman women. There are also enough examples of feminine-to-masculine gendered cross-dressing in Greek literature, for example, to fill another study. In such a study, this dissertation can be a useful tool of comparison between two cultures and the reasons for representations of cross-dressing in each. Using the insights here as a framework, it is possible to examine cross-dressing other cultures in antiquity. Such comparisons are important in understanding early attitudes towards dress that does not conform to social norms.
Ritual dress is another area that I have begun to explore here, though with a focus limited to women’s ritual transvestism. In the future I anticipate further studies examining the unique garments worn in Roman ritual, particularly by women who held significant religious roles. This study would then serve as a starting point for examining differences in Roman ritual dress in comparison to Greek garments. This study also elucidates the causes for women’s ritual cross-dressing.

Additional studies on cross-dressing women can examine female saints that disguised themselves as men in order to attain sainthood. Sources on these women were prevalent from the second century CE to the early medieval period. Marie Delcourt begins to draw connections between these saints and earlier instances of ancient transvestism, but stronger connections between the two remain to be made. Unlike the women discussed in this study who were condemned for wearing men’s clothing, cross-dressing saints used male clothing as a disguise to pursue their religious interests and were praised for doing so. However, similar to the women I mention who were limited by biased authorial representation emphasizing what was appropriate for their gender, the women in these accounts are only granted sainthood as women after they dispose of their disguises. Supplementary study on the prevalence and purpose of these accounts will benefit from a comparison to the smaller number of Roman women who were said to have cross-dressed and the near dearth of cross-dressing male saints.

This study has largely been conducted to bring a group of overlooked women to the fore of dress studies. Through an examination of women presented in men’s dress, we have been able to come to several conclusions on topics such as authorship, bias, and gender roles. It is useful, finally, to think about these notions in light of present times,
attitudes toward nonconformity, and biased representations within modern media.

Perhaps looking towards biases in ancient representations will allow us to reflect upon
our own predispositions and lead us to be critical and impartial consumers of media.
ILLUSTRATIONS

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![Closeup sketch of stola straps](image)


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