

III.iii. Digression: The possibility of pictorial intertexts

Before the close of this chapter, I will now consider briefly the possibility of pictorial intertexts for two of the references discussed above – the particular hairstyle ascribed to Laodamia in *Ov. Ars* 3,137f, and the notion of a tall Andromache in *Ars* 3,777f.

Though deviance from literary tradition seems to be a goal in itself and furthermore appears to fulfil an important poetic function, it is tempting to speculate on the existence of an established tradition of a tall Andromache in plastics or in painting as a source of inspiration for Ovid's remarks on her height. There seems, however, to be little evidence to support such an assumption. *LIMC* suggests merely one instance, a mural painting which shows Andromache as particularly tall. This painting supposedly displays Hector setting out to war, already dressed in armour, together with three women, one holding up a baby towards him, two waiting in a portal to the right. The woman in the middle, standing in the portal, is slightly taller than the other two. Touchefeu-Meynier thus assumes her to be Andromache and takes the two shorter women to be servants. However, the differences in height are almost negligible and in all likelihood, Andromache's height is a result of the need to demonstrate the social standing of the characters and does not go back on pictorial nor indeed literary tradition. Furthermore, this painting dates to the first century A.D. and is situated in the Domus Aurea.¹ Even if we do take Andromache's height in this painting to be more than a means of expressing her social superiority to the other women in it, it is, considering the late date, more likely that literary tradition from Ovid and onwards has influenced the artist's rendering of Andromache, than that this painting is the single remnant of an established artistic tradition inspiring Ovid; especially given the fact that Ovid's renderings of Andromache were remembered in the literary circles in Rome for a long time, as Martial in the late first century A.D. alludes to Andromache as an example for sexual practices (*Mart.* 11,104,13) in a manner conditioned by Ovid's.² Further, the heroines with whom Andromache is combined lend no support to the hypothesis that Ovid's depiction of Andromache goes back on pictorial intertexts. In vase paintings, Atalante's (*Ars* 3,775f) legs are often emphasized as most pictures of her focus on her as an athlete, but they are not shown as overly long,³ and though the archeological material on Andromeda (*Ars* 2,643) is quite wide-ranging, she is never shown with black skin.⁴ Therefore, the consideration of pictorial evidence for a tradition of a tall Andromache takes us no further than the discussion of the earlier literary tradition did. We still cannot be sure whether Ovid draws upon some text unknown to us, or if he has in fact invented the tall Andromache to suit his own purposes.

The *praeceptor's* statement that Andromache dressed in a simple manner (*Ov. Ars* 3,109f), however, is confirmed by pictorial tradition: Andromache is often depicted in simple garments and without jewellery, and, just like in Ovid, this appears not only to be an expression of her grief but occurs already in vase-paintings from the sixth and fifth century B.C. showing both Andromache and Hector.⁵

Turning to the other reference with a possible pictorial background, we note that in *Ars* 3,137f Laodamia is said to know to wear her hair unadorned with a simple parting, as is suitable for her

¹ Touchefeu-Meynier, 1981, 768.

² The allusion to Ovid is clear, but Martial actually contradicts Ovid (saying 'often' instead of 'never') and makes no mention of Andromache's height. Much the same holds true for *Iuv.* 6,503, which implies that Andromache was a woman of particular height. Cf. Janka, 2006.

³ Boardman, 1984, 940-950.

⁴ Schauenburg, 1981, 788.

⁵ Touchefeu-Meynier, 1981, 773, s.v. Andromache 4 and 6.

facial form. In this case it is reasonable to assume that representations in art form at least a backdrop for Ovid's depiction of her.⁶

longa probat facies capitis discrimina puri: Ov. Ars 3,137f
sic erat ornatis Laodamia comis.

(A parting in the simple hair suits the oval face: Laodamia wore her hair this way.)

In the literary sources there is nothing to indicate that Laodamia was known for this particular hairstyle. Turning instead to pictorial evidence, one finds no examples of Laodamia wearing a parting before the death of Protesilaus. Indeed, the only known Roman artefact displaying such a scene is a gem in the Sangiorgi collections, which dates roughly to Ovid's own time (third quarter of the first century B.C.) and shows the couple's last meeting before Protesilaus' departure for Troy.⁷ Here, Laodamia wears a small, slightly pointed cap, so that the arrangement of her hair is obscured to the viewer, but there is no suggestion of a parting and her hair seems to be held up in some way, rather than falling freely, which is what I assume Ovid has in mind in *Ars* 3,137f.⁸ In later art, however, the story of Protesilaus and Laodamia seems to have enjoyed some popularity as a motive for funeral sarcophagi in the second century A.D. but there, the emphasis lies on scenes taking place after the death of Protesilaus. The sarcophagus offering the most detailed version of Laodamia's story shows her in one scene seated on a bed with her hair falling freely from what may be called a parting, while Protesilaus is waiting at the foot of the bed.⁹

This piece of evidence is relatively late and could, just like the tall Andromache of the Domus Aurea, be a result of literary influence on the pictorial arts, or, of course, purely coincidental. Still, in the *Ars amatoria*, the mention of Laodamia is followed by the examples of Apollo (3,141f), Diana (3,143f), Iole (3,155f) and Ariadne (3,157f), the first two of whom are highly likely to be inspired by and allude to famous works of art.¹⁰ Though the passage in *Ars* 3 is by no means the only literary text to depict Apollo with his hair falling freely over his shoulders¹¹ or Ariadne with hair in disarray,¹² the fact that hairstyles displayed on statues apparently influenced the fashion of hairdressing will support the assumption that Ovid draws on pictorial as well as literary works of art for these examples.¹³ The context, therefore, increases the probability of Ovid having known a pictorial representation of Laodamia with a severe parting.

An allusion to a work of art does not rule out the possibility of further, literary, intertexts which may add typical Ovidian wit to the passage. When reading Ovid, the first place to look for intertexts must be among Ovid's own works. In *Epist.* 13, Ovid repeatedly stresses that Laodamia refuses to pay attention to her appearance as a token of her grief after the departure of Protesilaus for Troy. She says *nec mihi pectendos cura est praebere capillos* ('and I do not care about offering to have my hair combed') in *Epist.* 13,31 and in 13,39, she asks rhetorically *ipsa comas*

⁶ Viarre, 1969, 774; Schubert, 1992, 222; Reeson, 2001, 130f.

⁷ Dating according to Caciani, 1994, 558.

⁸ The identification of the couple on the gem with Laodamia and Protesilaus is suggested by Zwierlein-Diehl, 1976, 24-26, who also has a clear reproduction of the gem, Taf. 1, Abb. 3), see further Caciani, 1994, 555, s.v. Protesilaos 8.

⁹ Caciani, 1994, 558, s.v. Protesilaos 27; Rodenwaldt, 1890-1952, 3, p. 499f, tav. 132.

¹⁰ On Apollo and Artemis, Reeson, 2001, 130.

¹¹ Nor indeed in Ovid, cf. *Met.* 3,421. Further see McKeown, 1989, 376 on *Am.* 1,14,31.

¹² Ariadne's torn hair is mentioned several times in her letter to Theseus, cf. *Epist.* 10,13; 47; 137; 147, further in *Am.* 1,7,15f, all recalling Cat. 64,63.

¹³ Cf. R. K. Gibson, 2003, 149; Wood, 1999, 18f

pectar? ('should I comb my hair?').¹⁴ Laodamia's hairstyle in *Epist.* 13 is not so much a result of cosmetic considerations as one of lack of care caused by emotional distress.

The hairstyle described in *Ars* 3,137f with a parting suitable for an oval face is probably not to be identified with the disarrayed fashion Laodamia's hair must take on in *Epist.* 13, even though they do coincide on the Roman sarcophagus mentioned above. That kind of hairdo the *praeceptor amoris* exemplifies instead with Ariadne and Iole (*Ars* 3,153-158). Therefore, one cannot interpret the fact that the *praeceptor* implies that Laodamia carefully considered her hairstyle so as to appear as attractive as possible as a misreading of myth by the *praeceptor* like I suggested in the case of the sad Tecmessa and Andromache (*Ars* 3,517-524), but mentioning Laodamia's hair does invite comparison with Ovid's own description of Laodamia in the *Epist.*, where her hairdo or lack of such has great symbolic value. The reader of *Ars* 3,137f (especially if well-versed in Ovid's own texts) would have known that Laodamia was not primarily famous for her beauty prior to Protesilaus departure for Troy, but for her grief for him thereafter. The differences between the two texts display how the *praeceptor amoris* must look to less well known or less important episodes of mythology to be able to illustrate his teachings.

¹⁴ As opposed to Protesilaus, who must endure the dirt of the battlefield, *Epist.* 13,37-40.