Divine Poetics: Representation of Genre in Ovid's Metamorphoses 6.70-128

Hong Yoong

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DIVINE POETICS: REPRESENTATION OF GENRE
IN OVID’S METAMORPHOSES 6.70-128

by

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DIVINE POETICS: REPRESENTATION OF GENRE
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ABSTRACT

In my thesis, I explore the generic allusion of two ekphrases in the textile competition between Minerva and Arachne. While various scholars have approached the story of Arachne based on Ovid’s critique of the Augustan regime, I focus more on the poetic representation of the two ekphrases in the context of their intertextual relationship with other Greek and Roman literary traditions.

Minerva’s tapestry is the embodiment of the heroic epic tradition similar to Homeric and Vergilian narrative, and Arachne’s tapestry represents the archetype of the Hellenistic poetic tradition. While Ovid perceives the heroic epic tradition as the embodiment of Minerva’s divine power, he portrays the poetics of the Hellenistic tradition as the personification of Bacchus’ divinity. Ovid illuminates his understanding of the two poetic traditions through Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries; while at the same time Ovid demonstrates his mastery of the two traditions by interweaving them into the Metamorphoses.
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0.1 Introduction: the Divine Conundrum of Poetic Composition

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a unique text, a composition of elegiacally themed tales of eroticism and suffering described in hexameter verse. Scholars have faced the conundrum of the generic representation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for almost a century, ever since Richard Heinze (1919) began to examine the elegiac elements within the narrative in the *Metamorphoses* and considered the poem as the product of an essentially elegiac poet.¹ Brooks Otis laid out a different approach to the *Metamorphoses* in his *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (1966), presenting the poem as firmly a part of the tradition of Homeric and Vergilian epic.² It is a difficult task to determine how to locate Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* within a specific generic position. By attempting to categorize the poem, we presuppose that the *Metamorphoses* must adhere to specific sets of generic boundaries, which cannot be easily broken. William Anderson (1993) suggests the categorization of genre “is more damaging than helpful to approach Ovid’s poem.”³ Yet more recently, scholars such as Heather van Tress (2004), argue that the examination of generic patterns in poetry exists as early as Plato and Aristotle.⁴ She further claims that “Ovid is very much aware of genre.”⁵ In the textile competition between Minerva and Arachne (*Metamorphoses* 6.1-145), Ovid represents the two competing textiles as polar

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¹ See Anderson 1993, 110 on Heinze.
² See Anderson 1993, 111 on Otis.
³ Anderson 1993, 112.
⁴ van Tress 2004, 5.
⁵ van Tress 2004, 6.
opposites of one another. He attempts to do so by reflecting their conflicting themes as a literary polemic as well. Thus my investigation of the divine poetics in the two tapestries highlights Ovid’s own understanding of generic production. The difficulty with determining the generic categorization of the *Metamorphoses* is especially apparent in the *ekphrases* of the two tapestries in the contest between Minerva and Arachne. Denis Feeney (1991), for example, reads the contest between the two weavers not just as a competition between two different pictorial choices, but also as a choice between two different narrative styles. He argues, “Minerva’s work is an exaggerated picture of divine epic decorum, Arachne’s an exaggerated picture of neoteric divine abandonment.”

In this formulation, the two tapestries are indicative of the contest between two different generic forms. Yet there are other groups of scholars, including Anderson (1993), who ultimately abandon the generic attribution of the two tapestries in favor of other approaches of interpretation, especially the political.

In this thesis, I argue that the poetic and textile conflict between Minerva and Arachne ultimately stems from the conflict between structured order and uncontrolled liberation. Ovid maps this dichotomy of structured order and abandoned freedom, I argue, with two contrasted divine figures: Minerva, the goddess of weaving, strategy, and deceit, on the one hand, and Bacchus, the god of transformation, vital energy, and loss of self-control on the other. Ovid relies upon the traditional heroic epic styles of Homer and Vergil to create the narrative techniques at play in his *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry. At the same time, he attempts to compose the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry with narrative techniques reminiscent of Ovid’s Hellenistic and Neoteric predecessors. The allusive and referential nature of the Hellenistic poetic, which is implemented in Arachne’s tapestry,

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becomes synonymous with Bacchus’ *mania* or “madness.” Ovid thereby attempts to exemplify traditional heroic epic as part of Minerva’s divine attributes, and in contrast, to illustrate the narrative techniques of the Hellenistic and Neoteric poets as the embodiment of Bacchus’ divinity. Ultimately, the contest between the two characters shows Ovid’s success in surpassing the two poetic traditions by either separating the two poetic forms, as seen through the two *ekphrases*, or by merging them into a single narrative, as seen in the result of the contest.

0.2 Textile and the Text: Conflicting Complements of Ancient Poetry

Ovid chooses the *certamen* between Minerva and Arachne, a contest between woven tapestries, as a culturally appropriate opportunity for him to experiment with two divine poetic styles and two different poetic traditions inherited from his poetic predecessors. In her influential book, *Weaving the Truth* (2008) Ann Bergren notices the importance of a poet’s presentation of acts of weaving in a poem. Weaving is an essential skill for the production of clothing, which is necessary for the survival of society. As such, the role of the weaver is significant in the cultural development of the ancient world. The literal action of weaving is appropriated into the metaphoric realm of poetic production in order to legitimize the importance of the production of texts in the ancient world.\(^7\) While tracing a poet’s use of weaving metaphors in poetic composition, John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro (1996) note that verbs for weaving and weaving metaphors in Latin poetry appear as early as Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*. “[The] weaving metaphor comes forcefully into play on several occasions in Lucretius, but in the nominal form

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\(^7\) Bergren 2008, 18.
[\textit{textura}] rather than in the form of the verb \textit{texere}.”\textsuperscript{8} They also suggest that within Ovid’s poetic framework, “[the poems] take on the status of a woven object.”\textsuperscript{9} Gianpero Rosati (1999) later notes the textile contest “is, in short, an essay on narrative technique, a discourse on the partiality and ideology of the point of view of the producer of a text.”\textsuperscript{10} The textile contest is, therefore, the perfect medium for Ovid to represent the conflict of two textiles as a conflict of poetic tradition as well as a conflict between contrasting divine figures representative of these traditions.

\textbf{0.3 Divine Background: Minerva and Bacchus as Conflicting Celestial Figures}

Ovid’s poetic allusions to the divine persona of Minerva embodied within the \textit{ekphrasis} of her tapestry should not come as a surprise to scholars since Minerva, as well as her Greek counterpart Athena, is regularly associated with the art of weaving and most other artisanal craftwork. Ovid himself proclaims \textit{mille dea est operum: certe dea carminis illa est}, “she is the goddess of a thousand crafts; certainly she is the goddess of poetry” (\textit{Fasti} 3.833). The mention of craft and poetry in the same line indicates Ovid’s belief that the goddess Minerva, along with the craft of other artisanal workers, also governs the composition of poems. The line echoes the sentiment of Bergren’s argument, that the poet sees his composition similar to the production of physical crafts, like weaving. Indeed, Ovid’s association of weaving and poetry is not just a metaphoric comparison. The Roman concept of composing of “text” is derived from the \textit{texere} “to weave.” Thus Ovid’s poetic composition of the two tapestries function as a connection

\textsuperscript{8} Scheid and Svenbro 1996, 166.
\textsuperscript{9} Scheid and Svenbro 1996, 136.
\textsuperscript{10} Rosati 1999, 251.
between the material and the verbal worlds. Minerva’s divine power of weaving is linked with her divine association to *mētis*, cunning intelligence. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, we see Minerva’s Greek counterpart Athena assisting Odysseus’ attempt to enter his palace unnoticed. Athena proclaims, νῦν αὖ δεῦρ’ ἰκόμην, ἵνα τοι σῶν μῆτιν ύφήνω, “now I come here once more, in order to weave a *mētis* with you” (13.303). In this line, Homer associates the creation of intelligent plans and deceits with the action of textile making: Athena *weaves* (ὑφήνω) a plan (μῆτιν). This passage demonstrates how Athena’s two divine powers, *mētis* and weaving, are interconnected. Within the act of weaving, as far as Minerva’s divinity is concerned, the divine power of the well-calculated, structured, and cunning mind manifests itself.

Bacchus, on the other hand, does not associate his divine powers with the literal craft of weaving. Instead, his divine realm encompasses the power of poetry, especially poems of archaic choral lyric (*dithyrambos*), tragedy, and comedy. As Walter Burkert (1985) notes, “Both *dithyrambos* and tragedy belong in the setting of a Dionysus festival.”

In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Tiresias proclaims that the experience of *mania* “madness” comes from Bacchus’ divinity (*Bacchae* 305). Bacchus’s divine power of *mania* is an opposition to the etymological meaning of Minerva’s name. While both *mania* and Minerva share the same Indo-European root *men*- “to think of,” the meaning of the two words is completely opposite. *Mania* derives its nominal form from the verb μαίνομαι, which can mean “to be out of one’s mind.”

From intellectual craft or loss of intellectual control, forms a direct celestial conflict against the divine representation of Minerva, the divine figure of intellectual control and craft.

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11 Burkert 1985, 163.
12 Beekes 2010, 892; de Vaan 2008, 381.
13 Beekes 2010, 892.
this etymological contrast, Bacchus appears opposed to Minerva’s nature as revealed by the linguistic etymology of her name. The opposition of the two divinities of the mind can also clearly be seen in their mythologies, as Bacchus is born from the thigh of Jupiter while Minerva is born from his head. Burkert proposes that the birth of Bacchus from Zeus “is a no less enigmatic counterpart to Athena’s birth from the head.”\textsuperscript{14} It is a clear indicator that the two gods are connected through the linguistic origin of their divine powers and the opposing regions of their birth. Even though Bacchus lacks the association of weaving in his divine realm, he is ultimately set as a contrasting figure with Minerva through his divine realm of the poetic production of drama, his command over \textit{mania}, and his birth from Jupiter’s thigh. Against Bacchus stands Minerva, whom Ovid associates with epic poetry, both through her mastery of craftwork as well as her special tutelage of heroes. The opposing forces of Bacchus’ divinity, therefore, blends well with Arachne’s rejection of Minerva’s divinity as the goddess of weaving.\textsuperscript{15} Thus Ovid’s poetic composition of Arachne’s tapestry echoes the Bacchic divine powers, much as his poetic composition of Minerva’s tapestry reflects her divine powers.

\subsection*{0.4 Scholarship on Poetic Composition and Divine Affiliations}

My approach to the two tapestries through a religious and divine viewpoint is not entirely unfamiliar in the study of Classics. Many scholars have attempted to reconstruct the religious setting and divine affiliations of the gods through the gods’ portrayal in Greek and Roman literature. Burkert (1985), relies on various works of Greek literature, from the epics of Homer to the philosophical treatises of Plato, to create a broad model of

\textsuperscript{14} Burkert 1985, 165.
\textsuperscript{15} Ovid \textit{Metamorphoses}, 6.25.
the general ideas of Greek gods and their religious activities. Jon Mikalson’s *Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy* (1991) follows Burkert’s approach while elaborating on the specific Panathenaic celebrations as attested in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Charles Segal (1997), on the other hand, attempts to portray the similarities between the poetic composition of a specific story (Euripides’ *Bacchae* in Segal’s case) and the divinity represented by that poetic work. Matthew Dickie (1998) takes this approach a step further in considering the influences of a god’s divinity on poetic composition. He argues that, contrary to popular beliefs, some poets in the Hellenistic period (he specifically cites Posidippus, Philicus, and Euphorion) reflect their religious beliefs within the very constructions of their poetic endeavors.\(^{16}\)

Building upon these observations other scholars have made regarding ancient religion and poetic composition, I argue that Ovid, regardless of his actual religious beliefs, also incorporates the divine attributes of Minerva and Bacchus into his *ekphrases* of the two tapestries. The poetic construction of the two tapestries is not Ovid’s only foray into religious representation in poetry. Though incomplete, Ovid’s *Fasti* is a clear indication of the poet’s attempt to incorporate the religious settings of the Augustan age with the elegiac tradition that Ovid, as an elegist, inherits from his Roman neoteric predecessor.\(^{17}\)

Although other scholars have examined the contest of the tapestries through a political lens,\(^ {18}\) or as the poet’s self-representation through the figure of Arachne,\(^ {19}\) we must never forget that the main contention of the two characters is the argument over the acknowledgement of and respect for Minerva’s divine power. At the start of book 6 of

\(^{16}\) Dickie 1998, 51-52.

\(^{17}\) Miller 1991 examines how the elegiac resonance of the neoteric poets is recognizable in Ovid’s composition of the *Fasti*.


\(^{19}\) Pavlock 2009.
Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Arachne refuses to acknowledge Minerva either as her teacher or her divine inspiration (6.25). Arachne’s action implies that the girl refuses to worship the goddess as the patroness of weaving. In his *Fasti*, Ovid advises young girls to pray to Minerva during the *Quinquatria* festival: *Pallade placata lanam mollire puellae / discant et plenas exonerare colos,* “because Pallas was pleased, the girls may learn to card the wool and to spin off the full distaff” (*Fasti* 3.817-818). The divine blessing of Minerva to young girls is the skill of weaving, an important component of the domestic economy in ancient Rome; however, Arachne’s refusal to worship the goddess creates a problem within the reciprocal logic of the votive religious system. Because Arachne does not offer praise, Minerva cannot offer the benefits of her craft skills. Thus, the *certamen* between the two characters is, at least on the surface, a contest of divine prowess and authority. The refusal of Minerva’s *mētis* can be seen as an embrace of a Bacchic *mania*, and this contest, as I will demonstrate, is figured as a poetic competition between two traditions of poetry with which Ovid was intimately familiar: elegy and epic. Ovid, therefore, incorporates various dualities in the setting of the two tapestries: the duality of poetic composition versus textile production; the duality of divine *mētis* and divine *mania*; the duality of heroic epic and the Hellenistic traditions in Augustan Rome.

**0.5 Minervan Poetics: The Generic Representation of Minerva's Tapestry**

My thesis begins with a lengthy examination of previous scholarship on the textile *certamen* between Minerva and Arachne, including an investigation of Ovid’s poetic models. The investigation of Ovid’s precursors is important in the identification of the cause of conflict between the two characters in this story. I aim to show how the
production of the two tapestries ultimately stems from the divine conflict between Minerva and Arachne.

Through a close reading of the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry, I focus on how the tapestry’s presentation is reflected through Ovid’s description of the theme of Minerva’s tapestry as a *vetus argumentum* (6.69). My argument illustrates the manner in which the *ekphrasis* reflects the divine powers of Minerva. First, the appearance of *modus* at 6.102 in the *ekphrasis* becomes a marker for Minerva’s divine association with well-structured order and stability in poetic composition. I link the use of *modus* and the narrative arrangement of the *ekphrasis* as an indication for Minerva’s *numen* of cunning intelligence, *mētis*. The tapestry itself, though it does not refer to any sign of deceit, hints at the deception and intention of Minerva to punish Arachne through the pictorial subject matter of the tapestry and Ovid’s poetic arrangement of that intent. Finally I demonstrate how the implication of *mētis* suggests a Vergilian resonance in the tapestry. Ovid implements Vergilian narrative techniques and allusions in his *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry in order to associate the divine powers of Minerva with the heroic epic traditions, in which Ovid inherited from Homer, Lucretius, and especially from Vergil. Ovid, therefore, attempts to parallel Minerva’s divine personification of order, control, and structure with the poetic composition of heroic epics in ancient Greek and Latin literature.

0.6 Bacchic Poetics: The Divine Response in Arachne’s Tapestry

In the second chapter I analyze Arachne’s tapestry as a response to Minerva’s pictorial and Ovid’s poetic composition. Arachne’s tapestry and Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of it
offer a reaction of the Hellenistic pictorial and poetic aesthetics against Minerva’s tapestry and its written representation. As in the first chapter, I begin with a close reading of the tapestry, focusing on the reader’s initial perception of the _ekphrasis_ of Arachne’s tapestry and its differences in length and stylistic arrangement in comparison to Minerva’s pictorial embroidery. I argue that Ovid makes use of the reader’s inherent desire to compare Arachne’s tapestry with Minerva’s. He plays with the reader’s expectation of the poetic arrangement and subject matter of Arachne’s tapestry since the reader would compare the poetic structure of Arachne’s tapestry with the composition of Minerva’s work. Ovid seeks to illustrate Arachne’s attempt to oppose the goddess on as many fronts as she possibly can, which leads to a tapestry that contains a myriad of stories in the main narrative embroidery rather than a single event as in the centerpiece of Minerva’s tapestry.

From the surface comparison between the two tapestries, I move on to the Callimachean resonances in Ovid’s poetic style in the _ekphrasis_ of Arachne’s tapestry. The _ekphrasis_ of Arachne’s tapestry functions as Ovid’s point of reception of and adherence to Callimachean poetics through the comparison of her tapestry with Minerva’s tapestry. In addition to these Callimachean references, I also attempt to prove the overarching theme of Arachne’s tapestry, as indicated by the participle of _eludo, elusa_, is specific marker for the relationship between love, play, and deception during the Hellenistic period. The participle _elusa_, I argue, serves a thematic contradiction to the theme in Minerva’s tapestry, _vetus argumentum_. In terms of ancient poetics, _elusa_ offers a Hellenistic challenge to the poetics of heroic epic marked by its _vetus argumentum_.

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Since Minerva’s tapestry is a textile symbol of Minerva’s divine attribute, I associate the Callimachean-Hellenistic model of Arachne’s tapestry with the divine antithesis of Minerva’s poetics, Bacchus. I show how Bacchus’ divine appearance is the subversion of Apollo, who also represents the divine craft of poem making within the Hellenistic tradition (see, for instance, Callimachus Aetia fr. 1.21-28 and Hymn to Apollo 105-112). The two gods, Apollo and Bacchus, share similar attributes, and they share various religious locations in Greece (the most important being Delphi). While Callimachaean poetry invokes the inspiration and divine grace of Apollo, Arachne’s tapestry summons the other, darker aspect of the Apollonian divinity, the Bacchus aspect, in order to counteract the divine poetics of Minerva’s tapestry. While Minerva’s tapestry shows order and structure as indicative of her divinity, Arachne’s tapestry reveals the discord and fluidity of Bacchus’ allusion in the poetic composition. I conclude by noting how Bacchus’ divine power of mania ultimately contradicts the divinity of Minerva, because the two divine powers are polarizing perceptions of the mind. The interpretation of the Bacchic poetics, therefore, relies heavily on the reader’s understanding of the divine powers of Minerva as imposed upon Ovid’s ekphrasis of her tapestry.

0.7 Conclusion: The Poem, the Poet, and the Divine Poetics of Weaving

Although the two divine poetics are set up opposing forces, Ovid is capable of blending or separating the two forms just as he so desires. Ovid is, therefore, the ultimate winner of the contest because his mastery over the two forms is better than either weaver’s mastery over a single divine poetic form. The final result of the tapestry competition, or its lack of specific resolution, is the proof of Ovid’s master over the two
forms. While the contest between the Muses and the Pierides in book 5 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* ends with a clear description of who the winner is, the result of the textile competition in book 6 does not offer a clear indication of who won. The varying and conflicting scholarly interpretations of the contest’s actual result functions as indicators of Ovid’s assimilation of both divine poetics within the composition of a single event. My thesis ends with a preview of future investigations into Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* using the divine poetics of Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries as the foundation of my work.
Chapter 1. Minerva's Poetics: the Generic Representation of Minerva's Tapestry

1.1 Minerva’s Tapestry: A Poetic Approach

The idea behind my thesis stems from an observation on Minerva’s tapestry in book 6 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* made by William S. Anderson (1972). In his comprehensive commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, Anderson notes, “the composition of the goddess’ work is flawlessly Classical, perfectly centered, balanced, and framed, highly moral and didactic in content.” Anderson’s observation raises questions about the connection between the narrative style of Ovid’s description of Minerva’s work and its function in the *Metamorphoses*, particularly in contrast with the more fluid style of his description of Arachne’s tapestry in the same book. Does the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry reflect the poetics of traditional ancient epic like the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad*, as opposed to the more playful and allusive style of Hellenistic epic? The *ekphrases* of both Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries represent two literary traditions which Ovid appropriates and reframes in the *Metamorphoses*. Gianpiero Rosati (1999), in his comparison between the stories of the Minyeides and Arachne, attests that the story of Arachne functions as “an essay on narrative technique, a discourse on the partiality and ideology of the point of view of the producer of the text.” In the *certamen* between Minerva and Arachne, their contest becomes a dispute between two contrasting traditions. As part of my endeavor to explain the poetics of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* through the two different types of tapestry being contrasted at the beginning of book 6, I

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20 Anderson 1972, 160.
21 Rosati 1999, 251
aim to perform a close reading of Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry. In this chapter I show how Minerva’s tapestry functions as part of a condensed poetic representation of the *Metamorphoses*. First, I examine how the *ekphrasis* is arranged and how Ovid divides up scenes in the tapestry into specific sections in order to replicate the well-structured display of Minerva’s tapestry. I then show how Minerva’s tapestry functions as a condensed representation of Vergilian epic narrative. As I have indicated in the introduction to my thesis, Minerva’s presence in the traditional epic genre is prevalent, especially in epics focusing on a main hero protagonist such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. Ovid reflects her importance in traditional epic narrative through her textile production and his *ekphrasis* of that textile. After the analysis of Minerva’s tapestry, in the next chapter I demonstrate how Arachne’s tapestry becomes the representation of another poetic form of the *Metamorphoses*, and how these two poetic styles become the two threads that weave and bind the *Metamorphoses* in its place.

### 1.2 A *Certamen* of Weaving: Minerva versus Arachne

Many scholars have used the Arachne story as part of their examination of Ovid’s anti-Augustan sentiment. Anderson suggests that the “flawlessly Classical” representation of Minerva’s tapestry resembles Augustan classicistic art, “inasmuch as Ovid refuses to give it victory.”\(^{22}\) Paul Zanker (1988) elaborates on Anderson’s sentiment of an anti-Augustan reading of the *Metamorphoses* and focuses on Ovid’s awareness of the new morality laws enacted by Augustus.\(^{23}\) Ellen Oliensis (2004) argues for an even more intense and violent reading of anti-Augustan sentiments in the *ekphrases*,

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\(^{22}\) Anderson 1972, 160.

\(^{23}\) Zanker 1988, 165-166.
positioning her reading by explaining, “I will be looking for envy, aggression, exaltation, and abasement” in the Arachne story.\textsuperscript{24} Other scholarship on the Arachne story demonstrates an apparent need for scholars to prove that Arachne’s tapestry reflects Ovid’s own narrative style, and ultimately suggests his own undoing at the hands of Augustus.

There are various scholarly treatments of the success of Arachne’s tapestry and Ovid’s description of it. Karl Galinsky (1975) suggests that the narrative organization of Arachne’s textile proves “[Ovid’s] own artistic breadth. Symmetry has no prerequisite to Ovidian art; a set of loosely ordered tales can form a masterpiece.”\textsuperscript{25} Heinz Hofmann (1986), agreeing with Galinsky, pushes Galinsky’s sentiments further by indicating that the collection of stories within Arachne’s tapestry “is an analogue of the \textit{Metamorphoses},”\textsuperscript{26} especially because variations of some of the stories in Arachne’s tapestry are recounted elsewhere in Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses}. He also suggests that Ovid’s ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry indicates the success of the poet as the true successor of the \textit{carmen deductum}, and therefore the true successor of the Hellenistic poetic craft which Ennius failed to realize.\textsuperscript{27} Barbara Pavlock (2009), agreeing with Hofmann and Galinsky, looks to the conclusion of the narrative (i.e., the punishment of Arachne) and states “by aligning himself with Arachne as artist …, Ovid raises questions about the fate of the poet and of his work as well.”\textsuperscript{28} According to Pavlock, Arachne’s fate echoes Ovid’s own social demise in Rome and his subsequent exile, where he eventually writes

\textsuperscript{24} Oliensis 2004, 286.
\textsuperscript{25} Galinsky 1975, 82.
\textsuperscript{26} Hofmann 1986, 231.
\textsuperscript{27} Hoffman 1986, 234.
\textsuperscript{28} Pavlock 2009, 6.
the famous phrase *carmen et error* (*Tristia* 2.207). Arachne’s destroyed tapestry may be a symbol of Ovid’s own fear of the destruction of his works.

I propose a different approach to reading Arachne’s tapestry that attempts to avoid the constraints of a political or self-reflexive lens. I argue that the two tapestries serve as poetic threads for the composition of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. While Ovid envisions the traditional heroic epic as the embodiment of Minerva’s divine powers, he perceives the allusive and playful poetics of the Hellenistic tradition as the personification of Bacchus’ *numina*. Ovid illuminates his understanding of the two poetic traditions through the two *ekphrases* of Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries; while at the same time Ovid demonstrates his mastery of the two traditions by interweaving them into a single epic, the *Metamorphoses*. The style of Minerva’s tapestry, which I describe as “Minervan poetics,” is the main topic of this chapter; while the style of Arachne’s tapestry, which I call “Bacchic poetics,” is addressed in the following chapter.

1.3 *Laus Artis Lanificae*: Setting Up the *Certamen*

Ovid begins the tale of Arachne as a continuation from the previous story from book 5, the contest between the Muses and the Pierides. The reader would expect a shift in narrating character from the Muses to Minerva in book 5 of the *Metamorphoses*, because a large portion of the contests between the Muses and the Pierides are told through the perspective of the Muses. Ovid instead introduces the *certamen* between Minerva and Arachne in book 6 through the voice of the main narrator of the poem while removing Minerva as the narrator of this story. The switch of narrator from the Muses to the poem’s main narrator creates the impression of a more truthful account, since the
certamen between Minerva and Arachne is told by the main narrator rather than from the biased perspective of one of the contestants, as occurred in the narrated contest between the Muses and the Pierides. The story of Arachne is unique not only because it is the only full and intact account of the Arachne myth that we have, but also because it serves as an example of Ovid’s own poetic endeavor to link the production of poetry with the construction of textile images as he transfers the narrating agency away from Minerva and onto himself.29

Book 6 of the Metamorphoses begins with Minerva listening intently to the Muses’ story and with the beginning of Minerva’s speech:

Praebuerat dictis Tritonia talibus aures,
Carminaque Aonidum iustamque probaverat iram.
tum secum “laudare parum est, laudemur et ipsae
Numina nec sperni sine poena nostra sinamus!”

To these excellent words Tritonian Minerva gave her ears,
She approved both the songs of the Muses and their just anger.
Then with them, she says “there is not enough praising, let myself be praised
And do not allow my divine powers itself to be spurned without punishment!”
(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.1-4)30

Minerva signals here, very early in the Arachne story, the themes that appear throughout her tapestry: the praise of the goddess, which Arachne refuses to provide to Minerva, and the punishment of mortals who challenge the gods. Ovid inserts Minerva, Tritonia, in the center of the first line, much like how Minerva weaves herself into her tapestry as the central figure. Minerva also elucidates the style of self-praise in her tapestry by claiming laudemur ipsae (6.3). The use of poena in line 4 foreshadows the pictorial depiction of punishment in Minerva’s tapestry and the conclusion of the certamen. Much like the

29 Elsewhere Ovid compares the poet with other craftsmen like the sculptor in the story of Pygmalion (10.243-297) and the inventor in the story of Daedalus (8.183-259).
30 All quotations of the Metamorphoses are from the Teubner edition by W. S. Anderson (2001). All translations are mine, unless noted otherwise.
prooemium of the Metamorphoses, Ovid reserves the first four lines of book 6 to reveal the style and theme of praise and punishment in Minerva’s presentation of her tapestry.

As mentioned above, we expect the following lines to be narrated by Minerva, the main character in the narrative, just like the Muses acted as narrators during the narrative of the contest between the Pierides and the Muses in book 5. Since this is Minerva’s response to the story told by the Muses, the reader expects the story of Arachne to reproduce the narrative structure of the story of the Muses, but instead, Ovid quickly denies the reader’s expectation and transfers the narrative to the voice of the main narrator:

Maeoniaeque animum fatis intendit Arachnes,
Quam sibi lanificae non cedere laudibus artis
Audierat.

And then, she [Minerva] turned her mind to the fate of Maeonian Arachne,
Whom she [Minerva] had heard would not yield
Her praise of the weaving skill to the goddess.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.5-7)

The verbs intendit (6.5) and audierat (6.7) mark a shift in narrator. Though the subject of the two verbs in these lines is still Minerva, Ovid switches the narrative structure from a first-person narration by Minerva to a third-person narration by the main narrator, and the entire contest between Arachne and Minerva is narrated by the main narrator of the poem. The repetition of “praise” in lines 3 and 6 (laudemur, laudibus) indicates what the contention between the two women is about. The first numen of Minerva, noted in verse 4 (numina ... nostra, 6.4), is now spelled out as the goddess’ particular role as the expert of ars lanifica “weaving skill.” In this sentence and the two lines preceding it, Ovid proposes the main prize that the two characters seek: the laus artis lanificae.
While Ovid describes Arachne’s and her prodigious weaving skills in the following lines (7 to the first half of 24), it is in lines 24-52 that Ovid sets the stage for the meeting and the argument between the mortal girl and the goddess. First he interjects with the description of Arachne’s character mid-line at line 23:

... scires a Pallade doctam.
quod tamen ipsa negat tantaque offensa magistra
“certet” ait “mecum! nihil est, quod victa recusem.”

... you would think that she was taught by Pallas Minerva. But still she denies that and is offended by such a teacher and said, “Let her vie with me! There is nothing which I, conquered, may refuse.”

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.23-25)

In three lines, Ovid switches from a second-person verb in line 23 to a third-person in line 24 and finally a first-person in line 25, all in quick succession. The hemistich in line 24 reinforces the swiftness of Arachne’s act of denial: *negat*. Anderson notes that the lack of an “epic” introduction of direct speech in line 25 indicates, just as *tum secum* in line 3, the swift tone of the speaker.\(^{31}\) The urgency of the tone dramatizes the *certamen* that is to come. The *laus artis lanificae* of the goddess and the maiden are at stake in the two direct speeches.

The contest between the two escalates when Minerva, disguised as an old woman, appears to Arachne to advise her:

**cede** deae veniamque tuis, temeraria, dictis
supplice voce roga: veniam dabit illa roganti.

**Yield** to the goddess, reckless girl, and for your speech
Ask for pardon with a suppliant voice: she will give pardon if you ask.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.32-33)

The same verb that occurred in line 6 (*non cedere*) is placed in the mouth of Minerva in line 32 (*cede*). Here, the resonance of the *laus artis lanificae* is repeated through the

\(^{31}\) Anderson 1972, 154.
usage of *cedo*. The goddess gives an ultimatum to the girl, but instead Arachne responds *eadem est sententia nobis* “my sentiment is the same” (6.41). In this line, *sententia* is used as replacement for both *dictis* in line 32 and also her challenge in line 25. Here, in place of the verb *cedo*, Ovid offers *sententia*, a term still that still refers to the cause of the *certamen*, the *laus artis lanificae*. By showing the inflexibility of the two characters, Ovid sets the stage for the *certamen*: Arachne and Minerva are competing for the *laus artis lanificae* because neither one is willing to yield (*cedo*) to the other.

1.4 *Argumentum: The Structured Tapestry*

After a detailed description of the mechanism of weaving (6.53-67.), Ovid finally begins his *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry:

> illic et lentum filis inmittitur aurum et *vetus* in tela deducitur *argumentum*.

There both the lasting gold is inserted on the threads and the *ancient story* is woven in the web.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.68-69)

Ovid chooses to refer to the pictorial depiction of Minerva’s tapestry as *vetus argumentum*. The word *argumentum* is partially ambiguous in reference to the following lines 70-102, because the word describes both the tapestry itself and the *ekphrasis* of the tapestry, such that *argumentum* comes to mean not only “the embroidered images of the tapestry,”32 and “the written story (*ekphrasis*) of the naming of Athens,”33 but also “the evidence of Minerva’s triumph over Neptune.”34 On the surface, the reader assumes that

32 The phrase *vetus argumentum* can be translated as “an ancient event portrayed in a tapestry.” This would be the most literal meaning of *argumentum* when this word refers to the passage in 70-102.
34 Cf. Ovid *Met.* 6.75-82.
the *argumentum* is the pictorial theme of the tapestry. But there is no actual tapestry, only words describing what the tapestry would look like; thus, the *argumentum* also refers to the *ekphrasis* of the tapestry and not just the tapestry itself. Finally, when we consider that the cognate of *argumentum* is the verb *arguo*, we realize that the most basic meaning of *argumentum* is “proof” or “evidence.” In light of this, *argumentum* also indicates the pictorial evidence of Minerva’s triumph over Neptune. The word *argumentum* showcases how Ovid intends to merge the three forms—theme, picture, writing—into his poetic production of the *ekphrasis* that appears as such. I include the entire scene at length here, and analyze each section in detail below.

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.
bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis
augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum
inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago;
stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente
aspera saxa facit, medioque e vulnere saxi
exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;
at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti; defenditur aegide pectus,
percussamque sua simulat de cuspide terram
edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae
mirarique deos; operis Victoria finis.

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.
bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis
augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum
inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago;
stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente
aspera saxa facit, medioque e vulnere saxi
exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;
at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti; defenditur aegide pectus,
percussamque sua simulat de cuspide terram
edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae
mirarique deos; operis Victoria finis.

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.
bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis
augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum
inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago;
stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente
aspera saxa facit, medioque e vulnere saxi
exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;
at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti; defenditur aegide pectus,
percussamque sua simulat de cuspide terram
edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae
mirarique deos; operis Victoria finis.

35 de Vaan 2008, 53.
ipsa sibi plaudat crepitante ciconia rostro. 
qui superest solus, Cinyran habet angulus orum, 
isque gradus templi, natarum membra suarum, 
amplectens saxoque iacens lacrimare videtur. 
circuit extreeras oleis pacalibus oras 
(is modus est) operisque sua facit arbare finem.

Pallas Minerva embroiders the rock of Mars on the Cecropian Citadel and the ancient quarrel concerning the naming of the land. Twelve gods, with Jupiter in the middle, sit on their lofty chairs With an august dignity; their own appearance characterizes Each of the gods; the appearance of Jupiter is regal; She fashions the god of the sea to stand and to strike Hard rocks with his long trident, and from the middle of the rock’s wound Sea water to have sprung forth, so that he claims the city by that pledge; But, she gives herself a shield, she gives herself a spear with a sharp point She gives a helmet for her head; her chest is protected by the Aegis, She makes it look like the ground struck with her own point Gives out a sprout with fruits of white olive And the gods are amazed; Victory is the end of Minerva’s work. So that her rival of praise may understand by examples, Since the girl hopes for a reward for such furious outrages, She adds four contests in the four parts [corners] Distinguished by their own appearance, decorated by little figures. One corner contains Thracian Rhodope and Haemus Who are now icy mountains, once mortal bodies, Who assigned the titles of the loftiest gods to themselves. Another part contains the wretched fate of the mother Of the Pygmy: Juno ordered her who was defeated in a contest To be a crane and to declare war against her own people. She also embroidered Antigone who once dared to compete With the great consort of Jupiter, whom royal Juno Turned into a bird, and neither is Ilion useful to her Nor her father Laomedon, but instead she flaps with her transformed wings As a white stork while her beak sounds shrilly to herself. What is left alone, this angle of the region contains Cinyras, And at the steps of the temple, once limbs of his daughters, This man appears to cry while embracing and lying down on the stony steps. 100 She surrounds the outermost borders with peaceful olive branches (This is the style) and with her own tree she fashions the end of her work

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.70-103)

The arrangement of this *ekphrasis* is so organized that these 33 lines can be divided into several sections, which coincide with how the actual tapestry would have appeared. By
combining the three different meanings of the *argumentum* in the production of this *ekphrasis*, Ovid allows the various *numina*, “divinities,” of Minerva to manifest themselves in the tapestry. I now demonstrate how these sections are organized and how the *ekphrasis* reflects the various *numina* of Minerva: weaving, strategy, and teaching.

Ovid constructs the arrangement of his *ekphrasis* to allow the reader to examine the tapestry through the perspective of a viewer within the poem. The *ekphrasis* begins with a geographic portrayal:

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.  
*bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis*
augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum
*inscribit* facies: Iovis est regalis imago;

Pallas Minerva embroiders the rock of Mars on the Cecropian Citadel and the ancient quarrel concerning the naming of the land. Twelve gods, with *Jupiter in the middle*, sit on their lofty chairs With an august dignity; their own appearance *characterizes* Each of the gods; the appearance of Jupiter is regal.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.70-74)

Much like line 1 of book 6, Ovid inserts Minerva into the *ekphrasis* itself and this insertion resonates with the manner in which Minerva is introduced into the tapestry. In line 70, Ovid utilizes words that would be familiar to an educated Roman reader: *Cecropia arx, Pallas, and scopulum Mavortis*. These familiar geographical points allow the reader to visualize not just the city of Athens, but, specifically, the location of the Athenian Acropolis. Here Ovid and Minerva invoke the reader’s geographical familiarity with areas in the *ekphrasis* much like how Pindar uses geographical locations in his victory odes. Nancy Felson (1999) explains the importance of deictic description in Pindar’s poems, where Pindar calls upon geographical boundaries in *Pythian* 4, so that his “audience would experience ‘as-if’ journeys away from and ultimately back to their
hometown, as they accompany traveling subjects on their journeys.” By employing a technique like Pindar’s fictive deixis, Ovid provides the two important landmarks, the Areopagus and the Acropolis, to facilitate the visualization of the tapestry for the reader. The detailed geographical description (6.70-71) followed sequentially by the appearance of the gods (6.72-73) offer three different perspective of Minerva’s tapestry. First, the tapestry shows that the gods within the tapestry are viewing the contest between Minerva and Neptune; hence, they are the internal viewers of the tapestry. Second, the sequential arrangement of the two descriptions, the geography followed by the gods, suggests the movement of the gaze of the viewers of the tapestry within the poem, whom I call the external viewer of the tapestry. Finally, the sequence of the ekphrasis allows the third viewer, the reader of the poem, to follow the gaze of the internal and external viewer at the same time. Just as the tapestry unravels before the eyes of the poetic viewer, so too does the ekphrasis unravel itself to the audience. The word pingit in line 71 not only signals a physical location (the Acropolis), but also describes the embroidered tapestry. In the same line (6.71), Ovid reveals the argumentum of Minerva’s tapestry: the naming of Athens (antiquam de terrae nomine litem). The enjambment of the verb in line 71 and the statement of the theme of Minerva’s weaving slows down the narrative process, much like the description of the physical geography of Athens itself, in order for the reader to experience the revelation of the tapestry the same way the external viewer of the tapestry would have. After pointing out the setting, Ovid draws the attention of the reader of the poem to the viewer within the tapestry. Lines 72-74 showcase the appearance of ten out of the twelve Olympians viewing the contest between Minerva and Neptune. The gods themselves, much like the external viewer of the tapestry and the reader of the poem, are

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seated during the contest between Minerva and Neptune. Ovid imitates the position of the
gods in his *ekphrasis*, placing the phrase *medio Iove* at the center of line 72, separating
the gods from their lofty seats.

Ovid next states that the depicted gods may be identified from the intricate details
of Minerva’s weaving. Again, Ovid creates dual meanings in his choice of words by the
manifestation of the verb *inscribo* (*inscribit*, 6.74), which generally means “to write”
rather than “to characterize.” The verb raises the expectation for the audience that
Minerva embroiders the names of each god into the tapestry, but instead, Ovid uses *facies*
(6.74) as the subject of *inscribo*, changing the literal meaning of the verb “to write” into
its metaphorical form “to characterize”: the features of each god’s appearance (*sua ... face*) serve as an identifying mark. Once again Ovid blurs the difference between a
pictorial depiction and a literary description, just as he does with the *argumentum* in line
68 and the relationship between the reader of the poem and the external viewer of
tapestry in lines 70-74. The sequence of narration from geographical location, to the
appearance of the gods, then to the intricate details of the gods’ appearance, indicates
Ovid’s clever use of perspective and gaze.37 Ovid simulates the actions of the external
viewer of the tapestry by taking advantage of the narrative sequence of the poem. The
initial appearance of the geographical location (specifically the *scopulum Mavortis*, a
Latin translation of Areopagus) before the description of the gods indicates that the seats
of the gods are located on the Areopagus. While in reality the actual elevation of the
Areopagus is lower than the Acropolis, where the competition between Minerva and
Neptune takes place, as Anderson explains this choice of elevation by noting, “Ovid is

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37 This is not the first time Ovid plays with the idea of perspective and gaze. He also uses it in the narrator’s
erotic observation of Corinna in the *Amores*. See Greene 1999.
somewhat casual about the topography of Athens.”\(^{38}\) This means that Minerva intentionally elevates the height of the Areopagus so that the gods would be able to view the *certamen* between Minerva and Neptune. Ovid transcribes this intentional elevation by setting the description of the Areopagus at the beginning of the *ekphrasis*. The position of *inscribit facies* (6.74) further supports the position of the gods, as it provides a narrative zoom from the geographical landscape into the countenance of the gods themselves. Lines 70-74, therefore, begin a narrative description starting from the top of the tapestry and moving down towards the Acropolis, which serves as the centerpiece of the tapestry and completes the background of the tapestry. The arrangement of these five lines implies that the gods (internal viewers) are gazing upon the *certamen* between Minerva and Neptune, just as the external viewer’s own gaze is drawn towards the *certamen* between Minerva and Arachne, and simultaneously the reader’s gaze towards Ovid’s description of the two contests.

Above the centerpiece, Ovid denotes the geographical location and the audience for the ancient contest. Much as he does in the other *certamina* in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid chooses to portray the loser in the centerpiece before he moves on to the imminent winner’s side of the story. The *certamen* of Minerva and Neptune recalls the contest between the Pierides and the Muses in book 5 and looks forward to another famous contest between Ajax and Ulysses in book 13. Sequentially the loser performs his speech or song first, which is followed by the winner’s version. Ovid makes use of this trope and modifies it to fit it into the *ekphrasis*. Since the two contestants are not able to compete in direct speech, Ovid takes advantage of the situation by reinterpreting the tapestry into “speech.” The *ekphrasis* proceeds first to the depiction of Neptune:

\(^{38}\) Anderson 1972, 161.
stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente
aspera saxa facit, medioque e vulnere saxi
exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;

She fashions the god of the sea to stand and to strike
Hard rocks with his long trident, and from the middle of the rock’s wound
Sea water to have sprung forth, so that he claims the city by that pledge.
(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.75-77)

Here Ovid does not name Neptune but, instead, uses the phrase deus pelagi to describe
him, while the words ferio, asper, and vulnus set a rather grim tone in the appearance of
Neptune. After that, Ovid shifts the attention of the reader to the description of the woven
Minerva:

at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti; defenditur aegide pectus,
percussamque sua simulat de cuspidem terram
edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae
mirarique deos; operis Victoria finis.

But, she gives herself a shield, she gives herself a spear with a sharp point
She gives a helmet for her head; her chest is protected by the Aegis,
She makes it look like the ground struck with her own point
Gives out a sprout with fruits of white olive
And the gods are amazed; Victory is the end of Minerva’s work.
(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.78-82)

The contrast between the depictions of the two gods is striking because the reader
immediately discovers that Ovid spends more lines describing Minerva than Neptune.
While Ovid relates the identification of Neptune with only two words, pelagus and
tridens, he marks out Minerva’s self-portrait with two full lines. The lengthier description
of Minerva compared to the shorter description of Neptune insinuates that more attention
is paid to the pictorial Minerva by both Minerva the weaver and the viewer of the
tapestry; the longer description of Minerva’s appearance suggests that a viewer of the
tapestry would spend more time admiring her woven representation. Moreover, while the
reader is invited to perceive Neptune as a grim figure, Ovid uses the words *edo, baca*, and *fetus* in Minerva’s depiction to contrast her image with Neptune’s somber appearance. The narrative arrangement of the two gods thus highlights the various meanings of *argumentum*. Though the *ekphrasis* functions as the descriptor for the theme of the centerpiece, Ovid adjusts the descriptive length of the two gods in order to allow the reader to experience what the external viewer of the tapestry would have seen.

Apart from simulating the external viewer’s gaze of the tapestry, Ovid also tries to show how the *certamen* of Minerva and Neptune resonates with the *certamen* of Minerva and Arachne. The *ekphrasis* illustrates that the poses of the two gods look almost similar, since the two divinities perform similar striking actions (*ferire* in line 75 for Neptune and *percussam* in line 80 for Minerva) with their shaft-like weaponry (the trident for Neptune and the spear for Minerva). This implies Minerva’s intention to highlight the parallelism between her contest against Neptune and her contest against Arachne. The similar action of the two gods in contest with one another reflects the similar actions of Arachne and Minerva as they both weave, described by Ovid in lines 53 to 60. The words *ambaet* in line 53, *utraque* in line 59, and the usage of third person plural verbs from lines 53 to 60 imply the similarities between Arachne’s and Minerva’s weaving techniques. The similarity of the striking poses of the woven Neptune and Minerva shows that Minerva the weaver is also aware of how Arachne’s weaving skill could be the same as hers. Neptune becomes both a past reflection of Arachne challenging Minerva, and a future image of her defeat.

The centerpiece finally ends with the depiction of Victoria to indicate the victory of both the contest against Neptune and the contest against Arachne. The image of
Victoria in the tapestry also reflects Minerva’s affiliation to the goddess of victory, just as the temple of Athena Nike is located at the very entrance to the Athenian Acropolis. The centerpiece begins with a famous Athenian location and nicely ends with another Athenian location. The appearance of Victoria strengthens the multiple meanings of argumentum, as it signifies part of the theme of the tapestry, the proof of Minerva’s victory, but also the written story, the ekphrasis, of the certamen.

In the next four lines, Ovid shifts the focus of his ekphrasis from that of the external viewer of the tapestry into Minerva’s mindset. The shift in the four lines slows down the narrative speed of the ekphrasis. Here, Ovid introduces the rationale behind the extra images that Minerva now imprints on the four corners of her tapestry:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ut tamen exemplis } & \text{intellegat aemula laudis,} \\
\text{quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis,} \\
\text{quattuor in partes certamina quattuor addit,} \\
\text{clara colore suo, brevibus distincta sigillis.}
\end{align*}
\]

So that her rival of praise may understand by examples,
Since the girl hopes for a reward for such furious outrages,
She adds four contests in the four parts [corners]
Distinguished by their own appearance, decorated by little figures.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.83-86)

The appearance of intellego (intellegat, 6.83) recalls line 23, specifically the word docta. The verb intellego suggests Minerva’s intention of making Arachne “learn” a different lesson because Arachne refuses to acknowledge that she “was taught” by the goddess in the art of weaving. The mention of intellego reinforces the idea that Minerva’s injured numina is not only the art of weaving, but also Arachne’s refusal of the goddess’ teaching. For that, Minerva “teaches” the girl in a more forceful manner. The word laus reappears in this line (laudis, 6.83), to remind the reader what the quarrel between the goddess and the maiden is about, laus artis lanificae. In one line, Ovid readdresses the
injured *numina* of the goddess, and, together with her warlike attire in lines 78 and 79, reminds the reader that the goddess’ specific *numina* as the patron of education, weaving, and warfare are embedded in the *ekphrasis*.

After this brief interlude, Ovid returns the reader to the perspective of the tapestry’s external viewer. Ovid divides up the four images almost equally in line numbers, beginning with the appearance of Haemus and Rhodope on one corner:

Threiciam Rhodopen habet angulus unus et Haemum nunc gelidi montes, mortalia corpora quondam, nomina summorum sibi qui tribuere deorum.

One corner contains Thracian Rhodope and Haemus
Who are now icy mountains, once mortal bodies,
Who **assigned** the titles of the loftiest gods **to themselves.**

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.87-89)

Then he moves on to the next corner, pointing out the story of the pygmies:

altera Pygmaeae fatum miserabile matris
pars habet: hanc Iuno victam certamine iussit esse gruem populisque suis indicere bellum.

Another part contains the wretched fate of the mother
Of the Pygmy: Juno ordered her who was defeated **in a contest**
To be a crane and to declare war against her own people.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.90-92)

The next corner contains the transformation of Antigone:

pinxit et Antigonen ausam **contendere** quondam cum magni consorte Iovis, quam regia Iuno in volucrem vertit, nec profuit Ilion illi
Laomedonve pater, sumptis quin candida pennis ipsa sibi plaudat crepitante ciconia rostro.

She also embroidered Antigone who once dared **to compete**
With the great consort of Jupiter, whom royal Juno
Turned into a bird, and neither is Ilion useful to her
Nor her father Laomedon, but instead she flaps with her transformed wings
As a white stork while her beak sounds shrilly to herself.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.93-97)
The final corner shows Cinyras on the temple steps:

qui superest solus, Cinyran habet angulus orbum,
isque gradus templi, natarum membra suarum,
amplectens saxoque iacens lacrimare videtur.

What is left alone, this angle of the region contains Cinyras,
And at the steps of the temple, once limbs of his daughters,
This man appears to cry while embracing and lying down on the stony steps.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.98-100)

Ovid allots three lines to each minor scene, with the exception of Antigone, who gets five. The near-symmetrical allocation once again reflects the well-balanced organization of the tapestry. There is no mention of what exact visuals the four images contain except that observation that these images are *clara* (6.86) At line 89, the reader finally realizes that punishment is the common theme of these minor images. The organization of these corners is well structured, since the first line of each scene contains the names of the figures; Haemus and Rhodope, the Pygmy queen, Antigone, and Cinyras. Ovid includes the reason for the appearance of these characters in each section. With the exception of the Cinyras scene, Ovid imbues the corner scenes with words or phrases that describe the act of competition, specifically against the gods. Lines 89, 91, and 93 contain the intention of Minerva, which Ovid states in lines 83-86. As I have shown above, the verb *intellego* (6.83) shows Minerva’s desire to teach Arachne for the girl’s hubristic contention. Ovid repeats the word *certamen* in line 91, which Arachne expresses in line 42. The verb *contendo* in line 93 becomes the verbal equivalent to *certo* in line 25, which, once again, is expressed by Arachne.\(^{39}\) The resonances that occur in these minor scenes

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\(^{39}\) Even in the Cinyras story the theme of competition may be implied, since—according to some versions of the story—Cinyras’ daughter Smyrna was punished with lustful urges for her father because *cuius mater Cenchreis superbius locuta quod filiae suae formam Veneri anteposuerat*, “her arrogant mother, Cenchreis, said that the beauty of her own daughter was preferable to that of Venus” (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 58.1).
with the larger contest at hand reveal Minerva’s mindfulness of the verbal challenge posed by Arachne. By expressing *contendo* in line 93 and *certamen* in line 91, Ovid reminds the reader of Arachne’s desire to compete against the goddess in lines 25 and 42. The minor scenes, therefore, are Minerva’s woven response to Arachne’s challenge to the goddess. In the *ekphrasis*, Ovid attempts to illustrate Minerva’s mindfulness to the reader by using the same or similar words as those found in Arachne’s statement prior to the *certamen*.

Finally, Ovid ends the *ekphrasis* appropriately with the description of the borders of the tapestry:

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circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras  
(is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem. 
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She surrounds the **outermost borders** with peaceful olive branches (This is the style) and with her own tree she fashions the **end** of her work.  

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.101-102)

The placement of the *extremas ... oras* marks the boundaries around the *oleis pacalibus*. Ovid replicates the positioning of the olive patterns within the extreme borders of the tapestry into his *ekphrasis* by arranging the word order to create a visual depiction through poetic arrangement for the reader. The word order of line 101 allows the reader to visualize how the tapestry would have been presented, much like the position of Jupiter in line 72. The last word of the *ekphrasis, finem*, refers both to the end of Minerva’s textile work and the end of Ovid’s verbal illustration and arrangement of the tapestry. The final word, much like the other earlier examples I have shown, recalls the various meanings of *argumentum*. Each of these examples highlights Ovid’s clever use of word order, word play, and repetition in order to aid the reader with the conception of Minerva’s tapestry.
1.5 *Is Modus Est*: Minerva’s Style, Minerva’s Poetics

The multiple meanings of *argumentum* active in the *ekphrasis*, therefore, call attention to the odd parenthetical sentence *is modus est* in line 102. I translate the sentence as “this is the style” in order to emphasize the varying meanings contained in *modus*. The issue with the translation of this sentence lies in the understanding of what *modus* refers to and what effects *modus* brings into the last line of this *ekphrasis*. The insertion of the parentheses by the editor of the text, William Anderson (1972), portrays the thought as a side-note to the sentence at lines 101-102. The varying meanings of *modus* correspond to the different interpretations of *argumentum* discussed in the previous section. *Modus* exemplifies the multiple layers in Ovid’s presentation of Minerva’s tapestry in written form. I now examine what *modus* refers to and how the different permutations of *modus* support Ovid’s intention to replicate the organization of Minerva’s tapestry in his *ekphrasis* of it.

The original sense of *modus* in its most basic form is “measurement” because the root of *modus* stems from the Proto-Italic *medo*, derived from the Proto-Indo European *med-o-*, both meaning “measure.”

The idea of measurement makes sense in the description of a tapestry, especially one woven by Minerva, goddess of meticulous craftsmanship. In relation to lines 101 and 102, the literal meaning of *modus* reflects Anderson’s sentiment that the *ekphrasis* is a well-balanced description of the tapestry, which invokes Minerva’s divinity as the goddess of order and stratagem. *Modus*, in its literal meaning, therefore describes the “way” any tapestry would be arranged; textile

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40 de Vaan 2008, 385.
production requires precise measurement and careful planning. The literal *modus* characterizes the general idea of textile production.

The placement of *is modus est* at the juncture of lines 101 and 102, however, does not only attest to the production of tapestries. *Modus* can also mean a “proper measure” or “permitted amount” in the idea of limitations of a measurement. Cicero, for example, uses *modus* to such effect: *etsi enim suus cuique modus est, tamen magis offendit nimium quam parum*, “Although each thing has its own proper measure, nevertheless, being excessive gives more offense than being insufficient” (Cicero, *Orator* 73). Cicero qualifies the figurative meaning of *modus* through the concessive use of the clause, *magis offendit nimium quam parum*. The allowed limitations which *modus* implies become more figurative to mean a permitted or allotted “limit” or “boundary” elsewhere in Latin literature. In *De rerum natura*, Lucretius describes the nature of infinity and the universe:

```latex
nunc ex tra summam quoniam nil esse fatendum, 
non habet extremum, caret ergo fine modoque.
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Since now we must admit that nothing exists beyond the universe, the universe has no **extreme edge**, therefore it lacks an **end** and **limit**. (Lucretius *De rerum natura* 1.963-964)

Lucretius positions the words *extremum, finis* and *modus* together within a single line to describe the boundless nature of the universe. The words *extremum* and *finis* qualify the figurative meaning of *modus*. Likewise, Ovid sets the same two words (*extremas* and *finem*) on either side of and close to *modus* in lines 101 and 102 as well. The sense of *modus*, therefore, reinforces the concept of limitation expressed by *extremum* and *finis*. In Lucretius’ case, he attempts to explain the boundlessness of the universe by describing the universe as lacking any “boundary.” Ovid, I argue, reuses the same explanatory style of Lucretius but he does so in order to indicate where the olive patterns would appear,
namely, at the allowed limit of the woven textile. Thus the “boundary” makes sense in relation to lines 101 and 102. In the Lucretian sense, Ovid calls attention to the end of the *ekphrasis* for the reader: “this is the end [of Minerva’s work].” Moreover, *modus* could also be an emphatic explanation of the meaning of *extrems ... oras* (6.101): “this [the olive] is the boundary.” Either way, the phrase *is modus est* operates as an indicator of what the last two lines of the *ekphrasis* contain. Once again, the “appropriate measure” of *modus* suggests another reason for the contest between Arachne and Minerva, since the Maeonian girl, much like the characters depicted in the four corners of Minerva’s tapestry, does not remain within the appropriate limitations of her humanity. By challenging Minerva, Arachne oversteps that *modus* and insults the goddess. Thus, *modus* partially denotes Minerva’s divinity, since the appropriate limitation of *modus* caters to Minerva’s divine affiliation towards self-control. *Is modus est* indirectly summarizes the well-structured positioning of both Minerva’s tapestry and Ovid’s description of the tapestry. The careful positioning of the characters and scenes by Minerva as well as Ovid’s constant attempts to emulate the tapestry in written form are condensed into one phrase in the last line of the *ekphrasis*.

In addition, *modus* subtly implies the narrative genre of the *ekphrasis*. It is no surprise that Ovid is self-conscious about the metrical significance of his work. In his *Amores*, Ovid begins the first poem of his first book with a rather odd *prooemium*:

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Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
Edere, materia conveniente *modis*.
Par erat inferior versus: risisse Cupido
Dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.
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I was preparing to relate about arms and violent wars
In a serious verse, since the theme is suitable for this *meter*.
The lower line used to be equal: but Cupid is said
To have laughed and to have stolen one foot.

(Ovid *Amores* 1.1.1-4)\(^{41}\)

Ovid playfully addresses his reason for writing poetry in elegiac couplets. It is not because he wants to write about love; in fact, he wants grander themes and echoes the famous line *arma virumque cano* from Vergil’s *Aeneid* 1.1. The parallel between the first line of the *Aeneid* and the first line of the *Amores* is so evident that the speaker of the two lines is even in the first person. The first line of the *Amores* echoes the first line of the *Aeneid* because the first line of an elegiac couplet is a hexameter. Yet, at the fourth line, the poem becomes self-conscious as to the metrical difference between elegy and epic: the pentameter line of elegy is “one foot” short of a full hexameter line. Ovid employs the difference between the two metrical lines to convey difference in thematic choices between epic and elegy. According to Ovid, the epic genre contains themes of arms and warfare, while the elegiac genre deals with erotic topics. Of particular interest to my study, in the *prooemium* of the *Amores* Ovid uses *modus* to refer to the metrical measurement of his poem; hence, *modus* comes to mean “meter.” As in English where “meter” refers to both a unit of measurement and the “style” of poetry, *modus* has the same effect in Ovid’s poem.

Later in book 2 of the *Amores*, Ovid reminds the reader again about his *prooemium*:

\begin{quote}
Carminis hoc ipsum genus inpar; sed tamen apte
   Jungitur herous [sc. *modus*] cum breviore *modo*.
\end{quote}

This very type of song itself is uneven; but still suitably
   The heroic [*meter*] is joined with the shorter *meter*.

(Ovid *Amores* 2.17.21-22)

\footnote{All quotations of the *Amores* and *Fasti* are from the edition by E. J. Kenney (1994). All translations are mine, unless noted otherwise.}
Ovid cleverly place *herous* in the front of line 22 before *breviore modo*. The line itself suggests that the “heroic” meter is the hexameter line preceding the “shorter” pentameter line of elegy. Much like the first line of the *Amores*, the mention of *herous* evidently substantiates how Ovid views the theme of epic: arms, warfare, and heroes. In *Amores* 2.17.22, we also see that Ovid employs *modus* as a stand-in for “meter” much as in *Amores* 1.1.2. *Brevior* modifies *modus* to mean the pentameter line, which is shorter than the hexameter. Ovid reuses this manner of indicating different metrical style like in his *Tristia*, when he addresses his elegiac works as *inparibus ... carmina ... modis*, “poems with uneven meter” (2.220). The adjective *inpar*, which modifies *modus*, hearkens back to the same *inpar* in *Amores* 2.17.21. Martial later refers to epic poetry with the words *aspera ... paribus bella tonare modis*, “to sing harsh wars with the equal meter” (*Epigrammata* 8.3.14). Martial combines the two descriptors, the theme of war and the type of meter, which Ovid categorizes as epic genre, into his poetic definition of epic. The *par*, which Ovid uses in *Amores* 2.1.2, now becomes the modifier of *modus*, much like *brevior* and *inpar*. Thus, *modus* almost metonymically comes to mean the metrical genre of poetic production.

The metrical representation of *modus* is clearly seen in the arrangement of the hexameter line of both *Amores* 1.1.1 and *Metamorphoses* 6.102. The two lines are not just written in hexameter; they both contain five dactylic feet in their respective lines. This arrangement of the two lines, therefore, contains the greatest number of dactyls allowable in a line of hexameter. Therefore, the two lines are synonymous with the expression of dactylic hexameter. Since Ovid uses *modus* in other works of his to denote “meter” in poetry, I argue that the *modus* in *Metamorphoses* 6.102 suggests the metrical
genre of the *ekphrasis* and not just the “border” or “appropriate manner” of the tapestry. The multiple meanings of the terse expression *is modus* resonate with Ovid’s insertion of the *argumentum* in *Metamorphoses* 6.69 prior to the beginning of his *ekphrasis*. The *modus* not only defines the borders of the woven tapestry, but it also figuratively shows Minerva’s intention of “teaching” Arachne about the dangers of transgressing human limits. Externally, *modus* functions in a similar literary fashion to *argumentum*. *Argumentum* describes the theme of this section of the *Metamorphoses*, namely an *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry. *Modus* instead addresses the metrical style of the *ekphrasis*, a hexameter line with the greatest number of dactylic feet allowed in a line. *Argumentum* is the manifestation of the content while *modus* is the poetic arrangement of the tapestry and text. These two words show that the *ekphrasis* is not just a story about Minerva’s slighted *numina*, they also denote the narrative techniques which Ovid implements in his writings. *Modus*, therefore attests that Minerva’s tapestry is symbolic of the traditional epic narrative style.

1.6 Minerva’s *Mētis*: The Other Slighted Numen

Anderson notes that the five dactyls of *Metamorphoses* 6.102 “give the picture a light ending.” Yet, at certain parts of the *ekphrasis*, I have indicated that the scenes contain descriptions of violence and agonistic phrasing that contrast with the very last line. The sharp contrast between the majority of the scenes depicted and the last line of the passage suggests that Minerva’s other *numen* is involved. The “light tone” of the final line belies the larger theme of the tapestry, which, as I have argued, is *certamen* and

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42 Anderson 1972, 165.
punishment. As such, I argue that the tapestry in its entirety contains Minerva’s divine attribute of mētis inserted both into the tapestry and also within Ovid’s ekphrasis of it. In this section, I illustrate how Ovid links the idea of weaving, writing, and mētis in his ekphrasis, as I demonstrate how the concept of mētis in the ekphrasis is important to the analysis of Minervan Poetics.

As I have mentioned above, the original meaning of the term modus stems from the idea of measurement. Likewise, the root form of the Greek noun mētis contains the same sense as modus, which is “measurement,” or some act of “measuring.” According to Robert Beekes, the Greek word mētis derives from the same Proto-Indo-European root as the Latin word mētior (< *meh₁-ti-).43 Michiel de Vaan agrees that both mētior and mētis come from the same root *meh₁-ti-, “to measure.”44 Hence, modus (from Indo-European root *med-o- “measure”)45 and mētis form a kind of figura etymologica: although stemming from two different roots, they both connote similar linguistic meanings. While Ovid’s argumentum contextualizes the narrative and pictorial theme of the tapestry, his modus distinguishes the arrangement of the tapestry and the text. Since modus and mētis are closely related, the use of modus in line 102 suggests that Minerva’s mētis is deeply embedded in the narrative arrangement of the ekphrasis and the tapestry. As the story of Arachne revolves around the numina of Minerva, and Minerva’s tapestry displays two more aspects of Minerva’s numina, “warfare” and “olives,” it should come as no surprise that both tapestry and text also contain her numen of mētis. How does Ovid illustrate the mētis in Minerva’s tapestry? The answer lies in the arrangement of the tapestry. Since I have shown that modus describes Minerva’s textile arrangement and Ovid’s ekphrasis of

43 Beekes 2010, 948-949.
the tapestry, and since *modus* has similar linguistic meaning as *mētis*, I argue that the manner in which Minerva organizes her subject matter alludes to the application of Minerva’s divinity of *mētis* into the tapestry.

*Mētis* is not the only appearance of Minerva’s divinity. As I have demonstrated earlier, by using the verb *intellego* in line 83, Minerva presents the four corners of the tapestry as an educational, albeit harsh, example to Arachne. The verb *intellego* refers not just to the conflict between the goddess and the mortal girl, but it also implies that the four corner scenes are representative of Minerva’s divinity of Wisdom. The reason for this implication rests on the relation between *intellego* and the appearance of the participle *docta* in line 23. Ovid associates the participle *docta* with Minerva in the *Fasti* where he wishes, *possim utinam doctae verba referre deae*, “If only I could relay the words of the skilled goddess” (*Fasti* 6.565). He also emphasizes the relationship between “learning” and “weaving” among young girls in the *Fasti*. In the *Quinquatria* festival, Ovid advises young girls *Pallade placata lanam mollire puellae / discant et plenas exonerare colos*, “Because Pallas was pleased, the girls may learn to card the wool and to spin off the full distaff” (*Fasti* 3.817-817). Since Arachne refuses to placate Minerva, however, the verb *intellego* at *Metamorphoses* 6.83 serves to indicate the alternative “learning” that Minerva forces upon Arachne. Along with *intellego* and *docta*, Minerva also weaves another divine attribute into the tapestry. She depicts herself as the goddess of warfare at its very centerpiece. Minerva fashions her pictorial self in lines 78 and 79 with a shield, spear, helm, and spear. As noted in the introduction above, the iconic representations of Minerva up to Ovid’s time included both the *Athena Parthenos* and the *Athena Polias* statues, which stood on the Acropolis. The appearance of Ovid’s battle-
ready Minerva would remind the audience of the extent of her more aggressive divine powers. Thus, this battle-ready Minerva is the visual expression of her warring *numen*, which she has woven into her tapestry.

There are two different ways Minerva weaves her various *numina* into the tapestry. The first is a conspicuous approach where the audience would recognize immediately that Minerva chooses to place her warlike *numen* into the centerpiece. The second is a more subtle approach, which requires Ovid to break the narrative description of the tapestry in order to explain the intention of the four corner scenes. I assert that her divine attribute of *mētis* is more subtle and similar to her *numen* of wisdom. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1978) explain that *mētis* “presents itself as what it is not and which conceals its true lethal nature beneath reassuring exterior.”

Mētis thus presents itself deceitfully as an unassuming object, much like how Minerva’s wisdom is only known through Ovid’s narrative interruption of the four corner scenes. The unassuming nature of *mētis* is likened to the construction of a trap. Detienne and Vernant elaborate, “*mētis* ... is woven, plaited, or fitted together, just as a net is woven, a weel is plaited, or a hunting trap is fitted together. ... [M]any pieces can be fitted together to produce a well-articulated whole.”

Ann Bergren (2008) further elucidates the role of *mētis*: “It [*mētis*] is both the strategy of deception, the plot itself, and the mental ability to devise one.”

Minerva’s “trap” is subtly shown within the tapestry itself, and Ovid attempts to synthesize this trap through the arrangement of his *ekphrasis*. Likewise, *mētis* is associated with traps and the act of weaving. As Minerva’s Greek counterpart, Athena, tells Odysseus, τοὶ σὸν μῆτιν ὑφήνω, “I weave a *mētis* with you” (Homer, *Odyssey*).

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46 Detienne and Vernant 1978, 27.
47 Detienne and Vernant 1978, 45-46.
48 Bergren 2008, 17.
The mētis is the “cunning plan” for Odysseus to re-obtain his throne and to punish the suitors who tried to usurp his kingdom and wife. The mētis is finally revealed when Homer likens the death of the suitors to the capture of fish δικτύῳ πολυωπῷ “with a fine-mesh net” (Homer, Odyssey 22.386). Thus, the mētis is never fully revealed in the text, but subtly implied through the arrangement and the progression of the story. Only at the end of the scene of the suitors’ slaughter does Homer finally reveal the mētis. Ovid’s ekphrasis, in similar fashion, hides elements of mētis through the literal and poetic arrangement of the tapestry.

Ovid first describes the centerpiece of the ekphrasis with a significant location in Athens, namely the Acropolis (cecropia arx), and the Areopagus (scopulum Mavortis), in line 70. This is followed by the appearance of the battle-ready Minerva in lines 78 and 79, which echoes the Athena Parthenos and the Athena Polias located on the Acropolis. In line 81, Ovid mentions the olive sprout, which again echoes another significant locus on the Acropolis, the spot where the sacred olive tree grows. Finally, right before the description of Minerva’s intention in weaving the four minor scenes, Ovid ends the tapestry with the appearance of Victoria in line 82. The appearance of Victoria represents the temple of Athena Nike, the symbol of the victory of the Athenians against the Persian forces of Xerxes, which is located right at the entrance to the Acropolis. Ovid simulates the movement of the external viewer’s gaze from the top of the tapestry, the Areopagus where the gods view the contest between Minerva and Neptune, to the lowest point of the Acropolis, the temple of Athena Nike. Though these Athenian loci are anachronistic because these structures should not exist during the mythological contest between Minerva and Neptune, Minerva surrounds the pictorial Neptune with them and Ovid
reinterprets the positioning of these landmarks in writing by arranging the placement of his narrative of the tapestry. The placement of these loci, therefore, forms a trap, which reminds Neptune both of his defeat and of the future site where all these important structures will be built in dedication to Minerva. Furthermore, the olive branches that surround the tapestry become another trap encircling the centerpiece, which marks Neptune’s defeat; and it also encircles the four corner scenes, which mark Arachne’s eventual defeat. This suggests that Neptune’s appearance in the centerpiece functions as a stand-in for Arachne whom the goddess recognizes as a rival, aemula, in line 83. The centerpiece, the four corners, and the olive branch border all function as traps surrounding Arachne, who is represented by Neptune. These traps demonstrate the mētis of Minerva. The tapestry reveals the future defeat of Arachne through Neptune and the consequences of Arachne’s defeat. Finally, the adjective pertaining to the olive border (pascalis “peaceful”) and the lightness of the full dactylic line of 102 serve to mask the frightening depiction of Minerva’s symbols and the punishment scenes at the four corners. This method of subtle revelation of Arachne’s fate echoes Homer’s slow revelation of Athena’s mētis in the Odyssey. Furthermore, given the existence of Minerva’s mētis in the ekphrasis, as I have argued, it is evident that the modus “appropriate style/manner” indicates Minerva’s numen of mētis. The idea of Minervan poetics, therefore, contains the element of mētis hidden through the literary arrangement of the text in the Metamorphoses. The existence of mētis links the Ovidian Minerva of this story with Vergil’s portrayal of Minerva in the Aeneid, especially in book 2.

1.7 Donum Minervae: Vergilian Epic in Minerva’s Tapestry
Unlike the covert actions of Minerva in the Arachne story, the cunning actions of Minerva in the Aeneid are more openly described by Vergil, particularly in book 2. Yet the ekphrasis of Minerva’s tapestry in the Metamorphoses contains multiple references to the traditional narrative style of the Vergilian epic. I now show where these elements occur and how they affect the narrative structure of the ekphrasis in order to represent, in Anderson’s formulation, the “examples of Augustan classicistic art.”

I compare my examination of mētis, modus, argumentum, and intellego with the Vergilian style of the Aeneid, as I endeavor to prove that the ekphrasis is ultimately an emulation of the Vergilian narrative of the Aeneid.

As argued above, the mētis in the Aeneid is more blatantly exposed than the mētis in the Metamorphoses. This does not necessarily mean that Ovid deviates from the Vergilian style. On the contrary, the hidden mētis in the ekphrasis reflects the Greek idea behind the conception and production of mētis. Vergil, much like Ovid, underscores the relationship between mētis and Minerva through the act of weaving. For example, Vergil attributes the design and idea of the Trojan Horse to Minerva:

instar montis equum divina Palladis arte
aedificant sectaque intexunt abiete costas

A horse as huge as a mountain by the divine craft of Pallas
They build and they interweave its ribs with cut pine.
(Vergil Aeneid 2.15-16)

Vergil imagines the construction of the horse as a woven product as indicated by the verb intexo “interweave, weave in” (intexunt, 2.16), which points to Minerva’s divine craft (divina arte, 2.15). The production of the Trojan Horse is, therefore, a woven deceit of Minerva, much like her tapestry in Ovid’s ekphrasis which is described with the line,

49 Anderson 1972, 160.
vetus in tela *deducitur argumentum*, “the ancient theme is woven into the web” (Ovid, *Met.* 6.69). To ensure that the deceit of Minerva is tied to the Trojan Horse, Vergil refers to the horse as “the gift of Minerva” at various points in the text, such as *pars stupet innuptae donum exitiale Minervae*, “Some are amazed at the fatal gift of unwed Minerva” (*Aeneid* 2.31), and *si vestra manus violasset dona Minervae* “if your hand damaged the gifts of Minerva” (*Aeneid* 2.189). Each use of *donum* refers back to the “gift” of the Trojan Horse. The inclusion of *exitiale* emphasizes the characteristic deceptiveness of the gift. Starvos Frangoulidis (1992) notices that the usage of *donum* and *dolus* is interchangeable throughout book 2 of the *Aeneid* and claims that “the word *dolus* applies almost exclusively to the stratagem of the Horse.”50 Thus, the “woven” horse is linked to the deception and stratagem of the goddess, which reflects Minerva’s divine affiliation with *mētis*. Although the deception of the Trojan Horse is revealed by Aeneas during his retelling of the fall of Troy, the temporal appearance of the Horse happens in the past, after the deceit is revealed to Aeneas. In Ovid’s text, however, the observation of Minerva’s tapestry occurs in the present time, which means the deceit is not fully revealed, but rather is implied throughout the narrative structure of the tapestry.

In addition to the resonance between the Trojan horse in the *Aeneid* and the tapestry in the *Metamorphoses*, there are other Vergilian literary resemblances that occur in the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry. The most obvious form appears in lines 6.78-79 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*:

```
at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti...
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**But,** she gives herself a shield, she gives herself a spear with a sharp point
She gives a helmet for her head...

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50 Frangoulidis 1992, 30.
Ovid uses the word *at* to indicate that the external viewer of the tapestry has turned his attention from the woven Neptune to the woven Minerva. The use of *at* often signifies directional change or a contrast between two opposing forces. For example, when Vergil describes the gifts of Troy which Aeneas places in the ships (*Aeneid* 1.643-656), he uses *at* in line 1.657 to denote a directional and geographical change from the mortal realm of Carthage to the divine realm of Olympus. In *Aeneid* 8.714, Vergil uses *at* in his *ekphrasis* of Aeneas’ shield to show that the pictorial Augustus is located in opposition to the pictorial Cleopatra and the historical opposition between the real Augustus and Cleopatra.

The tricolon formulation of *dat* (*Ovid Met. 6.78-79*) also echoes the Vergilian epic style of narrative composition. A more famous example comes from book 4 of the *Aeneid*:

```
   nec te noster amor nec te data dextera quondam
   nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido?
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Does *neither* my love *nor* my pledge at one time

*nor* Dido intending to die with cruel funeral holds you?

(*Vergil Aeneid* 4.307-308)

The arrangement of *nec* bears a resemblance to *dat* as the two monosyllabic words are not only repeated three times, but they also begin each colon within their respective tricolon. Both words also begin the next line of the tricolon. The Vergilian style is apparent in Ovid’s line, as Ovid chooses to represent the literary description of the pictorial Minerva as an epic figure, specifically a Vergilian epic figure.

Other appearances of the Vergilian epic style in Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry can be examined with the work of Anthony Boyle (1993). Boyle “attempts to
clarify some features of the *Aeneid* and his observations can be used to study the Vergilian elements in Ovid’s narrative of Minerva’s tapestry. Boyle breaks down the *Aeneid* into various ways of interpreting the text: one interpretation is the manner in which the *Aeneid* functions as a didactic text, as he notes: “there was nothing like this [moralizing text] in Roman epic before Virgil.” The didactic function of the *Aeneid* is conveyed within Ovid’s *ekphrasis*, since the appearance of *intellego* (*ut ... intellegat*, 6.83), which qualifies the reason for the four corner scenes, implies Minerva’s intention to “teach” Arachne the consequences of the mortal girl’s arrogance towards the goddess. Boyle also suggests that the *Aeneid* possesses a “classicized epic narrative style” which contains “specific, arresting details selected for immediacy and potency of impact, encapsulated in tough, aggressive, concrete, highly imagistic language with a dense concentration of epithets and verbs.” Indeed the epic style that Boyle describes can be found in the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. For example, Ovid describes the appearance of Jupiter as *augusta gravitate* “with an august dignity” (6.73). The spondaic *augusta* together with the “heavy” meaning of *gravitas* reflect the potency and vividness of the pictorial Jupiter in text form. The tricolon repetition of *dat* in *Metamorphoses* 6, lines 78-79, reflects the Vergilian style of dense concentration of verbs. The aggressive language can also be seen through the various words in the depiction of Neptune like *aspera* and *vulnere* in *Metamorphoses* 6.76.

Boyle also describes the *Aeneid* as a well-formulated text:

The neoteries appreciated the importance of poetic structure ... [b]ut Virgil went beyond his predecessors in the number and intricacy of the inter-related narrative

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51 Boyle 1993, 80.  
52 Boyle 1993, 86.  
53 Boyle 1993, 86.  
54 Boyle 1993, 87.
structures he imposed on both the poem and its part, creating in his verbal artifact the kinds of detailed correspondences, contrasts and relationships associated contemporarily with the visual arts, especially architecture and monumental sculpture.\textsuperscript{55}

Boyle’s interpretation of the \textit{Aeneid} here bears resemblance to Anderson’s interpretation of the \textit{ekphrasis} of Minerva’s tapestry. The arrangement of Minerva’s tapestry and its \textit{ekphrasis} is specified in terms of its \textit{modus}, which, as I have shown above, supports the poetic similarities between the \textit{ekphrasis} and the \textit{Aeneid}. Boyle also considers the \textit{Aeneid} as a self-reflexive text, in that Vergil uses the \textit{ekphrases} of the \textit{Aeneid} as a way for the poem to reflect upon itself.\textsuperscript{56} For example, the fresco of the Trojan War appears on the walls of Dido’s city at \textit{Aeneid} 1.453-493. The fresco itself reflects the tragic events of Troy which Aeneas has experienced and retells in books 2 and 3 of the \textit{Aeneid}. Likewise, the arrangement of Minerva’s tapestry is a self-reflection of her experience. Just like Aeneas, the pictorial Minerva shows Minerva’s triumph over Neptune and it reflects Minerva’s intention of defeating the Maeonian girl. Since the fresco in \textit{Aeneid} 1 also reflects the narrative presentation of \textit{Aeneid} books 2 and 3, it is arguable that the \textit{ekphrases} of Minerva’s tapestry and Arachne’s tapestry reflect the narrative presentation of the \textit{Metamorphoses}, at least at certain parts of Ovid’s epic. The appearance of Minerva’s tapestry as a trap, the didactic function of the four corner scenes, the poetic arrangement of its \textit{ekphrasis}, and Ovid’s word choice in the \textit{ekphrasis} all exhibit a manifestation of Vergilian poetics in the \textit{ekphrasis}. This suggests that the idea of Minervan poetics of the \textit{ekphrasis} incorporates elements from the \textit{Aeneid}. Therefore, I argue that any part of the \textit{Metamorphoses} echoing the Vergilian style of epic narrative

\textsuperscript{55} Boyle 1993, 90.
\textsuperscript{56} Boyle 1993, 99. For more on the \textit{ekphrases} in Vergil’s \textit{Aeneid}, see Putnam 1998.
resonates with the Minervan poetics that Ovid presents in the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry.

### 1.8 Minervan Poetics: A Summary

I have discussed above what the poetic structure of Minerva’s tapestry represents. Minervan poetics ultimately rests on three main styles: the appearance and application of *mētis*, the didactic nature of the tapestry and the *ekphrasis*, and the Vergilian narrative techniques of the *ekphrasis*. Minervan poetics, as I define it, is the narrative style that reflects Minerva’s various *numina*. The contest itself occurs because Arachne injured Minerva’s *numen* of weaving. The appearance of the *numina* of wisdom, *mētis*, and of the symbols of warfare are intertwined within the tapestry and its *ekphrasis*. The *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry functions as the form of the *Metamorphoses* unmixed with the poetics of Arachne’s tapestry. Minervan poetics can only be fully appreciated when it is set together with its antithetical poetics, the “Bacchic poetics” displayed in Arachne’s tapestry, which I will examine at length in the following chapter. The two *ekphrases* serve as a condensed poetic technique that Ovid implements in various parts of the *Metamorphoses*. In the next chapter, I continue with the analysis of Arachne’s tapestry, focusing how its poetics are antithetical to Minervan poetics. The results of my analysis, in tandem with the analysis presented in this chapter, illuminate how the *ekphrases* of the two tapestries function as poetic markers of Ovid’s development of his *Metamorphoses*. 
Chapter 2: Bacchic Poetics: The Divine Response in Arachne’s Tapestry

2.1 Arachne’s Tapestry: A Different Examination

In continuation from the previous chapter on the investigation of Minervan poetics, this chapter analyzes the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s textile in order to construe the antithetical poetics of Minerva’s tapestry. Just as in the first chapter, I perform a close reading of the *ekphrasis* and examine, in detail, how Arachne’s tapestry contrasts with Minerva’s tapestry in written form. I examine how Ovid arranges the scenes of the tapestry, and I present how the arrangement contradicts the narrative arrangement of Minerva’s tapestry. I then explore how Ovid uses Hellenistic poetics to contradict the more rigid and inflated form of the Vergilian epic narrative. First, I argue that the poetic length and refinement of Arachne’s tapestry, in comparison to Minerva’s tapestry, adheres to the programmatic message of Callimachus’ *Aetia* and *Hymn to Apollo*. The Hellenistic poetics presents itself from Ovid’s written theme of Arachne’s tapestry, which I will argue is represented by the use of the participle *elusa* “deceived” (6.103). The amorous actions of the male gods described in Arachne’s tapestry recall Hellenistic representations of Cupid, and Ovid alludes to this Hellenistic representation of Cupid through the function of “a deceived woman” (*elusa*) as the main theme of Arachne’s tapestry. The Hellenistic poetics also exposes itself through other allusive methods, which Ovid uses to its full extant. After demonstrating how Arachne’s tapestry embodies the generic composition of Hellenistic poetics, I elucidate that this Hellenistic poetics complies with the divine representation of Bacchus, as far as Arachne’s tapestry is concerned. The representation of the Bacchic poetics displays itself in two ways:
Bacchus’s relationship with Apollo through Apollo’s presence in Hellenistic poetry, and
Bacchus’s relationship with Minerva through the contradicting nature of their divine
elements.

2.2 Intertextual and Intra
textual Weavings of Arachne’s Tapestry

Ovid shifts to his *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry immediately after he concludes
Minerva’s tapestry. Unlike Minerva’s tapestry, which includes two introductory lines on
the thematic arrangement of her centerpiece (6.68-69), Arachne’s tapestry does not
contain a brief introduction on the subject matter of her centerpiece. Since Arachne’s
tapestry lacks an introductory line, the reader immediately discovers that the *ekphrasis* of
Arachne’s tapestry is shorter than the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s work. This brevity is further
emphasized by the number of lines, which Ovid dedicates to the description of Arachne’s
tapestry:

Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri
Europam: verum taurum, freta vera putares.
Ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas
et comites clamare suas tactumque vereri
adsilientis aquae timidasque reducere plantas.
Fecit et Asterien aquila luctante teneri,
fecit ororinis Ledam recubare sub alis;
addidit, ut satyri celatus imagine pulchram
Iuppiter implet gemino Nycteida fetu,
Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, Tirynthia, cepit,
aureus ut Danaen, Asopida luserit ignis,
Mnemosynen pastor, varius Deoida serpens.
Te quoque mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuvenco
virgine in Aeolia posuit, tu visus Enipeus
gignis Aloidas, aries Bisaltida fallis;
et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater
sensit equum, sensit volucrem crinita colubris
mater equi volucris, sensit delphina Melantho:
Omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum
reddidit. Est illic agrestis imagine Phoebus,
utque modo accipitris pennas, modo terga leonis
gesserit, ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen,
Liber ut Erigonens falsa deceperit uva,
ut Saturnus equo geminum Chirona crearit.
Ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo,
nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos.

The Maeonian girl marks out the girl deceived by the image of a bull
Europa: you would believe the bull true, the sea true.
The girl herself seemed to look back to her abandoned lands
And to cry out to her companions and to fear the touch
Of the rushing water and to shrink back her timid feet.
She also made Asteriē to be grasped after she struggles with the eagle,
She made Leda to recline under the wings of a swan;
She inserted, how disguised in the form of satyr
Jupiter filled the beautiful Antiope with twin offspring,
How he was Amphithryon, when he seized you, Alcmene,
How he deceived Danae as gold, deceived Aegina as fire,
Mnemosyne as a shepherd, Proserpina as a colored snake.
You too, Neptune, she fashioned you changed into a savage bull
upon the Aeolian girl, you having seemed like Enipeus
You beget the Aloïdae, you deceive Theophane as a ram;
And the golden haired very fruitful mother of the crops
Perceived you as a horse, she, the snake-haired girl, perceived you as a bird,
Mother of the winged horse, Melantho also perceived you as a dolphin:
To each of them both their own likeness and the picture of their settings
She bestowed. There is Phoebus in the likeness of a farmer,
And how now the feathers
of a hawk, now the skin of a lion
He wore, how as a shepherd he tricked Isse, the daughter of Macareus,
How Liber deceived Erigone with a false grape,
How Saturn begat the twin-natured Chiron with a horse.
The farthest part of her web surrounded by
a fine border
Contains flowers interwoven with ivies bound together.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.103-128)

Ovid dedicates only twenty-six lines to the description of Arachne’s tapestry, in
collection to thirty-three lines for Minerva’s. Though shorter, the tapestry shows the
brevity and refinement of Hellenistic poetics that the neoteric poets adheres to and
admires. As Denis Feeney (1991) notes, “Arachne’s work is, by contrast, a neoteric
masterpiece, asymmetrical and willful.”

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Minerva’s tapestry arrangement with Ovid’s written arrangement, the neoteric masterpiece of Ovid’s *ekphrasis* should also be found in the actual arrangement of Arachne’s tapestry. This shows that, unlike Minerva’s tapestry, Arachne chooses a different aesthetic approach to her presentation of the theme of her pictorial work.

Without any introductory lines, Ovid immediately jumps into what Arachne’s tapestry looks like. Unlike the description of Minerva’s tapestry, this *ekphrasis* begins with the portrayal of Europa and Jupiter as a bull:

Maenonis *elusam* designat imagine tauri
Europam: verum taurum, *fretam* vera putares.
Ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas et comites clamare suas tactumque vereri
adsilientis *aqua* timidasque reducere plantas.

The Maenonian girl marks out the girl **deceived** by the image of a bull, **Europa**: you would believe the bull real, the sea real.
The girl herself seemed to look back to her abandoned **lands**
And to cry out to her companions and to fear the touch
Of the rushing **water** and to shrink back her timid feet.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.103-107)

Immediately, the reader will recognize this scene from the story of Europa in book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*, if the reader has read the poem sequentially. The most noticeable thing in the very beginning of this *ekphrasis* is the absence of the geographical landscapes that Ovid masterfully depicts in his account of Minerva’s tapestry. Ovid only reveals general descriptions of the landscape, such as *fretam* in line 104, *terra* in line 105, and *aqua* in line 107, and without any specificity. In comparison to the specific description of the Athenian Acropolis in lines 6.70-71, the reader (or the viewer of the tapestry) would notice the lack of a definite location in this *ekphrasis*. Instead, the reader would have to rely on his or her own familiarity with either the mythos of Europa or their familiarity with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. It is in book 2 of the *Metamorphoses* that Ovid
mentions the location of Europa’s abduction. In book 2, Jupiter orders Mercury to go to a location to aid him in the seduction of Europa, in which Jupiter says *indigenae Sidonida nomine dicunt*, “the natives call it the Sidonian [land] in name” (Ovid *Met.* 2.840). The reader of the *ekphrasis* in book two will be able to figure out the location of *terra* in 6.105 after he reads the mention of Europa in 6.104 and after he puts the two poetic scenes from book 2 and 6 together. Ironically, Ovid refuses to name Europa in book 2 but instead he refers her through her patronymic (*Agenore nata*, “daughter of Agenor,” 2.858). Europa’s name, emphasized by its enjambed position at 6.104, feels as though Ovid withholds and hides her name from the end of book 2 until at the very moment in 6.104. In short, the allusive description of the tapestry’s setting immediately shows a sharp contrast from Minerva’s vivid depiction of her own tapestry’s background.

William Anderson (1972) suggests that instead of the introductory line, Ovid inserts the theme of Arachne’s tapestry in one word at the first line of his *ekphrasis*. Anderson claims, “*elusam*: the first detail about the scene sets the tone [of the *ekphrasis*]...” The use of *elusa* in line 103 becomes a compact version of the *vetus argumentum* of Minerva’s tapestry in line 69. The gender of this participle (feminine) also implies not just the deceived Europa in this section of the *ekphrasis*, but also other women who were fooled by male gods in the remaining part of the tapestry. Thus, the subsequent list of women in Arachne’s tapestry reverberates to the *elusa* in the first line (6.103) of the *ekphrasis*:

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58 Ovid later introduces Cadmus’s character through his search of Europa under the commands of Agenor in book 3. Unable to find his sister, the hero later establishes the city of Thebes, which acts as a symbol of his inability to return home. Europa becomes “lost” in the poem until her name is finally mentioned for the first time in book 6.

59 Anderson 1972, 165.

60 As I argued in chapter 1 above.
Fecit et asterien aquila luctante teneri, 
fecit olorinis ledam recubare sub alis; 
addidit, ut satyri celatus imagine pulchram 
Iuppiter implerit gemino nycteida fetu, 
Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, tirynthia, cepit, 
aureus ut danaen, asopida luserit ignis, 
mnemosynen pastor, varius deoida serpens.

She also made asterië to be grasped after she struggles with the eagle, 
She made leda to recline under the wings of a swan; 
She inserted, how disguised in the form of satyr 
Jupiter filled the beautiful antiope with twin offspring, 
How he was Amphitryon, when he seized you, alcmene, 
How he deceived danae as gold, deceived aegina as fire, 
mnemosyne as a shepherd, proserpina as a colored snake.  

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.108-114)

Following the description of Europa and the oxen Jupiter, Ovid rapidly moves on to a list of women who were also deceived by Jupiter. Anderson remarks, “Ovid summarizes [the list] in neat single lines or half-lines (with one two-line variation).” Ovid plays with the expectation of the reader, since the slow and epic description of Minerva’s tapestry would beguile the reader’s supposition on how Arachne’s ekphrasis is framed. The reader would expect that Europa’s amatory pursuit is the centerpiece of Arachne’s tapestry. Instead, the reader is presented with a catalogue of Jupiter’s amatory victims. Though Ovid dedicates five lines to Arachne’s portrayal of Europa, he spends the following seven lines in describing Jupiter’s deception of eight different women. The deception of expectation in this ekphrasis is further elaborated by the repetition of facio in lines 109 and 110 and the switch from repetition of facio into addo. Ovid uses the verb addo and then he shifts completely into indirect questions for the remaining five lines. After that, he dedicates two lines in the description of Antiope’s deception before spending a line on Alcmene.

61 Anderson 1972, 165.
Next, he commits half-lines to the remaining four women. The arrangement of each line is a sharp, almost complete opposition of the poetic arrangement of Minerva’s tapestry.

Note that Jupiter’s name is withheld until line 111 even though he appears at the very beginning of the *ekphrasis*. Ovid toys with the anticipation of the reader at every portion of the *ekphrasis* by making use of the reader’s understanding of the poetic production of Minerva’s tapestry and the previous tales of the *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, Anderson’s comment on “variation” is well exhibited in this section. Unlike Minerva’s tapestry, where the characters of her own tapestry and the *ekphrasis* are arranged in a specific manner, Ovid’s inconsistent arrangement of Arachne’s characters suggests that the appearance of these characters in Arachne’s tapestry are less organized than Minerva’s textile figures. The eight female characters and the eight guises of Jupiter (sixteen characters total) are condensed within a few short lines. Though the appearances of these sixteen characters are showcased in quick succession, they are part of Arachne’s centerpiece and they do not appear as a narrative and textile background of the centerpiece, unlike the appearance of the Olympians in Minerva’s tapestry (6.72), where they are positioned as background to the main scene, the contest between Minerva and Neptune.⁶² Each of the female characters in this section alludes to the story of their rape, marked by the various guises of Jupiter. Therefore, Ovid alludes to Arachne’s intention to squeeze multiple narratives into a single tableau as her central narrative in contrast to Minerva’s single narrative as the main focus of her tapestry. The portrayal of Arachne’s narrative structure ensures the reader that the contest is not just a contest of who is a better weaver, but who can tell a better story to captivate the audience. Just as the these deceived women are models of *elusa* in line 103, the inferences of their own personal

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stories through their appearances and Jupiter’s various guises exhibits Ovid’s (and Arachne’s) propensity for the Callimachean style of elucidating a story, or stories for Arachne’s tapestry.

Ovid’s depictions of the women and the various guises of Jupiter in Arachne’s tapestry only consist of the names of the women and the forms that Jupiter assumes. The list of amorously deceived women by Jupiter suggests a series of independent narratives. The images allude to the absent narratives which not only rely on the reader’s knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology, but also the reader’s knowledge of the stories Ovid chooses to tell in the *Metamorphoses*. Like the story of Europa, the appearances of Alcmene and Danae are also located elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*. Danae is mentioned several times in the story of Perseus in books 4 and 5. Alcmene appears in book 9 after the death of Hercules to recount the tale of his birth, where she mentions the father of the hero to be Jupiter. The appearances of Alcmene and Danae, much like Europa, bind the *Metamorphoses* together not just through their depiction by other authors (intertextual narrative), but also through their depiction by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (intratextual narrative). But at the same time, Ovid blurs the two structures in order to challenge the reader’s expectations. Proserpina’s appearance in the *Metamorphoses* is not only limited to this section. The reader would recognize her name from her story told by the Muses in book 5. Yet, the rape of the Proserpina by her own father, Jupiter, is not told beyond the brief inference in this section of the *ekphrasis*. This means that Ovid challenges the reader’s intratextual knowledge of the *Metamorphoses* and the intertextual knowledge of the mythos of Proserpina.

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2.3 Organization and Misdirection of Arachne’s Tapestry.

Not content with just the various sexual deceptions of Jupiter, Arachne now portrays various amorous deceptions performed by other male gods of the Olympian pantheon. While there is no cohesive organization of the pictorial representation, Ovid frames his poetic composition of the tapestry in a sequence based on Ovid’s impression of the hierarchical rank of the male gods: Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus, and finally Saturn. Arachne then moves on to the description of Neptune’s amatory deceptions. The reader anticipates minor scenes, like the ones Minerva weaves in the corners of her tapestry (Ovid *Met*. 6.85-100), but instead, Ovid presents these following lines as continuing sequentially from the depictions of Jupiter’s various guises by means of the adverb *quoque*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Te } & \text{ quoque } \text{ mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuvenco} \\
& \text{ virgine in Aeolia posuit, tu visus Enipeus} \\
& \text{ gignis Aloidas, aries Bisaltida fallis;} \\
& \text{ et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater} \\
& \text{ sensit equum, sensit volucrem crinita colubris} \\
& \text{ mater equi volucris, sensit delphina Melantho:}
\end{align*}
\]

You too, Neptune, she fashioned you changed into a savage bull upon the **Aeolian girl**, you having seemed like Enipeus You beget the **Aloidae**, you deceive **Theophane** as a ram; And the golden haired very fruitful **mother** of the crops Perceived you as a horse, she, **the snake-haired girl**, perceived you as a bird, **Mother** of the winged horse, **Melantho** also perceived you as a dolphin: (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.115-120).

The continuity of this line through *quoque* immediately shows how Arachne dissociates her work from Minerva’s. Though Neptune appears in both tapestries, Minerva presents Neptune as a defeated opponent who is unable to control his representation in the *vetus argumentum*. Arachne, however, chooses to pose Neptune almost as a natural
continuation of the series of elusae “deceived women” that are occurring immediately right after the catalogue of Jupiter’s “deceived women.” The relationship between the two male gods (and subsequently with the other male gods in the ekphrasis) is more co-operative than competitive, regardless of how negative the portrayals of their divinities are.

Anderson notes that the six women are arranged in two triads, the first three linked by the second person pronoun at 6.115, while the remaining three are connected by the verb sensit. In this section of the ekphrasis, Ovid almost immediately invokes Neptune’s name in the beginning of the list of women he deceived, in contrast with Jupiter’s name which was withheld in line 6.111. In order to create a parallel between Jupiter and Neptune, Ovid introduces Neptune as a young bull (iuvencus) at 6.115, like Jupiter appeared at 6.103 (taurus). The parallel, however, ends there. Whereas Ovid extensively narrates the portrayal of Europa’s appearance in detail, he only dedicates two lines for Neptune’s first deception in Arachne’s tapestry. The quick sequence of the list of deceived women in this section showcases the hastening of the narrative as the ekphrasis progresses in the poem. Unlike the beginning of the Jupiter section, where Europa first appears in the ekphrasis, here Ovid concludes the Neptune scene with the portrayal of Medusa. Medusa’s appearance is a reference to her story earlier on at the end of book 4 of the Metamorphoses. The story of Medusa at the end of book 4 resembles the manner in which the story of Europa concludes book 2. Thus, the two sections are not only linked by the familial hierarchy of Jupiter and Neptune mythologically, but also they are linked by the narrative ring composition through the position of their story elsewhere in the Metamorphoses. Unlike the narrative construction of Minerva’s tapestry, where

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66 Anderson 1972, 166.
Ovid elucidates every single geographical and mythological detail in the tapestry, the appearances of these characters in Neptune’s scene, like the ones in Jupiter’s scene, are described to accentuate the difference between the two tapestries.

In the next line and a foot, Ovid briefly returns back to the thought process of the Maeonian girl:

\[
\text{Omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum reddidit.}
\]

To each of them both their own likeness and the picture of their settings
She bestowed.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.121-2)

This line echoes the manner in which Ovid recounts the thought process of Minerva as well:

\[
\text{ut tamen exemplis intellegat aemula laudis,}
\text{quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis,}
\text{quattuor in partes certamina quattuor addit,}
\text{clara colore suo, brevibus distincta sigillis.}
\]

So that her rival of praise may understand by examples, Since the girl hopes for a reward for such furious outrages, She adds four contests in the four parts [corners] Distinguished by their own appearance, decorated by little figures.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.83-86)

In the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid shortens Arachne’s intermission into a single line, in comparison to Minerva’s interjection. The condensation of the interjection section adheres to the general idea of the rest of the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s work. Though shorter in length, line 121 confers much importance, especially when compared with the four-lined interlude of Minerva’s tapestry.

First, the use of the word *locus* in the line is a contradictory statement posed by Ovid. Unlike the description of Minerva’s tapestry, Ovid’s written narrative of Arachne’s
work does not contain a specific location or locations of the various scenes which he
describes. The paradoxical and playful use of locus in this line suggests the allusive
nature of the ekphrasis and, internally, the actual tapestry itself. Second, the use of sua
facies creates another ironic tone when the line is compared to the interjection scene of
Minerva’s tapestry. Anderson notes that with the use of sua facies together with omnis at
the beginning of the line, “the poet collects the individual scenes into one group about
which he can make generalizations.”67 The irony of Anderson’s statement is that the
scenes prior to and proceeding this line do not have a definitive categorization, except for
the list of sexual deceits which each male gods performed. Line 121 seems to allude to
Minerva’s decision to make use of the four corners (6.85) of the tapestry. But the reader
immediately realizes that there is no clue as to how Arachne’s tapestry should be
arranged if it had to be recreated from Ovid’s description of it. The interlude of
Arachne’s tapestry also lacks any moral or educational intentions like those blatantly
expressed in lines 6.83-84. The two lines in Minerva’s interlude recall the use of docta in
the previous line.68 In line 121, there is no mention of “education” or “teaching.” This
suggests that Arachne does not consider her work to contain any moralistic or educational
potential.

In the following section, Ovid elaborates who the omnes of line 121 are. This
section functions in a similar manner to the portrayal of the four corners of Minerva’s
tapestry; however, the lack the structural arrangement in this section, in comparison to
Minerva’s tapestry, highlights the fluidity of both the written description and the actual

68 As I argued in chapter 1 above
tapestry of Arachne. While there is a minor scene in each corner of Minerva’s tapestry (four scenes total), the section tells of three gods in a total of six amorous scenes:

... Est illic agrestis imagine Phoebus,
utque modo accipitris pennas, modo terga leonis
 gesserit, ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen,
Liber ut Erigonen falsa deceperit uva,
ut Saturnus equo germen Chirona creavit.

... There is Phoebus in the likeness of a farmer,
And how now the feathers of a hawk, now the skin of a lion
He wore, how as a shepherd he tricked Isse, the daughter of Macareus,
How Liber deceived Erigone with a false grape,
How Saturn begat the twin-natured Chiron with a horse.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.122-126)

The reader notices immediately that Ovid only mentions “farmer,” “feather,” and “skin” in reference to Apollo while elipsing Apollo’s amorous partners in his composition. This is the most highly allusive reference in the entire framework of Arachne’s tapestry. This poetic variatio misleads the reader’s expectation of Ovid’s ekphrasis in the earlier section where the names of the female victims of divine treachery are listed (6.103-120).

Apollo’s appearance as a farmer is an allusion to the erotic love between him and King Admetus. Anderson notes on the significance of the farmer guise, as the story also occurs in Callimachus, Tibullus, and Ovid’s Heroides. Anderson notes his ignorance about the amorous stories Ovid’s “feathers of a hawk” and “skin of a lion” refer to; however, the highly allusive references were clearly known to Ovid and, presumably, his educated contemporary audience. The absence of the objects of Apollo’s desire not only indicates the allusive construction of the ekphrasis, but it also compresses both the images of the tapestry and hastens the narrative flow of the ekphrasis. The word gesserit at line 124

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69 Anderson 1972, 167. Though the “love” scene of Apollo and Admetus only survives through these authors, there is a larger narrative of Apollo and Admetus which is alluded and lost to us. The precursor to Apollo’s meeting with Admetus is mentioned in the opening verses of Euripides Alcestis and pseudo-Apollodorus Library.
appears as an enjambment, and it signifies the end of this highly referential narrative and the continuation of the standard deceptive pairings, which we have seen earlier in this *ekphrasis*.

After the enjambment, Ovid concludes Apollo’s amorous pursuit with the portrayal of Isse deceived by Apollo in the guise of a shepherd. Line 124 echoes the same word choice for Jupiter in the earlier parts of the *ekphrasis*. Pastor recalls Jupiter’s guise as a shepherd at 6.114. The word *luserit* is used earlier at 6.113. The repetition of these words links the two sections of the *ekphrasis*, hinting that the scenes of 6.122 and 126 are still part of the centerpiece of Arachne’s work, unlike the minor corner scenes of Minerva’s tapestry. Thus, these words function not only as a connection to the first section of the *ekphrasis*, like *quoque* at 6.115, but also they demonstrate differences between Arachne’s and Minerva’s tapestries. The appearance of Bacchus and Saturn finally shows the manner in which Ovid arranges the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry. Bacchus is generally accepted as the youngest of the Olympian gods while Saturn is the defunct god whom Jupiter overthrew during the Titanomachy. The description of the main scene is now complete; the reader now realizes that Ovid illustrates the main scene as a series of amorous deceits based on the male god’s hierarchical power in the Olympian court. Jupiter is listed first in the tapestry with the most amounts of women deceived, while Saturn remains at the last description. While Jupiter’s contains the highest number of women he deceived, Ovid does not even mention the woman whom Saturn tricks.
The final character in the main tapestry is Chiron, who, like Europa, first appears in the second book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses.* The positions of Chiron as the concluding phrase and of Europa as the opening description of the centerpiece complete an intratextual ring composition in Arachne’s tapestry. The ring composition of Arachne’s work resembles the ring composition of the main scene of Minerva’s tapestry, where the appearances of the Cecropian citadel at line 6.70 and Victory at 6.82 complete a geographical ring composition of the Athenian Acropolis. Yet, Ovid’s ring composition of Arachne’s tapestry seems to be a deflated version of the ring composition style of epic genre. Rather than portraying the eminence of the amorous pursuits of the male gods in a positive light, Ovid reduces the dignity of the male gods by utilizing both the intratextual location of various stories within the larger narrative corpus of the *Metamorphoses.* He also plays with the reader’s acute perception of the difference between the two different *ekphrases* through their poetic arrangements.

The final parallel between the two tapestries is indicated in this last two lines of Arachne’s tapestry. Much like the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s weaving, Arachne weaves a floral pattern as the finishing touches of the tapestry, but instead of the olives, Arachne opts for the floral patterns of the ivy. Ovid concludes his *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s work with the description of the border of her tapestry in two lines:

Ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo,  
 nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos.

The farthest part of her web surrounded by a fine border  
Contains flowers interwoven with *ivies bound together.*  

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.127-8)

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70 Chiron is first mentioned at 2.635 while Europa is first mentioned at 2.858.
71 As I argued in chapter 1 above.
Immediately the reader will be able to see the parallel between the two tapestries. As a comparison, here are the last two lines of Minerva’s tapestry:

*circuit extre mas* **oleis pacalibus oras**
(is modus est) *operisque sua facit arbore finem*.

She surrounds the outermost borders with peaceful olive branches
(This is the style) and with her own tree she fashions the end of her work.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.101-102)

Much like the other sections of Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid twists the narrative style and poetic arrangement of Arachne’s tapestry from his poetic arrangement of Minerva’s. In Arachne’s two lines, the reader first sees *ultima pars* in the description of the borders. In Minerva’s two lines, however, Ovid places the description of the *finem* “end” at the end of the sentence. Similarly, Ovid’s descriptions of the floral pattern are inversed between the two tapestries. The placement of the ivies in Arachne’s borders appears at the end of the two lines while the placement of the olives in Minerva’s borders occurs at the beginning of the description of her borders. Yet, both mentions of the floral patterns appear in the ablative case. The last line (102) of Minerva’s tapestry contains five dactyls to illustrate a light ending for the tapestry.72 The last line (128) of Arachne’s tapestry, however, contains a spondee on the fifth foot and has a spondaic tone as the conclusion of the tapestry’s description. The arrangement of the poetic structure of the *ekphrasis*, as I have shown above, is subversive from the poetic arrangement of Minerva’s tapestry.

Although the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry contains various epic generic elements, like the poetic structures found in Minerva’s tapestry, Ovid alters the reader’s expectation of the poetic arrangement and description of Arachne’s tapestry.

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72 Anderson 1972, 164. See my discussion on this dactylic line in chapter 1 above.
Thus, Ovid plays with the reader’s expectation both in his expectation on the subject matter of the narrative and the way Ovid arranges the narrative structure to adhere to the allusive identity of the Hellenistic tradition. The craft of Arachne’s work indicates Ovid’s creative and playful manner on the medium of his “tapestry” namely the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid alludes to the Hellenistic tradition, which Callimachus advises poets to adhere, in the ending of *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry. Ovid subtly inserts the mention of *tenuis* in the second to last line of his *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s work. The appearance of *tenuis* corresponds to both the slender appearance of Arachne’s border and Ovid’s adherence to the slender poetic style of Callimachus’ poetics. The allusive nature of the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry can further be examined if the reader understands Ovid’s crafty intratextual references throughout the *Metamorphoses*, predominantly the stories prior to the contest between the two female characters. Ovid plays with the reader’s expectation of the narrative structure for Arachne’s tapestry. The manner in which the male gods deceive their amorous prey reflects the similar way Ovid deceives the reader’s perception and expectation of Arachne’s tapestry. Thus, it is appropriate that the appearance of *elusa* in line 103 and *luserit* in line 113 and 124 highlight the playful deception of both the divine figures over their prey and Ovid over the reader’s perception of the poetic *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry.

### 2.4 Callimachean Poetics in Arachne’s Pictorial Description

As I have mentioned above, the reader immediately realizes the brevity of this *ekphrasis* because Ovid quickly shifts the narrative perspective from his description of Minerva’s tapestry (6.102) to Arachne’s tapestry (6.103); however, Ovid does not include
an introductory line on the thematic subject-matter of Arachne’s work, unlike the theme vetus argumentum (6.68-69) of Minerva’s tapestry. Towards the end of the description, the reader also notices the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry is ultimately shorter than Minerva’s. The brevity of the *ekphrasis* suggests that Ovid adheres to the Callimachean ideals of poetry, where poetic production should be as refined as possible. In his *Aetia*, Callimachus presents his well-known avoidance of epic, which he describes in terms of quantity and volume:

... αὖθι δὲ τέχνη
κρίνετε, μὴ σκοίνῳ Περσίδι τὴν σοφίην.
μηδ' ἀπ' ἐμείν διώτ τις μέγα ψοφέουσαν ἄῳδήν
τίκτεσθαι· βροντάν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός.

... But from now on
Estimate poetry by the **skill**, not by the Persian **skoinos**.\(^{73}\)
Don’t search for a great sounding song to be born
From me. To **thunder** is not mine, but of **Zeus**.

(Callimachus *Aetia* fr. 1.17-20)

Callimachus prepares to address the value of his poetry, and perhaps all poetry in general, in terms of length and volume of narrative technique. The mention of the **skoinos** at 1.18 suggests that a critic’s decision of poetic quality through “length” rather than “skill” (τέχνη, 1.18) is not a definitive way of measuring poetry. The juxtaposition of “length” against “skill” indicates the absurdity of judging a poem’s quality by means of an actual measurement.

The second part of this section (1.19-20) elaborates further the τέχνη of the poem which the poet’s critic should adhere to. The display of Zeus’ thunder echoes the epic resonance of Zeus as the god of thunder in Homeric\(^{74}\) and Hesiodic\(^{75}\) literature.

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\(^{73}\) A Persian **skoinos** is a unit of measurement. One Persian **skoinos** = 60 *stadia* = approx. 12,000 feet.

\(^{74}\) For example, Homer *Iliad*, 8.133

\(^{75}\) Hesiod *Theogony*, 41.
Callimachus suggests that his poetic endeavor will not follow the same subject-matter “belonging to Zeus” which Homer and Hesiod have used for their poetic composition. At lines 21-28 of the *Aetia*, Callimachus expands his reasoning of not using the subject-matter “belonging to Zeus” through Apollo’s advice concerning poetic arrangement:

καὶ γὰρ ὅτε πρῶτιστον ἐμοὶ ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα γούνασιν, Ἀ[πό]λλων ἔπειν ὅ μοι Λύκιος:

For when at first I set writing-tablet upon my Knees, Lykian Apollo said this to me:

... O poet, raise your sacrificial victim to be as fat as possible, But your Muse, my good man, to be slender.

And I bid you this, go there, where wagons do not pass,

Do not drive your chariot down the same path from others,

Nor along the broad path, but the roads Untrodden, even if you will drive a narrower path.

(Callimachus *Aetia* fr. 1.21-28)

In this section of the *Aetia*, Apollo advises Callimachus to use the fattest victim (θός...πάχιστον 1.23) when it comes to sacrifices, but to keep his verse, implied by the mention of the Muse, slender (λεπταλέος 1.24). The juxtaposition of these two scenes, sacrificing and poetic composition, serves as Apollo’s warning to Callimachus of the dangers of “bloated” narrative: while it is acceptable and even encouraged to offer a “fat” sacrifice to the gods, poetry should not adhere to the same standards as sacrificial rites, as the ritual act of sacrificing is ultimately different from the act of poetic composition.

Benjamin Acosta-Hughes and Susan Stephens (2002) explain the association of the two different events as a reference to the beginnings of Hesiod’s *Theogony*. They propose that, “Apollo’s advise about sheep and Muses in fragment 1 anticipates [...] that earlier
poetic initiation where Hesiod had to choose between his sheep and Muses (Theog. 23-25). The “fattest sacrifice,” therefore, represents a subtle reference to the two different paths which Hesiod has to choose, whether to follow the path of the clueless shepherd or to pursue a divine path of the Muses. There is no choice for Callimachus, since Apollo guides him to the right path, that is, to compose poems that are more concise and less “lengthy.” Apollo then uses wagon imagery (1.26-28) as a metaphor for Callimachus’ poetic pursuit, suggesting that the poet should not follow the paths which other poets have taken (1.26), but to pursue an “untrodden” poetic path instead (1.28). Callimachus compares the commonly tracked path as a “broad” road (1.27) and the untrodden one as a “narrower” road. The road metaphor elaborates on the meaning of Apollo’s warning of a “fat” poem. While a “fat” and “broad” poem would consist of repetitive and “worn-out” subject-matter, the Callimachean poetry must consist of the subject matter which is not frequently explored by other poets, hence the “untrodden” path is the “refinement” of proper poetry.

In another programmatic passage in Callimachus’ Hymn to Apollo, we also find a contrast between the “great flow” of epic poetry versus the refined trickle of Callimachus’ works:

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ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ’ οὐσία λάθριος εἶπεν. 105
“οὐκ ἠγαμα τὸν ἄοιδὸν ὡς ὦδ’, ὡς πόντος ἀείδει.”
τὸν Φθόνον ὡπόλλων ποδὶ τ’ ἠλασὲν ὡδὲ τ’ ἔσωσεν.
“Ἀσσυρίου ποταμῷ μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ’ ὡδαὶ συρφετὸν ἐλκεί.
Δηοὶ δ’ οὐκ ἄπο παντὸς ύδωρ φορέουσι μέλλεισα,
ἀλλ’ ἥτις καθαρῆ τε καὶ ἀχρόντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ἀληθῆ λιβας ἀκρον ἀωτον.”

Envy spoke in secretly into Apollo’s ear:
“I don’t admire the poet who does not sing as much as the sea.”

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76 Acosta Hughes and Stephens 2002, 249.
Apollo drove Envy away with his foot and spoke thusly:
“\textit{The stream of the Assyrian river is great, but the majority of it is sludge from the land and a lot of garbage it drags upon its wave. The honey-bees carry water to Deo not from every source, but whichever small trickle springs up both pure and undefiled from a holy spring, the finest peak of waters.}”

(Callimachus \textit{Hymn to Apollo} 105-112)

The three different types of aquatic environments, πόντος “sea,” ποταμός “river,” and πῖδαξ “spring,” are metaphors for the different poetic styles, which Callimachus echoes in his programmatic section of the \textit{Aetia}. When Φθόνος “Envy” tells Apollo that a good poet should “sing as much as the sea,” this line (105) echoes Callimachus’ reference to lengthy poems in the \textit{Aetia} (fr. 1.18). Apollo responds to Envy’s analogy of the sea with the analogy of the polluted Assyrian river, which Frederick Williams (1978) suggests “presumably represents the imitation of traditional epic, a genre which in its lengthy course lost all its vitality.”\textsuperscript{77} However, Alan Cameron (1995) pushes the analogy further by suggesting that the sea and river are synonymous in the context of the Callimachean corpus. He states that “there is no essential difference between sea and river,”\textsuperscript{78} and “the sea does the one thing a poem should not do: it rolls on forever.”\textsuperscript{79} Ultimately, the comparison made in this programmatic section of the hymn is a comparison between the length of poetic composition. As Cameron notes “purity is always associated with smallness.”\textsuperscript{80} Thus in Cameron’s approach, both sea and river offer the same allegory of long and unwieldy poems, while the small trickle of a spring refers to short and “purified” styles of poetic composition.

\textsuperscript{77} Williams 1978, 89.
\textsuperscript{78} Cameron 1995, 406.
\textsuperscript{79} Cameron 1995, 405.
\textsuperscript{80} Cameron 1995, 405.
The reception of the short-refined Callimachean style is compiled by neoterics, and even Vergil himself indicates his dedication to the Callimachean style in his *Eclogues*:

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cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
vellit et admonuit: ‘pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ovis, deductum dicere carmen.’
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When I was singing about kings and battles, Apollo pulled My ears and admonished me: “Tityrus, it is proper for a shepherd To feed his fat sheep, and to sing a well-spun poem.

(Vergil *Eclogues* 6.3-5)

Vergil’s adherence to the Callimachean style ultimately becomes a problem when the poet begins his composition of the *Aeneid*. The problem for Vergil, ultimately, is to write a subtle and refined long poem. As such, the programmatic statements of Callimachus’ *Aetia* and *Hymn to Apollo* become an important factor. Callimachus cautions poets not to write poems with repetitive narrative styles, the so-called “commonly taken path on broad roads”; instead, a poet should prefer a narrative style that is unused and narrower. Likewise, the poet who “rolls on forever” like a river, cannot compose a refined poetic work. Vergil proceeds with his writings of the *Aeneid* with these lessons in mind.

Cameron notes the Callimachean influence in Vergil’s composition by saying, “it was a refinement of Callimachus’ aetiological mode that allow Vergil to foreshadow events at a variety of later stages in Roman history while restricting his primary narrative to a few years in the life of Aeneas.”\(^{81}\) In a close reading of the *Aeneid*, Garth Tissol (1992) explains how a specific scene about Camilla at *Aeneid* 11.581-582 refers to the story of Acontius and Cydippe in Callimachus *Aetia* 3 fr. 67.9-10.\(^{82}\) Tissol argues that the “reflection on the contrasting fates of the two women heightens the pathos of Camilla’s

\(^{81}\) Cameron 1995, 483.  
\(^{82}\) Tissol 1992, 264
lot.” Tissol’s work and that of various other scholars has shown the magnitude of Vergil’s allusions on Callimachus. The *Aeneid* becomes the evidence of a poet’s incorporation of the Callimachean ideals of “short and refined” poetry into a “long and polished” poetic form. Ovid, therefore, possesses a completed example and guideline for the application of Callimachean poetics into epic poetry.

Ovid exemplifies the Callimachean subject-matter in Arachne’s tapestry, by presenting its poetic composition as the complete opposite to Minerva’s tapestry. Arachne’s tapestry consists of multiple characters with varying stories in the centerpiece, and it lacks any specific temporal and local indicators. On the other hand, Minerva’s tapestry highlights one specific character (Minerva herself), in one specific location (Athens), in a specific temporal setting (the contest between Minerva and Neptune). Likewise, the “flawlessly Classical” arrangement of the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry connotes the repetitive formulation of the “river” and the “well-treaded paths” in Callimachus’ programmatic statement, which he cautions not to use. Thus, Minerva’s tapestry represents the poetic style “belonging to Zeus” which Callimachus mentions at line 1.20 in his *Aetia*. Since Arachne’s tapestry is the antithetical approach to Minerva’s work, Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry has to be the “untrodden” and “slender” representation of the Callimachean ideal; hence, the narrative structure of Arachne’s tapestry is noticeably smaller than the narrative structure of Minerva’s work. Ovid’s allusion to the Callimachean poetic ideals in Arachne’s tapestry becomes a quintessential narrative technique for Ovid, in order to distinguish the two different poetic styles that are subtly woven into the composition of the *Metamorphoses*. Heather van Tress’ (2004)

83 Tissol 1992, 268.
85 Anderson 1972, 160.
investigation of Callimachean allusions in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* ultimately begins from her observation on the Callimachean and simultaneously un-Callimachean form of the *prooemium* of Ovid’s poem. While her research focuses on where and how these Callimachean allusions appears in the some parts of the *Metamorphoses*, it is in the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry where Ovid summarizes his understanding of the Callimachean poetics.

### 2.5 Elusa: Arachne’s Playful *Argumentum* and the Poetics of Deception

Throughout my earlier analysis on the poetic structure of Arachne’s tapestry, I have shown how Ovid subverts the narrative structure and poetics of Minerva’s tapestry when he presents his *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry. Ovid inadvertently challenges the reader’s expectation on the overall poetic structure of the Arachnean narrative compared to the Minervan narrative. The reader, therefore, experiences the playful deception of the characters of Arachne’s tapestry through Ovid’s clever understanding of the reader’s perception of the epic genre. The poetic arrangement of the *ekphrasis*, hence, adheres to the overall theme of Arachne’s tapestry, *elusa*, the playful deception. Anderson notes that at the appearance of *elusa* at 6.103 “the first detail about the scene sets the tone.” This means that Ovid compresses his explanation of Arachne’s thematic intention into a single word, *elusa*, in comparison to Minerva’s thematic intention, *vetus argumentum*, which Ovid allocates into two lines (6.68-9). *Elusa* and its variants (like *luserit*, 6.113; 124) in the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry highlight the double-meaning of the word itself.

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87 Anderson 1972, 165.
Much like vetus argumentum of Minerva’s theme, Ovid chooses elusa as the word for “deception” because the word can denote both the act of deception and the act of playing. Although there are several Latin words that indicate “deceit” such as dolus or fallax, Ovid purposefully chooses elusa as the programmatic theme of his written arrangement of Arachne’s tapestry because elusa echoes incorporates the idea of “play” into the action of “deceit”. Just as the word argumentum at 6.69 contains multi-layered meanings in reference to Minerva’s tapestry, elusa also contains multiple meanings, which extend beyond the face-valued of “deceived.” Elusa derives its root from the Latin verb ludere, commonly translated as “to play.”88 The face-value concept of elusa, however, means “deceived,” since the word attributes the situation of Europa both in the tapestry and her actual story, mentioned earlier in book 2 of the Metamorphoses. Since it contains the root form of ludo, the word elusa must also suggest some idea of playful activity in the tapestry and also in the poetic construction of the tapestry. Elusa, provides an understanding that the concept of “playing” is associated with the pursuit of seduction by an amator which resembles a playful act. Ovid’s composition of Arachne’s tapestry, hence, suggests the similarities between “playing,” “amorous pursuit,” and “deceiving.” The amorous pursuits of the male gods in the tapestry, the allusive appearance of Amor, and Ovid’s playful Callimachean narrative style are represented in Ovid’s choice of the word elusa. By choosing elusa as the “deception” theme of Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid manages to associate the amorous deceptions of the gods in Arachne’s tapestry with the playful neoteric style of poetic production of the ekphrasis of her tapestry.

The word elusa comes to mean “deceived” in the ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry because of its association with other words and phrases in the ekphrasis. At lines 6.103-

104, Ovid shows that elusa describes Europa’s state of being after she was deceived by Jupiter in the guise of a bull (imagine tauri). The word taurus is repeated again at line 6.104 with the adjective verus and the potential subjunctive in the apostrophe of puto “you would think.” The potential subjunctive marks the bull of Arachne’s tapestry as realistic (“you would think it was a real bull”). But the reader of the ekphrasis and the viewer of the tapestry recognize that the taurus is no ordinary bull, in spite of the potential subjunctive. The appearance of imago, verus, and the potential subjunctive, elusa construct a concept of deception. Elsewhere in the ekphrasis, Ovid continues with the theme of deception with imago (6.110 and 6.124), celatus (6.110), the verb fallo (6.117), and the adjective falsus (6.125). These words set the tone of the tapestry: repeated acts of deceits. But Ovid also includes the verb ludo twice in the ekphrasis (6.113 and 6.124). The appearance of ludo in the tapestry together with the words of deception suggests that there is a playful manner in which these amorous deceits are conducted. Hence, the theme of the tapestry, condensed into a single word elusa, is ubiquitous throughout Ovid’s ekphrasis of the tapestry. The word elusa becomes equivalent to the act of deception and also playful love affairs. The playfulness of the deception becomes an important aspect for Ovid to allude to the appearance of Cupid, who commonly appears in Roman erotic elegy, in the backdrop of the ekphrasis.

The playfulness of the allusive Cupid is well-documented elsewhere in Ovid’s work. In his Amores 1.1, Ovid portrays Cupid as a comical character who interrupts his poetic endeavors to write epic poetry, risisse Cupido / dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem, “It is said that Cupid laughed and stole one [metrical] foot” (Am. 1.1.3-4). The playful poetic style of Ovid and his playful representation of Cupid are so well

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89 See Lyne 1980 on the various roles of Amor/Cupid and the god’s relation with the poet in Latin elegies.
pronounced that Quintilian later compares the poet with his elegiac contemporaries and claims *Ovidius utroque lascivior*, “Ovid is more playful than either of them (i.e., Tibullus and Propertius)” (*Instituo Oratoria* 10.1.93). In comparison with other epic poets, Quintilian also notes that Ovid is a playful poet and an *amator ingenii sui*, “a lover of his own talent” (*Instituo Oratoria* 10.1.88). The inclusion of the word *lascivius* “playful” and *amator* “lover” in the same section shows how the two ideas of love and play are intertwined in the Ovidian corpus. Donald Lateiner (1978) comments on the relationship between deception and love elsewhere in the *Amores* as virtually synthesized in his poetry: “The pleasure [of love] lies in play. Deception is crucial to Ovid, whether it is recommended or described as painful.”\(^90\) John Miller (1983) echoes Lateiner’s sentiments along similar lines. In fact, Miller elaborates Lateiner’s reading of the *Amores* into the *Ars Amatoria*, stating that “the literary playfulness of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* ranges widely in its comic imitations of Greek and Roman authors.”\(^91\) From Lateiner’s and Miller’s work, it can be construed that Ovid adapts representations of Cupid in earlier Greek and Roman literature and repackages the god into a divine being who becomes a tool for Ovid’s poetic production, like his appearance in *Amores* 1.1. The word *elusa*, therefore, becomes a kind of reference to Ovid’s playful poetic style. By using *elusa*, Ovid invokes the type of Cupid who deceives and plays with the emotions of others. While Cupid does appear elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* as well, he is hidden within the tapestry of Arachne and Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of that tapestry. The word *elusa* becomes the thematic marker for the hidden Cupid, and Ovid attempts to conjure Hellenistic sentiments through the allusive depiction of a cheating and playful Cupid.

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\(^{90}\) Lateiner 1978, 190.  
\(^{91}\) Miller 1983, 26.
The appearance of a playful Cupid actually predates the advent of Hellenistic period. One of the first depictions of Eros (the Greek version of Cupid) as a playful being appears in the lyric poet Anacreon. Through Anacreon, we can see the development of an Eros/Cupid figure who is both destructive and playful at the same time. Anacreon depicts Eros as young boy, much like the Cupid with whom we are quite familiar. He mentions:

σφαίρῃ δηὖτε με πορφυρὴ
βάλλων χρυσοκόμης Ἔρως
νήνι ποικίλοσαμβάλῳ
συμπαίζειν προκαλεῖται.

Once again hitting me with a purple ball, golden-haired Eros calls me to play with the girl with the embroidered sandals.

(Anacreon fr. 358 PMG)

Anacreon associates Eros with the act of playing through the image of a ball and the verb συμπαίζω “play with.” The two details showcase how Eros and the pursuit of love in Anacreon’s mind are synonymous with children’s games. Anacreon associates amorous acts of deception with the playing of games, rather similar to what we find in the ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry with its use of ludo to mark both play and erotic deception. In fragment 398 PMG, Anacreon further suggests the “playfulness” of his Eros by comparing amorous pursuit (or rather the madness of the attempt) as the ἀστραγάλαι Ἐρωτος “the dice of Eros.” Monica Cyrino (1996) points out the significance of the games which Eros plays in Anacreon’s fragments, stating “the tone of these fragments indicates that eros plays the game to win. The aggression of this agonistic eros echoes frequent lyric portrayal of destructive love.”

Cyrino’s observation on Eros’ intent in the game of love shows that the god always plays to win, no matter the cost. Eros’

92 Cyrino 1996, 372.
competitive and aggressive nature in the game of love implies that the god (or the
amator) must do anything he can to win, even if it means resorting to acts of cheating or
“deceiving.” It is in this context that “play” can become associated with “cheating.” In
Arachne’s tapestry, the appearance of a playful deceit elusa rather than dolus adheres to
the destructive force of Cupid through the forceful amorous pursuits of the male gods
towards both mortal and immortal women.

Various Hellenistic poets follow suit with Anacreon’s depiction of Eros as the
playful yet destructive divinity of love.93 In the Argonautica, the poet Apollonius reuses
the Anacreontic “dice of Eros” when he first introduces the god Eros into his epic poem.
In Argonautica 3.117-118, Aphrodite finds Eros and Ganymede at play: ἀμφ’
ἀστραγάλοισι δὲ τῶγε / χρυσέιοις ... ἑψιόωντο “both of them [Eros and Ganymede]
were amusing themselves with golden dice.” The appearance of the dice-game in the
scene belies the important role Eros will play in the Argonautica. Without the power of
Eros, Medea would not fall in love with Jason and the entire quest for the golden fleece
would be lost. To win the quest, the hero needs to win the love of Medea, a love which
the gambling Eros will win for Jason. Thus the act of playing and winning becomes a
crucial plot-device for the Argonautica. Apollonius continues to strengthen the playful
Eros of the Anacreontic tradition with the mention of a ball. After chastising Eros for
cheating Ganymede (ἡπαρέες οὐδὲ δίκη περιέπλεο, “did you cheat and not win justly,”
Argonautica 3.130), she says that she will give him a σφαῖραν ἐντρόχαλον “a well-
rounded ball” (3.135), which used to belong to Zeus (3.131), if Eros brings it about that
Medea falls in love with Jason (3.141-143). Apollonius uses the same word σφαῖρα as the

93 See Rosenmeyer 1992 on the poetic tradition on Anacreon’s work. See also Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004 on
the Anacreontic resonance in Posidippus’ poetry.
one Anacreon uses in fragment 358 *PMG*. The ball and the dice thus invoke the
destructive and playful Eros which Anacreon mentions in his lyric poetry. Mary
Pendergraft (1991) has suggested that “this toy [ball] is not merely a child’s plaything ... 
it [is] certain that the ball represents the spherical cosmos.”\(^94\) The symbol of the ball as 
the universe suggests that Eros holds sway over the driving force of the Universe. The 
symbol of Eros as the controller of the entire world appears in the *Metamorphoses* when 
Venus mentions to Eros’ Roman counterpart Cupid:

\[
\text{tu superos ipsumque Iovem, tu numina ponti} \\
victa domas ipsumque, regit qui numina ponti. \\
\]

You rule over the gods above and over Jupiter himself, you rule over the 
conquered divinities of the sea; over Jupiter himself—he who governs the 
divinities of the sea.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.369-70)

The two lines are suggestive of Cupid’s hierarchical position above all other divinities, 
especially Jupiter himself. Ovid’s depiction of Cupid as a divinity above Jupiter echoes 
the cosmos-ball wielding Eros in Apollonius’ epic. Both poems suggest that Cupid’s 
power is an all-encompassing force that even overpowers Jupiter. Though the physical 
appearance of Cupid is missing in the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry, the presence of 
the god is still felt through the appearance of *ludo* in the thematic word *elusa* and in the 
*ekphrasis* itself. Cupid’s destructive identity is subtly illustrated by Arachne (Ovid) 
through the images (written description) of the amorous deception of the gods.

The theme of “deceit” is also linked to Eros in the Hellenistic tradition. Theocritus 
attributes the epithet δόλομάχανος “contriver of deceit” to Eros (*Idyll* 30.25). In the same 
poem, Theocritus echoes Apollonius’ construction of the cosmos-wielding Eros when 
Theocritus explains the epithet δόλομάχανος by indicating that Διὸς ἔσφαλε μέγαν νόον,

\(^{94}\) Pendergraft 1991, 96.
“he [Eros] tricks the great mind of Zeus” (*Idyll* 30.30). Callimachus shares the sentiments of the “Ἅρως δολομάχανος” in a fragment of his *Aetia*. In the introductory lines of the story of Acontius and Cydippe, Callimachus says:

> Αὐτὸς Ἔρως ἐδίδαξεν Ἀκόντιον, ὅπποτε καλῇ ἠθετο Κυδίππη παῖς ἐπὶ παρθενικῇ, τέχνην – οὐ γὰρ ὅγ’ ἐσκε πολύκροτος –...

Eros himself taught Acontius, since the boy was burned by beautiful maiden Cydippe, a *craft*, for the boy was not *cunning* enough [to do so]...

(Callimachus *Aetia* 3 fr. 67.1-3)

Callimachus associates the τέχνη “craft” of Eros with his identity as πολύκροτος “cunning”: he teaches Acontius how to seduce Cydippe by deceit. The idea of the erotic craft as a cunning skill in the Callimachean narrative is exactly the same idea as the δολομάχανος in Theocritus’ poem. Likewise, the word *elusa* in the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry conveys similar ideas in the adjectives πολύκροτος and δολομάχανος.

While the two Greek epithets portray the contrivance of amorous deceits, *elusa* instead explains the end result of the contrivances, namely the female mortals and immortals deceived by male gods. *Ludo*, likewise, denotes the acts of the deceits which were contrived by the male gods. The reader of the *Metamorphoses* would know how these deceptive acts take place elsewhere in the epic poem. Arachne, however, weaves the final results of the contrivance and action of the gods’ deceits, and Ovid describes the aftermath in written form. *Elusa*, therefore, implies the Hellenistic tradition of the portrayal of Cupid as the “playful” and “all-powerful” “contriver of deceits.” The absence of any mention of Cupid in the *ekphrasis* greatly emphasizes the allusive Hellenistic style of the poetic construction of Arachne’s tapestry.
The use of *elusa* as the schematic theme of both the tapestry and its *ekphrasis* also suggests the manner in which Eros is used in Alexandrian poetry. As Claude Calame (1999) examines the poetics of Eros throughout the history of Greek literature, he discovers that in the Alexandrian period poets create erotic epigrams as a purely literary game, designed to entertain intellectual groups on the lookout for sophisticated poetic amusement. [...] The charm of the erotic verses continued to weave its spell, but on a different public and with a different function.  

What I take from Calame is that the Hellenistic poets appropriated the figure of Eros from the archaic tradition and reestablished his “playfulness” as a literary device for the amusement and playful interaction among various poets during the Alexandrian period, and that their successors, the neoterics of the Roman poetry, did the same, fashioning a “Cupid” figure from the archaic Greek and Hellenistic representations of Eros. Eros obviously appears as a poetic-device when Callimachus explains how Acontius becomes πολύκροτος because of Eros. As far as we can tell, Eros does not make any other appearance after *Fragment 67* of the story of Acontius. Eros, therefore is not just a character within the poetry, but rather functions as the overarching poetic style of the story, namely the amorous wooing of Cydippe through a cunning amorous contrivance. Eros now stands in not just as the subject of poetry, but also as the poetic device of the love Callimachus intends to compose in the story of Acontius and Cydippe. Eros has now become a playful poetic device that Hellenistic poets use to highlight the wit of their own work, since the concept of Eros as a maddening and irrational love is force in opposition to the Alexandrian ideal of the well-read, intellectual, and rational poet. Such is the case with Ovid’s use of *elusa*. The word not only functions as an outcome of Jupiter’s deception of Europa, but it also stands for Ovid’s clever allusive reference to Eros as a poetic device.

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95 Calame 1999, 61.
playful poetic device that the Alexandrian poets developed. It is through its root form 
ludo that the elusa echoes the Hellenistic production of the playful and contriving love
which permeates throughout the tapestry of Arachne.

2.6 Beyond Elusa: Hellenistic Ideals of Arachne’s Tapestry

The mention of elusa is not the only intertextual reference to the Hellenistic
tradition in the ekphrasis of Arachne’s poetry. Scholars have previously attributed the
ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry to the Hellenistic tradition when compared to the style of
Minerva’s tapestry. For example, Heinz Hofmann (1986) suggests that Arachne’s
tapestry appears to be “symbolising the carmen deductum with its asymmetrical,
erotically flavoured subject matter” and its display of a “Callimachaean complex of
concepts.”96 Hofmann’s analysis concludes that the poetic style of Arachne’s tapestry
conforms with the Alexandrian ideal of what a carmen deductum should look like.
Although Byron Harries (1990) believes that there are more Roman influences in
Arachne’s tapestry, he still agrees with Hofmann’s sentiments, claiming that “Arachne is
thus a poetic creation in the sense that she is fashioned out of the conventions and
allusive adaption of familiar poetry.”97 While Harries later discusses how Arachne’s
tapestry owes its Roman style to Ovid’s Ars Amatoria,98 John Miller (1983) counteracts
that claim in his analysis of the Callimachean-style narrative in the Ars Amatoria.
According to Miller, “Ovid suggests that he will be like Callimachus in insuring the truth

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96 Hofmann 1986, 231
97 Harries 1990, 66.
98 Harries 1990, 69.
through his personal experience, only he will do so without the gods.” He concludes his research by stating that the *Ars Amatoria* “evokes the *Aitia* prologue along with other features of Callimachus’ poem, the dialogue with the Muses, Callimachus’ persona, and the deity who explains his cult.” Harries inadvertently supports the Hellenistic style of Arachne’s tapestry through the similarity in poetic structure between the *ekphrasis* of the textile and the *Ars Amatoria*. Donald Lateiner’s (1978) attempt to connect the *Amores* with Callimachean poetics suggests the similarities between the two poets through their portrayal of love. Lateiner states, “Love, like poetry, is a game with rules requiring technique, dexterity, and energy. However comic in theme and tone, poetry is a serious pursuit for Ovid.” Llewelyn Morgan (2003) also notices the Callimachean-Ovidian poetic structure when he compares the *Metamorphoses* with other epic narratives. He considers Ovid’s epic as “flippant, playful, and given to puerile sexual humor” in comparison to other Roman epics, especially Vergil’s *Aeneid*.

Apart from Ovid’s reference to the Hellenistic portrayal of Cupid with his use of *elusa*, the *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry must exhibit the poetic style of the Hellenistic tradition. Anderson notes that the *ekphrasis* is composed with “quite different principles from Minerva’s and with totally antithetical themes.” I have shown in Chapter 1 that Minerva’s tapestry exhibits a poetics similar to traditional Vergilian epic in its well-structured construction. Following Anderson’s observation on Arachne’s tapestry, it can be construed that poetic production of Arachne’s tapestry must be Hellenistic in the sense that it serves as a proper antithesis to the poetics of Minerva’s tapestry. In order to prove

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100 Miller 1983, 34.
101 Lateiner 1978, 194.
102 Morgan 2003, 68.
103 Anderson 1972, 164.
this, I use criteria developed by Annette Harder (2004) in order to show that Arachne’s tapestry adheres to the Hellenistic elements of poetic formulation. Harder composes the criteria to show how Hellenistic features persist in the poem of Catullus 63. In her analysis she formulates five criteria which most Alexandrian poems contain:

1. explicit signals, like programmatic remarks;
2. aspects of the poem’s content, like its relationship to daily life, cult, aetiology;
3. stylistic refinements;
4. learned play with the literary tradition, including issues like allusions and generic variations;
5. size and structure [short length but elaborate poetic structure].

I have discussed (1) at length in section 2.4 above, about how the use of elusa as the word of deception fulfills the programmatic theme of both Arachne’s depiction of amorous deception and Ovid’s allusive reference to the Hellenistic tradition of Cupid.

The content (2) of the tapestry does not offer any explicit material relating either to daily life, cult, or aetiology. However, it can be argued that Ovid does allude to aetiological or cult references in Arachne’s tapestry in an obscure way. One example is the reference to Aegina as Asopida, “the daughter of Asopis” (6.113), for whom the island Aegina is eventually named. But in the tapestry, Ovid only mentions her amorous deception by Jupiter. Their son, Aeacus, the mythical king of the island Aegina, will play a prominent role later in the Metamorphoses at 7.472-522. The rape of Demeter by Neptune may also be a reference to a Demeter cult in Greece. Pausanias presents a similar story of Demeter and Poseidon (Neptune’s Greek counterpart) in his survey of Greek cults in Arcadia stating, τὴν δὲ Δήμητρα τεκεῖν φασίν ἐκ τοῦ Ποσειδόνος θυγατέρα, ἤ τὸ ὄνομα ἐξ ἀτελέστους λέγειν οὐ νομίζουσι, “they say that from Poseidon Demeter gives birth to a daughter, whose name they do not consider proper to say to the

104 Harder 2004, 581.
uninitiated” (Graecae Descriptio 8.25.7). Pausanias’ ἀπελέστος points to the connection between the story of Poseidon and Demeter and mystery cult.

Harder (2003) defines stylistic refinement (3) as the appropriate use of stylistic devices in moderation so that the poet does not overwhelm the poetry and make it, as Callimachus puts it, πάχιστον “very fat.” The stylistic device in the Arachnean tapestry seems to vary compared to the device used in Minerva. I have compared the stylistic devices of the two poetry at length in section 2.3 and I have shown how Ovid adheres to the Callimachean poetic length. The difficulty in breaking down Arachne’s tapestry into several sections also indicates that the stylistic refinement of this ekphrasis is well thought and carefully crafted.

As for the learned play of mythological and literary tradition (4), it is obvious that some of the mythological characters refer to past literary tradition, particularly Callimachus. The theme of the tapestry signaled by Ovid’s elusa evokes the narrative tradition of a playful yet destructive Eros of the Alexandrian and Archaic poets. Mythologically speaking, the mention of Apollo as a farmer (6.122) refers to Tibullus 2.3.11-14 and Callimachus’ Hymn to Apollo 47.105 The story of Erigone deceived by Bacchus’ false grape (6.125) is lost to us; however, it is highly likely a reference to the myth contained in Sophocles’ lost play Erigone, if not a reference to Sophocles’ play itself.106 As a whole, the tapestry of Arachne is Ovid’s emulation of his predecessor. Hofmann notes, “he challenges the tapestries of Callimachus’ Victoria Berenices and Catullus 65 ... by flaunting his own poetic skill in making both [tapestries] equally perfect.

106 Sophocles fr. 185-190 Radt.
and beyond the reach of criticism.”107 The generic allusions of Arachne’s tapestry are linked to other scenes in the *Metamorphoses* intratextually through the appearance of Europa (6.103-7), Danae (6.113), and Medusa (6.119-20). The allusions are also linked to the mythological and literary tradition more broadly through the portrayal of Demeter (6.118-9), Admetus (6.122), and, as far as we can tell, Erigone (6.125).

Finally it is evident that the size (5) of Ovid’s *ekphrases* of Arachne’s tapestry is shorter (twenty-six lines) than Minerva’s tapestry (thirty-three lines). While Ovid’s description of Minerva’s central character, herself, contains thirteen lines, the longest description of a singular character in Arachne’s tapestry is only five lines. As for the structure of the tapestry, Ovid’s *ekphrases* of Arachne’s tapestry does not contain a central starting point, unlike Minerva’s. The lack of a set position in the actual tapestry makes the *ekphrase* begin in media res.

In sum, all five generic criteria of Hellenistic poetics catalogued by Harder (2003) are present in Ovid’s poetic formulation of Arachne’s tapestry. As such, it is clear that the *ekphrase* is an emulation of the Hellenistic tradition, much like how the *ekphrase* of Minerva’s tapestry echoes Vergilian poetics and especially the poetics of the *Aeneid*. Thus, Arachne’s tapestry subverts the Minervan poetics which I have discussed in detail in chapter 1.

### 2.7 Bacchic Poetics: the Anti *Is Modus Est*

In the first chapter of my thesis, I argued that Ovid’s poetic composition of Minerva’s tapestry is closely associated to the divine attribute of the goddess herself. Her

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divine persona is imprinted into both the pictorial embroidery of her tapestry and Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of it. Upon close analysis of Arachne’s tapestry, I found a parallel yet opposing comparison between the two poetic formulations of Minerva’s and Arachne’s textile work. While Ovid organizes Minerva’s narrative structure as rigid and orderly, the structure of Arachne’s tapestry is fluid and freer. While Minerva focuses on a single event and the achievement of a single character (herself), Arachne weaves a broad pictorial tableau of male gods and their amorous “achievements.” While Ovid attempts to fashion Minerva’s tapestry as a textile equivalent of the traditional heroic epics of Homer and Vergil, Ovid presents Arachne’s tapestry as a highly allusive pictorial embroidery which is akin to the allusive poetics of the Hellenistic tradition. The poetic form of Arachne’s tapestry must also be influenced by a divine force that contradicts Minerva’s divinity. Ovid hints at the hidden divinity of the tapestry through his description of the border patterns of Arachne’s tapestry:

> Ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo, nexilibus *hederis* habet intertextos.

> The *farthest part* of her web surrounded by a fine border Contains flowers interwoven with *ivies bound together.*

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.127-128)

The reader immediately notices the familiarity between the last two lines of Arachne’s tapestry and the last two lines of Minerva’s tapestry. As a comparison, once more, here is the last two lines of Minerva’s tapestry:

> circuit extremas *oleis pacalibus* oras
> (is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem.

She surrounds the outermost borders with *peaceful olive* branches (This is the style) and with her own tree she fashions the end of her work.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.101-102)
Both women choose a floral pattern to complete their tapestry. Ovid chooses to end both *ekphrases* with the description of the border patterns. Ovid also makes both descriptions of the floral pattern in the same ablative case and the same plural number. At the same time, the reader notices that similar phrases are rearranged in the poetic sequence of the sentence. The word describing the finality of the tapestry is placed at separate ends; Ovid places the “close” (*ultima pars*, 6.127) at the beginning of the verse describing Arachne’s tapestry but he places the “close” (*finem*, 6.102) at the end of a verse describing Minerva’s tapestry. Ovid also flips the syntactical position of the floral patterns; the ivies are located on the second line of the couplet describing the border of Arachne’s tapestry while the olives are placed on the first line of the couplet describing the border of Minerva’s tapestry. What is missing in the narrative description of Arachne’s tapestry is the mention of any divine link between the ivy-borders and herself, unlike Minerva’s tapestry which Ovid mentions as *sua arbor* “her own tree.”

The *sua arbor* clearly denotes the divine relationship between Minerva’s choice of floral pattern in her tapestry and the divine representation which the pattern symbolizes. In Arachne’s tapestry, the ivy is the sacred flora of Bacchus, and, therefore, signifies the divine presence of Bacchus in Arachne’s tapestry. Although Anderson notes that the use of the ivy is a commonly associated with poets,\(^\text{108}\) I am compelled to disagree with his statement because the positioning of the last two lines of both *ekphrases* suggests that the floral patterns are marker of the two gods’ divinity in their respective tapestries. The ivy is not just a mere association to the poet, but rather a divine symbol of Bacchus that opposes the symbolic representation of the olive branch in Minerva’s tapestry. If the divine poetics of Minerva’s tapestry is Minervan and is illustrated through the appearance

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\(^{108}\) Anderson 1972, 167.
of the olive patterns as the borders of Minerva’s tapestry, then the divine poetics of Arachne’s tapestry is Bacchic because of the ivy-patterns. In book 3 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Bacchus unveils his celestial heritage when sailors attempt to kidnap him while he is on his way to Naxos. The god immediately takes over the ship by using ivies to obstruct the sailors from going astray from his intended destination. In this scene, Ovid uses the word *hedera* as the first manifestation of Bacchus’ divine powers. In another scene of the *Metamorphoses*, Bacchus employs his powers against the Minyeides for their refusal to worship him. Ovid states, *coepere viurescere telae / inque hederae faciem pedens frodescere vestis*, “the web began to turn green and the hanging garment began to become leafy changing into the appearance of the ivy” (4.394-5). The two occurrences of *hedera* in the *Metamorphoses* indicate that the divine powers of Bacchus are made manifest through the symbol of the *hedera*. Since the religious and divine symbol of Minerva are signified by Ovid’s usage of *sua arbor*, the ivy must, therefore, be the symbolic representation of Bacchus’s divine power. Thus, I consider the poetic style of Arachne’s tapestry as Bacchic poetics if the poetic style of Minerva’s tapestry is coined as Minervan poetics.

While *hedera* is the hint of Bacchus’ divine representation in Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of Arachne’s tapestry, I argue that the Hellenistic narrative techniques implemented by Ovid is also indicative of Baccchus’ divine powers, as far as Arachne’s tapestry is concerned. In terms of the poetic composition, Bacchus has certainly been associated with the poetic production of *dithyrambs*, tragedies, and comedies, since the Athenians performed these poems during the celebration of Dionysus Eleutherus. While poets and scholars do not

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110 Mikalson 2005, 92.
directly affiliate Bacchus’ divine powers with the Hellenistic tradition, Hellenistic poetics has certainly been associated with the divine invocation to Apollo. As I have discussed at section 2.3, Apollo appears as the advisor and guide in Callimachus’ programmatic passages in *Aetia* fr. 1.21-28 and in *Hymn to Apollo* 105-112. Apollo’s manifestation in these two programmatic sections is emblematic of Callimachean poetry. But Bacchus and Apollo are intertwined together in their religious and divine narrative. In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Tiresias explains to Pentheus that Dionysus contains similar divine roles as Apollo. First, he says ὅταν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἐς τὸ σῶμ᾽ ἔλθῃ πολύ, / λέγειν τὸ μέλλον τοὺς μεμηνότας ποιεῖ, “for whenever the god entered the body by much / he makes the ones having been maddened to speak the future” (*Bacchae* 300-301). The power of divination, which is usually associated with Apollo, is here also associated with Bacchus. In a few lines later, Tiresias continues, ἔτ᾽ αὐτὸν ὄψῃ κἀπὶ Δελφίσιν πέτραις, “furthermore, you will also see him on the Delphian rocks” (*Bacchae* 306). In this line, Tiresias alludes to Dionysus’ winter residence at Delphi during Apollo’s annual absence while visiting the Hyperborians. The description of Bacchus’ divine powers in the *Bacchae* suggests that the god of wine shares some divine and religious aspects as the sun god himself. Apart from Tiresias’ comparison of Bacchus and Apollo, Walter Burkert (1985) investigates the dichotomy between the two gods in other aspects and concludes, “Dionysus seems indeed to become the dark, chthonic counterpart to Apollo.” The “dark counterpart” of Apollo makes sense as the subject-matter of Arachne’s tapestry is the revelation of the male gods’ dirty deeds rather than the emulation of their divine actions, unlike Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo*. By suggesting Bacchus’ divine power in Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid subverts the Callimachean-Hellenistic narrative style of

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111 Burkert 1985, 224.
emulation of the gods into the defamation of their divinity. Together with the comparison between the *hedera* and the *olea* “olive,” it is clear that Hellenistic poetics, at least in Arachne’s tapestry, is indicative of a Bacchic rather than the Minervan poetics.

Minerva’s poetics also involves the poetic memory of *mētis* and *mens*. In fact, the etymological root of Minerva’s name is derived from the Indo-European root *men-*. Although Detienne and Vernant suggest that not all gods are associated with *mētis* including “Dionysus whose spells and tricks never spring from pure *mētis*,” Bacchus is etymologically linked to Minerva’s divine power of memory through his divine allotment of madness. In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Tiresias proclaims that *mania* “madness” also belongs to Dionysus (305). The nominal form of *mania* comes from the verb *μαίνομαι*, which can be translated as “to be out of one’s mind.” As Robert van Beekes (2010) attests, the origin of *μαίνομαι* also comes from the Indo-European root *men-*. Bacchic divine power of “madness,” therefore, contains the etymological affinity to Minerva’s name, but at the same it is a polemic response to Minerva’s divinity. *Mania* “madness” is the antagonistic version of Minerva’s etymological “wisdom.” The contrast is clearly seen in the depictions of the two tapestries. Minerva commits to poetic memory a specific event at a specific time within Athen’s mythical history, namely the naming of Athens. Arachne, on the other hand, presents various allusive amorous deceptions which lacking any specificity, which is a feature of Hellenistic poetics. Furthermore, the narratives presented in Arachne’s tapestry are mostly hinted at referentially and not fully narrated. Arachne’s work, both as handcraft and as poetic *ekphrasis*, repudiates Minerva’s choices in her pictorial framework. Additionally, the great number of scenes alluded to in a few

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112 As I have discussed in Chapter 1.
113 Detienne and Vernant 1978, 279.
114 Beekes 2010, 892.
short lines likens Arachne to a frenzied prophet, as described at Euripides Bacchae 300-301, or to an inspired poet, as Plato described at Ion 533e. The Bacchic “madness” appears subtly through the allusive and hasty references to the characters in Arachne’s tapestry. Therefore, it is evident that Bacchus’ divinity influences Ovid’s poetic arrangement of Arachne’s tapestry in order to show the polemic ideals of the two tapestries and the two prevailing narrative traditions which persist in Ovid’s time.

2.8 Bacchic Poetics: A Summary

This chapter investigates how the poetic structure of Arachne’s tapestry is a reaction against the poetic structure of Minerva’s tapestry. The two tapestries contradict each other in their physical and poetic formulations. I demonstrate that the short and refined style of Ovid’s description of Arachne’s work invokes the Callimachean poetics of the slender and refined poetic construction. I also reveal how elusa is the Hellenistic theme which opposes the vetus argumentum of Minerva’s heroic epic theme. I tie in the use of Callimachean narrative technique and elusa as part of Harder’s criteria for the identification of a Hellenistic narrative. Since the poetic composition of Minerva’s tapestry reveals various aspects of Minerva’s godhood, the ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry must contain the divine powers which equally opposes Minerva’s divinity. The mention of Bacchus divine flora hedera, the subversion of Apollonian patronage of the Hellenistic tradition in Arachne’s tapestry, and the echoes of mania through the presentation of the characters in Arachne’s tapestry confirm Bacchus’ divine persona as the divine antagonism of Minervan poetics. Ovid successfully incorporates the divine and

115 Plato Ion 533e, calls poetry the production of a poet who is ἔνθεος “inspired/having a god within” rather than a poet who possesses τέχνη “craft.”
religious aspect of the two gods and pit the two divinities against one another through the poetic composition of the two tapestries.
Conclusion: The Poem, the Poet, and the Divine Poetics of Weaving

3.1 Divine Poetics: Polemic Representation of the Two Tapestries

The two aspects of divine poetics are an important factor in understanding the divine and religious roles that play into the craft of the two tapestries of Minerva and Arachne. While the divine aspect of Minerva is easily observable through the narrative technique of the *ekphrasis* of her own tapestry, the divine aspect of Bacchus in the Arachnean tapestry is a little more allusive and fluid to examine, but I have shown that it can be distinguished. Both poetics assert or allude to the presence of the divine beings who govern them. Both showcase the important influences of Minerva and Bacchus, both as a subject matter of the story and as the narrative style of the *Metamorphoses*. However, Minervan poetics is characterized by the well-structured arrangement of the *ekphrasis* of Minerva’s tapestry, while Bacchic poetics exhibits the fluidity of the narrative arrangement of Arachne’s textile. Minervan poetics, in adherence to *mētis*, conceals the contrivance and intention of the character in the poem. Through *mētis*, Minervan poetics also invokes the poetic memory and remembrance of an important and famous historical or mythological events. As the embodiment of *mania*, Bacchic poetics presents the antithetical viewpoint of Minerva’s structured memory, as Arachne’s tapestry lacks specificity and employs many allusions in her portrayal of various narratives. Most importantly, Minervan poetics illustrates traditional epic tropes, which are used often in many of Ovid’s epic predecessors, especially Vergil. Likewise, Ovid’s use of Bacchic poetics demonstrates his command and understanding of the Hellenistic and neoteric traditions. I present the two poetics through the conflicting divinities of two
gods because the poetic construction of the two tapestries is not tied down to a specific, single literary genre. The two tapestries are part of the strife between various dualities. They are the conflict between immortal and mortal, organization and fluidity, deception and revelation, compliance and disobedience. The two poetic styles compliment but contradict each other at the same time. Finally, because the two gods do appear or are evoked multiple times in other parts of the *Metamorphoses*, it is clear that the poetic styles of the two tapestries signify not just a generic difference but a divine one as well.

3.2 Caelestia *Crimina*: Interpreting the Outcome of the Contest

The obvious conflicting values between the two divine poetics highlight Ovid’s complete mastery of the two poetic forms he has inherited. What sets him apart from the traditions that he inherited is his ability to reflect upon the poetic description of the tapestry with the divine powers and persona of the god whom each tapestry represents. Ovid also sets himself apart by being able to blend or to contrast the two divine poetic forms. In this way, Ovid shows himself as the ultimate winner not only just of the competition between Minerva and Arachne, but also the master of the two poetic styles the two tapestries represent. Although the contest between Minerva and Arachne is also a contest between two opposing poetic styles, i.e. the traditional heroic epic and the Hellenistic poetics, which I have shown in the first and second chapters, Ovid instead shows his supremacy over the two styles by blending them together in the conclusion of the contest:

Non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor
possit opus: doluit successu flava virago
et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes...
Neither Pallas, nor Envy could pick at that work: the blond virago was hurt by the succession and she ripped the adorned garments, those divine offenses.

(Ovid Metamorphoses 6.129-131)

Immediately after the end of Ovid’s ekphrasis of Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid informs the reader of Minerva’s anger towards Arachne. In comparison, here is the conclusion of the contest between the Muses and Pierides immediately after Calliope ends her story of Ceres and Proserpina:

Finierat doctos e nobis maxima cantus;
at nymphae vicisse deas Helicona colentes concordi dixere sono...

The oldest of us had ended her learned poetry; but the nymphs declared with an unanimous voice that the goddesses living on Helicon were victorious...

(Ovid Metamorphoses 5.662-664)

The appearance of a panel of judges and the actual appearance of “victory” in Ovid’s writing shows a concrete conclusion of the contest between the Muses and the Pierides. The use of the perfect tense in vicisse and dixere also attests to the completed aspect of the nymphs’ judgment. Ovid makes it clear who the winner in the contest of poems is.

The use of the perfect tense of the verb vinco “win victory” and the nymph’s concordus sonus “unanimous voice” shows no ambiguity of the victor of the contest. On the other hand, the conclusion of the textile contest between the two women lacks either any mention of a panel of judges or a proclamation of who the victor is.

The conclusion of the contest between Minerva and Arachne begins with the potential subjunctive possit in 6.130. William Anderson (1972) remarks that if the indicative is used instead “[it] would suggest that Minerva tried and could find no
fault."\textsuperscript{116} But the potential subjunctive suggests Minerva does not even have the capability to attempt a judgment. Ovid then reveals why the goddess is unable to perform any criticism at 6.130 as well. Ovid claims that the goddess is hurt by the \textit{successus} of Arachne’s tapestry. The major issue with the reading of the conclusion is the final judgment of the contest. Many scholars view the mention of the \textit{successus} as this contest’s equivalent of \textit{vinco} at 5.663, as if \textit{successus} signals the victory of Arachne’s tapestry over Minerva’s, producing the goddess’s anger.\textsuperscript{117} From this perspective, the victory of Arachne would represent the Ovidian victory over the Augustan moral aesthetic of Minerva’s tapestry. However, as Denis Feeney (1991) points out, assuming that Minerva’s wrath ultimately stems from her loss to Arachne in the contest is ultimately a problematic viewpoint. He claims “Ovid’s pendulum never rests in its oscillation between the poles of Minerva and Arachne, epic and neoteric canons.”\textsuperscript{118} He agrees with Elena Leach’s (1974) interpretation of the conclusion, that “as the creator of the poem, Ovid maintains a vision embracing both points of view.”\textsuperscript{119} Franz Bömer (1977) shares this sentiment in his commentary on the conclusion, stating, “it is, however, not true, and it is not in Ovid, that her [Arachne’s] tapestry is more beautiful than that of Minerva.”\textsuperscript{120} It is, therefore, unwise to simply interpret the contest as depicting Arachne’s victory over Minerva with respect to both the tapestry, subject matter, and the poetic representation of the two tapestries. The lack of both a judging

\textsuperscript{116} Anderson 1972, 169.
\textsuperscript{117} Anderson 1972, Galinsky 1975, Hofmann 1985, and more recently Oliensis 2004. See also my discussion in Chapter 1 above.
\textsuperscript{118} Feeney 1991, 192.
\textsuperscript{119} Leach 1974, 104.
\textsuperscript{120} Bömer 1977, 44: “Es trifft aber nicht zu, und es steht auch nicht bei Ovid, dass ihr Gewebe schöner sei als das der Minerva.”
panel and an official statement of the victor creates an ambiguous interpretation as to the outcome of the textile contest.

The ambiguous outcome and interpretation of the conclusion lead me to interpret the meaning of *successus* not as indicating the “victory” of Arachne, but rather as the tapestry “which follows after Minerva’s tapestry.” Certainly *successus* can mean the “good outcome” or “victory” of a specific event, since one of the meanings of its verbal root form *succedo* suggests “to turn out well.” However, the verbal root can also simply indicate temporal sequence, as Ovid in fact uses the verb in the *Metamorphoses*: *tertia post illam successit aenea proles*, “after that generation, the third came next, that is the Bronze generation” (1.125). This use of *succedo* is important, since within the traditional narrative of the Ages of Man dating back to Hesiod (*Works and Days* 109-201), the Bronze Age does not succeed the previous Silver Age in any manner other than temporally. In this sense, *successus* does not necessarily mean the “victory” of Arachne’s tapestry over Minerva, but rather the description of the tapestry that comes right after Minerva’s tapestry sequentially. Therefore, it is more appropriate to reconstruct the translation of the result as such:

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Non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor
possit opus: doluit successu flava virago
et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes...
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Neither Pallas, nor Envy **could** pick at that work: the blond *virago* was hurt by the work that followed hers, and she ripped the adorned garments, those divine offenses.

(Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.129-131)

This translation of *successus* creates a different tone for our interpretation of the result of the contest. In this version, Minerva is now injured by the *ekphrasis* that comes after hers.

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121 See the *OLD’s* entry on *succedo* n. 7 “to turn out well.”
The new translation of *successus* now reflects the ambiguous potential subjunctive of *possit*. The goddess ultimately destroys Arachne’s tapestry because Arachne’s work is indicative of “caelestia crimina,” not because it is better than Minerva’s. The interpretation of *successus* as a sequential event, or tapestry, that takes place after the previous tapestry adheres to Feeney’s, Leach’s, and Bömer’s argument that the interpretation of the conclusion of the contest should not be a pro-Arachne result. Instead, the anger of Minerva ultimately stems from her anger towards the different textile style and poetic style of Arachne’s tapestry. Minerva is hurt not by Arachne’s victory over the goddess, but by the representation of the tapestry, physically and poetically, that sequentially comes right after Minerva’s work in the *Metamorphoses*.

The alternate interpretation of *successus* as a “sequence” rather than a “result” becomes an important factor in determining line 6.131. When Minerva ripped Arachne’s tapestry, Ovid finally reveals Minerva’s interpretation of Arachne’s work, a *caelestia crimina*. I maintain the translation of *caelestia crimina* as neutral as possible, and thus, I come up with “divine offenses.” The difficulties with the interpretation of *caelestia crimina* are similar to those of *possit* and *successus* at 6.130. Bömer mentions that “the phrase [*caelestia crimina*] is interpreted variously,”122 and then lists how other scholars interpret the appearance of this phrase. More recently, some scholars have interpreted *caelestia crimina* as meaning “the offenses which the gods commit,” following Anderson’s interpretation.123 However, the adjective *caelestia* can function as either a subjective or objective genitive, such that *caelestia crimina* can also indicate “the offenses towards the gods.” Gianpero Rosati (1999) champions this interpretation when

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122 Bömer 1977, 45: “der Ausdruck wird unterschiedlich gedeutet.”
he argues that “Arachne wants to offend the goddess by mentioning an episode [the rape of Medusa] which is particularly odious to her”;\textsuperscript{124} thus he concludes “I am tempted to see in caelestia crimina, ‘a reproach against the gods.’”\textsuperscript{125} By examining the two tapestries through the divine poetic styles which I have explored in chapter 1 and 2, I can expand Rosati’s interpretation of crimina in the way which Minerva is offended by Arachne’s tapestry. I suggest that the anger of the goddess does not only stem from Arachne’s intention to anger the goddess on purpose, but also from the opposing divine poetic style her woven narrative employs, which conflicts with Minerva’s divine representation. Minerva views Arachne’s tapestry not just as a mythological offense against herself (through the depiction of Medusa), but also as a poetic one as well. While some readers, like Anderson, would see the final outcome as Minerva’s anger towards the girl because the goddess is a sore loser, other readers, like Rosati, sees Minerva’s attack towards the girl is a justifiable response against Arachne’s blasphemy. Ultimately, the vague adjectival use of caelestia seems to muddle both readers’ and scholars’ interpretations and expectations of the outcome and the victor of the contest.

The important factor of these three ambiguous phrases is how they highlight Ovid’s successful fusion of the two poetic styles into his own narrative technique. Since the outcome of the contest can be interpreted in two different ways based on the poetic style, the outcome is essentially the combination of the two divine poetic styles which Ovid subversively placed into the contest. If the reader approaches the conclusion through a Minervan poetic, he will interpret the result as an inconclusive judgment because the goddess is too angry at the intentional offenses made by Arachne. If, on the

\textsuperscript{124} Rosati 1999, 251.
\textsuperscript{125} Rosati 1999, 251.
other hand, the reader examines the conclusion through a Bacchic poetic, he will interpret that the anger of the Minerva was spurred by the goddess’ inability to make any negative remarks against Arachne’s tapestry. By allowing two different interpretations, in contrast to the result of the contest between the Muses and the Pierides, Ovid successfully executes a subversive narrative technique that presents two different conflicting ideas into one specific scene. Ultimately, neither the goddess nor the mortal girl are the winners of the artistic contest. Ovid shows that he is able to present the two different poetic styles as separate narratives in competition against each other or as a single narrative statement with two poetic readings imbedded subversively in the conclusion of the contest. Thus, Ovid becomes the master of the two poetic forms as he bends their formation to his will as he sees fit. Ovid could reveal the winner of contest, as he does so in the contest between the Muses and the Pierides; instead, the inconclusive result of the textile contest reveals that Ovid is the real winner of the contest. The poet surpasses both contestants through his command and understanding of their contrasting divine artistic styles. Ovid blends the artistic creativity of two different poetic styles, two contrasting divinities, and two artistic media, textile manufacture and poetic composition. Ovid successfully associates the divinity of Minerva and Bacchus through the generic representation of two prevailing traditions during the Augustan period; the traditional epic narrative structure for Minervan poetics and the neoteric reception of Alexandrian narrative style for Bacchic poetics. Since Ovid illustrates the textile contest as a metaphor for poetic production, thus his *Metamorphoses* becomes the very canvas of the poet’s poetic tapestry.
3.3 Beyond the Tapestry: Application of Minervan and Bacchic Poetics in the 
*Metamorphoses*

The investigation of the two divine poetics, Minervan and Bacchic, in the textile contest between Minerva and Arachne serves as the poetic platform from which much, if not all, of the *Metamorphoses* can be based. As I have mentioned in my introduction, scholars in the past realized the peculiarity of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as an epic poem. Many scholars, such as Richard Heinze, Brooks Otis, Stephen Hinds, and William Anderson, have observed two narrative genres that persist in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, elegy and epic. My thesis circumvents that problematic issue by illustrating Ovid’s understanding and realization of two different narrative styles which persist in his time. As such, the *ekphrases* of the two tapestries are clear indicators of two prevailing narrative trends of the Augustan age. Furthermore, Ovid marks the two poetic styles as representation of the divine powers of Minerva and Bacchus. Thus, the traditional theme of hexameter narrative, which Classical scholars classify as epic, is the embodiment of Minerva’s divine power of structure, discipline, and memory. On the other hand, the allusive, Alexandrian, and tragic elements of the elegiac couplets, which scholars classify as elegy, are poetic representations of Bacchus’ divinity.

Using my thesis of the two tapestries as the groundwork for divine representation in Ovid’s poetic construction, In the future, I aim to demonstrate how the divine representation of Minerva and Bacchus shapes the way in which Ovid constructs the *Metamorphoses*, at least where the two divinities appear in the poem. Gianpero Rosati’s (1999) research on the two tapestries suggests that the textile contest of Minerva and Arachne is related to other to the story of the Minyeides in book 4. His analysis concerns
the weaving metaphors of the two stories “which explore the whole semantic field of textuality and ... a picture of the process of the construction of the text, of its mechanism, of its sense.” What Rosati fails to account for, though he glances at it briefly, is the position of the Minyeides narrative. Ovid introduces the Minyeides as an intermission of the Cadmean saga. The story begins book 4, immediately after the triumph of the Bacchic cult and the recognition of Bacchus as true god by the Thebans. It also comes right before Ovid’s description of the demise of Cadmus’ other descendants (4.416-562) and finally of Cadmus’ metamorphosis (4.563-603). The story of Minyeides is, therefore, not just the poetic metaphor for textuality and tapestry, but it also serves as the conflict of the two divine powers, Minerva and Bacchus, and through the poetics which Ovid represents them. The story of the Minyeides is clearly a story of divine contention between the two gods. Future work, therefore, will illustrate how the stories of the Minyeides and Arachne are linked, not only in their textile metaphors, but also their divine representation of the poetic production. Since the Minyeides are opposed to the religious rites of Bacchus, the stories that they tell are inextricably linked to the Minervan poetics in Ovid’s *ekphrasis* of Minerva. The groundwork undertaken in my thesis will provide the scene concerning the relationship between textile production, poetic construction, and divine representation in the story of the Minyeides.

While the story of the Minyeides shows the conflict of the two divine poetics, the story of Tereus and Procne in book six of the *Metamorphoses* briefly show the co-dependency of the two poetic forms. Philomela, muted by Tereus, weaves a tapestry in order to convey to her sister Procne the crime against her (6.571-580). The fact that the two women are Athenian princesses suggests a relationship between textile production,

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126 Rosati 1999, 253.
poetic construction, and Minerva’s divinity. Procne, upon learning the crime, attempts to rescue her sister by using a Bacchic celebration as a diversion (6.587-600) in order to sneak Philomela into the palace of Tereus. While the two events of the story are co-dependent, the story of Tereus and Procne provides further evidence of divine poetics in Ovid’s construction of the *Metamorphoses*. Procne and her sister are clear representations of Minervan poetics, while Tereus’ lustful assault of Philomela and his very ethnicity (note *Threcius Tereus* “Thracian Tereus” 6.424) exemplify the Bacchic poetics of Arachne’s tapestry. The conflict between Procne and Tereus, therefore, can be summed up through the divine poetics of Minerva and Bacchus.

These are two examples in which the appearance of the two divine poetics shapes the manner in which these stories are organized. The two divine poetics are, in one way or another, bound to each other throughout the *Metamorphoses*. This analysis of the divine powers as poetic representations in the *Metamorphoses* will hopefully serve as a platform for a different interpretation of the epic. The two divine poetics, which I have revealed, will serve as a guideline for studying Ovid’s use of the gods’ divine persona in the creation of the *Metamorphoses*. The appearance of divine influences within his poetic arrangement is especially clear when he ends his *prooemium* with the same verb *deduco* (1.4) as the verb, in which Minerva begins her textile narrative (6.69). The verb *deduco* at *Metamorphoses* 1.4 describes the literary weavings of the *Metamorphoses* while the same verb at 6.69 describes the literal weavings of Minerva’s tapestry. The verb, therefore, associates Minerva’s tapestry with the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. But the concluding lines of the *Metamorphoses*, as Feeney (1991) notes, create a resonance with Arachne’s
tapestry in the phrase *ira Iovis* at 15.871. The *ira* in this line echoes the wrath of Minerva at Arachne’s textile production (6.130). In the last lines of his poem, Ovid demonstrates the connection between Arachne’s textile and the *Metamorphoses* as a whole as well, much as he does with his echo of *deduco* to describe both his own poem and Minerva’s textile. Ovid begins the *Metamorphoses* with a resonance of Minervan poetics and ends the poem with similar resonance of Bacchic poetics. My future work aims to demonstrate an alternate reading to the *Metamorphoses*, one that is motivated by divine personae of the gods rather than just its generic construction. My thesis complements past scholarship on the generic production in the *Metamorphoses* while, at the same time, offering a different approach in the understanding of Ovid’s poetic narrative of the *Metamorphoses* through a divine and religious point of view. This thesis, I hope, has open up new ways of discussing various narrative constructions in the *Metamorphoses* either through Minervan or Bacchic poetics.

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127 Feeney 1991, 221.
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