

# LESBIANTIQUITY

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{ OVID }  
{ NASO }

UNMAIDENLIKE  
KISSES

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Ovid translation, introduction, and notes © Miriam Kamil 2024

Latin text from: R. J. Tarrant, ed., *P. Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Back cover art: 'Root & Branch Tree' © Emily Setzer 2024

## **THE TRANSLATOR**

### **Professor Miriam Kamil**

I am a Visiting Assistant Professor at Bryn Mawr College. I earned my PhD in Classical Philology from Harvard in 2022, where I studied Ovidian poetics under the guidance of Richard Thomas, Richard Tarrant, and Greg Nagy. My current project focuses on queer and deviant receptions of classical antiquity in the modern US and Europe.



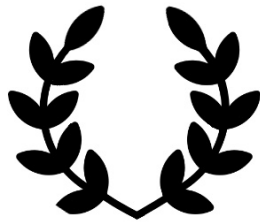
## PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO

Toward the middle of the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells the story of Callisto's transformation into a bear. A nymph and member of Diana's band, Callisto spends her time hunting and has no interest in marriage. She resembles Daphne from Book 1, whose resistance to an amorous Apollo prompted her transformation into a tree. But unlike Daphne, Callisto's divine attacker, Jupiter, is successful in his rape attempt. After Callisto becomes pregnant, she is expelled by Diana, transformed into a bear by Juno, and changed into a constellation by Jupiter.

The story merits entry into this series because during the attack Jupiter magically disguises himself as Diana. The poet calls attention to the homoerotic aspect of the pairing in line 431, when he identifies Jupiter/Diana's kisses (*oscula*) as the wrong sort to be given to one girl by another (*nec sic a virgine danda*).

The myth is much older than Ovid, appearing in a Hellenistic scholion to Hesiod and a fragmentary Greek comedy by Amphis.<sup>1</sup> The brief romantic pairing between Diana (Artemis) and Callisto may hint at a popular assumption of homoeroticism between Diana and her all-female band. There is, however, no known version of the myth where Diana (Artemis) is not Jupiter (Zeus) in disguise. The myth is therefore fundamentally heterosexual. The goddess's cruel dismissal of Callisto after the rape would also seem to thwart interpretation of an affectionate relationship between the two characters. Then again, Diana's behavior could be construed as romantic jealousy.

<sup>1</sup> See Boehringer, Sandra, *Female Homosexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome*, trans. by Anna Preger (London: Routledge, 2021) pp. 178–82.





## ROOT & BRANCH READING GUIDE

Our translations branch out to explore  
a variety of options for the text:  
any variants in the original < Greek Latin > texts  
and the various possible meanings in English.

Our translations are rooted in the words  
of the original text, replicating when possible  
word order, root meanings of words, and  
grammatical gender (  $\begin{pmatrix} [n] \\ [f] \\ [m] \end{pmatrix}$  ) of words about people.

You, the reader, will choose which branches you prefer to follow.

## METAMORPHOSES 2.425-431

425 Straightaway he puts on the face and  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{dress} \\ \text{appearance} \\ \text{habits} \end{array} \right)$  of Diana  
 and says, "O  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{maiden} \\ \text{girl} \\ \text{virgin} \end{array} \right)$ , one member of my companions [f],  
 on what peaks have you hunted?" From the turf the  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{maiden} \\ \text{girl} \\ \text{virgin} \end{array} \right)$   
 lifts herself and says, "Hello,  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{god} \\ \text{divinity} \\ \text{power} \end{array} \right)$  [n],  $\left\langle \begin{array}{c} \text{with me as judge} \\ \text{in my judgment} \end{array} \right\rangle$   
 - hear it himself though he may - greater than Jupiter." [He] laughs  
 and hears  
 430 and rejoices that [he] is preferred to [him]self and  $\left\langle \begin{array}{c} \text{gives kisses} \\ \text{joins lips} \end{array} \right\rangle$   
 not  $\left\langle \begin{array}{c} \text{measured} \\ \text{modest} \end{array} \right\rangle$  enough nor  $\left\langle \begin{array}{c} \text{how} \\ \text{like} \end{array} \right\rangle$  ones that by  $\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{a virgin} \\ \text{a girl} \\ \text{a maiden} \\ \text{the Virgin} \end{array} \right)$   
 ought to be given.



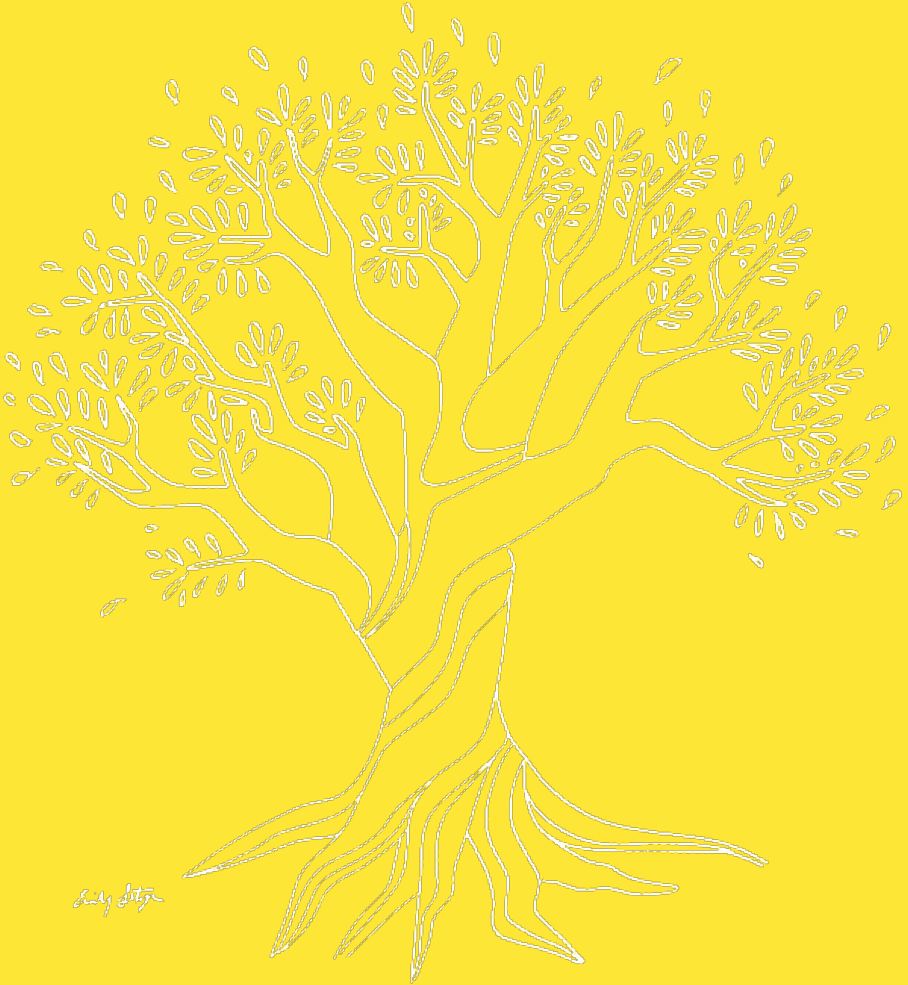
425 protinus induitur faciem cultumque Dianae  
 atque ait: 'o comitum, uirgo, pars una mearum,  
 in quibus es uenata iugis?' de caespite uirgo  
 se leuat et 'salue numen, me iudice' dixit,  
 'audiat ipse licet, maius loue.' ridet et audit  
 430 et sibi praeferri se gaudet et oscula iungit  
 nec moderata satis nec sic a uirgine danda.

## NOTES

429 *audiat ... audit; hear ... hears*: the line is bookended by two forms of the verb *audio* in emphatic polyptoton.

429–30 *ridet et audit et sibi praeferrī se gaudet et oscula iungit; [He] laughs and hears and rejoices that [he] is preferred to [him]self and gives kisses / joins lips*: nothing in the Latin here specifies Jupiter as male, so I have put gendered pronouns in brackets.

431 *nec sic a uirgine danda; nor how/like ones that by a girl / a maiden / a virgin / the Virgin ought to be given*: Ovid calls attention to the homoerotic aspect of the pairing by highlighting the incongruity between Diana's gender and her (his) actions. Although generally not capitalized, *uirgo* can also be considered an epithet of Diana, who is the Virgin Goddess.



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